

Associations Between Diverse Learning Environment & Ethnic Identity: The SPU Experience Project

Nguyen, E.; Elbahouty, N.; Pineda-Lomeli, A.; Kaur, S.; Miller, L.; Kaur, J. Dr. Baldelomar

Introduction

The SPU Experience project emphasizes multiple aspects of identity development of students at a college institution. As part of this project, we developed the following measure:

- Adaptive Measure of Identity Statuses: Ethnicity (AMIS-E), which assesses ethnic identity development (Constructs of the AMIS-E are defined in Table 1)

Ethnic Identity:

- Adaptive Measure of Identity Statuses: Ethnicity (AMIS-E)
- An extension of Marcia's Commitment and Exploration matrix of identity statuses (1966); Theoretical model developed by Phinney & Baldelomar (2011)

Construct	Definition
Exploration	Exploring one's ethnic identity
Commitment	Active commitment to one's own ethnic group(s)
Pressure	Outside influence on ethnic identity
Commitment Goal	Planning to become more involved in one's ethnic community(ies)
Future Change	Desire or openness to further explore ethnic identity(ies)

Table 1: AMIS-E Construct Definitions

To understand how ethnic identity impacts the SPU Experience we used the Diverse Learning Environment Measure (DLE) to assess the fit of SPU's environment with the ethnic minority identity. The constructs of this measure are defined in Table 2.

Diverse Learning:

- Diverse Learning Environment (DLE)
- Adapted from research on the college experience by Cheng & Sikkink (2020)

Construct	Definition
Campus	Presence of diversity on campus
Interactions	Awareness of ethnic identity in social interactions outside one's ethnic identity
Discrimination ID	Experiencing discrimination based on one's identity
Discrimination Type	Type of discrimination experienced
Environment	Access to resources that help support learning
Dropout	Desire to drop out of SPU

Table 2: DLE Construct Definitions

Goals:

- Establish Reliability of the AMIS-E
- Examine correlations between AMIS-E & DLE and assess the Diverse Learning Environment at SPU.
 - The combination of these measures allows us to see the connection between ethnic identity exploration in relation to the presence of a diverse learning environment. This is especially important in the Emerging Adulthood stage in which the risk of identity confusion is at its highest.

Hypotheses:

- If the AMIS-E is reliable, People of Color will score higher, indicating a higher awareness of and commitment to their ethnic identity than white People.
- AMIS-E Commitment will be negatively correlated with DLE Environment; Those who are more committed to their ethnic identity, are more likely to feel that their environment is not diverse enough and experience discrimination.
- AMIS-E Exploration should be positively correlated with DLE Environment; A diverse learning environment is necessary for sufficient ethnic identity exploration in higher education.

Methods

Sample Characteristics: SPU Undergraduate students taking Psychology courses (N=232; White=31%; POC=50% [Native American=0.9%, Hispanic/Latino=9%, Middle Eastern=0.9%, Asian=19%, Black=6%, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander=0.4%, Multiracial=13%]; Missing=19%)

Procedure: Online survey study conducted through Qualtrics and Sona

Instruments: AMIS-E & DLE

Scale Development:

Pilot Part 1

- test items created by investigators (N = 83)

Pilot Part 2

- selected and adjusted items based on reliability from Part 1 and retested (N = 232)
- Four subscales: Social Identity: commitment, exploration, and conflicts
 - AMIS-E
 - Diverse Learning Environments
- We split our data by ethnicity to better analyze our results
 - For the purpose of this study, 'POC' refers to People of Color

Results

Reliability of AMIS-E & DLE

	Cronbach's α
AMIS-E	0.907
AMIS-E_Exploration	0.823
AMIS-E_Commitment	0.830
AMIS-E_Pressure	0.753
AMIS-E_Belongingness	0.736
AMIS-E_Commitment goal	0.859
AMIS-E_Future change	0.831

Table 3: Reliability Scores for AMIS-E

	Cronbach's α
Diverse Learning Environment	0.889
DLE_Campus	0.830
DLE_Interactions	0.861
DLE_Discrimination ID	0.882
DLE_Discrimination Type	0.977
DLE_Environment	0.564
DLE_Dropout	0.409

Table 4: Reliability Scores for Diverse Learning Environment

Hypothesis #1:

- The subscales of the AMIS-E show good reliability (See Table 3).
- POC scored higher across all levels of AMIS-E than White people; indicating a higher level of awareness & commitment to their ethnic identity (See Figure 1).



