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The Impact of Asian American Cultural Centers on Sense of Belongingness for Asian American Undergraduate Students

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THE IMPACT OF ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTERS ON SENSE OF
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THE IMPACT OF ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTERS ON SENSE OF
BELONGINGNESS FOR ASIAN AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

This dissertation, by Malina Banavong Maladore, has
been approved by the committee members signed below
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of
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DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTERS ON SENSE OF
BELONGINGNESS AND MENTAL WELL-BEING FOR ASIAN AMERICAN
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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This dissertation examines the role of cultural centers and experiences of microaggressions in shaping the ethnic identity of Asian American undergraduates in U.S. higher education institutions. Utilizing Phinney's model of ethnic identity development, a study with 175 participants revealed a positive correlation between reported microaggressions and sense of ethnic belonging in students attending universities with cultural centers. The findings highlight the complexities of belongingness and the potential impact of cultural centers on ethnic identity and experiences of microaggressions. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of Asian American students' experiences in higher education. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: Asian Americans, higher education, ethnic identity, cultural centers, mental health, microaggressions, Phinney's model

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This journey has been the most worthwhile adventure of growing and learning. I won't forget starting my journey at Antioch back in Fall 2019. I'll remember who I was before I came in and how I've both changed and stayed the same.

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To my mother, Anousone Banavong, and my father, Ed Maladoungdok: your stories and journeys will forever be a part of me. Mom, you taught me how to be a strong woman. You showed me from a young age how to stand firm in my beliefs and to never be afraid of challenges. Dad, your love, understanding, and determination have inspired me. You taught me to never give up without trying. You both showed me to always be proud of my Laotian heritage.

To my older sister, Allison Maladore Bangura, and my older brother, Andrew Maladore: you both have been instrumental in my journey. Even though I'm a doctor now, I will always be your baby sister. I'll always remember our days playing Final Fantasy together.

To my friends back in Connecticut, thank you for being there with me throughout this wild journey. I've never been more excited about where my life will now take me—I know this adventure will continue, embracing the unknown and all its possibilities.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Research on Asian Americans in Higher Education

The United States (U.S.) Census Bureau indicates that between the years of 2000 and 2018, Asian Americans surpassed other racial groups in American college admissions (Bauman & Cranney, 2020). In 2018, 59% of Asian Americans aged 18 to 24 were enrolled in higher education institutions, a rate exceeding that of White (42%), Black (37%), and Latinx (36%) student populations (Bauman & Cranney, 2020). Although enrollment figures are high, the factors that shape the experiences of Asian American students in higher education are multifaceted and complex (Li, 2018; Lim, 2015; Yoo, 2020).

Research on ethnic identity development and mental health among Asian American young adults in higher education is limited (Poon et al., 2016). The Bureau of Educational Sciences and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) categorize Asian Americans outside the underrepresented minority (URM) group, resulting in their exclusion from national and longitudinal minority student studies (de Brey et al., 2019). The U.S. National Institute of Health (NIH) allocates only 0.17% of its clinical research funding to the Asian American population. Additionally, from 2000 to 2013, just 14 published higher education journal articles specifically researched Asian American undergraduate students (Đoàn et al., 2019; Lau et al., 2022; Poon et al., 2016). The discrepancy in research funding and the scarcity of published studies on this population potentially hinders a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Asian American students in higher education, including the exploration of factors influencing identity development.

Purpose of Study

This study aims to explore the multifaceted process of ethnic identity development among Asian American undergraduate students through the lens of Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity development (1993). Phinney's model (1993) conceptualized ethnic identity development as a comprehensive process shaped by cultural, social, and environmental factors. The model outlines the stages of ethnic identity formation, including unexamined ethnic identity (a lack of awareness of one's ethnic identity), ethnic identity search (self-exploration of one's ethnic identity), and ethnic identity achievement (a secure sense of ethnic identity).

Previous studies have utilized and referenced Phinney's model framework to examine identity development among Black, Latinx, and Indigenous American students in higher education (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kirby et al., 2020; Lozano, 2014; Patton, 2006; Reyes & Shotton, 2018). In the present study, higher education institutions that provided dedicated cultural spaces and resources for students, including monoracial cultural centers, were examined in relation to ethnic identity development. Drawing from existing literature that examines ethnic identity development among racial and ethnic minority undergraduate students, this study aims to explore the relationship between cultural centers-and ethnic identity development among Asian American undergraduate students. Additionally, this study seeks to examine the role of microaggressions; particularly, how might these experiences act as catalysts in moving individuals from the unexamined stage to the exploration stage of Phinney's model.

Given the scarcity of research within clinical psychology regarding the identity development of Asian American undergraduate students, this study hopes to broaden the understanding of this process, focusing on the influence of Asian cultural centers on campus within the context of Phinney's framework. This study utilizes quantitative measures to delve

into the relationship between ethnic belongingness and experiences of microaggressions, with the intention of establishing a comprehensive foundation for future exploration of Asian American undergraduate students' identity development within higher education.

By considering the cultural, social, and environmental factors outlined in Phinney's model, this research intends to contribute to the empirical groundwork for a nuanced and in-depth exploration of the identity development of Asian American undergraduates, contributing to a more inclusive body of literature in the field of ethnic identity studies in higher education settings.

Definition of Key Terms

In this chapter, key terms are organized into three categories of key terms including clinical psychology, cultural and sociocultural, and higher education.

Clinical Psychology Key Terms

Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development

Racial identity development can be theorized as the dynamic, ongoing process by which individuals explore, define, and consolidate their racial and ethnic identities into their overall self-concept. Jean Phinney (1993) conceptualized the process of racial identity development for late adolescents/young adults by using a multidimensional three-stage development model. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of Erik Erikson's (1994) psychosocial theory of development and James Marcia's (1980) identity formulation development, Phinney delineated into the following stages: Stage 1 as "unexamined ethnic identity," Stage 2 as "ethnic identity search," and Stage 3 as "ethnic identity achievement."

Stage 1: Unexamined Ethnic Identity. This first stage often involves an initial lack of awareness of one's racial identity. Understanding one's racial identity comes through

socialization at home, school, community, and wider society (Phinney, 1993). Minorities, such as Asian Americans, who reside in predominantly white, Eurocentric societies, initially internalize and accept the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the majority culture, including negative views of their own group held by the majority (Phinney, 1993). This may be illustrated via treatment by peers or through media portrayals of one's racial group.

Stage 2: Ethnic Identity Search. The second stage is the individual's self-exploration regarding racial identity which includes seeking out information and experiences that may relate to their racial/ethnic group and culture (Phinney, 1993). This stage may occur during adolescence or early adulthood after encountering a significant situation that may reflect one's meaning of their racial identity, such as facing racial discrimination and microaggressions. The individual may start to have conversations regarding their racial identity with others such as their family, friends, and community members, as well as reflecting the current and future effects of their racial identity (Phinney, 1993).

Stage 3: Ethnic Identity Achievement. The third stage is conceptualized as the clarity of one's racial/ethnic identity. This phase in development includes a sense of confidence and stability of one's own ethnicity (Phinney, 1993). The individual assesses their racial/ethnic group by their own understanding and by how their racial/ethnic group is impacted in a larger social context.

Sense of Belongingness

In this paper, belongingness refers to Hagerty and colleagues' (1992) definition of (a) valued involvement: the individual feeling of being needed, valued, and accepted; and (b) fit: the individual's perception that their characteristics complement the system and/or environment. Hagerty et al.'s formulation of belonging reinforces previous definitions by Maslow (1962),

Anant (1969), and Rosenberg and McCullough (1981), include the importance of correspondence between an individual's perception of the self and its surroundings.

