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Health Challenge of Stress Experienced by Native American Adolescents

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Nursing; Florida Atlantic University

Little is known about how Native American youth experience or manage stress. The purpose of this study was to describe the health challenge of stress experienced by Cherokee-Keetoowah adolescents and to identify approaches used to manage stress. All adolescents regardless of ethnicity face normative sources of stress, such as daily hassles and transition experiences like moving to a new school. Native American youth are known to have significantly greater stress, related to social and economic factors, than their white peers. A qualitative story-theory-guided approach was used to conduct a secondary analysis of a data set collected during a larger study to identify dimensions of the health challenge of stress and approaches used to resolve the health challenge. The written stories of stress were gathered from 50 Cherokee-Keetoowah adolescents ranging in ages from fourteen to eighteen years. Three health challenge groups were identified as: the burden of expectations, relationship disruption, imposing feelings, and the actions of others. Connecting with valued others, engaging in meaningful activities, and choosing a positive attitude about change were themes that characterized ways that these adolescents managed stress. It is essential to understand how Native American adolescents experience stress and what they do to manage it if we wish to deter the physical and mental consequences of stress. Furthermore, the development of stress-reducing culturally competent interventions built on a foundation such as story-sharing is a culturally congruent approach for intervening with Native American adolescents.

Health Challenge of Stress Experienced by Native American Adolescents

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Introduction

All adolescents regardless of ethnicity face normative sources of stress, such as daily hassles and transition experiences like moving to a new school. Little is known about how Native American youth experience or manage stress but they are known to have significantly greater stress, related to social and economic factors, than their white peers. Native American youth are exposed to a variety of continuous stressors including poverty and family disruption. Stress and coping processes play an important role in physical and mental health outcomes for Native American youth.

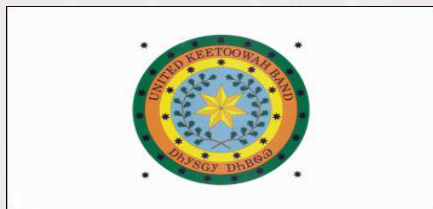
References:

Bergstrom, A., Cleary, L., & Peacock, T. (2003). *The seventh generation: Native students speak about finding the good path*. Charleston, WV: WRIC/CRESS. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED472385).

Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24(4), 385-395.

Purpose

Little is known about how Native American youth experience or manage stress. The purpose of this study was to describe the health challenge of stress experienced by Cherokee-Keetoowah adolescents and to identify approaches used to manage stress.



Research Questions

The research questions that guided these analyses are:
1) What is the health challenge of stress experienced by Cherokee-Keetoowah adolescents?
2) How do Cherokee-Keetoowah adolescents resolve the health challenge of stress?

Parent Study completed by J. Lowe (2007-2010)—
“Community Partnership to Affect Cherokee-Keetowah Adolescent Substance Abuse”

Methods

A qualitative story-theory-guided approach was used to conduct a secondary analysis of an existing data set collected from a larger study where written stories of stress were gathered from 50 Cherokee-Keetoowah adolescents ranging in ages from fourteen to eighteen years. Participants wrote for fifteen minutes about their stress and how they managed it; they were told to write without concern for spelling, grammar or punctuation. Inductive processes were used to analyze the data. Data analysis was guided by the story inquiry method to identify dimensions of the health challenge of stress and approaches used to resolve the health challenge.

References:

Lowe, J., Riggs, C., Henson, J., & Liehr, P. (2008). Cherokee self-reliance and word-use in stories of stress. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 16(1), 5-9.

Smith, M. J., & Liehr, P. R. (2008). Story Theory. In P. R. Liehr & M. J. Smith (Eds.), *Middle Range Theory for Nursing* (pp. 205-224). New York: Springer Publishing Company

Results

Three health challenge groups were identified as:

- 1) The burden of expectation of self or from others (n=33) was the most frequently described challenge emerging from the stories of stress.
- 2) Relationship disruption
- 3) Imposing feelings and the actions of others.

Connecting with valued others, engaging in meaningful activities, and choosing a positive attitude about change were themes the three themes that characterized ways that Cherokee-Keetoowah adolescents managed stress.



Conclusions

It is essential to understand how Native American adolescents experience stress and what they do to manage it if we wish to deter the physical and mental consequences of stress. Culturally competent data collection approaches that are built on a foundation of story-sharing show promise for coming to know this population. Lowe has developed stress-reducing culturally competent interventions (Lowe, 2002; Lowe, 2006) If researchers wish to engage in health-promoting activities with Native-American youth, coming to know them is an essential first step.

References:

Lowe, J. (2002). Cherokee self-reliance. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 13, 287-295.

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