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WHY AND HOW RESEARCHERS SHOULD STUDY ETHNIC IDENTITY, ACCULTURATION, AND CULTURAL ORIENTATION

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I can't explain it. It's so much . . . being Hmong is too broad to explain.
It comes with a lot of aspects. That's as far as I can get.
—Hmong college student

As the number of immigrants, refugees, and American-born ethnic minorities living in the United States and Canada continues to grow, North American psychologists and other social scientists have become increasingly interested in culture and how it shapes one's interactions with others, responses to one's environments, and feelings about oneself and others. At first blush, cultural processes may appear too broad to explain and difficult to study, resulting in sentiments similar to those expressed by the Hmong college student quoted at the beginning of this chapter. However, research conducted in the late 20th century on ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation has moved researchers closer to identifying the many aspects

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of culture that might influence human behavior. Therefore, as the 21st century begins, we are optimistic that researchers will go much farther in understanding the mechanisms of cultural influence than they have in the past. In this chapter we present new conceptual and methodological approaches to studying ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation that may help researchers achieve this end. First, however, we define our terms and discuss why these constructs are worthy of further scientific pursuit.

WHAT ARE ETHNIC IDENTITY, ACCULTURATION, AND CULTURAL ORIENTATION?

Ethnic identity (the degree to which one views oneself as a member of a particular ethnic group), *acculturation* (the process of adjusting to a different culture), and *cultural orientation* (one's feelings toward and levels of engagement in different cultures) are similar in a number of ways. All three constructs describe individuals' relationships to their cultural environments, span multiple domains of life experience (e.g., language, activities), and are dynamic and constantly changing. In addition, researchers have primarily used self-report inventories such as the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992), the General Ethnicity Questionnaire (Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000), and the Suinn–Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Rating Scale (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987) to measure these constructs. Because of these similarities, these terms are often used interchangeably in the literature.[1]

These constructs, however, are distinct in significant ways, making critical the accurate use of these terms. Whereas ethnic identity requires conscious endorsement, acculturation and cultural orientation do not; that is, an individual may be very oriented to American culture in terms of the customs and traditions he or she practices, but he or she may not explicitly identify with American culture. Also, whereas *acculturation* refers to the adjustment of immigrant and refugee groups, *ethnic identity* and *cultural orientation* also apply to American-born ethnic minorities. Given the similarities among the three constructs, we discuss all of them in this chapter; however, where appropriate, we focus on them separately.

WHY SHOULD RESEARCHERS STUDY THESE CONSTRUCTS?

Although ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation are constructs that have received much attention in the literature, many critical

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[1]We are not discussing *racial identity*, or "the quality of one's identification with one's racial group," because of its emphasis on "racial oppression and racism" (Alvarez & Helms, 2001). Although we strongly believe that racial identity assumes an important role in the psyche of Asian Americans and other multicultural individuals, given space constraints we limit the focus of this chapter to constructs that are related to the influence of cultural practices and beliefs and identification with such practices and beliefs.

questions remain unanswered. Before we describe these questions in detail we discuss the reasons why they are worthy of continued pursuit.

To Examine a Central Aspect of Identity or Self-Concept

> It means a lot for me to be Hmong. It's one of the most important parts of my life. It's a daily thing I have to live with, being a Hmong person.
> —Hmong college student

Over the centuries, belonging to a particular ethnic group has remained an important part of how individuals view and describe themselves (Smith, 1986). By identifying oneself in terms of one's ethnic or cultural group, an individual retains his or her connection to an existing community as well as to a larger historical context (Takei, 1998). Over the course of an individual's life, ethnic identity may also link earlier and later stages of that life. For example, Luborsky and Rubinstein (1990) found that in a sample of 45 Irish, Italian, and Jewish widowers living in Philadelphia, the majority reported that their ethnic identities provided a way for them to retain connections with their life experiences before the deaths of their wives. Although much of the literature suggests that the development of ethnic identity peaks during adolescence, (Phinney, 1990), Simic (1987) and Myerhoff (1978) have argued that ethnic identity may also assume a central role in old age, when older adults are perceived by younger adults as cultural carriers and transmitters.

To Reveal the Psychology of Immigrant, Refugee, and Other Multicultural Groups

In light of the tremendous amount of migration that has occurred in the past few decades and the concomitant emergence of multicultural societies, it has become increasingly important to understand the psychology of multicultural individuals, or people who have been influenced by different cultural traditions. Such knowledge is critical if such individuals are to be integrated successfully into U.S. society and if the intercultural conflict and distress that result from adapting to a new culture are to be reduced. For example, several studies have demonstrated that many Asian American families suffer from intergenerational conflict, or tension between immigrant parents and their children due to generational differences in American cultural orientation (Drachman, Kwon-Ahn, & Paulino, 1996; Ying & Chao, 1996). To address this issue, Ying (1999) devised an intervention (Strengthening of Intergenerational/Intercultural Ties in Immigrant Chinese American Families) that aims to facilitate cultural understanding between Asian immigrant parents and their American-born children. With a pilot sample of 15 parents living in the San Francisco Bay area, the intervention was found to improve

parental reports of their senses of efficacy and their relationships with their children.

