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Ethnic Identity

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Ethnic identity in Asian Americans is often understood as the degree to which individuals identify with their country of ancestral origin (e.g., China, Japan). Accordingly, much of the research on ethnic identity among Asian Americans has related various psychological outcomes (e.g., well-being) to attachment to an Asian country (e.g., identification as Chinese). Focusing only on identification with one's country of ancestral origin, however, overlooks the other ways in which Asian Americans can be ethnically identified. As we explain in this chapter, ethnic identity can be understood more broadly as the attachment one feels to one's cultural *heritages,* including those not based specifically on one's country of origin. In this chapter, we review research on three ethnic identities—Asian, American, and Asian American—and contend that all must be taken into account in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of Asian American ethnic identity. After looking at each identity, we examine the ways in which these identities relate to each other within an individual. We conclude the chapter with what we see as an emerging theme in Asian American psychology: the contextual and dynamic nature of identity.

Ethnic identity, which is the degree to which one feels part of a group, must be distinguished from acculturation, which is the degree to which one has adapted to a certain culture (Laroche, Kim, Hui, & Tomiak, 1998; Tsai & Chentsova-Dutton, 2002; Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, & Wong, 2002).[1] Ethnic identity involves one's subjective sense of attachment whereas acculturation focuses on actual practices and behaviors (e.g., speaking English) that are adopted when arriving in a new culture. Although concepts of identity and acculturation can be extended to Asian, American, and Asian American domains, most research on Asian Americans in our field has examined identification with an Asian ethnic identity (e.g., Chinese) and acculturation to American society. This can be contrasted to research on African Americans, which focuses more on African American ethnic identity (see Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003) than on acculturation

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to American society. This difference can be attributed to the proportion of foreign-born individuals in the two groups. Whereas the majority of Asian Americans are foreign-born, the majority of African Americans are American-born (Malone, Baluja, Costanzo, & Davis, 2003), making questions of acculturation and identification with one's ancestral country more relevant for Asian Americans than for African Americans. However, the steady rise in the number of U.S.-born Asian Americans, for whom acculturation concerns are relatively low (Tsai & Chentsova-Dutton, 2002; Ying, Lee, & Tsai, 2000), will likely increase the presence and importance of research on Asian American identity.[2] In this chapter, we focus on Asian, American, and Asian American identities. (For further discussion of acculturation, see Chapter 9, this volume.)

Asian Ethnic Identities

Although ethnic identity for Asian Americans involves more than just a sense of attachment to their Asian cultural heritage, we begin our chapter with a section on Asian ethnic identities because it is an important concept for the Asian American population. In part, this is because two-thirds (68.9%) of Asian Americans in the United States are foreign-born (Malone et al., 2003). First, we define the Asian ethnic identity, and then we review research on the links between Asian ethnic identities and various psychosocial outcomes, including mental health and achievement.

What Is an Asian Ethnic Identity?

Identification with one's Asian ethnicity is the degree to which individuals view themselves as members of a particular Asian cultural group (Phinney, 1996; Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, et al., 2002) and incorporate specific Asian cultural ideas and practices into their self-concepts (Phinney, 1996). Measures of Asian ethnic identities instruct respondents to rate their feelings and sense of attachment to their Asian heritages. Popular measures of Asian ethnic identities include the General Ethnicity Questionnaire (Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000), the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Rating Scale (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987), and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measures (Phinney, 1992). Some researchers also use the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994) to measure ethnic identity (see Lay & Verkuyten, 1999; Verkuyten & Lay, 1998) because it not only requires respondents to evaluate their ethnic group *(private collective self-esteem)* and how important that group is to their self-concept *(identity collective self-esteem)* but also asks them how they perceive their membership *(membership collective self-esteem)* and how they think their ethnic group is viewed by others *(public collective self-esteem).*

Why Is the Asian Ethnic Identity Important?

