[Research Forum]

Ethnic Identity, Acculturation, and Emotional Well-being Among Asian American and Asian International Students

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In this study, we studied acculturation, ethnic identity, emotional well-being, and demographic characteristics of Asian American and Asian international students. The results indicated that Asian American students scored higher on acculturation and ethnic identity than Asian international students, but the two groups did not differ in emotional well-being. Asian American students' emotional well-being was predicted by their ethnic identity, but not by acculturation. A moderate, negative relationship was found between acculturation and ethnic identity for both Asian American and Asian international students.

One of the most popular topics in Asian American studies is acculturation (Sue & Sue, 1999), a psychological process that is believed to have a crucial role in American ethnic minorities' and immigrants' adjustment to living in

the U.S. Through early years of research, the belief was established that the acculturation level had significant psychological consequences for American ethnic minorities and immigrants (Gordon, 1964; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936), including Asian Americans (e.g., Kim & Berry, 1986; Zheng & Berry, 1991). More recently, ethnic identity was recognized as a crucial psychological resource on which the emotional experiences of minority individuals are based (e.g., Phinney, 1990, 1996). Although past studies centered attentions on ways in which acculturation or ethnic identity influence Asian American's mental health, scant attention to date has been paid to understanding differential roles of acculturation and ethnic identity in association with psychological adjustment for different groups of individuals with Asian heritage. The purpose of the present study was to clarify how ethnic identity and acculturation are related to the emotional well-being of Asian American and Asian international students respectively. Moreover, how the demographic characteristics of these two student groups relate to their acculturation and ethnic identity were also compared.

Acculturation can be broadly defined as the host culture acquisition (Phinney, 1990), or as the learning that occurs as the result of contact with a second culture (Berry, 1980). Acculturation was originally viewed as a bipolar phenomenon, with one end being totally acculturated and the other totally traditional. This implies that individuals have to give up their traditional culture in order to take on the values and behaviors of the dominant social structure (see Phinney, 1990). More recently, two-dimensional models have emerged to conceptualize ethnic minorities' cultural adaptation as containing more than just acculturating themselves into the dominant culture, but also including the effort for maintaining the ethnic culture. Some researchers differentiate acculturation in behaviors and that in values based on the belief that adopting host cultural behaviors occurs early but changes in cultural values usually take longer (e.g., Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999). Other theories went even further, insisting that individuals can "have a sense of belonging in two cultures without compromising his or her sense of cultural

identity" (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993, p. 399). It is recognized that immigrants and ethnic minorities can be bicultural in that they maintain their ethnic identity while adapting their behaviors to fit into the mainstream culture.

Phinney (1990) differentiated acculturation and ethnic identity by pointing out that acculturation deals broadly with host culture acquisition, whereas ethnic identity refers to "an enduring, fundamental aspect of the self that includes a sense of membership in an ethnic group and the attitudes and feelings associated with that membership" (Phinney, 1996, p. 922). An unconfused ethnic identity can provide individuals with a shared cultural heritage, a sense of social relatedness, and symbolic cultural ties (Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995). Some theorists believe that ethnic identity can be free from the influence of acculturation, defined as the second cultural acquisition (Birman, 1994; LaFromboise et al., 1993), whereas others view them as related entities that influence each other (Cuéllar, Nyberg, Maldonado, & Roberts, 1997). Nevertheless, many researchers agree that acculturation processes and ethnic identity development can occur simultaneously (Berry, 1980).

Both ethnic identity and acculturation have been examined in relation to immigrants' and ethnic minorities' demographic characteristics. The findings have shown that generation status (e.g., Padilla, Wagatsuma, & Lindholm, 1985) and the length of residence in the U.S. (e.g., Suinn, Ahuna, & Khoo, 1992; Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987) are positively related to acculturation but negatively related to ethnic identity (Masuda, Matsumoto, & Meredith, 1970; Ting-Toomey, 1981). It has also been found that age, particularly for the first generation of Asian Americans or Asian internationals, is negatively related to the degree of acculturation (Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991). Further, the evidence suggests that highly educated groups are more likely to maintain their ethnic identity as well as to acculturate into the mainstream culture than less educated groups (Sodowsky

& Carey, 1988). Although these findings are helpful in understanding the patterns of relationship between demographic characteristics and ethnic identity or acculturation, it is still not clear if and how these demographics contribute differently to acculturation processes and ethnic identity development, especially for Asian American and Asian international students.