Figure 1: Mean of AMIS-E; White compared to People of Color

Hypothesis #2&3 (Correlations)

- Regarding the relationship between the AMIS-E and DLE, these are our findings:

White Respondents:

Correlation Matrix	DLE_campus	DLE_interactions	DLE_discriminationID	DLE_DiscriminationType	DLE_environment	DLE_dropout
DLE_campus	—	—	—	—	—	—
DLE_interactions	0.208*	—	—	—	—	—
DLE_discriminationID	0.228*	0.200**	—	—	—	—
DLE_DiscriminationType	-0.063	-0.069	-0.169	—	—	—
DLE_environment	-0.146	-0.416***	-0.457***	0.199	—	—
DLE_dropout	-0.449***	-0.029	-0.345***	0.182	0.244*	—
AMIS-E_Exploration	0.092	0.260*	0.286**	-0.077	-0.158	-0.082
AMIS-E_Commitment	0.125	0.190	0.359**	-0.048	-0.205*	-0.172
AMIS-E_Pressure	0.022	0.068	0.130	-0.142	-0.124	-0.036
AMIS-E_Belongingness	-0.064	0.120	0.067	0.047	-0.121	-0.002
AMIS-E_Commitment Goal	-0.020	0.168	0.199	0.010	-0.177	0.016
AMIS-E_Future Change-Open	-0.063	0.174	0.022	-0.027	-0.041	0.075

Table 5: Correlations for White Respondents

Hypothesis #2:

- AMIS-E Commitment and DLE Environment were negatively correlated as predicted.

Follow-up Analysis

We split our data on discrimination by minority/majority group (see figure 2) and found that POC students experience more discrimination based on ethnicity, citizenship status, and SES than White students.

POC Respondents:

Correlation Matrix	DLE_campus	DLE_interactions	DLE_discriminationID	DLE_DiscriminationType	DLE_environment	DLE_dropout
DLE_campus	—	—	—	—	—	—
DLE_interactions	-0.019	—	—	—	—	—
DLE_discriminationID	0.192	0.364***	—	—	—	—
DLE_DiscriminationType	-0.151	-0.054	-0.298**	—	—	—
DLE_environment	-0.182	-0.335**	-0.405***	0.111	—	—
DLE_dropout	-0.290**	-0.016	-0.356***	0.282**	0.296**	—
AMIS-E_Exploration	0.109	0.216*	0.164	-0.014	-0.274**	-0.016
AMIS-E_Commitment	0.016	0.211**	-0.009	-0.026	-0.186	-0.029
AMIS-E_Pressure	-0.200	0.214**	0.042	-0.020	-0.188	0.045
AMIS-E_Belongingness	-0.142	0.040	0.155	0.076	-0.106	-0.141
AMIS-E_Commitment Goal	-0.035	0.167	-0.096	0.053	-0.068	-0.027
AMIS-E_Future Change-Open	0.015	0.156	-0.035	0.000	-0.148	-0.042

Table 6: Correlations for POC Respondents

Hypothesis #3:

- Counter to our prediction, AMIS-E Exploration & DLE Environment were negatively correlated.

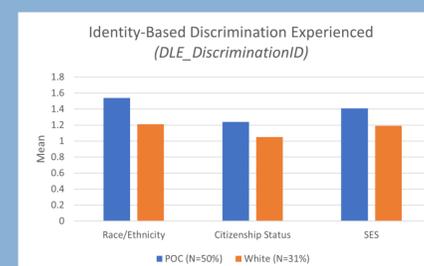


Figure 2: Types of Identity-based discrimination experienced

Discussion

Correlations:

- AMIS-E Pressure is positively correlated with DLE_Interactions; Feeling pressure to commit to an ethnic group makes one more aware of tensions in their interactions with those outside that ethnic group (and vice versa).
- AMIS-E Exploration is negatively correlated with DLE_Environment; Indicating that the environment at SPU may not be suitable for ethnic identity exploration for People of Color.

Other Findings:

- We found a positive Correlation between AMIS-E Exploration, AMIS-E Commitment & DLE Discrimination ID for White respondents, but no correlation for POC
 - Our initial observation of this relationship was not consistent with our expectation, but when we split our data into ethnic majority/minority groups we found that POC students experience more discrimination based on ethnicity, citizenship status, and SES than White students (See Figure 2).
- We suspect that COVID-19 significantly impacted our results related to interaction and campus environment which would explain the lack of significant correlations observed.

Future Directions:

- Add Community Factor as a mediator to measure level of involvement in identity-based communities
 - Add question, "do you live on campus?" as part of community measure
- Survey more diverse population across campus to provide greater variability

Conclusion

- The AMIS-E measure was found to be reliable
- All our hypotheses were confirmed, apart from hypothesis #3
- Must consider impact of COVID-19 & respondent's SES on survey results and lack of correlations for POC