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# The Role of Enculturation and Acculturation in Asian and European American College Students' Daily Social Stress and Support

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The current study examined the effects of enculturation and mainstream American acculturation on Asian Americans' and European Americans' daily experiences of social stress and support. We hypothesized that Asian Americans with high levels of enculturation would experience less social stress and more social support. Participants included 56 Asian Americans and 38 European Americans (62 women, 32 men; average age = 20.06 years) who provided information about enculturation and acculturation at baseline. Using a daily diary methodology, participants were asked to report on daily experiences of social stress and support each night for 14 days. Hierarchical linear models revealed that, across all participants, enculturation predicted less social stress, and mainstream acculturation predicted more daily social support. Ethnicity also interacted with enculturation and acculturation to predict social stress and support, such that Asian Americans with a higher level of enculturation experienced less social stress, whereas the relationship between mainstream acculturation and increased positive social support was stronger for European Americans than Asian Americans. A deeper identification with one's culture-of-origin may contribute to fewer stressful social experiences for Asian Americans, whereas a connection to mainstream culture may portend increased social support for European Americans. Findings highlight the necessity of examining the role of enculturation and acculturation in studies of ethnic/cultural differences in social experiences.

## *What is the public significance of this article?*

This study uses a daily diary method to show that a deeper identification with one's culture-of-origin may contribute to fewer stressful social experiences for Asian Americans, whereas a connection to mainstream culture may result in increased social support for European Americans. This study highlights the importance of examining how varying levels of enculturation and acculturation may influence Asian Americans' and European Americans' social experiences.

*Keywords:* Asian American, acculturation, social stress, social support, daily diary

*Supplemental materials:* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/aap0000114.supp>

Asian American individuals often struggle with elevated rates of psychological distress compared with European Americans (Greenberger & Chen, 1996; Okazaki, 1997; Siegel, Aneshensel, Taub, Cantwell, & Driscoll, 1998). This increased stress likely stems, in part, from experiences unique to Asian Americans and other minority groups in the United States, such as acculturative stress, discrimination, and the "perpetual foreigner" stereotype (i.e., the belief that Asian Americans are inherently foreign and unable to assimilate irrespective of their citizenship status or

duration of residence in the United States; Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Huynh & Fuligni, 2010; Hwang & Ting, 2008). However, in general, research has not focused on the specific psychosocial experiences of Asian Americans. This is perhaps in part because of the model minority myth, a false stereotype that suggests that Asian Americans have achieved success in contemporary society and, thus, do not have different health needs than the majority culture (Lee et al., 2009; Wu, 2002; Yoo, Burrola, & Steger, 2010). It is therefore important to investigate the factors that might serve as risk or resilience factors within this often-overlooked population.

One issue of particular relevance for Asian Americans' emotional well-being involves social support. Broadly speaking, experiencing positive social connections has been linked to a host of stress-buffering benefits, including increased psychological well-being (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001; Taylor, 2007), reduced risk for depression and anxiety (Cohen, 2004), and enhanced immune, neuroendocrine, and cardiovascular function (Seeman, 1996). Moreover, receiving social support can mitigate the effects of

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chronic environmental stressors often experienced by ethnic minority groups in the United States, such as perceived discrimination (Simons et al., 2006; Wei, Heppner, Ku, & Liao, 2010; Wei, Yeh, Chao, Carrera, & Su, 2013) and acculturative stress (Singh, McBride, & Kak, 2015).

These issues have rarely been examined specifically in Asian American populations. Instead, conclusions about social support are often generalized from findings in European American samples (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Lin, Woelfel, & Light, 1985). Nevertheless, a few recent studies have shown that social support can play a similar protective role for Asian Americans. For example, supportive social networks have been shown to buffer the effects of perceived discrimination on psychological distress (Kim, 2014) and physical health (Gee et al., 2006) in Asian American samples. Given the benefits of social support for Asian Americans, an understudied and often-marginalized group within the United States, it is important to investigate how cultural factors may influence their social experiences when compared with European Americans.

Conceptually, these findings pertaining to the positive effects of supportive social networks may seem consistent with the Asian cultural value of collectivism. Members of individualistic societies (which include the United States and most Western societies) view the self as independent, with established, unique qualities; in contrast, members of collectivist societies view the self as interdependent, with malleable traits that are shaped by the group's characteristics (Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, 2002). Whereas individualism socializes people to assert their desires and feelings, collectivism socializes people to prioritize group interests over their own desires and feelings (Hui & Triandis, 1986). In accordance with theories of collectivist values, Asian Americans from collectivist cultures tend to rely more heavily on social support networks for help (Yeh, Arora, & Wu, 2006), and collectivist norms encourage strong in-group ties, greater use of social support, and enhanced quality of social support across racial/ethnic and cultural groups (Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). Taken together, these findings suggest that social connection and harmony may be enhanced within Asian American populations, creating a buffer against negative mental and physical health outcomes.

