Adaptation and Coping among East African Immigrants in North America

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Abstract

Immigrants are faced with the challenge of adapting to a culture different from their own. Successful adaptation includes socio-cultural adaptation, psychological adjustment, and coping. This study investigated cross-cultural adaptation and coping among East African immigrants in North America. Participants in this study were 51 individuals of East African origin who were over 20 years of age, residing in North America and recruited through a snowballing procedure. Participants completed the Acculturation Index, Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale, and Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, Ways of Coping Checklist (Revised), and a demographic questionnaire using Survey Monkey. Data analysis utilized SPSS. Independent-samples-t- tests and Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted. Results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in socio-cultural adaptation by: acculturation, coping, and migration with family. Additionally, there was no statistically significant difference in psychological adjustment by acculturation and participation in a faith community. Results revealed a positive correlation between psychological adjustment and socio-cultural adaptation, and a statistically significant difference in socio-cultural adaptation by participation in faith community. Further research into adaptation and coping among East African immigrants is recommended
Key words: acculturation, adaptation, coping, immigration, East Africans, adjustment

Introduction and background

Cross-cultural interaction is inevitable in the present day because travel has been eased by improved technology and many people voluntarily or involuntarily migrate. Individuals from different cultures who come into contact usually influence each other to change in cultural and psychological ways. This process is called acculturation (Berry, 1997). Ward and Kennedy (1994) stated that acculturation results into both psychological or emotional well-being, and socio-cultural adaptation or the ability to fit in and to negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture.

Immigrating between cultures that are significantly different may create stress for the immigrants. The greater the difference between the immigrants and host cultures, the greater the psychological and socio-cultural difficulties in adjustment (Ward & Kennedy; as cited in Pandey, Sinha, & Bhawuk, 1996). The difference between the immigrant who succeeds in the new culture and the one who fails may primarily be the ability to cope with difficult and challenging circumstances. In order to adapt to the new culture, individuals are required to

utilize the coping strategies they are familiar with and, if necessary, learn new ways of approaching challenges.

Immigration to a developed country is the dream of many individuals in developing countries, often attained through educational, business and career opportunities. In addition, since 1995, the United States Government has offered the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program annually, to persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States. Those who become successful are provided with a United States Permanent Resident Card and with it, the right to live and work in the United States. Statistics indicate that between 2009 and 2011, numbers of successful applicants who were eligible to migrate to the USA from the East African region were 1,319 from Uganda, 13,615 from Kenya, and 693 from Tanzania (Diversity Visa Lottery Results, 2009, 2010, 2011).

The East African Community consists of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. For the purposes of this study, the East African countries of Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya were considered. The three countries have a combined population of approximately 136 million people of various clans and tribes (Population Reference Bureau, 2016). Each of these groups has a distinct culture, which expresses itself in "customs, morals, ethics, social behavior, material objects such as musical instruments, household utensils, foods and domestic animals," distinct languages, social and political organization, traditional religious beliefs and practices (Mbiti, 1990). Mbiti further stated that for Africans, family and kinship is emphasized and is one of the strongest forces of traditional African life, which is evident even in migration when families migrate to join family members or when new immigrants depend on family members for support in the form of housing, finances, introduction into social groups, and recommendations for jobs, schools and services until they are established in the new country. Many East Africans who have migrated to the United States do so as nuclear families and often move to a city or state where a relative, friend or co-national already lives, resulting in concentrations in particular cities or states (Bosire, 2006).

East Africans who have migrated and established themselves in new homes have been able to support family members left behind in their home countries by sending remittances such as money for school fees, health needs and business ventures. Uganda and Kenya are among the top 10 remittance recipient countries in Africa (Juuko, 2010). According to 2000 census data (Page, 2007), East African immigrants who have successfully acculturated also pursue higher educational and career opportunities, with black immigrants from Africa emerging as the group with the highest academic achievements, higher even than Asians and Caucasians..

As more and more East Africans migrate to the US, the issue of adaptation needs to be considered. Some immigrants fail to adapt to the new culture resulting in parent-child conflicts, criminal behavior, and substance use and abuse (Gans; as cited in Zhou, 1997). Immigrant children can be found on both ends of the spectrum with some as award winners in academics while others engage in multiple high risk behaviors, school failure, street gangs and youth

crime (Zhou, 1997). Complete failure to adapt could result in immigrants being deported or faced with voluntary return to their mother countries. As such, in order to adapt successfully to the new culture, coping strategies must be effectively utilized to manage stressful situations.

