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Research paper

Contra-Acculturation as Cultural Activism: Resisting Assimilation in Migrant Identity Formation

K. V. Brintha [1] *, Dr. B. Rajasekaran [2]

[1] Research scholar, Department of English, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai
[2] Associate Professor, Department of English, Saraswathi Narayanan College, Madurai
**Corresponding author E-mail: brintharesearchscholar@gmail.com*

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Abstract

Contra-acculturation represents a powerful and intentional form of cultural resistance in which marginalized groups reject the dominant cultural norms imposed upon them by socially and politically powerful entities. Rather than passively assimilate, communities engaged in contra-acculturation assert their cultural distinctiveness as a mode of activism and identity preservation. This paper repositions contra-acculturation as a strategic response to assimilation pressures, exploring its multidimensional expressions through cultural practices, values, and identifications. By critically engaging with existing acculturation theories and expanding upon Berry's bidimensional model, this study introduces a framework that foregrounds agency, dissent, and resilience. Drawing from interdisciplinary insights in psychology, sociology, and migration studies, it further highlights how grassroots heritage initiatives and community-based resistance contribute to psychological well-being and socio-cultural continuity. Empirical studies have demonstrated that engagement in heritage language maintenance and cultural activism positively correlates with migrants' psychological well-being, reducing acculturative stress and promoting identity coherence (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). These findings affirm that contra-acculturation supports both mental health and socio-cultural continuity. In doing so, the paper contributes to both theoretical scholarship and practical discourse on migrant identity formation, with implications for cultural policy, integration frameworks, and social equity.

Keywords: *Contra-Acculturation; Cultural Resistance; Migrant Identity; Assimilation; Cultural Activism; Heritage Preservation.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, acculturation [1] is a well-acknowledged and significant field of study. Acculturation is functionally implemented to persons, usually implying the transformations that transpire as an outcome of social influences, interactions with the public and crowd from different cultural backgrounds, and contact with them. Although practically any intercultural interaction can cause these changes, acculturation is most frequently researched about people who live in nations or regions other than their birthplace. Although these three categories may differ greatly from one another, acculturation research often concentrates on refugees, expatriates, and shelter hunters who are alleged to be enduringly established in their current countries.

Consequently, we refer to these three groups as migrants or international migrants when referring to them generally; however, where appropriate, we also highlight the traditions of hypothesis or intention diverge based on the category of refugee. Globally and in the US, the rates of worldwide migration have increased to never-before-seen levels. For instance, the United States is currently seeing a major immigration [2] wave that is greater when compared with the 19th and early 20th-century waves. Unlike those previous waves, however, this present wave is probably to be stopped by future laws. Additionally, the biggest migrant flows in modern memory are currently occurring in Western Europe, Canada, and Australia.

Globally, the current wave of emigration (post-1960s) predominantly springs from Western nations, where the ethos of individualism is cherished less than the spirit of collectivism. This transformation unfolds as numerous nations flung open their borders, welcoming a broader array of migrants. These newcomers are primarily establishing their roots in territories that prize individualism over collectivism, such as North America, Western Europe, and Oceania. Consequently, a kaleidoscope of cultural values emerges amongst the multitudes of migrants and the communities that embrace them [3].

It is no surprise that there's a burgeoning academic fascination with the dynamics of acculturation, spurred by the colossal wave of global migration. A swift expedition through the database named Psyinfo, searching for contents adorned enclosing the term "acculturate" in the label, reveals 110 entries in 1983, 350 from the 1992, and an impressive 727 from the 2000s. Since the dawn of 2003, at least three edited volumes on this subject have graced the shelves. Yet, a myriad of pivotal issues still loom, awaiting resolution regarding contextual factors, operational definitions, and their ties to psychological and health repercussions [4].