Research on ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation may also reveal how multicultural individuals view specific interventions, which may in turn affect their rates of compliance with mental health treatment. For instance, evidence suggests that overseas-born Asian Americans are significantly less compliant with psychotherapy treatments than are American-born Asians (Sue, Fujino, Hu, Takeuchi, & Zane, 1991). This may be due to their distinct models of cultural orientation. Previous findings suggest that American-born Chinese have bidimensional models of cultural orientation; that is, their orientations to Chinese and American cultures are uncorrelated with each other (Tsai et al., 2000). Thus, American-born Chinese may view compliance with American treatments as not affecting how Chinese they are. Immigrant Chinese Americans, however, have unidimensional models of cultural orientation; that is, their Chinese and American orientations are inversely related to each other (Tsai et al., 2000). Thus, immigrant Chinese Americans may believe that complying with American treatments may decrease how Chinese they are. As a result, American-born Chinese may be more likely than immigrant Chinese to comply with American interventions.

To Uncover Heterogeneity Within Cultural Groups

Given the increasing diversity of the U.S. population, it is likely that variation within groups will become larger than variation among groups. Unfortunately, scholars interested in cultural influences on human behavior often overlook the enormous variation that exists within cultural groups, which may result in cultural stereotyping or the misattribution of group differences to culture. Studies of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation are important because they highlight and elucidate such within-group differences. For example, across a series of studies, Jeanne L. Tsai and colleagues have demonstrated that within Asian American groups, place of birth has a significant impact on individuals' models of cultural orientation (Tsai, 2001; Tsai et al., 2000) and have demonstrated the effects of cultural orientation on various measures of psychological well-being (Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2001; Ying, Lee, & Tsai, 2000).

To Elucidate the Mechanisms of Cultural Influence

Ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation are deserving of study because they reveal the mechanisms of cultural influence in two ways. First, studying these constructs ensures that differences among groups are due to cultural variables rather than to variables confounded with culture (e.g., socioeconomic status [SES]; Triandis, Kashima, Shimada, & Villareal,

1986). For instance, Tsai and Levenson (1997) compared reports of emotion made by Chinese Americans and European Americans living in the San Francisco Bay area during emotional conversations with their romantic partners and found that, consistent with Chinese values of emotional moderation, Chinese Americans' reports of emotion were less variable than those of European Americans. These differences could have been due to a variety of group differences (e.g., familiarity with the experimental setting). Therefore, to ensure that the differences were due to cultural variables, the authors looked at the correlation between acculturation to American culture and reports of emotion among Chinese Americans. As expected, the less acculturated to American culture Chinese Americans were, the less variable were their reports of emotion.

Second, because measures of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation include multiple aspects of culture (e.g., language, social affiliation, and attitudes), they can illuminate the specific means by which cultural values, customs, and norms are transmitted to and influence the individual. For example, Ying, Lee, and Tsai (2000) found that for American-born Chinese living in a region in which there is a significant Chinese-speaking community, cultural orientation in the domain of language predicted participants' sense of coherence (the degree to which the world is experienced as manageable, meaningful, and comprehensible; Antonovsky, 1987), whereas cultural orientation in the domains of social affiliation and attitudes did not. By comparison, for immigrant Chinese living in the same community, cultural orientation in all three domains influenced sense of coherence. These findings suggest that for American-born Chinese, language is the primary mediator through which culture may influence individuals' experiences of their environments, whereas for immigrant Chinese, cultural influences are also transmitted through social affiliation and attitudes.

Given the importance of studying ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation, it is not surprising that the number of publications on ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation from 1990 to 1999 (2,867 journal articles and chapters) is more than twice as large as that of the previous decade (1,409 journal articles and chapters).[2] In all likelihood, this number will continue to increase in the decades to come. In the next section we briefly review what is known about these constructs, particularly as they pertain to Asian Americans. Rather than provide a comprehensive review of existing studies, we describe dominant themes in the literature to lay the foundation for the main purpose of our chapter, which is to propose ways in which researchers should study ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation in the future.

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[2]To calculate these figures we searched the PsycINFO database, using *acculturation, assimilation, cultural orientation*, and *ethnic identity* as keywords. We included non-English publications but excluded dissertations.

The existing literature on ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation in Asian Americans has revolved around three main topics: (a) the applicability to Asian Americans of popular models of ethnic identity development; (b) the dimensionality for Asian Americans of cultural orientation and acculturation; and (c) the relationships among ethnic identity, acculturation, cultural orientation, and various indicators of mental health. To study these topics, most researchers have measured ethnic identity, cultural orientation, and acculturation with self-report questionnaires.

Applicability to Asian Americans of Ethnic Identity Development Models

Phinney (1989, 1990) has proposed a model of ethnic identity development that is based on Marcia's (1993) model of identity formation in adolescents. According to Phinney's model, individuals move from one stage of identity development to another; these transitions are a function of individuals' psychological maturity and exposure to different life experiences. During late childhood and adolescence, individuals are at either the *diffuse* stage (where there is a lack of commitment toward, and no exploration of, one's ethnic identity) or the *foreclosed* stage (where there is commitment to an ascribed ethnic identity, without exploration of the meaning of that identity). Individuals may enter the *moratorium* stage, where they re-examine their ethnic identity and explore its meanings before committing to the same or a different ethnic identity. After intense exploration, individuals may commit to an ethnic identity, at which point they have entered the *achieved* stage. On the basis of a content analysis of participants' essays on the topic of growing up Asian American, Ying and Lee (1999) found that the ethnic identity development of a sample of 342 American-born and immigrant Asian American adolescents living in the San Francisco Bay area followed Phinney's model. These results are consistent with those of Phinney and Chavira (1992), which also demonstrated that Phinney's model is applicable to Asian American high school students living in Los Angeles. More longitudinal studies, however, are needed to determine definitively whether individuals move from one stage to the next over time.