Cultural & Sociocultural Key Terms

Asian Americans

According to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau, Asian Americans comprise three regional groups (East, South, and Southeast Asian) and encompass 20 ethnic subgroups (McGeeney et al., 2019). East Asian Americans include individuals of: Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Tibetan descent. South Asian Americans consist of those of: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Bhutanese, and Sri Lankan origin. Lastly, Southeast Asian Americans include individuals with: Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Burmese, Indonesian, Malaysian, Bruneian, Singaporean, Filipino, and Timorese origins, with each regional and ethnic group having its own distinct histories, cultures, and languages (McGeeney et al., 2019).

Model Minority Myth

Sociologist William Petersen (1966) first introduced the term "model minority" to designate racial minority groups that have achieved income and educational attainment levels comparable to those of White Americans. The model minority myth represents a racial framing that serves as a manifestation of exclusion, inequity, and racism (Zhang & Moradi, 2012). Internalization of the model minority myth reflects color-blindness ideology, disregarding the impact of race and ethnicity in the sociopolitical context (Zhang & Moradi, 2012).

Microaggressions

Microaggressions refers to subtle discriminatory behaviors and actions (Sue et al., 2007). These behaviors, often unintentional, may be perceived as benign or innocuous by the perpetrator. However, the cumulative effect of these recurring actions can be harmful to the

individuals at the receiving end as they reflect underlying biases and prejudice. These microaggressions can target various intersectional identities, including but not limited to, racial, ethnic, and gender-based identities.

Racial Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions are subtle forms of verbal and/or behavioral racial discrimination. Sue et al. (2007) defined racial microaggressions as "hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target [racial] person or group" (p. 273). This interpersonal form of discrimination may be intentional or unintentional, as they often occur in daily, commonplace settings such as a workplace or classroom environment. Sue et al. (2007) delineated three forms of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Everyday racial microaggressions adversely impact racial/ethnic minorities, as they are correlated with elevated feelings of anxiety, stress, anger, depression, and somatic symptoms (Huynh, 2012; Kim et al., 2017).

Intersectionality

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) introduced the concept of "intersectionality," which is defined as the overlapping intersectional layers of an individual's racial/ethnic, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual identity, religion, and additional characteristics. Examining individuals through an intersectional lens refers to understanding the multilayered identities of a person based on their positionality (e.g., Southeast Asian, ciswoman, able-bodied) and how these identities establish that person's relationships to these systems of power (Dziuba, 2021).

Higher Education Key Terms

Campus Climate

"Campus climate" is defined as the campus culture and environment of an institution, shaped by the collective attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, and expectations of its students, faculty, and administration (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). Campus climate also reflects how the institution responds to sociocultural events (Hurtado et al., 1998).

Racial Campus Climate

"Racial campus climate" refers to the campus culture and environment of an institution as it relates to ethnic and minority students, faculty, and administration, focusing on how racial identity impacts learning and social experiences. This climate is characterized by students' experiences of institutional policies and practices, treatment within the campus environment, and the institution's advocacy for racial diversity (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Cultural Centers

In this dissertation, cultural centers refer specifically to race-specific centers for Asian Americans, drawing on research about similar centers for Black, Latino, and Indigenous Americans (Patton, 2006, 2010; Reyes & Shotton, 2018; Sanders, 2016). They represent more than physical spaces; they symbolize belonging for underrepresented students of color in universities (Kirby et al., 2020). Cultural centers should provide cultural familiarity, facilitate cultural expression, and offer cultural validation (Museus, 2008) and require focused human resources and infrastructure, functioning collaboratively within the higher education system (Kezar, 2019; Toya, 2011).

Cultural Validation

Rendon (1994) discussed the importance of cultural validation as a way of belonging for students of color. Especially in predominantly White institutions, racial/ethnic minority students can face marginality, cultural disconnect, and bias that may weaken the connection these students feel toward their school and peers. In postsecondary institutions that emphasize Eurocentric curricula and values, students' report experiencing that their cultural identities are under threat, which can lead to feelings of alienation. Although institutional validation of culture is not directly related to students' academic performance, Fong and colleagues (2023) found that it indirectly mediates relationships through a sense of belonging and perceptions of academic and social campus support.

Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity encompasses the awareness, acknowledgment, and appreciation of students' diverse cultural backgrounds. It serves as a critical element in crafting an inclusive and respectful learning environment. For students of color, the significance of cultural sensitivity cannot be overstated. In higher educational institutions, racial and ethnic minority students often find themselves navigating spaces that may not reflect or relate to their unique experiences, values, and challenges. This could potentially result in feelings of marginalization, misunderstanding, and alienation.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review critically examined the dynamic process of ethnic identity development among Asian American college students through the lens of Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development. It explored the initiation and facilitation of ethnic identity search among Asian Americans, spanning adolescence to college age. Additionally, the review investigated factors of intersectional identity that may influence the development of ethnic identity and the sense of ethnic belonging among Asian Americans, including the role of intersectional identities.

Initiating Ethnic Identity Search

Phinney (1993) posited that the transition from the initial stage of Unexamined Ethnic Identity to the transitional stage of Ethnic Identity Search among racial/ethnic minority individuals occurs when they encounter situations that prompt the recognition and awareness of their ethnic identity. While Phinney's model did not specify the triggers for this introspective journey, subsequent research by Sue et al. (2007) and Nadal et al. (2014) suggest that experiences of racial microaggressions often catalyze individuals to explore and affirm their cultural heritage and collective identity.

Nadal et al. (2014) study examined the impacts of racial microaggressions on mental health and ethnic identity development among 506 participants from Asian, Latino/a, Black, White, and Multiracial ethnic groups in the United States. They found that the participants who experienced racial microaggressions often felt immediate distress, and those who either disregarded or downplayed the incidents tended to suffer negative detrimental effects on their mental health and ethnic identity development (Nadal et al., 2014). Conversely, Nadal and colleagues (2014) highlighted that participants who sought validation from others after

experiencing a microaggression—whether through community engagement or by connecting with others with similar experiences—were found to have lower levels of internalized racism. This validation process after experience of racial microaggressions has been linked with heightened awareness of one's racial/ethnic identity (Nadal et al., 2014; Sue et al., 2009)

Ethnic Identity Search Among Asian Americans

Stein et al. (2014) delved into the complexities of ethnic identity formation among Asian American adolescents, analyzing the experience of a sample of high school students aged 14–15 in the Southeastern United States ($N = 176$). Their research highlighted the critical role that experiences of discrimination and marginalization play in shaping ethnic and utilized the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1993) and a measure of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination developed by Greene et al. (2006). Stein and colleagues (2014) explored whether a strong sense of ethnic identity, characterized by belonging and exploration, could mitigate the adverse psychosocial effects of discrimination. The findings of Stein et al. (2014) indicated that a sense of ethnic belonging did not insulate Asian American youth from the negative impacts of discrimination as adolescents experienced the detrimental, negative effects of racial discrimination regardless. Stein et al. (2014) emphasized the absence of "ethnic enclaves"—supportive racial/ethnic social networks that promotes camaraderie and understanding—within their study. They suggested that Asian American youth who do not have access to these social networks may have fewer opportunities for exploration and development of their racial/ethnic identity (Stein et al., 2014).

Weng and Choi (2021) examined the role of the Asian American community in shaping the ethnic identities of Asian American adults through comprehensive interviews with 35 individuals who resided in a small predominately White city in southern United States. Their

research emphasized the profound influence of cultural communities on participants

self-identification and navigation of having a dual-layered identity tied to both their specific

ethnic group and the broader Asian American racial identity (Weng & Choi, 2021). Weng and

Choi (2021) discovered the subtle yet significant importance of involvement with both ethnic

and racial communities, emphasizing the broader Asian American community's crucial systemic

role in boosting representation and sociopolitical power for Asian Americans within a

predominately white city through various organized initiatives and events.

