An Introduction to the Composition of the Multi-Site University Study of Identity and Culture (MUSIC): A Collaborative Approach to Research and Mentorship

Robert S. Weisskirch  
California State University, Monterey Bay

Byron L. Zamboanga  
Smith College

Russell D. Ravert  
University of Missouri-Columbia

Susan Krauss Whitbourne  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Irene J. K. Park  
University of Notre Dame

Richard M. Lee  
University of Minnesota

Seth J. Schwartz  
University of Miami

The Multi-Site University Study of Identity and Culture (MUSIC) is the product of a research collaboration among faculty members from 30 colleges and universities from across the United States. Using Katz and Martin’s (1997, p. 7) definition, the MUSIC research collaboration is “the working together of researchers to achieve the common goals of producing new scientific knowledge.” The collaboration involved more than just coauthorship; it served “as a strategy to insert more energy, optimism, creativity and hope into the work of [researchers]” (Conoley & Conoley, 2010, p. 77). The philosophy underlying the MUSIC collaborative was intended to foster natural collaborations among researchers, to provide opportunities for scholarship and mentorship for early career and established researchers, and to support exploration of identity, cultural, and ethnic/racial research ideas by tapping the expertise and interests of the broad MUSIC network of collaborators. A guiding principle was that natural collaborations among researchers might emerge when researchers with similar interests are thinking about and using the same data. The goals of the research were to (a) focus data collection on issues of identity and culture; (b) target multiple, diverse locales across the United States; and (c) test innovative ideas related to identity and culture. Although the focus was on identity-related and cultural constructs, data were also collected on parental relationships, depression, anxiety, body image, externalizing symptoms, risky sexual behaviors, substance use, posttraumatic stress disorder, sensation seeking, and personality. There was minimal funding (less than $1,000) underwriting the costs associated with administration, data collection, analyses, and publication.

Initial Research and Data Collection

Several researchers (i.e., Schwartz, Zamboanga, Weisskirch, and Ravert) knew each other through professional conferences, having worked together previously, or from citing one another’s scholarship, and decided to collaborate on collecting data to expand on the identity and cultural identity data that Schwartz had collected in South Florida in 2004 and 2005. Although the South Florida sample was diverse in comparison to most samples, it remained limited to the diversity in that area (i.e., Cubans, Nicaraguans, Colombians, Haitians, and Jamaicans). Beginning in 2006, the team decided to recruit additional collaborators to allow for greater geographic and ethnic diversity for the sample. In 2007, we also opted to collect the data online in order to create a common portal for administration, minimize time for transcription, and ease burden on the participants. The collaborators involved deemed this initial pilot project of data collection successful and, in 2008, decided to expand data collection to include greater geographic diversity, by targeting sites with potentially large ethnic minority populations and including measures to reflect the collaborators’ research interests.

MUSIC expanded in 2007 when the four original researchers (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Weisskirch, and Russert) recruited faculty researchers from several different sites and with interests in diversity and late adolescence or emerging adulthood. The 2007 sample included over 2,500 participants from nine university sites across the United States (one in Florida, one in Connecticut, three in California, one in Massachusetts, one in Texas, one in Missouri,
and one in Georgia). The larger sample size provided the opportunity for greater diversity within the sample as well the potential for more sophisticated statistical analyses that require larger samples. In the 2008–2009 year, additional collaborators and data collection sites were added. Additional measures of risk behaviors (e.g., substance use and risky sexual activities), religiosity, well-being, sexual identity, externalizing behaviors, emotion regulation, and perceived discrimination were added to the survey. The 2008–2009 round of data yielded over 10,000 participants from 30 sites across the country. The sample was especially unique given its broad variety of data collection sites and the ethnic and racial diversity of the participants.