Dimensionality of Cultural Orientation and Acculturation

The two most popular models of cultural orientation and acculturation are the *unidimensional* model and the *bidimensional* model. The unidimensional model was initially developed to describe the process by which European immigrants became more American during the late 1800s and early 1900s (Gordon, 1964). This model assumes that one cultural orientation is

inversely related to the other (i.e., the more oriented one is to Culture A, the less oriented he or she is to Culture B). The bidimensional model was a product of the increased ethnic consciousness brought forth by the civil rights movement and reflected an emerging emphasis on the value of multiculturalism. This model assumes that cultural orientations are independent of each other (i.e., the degree to which one is oriented to Culture A is unrelated to the degree to which one is oriented to Culture B). Berry (1980) provided a classification of acculturation strategies that incorporates both models; in his scheme, immigrants may be strongly oriented to their host culture and only weakly oriented to their heritage culture (assimilation), strongly oriented to the heritage culture and only weakly oriented to the host culture (separation), weakly oriented to both cultures (marginalization), and strongly oriented to both cultures (integration). Because both unidimensional and bidimensional models have received various criticisms (see Tsai & Chentsova-Dutton, in press), researchers have attempted to determine the conditions under which each model is applicable.

In our own studies of Chinese Americans living on the West coast (Tsai et al., 2000) and of Hmong Americans living in the Midwest (Tsai, 2001), we tested the unidimensional and bidimensional models by measuring the relationship between reported orientation to Chinese/Hmong culture and reported orientation to American culture. Our findings suggest that place of birth (a proxy for cultural exposure and experience) may determine which model best describes self-reported cultural orientation. More specifically, our findings suggest that American-born Asians have a bidimensional model of cultural orientation, whereas overseas-born Asian Americans have a unidimensional model of cultural orientation.

Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus (2000) also tested the unidimensional and bidimensional models, but they used an approach that was different from Tsai et al.'s (2000). Ryder et al. examined whether the unidimensional or bidimensional models best described different measures of psychological and social functioning in three samples of Chinese living in Canada (greater than 50% of these samples were immigrants). They administered separate self-report measures of unidimensional cultural orientation–acculturation, bidimensional cultural orientation–acculturation, and various measures of psychological and social functioning and found that the bidimensional model better captured relations between cultural orientation–acculturation and the various psychological indexes than did the unidimensional model. It is interesting that Ryder et al. also found that although orientations to host and native cultures were negatively correlated in the first generation, they were not correlated in subsequent generations, supporting the findings of Tsai et al. (2000). Recently, Abe-Kim, Okazaki, and Goto (2001) found that a multidimensional model best characterized the relationships between levels of acculturation and cultural variables such as individualism–collectivism, loss of face, and impression management for a sample of Asian American college

students. Similarly, Lieber, Chin, Nihira, and Mink (2001) found that bidimensional approaches to acculturation and ethnic identity were better predictors of life satisfaction among Chinese immigrants than were unidimensional models. Thus, these studies suggest that specific relationships between cultural orientation and psychological and social functioning may be lost if one assumes only a unidimensional perspective.

Relationships Between Ethnic Identity, Acculturation, and Cultural Orientation and Mental Health

Over the past 20 years, much research has focused on the relationship between ethnic identity, acculturation, cultural orientation, and various indicators of psychological well-being. The focus of these studies has been on which stage of ethnic identity, type of acculturation strategy, or type of cultural orientation is related to the most positive psychological outcome. Although the findings have been mixed, for the most part they support Phinney's (1990) model of ethnic identity development, Berry's (1980) model of acculturation, and the assumption that high levels of orientation to different cultures is optimal. For example, in a sample of predominantly American-born Asian, African American, and Hispanic minority adolescents, Martinez and Dukes (1997) found that individuals with an achieved ethnic identity had higher levels of self-esteem than those who were still exploring or had not yet examined their ethnic identities. Another study found that orientation to Vietnamese culture was associated with increased self-esteem for adult Vietnamese immigrants living in Australia (Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997), and another found that decreased identification with Vietnamese culture was associated with increased levels of depression for mostly foreign-born Vietnamese American college students living in the Midwest.

Consistent with Berry's (1995) model, integrated acculturation appears to be associated with higher levels of psychological adjustment than other acculturation strategies (Berry & Kim, 1988; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). In a similar study, Ying (1995) investigated the relationship between cultural orientation strategies and well-being for a community sample of Chinese American adults living in San Francisco and found that being oriented to both cultures was more psychologically adaptive than being oriented to only one. For example, participation in Chinese and American activities was associated with less depression, greater life satisfaction, more positive affect, and less negative affect than was exclusive participation in Chinese activities. Leiber et al. (2001) found that being bicultural (i.e., being highly acculturated and having a strong Asian identity) was associated with higher SES, which together enhanced positive life satisfaction in Chinese immigrants.

Findings from other studies, however, tell a different story. Phinney, Madden, and Santos (1998) found no relationship between cultural orienta-

tion and levels of depression, anxiety, and self-esteem in a sample of Armenian, Mexican American, and Vietnamese (mostly immigrant) adolescents living in Los Angeles. Verkuyten and Lay (1998) reported that ethnic identity was unrelated to personal self-esteem (feelings of regard for the self), life satisfaction, and mood for Chinese adolescents living in the Netherlands who were second generation or who had migrated to the Netherlands before the age of 2 years. Vollebergh and Huiberts (1997) found in a sample of students in the Netherlands that included Asian secondary school students that minority students who demonstrated integrated acculturation did not differ from those with separated acculturation in reported levels of depression, stress, or well-being. Leiber et al. (2001) found that separated and bicultural individuals did not differ in reported quality of life in the domains of friendship, finances, or community. Thus, although many studies support popular models of ethnic identity development, acculturation, and cultural orientation, some studies do not. Single-item measures of ethnic identity were most frequently used in these studies. Thus, it is possible that the construct of ethnic identity was not sampled adequately to demonstrate relationships between ethnic identity and psychological health. A host of other factors, such as heterogeneity in Asian groups and in their cultural contexts, may also account for these findings; however, it also is possible that popular models of ethnic identity development, acculturation, and cultural orientation should be revised to account for recent findings.