Acculturation and ethnic identity have also been examined as predictors of psychological and emotional well-being, but the findings have not been consistent or conclusive. For instance, it has been reported that immigrants' acculturation level (i.e., the degree to which one adopts mainstream cultural values, English usage, and mainstream social affiliations) contributed to mental health (see Nagata, 1994) and psychological adjustment (Ghaffarian, 1998; Lam, Pacala, & Smith, 1997; Mehta, 1998; Nguyen, Messe, & Stollak, 1999). In contrast, it has also been reported that various ethnic group members could have relatively low levels of acculturation but moderately high levels of self-esteem (Yu & Berryman, 1996).

Similarly, there are conflicting findings as to how ethnic identity influences psychological well-being among ethnic minorities. It was reported that high ethnic identity was associated with high self-esteem among 8th and 9th grade Hispanic students (Grossman, Wirt, & Davids, 1985) and lower ethnic identity with lower self-esteem among African American college students (Parham & Helms, 1985). Among African American, Asian American and Mexican American 10th graders, ethnic identity was found to positively relate to several psychological adjustment measures (Phinney, 1989). In contrast, it was also observed that close identification with one's ethnic group could lead to a decrease of self-esteem when the individual interacted in mainstream settings (Phinney, 1990). In addition, some studies failed to find any relationship between ethnic identity and various measures of adjustment (Houston, 1984; White & Burke, 1987).

One of the reasons for the inconsistent findings may be that most research had examined either acculturation or ethnic identity, but not both at the same time. In her review article, Phinney (1990) treats these two processes as related and argues against studying either ethnic identity or acculturation in isolation. More importantly, she recognizes that ethnic identity is virtually invisible to the individuals who belong to a homogenous culture because it serves as a default standard. Ethnic identity may only manifest itself for those who live in a multiethnic environment, and individuals who experience themselves as minorities in a majority culture may perceive their ethno-cultural differences at a more conscious level. She further believes that a good adjustment of American ethnic minority members, for whom both acculturation and ethnic identity are relevant, is likely a product of a good relationship with both the ethnic and the mainstream cultures. Thus, the understanding of ethnic minorities' psychological adjustment cannot be completed without taking acculturation and ethnic identity into consideration simultaneously.

Another possible reason accounting for the inconclusive findings may be related to the way in which psychological well-being or adjustment is defined and measured for ethnic minorities. Past research often used indicators such as self-esteem (Martinez & Dukes, 1997), locus of control (Hsieh, Shybut, & Lotsof, 1996), and life satisfaction (Mehta, 1998) to assess psychological and emotional well-being. It can be argued that these concepts are culturally value-laden and prone to the influence of cultural differences in personality styles and values, particularly when used with individuals of Asian descent (Abe & Zane, 1990). For instance, when Asian Americans are modest, they may be perceived as having low self-esteem (Crittenden, 1991) or lacking self-confidence (Sue & Sue, 1987). Similarly, the collectivistic nature of Asian cultures may be associated with an external locus of control (Padilla et al., 1985) or not being assertive (Zane, Sue, Hu, & Kwon, 1991), which is generally viewed as an undesirable psychological attribute in an individualistic society.

In summary, the literature has not given definite answers as to how acculturation and ethnic identity are related, nor has the literature shown if they can be predicted by the same demographic variables, or whether they would bring similar psychological outcomes for Asians living in the U.S. We designed this study to explore some of these questions by examining Asian American and Asian international college students' acculturation, ethnic identity, emotional well-being, and demographic characteristics. To avoid being "confounded with other variables that covary with ethnicity" (Abe & Zane, 1990, p. 437), we used subjective feelings of happiness as an indicator of emotional well-being.

Based on the literature and our observations, we developed and tested the following hypotheses:

1.   Asian American students would score higher on both acculturation and ethnic identity than Asian international students. The literature supports that longer and more exposure to the host culture leads to a higher level of acculturation of minority members than shorter and less exposure (e.g., Berry, 1980; Kim & Berry, 1986), and leads to a stronger sense of coherence to their own cultures or ethnic groups as the result of facing the challenge of defining themselves in ethnic terms in diverse America (Phinney, 1996). Coming from homogeneous environments, there has been little need for most Asian international students to view themselves from ethno-cultural perspectives, and it only emerges after they come to the U.S.

