

# A Question of Balance: Exploring the Acculturation, Integration and Adaptation of Muslim Immigrant Youth\*

## Una Cuestión de Equilibrio: Explorando la Aculturación y la Adaptación de Jóvenes Musulmanes Inmigrantes

Jaimee Stuart and Colleen Ward  
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

**Abstract.** The paper addresses criticisms of contemporary acculturation research by adopting a mixed method approach (open-ended survey responses, interviews, focus groups and projective techniques) to the study of the acculturation experiences of Muslim youth in New Zealand. The research explores: 1) the meaning, definition and achievement of success; 2) the process of negotiating multiple social identities; and 3) the graphic representation of identity. Thematic analysis indicated that young Muslims aspire to achieve success in personal, social, material and religious domains and that they seek to balance potentially competing demands from family, friends, the Muslim community and the wider society. At the same time they aspire to balance multiple identities, retaining religious and cultural elements in the definition of self while endeavoring to integrate into the wider society. The process of achieving this balance is characterized by three strategies: alternating orientations, blending orientations and minimizing differences. The findings are discussed in relation to advancing our understanding of integration as an acculturation option, and the community-based policy implications for multicultural societies are considered.

**Keywords:** acculturation, adaptation, balance, integration, Muslim, youth.

**Resumen.** El artículo aborda las críticas a la investigación sobre aculturación adoptando una metodología mixta (encuestas con preguntas abiertas y cerradas, entrevistas, grupos focales y técnicas proyectivas) para estudiar la experiencia aculturativa de jóvenes musulmanes en Nueva Zelanda. La investigación explora: 1) el significado, la definición y el logro de éxito; 2) el proceso de negociación de múltiples identidades sociales; y 3) la representación gráfica de la identidad. Análisis temáticos revelaron que los jóvenes musulmanes aspiran a lograr el éxito en el terreno personal, social, material y religioso tratando de equilibrar las exigencias potencialmente en conflicto de la familia, las amistades, la comunidad musulmana y la sociedad en general. Al mismo tiempo, aspiran a equilibrar identidades múltiples, reteniendo elementos religiosos y culturales en la definición del yo al tiempo que se esfuerzan por integrarse en la sociedad más amplia. El proceso del logro de este equilibrio se caracteriza por el empleo de tres estrategias: alternar orientaciones, integrar orientaciones y minimizar las diferencias. Se analizan los resultados en cuanto a su capacidad para ahondar nuestro conocimiento de la integración como estrategia de aculturación y se abordan las implicaciones para las políticas comunitarias en sociedad multiculturales.

**Palabras clave:** aculturación, adaptación, equilibrio, integración, jóvenes, musulmán.

The study of immigration has a long history in cross-cultural and social psychology, and over the last four decades significant advances have been made in theoretical models of acculturation psychology. Unidimensional models, where immigrants are viewed as shedding their heritage culture for the sake of adopting the mainstream culture of the society of settlement, have been abandoned, and it is widely recognized that ethnic and national cultural orientations are largely independent and that both play important roles in acculturation and adaptation (Berry & Sam, 1997;

Ward, 2001). Amongst the most popular approaches to the study of acculturation, Berry's (1974, 1997) acculturation framework with two dimensions (cultural maintenance and cultural contact) and four strategies (integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization) is best known and most widely researched, and along with more recent extensions, such as the Interactive Acculturation Model (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Sénécal, 1997) and the Relative Acculturation Extended Model (Navas, Rojas, García, & Pumares, 2007), forms the core of contemporary acculturation research. While these models represent a major conceptual advance over the earlier unidimensional approaches, they are not without their critics (Chirkov, 2009a; Rudmin, 2003).

The core components of Berry's model have been criticized for neglecting the complexities of accultur-

Correspondence: Colleen Ward. Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research. PO Box 600. Victoria University of Wellington. Wellington. 6140 New Zealand. E-Mail: [Colleen.Ward@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Colleen.Ward@vuw.ac.nz)

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ation and for the underlying assumption that acculturation simply involves a rational choice amongst four strategies (Rudmin, 2009). The neglect of domain-specific variation in acculturation processes (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2006) has been noted, and the emphasis on acculturative stress and adaptation problems has been harshly criticized (Rudmin, 2009). Calls for researchers to reject the “deficit approach” and to adopt a broader perspective that highlights positive growth and development are gaining increasing recognition (Sirin & Balsano, 2007; Stuart, Ward, Jose, & Narayanan, 2010). More fundamentally, however, it has been suggested that conventional measures of psychological acculturation often fail to capture the dynamic nature of the acculturation process (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2006; Ward, 2008). Integration (maintaining one’s ethnic culture while also adopting elements of the host culture) has been associated with a range of positive psychological and social outcomes for immigrant youth (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006), but it remains to be seen how individuals achieve integration or even more broadly how they live and function on a day-to-day basis as acculturating individuals. As stated by Fuligni (2010, pp. 20-21):

We now know that adolescents from immigrant families do not simply chose one culture or another, and that they prefer to retain aspects of their family’s culture of origin that provide them with a sense of purpose and motivation to adapt to the norms and practices of their new societies and make them their own. Exactly how they engage in that process, and the implications for the evolution of both their native cultures and societies of origin, is perhaps the key question for the next generation of research on this growing and increasingly important population of children.

