



Factor structure and construct validity of the Anxiety Sensitivity Index among island Puerto Ricans

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Abstract

The factor structure and convergent and discriminant validity of the Anxiety Sensitivity Index (ASI) were examined among a sample of 275 island Puerto Ricans. Results from a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) comparing our data to factor solutions commonly reported as representative of European American and Spanish populations indicated a poor fit. A subsequent exploratory factor analysis (EFA) indicated that a two-factor solution (Factor 1, Anxiety Sensitivity; Factor 2, Emotional Concerns) provided the best fit. Correlations between the ASI and anxiety measures were moderately high providing evidence of convergent validity, while correlations between the ASI and BDI were significantly lower providing evidence of discriminant validity. Scores on all measures were positively correlated with acculturation, suggesting that those who ascribe to more traditional Hispanic culture report elevated anxiety.

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1. Introduction

Ethnicity has been suggested to be a potentially significant variable in the differential expression of psychopathology (Carter, Miller, Sbrocco, Suchday, & Lewis, 1999). For example, Carter et al. (1999) found that African Americans differ slightly from European Americans in the features that characterize anxiety sensitivity. Specifically, they noted that although anxiety sensitivity among African Americans is multidimensional, number and composition of the anxiety sensitivity dimensions exhibited by African Americans differ from those characteristic of European Americans.

Similarly, Smith, Friedman, and Nevid's (1999) study on phenomenological differences between African American and European American patients with panic disorder with or without agoraphobia illustrates the plausible presence of ethnic differences in symptomatology. Results suggest that African American patients with panic disorder demonstrated a significantly later age of onset, and showed higher rates of PTSD comorbidity. In addition, African Americans reported greater panic attack symptom severity with more intense levels of numbing or tingling in the extremities, as well as a greater fear of dying or going crazy.

Empirical investigations examining the impact of Hispanic culture on psychopathology and assessment, however, have been limited in scope (Ortega, Rosenheck, Alegria, & Desai, 2000). In addition, several studies reported in the extant literature have ignored the subtle differences that may exist among Hispanic groups. This study aimed to address some of these gaps in the literature by examining influence of acculturation on the construct of anxiety sensitivity among island Puerto Ricans.

1.1. Deficit of epidemiologic data among Hispanic populations

Examining the relationship between ethnicity and the development of psychopathology is increasingly important among Hispanics, as this population is currently the largest minority group in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003). The rapid growth of the Hispanic population has prompted the increased attention given to mental health issues specific to this population. In spite of the amount of evidence suggesting that ethnicity might play an important role in the epidemiology and differential expression of psychopathology (Carter, Sbrocco, & Carter, 1996; Carter et al., 1999), literature investigating the nature of psychological disorders among Hispanics has been limited in depth and comprehensiveness (Ortega et al., 2000).

To date, the most extensive source of data pertaining to ethnic minorities is the Epidemiologic Catchment Area (ECA) Program. Findings from the Los Angeles Epidemiologic Catchment Area Project (LAECA) compared prevalence of mental disorders between Mexican-Americans and non-Hispanic Whites and revealed that rates for most mental disorders were strikingly equivalent for both

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