Researchers clearly have learned a substantial amount about ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation from studies conducted in the past few decades. Researchers should continue to examine whether existing models of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation apply to Asian Americans and how different stages of ethnic identity and types of acculturation–cultural orientation affect psychological and social functioning. There are many other questions, however, that remain to be answered, all of which stem from existing studies and methods of examining ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation. We dedicate the rest of this chapter to a discussion of these questions. We begin with the methodological questions and end with conceptual ones. For each question we present possible solutions; in some cases we illustrate these solutions with findings from our own research.

HOW SHOULD RESEARCHERS STUDY ETHNIC IDENTITY, ACCULTURATION, AND CULTURAL ORIENTATION IN THE FUTURE?

Methodological Questions

In this section we introduce three methodological questions that deserve further study: (a) What instruments should be used? (b) can research-

ers move beyond self-report measures? and (c) are there other ways of measuring changes in ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation?

What Instruments Should Be Used?

With the exception of the Suinn–Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Rating Scale, the lack of commonly accepted measures of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation makes comparison of results across studies virtually impossible. Agreement among researchers about which instruments to use with specific cultural groups clearly would overcome this problem. It is unfortunate that no studies have empirically examined whether one instrument is better than another for use with a particular cultural group. Furthermore, one's research question will determine which instrument is the most appropriate one to use. For example, if researchers are interested in examining individuals' feelings about their relationships to their ethnic groups, or the meaning of ethnic group membership, it makes sense to use interviews rather than forced-choice questionnaires. However, if researchers are interested in specific behaviors, they may choose to use questionnaires, which are more efficient and less time and labor intensive. In this case, researchers should clearly articulate to their participants the exact behaviors of interest. For instance, if researchers are examining the effects for members of different cultural groups of socializing with European Americans on attitudes toward American culture, then they should clearly articulate the specific form of socialization to which they are referring. Two different cultural groups may report socializing "a lot" with European Americans, but for one group socializing may refer to talking with coworkers, whereas for the other group socializing may refer to dating European Americans. This example illustrates a common problem of equivalence in measuring aspects of cultural orientation by means of self-report measures. What are the ways to surmount such problems? In the next section we describe methodological innovations that may aid researchers in assessing constructs such as "socializing" in different cultural groups.

Can Researchers Move Beyond Self-Report Measures?

Most measures of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation are self-report questionnaires. Although these instruments have the advantage of easy administration, they also experience the common biases of self-report (e.g., invalid responses due to limited self-understanding or the desire to give socially acceptable responses). Thus, assessments of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation that include more than the target individual's perspective and that are behavioral are needed.

One possible method is the Q-sort technique, which has been used successfully in the assessment of personality (Block, 1971; Westen & Shedler,

1999). With Q-sort techniques an individual must determine how well various statements describe him- or herself or another person. Each statement is given a particular weight, based on how characteristic the statement is of the target individual. Moreover, individuals are given a fixed distribution so that only a limited number of statements can receive a given weight. This technique may be used to identify patterns of ethnic identification and cultural orientation. For example, Davis (1997) used this method in his study of a Basque sample to examine the relative importance their ethnicity, language, and geographic location assumed in their lives. This method can also be used to create composite profiles of individuals' ethnic identification or cultural orientation; that is, in addition to having individuals sort statements about themselves, other people in their lives (e.g., family members, close friends, coworkers) may also sort statements about them. Individual profiles may be averaged to create a composite profile of the individual, which may be more accurate than any one profile. Finally, this technique could be used to compare individuals' perceptions of themselves with others' perceptions of them. For example, this technique might allow researchers to measure disparities between how Asian American children view themselves and how their parents view them.

Another promising method is the *sociometric task*, which is often used by developmental psychologists to assess the status of children and adolescents within peer groups. Like Q-sort techniques, sociometric techniques allow one to obtain more comprehensive assessments that are based on participants' self-reports and the reports of others. This method also can provide information regarding the relative position of individual members in terms of their cultural orientations. One problem with existing instruments is that they do not indicate a clear reference group. As a result, when rating oneself, an individual may compare him- or herself with a recently immigrated Chinese American, whereas another may compare him- or herself with a fourth-generation American-born Chinese American. In sociometric tasks the reference group is clear, which ensures that participants are using the same criteria when making their ratings. For example, the effects of socializing for members of different cultural groups can be examined in reference to specific social environments. Two principal sociometric methods have been validated and widely used (Frederickson & Furnham, 1998; Maassen, Goossens, & Bokhorst, 1998). In one method, children are asked to provide a certain number of nominations of their peers with whom they would most (or least) like to undertake a particular activity. In the other method, children are asked to provide ratings or forced-choice evaluations of each of their peers. For our purposes, a group of individuals may be asked to nominate which of their peers are the "most Chinese" and which are the "most American" to obtain a rating of cultural orientation for each of the group members.

