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Generational Differences in Vulnerability to Identity Denial: The Role of Group Identification

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Abstract

Identity denial, or having one's group membership go unrecognized by others, is a form of discrimination and a common experience for ethnic minorities whose national identities are routinely questioned. Three studies found that being denied one's national identity generated greater negative emotions for second+ generation (i.e., U.S.-born) compared to first generation (i.e., foreign-born) Asian Americans, and for those first generation Asian Americans who arrived to the USA earlier in their lives compared to later. Negative emotions in response to identity denial were mediated by American identification, specifically greater self-stereotyping as American, among second+ generation Americans. The present work thus identifies which group members are most vulnerable to the negative effects of identity denial and further suggests that identity denial is a self-definitional threat in which one's view of oneself is not validated by others.

Keywords

Many ethnic minorities face having their national identities questioned or doubted. For instance, Asians in America (Cheryan & Monin, 2005), Haitians, Indians, and Iranians in Canada (Lalonde, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1992; Moghaddam, Taylor, & Lalonde, 1987), and Turks in the Netherlands (van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998) report a discrepancy between how much they associate themselves with their national identity and how much they believe they are seen by others as possessing that identity. Having one's national identity unrecognized has been linked to negative well-being (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Guendelman, Cheryan, & Monin, 2011; Kim, Wang, Deng, Alvarez, & Li, 2011; Liang, Li, & Kim, 2004; Park-Taylor et al., 2008) and a greater likelihood of facing discrimination (Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011; W. H. Lee, 2001; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010).

The current work investigates whether some group members are more vulnerable to the

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negative effects of having their national identities denied than others. Specifically, we examine whether the length of time one has possessed the American identity, operationalized as generational status (first generation/foreign-born vs. second+ generation/U.S.-born) and as age of arrival in the USA, predicts negative emotions in response to having that identity questioned. Generational status and age of arrival, we argue, can shape people's identification as American, which in turn influences negative emotions in response to having that identity doubted by other Americans. By elucidating both moderators (generational status and age of arrival) and mediators (components of American identification) of responses to national identity threat, this work seeks to further understand the variability that exists in emotional responses to having an important identity questioned and the processes underlying these emotions. In doing so, we hope to shed light on what factors may exacerbate, and protect against, harmful effects of this form of discrimination against seemingly nonprototypical Americans.

Identity Denial and Negative Consequences

People who belong to a certain group but deviate from the group prototype often contend with *identity denial*, or the tendency of others to doubt or not recognize their membership in that group (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Identity denial is a form of identity miscategorization (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003) in which one's social identity (as American) does not match up with how he/she is perceived by others (as less than fully American). For instance, many Asian Americans identify themselves as fully American but are perceived as "perpetual foreigners" and are more likely to have their American identities doubted than White Americans (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Park-Taylor et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2007; Wu, 2002). Asian Americans first arrived in the USA in the 18th century (Takaki, 1989) and are currently one of the fastest growing racial groups in the USA (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2012). Yet many Asian Americans and other ethnic minorities still contend with being seen as less American than White Americans (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Identity denial is often experienced by Asian Americans through frequent misperceptions, such as having their English abilities questioned and encountering assumptions of not being American (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Park-Taylor et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2007).

Having one's American identity questioned is associated with negative emotions, and in the long term, with negative economic, political, and health outcomes (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Guendelman et al., 2011; Liang et al., 2004; Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2011). Cheryan and Monin (2005) found that Asian Americans who had their American identities denied—by having their English abilities questioned or their citizenship directly challenged—reported feeling angrier and more offended than Asian Americans who did not have their American identities denied. In the long term, identity denial may have negative health and economic consequences for Asian Americans. For example, Asian Americans who had their American identities denied chose unhealthier American foods (e.g., hamburgers) over more nutritious Asian foods (e.g., sushi) in an attempt to prove their American identities (Guendelman et al., 2011). In addition, perceptions of foreignness have led to discrimination towards Asian Americans, based on perceived economic (Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011) and national security threats (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). Thus, identity denial may be associated with negative economic, political, and health outcomes.

Generational Status, Discrimination, and Identity Denial

In the current work, we consider how generational status influences responses to identity denial. Because having one's American identity denied is considered a form of discrimination against Asian Americans (Yogeeswaran &

Dasgupta, 2010), it is important to examine this work within the context of other work on generational differences in perceived discrimination. Some research suggests that perceived discrimination based on race is greater among second+ generation (i.e., North American-born) Americans and Canadians compared to their first generation counterparts (Krieger, Koshelevea, Waterman, Chen, & Koenen, 2011; Reitz & Banerjee, 2007, 2009). Perceiving greater discrimination is also associated with poorer health outcomes for second+ generation than first generation Americans (Gee, Ro, Gavin, & Takeuchi, 2008). In contrast, other research has suggested that first generation Americans perceive more race-based discrimination than the second+ generation (Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008; Yoo, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2009). Examining how discrimination was defined may help to reconcile these differences. When race-based discrimination includes discrimination based on language abilities, reports of discrimination may be more prominent among the first generation (Yoo et al., 2009) because English is less likely to be their native language. When discrimination is defined as inequitable treatment based on race, reports of discrimination may be more prevalent among the second+ generation because of their greater socialization in the USA as racial minorities (Wiley, Perkins, & Deaux, 2008). Thus, although there appear to be generational differences in perceptions of discrimination, the direction of these effects may depend on the particular form of discrimination examined.