2.   Asian American students and Asian international students would not differ in emotional well-being. Unlike many Western self-concepts, such as self-esteem or locus of control, subjective feeling of happiness is not as culturally biased (Abe & Zane, 1990). There is no reason to expect any systematic differences existing between Asian American and Asian international students with respect to their emotional well-being assessed by their self-reported level of happiness.

3. Ethnic identity would predict emotional well-being for Asian American students, and acculturation would for Asian international students. We assumed that for Asian American students who have lived in a multiethnic society for many years, knowing "who I am" ethnically would have a crucial role in their emotional well-being (Ting-Toomey, 1981), whereas for Asian international students who came to the U.S. recently for a specific educational goal, knowing "what, and how, to do" (e.g., language acquisition) would be important in their emotional adjustment (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992).

4. We expected a moderate, negative relationship to exist between acculturation and ethnic identity for Asian American and Asian international students. Although some theories view acculturation and ethnic identity as being independent from each other (e.g., Birman, 1994), we believe that increased engagement toward the dominant culture will decrease the attachment to the ethnic culture to a certain degree, especially in the area of cultural practice.

In addition, we also explored the research question: What demographic variables would best predict ethnic identity and acculturation for Asian American and Asian international students?

Method

Participants

Participants were 63 Asian Americans (28 men and 35 women) and 55 Asian international students (33 men and 22 women) recruited from Asian student organizations on two predominantly Caucasian Midwest state universities. Among the Asian American students, 31 were the first generation and 32 the second generation, and their age ranged from 19 to 41 ($M =$ 21.54, $SD = 3.47$). The ethnic background for this group consisted of 24% Vietnamese, 21% Chinese (36% from China mainland and 6% from Taiwan), 19% Indian, 9% Philippines, 7% Korean, 7% Japanese, 3% Thai, and 10%

from other East Asian countries. The education background of the Asian American participants was 8% freshmen, 20% sophomores, 30% juniors, 21% seniors, 7% master's, 5% doctoral, and 9% other.

The Asian international students' age ranged from 19 to 36 ($M = 26.62$, $SD = 4.77$). The ethnic composition of this group was 42% Chinese, 24% Koreans, 12% Malaysians, 12% Japanese, 4% Indians, 4% Singaporeans, and 2% Indonesians. The education background of these students was 2% freshmen, 4% sophomores, 9% juniors, 17% seniors, 38% master's, 28% doctoral, and 2% other.

Instruments

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

The MEIM (Roberts et al., 1999) was developed to assess behavioral and attitudinal aspects of ethnic identity that are common to all ethnic group members (Phinney, 1992). Thus, the measure focuses on general characteristics of ethnic identity for all ethnic groups (e.g., Asians), such as the sense of belonging to or identification with one's own group (Phinney, 1992). The MEIM was originally developed by Phinney (1992) and recently revised by Roberts et al. (1999). It contains 12 scored items, with 5 on "ethnic identity search" and 7 on "affirmation, belonging, and commitment." Responses are recorded on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" (4) to "strongly disagree" (1). The MEIM score is the sum of the item scores, which can range from 12 to 48.

Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the whole scale of .81 for high school samples and .90 for college samples (Phinney, 1992), and over .80 across various ethnic groups including Asians (Roberts et al., 1999), was reported. The reliability analysis of the present study resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .89 for Asian American students and .80 for Asian international students. Moreover, the principal component analyses conducted on the present data separately for Asian American and Asian

international students evidenced the existence of a single component that best represented the structure underlying the responses to the MEIM. The component explained 47.38% and 33.12% of the total variance, respectively, for Asian American and Asian international students. The concurrent validity of the MEIM was also supported by its positive correlation with self-esteem among minority college populations in the past literature (Phinney, 1992).

The Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA)

The SL-ASIA (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, et al., 1987) assesses acculturation from cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal perspectives, placing individuals on the continuum between "Western identified" and "Asian identified" with "bicultural" in the middle (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, et al., 1987). The SL-ASIA used the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans, ARSMA (Cuéllar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980) as the development model, which reflects the bipolar explanation of acculturation. Although in the recent literature, acculturation has been viewed and measured as bidimensional in that one can acculturate in both mainstream and the ethnic culture (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000; Stephenson, 2000), we used the SL-ASIA for this study because (1) it serves our study purpose well, and (2) this scale was developed and normed for Asian American populations and was noted to be the leading Asian American acculturation measure employed in the psychological literature (Ponterotto, Baluch, & Carielli, 1998).