To assess whether Asian Americans feel their Asian ethnic identities are important to them, relative to White Americans, we collected data from 98 Asian American Stanford University students (72.3% of whom were born in the United States) on their Asian ethnic identities and 143 White American Stanford students (94.7% of whom were born in the United States) on their European ethnic identities.[3] Participants indicated their level of agreement to 40 statements on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The statements included measures of ethnic identity (e.g., "I am proud of Chinese/ German culture") and were adapted from the General Ethnicity Questionnaire (Tsai et al., 2000), the National Attachment Scale (Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, & Pratto, 1997), and the General Social Survey (J. A. Davis, Smith, & Marsden, 2002). As predicted, Asian Americans identified more strongly with their Asian ethnicities ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .82$) than White Americans identified with their European ethnicities ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.09$), $t(218.0) = 5.55$, $p < .001$, reflecting the importance of the Asian ethnic identity to Asian Americans.[4]

Past research demonstrates that a strong ethnic identity has positive effects on a variety of psychosocial outcomes for Asian Americans, such as mental health (Mossakowski, 2003;

Williams et al., 2005), personal self-esteem (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Tsai et al., 2001; Yip & Fuligni, 2002), and well-being (Crocker et al., 1994; Yip & Fuligni, 2002). The mediators of these positive effects are thought to be greater social connectedness (Tajfel, 1978) and ethnic pride (Mossakowski, 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Wong et al., 2003; Yasui, Dorham, & Dishion, 2004).

Although most studies have observed that higher Asian ethnic identification is associated with more positive psychological outcomes, other studies have not found a positive effect of Asian ethnic identity on mental health (Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999) or self-esteem (Yip & Cross, 2004). R. M. Lee (2003) did find a positive relationship between Asian ethnic identity and self-esteem among Asian American college students, but further analyses revealed that Asian ethnic identity did not mediate or moderate the effect of perceived discrimination on well-being. These inconsistencies in the findings that relate high Asian ethnic identification to psychological outcomes might be explained by the generation status of the study participants. Maintaining a connection to one's Asian heritage may be a buffer against stress in foreign-born individuals who are adjusting to a new cultural environment. However, Asian ethnic identity may have no such effect on U.S.-born Asian Americans who have a significant amount of competence with the majority culture and may rely on another identity (e.g., their American identity) for their well-being. In line with this prediction, Ying et al. (2000) found that pride in China predicted greater agreement that one's life was meaningful and manageable for foreign-born, but not U.S.-born, Chinese Americans. Williams et al. (2005) also observed that for Japanese Americans who led a primarily American lifestyle, Japanese ethnic identity and depressive symptoms were not related; however, for Japanese Americans who led a more Japanese lifestyle, a higher Japanese ethnic identification protected them against depressive symptoms. Discrepancies in the literature regarding the relationship between Asian ethnic identification and mental health might also be due to differences in how researchers measure Asian ethnic identification. For instance, R. M. Lee (2005) found that while the Asian ethnic pride component was related to fewer depressive symptoms, clarity about one's Asian ethnicity or commitment to learning more about one's Asian ethnicity did not offer the same benefit. More research is needed on how methodological differences may account for different relationships between Asian ethnic identification and mental health.

Ethnic identities are also important because they organize and guide information processing (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). As a result, many studies have linked level of ethnic identification to attitudes and behaviors (Rotherman & Phinney, 1987). Studies have found that a higher ethnic identity predicts more support for increasing diversity in organizations (Linnehan, Konrad, Reitman, & Greenhalgh, & London, 2003) and more positive attitudes toward organizations that explicitly value diversity (S. S. Kim & Gelfand, 2003). Finally, level of ethnic identity predicts certain behaviors, such as consumer choices (Xu, Shim, Lotz, & Almeida, 2004) and community involvement (Mitchell & Dell, 1992; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004; Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995; Yip & Cross, 2004).

What Can We Conclude About the Asian Ethnic Identity?

A large body of research exists examining the presence and consequences of Asian ethnic identities in Asian Americans. These identities provide Asian Americans with a sense of self and guide their daily behaviors. One theme that clearly emerges from this literature is the different ways the Asian ethnic identities may function in foreign-born versus U.S.-born Asian Americans. The research on generation status and mental health suggests that Asian ethnic identification is salient and more protective for foreign-born than American-born Asian Americans. Clearly, future research will need to examine the relationship between generation status and Asian ethnic identification further. Rather than suggesting that U.S.-born Asian Americans are less ethnically identified than their foreign-born counterparts, we suggest that U.S.-born Asian Americans are more oriented to other ethnic identities, such as their American and Asian American identities. We discuss these identities next.

