



Sojourn students' humor styles as buffers to achieve resilience

Chau-kiu Cheung*, Xiao Dong Yue

Department of Applied Social Studies, City University of Hong Kong, Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong, China

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 7 March 2011

Received in revised form 22 August 2011

Accepted 15 October 2011

Keywords:

Sojourn

Humor

Resilience

Acculturative stress

Buffering

ABSTRACT

Resilience, which means adjustment under stress, is crucial for sojourn students, who are likely to experience acculturative stress. One possible way of upholding adjustment and resilience is the students' humor practice. Essentially, such practice is possibly able to buffer the stress to achieve resilience. The possibility is the focus of the present study of 215 students coming from Mainland China to study in a university in Hong Kong. Results show that the study and cultural aspects of acculturative stress were most harmful to the student's adjustment. Furthermore, the student's affiliative humor style was most vital in sustaining adjustment and accomplishing resilience under various kinds of stress. These results highlight the merit of affiliation as a principal salutogenic factor derived from humor.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Resilience, which means adjustment under acculturative stress, is valuable in the sojourn university student (De Garmis & Martinez, 2006; Liebkina, Jasinokaja-Lahti, & Solheim, 2004). Accordingly, acculturative stress in terms of language, study, cultural, and relational life aspects is clearly a problem threatening adjustment (Hashim & Yang, 2003; Liebkina & Jasinokaja-Lahti, 2000). In this connection, adjustment consists in the cognitive dimension of life satisfaction and the affective dimension of low depressive mood (Harker, 2001). Adjustment is particularly a concern in the face of acculturative stress threatening sojourners. The maintenance of adjustment is an indication of resilience, which means rebounding to normal functioning under acculturative stress (Becker & Newsom, 2005; Flores, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2005). Adjustment and resilience are evidently desirable or intrinsically valuable. Furthermore, they embody an extrinsic value in their contribution to academic achievement, organizational commitment, job performance, and social integration (Chen & Chiu, 2009; Liebkina et al., 2004; Remennick, 2004). These contributions are meritorious both to the sojourner and to the host society. The sojourn student's adjustment and resilience are therefore worthy of and required for promoting. A way of the promoting likely rests on the sojourner's practice of humor, defined as making fun of or for oneself or others. How humor facilitates the promoting, however, is lacking in empirical research, as current work is largely conceptual and speculative (Pitts, 2009). Moreover, how humor contributes to resilience in general has not been explicit in adducing empirical evidence, even though the contribution is a suggestive one (Celso, Ebener, & Burkhead, 2003; Tupade & Fredrickson, 2007). The present study is therefore responsible for illuminating the contribution of humor to adjustment and resilience. Essentially, it delineates the differential contributions of the four styles of humor practice, concerning affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating humor. In addition, the study examines the differential impacts of acculturative stress, concerning language, study, cultural, and relational aspects. The study also reveals the buffering effects of the four humor styles in relation to the four acculturative stresses. It thus taps the effects of humor styles on resilience, which is adjustment in the presence of the

* Corresponding author. Fax: +852 27888960.

E-mail address: ssjacky@cityu.edu.hk (C.-k. Cheung).

stresses. The study would altogether add insights to existing knowledge concerning adjustment, resilience, acculturative stress, and humor.

The study is required particularly to shed light on sojourn students' adjustment in the face of acculturative stress to enrich the pertinent knowledge base (Li & Gasser, 2005). Such light is informative because promoting sojourn students' adjustment is imperative due to their prominent susceptibility to acculturative stress (Wei, 2007). One reason for their susceptibility is their inadequate resources (Chow, 1999; Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003). This happens when the student is preoccupied with the short-term study rather than invests in long-term accommodation to the host place. Hence, the student is likely unprepared for facing various acculturative stresses, arising from study and other aspects. The sojourn student is notably not collecting resources, such as earnings from work, to cope with acculturative stress. Coping resources are therefore likely to be lacking in the sojourn student. This would make the sojourner suffer in adjustment (Cooper, Coll, Thorni, & Orellana, 2005; Portes, 1995b). The sojourn student's lack of resources would be a structural barrier to the student's adjustment. Another condition for the student's problem in adjustment is his or her young age. An older sojourner tends to fare better in adjustment than does a younger one (Angel, Buckley, & Sakamoto, 2001; Sodowsky & Lai, 1997). Moreover, getting married is a condition favoring adjustment (Angel et al., 2001). This condition is also likely to be lacking in the sojourn student. Typically sojourning alone, the student is prone to have little timely and proximate support from his or her family. Such a lack is another barrier to the sojourner's adjustment (Angel et al., 2001; Sodowsky & Lai, 1997). These conditions would make the sojourn student particularly at risk of the problem in adjustment.