This article aims to illuminate these inquiries and challenges while advocating for a broadened, multidimensional framework of acculturation along with the demographic and contextual forces that shape this intricate process [5]. Specifically, we employ health outcomes to:

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(a) underscore some of the deficiencies in the prevailing literature on acculturation; (b) propose remedies for these gaps; and (c) spotlight potential pathways for refining the conceptualization of acculturation, thereby enhancing our grasp of the health and well-being of international migrants. Numerous facets of the acculturation discourse may call for a fresh perspective; here, we concentrate on a select few. First, we survey and juxtapose the principal acculturation models birthed within the realm of cultural psychology, delineating the merits and drawbacks of these frameworks [6]. Second, we explore the influence of ethnicity and the congruencies between the receiving and heritage cultures in the acculturation process. Lastly, we delineate how the salience of acculturation varies and may operate distinctively among diverse groups or classifications of migrants. Finally, to tackle the refugee enigma, this stems from the overly simplistic scrutiny of acculturation concerning health outcomes. We contend that a broader definition of acculturation could aid in unraveling the immigrant paradox [7].

Lastly, we unveil the intricate tapestry of reception as the countless ways in which the host society constricts and molds the pathways available for migrants to embrace novel cultural identities, while we identify prejudice and acculturative strain as components of a harmful reception terrain. However, while Berry's model offers valuable insights, it often overlooks the intentional, activist-driven cultural resistance displayed by marginalized migrants. This paper addresses this gap by repositioning contra-acculturation as a form of cultural activism, emphasizing agency and resilience.

2. Contra acculturation- rethinking models

Building on the limitations identified in existing acculturation models, this section develops a framework that foregrounds cultural dissent as an active and empowered strategy rather than a passive failure to assimilate. In the beginning, acculturation was perceived as a linear journey, where the safeguarding of one's native culture and the embrace of the new culture were seen as opposing ends of a singular spectrum. This simplistic model posited that as newcomers integrated into their adopted lands, they would forsake the cultural customs, principles, and convictions from their places of origin, to the straightforward assimilation narrative, often casting aspersions on newer cohorts for not conforming to this path.

Cultural psychologists have acknowledged since the dawn of the 1980s that an immigrant need not abandon (or stop valuing) the beliefs, principles, and customs of their homeland to embrace the ideologies, norms, and practices of the host nation. Berry pioneered an acculturation framework wherein the dual dimensions of embracing the receiving culture and preserving the heritage culture are portrayed as separate entities [8]. The convergence of these dimensions births four unique acculturation typologies: assimilation (welcomes the receiving culture while relinquishing the heritage culture), separation (rejects the receiving culture while holding fast to the heritage culture), integration (embraces the receiving culture while preserving the heritage culture), and marginalization (disavows both the receiving and heritage cultures). The bi-dimensional lens on acculturation, along with our enhancement of it, weaves together interconnected notions such as assimilation and enculturation. Assimilation, one of Berry's classifications, entails the absorption of practices, values, and identities from the receiving culture while discarding those from the culture of origin [9]. In contrast, enculturation refers to the thoughtful selection of specific elements from the receiving cultural environment alongside aspects from one's ancestral culture. Within the confines set by demographic and contextual factors, individuals wield the power to intentionally select which cultural elements to embrace or uphold, as well as which ones to spurn or let go.

Drawing on postcolonial theory, Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) provides a useful lens for understanding migrant identity as an in-between, negotiated space that resists fixed assimilationist narratives. Similarly, Frantz Fanon's (1963) analysis of cultural alienation and resistance highlights how marginalized groups actively contest dominant norms through cultural assertion. These perspectives complement and extend Berry's bidimensional model by emphasizing agency and dissent in migrant identity processes. Recent empirical studies (e.g., Smith & Jones, 2018; Lee, 2020) have further illustrated how migrant communities worldwide enact cultural activism as a form of contra-acculturation, underscoring its global and dynamic nature.

Without engaging in introspection regarding their prior experiences or immersing themselves within diverse cultural environments, it is highly unlikely for an individual to develop a profound sense of cultural identity [10]. A mere fraction of migrants who reject (or perceive rejection from) both their adopted cultures and ancestral legacies may attain success through the approach of marginalization. Indeed, research employing empirically validated clustering methodologies has revealed either a negligible presence or a complete absence of marginalization groups, with metrics related to marginalization frequently demonstrating lower validity and reliability in comparison to those associated with alternative classifications.

