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A Narrative Review of Protective Factors that Predict Enculturation Processes for Latinx Individuals in the U.S.

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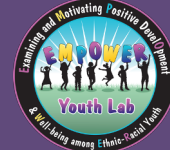
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A Narrative Review of Protective Factors that Predict Enculturation Processes for Latinx Individuals in the U.S.



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Abstract

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the rise of immigration led the Latinx community to experience the largest population growth amongst all ethnic-racial groups (Sanchez et al., 2012). Enculturation is the process of preserving heritage cultural values while enduring the influence of the current, surrounding culture (Schwartz et al., 2013). Enculturation is a subcomponent in the broad spectrum of acculturation, the process through which the introduction of two differing cultures induces cultural changes (Rodriguez et al., 2002). While current research has focused on the protective factors involved in the acculturative process, minimal research has centered on the protective factors in *enculturation* amongst the Latinx community. The aim of the current narrative review was to identify the protective factors (e.g., language, values, generational differences, group membership) in existing work that have been associated with enculturation of Latinx U.S. citizens. Implications will discuss the promotion of social awareness within the Latinx community.

Background Significance

Enculturation is the socialization process of an individual's native culture, which poses as a concrete structure throughout generations (Alamilla, Kim, & Lam, 2010; Herskovits, 1949). Enculturation functions as a protective factor (Barerra et al., 2004), emphasizing its role as a significant contributor to positive well-being in the Latinx community (Cariello et al., 2019). This review identified four distinct protective factors (i.e., language, group membership, generational differences, values) that strengthen the enculturation process for Latinx individuals.

Discussion

- The literature presented highlights four protective factors that predict the enculturation process among Latinx individuals. The protective factors of language, values, and group membership have been found throughout the studies to strengthen the enculturation process.
- Researchers, school officials and community members can utilize this review as a foundation of knowledge to conduct studies examining the enculturation process for Latinx individuals
- These studies are relevant in many fields as they affect many members of the Latinx community. This research may be useful in the medical field, education system, legal system, to name a few.

Language

- Language is the way many individuals communicate, therefore the higher the language fluency the more ethnic racial identity and socialization an individual experiences (Dennis et al., 2016)
- Speaking one's native language can determine their level of connection to their identity and values (familism, respect for family; Knight et al., 2009).
- Each generation has its own experience with Spanish fluency. As generations progress, they may have a harder time in Spanish proficiency (Cervantes & Cordova., 2011)
- Even though a connection with one's community might form, so can stress due to struggles with communication and language (e.g feeling isolated, insecurity; (Cervantes & Cordova., 2011).

Generational Differences

- Latinx families are more likely to live in multigenerational households more than white families (Cohen & Casper, 2002).
- Yet each generation brings varying perspectives to a family. Dennis et al. (2016) states that having at least one foreign born parent influences a connection to cultural values in other generations.
- 2nd U.S born generations practice cultural traditions more than 3rd generations (Dennis et al., 2016).
- 1st generation immigrants are more likely to continually practice enculturative protective factors (e.g familism; Saul et al., 2020).
- Generation status in relation to language proficiency has seen later generations decline in Spanish proficiency and are less likely to identify as Latinx. (Sanchez et al., 2012).

Limitations

- Minimal research emphasizes the protective factors relating to enculturation within the Latinx community.
- In addition, this result in the inability to learn more specific details, such as if a protective factor predicts higher enculturation compared to another, or to what degree does the influence of protective factors impact each other and affect its ability to predict enculturation.
- Literature fails to distinguish the nationalities of their Latinx sample, and studies that do focus on a particular nationality focused on those of Mexican descent, with less attention given to their non-Mexican counterparts.

Group Membership

- Cultural factors such as Spanish-speaking ability, cultural practices, and physical identifiers strengthen Latinx identification, which improves collective self-esteem and group acceptance. (Sanchez et al., 2012; Eschbach & Gómez, 1998).
- Strong bonding ties providing emotional support, such as family members and close friends, have shown an increase in Latinx group membership (Abraido-Lanza, Echeverría, & Flórez, 2016)
- Greater belonging to Anglo and Mexican culture in adolescents was found to be correlated with stronger traditional beliefs. (Gonzales et al., 2008). A sense of belonging in both host and heritage groups may allow for greater preservation of traditional cultural values.

Values

- Religion (Catholicism) is a symbolic connection with the homeland, connecting people as a community through identity, origin, and history (Calvillo & Bailey, 2015).
- Mexican American youth with stronger cultural values, such as respect and familism, received more discrimination but were more effectively mediated its effects, which strengthened their connection with their heritage culture (Brittian et al., 2013; Knight et al., 2014).
- Familism was found to be the strongest predictor of identification with their heritage culture in Latinx youth (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009).
- Experiencing an opposing perception of cultural values increases depression in Latinx youth (Nicasio et al, 2019).

Future Directions

- Adjusting interventions to help the Latinx community with the process of enculturation.
- Studies could explore more specific ideas regarding enculturation (e.g. how enculturative protective factors affect ethnic-racial identity)
 - This could create a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of enculturation especially in the case of the Latinx community