American Identity

Asian Americans' relationship to America has been studied primarily in terms of acculturation, or how much Asian Americans have adapted to being in the United States. However, Asian Americans also have a sense of national identity, or feelings of attachment to the United States. In this section, we examine how Asian Americans understand their American identity and how this relates to the way they are seen by others.

What Is the American Identity for Asian Americans?

How do Asian Americans define being American, and does this differ from how other Americans define it? Devos and Banaji (2005) asked Asian Americans, White Americans, and African Americans about the degree to which they define being American in terms of civic values, patriotism, and native status and found that all three groups ranked the belief in civic values as primary, followed by patriotism, and finally native status, suggesting that there is some common understanding of what it means to be an American. However, other studies have found variation between ethnic groups. Tsai, Morstensen, Wong, and Hess (2002) found that there were significant differences between Asian Americans and White Americans in how they spontaneously defined being American. Asian Americans tended to define American culture and being American more in terms of customs and traditions (e.g., holidays, food) than did White Americans. Interestingly, the longer the Asian American participants had been in the United States, the more they differed from White Americans in their definition. These findings suggest that even among Americans, what it means to be a citizen is not widely agreed on and may differ by ethnicity and years spent engaging with American culture.

Why Is American Identity Important?

One reason we know that the American identity is a factor in the lives of Asian Americans is because Asian Americans say it is. In the study described in the Asian identities section of this chapter, we also included measures of America identity (e.g., "I am proud of American culture") and level of acculturation (e.g., "I listen to American music"). A repeated-measures ANOVA with Group (Asian American, White American) × Subscale (American Identity, Acculturation) revealed no main effect of Group, $F(1, 234) < 1$, *ns*. Both Asian Americans ($M = 5.14$, $SD = .82$) and White Americans ($M = 5.23$, $SD = .87$) reported being American to the same extent. Interestingly, this main effect was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(1, 234) = 17.35$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 8.1). Although Asian Americans ($M = 5.62$, $SD = .82$) reported being less acculturated than White Americans ($M = 5.91$, $SD = .86$), $F(1, 234) = 7.32$, $p < .01$, they did not differ from White Americans in their identification with American culture (Asian Americans: $M = 4.67$, $SD = .82$, White Americans: $M = 4.54$, $SD = .88$), $F(1, 234) = 1.31$, *ns*. Although Asian American college students may be less acculturated on average than their European American peers, they do not differ in their levels of attachment to being American.

However, just because Asian Americans may report feeling American does not mean they are seen that way by others. Assumptions about who is American affect Asian Americans as they are forced to contend with and dispel stereotypes. The exclusion of Asian Americans from being considered American can be seen throughout American history from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, to Japanese internment during World War II (Chan & Hune, 1995), to the case of Dr. Wen Ho Lee who was falsely accused of spying for China (W. H. Lee, 2001), to the post-9/11 hate crimes against Asian Americans (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2002). In a large phone survey asking Americans to imagine voting for a candidate from different minority groups for the presidency, 23% reported that they would be uncomfortable voting for an Asian American for president of the United States. This percentage is significantly greater than the 15% of respondents who said that they would feel uncomfortable voting for an African American candidate (Yankelovich Partners, 2001). For Asian Americans, the struggle to be included as full members of American society continues today.