How might responses to having one's American identity denied differ depending on generational status? Most work to date on identity denial has focused on the experiences of second+ generation Asian Americans (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Guendelman et al., 2011; Park-Taylor et al., 2008), yet the majority of Asians in America are first generation (60%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Little is known about whether second+ generation Asian Americans are more vulnerable to negative effects of identity denial than their first generation counterparts. We predict

that second+ generation Asian Americans, who were born in the USA and believe themselves to be American to the same extent as other Americans (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Park-Taylor et al., 2008), will report more negative emotions in response to having their American identity denied.

Imagine someone born in the USA who grows up accustomed to American food, has American friends, and is interested in American pop culture and media. Now imagine that this person is frequently subjected to insinuations from other Americans that she is not American, such as being asked, "Where are you *really* from?" or being told that she speaks English surprisingly well. These insinuations signal that others in her in-group do not recognize that she shares their group membership. Feeling ostracized or unaccepted by one's group can negatively affect mental and physical health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003; Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000). Moreover, second+ generation Asian Americans may respond negatively to the discrepancy between how they are seen by other Americans, as less than fully American, and how they see themselves, as full-fledged Americans (Swann, 1983).

Now imagine another person who has recently arrived in the USA and is adapting and adjusting to American practices and values. She may also be subject to frequent insinuations that she is not American. However, these experiences may be less bothersome because she has spent less of her lifetime in the USA, is likely identified with the identity of her birth country, and may be in the process of acquiring an American identity. First generation immigrants adopt the American identity through a process of learning and engaging with American culture, which typically occurs after relationships with people in the home country have already been established (Tsai & Chentsova-Dutton, 2002; Ying, Lee, & Tsai, 2000). For them, being denied their American identity might be less of a painful experience because they may feel less of a discrepancy between their own identity and how they are seen by others. Similarly, first generation

Asian Americans who arrived later in their lives may be less prone to negative emotions in reaction to identity denial than those who arrived at younger ages and have engaged in American contexts for most of their lives (Tsai & Chentsova-Dutton, 2002; Wiley et al., 2008).

Explaining Generational Differences: The Components of American Identification

In addition to investigating generational status as a moderator of negative emotions in response to identity denial, we also investigate differences in group identification as an explanation for why generational differences may occur. According to social identity theory, identification is the extent to which an individual attaches value and importance to a group membership (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Work on identification and perceived discrimination has focused primarily on the relationship between *ethnic* identification and perceived discrimination (McCoy & Major, 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Yip et al., 2008), Less research has examined the relationship between *American* identification and perceived discrimination. Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (1999) theorized that those who are highly identified with their in-group may feel more threatened when they are rejected by others in their group than those who are less identified with the group. In the present work, we test for whether differences in group identification may explain generational differences in negative emotions to rejection from in-group members.

Recent research has elucidated several distinct components of identification. For example, Leach et al. (2008) consolidated several previous identification measures and developed from them a five-component model of identification (see Cameron, 2004; Jackson, 2002; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998, for other multicomponent approaches to identity). Leach et al.'s components include (a) individual self-stereotyping, or how

similar one perceives oneself to other prototypical group members; (b) in-group homogeneity, or how much one perceives the group as sharing commonalities; (c) satisfaction, or positive feelings about the group; (d) solidarity, or one's psychological bond or commitment to the group; and (e) centrality, or the salience and importance of one's in-group membership to the self. These components are classified under two dimensions of group identification. Individual self-stereotyping and in-group homogeneity fall under s*elf-definition*, or one's perception of the self as similar to the in-group prototype, while satisfaction, solidarity, and centrality fall under *self-investment*, or one's positive feelings or sense of bond with the in-group.

Of Leach et al.'s (2008) five components of identification, two components are particularly strong candidates to predict responses to identity denial. Because having one's identity denied involves a discrepancy between how one sees oneself and how one is seen by others (Cheryan & Monin, 2005), those with the largest discrepancy may be the most affected. Thus, individual self-stereotyping, or perceiving oneself as similar to other Americans, may explain negative emotions in response to having that definition denied by others. This would suggest that identity denial is a *self-definitional* threat in which one's view of oneself is not validated by others (Swann, 1983). A second component that may also be important in explaining differential responding to identity denial is centrality. Centrality, or the degree to which one's in-group is important and salient to one's self-image, has been previously suggested as predicting responses to identity denial because those high on centrality may be threatened when that important group membership is not acknowledged by others (Branscombe, Ellemers, et al., 1999; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). This would suggest that identity denial is a *self-investment* threat in which one's investment in the group is doubted.

Examining the identification components that best explain differential responses to identity denial sheds light on the processes underlying the phenomenon and also identifies interventions to

alleviate these threats. For example, if individual self-stereotyping is a predictor of negative emotions in response to identity denial, then interventions that acknowledge the *similarities* that those under threat share with others in their group could alleviate these negative effects. In contrast, if centrality is a predictor in explaining differences in negative emotions in response to identity denial, then interventions that acknowledge the *importance* of that identity could help to diffuse negative emotions.

