

Public Abstract

First Name:Angellar

Middle Name:

Last Name:Manguvo

Adviser's First Name:Stephen

Adviser's Last Name:Whitney

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:SP 2013

Department:Educational & Counseling Psychology

Degree:MA

Title:The relationship between ethnic identity, perceived acceptance, and sociocultural adjustment of African students in the US

Researchers have indicated that international students from Africa experienced more difficulties in adjusting to the US social and academic environment as compared to those from other regions of the world. This study investigated the experiences of African students in relation to their ethnic identity, perceived acceptance, and sociocultural adjustment, as well as the interrelationship among the constructs. An exploratory mixed methods research design was utilized in which the qualitative phase was conducted first, results of which were used to inform and guide the quantitative phase. The first three research questions of the study sought to qualitatively explore the emergent constructs whereas the fourth research question sought to explore the relationship among the constructs.

African students in this study experienced varied challenges as they navigated into their new environment. They, however, rarely sought professional assistance; rather, they preferred culturally-responsive programs initiated by fellow Africans. African students also negotiated two main identities. First, they consolidated their ethnic and national differences and embraced a monolithic African identity. Second, they negotiated a racial identity in a racially polarized society. African students also exhibited varied meta-perceptions. Overall, they perceived themselves as better accepted as individuals than they perceived their in-group to be.

In terms of the relationship between ethnic identity, perceived acceptance, and sociocultural adjustment, findings revealed that ethnic Pride was positively correlated with sociocultural adjustment factors. The converse was true for Belonging; participants who associated more with fellow Africans tended to experience more adjustment difficulties. Interestingly, participants who held negative meta-perceptions tended to speak more positively of Africa, associate more with fellow Africans, and experience more sociocultural adjustment problems.

Findings also showed that pre- and post-migration factors had a greater influence on the sojourning experiences of African students than demographic factors such as age and gender. Additionally, participants who stayed longer in the United States held more negative meta-perceptions, despite exhibiting a greater understanding of the American value system. Finally, participants from higher socioeconomic backgrounds represented themselves stronger as Africans and also scored significantly higher on sociocultural adjustment factors than those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

In conclusion, this study reveals the multidimensionality of Africanness as a form of ethnic identity and how its different facets relate differently with perceived acceptance and sociocultural adjustment. The study also shows how the sojourning experiences of African students are embedded within their meta-perceptions, with negative meta-perceptions having adverse effects on sociocultural adjustment. Findings from this study have practical implications on the adjustment of African students in particular and international students in general.