

American Migrants in Australia: An Exploratory Study of Adjustment

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In the literature on American migration to Australia, there is a debate concerning the ease and degree of post-migration social-psychological adjustment. In this paper a model of migrant adjustment is derived from the literature; relationships among social psychological measures of adjustment (alienation, work orientations, amicability, isolation, and missing family and friends) and socio-demographic variables are analyzed using path analysis. Results tend to support a complex view of migrant adjustment based on differences in socio-demographic characteristics. Certain modifications to existing literature are recommended, and avenues for further research are suggested.

Since World War II more than 60,000 Americans have emigrated to Australia. According to the 1971 Australian census, more than 30,000 Americans were residents; a decade earlier there had been fewer than 11,000. With this increasing American presence in Australia a small but growing literature on American migrants has developed (Dept. of Immigration, 1969, 1971; Lett, 1975; Lett and Pederson, 1977; DeAmicis, 1976; Cuddy, 1977; Phillips, 1977; Bardo and Bardo, 1981, 1980). Within this literature there are currently two dominant themes: the first concerns work orientations and adaptations of American teachers; the second concerns post-migration adjustment of American migrants. The current paper involves a test of a model of socio-demographic and social-psychological causes of differentials in the difficulty of post-migration adjustment. On the basis of sample data drawn from the Melbourne metropolitan area it will be argued that there are systematic variations in the degree of adjustment related to migrant characteristics such as age, sex, socio-economic status (as measured by educational attainment), and length of residence. Although these findings tend to support general theories concerning social-psychological adaptations to migration, they do lead to certain modifications in expected causes of these patterns.

CURRENT STATE OF THE LITERATURE

In 1969 and 1971, the Australian Department of Immigration conducted surveys of 129 "assisted passage" migrants. The purpose of these surveys was to gain some understanding of how satisfied or dissatisfied Americans were with Australia. In another study, Lett (1975) analyzed the adjustment of American "new school teachers" in Victoria compared to their Australian counterparts. Several other studies (DeAmicis, 1976; Cuddy, 1977; Phillips, 1977; Bardo and Bardo, 1981) are more comprehensive. They attempt to deal with multiple aspects of the American decision to move to Australia, adjustments made, and life orientations. There are, however, major differences in some conclusions reached in these studies.

Cuddy (1977), through a mail survey of 200 American residents in Australia, concludes that most Americans migrate to escape social problems and conditions in the U. S. They are fleeing crime, pollution, the fast pace of life, or searching for an America that existed 20 years ago. Upon arrival in Australia, Cuddy believes, Americans face few settling-in problems, and they easily become part of the Australian scene. DeAmicis (1976), from interviews with 50 Americans, does not accept the common, what he terms simplistic, notion of escape. Instead, he views migration as a series of commitments by which the individual changes and shifts with time. Original commitments that brought people to Australia are not the same as those that keep them there. For many Americans, according to DeAmicis, the original decision to settle in Australia evolves from a desire to do something or see something different; others go to Australia for specific purposes or plan to stay only a specific period of time; and others go to Australia

with "semi-open-ended" commitments. For this last group, moving to Australia satisfies a desire for adventure, relief of boredom, or satisfaction of their curiosity. He stresses, however, that these original motives change over time. Through the process of making "side bets" in their jobs, family lives, and other activities, Americans become committed to life in Australia. They do not usually make a decision to migrate - it just happens.

Phillips (1977) and Bardo and Bardo (1980, 1981) take somewhat different positions from those argued by Cuddy and De Amicis. They tend to accept that Americans undergo a progressive commitment process but that this process is not without conflict for the individual.

Through observation and interviews in the Sydney metropolitan area, Phillips concluded that severe adjustment problems can develop for Americans, especially concerning norms of interaction, cultural expectations, and missing of relatives. The sources of these problems, Phillips believes, are in the complexities of differences between Australian and American societies.

The point is that the United States and Australia, despite certain obvious historical and cultural similarities, are in fact two quite different societies. When they reach Australia most American migrants are a relatively privileged group with clear advantages derived from their relative affluence, education, skills and command of the language. But they are underprivileged and on dangerous ground when it comes to their preconceptions about life in Australia. Many of them arrive expecting a "little America down under" and most of their initial impressions confirm this view. Gradually, as they begin to realize the enormous and highly complex differences between the two societies, they often develop a sense of betrayal, as if Australia had somehow let them down. (Phillips, 1977: 1-2).

