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NATIVITY AND YEARS IN THE RECEIVING CULTURE AS MARKERS OF ACCULTURATION IN ETHNIC ENCLAVES

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Abstract

The current study was conducted to ascertain the validity of two commonly used markers of acculturation (nativity and years in the receiving culture) in an enclave context. Relationships between these markers and a bidimensional measure of acculturation were examined in a convenience sample of Hispanic immigrant adolescents and their caregivers in Miami. Nativity was examined using adolescent-reported data; approximately half of the youth were U.S.-born and half foreign-born, but all of the caregivers were foreign-born. Years in the receiving culture was examined using both adolescent and caregiver data. Results indicated that nativity was significantly associated with adoption of receiving-culture practices, with a small to moderate effect size. Years in the receiving culture was significantly associated with adoption of receiving-culture practices only for adolescent girls and for female caregivers who immigrated as youth. Neither nativity nor years in the receiving culture explained even moderate amounts of variance in retention or loss of culture-of-origin practices.

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Keywords

acculturation; ethnic enclaves; nativity; immigrant; Hispanic

Acculturation has become a recognized area of study (Chun, Organista, & Marín, 2003). An unprecedented number of immigrants from developing countries are settling in industrialized nations. In many cases, the practices endorsed by immigrants' countries of origin are markedly different from the practices of their new receiving societies. Acculturation is assumed to occur as immigrants typically (a) selectively adopt receiving-culture practices and (b) simultaneously retain or relinquish selected practices from their cultures of origin (Berry, 1997).

Research suggests that acculturation is a complex phenomenon comprised of multiple processes (Phinney & Flores, 2002), and a number of definitions of acculturation have been advanced (Hunt, Schneider, & Comer, 2004). In response to this complexity, some researchers have elected to use demographic variables as markers of acculturation. Two of the most commonly used markers of acculturation are nativity (i.e., foreign-born versus born in the receiving society; Harker, 2001; Kao, 1999) and number of years spent in the receiving culture (Coatsworth et al., 2002; Gfroerer & Tan, 2003). However, it is possible that the accuracy of these markers may vary according to both the definition of acculturation used and the receiving context under study. In the present study, we operationalized acculturation in terms of two processes: acquisition of receiving-culture practices and retention versus relinquishment of heritage-culture practices (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001).

The nature of the community to which immigrants acculturate may affect the degree to which individuals acquire receiving-culture practices and relinquish those of the culture of origin. In communities where the receiving culture predominates, three patterns would be expected to be observed. First, immigrants may be most likely to adopt receiving-culture practices and to relinquish those from the culture of origin (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006). Second, contact with receiving-culture individuals and being born in the receiving culture have been associated with loss of culture-of-origin practices (e.g., Phinney & Flores, 2002). Third, years spent in the receiving culture may be related to adoption of receiving-culture values and practices (Kwak & Berry, 2001). However, it is not known whether these same patterns would emerge in ethnic enclaves where the culture of origin predominates. Indeed, a search of the PsycInfo psychological literature database from January 1983 through June 2005 yielded no studies examining the extent to which immigrants in ethnic enclaves adopt practices from the new receiving culture and retain or relinquish the practices from the heritage culture. The use of demographic markers of acculturation is dependent on the relationships of these markers to acculturation processes themselves (Phinney, 2003).

In a community where culture-of-origin values are more heavily endorsed, it is possible that retention of culture-of-origin practices may not (a) decline with greater numbers of years spent in the receiving society or (b) differ between foreign-born individuals and those born in the receiving society. In enclave contexts, some immigrants "remain isolated [from the receiving culture] into the third or even later generations" (Phinney & Flores, 2002, p. 322). As a result, in enclaves where the culture of origin predominates, although receiving-culture media influences may promote acquisition of receiving-culture practices (Stilling, 1997), the enclave may serve to counter the effects of the receiving culture on loss of culture-of-origin practices. Nativity and years in the receiving culture may therefore not be related to retention of culture-of-origin practices in enclave contexts.

In addition, years spent in the receiving culture may not be related to adoption of receiving-culture practices for individuals who immigrate as adults to enclave communities oriented

toward the culture of origin. Although no published research has examined this issue directly, indirect evidence may be available to support such a conclusion. For example, Mutchler and Brallier (1999) found that older Hispanics in the United States, particularly those living in Hispanic enclaves, tend to have poor English proficiency despite residing in the United States for many years. As a result, for individuals who immigrate as adults to enclave contexts, increasing length of residence in the receiving culture may not correspond to increasing endorsement of receiving-culture practices.