These and related issues have led some to question if there is a crisis in acculturation research (Chirkov & Landis, 2008), and in addition to criticisms of key conceptual frameworks, the limitations of prevalent methodological approaches have garnered comment (Poortinga, 2010). Chirkov (2009a) has argued that the use of standardized scales as the primary means of examining acculturation is flawed and that alternative techniques such as multi-method and qualitative approaches, including ethnography, participant observations and qualitative interviewing, should be employed. He has also maintained that the role of language “as an active, constructive, and meaning producing means of organizing people’s lives and experiences” should not be ignored (Chirkov, 2009b, p. 178). Reliance on a wider range of qualitative techniques that incorporates immigrant voices not only adds depth to the investigation of acculturation, but can also address the issue of “perspective” in this line of research. For the most part theory-building has been undertaken from a hypothetico-deductive or “top-down” perspective. A bottom-up approach can add a

new dimension and increase ecological validity, as it examines the “lived experiences” of acculturating individuals from an immigrant perspective.

Finally, acculturation research has been criticized for its disconnection from immigrant groups and as having little practical utility for immigrants and those who assist them (Chirkov, 2009b). There is, however, clear evidence that community-based acculturation research, particularly projects geared towards explicit social action, effectively counters those criticisms (Ward & Kagitcibasi, 2010). For example, work by Collie and associates with young Assyrian women in New Zealand not only led to the implementation of empowering strategies in academic and community settings, but also advanced theorizing on integration by describing the process of mindful identity negotiation (Collie, Kindon, Liu, & Podsiadlowski, 2010; Collie, Liu, Podsiadlowski, & Kindon, 2010). Similarly, action-oriented research by Paloma and colleagues with Moroccan women in Spain engendered a sense of empowerment through the development of self-awareness and cultural competence and the promotion of social inclusion for new immigrants; at the same time the project advanced a new model of acculturative integration, a reflexive and evaluative process, involving transformation of self and social conditions and the process of self and citizenship construction (Paloma, García-Ramírez, de la Mata, & Association AMAL-Andaluza, 2010; Paloma, García-Ramírez, de la Mata, & El Jebary, 2009).

This research aims to address key shortcomings in studies of acculturation by using multi-methods to explore the acculturation experiences of Muslim youth in New Zealand. The studies form part of a larger body of research and community development programs with Muslim immigrants in New Zealand (Ward, 2010; Ward, Liu, Fairbairn-Dunlop, & Henderson, 2010). While there is increasing prejudice towards Muslim migrants globally (Sirin & Fine, 2008), we believe that there is often an overemphasis on the negative outcomes for this community. Therefore, this research is undertaken within a positive psychology paradigm, examining the meaning and achievement of success within the experience of acculturation, an approach that does not disregard the potential stressors faced by Muslim youth, but rather acts to illuminate the strengths and resilience of this community. As acculturation research has been criticized as lacking systematic analysis of the “home” and “host” cultures of immigrants (Chirkov, 2009a) and as the influence of contextual factors on the immigrant experience has received increasing attention (Ward, Fox, Wilson, Stuart, & Kus, 2010), a brief description of immigration trends in New Zealand, attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism, and the characteristics of the country’s growing Muslim population is provided before the research is presented.

## The New Zealand Context

New Zealand has traditionally been a bicultural society, rooted in an indigenous Maori and British colonial base, although multiculturalism has become an emergent ideology with diversity being promoted symbolically (through social discourse) and literally (via inclusive policy frameworks). At present almost one in four persons in New Zealand's 4.3 million population is overseas-born. Ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is a reality now, and with a growing Maori population and 40-50,000 new immigrants from approximately 150 countries entering New Zealand each year, this diversity will continue to increase.

Islam is the most rapidly growing religion in New Zealand with the Muslim population having increased six-fold between 1991 and 2006. Muslims now constitute about 1% of the population. The majority (77%) of New Zealand Muslims are overseas-born with the largest proportions identifying as Indian (29%) and as members of Middle Eastern groups (21%) such as Arab, Iranian and Iraqi (Ministry of Social Development, 2008). Although Muslims are a flourishing group, compared to other immigrant communities, there has been relatively little empirical research about their experiences in New Zealand (Sang & Ward, 2006).

As national-level political and social contexts affect immigrant experiences, it is important to examine aspects of New Zealand society that may facilitate or impede immigrant adaptation. A national survey by Ward and Masgoret (2008) found that overall New Zealanders strongly endorse a multicultural ideology. Approximately 89% of survey respondents agreed that it is a good thing for a society to be made up of different races, religions and cultures, a higher proportion of agreement than found in Australia and 15 European Union countries. Perceptions of threat were low to moderate (e.g., only 26% agreeing that immigration increases the level of crime and 21% maintaining that allowing immigrant cultures to thrive means the New Zealand culture is weakened). However, in the same study it was shown that some immigrants were perceived more favorably than others. Those from Western countries were viewed more positively than those from Asia and the Pacific. A follow up survey by Ward and Stuart (2009a), which focused on the assessment of New Zealanders' attitudes towards Muslim immigrants, found that settlers from major source countries (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Korea, Philippines, India, China, South Africa, Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji) were viewed more positively than those from predominantly Muslim countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Somalia). These findings suggest that although New Zealand is generally a tolerant society, Muslim immigrants may be at greater risk for preju-

dice and discrimination than other immigrants and ethnic minorities.<sup>1</sup> By and large, these social and political conditions provide the context for the acculturation experiences of Muslim youth in New Zealand and may encourage, facilitate or constrain adaptive outcomes (Bourhis et al., 1997).