Bardo and Bardo (1981) further elaborate the effects of societal differences on the individual. On the basis of 60 in-depth interviews and extensive participant observation in the Melbourne metropolitan area, they argued that there are patterned variations in the degree to which migrants experience adjustment difficulties. These variations are seen as being a consequence of differences in expectations, roles, life situation (based on socio-economic status), sex, and length of residence. Americans who move to Australia are settlers rather than migrants. They do not possess a true "migrant orientation" (i.e., make the decision to move permanently to Australia) and only over time do they make the commitments that render their remigration unlikely. This changing of cultures and commitment process takes place, not in an emotional and experiential void, but within a matrix of social relationships and previous socialization. Social relations with individuals both in Australia and the United States are seen as associated with adjustment. Americans may, at times, find interacting with Australians difficult, they may be subject to some interpersonal discrimination, and they may feel isolated. A tendency was also identified for Americans to retain some ties (through role expectations) with significant others who remain in the United States (especially family and friends) and for there to be some degree of emotional longing for those individuals. Variations in these feelings of "missing family and friends" were found to be related to such social structural and demographic variables as length of residence, sex, and age of respondent.

A second major source of variation in adjustment was associated with the cluster of variables surrounding socio-economic status and work orientations. Because of Australian occupational structures, it tends to be easier for American white-collar and professional workers to be accepted in their occupations than for blue-collar workers. (American occupational credentials of white-collar workers are more readily accepted, while systemic differences make acceptance more difficult in the blue-collar trades.)

Aside from general acceptance within one's occupation, differences in work orientations are also described. Particularly significant to American migrants are norms governing strikes and work stoppages as well as on-the-job norms that fall under the rubric "she'll be right mate", and "give me a fair go." Many

Americans found these norms to be particularly troublesome sources of personal conflict that affected their adaptation to life in Australia.

Taking the variables identified by Phillips and Bardo and Bardo, it is possible to derive a schematic representation of expected relationships in a more clear and testable manner; these relationships are reproduced in Figure 1. The degree of adjustment to life in Australia (operationalized here as alienation) is defined as a direct consequence of socio-economic status (measured here by education and occupation), sex, age, and length of residence. Intervening between these socio-demographic variables and alienation from life in Australia are four other attitudinal dimensions. Work orientation is the attitudinal referent through which socio-economic status (education and occupation) affects alienation, while education can also be expected to affect normative orientations and adaptability, thereby affecting perceptions of Australian amicability. Perceptions of amicability are also defined as consequences of the degree of missing family and friends who remained in the United States (through its impact on one's own openness to these relationships), sex of respondent, and length of residence. Indirectly age of respondent is also defined as a cause of perceptions of amicability through its effect on the degree of missing relatives. Perceptions of amicability, the degree of missing relatives, and length of residence are also seen as causes of feelings of individual isolation which, in turn, affect one's overall adjustment. In this model all paths are predicted to be positive. The remainder of this paper will involve a test of this theoretical model employing the technique of path analysis.

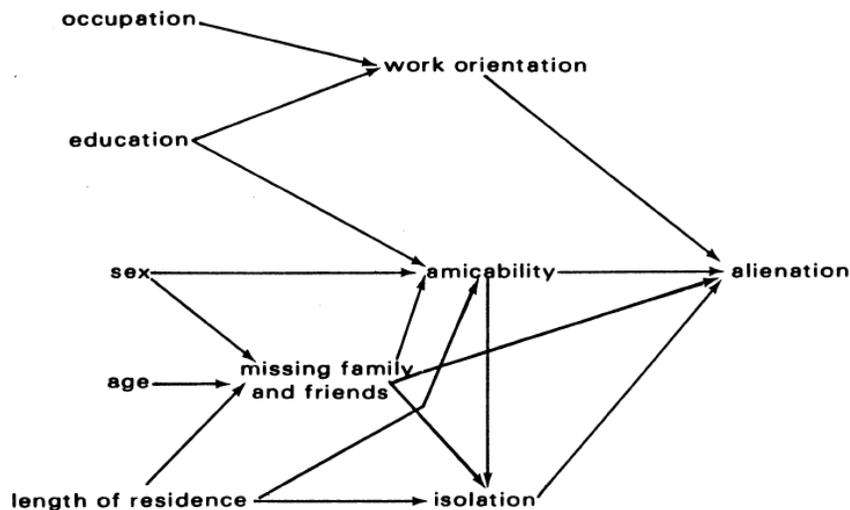


Figure 1: Theoretical Path Diagram

METHODS

Sample

A sample of 115 American residents of the Melbourne metropolitan area were administered a questionnaire containing attitude items and a socio-demographic section. Because no central register of Americans was available, and because Americans do not live in enclaves in Australian cities, it was necessary to obtain an opportunistic sample. To maximize diversity within the sample, respondents were contacted through a number of sources including a radio announcement, attendance at American-oriented events and club meetings, word-of-mouth, facilities that Americans might frequent, and the sample that resulted was 65 percent male and largely white-collar business people, professionals, and