Acculturation

At the group level, acculturation is defined as, "culture change that results from continuous, firsthand contact between two distinct cultural groups" (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988). This includes changes such as physical, biological, cultural, social, and psychological (Berry et al., 1988; Berry; as cited in Kazarian & Evans, 1998). Acculturation is also defined as changes in behavioral, affective and cognitive functioning (Cuellar et al.; as cited in Kim & Abreu, 2001). Acculturation consists of contact, conflict and adaptation (Stone, 1997), culture shedding, culture learning, and culture conflict (Berry; as cited in Berry, 2003). Additionally, emotional regulation, openness and flexibility are essential for intercultural adjustment (Matsumoto et al., 2003).

Difficulty in adaptation to the new culture may result in acculturative stress. Acculturative stress includes "confusion, anxiety, depression, feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptoms and identity confusion" (Berry et al.,1988). According to Organista, Organista, and Kuraski (as cited in Chun, Organista, & Marin, 2002), high levels of acculturative stress increase the possibility of developing psychological problems. Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, and Loya (1997) stated that acculturative stress can be a result of the combination of intergenerational stress and role conflicts. Studies done among international students show that in order to attain their goals in education, international college students need to adapt to a new culture and function effectively in a culture that is different from their own. Adapting to the new culture may prove difficult for some of them, resulting in acculturative stress. This led Sodowsky and Lai (as cited in Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gainor, & Baden, 2005) to state that international college students experience acculturative stress such as "culture shock, confusion about role expectations in the United States, loss of social support, alienation, discrimination, and language barriers."

Acculturation involves an interaction of two dimensions such as the immigrant's identification or relationship with the host culture, and the immigrant's co-national identification or maintenance of his or her own culture (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Upon migrating into a new culture, an individual is faced with the option to maintain his or her life as it has been in the home culture or to change. This interaction would result in assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988). The interaction between immigrants' identification with their home culture and the new culture influences the emotional state of the immigrants (psychological adjustment), and the immigrants' willingness to adapt the culture of the host nation (socio-cultural adaptation).

Adaptation

Cross-cultural adaptation consists of psychological adjustment and socio-cultural adaptation. Ward and Kennedy (1996) defined psychological adjustment as a state of well-being that is predicted by personality, life changes, extraversion, locus of control and relationship satisfaction. Studies on psychological adaptation have operationally defined poor psychological adaptation as depression (Ward & Kennedy, 2001; Ward & Rana–Deuba, 1999). As such, they have utilized depression scales to measure psychological adaptation, such as the CES-D (Ward & Kennedy, 1996) and the Zung Self Rating Depression Scale (ZSDS) (Zung, 1965). The Profile of Mood States (POMS) (McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1971), which measures symptoms of tension, depression, anger, confusion and fatigue, has also been used in psychological adaptation studies (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1993; Ward & Searle, as cited in Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000). However, The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), a measure of cognitive and affective aspects of loneliness has also been used to indicate levels of psychological adjustment (O'Reilly, Ryan, & Hickey, 2010; Stone, Feinstein, & Ward; as cited in Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000).

Socio-cultural adaptation is defined by the difficulty an individual experiences in dealing with the social situations in the host culture, and is predicted by the individual's knowledge of the culture, language proficiency, cultural identity, the distance the individual sees between his or her own culture and the host culture, and the individual's expectations (Ward & Kennedy, 1996). Socio-cultural adjustment and psychological adaptation develops in different patterns over time (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). These authors suggested that socio-cultural adjustment appears to increase gradually after migration and then reach a plateau because psychological adaptation is more variable over time. Furthermore, the authors stated that the relationship between socio-cultural and psychological adaptation appears to grow stronger over time. Ward and Kennedy (1993) noted that among sojourners, the relationship between socio-cultural adjustment and psychological adaptation depends on the sojourner's experience of the transition including, acculturation strategies and the ability to integrate into the host culture. Difficulty in integrating will contribute to the development of stress.

Faith Community as a Support for Immigrants

According to Ellison and George (1994), individuals who share values, interests and activities are more likely to share friendship. The authors further stated that helping behavior, which would be common within friendships, is considered more valuable when there is evidence of shared cultural beliefs regarding helping behavior among the individuals involved. On arrival in America, immigrants have often come together to form religious institutions

similar to the ones in the home country, or joined established churches and other places of worship that have welcomed them. Hirschman (2004) gave examples of immigrant groups that have built their own places of worship including, Vietnamese Catholics, Korean Christians, Indian Hindus, Italian and Irish Catholics. Some immigrants consider it more meaningful to worship in a familiar language and cultural context within their own places of worship. Immigrants have also commended the role of religious institutions in helping them adapt to their new culture by providing social support.