The present study was intended to investigate, in the Miami Hispanic ethnic enclave, the relationship of nativity and years in the receiving culture to adoption of receiving-culture practices and to retention of culture-of-origin practices. The present study builds on previous work (e.g., Calzada & Eyberg, 2002; Phinney & Flores, 2002; Ryder et al., 2000) evaluating the use of these markers of acculturation in receiving-culture contexts. The present study, therefore, provided an opportunity to examine the extent to which nativity and years in the receiving culture are applicable as markers of acculturation in the Miami Hispanic context. The applicability of the potential markers was evaluated both (a) in terms of the presence or absence of statistically significant relationships between the markers and measures of acculturation and (b) in terms of the amount of shared variability inherent in these relationships. The present study also examined the extent to which the relationships of these markers to measures of acculturation differed by gender and by age at immigration (i.e., child/adolescent versus adult).

The case of Hispanic immigrants in Miami may provide an appropriate enclave context in which to examine the present research questions. The cultural context of Miami is particularly conducive to retention of Spanish and Hispanic cultural practices (Stepick & Stepick, 2002). Miami is the only American city where an immigrant group—in this case, Cubans and Cuban Americans—holds the majority of political and economic power (Croucher, 2002). This power, coupled with the influx of Central and South Americans to Miami in the past 20 years or so, has transformed greater Miami into an enclave city where, in many cases, adaptation to the receiving (in this case, American) society is optional (Huntington, 2004). Huntington (2004) has argued that such conditions may soon be present in the southwestern United States, particularly California and Texas, suggesting that Miami may represent a model for what other regions of the country might look like in the future. Moreover, given the heavy influx of ethnic, cultural, and religious minority groups to other postindustrial countries (van de Vijver & Phalet, 2004), such enclaves may begin to appear elsewhere in the world as well.

HYPOTHESES

Three hypotheses were advanced for the present study. First, we hypothesized that U.S.-born participants would endorse American cultural practices to a significantly greater extent than would foreign-born participants but that endorsement of Hispanic cultural practices would not differ between immigrant and U.S.-born participants. Second, we hypothesized that when individuals are not separated by age at immigration, the number of years spent in the United States would be moderately and positively related to adoption of American cultural practices but unrelated to retention of Hispanic cultural practices. Third, we hypothesized that for participants who immigrated as children or adolescents, years in the United States would be related to adoption of American practices; but for individuals who immigrated as adults, years in the United States would be unrelated to adoption of American practices.

METHOD

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURES

A convenience sample of 157 eighth-grade Hispanic immigrant adolescents and their primary caregivers (314 participants in total) was used for the present study. Participants were drawn from a larger study (Pantin et al., 2003) evaluating the efficacy of a substance-abuse prevention program for Hispanic immigrant adolescents. Primary caregivers were all immigrants from Hispanic countries, with the majority from Cuba (40%) or Nicaragua (21%) and smaller percentages from Colombia (8%), Honduras (8%), Guatemala (6%), Puerto Rico (5%), and other Hispanic countries (12%). All caregivers were born in their countries of origin, and 52% of adolescents were foreign-born. Caregivers had resided in the United States for a mean of 14.0 years ($SD = 10.3$, range: 0–42), and foreign-born adolescents had resided in the United States for a mean of 5.8 years ($SD = 3.7$, range: 0–14). Of the adolescents, 62% were male and 38% were female. The majority of participating caregivers were mothers (90%), with the remainder being fathers (7%) or grandmothers (3%). The predominance of female caregivers in a family-based intervention sample is consistent with the distribution of gender roles in many Hispanic cultures, in which women assume most child-rearing tasks (Gomez & Marin, 1996). To avoid confounding caregiver gender with tests of hypotheses, and because there were so few male caregivers in the sample, only female caregivers ($n = 146$) were included in analyses using caregiver data.

For the larger study, participants were recruited from schools in heavily Hispanic areas of Miami. Study procedures were approved by the University of Miami Institutional Review Board, the Miami-Dade Public School Board, and all three participating middle schools. More details on study procedures can be found in Pantin et al. (2003).

MEASURES

Demographics—Caregivers and adolescents were asked to indicate their age, gender, countries of birth, and the number of years they had resided in the United States.

Acculturation—The Bicultural Involvement Questionnaire (Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980), as modified by Birman (1998), is a 42-item measure reflecting a definition of acculturation as consisting of adoption of receiving-culture practices and retention of heritage-culture practices. The measure, therefore, consists of two separate subscales (Americanism and Hispanicism). The Americanism scale assesses use of English and affinity for American food, entertainment, and music. The Hispanicism scale assesses use of Spanish and affinity for Hispanic food, entertainment, and music. In the present sample, Cronbach's alpha values were as follows: adolescent Americanism, .96; adolescent Hispanicism, .96; caregiver Americanism, .81; and caregiver Hispanicism, .94.

