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Stress as a Motivation for Asian-Heritage Young Adults'
Rave Participation in Southern California

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Sociology

by

Min Young Yoo

December 2017

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Stress as a Motivation for Asian-Heritage Young Adults' Rave Participation in Southern California

by

Min Young Yoo

Master of Arts, Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, December 2017
Dr. Tanya Nieri, Chairperson

Using a sample of 32 Asian-heritage¹ young adults, between 19 to 24 years of age, from Southern California, this qualitative study examined the motivations for participation in raves, all-night, electronic dance music events. Results based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews suggest that stress, particularly associated with cultural issues, was a major motivation for participation. Cultural stressors included expectations to be a model minority, high expectations from family, parent-child acculturation differences, and discrimination due to sexual orientation by one's own ethnic community. Music, collective experience, and drug use at raves were the mechanisms by which stress was reportedly reduced. These findings suggest that raves may provide positive mental health benefits for Asian-heritage young adults.

¹ "Asian-heritage" is used throughout the paper as a category that includes people in the United States who self-label as Asian, Asian-American, or an ethnic national of an Asian country.

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Introduction

Asian-heritage people constitute one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States. There are approximately 21 million Asian-heritage people living in the U.S. as of 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). By 2060, this group will double to 48.6 million residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). Despite the growth of this group, the experiences of Asian-heritage people, and especially Asian-heritage young people, continue to be understudied in academic research as part of the legacy of historical racism and legal exclusion (Lee and Zhou 2004). The lack of research allows for the perpetuation of stereotypes and misconceptions – for example, that Asian-heritage people constitute a monolithic, rather than highly diverse group, they are a model minority, and they do not experience discrimination in the 21st century. In addition, there is the inaccurate notion that they do not engage in deviant behavior, such as drug use. To provide a more accurate and complete picture, more research on Asian-heritage young people is needed.

Despite more recent mainstreaming, many still view raves as part of a “deviant” subculture and therefore affiliation can confer some degree of stigma unto attendees (Anderson 2009). However, this study emphasizes that raves can offer positive benefits to participants, and specifically Asian-heritage young adults, as well. One central benefit is attendees’ perception that these all night social dance events alleviate stress.

The Asian-heritage experience in the United States

To understand Asian-heritage young adults’ rave participation, it is important to consider the cultural stressors associated with being of Asian-heritage in the United

States. Two strands of literature in race and ethnic relations shed light on the stressors associated with being an ethnic minority or immigrant: the process of acculturation and the model minority myth. First, acculturation is the process of change at the individual and group levels as a result of interaction with and exposure to another culture (Bornstein and Cote 2005; Chun, Organista, and Marin 2013). Prior research, including on Asian-heritage people in the U.S., suggests that acculturation to American culture is associated with some undesirable health outcomes, such as greater drug use among young adults (Hahm, Lahiff, and Guterman 2003, 2004). Furthermore, acculturation may be stressful for young adults if they have assimilated to American culture faster than their parents who may uphold traditional Asian cultural values and behaviors (Crane et al. 2005; Kim, Ahn, and Lam 2009; Kim et al. 2009). Parent-child acculturation differences may lead to parent-child conflicts and emotional distancing (Costigan and Dokis 2006; Hwang 2006), leaving the child feeling alienated and motivating him or her to seek alternative identities and lifestyles, such as through rave participation.

Second, given the socioeconomic and educational success of Asian-heritage people relative to other racial/ethnic groups in the U.S., they are often branded as a “model minority” group – that is, a group that is successful and should be emulated by other minority groups. However, Asian-heritage people are not a model minority (Chou 2008). The “model” label is problematic because it essentializes Asianness and implies that the outcomes of Asian-heritage people can be reduced to being Asian. In fact, many diverse factors operate to explain the success of this group relative to other ethnic minority groups. The label is also problematic because it ignores sub-group diversity. For

example, Southeast Asians (i.e., Cambodians, Hmong, Laotians and Vietnamese) face issues of poverty, unemployment, and labor market discrimination and as such, are quite distinct from other Asian subgroups (Mar 2005; Ponce et al. 2009). Treating Asian-heritage people as a monolithic group allows policies to be put in place that disadvantage the more marginalized sub-groups. The model minority myth is consistent with the ideology of colorblindness, which aims to minimize and disregard the subordination of ethnic minorities and functions to preserve power among White, European-Americans (Bonilla-Silva 2013).

Today, the model minority stereotype is one of the most pervasive stereotypes for Asian-heritage people (Kawai 2005; Lee 2015). Members of this group are expected to uphold this stereotype, and often times, they internalize it (Zhou and Xiong 2005; Chao et al. 2013). Furthermore, the stereotype justifies “othering” people who do not fit it (Lee and Zhou 2004). Research shows that many Asian-heritage people, including young adults, struggle to be recognized by society for who they are rather than for the extent to which they reflect the stereotype (Lee 2015). Disjunctures between the person’s self-view and the dominant society’s view are associated with undesirable outcomes, such as depression and low self-esteem (Stryker and Burke 2000; Marcussen 2006). As a result, young adults may look for spaces, such as raves, in which the stereotype is not applied, the Asian-heritage identity is respected, or alternative identities are appreciated. Thus, this study aims to understand how culture-related stress, whether originating in the family or society, may motivate rave participation and shape rave experience.