teachers. (Although a large number of teachers were contacted, only nine were included in this sample.) Special efforts were also made to contact blue-collar workers (a group under-represented in previous studies); 17 were included. Ages ranged from under 20 to about 70, with modal categories between 20-29 and 50-59. Median income for the sample was in the category \$10-15,000; very few respondents reported incomes of less than \$5,000 or more than \$20,000. Seventy percent of the respondents were married.

OPERATIONALIZATION

All attitude items in the questionnaire were in a Likert format with a standard five position response code ("strongly agree", "agree", "undecided", "disagree", "strongly disagree"). Among the items were two scales that will be used in the current analysis: a 29-item General Satisfaction with Life in Australia Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$) and a 17-item Australia Amicability Scale ($\alpha = .89$). The general scale was factor analyzed to oblique simple structure (Gorsuch, 1974) to determine sub-domains of satisfaction (Nunnally, 1967); a solution with six factors resulted. Four of the factors (Degree of Isolation, Degree of Missing Family and Friends, Degree of Alienation, and Work Orientation) proved conceptually consistent with this present study and were used to construct dimensional indexes.¹

Indexes were constructed by summing responses for each individual on items that loaded $\geq .40$ on each factor. The Index of Missing Family and friends consists of four items ($\bar{X} = 2.66$); the Index of Alienation has five items ($\bar{X} = 3.34$), the Index of Work Orientations is made up of three items ($\bar{X} = 3.40$); and the Index of Isolation has three items ($\bar{X} = 3.63$). The Amicability Scale mean is 3.85. To assure statistical independence, no item was used on more than one index. Relationships among these social psychological measures and socio-demographic variables were then analyzed using path analysis (Duncan, 1966).

Table 1. Correlation Matrix

	Alienation	Work Orientation	Amicability	Isolation	Occupation	Education	Missing Family Friends	Sex	Age	Length of residence
Alienation										
Work Orientation	.61									
Amicability	.59*	.52*								
Isolation	.27*	.40	.61*							
Occupation	.09	.02	.04	.04						
Education	-.04	.17*	.17*	-.18*	.14					
Missing Family Friends	.37*	.34	.29*	.37*	.01	-.12				
Sex	.10	.07	.10	-.04	.23*	-.06	.20*			
Age	.21*	.39*	.18	.30*	-.04*	-.25*	.25*	-.38*		
Length of Residence	.22*	.36*	.25*	.32*	-.18*	.48	.18*	.33*	.67*	

*Significant at p less an .05

RESULTS

Figure 2 contains the path coefficients generated by analysis of the data from the sample of Americans in accordance with the predicted path model. In this figure all coefficients are reproduced regardless of statistical significance. Although the relationships found were generally supportive of the theory tested, some major modifications were indicated.