The Bicultural Involvement Scale was originally validated by Szapocznik et al. (1980) using a mostly Cuban sample. Birman (1998) has provided further validation evidence for this measure with a more diverse sample of Hispanic immigrants. In these studies, the measure has been shown to be internally consistent and to relate to comparison variables (e.g., ethnic identity, cultural competence) in theoretically consistent ways. The domains of language, food, celebrations, media, and entertainment are widely used in measures of behavioral acculturation (Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003).

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

U.S.-born participants will endorse American cultural practices to a significantly greater extent than foreign-born participants, but endorsement of Hispanic cultural practices will not differ between immigrant generations. We used adolescent data to test Hypothesis 1. We conducted a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to examine differences in adolescent Americanism and Hispanicism scores by nativity. We entered gender as an additional independent variable given the importance of gender differences in acculturation research (see Phinney, 2003). The MANOVA produced a significant main effect of nativity, Wilks's $\lambda = .86$, $F(2, 152) = 12.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$; and a significant main effect of gender, Wilks's $\lambda = .90$, $F(2, 152) = 8.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$. The Nativity \times Gender interaction was not significant. Significant univariate effects of nativity emerged for Americanism, $F(1, 153) = 20.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$; and Hispanicism, $F(1, 153) = 5.09$, $p < .03$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Item-mean scores on the Americanism scale (U.S.-born, $M = 4.31$, $SD = 2.18$; foreign-born, $M = 3.87$, $SD = 2.76$) were higher in U.S.-born adolescents, whereas item-mean scores on the Hispanicism scale (U.S.-born, $M = 3.02$, $SD = 3.51$; foreign-born, $M = 3.35$, $SD = 3.49$) were higher in foreign-born adolescents. A significant univariate effect of gender emerged only for Hispanicism, $F(1, 153) = 13.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. Item-mean scores for Hispanicism were higher in girls ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 3.30$) than in boys ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 3.83$). The univariate effect of gender on Americanism scores was not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 2

For foreign-born Hispanics, number of years in the United States will be positively related to adoption of American cultural practices but unrelated to retention or loss of Hispanic cultural practices. For female caregivers and for foreign-born adolescents, bivariate correlations were computed between years in the United States, on one hand, and Americanism and Hispanicism scores, on the other. Correlations for adolescents were computed separately by gender. For caregivers, number of years in the United States was significantly correlated with Americanism, $r = .52$, $p < .001$; and Hispanicism, $r = -.20$, $p < .02$. For foreign-born adolescents, number of years in the United States was significantly correlated with Americanism for girls, $r = .50$, $p < .001$; but not for boys, $r = .17$, *ns*. Number of years in the United States was not significantly correlated with Hispanicism for either foreign-born girls, $r = -.15$; or foreign-born boys, $r = -.07$.

Hypothesis 3

For participants who immigrated as children or adolescents, years in the United States will be related to adoption of American practices; but for individuals who immigrated as adults, years in the United States will not be related to adoption of American practices. Caregiver data (females only) were used to test this hypothesis. To ascertain whether the relationship between caregivers' years in the United States and Americanism scores was moderated by the ages at which caregivers immigrated, we split the sample according to whether caregivers entered the United States before or after age 21 (the sample median and a widely accepted demarcation of adulthood in the United States). The mean number of years in the United States was 24.60 for parents who immigrated prior to age 21 and 14.85 for those who immigrated at age 21 or later. To avoid confounding age of immigration with number of years in the United States, in the test of Hypothesis 3, we matched the two subsamples on number of years in the United States. We examined the frequency distributions for both subsamples and identified the range of years in the United States (10 to 38) that was common to both subsamples. Only participants whose length of stay in the United States fell within this range were included in the test of Hypothesis 3 ($n = 91$; 45 who immigrated before age 21 and 46 who immigrated at age 21 or later).

For female caregivers who had entered the United States before age 21, number of years in the United States was significantly and positively associated with Americanism, $r = .50, p < .001$. However, for female caregivers who had entered the United States at or after age 21, years in the United States was not significantly related to Americanism, $r = .19, ns$. When we reconducted this analysis as a Spearman rank-order correlation to control for variance differences between the two age-of-immigration groups, the results were similar: immigration before age 21, $\rho = .42, p < .005$; immigration at age 21 or older, $\rho = .21, ns$.

