

Introduction

- International students face numerous challenges when arriving to study at a Canadian university, which may lead to poor psychological adjustment and sociocultural adaptation (Smith & Khawaja, 2011)
- Social connectedness has been found to act as a buffer against acculturative stress. However, no study to date has examined the differential effects of social connectedness on psychological versus sociocultural adjustment (Zhang & Goodson, 2011)
- Furthermore, although interactions with host nationals have been associated with better adjustment outcomes, the mechanisms guiding these “interactions” are unclear (Geeraert, Demoulin, Stephanie, & Demes, 2014)
- The current study examined *Mainstream Social Connectedness* and *Social Connectedness with the Ethnic Community* separately, to determine whether they uniquely influence outcomes in psychological and sociocultural adjustment.

Method

Hypotheses

- H1.** Among international students, higher levels of ethnic social connectedness (SC) will be associated with greater subjective well-being.
- H2.** Among domestic students, higher levels of mainstream social connectedness will be associated with greater subjective well-being.
- H3.** For both groups, higher levels of mainstream SC will be associated with greater sociocultural adaptation (lower SCAS).
- H4.** For international students, higher mainstream SC at Time 1 will predict (1) greater well-being and (2) greater sociocultural adaptation at Time 2.

Participants

	Time 1	Time 2
<i>n</i>	253	24
Sex (% female)	75	100
Age (years): mean	19.12	18.38
Domestic student (%)	85	88
International student (%)	15	12

Measures

Social Connectedness

- *Social Connectedness in Mainstream Society* and *Social Connectedness in the Ethnic Community* scales (SCMN and SCETH; Yoon, Jung, Lee, & Felix-Mora, 2012)
- 2 sets of five parallel items; Likert-type scale, e.g. “I feel a sense of closeness with Canadians”

Subjective Well-being:

- *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) – five-item scale; higher scores indicate greater global satisfaction
- *Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale* (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) – 20-item scale; higher scores indicate more symptoms of depression
- *Perceived Stress Scale* (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983) – 14-item scale measuring the frequency of perceived stress; higher scores indicate higher frequency

Sociocultural Adaptation:

- *Sociocultural Adaptation Scale* (SCAS; Ward & Kennedy, 1999) – 15-item version of the SCAS, with items selected to reflect academic challenges; higher scores reflect greater difficulty adapting to a new environment

Scale Reliability

Cronbach's alpha (Time 1)

	Domestic	International
Mainstream SC	.93	.73
Ethnic SC	.93	.91
SWLS	.83	.74
CES-D	.89	.84
SCAS-15	.79	.84
PSS	.84	.70

Results

- ➔ Preliminary analyses: Ran correlations on each of the hypotheses to test for significance. Correlations significant at the 0.01 level were then included in multiple regression analyses.
- ➔ Significant findings are reported below.

H1. SCETH at Time 1 was negatively correlated with CES-D at Time 2 ($r(22) = .58, p < .01$). SCETH at Time 1 significantly predicted lower CES-D at Time 2 ($\beta = -3.63, t(20) = 2.14, p < .05$), controlling for Time 1 CES-D scores.

H2. Time 1: SCMN among domestic students was significantly correlated with higher SWLS ($r(212) = .36, p < .01$), and lower CES-D ($r(212) = .19, p < .01$). SCMN was still significantly associated with higher SWLS ($\beta = 1.98, t(207) = 4.14, p < .0001$), after controlling for SCETH, gender, English fluency, and acculturation.

H3. Time 1: SCMN in both domestic and international students was significantly correlated with lower SCAS ($r(212) = .20, p < .01$); ($r(22) = .33, p < .05$); respectively.

H4. Sample size too small to examine international students separately. For whole Time 2 sample, SCMN at Time 1 did not significantly predict any adjustment outcomes at Time 2.

Discussion

- ➔ These findings suggest that mainstream and ethnic social connectedness make unique contributions to the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of both domestic and international students
- ➔ Mainstream social connectedness was correlated with better sociocultural adjustment, supporting the theory that more interactions with host nationals may lead to better adjustment outcomes
- ➔ Ethnic social connectedness predicted fewer symptoms of depression approximately 3 months later, with implications for campus interventions targeted at international students

Key limitations

- ➔ Small sample size for Time 2
- ➔ Predominantly female sample (3 male participants excluded from Time 2)
- ➔ Small proportion of international students
- ➔ Diverse campus

References

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