## Method

The data that are analyzed in this paper form parts of three interlinked studies with Muslim youth in New Zealand. The larger studies are briefly described, and the analytical procedures used for this paper are summarized. A Pakeha (New Zealander of European descent) female (the first author) and a New Zealand-born Fijian-Indian Muslim woman (both in their mid-twenties) developed the workshop program (in conjunction with the second author) and co-facilitated the sessions (see the acknowledgements). The first author also conducted the interviews and focus groups and carried out the quantitative data collection. Both of the facilitators had connections within the Muslim community, and together represented an informed position (outsider and insider) on the Muslim youth community in New Zealand.

## Study 1: Community Workshops

The research program included two workshops specifically focusing on leadership development for young Muslims. In total 36 Muslim young people (10 in Wellington and 26 in Auckland) between the ages of 16 and 25 took part in the leadership development workshops, which were conducted by the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research (CACR) at Victoria University of Wellington in partnership with the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ), The New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils (NZFMC) and the Islamic Studies Research Unit (ISRU) at Auckland University. In Wellington, 8 females and 2 males participated in the workshop, and in Auckland there were 16 female and 10 male participants. While the workshops were gender mixed, for the comfort of the participants' (and on consultation with the community) males and females had separate designated areas in the workshop rooms, and when break-out discussions were required, participants remained in gender segregated groups. The ethnic mix of the participants was representative of the wider Muslim community in New Zealand, with individuals coming from a range of Asian (India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia), Middle Eastern (Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran) and African (Somali, Egyptian) backgrounds.

The workshops were designed to: 1) explore issues of identity as young Muslim people in New Zealand;

2) describe aspirations for success in young Muslims; 3) identify resources for and obstacles to success in personal and social environments; and 4) create empowering personal and community goals. In this paper we limit the results to aspects of: 1) participants' responses to the question "*What does it mean to be a successful young person in New Zealand society?*" through thematic analysis examination (see Braun & Clarke, 2006) and 2) their construction of identity maps, a projective mapping technique (an exercise that elicits pictorial representations of multiple social identities), which was developed and elaborated by Zaal, Salah and Fine (2007) and Sirin and Fine (2007, 2008). Results from the workshops were collated into a report and delivered back to the participants for consultation and subsequent dissemination.

### Study 2: Survey Research with Open-ended Question

The qualitative data for this study were collected as part of a self-report survey on risk and resilience in first and second generation Muslim migrant youth in New Zealand. In total 155 participants, aged 16 to 27 years ( $M = 20$ ,  $SD = 3.6$ ; 70% female) were included in the study. Upon conclusion of the survey, participants were asked "*What do you think is the most important thing that helps you succeed in your life in New Zealand?*" Thematic analysis was used to collate responses to this question.

### Study 3: Interviews and Focus Groups

The final study consists of interview and focus group information derived from a study on positive pathways to development in 25 young Muslim adults (19 - 27 years). A total of 18 participants were involved in face-to-face interviews and 7 in two focus groups of 3 and 4 participants each. The interview sample consisted of 7 males and 11 females who came from the Middle East (7), South East Asia (6), South Asia (4), and Africa (1). With the exception of the focus group participants who were female international students and were unsure of their plans to stay in New Zealand, participants had permanently migrated to New Zealand.

The research was exploratory in nature, seeking to understand Muslim young people's experience of adjustment in the New Zealand environment using qualitative techniques. The findings discussed here relate to one of the open-ended questions that was posed to participants: "*Think about all of the ways you identify yourself. Do your identities work together or do they conflict?*"<sup>2</sup> This question taps the potentially contradictory demands young Muslims in New Zealand may face with regards to their identity posi-

tions, and responses were analyzed by integrating aspects of grounded theory and thematic analysis (see Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, & Townsend, 2010). The preliminary findings were presented to research participants and interested community members in an open forum, which led to the refinement of the emergent themes and informed subsequent quantitative research.

### Analytic Procedure for this Study

Each of the larger studies had specific objectives, and these required that data be subjected to a range of analytic procedures including aspects of grounded theory, thematic analysis and interpretive techniques for projective methods. Across these studies and methods the notion of "achieving balance" emerged as a salient theme. The "balance" theme is extracted from the rich data sets and discussed here in relation to three issues: 1) How do Muslim youth define and achieve success; 2) How do Muslim youth "balance" their multiple orientations; and 3) How do Muslim youth represent their multiple orientations?

### Results and Discussion

#### *How do Muslim youth define and achieve success?*

For the young Muslims in this research program, definitions of success were found to be wide ranging. For example, adjusting successfully could mean having a career, being well educated or memorizing the Koran. This finding parallels the research of Suárez-Orozco and Todorova (2003) concerning the multiple influences on a young person's path of migration, where it is suggested that success is constructed through a complex interplay of a young person's social worlds. The fact that success was conceptualized across a variety of domains is an important point to note as there is a tendency in youth research to define success in terms of narrowly categorized outcomes, for example wellbeing or academic achievement (MacDonald & Valdivieso, 2000).

In the leadership workshops, definitions of success were brainstormed by participants and broadly categorized into four domains: religion, social, personal and material. Some of the ways youth defined success in religious terms were: achieving a sense of peace and purpose, engaging in religious activities and being able to express oneself as a Muslim. In the social domain, success was seen as positively influencing others, not harming others in the pursuit of personal goals and being able to see things from other people's points of view. Personal success was characterized by being knowledgeable, controlling your own desire, being content with what has been provided in this life and having a clear set of goals to pursue. Lastly, material

success referred to the more tangible elements in the environment, such as having a good career and earning enough money. These domains show that for young Muslims in New Zealand, success is multifaceted and includes elements of spiritual engagement, social interaction and personal attributes.