Despite these conceptual and empirical links between collectivism and stronger networks of support, collectivist values have also been shown to contribute to unique social difficulties within Asian American groups. In fact, several studies have documented *greater* social difficulties in Asian American populations, relative to European American samples. For example, explicit requests for social support among Asian and Asian American individuals can be viewed as selfish or overly forthcoming and, therefore, can damage one's reputation (Kim et al., 2008). Moreover, both first-generation and second-generation Asian Americans consistently report a desire to avoid criticism, forgo worrying and burdening others, and evade the possibility of losing face (Chang, 2015), which can lead to underutilization of social support and greater reliance on the self, relative to European American individuals (Chang, 2015; Wang, Shih, Hu, Louie, & Lau, 2010). Similarly, in one study of daily social support experiences, Asian Americans sought social support less often than European Americans, and this difference in requests for support was partially mediated by the

cultural value of maintaining group harmony through emotional restraint (Wang, Schwartz, & Zamboanga, 2010).

Thus, whereas the overarching cultural value of collectivism may promote the maintenance of strong in-group ties, that same value may detract from individuals' willingness to actively seek social support, lest they disrupt the positive dynamic of their group. This particular notion of collectivism has been termed *harmony collectivism*, in which Asian individuals fear mismanaging existing relationships, are more negatively affected by interpersonal conflicts, and expend more energy preventing potential interpersonal conflicts than European Americans (Campos & Kim, 2017; Hashimoto, Mojaverian, & Kim, 2012). To adhere to this value of harmony collectivism, Asian Americans may show support for one another by giving practical advice, regulating emotional expressions, and fulfilling familial duties over personal desires, instead of soliciting or showing more overt social support (Chen, Kim, Mojaverian, & Morling, 2012; Ho, 1998).

Nevertheless, little research has examined specific factors that make Asian Americans more or less likely to experience social stress or social support, especially outside of their immediate family context. In addition to this general lack of cross-cultural research of the unique social experiences of Asian Americans, several additional issues make the current literature on social stress and support hard to interpret. First, composite measures of social stress and social support developed with White American samples will not necessarily generalize to other cultures, including Asian American samples. Recent evidence suggests that multifaceted methods of assessment might be necessary to capture the various aspects of Asian Americans' social experiences. For example, measures that assess social support, but do not ask whether the social support was solicited or unsolicited, will likely confound two conflicting aspects of social interactions for Asian Americans (Mojaverian & Kim, 2013).

Another factor that tends to be overlooked in research on the social experiences of Asian Americans involves variability in individuals' levels of acculturation. Acculturation has been defined as the process of acquiring the cultural characteristics of a certain country (Berry, 1980; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Past research has often theorized acculturation as a unidimensional process, such as by using nativity, language use, and years spent in the United States as a proxy for individuals' acclimation to the culture of the United States (Alegria et al., 2007; Allen et al., 2008; Corral & Landrine, 2008). However, in recent years, empirical evidence has predominately favored theorizing acculturation as a bidimensional process (Phinney, 2003; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Bidimensional models of acculturation posit that two acculturation processes, mainstream acculturation (assimilation to U.S. culture) and enculturation (orientation to Asian culture), operate independently and simultaneously in Asian American individuals (Abe-Kim, Okazaki, & Goto, 2001; Kim & Omizo, 2006; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). Asian Americans living within the United States show wide variability in their endorsement of levels of enculturation and mainstream acculturation (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). Indeed, some Asian American individuals closely identify with collectivist values from their culture-of-origin, others identify more strongly with individualistic attitudes of mainstream Western cultures, and some identify with both.

