

## **DIMENSIONS OF ADJUSTMENT FOR AMERICAN SETTLERS IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A general sample of adult American settlers in Melbourne, Australia, (N = 116) was administered a questionnaire containing life satisfaction items and a personal data section. One section of this questionnaire contained a 29-item "Satisfaction with Life in Australia" scale. This scale was factor analyzed using an oblique algorithm; a solution with six factors resulted. Factors dealt with Homeiness and Housing (I), Missing Relatives and Friends in the U.S. (II), Cultural Expectations (III), Work Orientation (IV), Degree of Isolation (V), and General Alienation (VI). Results were discussed in relation to studies on other migrant groups and possible significance of family to American settlers.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since World War II thousands of Americans have emigrated for Australia. Between 1959 and 1975, for instance, over 42,000 American migrants arrived in Australia (Department of Immigration, 1975). While, compared to other groups in Australia's burgeoning migrant population, Americans are numerically few in number, they have major economic significance. Recent research (Simon, 1975) shows Americans to be over-concentrated in the professions and white-collar occupations; American interests also control much of the arable land in the Northern Territory, uranium mining, automobile production, and even a major segment of retail sales ("McDonalds," "K-Mart," "Woolworths," "Safeway," etc.). Even the electronic media reflect the American presence — from a preponderance of prime time television shows produced in the United States to "local talent" drawn from the American expatriot community. Until recently, however, American residents of Australia escaped most scientific interest.

It has been assumed by the scientific community, as well as in the lay literature, that American migrants suffered few problems in adjustment to their new environment. Unlike other migrant groups, Americans were seen as suffering no major social or psychological upheavals in their adjustment to the new life situation, and preliminary studies tended to support this position.

DeAmicis (1976), from his analysis of interviews with Americans in Melbourne, highlights the social-psychological adaptive processes that "commit" the migrants to their new environment. This commitment occurs easily and without psycho-emotional upset. In a similar analysis of interview data, Cuddy (1977) has analyzed migrant lifestyles. Again, it was concluded that migrant adjustment occurred easily. However, more recent research (Bardo and Bardo, 1980) disagrees with these previous studies. Based on interview and participant observation data it is concluded that American migrants do, indeed, suffer social and psychological upheaval as a consequence of migration; the sources of these problems are largely found in differences in role expectations (e.g., sex-roles), perceived anomalies in supposedly equivalent institutions,

normative orientations particularly toward work, exclusion from certain occupations, and isolation from significant others, especially family. It is further argued that differences between the American experience and that of other migrant groups, rests largely on two variables: lack of an overt language barrier and relatively high educational and economic status of American migrants.

As significant as are these differences in theoretical stance and empirical findings, there is a second problem with the scientific literature on American migrants: the vast majority of studies are based on qualitative data; very few studies have employed quantitative techniques. Those that have been completed either concentrate on a specialized population (Lett, 1975) or suffer severe methodological problems (Cuddy, 1977). Cuddy, for instance, using a national sample ( $N = 200$ ) attempts to create "profiles" of Americans who choose to settle in Australia's different states. Aside from sampling problems associated with mail surveys, Cuddy's profiles are based on sub-samples so small as to be meaningless. (Australia is divided into six states and a territory; sub-samples on which profiles were constructed average only 28 subjects.)

The current study will attempt to partly fill this void of quantitative studies by providing preliminary data concerning the nature of American adjustment.

## METHOD

Because there is no central register of migrants in Australia and because Americans do not generally share characteristics that make them visible as migrants, it was not possible to use probability techniques in sample selection. Therefore, a multitude of sources was used to establish contact with Americans in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Respondents were identified through American clubs and organizations, through attendance at cultural events of interest to Americans, through newspaper leads, by word of mouth, in a radio announcement, and by contacting probable employers. These techniques produced a sample of 116 subjects.

In this sample 61.7 percent were males and all respondents were white. Ages ranged from 18 to 70 years with the median age of 36-40. (The sample was somewhat over represented in the older categories.) Of all respondents, 70.4 percent were married and 52 percent had children. The median age of first child was about 13 years, but 20 percent of those respondents with children listed those children as grown. (This is also consistent with the age structure of the sample.) Occupationally, 70 percent of respondents were in households headed by white collar or technical-professional workers which, while somewhat over-representative, is consistent with reported migration patterns (Simon, 1975). Length of residence in Australia varied from several months to 33 years, with a median of 5 years. Only two respondents were no longer American citizens.