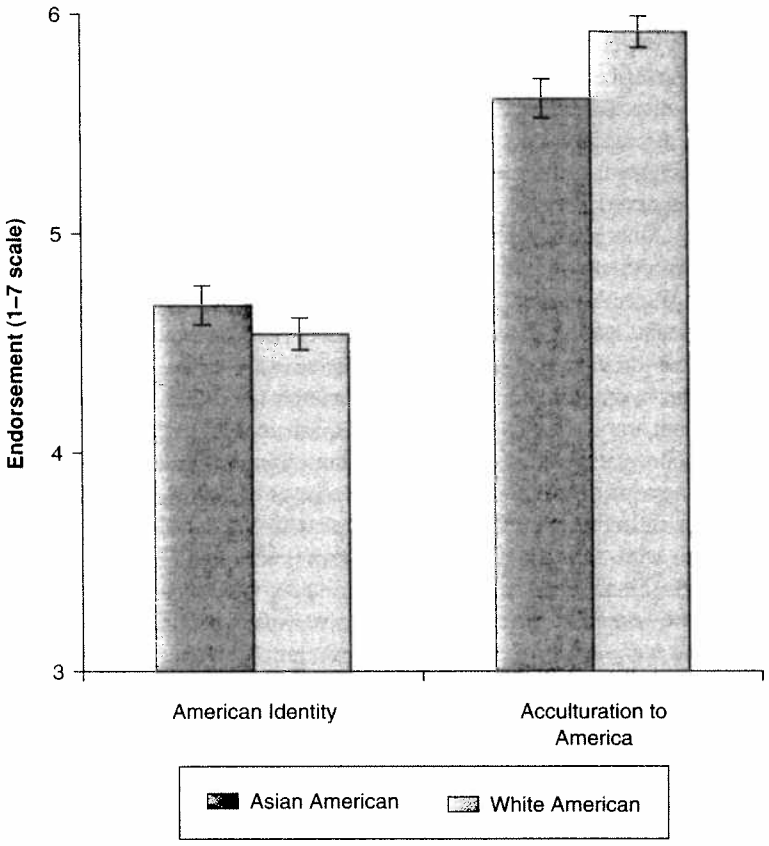

Figure 8.1 Reported Level of Identification With America and Acculturation to American Practices by Asian Americans ($n = 98$) and White Americans ($n = 143$).

Research in social psychology has begun to look closely at the incidence and consequence of this exclusion from the American ingroup. In line with the historical data, researchers have found that Asian American faces (Cheryan & Monin, 2005) and Asian Americans in general (Devos & Banaji, 2005) are perceived to be less American than White Americans. In one particularly clever study, Devos and Banaji (2005) demonstrated that White American participants had a stronger implicit association between American symbols and White *European* celebrity faces (e.g., Gerard Depardieu) than between the same symbols and Asian *American* celebrity faces (e.g., Connie Chung), despite the fact that they knew the nationalities of the celebrities when explicitly asked. Among African Americans, Asian Americans, White Americans, and Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans appear to be perceived as the *least* American (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Devos & Banaji, 2005), demonstrating that this bias is more than simply being non-White (as is the case of African Americans) or being part of a recently immigrated group (as is the case of Hispanic Americans). Asian Americans themselves appear to be aware that they are perceived as less American than their White American counterparts. They report being misperceived as foreigners more often than White Americans, and they report a discrepancy between how much they believe they belong in America and how much they think others believe they belong in America (Cheryan & Monin, 2005).

How do Asian Americans react to being seen as less American than their White American peers? Cheryan and Monin (2005) showed that Asian Americans found statements alleging they

were not American to be offensive and disliked those who made such statements. In addition, when denied their American identity, Asian Americans reacted by increasing their reports of their participation in American practices, presumably as a way of proving their American identity to those who doubted it. For example, in one study, a White American experimenter attempted to deny the American identities of Asian Americans and White Americans by stopping them on campus and asking if they spoke English, implying that they were foreigners. Asian Americans who were asked, "Do you speak English?" spent more time recalling American television shows from the 1980s as a way of proving they were American (and perhaps lived in America in the 1980s) than did Asian Americans who were not asked. In contrast, there was no difference between White Americans who were asked if they spoke English and those who were not.

Although the impact of identity on psychosocial variables such as mental health has been studied most often with Asian ethnic identities, some research indicates that being oriented to American culture increases feelings of efficacy and competence for foreign-born Asian Americans (Ying et al., 2000). In addition, having a strong national identity appears to promote social and psychological adjustment because it enables individuals to relate to the dominant culture in an effective way (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001; Ying, 1995). For Asian immigrants, their ability to learn the ways of a new culture predicts how well they fit into their new environments.

National identity is important to consider not only from the point of view of Asian Americans but also with regard to how to best construct a multicultural society. Research on the Common Ingroup Identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) and superordinate identity (Huo, 2003; Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996) find that having a strong national identity encourages cohesion between ethnic groups and minimizes strife. Hong et al. (2004) found that among Asian Americans who believed human character was malleable, those who were encouraged to think about their American identity were less prejudiced against African Americans than those who were primed with their Asian American identity. Therefore, it appears that having a strong superordinate identity may be beneficial for Asian Americans and for society in general.

What Can We Conclude About the American Identity?

