

Understanding The Acculturation Of South Asian Immigrant Women In The United States

Abstract

In the recent past, the contributions made by immigrant women towards the American economy and workforce has seen a considerable rise and this trend only seems to keep growing. South Asian immigrant women have been leaders in many prominent fields such as council member for the city of Irvine- Farrah N. Khan, CFO of General Motors - Dhivya Surayadevara and Actress/Producer-Mindy Kaling. One can wonder, how did they do this, were they all same type of personalities, coming from similar kind of families, or what are their stories?? Although South Asian women are making significant contributions, past literature has revealed how immigration to western countries can lead to acculturative stress as there is disparity between the roles defined by their home culture and the host culture. In this study, we focused on understanding how South Asian women adapt to an acculturative strategy along with their current socio demographic situation. Results will be discussed in the light of women's marital, educational, visa, and employment status, along with the acculturative strategy most adopted by them.

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Introduction

Acculturation: is defined as a process of social, financial, psychological, and cultural change that stems from the balancing of two cultures (home country and host country).

Research has shown that immigrant women are more vulnerable to acculturative stress than men.

South Asian women are considered the primary transmitters of tradition, values, and culture to their families. As a result, the acculturation of women affects the acculturation of their families.

One of the most influential bidimensional models of acculturation was the one developed by Berry (1974,1980) According to Berry's model, immigrant groups and individuals are confronted with two basic issues during the process of acculturation. The first issue involved asking to what extent they consider it of value to maintain their heritage culture and identity. The second issue involved asking whether they consider it of value to maintain contact and relations with other groups. When these two issues are considered simultaneously a conceptual framework is generated with four acculturation strategies or options available to individual and groups.

Acculturation strategies (based on Berry's model, 1997):

- o Assimilation: South Asian women who acquire the behaviors and values of the American culture and give up their own traditional Indian beliefs and value systems.
- o Integration: South Asian women who integrate their traditional Indian culture with the acquired characteristics of the American culture.
- o Separation: South Asian women who adhere strictly to their traditional Indian culture and exhibit reluctance to accept, adapt, or even identify with the American culture.
- o Marginalization: South Asian women that do not maintain allegiance to traditional Indian beliefs, values, or behaviors, and do not accept the values of the American culture.

The major focus of this study is understanding the acculturation of first-generation South Asians immigrant women in light of the Berry' bidimensional model and to explore various socioeconomic and demographic correlates of the sample.

Methodology

Sample

- A total of 71 respondents attempted the survey. However, all the 71 cases could not be used for analysis, as 5 of the surveys were incomplete. Therefore, 67 cases with complete information on the questionnaire were further considered for the study
- Data was collected using purposive sampling.
- The sample consisted of first-generation South Asian women, who were currently living in the United States, aged between 18 and 80 years. Participation was completely voluntary, and respondents could opt out of the survey at any time.
- Inclusion criteria: women born in South Asian country and migrated to the United States.
- Exclusion criteria: women born in the United States and raised with South Asian ethnic background.
- **Measures**
- The survey questionnaire consisted of 33 questions. 15 questions based on socio-demographic details and 18 questions based on acculturation.
- **Plan of analysis**
- For the purpose of statistical analysis of acculturation variables Latent Class Analysis (LCA) was used. The poLCA package in the statistical software R was found to be the appropriate tool for performing LCA.
- SPSS-20. was used to study the descriptive statistics of the sociodemographic correlates.