Acculturative stress can be the main source that threatens the sojourn student's adjustment (Hashim & Yang, 2003; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000). The threat can happen in language, study, culture, and interpersonal relations (Coatsworth, Maldonado-Molina, Pantin, & Szaporznik, 2005; Hernandez & Charney, 1998). Acculturative stress thereby can arise from prejudice, discrimination, social isolation, and cultural shock, which all prove to threaten the sojourner's adjustment (Angel et al., 2001; Chang, 2009; Liebkind et al., 2004; Sodowsky & Lai, 1997). As acculturative stress is taxing the sojourner's ability to cope, it is likely to create anxiety and the feeling of uncertainty in the sojourner. The anxiety and uncertainty would explain the detrimental effect of acculturative stress on adjustment (Chang, 2009). Another path for the detrimental effect is through the feeling of alienation, emerging from prejudice, discrimination, and social isolation (Cooper et al., 2005). Besides, stress in the cultural realm is provocative for opposition, which forges a barrier to adjustment (Bobo & Fox, 2003). Relational stress, furthermore, is responsible for the weakening of social capital, including solidarity and mutual assistance. The lack of social capital is likely to compromise adjustment (De Garms & Martinez, 2006; Portes, 1995b). Notably, relational stress would foment attachment anxiety, which precipitates problems in adjustment (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). Study stress, alternatively, is likely to interfere with academic performance. The interference can spill over to adjustment to various life domains (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). Language stress is another threat to adjustment stemming from the sojourn's inadequate mastery of the host language. Typically, the sojourn's proficiency in English, as in this study, is a contributor to adjustment (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006).

1.1. *Humor as a determinant of adjustment and resilience*

Resilience means the buffering of stress in sustaining adjustment. This buffering is a supposed function of humor, possibly through its cognitive reframing and emotional management (Martin, 2007). More generally, the manifestation of humor offers the functions of creating positive emotions, facilitating communication and influence, relieving tension, saving faces, testing water (i.e., other person's reactions), and killing pain (Abel, 1998; Martin, 2007; Parrish & Quinn, 1999). The therapeutic function of humor also rests on its facilitation of creativity, cognitive restructuring, and access to social support (Martin, 2004, 2007). Humor is twofold, production and appreciation of humor (Martin, 2007). Pertinent to the production aspect are four humor styles, affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating ones. Affiliative humor means making jokes to weave interpersonal relationships, such as making people laugh (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). Self-enhancing humor means casting a humorous view on life, such as thinking of something funny. Aggressive humor means teasing others in an offensive way, such as laughing at others. Self-defeating humor means teasing and putting down oneself, such as saying about one's own weaknesses. These four humor styles tend to affect adjustment or resilience in profoundly different ways.

Affiliative humor is likely to sustain adjustment, notably by its relief of anxiety, depression, and attachment avoidance (Cann, Norman, Welbourne, & Calhoun, 2008; Chen & Martin, 2007; Frewen, Brinker, Martin, & Dozois, 2008). Its salutary function may derive from the associations of affiliative humor with openness, agreeableness, cheerfulness, self-esteem, intimacy, interpersonal or social competence, and initiating of relationships (Martin et al., 2003; Martin, 2007; Saraglou & Scariat, 2002; Vernon, Martin, Schermer, & Mackie, 2008; Yip & Martin, 2006). Self-enhancing humor also functions to buttress adjustment or resilience, through reduction in anxiety (Cann et al., 2008). Its benefit may stem from the associations of self-enhancing humor with health, social or interpersonal competence, cheerfulness, openness, intimacy, optimism, agreeableness, extraversion, and self-esteem (Kazarian & Martin, 2006; Martin et al., 2003; Martin, 2007; Saraglou & Scariat, 2002; Vernon et al., 2008; Yip & Martin, 2006). However, it may aggravate depression and reduce autonomy, thus jeopardizing adjustment (Chen & Martin, 2007; Frewen et al., 2008). Aggressive humor tends to impede adjustment or resilience due to its inducement of attachment avoidance, loneliness, aggression, and maladjustment in the family (Cann et al., 2008; Cecen, 2007; Kazarian & Martin, 2006; Martin et al., 2003). Its detriment to adjustment may ensue from the associations of aggressive humor with social incompetence, neuroticism, and hostility (Martin, 2007; Martin et al., 2003; Vernon et al.,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/947337>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/947337>

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