Whereas few studies have investigated the influence of acculturation in regard to Asian Americans' social experiences, a growing literature has investigated its influence on the mental and physical health of Asian Americans and other minority groups within the United States. Studies that have conceptualized acculturation as a unidimensional construct have found that greater orientation to mainstream American culture has been linked to increased maladaptive health behaviors for Latinx immigrants, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the immigrant paradox (Alegría et al., 2008). For example, Latinx individuals with higher levels of acculturation report increased rates of smoking and alcohol use, as well as an increased likelihood of being diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder (Abraído-Lanza, Chao, & Florez, 2005; Alegría et al., 2008; Lara, Gamboa, Kahramanian, Morales, & Hayes Bautista, 2005). However, research that theorizes acculturation as a bidimensional process has suggested that both retaining one's culture-of-origin and increasingly identifying with mainstream Western culture predict favorable outcomes, such as a study that found that Cuban American college students who endorsed both Hispanic and American cultures reported lower depression and anxiety and higher self-esteem (Wang, Schwartz, et al., 2010). Among Asian Americans, an increased identification with U.S. cultural practices has been associated with greater sexual risk-taking and hazardous alcohol use for East Asians, whereas an increased identification with their culture-of-origin has been linked with reduced hazardous alcohol use for South Asians (Schwartz et al., 2011). Although this negative association between alcohol use and culture-of-origin identification for South Asians is consistent with past research that has shown the protective effects of ethnic identity and alcohol problems for Asian Americans (Chae et al., 2008), the positive association between East Asians' identification with U.S. culture and sexual risk-taking and alcohol use could stem from a pressure to feel more Americanized, especially given that most of the participants in this study lived in university settings. Thus, more research using bidimensional models of acculturation could elucidate how acculturation influences other aspects of Asian Americans' experiences. Still, these preliminary findings relating to public health highlight how acculturation serves as a promising factor to examine when considering Asian Americans' distinct lived experiences within the United States.

Given the extent to which acculturation has been shown to influence health outcomes, differences in acculturation could also greatly influence one's reports of social interactions and conflict. For example, one study accounted for the role of acculturation while exploring the social experiences of Vietnamese young adults (Vu & Rook, 2013). Findings suggested that Vietnamese young adults who were more acculturated to the mainstream culture reported increased rates of arguing and receiving criticism from their parents but did not actually receive less social support from parents or friends overall (Vu & Rook, 2013). Past research has suggested that Asian American children's increased identification with the dominant (i.e., mainstream U.S.) culture may cause increased conflict within Asian American families, as their adherence to mainstream values can cause arguments and decreased closeness with their parents who still hold onto more traditional ideas and beliefs (Choi, He, & Harachi, 2008; Rick & Forward, 1992). On the other hand, increased identification with one's native culture has been linked with increased psychological well-being

(Iwamoto & Liu, 2010; Lantrip et al., 2015; Miller, Yang, Hui, Choi, & Lim, 2011). However, none of these studies examined enculturation specifically in relation to Asian Americans' reporting of social stress and social support, and mainstream acculturation is also rarely considered in studies of ethnic minority social experiences. Instead, ethnic differences pertaining to social experiences are often tested using a dichotomous variable (e.g., Asian American vs. European American). Such an approach ignores crucial cultural factors, such as acculturation, which can provide a more holistic perspective on the driving forces behind differences within and across ethnic minority groups.

### Current Study

To address these gaps in the literature, the current study used a daily diary methodology to examine Asian Americans' and European Americans' experiences of social support and social stress as a function of their levels of acculturation. To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine the influence of both enculturation and acculturation on Asian Americans' and European Americans' reporting of social experiences using a validated measure of acculturation, thus building upon past research that has examined acculturation or social relationships, but not both. These constructs were examined in a sample of young adults, given that close relationships with friends and romantic partners become especially important for healthy development during the transition to adulthood. Moreover, the transition to adulthood is a key development period for navigating issues of cultural identity and acculturation, particularly for students who leave home to attend university (Murray et al., 2014; Tsai & Fuligni, 2012). A daily diary methodology allowed us to avoid the pitfalls of past research on the social experiences of Asian Americans, which have largely relied on cross-sectional, self-report measures validated in European American samples. These assessments often ask participants to endorse generalized statements about their social experiences across multiple relationships and a large time span (e.g., past 2 weeks or past 6 months), including generalizations that might not be valid for Asian Americans. Importantly, enculturation and mainstream acculturation were also assessed for all participants, allowing us to test whether acculturation moderates the effects of ethnicity (Asian American vs. European American) on experiences of social stress and support.

Moreover, we included a European American sample to serve as a comparison group for Asian Americans. This allowed us to ask questions about the relative impact of ethnicity, as well as enculturation and mainstream acculturation, on the social experiences of Asian Americans versus European Americans (who comprise the typical study sample in research in this area). Based on previous research, we hypothesized that Asian Americans would report more positive social experiences and lower social stress, but only if they had high levels of enculturation, which would indicate a stronger identification with their ethnic identity.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 94 college students (56 Asian American and 38 European American) enrolled in psychology courses and

offered course credit for completion of the study. The average age of the participants was 20.06 years ( $SD = 1.95$ ), and the sample was 66% female (34% male). Asian American participants varied greatly in their ethnic self-identification, with Chinese ( $n = 12$ ) and Asian Pacific/Pacific Islander ( $n = 10$ ) being the two most commonly reported ethnic identities (see Table S1 in the online supplemental material for a full list). A little more than half of the Asian American participants (57%) reported that they had lived in the United States for their entire lives, compared with 79% of European Americans. Participants were largely representative of upper-middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds.