Results

Table 1 Representing the Marital and Employment status with respect to Educational qualification (N=67)

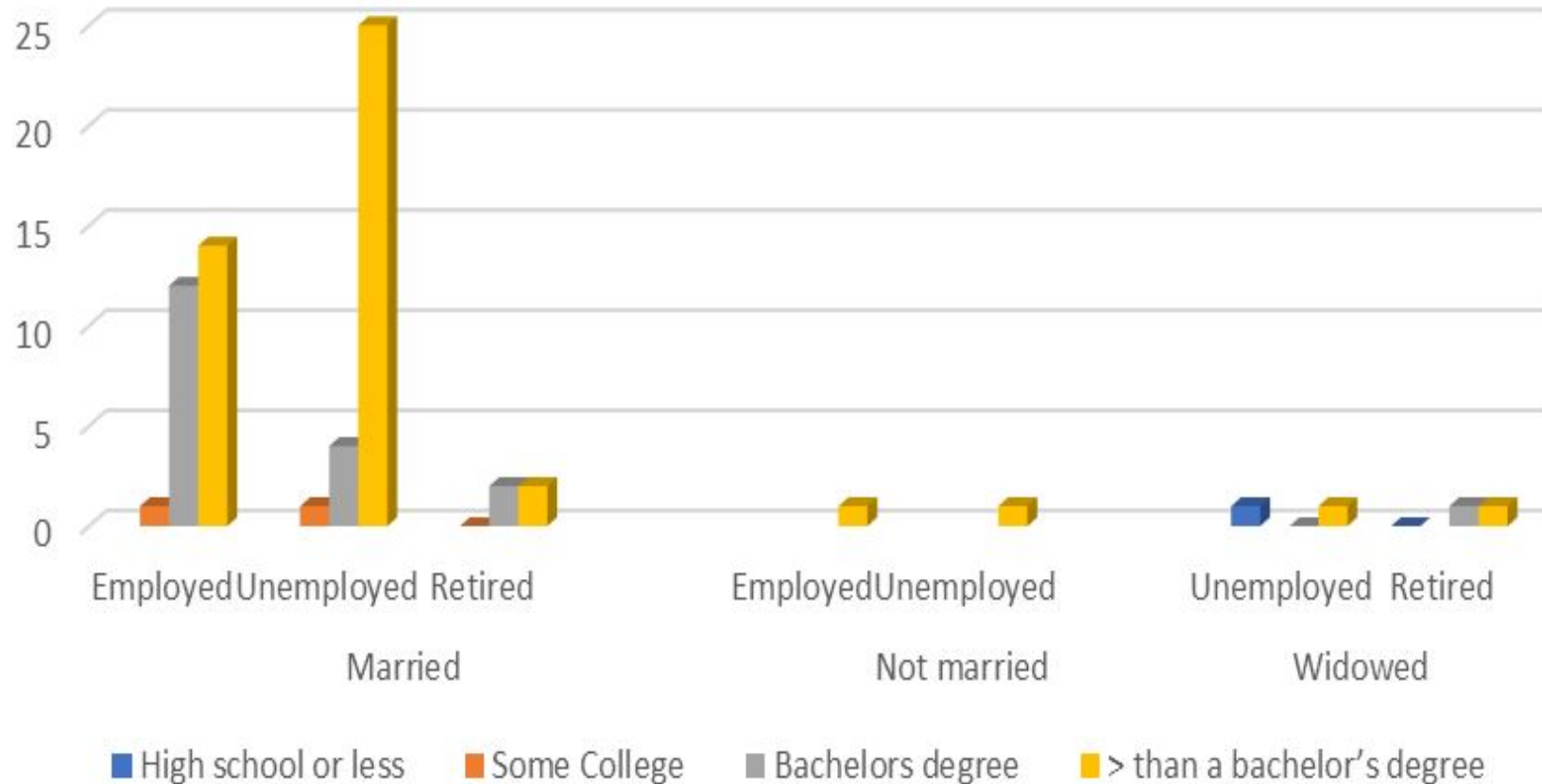


Table 2 Represents the Marital and Educational qualification with respect to the Mental health professional help(N=67)

