



Review

A review of the acculturation experiences of international students

Rachel A. Smith, Nigar G. Khawaja*

School of Psychology and Counselling, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 August 2010

Received in revised form 6 June 2011

Accepted 17 July 2011

Keywords:

Acculturation models

International student

Coping

ABSTRACT

Universities in Western countries host a substantial number of international students. These students bring a range of benefits to the host country and in return the students gain higher education. However, the choice to study overseas in Western countries may present many challenges for the international student including the experience of acculturative stress and difficulties with adjustment to the environment of the host country. The present paper provides a review of current acculturation models as applied to international students. Given that these models have typically been empirically tested on migrant and refugee populations only, the review aims to determine the extent to which these models characterise the acculturation experience of international students. Literature pertaining to salient variables from acculturation models was explored including acculturative stressors encountered frequently by international students (e.g., language barriers, educational difficulties, loneliness, discrimination, and practical problems associated with changing environments). Further discussed was the subsequent impact of social support and coping strategies on acculturative stress experienced by international students, and the psychological and sociocultural adaptation of this student group. This review found that the international student literature provides support for some aspects of the acculturation models discussed; however, further investigation of these models is needed to determine their accuracy in describing the acculturation of international students. Additionally, prominent acculturation models portray the host society as an important factor influencing international students' acculturation, which suggests the need for future intervention.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1. Introduction	700
2. Acculturation	700
3. Possible acculturative stressors encountered by international students	702
3.1. Language	702
3.2. Educational stressors	702
3.3. Sociocultural stressors	703
3.4. Discrimination	704
3.5. Practical stressors	704
4. Acculturative life changes, appraisal, and coping in international students	704
4.1. Cognitive appraisal of life changes	705
4.2. Coping in response to acculturative stressors	705

* Corresponding author at: School of Psychology & Counselling, Queensland University of Technology, Level 5, O Block, B Wing, Victoria Park Road, Kelvin Grove, Queensland, 4059, Australia. Tel.: +61 7 3138 4540; fax: +61 7 3864 4660.

E-mail addresses: r14.smith@connect.qut.edu.au (R.A. Smith), n.khawaja@qut.edu.au (N.G. Khawaja).

4.2.1. Underutilisation of student counselling services	705
5. Acculturative stress of international students	706
6. The buffering effect of social support on acculturative stress and depression	707
7. Interventions/programs to aid acculturation in international students	708
7.1. Behavioural interventions	708
7.2. Multicultural intervention to improve social ties	709
7.3. Support program for Asian international students	709
8. Future directions for research	709
8.1. Acculturation models and international students	709
8.2. Methodology	710
8.3. Interventions	710
9. Conclusion	710
References	710

1. Introduction

In 2008, there were more than 3.3 million tertiary international students worldwide (OECD, 2010). Over half of all tertiary international students choose to study in the United States of America (U.S.A.) (19%), the United Kingdom (U.K.) (10%), Germany (7%), France (7%), and Australia (7%) (OECD, 2010). Other countries hosting significant numbers of international students include Canada, Japan, Italy, and Russia (OECD, 2010). International students are an important financial commodity for these countries contributing approximately \$19 billion (U.S. dollars) annually to each of the Australian and U.S. economies, followed by \$14 billion to the U.K. economy (Australian Education International, 2010; NAFA, 2010; UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2010).

International students are not only a valuable financial asset to universities in developed countries, they are individuals who also enrich these countries with their diverse heritage and perspectives, thus, serving to increase cultural awareness and appreciation (Bevis, 2002; Harrison, 2002). International students bring with them a wide range of knowledge and skills across many disciplines, thereby contributing to the intellectual capital of their host country and adding to the work force. Whilst it could be argued that their stay is mutually beneficial as they bring a range of assets to their host country and in return gain higher education, a number of factors impact upon international students' acculturation; whereby acculturation is the process of change that takes place as a result of two or more cultures coming into contact (Berry, 2005). Moving to a foreign country to study brings many potential challenges, and international students may experience acculturative stress (i.e., stress resulting from life changes in the acculturation process; Berry, 2006) and adjustment problems.

While literature reviews have previously investigated the array of stressors that international students face (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000), the subsequent expansion of literature in this area in the past decade highlights the need for another review integrating this recent research. Furthermore, there is an ongoing need to refine dominant acculturation models in the general acculturation literature and apply them to international students, as the majority of the acculturation models are related to immigrants and refugees. A recently published systematic review (Zhang & Goodson, 2011) examined the predictors of international students' psychosocial adjustment in the U.S.A. across 64 studies. Although this review provided an important analysis of the literature, the findings were not thoroughly discussed in relation to acculturation models. The authors in their review did state the theoretical framework employed in each study, which included acculturation models, however, the findings were not specifically used to critique the models or theories. Additionally, by only focusing on studies conducted in the U.S.A., the review ignored important contributions from other countries. Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, and Todman (2008) reviewed the central acculturation models in the literature and applied them specifically to international students, in which each model was discussed briefly. Whilst this was an important addition to the literature, there is a need to review the literature again to include emerging acculturation models and a more comprehensive discussion of the international student literature.

A number of strategies were used to identify relevant literature for the current review.

For example, computer searches for relevant journal articles were conducted using the search engine EBSCO Host with title words 'international student', 'foreign student' or 'overseas student'. The overall search resulted in a total of 94 studies, including 13 qualitative studies and 81 quantitative studies considered in the review presented below.

In the current review, the theoretical background of acculturation specifically in relation to international students is discussed initially. Drawing upon leading acculturation models, the range of potential stressors that international students face when studying abroad, and their coping mechanisms will then be considered. The impact of acculturative stress on international students and recent attempts to enhance the adjustment and acculturation of international students through various programs are examined also. Finally, gaps in the literature are highlighted in order to suggest future research directions.

2. Acculturation

Before commencing a review of the stressors impacting international students it is important to discuss the concept of acculturation. The increase in migration over the past century has prompted researchers to explore the processes that

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/947243>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/947243>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)