Shyness in Ethnic Minority Students during the College Transition

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Introduction
Transitionaling to college can be a challenge for adolescents. One of the stresses students encounter during the transition can be establishing new relationships with others. For adolescents with high levels of shyness, meeting people can be particularly challenging since they tend to feel uncomfortable, tense, and inhibited in social situations. Despite the abundance of literature on shyness, less is known about the experiences of ethnic minority students with high levels of shyness and their adjustment to life at college. Shy ethnic minority adolescents attending predominantly white universities might find the college transition to be particularly challenging.

Present Study
The current investigation focused on shyness in a sample of ethnic minority participants who were in their first year of attendance at a predominantly white university.

Research Questions
What is the relationship between shyness and difficulty adjusting to college while simultaneously accounting for belongingness, friendship satisfaction, self-worth, and parental support?

Are the effects of shyness, belongingness, friendship satisfaction, self-worth and parental support on difficulty adjusting to college mediated by loneliness?

Is the effect of shyness on loneliness moderated by higher involvement in extracurricular activities?

Method
Participants completed the following measures:
- Cheek and Buss’ Shyness Scale (Cheek & Buss, 1981)
- Difficulty Adjusting to College (Mounts, 2011) (unpublished document)
- UCLA’s Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980)
- Sense of Belonging to the University (Pittman & Richmond, 2007; Goodenow, 1993)
- McGill Friendship Satisfaction Questionnaire (Mendelson & Aboud, 1999)

Analysis
Hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships among the variables.

In the first set of analyses, difficulty adjusting to college was regressed on shyness, belongingness, friendship satisfaction, self-worth, and parental support.

In the second set of analyses, the role of loneliness as a mediator of the relationship between shyness, self-worth, friendship satisfaction, and parental support was examined.

For the final set of analyses, an examination of whether the relationship between shyness and loneliness was moderated by involvement in extracurricular activities was explored.

Table 1: Cronbach’s Alphas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shyness</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Adjusting</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship Satisfaction</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Self Worth</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Support</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Results – First Analyses
Relationship between Analyses
- Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Neeman & Harter, 1986)
- Parental Support scale (Mounts, 2004)

- A measure of involvement in on-campus extracurricular activities (number of activities participated in since starting college)

- The current investigation focused on shyness in a sample of ethnic minority participants who were in their first year of attendance at a predominantly white university.

- Shyness in Ethnic Minority Students during the College Transition

- Extracurricular Activity as Moderator

- Higher levels of shyness in conjunction with higher levels of involvement in extracurricular activities were related to lower loneliness.

Discussion
Findings suggest that shyness may play a significant part on ethnic minority students’ adjustment to college.

Shyness, friendship satisfaction, and self-worth might contribute to loneliness which, subsequently, will contribute to more difficulty with the college transition.

The amount of extracurricular activity involvement may mitigate the chance of developing high levels of loneliness for minority students who have high levels of shyness.

Future Directions
- Assess shyness, loneliness, and difficulty adjusting to college longitudinally over students’ time at college.

- Investigate how outcomes of shyness in ethnic minority students differs from outcomes of shyness in non-ethnic minority students.