Although the American identity is not always thought of as an ethnic identity, the research described in the previous paragraphs demonstrates that it is an important identity for both foreign-born and U.S.-born Asian Americans. Because being American is tied to positive outcomes in America (i.e., inclusion, civic rights, feelings of belonging), understanding the ways in which Asian Americans relate to their American identity and the ways in which they are prevented from doing so becomes an important aspect of understanding Asian American psychology. Taken together, the research makes it clear that American national identity is of importance to Asian Americans and that whether or not others view Asian Americans as American has important social, political, and economic consequences.

Relationships Between Asian and American Identities

The findings described in the previous section seem to suggest that having both a strong Asian ethnic identity and a strong American identity is desirable for psychological protection and positive ethnic group relations. But can one successfully have two strong ethnic identities? The dominant discourse in America during the wave of 19th-century immigration was that having an Irish, Chinese, or some other ethnic identity precluded immigrants from having a strong American identity, as reflected in Theodore Roosevelt's statement that "a hyphenated American is not an American at all" (P. Davis, 1920, p. 648). However, research on U.S.-born Asian Americans supports the bidimensionality of identity: The Asian ethnic and American identities are orthogonal (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Tsai et al., 2000). In other words, having a strong Asian ethnic identity does *not* preclude individuals from having a strong American identity (Huo, 2003).

Other research suggests that the relationship between Asian ethnic and American identities might vary by component of identity. Cheryan and Monin (2005) found that reports of participation in American and ethnic practices, such as listening to American/Asian music, were marginally negatively correlated, whereas reports of pride in America or Asian country of origin were marginally positively correlated. Dimensionality also appears to depend on generation status: Whereas ethnic and national orientation did not correlate for U.S.-born Asian Americans, the two were negatively correlated for foreign-born Asian Americans (Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000).

The ability for some to identify strongly with two cultures does not mean that belonging to two cultures, or having a "double-consciousness" (Du Bois, 1903), is easy or painless. Being forced to learn two modes of functioning can be stressful, particularly for immigrants who must learn such skills in a short amount of time (Berry, 1990; Yeh et al., 2003). However, other research demonstrates that there might also be benefits to successfully learning to integrate two cultures. Specifically, being bicultural—high on both ethnic and national identity—appears to have a positive impact on mental health (Phinney et al., 2001; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Ying, 1995; Ying et al., 2000).

Researchers have recognized the interplay between national and ethnic identities and the role both identities play in psychosocial adjustment. Indeed, for Asians in America, both identities provide a frame with which to view the world. One important caveat to keep in mind while interpreting research on ethnic and national identity in Asian Americans is that living in two cultures is more than simply internalizing the two cultures. Bringing together two cultures results in creating a new culture (Garcia & Hurtado, 1995). This necessitates studying a third type of identity—the Asian American identity.

Asian American Identity

In psychological research, Asian Americans are often used as a proxy for Asians to study East-West cultural differences. Although this strategy is a useful way to test cultural psychology hypotheses and has successfully yielded important insight into East-West cultural differences (see Ji, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000; H. S. Kim, 2002; H. S. Kim & Markus, 1999), many other studies attest to the fact that Asian Americans are not identical to Asians in the psychological data they generate. In some studies, Asian Americans are somewhere in between Asians and White Americans (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). Other studies have found that Asian Americans act even more "American" than White Americans (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; see also Triandis, Kashima, Shimada, & Villareal, 1986, for a discussion of "cultural overshooting") and in yet other studies, Asian Americans act even more "Asian" than their Asian counterparts (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, in press). Why does this happen, and how do Asian Americans themselves view their group? Do they distinguish themselves from their Asian forebears or from their White American peers? To answer these questions, we need to examine Asian American identity.

What Is the Asian American Identity?

The Asian American identity is the extent to which individuals identify with other Asian Americans and see themselves as part of a larger pan-ethnic group. (This identity is sometimes termed *racial identity*, see Alvarez & Helms, 2001.) Before the mid–20th century, individuals from one Asian country did not think of themselves as connected to individuals from other Asian countries because they perceived their cultures to be dissimilar, and there were feelings of animosity due to previous wars and political tensions between their countries. However, in the 1970s, the Asian groups were lumped together by the dominant society and assigned the label "Asian American." In time, these Asian groups, which had previously been opposed to one another, began to construct a shared sense of history and discrimination. This process was facilitated by Asian Americans who fought alongside African Americans in their struggle for civil rights in the 1960s, making Asian Americans even more aware of the injustices experienced by their own group. Embracing the Asian American identity, therefore, became a way to fight for political rights and representation (Chan & Hune, 1995). Whereas the Asian ethnic identity is often based on one's home

context and one's adherence to specific cultural traditions (Tsai & Chentsova-Dutton, 2002; Ying, Coombs, & Lee, 1999), the Asian American identity was constructed as a way for individuals of different Asian backgrounds to jointly gain political access and representation (Chan & Hune, 1995; Kibria, 1998).

