An Integrative Approach to Biculturalism: Analysis of Acculturative Strategies' Effects on Asian Adolescents' Psychosocial Well-Being and Ethnic Identity Development

The formation of ethnic identity during critical developmental periods (i.e., adolescence) is a vital process in establishing an individual’s self-concept. Due to increased Asian immigration rates and their unique title as a “model minority,” Asian Americans are a specific population of interest when studying the effect of acculturation strategies on psychosocial well-being and ethnic identity development as they integrate into Western society. This report gathered findings across six different research studies with a sample composed mainly of Asian high school and college students. Consistent with previous research, marginalized acculturative strategy users suffered the worst psychological adaptive outcomes, reported the lowest overall quality of life, and expressed the lowest ethnic identification with both the heritage and dominant culture. Separated acculturative strategy users experienced feelings of confusion when attempting integration into the dominant culture and reported higher levels of acculturative stress, thus leading them to stay connected mainly to their heritage culture. Assimilated acculturative strategy users are also at risk for negative developmental outcomes; however, this risk increases as these users’ self-concept becomes increasingly dependent on their acceptance into the dominant culture. Finally, achieving bicultural competence through use of an integrated acculturative strategy leads to the most positive psychosocial outcomes including resilience, higher self-esteem, social connectedness, etc. While the findings from this report are a formative step to understanding the Asian American experience, the gap between research and policy changes need to be bridged.