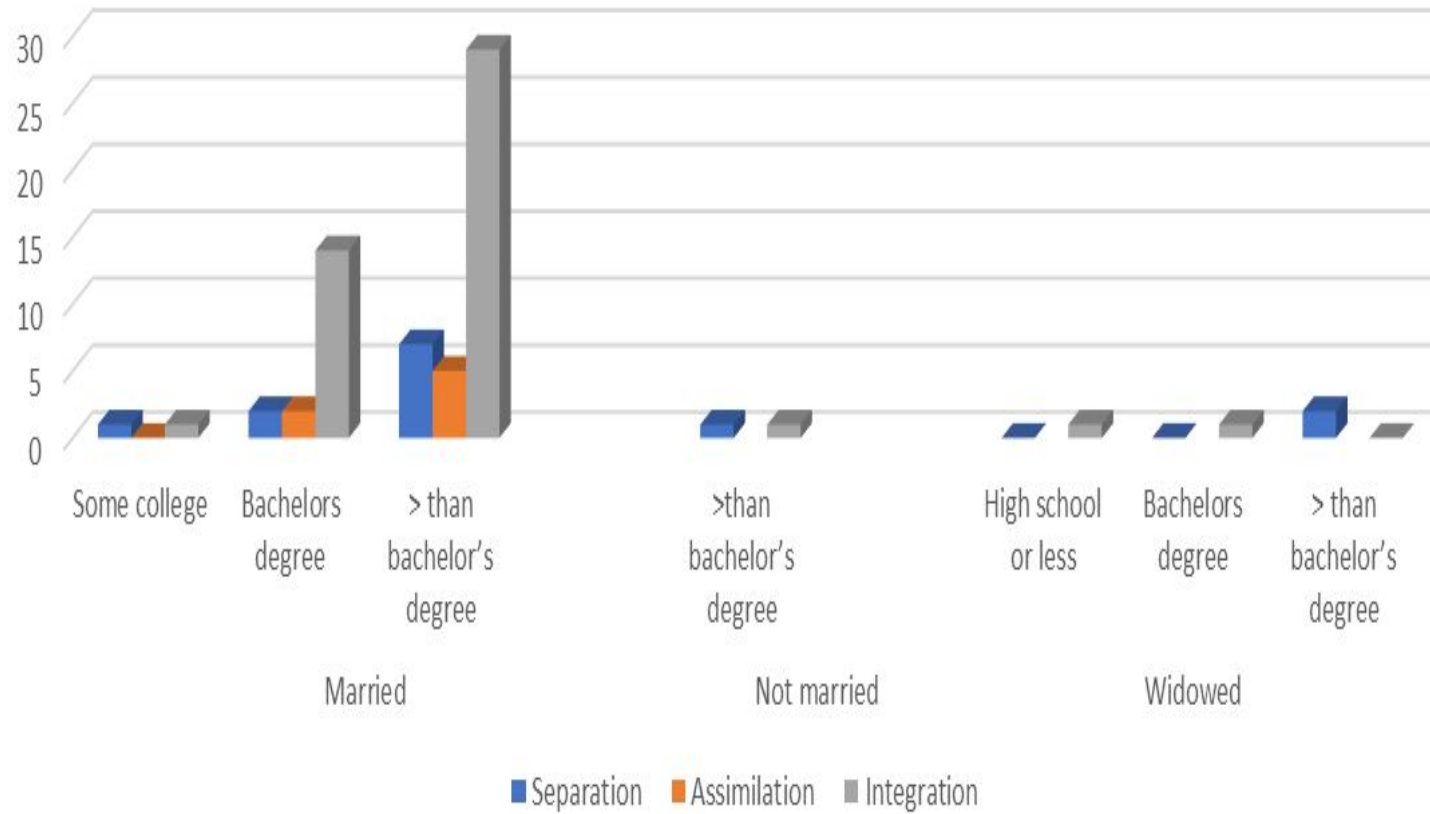


Table 3 Estimated proportion of respondents belonging to a latent class analysis with maximal probability on proficiency of english language and language spoken at home within the three latent acculturation strategy classes (N=67)