As we suggested earlier, one of the original functions of Asian American identity was to organize against discrimination and encourage greater political participation by Asian Americans. Interestingly, although foreign-born Asian Americans experience more race-based discrimination than their U.S.-born counterparts, U.S.-born Asian Americans participate more in Asian American political and social organizations (Espiritu & Ong, 1994). This may be because discrimination has a greater negative impact on psychological well-being for U.S.-born Asian Americans than for their foreign-born counterparts (Ying et al., 2000). It may also be that U.S.-born Asian Americans feel they have more of a right to contest discrimination than foreign-born Asian Americans, who may feel that their immigrant status prevents them from having the right to object.

Why Is the Asian American Identity Important?

Today, many Asian American organizations continue to educate others about a shared history of exclusion and continue to fight for representation (Kibria, 1998). Those who identify as Asian American are more likely to be politically involved in Asian American causes than those who do not (Lien et al., 2003). However, the Asian American identity today has become more than just a political identity. Many Asian Americans have a sense of belonging to a pan-Asian race and of having pan-Asian values, which they construct to stand in opposition to dominant White America (Kibria, 1997). More than 50% of Asian Americans responding to a large-scale phone survey in 2000–2001 stated that the Asian American identity was part of their ethnic identification, although only one in six preferred it as their primary ethnic identification (Lien et al., 2003). The notion of a pan-Asian race has extended into the daily lives and customs of Asian Americans, including creating new patterns of marriage between people of differing Asian ethnicities (Kibria, 1997). Thus, although the Asian American identity is a relatively new identity, it has been embraced by Asian Americans themselves as a political tool while at the same time generating a new cultural group and identity. However, the formation of an Asian American identity is by no means complete. Some Asian American groups, such as South Asian Americans, report feeling marginalized and excluded by the Asian American community (Doshi, 1996). It remains to be seen whether the Asian American identity will become more inclusive or will dissolve into separate identities as the number of Asian Americans increases.

What Can We Conclude About the Asian American Identity?

The history of the Asian American identity makes evident the political nature of identity. This identity was imposed on Asian Americans, who have since come to embrace it as a political and social tool. However, the fact that the Asian American identity might not be embraced to the same degree by foreign-born immigrants, who still have strong ties to their home country, is one reason this identity has not been studied in the field as much as the Asian ethnic identities. However, we expect that this tendency will change as the Asian American population increases and as Asian Americans strengthen their sense of ingroup identity in the face of discrimination (Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001). Future research will need to assess the impact of the Asian American ethnic identity on mental health outcomes.

Ethnic Identity Across Individuals and Situations

Identity researchers often assign each person an "ethnic identity score," based on their responses to a series of questions, that represents how attached that individual is to his or her ethnicity. These identity scores have predictive value for Asian Americans. However, seeing ethnic identity purely as a fixed entity within an individual ignores its contextual aspect. Ethnic identity is also a dynamic concept that depends on one's

immediate environment. Therefore, in addition to the personality component, there is a situational component to ethnic identity. We address both aspects of ethnic identity in this section, starting with identity across individuals and moving on to identity across situations.

Individual Differences

Ethnic identity on an individual level depends on various factors. Many researchers have examined the interactions between ethnic identity and other identities, such as gender (Gonzales & Cauce, 1995; Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001; Tsai et al., 2001). Research on Asian Americans finds that, in general, female Asian Americans are more oriented toward their ethnicity than are their male counterparts (Ting-Toomey, 1981; Yip & Fuligni, 2002), perhaps because they have more social attachments to family and friends (Gilligan, 1993) and consequently internalize their ethnicity to a greater degree. Differences between individuals also develop over one's lifetime. Typical phases of ethnic identity development generally begin with a period of conforming to the majority culture, followed by a period of embracing one's cultural heritage, and finally, a successful integration of both identities (Alvarez & Yeh, 1999; Gonzales & Cauce, 1995; Helms, 1995; J. Kim, 2001; Phinney, 1990; Ying & Lee, 1999). Demographic variables such as religion (Kurien, 2001), socioeconomic status (Dhingra, 2003; Espiritu & Ong, 1994), birth order (Manaster, Rhodes, Marcus, & Chan, 1998), terms of immigration (Ying & Han, in press), and Asian country of origin (Lien et al., 2003) are also important in constructing one's ethnic identity.