Behavioral and physiological measures of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation should also be used, particularly to capture the

emotional aspects of these dimensions. For example, using the Facial Action Coding System (Ekman, 1978), we coded the emotional facial behavior of American-born and overseas-born Hmong college students during the 10-s period after they were asked "What does it mean to be Hmong?" and "What does it mean to be American?" Although the two groups did not differ in their reported pride in being Hmong or American (as assessed by a self-report inventory), they did differ in their facial behavior. More American-born Hmong than overseas-born Hmong frowned in response to the question "What does it mean to be American?" (36% of American-born Hmong compared to 9% of overseas-born Hmong); $\chi^2(1, N = 42) = 4.59, p < .05$. This difference puts in doubt the validity of the self-report findings. For example, it is possible that more American-born Hmong than overseas-born Hmong felt concerned about being American, perhaps because they are more aware of their status as minorities. Thus, behavioral coding may capture the complexity of participants' feelings about their cultural identity that their responses to cultural orientation inventories cannot. Physiological measures (e.g., heart rate, skin conductance activity) may also be used to capture the emotional responses of participants when asked about their ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation (see Tsai & Levenson, 1997, for more information). Of course, in future studies researchers must first determine the conditions under which behavioral and physiological measures have greater predictive value than self-report methods.

Are There Other Indicators of Change in Cultural Orientation?

Most of the existing research assesses changes in cultural orientation in terms of participation in cultural activities, feelings about the culture, and other domains of life experience. However, cultural exposure also changes one's values, beliefs, and conceptions of the world. For example, Ying (1988, 1990) has examined the conceptions of depression held by unacculturated members of the Chinese American community in San Francisco's Chinatown. She found that, consistent with a lack of separation between mind and body in Chinese culture, this sample of Chinese Americans viewed the somatic, affective, and interpersonal aspects of depression as inseparable. This is in stark contrast to European Americans, who clearly differentiate among the somatic, affective, and interpersonal aspects of depression. Recently, Ying, Lee, Tsai, Yeh, and Huang (2000) examined the conceptions of depression held by a sample of bicultural Chinese American college students. They found that this sample of Chinese Americans held conceptions of depression that resembled those of European Americans, suggesting that with increased exposure to American culture Chinese Americans adopt European American conceptions of depression. In future work a variety of techniques (e.g., similarity and consensus tasks) should be used to measure how cultural orienta-

tion and acculturation affect the way individuals perceive and understand their worlds and what values and beliefs they hold.

Conceptual Questions

Armed with the answers to the methodological problems described earlier, researchers may be able to address central questions about ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation that have hitherto received limited attention. We discuss these questions next.

Are Researchers' Notions of "Ethnic Identity" Culturally Constructed?

Markus and Kitayama (1998) argued that cultural values, norms, and traditions influence how one views what it means to be a person. In Western cultures people are "rooted in traits and motives," (p. 65) whereas in Asian cultures people are situated in a web of social roles and interpersonal relationships. For example, Kanagawa, Cross, and Markus (2001) asked Japanese and American participants to respond to the question "Who am I?" 20 times. Americans described themselves in terms of pure psychological attributes (e.g., "I am outgoing") and attitudes (e.g., "I am not a racist") more than Japanese, whereas Japanese described themselves in terms of activities ("I have a part-time job") more than did Americans. It is possible that studies of ethnic identity are based on Western cultural assumptions about what it means to be a person that may not apply to members of other ethnic groups. For instance, in examining identity, American psychologists emphasize traits rather than social roles. However, it is possible that for Asian Americans social roles may be an important part of identity or self-perceptions.

To examine whether Asian Americans and European Americans differ in their social roles, Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, Idzelis, Miranda, and Hama (2001) compared 144 Chinese American (American-born and immigrant) and 170 European American descriptions of the roles that composed their lives. At the time of the study, the participants were all living in the San Francisco Bay area. Participants completed Cowan and Cowan's Pie (1975); in this task, participants were asked to list all of the roles that composed their lives. They were then asked to divide a 360-degree Pie, which represented the totality of their lives, into separate pieces that reflected the significance of each role in their lives. Participants completed two Pies: one that reflected their current lives and another that reflected how they would ideally like their lives to be. When we compared the roles that participants assumed in their lives, we found interesting differences between Chinese Americans and European Americans. Chi-square analyses revealed that a greater percentage of Chinese Americans than European Americans mentioned the daughter/son role as composing part of their identities (Chinese Americans: 89.6%, European Americans: 81.4%), $\chi^2(1, N = 316) = 4.15$, $p < .05$. Moreover, among participants who did mention the daughter/son role, Chinese Ameri-
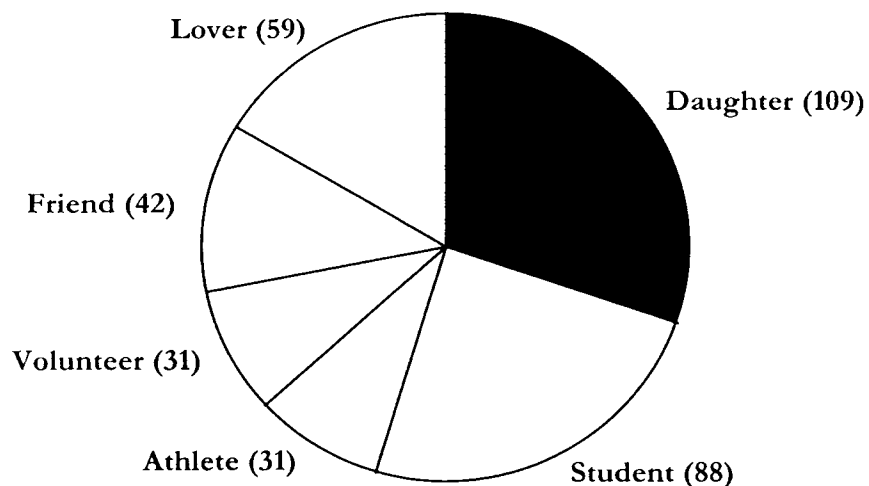
cans allotted a significantly greater portion of their Pie to it than did European Americans, F (1, 257) = 8.72, p = .003 (scores were transformed into square roots to meet parametric assumptions; European Americans: 6.34 [SD = 2.07], Chinese Americans: 7.20 [SD = 2.62]). To illustrate this difference, Pies of 1 participant from each group are shown in Figure 2.1.