Overview

Three studies examined whether some group members are more vulnerable to the threat of not having their group membership recognized and why. We aimed to examine (a) whether generational status and age of arrival to the USA moderate negative emotions in response to identity denial, and (b) identification as a potential explanation for *why* second+ generation Asian Americans may respond with greater negative emotions in response to identity denial than their first generation counterparts. We simultaneously investigated other potential explanations for generational differences, including differences in other components of identification, a broader tendency to respond differently to all experiences of discrimination, differential rates of citizenship, and differences in prior experience with identity denial. We hypothesized that second+ generation Asian Americans and those who arrived earlier in their lives will report greater negative emotions in response to identity denial than first generation Asian Americans and those who arrived later in their lives, and differences in responses to identity denial will be explained by differences in American identification, specifically by the individual self-stereotyping or centrality component.

Study 1a

The first study investigated generational differences in emotional responses to identity denial. Anger was of particular interest because it is a common emotion in response to perceived discrimination (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002; Wang et al., 2011). We hypothesized that second+ generation Asian Americans would report greater anger than their first generation counterparts in response to having their American identities denied. We also included other potentially race-relevant situations (e.g., not getting service at a restaurant) to examine whether second+ generation Asian Americans would be more likely to express anger in response to all race-relevant situations than their first generation counterparts or whether there may be something unique about their anger to identity denial.

Method

Participants One hundred forty-nine Asian American participants (98 women[1]) at the University of Washington participated in this study for subject pool credit. The study was available in the online sign up system to self-identified Asian/Asian Americans, without their knowledge of the racial restriction. The most common countries of origin were China/Hong Kong/Taiwan (36.2%), Korea (20.1%), and Vietnam (14.1%). Of the sample, 57 were first generation (average age of arrival: $M = 11.78$, $SD = 5.69$) and 80 were second+ generation. We did not collect information to distinguish participants who were second generation from those from later generations. Twelve participants did not indicate place of birth and were therefore excluded from analyses. Citizenship was not assessed in this study. Other findings using this dataset were also published in a paper that investigated Asian Americans' responses to potential racial microaggressions (Wang et al., 2011).

Procedure Participants were told that they would be answering questions about "12 situations that people may commonly encounter" and were told to imagine themselves in each scenario and to indicate their honest reactions. Participants first saw a control scenario, then two identity denial scenarios, followed by the remaining control scenarios. The two identity denial scenarios

were based on previous work demonstrating that perceiving one as a nonnative English speaker and assuming that one is from another country are forms of identity denial (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Park-Taylor et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2007). The first identity denial scenario read as follows: "Imagine that you have just given your first presentation for a class. The professor gives feedback for all student presentations and he asks whether English is your native language." The second identity denial scenario read as follows: "Imagine that you are at a domestic (U.S.) airport food court ordering a meal. The cashier rings up your order, pauses, and asks 'So where are you from?'" The other 10 scenarios were perceived as race-relevant by Asian Americans but did not involve identity denial (Wang et al., 2011). For instance, one scenario read as follows: "Imagine that you are out shopping at the mall and you notice that other customers are getting assistance at the store. None of the employees at the store offer you assistance" (see Wang et al., 2011, for a full list of scenarios).

Participants were asked how angry they would be if they were in each of the two scenarios on a scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 8 (*extremely*) (α = .86). Other questions irrelevant to hypotheses were also asked after each scenario, including how much the situation was due to personal or situational factors, how relevant the situation was to other identities (e.g., gender, height), and eight other emotional responses (e.g., confused, ashamed). Demographics (e.g., race, generational status) were collected at the end of the study.

Results

A 2 (between-subjects; generational status: first vs. second+ generation) × 2 (within-subjects; situation: identity denial vs. control) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed no main effect of generational status, $F(1, 135) = 1.51$, *ns*, but a main effect of type of situation, $F(1, 135) = 81.76$, $p < .001$. This main effect was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(1, 135) = 12.99$, $p < .01$. As predicted, second+ generation Asian Americans reported greater anger after having

their American identities denied ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.93$) than first generation Asian Americans ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.71$), $F(1, 135) = 6.72$, $p < .05$, $d = .46$. In contrast, there was no difference in anger between second+ generation ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.26$) and first generation Asian Americans ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.67$) in their responses to the control situations, $F(1, 135) = .78$, *ns*.

We also assessed whether responses to identity denial are more harmful for first generation Americans who arrived to the USA earlier in their lives than for those who arrived to the USA later in their lives. Contrary to predictions, age of arrival was not correlated with anger in response to identity denial, although the relationship was in the predicted direction, $r = −.17$, $p = .20$.

Discussion

Second+ generation Asian Americans reported greater anger in response to identity denial than first generation Asian Americans, whereas there was no generational difference in anger in response to the other potentially racist situations. This suggests that identity denial situations, rather than all potentially race-relevant situations in general, are more problematic for U.S.-born compared to foreign-born Asian Americans.

