Hiding in plain sight: Acculturative Stress and Self-Concealment Amongst Immigrant College Students

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Introduction

• Acculturative stress is defined as culture shock.
• Newcomers experience hostility from the host countrymen, and are left with a feeling of “other.” This feeling is called the Acculturatation process.
• It occurs when groups and individuals undergo psychological changes when they come into contact with a different culture, (Williams & Berry, 1991).
• Acculturation also occurs to people born in 1st generation countries, (Hughes, 2003; Torres, 2004)
• Social support has been shown to reduce acculturative stress.
• Self-concealment is a product of acculturative stress—the need to hide who you are so you aren’t seen as an outsider.
• Social support may reduce self-concealment.

Current Study

• This study examined the relationships between social support, acculturative stress and self-concealment amongst immigrant college students.

Methods

Participants

This study was conducted at Dominican University San Rafael, where an online survey was sent to 150 students with F-1 and J-1 visa or 1st generation students. Only 34 participants qualified (81.25%) women and (18.75) men. The average age was 25 (SD=4.62), with a range of 18-40. All the participants were undergraduates.

Table 1. Groups by Places of Origin (N =34)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cum Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>14.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-Pacific Islander</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>79.41</td>
<td>79.41</td>
<td>94.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Groups by Places of Origin (N =34)

Hypothesis

H #1 There was a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support, r = 0.15, n = 34, p = 0.200. p > .05

H #2 Self concealment was related to acculturative stress (r = 0.49, n=34, p=0.002. p < .05

H #3 There was a non-significant positive correlation between Perceived Social Support and Acculturative Stress, r = 0.03, n = 34, p = 0.429. p > .05

Results

Table 1. Correlations between Acculturative Stress Index, Perceived Social Support and Self-Concealment-Scale.

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acculturative Stress Index</th>
<th>Perceived Social Support</th>
<th>Self-Concealment Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation (1-tailed)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.429</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) There was a significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Acculturative Stress, r = 0.49, n = 34, p = 0.002. That is, higher scores on Self-Concealment were correlated with greater Acculturative Stress.

2) There was a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support, r = 0.15, n = 34, p = 0.200.

3) There was a non-significant positive correlation between Perceived Social Support and Acculturative Stress, r = 0.03, n = 34, p = 0.429. That is, higher scores on Self-Concealment were correlated with greater Acculturative Stress.

Discussion

Findings

The purpose of this study was to (a) Identify if family support helped lower acculturative stress and if b) if Self-concealment was related to acculturative stress amongst immigrant college students. The findings found a positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Acculturative Stress, a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support and a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support amongst college immigrant students.

Limitations

• Several limitations must be noted in this study.
• First, all participants were solicited from only one university campus at Dominican University San Rafael, making access to a larger more diverse population difficult.
• Second, perceived social support in the current study, was measured from mainly two perspectives, i.e., support from family & friends. This is a limited view since Support could also come from the larger community the students find themselves in.

Conclusion

• The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturative stress levels amongst immigrant college students; by examining the association between acculturative stress and perceived social support and self-concealment.
• College immigrant students experience high levels of acculturative stress; those with less family support show significantly higher levels of stress.