Moreover, the more "Chinese" Chinese Americans reported being (based on their responses to the General Ethnicity Questionnaire–Chinese version, a measure of orientation to Chinese culture; Tsai et al., 2000), the more they defined themselves in terms of the daughter/son role (r = .24, p < .01). In addition, in their ideal Pies, compared to European Americans, a significantly greater percentage of Chinese Americans mentioned the daughter/son role, χ^2(1, N = 316) = 3.08, p < .05, one-tailed, and, among those who did, Chinese Americans reported that they would like their roles as daughters and sons to assume larger pieces of the Pie than did European Americans. (Scores were transformed into square roots to meet parametric assumptions; Chinese Americans: 7.79 [SD = 2.40], European Americans: 6.93 [SD = 2.18]; F[1, 253] = 9.00, p < .01.) These group differences are consistent with descriptions of Chinese culture as placing greater value than American culture on familialism and filial piety. Thus, thinking of identity as comprising roles rather than traits revealed interesting differences between Chinese and European Americans that may not have emerged had identity been defined in terms of traits only. Future research should begin to explore the other ways in which Western cultural assumptions may obscure an understanding of identity in Asian American groups.

What Does It Mean to Be a Member of a Particular Ethnic or Cultural Group?

In our questionnaires, we routinely ask our respondents to indicate their ethnicity or cultural heritage, or to rate how oriented they are to a particular culture, across different life domains (e.g., activities). Do we know, however, what our respondents mean when they indicate that they are "very Asian"? Does "being American" mean the same thing for members of different ethnic groups in the United States? Moreover, researchers often do not account for the fact that the meaning of ethnic identities may change over time. For instance, the term *Asian American* arose from an acknowledgement that individuals of various Asian cultures, although different along a number of dimensions, share a common status as a minority group in the United States. When the term emerged in the 1960s it held primarily political significance; since then, however, the term has gained cultural, social, and psychological significance. For example, Kibria (1997) found that since the creation of the term *Asian American*, second-generation Korean and Chinese Americans living in Los Angeles and Boston have begun to view other Asian Americans as viable marital partners with whom they share common cultural values as well as a common status.

Chinese American Female

Lover (59)

Daughter (109)

Friend (42)

Volunteer (31)

Athlete (31)

Student (88)

European American Female

Artist (25)

Daughter (33)

Lover (83)

Student (96)

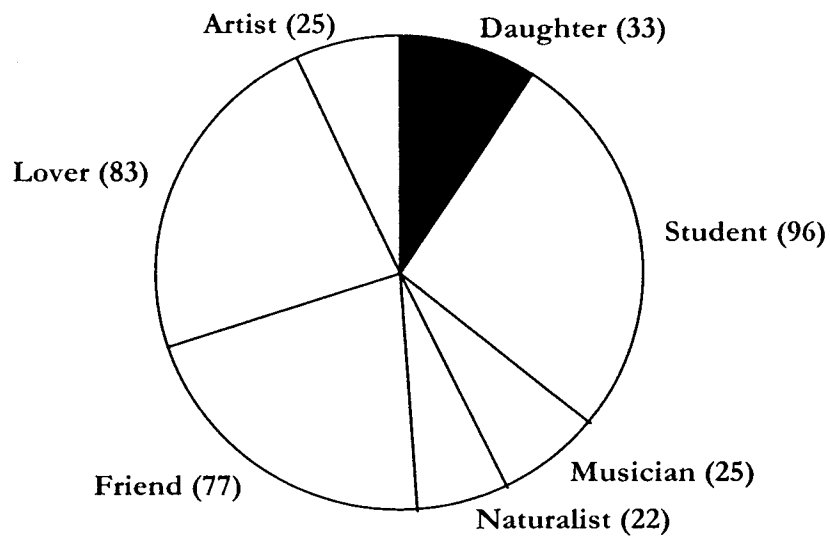Friend (77)

Musician (25)

Naturalist (22)

Figure 2.1. Pies of a Chinese American female participant (top) and European American female participant (bottom). Numbers in parentheses are degrees.

Remarkably few studies have asked these questions, despite the fact that the answers to them are extremely important to an understanding of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation. For example, if members of various American ethnic groups view differently what "being American" means, one cannot compare their responses to an American identity questionnaire unless one lets the participants know ahead of time what one means by "being American."

In several studies, we and our colleagues have attempted to understand the meaning of ethnic identity for Asian American and European American groups. For example, Tsai, Mortensen, Wong, and Hess (in press) compared American-born and immigrant Hmong and European American notions of what it means to "be American." Participants (all of whom lived in the Midwest) were asked to describe what "being American" meant to them. Their responses were coded with a system devised by Tsai (2001). A sample of codes and representative examples are provided in Table 2.1. Whereas Hmong viewed "being American" more in terms of customs and traditional behaviors, European Americans viewed "being American" more in terms of ethnic diversity and patriotism (see Figure 2.2).