The SL-ASIA consists of 21 multiple-choice items, of which 4 items are about identity, 4 items about friendship, 3 items about generation/ geographic history, and 1 item about attitudes. A 5-point Likert scale was used to record responses to each of the items as ranging from "strongly Asian-oriented" (1) to "strongly American-oriented" (5). The SL-ASIA categorizes individuals as being Asian-oriented (average score 1), bicultural (average score around 3), and assimilated (average score 5). The SL-ASIA total score is the sum of the 21 item scores ranging from 21 to 105.

Satisfactory internal consistency of SL-ASIA has been reported, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .88 to .91 (Suinn, Ahuna, et al., 1992; Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, et al., 1987). The internal consistency for this study was .81 for Asian American students and .70 for Asian international students. Moreover, structural equivalence between the Asian American and Asian international students on the responses to the SL-ASIA was demonstrated by the principal component analyses, indicating that a single component best approximated the participants' responses underlying the SL-ASIA. This component explained 31.44% (Asian American students) and 24.22% (Asian international students) of the total variance. Evidence of construct validity of the SL-ASIA was also reported by Suinn, Ahuna, et al. (1992) who noted significant correlations between acculturation as measured by SL-ASIA and demographic variables such as length of residence in the U.S. ($r = .61$, $p < .001$), immigration age ($r = -.49$, $p < .001$), length of residence in non-Asian neighborhood ($r = .41$, $p < .001$), and self-ratings of cultural identity ($r = .62$, $p < .001$). Moreover, respondents whose first language was English showed higher levels of acculturation than those who learned English as the second language (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, et al., 1992).

The Depression-Happiness Scale (D-HS)

The D-HS (McGreal & Joseph, 1993) was designed to capture the spectrum of inversely related concepts of depression or happiness (Joseph & Lewis, 1998). It consists of 25 items representing negative (12 items) and positive (13 items) feeling, such as "I felt cheerful" and "I felt sad," using a 4-point Likert Scale from never (0) to often (3). The negative items require reversing scores. The total score ranges from 0 to 75, with the higher scores indicating feelings of happiness and lower scores indicating feelings of depression (McGreal & Joseph, 1993).

Internal consistency of the scale has been reported with a Cronbach's alpha being around .90 (Joseph & Lewis, 1998; McGreal & Joseph, 1993), and Cronbach's alphas in the present study were .88 for Asian American

students and .81 for Asian international students. Structural equivalence of the D-HS between the two student groups was also evidenced by the principal component analyses conducted on the present data, which yielded a single component that explained 26.88% (Asian American students) and 21.81% (Asian international students) of the total variance. A correlation of –.75 was found with the Beck Depression Inventory, BDI (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979) and .59 with the Oxford Happiness Inventory, OHI (Argyle, Martin, & Grossland, 1989), and past literature further suggested adequate construct validity (Joseph & Lewis, 1998)

Demographic Form

The demographic form asked participants to indicate their age, sex, years in school, length of residence in the U.S., citizenship status (Asian international students or Asian Americans), and generational status (for Asian American students only).

Procedure

With the permission of Asian student organizations from two selected Midwest state universities, one of the authors went to their regularly scheduled meetings to solicit participation. Potential participants were told that we were interested in cultural adjustment of Asian students. They were fully informed that participation was voluntary that they could withdraw their participation at any time, and that their responses were confidential. The volunteers were given the measures and the demographic form and asked to complete and return them at that time, which led to a 95% compliance rate.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

To determine the comparability of our Asian American and Asian international student groups, a series of *t*-tests on their demographics were conducted. The results revealed that Asian international students (*M* =

26.62, *SD* = 4.77) were significantly older than Asian American students (*M* = 21.54, *SD* = 3.47), *t* (116) = 6.67, *p* < .01, and their education levels (49% graduate students) were higher than those of Asian American students (10% graduate students), *t* (112) = 4.29, *p* < .001. Therefore, we made the decision to control for age and education level in the subsequent comparative analyses between the two groups by employing a series of analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs), with age and education level being treated as covariates.