## Procedure

Participants attended a baseline visit, during which they completed self-report questionnaires and received instructions about how to complete daily diary assessments. Participants received information regarding the rationale of using online daily diary questionnaires, and the importance of completing assessments on-time each day was emphasized. The first daily diary assessment was completed on the night of the baseline visit, and the remaining daily diary assessments on the following 13 days. Each evening, an automated e-mail message reminded participants to complete the daily survey at bedtime (any time between 8 pm and 3 am) and provided a link to the survey. To encourage compliance, participants who completed all daily surveys on time were entered into a drawing for gift certificates. Participants all gave informed consent, and the institutional review board at the University of California, Los Angeles approved the research protocol.

## Measures

**Acculturation and enculturation.** At baseline, participants were asked to identify a primary culture-of-origin with an open-ended prompt. Then, participants' levels of acculturation to both their culture-of-origin and the mainstream American culture were assessed with the Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA; Ryder et al., 2000). The VIA is a 20-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess the extent to which participants engage in and identify with their culture-of-origin and mainstream cultures. The Heritage Acculturation subscale, which we used as a proxy for the theoretical construct of enculturation, contains items such as, "It is important for me to maintain or develop the practices of my heritage culture," and the Mainstream Acculturation subscale contains items such as, "It is important for me to maintain or develop American cultural practices." Responses are answered on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Lower scores on the VIA Heritage subscale and higher scores on the VIA Mainstream subscale tend to be positively correlated with various measures of acculturation for immigrants from East Asian countries, including time living or attending school in a Western culture, generational status, and identification with Western values. In the present study, the VIA demonstrated strong internal consistency for both the Heritage Acculturation ( $\alpha = .87$ ) and Mainstream Acculturation ( $\alpha = .89$ ) subscales.

**Daily social stressors.** Experiences of social stress were assessed daily using a checklist of 14 social stressors drawn from instruments designed to elicit self-reports of recent social stress, including the Social Conflict subscale of the Diary of Ambulatory Behavioral States (Kamarck et al., 1998), the Inventory of Small Life Events (Zautra, Guarnaccia, & Dohrenwend, 1986), the Objective and Subjective Event Checklist (Seidlitz & Diener, 1993), and the Brief Adolescent Life Event Scale (Shahar, Henrich, Reiner, & Little, 2003). Items were chosen to represent a range of negative social experiences that might occur on a daily basis, such as rejection, conflict, and criticism. Example items include "had an argument/problem with significant other" and "was rejected or excluded from a group event (party, group project, etc.)." Participants endorsed each item as either present or absent over the past day, and if an item was marked as present, they indicated the number of times that the event occurred throughout the day. A count of all events endorsed for a given day was then used as a measure of daily social stress.

**Daily social support.** Social support was assessed each day using five items designed to measure the quality of participants' relationships. Participants responded to each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very little or not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Example items include "In the past day, how much have you felt that others responded to my needs/wishes?" and "In the past day, how much have you had enjoyable/fun times socializing with others?" A social support score was calculated for each day by summing the scores for these five items. Absolute values of correlations among social support items ranged from .06 to .91, with a median correlation value of .45 (all  $p < .05$ ).

## Analytic Procedures

Hypotheses were examined using hierarchical linear modeling, which accounts for the nesting of time points within individuals by estimating both within-person (Level-1) and between-person (Level-2) error variances (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002; Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2004). All models included gender and age as covariates. The main effects of acculturation and ethnicity on daily social experiences were first explored using the following hierarchical linear modeling function:

$$\text{Level 1 : } \text{SOC}_{it} = b_{0i} + r_{it}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Level 2 : } b_{0i} = & \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{GENDER}_i) + \gamma_{02}(\text{AGE}_i) \\ & + \gamma_{03}(\text{ENCULTURATION}_i) \\ & + \gamma_{04}(\text{M\_ACCULTURATION}_i) \\ & + \gamma_{05}(\text{ETHNICITY}_i) + u_{0i} \end{aligned}$$

In this example,  $\text{ENCULTURATION}_i$  represents the individual's enculturation score,  $\text{M\_ACCULTURATION}_i$  represents the individual's mainstream acculturation score, and  $\text{ETHNICITY}_i$  represents the individual's ethnicity (0 = European American, 1 = Asian American). Both acculturation scales were grand-mean-centered for ease of interpretation.  $\text{SOC}_{it}$  represents daily levels of social stress, and separate models were run with daily social stress and daily social support as outcomes. For tests of the interactions between ethnicity and acculturation domains, interaction terms were added as predictors on Level 2 (see example function below).