Because young Muslims are embedded in a variety of environments that influence how well they are able to adjust, achieving success in any of its forms can be a complex endeavor. Furthermore, the most influential contexts for a young person's development (specifically the family, peers, ethnic community and wider society) are often disparate and may act as sources of strength as well as create obstacles to positive outcomes (Stuart et. al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2003). For instance, youth indicated that being a member of a well functioning family was seen as a very important part of their lives. Not only do family members share support, experience and security, they also provide a sense of connection to religion and values. However, family was also detrimental to positive adjustment when parents were more traditional than youth, or had very high expectations about how they wanted their child to succeed, effectively leading youth to feel pressured and misunderstood.

At the same time young people are attempting to meet the demands of their family, there are often different expectations placed upon them by their friends, community and the wider society (Stuart & Ward, 2011a). Youth indicated that while peers were a source of support and companionship, peer pressure could lead to negative consequences, especially when youth were pressured into behaving in a way that went against their religious or ethnic values. A similar pattern emerged in the discussion of the ethnic/religious community where youth felt supported and educated in topics that were important to them (e.g., religious issues), although they felt pressured to conform to the traditional views of community leaders (which were seen to favor the separation of ethnic groups), rather than explore an integrative approach to adaptation. Further complicating this issue, even though young people felt that they could practice their culture and their religion in New Zealand, they still experienced discrimination with regards to their religion, their accent and their names. Effectively, in some ways the wider society acted to reinforce their position as minorities and to prevent them from integrating into society as they desired.

One of the major themes that arose in terms of how Muslim youth go about achieving success while facing a diverse and sometimes contradictory set of demands was described as "*reaching a balance*." The concept of balance is illustrated in the following quote:

*In order to be successful, you need balance – Between the things that are important to you (the things you want and value), and your friends, religion, family and social life.*

The notion of "*reaching a balance*" is similar in some ways to the theoretical construct of integration in that it concerns the process of managing more than one cultural orientation. However, "balance" in these data represents an emergent theme that was derived solely from participants' accounts of their experiences of adjusting to New Zealand society rather than an imposed theoretical construct tested with immigrant youth. Also, where integration concerns the management of only two orientations (ethnic and host) (Berry, 1997), the term balance can incorporate multiple orientations.

The theme of balance also emerged strongly in the qualitative data collected in study two. In response to the question "*What do you think is the most important thing that helps you succeed in your life in New Zealand?*" the majority of participants alluded to a balance across their religion, culture and New Zealand society as the key driver of achievement. Therefore, it seems as though the concept of balance not only refers to the struggle inherent in being a member of a religious minority, it also refers to an ideology of managing many competing demands. Because answers to this open-ended question were not primed, and data were collected anonymously and without collusion, the consensus in the nature of the responses with regards to the concept of "balance" forms a very strong picture of how these young people view success.

*Achieving a good balance, being a Muslim and being a member of a non-Muslim society and not compromising on faith, but still being able to be comfortable.*

For many of the young Muslims in this research, balance was not necessarily seen as an outcome of acculturation, it was viewed as the process through which one could minimize the risks of managing multiple orientations and meet the divergent demands that were placed upon them.

*Balance, you need to learn to balance all of the important aspects in life such as religion, family, friends, socialising, time and money. You shouldn't end up being disappointed or disappointing other people because you can't make these things all work together.*

As the above quote illustrates, "balance" was seen as a means to meet the expectations of others, as well as the expectations Muslim young people had about their own success.

Reaching a balance also means resisting influences that would undermine values and beliefs, and specifically, continuing to uphold moral values throughout the process of adaptation.

*To have good morals and have a strong base of religion and be able to balance these in your life in New Zealand.*

For young people seeking balance, acculturative changes were made in order to fit into the new culture, but these were not at the expense of compromising the self.

*Being true with myself, who I am and where I am from. Being able to balance out the two different cultures, mine and theirs.*

In fact, the act of managing divergent demands may actually lead to development of the self, especially with regards to promoting openness and acceptance of others:

*Tolerance, learning about the New Zealand culture and way of life, seeing things from others' point of view, being honest, understanding and having empathy. Balancing my culture with New Zealand culture.*

And also acceptance of oneself as a member of a minority group:

*Always remembering that I am a Muslim and no matter what that I will always be different but to accept that difference and learn to work with it and around it.*

For the young people in this study, adjustment to the New Zealand society involved integrating a set of potentially conflicting orientations and consequently, making decisions about 'operational' values and behaviors in their everyday lives. Striving for balance enabled these young people to understand and negotiate these orientations successfully.

*I feel a sense of belonging and connection to both my religion and culture as well as to New Zealand society. I do not see them as conflicting.*

In summary, the young Muslims in this research achieved success by managing the array of expectations which they had of themselves and which others placed upon them. Through the process of "reaching a balance," the youth in this research were consciously engaging in and actively directing their acculturation. Effectively, they accepted that different areas of their life would call for different ways of being and that they must actively manage these in order to achieve success. Furthermore, these young people did not compromise themselves in the process of balancing their multiple orientations; rather, they made changes that enabled them to be more effective across contexts while retaining the most important and defining components of the self. It must, however, be noted that balance may be an ideal rather than a reality, because to effectively manage one's orientations the young person must be permitted to do so both by the community and by the host society.

### **How do Muslim youth "balance" their multiple orientations?**

In the preceding section, it was shown that Muslim youth dynamically engage in the process of attempting to "reach a balance." The following section will focus on the different ways young Muslims enact this process of balance. Specifically, three strategies used by these youth in order to balance their multiple cultur-

al orientations will be discussed. These are labeled alternating orientations, blending orientations and minimizing differences.