Subjects were administered a questionnaire containing several "satisfaction" scales and personal data section. The satisfaction items included such topics as interaction, norms, values, housing, shopping, work, religion, family, and public services. Possible responses to these items were in a fixed, standard, five-position Likert format.

The largest scale, containing 29 items, was "Satisfaction with Life in

Australia" scale (SLA). Item analysis revealed that all items loaded on the scale with an item total correlation of at least .35; tests revealed that the scale was highly reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .92). This scale was subjected to further analysis using an oblique algorithm.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF FACTORS

Eigenvalues were calculated for the correlation matrix. The Scree Test (Cattell, 1966) indicated six factors. An iterative principal axis solution was applied to the correlation matrix until communalities stabilized in the third decimal place. A Kaiser Varimax Orthogonal Rotation (Harman, 1967) was applied to the factor matrix, followed by eight graphical rotations (Burdal, 1977; Cattell and Foster, 1963) and finally a Maxplane clean-up rotation (Cattell and Muerle, 1960), resulting in a 64.5 percent .10 width hyperplane. The resulting factor pattern can be found in Table 1.

Table 1  
Factor Pattern

Item	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1. Australians really help you if you lose your job.	.19	-.09	.07	.46	.13	.03
2. There's nothing going on here to keep teenagers busy.*	-.07	.10	.54	-.08	.12	-.08
3. I miss the old American ways of getting together.	-.07	.32	.08	.06	-.05	.28
4. Americans have a harder time finding a job than do native Australians.*	-.11	-.04	-.13	.60	-.10	.71
5. I wish I lived somewhere else - Australia is just not for me.*	.26	.20	.25	.01	.00	.21
6. It's tough on an American family to live in Australia.*	.09	-.08	-.02	-.01	.09	.51
7. I'd rather have my children marry an American than an Australian.*	.41	-.06	-.06	.23	.07	-.05
8. One problem with living in Australia is that you are so alone.*	-.06	.12	-.09	-.09	.88	.07
9. Australians are so warm, I really don't miss my relatives.	.05	.68	.04	.10	.10	-.06
10. There's always someone to do things with.	.04	-.10	.17	.00	.46	.08
11. Cultural events are very good here.	-.31	-.10	.46	.40	.36	-.04
12. No matter how hard you try, you just can't get ahead here.*	-.05	.05	.04	.07	.12	.38
13. My family feels isolated here.	.18	.05	.03	.14	.47	.02
14. I really miss my old friends from the U.S.*	.13	.69	.07	-.09	-.06	.00
15. My housing in Australia is better than what I had in the U.S.	.51	.01	.06	-.01	-.07	.08
16. Australian values seem right to me.	.07	.11	.73	-.04	-.11	.11
17. I like the Australian ways of doing things.	-.12	-.17	.74	.01	-.09	.41
18. I wouldn't want my children to start acting like Australians.*	.09	-.07	.37	.04	.11	.26
19. I feel very much that I belong here.	.11	.07	.23	.24	.14	.24
20. Most housing lacks important amenities.*	.82	.06	-.08	-.03	-.08	.13
21. It's hard to get used to the housing here.*	.79	.01	.08	-.06	.02	-.02
22. I like the quality of the homes in Australia.	.63	.04	.30	.05	-.23	.23
23. Americans can "get ahead" just as easily as native Australians.	.00	-.05	-.03	.45	.00	.25
24. I miss my family a great deal.*	-.05	.90	-.09	-.07	-.06	-.06
25. Australia is now my home.	.47	.25	.02	.03	-.05	-.12
26. Americans are not discriminated against in obtaining work.	-.00	.04	.08	.49	-.01	.32
27. Many of my relatives are in the U.S., but I don't miss them very much.	-.02	.98	-.02	-.08	-.09	-.01
28. There's just not enough good reasonably priced housing in Australia.*	.04	.09	.18	.06	-.03	.54
29. Australian ways are really strange.*	.01	.04	.04	-.04	.08	.54

\*Items were coded inversely.

Although the data contained a few anomalies, the factors were readily interpretable. Items loading at .35 or higher were included in factor interpretations.

