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## Asian culture and Christian spirituality

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## Introduction

Asian-Americans are a broad and diverse group, numbering approximately 10 million in the United States (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2001). Common traditional core values among Asian-Americans include respecting one's elders and a more authoritarian parenting style, controlled emotionality, inseparability of mind and body, and high academic and occupational goals (Sue and Sue, 2003). Asian-Americans also vary widely in their SES, education, sexuality, and mental health issues—factors often obscured by the “model minority myth” (Yin, 2000).

Traditional Asian-American religious beliefs and systems have been integrated into contemporary psychological research and interventions (e.g. DBT, ACT), but Christian Asian-Americans have seldom been studied.

Defining religion and spirituality remains controversial (e.g., Yick, & Oomen-Early, 2008; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). Here we treat them as inter-related constructs conveying public and private facets of an individual's or group's connection with the transcendent.

Relationships among culture, spiritual well-being, and early family dynamics were explored among an Asian sample using the FACES-IV, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, and the SL-Asian Self-Identity Scale. The authors believed that (a) respondents with healthier family scores would report higher spiritual, religious, and existential well-being; (b) respondents with healthier family scores would identify themselves as more acculturated; and c) higher acculturation would correspond with increased spiritual well-being.

## Methods

### Participants

**Total:** N=117

**Gender:** 75 female (67.6%); 36 male (32.4%)

**Ages:** 16 to 69, avg = 31.2, SD = 12.8.

**Ethnicity:** 49 Chinese (44.1%), nine Filipino (8.1%), one Hmong (.9%), four Japanese (3.6%), 34 Korean (30.6%), seven Taiwanese (6.3%), three Vietnamese (2.7%), and four “Asian-Other” participants.

**Religion:** Three (2.7%) individuals identified themselves as Agnostic, one (.9%) as atheistic, and 107 (96.4%) as Christian.

**Christianity:** 13 (12.3%) Catholic, one (.9%) Eastern Orthodox, and 92 (86.8%) Protestant.

**Protestant Denominations:** 28 (25.2%) Baptist, 3 (2.7%) Calvinist, 8 (7.2%) Charismatic, 7 (6.3%) Evangelical, 1 (.9%) Methodist/Wesleyan, 35 (31.5%) Non-denominational, 2 (1.8%) Pentecostal, 13 (11.7%) Presbyterian, 4 (3.6%) Reformed, and 1 (.9%) Seventh-Day Adventist; nine (8.1%) described themselves as “Christian-Other”.

### Instruments:

**Demographics**, including gender, age, ethnicity, religious and spiritual identity

**Spiritual Well-Being Scale**

**Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale**

**Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales – Fourth Revision.**

**Procedure:** Participants were solicited by recruiters who assisted in gathering data; most were from communities in southern California, northwestern Oregon and northwestern Washington. However, no data were gathered to identify the geographical location of participants. Access to **Survey-Monkey** self-report survey was electronically disseminated via e-mail.

	Enmeshment	Disengagement	Rigidity	Chaotic
<b>Spiritual Well-Being</b>	$F(3,107) = 2.00, p = NS$	$F(3, 107) = 3.53, p = .017^*$	$F(3,107) = .03, p = NS$	$F(3,107) = 4.22, p = .007^{**}$
<b>Religious Well-Being</b>	$F(3,107) = 1.52, p = NS$	$F(3,107) = 2.40, p = NS$	$F(3,107) = .31, p = NS$	$F(3,107) = 3.89, p = .011^*$
<b>Emotional Well-Being</b>	$F(3,107) = 2.75, p = .046^*$	$F(3,107) = 3.64, p = .015^*$	$F(3,107) = 1.04, p = NS$	$F(3,107) = 2.93, p = .04^*$

\* Denotes significance  $p < .05$ , while \*\* denotes significance of  $p < .01$

### ANOVA Results For SL-ASIA Scales and SWB, RWB, EWB

SWB Scale	Results
SWB	$F(3,107) = 0.28, p = NS$
RWB	$F(3,107) = 0.70, p = NS$
EWB	$F(3,107) = 0.31, p = NS$