For many immigrants, churches are considered social communities that provide more than a place and community in which to worship. Hirschman (2004) stated that churches provide associations for immigrant men, women and children, which in turn provide education, leisure activities, opportunities for leadership and civic contributions resulting in a higher social status and recognition that would have been unavailable in the larger community. Hirschman (2004) further argued that many immigrant churches provide for the social and economic needs of immigrants including, information about housing, social and economic opportunities that help immigrants adapt to American life.

Church communities may replace the function of the extended family for the immigrants. According to Hirschman (2004), the church community helps immigrant families by counseling them on how to handle their American born children, and also provide activities for them. Hagan (2008) has investigated the role of faith among Mexicans migrating to the USA, and based on the results of this study suggested that for some immigrants, participation in religious institutions helped them to persevere through difficult times. Hagan (2008) further stated that the church community provided a haven for the immigrants, enabling them to maintain their connection with their home country by meeting with fellow immigrants, but also facilitated the process of adaptation and provided encouragement through social support. Social support is very important to East African immigrants because traditionally, they emphasize the role of family and kin, and live as extended family groups. Religious communities are a source of social support that is available to East African immigrants after immigration. As noted above, research indicates that religious communities function as extended families for immigrants.

This study investigated cross-cultural adaptation among East African immigrants and their coping strategies during the transition from one country to another. Difficulties in adaptation can result in psychological distress, substance abuse, academic and occupational difficulties, antisocial behavior, emotional difficulties, family problems and problems with peers and authorities. However, considering the effects of poor adaptation, limited research has been conducted in this area. The purpose of the current study was to investigate psychological and socio-cultural adaptation, and acculturation among East African Immigrants in North America and to identify the coping strategies they utilized to manage the challenges of the cultural transition. In an attempt to address the current need, this study investigated socio-

cultural adaptation among East African immigrants considering acculturation, coping, participation in faith community, and migration with family. Additionally, psychological adjustment considering acculturation and participation in a faith community was investigated. The correlation between psychological adjustment and socio-cultural adaptation among participants in the study was also assessed.

Methodology

Participants in the study consisted of 51 immigrants above the age of 20 years from the East African region who were residents in North America (USA and Canada). The study included individuals who were sojourners (staying in North America for a known and limited length of time) and individuals who migrated to North America and intended to stay there for an unspecified length of time.

Gender composition of the study group was 37.3% male and 62.7% female. Analysis of the country of origin of the participants in the study revealed that 90.2 % were from Uganda with 9.8% were from Kenya. Participants in the study fell within the following age ranges: 2.0% were 21 -25, 11.8% were 26 – 30, 11.8% were 31-35, 29.4% were 36-40, 33.3% were 41-45, 7.8% were 46-50, 2.0% were 51-55, and 2.0% were 61-65 years of age. The analysis of the highest level of education attained by participants in the study revealed that 2.0% graduated from high school, 29.4% had a bachelor's degree and 68.6% held a graduate degree. Most of the participants were married (74.6%) while 21.6% were single, and 3.9 % were divorced. Some of the participants migrated with their families (58.6%) while others didn't (41.2%). The length of stay in America ranged from 1 to 5 years for 25.5% of participants, 6 to 10 years for 37.3%, 11 to 15 years for 15.7%, and 16 to 20 years were 11.8%. Similarly, 21 to 25 years were 5.9%, 26 to 30 years were 2.0%, and 31 to 35 years for 2.0%.

Concerning involvement in a faith community, 96.1% of the participants were involved in a faith community at their home land while 3.9% were not involved. A majority of the participants were involved in a faith community in America (94.1%) than those who were not (5%). The level of participation in their faith communities varied with 3.9% of participants reporting that they were "not at all" active in their faith community, 21.6% stated that they were "a little bit" active, 27.5% said were "moderately" active, and 47.1% indicated that they were active "a great deal". On evaluating the contribution of their faith community to adaptation, 47.1% of participants scored the contribution as "a great deal", 11.8% as "not at all", 19.6% as "a little bit", and 21.6% as "moderate".

