FACTORS INVOLVED IN ACCULTURATIVE STRESS AND ADJUSTMENT AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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This paper provides a cross-cultural comparison of profiles of stress and positive adjustment between international and domestic students at a Canadian University (N=202) using the BPSHI-r (Bio-Psycho-Social Health Index). Beginning with an overview of the reported levels of stress symptoms across the three major dimensions (bio-psycho-social), along with a measure of positive adjustment and reports of global current stress levels, comparisons between the profiles of international students vs. domestic students is made. Further detailed analysis of the impact on stress and adjustment for the factors of: country of origin, length of residence in Canada, living with one’s family or not, and gender reveals differences in current, psychological, and social stress, but not somatization. Differences were also observed in feelings of belonging in Canada and strength of ethnic identity for the participants and their stress profiles.
OVERVIEW

- Acculturation & Stress

- Current Study:
  Comparing International and Domestic Students
  - Stress scores and the nature of stress
  - Stress and Region of migration
  - Stress and Gender
  - Stress and living with Family

- Reflections and Discussion
Examined profiles of stress between International (106) and Domestic (91) students

Made use of the Bio-Psycho-Social Health Index (BPSHI-r.)

Students Ranged in Age from 17 to 51 with a mean age of 20.73 (4.433)
Acculturative Stress is often experienced as part of the transition of living between or among cultures.

Acculturative Stress has been associated with acculturative styles (Cawte, Bianchi, & Kiloh, 1968; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Berry, 2006).

Moving towards Integration involves sociocultural adaptation and psychological adaptation (Tonks 2004).
PARTICIPANTS

Gender

Female: n=129
Male: n=69

Total: n=69
PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTRY

n = 91

n = 59
Focus on stress and positive adjustment to 5 point likert scales (Tonks, Bates, Lai & Paranjpe, 2000).

Specifically examines social factors and responses in addition to physiological and psychological.

Provides subscale scores for each of these dimensions of stress & adjustment.
Based upon the relationships among questions on the Tonks et al. (2000) study a revised form was developed with:

- 12 Positive Adjustment questions
- 8 Biological Stress questions
- 12 Psychological Stress questions
- 12 Social Stress questions
- 3 Cultural Identity questions
- Each Rated on a 5 point Likert Scale
STRESS TOTAL & CURRENT STRESS

- Stress Total = Bio-Stress + Psycho-Stress + Social Stress

- Current Stress: Indicate on a scale of 1 - 10 the degree of stress you are currently experiencing, where 1 = no stress at all and 10 is extreme stress at your limits.
RESULTS

- ANOVA for:
  + Canadian vs International
  + Region
  + Gender
  + Family

- Correlations

- Inter-Item relationships
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<th>Psy-Stress</th>
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<th>Current Stress</th>
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POSITIVE ADJUSTMENT

- .065 I exercise regularly (2 times a week or more)
- .087 I eat meals at regular times each day.
- .150 I have plenty of energy to go about my daily tasks.
- -.002 I socialise with people if given the opportunity.
- .359 I feel happy with the way my life is.
- .325 I discuss this feeling with someone close to me.
- .272 I go out with friends on a regular basis to the cinema.
  - .150 to nightclubs or bars.
  - .153 to religious meetings.
  - .106 to other gatherings.
- .341 I participate in team sports or activities on a regular basis.
- -.104 I discuss this feeling (of racial exclusion) with someone in order to help me
I suffer from bad headaches.

I suffer from pains in my body.

I get colds/flu on a regular basis.

My muscles and joints constantly feel stiff.

I usually feel tired and exhausted in the morning.

I usually have great difficulty in falling asleep/staying asleep.

I often shake or tremble.

I often break out in a cold sweat.
I generally keep a low profile due to fear.
I wish that I was back in my home country.
I am extremely shy or sensitive.
Homesickness bothers me.
I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new foods.
I feel sad living in unfamiliar surroundings.
I fear for my personal safety: my different cultural background.
I prefer my own company.
I usually feel unhappy and depressed.
Worrying continually gets me down.
It makes me angry to have anyone tell me what to do.
People often annoy or irritate me.
SOCIAL-STRESS

- 0.191 I feel shy when meeting new people.
- 0.390 I feel excluded from social activities.
- 0.286 I feel alone.
- 0.491 I feel excluded on the basis of race alone.
- 0.355 Different Social activities
- 0.326 I feel intimidated to participate in social activities.
- 0.598 Others are biased toward me.
- 0.490 Others don't appreciate my cultural values.
- 0.437 I am treated differently because of my appearance.
- 0.428 People insult me verbally.
- 0.484 I am uncomfortable with new cultural values
- 0.535 I feel my status in this society is low due to my cultural background.
CULTURAL IDENTITY & BELONGING

- .039 - I like to choose a best friend who is someone of my own ethnicity.
- .167 - I feel it is important to maintain my cultural identity.
- .231 - I feel good about associating with people from my ethnicity.

- I feel a sense of belonging here (to a community)
REFLECTIONS & DISCUSSION

- Self-report data – may not get accurate info
- Characteristics of sample
  - Canadian & International
- Characteristics of Measures
  - Some only meaningful for Internationals
- Acculturative vs ‘Everyday’ Stress
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Further examine longitudinal features of stress and adjustment (see Lowe et al.)
- Development of “student stress measure” to tease out features of acculturative vs. everyday stress
- Examine internal vs. external migrants
THANK-YOU!
REFERENCES