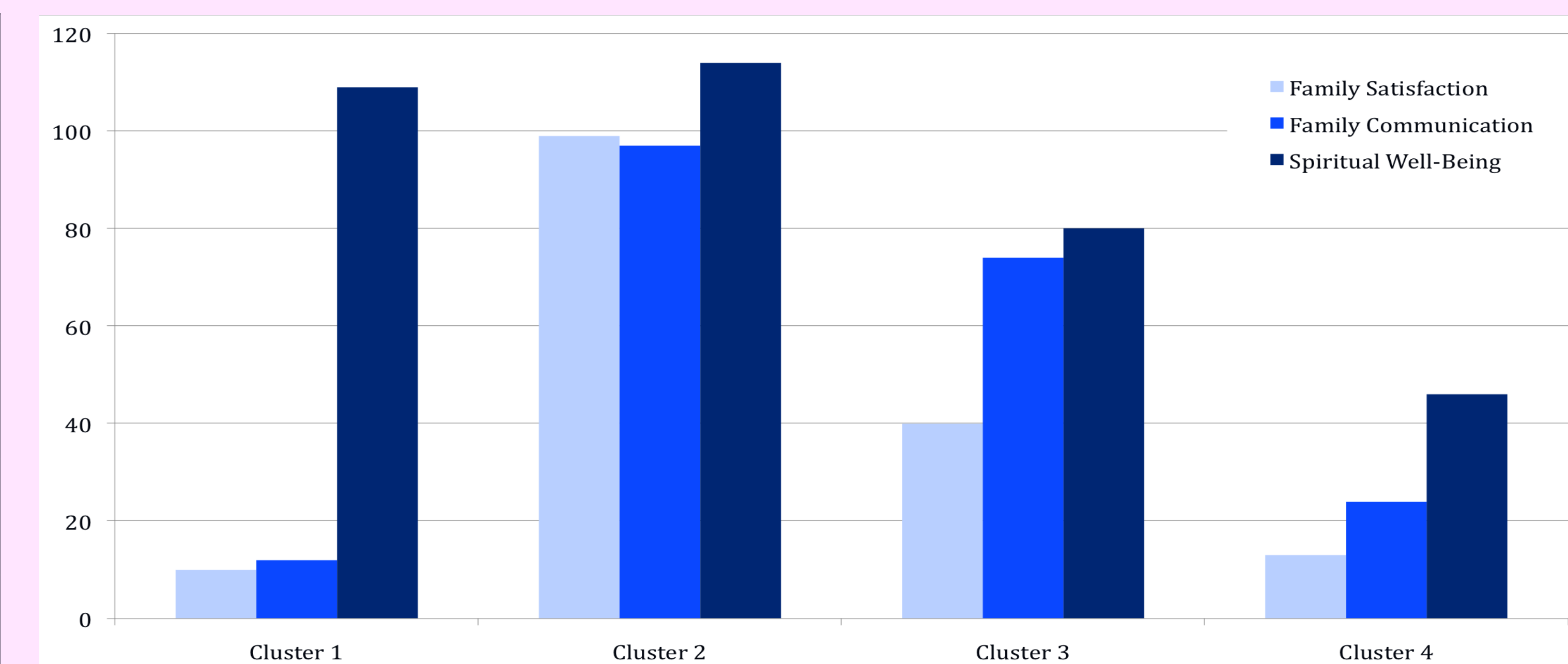
### ANOVA Results For FACES-IV Scales and SL-ASIA

Scale	Results
Enmeshed	$F(3,107) = 0.87, p = NS$
Disengaged	$F(3,107) = 0.60, p = NS$
Rigid	$F(3,107) = 1.35, p = NS$
Chaotic	$F(3,107) = 0.64, p = NS$

### Cluster Analysis Results

Variable	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
Ethnicity	Korean	Chinese	Chinese	Taiwanese
Rel/Spir. Identity	Christian	Christian	Christian	Atheistic
Orthodox Christ.	Protestant	Protestant	Protestant	Protestant
Denomination	Reformed	Baptist	Evangelical	Non-Denom.
Family Satisfaction*	10%	99%	40%	13%
Family Comm.*	12%	97%	74%	24%
FACES-IV Total Ratio**	0.88	2.25	1.94	1.43
Acculturation***	3.69	3.20	3.20	2.40
Spiritual Well-Being	109	114	80	46
Cluster N	41	15	39	11

Note. N = 111, \*1-100%, \*\*ratio >1 healthier, ratio <1 unhealthier, \*\*\* 1 = Asian culture, 3 = bicultural, 5 = Western culture.



## Discussion

1. No significant relationships were found between acculturation on the SL-Asia and either spiritual wellbeing or family styles. Limited range on acculturation, or limitations in the utility of the one-dimensional acculturation scale (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010) may account for this outcome.
2. Some weak relationships were found for spiritual wellbeing and family styles. The use of categorical rather than dimensional data for family style may have weakened these results.
3. Cluster analysis, which used dimensional data, was able to identify distinct groups in the sample characterized by differences in acculturation, spiritual wellbeing, and family style. This finding suggests that family style may be more powerfully assessed using a dimensional approach and that there are important relationships among acculturation, family style, and spiritual wellbeing in the present sample.
4. Sample limitations and failure to assess the duration of faith commitment limit generalization from these data. In particular, those who have left family religious traditions are likely under-represented.
5. The finding that those with highest and lowest family adaptability and cohesion scores showed highest spiritual wellbeing scores suggests a curvilinear relationship. Perhaps family stresses are greater at intermediate levels of adaptability and cohesion than at either extreme.
6. Clinically, these data suggest that it is important to attend to both acculturation and family dynamics among Asian-Americans. They also suggest the relationship of these factors to wellbeing may be complex.

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## Unidimensional Model of Acculturation

Asian Culture ← Bicultural → American Culture