At the college campus systemic level, Asian American undergraduate students encounter

unique challenges in their ethnic identity development journey that arises from racial and cultural

marginalization (Li, 2018; Lim, 2015; Yoo, 2020). These students frequently confront racial

microaggressions, as Yeo et al. (2019) highlighted through semi-structured interviews. The

research uncovered regular encounters with stereotypes, cultural insensitivity, and exclusion by

both peers and faculty. Experiences such as misidentification as international students often lead

to xenophobic attitudes, language ridicule, and racial epithets. These painful encounters not only

intensify feelings of alienation but also instill a sense of shame in one's ethnic group,

significantly impeding the exploration and affirmation of ethnic identity (Chen et al., 2014; Law

et al., 2019; Yao & Mwangi, 2022; Yeo et al., 2019).

Yoo (2020) delved into the complexities of sense of ethnic belonging among Asian

American undergraduates, conducting in-depth interviews that revealed a spectrum of

experiences. While some students reported a profound affinity with their ethnic communities,

others faced a struggle with feelings of isolation. Critical to the development and affirmation of

ethnic identity were factors such as the campus climate, the representation of one's culture, and

the quality of social connections. The availability of culturally oriented programs and spaces

dedicated to celebrating diversity correlated with a more robust sense of ethnic belonging (Li, 2018; Lim, 2015; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Wells & Horn, 2015).

Cultural Centers Facilitation of Ethnic Identity Search

The second stage of Phinney's ethnic identity development involves the individual's self-exploration of ethnic identity, which encompasses seeking information and experiences pertinent to their racial/ethnic group and culture (Phinney, 1993). The exploration of ethnic identity and sense of belonging among racial/ethnic minority college students has been closely linked to the utilization of safe spaces, resources, and communities that cater to the individual's racial/ethnic background (Li, 2018; Lim, 2015; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Wells & Horn, 2015). A systematic approach to enhancing the college experience for students of color has been the creation of ethnic student organizations, including monoracial cultural centers. These monoracial cultural centers fulfill three essential roles for students: providing cultural familiarity, allowing cultural expression, and offering cultural validation (Museus, 2008). Museus (2008) emphasized the importance of cultural organizational spaces wherein students of shared racial or ethnic backgrounds can forge connections, thereby nurturing acceptance, comprehension, and a profound sense of community, which in turn fosters a secure environment for exploring ethnic identity.

Asian American Cultural Centers

The establishment of Asian American cultural centers, similar to other monoracial cultural centers, has provided safe havens where students can build a social network, feel a sense of community, and navigate racial microaggressions while seeking validation for their identities—factors all associated with the development of ethnic identity (Patton, 2010). Kirby et al. (2020) investigated the role and significance of cultural centers in supporting the sense of

belonging and academic success of Asian American students at a predominantly white institution (PWI). Through qualitative interviews with 22 participants, the study found that cultural centers were pivotal in fostering community and cultural affirmation. Participants highlighted the value of these centers in offering a sense of belonging, connecting with peers with shared experiences, and providing access to culturally specific resources.

Intersectional Identities

Intersectional identity among Asian American undergraduates also plays a significant role in shaping their ethnic identity development and sense of belonging to their ethnic group. Li (2018) undertook a quantitative study with 6,609 Asian American college students across 90 institutions of higher education, uncovering variances in the sense of belonging across different Asian American ethnic groups. This study finding highlights the necessity of specified strategies to foster ethnic belonging, accounting the distinct ethnic backgrounds of each group (Li, 2018). Cheng and Lee (2009) explored the impact of Multiracial Identity Integration (MII) on individuals navigating multiple racial identities. Their findings suggested that Multiracial Asian Americans encounter heightened complexity in their sense of ethnic belonging compared to both monoracial and multiethnic Asian Americans as they also face the additional layer of multiracial identity development.

While the intersectionality of identity development with gender identity remains under-researched in Asian American communities, Matthews et al. (2022) examined the connection among LGBT Asian Americans and mental/physical health outcomes. They found that Asian Americans who identified as LGBTQIA faced higher levels of chronic stress due to reports of alienation from cultural communities and lack of acceptance from family because of their sexual identity (Matthews et al., 2022). The study by Matthews et al. (2022) underscores

the significance of recognizing and addressing the multifaceted nature of ethnic identity

development among various intersectional identities.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The aim of this study was to investigate how the presence of Asian American cultural centers may influence ethnic identity development among Asian American undergraduate students. The quantitative methodology aligned with Phinney's frameworks by exploring self-reports of ethnic belongingness among participants from campuses with and without Asian American monoracial cultural centers. Additionally, the study examined the relationship between experienced microaggressions and sense of ethnic belonging, as well as the influence of sociodemographic factors and gender identity.

1. Does the presence and frequency of visitation to Asian American cultural centers at universities influence Asian American undergraduates' sense of ethnic belonging?

2. Does the presence of a cultural center influence the relationship between experiencing microaggressions and one's sense of ethnic belonging?

3. Does sense of ethnic belonging vary between sociodemographic and gender identity?

Participants

Participants in this study were required to self-identify as Asian American, be enrolled in undergraduate programs, and have been born in the United States or immigrated to the country. The age range for participation was set between 18 and 29 years old, aligning with the period of early to late emerging adulthood, which is considered crucial for ongoing ethnic identity exploration according to Phinney (1993). Exclusion criteria were primarily based on age and U.S. citizenship status; individuals younger than 18 or older than 29 were not included in the study, as these ages fall outside the range of emerging adulthood as defined by Phinney's model.

This study specifically focused on the Asian American population and including international students extended beyond the scope of this dissertation research.

Recruitment

This cross-sectional survey study recruited a convenience sample of Asian American undergraduate students from universities across the U.S., including those with and without Asian American cultural centers. Recruitment utilized social media, email listservs, and university cultural center mailing lists, with additional assistance sought from cultural center directors to ensure a broader representation of participants. To extend data collection and enhance recruitment, two addenda were incorporated. The first addendum, approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on July 14, 2023, extended data collection until September 30, 2023, primarily focusing on social media outreach. A second extension, approved on October 10, 2023, allowed data collection to continue until October 30, 2023, incorporating Prolific services. Despite the approved extension, data collection concluded on October 20, 2023.

Data Collection

Data was collected using an online survey administered through Google Forms from April 2, 2023, to September 30, 2023. The survey contained 35 questions and incorporated two validated instruments: the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM-R) and the Revised 28-Item Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (R28REMS). In addition to these measures, the survey collected demographic information such as age range, gender identity, specific Asian ethnicity, and current year of undergraduate study.

Measures

This research used two measurement instruments: the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM-R) and the Revised 28-Item Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (R28REMS),

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM-R)

The MEIM-R assessed the participants' ethnic identity exploration and commitment, which directly corresponded to Phinney's stages of ethnic identity development, particularly in assessing the exploration (search) and resolution (achievement) stages of ethnic identity among Asian American undergraduates. The MEIM-R was composed of six items that utilized a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree = 1" to "Strongly Agree = 5" (Phinney & Ong, 2007). The MEIM-R has demonstrated high statistical reliability ($\alpha = .88$), and confirmatory factor analysis provided strong evidence for scale validity (AGFI = .96, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .04).

Revised 28-Item Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (R28REMS)

The R28REMS measured the frequency and type of microaggressions experienced by participants. Developed by Forrest-Bank et al. (2015), the Revised 28-Item Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (R28REMS) is an abbreviated version of Nadal's (2011) original 45-item Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS). The R28REMS had strong reliability and validity and exhibited high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.97$).

Data Analysis

SPSS version 27 was utilized for data analysis. Descriptive statistics included means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages for demographic information and survey measures. Independent samples *t*-tests assessed the relationship between the existence of Asian

American cultural centers and participants' sense of belonging in one's ethnic identity among participants in universities with and without cultural centers' mental health. Pearson's correlation coefficients examined the relationship between sense of belonging and experiences of microaggressions. One-way ANOVA compared the belongingness to one's ethnic identity scores based on the frequency of visits to cultural centers and experiences of microaggression

Independent Samples *t*-Test

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to assess the influence of Asian American cultural centers in universities on Asian American undergraduates' sense of belonging within their ethnic group (MEIM-R). The *t*-test was utilized to discern the difference in outcomes of sense of belonging between Asian American undergraduate students attending universities with available Asian American cultural centers (Group A) and those attending universities without such at center (Group B).

