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Mindfulness and resilience when adversity reigns

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Life can be difficult and filled with challenges when the following describes ones environment and the experiences that occur while living in this environment: one of the highest poverty rates, teen pregnancy rates, and second births to teen mother rates in the nation; one of the highest HIV, obesity, and Type II diabetes rates in the nation; limited access to affordable healthcare; high crime rates (several local communities have the highest rates in the state of Texas); high rates of access to and use of illicit drugs; high levels of pollution; high levels of discrimination and prejudice when traveling outside of this region (the local population of four-hundred and fifty thousand is ninety-five percent Mexican American). The population of interest in this study consists of first generation Mexican American college students. Most, in their late teens and early twenties, work full time, are parents, and are enrolled full-time in college. The optimism, hope, and 'engagement in life' maintained by a majority of these young people is unexpected considering the statistics that describe life in this region of the United States. It appears that most, without awareness regarding the process itself, are mindful, non-judgmental, and resilient regarding their life circumstances. Mindfulness practice is defined as intentional focus on present experience with acceptance. Most of these students appear to be accepting and non-judgmental of their current life situation, and most are focused on improvement of life circumstances (resilience) via employment and the simultaneous pursuit of an education. If mindfulness is occurring naturally within this group at rates that are higher than what is seen in other ethnic groups, then how and why? Use of the following assessment instruments will attempt to clarify this issue: the mindful attention awareness scale, the Langer Mindfulness Scale, and the big five personality inventory.

Biography

Blake H Armstrong has completed his PhD in Clinical Psychology (1995) and is a licensed Clinical Psychologist in Texas and South Carolina. He is an Associate Professor of Psychological Science at South Texas College and a Senior Lecturer at the University of Texas- Rio Grande Valley. His publications and research interests focus on critical thinking, mindfulness and belief inflexibility.

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