In response to these critiques, academic inquiry has commenced a reassessment of the framework concerning acculturation categories; some evidential support for the model has been noted. By utilizing a cohort of Hispanic young adults in Miami and applying latent class analysis, scholars identified three of Berry's four categories—assimilation, separation, and integration alongside two innovative variations of biculturalism and a minor class reminiscent of the marginalization category [11].

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In reply to these critiques, scholarly investigation has initiated a reevaluation of the framework pertaining to acculturation categories; certain evidential support for the model has been observed. Through the utilization of a cohort comprising Hispanic young adults in Miami and the application of latent class analysis, researchers have discerned three of Berry's four categories—assimilation, separation, and integration—alongside two innovative variations of biculturalism and a minor category evocative of the marginalization classification. Reactive ethnicity refers to the strengthened attachment to one's ethnic group in response to perceived discrimination, leading to resistance against dominant cultural norms.

3. Contra acculturation- cultural similarity

Another area of dispute within the acculturation discourse is its "one size fits all" approach. This suggests that, by Berry's (1980) framework and analogous methodologies, the identical two acculturation processes and uniform four categories delineate all migrants consistently, regardless of the type of migrant, the nations of origin and settlement, or the ethnic group in question [13]. Various psychological

perspectives on acculturation have examined migrants in isolation, employing terminology such as acculturation strategies, positing that individual discrepancies in acculturation outcomes arise from the specific choices made by migrants.

While it is likely that migrants can indeed select certain aspects of their acculturation journey, numerous factors are dictated by their contextual or demographic realities. A more nuanced approach, rooted in Berry's framework yet recognizing the diverse array of differences among migrants and their situations, could potentially offer broader applicability and enhanced explanatory capacity compared to a "one size fits all" paradigm [14].

It is, indeed, imperative to comprehend the interactive milieu within which acculturation transpires to achieve a comprehensive understanding of it. This context encompasses the attributes of the migrants, the groups or nations of their origins, their economic status and available resources, the nation and community in which they reside, and their proficiency in the local language. The concepts of ethnicity and culture are two terms pertinent to acculturation that may necessitate further definition and elucidation.

It is essential to recognize culture, as the term acculturation hints at a transformation in cultural norms. The collective beliefs, symbols, and significances shared by a group of individuals encapsulate the essence of their culture. By juxtaposing the new cultural landscape with the migrant's original heritage, one can gauge the extent of acculturation necessary for adaptation. Typically, culture does not align neatly with nations and their borders.

Another vital element that merits consideration is language. Observations and studies suggest that a common language serves as a cornerstone of national identity, and migrants who converse in a tongue different from that of their new homeland or who find themselves unable to communicate are often perceived as threats to social cohesion. The interplay of language differences, ethnic backgrounds, and cultural similarities profoundly influences the ease or complexity of the acculturation journey.

In the investigation of acculturation, it is imperative to recognize the diverse classifications of migrants under examination. Indeed, the probability of a migrant's successful assimilation may fluctuate depending on the circumstances surrounding their relocation. Four distinct categories of migrants can be identified: sojourners, refugees, asylum seekers, and voluntary immigrants. Voluntary immigrants are individuals who leave their countries of origin in search of employment, improved economic prospects, matrimonial alliances, or familial reunification.

Refugees are individuals who have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to conflicts, persecution, or natural disasters. They are often relocated to other countries through collaborative efforts between international aid organizations and the governments willing to accept them. Asylum seekers are those who proactively seek refuge in a foreign land out of fear for their safety due to violence or oppression. Sojourners, on the other hand, are individuals who migrate to another country for a predetermined duration, to return home once that period concludes.

Conversely, refugees and asylum seekers, along with immigrants hailing from lower socioeconomic strata and those entering unlawfully, may be regarded as encumbrances on the resources of the host nation and are likely to face prejudice. In contrast, voluntary immigrants who are professionals, such as medical doctors or engineers, may find themselves warmly welcomed by their newfound communities. Those immigrants who encounter rejection or discrimination in their new surroundings may struggle to acclimatize and might even resist the adoption of the customs, beliefs, and identities inherent to their host culture.