Pearson Correlation Coefficient

A Pearson correlation analysis investigated the correlation between sense of ethnic belonging (MEIM-R) and reported microaggressions (R28REM). The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was selected to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables (Field, 2013). The study aimed to explore correlations between sense of belonging and experiences of discrimination among Asian American undergraduates.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with a strong emphasis on ethical considerations to ensure the protection and respect of all participants. Prior to any data collection, this study received approval from Antioch University New England's Institutional Review Board (IRB) on January 9, 2023, affirming the study's adherence to established ethical guidelines. At the beginning of the

survey, each participant was informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of their

participation, potential risks, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

Participant anonymity was ensured as identifiable information such as names, birth dates, or

places of origin was not solicited. Privacy was further protected by the secure storage of data and

restricting access to only the research team. Results were reported collectively to prevent the

identification of individual responses. These measures were crucial to uphold the participants'

rights and dignity, in line with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association

(APA).

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

In this study, 195 participants were initially surveyed; however, 20 participants ceased responding more than halfway through. Among the remaining 174 participants, 171 completed all survey questions, and 3 participants skipped individual questions. Specifically, one participant omitted a question on the PHQ-9 section and two omitted separate questions on the GAD-7 portion. Of the 174 total participants, 64% of participants ($n = 111$) confirmed the presence of an Asian American Cultural Center on their campus, while 36% ($n = 63$) indicated the absence of an Asian American cultural center on campus.

Demographics

Gender Identity

Gender identity distribution was as follows: cisgender men ($n = 81$), cisgender women ($n = 74$), non-binary people ($n = 12$), transgender men ($n = 1$), transgender women ($n = 1$), preferred not to say ($n = 2$), didn't know (0.6%, $n = 1$), and 1.1% ($n = 2$) identified as men without further specification (Refer to Appendix Table 4.1).

Age & Academic Year

Participants' age breakdown revealed that 60.6% were aged 18–21 years, 31.4% were 22–25 years, 6.3% were 26–30 years, and 1.7% were older than 30 years (Refer to Appendix Table 4.3). In terms of academic standing, 33.7% were fourth-year students, 25.1% were third-year students, 17.7% were second-year students, 11.4% were in their fifth year or above, and 10.3% were first-year students. Additionally, 1.7% preferred not to disclose their academic year (Refer to Appendix Table 4.2).

Sociodemographic

  All participants in this group identified as Asian American, with sociodemographic backgrounds which included East Asian Americans ($n = 55$), Southeast Asian Americans ($n = 50$), South Asian Americans ($n = 28$), Multiracial Asian Americans ($n = 23$), Multiethnic Asian Americans ($n = 18$), and Native Hawaiian ($n = 1$; Refer to Appendix Tables 4.5 and 4.6).

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Results of Statistical Analyses

Research Question 1: Does the presence and frequency of Asian American cultural centers at universities influence Asian American undergraduates' sense of ethnic belonging?

The independent sample t-test revealed no statistically significant difference in MEIM-R scores between Asian American undergraduate students who attended institutions with and without a cultural center, $t(173) = -1.57$, $p = .118$. Participants who attended institutions with a cultural center had a slightly higher mean MEIM-R score ($M = 22.54$, $SD = 4.48$) compared to those without ($M = 21.38$, $SD = 5.09$). Frequent visitors to cultural centers had the highest mean MEIM-R score ($M = 24.07$).

Research Question 2: Does the presence of a cultural center influence the relationship between experiencing microaggressions and one's sense of ethnic belonging?

All participants ($N = 174$) have reported experiencing at least one racial microaggressions within the past 6 months, with an average R28REMS mean score of $M = 42.61$, $SD = 16.07$. A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between the sense of ethnic belonging and experiences of microaggressions among Asian American undergraduate students, $r(173) = .168$, $p = .026$ (see Appendix Table 4.17). Participants who reported the presence of a cultural center showed a significant correlation between experiences of microaggression and the sense of belonging within one's ethnic group of $r(111) = .213$, $p = .024$

(see Appendix Table 4.13). For participants without a cultural center, no significant correlation was found between microaggression and the sense of belonging within one's ethnic group of $r(63) = .060$, $p = .484$ (see Appendix Table 4.13).

Research Question 3: Does sense of ethnic belonging vary between sociodemographic and gender identity?

Multiethnic Asian Americans reported the highest average MEIM-R scores ($M = 23.44$), followed closely by Southeast Asian Americans ($M = 22.76$) and South Asian Americans ($M = 22.68$). East Asian American students reported slightly lower scores ($M = 21.64$), while Multiracial Americans had the lowest average scores ($M = 19.87$). The single participant identifying as Native Hawaiian reported a mean MEIM-R score of 23.00, but this value is not representative due to the limited sample size (see Appendix Table 4.16).

Cisgender men reported the highest mean MEIM-R scale ($M = 22.45$), followed by participants who did not disclose their gender identity ($M = 21.90$), then cisgender women ($M = 21.88$), and non-binary identified students ($M = 21.42$). Non-binary students experienced the highest level of microaggressions ($M = 46.75$), followed by cisgender women ($M = 43.28$). Those who did not disclose their gender identity also experienced a significant level of microaggressions ($M = 37.50$), and lastly, cisgender men with the lowest levels of experienced microaggression ($M = 34.00$; See Appendix Table 4.16).

Summary of Findings

The results of statistical analyses revealed no direct significant difference in the sense of ethnic belonging between participants at institutions with and without cultural centers. Participants with access to a cultural center reported slightly higher mean scores of the sense of ethnic belonging, with participants who frequently visited cultural centers found to have the

highest mean of ethnic belonging. A significant positive correlation was found between experiences of microaggressions and ethnic belonging among participants who reported the presence of a cultural center. Furthermore, variations in ethnic belonging were evident among different sociodemographic and gender identity groups, as Multiethnic Asian Americans reported the highest sense of ethnic belonging, while Multiracial Asian Americans reported the lowest. Cisgender men reported the highest mean sense of belonging, while non-binary students reported the lowest.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This study investigated the potential role of Asian American cultural centers in shaping the complex and evolving process of ethnic identity development among Asian American undergraduate students. Through the lens of Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development, it considered ethnic identity as an ongoing process that requires deep exploration and a dedication to understanding and embracing one's ethnic group (Phinney, 1993). The research focused on how college campus resources, such as cultural centers, may support this developmental process of Ethnic Identity Search by providing a safe space for Asian American students, particularly in terms of support during incidents of microaggressions and enhancing their sense of ethnic belonging. Given that the findings of this dissertation are correlational and not causational, it is important to interpret the results and related discussions with an understanding that they reflect associations rather than direct causes.

Exploration of Ethnic Identity: Microaggressions

In this study, all participants reported experiencing at least one racial microaggression in the past six months. Participants who attended institutions with Asian American cultural centers had a significant positive correlation between experiencing microaggressions and a sense of ethnic belonging. Conversely, no significant correlation was found between microaggressions and ethnic belonging among participants without access to Asian American cultural centers. This discrepancy may suggest the supportive role that cultural centers play in supporting Asian American students within the interplay in assisting Asian American students to navigate their ethnic identity exploration, especially in Phinney's initial stages of Ethnic Identity Search by racial microaggressions that prompt awareness of ethnic/racial identity.

Asian American undergraduate students who attend institutions with a cultural center may use the resource for validation processes after experiences of racial microaggressions, aligning with Nadal et al.'s (2014) assertion of advocacy and community involvement in response to racial microaggressions. The interplay between experiences of microaggressions and ethnic identity also corresponds with Stein et al.'s (2014) emphasis on the importance of supportive social networks such as "ethnic enclaves," which provide camaraderie and understanding in the face of discrimination and microaggressions.

