

Spring 2021

Cultural Identity Predicts Resilience in Maltreated Youth

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Recommended Citation

Donohue, Jordan; Salcedo, Janelle; Webster, James; and Ellis, Kinsey, "Cultural Identity Predicts Resilience in Maltreated Youth" (2021). *Undergraduate Research Symposium Posters*. 7.
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/durep_posters/7

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INTRODUCTION

Child maltreatment can be defined as harm, whether physical or emotional, that resulted from a caregiver's action or failure to act (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021). Because maltreatment will affect 1 in 4 U.S. children at some point in their lifetime (Finkelhor et al., 2013), it is crucial to explore and identify facilitators of resilience in maltreated adolescents. Resiliency is the ability to identify and use personal strengths to overcome and adapt to hardships in life (Lyons, 2009). Cultural identity can refer to and be defined by a multitude of components such as religion, race, lifestyle, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and geography. Literature suggests that the possession of strong cultural values can promote resilience in trauma-exposed individuals (Raghavan & Sandanapitchai, 2020). However, limited findings exist on cultural identity and resilience with trauma-exposed, maltreated youth as the population of interest. The present study aims to investigate the effect of cultural identity on resilience in maltreated youth.

RESULTS

A linear regression was performed to examine whether cultural identity predicts resilience utilizing scores assessed by the NV-CANS. The model indicated a significant predictive relationship between cultural identity and resilience, $F(1, 63) = 16.073, p < .001$. 20.3% (Adjusted $R^2 = 19.1\%$) of the variance in resilience can be explained by the variance in cultural identity (see Figure 1). Specifically, according to the unstandardized regression coefficients, an increase in cultural identity predicted an increase in resilience ($\beta = .322, SE_{\text{cultural-identity}} = 0.08, t = 4.009, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [.161, .482]$).

RESULTS

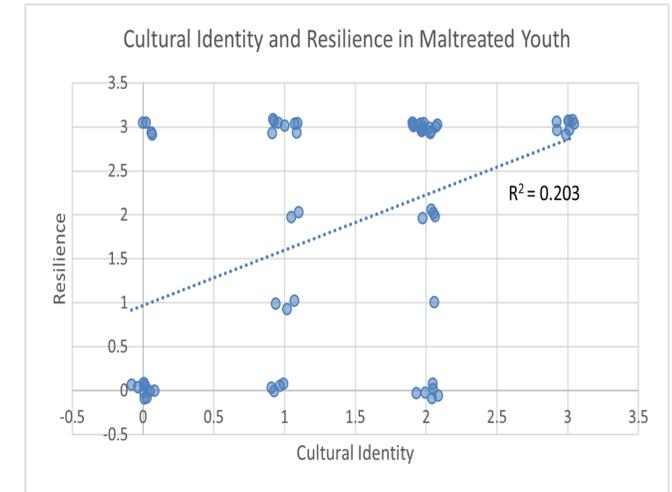


Figure 1. Cultural identity on resilience in maltreated youth

HYPOTHESIS

1

- We hypothesize that heightened levels of cultural identity will significantly predict greater resilience.

METHODS

Participants

65 youth (32 female, 30 male, 2 transgender, 1 non-binary) aged 11-17 years (Mean age = 14.26) removed from their homes by Department of Family Services (DFS) sites in Las Vegas, Nevada after substantiated child maltreatment.

Youth were African American (30.8%), Caucasian (21.5%), Multiracial (20.0%), Hispanic/Latino (18.5%), Asian (3.1%), Native American (1.5%), and other (4.6%).

Measures

Nevada Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (NV-CANS; Lyons, 2008).

Participants (n = 65) completed the NV-CANS, which assesses both cultural identity and resilience.



RESULTS

1

- Heightened levels of cultural identity significantly predicted an increase in resilience.

DISCUSSION

Overall, these findings suggest that cultural identity predicts levels of resilience in maltreated youth. This is a critical finding in expanding the literature and improving clinical outcomes, suggesting clinicians should take cultural factors into consideration and work with youth to build cultural support networks and a sense of belonging.

The sample size and age composition limits the generalizability of the study. Utilizing the CANS to assess for cultural identity also presents limitations. The clinician must rate a child's cultural identity level, which may be influenced by the amount of time spent with the child. Other measurements of cultural identity and a larger sample size could be utilized to further support the predictive relationship between cultural identity and resilience level.

Further research should investigate the mechanisms by which cultural identity influences levels of resilience, as well as specific aspects (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc) of cultural identity. This would provide more insight into factors that contribute to a child's resilience following a traumatic event and to the overall field.



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