Furthermore, it is conceivable that refugees and asylum seekers have experienced substantial trauma in their countries of origin, which may impede their ability to adjust within the new environment. It is also plausible that even the offspring of ethnic minority migrants will not be fully accepted as integral members of the receiving society, indicating that discrimination and the pressures associated with acculturation may persist beyond the initial generation.

International migration sociology unveils crucial revelations about the environments into which migrants flow, as the journey of migration is far from arbitrary. In the realm of voluntary migration, which encompasses both immigrants and those seeking asylum, two key forces converge to initiate migration: (a) the longing to escape from one's homeland (the "push") surpasses the inclination to remain, and (b) the host nation yearns for the specific skills and labor that migrants bring. For example, the United States' demand for domestic aides and landscapers has lured a significant influx of undocumented migrants from Mexico and Central America.

Additionally, the demand for specific professions, such as computer scientists in Silicon Valley or agricultural laborers in the Southeastern United States, may influence the selection of migrant groups to settle in specific regions within the host nation. In certain instances, nations may even find themselves competing for specialized migrants such as engineers, scientists, and medical professionals, while immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees possessing lower socioeconomic and educational backgrounds often contend with the challenge of locating countries willing to accept them.

As previously mentioned, another critical factor influencing the trajectory of acculturation is the cultural and/or ethnic heritage of the newcomers. For example, a public opinion survey conducted in the United States during the early 2000s revealed that native-born Americans tended to harbor less favorable perceptions of Hispanic migrants compared to those from other ethnic backgrounds, while migrants from Europe and Canada, predominantly White, were viewed more positively. An additional survey conducted across various Western nations also underscored that ethnic minority migrants are generally regarded with less favor than their White counterparts. It comes as no surprise that migrants hailing from ethnic minority groups may confront (or sense) prejudice and animosity from the local populace in many nations that accept them, more so than White immigrants. Perhaps not coincidentally, White individuals in the United States have persistently reaped economic benefits over other ethnic communities, even as minority populations have surged. Additionally, disparities in health outcomes have endured between Whites and other ethnic groups regarding various health challenges, including substance abuse, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and HIV/AIDS.

Reactive ethnicity encapsulates the response to discrimination faced by migrants, particularly those belonging to ethnic minority groups. This phenomenon denotes a resistance to merging with the dominant culture, resulting in a stronger attachment to one's cultural roots. In simpler terms, prejudice often catalyzes the segregation of ethnic minority migrants from the mainstream culture upon their arrival. While certain exceptions and irregularities may emerge, the patterns and correlations inherent in acculturative processes have been consistently documented in the scholarly literature concerning acculturation across various host nations. Consequently, prudence is advisable when generalizing the acculturation trends observed in the United States to other nations that have received migrants. The narratives of immigration to the United States must be intricately interwoven with the understanding of migration trends among the myriad ethnic communities residing within its borders. As English-speaking Europeans established the foundations of the United States, the cultural fabric and ideologies of Great Britain have profoundly influenced many of the nation's enduring customs. Since the inception of the original British colonies, the United States has served as a beacon for successive waves of immigrants originating from every corner of the globe. The initial influx occurred during the mid-18th century, followed by a wave of Germans and Scandinavians in the late 1700s and early 1800s, succeeded by an influx of Southern and Eastern Europeans in the latter years of the 19th century and the early 20th century, culminating in the "new" wave of immigration that emerged in 1965 when stringent quotas were rescinded. The frosty reception from the native populace towards each new influx of newcomers underscores that the prejudice against those perceived as divergent from the mainstream is a