Why did we not observe generational differences in the other race-relevant situations in light of previous work that has found generational differences in responses to discrimination? (e.g., Reitz & Banerjee, 2009). One possibility is that previous work asked participants to generate and respond to experiences of discrimination as they defined it (e.g., "How often do people treat you unfairly because of your [self-identified racial/ ethnic group]?"; Yip et al., 2008) whereas we asked participants about specific interpersonal situations that were not explicitly presented to them as discrimination. Second+ generation Asian Americans' greater socialization as minorities (Wiley et al., 2008) may cause them to categorize a wider variety of experiences as perceived discrimination than the first generation does, a pattern that may disappear when scenarios are not presented as explicitly discriminatory.

We did not find in this study that age of arrival predicted anger in response to identity denial. We speculate this was because our sample size for the first generation was relatively small ($n = 57$). To address this, we recruited larger samples of first generation participants in the subsequent studies. We also continued to examine generational differences in negative emotions in response to identity denial and turn now to explaining these differences.

Study 1b

In this study, we again examined generational differences in negative emotions in response to identity denial and included American identification for a preliminary look at its potential role as a mediator of generational differences. In addition, we collected a larger sample of first generation Asian Americans to examine potential variability within the first generation in their negative emotions in response to identity denial based on when they arrived in the USA. Finally, we sought to rule out an alternative explanation that differences are driven by the greater presence of non-Americans (i.e., non-U.S. citizens) among first generation Asian Americans.

Method

Participants Two hundred forty-eight self-identified Asian American participants (100 men; 147 women; 1 missing data) participated for subject pool credit or a chance to win a gift certificate from an online retailer. Participants were drawn from Stanford University ($n = 87$) and the University of Washington ($n = 161$). Testing for differences between universities generated no main effects of school or interactions between school and generational status on responses, so samples were combined. The majority of the total sample ($n = 189$; 76.2%) were U.S. citizens. The most common countries of origin were China/Hong Kong/Taiwan (36.7%), Korea (22.6%), and Vietnam (8.1%). Of the sample, 100 were first generation (average age of arrival: $M = 9.60$, $SD = 8.00$), 136 were second generation, 10 were third

or greater generation, and 2 did not indicate their generational status.[2]

Procedure Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to learn more about identities and practices related to Asian Americans. Participants completed a questionnaire in lab (University of Washington) or online (Stanford) that asked about practices and identification related to their various identities (i.e., American, Asian ethnic, ethnic American, Asian American)[3]. One question measured centrality, two questions measured solidarity, and two questions measured satisfaction. Centrality was measured with the question, "How much do you identify with being American?" (adapted from Leach et al., 2008). Solidarity was assessed with two questions, "How much do you belong to America?" and "How connected do you feel to Americans?" ($r = .66$, $p < .001$) (adapted from Cameron, 2004; Leach et al., 2008; Phinney, 1992). Satisfaction was assessed with two questions that were reverse-coded, "I am embarrassed/ashamed of American culture" and "Growing up, how embarrassed/ashamed were you of American cultural practices?" ($r = .51$, $p < .001$) (adapted from Cameron, 2004; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Phinney, 1992; Sellers et al., 1998; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000). All questions were answered on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). No questions were included to measure individual self-stereotyping or in-group homogeneity.

Participants were then asked to respond to two situations of identity denial focusing on English ability and perceived nonnativity (see Appendix for scenarios) (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Guendelman et al., 2011; Park-Taylor et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2007). Emotional responses to being seen as a nonnative English speaker were assessed by asking participants how angry and offended they would be in response to the English language scenario and how much it would bother them to be perceived as a nonnative English speaker ($\alpha = .84$) (adapted from Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Liang et al., 2004; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Emotional responses to having their nationality as Americans questioned were

assessed by asking participants how angry and offended they would be in response to the American identity scenario and how much it would bother them to be perceived as foreign (α = .70). All questions were asked on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Emotional responses to the two ways of having one's identity denied (nonnative English speaker, nationality as Americans questioned) were correlated, $r = .67$, $p < .001$, and averaging them generated our measure of negative emotions to identity denial.

Identification items were asked before the identity denial scenarios in this study because of previous research demonstrating that having one's identity denied influences how Asian Americans respond to questions about their American identity (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Demographics (e.g., race, generational status, age of arrival, citizenship) were collected at the end of the study.

Results

Influence of Generational Status and Age of Arrival on Emotional Responses to Identity Denial Consistent with Study 1a, second+ generation Asian Americans reported greater negative emotions in response to having their American identities denied ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.00$) than first generation Asian Americans ($M = 2.76$, $SD = .92$), $t(244) = 4.58$, $p < .001$, $d = .59$. To ensure that these differences were not due to recently immigrated first generation Americans who may not consider themselves American, we also examined only U.S. citizens and found that even among this group, second+ generation Asian Americans reported greater negative emotions in response to the identity denial situation ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.00$) than first generation Asian Americans ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.05$), $t(187) = 2.03$ $p < .05$, $d = .30$.

To assess whether, among first generation Asian Americans, responses to identity denial are more harmful for those who arrived to the USA earlier in their lives than for those who arrived to the USA later in their lives, we correlated negative emotions in response to identity denial with age of arrival for first generation participants only. As

predicted, we found a negative correlation between age of arrival and negative emotions ($r = -.36$, $p < .001$).