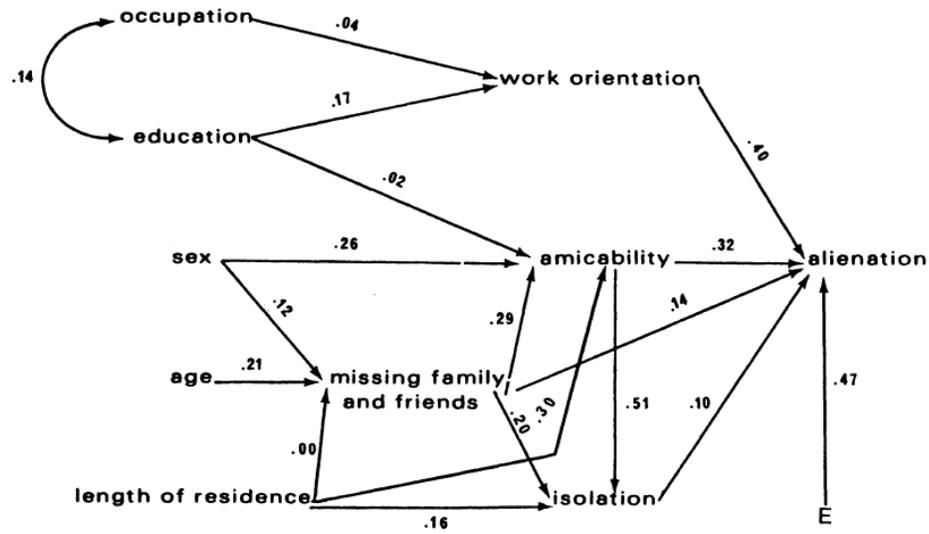


Figure 2: Path Coefficients for Theoretical Diagram

Starting with the social status dimension, it can be seen that the link between education and specific occupational category was not as strong as expected. This is partly an artifact of the homogeneity of the data set's distribution of occupational statuses, although this distribution is consistent with the actual distribution of American migrants' occupations (Simon, 1975). When effects of education are controlled there is no improvement in the relationship between occupation and the Index of Work Orientation; similarly, there is no change in the correlation between education and Work Orientation, controlling for occupation ($r = .17$, $p = .17$). The expected relationship between Work Orientation and the Index of Alienation is strong ($p = .40$), even when the effects of perceptions of amicability, degree of missing relatives, and degree of isolation are controlled.

The expected link between education and the Index of Amicability did not materialize, although all other predicted paths were significant.² The apparent relationship between education and amicability at the zero order ($r = .17$) was spurious, disappearing when sex, age, and degree of missing relatives were controlled. The expected relationship between the Index of Amicability and the Index of Alienation remained significant ($p = .32$) although it was somewhat less than indicated at the zero order ($r = .59$).

Anticipated relationships of alienation with two of the social-psychological variables, Index of Missing Relatives ($r = .37$) and the Index of Isolation ($r = .27$) failed to materialize when effects of other variables were controlled; however, the Index of Missing Relatives ($r = .37$) and the Index of Amicability ($r = .61$) were both found to be significant predictors of isolation, as was length of residence ($r = .32$, $p = .16$). The relationship between the Index of Missing Relatives and Length of Residence ($r = .18$) did not remain significant; the only antecedent variable empirically identified for the Index of Missing Relatives was age of respondent ($r = .25$, $p = .21$).

Overall, variables included in this model were reasonable predictors of the consequent variable ($R^2 = .53$), but there were so many insignificant paths that restructuring of the model was indicated. Therefore, insignificant paths were deleted from the model and path coefficients were again calculated. The results are reproduced in Figure 3.

Although the revised model accounted for slightly less variance in the original consequent variable, Index of Alienation ($R^2 = .52$), it provides a more accurate representation of relationships for this

sample. In this instance, isolation and alienation appear to be two nearly orthogonal constructs, both of which are a consequence of a partly overlapping variable set.

In this modified diagram education is the only antecedent variable for work orientations ($r = p = .17$), and the relationship between work orientation and alienation remains effectively unchanged ($p = .41$). The Index of Amicability's effect on the Index of Alienation is increased slightly ($p = .37$), but its magnitude is in the same general range as in the original model. Similar results were found for both length of residence's ($p = .28$) and Index of Missing Family's ($p = .29$) effects on the Index of Amicability. Approaching the model from the Index of Isolation, all paths in the original analysis remained significant, so no changes in prediction were encountered.

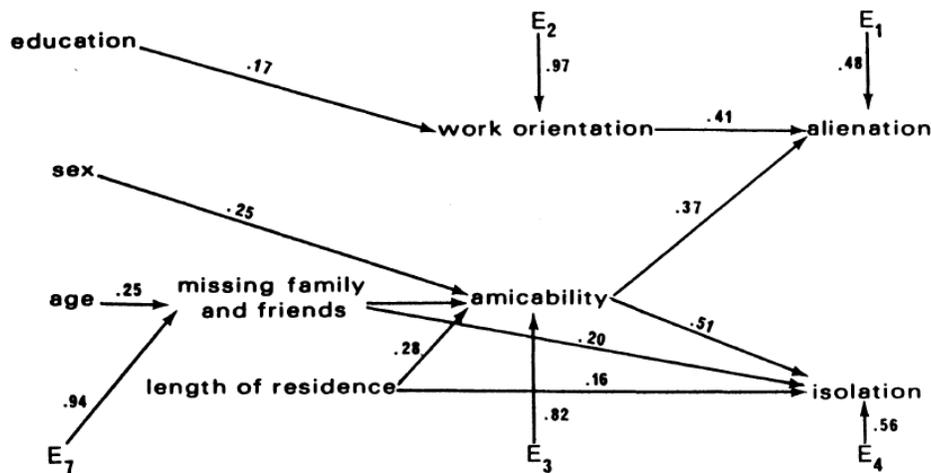


Figure 3: Empirically Modified Path Diagram

DISCUSSION

Although any conclusions based on a non-probability sample must be considered tentative, the data tend to support the position that adjustment of American migrants in Australia is a complex social-psychological process involving several dimensions of adjustment: alienation, degree of isolation, compatibility of work orientations, perceptions of Australian amicability, and the degree of missing family and friends who remained in the U. S. Because of the complexity of these social psychological dimensions, the data also suggest that it is misleading to think in terms of a unitary "adjustment" process. Instead, there are at least several types of adjustments to be made.