In this research, *alternating orientations*, referring to an approach in which different components of identity are emphasized dependent on the environment within which interaction takes place, emerged as a behavioral strategy for achieving a balance. Individuals who indicated that they alternated between cultural and/or religious orientations saw the need for different types of behavior and distinct roles across contexts. The following quote specifically illustrates the perception that one must act differently at home with the family than outside of the home:

*There are definitely different ways that I act with some people than with others. Especially the difference between the way I would act with a New Zealander and how I would act with my family.*

By changing their behavioral repertoire based on the environment, these young people were able to dynamically meet a variety of different expectations and fulfill a range of social norms. In the process of alternating between components of identity, participants mobilized 'markers' of identity, effectively transforming themselves in order to more easily move across contexts. Markers of identity are specific differences in behavior or appearance that indicate a shift in context. For example, alternating between orientations could be signaled by the type of clothes worn, food eaten, or as the following quote illustrates, through the language spoken.

*At home I am more Iraqi than outside of home for obvious reasons, because I live with Iraqi people at home, and I speak Arabic at home. I'd definitely say I change depending on the environment I'm in.*

For the young Muslims in this study alternating between different ways of behaving enabled a smooth transition between contexts in which there were disparate expectations placed upon them. These young people did not necessarily "integrate" their orientations towards their culture, religion and New Zealand society. Rather, balance was achieved by keeping these environments separate, with distinct behavioral repertoires for different contexts. It is important to note that while those who engaged in alternating strategies consciously decided to behave inconsistently across contexts, they did not necessarily feel that their cultural orientations were in conflict. Rather, they saw the need to be aware of which behaviors were and were not appropriate in any given context and manage these in a dynamic and transformative way. As the following quote illustrates:

*It's just a matter of putting the spotlight on which aspect (is important) depending on the context, it's a matter of placing relevance in the context. I play different roles, everybody does.*

Alternating strategies have been noted in earlier research, which indicates that "biculturals" alternate

between identities based on the context. For example, the model of cultural frame switching (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000) suggests that biculturals cognitively shift between orientations based on relevant cues in the environment. Also, Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) have suggested a type of bicultural identity labeled “alternating biculturalism” whereby individuals shift between their dual identities based on what they consider to be appropriate in the social setting. Across these studies and our research the “alternating” label can be seen to capture the process of moving between orientations dependent on the context.

The second strategy for balancing multiple and potentially contradictory demands is labeled *blending orientations* and refers to a type of hybridization of multiple roles and identities. Specifically, blending can be seen as a way of achieving balance through the act picking and choosing the elements of each orientation to adopt.

*I went from a pure Iraqi lifestyle to a hybrid New Zealand/Iraqi Muslim lifestyle. We tried to pick and choose between cultures. For example for me, I don't drink and I didn't want to go towards that path. So in that sense you have an advantage of choosing the best qualities of the cultures, so that's good.*

Individuals who chose to blend their orientations effectively create a new set of ways of thinking, feeling and acting that did not belong discretely within any one of their orientations on its own. Rather, they attempted to achieve balance by absorbing the specific qualities of many contexts and acting this out in their everyday lives.

An important point to note is that those who engaged in strategies of blending considered cultural orientations (national and ethnic) as parallel to religious orientation. As the previous quote indicated, lifestyle is regarded as a hybridization of New Zealand/Iraqi and Muslim. The following quote illustrates that balance is achieved by ‘embracing’ both cultural orientations, whilst keeping Islam as a central, overarching driver for behavior.

*You have two cultural sides, a Western and an Eastern influence. I don't particularly stick to one side. I sort of embrace both. And there's the spiritual identity. And that's Islam. It's not just a religion, but it's a way of living and a way of life. How you go about doing things and stuff.*

Earlier research with biculturals has indicated that individuals construct new identities based on a combination of characteristics from their dual cultures (Birman, 1994). Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) labeled the self-identification as part of two cultures (for example, Mexican-American) as blended biculturalism. Unlike previous research, however, which has focused on blended identities as an acculturation outcome, our data portray blending as a dynamic acculturation process.

The final strategy for achieving balance is labeled *minimizing differences*. This strategy refers to an approach that is centered on the consistency of the self as an entity rather than on the differences between one's orientations. For individuals who engage in minimizing differences, discrete identity components are less important than a sense of coherent personal identity.

*My identity is the same (as it has always been), I don't like to be different across all different situations. I am me.*

For those who minimized differences, balance was achieved through affirmation of the unchanging nature of the self, regardless of changes in the environment.

*So for me the person inside is still the same (as before I migrated). My beliefs and values are still the same, it is just that my perspective has changed.*

It is important to note that individuals who minimized differences were well aware of the multiple positions that they had access to even though they chose to focus on the self as a “whole.” Furthermore, while their orientations were considered as elements of the self, they also saw themselves as more than the sum of these parts.

*I'm more than all those (identities), so I say I am any of them, or none at all. If I could (describe myself in a word), I would just use my name. That is me.*

In summary, Muslim youth engage in different ways with the process of “reaching a balance.” The preceding section outlined three distinct strategies used by Muslim youth in order to balance their multiple cultural orientations: alternating, blending and minimizing differences. While it is unknown how these strategies relate to adjustment outcomes, these results elucidate the innovative ways in which young people enact balance in their lives.