These findings also held for Chinese Americans and European Americans living in California. We speculate that because Asian Americans are a minority in the United States and must adjust to mainstream American culture, the term American conjures up notions of mainstream customs and traditions. European Americans, however, are members of the majority culture; as a result, the meaning of being American is abstract and based on themes that they learned in school. It is interesting that both Asian Americans and European Americans described "being American" in terms of political ideology, which may speak to the pervasiveness of notions that the United States is a symbol of democracy and freedom. Thus, although the meaning of "being American" for Asian Americans and European Americans is similar in one way, it is different in others. It is likely that the meanings of "being American" or "being Chinese" also show significant within-group variability due to factors such as specific cultural background, reasons for migration, and time spent in the United States.

In the pie study described earlier, Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, et al. (2001) found further suggestion that the meaning of "being American" might differ across ethnic groups. Whereas for European Americans an American orientation was significantly and positively correlated with the brother/sister role ($r = .26$, $p < .05$), it was negatively, although not significantly, correlated with the brother/sister role for Chinese Americans ($r = -.12$, $p > .20$). This is contrary to notions that American culture places more emphasis on independence and less emphasis on social relationships than does Chinese culture. It is possible that Chinese Americans, in trying to emulate American values of independence and individualism, actually become more stereotypically "American" than their European American counterparts. In

TABLE 2.1

Sample Codes and Representative Examples

Code	Representative example
Customs/traditional behavior	Having the American lifestyle
Ethnic diversity	The whole melting pot idea
Patriotism	To be proud is the essence of America
Political ideology	We have equal rights

any case, these findings, like those of Tsai et al. (2000), suggest that one should not assume that cultural terms, or the cultures themselves, have the same meaning across ethnic groups. In future studies researchers should invest substantial time understanding what ethnic identity, cultural orientation, acculturation, and other related constructs mean to research participants and ensuring that participants know what one means when one uses such terms.

Do These Processes Vary By Context, Domain, and Group?

Context. We have discussed how ethnic identity may be influenced by historical changes; however, it may also be influenced by more immediate forces, such as changes in situational or environmental social context. Social contexts vary in terms of how salient cultural values and norms are. For instance, the degree to which one feels oriented to Chinese culture may depend on whether one is surrounded by European Americans or by Chinese immigrants, whether one is speaking Chinese or English (Yang & Bond, 1980), or whether one is in the presence of an authority figure or a peer. In future studies researchers also need to examine the role of minority status in the development of ethnic identity by comparing Asian Americans residing in primarily Asian communities (e.g., Hawaii) versus in primarily European American communities. In addition, individuals may be more concerned about being evaluated and providing socially desirable responses in some contexts than in others. Unfortunately, few studies have explicitly examined the effect of social context on self-perceptions of ethnic identity, cultural orientation, and acculturation in Asian Americans.

Although the social context can be manipulated in ways that are obvious to participants (e.g., having another person present), it may be also informative to understand how changes in the social context may unconsciously or nonconsciously influence ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation. One way to assess the nonconscious influence of the social context is to use priming techniques. In previous literature, priming techniques have been used to elicit culturally consistent or stereotypically consistent behavior. For instance, Shih, Pittinsky, and Ambady (1999) found that when they primed Asian American identity by asking participants living on the East coast a variety of questions about their ethnicity, language proficiency, and
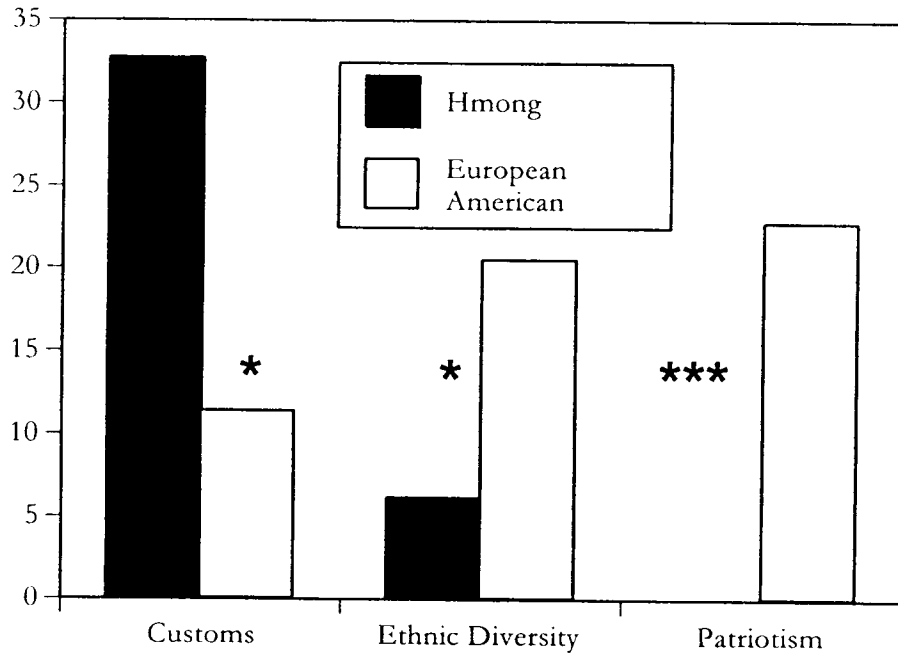
Figure 2.2. Percentages of respondents who mentioned customs/traditional behavior, ethnic diversity, patriotism, and political ideology when asked "What does being American mean to you?" $*p < .05$. $**p < .001$. (From Tsai et al., in press)

family history, Asian American females performed significantly better on math tests (consistent with the stereotype of Asian Americans as having superior quantitative skills) than when their identities were not primed. Similar techniques may also be used to illustrate how perceptions of ethnic identity, cultural orientation, and acculturation may be influenced by the social context. For example, Hong, Chiu, and Kung (1997) found that exposure to Chinese cultural icons through priming increased endorsement of Chinese values in Hong Kong students.