As we have mentioned previously in this chapter, generation status also matters in determining how much Asian Americans identify with their Asian ethnic and American identities. Foreign-born Asian Americans are more likely to espouse traditional Asian values whereas U.S.-born Asian Americans are more likely to integrate Asian and American values (Weisman, Snadowsky, & Gannon, 1972; Ting-Toomey, 1981; Ying et al., 1999). In addition, U.S.-born Asian Americans are much more likely to identify themselves as "American" than are their foreign-born counterparts (Lien et al., 2003). Does this mean that Asian Americans will eventually be diffused into the mainstream to the point where their ethnic identity is subsumed by their national identity? In fact, research suggests the opposite. Third- and fourth-generation Asian Americans are actually no lower in their levels of ethnic identification than second-generation Asian Americans (Wooden, Leon, & Toshima, 1988), and in some cases their levels of identification are actually higher than those of second-generation Asian Americans (Ting-Toomey, 1981). Asian Americans' distinctive features, the continued flow of immigrants from Asia, and the discrimination they face may ensure a certain level of Asian ethnic identification among Asian Americans (Kibria, 1998). This experience can be contrasted to the Irish and Italians who also arrived in America during the 19th century and "became White" in the eyes of mainstream Americans (Ignatiev, 1995).

Individuals can also vary in the degree to which they integrate their identities. Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, and Morris (2002) examined Bicultural Identity Integration (BII), or the extent to which biculturals perceive that their ethnic and national identities are at odds. They found that some Chinese American biculturals perceived their dual cultures to be compatible and integrated (high BII), whereas others perceived their cultures to be conflicting and hard to integrate (low BII). These two groups responded differently to cultural primes that made their Chinese ethnicity salient (e.g., pictures of the Great Wall) than to cultural primes that made their American identity salient (e.g., pictures of the U.S. Capitol). High BII individuals responded in a culturally congruent manner by making more external attributions (a typically Chinese behavior), whereas low BII individuals responded in an oppositional fashion and increased their internal attributions (a typically American behavior).

Contextual Nature of Identity

Although much of the research on identity among Asian Americans has treated identity as an individual difference variable that varies across people, overlooking the contextual nature of identity would be short-sighted. Identity is a dynamic construction that is defined by individuals

(Phinney, 1990) within a larger system of power (Kibria, 1998). Societal constraints, such as the meaning assigned to various skin colors and features, limit one's ability to claim a particular ethnic identity (Espiritu, 1992; Phinney, 1990; Phinney et al., 2001). Furthermore, ethnic identity varies depending on the immediate social cues (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Hong et al., 2004; Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999; Yip & Fuligni, 2002). Rather than being merely a static entity, identity is fluid and process-driven.

The dynamic and contextual nature of identity is apparent in research on Asian Americans, which demonstrates that certain contexts can activate ethnic identity. Kim-Ju and Liem (2003) found that imagining interacting with a group of White American strangers made Asian ethnic identity more salient for Asian Americans than imagining interacting with an ethnically diverse group of strangers. Interestingly, Asian ethnic identity was also more salient for Asian Americans when they imagined interacting with strangers of the same race, whereas the same was not true for White Americans, perhaps because for White Americans, the event of interacting with other White Americans is common and not thought of along ethnic lines. Ethnic and national identities can also be separately activated in the presence of objects or other reminders that cue their identities. These cues can be images, such as famous landmarks in China or the United States (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000), questionnaires or tasks that ask about one identity in particular (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Shih et al., 1999), or even a statement that encourages participants to see themselves as members of a particular group (Hong et al., 2004). Hong et al. (2000) use the term "cultural frame switching" to refer to this tendency for biculturals to (often automatically) alternate identities based on the situational demands. Another factor that may play a role in determining how much one identifies as Asian, American, or Asian American is exposure to Asian culture. Asian Americans who visit Asia or spend more time there may experience a higher level of identification with their home countries, whereas those who spend more time in America may identify more strongly as American or Asian American.