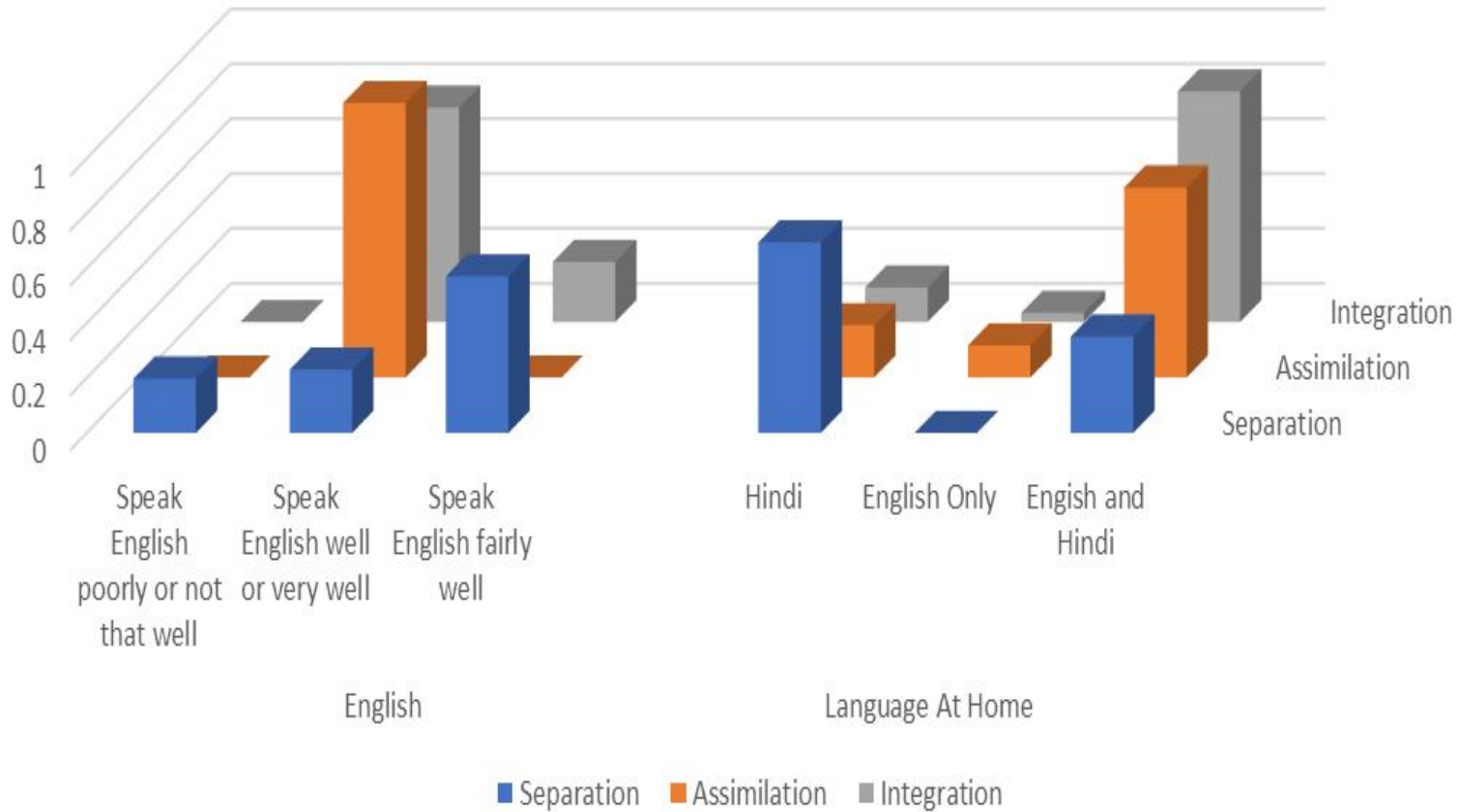


Table 4 Estimated proportions of respondents belonging to a latent class analysis with maximal probability on Identifying oneself as South Asian or American within the three latent acculturation strategy classes (N=67)