Table 1  
Correlation Matrix of Acculturation and Social Experience Variables

Study variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	1	2	3	4
1. Enculturation	6.49	1.58	2–9				
2. Mainstream acculturation	6.79	1.43	2.60–9	.16			
3. Average daily social stress	1.55	2.71	0–23	-.19	.08		
4. Average daily social support	18.57	2.86	9.14–24.21	.24*	.34**	-.27**	

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Separate models were run for interactions with enculturation and mainstream acculturation.

$$\text{Level 1 : } SOC_{it} = b_{0i} + r_{it}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Level 2 : } b_{0i} = & \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{GENDER}_i) + \gamma_{02}(\text{AGE}_i) \\ & + \gamma_{03}(\text{ENCULTURATION}_i) + \gamma_{04}(\text{ETHNICITY}_i) \\ & + \gamma_{05}(\text{ENCULTURATION} \times \text{ETHNICITY}_i) + u_{0i} \end{aligned}$$

### Results

Descriptive statistics for all main study variables, as well as Pearson and point-biserial correlations among these variables, are presented in Table 1. The most common culture-of-origins endorsed for Asian American participants were Chinese (21%) and Asian Pacific/Pacific Islander (18%) and for European American participants were Irish (11%) and Armenian (5%; see Table S1 in the online supplemental materials for additional culture-of-origin information). Participants' levels of enculturation,  $t(91) = 0.51$ ,  $p = .61$ , and mainstream acculturation,  $t(91) = -1.04$ ,  $p = .30$ , did not differ by gender. Interestingly, European American and Asian American participants did not report significantly different levels of enculturation,  $t(91) = -0.42$ ,  $p = .67$ . However, European Americans had a significantly greater mainstream acculturation score ( $M = 7.32$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) than Asian Americans ( $M = 6.43$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ),  $t(91) = -3.06$ ,  $p < .01$ . On average, participants completed 12.45 ( $SD = 2.35$ ) out of 14 daily diaries of submitted surveys, a rate comparable with or better than other daily diary studies conducted within college samples (Covault et al., 2007; Sahl, Cohen, & Dasch, 2009).

When ethnicity, enculturation, and mainstream acculturation were examined as predictors of daily social outcomes, covarying for gender and age, enculturation predicted less social stress ( $b = -.37$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and it did not predict more daily social support ( $b = .31$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p = .08$ ; see Table 2 for all estimates of this multilevel model). In contrast, mainstream accul-

turation predicted significantly more daily social support ( $b = .63$ ,  $SE = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) but did not predict daily social stress ( $b = .26$ ,  $SE = .22$ ,  $p = .24$ ). Ethnicity did not predict daily social support ( $b = -.21$ ,  $SE = .58$ ,  $p = .72$ ) or daily social stress ( $b = .34$ ,  $SE = .59$ ,  $p = .56$ ).

We then examined whether ethnicity interacted with the relationship between enculturation and daily social experiences (see Table 3 for all estimates of this multilevel model). Ethnicity interacted with the relationship between enculturation and social stress ( $b = -.82$ ,  $SE = .36$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but not the relationship between enculturation and general social support ( $b = .35$ ,  $SE = .37$ ,  $p = .35$ ). To probe the nature of the statistically significant interaction effect, we calculated simple slopes. As shown in Figure 1A, simple slope analyses revealed that there was a statistically significant negative relationship between enculturation and daily social stress for Asian Americans ( $b = -.65$ ,  $SE = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) but not European Americans ( $b = .17$ ,  $SE = .28$ ,  $p = .55$ ).

Finally, analyses of the interaction between ethnicity and mainstream acculturation in predicting social experiences showed that ethnicity did not interact with the relationship between mainstream acculturation and social stress ( $b = .26$ ,  $SE = .46$ ,  $p = .57$ ), but ethnicity marginally interacted with the relationship between mainstream acculturation and daily social support ( $b = -.75$ ,  $SE = .44$ ,  $p = .09$ ; see Table 3 for all estimates of this multilevel model). We decided to run simple slope analyses as an exploratory analysis of this interaction because it trended toward significance, and it is one of the first studies to use a daily diary method to examine social relationships in an Asian American population. Simple slope analyses revealed that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between mainstream acculturation and general social support for European Americans ( $b = 1.19$ ,  $SE = .36$ ,  $p = .001$ ). In contrast, mainstream acculturation was only a marginally significant predictor of daily social support for Asian Americans ( $b = 0.44$ ,  $SE = .26$ ,  $p = .094$ ; see Figure 1B).