The Acculturation Index (AI) (Ward & Kennedy, 1994) is based on Berry and Kim's (1988) two dimensional acculturation model. The model proposes the two dimensions of acculturation as the maintenance of original cultural identity, and maintenance of relations with

other groups. These dimensions can be used to assess the acculturation strategies of integration, separation, assimilation and marginalization. The AI is a 21-item instrument that measures individuals' attitudes towards their home culture and their attitudes towards their host culture. The AI assesses values, and the cognitive and behavioral domains of acculturation including the pace of life, religious beliefs, food and relationships. Respondents are asked to consider two questions about their current lifestyle: "How similar are your experiences and behaviors to those of people sharing your culture of origin?" and 'How similar are your experiences and behaviors to those people in your host culture?" Responses are then given on a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (not at all similar) to 7 (very similar). Measures of co-national identification and host-national identification are obtained. The identification scales are split using the scalar midpoint. High co-national-high host national identification indicate integration, high co-national-low host national indicates separation, low co-national and low host national identification indicates marginalization, low co-national–high host national identification indicates assimilation. Internal reliability assessed by Cronbach alpha is reported at 0.93 for the home culture and 0.96 for the host culture (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) (Searle & Ward, 1990) was created by Searle and Ward for their study of cross-cultural transition and adaptation of Malaysian and Singaporean students in New Zealand. The SCAS is based on Furnham and Bochner's (1982) work with the Social Situations Questionnaire. The SCAS is a 29-item instrument that measures inter-cultural competence focusing on behavior. These behaviors include length of residence in host culture, cultural knowledge, amount of interaction and identification with host nationals, cultural distance, language fluency and acculturation strategies (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Respondents rate the difficulty they experience in various social situations in the host culture on a scale of 1 (no difficulty) to 5 (extreme difficulty). The total score represents the socio-cultural adaptation score. A higher score on the SCAS indicates greater difficulty in adjustment, with scores under 59 indicating slight or no difficulty in socio-cultural adaptation. Ward and Kennedy state that results from studies using the SCAS are consistent with contemporary theory and research on social skills acquisition. The internal consistency of the SCAS ranges from 0.75 to 0.91 (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Construct validity is indicated by consistent significant correlations between socio-cultural and psychological adjustment as measured by the Zung Rating Depression Scale (Zung, 1965), and ranges between 0.2 and 0.62, M=0.38, (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Center for Epidemiologic Studies, Depression Scale (CES-D, Radloff, 1977) is a 20-item self-report measure of depressive symptoms. The CES-D is comprised of six scales reflecting major dimensions of depression: depressed mood, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, psychomotor retardation, loss of appetite, and sleep disturbance. Respondents indicate the frequency of occurrence of each of the items on a 4 point scale, 0 (rarely or none of the time) to 3 (most or all of the time). Some

of the items are reverse scored (4, 8, 12 and 16). The total CES-D score is the sum of the scores on the items. A CES-D score above 15 indicates significant depressive symptoms. High internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's alpha ranges from .85 to .90 across studies (Radloff, 1977). Radloff (1977) stated that construct validity has been demonstrated by highest correlations with scales designed to measure depression e.g. Bradburn Negative Affect Scale (Bradburn, 1969) and negative correlations with scales designed to measure different variables e.g. Bradburn Positive Affect Scale (Bradburn, 1969). Test re-test reliability is reported as $r > 0.5$ (Sharp & Lipsky, RCMAR Measurement Tools). For purposes of this study respondents indicated the frequency of occurrence of each of the items on a 4 point scale, 1(rarely or none of the time) to 4 (most or all the time). A CES-D score of 35 on this modified scale indicates significant depressive symptoms.

Ways of Coping Checklist (Revised) (WCCL-R) (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985) is a 66-item instrument that assesses the thoughts and behaviors that individuals use to deal with the demands of specific stressful encounters. The respondent rates each item on a 4 point Likert scale: 1 (does not apply and /or not used at all) to 4 (used a great deal). Each of the 66 items contributes to one of eight coping scales including confrontive coping, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal. Relative scores are calculated for each scale indicating the proportion of effort represented for each type of coping. The total raw score for each scale is divided by the number of items in the scale. The average responses per scale are summed across the scales. The average score for each scale is divided by the sum of the averages for all eight scales to obtain the relative score for the scale (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Results may indicate that the individual utilizes a number of coping strategies in comparable measure. Folkman and Lazarus (1988) reported that reliability of the eight coping scales range from .61 and .79. The authors state that the WCCL-R has face validity because respondents score strategies that they have used to cope with demands of stressful situations. In addition, the authors state that evidence of construct validity of the WCCL-R is demonstrated by results from studies which confirm their theoretical predictions that coping consists of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping and that coping is a process.

A demographic questionnaire was created by the primary investigator to gather information about the participants' gender, age, nationality, education level, marital status, family makeup, length of time spent in America and the reason for immigration. The questionnaire was also used to gather information on participation and level of activity in a faith community and the participants' evaluation of the role of the faith community in facilitating cross-cultural adaptation.