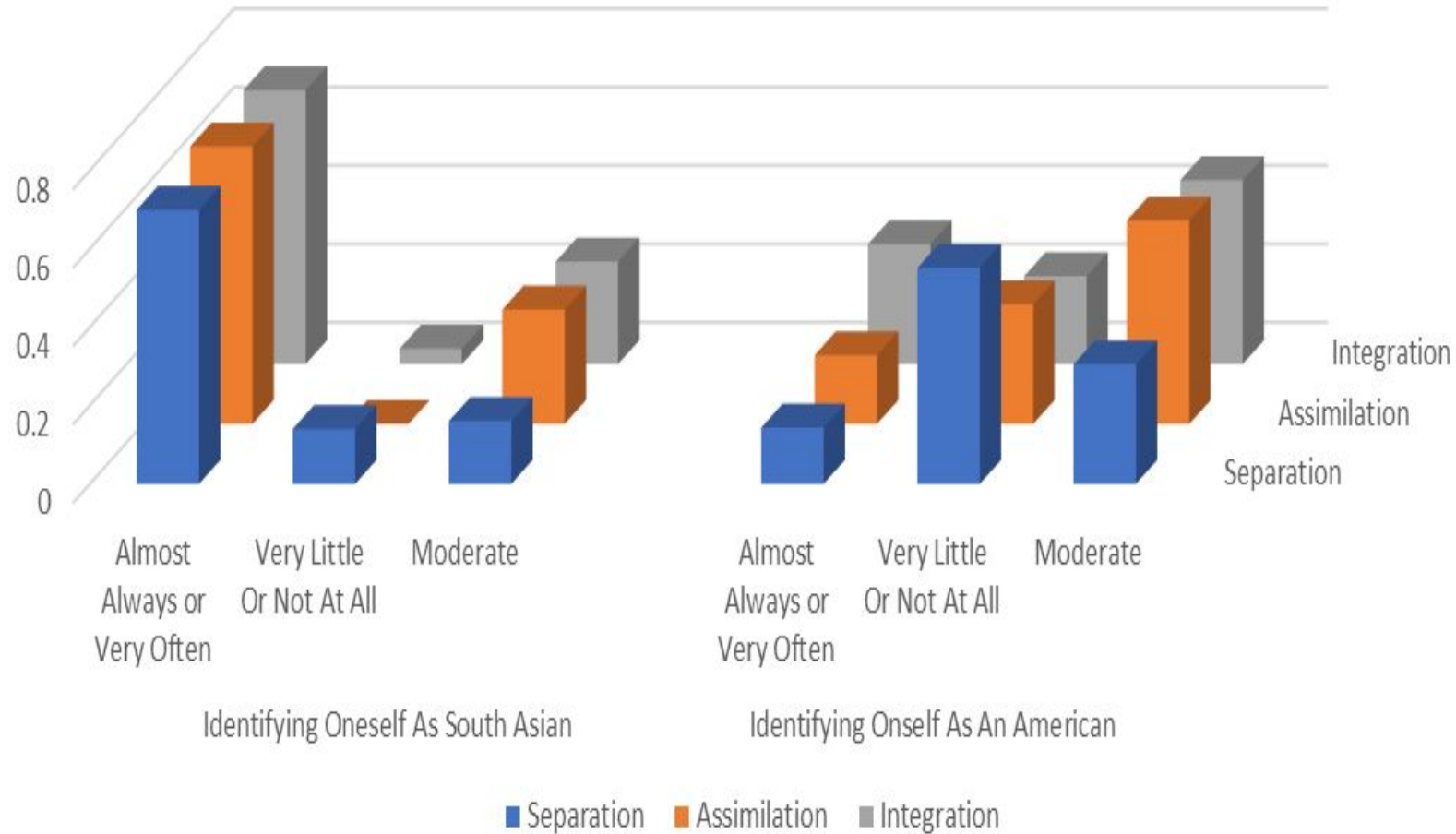


Table 5 Estimated proportions of respondents belonging to a latent class analysis with maximal probability on Comfort in reaching out to a local physician for physical needs and a mental health professional within the three latent acculturation strategy