Table 2  
Effects of Enculturation and Mainstream Acculturation on Social Stress and Social Support

Predictors	Social stress			Social support		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept, $\beta_{00}$	2.30	3.07	.45	19.74	2.99	<.001
Gender, $\beta_{01}$	-0.40	0.59	.50	-0.78	0.57	.18
Age, $\beta_{02}$	-0.04	0.15	.81	-0.03	0.14	.86
Enculturation, $\beta_{03}$	-0.37	0.18	<.05	0.31	0.18	.08
Mainstream acculturation, $\beta_{04}$	0.26	0.22	.24	0.63	0.22	<.01
Ethnicity, $\beta_{05}$	0.34	0.59	.56	-0.21	0.58	.72

Table 3  
*Effects of Acculturation Variables and Ethnicity on Social Stress and Social Support*

Predictors	Social stress			Social support		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1: Enculturation and ethnicity						
Intercept, $\beta_{00}$	2.30	2.94	.43	22.35	3.04	<.001
Gender, $\beta_{01}$	-0.57	0.58	.32	-0.86	0.60	.15
Age, $\beta_{02}$	-0.03	0.14	.85	-0.14	0.15	.35
Enculturation, $\beta_{03}$	0.17	0.28	.55	0.19	0.29	.52
Ethnicity, $\beta_{04}$	0.18	0.55	.74	-0.72	0.58	.21
Enculturation $\times$ Ethnicity, $\beta_{05}$	-0.82	0.36	<.05	0.35	0.37	.35
Model 2: Mainstream acculturation and ethnicity						
Intercept, $\beta_{00}$	2.02	3.19	.53	19.15	3.06	<.001
Gender, $\beta_{01}$	-0.42	0.60	.48	-0.84	0.58	.15
Age, $\beta_{02}$	-0.02	0.15	.92	-0.01	0.15	.95
Mainstream acculturation, $\beta_{03}$	0.01	0.38	.98	1.19	0.36	<.01
Ethnicity, $\beta_{04}$	0.29	0.62	.64	-0.01	0.59	.98
Mainstream Acculturation $\times$ Ethnicity, $\beta_{05}$	0.26	0.46	.57	-0.75	0.44	.09

## Discussion

Past studies have shown that although Asian American populations can benefit from social support networks, they often experience challenges and even reduced well-being from trying to solicit social support due to the cultural value of harmonistic collectivism. Whereas past studies have examined differences in social support purely based on ethnic group membership (Kim, Sherman, Ko, & Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al., 2004), this study is the first to provide a naturalistic examination of Asian Americans' and European Americans' daily social experiences while accounting specifically for acculturation. Specifically, we sought to examine whether varying levels of acculturation might explain why Asian Americans appear to experience elevated rates of social support and fewer social stressors compared with European Americans in some studies but more difficult and stressful social relationships in others. Our results show that ethnic group membership alone did not lead to differences in experiences of daily social stress and social support. However, increased enculturation predicted less social stress, and greater mainstream acculturation predicted increased social support. Furthermore, acculturation moderated the relationship between ethnicity and social stress and support, such that enculturation was particularly protective against social stress for Asian Americans, whereas mainstream acculturation was more predictive of social support for European Americans.

The finding that acculturation to one's culture-of-origin is particularly protective for Asian Americans is consistent with past research on the benefits of identifying with one's culture-of-origin. For example, engagement with the language, media, and practices of one's culture-of-origin has been found to protect against health risk behaviors by reducing prodeviant attitudes (Mills & Caetano, 2010; Saint-Jean, 2010). In contrast, disengaging from one's culture-of-origin has been linked with an increase in maladaptive health behaviors (Abraído-Lanza, Armbrister, Flórez, & Aguirre, 2006). The results of our study suggest another benefit of strong identification with one's culture-of-origin: It may lead to a reduced number of stressful social experiences, such as conflict or experiences of social rejection.

One factor that might play a role in the link between enculturation and reduced social stress for Asian Americans is identification with collectivist values. Particularly for Asian cultures, endorsements of collectivism tends to co-occur with culture-of-origin practices (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Rodriguez, & Wang, 2007). An important component of collectivism is emphasizing the importance of group harmony, rather than individual success. As a result, Asian Americans who identify strongly with collectivism might place a greater emphasis on avoiding conflict in the service of strong in-group ties, thereby leading to reduced social stress (Kim et al., 2008; Triandis et al., 1988). However, because past research has yielded evidence that collectivism may increase Asian Americans' stress surrounding social relationships, another factor that may explain the link between enculturation and social stress is increased ethnic identity. Because participants have a stronger identification with their culture-of-origin, they may feel embedded in a heritage culture community that provides implicit support and a core common social network that minimizes disagreements, conflicts, and misunderstandings due to cross-cultural misunderstandings, minority-majority status, and power differentials. Of note, increased connection to one's culture-of-origin did not predict increased feelings of social support, even though it predicted less social stress. This may also stem from the notion of harmony collectivism. Although an increased identification with one's culture-of-origin may help reduce disagreements and conflicts, it may not necessarily make participants feel more comfortable attaining support from their peers, parents, and others. Thus, adherence to harmony collectivism may preclude increased social support even if ethnic identity reduces social stress. Furthermore, participants were asked to identify a primary culture-of-origin when filling out the VIA, which may in turn have neglected the experiences of participants who identify as having more than one culture-of-origin. Participants who have more than one culture-of-origin could feel a reduced connection to the culture they identify as their primary culture-of-origin, or they may draw additional support from each of their culture-of-origins. Future studies should further examine whether enculturation—including enculturation to more than one culture-of-origin—can also influence positive feel-