Procedure and ethical considerations

Results

Psychological adaptation of East African immigrants within this study was indicated by scores on the CES-D. Scores on the SCAS provided a measure of participants' socio-cultural adaptation. The mean CES-D and SCAS scores are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean Depression and Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scores of Study Population

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation
Depression score	27.56	5.27
Socio-cultural adaptation score	50.59	16.5

Note: Scores from the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), & Socio-cultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS)

The study investigated the modes of acculturation including integration, using the Acculturation Index (AI); coping strategies including seeking social support, using the Ways of Coping Checklist (Revised); involvement with faith community and migration with family, using the demographic questionnaire. Table 2 displays the representation of these variables within the study population.

Table 2

Integration, Seeking Social Support, and Involvement in Faith Community and Migration with Family of Study Population

Measure	N	Percentage of Population
Integration ***	16	31
Non-integration ***	35	69
Seeking social support **	20	41
Non-seeking social support **	29	59
Involvement with faith community *	48	94
Non-involvement with faith community *	3	6
Migrated with family *	21	41
Migrated without family *	30	59

Note: Variable scores from: The Acculturation Index (***), Ways of Coping Checklist (Revised) (**), & Demographic Questionnaire (*)

In order to investigate acculturation and psychological adjustment among the study population, a t-test was utilized to compare mean CES-D scale scores for the sample group who

scored high on integration with those who score high on assimilation, separation and marginalization. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in mean CES-D scale scores between the two groups, t (49) = .16, p = .88. East African immigrants in North America who scored high on integration did not score significantly lower on the CES-D scale (M = 27.38, SD = 5.03) than immigrants who scored high on assimilation, separation and marginalization (M = 27.63, SD = 5.45).

Concerning acculturation and socio-cultural adaptation among the study population, a t-test was utilized to compare mean socio-cultural adaptation scale scores for the sample group who scored high on integration with those who scored high on assimilation, separation and marginalization. Results indicated that there is no significant difference in mean socio-cultural adaptation scale scores between the two groups, t(49) = .48, p = .63. East African immigrants in North America who endorsed integration did not score significantly higher on socio-cultural adaptation (M = 48.94, SD = 16.58) than immigrants who endorsed assimilation, separation and marginalization (M = 51.34, SD = 16.66).

In assessing the relationship between seeking social support and socio-cultural adaptation among the study population, a t-test was utilized to compare mean socio-cultural adaptation scale scores for the sample group who endorsed seeking social support as one of their main coping strategies with those within the second sample group who endorsed confrontal coping, distancing, self-controlling, accepting responsibility, escape avoidance, planning problem solving and positive reappraisal. Results indicated that there is no significant difference in mean socio-cultural adaptation scale scores between the two groups, t(47) = 1.12, p = .27. East African immigrants in North America who endorsed seeking social support as one of their main coping strategies did not score significantly higher on socio-cultural adaptation (M = 54.10, SD = 17.41) than immigrants who endorsed other coping strategies (M = 48.72, SD = 15.85).

Considering socio-cultural adaptation and psychological adjustment among the study population, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between East African immigrants' scores on psychological adjustment (CES-D scores) and their scores on socio-cultural adaptation. Results yielded a significant positive correlation between immigrants' psychological adjustment (CES-D scale scores) and socio-cultural adaptation scores (r = .25, p = .04). East African immigrants in North America in this study who demonstrated high socio-cultural adaptation also demonstrated high psychological adjustment (low CES-D scores).

In order to evaluate the relationship between participation in faith community and psychological adjustment among the study population, a t-test was utilized to compare mean CES-D scale scores for the sample group who endorsed participation in a faith community with those who denied such participation. Results indicated that there is no significant difference in mean CES-D scale scores between the two groups,

 t(14.06) = -1.59, p = .14. East African immigrants in North America who are involved in a faith community did not score higher on psychological adaptation (M = 27.46 SD = 5.42) than immigrants who are not involved in a faith community (M = 29.00, SD = 1.00).

Regarding the relationship between participation in faith community and socio-cultural adaptation among the study population, a t-test was utilized to compare mean socio-cultural adaptation scale scores for the sample group who endorsed participation in a faith community with those who denied such participation. There was a significant difference in mean socio-cultural adaptation scale scores between the two groups, t (3.82) = 3.35, p = .03, at the .05 level. East African immigrants in North America who are involved in a faith community scored higher on socio-cultural adaptation (M = 51.48, SD = 16.56) than immigrants who are not involved in a faith community (M = 36.33, SD = 6.66).

