Candidate: Hartini Abdul Rahman
For the degree of: Doctor of Philosophy
Department: Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

Title: Bicultural Identity Integration and Individual Resilience as Moderators of Acculturation Stress and Psychological Wellbeing

Committee: Dr. Joseph Morris, Chair
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Time/Place: Thursday, July 6, 2017
4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
3335 Sangren Hall

This research builds upon scholarship that explores the unique immigration-related experiences of self-identified Asian bicultural immigrants born in and outside of the United States of America (USA), complementing other research on immigrants in the country. Previous research suggests immigrants experience multiple challenges that contribute to acculturation stress, which in turn takes a toll on their psychological wellbeing. This study aims to examine the impact of personal and socio-cultural factors on the psychological wellbeing of Asian and Asian American bicultural individuals. Based on the existing biculturalism literature, it was hypothesized that the strength of identification with both cultures (heritage/origin and mainstream/host cultures) are positively related to levels of psychological wellbeing and negatively related with levels of psychological (over)
distress. It was also hypothesized that when faced with stressful events, presence of high individual resilience responses is positively related to higher levels of psychological wellbeing. Additionally, a relationship between acculturation stress, bicultural identity integration, resilience and psychological wellbeing was anticipated based on current literature.

In this study, a series of correlational and hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses were employed to test the influence of immigrant generational status, acculturation stress, bicultural identity integration, and individual resilience on psychological wellbeing of 156 self-identified bicultural Asian and Asian American students and affiliated members of a midwestern university. The study also sought to determine if bicultural identity integration and individual resilience moderated the relationship between acculturation stress and psychological wellbeing. Finally, this study examined whether immigrant generational status moderated the influence of individual resilience and bicultural identity integration across the two immigrant samples.

Results indicated that between foreign-born and U.S.-born individuals, foreign-born individuals reported greater acculturation stress and significantly lower psychological wellbeing compared to U.S.-born sample in this study. The relationship between acculturation stress and psychological wellbeing was found to be inversely related; as acculturation stress increased, psychological wellbeing declined. Meanwhile, resilience and bicultural identity integration (harmony and blendedness) were found to be predictive of higher psychological wellbeing. As resilience, BII-harmony, and BII-blendedness increase, psychological wellbeing also increases. However, there was no difference in the strength of the relationship between psychological wellbeing, resilience and BII-blendedness across generational statuses. Additionally, perceptions of BII-harmony strongly affected the psychological wellbeing of foreign-born individuals only.

Contrary to expectations, resilience and bicultural identity integration (harmony and blendedness) did not moderate the relationship between acculturation stress and psychological wellbeing for the total sample. The results also revealed a positive relationship between bicultural identity integration and individual resilience. Limitations of the study are discussed and implications for future research and practice are explored.