Factor I: Homeiness and Housing

The only unusual item loading on Factor I was "I'd rather have my children marry an American than an Australian" (item 7). Other items loading on this factor include: "My housing in Australia is better than what I had in the U.S." (item 15); "Most housing lacks important amenities (item 20); "It's hard to get used to the housing here" (item 21); "I like the quality of the homes in Australia" (item 22); and "Australia is now my home" (item 25). Because

marriage, housing, and the home are all so personal and closely linked, this factor is interpreted as relating to one's feelings of "being at home" in Australia and with Australians as well as with the quality of housing.

*Factor II: Missing Relatives and Friends in the U.S.*

"Australians are so warm, I really don't miss my relatives" (item 9); "I really miss my old friends from the U.S." (item 14); "I miss my family a great deal" (item 24); and "Many of my relatives are in the U.S., but I don't miss them very much" (item 27) all load highly on Factor II. This was the clearest and most easily interpreted of all factors in this solution; it deals with feelings of isolation or nonisolation from relatives and friends.

*Factor III: Cultural Expectations*

Items highly correlated with this factor include: "There's nothing going on here to keep teenagers busy" (item 2); "Cultural events are very good here" (item 11); "Australian values seem right to me" (item 16); "I like the Australian way of doing things" (item 17); and "I wouldn't want my children to start acting like Australians" (item 18). Although these items deal with diverse aspects of life in Australia they all seem to tap Americans' expectations of the appropriateness of cultural elements.

*Factor IV: Work Orientation*

The only anomalous item loading on Factor IV is item 11, "Cultural events are very good here." All other items seem to deal clearly with work-related issues: "Australians really help you if you lose your job" (item 1); "Americans have a harder time finding a job than do native Australians" (item 4); "Americans can 'get ahead' here just as easily as native Australians" (item 23); and "Americans are not discriminated against in obtaining work" (item 26).

*Factor V: Degree of Isolation*

Four items loaded highly on Factor V: "One problem with living in Australia is that you are so alone" (item 8); "There's always someone to do things with" (item 10); "Cultural events are very good here" (item 11); and "My family feels isolated here" (item 13). All four items deal with perceptions of personal or familial social isolation.

*Factor VI: General Alienation*

Factor VI seems to be a general factor tapping feelings of alienation from life in Australia. Items strongly correlated with this factor include: "Americans have a harder time finding a job than do native Australians" (item 4); "It's tough on an American family to live in Australia" (item 6); "No matter how hard you try you just can't get ahead here" (item 12); "I like the Australian ways of doing things" (item 17); "There's just not enough reasonably priced housing in Australia" (item 28); and "Australian ways are really strange" (item 29).

## DISCUSSION

This analysis of the SLA scale revealed certain fairly clear concerns among the American migrants in Australia. Dimensions tapped include feelings of belonging/isolation, homeiness, quality of housing, work opportunities, cultural expectations and missing of relatives and friends back in the U.S. Most of these concerns are typical of those found in the literature for other migrant groups—especially the concerns related to work, relatives, and belonging in the new

country of residence (Mindel and Habenstein, 1976; Vlachos, 1968). Albeit, because of the cultural similarities between the U.S. and Australia and because of the wide range of modern, urban, and technological skills Americans bring with them, they may have advantages over other migrant groups; but they still face the same types of problems in adapting to the new environment. (That is, there may be quantitative differences between problems faced by "advantaged" migrant groups and those of more traditional immigrants.)

Second, item 11, "Cultural events are very good here" appeared in what were otherwise fairly easily interpretable factors (III, IV, and V). While its correlation with Factors III and V is not particularly enigmatic, its relationship to Factor IV (work orientation) is less clear. One possible explanation lies in the high proportion of professional and business people and teachers in this sample. The upper-middle class and educators tend to be more concerned with cultural events than other segments of the population; therefore, their perceptions of much of their professional environment may be colored by the adequacy of local cultural activities.

Finally, perhaps the most significant finding in this research is the clarity with which a "missing relatives and friends" dimension emerged. In his recent article on the commitment process, De Amicis argues that American settlers in Australia generally lack a strong personal tie to their families including parents and siblings. Yet, in spite of this apparent "lack of commitment," a strong, clear factor concerning orientation toward relatives emerges. While this does not necessarily indicate strong emotional ties to one's relatives, existence of such a clear factor does suggest that Americans consistently recognize a family commitment. The emotional importance of this dimension should be explored in further research.

#### FOOTNOTES

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