Differences Between Asian American and Asian International Students

Means and standard deviations for acculturation, ethnic identity, emotional well-being were reported in Table 1. To compare the Asian American and Asian international students' acculturation, ethnic identity, and emotional well-being, we conducted three separate ANCOVAs, with age and education level as covariates. The results showed that Asian American students scored higher in acculturation than Asian international students, *F* (1, 110) = 59.32, *p* < .01. The effect size (eta^2 = .35), a large effect according to Cohen (1988), indicated that 35% of the variance of acculturation was accounted for by participants' group membership. Asian American students scored closer to being assimilated, while Asian international students closer to being Asian-oriented according to the Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, et al. (1987) formulation. Further, the mean score of our Asian American sample

Table 1   Means and Standard Deviations for Acculturation, Ethnic Identity, and Emotional Well-Being

Variables	Asian American students		Asian International students	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Acculturation	3.02	.38	2.10	.52
Ethnic identity	3.27	.49	2.95	.42
Emotional well-being	1.99	.41	1.97	.33

was compatible with the mean of 3.02 for a Midwest Asian American college student sample reported by Mok (1999).

The results also showed that Asian American students had a stronger ethnic identity than Asian international students, $F (1, 110) = 6.63, p < .05$. The effect size (eta^2 = .06), a medium effect (Cohen, 1988), suggested that 6% of the variance of ethnic identity was accounted for by the participants' group membership.

There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups' emotional well-being, $F (1, 108) = 0.8, p > .05$. Both Asian American and Asian international students scored in the upper range on the Depression-Happiness scale. Both the mean scores of Asian American students ($t = 10.46, p < .01$) and Asian international students ($t = 11.87, p < .01$) were significantly higher than the mid-point on the depression-happiness continuum. Thus, the participants in both groups appeared to be in a generally happy state. Moreover, the mean scores were compatible with the mean score of the general college student sample ($M = 1.94, SD = .50$) reported in the scale validation study (Joseph & Lewis, 1998).

The Relationship of Acculturation and Ethnic Identity with Emotional Well-being

Two sets of hierarchical multiple regression analyses, with age and education level being controlled for, were conducted to examine the relationship of emotional well-being with acculturation and ethnic identity. The results revealed that age and education level entered in the first step (i.e., step 1) failed to explain any significant amount of variance of emotional well-being for either group (see Table 2). When ethnic identity and acculturation were entered in the second step (i.e., step 2), R^2 change was statistically significant for Asian American students, but non-significant for Asian international students. It was notable that ethnic identity, not acculturation level, contributed uniquely to Asian American students'

emotional well-being. The higher ethnic identity seemed to be associated with higher Asian American students' emotional well-being.

The Relationship Between Acculturation and Ethnic Identity

Partial correlation coefficients, with age and education level being held constant statistically, were calculated to examine the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity. The results revealed that acculturation and ethnic identity were negatively correlated for both Asian American students (Partial $r = -.49$, $p < .01$) and Asian international students (Partial $r = -.31$,

Table 2   Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Emotional Well-being

Predictors	β	sr^2	Increment R^2	F change	p
Asian American students					
Step 1					
Education level	−.03	.00			
Age	.01	.00			
			.00	.02	n.s.
Step 2					
Ethnic identity	.43*	.12			
Acculturation	.18	.03			
			.13	3.84	< .05
Asian international students					
Step 1					
Education level	−.16	.02			
Age	.11	.02			
			.03	.64	n.s.
Step 2					
Ethnic identity	.16	.02			
Acculturation	.14	.02			
			.03	.75	n.s.

*$p < .01$

$p < .05$). It appeared that, to a moderate degree, ethnic identity level decreased as acculturation increased.

Demographic Predictors of Acculturation and Ethnic Identity

To answer the research question concerning demographic predictors of acculturation and ethnic identity, step-wise multiple regression analyses were conducted with the predictors being length of residence, education level, and generational status for Asian American students, and length of residence and education level for Asian international students. The results showed that Asian American students' acculturation was significantly predicted by (1) the length of residence in the U.S. ($\beta = .59$), which accounted for 34.4% of the variance, $F (1, 58) = 30.42$, $p < .01$, and (2) generation status ($\beta = .31$), which accounted for additional 6.5% of the variance, $F (2, 57) = 19.71$, $p < .01$. Asian international students' acculturation, on the other hand, was significantly predicted by their length of residence in the U.S. only ($\beta = .37$), which accounted for 14.0% of the variance, $F (1, 49) = 7.87$, $p < .01$. Longer length of residence in the U.S. and higher generation status were associated with higher acculturation level of Asian American students, and longer length of residence was related to higher acculturation of Asian international students.