The 2007 sample included 2,546 individuals (79% women, 21% men) with an ethnic composition of 34% White/Euro-American, 11% African American/Black, 44% Latino/Hispanic, 7% Asian American, and 4% other. Seventy-seven percent of the sample participants were born in the United States and 23% were born outside the United States. Several empirical articles emerged from this dataset linking identity and cultural variables with topics including sensation seeking and perceived invulnerability (Ravert et al., 2009), parental nurturance and acceptance (Schwartz et al., 2009), and alcohol expectancies and risky drinking practices (Zamboanga, Schwartz, Ham, Borsari, & Van Tyne, 2010). This initial round of data collection also demonstrated that a multisite collaboration could yield a more diverse sample than could be collected at any one site and the measures could be successfully administered online and across different populations.

In Fall 2008, we began to collect another round of data, most notably adding measures of specific risk behaviors (e.g., substance use, sexual behaviors, and a number of different types of risky driving), and adding more collaborators and sites to broaden the geographic scope. In Spring 2009, we collected data and added collaborators once again. In total, then, the 2008–2009 sample included 10,321 participants. Women comprised 73% of the sample—this gender distribution is consistent with enrollment patterns in colleges and universities, particularly in psychology, human development and family studies, and other social science courses from which most of the participants were recruited. The ethnic composition of the sample was 63% White/Euro-American, 9% African American/Black, 15% Latino/Hispanic, 13% Asian American, and 1% other. We also collected more specific subgroup ethnic information, as well as qualitative data on how the participants described their ethnicity “in their own words.” Beyond typical demographic information, we also included a number of demographic questions about romantic relationship status, sexual orientation, parents’ alcohol and drug problems, and language brokering (i.e., translating for parents). Roughly 88% of participants were U.S.-born. Sixty-nine percent of the sample had U.S.-born mothers and 69% had U.S.-born fathers, so first and second generation immigrants comprised a considerable proportion of the sample.

## College-Attending Emerging Adults

Emerging adults attending college have unique experiences with identity and culture because of the confluence of developmental and contextual issues. Developmentally, emerging adults have gained a great deal of autonomy from their family of origin and spend a large amount of time away from parents’ influence, but still may have close ties (e.g., financial) to their parents. In addition, they have made gains in cognitive development that allow for higher order, abstract thinking and self-reflection on their place in society and the world (Blakemore et al., 2003). Contextually, the college experience provides opportunities for identity development (Montgomery & Côté, 2003), given that emerging adults have opportunities to interact with a broad range of people and ideas. At the same time, college may present choices for identity alternatives that were not previously available (Schwartz, Côté, & Amett, 2008). College-attending emerging adults also are more likely to continue to explore their identities than working emerging adults who are more likely to have consolidated their identities (Luyckx, Schwartz, Goossens, & Pollock, 2008). Hence, our ethnically diverse samples of college-attending emerging adults present an ideal population to sample for research on identity and culture.

## The MUSIC Methodology

Methodology across the instances of data collection was identical. Students were offered extra credit by their instructor or received “experiment” credit for participation in a research study, depending on the site in question. The faculty researcher at each data collection site was responsible for obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and for managing all recruitment effort at his or her school.

Participating individuals received a link to the consent form webpage from their instructor via an e-mail or posting on an electronic notification (e.g., course management software). A waiver of signed consent was obtained at each site so that participants could provide consent online. Participants read the consent document and checked a box to indicate that they agreed to participate in the study. The website for the study was secure, and the individual responses were not accessible to anyone, other than the MUSIC collaborators, after the data collection period had ended.

The questionnaire was divided into five survey web pages in 2007, and later expanded to six survey pages in 2008–2009. Participants could skip any items they did not wish to answer, could advance to the next page once submitting responses, as well as saving their work and finishing later. If a participant selected this latter option, the website would send an automated e-mail with a link to return to the remaining portion of the questions. On the consent page, participants were notified that they would receive course or research credit only if they completed the entire survey. On each survey page, each measure contained a generic header (e.g., “attitudes about yourself”) and a response scale. The response choices for each item were presented with radio buttons to allow each participant to indicate her or his answer. Once all five or six pages were submitted, respondents were directed to a “thank you” page and debriefed about the nature of the measures and the research.