In order to investigate migration with family and socio-cultural adaptation, a t-test was utilized to compare mean socio-cultural adaptation scale scores for the sample group who migrated with family members with those who denied migrating with family members. Results indicated that there is no significant difference in mean socio-cultural adaptation scale scores between the two groups, t (49) = .25, p = .80, at the .05 level. East African immigrants in North America who migrated with family members did not score higher on socio-cultural adaptation (M = 50.10, SD = 15.76) than immigrants who did not migrate with family members (M = 51.29, SD = 17.91).

Discussion

This study investigated psychological adjustment, socio-cultural adaptation and coping among East African immigrants living in North America. Psychological adaptation, the ability to maintain a state of mental and emotional well-being through the process of acculturation, was assessed through low depression scores on the CES-D. Socio-cultural adaptation, the ease with which the individual resolves social challenges and demands within the host culture, was measured by scores on the SCAS. The individual's ability to cope within the host culture was measured by scores on the Ways of Coping Checklist-Revised. Prior research had suggested that immigrants who integrated into the host society had demonstrated a higher psychological and socio-cultural adaptation.

Concerning psychological adjustment (levels of depression) and acculturation, results from the study revealed no statistically significant difference in psychological adjustment between East African immigrants in North America who score high on integration and immigrants who score high on other modes of acculturation such as assimilation, separation and marginalization. Ward and Rana-Deuba''s (1999) definition of acculturation as the interaction of the immigrant's identification with the host culture, and the immigrant's co-national identification of his or her own culture assumes that the host culture and the

immigrant's culture are significantly different and that the immigrant can see a clear distinction between the two cultures. For the purposes of this study, participants' rating of their identification with the home countries was compared with their identification with the host country. With globalization, modernization, and the spread of American culture, the culture of educated urbanized East Africans has likely incorporated significant parts of American culture (Ssenyonga, 2006).

In describing their modes of acculturation, East African immigrants may have compared themselves to East Africans who are not much different from Americans in culture. As a result, East African immigrants falling within the different categorizations of acculturation; integration, separation, marginalization, and assimilation may be more similar in culture than they would have been if they were comparing themselves to East Africans who were significantly different from Americans. East Africans who find their culture very similar to American culture may find it necessary to make only minor changes as individuals in order to adapt to the new culture and thus experience minimal psychological adjustment. Research with various cultural groups reveals that difficulty in adaptation may be minimized by the similarity of the groups to the host culture. In a study on Turkish, Pakistani and South American immigrants in Berlin, it was partly confirmed that disparity between the host country and the immigrant's country contributed towards depressive symptoms in the immigrants (Shah, 1988). In another study on Caribbean and Mediterranean immigrants in Holland, the Caribbean immigrants who were more familiar with the Dutch culture through exposure during the colonial period had a stronger preference for developing contacts with the natives than the Mediterranean immigrants who had not had much prior contact with the natives. In addition, it was found that Dutch natives preferred interaction with Caribbean immigrants over Mediterranean immigrants (Martinovic, Tubergen, & Maas, 2009). These studies confirm that familiarity with the host culture and transferability of skills facilitates acculturation.

Acculturation groups within this study did not differ significantly in psychological adjustment, which was indicated by levels of depression, suggesting that difficulty in adapting may likely be indicated by other mental health problems apart from depression. Information specific to East African immigrants on manifestations due to difficulty in adaptation are not available. However, research on first generation immigrants suggests that they may report lower prevalence than expected on mental disorders because they have different idioms of distress, experience symptoms in culturally different ways, and are less likely to report their symptoms if they feel self-conscious about doing so (APA, 2012).

Results from the study revealed no statistically significant difference in socio-cultural adaptation between East African immigrants in North America who scored high on integration and immigrants who scored high on other modes of acculturation such as assimilation, separation and marginalization. East Africans who have voluntarily migrated to North America are more likely to be educated, living in urban areas and already adapted to the North American

culture even before they go to America. Chiswick (1982) stated that economic immigrants from countries with similarities in language, culture and economic structure to their host countries found that their skills were more readily transferable than those from countries with a greater disparity to the host country, thus easing adaptation into the host culture and providing an incentive for the choice of America as a destination. Adaptation to American culture before immigration could occur through watching and identifying with American film and television and access to the internet, and American magazines and books. In a study done on consumption of US film in foreign markets, Craig, Greene, and Douglas (2005) stated that film lays an important role in the transmission of cultural values and mores by reflecting the daily life of the culture in which the films are created.