In addition to being a reactive construct that varies based on one's context, identity can also be a strategic choice made in order to maximize a positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Cheryan and Monin (2005) found that Asian Americans responded to an accusation that they were not American by increasing their level of reported participation in American practices as a way of proving their American identity to others. People also choose contexts that allow them to enhance a rewarding social identity or to distance themselves from a threatening social identity (Ethier & Deaux, 2001; & Deaux, 2001; Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996). Thus, identity negotiation is an ongoing process based on one's larger sociocultural and immediate context that involves responding to social cues, selecting certain environments, and presenting relevant information to others.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we reviewed research on three types of ethnic identities for Asian Americans: the Asian ethnic identities, the American identity, and the Asian American identity. The importance of these ethnic identities can be seen both in people's own reports and in the outcomes related to ethnic identification. All three identities construct the worlds of Asian Americans by guiding their interpretations of situations (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Kibria, 1997), predicting with whom they associate (Sidanius et al., 2004), choosing how they adapt to their environments (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997), and understanding how others react to them (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997).

Individuals vary in the ways in which their ethnic identities are constructed and displayed. A first-generation Chinese immigrant who speaks Chinese at home and has warm feelings toward China can be identified as having a high ethnic identity, but so can a fourth-generation Japanese American whose home life is highly American but who is an ardent activist for Asian American causes. Asian ethnic identities continue to be important due to the recency of immigration (Malone et al., 2003), but an understanding of ethnic identity in Asian Americans

is not complete without an examination of the American and Asian American identities. The American identity is a goal and a reality as Asian Americans engage with American culture in their daily lives. And the Asian American identity persists due to its power as an organizing tool, both politically and socially. For Asian Americans, the notion of ethnic identity is clearly complex, involving multiple interrelating identities. Allowing this complexity to guide our research in the coming years will be even more crucial as the Asian American population increases in the years to come.

Notes

1. Because identity refers to an individual's subjective experience whereas acculturation refers to a set of behaviors (Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, et al., 2002), Asian Americans can both participate heavily in American activities (i.e., be highly acculturated) yet feel disconnected from their American identity (i.e., not identify with American culture). Furthermore, one's level of acculturation is independent of one's Asian ethnic or Asian American identities: Asian Americans can be highly acculturated to American culture and simultaneously be highly identified with their Asian ethnic and Asian American identities (Laroche et al., 1988; Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Solheim, 2004).

2. We do not predict a decrease in the importance of acculturation research due to the continuous influx of Asian immigrants to the United States.

3. Ethnic heritages listed by Asian Americans were: Chinese (46), Taiwanese (10), Japanese (9), Filipino (8), Korean (9), Vietnamese (6), Indian (5), South East Asian (1) and 4 did not indicate a response. Ethnic heritages listed by White Americans were: German (26), English (17), Irish (11), Italian (11), Scottish (7), European (8), Swedish (7), Polish (6), Russian (5), Jewish (5), American (4), White (2), French (3), Scandinavian (2), Slavic (2), Hungarian (2), Albanian (1), Danish (1), Finnish (1), Israeli (1), Lithuanian (1), Welsh (2), Hawaiian (1), Japanese (1), Serbian (1), Portuguese (1), Norwegian (3), and 11 did not indicate a response. Eight White Americans listed non-European ethnicities; removing these individuals from the analyses did not change the results.

4. We also included measures of participation in cultural practices (e.g., "I listen to Chinese/German music"). A repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Subscale (Pride, Practices) × Group (Asian American, White American) revealed a two-way Group × Subscale interaction, $F(1, 218) = 36.62$, $p < .001$. Asian Americans reported engaging in more Asian ethnic practices ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.00$) than having pride in their Asian heritage ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .82$), $F(1, 218) = 23.65$, $p < .001$. In contrast, White Americans reported more pride in their European heritage ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.09$) than participation in European practices ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 238) = 13.16$, $p < .001$. This difference may be explained by the fact that as a group, Asian Americans are more recent immigrants to the United States than White Americans and, therefore, may engage in traditional Asian practices to a greater degree at home than White Americans. White Americans, however, may continue to feel some attachment to their European heritages, even if they no longer engage in traditionally European practices at home.

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