The first in the family: Academic acculturation stress and first generation students

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Acculturation

• “When groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, 1936, p. 149).”
Acculturation Stress

- Distress associated with the acculturative process
First Generation Students

- Undergraduates whose parents did not attend or did not complete an undergraduate degree
- Can experience acculturation stress when transitioning to college
  - Called Academic Acculturation Stress (AAS)
Why Do We Care?

- Approximately 45% of UNT’s student population is composed of first generation students.
- First generation students are more likely to leave college without earning a degree (Ishitani, 2003).
- By examining AAS, it is possible to understand what first generation undergraduates are facing and use the information to help them succeed.
The Present Study

- **The purpose**
  - To compare amounts of social support and psychological well-being in first generation students and later generation students

- **Hypotheses**
  - First generation students will report:
    1. ↓ levels of social support
    2. ↑ levels of depression
    3. ↓ levels of satisfaction with life
Methods

• Participants
  ▫ 1,699 undergraduates from the University of North Texas

Gender and Generation Status

- Non-first Generation
  - Males, 465
  - Females, 855
- First Generation
  - Males, 114
  - Females, 265
Methods

• Measures
  ▫ Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988)
    • 3 Subscales
    • Social support from friends
    • Social support from family
    • Social support from a significant other
Methods

• Measures
  ▫ *Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology - Self Report* (QIDS-SR; Rush et al., 2003)
    • Used to assess depression
  ▫ *Quality of Life Enjoyment and Satisfaction* (Q-LES-Q; Endicott, Nee, Harrison, & Blumenthal, 1993)
    • Measures perceived quality of life
Methods

• Procedure
  ▫ Participants completed these measures as part of an online mass testing session
Results

- 2X2 Analysis of Variance
- Bonferroni correction
  - $\alpha = .0083$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>First Generation Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Non-first Generation Mean (SD)</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Support (friends)</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>21.45 (5.7)</td>
<td>22.16 (5.3)</td>
<td>7.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support (family)</td>
<td>1,698</td>
<td>20.86 (6.2)</td>
<td>22.16 (5.3)</td>
<td>13.74***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support (significant other)</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>22.09 (6.5)</td>
<td>22.62 (6.0)</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>1,647</td>
<td>6.87 (4.6)</td>
<td>6.43 (4.2)</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Life</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>56.45 (10.7)</td>
<td>57.61 (9.7)</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** *p < .01, *** *p < .001
Results

**Depression**

\[
F_{\text{interaction}} = 8.00 \\
p < .0083
\]

**Satisfaction with Life**

\[
F_{\text{interaction}} = 8.58 \\
p < .0083
\]
Discussion

- Hypotheses
  - First generation students will report:
    1. ↓ levels of social support
       ✓ Social support from friends
       ✓ Social support from family
       ✗ Social support from a significant other
    2. ↑ levels of depression
       ✗ In males
       ✓ In females
    3. ↓ levels of satisfaction with life
       ✗ In males
       ✓ In females
Discussion

• These results indicated that the combination of being female and first generation had the strongest relationship with psychological well-being.
• Previous research suggests that women with early on-set depression have lower educational attainment (Brendt et al., 2000).
Applications

- Retention and counseling programs for first generation students
  - Aiding in academic acculturation
  - Realizing gender has an effect on AAS
  - Providing additional social support
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References


