

Acculturation at Group and Individual Levels

At the group level, acculturation entails the widespread adoption of the values, practices, forms of art, and technologies of another culture. These can range from the adoption of ideas, beliefs, and ideology to the large-scale inclusion of foods and styles of cuisines from other cultures. For example, the embrace of Mexican, Chinese, and Indian cuisines within the U.S. This includes the simultaneous adoption of mainstream American foods and meals by immigrant populations. Acculturation at the group level can also entail the cultural exchange of clothing and fashions, and of language. This happens when immigrant groups learn and adopt the language of their new home, or when certain phrases and words from a foreign language make their way into common usage. Sometimes, leaders within a culture make a conscious decision to adopt the technologies or practices of another for reasons associated with efficiency and progress.

At the individual level, acculturation may involve all the same things that occur at the group level, but the motives and circumstances may differ. For example, people who travel to foreign lands where the culture differs from their own, and who spend extended periods of time there, are likely to engage in the process of acculturation, whether intentionally or not, in order to learn and experience new things, enjoy their stay, and reduce the social friction that can arise from cultural differences.

Similarly, first-generation immigrants often consciously engage in the process of acculturation as they settle into their new community in order to succeed socially and economically. In fact, immigrants are often compelled by law to acculturate in many places, with requirements to learn the language and the laws of society, and in some cases, with new laws that govern dress and covering of the body. People who move between social classes and the separate and different spaces they

inhabit also often experience acculturation on both voluntary and required basis. This is the case for many first-generation college students who suddenly find themselves among peers who have been socialized already to understand the norms and culture of higher education, or for students from poor and working-class families who find themselves surrounded by wealthy peers at well-funded private colleges and universities.