American Identification Components as Mediators We conducted a mediational analysis using an SPSS macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. As seen before, second+ generation Asian Americans reported greater negative emotions in response to identity denial than their first generation counterparts, $b = .59$, $SE = .13$, $p < .001$ (Step 1). Second+ generation Asian Americans reported greater American centrality, $b = 1.30$, $SE = .13$, $p < .001$, and solidarity, $b = .87$, $SE = .11$, $p < .001$, but not satisfaction, $b = -.02$, $SE = .11$, *ns* (Step 2). Only centrality significantly predicted negative emotions when controlling for generational status, $b = .27$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$ (solidarity: $b = -.13$, $SE = .12$, *ns*; Step 3). The relationship between generational status and negative emotions in response to identity denial was reduced, $b = .36$, $SE = .16$, $p < .05$ (Step 4), and the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) did not include zero (.08 to .62). American centrality was thus a significant mediator of generational differences.[4]

Discussion

Second+ generation Asian Americans reported greater negative emotions in response to having their American identities questioned than first generation Asian Americans and this was the case even when eliminating non-U.S. citizens from analyses. Moreover, we examined age of arrival to the USA as a predictor of negative emotions in response to identity denial. Within the first generation, those who arrived earlier reported greater negative emotions in response to identity denial than those who arrived later to the USA, illustrating the variability that exists within the first generation subgroup of the larger Asian American population.

We also took a preliminary look at identification as American and found that centrality was a significant mediator between generational status and negative emotions whereas satisfaction and solidarity were not. The centrality component is defined as the salience or importance of in-group

membership and previous work has found that those high in centrality are more sensitive to threats towards their in-group, such as the threat of discrimination (Leach et al., 2008; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Second+ generation Asian Americans, who believe that being American is important to them, may thus respond with greater negative emotions to the insinuation that they are not American compared to first generation Asian Americans, who may view the American identity as less central.

The current study only included one item on centrality, which may not fully tap into the construct and did not examine two additional components of identification (individual self-stereotyping and in-group homogeneity). We address this in the next study by using a previously validated, multicomponent measure of identification (Leach et al., 2008) to further investigate the processes underlying negative emotions in response to identity denial.

Study 2

In Study 2, we once again examined generational status and age of arrival differences in responses to identity denial. We also more fully investigated potential mediators of the relationship between these demographic differences and responses to identity denial. Again, we considered whether second+ generation Asian Americans may be more likely to identify as American and therefore react with greater negative emotions to insinuations that they do not possess this identity; however, we used a previously validated scale of identification, developed and tested by Leach et al. (2008), which included five components of identification. Furthermore, we aimed to rule out the alternative explanation that first generation Asian America are less affected by identity denial because they are more accustomed to being perceived in this way (see Reitz & Banerjee, 2009).

Method

Participants One hundred and sixty self-identified Asian American participants from the University of Washington (54 men; 106 women)

participated for subject pool credit. Ninety-four participants (55.8%) were U.S. citizens. The most common countries of origin were China/Hong Kong/Taiwan (41.3%), Korea (26.9%), and Vietnam (11.3%). Of the sample, 84 were first generation (average age of arrival: $M = 14.24$, $SD = 7.79$), 66 were second generation, and 10 were third or greater generation. The low number of first generation U.S. citizens in this study ($n = 18$) prevented us from restricting the sample to only U.S. citizens.

Procedure Participants completed a questionnaire in the lab on "identity and practices" and were told that they would be asked questions related to their ethnicity. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four versions of the questionnaire. We counterbalanced whether participants first responded to the identity denial scenarios or identification measures. We also counterbalanced the two identity denial scenarios. The same two identity denial scenarios from Study 1b were used in this study. There were no order effects for the variables of interest. Participants also responded to filler items on American practices (e.g., speaking English, listening to American music), their desire to be seen as American, and concerns about unworthiness as American (Smith, Murphy, & Coats, 1999) between the identification measures and identity denial scenarios. Demographics (e.g., race, generational status) were collected at the end of the study. See Tables 1 to 3 for means and correlations between measures.

Materials

Emotional Responses to Identity Denial Emotional responses to each identity denial scenario were assessed by asking participants how angry, offended, and bothered they would feel in the situation (English language scenario: α = .92; national identity scenario: α = .86). Emotional responses to the two ways of having one's identity denied were correlated, $r = .23$, $p < .01$, and averaging them generated our measure of negative emotions in response to identity denial. Questions were asked on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*extremely*).

Table 1. Study 2: Means and Standard Deviations

	Negative emotions in response to identity denial	Am ISS	Am centrality	Am solidarity	Am satisfaction	Am IGH	Personal experience with identity denial
First gen M (*SD*)	4.87 (1.45)	3.79 (1.34)	2.72 (1.48)	3.54 (1.25)	4.27 (1.31)	4.02 (1.39)	3.58 (1.09)
Second+ gen M (*SD*)	5.67 (1.62)	4.80 (1.31)	4.87 (1.08)	4.68 (0.90)	5.64 (0.77)	4.01 (1.17)	2.26 (0.92)
t test	3.27**	4.82***	10.36***	6.57***	7.98***	−.02	−8.29***

Note. Gen = generation, Am = American, ISS = individual self-stereotyping, IGH = in-group homogeneity.
**$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

American Identification Participants answered questions to assess their identification as American with the Leach et al.'s (2008) 14-item measure of identification. The identity measure encompassed five subscales: centrality (three items, α = .92), solidarity (three items, α = .93), individual self-stereotyping (two items, $r = .84$, $p < .001$), satisfaction (four items, α = .94), and in-group homogeneity (two items, $r = .78$, $p < .001$). Questions were answered on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Personal Experiences With Identity Denial Participants completed two questions assessing how much other Americans perceive them as foreign and as a nonnative English speaker, on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*), $r = .68$, $p < .001$.