### ***How do Muslim youth represent their Multiple Orientations?***

The following section discusses how Muslim youth pictorially represent their multiple orientations and the ways in which distinct strategies for reaching a balance emerge in these representations. Methods employed to explore psychological dimensions of identity have been typically reserved to self-report surveys and textual narratives derived from interviews and focus groups. In the following study, data are drawn from the projective method of identity mapping and the consequent pictorial self-representations of Muslim youth in the New Zealand environment. Sirin, Katsiaficas, and Volpe (2010) suggest that identity mapping, or visual representations of one's identities, is a non-textual alternative designed to “texturize” our understanding of the lived experience of individuals. The identity mapping activity involved individuals considering all

of their distinct social identities and how the different parts of the self fit (or do not fit) together and then constructing an illustration (or identity map) to symbolize the self. Effectively, identity maps can illustrate which aspects of the self are viewed as important, positive or problematic, the groups that one belongs to, and how one experiences multiple social identities.

In order to code identity maps, Sirin and Fine (2008, p.136) developed a coding strategy map for three distinct identities: integrated identity (Muslim identity and national identity fully blended in a non-conflicting way), parallel identity (both identities depicted as separate), and conflicting identity (representations of tension, hostility or irreconcilability of identities). The analytical strategy used in the current study to understand the themes emerging from the identity maps was derived from these coding categories. It was found that elements of all three of these coding categories were present in the identity maps produced by the participants, although the representations of identity in this study were predominantly “integrated.” The authors felt that labeling the identity maps as “integrated” did not sufficiently illuminate the rich symbolism used by participants to describe their identities. Therefore, an interpretive, exploratory analysis guided by the findings of the previous studies was undertaken. This enabled the researchers to give voice to the symbolic elements embedded in the identity maps.

Our analysis of the identity maps indicated that

there were indeed qualitatively different strategies in which these young Muslims integrated their identities. In fact, the authors suggest that the identity maps show that the process around managing one’s multiple identities may be as important as the overall outcome of an “integrated identity.” As previously discussed with regards to definitions of success, this process of identity management can be understood as the attempt to achieve or reach a balance.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate two distinct ways in which participants presented their integrated identities. These creations are representative of the overall theme of the young Muslims’ identity maps; they all contain elements that blend Islam, ethnic culture and New Zealand society, but they also all include a richness of the young person’s life that combines family, friends, education and community.

Figure 1 shows all of the important components of this young person’s identity (Iraqi, New Zealander, Muslim, student, volunteer etc.) and how these components of the self are associated with one another through the central element of Islam. The overall identity is represented as being encased within a heart, potentially symbolizing an approach to reaching a balance that is characterized by love and connection to others. Leading to this heart is a pathway, indicating that arriving at a place of integration is dynamic. This element indicates a deep awareness of the need to actively manage multiple orientations in order to

Figure 1. Identity Map A

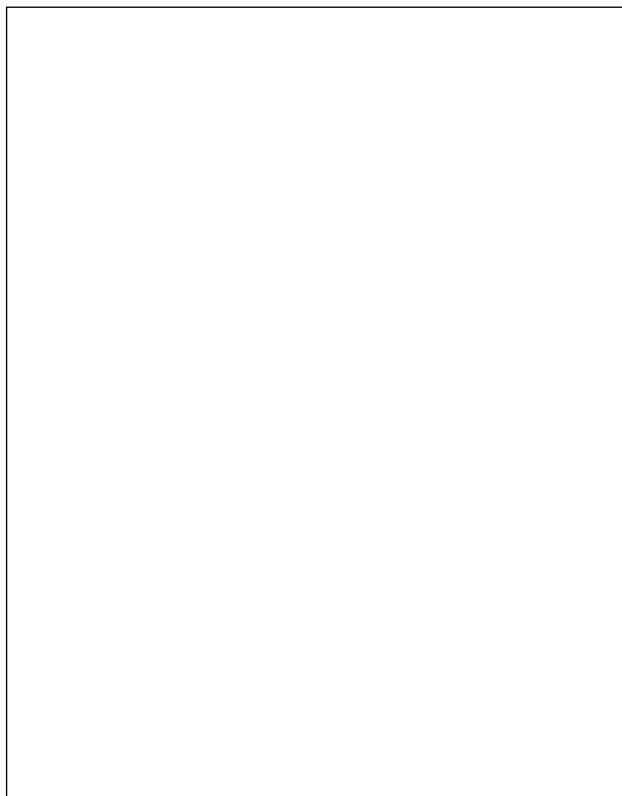
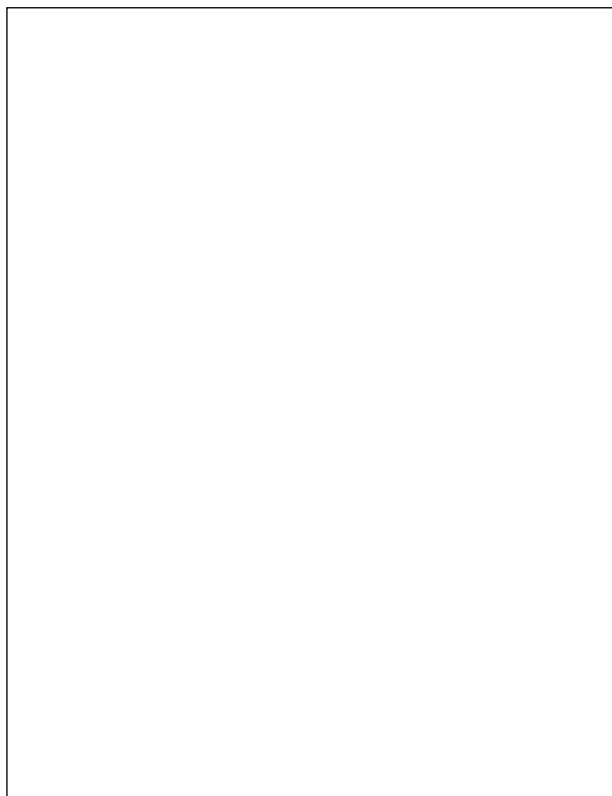


Figure 2. Identity Map B





achieve success. The identity map illustrates that this young person kept their many identities separate but that they were all interconnected, potentially demonstrating utilization of alternating orientations as a means to achieve balance.