In constructing the study, we opted to primarily use entire measures in order to reference the psychometric properties (e.g., factor structure, internal consistency, construct, and convergent validity) that have been established for each measure. Use of incomplete or partial measures may have changed the factor structure or internal consistency of scores, which would then likely alter the validity of these scores. Although doing so resulted in a lengthy survey for participants, requiring up to 45 to 90 minutes to complete, we also gained psychometric rigor by using entire measures.
For some measures, we also reworded a few items to broaden their scope. For example, our measure of acculturative stress (Rodríguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & García–Hernandez, 2002) was reworded to refer to “the country my family is from” rather than only to Mexico.

Collaboration and Mentorship

Given the goals of the collaboration and the research, the MUSIC data presented opportunities for collaborators to advance their research programs as well as have access to a large data set for research endeavors that may not have been easily attainable from one or even several university researchers working together. The MUSIC collaborative working group also presented rich opportunities for diverse researchers, of all academic ranks, to engage in research in their area of interest, without requiring external funding. Among the MUSIC collaborators, 62% were women, and 50% were Latino, Asian American, or African American. In the 2008–2009 academic year, 42% were untenured assistant professors, graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, or other nontenured academic positions, whereas by the 2011–2012 academic year, 58% had achieved tenure and promotion to associate professor, some promoted to full professor, and several of the graduate students and postdoctoral researchers had acquired faculty positions. In addition, 46% of the MUSIC collaborators had used the data set with graduate students under their supervision. At present, 21 journal articles have been published (not including those in this issue and other scholarly papers that are currently under review in other peer-reviewed journals; see Appendix A), at least 15 conference presentations have been given, and several doctoral dissertations are underway, using the MUSIC data sets. Many of the publications and presentations have incorporated graduate and undergraduate students as coauthors, providing opportunities for mentorship and research training.

Early in the project, we were cognizant that the collaborative consisted of a broad range of researchers with varied interests and backgrounds, some with a great deal of experience in collaborative research and others with little or no such experience. Therefore, we decided to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to delineate at the outset how the data could be used and how authorship could be determined and earned (see Appendix B). Although there was a master IRB approval through Dr. Seth J. Schwartz at the University of Miami, there were no designated “principal investigators” for the endeavor, and all MUSIC collaborators had equal say about projects (our policy has been that the lead author on each paper has final say on decisions related to that paper). Some important features about the MOU involve issues of authorship. Essentially, we decided that opportunities for collaboration on a given paper should be offered to everyone in the group who could contribute to the manuscript. This call for collaboration was typically achieved by the lead author sending out an e-mail to the MUSIC collaborators describing the project and plan to the group and soliciting interested parties to reply. Those who responded affirmatively to the lead author were offered the opportunity to collaborate and contribute as coauthors, with the expectation that they would make a significant contribution to the paper in the draft and revision process. Washburn (2008) and Fine and Kurdek (1993) have emphasized the importance of clarifying authorship at the outset of collaboration as well as detailing a procedure for determining authorship as key components of successful collaboration in research. For MUSIC, on some publications, this process led to many coauthors and required the lead author to cull through comments from the many collaborators. Although increasing coauthorship has become a trend (see Number of authors, 2011), MUSIC collaborators have agreed that the process yielded stronger manuscripts and provided a chance to receive prereviews before submitting manuscripts for presentation or publication. For graduate students and early career faculty, the multiple coauthor process also provided mentorship with respect to all areas of publication such as good writing, effective data analyses, and addressing reviewer comments.