Cultural Centers Facilitation of Exploring Ethnic Identity

Participants in this study who frequently engaged with cultural centers at their institutions reported the highest levels of ethnic belonging, while those from institutions without such centers reported the lowest. This finding is consistent with prior research which suggests that cultural centers provide safe spaces, resources, and community support, all of which are integral to the exploration and reinforcement of ethnic identity for racial/ethnic minority college students (Museus & Maramba, 2011; Patton, 2006; Wells & Horn, 2015). Asian American students with access to cultural centers, much like their counterparts from other racial/ethnic minority groups from previous studies, may leverage these spaces and networks to engage in the Ethnic Identity Search process (Li, 2018; Lim, 2015).

Moreover, the association between frequent visitation of cultural centers and a higher sense of ethnic belonging may indicate solidifying and progressing Ethnic Identity Search to the Ethnic Identity Achievement stage. Kirby et al. (2020) also observed a strong sense of belonging in Asian American students who regularly visited cultural centers. They underscored the role of cultural centers in fostering ethnic identity resilience (Kirby et al., 2020).

Intersectional Identities Impact of Exploring Ethnic Identity

Sociodemographic and gender identities may also influence the process of ethnic exploration, though this study found the differences between each group to be marginal. Among all participants, Multiethnic Asian Americans reported the highest average scores for a sense of ethnic belonging, while Multiracial Asian Americans reported the lowest. The differences in the sense of belonging among Multiethnic, Southeast Asian, South Asian, and East Asian Americans were minimal, with a 3.57-point difference in the mean scores of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R) between Multiethnic and Multiracial Asian Americans. Cheng and Lee's (2009) research on Multiracial Identity Integration (MII) underscores the fluidity of identity formation and its role in the diverse experiences of Multiracial Asian American undergraduates, pointing to the nuanced complexities of multiracial identity perceptions as compared to those of monoracial Asian Americans.

With regards to gender identity, cisgender men reported the highest mean MEIM-R scores, followed by participants who did not disclose their gender, cisgender women, and non-binary students, who reported the lowest average scores. These results may support the importance of considering intersectional identities, including both ethnicity and gender, to grasp the complexities of ethnic belonging and experiences of microaggressions among Asian American undergraduates.

Future Research Directions

This dissertation delves into the development of ethnic identity among Asian American undergraduates, framed within Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development Model. It examines the nuanced role cultural centers may interplay in the ethnic identity search process. Although t-test results indicate no direct impact of cultural centers on students' sense of belonging, a significant

correlation between racial microaggressions and a sense of belonging at institutions with cultural centers suggests a more complex influence, contributing to ethnic identity exploration in a wider relational setting. This is partially supported by the marginally higher MEIM-R scores for those frequenting cultural centers, hinting at these centers' role in reinforcing ethnic ties. Moreover, the research observed an effect of intersecting socio-demographic identities on the sense of ethnic belonging, signaling the need for additional research to unravel these complexities among Asian American undergraduates.

This study advocates for broader research to extend its findings and deepen understanding of how cultural centers may influence ethnic identity formation and sense of ethnic belonging for Asian American undergraduates. It underscores the need for integrating qualitative and longitudinal methods to more accurately capture the complex experiences and sense of ethnic belonging among Asian American students.

Geographic Location

The geographic distribution of participants also suggests the potential for future research to compare the impact of Asian American cultural centers in areas with varying densities of the Asian American population. Given that this survey was predominantly circulated among universities on the West and East coasts, including institutions in the Midwest and South could provide a broader understanding of the experiences of Asian American students. Weng and Choi's (2021) study explored the complexities of ethnic identity and belongingness among Asian Americans in a predominantly white southern US city, highlighting the intricacies of navigating ethnic and racial identities within cultural communities. Their findings suggest that the broader Asian American identity significantly influences city-wide dynamics, with racial discrimination in these predominately white settings linked to heightened involvement in ethnic and racial

communities, fostering increased ethnic solidarity (Weng & Choi, 2021). Exploring Asian American cultural centers in geographic areas with smaller Asian American populations can enhance the understanding of how the surrounding racial and sociocultural environmental impact on ethnic identity development.

Broader Exploration of Intersectionality

Further exploration could examine how students' own upbringing—in predominantly white, Asian, or diverse areas—affect their sense of belonging within their ethnic group. Additional research into the intersectional identities of Asian American undergraduates may offer deeper insight into the complexities of ethnic identity development in relation to gender and sociodemographic factors. Future studies may further investigate how sexuality, socioeconomic background, and disability intersect to affect students' perceptions of cultural centers and their experiences of belonging, including their experiences with additional discrimination and microaggressions. As Multiracial Asian Americans exhibited the lowest levels of ethnic belonging in this study, further research delving into the comparisons between different ethnic groups or racial mixtures could provide a deeper understanding of the complex nature of racial and intersectional identities.

Policy Implications

The correlational findings of this dissertation suggest that Asian American cultural centers may play a significant role in influencing the experiences of microaggressions and ethnic belonging among Asian American undergraduates. Policy implications derived from this study encourage educational institutions to consider the potential benefits of creating these cultural centers. Policies could focus on supporting the establishment and enhancement of these centers, ensuring they are adequately resourced to meet the unique needs of Asian American students.

Additionally, policies may include regular assessments of student experiences regarding ethnic belonging and microaggressions, using these insights to inform continuous improvement of cultural center programs and broader campus initiatives aimed at fostering inclusivity and cultural awareness. This approach would contribute to a more supportive and understanding campus environment for Asian American students.

Cultural Centers

Cultural centers may foster active engagement in ethnic identity development through organizing alumni network mentorship programs and promoting potential role models that align with Tinto's (1993) and Yosso et al.'s (2009) findings on the value of social networks for students of color. Hosting workshops and events that honor Asian American cultural heritage may foster a sense of community belonging and unity for Asian American students (Yosso et al., 2009).

Workshops and support groups that provide information on racial microaggressions and awareness may also facilitate the shift from the unexamined ethnic identity to the ethnic identity exploration stage (Phinney, 1993). These spaces can provide students with a safe environment for exploring, connecting, and validating their experiences of discrimination, in line with Nadal et al.'s (2014) findings on navigating racial microaggressions. Workshops and support groups may also help Asian American individuals in the process of unlearning dominant group messages about Asian American racial stereotypes and the model minority myth.

Cultural centers could cultivate an inclusive environment by hosting events or discussion groups tailored to specific ethnic backgrounds and the diverse gender identities of Asian American students. Addressing racial microaggressions, gender roles, and intersectional identities may support Asian American undergraduate students who are also part of other

marginalized identities. Inclusive programming that emphasizes themes of community, racial microaggressions, and intersectionality can further enhance Asian American undergraduates' engagement in exploring their ethnic identities, profoundly influencing their sense of belonging.