narrative as ancient as time itself. In Boston, Irish immigrants endured social ostracism during the 18th and 19th centuries amidst a predominantly British-descended populace. Roosevelt, during his presidency, issued stern warnings to German-speaking immigrants, emphasizing the imperative to adopt the language. Polish, Italian, and Jewish newcomers faced significant discrimination and were regarded as unassimilable during the tumultuous period of World War I. Nevertheless, the descendants of these waves of immigration began to integrate seamlessly into the American societal framework, resulting in a gradual diminishing of ethnic distinctions following the first generation.
Upon arriving in the US or other Western realms, immigrants from non-European backgrounds often grapple with reconciling their rich heritage. Individuals from nations like India and other Asian territories, where a singular ethnic group dominates, may find themselves unexpectedly cast into the realm of ethnic minorities. The term "Hispanic" serves as another illustration; coined by the US Census to categorize individuals of Latin American descent who speak Spanish, it is seldom embraced within those very regions. In truth, individuals from diverse nations are often grouped under a singular label, treated as a monolithic entity. As a result, new arrivals from South America are propelled into the intricate endeavor of defining their interpretation of what it means to be Hispanic.
Theories surrounding racial and ethnic identity may illuminate the struggles faced by people of color navigating their newfound roles as members of minority groups. Through encounters with discrimination, the migrant becomes acutely aware of their identity as part of a marginalized group, often perceived as undesirable, inferior, or unjustly stereotyped by the host society. Thus, the quest for migrants of color becomes one of seeking acceptance in a society that may never wholly embrace them.

4. Acculturation- assumption and application

Beyond the parallels in ethnicity and culture, a plethora of other factors may sway which immigrant clusters are inclined to face specific forms of acculturative challenges. Although numerous combinations of factors shape the degree of acculturative transformation a migrant might experience, we can pinpoint a few overarching patterns here.
To commence, in contrast to individuals who migrate later in life, youthful migrants exhibit a markedly greater propensity to swiftly and seamlessly assimilate the customs, values, and identities of the host culture. The "1.5 generation" of migrants comprises individuals who arrive as young children and, in numerous respects, align more closely with second-generation migrants (those born in the host country to foreign parents) than with those who migrate as adults or adolescents. Those who journey as toddlers may lack vivid recollections of life before migration, in stark contrast to those who transition as adults or teenagers.
Subsequently, adult migrants, particularly those who arrive as older individuals, may encounter the most significant challenges in assimilating into the customs, identities, and values of the new culture. The most recent wave of migrants (especially those who entered as adults) likely retains the most direct connections to their countries of origin, which can influence their approach to interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds as well as with the host culture. Their distinct foreign accents or inability to communicate proficiently in the language of the host nation may underscore their immigrant status, thereby potentially inviting bias and contempt from native-born residents.
Numerous individuals within the receiving society may regard it as disrespectful when migrants decline or struggle to master the language of the country or region to which they have relocated. This form of prejudice can at times be correlated with persistent health concerns such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and cerebrovascular accidents.