Concluding Remarks and Future Directions

In a time where resources are limited and demands on faculty to engage in grant writing, research, and scholarship are high, members of the academy have to find creative and cost- and time-efficient ways to conduct research amid all the other demands of faculty life as well. Additionally, research focusing on diverse populations often requires additional effort to recruit and retain participants who may be wary of participation or who are tired of being repeatedly targeted for study inclusion as representatives of “diversity” (Knight, Roosa, & Umaña–Taylor, 2009). So, a challenging situation ensues. Faculty researchers feel pressure to engage in grant writing (though not at all institutions) in order to advance their research programs, but studies with diverse populations require significant effort. Institutions may not recognize the challenges for faculty who conduct research with diverse populations. Lastly, funding for research is extremely competitive (especially given today’s economy), time-consuming to pursue, and difficult to obtain without pilot data and a strong record of publication in the area. Therefore, faculty must be creative in developing research opportunities. The MUSIC collaboration provides a potential model of a creative and productive method for engaging in research, particularly with ethnic minority samples.

In this issue, five research articles present innovative findings from the MUSIC datasets. There are two themes across the articles. Research is emerging about broadening the constructs and measures of acculturation and ethnic identity and their relation to health risk behaviors and psychosocial and mental health outcomes. As such, Brittian, Umaña–Taylor, and Derlan (this issue) explore how family ethnic socialization and ethnic identity relate to psychosocial issues such as self-esteem, depression, and anxiety in samples of bicultural college students. Schwartz, Kim, Whitebourne, Zamboanga, Weisskirch, Forthun, Vazsonyi, Beyers, and Luyckx (this issue) use an expanded model of identity status to test differences in acculturative processes between first and second generation immigrants as well as across ethnicity in a variety of health risk behaviors and activities. In addition, Syed, Walker, Lee, Umaña–Taylor, Zamboanga, Schwartz, Armenta, and Huynh (this issue) compare constructs and items from the Multicultural Identity Measure (MEIM) and the Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS), examining two different types of identity exploration underlying each measure. They further investigate how these two types of identity exploration relate to measures of psychological functioning. The second theme is about the relationship of perceived discrimination on behavioral and mental health outcomes among immigrant populations (i.e., Asian Americans and Latinos). Park, Schwartz, Lee, Kim, and Rodriguez (this issue)
explore how ethnic identity and American identity moderates the link of perceived discrimination with psychological adjustment in South and East Asians. In contrast to previous research, they find that American identity exacerbated the link between perceived discrimination and antisocial behaviors. Further, Armenta, Lee, Pituc, Jung, Park, Soto, Huynh, Kim, and Schwartz (this issue) investigate perceived ethnic discrimination in relation to internalizing symptoms among Asian American and Latino college students and support the invariance of the Foreigner Objectification Measure (FOBS), a new tool for researchers.

In the future, we anticipate that the MUSIC collaboration will continue. We have discussed the possibility of pursuing external funding, given the strong track record of innovative and productive research. Also, we have considered new data collection with an eye toward focusing on longitudinal data collection and retaining a focus on personal and cultural identity. In addition, we considered the potential for international data collection in order to bolster theory-building on personal and cultural identity that moves beyond a United States-focused experience of diverse youth. We feel fortunate to have been part of the project, consider it a successful model of grassroots collaborative research, and hope that it inspires others to advance the field of research on cultural diversity by engaging in collaboration.

References

Appendix A

Publications From the MUSIC Dataset


(Appendices continue)


*This issue

(Appendices continue)
Appendix B

MUSIC Memorandum of Understanding

I. General Terms of Collaboration

A. As part of the MUSIC collaborative, each collaborator is responsible for recruiting participants for the study and/or contributing meaningfully to the project design, conceptualization, analysis, and manuscript preparation. The target participants are emerging-adult college undergraduates (roughly ages 18–30) from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

B. Data collection will be conducted online exclusively and through a designated website containing the survey.


II. Institutional Review Boards (IRB)/Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects

Each data project collaborator is responsible for attaining approval through his/her own Institutional Review Boards. Seth Schwartz is submitting a “Master IRB,” indicating all the collaborators and data collection sites. Copies of the IRB and sample consent forms may be requested from Dr. Schwartz. Each collaborator may modify the consent forms, if necessary, to meet the demands of her or his IRB.