Proficiency in English contributes significantly to the ease of socio-cultural adaptation and according to Zhou (1997) is the most important component of adjustment into the American society for immigrants. Most immigrants from East Africa would likely have a good command of English because it is the official language of Kenya and Uganda. Individuals who migrate as older adults and as political refugees or economic migrants may experience more difficulty in adapting. In addition, political refugees and some economic migrants are more likely to be of lower education, economic status and are more likely to experience difficulty learning and becoming fluent in English (Guenther, Pendaz, & Makene, 2011; Hirschman, 2004).

Results from the study revealed no statistically significant difference in socio-cultural adaptation between East African immigrants in North America who scored high on seeking social support as one of their major coping methods and immigrants who coped through the use of other methods. For most inhabitants of East Africans, the extended family unit is very important and the society is largely collectivistic as compared to the North American society, which is considered to be individualistic. Family relationships have been shown to facilitate adaptation by sharing in the process of change and collectively helping generate solutions to the challenges of adjustment (Arends-Toth & Vijver; as cited in Stuart, Jose, & Ward, 2009). In addition, it has been observed that immigrants often settle in communities with others of the same country of origin. These communities can provide support for children's emotional and academic adjustment, reinforce cultural values and provide a buffer against negative elements in the host culture (Shields & Behrman, 2004). In addition, a positive correlation was found between East African immigrants' scores on psychological adjustment and their scores on socio-cultural adaptation. This finding is consistent with prior research that found that the relationship between socio-cultural and psychological adaptation appears to grow stronger over time (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

Ward, Okura, Kennedy, and Kojima (1998) stated that at entry, an immigrant experiences the most immediate life changes, most limited resources and social support. The immigrant also experiences the most difficulty in socio-cultural adaptation due to least

familiarity with and knowledge about the host culture. These authors further stated that in the majority of cases it is likely that the magnitude of the relationship between psychological and socio-cultural adaptation is modest at entry and increases over time. It is likely that socio-cultural adaptation and psychological adaptation reinforce each other.

Results from the study revealed no statistically significant difference in psychological adjustment (level of depression) between East African immigrants in North America who are involved in a faith community and immigrants who are not involved in faith communities. It is likely that East Africans generally do not demonstrate difficulty in psychological adaptation through depressive symptoms. Results from prior studies have suggested a positive relationship between good mental health and spirituality. Sloan, Bagiella, and Powell (1999) suggested a positive relationship between many dimensions of religion, spirituality and indicators of wellbeing. Results from a study of depressed patients by Koenig, George, and Peterson (1998) indicated that individuals with higher intrinsic religiosity scores had more rapid remissions than individuals with lower scores. Scholars in the field of religious orientation differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Oakes (2000) stated that intrinsic religiosity, which involves compassion, love for others and faith in transcendence is associated with positive mental health. On the other hand, extrinsic religiosity, which focuses on using faith and religion as a tool to achieve goals is not associated with positive mental health.

This study used a depression scale as an indication of psychological adaptation or mental health. As noted from prior studies (Oakes, 2000; Sloan, Bagiella, & Powell, 1999), not all dimensions of religion and spirituality are associated with good mental health. This study did not distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity, which may have contributed to results showing an insignificant difference in psychological adaptation between the individuals involved in a faith community and those who were not involved in a faith community.

Results revealed a statistically significant difference in socio-cultural adaptation between East African immigrants in North America who are involved in a faith community and immigrants who are not involved in a faith community. Hirschman (2004) previously found that socio-cultural adaptation of immigrants is facilitated by the social support from faith communities. Social support from faith communities has involved help finding jobs, housing, celebrating important family events and participation in social events. Hirschman further stated that faith communities also provide opportunities for individuals to take up positions of responsibility and be recognized regardless of what positions they may hold at work or outside the faith community. This acceptance and support by other members likely builds up the immigrants' self-confidence and willingness to adapt in other social situations facilitating socio-cultural adaptation.

Among the study population there was limited representation of individuals who are not involved in a faith community. Research on religiosity among Sub-Saharan Africans indicates that nine out of ten individuals say that religion is very important to them and most of them

state that they are active in their religion: attending services, fasting and giving alms (Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, 2010). The Pew study further revealed that 86% of the participants from Uganda, 87% from Kenya and 93% from Tanzania reported that religion is very important to them.

Results from the study revealed no statistically significant difference in socio-cultural adaptation between East African immigrants in North America who migrated to North America with family members (n = 21, M = 50.10) and immigrants who migrated to America without family members (n = 30, M = 51.29). Immigrants who migrate without family members may likely feel more pressure to learn the language, build relationships and function in society than those who have family members they live with, who speak the same language and offer support in new social situations. Results from this study suggest that individuals who migrate with family members may also experience difficulty as they adapt because they will still be required to adapt as individuals in their various individual settings, for example; school, work and the society. On the other hand, those who migrate as individuals become part of various social groups like school, work, friends, church, and other groups. These social groups provide support that facilitates socio-cultural adaptation.

