



Examining Differences in the LEC Responses of Hispanic and White College Students

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Introduction

ABSTRACT

- Certain events can have long lasting consequences on individual life experiences, and the understanding of the impact of life events across different groups is important.
- Previous studies have found that experiencing assault (both physical and/or sexual) can have lasting consequences in the form of increased scores in anxiety.
- Likewise, these increased scores in anxiety have been shown to correlate with higher rates of suicide and other serious mental health concerns.

CURRENT STUDY

- This study investigates the differences in the stress levels associated to exposure to traumatic life events related to sexual assault and physical assault between white participants and Hispanic participants as self reported in the assessment of the Life Events Checklist and the Patient Health Questionnaire.
- Based on this data, conclusions could be drawn about the differences in incidence of assault on the differing groups and how stress levels are different in individuals who experienced or witnessed similar traumatizing events.

Method

PARTICIPANTS

- Data was retrieved from a total of 530 participants.
- Participants were assessed to ensure valid data. Individuals who were responding inattentively at either of two attention check items (i.e., "Please select strongly agree if you are paying attention").
 - 21 were excluded for attention
 - Inattentive responding was roughly equal across White/Hispanic groups
- Individuals were excluded if they did not identify as white or Hispanic (96 participants were excluded for this study criterion).
- 413 undergraduate college students in total were included in the study.
 - 299 White participants (72.4%)
 - 114 Hispanic participants (27.6%)
 - 95 Male (23.0%)
 - Age M = 19.37 years old, SD = 3.09

Procedure

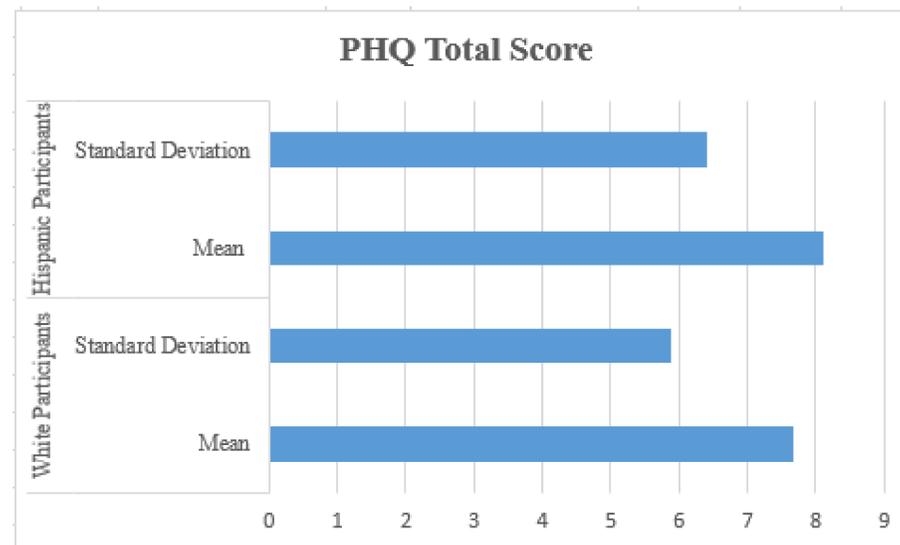
PROCEDURE

- All participants were given the LEC questionnaire with questions asking about different potentially psychologically impacting events and their level of exposure to such events.
- The number of individuals who had experienced these events in either category were compared to analyze differences in the incidence of physical and sexual assault in both groups.
- Individuals who reported to have either personally witnessed or personally experienced sexual assault, unwanted sexual contact, or physical assault were then compared to analyze differences in reported stress levels in the Patient Health Questionnaire.

Results

RESULTS

Differences in PHQ Total Scores in Participants who Witnessed/Experienced Sexual or Physical Assault								
	White Participants		Hispanic Participants		t-value	df value	Significance (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation				
PHQ Total Score	7.66	5.88	8.12	6.4	0.845	525	0.398	



- The Participants who had reported to have experienced or witnessed sexual or physical assault were used to determine the mean PHQ total scores between the White and Hispanic Participants.
- As seen above, the significance is not sufficient to conclude that there are statistically significant differences in the PHQ scores of White and Hispanic participants who had experienced assault.

Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS

- According to the data collected, there are no statistically significant differences in the anxiety scores reported by the Patient Health Questionnaire by White and Hispanic participants who had witnessed sexual or physical assault.
- This is not what was expected based on previous studies that found that Hispanic participants within those studies had higher PHQ total scores than White participants.

Limitations

LIMITATIONS

- As with many University studies, the sample for this study was limited to Undergraduate students and thus was limited to young adults with at least some college education. This limits the generalizability of the study, and this limits the possibly increased differences between these populations in other stages of life or at different educational levels
- It is possible that the scores of the participants were similar due to the similar life situations they are in currently. By only using undergraduate students, this study is limited to generally higher socioeconomic status individuals which could possibly serve as a protective factor against exposure to certain traumatic life events and to additional stressors.
- All the participants in this study had an average age of 19.37 years old which could limit the potential exposure to various incidents of sexual assault and physical assault. As an individual gets older, they could experience more stressors and the fact that the participants of this study were on average below the age of 20 could limit the data this study could collect on traumatic life events.