When ethnic identity was regressed on all of the demographic variables, Asian American students' education level ($\beta = -.26$) was found to be a statistically significant predictor, accounting for 6.6% of the total variance, $F (1, 58) = 4.13$, $p < .05$. It suggested that ethnic identity decreased as their education level increased. On the other hand, none of the demographic variables predicted Asian international students' ethnic identity.

Discussion

The findings of this study supported our hypothesis that Asian American students would score higher in acculturation than Asian international students would. Being educated and socialized in the U.S., Asian American students

had more exposure to and contact with the mainstream American culture than Asian international students who had recently come to this country. It is interesting, however, that Asian American students also had a stronger ethnic identity than Asian international students. Ethnic identity seems to be only meaningful for those who live in a multiethnic society such as the U.S. (Phinney, 1990).

While Asian American students grew up with the pressure of defining themselves ethnically, the concept of ethnic identity may not have been salient to the international students from Asian societies, where the cultural contexts are presumably homogenous in nature. It is possible that international students did not see the relevance of the statements such as "I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me" (Roberts et al., 1999) as much as Asian American students did. Thus, the differences in ethnic identity found between the two groups might have been, in part, due to the differential patterns of responses to the scale intended to measure ethnic identity. Asian American students could have endorsed their response on each item in reference to the construct of ethnic identity more than Asian international students could have. Future investigation that takes measurement invariance (e.g., Meredith, 1993) into account warrants accurate assessment of the level of ethnic identity.

It is notable that Asian American and Asian international students differed in acculturation level and ethnic identity, but not in emotional well-being. Both groups had relatively high levels of emotional well-being. Further, it is significant that only ethnic identity, not acculturation, predicted Asian American students' emotional well-being, and neither ethnic identity nor acculturation predicted Asian international students' emotional well-being. These findings further challenged the assumption on which the early acculturation theories are based (e.g., Gordon, 1964; Redfield et al., 1936) — that is, the more acculturated ethnic minorities become the better adjusted they are. Undoubtedly, a certain level of acculturation is necessary for

surviving in American culture, but when a reasonable level has been achieved, acculturation may not play an important role for emotional well-being. For Asian American students, an adequate understanding of what their ethnicity meant to them in the context of cultural diversity would contribute to the adequate adjustment (Phinney, 1990). The sense of certainty in their identities may serve as a core in their emotional security and these emotional securities, in turn, may facilitate their emotional well-being. This is consistent with Martinez and Dukes's (1997) observation that an unconfused ethnic identity provided ethnic minority members a secured internal frame of reference. This internal frame of reference may help them realize the meaning and the advantage to living in a multicultural society and increase their good feelings about themselves.

It is interesting that acculturation did not predict emotional well-being for Asian international students as we hypothesized. It seems that the degree to which they became "Americanized" or remained "Asian" did not really affect their level of happiness. Although we had to group individuals with different Asian nationality or heritage together as Asian international students due to the limited number of participants in each subgroup (e.g., Chinese, Koreans, Japanese), which prevented us from examining any meaningful subgroup differences (e.g., Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998), their mind as a whole might have been as goal-oriented as their "international student" status implied while attending school. They knew they were in the U.S. for a specific educational goal, and thus the level of their Americanization, after they had achieved a functional level of acculturation, was not a major concern. In fact, Hull (1978) had insisted that it was not the cultural skills they need to interact with the host culture, but academic concerns that had the most saliency for international students and often became the origin of their stress-related mental health problems. Church (1982) also observed that international students were more "student" than "foreigner" in adjusting to the American culture.