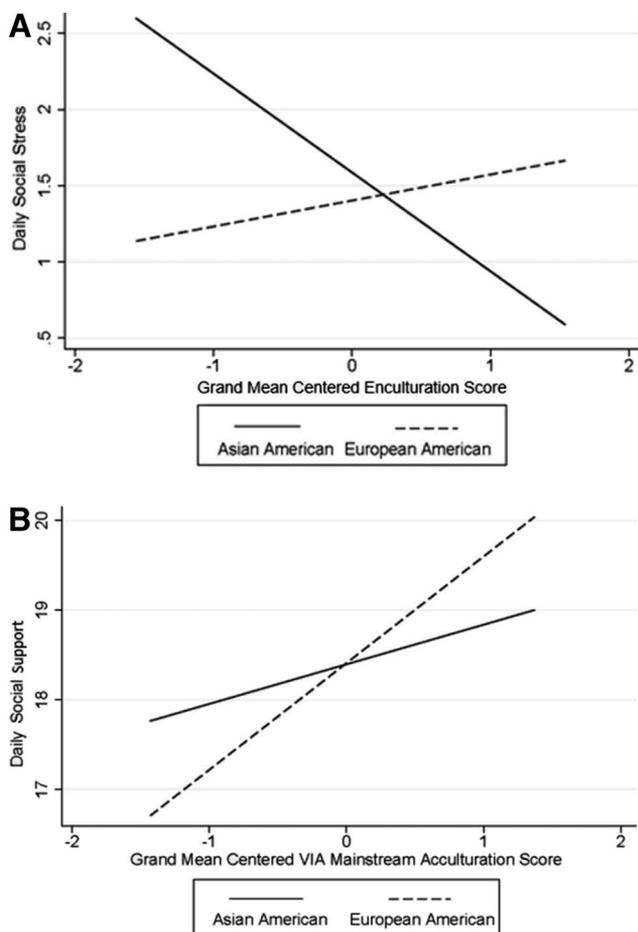


Figure 1. (A) There was a statistically significant negative relationship between enculturation and daily social stress for Asian Americans but not European Americans. (B) There was a statistically significant relationship positive relationship between mainstream acculturation and daily social support for European Americans but not Asian Americans.

ings of support and connection, and whether and how these effects are culturally specific.

Increased mainstream acculturation was linked to greater feelings of daily social support, and moderation analyses revealed that this relationship was stronger for European Americans. This finding substantiates past findings that mainstream acculturation predicts enhanced self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and positive affect, as well as reduced depression, anxiety, psychological distress, and negative affect (Gupta, Leong, Valentine, & Canada, 2013; Yoon et al., 2013). Stereotyping and prejudices inherent in the acculturation process for Asian Americans might contribute to the fact that the link between increased mainstream acculturation and enhanced social connection was stronger for European Americans than Asian Americans. For example, the European American phenotype (i.e., light-colored skin) is more congruent with the predominant phenotype of the United States than the phenotype of immigrants from East Asian countries (i.e., dark-colored skin), which tends to result in more favorable perceptions by others in the United States (Schwartz et al., 2010). Similarly, foreign accents

from European countries (e.g., Australian, British, or French accents) are perceived as interesting and likable in the United States, whereas foreign accents that have been associated with racial and ethnic minorities, such as Asian cultures, tend to be rated less positively (Fuertes, Gottdiener, Martin, Gilbert, & Giles, 2012; Steiner, 2009). Thus, when Asian Americans attempt to integrate more fully into mainstream American culture, they might face ostracism and discrimination, in the same places where European American immigrant families find social connection. That is, Asian Americans' phenotypic differences might still set them apart from others in the country, even if their values, attitudes, and behaviors align with the mainstream culture. Given that our sample came from a university in California with a sizable amount of Asian Americans, participants may have felt less ostracized from their fellow Asian American peers, even if they still faced prejudice and discrimination more broadly. Still, Asian American youth may face difficulty finding other peers with a similar level of mainstream acculturation, or they may come from a family context that makes it more difficult to fully derive the social benefits of mainstream acculturation, such as if they have elevated familial responsibilities or if their family places pressure on them to maintain their culture-of-origin values and refuse mainstream acculturation. There are likely multiple, interacting factors that account for greater difficulties with social connection for Asian Americans, including the region of the United States in which they reside, even if they report high mainstream acculturation.