5. Contra acculturation- multidimensionality

There exists a rich tapestry of literature exploring the cultural practices (the nuances of language use, favored media, social connections, and cherished traditions), cultural values (the belief systems that define specific communities, emphasizing either individualism or collectivism), and cultural identifications (the bonds formed with cultural groups and the esteem derived from these affiliations). Acculturation manifests as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, distinguished not solely by the interaction between heritage-culture and receiving-culture orientations but also by the myriad components anticipated to develop. The integration of the diverse bodies of literature about cultural practices, values, and identifications may provide a more comprehensive understanding of acculturation, considering that these three constructs are intricately interconnected both in conceptual and empirical terms. While it's accurate that certain research inquiries, like analyzing patterns of language use, may necessitate a focus on a singular acculturation domain, we argue that in such instances, the subject of analysis represents merely a fragment of the whole. The concepts in these instances should be aptly defined, using terms such as "identity-based acculturation," "behavioral acculturation," or "value acculturation." In the realm of acculturation literature, the spotlight has predominantly shone on behavioral acculturation [15], capturing the essence of numerous studies. Most of the widely utilized measures of acculturation are heavily (if not solely) focused on assessing language use and various cultural behaviors. Nevertheless, cultural practices could serve as a reasonable proxy for gauging cultural adaptability. Despite holding a robust sense of allegiance to their familial roots and numerous cultural values, many Asian American adolescents within the study demonstrated a lack of proficiency in their ancestral languages.
Relying solely on language use as a measure may present a skewed depiction of acculturation, as evidenced by numerous Hispanic adolescents who, despite minimal Spanish proficiency, strongly resonated with items that reflect Hispanic ethnic identity. In a similar vein, language use accounted for less than 20% of the variability observed in behavioral and value-based measures of acculturation. This phenomenon has been termed the context of reception by sociologists and anthropologists. A primary source of stress for immigrants is believed to stem from their perceptions of a negative context of reception, coupled with experiences of discrimination. However, the effects of the actual or perceived context of welcome on the psychosocial well-being and health outcomes of immigrants remain largely unexplored. As previously highlighted, research suggests that immigrants' perceptions of discrimination may adversely impact their physical and mental health, as well as hinder their efforts to integrate into their new cultural surroundings.
Clinical and epidemiological inquiries [16] into acculturation and migrant health remain largely disconnected from social psychological investigations regarding the disparities between immigrants and the receiving society, as well as the receptiveness towards migrants. To conduct a comprehensive examination of the interrelationship between the dynamics of international migration and the process of acculturation, as well as the psychosocial and health ramifications for migrants, it is imperative to adopt a holistic methodology that incorporates the expertise of social and cultural psychologists, health psychologists, and epidemiologists (17 and 18). One intriguing hypothesis suggests that those immigrants hailing from ethnic, religious, or national backgrounds viewed unfavorably may encounter heightened discrimination compared to their counterparts from more accepted groups [19]. Nevertheless, the extent to which a migrant's beliefs, practices, and identity resonate with or stray from what local and national societies deem most fitting for newcomers can either soften or intensify the discrimination they may face or sense. As outlined in sociological and anthropological studies, being pushed into impoverished and hazardous

neighborhoods is merely one facet of an unwelcoming reception environment, alongside bias and limited access to employment and essential social services (20). Moreover, unlike voluntary immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees typically emerge from lower socioeconomic strata and are less likely to have established support systems in their new environments (like family and friends). These variables may exacerbate the stress and hurdles associated with acculturation. below Figure 1 shows the Dimensions of Contra-Acculturation (Venn Diagram).

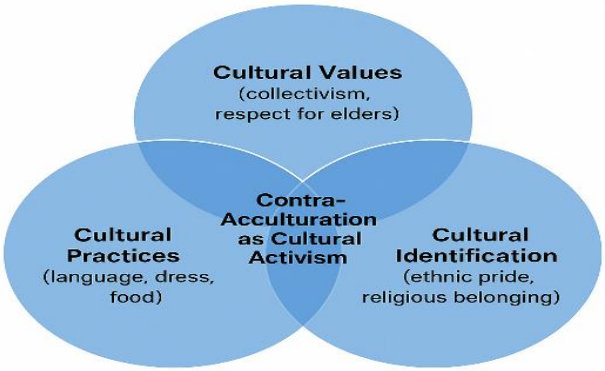

Fig. 1: Dimensions of Contra-Acculturation (Venn Diagram).

Broadly speaking, how context shapes various social and developmental dynamics can be similarly applied to the effects of the reception environment on acculturation. In simpler terms, migrants and their communities react differently based on both local and distant settings, and there exists a certain level of compatibility or discord between the individual and their surrounding environment. This assertion aligns with social-psychological findings that indicate the amount of discrimination, stress, and hostility immigrants encounter during their integration process is partly contingent upon how well or poorly their acculturation strategies align with the expectations of those in the welcoming society. The concept of goodness-of-fit serves as a measure of the perceived reception atmosphere.