Results

Influence of Generational Status and Age of Arrival on Emotional Responses to Identity Denial As predicted, second+ generation Asian Americans reported greater negative emotions in response to having their American identities denied (*M* = 5.65, *SD* = 1.62) than first generation Asian Americans (*M* = 4.87, *SD* = 1.45), $t(158) = 3.72$, $p < .001$, $d = .51$. Among first generation Americans, arriving to the USA later in life was associated with less negative emotions in response to identity denial than those who arrived earlier, $r = −.33$, $p < .05$.

American Identification Components as Mediators The means and standard deviations for the American identification components, personal experience with identity denial, and negative emotions are reported in Table 1. Among first generation Asian Americans, greater American identification was generally associated with greater negative emotions (see Table 2). However, among second+ generation Asian Americans, American identification was not associated with negative emotions (see Table 3), suggesting that identification differences may be a better predictor of differences between the generations and differences within the first generation than within the second+ generation.

We conducted a multiple mediational analysis using the same procedures as in Study 1b with the five subscales of American identification. Only individual self-stereotyping emerged as a significant mediator between generational status and negative emotions (Step 1: $b = .79$, $SE = .24$, $p < .01$; Step 2: individual self-stereotyping: $b = 1.01$, $SE = .21$, $p < .01$; centrality: $b = 2.15$, $SE = .21$, $p < .01$; solidarity: $b = 1.14$, $SE = .17$, $p < .01$; satisfaction: $b = 1.38$, $SE = .17$, $p < .01$; in-group homogeneity: $b = −.005$, $SE = .20$, *ns*; Step 3: individual self-stereotyping: $b = .26$, $SE = .12$, $p < .05$; centrality: $b = .15$, $SE = .12$, *ns*; solidarity: $b = −.18$, $SE = .15$, *ns*; satisfaction: $b = .04$, $SE = .16$, *ns*; in-group homogeneity: $b = −.003$, $SE = .10$, *ns*; Step 4: $b = .37$, $SE = .31$, *ns*; 95% CI for individual self-stereotyping:

Table 2. Study 2: First Generation Correlation Matrix With American Identification, Personal Experience With Identity Denial, and Negative Emotion in Response to Identity Denial

	Negative emotions in response to identity denial	Am ISS	Am centrality	Am solidarity	Am satisfaction	Am IGH
Am ISS	.34**					
Am centrality	.28*	.47**				
Am solidarity	.18	.63**	.52**			
Am satisfaction	.22**	.57**	.66**	.61**		
Am IGH	−.01	.23*	−.08	.25*	.09	
Personal experience with identity denial	.03	−.41**	−.36**	−.46**	−.22**	−.02

Note. Am = American, ISS = individual self-stereotyping, IGH = in-group homogeneity.
*p < .05; **p < .001.

Table 3. Study 2: Second+ Generation Correlation Matrix With American Identification, Personal Experience With Identity Denial, and Negative Emotion in Response to Identity Denial

	Negative emotions in response to identity denial	Am ISS	Am centrality	Am solidarity	Am satisfaction	Am IGH
Am ISS	.09					
Am centrality	.02	.25*				
Am solidarity	−.06	.49**	.50**			
Am satisfaction	.03	.49**	.44**	.58**		
Am IGH	.10	.40**	.07	.08	.15	
Personal experience with identity denial	.02	−.31**	−.001	−.36**	−.39**	−.10

Note. Am = American, ISS = individual self-stereotyping, IGH = in-group homogeneity.
*p < .05; **p < .001.

.02 to .58). None of the other American identification subscales were significant mediators (all 95% CIs included zero).

Personal Experience as a Potential Mediator
An alternative explanation for generational differences could be that first generation Asian Americans are more accustomed to identity denial and therefore have less intense negative emotions in response to instances of identity denial. We tested this using a simple mediation. The second+ generation ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 0.92$) was less likely to experience identity denial than the first generation ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.09$), $t(158)$

$= 8.29$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.32$. Experience, however, was not a significant mediator between generational status and negative emotions (Step 1: $b = .79$, $SE = .24$, $p < .01$; Step 2: $b = −1.33$, $SE = .16$, $p < .01$; Step 3: $b = .04$, $SE = .12$, *ns*; Step 4: $b = .85$, $SE = .29$, $p < .01$; 95% CI: −.41 to .31). Personal experience with identity denial was not correlated with negative emotions for either group (see Tables 2 and 3).

Discussion

Study 2 demonstrated that greater negative emotions in response to identity denial experienced

by second+ generation than first generation Asian Americans was mediated by a greater tendency for second+ generation Asian Americans to self-stereotype as American. Furthermore, greater negative emotions in response to identity denial were experienced by those who arrived earlier than later to the USA. Other components of American identification and differences in previous experience with identity denial were also considered as potential mediators but did not mediate the relationship between generational status and negative emotions. Thus, being seen as similar to other Americans may be a stronger concern for second+ generation Asian Americans and those first generation Asian Americans who arrived earlier in their lives because it signals a discrepancy between their self-definition as American and how others perceive their identity (Noels, Leavitt, & Clément, 2010; Swann, 1983).