Clinical Implications

Data collected from the current study suggest that collaborations between counseling and cultural centers may enhance the support provided to Asian American undergraduate students. Integrating these resources can be pivotal in helping clinical settings to develop effective interventions and support programs. Mental health professionals can leverage these insights to create more inclusive environments, integrating cultural sensitivity into therapy sessions. Specifically, for universities with Asian American cultural centers, therapists could consider referring Asian American students to cultural centers as part of a treatment plan for those who have recently experienced racial microaggressions and/or facing alienation. Clinicians can become familiar with Phinney's model in assessing Asian American as well as other racial/ethnic minority college students who are within the ethnic identity exploration stage (Phinney, 1993). Encouraging visits to Asian American cultural centers can offer vital social support and resources for ethnic identity exploration, creating safe spaces for individuals. This approach may foster personal and social development for Asian American undergraduates facing disconnection, cultural and familial distress, and racism

Limitations

In this dissertation, Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development serves as the main framework to examine ethnic belonging but may not encompass the full range of experiences across Asian American subgroups. Acknowledging the difficulty in establishing causality, this work suggests future research should utilize longitudinal methods to track the evolution of racial

identity and its convergence with ethnic belonging over time. While the quantitative approach is beneficial for uncovering correlations, it may not capture the complexity and ever-changing nature of ethnic identity development as effectively as qualitative data might. Additionally, the study's design may not fully account for the impact of cultural center staff's own ethnic and gender identities on the support provided to students. Consequently, the ability to infer causality from the observed correlations is limited, warranting a cautious interpretation of the interaction between cultural centers and experiences of microaggressions in shaping ethnic belonging. Future research is encouraged to utilize mixed-method approaches to explore the complex dynamics within cultural centers, particularly the influence of staff's identities on student outcomes. These methods would enhance understanding of the centers' roles and the nuanced nature of microaggressions encountered by students.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

This dissertation explores the interplay between Asian American cultural centers, racial microaggressions, and sense of ethnic belonging among Asian American undergraduates. Findings highlight the nuance roles that cultural centers may play in enhancing sense of ethnic belonging for students, underscoring the importance of cultural centers as part of a wider relational network on campus. A significant positive correlation between racial microaggressions and a sense of belonging at institutions with cultural centers suggests these cultural centers' subtle impact on students' ethnic identity development. Marginal variations of Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R) scores among sociodemographic and gender identities groups suggests the multifaceted experience of ethnic identity exploration, how sense of belonging for Asian American students is shaped by a broader spectrum of social, cultural, and individual influences, not solely by the presence of cultural centers. This study illuminates the importance of inclusive environments in higher education for the development of ethnic identity. It highlights the need for continued research to elucidate the complexities of ethnic identity formation among Asian American undergraduate students and to evaluate how programming and leadership within cultural centers influence student experiences.

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APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 4.1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants' Gender Identity

Gender Identity	N	%
Cisman	81	46.3%
Ciswoman	74	42.9%
Don't Know	1	0.6%
Non-Binary	12	6.9%
Preferred not to say	2	1.1%
Transman	1	0.6%
Transwoman	1	0.6%
Other: Man	2	1.1%
Total number of participants	**174**	**100%**

Note. This table illustrates the breakdown of study participants based on gender identity. The categories include male, female, and other gender identities as identified by the participants.

Table 4.2

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants' Current Academic Year

Undergraduate Year	N	%
First-Year	18	10.3%
Second-Year	30	17.7%
Third-Year	44	25.1%
Fourth-Year	59	33.7%
Fifth Year and Above	20	11.4%
Prefer not to say	3	1.7%
Total	**174**	**100%**

Note. This table provides the distribution of participants across different academic years as it demonstrates the diversity of the study population regarding their stage in their academic journey.

Table 4.3

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants' Age

Age Range	N	%
18-21	105	60.6%
21-25	55	31.4%
26-30	11	6.3%
30 and older	3	1.7%
Total	**174**	**100%**

Note. This table reflects the age distribution of the study participants. It is divided into age ranges, providing insight into the age diversity of the study population.

Table 4.4

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants' Residence

Residence	N	%
On-Campus	55	32%
Off-Campus	118	67.4%
Not sure	1	0.6%
Total	**174**	**100%**

Note. This table displays the number of reported residences. This information offers a glimpse into the varying living circumstances of the participants.

Table 4.5

Regional Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants' Ethnicity

Ethnic Identity: Broad		
	N	*%*
East Asian American	54	31.4%
Southeast Asian American	50	28.6%
South Asian American	28	16.0%
Multiracial Asian American	23	13.1%
Multiethnic Asian American	18	10.3%
Native Hawaiian	1	0.6%
Total	**174**	**100%**

Note. This table provides an overview of the ethnic breakdown of the study's participants. Frequencies and percentages for each regional background helps highlight the overall cultural diversity within the study population.

Table 4.6

Specific Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants' Ethnicity

Ethnicity	N	%
East Asian American	**54**	**31.4%**
Chinese American	37	19.0%
Japanese American	3	3.6%
Korean American	13	6.3%
Taiwanese American	1	1.6%
Southeast Asian American	**50**	**28.6%**
Laotian American	3	1.7%
Vietnamese American	14	8.0%
Thai American	1	0.6%
Filipino American	23	13.1%
Hmong American	5	2.9%
Cambodian American	3	1.7%
Singaporean American	1	0.6%

Ethnicity	N	%
South Asian Americans	**28**	**16.0%**
Indian American	18	10.3%
Pakistani American	8	4.6%
Nepalese American	2	1.1%
Multi-Racial Asian American (Mixed Other Racial Identities)	**23**	**10.3%**
Chinese American, Filipino American, Mixed Other Racial Identities	1	0.6%
Chinese American; Mixed Other Racial Identities	3	1.7%
Filipino-American; Mixed with other Racial Identities	4	2.3%
Filipino-American; Taiwanese-American; Mixed with Other	1	0.6%
Japanese-American; Mixed with other racial identities	2	1.1%
Korean American; Mixed with Other Racial Identities	6	3.4%
Thai-American; Mixed with other racial identities	1	0.6%
Vietnamese-American; Mixed with Other Racial identities	2	1.1%

Ethnicity	N	%
Identified as Mixed with Other Racial Identities	3	1.7%
Multi-Ethnic Asian American	**18**	**10.3%**
Burmese American & Chinese American	1	0.6%
Cambodian American & Chinese American	1	0.6%
Chinese American & Filipino American	1	0.6%
Chinese-American; Indian American	1	0.6%
Chinese-American; Korean-American	1	0.6%
Chinese-American; Malaysian-American; Singaporean-American	1	0.6%
Chinese-American; Pakistani American	1	0.6%
Chinese-American; Taiwanese American	3	1.7%
Chinese-American; Vietnamese-American	4	2.3%
Filipino-American; Japanese-American	1	0.6%
Filipino-American; Thai-American	1	0.6%
Indian-American; Sri Lankan-American	1	0.6%

Ethnicity	N	%
Laotian-American; Thai-American; Vietnamese-American	1	0.6%
Other	**1**	0.6%
Native Hawaiian	1	0.6%
Total	**174**	**100%**

Note. This table provides a detailed view of the ethnic breakdown of the study's participants. Frequencies and percentages for each reported ethnicity help to highlight the cultural diversity within the study population.

Table 4.7

Presence of Cultural Center

Presence of Asian American Cultural Center	N	%
No Cultural Center	63	36%
Yes Cultural Center	111	64%
Total	**174**	**100%**

Note. This table provides the number of participants reports of having an Asian American cultural center on their campus.

Table 4.8

Frequency of Visits to Cultural Center

Participants Reported Frequency of Visits to Cultural Centers		
Frequency	**N**	**Percent**
4+ times a month	12	6.9%
once every two months	4	2.3%
1-3 times a month	12	6.9%
Never visited	50	28.6%
Only visited the cultural center once or twice	33	19.4%
Total	**111**	**100%**

Note. This table provides the frequency of cultural center visitations of participants who reported of having an Asian American cultural center on their campus.