When migrating to Australia, Americans (and other migrant groups) face not only the reality of having to interact in a new and different physical location but also in a culture where norms governing relationships and interactions are not exactly in the form expected. It would be anticipated (and the data bear out) that norms governing different aspects of life might vary in their degree of difference from expectations based on previous experience. Similarly, the degree of conflict for the individual that results from these normative differences would also be expected to vary according to the significance of the aspect in his/her life as well as the magnitude of divergence. Thus, it would be likely that migrants would adjust differently to various spheres of life. The final path model provides an example of one possible form of "differential adjustment." Logically, one's degree of alienation could be quite high while one might not experience a great sense of isolation. One could be accepted, have friends, and engage in satisfying interaction, yet still feel alienated from life in Australia: e.g., one's friends could be other migrants like oneself, and psychological integration with other components of Australian society would be minimal.

Not only are migrants being integrated into complex life situations, but they are leaving behind individuals who have been significant others in their lives and with whom they may share affective bonds. As Maines (1978) shows, physical migration does not require complete severance of previous social networks, though it does modify them. Since personal ties to these networks of significant others are governed by norms that vary in their scope, intensity, and emotional immediacy, it would be expected that one's ability to adapt to modifications in these relationships would also affect how one "adjusts" to the new life situation. This, too, is supported by the data; the degree to which one misses family and friends who did not migrate is related to perceptions of amicability and isolation and directly and indirectly to feelings of alienation.

What this path model represents, in part, is the complex nature of migrant adjustments, even for a relatively advantaged migrant group such as Americans. It also highlights some major consistent social structural variations in the degree to which these adjustments occur. The most important of these variables are social status, sex roles, and age related roles. (Length of residence is more related to social process than structure, but it is also significant.)

From a migrant policy perspective what these systematic variations indicate is that it would be impossible to provide programs to aid American migrants who are having difficulty adjusting. Australian migrant assistance programs are addressed mainly at Eastern and Southern Europeans and others who are not native English speakers or do not have urban industrial skills. While the needs of these large migrant groups are indeed great, social psychological adjustments require other migrants, such as the Americans and, most likely, British and Irish, should not be ignored. After all, most American immigrants bring with them training and skills that could be used within the Australian productive system. Currently, Americans have one of the highest out-migration rates of any immigrant group, so many of these skills are being lost. Recognition of socio-psychological problems associated with migration and development of resources to deal with those problems could aid in retention of some individuals.

One socio-demographic variable not included in the above discussion was age of the respondent. Age is an indicator of both social structure (age stratification) and social process. In this data set, age is moderately correlated to length of residence ($r = .67$), so multicollinearity does not seem to be a problem. In this analysis the correlation between these two variables was left undefined to reflect their semi-independent nature. That is, both age of respondent and length of residence were expected to separately relate to dimensions of adjustment; the final path analysis supported this proposition.

Finally, while the data support a complex view of migrant adjustment, they do indicate several possible modifications of this position. The final path model contained two largely uncorrelated consequent variables, and several expected relationships among antecedent variables proved to be insignificant. Partly, these variations reflect differences between quantitative techniques employed here and qualitative techniques used previously. (Path coefficients are partial betas which specify the manner in which variance is explained, while qualitative research designs do not allow easy recognition of dual accounting of variability.) But the differences in results to some extent reflect some variation in theory. This analysis suggests that migrants face many adjustments in various spheres of life. Their adaptation to any one condition or life situation may be quite different from adjustments to other conditions. It remains for future research to continue delineating the nature of adjustments required of migrants and to explicate specific relationships among the various dimensions.

FOOTNOTES

1. The two other dimensions, Cultural Expectations and Crime Orientation, are also conceptually related to this study; however, there was item overlap between Cultural Expectations and Work Orientations, so Cultural Expectations was eliminated. The crime dimension, although theoretically interesting, was not covered in previous discussions and was therefore eliminated. (Items included in these indexes are available from the authors.)
2. Significance is interpreted here to mean that both the F • level for inclusion of the variable in the regression equation was significant and that the b associated with each P had a magnitude of at least twice its own standard error.

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