East African immigrants may derive social support from keeping in touch with friends and family that remained in East Africa through currently available technology (Face book, telephone, SMS, and Skype). Results from research on the use of technology by immigrants from Senegal reveal that immigrants maintain long distance relationships with family and friends left in the home country via landline telephones, mobile phones, and the internet, among others (Tall, 2004). The author noted that the immigrants often: provide the mobile phones as gifts to relatives, ensure access to telephone lines, and pay the phone bills. The same situation prevails in East Africa with some immigrants ensuring that they can communicate with the people left behind using available technology.

One of the challenges this researcher faced while conducting this study was that some potential participants were generally suspicious of the process and reluctant to provide information. Birman (2006) in her research with refugees encountered a similar challenge. Any harsh treatment or discrimination against immigrants in the host country may contribute to their reluctance to provide personal information. This limitation suggests that there may be a need to include a measure that assesses the consistency of participants' response style in order to ascertain the honesty of responses given.

Participants for the study were recruited using the snowballing method. This method of recruitment may have provided participants from similar cohorts, with similar backgrounds and who may have faced similar challenges in adaptation, resulting in no statistically significant differences in the various groups. The results from research using these groups may also not be accurately generalized to the wider East African population. To improve on recruitment of

participants, researchers could utilize the national and regional groups to which immigrants subscribe.

In addition to limitations encountered in the sample population, there were limitations in the data collection tools. One of these tools was the Acculturation Index (AI), which was used to measure acculturation. The AI, an instrument developed by Ward and Kennedy (1994), focuses on the individual's attitude to the home culture and to the host country. Firstly, no consideration of adaptation to the host country that may have already occurred before immigrants move to the country is included in the AI. An instrument that includes an assessment of baseline similarities between the immigrant's home and host country cultures before adaptation is measured, may reveal more subtle differences in adaptation and acculturation between different groups. At the time of this study, such an instrument was unavailable to this researcher. Secondly, the AI provides measures of immigrants' identification with their host and home countries. The identification scales are split along the scalar midpoint and combined to indicate the acculturation strategies of integration, separation, assimilation and marginalization. Using the method of splitting along the scalar midpoint, data points that are close to each other in value but may happen to be on either side of the midpoint are categorized in different groups. Individuals may end up being categorized in different acculturation groups while they overlap significantly on the items. When the groups are analyzed statistically, they may not differ significantly because of the original categorization. A clearer and more significant distinction between the various acculturation strategies would likely produce more conclusive results.

The use of the Ways of Coping Checklist-Revised to investigate participants' modes of coping also presented some limitations. In scoring the WCCL-R, it was possible for a participant to identify more than one strategy as their mode of coping. This resulted in an overlap in the groups reducing the distinction between the groups. A measure that utilized combinations of modes of coping or clearly differentiated among specific modes could likely have yielded more conclusive results.

A number of limitations arose from the use of CES-D. The CES-D has not been validated with the East African population thus limiting applicability within this population. In addition, while the CES-D was used to measure psychological adaptation, it is a measure of depression rather than 'psychological adaptation.' Results from this study suggest that participants in this study may be more likely to respond to difficulties in adaptation and acculturation in ways other than depressed mood. However, because a specific measure of depression was used, other ways of the study population responding to difficulties in adaptation were not investigated.

In order to improve data collection and analysis within similar future studies the following recommendations are presented. It is recommended that future researchers work more closely with the leadership and structures within the organizations to recruit participants

for studies on immigrants. Results of the studies could then be shared with the organizations. Results from a larger research population would be more representative of cross cultural adaptation and coping among East African immigrants in North America.

This study did not consider the number of years the immigrant has stayed in North America as a covariate. It is recommended that further studies take the length of an immigrant's stay in the host country as a covariate. Individuals who have lived in the host country for a longer time, have likely adapted more than recent immigrants. It is recommended that further research in this area utilize instruments that can highlight subtle differences in adaptation, acculturation and coping considering that modern immigrants experience a degree of adaptation even before migration.

Conclusion

This research was an attempt at investigating adaptation and coping among this population conducted among immigrants and refugees from Africa and particularly East Africa (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania). Although there were challenges in participant recruitment and on-line data collection, the results showed that involvement in faith communities contributes positively to socio-cultural adaptation.

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