Table 4.9

MEIM-R & R28REM Scores Among All Participants

	N	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
MEIM-R	174	22.13	4.725
R28REM	174	42.61	16.067

Primary Research Findings

Table 4.10

Influence of Cultural Centers on Sense of Belonging

Group Statistics					
	Cultural Center	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SD Error of Mean**
MEIM-R Total Scores	No	63	21.38	5.088	.641
	Yes	111	22.54	4.478	.423

Table 4.11

Independent Samples Test

Independent Samples Test											
		Levenne's Test for Equality of Variances		**T-test for Equality of Means**		**Significance**				**95% Confidence Interval of the Difference**	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
MEIM-R Total Scores	Equal variance assumed	.913	.341	-1.570	173	.059	.118	-1.164	.741	-2.626	.299
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.515		.066	.132	-1.164	.768	-2.685	.358

Table 4.12

Independent Sample Effect Sizes

Independent Sample Effect Sizes					
				95% Confidence Interval	
		Standardizer	Point Estimate	Lower	Upper
MEIM-R Total	Cohen's d	4.706	-.247	-.557	.063
	Hedge's Correction	4.726	-.246	-.554	.063
	Glass's delta	4.478	-.260	-.570	.061

Note. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes. Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation. Hedge's correction uses the pooled standard deviation plus a correction factor. Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Table 4.13

Presence vs Absence of Cultural Center: Correlations (MEIM-R and R28REM)

Correlations			MEIM-R	R28REM
Presence of Cultural Centers	MEIM-R	Pearson Correlation	1	.213*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.024
		N	111	111
	R28REM	Pearson Correlation	.213*	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	
		Pearson Correlation	1	.213*
Absence of Cultural Centers	MEIM-R	Pearson Correlation	1	.060
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.484
		N	63	63
	R28REM	Pearson Correlation	.060	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.484	
		N	63	63

Table 4.14

All Participants: Racial Microaggressions and Sense of Ethnic Belonging: Pearson Correlation

(MEIM-R and R28REM)

Correlations		MEIM-R	R29REM
MEIM-R	Pearson Correlation	1	.168*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026
	N	173	173
R28REM	Pearson Correlation	.168*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	
	N	173	173

Table 4.15

Confidence Intervals

Confidence Intervals			95% Confidence Intervals (2-tailed)	
MEIM-R – R28REM	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Lower	Upper
	.168	.026	.020	.309

Table 4.16

MEIM-R Mean Scores for Regional Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants Ethnicity

Ethnic Identity: Broad		
	N	MEIM-R Scores
East Asian American	54	21.64
Southeast Asian American	50	22.76
South Asian American	28	22.68
Multiracial Asian American	23	19.87
Multiethnic Asian American	18	23.44
Native Hawaiian	1	23.00

Table 4.17

MEIM-R and R28REM Mean Scores for Gender Identities

Gender Identity			
	N	MEIM-R Scores	R28REM Scores
Male Identified Individuals (Cisgender Men & Transmen & "Men")	84	22.45	34.00
Female Identified Individuals (Cisgender Women & Transwomen)	75	21.88	43.28
Preferred Not to Say & I Don't Know	3	21.90	37.50
Non-Binary Individuals	12	21.42	46.75

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX B.1: RECRUITMENT FLYER

APPENDIX B.2: RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER DIRECTORS

Subject: Research Study: Asian American Cultural/Resource Centers & Mental Health

Hello _____,

My name is Malina Banavong Maladore, and I am a fifth-year clinical psychology doctoral candidate at Antioch University New England.

I am interested in researching the experiences of current Asian American undergraduate students. In particular, how might campus communities gathering spaces (e.g., cultural centers, resource centers) impact Asian American undergraduate students' sense of belongingness and mental well-being.

I'm wondering if you can share this flyer to students via newsletter, thank you!

Best,

Malina Banavong Maladore, M.A., M.S.
Clinical Psychology Doctoral Candidate (PsyD)
Antioch University New England
She/Her/Hers

APPENDIX B.3: RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENTS

Subject: Research Study on AAPI Undergraduate Students

Hi _____,

My name is Malina Maladore, and I am a fifth-year clinical psychology doctoral candidate at Antioch University New England.

I am currently researching the role of how campus communities, such as Asian American Cultural Centers, may affect students' sense of belonging and mental well-being. I hope this research will advocate for the creation of more such centers and secure additional funding and expansion for existing ones.

I am seeking undergraduate participants for my survey and would greatly appreciate it if _____ department of Asian/Asian American studies could possibly share my survey with AAPI undergraduate students.

Enclosed you will find a flyer with my email to share with students (attached below). I look forward with hopeful anticipation to your positive response!

Best,

Malina Banavong Maladore, M.A., M.S.
Clinical Psychology Doctoral Candidate (PsyD)
Antioch University New England
She/Her/Hers

APPENDIX B.4: INSTAGRAM RECRUITMENT MESSAGE TO ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENT GROUPS

Hi! My name is Malina, I'm a doctoral candidate at Antioch University New England and I'm doing my dissertation research on the importance of community resources, such as cultural centers for AAPI students, and how they boost well-being and sense of belonging. Would your organization, _____, have students that may be interested in taking my five-minute survey and possibly share my flyer on your Insta story? The goal of my research is to further advocate the creation and expansion for these cultural resources and centers. Thanks!

APPENDIX B.5: PROLIFIC RECRUITMENT MESSAGE

Title of Study: Asian American Undergraduate Students Well-Being & Cultural Centers

Thank you for your interest in this dissertation research survey!

This is a 5-10 minute multiple choice survey is for Asian American identified undergraduate students ages 18+ who are currently enrolled at higher education institutions in the United States.

Participants will answer questions about their current college campus experiences and mental health as Asian American undergraduate students. Specifically, how campus communities gathering spaces (e.g., cultural centers, resource centers) may influence their sense of belonging and mental well-being.

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

Campus Community Impact on AAPI Students Sense of Belongingness & Well-Being

This survey explores the experiences of current Asian American undergraduate students. In particular, how sense of belongingness and mental well-being may be impacted by the campus community.

The dissertation research is being conducted by Malina Banavong Maladore, a fifth-year clinical psychology doctoral candidate at Antioch University New England and is supervised by Dr. Monique Bowen and Dr. Jennifer Leslie.

Survey Time: **5-10 minutes**

If you are interested, please click next:

Who Can Participate?
- Must be 18 or older and currently enrolled at a higher education institution
- Racially identify as Asian-American

Voluntary Nature of the Study
- Your participation is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty.
- You may also refuse to answer certain questions.
- A decision to participate or to withdraw will not affect your standing in your class or at the university.

Anonymity
- Your participation in this online survey is completely anonymous.
- No information you share electronically can be traced to you or the computer you used.
- Data will be kept stored in the online survey site's database. Only mentioned individuals above will have access to the data.
- Your participation in the survey indicates you read this consent information and agreed to participate in this anonymous survey.
- Participants will not be able to view their results after submitting their answers.

Contact and Questions
If you have questions about this study itself you may contact either Malina Maladore at and Dr. Jennifer Leslie at and/or Dr. Monique Bowen at .

If you have any questions concerning rights as a research participant, you may contact Antioch University New England Head of IRB, Dr. Kevin Lyness at and/or Antioch University New England Provost Dr. Shawn Fitzgerald at .

Counseling Support

Because of the sensitive nature of some of these questions, there is a possibility that you may experience psychological distress as a result of taking this survey. If you find that you need to talk with someone about how you are feeling, please reach out to your school counseling services or reach out these following services:

National Hotlines
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- Crisis Text Line: Text 741741
- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: 1-800-950-NAMI or text **"HELPLINE"** to 62640
- Self-Harm Hotline: 1-800-366-8288
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- Family Violence Helpline: 1-800-996-6228
- LGBTQ Hotline: 1-888-843-4564

AAPI Specific Resources
- Asian American Suicide Prevention and Education: 1-877-990-8585
- Asian Violence Resources: https://anti-asianviolenceresources.carrd.co/
- Asian American Health Initiative: https://aahiinfo.org/aahi-resources/
- Asian Mental Health Project: https://asianmentalhealthproject.com/
- Asian Pride Project: http://asianprideproject.org/

AAPI Social Mental Health Resources
Instagram accounts that offer mental health information and resources for Asian communities:
- @asiansdotherapy
- @asianmentalhealthcollective
- @asianmentalhealthproject
- @asiansformentalhealth
- @browngirltherapy
- @itsjiyounkim
- @hieupham.lcsw
- @projectlotusorg
- @southasiantherapists
- @themindhealthspot
- By clicking the **"Next"** button you have given your consent to participate.