In addition, on average, European Americans in the current sample had been living in the United States for a longer time than Asian Americans. As a result, mainstream acculturation may have been more accessible and adaptive for European Americans compared with Asian Americans, as the former's culture-of-origin ties could be fairly weak. However, it is also important to note that, although the link between mainstream acculturation and social support was statistically significant for European Americans ( $p = .001$ ) and not significant for Asian Americans ( $p = .09$ ), the overall interaction only trended toward significance ( $p = .09$ ). Thus, these findings should be interpreted with extreme caution, and further research on the social benefits of mainstream acculturation across ethnic minority cultures, including Asian American populations, is warranted. It is possible that both Asian and European Americans who identify strongly with the mainstream culture more easily relate to the dominant cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors of their current home environment, which would make it easier for them to engage in fulfilling and harmonious relationships.

This study has several limitations that should be noted and addressed in future research. First, the study featured college students. As a result, findings cannot necessarily be generalized to other age-groups or to young adults who are not attending university, and the socioeconomic backgrounds of our sample were necessarily limited in scope. Despite this fact, we believe the focus on college student acculturation and social experiences is crucial for several reasons. Processes of individuation from the family and formation of close peer relationships are often central to the transition to college. College student populations are also becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, making it essential for research to uncover the ways in which socialization in college might differ for students from different backgrounds. Nevertheless, future studies should assess how ethnicity and acculturation influence daily social experiences

across individuals of different ages, races and ethnicities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and disability statuses, among other underrepresented demographic backgrounds within the psychological literature. In particular, it is important to examine the influence of acculturation and the various social experiences of Asian American ethnic subgroups, as it is possible that there are distinct differences within this highly heterogeneous group. For example, although gaps in acculturation levels have been shown to increase parent-child conflicts across Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese Americans, it has not been shown to reduce the amount of support Vietnamese American children receive from their parents (Ahn, Kim, & Park, 2008; Hwang, Wood, & Fujimoto, 2010; Vu & Rook, 2013). Data on the experiences of Southeast Asians (e.g., Cambodian, Hmong, and Vietnamese) are especially scarce, so it is important that future research investigate their specific social experiences in relation to acculturation (Harachi, Catalano, Kim, & Choi, 2001). Furthermore, although the items included in our social stress measure could definitely be influenced by stressors unique to Asian Americans, future studies should include specific items that ask about racialized experiences (e.g., exposure to stereotypes). Overall, an intersectional approach is crucial to better understanding acculturation and social connection in a way that supports effective assessment and intervention.

A second limitation is we assessed social support without using a previously validated measure. Because brevity in daily diary measures is crucial for encouraging compliance, we used brief measures to assess daily social stress and social support, rather than more comprehensive measures about the context and objective severity of various social stressors. Future studies should use multiple methods and informants to more thoroughly assess the effects of different specific stressors on the social relationships of Asian Americans. For example, researchers could examine how social experiences unfold over various time frames using various creative longitudinal designs (e.g., 2 weeks once every semester or ecological momentary assessment to examine multiple time points within a single day). In addition, future studies may consider examining mediational models pertaining to acculturation and Asian Americans' social experiences and well-being, as other theoretical templates suggest that if acculturation predicts social experiences, it could in turn predict stress exposure, which may then predict other outcomes such as negative affect or emotional well-being (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995). Testing such models may help determine if acculturation serves as a proxy for other variables, such as disadvantaged social status or prolonged exposure to traumatic events or stressful circumstances. Finally, future studies should take into account acculturative stress, which is a crucial aspect of acculturation and the immigration experience, and would more directly account for the presence of stressors that come from the acculturation process and in turn affect Asian Americans and European Americans.

Despite these limitations, these findings have important implications for understanding the unique social experiences of Asian American young adults. Results suggest that Asian American cultural values might be protective against the experience of social stress, whereas mainstream acculturation is helpful in fostering social support, especially for European American students. These

findings demonstrate that social experience assessments and results from European American samples cannot always be generalized to other cultures, and emphasize the importance of taking into account enculturation and mainstream acculturation when examining the experiences of Asian Americans and other racial or ethnic minority groups. Examining factors such as acculturation allows researchers to acquire a more holistic understanding of how culture and socialization influence diverse individuals' social behaviors and relationships. Future research along these lines could inform interventions to bolster social support networks for Asian Americans, thereby promoting well-being within this often-neglected population.

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