It is equally vital to acknowledge that different areas within a single country can exhibit dramatically diverse reception contexts, which may yield varying pressures and support mechanisms. A significant proportion of the population in major cities is constituted by migrants. These urban centers boast a rich history of embracing newcomers. Such co-ethnic communities may occasionally act as vital support systems. However, more rural or culturally homogenous regions may lean more towards an "American" identity, imposing stronger expectations to adhere to traditional cultural practices. Simultaneously, the existence of a considerable heritage-culture community may introduce acculturative stressors, thereby dissuading the migrant from wholly adopting the cultural dynamics of the host society. It is also imperative to acknowledge that reception circumstances are not immutable but evolve. Consider New York, for instance, where the Jewish and Italian influences are now celebrated and recognized, although this was not always the prevailing situation. Indeed, numerous Italian and Jewish immigrants who arrived in New York during the late 19th and early 20th centuries encountered animosity and were regarded as unassimilable. Although Puerto Ricans who migrated to New York during the vibrant decades of the 1950s and 1960s faced severe discrimination, the metropolis has since transformed into a significantly more welcoming sanctuary for Hispanic newcomers. Global events, nonetheless, possess the capacity to affect local attitudes and reception environments. For example, in the wake of the tragedies of September 11, 2001, migrants from the Middle East in both the United States and Europe have experienced increased animosity compared to earlier periods [21].

Beyond the US context, contra-acculturation manifests globally. Syrian refugee communities in Germany have established heritage language schools, intentionally preserving Arabic linguistic traditions despite assimilation pressures (Khalil, 2019). Similarly, South Asian migrants in the UK actively organize cultural festivals that celebrate ancestral identities, serving as platforms for cultural dissent (Patel, 2021). Indigenous migrant groups have also employed art and language revitalization programs to assert their distinct cultural identities, challenging dominant narratives and fostering community resilience. Given that the process of acculturation is intricately intertwined with the context of reception, it becomes imperative to investigate the complex interplay between acculturation and the surrounding environment, as it provides critical insights into forecasting the psychosocial and health implications for immigrants and their immediate descendants. Like discrimination, the reception context manifests itself as both a subjective and objective domain; however, the connections between individual experiences and health and psychosocial outcomes resonate with greater significance. It is essential to establish reliable metrics to assess both perceived and tangible contexts of reception. Furthermore, it is vital to scrutinize the congruence or discord between the perceptions of the host society regarding the reception experience and the migrants' interpretations of their circumstances. Routine behaviors exhibited by the receiving society (such as unneighborly conduct) and acts of discrimination that may go unnoticed by the dominant culture could be perceived as discriminatory by the migrants themselves [22].

The assistance that migrants receive from the local community constitutes yet another crucial component in fostering a hospitable environment. When newcomers are greeted with encouragement, inspiration, and concrete resources for support, they frequently find themselves in an optimal position to assimilate into the societal fabric. Immigrant children and adolescents, including refugees or those whose families are in pursuit of asylum, may attain academic success when they receive guidance, mentorship, respect, and care from individuals outside their immediate familial network. Such support can act as a salve, mitigating the harsh impacts of prejudice and feelings of unwelcomeness within the broader society [23]. Figure 2 below shows the Psychological Impact of Reception Context.

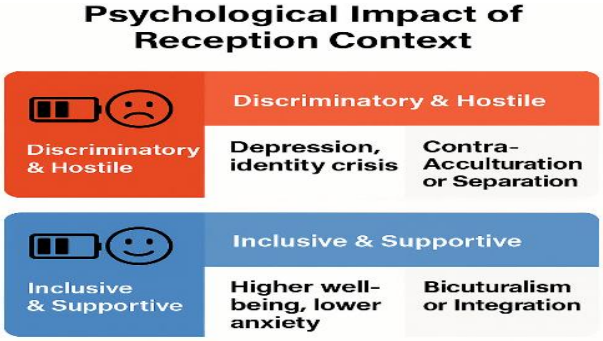

Fig. 2: Psychological Impact of Reception Context.