If you'd like to leave the survey at any time, just click **"Exit this Survey"**

APPENDIX D

ONLINE SURVEY

<u>SECTION I</u>

Please answer these following questions

1. What is your age?

      18-20
      21-25
      26-30
      30+
      Prefer not to say

2. What is your gender-identity?

      Ciswoman
      Cisman
      Non-Binary
      Transwoman
      Transman
      Don't Know
      Prefer not to say

3. What is your current year?

      First-Year (Freshman)
      Second-Year (Sophomore)
      Third-Year (Junior)
      Fourth-Year (Senior)
      Fifth-Year and Above
      Prefer not to say

4. Do you live on-campus or off-campus?

      On-Campus
      Off-Campus
      Prefer not to say

5. Which best describes your ethnic identity? Please check all that apply

      Bangladeshi-American
      Bhutanese-American
      Burmese-American
      Bruneian-American
      Cambodian-American
      Chinese-American

Filipino-American
Hmong-American
Indian-American
Indonesian-American
Japanese-American
Korean-American
Laotian-American
Malaysian-American
Mongolian-American
Nepalese-American
Pakistani-American
Singaporean-American
Sri Lankan-American
Thai-American
Taiwanese-American
Vietnamese-American
Mixed with other racial identities (White, Black, Latinx, Arabic, and/or Indigenous).
Preferred not to say
Other:____

SECTION II

A **university cultural center** includes the following:

- A designated establishment for specific racial/cultural background
- Physical communal space located on campus
- Full-time staff and director
- Offer resources and community events

6. Does your university campus currently offer a cultural center specifically designated for Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) students?

My university offers a designated cultural center for AAPI students on campus.
My university offers a designated cultural center for AAPI students but this center is not located on campus.
My university offers a multicultural center for students but the center is not a specific space for AAPI students.
My university offers cultural student groups and resources for AAPI students but does not offer a cultural center/multicultural center.
My university does not offer a cultural center or cultural student groups for AAPI students.
Don't know.

7. If your university campus does offer a cultural center specifically designated for AAPI students,

how often do you visit and/or attend the cultural center events on a monthly basis?

>
> Very often: 4+ times a month.
> Somewhat often: 1-3 times a month.
> Occasionally: once every two months.
> Rarely: only visited the cultural center once or twice.
> Never: never visited the cultural center.
> Don't know.
> My university does not offer an AAPI cultural center.

SECTION III

The following questions 1-6 are from the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R).

Phinney, J., & Ong, A. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54(3), 271-281. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.271

Reprinted with permission, see Appendix E.

Instructions: Please answer the following questions that most accurately describe you.

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.

>
> Strongly Disagree
> Disagree
> Neither
> Agree
> Strongly agree

2. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.

>
> Strongly Disagree
> Disagree
> Neither
> Agree
> Strongly agree

3. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.

>
> Strongly Disagree
> Disagree
> Neither
> Agree

Strongly agree

4. I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better.

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither
Agree
Strongly agree

5. I have often talked to other people to learn more about my ethnic group.

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither
Agree
Strongly agree

6. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither
Agree
Strongly agree

SECTION IV

The following questions 1-22 are from the Revised 28-Item Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale

Forrest-Bank, S., Jenson, J. M., & Trecartin, S. (2015). The revised 28-item racial and ethnic microaggressions scale (R28REMS): Examining the factorial structure for black, Latino/Hispanic, and Asian young adults. *Journal of Social Service Research*, *41*(3), 326–344. https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2014.987944

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Please choose the number of times where someone made these assumptions about you based on your race within the past 6 months:

1. I spoke a language other than English.

Did not experience this event
Once
2 times

3 times
4 times
5 times or more

2. I would have a lower education.

Did not experience this event
Once
2 times
3 times
4 times
5 times or more

3. I would not be intelligent.

Did not experience this event
Once
2 times
3 times
4 times
5 times or more

4. I would not be educated.

Did not experience this event
Once
2 times
3 times
4 times
5 times or more

5. I held a lower paying job.

Did not experience this event
Once
2 times
3 times
4 times
5 times or more

6. I speak similar languages to other people in my race.

Did not experience this event
Once
2 times
3 times
4 times

5 times or more

7. I was poor.

     Did not experience this event
     Once
     2 times
     3 times
     4 times
     5 times or more

8. I ate foods associated with my race/culture every day.

     Did not experience this event
     Once
     2 times
     3 times
     4 times
     5 times or more

9. I was inarticulate.

     Did not experience this event
     Once
     2 times
     3 times
     4 times
     5 times or more

10. All people in my racial group look alike.

     Did not experience this event
     Once
     2 times
     3 times
     4 times
     5 times or more

11. Asked me to teach them words in my "native language."

     Did not experience this event
     Once
     2 times
     3 times
     4 times
     5 times or more

Instructions: Please choose the number of times where someone has said these statements to you within the past 6 months:

12. "I don't see race."

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times
    5 times or more

13. "I don't see color."

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times
    5 times or more

14. "I'm colorblind."

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times
    5 times or more

15. "You should stop complaining about race."

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times
    5 times or more

16. "People should not think about race anymore."

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times
    5 times or more

Instructions: Please choose the number of times you have experienced these following events where someone has reacted to you due to your race within the past 6 months:

17. Avoided walking near me.

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times
    5 times or more

18. Avoided sitting next to me.

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times
    5 times or more

19. Acted surprised at my success.

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times
    5 times or more

20. Clenched her/his purse or wallet.

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times
    5 times or more

21. Someone avoided eye contact with me.

    Did not experience this event
    Once
    2 times
    3 times
    4 times

5 times or more

Instructions: Think about your experiences with race. Please read each item and think of how many times these events has happened to you within the past 6 months.

22. I observed people of my race portrayed positively in magazines.

Did not experience this event
Once
2 times
3 times
4 times
5 times or more

23. I read popular books or magazines which featured people from my racial group.

Did not experience this event
Once
2 times
3 times
4 times
5 times or more

SECTION V

Instructions: Please answer these questions that most accurately describe your experience within the past 2 months.

Questions 1-9 in this section were asked in the survey but results were not included in the data. This section contains the PHQ-9 scale (Kroenke et al., 2001).

SECTION VI

Instructions: Please answer these questions that most accurately describe your experience within the past 2 months.

Questions 1-7 in this section were asked in the survey but results were not included in the data. This section contains the GAD-7 scale (Spitzer et al. 2006).

Thank you for taking this survey!

If you are experiencing any psychological distress as a result of taking this survey, please reach out to your school counseling services or reach out these following services:

National Hotlines

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- Crisis Text Line: Text 741741
- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: 1-800-950-NAMI or text "HELPLINE" to 62640
- Self-Harm Hotline: 1-800-366-8288
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- Family Violence Helpline: 1-800-996-6228
- LGBTQ Hotline: 1-888-843-4564

AAPI Specific Resources

- Asian American Suicide Prevention and Education: **1-877-990-8585**
- Asian Violence Resources: https://anti-asianviolenceresources.carrd.co/
- Asian American Health Initiative: https://aahiinfo.org/aahi-resources/
- Asian Mental Health Project: https://asianmentalhealthproject.com/
- Asian Pride Project: http://asianprideproject.org/

AAPI Social Mental Health Resources
Instagram accounts that offer mental health information and resources for Asian communities:

- @asiansdotherapy
- @asianmentalhealthcollective
- @asianmentalhealthproject
- @asiansformentalhealth
- @browngirltherapy
- @itsjiyounkim
- @hieupham.lcsw
- @projectlotusorg
- @southasiantherapists
- @themindhealthspot

APPENDIX E

PERMISSIONS

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Apr 05, 2024

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THE IMPACT OF ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTERS ON SENSE OF BELONGINGNESS FOR ASIAN AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Antioch University New England Apr 2024
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The Revised 28-Item Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (R28REMS): Examining the Factorial Structure for Black, Latino/Hispanic, and Asian Young Adults

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