



A RESEARCH NOTE: ADAPTATION AND GENERAL WELL-BEING OF ANGLO-INDIAN IMMIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA

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A series of studies were conducted as part of an honours project at Curtin University. This project was conducted in association with Anglo-Indian/All-India/ La Martinere Associations throughout Australia. Centrally coordinated through the Australian Anglo-Indian Association in Western Australia, these studies were conducted over a period of five months. The first study involved 16 interviews with key members of the Anglo-Indian community in Western Australia who described the experiences of Anglo-Indians in Australia. The second study involved a questionnaire which was distributed through associations to a large number of Anglo-Indians. This questionnaire examined the adaptation and general well-being of 214 Anglo-Indians living in Australia. Using a model developed by Berry (1986), the Anglo-Indians sampled obtained a score for each of the following types of adaptation:

- (1) Separation (they saw themselves as Anglo-Indian only);
- (2) Integration (they saw themselves as Australian and Anglo-Indian);
- (3) Assimilation (they saw themselves as Australian only); and
- (4) Marginalisation (they saw themselves as oscillating between being Australian and being Anglo-Indian).

As well as this adaptation, the Anglo-Indians sampled also reported socio-demographic features such as date of birth (age), marital status, length of residence, country of birth, gender, religious affiliation, employment and educational backgrounds. These individuals also provided an indication of their general well being.

QUALITATIVE STUDY

The sample consisted of 16 key informants who were older than 18 years old. This study was conducted to get some idea of the context and experiences of Anglo-Indians in adapting to live in Australia.

FINDINGS

How does life in Australia differ from life in India?

Some key informants had felt that life in Australia was more informal because of its considerably smaller population. In comparison to India they felt more isolated here. Others also noted that in India they had occupied privileged positions not available to them in Australia. Thus, they felt that despite the opportunities for their children, overall they had to work a lot harder in Australia. One participant reported that "[life was] easy going in India, we had servants" but "I suppose the opportunities were greater for our kids [in Australia]".

A number of informants also reported that the quality of life and opportunities were greater in Australia for example, "there are very few people [in India] who can afford cars and homes like this". However, one informant felt that religion and familial ties were less important in Australia. Another participant said that the Anglo-Indian community had greatly decreased in India and was struggling to survive, whereas in Australia the community was larger but there was no need to depend on each other here. He argued that while Australia had been prosperous for the community, there was less of an Anglo-Indian identity. Contrary to this, another suggested that the Anglo-Indian identity has developed in Australia unlike in India.

Do you see Anglo-Indians as different to other ethnic communities in Australia?

The participants overall suggested that Anglo-Indians, unlike most other recent migrant groups (other than British migrants) in Australia were a westernised group who spoke English, i.e., "our mother tongue is English" and had western values.

Another reported that Anglo-Indians were Christians and as such observed holidays such as Easter and Christmas. Another feature reported by a majority of the younger informants was that the Anglo-Indians, unlike other migrant groups adapted easily to

any environment, for example "problem is the community just blends in so easily...we don't stand out in a crowd".

How well do you feel the Anglo-Indians have adjusted to life in Australia'?

Overall, all key informants had felt that the Anglo-Indian community had adjusted to Australia without many problems. Some had reported that there were not many they knew who had not adjusted successfully. Many felt that it was the Western cultural values and upbringing which had aided adjustment. One participant remarked "I think the main reason we have adjusted so easily is because we have a sort of European background, even though we are a mixed race, we tended to hold onto our British heritage so when we came here we weren't coming into an entirely foreign environment, we spoke the language, learned the history, we were predominantly British".

CONCLUSIONS

These findings suggest that for the Anglo-Indians adaptation to life in Australia, overall had been achieved fairly easily. However, it is interesting that the Anglo-Indians saw themselves as different from other ethnic minorities in terms of being western and having English as a first language. The participants also reported that life in Australia had been different to India. Unlike India, they felt Australia placed less emphasis on a person's status, religion or social functions. It was again interesting, that they saw the differences between Australia and India as those same indicators which defined them as a community. Without those indicators it would be difficult to distinguish them from many Australians today.

QUANTITATIVE STUDY

The sample comprised 214 first generation Anglo-Indian immigrants who were older than 18 years old. This study tested the relationships between (i) the socio-demographic factors and the adaptation outcomes and (ii) between the adaptation outcomes and psychological well-being.

FINDINGS

Older Anglo-Indians were more likely than younger Anglo-Indians to separate (i.e. identify with being Anglo-Indian) or marginalise (i.e. oscillate between Anglo-Indian and Australian).

Those Anglo-Indians who had been in Australia longer will be less likely to separate (i.e. identify with being Anglo-Indian) or marginalise (i.e. oscillate between Anglo-Indian and Australian).

Only those who were marginalised (i.e. oscillated between being Anglo-Indian and Australian) showed any sort of problems with general well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

This second study reported relationships between age and length of residence in relation to marginalisation and separation and secondly, between marginalisation and psychological well-being. The latter of these results appeared to partially support the theoretical model argued by Berry (1986), which suggested that marginalisation out of all the outcomes, would be most likely to be related to poor psychological well-being.

REFERENCE

Berry, J.W. (1986). Multiculturalism and psychology in plural societies. In L.H. Edstrand (Ed.). *Ethnic minorities and immigrants in a cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 35-51). Lisse, The Netherlands.