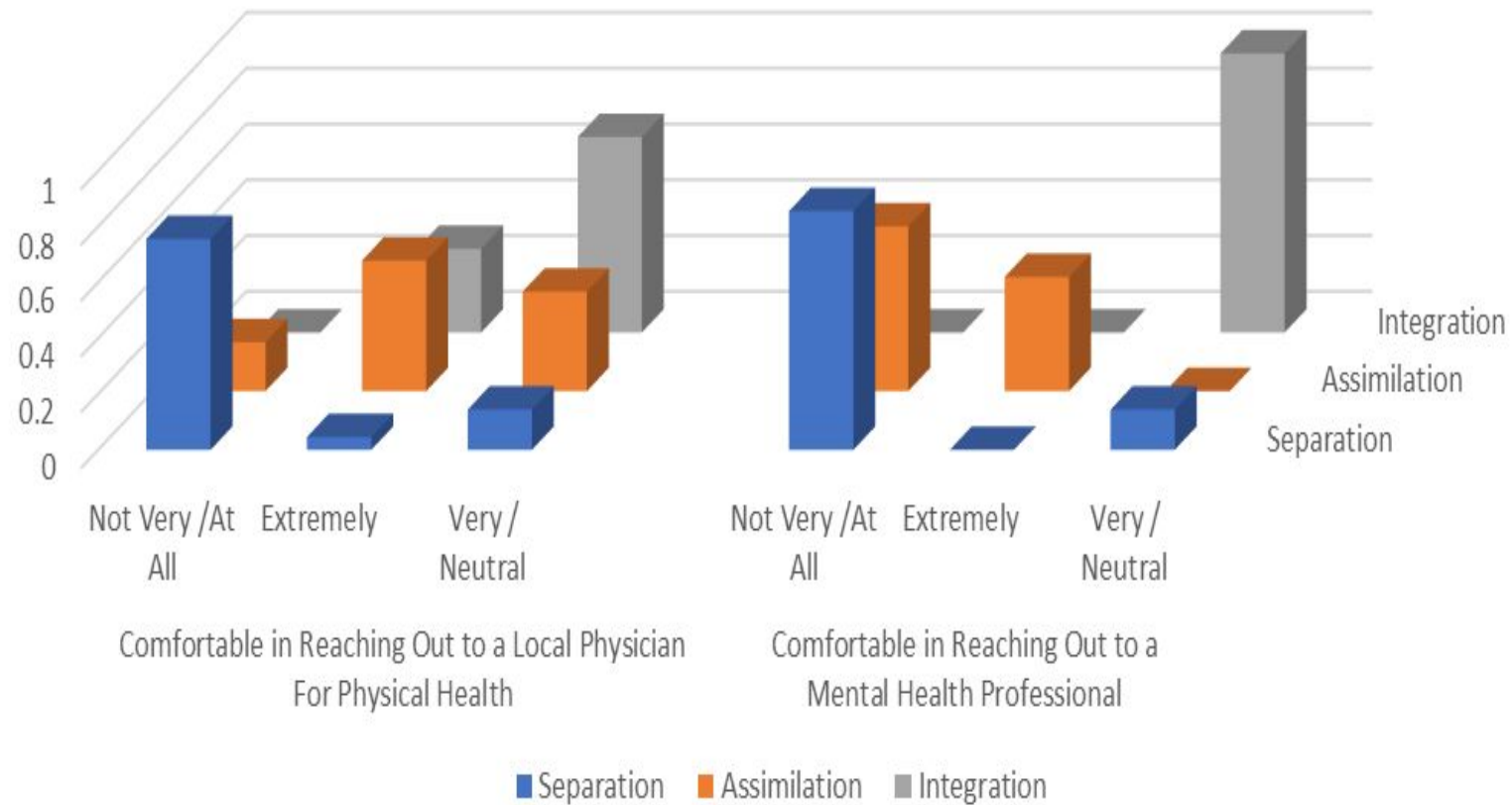


Table 6 Estimated proportions of respondents belonging to a latent class analysis with maximal probability on preferences for food and existing friendship within the three latent acculturation strategy classes (N=67)