While centrality was a significant mediator in Study 1b, centrality was not a significant mediator when we examined it in the context of other American identification components. Examining centrality as a sole mediator in the present study did reveal it as a significant mediator of the relationship between generational differences and negative emotions (Step 1: $b = .79$, $SE = .24$, $p < .01$; Step 2: $b = 2.15$, $SE = .21$, $p < .01$; Step 3: $b = .19$, $SE = .19$, $p < .05$; Step 4: $b = .39$, $SE = .31$, *ns*; 95% CI: .03 to .84). Although centrality may be an important explanation when tested alone, it may be a weaker explanation than individual self-stereotyping. This suggests that generational differences in responses to identity denial may be driven more by a self-definitional discrepancy (Swann, 1983) than a threat to an identity that one deems important. Without self-stereotyping in the model, centrality (i.e., "How much do you identify with being American?") may function like a self-definitional measure in addition to a self-investment measure. That is, identifying oneself as being American may also capture perceptions of oneself as similar to other Americans, thus potentially indicating greater consistency across both studies than initially apparent.

General Discussion

Three studies demonstrated that second+ generation Asian Americans reported greater negative emotions in response to having their American identities denied than their first generation counterparts. Moreover, even within the first generation, those who arrived to the USA earlier reported greater negative emotions in response to identity denial than those who arrived later. While it may be true that what unites the Asian American community more than anything else is their outsider status in America (Wu, 2002), the psychological burden of this stereotype of otherness is borne disproportionally by those Asian Americans who were born in the USA and those who arrived to the USA earlier in their lives.

Importantly, this work offers an explanation for why generational status predicts who is psychologically threatened by identity denial. Our results showing that self-stereotyping as American mediates differences in negative emotions to identity denial are consistent with a conceptualization of identity denial as a specific form of identity miscategorization in which internal and external self-categorizations are discrepant (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003). Further analyses revealed that individual self-stereotyping was a better explanation of generational differences than several other explanations, including other components of American identification, differences in responses to discrimination experiences more generally, differential rates of citizenship, and differences in prior experiences with identity denial.

This work thus joins other work examining identification as a multidimensional construct that can differentially predict outcomes for minorities (Cameron, 2004; Leach et al., 2008; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Spears et al., 1997). In addition to revealing individual self-stereotyping as a mediator, these studies can also help to shed light on generational differences in other components of identity. For instance, second+ generation Asian Americans were found to report higher levels of American centrality and solidarity than their first generation counterparts.

In contrast, there were no generational differences on perceived in-group homogeneity. This suggests that generational differences are more likely to arise on identification components that assess one's relationship to the group rather than those that assess perceptions of the group's characteristics. In addition, while centrality was a mediator in Study 1b, it did not mediate generational differences in Study 2 when examined in the context of individual self-stereotyping. As Leach et al. (2008) noted, centrality and individual self-stereotyping have often been viewed as overlapping constructs embedded within a more broadly conceptualized factor of "centrality" in previous measures (e.g., Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Jackson, 2002). However, testing them as distinct constructs in Study 2 allowed us to more precisely pinpoint an underlying source of threat.

Our results are important for several reasons. First, identity denial might provide an understudied mechanism to help partially explain generational declines in health. Second+ generation Americans are more likely than their first generation counterparts to report poorer mental and physical health (Parker Frisbie, Cho, & Hummer, 2001; Takeuchi et al., 2007). One explanation may be that the second+ generation responds with greater negative emotions to being categorized as less than fully American, which leads to negative health and well-being among this population (Guendelman et al., 2011). Second, by examining age of arrival differences, this work is consistent with recent work finding variability in psychological processes depending on immigration age (Cheung, Chudek, & Heine, 2011). Further investigations of the specific ways in which self-stereotyping differs between the generations—such as identifying specific domains in which second+ generation Americans self-stereotype more (e.g., Latrofa, Vaes, Cadinu, & Carnaghi, 2010)—will help to further uncover the psychological processes involved in responding to identity denial.

Furthermore, this work may influence interventions for those who may risk denying others' national identities and also for those who are targets of identity denial. Identifying specific components of identification is important in attempts to avoid denying the national identities of ethnic minorities. For example, teaching people to recognize the ways in which ethnic minorities in the USA are similar to other Americans could be especially important for those who interact with second+ generation populations or those who immigrated at young ages. Finally, while greater anger resulting from identity denial can have negative consequences for targets' mental and physical health as noted above, anger can also be construed as an approach-related emotion that may to lead to collective action (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009; Tagar, Federico, & Halperin, 2011). For example, anger is associated with increased support for positive risk-taking and nonviolent policies to de-escalate conflict (Tagar et al., 2011). From this perspective, anger at racial injustice, such as in the form of identity denial, may be a "positive" response that motivates individuals to act collectively to raise consciousness about and challenge discrimination (Adams, Biernat, Branscombe, Crandall, & Wrightsman, 2008). Interventions could thus be proposed to increase the extent to which first generation participants construct identity denial as discrimination and thereby benefit from the resulting anger that motivates greater collective action.

