Acculturation, Acculturative Stress, and Depression among Haitians in the United States
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Abstract
Acculturation and Acculturative stress have been shown to be important factors in understanding the mental health of immigrants and other ethnically diverse groups. This study is the first examination of the role of acculturation, acculturative stress, and depression in the Haitian population residing in the United States. Results from the study revealed that age, gender, and acculturative stress accounted for significant variance in depression levels.

Literature Review
Acculturation is the extent to which a person identifies with his or her group of origin and its culture or with the mainstream dominant culture. 

- Studies have shown a relationship between mental health problems and low levels of acculturation, that is, retaining the culture of origin amidst the demands of a new culture.

- Highly acculturated individuals may also experience stress, such as the challenges of adjusting to the cultural values of the dominant society.

Acculturative Stress refers to the stress that an individual experiences as they move away from their country of origin to another. 

- High levels of acculturative stress may place individuals at risk for developing depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, suicidal ideation, and identity confusion. 

Haitians: There are nearly half a million foreign-born Haitians and more than half a million second-generation Haitians living in the U.S. , yet there are no known studies examining acculturation, acculturative stress, and mental health for Haitians in the U.S.

Project Focus
1) Report descriptive information about acculturation and acculturative stress of Haitian immigrants.
2) Explore relationships between acculturation, acculturative stress and depression among Haitian immigrants.
3) Determine whether acculturation and acculturative stress predict depression for Haitian immigrants.

Methods
Participants: A total of 149 Rwandan and Haitian participants completed the Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE) and the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D).  Subjects were recruited from Haitian Community Centers, churches, and local businesses in New England. Measures were administered as a semi-structured interview. All subjects were debriefed and received a gift card.

Measures:
- The Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE)
- Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)

Results
There was a medium size correlation between acculturation, acculturative stress and depression r=.33, p<.01.

Acculturation stress.
Time spent in the US and gender explained 14.8% of the variance in depression. Participants who resided in the United States less than six years reported higher levels of acculturative stress and depression compared to those who had resided for longer than six years. The levels of reported acculturative stress and depression were compared by T-test using CES-D and SAFE total scores. Pearson’s Correlations checked the relationship between CES-D and SAFE scores in participants. Linear regression analysis examined the relationship between CES-D scores and duration of time in United States. Regression analysis was also used to examine the relationship between SAFE scores and duration of time in the United States. Finally, amount of time in the US and depression levels were regress on acculturation stress levels. One participant was excluded for incomplete data.

Procedure
Subjects were recruited from Haitian Community Centers, churches, and local businesses in New England. Measures were administered as a semi-structured interview. All subjects were debriefed and received a gift card.

DATA ANALYSIS:
The data was checked and found to have adequate reliability, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity. T-tests examined the difference in Haitians who had resided in the United States less than 6 years to those who had resided for longer than 6 years. The levels of reported acculturative stress and depression were compared by T-test using CES-D and SAFE total scores. Pearson’s Correlations checked the relationship between CES-D and SAFE scores in participants. Linear regression analysis examined the relationship between CES-D scores and duration of time in United States. Regression analysis was also used to examine the relationship between SAFE scores and duration of time in the United States. Finally, amount of time in the US and depression levels were regress on acculturation stress levels. One participant was excluded for incomplete data.

Findings:
- Acculturative stress and depression are positively correlated, both decreasing with time in country.
- Men and women experience this relationship differently, with women reporting higher depression and men higher acculturative stress.
- As age increased, depression scores decreased. This proves contrary to a growing trend focusing on geriatric depression, and points to possible cultural variables in the perception and social support of the geriatric population.
- High levels of acculturative stress, occurring at a younger age, are more likely to be related to negative mental health outcomes for Haitians.
- Participant’s place of birth, family place of birth, length of time in the U.S., primary language, and language spoken at home indicate that Haitians maintain many aspects of their culture, while transitioning and establishing themselves in the U.S. for substantial durations.
- Item analysis indicated little pressure to assimilate, little or no stress about culture.

Discussion
- Acculturative research often makes generalizations about cultural or ethnic groups without attending to within-group differences. Indeed, the results of this study point to the need to consider many variables, such as gender, age, nativity, language, time in country, and cultural strengths in reaching an understanding of the acculturation experience, and mental health, of Haitians.

- Haiti immigrants possess many strengths, such as high social support, that mitigate mental health outcomes and cause less stress assimilation.

Implications:
Acculturation research often makes generalizations about cultural or ethnic groups without attending to within-group differences. Indeed, the results of this study point to the need to consider many variables, such as gender, age, nativity, language, time in country, and cultural strengths in reaching an understanding of the acculturation experience, and mental health, of Haitians.

- This calls for culturally appropriate assessment, conceptualization, and treatment that attends to the role of acculturation and acculturative stress in Haitian mental health and provides an important area for future research.

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