Figure 2 shows the outline of a Muslim woman dressed in a headscarf. Important characteristics of the individual's identity make up the folds of the scarf (global citizen, Kiwi, Australian, Pakistani, Indian, mother, wife, daughter, sister etc.). Her identity overall is represented by the veiled women whose features contain an upside down question mark labeled "balance" and a smile made from "thankful, or trying to be." This shows an awareness of the need to actively manage multiple orientations as was illustrated in the previous identity map. It also indicates some difficulty concerning these multiple identities and some uncertainty with regards to whether the individual feels that she can manage to balance them. However, in the lower right corner of the page, there is a pin holding the head scarf securely. This pin is labeled 'Allah / Islam' and represents how her faith is holding all of the elements of herself together. This identity map illustrates that this young person perceives her identities as combined elements of the whole. This may represent the strategy of blending orientations where individuals seek to achieve a balance by embracing cultural orientations, whilst keeping Islam as a central, overarching driver for behavior.

The identity maps in our study of Muslim youth in New Zealand illustrate how youth construct their religious, national, ethnic and personal identities. An interpretive analysis of the maps showed that participants embodied a sense of identity integration, but that there are qualitatively different ways in which they engaged in this process. The technique of identity mapping elucidates the enormous amount of affective and relational material that may be lost when solely focusing on cognitive elements of identity. Through pictorial representations of identity, participants are enabled to display not only their multiplicity of identities, but also "the emotionality, politics, ambivalence and relationships attached to these varied identities" (Sirin, Katsiaficas, & Volpe, 2010, p. 25).

## Summary

Across the three studies described in this paper, the notion of "achieving a balance" was discussed as a means by which Muslim youth in New Zealand manage their multiple roles, identities and orientations. Muslim youth were found to define success across a variety of domains (religious, social, personal and material) and perceived the achievement of success to be embedded in the active management of their own and others' expectations within these domains. Additionally, results indicate that participants utilize a

variety of strategies in order to manage their multiple orientations. Specifically, it was found that three distinct strategies (alternating orientations, blending orientations and minimizing differences) were employed by Muslim youth in order to balance the important components of the self and the environment. Finally, through the projective technique of identity mapping, the multi-dimensionality of the social worlds in which the participants reside was made evident. Not only did this method enable a richness of data to be explored, the identity maps illustrated the complex interplay of factors that influence the construction of self and give evidence to how youth employ distinct strategies to achieve a balance.

## General Discussion

The aim of this paper was to address some of the shortcomings in studies of acculturation through the use of multi-methods in the exploration of acculturation experiences of Muslim youth in New Zealand. The research presented in this paper sought to take a bottom-up approach to the study of acculturation, effectively examining the "lived experiences" of Muslim migrants from their own perspective. By utilizing a wide range of qualitative techniques, the voices of the participants were able to become the central element of the research. These voices, in turn, influenced the development of a new way of conceptualizing a component of acculturation, namely the process of "achieving a balance." Not only does conducting research in this fashion add depth to the investigation of acculturation, but it can also address the issue of "perspective."

Previous research with immigrant youth has suggested that due to the differences in life stage and development, young people face more complex issues of acculturative adjustment than their adult counterparts (Berry et al., 2006; Oppedal, 2006; Phinney, 1990). This is particularly because migrant adolescents must negotiate and consolidate the values and behaviors prescribed by their ethnic and religious groups with those prescribed by the host culture, a task that is especially challenging when the values and beliefs of the ethnic culture differ significantly from those of the wider society (Stuart & Ward, 2011a). One of the first steps in building a complete picture of youth acculturation, therefore, is to understand the process young people go through when negotiating multiple cultural identities. The concept of achieving a balance may well offer an avenue for exploration, as evidenced by the young Muslims in this research, where "balance" was not necessarily seen as an outcome of acculturation, but rather was viewed as the dynamic process through which one could minimize the risks of negotiating their multiple social worlds and meet the variety of expectations that were placed upon them.

Traditional models of acculturation have predominantly offered frameworks that effectively enable researchers to better understand the psychological phenomena associated with intercultural contact, but also operate to constrain the ways we understand *experiences* of acculturation. Consequently, Ward (2008) suggests that there might be some ways we can begin to “think outside the Berry boxes”. Specifically, Ward indicates that acculturation strategies are often examined as static outcomes or as predictors of adaptation, with the process elements being largely overlooked. Ward (2008, p.107) posed the following questions as evidence of the restriction of traditional acculturation models: what does integration really mean, and how is it achieved? Do people integrate by fusing their orientations to home and host cultures? Are their identities situational so that sometimes they are “traditional” and sometimes “modern”? By utilizing the concept of balance in acculturation studies we may be able to begin to address these unanswered questions. Potentially, the concept of “balance” might even allow acculturation research to move beyond the rhetoric of two cultures that can be integrated to examine the real world implications of managing multiple identities, roles and orientations.

