



Clustering Methods of Acculturation

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Abstract

The purpose of our study was to determine if acculturation variables from different acculturation domains form empirically extracted acculturation clusters. The findings of the present study lend additional support to the use of clustering methods as a way of including multiple domains of acculturation, thereby gaining a more comprehensive understanding of acculturation and its connection with psychosocial adjustment. The results also reinforce prior research findings that integration, or biculturalism, is an adaptive acculturation strategy.

Keywords: biological active compounds; subarctic origin; medicinal plant

Introduction

The objective of our study was to determine whether different combinations of acculturation variables from different acculturation domains form empirically obtained groups [based on Berry's (1997) model], and whether these groups are related to different levels of life satisfaction in university students who belong to the first and second generation of immigrants. One hundred and twenty-two students attending a university in the Midwestern United States (70% female), from more than 20 different countries of origin, completed an online questionnaire. Hierarchical cluster analyses with Ward's method and a K-means analysis revealed four acculturation groups that were named: (1) bicultural attitudes, (2) bicultural practices and ethnic identity, (3) American practices, and (4) ethnic practices. Participants in the two groups most similar to Berry's (1997) integration acculturation category (bicultural attitudes; bicultural practices; and ethnic identity) reported greater life satisfaction than participants in the group most similar to Berry's category of separation (ethnic practices). The results of this study provide an additional argument in favor of using clustering methods as a way to include multiple acculturation domains, thereby gaining a broader understanding of acculturation and its connection to psychosocial adjustment. The results also reinforce that biculturalism is an adaptive strategy.

One of the most significant limitations to our study is that we did not have a measure of U.S. identity, which precluded us from providing a more detailed interpretation of the acculturative profiles. Another limitation to our study is that all of the participants were attending a Midwestern university at the time of data collection; this limits our ability to generalize our findings to people living in other geographic regions of the United States. Further, 70% of the participants were female, precluding conclusions regarding males. Because the present study is cross-sectional, changes in acculturation over time cannot be documented. Further, all of the data come from a single source; therefore, untapped subject variables may have contributed to the observed relationships among the variables.

Although most studies of acculturation among first- and second-generation immigrant college students have focused on students from a single ethnic group (e.g., Lee, Yoon, & Lui-Tom, 2006), there are a few studies, like ours, that have examined ethnically and multiculturally diverse samples (e.g., Schwartz,

Waterman, et al., in press). When a multi-domain approach is taken to both the conceptualization and measurement of acculturation, the measures utilized are typically applicable to any and all groups (Schwartz et al., 2010). One suggested direction for future research in this area is the inclusion of additional cultural (e.g., collective identity) and demographic (e.g., socioeconomic status) domains as descriptors in cluster analyses, as this will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the link between acculturation clusters and psychosocial adjustment. Another suggestion for future research is the inclusion of additional measures of psychosocial adjustment.

The findings of our study lend support to the use of clustering methods as a way of including multiple domains of acculturation, thereby gaining a more comprehensive understanding of acculturation and its link with psychosocial adjustment. Acculturation cannot be understood based solely on background factors such as language use. Acculturation is a multi-faceted, nuanced process, and it is therefore important that methodological approaches are used that take this into account.

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