6. Analysis and discussion

This section presents an analytical framework to distinguish between acculturation and contra-acculturation, using tables, figures, and thematic interpretations. The aim is to showcase how contra-acculturation, as a form of cultural activism, functions as a response to socio-political pressures and cultural hegemony. Table I shows the Acculturation vs. Contra-Acculturation

Table 1: Comparative Table: Acculturation vs. Contra-Acculturation

Dimension	Acculturation	Contra-Acculturation
Directionality	Adaptive (toward host culture)	Resistant (rejects dominant culture)
Goal	Cultural integration	Cultural preservation/dissent
Agency	Often passive/assimilative	Proactive and activist-oriented
Outcome	Identity fusion or marginalization	Identity reinforcement
Associated Strategy	Integration, Assimilation	Separation, Marginalization (redefined)
Example	Learning the host language and customs	Reviving indigenous languages and customs

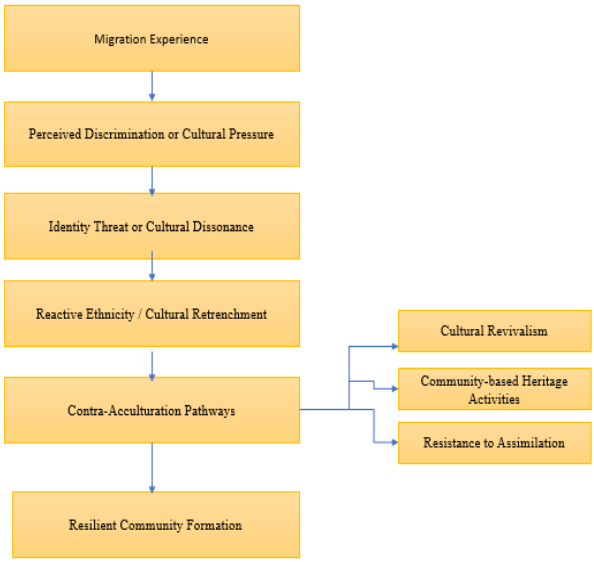

Fig. 3: Conceptual Model of Contra-Acculturation as Cultural Activism

Table 2: Thematic Analysis: Patterns in Contra-Acculturation

Theme	Description	Example
Cultural Retrenchment	Renewed interest in ancestral customs	African American youth embracing natural hairstyles
Linguistic Resistance	Preservation or revival of the native language	Local community schools offering native language education
Art-based Dissent	Artistic forms used to challenge cultural norms	Street graffiti and traditional performances protesting assimilation
Religious Anchoring	Intensified commitment to spiritual heritage	Community mosques and temples as identity anchors
Diasporic Networking	Forming and sustaining ethnic support systems	Diaspora festivals reinforcing transnational ties

5.1. Case snapshot: Mexican American youth activism in California

In California, second-generation Mexican-American youths are spearheading cultural resistance movements through bilingual theater, muralism, and poetry. These art forms articulate collective memory and critique cultural erasure, thereby serving as expressions of contra-acculturation. Rather than assimilating silently, these youth assert their hybrid identities by celebrating indigenous heritage in public spaces [24]. Figure 3 shows the Conceptual Model of Contra-Acculturation as Cultural Activism.

5.2. Implications

The analysis reveals that contra-acculturation is not a passive failure to acculturate but an empowered stance of dissent. It is deeply tied to cultural resilience, political agency, and identity politics. Policy frameworks and academic models must consider these alternative trajectories to ensure inclusive discourse around migrant adaptation and well-being [25].

7. Conclusion

This study redefines contra-acculturation as a critical and empowered response to dominant cultural imposition, positioning it not as a passive deviation from integration but as a deliberate and activist-driven assertion of identity. By interrogating conventional acculturation models—particularly Berry's bidimensional framework—this paper introduces contra-acculturation as a form of cultural dissent rooted in resilience, community agency, and the refusal to conform to assimilationist pressures. Through theoretical exploration, comparative analysis, and conceptual modeling, the study demonstrates how marginalized groups—especially migrants and ethnic minorities—utilize cultural practices, values, and identifications to challenge exclusion and foster belonging on their terms. Future research should explore contra-acculturation in non-Western host countries to understand how differing socio-political environments shape cultural resistance strategies. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the impact of contra-acculturation on second-generation migrants' identity development and well-being are warranted. Mixed-methods approaches could further validate the psychosocial and health outcomes linked to these processes.

8. Declarations

Data Availability Statement: Not Applicable.
Competing Interests and Funding: The authors did not receive support from any organization for the submitted work.
Human Participants and/or Animals: Not applicable
Conflict of Interest: The authors have expressed no conflict of interest.

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