Limitations and Future Directions

The relationship between generational differences and American identification was tested, but there may also be other potential mechanisms that explain these generational differences. For instance, another possibility is that because they are relative newcomers, first generation Americans may not believe that they have the standing to seek acceptance from Americans or express negative emotions in response to identity denial (Hornsey, Grice, Jetten, Paulsen, & Callan, 2007), whereas those born in the USA may be more willing to express discontent when they perceive that their American identity is doubted. Such alternate

mechanisms should be explored in future work on generational differences and responses to race-based judgments.

Another area for future work is to examine moderating and mediating processes in other groups experiencing identity denial. Previous research suggests that identity denial is also experienced by other minorities in the USA, such as Latinos (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Devos, Gavin, & Quintana, 2010; Park-Taylor et al., 2008), and abroad, such as Arabs in Europe (van Oudenhoven et al., 1998). Future research should investigate whether these populations and other minority groups with significant first generation populations (e.g., Blacks in New York) have similar demographic differences in responses to identity denial.

Conclusion

The current work demonstrates that assumptions that Asian Americans are not American are particularly problematic for those who were born in the USA because of their greater tendency to self-stereotype as American. Thus, it is important to educate other Americans about the negative consequences of making assumptions about the foreignness or lack of national loyalty of Asian Americans and other ethnic minorities. Expanding the notion of who is granted a national identity and what that means for how they are seen will be an important step towards improving the experiences of ethnic minorities in America and abroad.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. For Study 1a, there were no main effects or interactions for gender. In Studies 1b and 2, women reported greater negative emotions than men in response to identity denial scenarios, but there were no interactions with condition. For Studies 1a and 1b, there were no main effects of ethnic group or interactions with ethnic group, when comparing Chinese (including those of Hong Kong and Taiwanese background), Korean, Vietnamese, and other (i.e., other ethnic groups and multiethnic participants). For Study 2, there was a significant interaction between ethnic group and generational status, $F(3, 152) = 3.70$, $p = .01$. Specifically, second+ generation participants reported greater negative emotions to identity denial than their first generation counterparts for each ethnic group except for the Vietnamese, $t(16) = 0.19$, $p = .85$. The first generation Vietnamese participants reported negative emotions ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.27$) similar to the second+ generation overall ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.62$). However, the sample size was low for this group ($n = 7$), making it difficult to draw strong conclusions about the findings.

2. Some research separately examines the 1.5 generation, that is, those who immigrated between age 5 and 12 (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). In Study 2, a one-way ANOVA comparing first ($n = 37$), 1.5 ($n = 57$), and second+ generation ($n = 147$) found that 1.5 ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.95$) and second+ ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.99$) generation reported similar levels of negative emotions, and both groups reported greater negative emotions in response to identity denial than the first generation ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 0.72$), $F(2, 240) = 15.03$, $p < .001$, $d = .33$. The sample sizes of 1.5 generation Asian Americans were too low in the other studies to conduct similar analyses; however, we examine age of immigration as a continuous predictor in this and the next study to assess potential variability in responses among the first generation.

3. We examined ethnic identification as a potential mediator based on previous work suggesting that it may serve as a buffer that makes acceptance by co-nationals less important (see Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Huo, Molina, Binning, & Funge, 2010; R. M. Lee, 2005). However, none of the ethnic identification subscales in this or the next study mediated generational differences or age of arrival differences in responses to identity denial (all 95% CIs included zero).

4. Our hypotheses included both a moderator of responses to identity denial (i.e., generation) and a mediator that explained these generational differences (i.e., American identification). However, American identification could also potentially moderate responses to identity denial. To test this, we examined possible interaction effects between

each of the American components (i.e., centrality, solidarity, and satisfaction) and generational status (i.e., first vs. second+) in predicting negative emotions in Study 1b and 2. Study 1a did not include identification components. For Study 1b, none of the interaction effects were significant (American centrality: $b = .004$, $SE = .07$, $p = .96$; American solidarity: $b = −.02$, $SE = .08$, $p = .77$; American satisfaction: $b = −.02$, $SE = .08$, $p = .80$). For Study 2, we examined possible interaction effects between each of the American identification components (i.e., centrality, solidarity, individual self-stereotyping, satisfaction, in-group homogeneity) and generational status (first vs. second+) in predicting negative emotions. None of the interaction effects were significant (American centrality: $b = .12$, $SE = .10$, $p = .22$; American solidarity: $b = .16$, $SE = .12$, $p = .18$; American individual self-stereotyping: $b = −.13$, $SE = .09$, $p = .15$; American satisfaction: $b = .18$, $SE = .11$, $p = .11$; American in-group homogeneity: $b = −.06$, $SE = .10$, $p = .56$).

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Appendix

Studies 1b and 2 Identity Denial Scenarios

Nonnative English speaker

Imagine that you are sitting outside studying on campus, and a White American woman comes up to you and starts talking to you about the weather. After about a minute of conversing, she compliments you on your English ability.

Perceived as Not American

Imagine that you won a prize in a local contest, and when you show up to claim the prize, the administrator stops you and says, "I'm sorry, but for tax purposes you have to be American to receive this."