Berry (1995) emphasized that the process of acculturation and cultural adjustment depends on the larger socioenvironmental context. Specifically, he predicted that immigrants will have an easier time adjusting to their host culture if that culture is tolerant of cultural diversity and has resources to accommodate the immigrant groups. Similarly, the meaning of ethnic identity may be shaped by the larger socioenvironmental context. For instance, in our study of Asian American–European American differences in the meaning of American identity (Tsai, Mortensen, Wong, & Hess, in press), we included two samples: one from Minneapolis, where the vast majority of the population (88.2%) is European American, and another from the San Francisco Bay area, where 40.3% of the population is European American (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). We found greater differences in the meaning of "being American" between Asian Americans and European Americans in

the Minneapolis sample than between Asian Americans and European Americans in the San Francisco Bay area sample, perhaps because there is a more homogeneous mainstream American culture in the Midwest than on the West coast. Future research should explicitly examine how the socioenvironmental context influences ethnic identity, cultural orientation, and acculturation processes.

Finally, North American researchers often overlook the fact that the United States and Canada are not the only countries that house many ethnic groups. Europe, Russia, and China, for example, all include numerous Asian ethnic groups. Although studying ethnic identity in these countries poses additional difficulties, such studies may offer valuable insights about how individuals of Asian descent in North America are similar to or different from those in other parts of the world. For example, Lee, Falbo, Doh, and Park (2001) found that Koreans living in China are less likely to be bicultural (i.e., equally oriented to Korean culture and their host culture) than are Koreans living in the United States. The authors attributed this difference to the greater openness of American culture (relative to Chinese culture) to members of different cultural backgrounds.

Domain. Ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation have been described in the literature as comprising multiple domains. Although some of these domains are conceptually derived, there have been recent attempts to characterize the domains empirically through factor analysis (Roberts et al., 1999; Tsai et al., 2000). The domains that have been frequently described in the literature include cultural knowledge (Boski, 1992), positive and negative feelings toward one's ethnic group (Der-Karabetian & Ruiz, 1997), social affiliation preferences (Constantinou & Harvey, 1985), participation in culturally relevant activities (Phinney, 1990), linguistic preferences (Olmedo & Padilla, 1978; Ying, 1995), and political and ideological views and activity (Constantinou & Harvey, 1985).

Some domains may be more susceptible to acculturative processes than others (Ying, 1995). This domain-specific acculturation pattern has been termed *selective acculturation.* As immigrants or minority individuals adjust to life in their host culture, they may become highly oriented to the host culture in some of these domains but only weakly or not at all oriented in others. For example, an immigrant may learn to speak and understand English in order to succeed in his job, but outside of work he may continue to socialize exclusively with friends from his native culture. In fact, Ying (1995) found that immigrant Chinese American adults living in San Francisco were more likely to adopt American activities and speak English than to become close friends with Americans. Thus, rather than view acculturation as a general process, researchers should examine the domain-specific nature of acculturation. In addition, they should study other domains of life experience (e.g., political ideology, religious practices, values) in which individuals may actually become more rather than less oriented to their native cultures as they

spend more time in their host cultures. Measures of such domains are becoming increasingly available (Wolfe, Yang, Wong, & Atkinson, 2001).

Groups. To advance an understanding of culture, researchers must broaden their samples. Most studies of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation, including our own, have limited themselves to ethnic minority student populations. This may not only reflect the greater convenience of studying students compared to nonstudents, but it may demonstrate a bias toward Western models of development; that is, most models of identity development are at least partly based on Erik Erikson's theories, which portray identity formation as the major task of adolescence and young adulthood (Erikson, 1963). Remarkably little is known about ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation at other stages of the human life span, despite some evidence that ethnic identity has renewed meaning in old age (Simic, 1987). Thus, longitudinal studies are sorely needed to reveal how ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation change over time. In addition, although researchers often recognize the influence of ethnic identity on minority group members, they fail to acknowledge its influence on the majority group. Astonishingly little research has explored White or European American identity. This research is critical if researchers are to distinguish the effects of culture from those of minority–majority status and examine the generalizability of acculturation processes across different cultural contexts.

Moreover, the participants in our research studies are a select sample. Given that they are students and that research participation is voluntary, it is likely that individuals who participate in our studies are the ones most familiar with European American culture. Because individuals who are marginalized or separated from mainstream European American society are reluctant to participate in studies conducted by mainstream American institutions, we do not know how applicable our models of ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation are to them. Thus, to broaden the scope of our knowledge, researchers should actively try to include less acculturated individuals in their studies.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Much has been learned about ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation in the past few decades. Previous research has begun to answer basic questions about these constructs. Much more work is needed, however, if researchers are to learn more about a central aspect of identity, understand the psychology of multicultural groups, examine the tremendous variation that exists within groups, and reveal the mechanisms of cultural influence. In this chapter we suggested that researchers should

- Use greater care when using the terms *ethnic identity*, *acculturation*, and *cultural orientation* and when choosing specific instruments.
- Expand measures of these constructs to include behavioral and physiological methods and measures that do not rely solely on participants' reports (e.g., Q-sorts, sociometric tasks).
- Examine other indicators of change in cultural orientation, such as conceptions and beliefs.
- Consider cultural variation in notions of ethnic identity and the meaning of group membership.
- Consider how ethnic identity, acculturation, and cultural orientation processes vary by context (the immediate as well as the larger sociocultural context), domain (political ideology, values, and practices), and group (age, culture, and minority status).

It is our hope that in the years to come these methodological and conceptual directions will allow researchers to answer more difficult questions about how people relate to their cultural groups and cultural contexts.

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