Collaborators should not differ in the incentives for participation. The incentives for participation should be course credit or experiment participation credit (as is often required for psychology students). Dr. Schwartz will provide a list of participants from each site or student ID numbers to the collaborator in order to provide the credit to the student.

Everything will be done online. Paper copies of the survey should not be distributed to participants.

III. Authorship

A. In general, because of the collaborative effort, each collaborator should have the opportunity to meaningfully contribute as an author on any poster, presentation, or article resulting from the dataset. As per the American Psychological Association, having one’s name on the authorship requires one of the following:

- Conceptualizing the manuscript, poster, or presentation
- Conducting the statistical analyses
- Conducting in-depth literature searches
- Carefully editing drafts of the manuscript, poster, or presentation

B. There are two options for inclusion as an author on any poster, presentation, or article resulting from the dataset. As per the American Psychological Association, having one’s name on the authorship requires one of the following:

- Conceptualizing the manuscript, poster, or presentation
- Conducting the statistical analyses
- Conducting in-depth literature searches
- Carefully editing drafts of the manuscript, poster, or presentation

A second option is to include “The MUSIC Study Collaborative” as a group author. The collaborative name will always be listed last on the author byline. Individuals wishing to contribute to a manuscript, poster, or presentation under the collaborative name will have their names acknowledged in an author note. The collaborative name will be included in cases where there are collaborators who wish to be included on a manuscript, poster, or presentation but who do not wish to make one or more of the contributions listed above. Before the manuscript, poster, or presentation is undertaken, all of the collaborators working on it will agree on who will be listed as an author and who will be listed under the collaborative name.

B. An author may select data from specific sites to use for a proposed paper/project. In this situation, the collaborator(s) at each site selected for inclusion will have an opportunity to meaningfully contribute as an author on any poster, presentation, or article prepared using data from their site.

C. The lead author on any piece of work decides the order of name appearance in authorship. After the lead author, in general, the names should be listed in order of work contributed. If work contributed is equal among collaborative members, the author may decide the order in an equitable manner (e.g., alphabetically or via coin flip).

D. Each author may add student colleagues to any poster presentation or journal manuscript as long as all of the other authors agree. However, to be included as authors on a manuscript, student colleagues must make a meaningful contribution to the project (through literature searches, data cleaning and organization, or careful editing).

E. The name of the collaborative (i.e., Multi-site University Study of Identity and Culture; MUSIC), and the project should be referenced in all work produced by the collaboration. A standard description of the project will be created for all collaborators to use.
F. If an author only uses the data collected from his/her site, he/she may chose not to include other collaborators in the product. However, to facilitate open communication among the collaborators and to reduce duplication in scholarly work, it is important that the author inform the collaborators of the proposed paper/project.

IV. Access to the Data

A. Each collaborator (listed on p. 1) will receive a copy of the data file and codebook or access to the data file. The data file will be distributed once data collection is completed and the data have been organized and cleaned.

B. Data should only be used for the purposes of the work of the collaborative and should not be disseminated to others.

C. A collaborator may want to partner with others outside the collaborative working group; however, the outside partners will have no rights or privileges for using the data unless such use of data is approved by a majority of the collaborators. Authorship falls under III A.

D. Access to the data and the usability of the data shall be for five years following the end of data collection. At the end of the five-year period, we will decide whether it would be best to continue using the present dataset or to undertake a new data collection.

---

E-Mail Notification of Your Latest Issue Online!

Would you like to know when the next issue of your favorite APA journal will be available online? This service is now available to you. Sign up at http://notify.apa.org/ and you will be notified by e-mail when issues of interest to you become available!