Ethnic identity and acculturation were negatively correlated for both Asian American and Asian international students, but only to a moderate degree. It seemed that acculturation could, to a certain degree, compromise ethnic identity. However, it should not be interpreted literally as evidence for the notion that loss of ethnic identity has to occur when acculturation occurs. The low to moderate strength of the correlation between the two indicates that the amount of progress in acculturation did not create an equal amount of ethnic identity loss. Although acculturation and ethnic identity development can occur simultaneously, it is reasonable to expect some loss of ethnic cultures as one moves forward in accommodating to the host culture. This may particularly hold true "when the total cultural context is predominately mono-cultural" (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980, p. 143). Our sample was drawn from two Midwest campuses where ethnic diversity was limited, and ethnic minority members simply might not have had the opportunity to practice both mainstream culture and ethnic culture.

Another possible reason that is responsible for the negative correlation between acculturation and ethnic identity is that both measures used cultural behaviors as indicators. For instance, SL-ASIA assessed behavior acculturation, such as participation in dominant cultural activities, which is also included in MEIM as an indicator of ethnic identity. It is logical to expect that the increased behavioral involvement in one culture would lead to decreased involvement in the other. Moreover, the present data collected at the beginning of Asian student organization meetings might have introduced a possible sample bias by a kind of self-selection in the participants. For example, those who chose to become involved in ethnic student organizations, particularly in a predominately Caucasian Midwest university, might have engaged in ethnic behavior more frequently than those who chose not to do so. As a result, the level of ethnic identity might have been intensified and hence the magnitude of negative correlations between MEIM and SL-ASIA might have been increased. Nevertheless, such behavioral dimensions of acculturation and ethnic identity do not always

reflect one's cultural values or the extent to which one feels pride in one's own ethnicity (Kim et al., 1999). Future research should clearly define and measure these two constructs and examine the relationships between them.

Our findings on the relationship between Asian American students' acculturation and some demographic variables were consistent with the literature. The longer length of residence and higher generation status were associated with higher acculturation. Most notably, these variables together explained a large amount of variance (40.9%) of Asian American students' acculturation. It appeared that acculturation was sensitive to "from when" as well as "for how long" individuals of Asian heritage have been in contact with the mainstream culture. However, neither of the variables predicted Asian American students' ethnic identity. Perhaps, acculturative learning is more of an accumulative and gradual developmental process than ethnic identity development. Individuals may gradually acquire and accumulate second cultural skills in accordance with the degree to which individuals are exposed to American culture and feel the need to learn about it. On the other hand, ethnic identity development might reflect one's choice to pursue an ethnic definition of the self which may occur in a "yes or no" fashion at any point of time (Phinney, 1990).

The finding that education level negatively predicted Asian American students' ethnic identity also seemed to support that ethnic identity might not go through the same gradual and accumulative process as acculturation did. It is possible that those who have completed more years of college also had left home ethnic environment and been in contact with the dominant culture longer than those having less years of college completed. Being physically detached from ethnic environment may place strain on keeping one's minority ethnic identity. In addition, years of being outside home ethnic environment may be associated with the exposure to racial discrimination, which may discourage them from feeling ethnic pride.

Counseling Implications

The findings on the role of ethnic identity in psychological well-being may inform counselors about the importance of validating and encouraging Asian American clients' ethnic identity in counseling relationships. It is important that the counseling focus on providing clients of Asian heritage with support to prevent both disengagement and overengagement in the mainstream culture. Being able to practice the dominant culture while maintaining a strong ethnic identity may produce the best psychological outcomes for Asian Americans. Further, the findings also provided information concerning the differences between Asian American and Asian international students and among various groups based on their age, length of residence in the U.S., and education level. Perhaps counselors should pay more attention to internalized cultural conflicts (being American vs. being Asian) when working with Asian American students, and to the difficulty in cultural adjustment when working with Asian international students rather than vice versa.

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亞裔美籍學生與亞裔外國學生的民族認同程度、
涵化水平和心理健康狀況

本文探討了美國的亞裔美籍學生與亞裔外國學生在民族認同程度、涵化水平和心理健康狀況上的差異。研究結果顯示，亞裔美籍學生在涵化水平和民族認同程度兩方面均較亞裔外國學生為高，但兩組學生的心理健康狀況沒有差別。研究又發現，亞裔美籍學生的民族認同程度能預測他們的心理健康狀況，但他們的涵化水平則沒有這種預測能力。此外，無論是亞裔美籍學生還是亞裔外國學生，他們的涵化水平和民族認同程度均呈輕微的反比。