DISCUSSION

The present study was undertaken to evaluate the relationships of two commonly used markers of acculturation—nativity and years in the receiving culture—and measures of acculturation in an ethnic enclave. Although prior studies (e.g., Calzada & Eyberg, 2002; Ryder et al., 2000) have found these markers to be significantly and moderately related to both adoption of receiving-culture practices and retention of culture-of-origin practices, these studies were conducted in settings where the receiving culture was dominant. By contrast, the present study was conducted in Hispanic ethnic enclaves in Miami, where the culture of origin (an amalgamation of Hispanic cultures) and the immigrant language (Spanish) were dominant.

The present findings indicated that nativity was significantly related to adoption of receiving-culture practices for both male and female adolescents but that the strength of this relationship was moderate (12% shared variability). We were not able to test this hypothesis with adult caregivers because all caregivers were immigrants. Years spent in the receiving culture was significantly related to adoption of receiving-culture practices for females who immigrated as children or adolescents (with approximately 25% shared variability) but not for males who immigrated as children or adolescents nor for females who immigrated as adults. Examining the scatterplots¹ for the adolescent correlations indicated that boys tended to report high levels of Americanism even after only a small number of years in the United States, whereas for girls, Americanism levels appeared to increase in tandem with greater numbers of years in the United States. Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines, and Aranalde (1978) found a similar pattern in a sample of mostly Cuban immigrant adolescents in Miami. Similarly, for female caregivers who immigrated as children or adolescents, Americanism levels appeared to increase in tandem with greater numbers of years in the United States, whereas for caregivers who immigrated as adults, Americanism levels tended to be fairly low regardless of length of stay in the United States.

The pattern of findings obtained in the present study suggest three primary conclusions. First, although nativity was significantly related to adoption of receiving-culture practices, the amount of variability explained by the marker (12%) appears to be too small for nativity to be used to index this dimension of acculturation in ethnic enclaves. Second, the relationship between years in the receiving culture and adoption of receiving-culture practices differed both by gender and by age at immigration. For females who immigrated as children or adolescents (i.e., prior to age 21), this relationship was moderately strong (25% shared variance), but for males and for females who immigrated as adults, the relationship was nonsignificant and explained less than 5% of the variance in adoption of receiving-culture practices. Third, nativity was significantly related to retention of heritage-culture practices in adolescents, and the number of years spent in the receiving society was significantly related to retention of heritage-culture practices in caregivers. However, neither of these correlations explained more than 4% of variability.

¹Available from the senior author.

Broadly, the present findings suggest that in ethnic enclaves, nativity is, at best, a rough marker for adoption of receiving-culture practices and that results obtained using nativity may be quite different from the results that would be obtained by directly measuring adoption of receiving-culture practices. Moreover, in ethnic enclaves, the use of years spent in the receiving culture as a marker for adoption of receiving-culture practices may be most defensible for females who immigrated at young ages, but the use of such a marker with males or with females who immigrated as adults may not be warranted. Finally, neither of these markers would appear to adequately represent retention of heritage-culture practices.

These findings, especially the final conclusion, are inconsistent with previous research indicating that in contexts oriented toward the receiving culture, years spent in the receiving culture (Calzada & Eyberg, 2002; Ryder et al., 2000) and the number of generations born in the receiving society (Phinney & Flores, 2002) were significantly and inversely related to retention of culture-of-origin practices. The divergence between the present findings and those from prior research may therefore be taken to represent the different ways in which majority-culture and ethnic-enclave communities may influence the relationships between the proposed markers and the underlying acculturation processes they are used to index.

The finding that age at immigration moderated the relationship between years in the receiving culture and adult female immigrants' adoption of receiving-culture practices appears to represent an advancement in the evaluation of markers of acculturation. However, two important aspects of this issue remain unaddressed. First, given that we were able to examine the moderating effect of age at immigration only in women, it is important for future research to examine this effect with men to ascertain the gender-specificity of the finding. This is especially important given that in the present study, gender moderated the relationship between years in the receiving culture and adoption of receiving-culture ideals in adolescents. Second, to provide an estimate of the extent to which the moderating effect of age at immigration is more broadly generalizable or is specific to ethnic enclaves, future studies should examine the extent to which age of immigration also moderates the relationship between years spent in the receiving culture and adoption of receiving-culture practices in settings where the receiving culture is dominant.

The present results are consistent with Phinney (2003), who argued that demographic markers represent a unidimensional, rather than bidimensional, model of acculturation (i.e., adoption of receiving-culture practices). The present results suggest that the adequacy of nativity, years in the receiving culture, and other markers of acculturation are likely to vary based on the receiving context as well as on characteristics of the immigrants themselves (e.g., gender, age at immigration).

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