### A Reflection on Methods

This research was initially part of a much larger project entitled “Youth Voices: Youth Choices” (Ward et al., 2010), which sought to engage youth from Chinese, Pacific and Muslim communities to examine key indicators of participation and success, social and cultural connectedness, positive identity, leadership and capacity building. The current research emerged from this basic concept in an organic way, taking on a shape that was driven by the social interactions, understandings and relationships that developed among participants and facilitators as a part of the research process.

Methodologically, the field of cross-cultural psychology is beginning to recognize the need for mixed methods research, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to create innovative ways of addressing research questions (Karasz & Singelis, 2009). These new methodologies can enable research participants to become active agents in developing agendas for academic enquiry. In fact, the involvement of communities and individuals as drivers of research is becoming a hallmark of social intervention programs, and already forms the basis of the Participatory Action Research method (Collie, Liu et. al., 2010). All too often participants are treated as passive recipients of information and intervention (Poortinga, 2010). The current research has illustrated some new ways in which researchers can allow the “researched” to become active agents, capable of defining their own

outcomes and the process by which they reach these outcomes.

However, the active role of the researcher in the construction of the research must not be overlooked. In fact, the researcher (especially in community oriented projects) is never removed from the research findings. Both of the authors come from non-Muslim backgrounds. Being outsiders in the community can often have a number of spill-on effects, not only in whether one is seen as a worthy recipient of information, but also in the way findings are presented. However, outsiders can also be seen as legitimate connections to the host national community and as one participant suggested, can be used in order to create opportunities for community development (through dissemination of information, links with government, etc.).

In reflection of the research process, it can be exceedingly difficult to empower communities when as a researcher you are not embedded in lived experiences of the individuals involved. In many ways, researchers can be helpers – but should not be the drivers of community change; this should be owned by the members themselves. Also, even though some of the issues related to the authors’ positioning in this research were diminished by consulting and facilitating with a community “insider,” the facilitators were both female and New Zealand born, meaning that additional positioning issues could arise. Interestingly, the issue of gender mixed workshops and interviews (female facilitators and male participants) was not the cause of difficulties or tension. In fact, for the first author, being a non-Muslim New Zealand born female meant that participants exempted her from “normal” gendered interactions, and she was, in fact, treated as a student willing to learn and enact cultural and religious values.

### Applications in the Community

Our findings indicate that Muslim youth situate success in multiple domains—personal, social, religious and material—and that success is attained by achieving a sense of balance. The concept of balance is multi-layered and is applied to roles and relationships, life domains, cultural orientations, including values and practices, and at the most basic level an articulated sense of self. Although balance may be achieved in different ways, by blending and alternating cultural orientations as well as minimizing differences, all of these routes to success require “operating space” that accommodates diversity and encourages participation rather than enforcing separation. Under these conditions Muslim youth can retain their religious and cultural heritage as they are strongly motivated to do, but can also adopt practices common in the wider society without fear of social exclusion.

These findings, along with our broader program of research that has documented the strong and positive influence of Muslim identity on the psychological and social adaptation of Muslim youth (Ward & Stuart, 2009b; Ward, Adam, & Stuart, 2010), call into question the merit of the repressive anti-Islamic policies and practices that are currently gaining support in many Western countries. The French banning *niqab*, a visible marker of identity for many Muslim women, the Swiss outlawing the construction of minarets, and the threats of Koran burning in the United States in reaction to the proposed mosque near Ground Zero, all undermine the attempts of Muslim young people to achieve balance and lead integrated lives in Western societies. Ultimately, it is not sufficient for Muslim youth to recognize the value of balance and aspire to achieve integration, it is imperative for members of immigrant-receiving societies to acknowledge that not only is this possible, but it is also desirable.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this research gives voice to Muslim youth, the studies are not without limitations. The qualitative bottom-up approach is high in ecological validity, but the external validity remains in question not only because of the sampling frame and the qualitative methods, but also because of the specific research context. It is important to note that our studies were conducted in New Zealand, a country that is widely known as a tolerant society with a strong multicultural ideology. Indeed, our recent research findings on Muslim youth in New Zealand and in the United Kingdom has found that New Zealand Muslims experience less discrimination and have better adjustment outcomes than their UK counterparts and that these discrepancies are partially accounted for by differences in youth's perceptions of racial tolerance and multicultural ideology in the wider society (Stuart, Ward, & Robinson, 2011). Furthermore, Muslims form only 1% of the national population New Zealand, and unlike the situation in many parts of Europe, they are predominantly first-generation immigrants. The extent to which these contextual factors shape our findings should be investigated in future research. It is also suggested that the antecedents and consequences of achieving balance be examined. What factors facilitate and impede attaining balance? Do alternating, blending and minimizing strategies lead to different adaptive outcomes? Mixed method approaches, including survey research and quantitative analyses, should be used to address these questions.

In conclusion, the research sought to provide a new perspective on the acculturation of immigrant youth by adopting a bottom-up, process-focused approach that reflects their day to day experiences of acculturation. In doing so, balance emerged as a salient theme. This construct offers us a fresh perspective on acculturation,

an alternative way of conceptualizing integration, and a new avenue for exploring the acculturation process in future research.

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### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The experience and understanding of discrimination are important components of adaptation for the Muslim community. Although this paper does not specifically address this issue, other research endeavors within the research programme on Muslim migrant youth in New Zealand consider this as a central element of migration stress (see Stuart & Ward, 2011b; Stuart, Ward, & Robinson, 2011) for more information.

<sup>2</sup> This question acted as a guideline on the interview schedule. It must be noted that the question was asked in different ways with different participants, depending on the content of the specific interview or focus group.

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