

Acculturation strategies and substance use among foreign born college students in the United States

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BACKGROUND

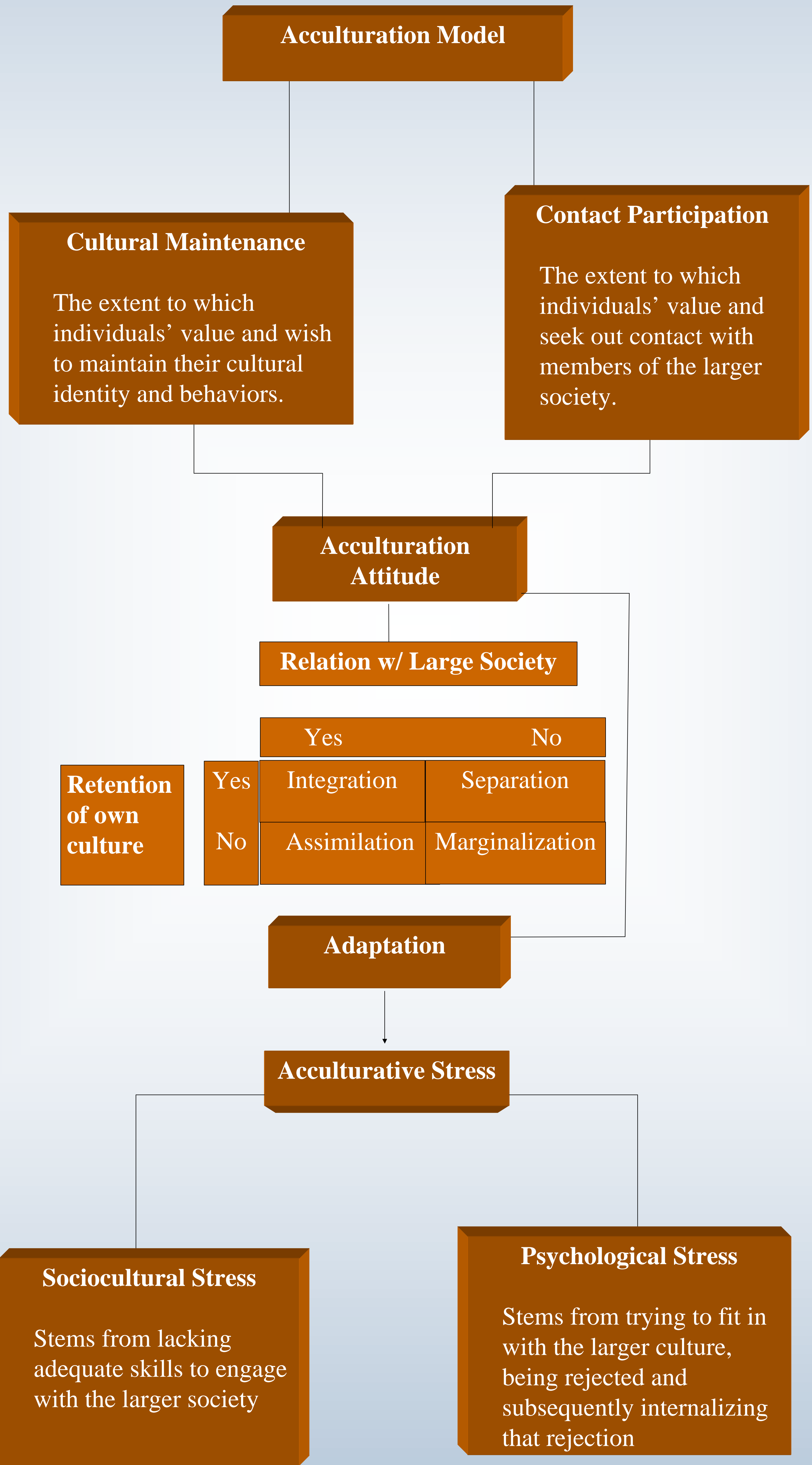
- Research has suggested that immigrants are less likely to use alcohol and illicit drugs than native-born youths. Further, substance use among immigrants has been shown to increase with longer lengths of residency in the U.S. (Gfroerer et al, 2003).
- The results suggest that there might be something about the American culture that encourages substance experimentation and use at a higher rate than in other places. Thus greater assimilation to the U.S. culture has been held accountable for higher level of substance use among immigrant populations.
- This idea reflects a unidirectional view of acculturation that assumes that increased contact with mainstream culture will always result in low cultural maintenance.
- Berry (1998) offers an alternative model of acculturation that is multidirectional. According to this model, an immigrant group can adopt new cultural practices without losing attachment to their cultural heritage. Berry conceptualizes the process of acculturation as having multiple potential outcomes or strategies (Integration, Assimilation, Separation, and Marginalization).

PRESENT STUDY

- This study will examine the association between acculturation and drug use adopting Berry’s acculturation framework.
- This study will adopt the model that drug use is a function of acculturation process and stress.
- The literature defines two acculturation outcomes, conceptualized as behavioral shift and acculturation stress (Berry, 1998, 2005).
- Behavioral shift occurs when immigrants find the acculturation experience easy and make behavioral changes to best fit the larger society.
- Acculturative Stress occurs when immigrants experience the difficulties of meeting the demands of their environment.
- Acculturative stress can be either psychological or sociocultural (refer to fig. 1).
 - Integration (low) psychological stress (low) sociocultural stress
 - Separation (low) psychological stress (high) sociocultural stress
 - Assimilation (high) psychological Stress (low) sociocultural stress

- In this study psychological stress will be assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale and a perceived discrimination scale.

BERRY’S ACCULTURATION MODEL



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HYPOTHESES

- The acculturation strategy that results in greater level of psychological stress will be more associated with drug use than strategies resulting in greater sociocultural stress.
- Integration will be the optimal acculturation strategy because it provides the bridge for two cultures to come together. Students who choose this strategy are expected to experience lower level of psychological and sociocultural stress and therefore have the lowest frequency of substance use.
- Because of the maximal involvement with mainstream culture but minimal interaction with native culture, assimilation reduces sociocultural stress, but it increases psychological stress; therefore, this strategy is expected to have the highest frequency of substance use.
- Separation results in greater sociocultural stress because of minimal societal integration, however, the close ties to the traditional culture reduce psychological stress; therefore, this strategy is expected to have the second lowest frequency of substance use.

METHOD

- The current study will be using an internet survey that would be open to foreign-born college students from Wesleyan University and other schools.
- The survey will be hosted on Wesleyan University’s server. Potential participants will be recruited via e-mail, Facebook, and word of mouth.
- The survey items consist of Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale (SMAS), the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, Perceived discrimination Scale and a substance use scale developed using materials from the National Survey on Drug use and Health, 2005.

LITERATURE CITED

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Gfroerer, Joseph C., Tan, Lucilla, (2003). Substance use among foreign-born youths in the United State: does the length of residence matter? *American Journal of Public Health*, vol.93 (11), pg 1892-1895