The rave scene

A rave is an all-night social event, typically for young adults. It features music, dance, art, and interactive exhibits that provide sensory experiences. A rave features live music; however, the performances are typically given by disc jockeys (DJs) rather than musicians. Raves most commonly feature electronic dance music (EDM), which includes repetitive beats of techno, house, trance, drum, and bass. The music is amplified by large audio speakers and presented in conjunction with laser light shows and other visual effects on decorated stages. While some raves are held in small settings, such as nightclubs, others are large-scale events (i.e., electronic music festivals) that can accommodate thousands of attendees. A key feature of raves is the ethos of PLUR (Peace Love Unity Respect), which advocates for the inclusion of all people, regardless of race, gender, social class, sexuality, or other personal difference (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007). Another key feature of raves is MDMA (a.k.a. ecstasy) consumption, due to the drug's perceived empathy-inducing properties which are considered to be consistent with PLUR ideology (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007).

Although raves began as underground events catering to a specific subcultural group, they have become very popular, commercialized, and mainstream (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007; Anderson 2009). While they originally catered primarily to a white audience (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007), Asian-heritage people constitute a large and growing group of rave participants (Hunt, Milhet, and Bergeron 2011). Some raves are even geared toward Asian-heritage participants in particular (Hunt, Moloney, and Evans 2011). Despite raves' growing popularity in the U.S. and among Asian-heritage young adults, prior research has primarily focused on drug consumption and other risk behaviors

at raves (Arria et al. 2002; Yacoubian et al. 2003; Engels 2004; Armenian et al. 2013) or on the age, gender, and socioeconomic status of rave attendees (Measham, Parker, and Aldridge 1998; Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007), with little attention to the role of race/ethnicity. Lastly, while research has found that MDMA is a common practice at raves (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007), it does not explore whether drug use motivates rave participation. Therefore, to fill in these gaps in the literature, this research explores how experiences and behaviors at raves, such as drug use, may be related to their motivations.

Prior research on motivations for rave participation

Prior research exploring rave participation has produced inconsistent findings about the motivations for participation. There is a debate in the academic literature regarding whether rave participation is a good or bad for society. Some cultural studies scholars argue that rave participation should be seen as a form of escape that offers a therapeutic experience (Tomlinson 1998; Reynolds 1998, 1999; Fritz 1999; Bennet and Peterson 2004; Joe-Laidler and Hunt 2013). Others have framed rave participation as a form of counter-cultural resistance or alternative lifestyle (Hill 2002; Hitzler and Pfadenhauer 2002; Kosmicki 2001), which may involve apathy or indifference towards mainstream cultures (Riley, Griffin and Morey 2010). Overall, within the cultural perspective, raves are presented as opportunities to escape from the demands and values of the dominant society (e.g., individualism, competition, material success). The extent to which rave participation should be understood as a form of therapy, resistance, or apathy is up for debate. While some scholarship presents favorable views of raves, other work is

highly critical, claiming that they are sites associated with leisure and hedonism (Redhead 1992, 1995; Reynolds 1999). By “escaping,” participants fail to fulfill their societal responsibilities or exploit their social privilege to engage in deviant behavior, such as drug use. This scholarship has primarily focused on white participants. An in-depth qualitative interview approach that incorporates rave participants’ perspectives, particularly among the emerging group of Asian-heritage young adult participants, has yet to be pursued.

Politics and moral panic related to deviance and drugs among young people have fostered a shift in rave research towards a public health perspective (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007), such that raves are defined as a public health concern requiring social control. Within this perspective, raves are referred to as hazardous sites where people eschew norms of society and engage in risky behaviors, such as drug abuse (Arria et al. 2002; Yacoubian et al. 2003; Engels 2004; Armenian et al. 2013). However, this research has neither examined drug use at raves as related to ethnicity nor examined rave participants other than white attendees. Furthermore, public health studies of raves tend to be quantitative (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007), thus not attending to the meanings participants tie to rave participation. As such, this prior research reduces raves as cultural phenomena to problematic behaviors (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007); in doing so it overlooks how raves may potentially resolve issues for participants or be beneficial to them. Relatively little research has explored Asian-heritage young adults’ motivations for attending raves. Therefore, the present study examines how ethnicity may play a role in rave participation and explores how Asian-heritage young adults’ participation fits within

the broader debate on whether raves are detrimental or advantageous.

Prior research on Asian-heritage rave participation

To date, there has been some examination of rave participation among Asian-heritage young people (Hunt et al. 2005; Moloney, Hunt, and Evans 2008; Fazio et al. 2010; Hunt, Moloney, and Evans 2010, 2011; Joe-Laidler and Hunt 2013; Moloney and Hunt 2016). This research finds that diverse subgroups of Asian-heritage young people participate in raves (Moloney and Hunt 2016; Moloney and Hunt 2016), and they participate extensively, attending both raves for the general population and raves geared toward Asian-heritage participants (Hunt, Moloney, and Evans 2011). It also unearths that, consistent with research on rave participants from other racial/ethnic groups (Anderson 2009), Asian-heritage young people participate in drug use at raves (Hunt, Moloney, and Evans 2008, 2011; Fazio et al. 2010). Participants who used drugs at raves reported that they experienced self-awareness, connection to other people and feelings of liberation from the mundane routine of their lives, thereby constituting a therapeutic experience (Joe-Laidler and Hunt 2013). While this prior research suggests that Asian-heritage participants may get relief from general stress at raves, it did not necessarily examine whether rave participation addressed specific forms of stress, namely cultural stressors associated with being of Asian-heritage.

Although these scholars did not explore cultural factors as motivations for rave participation, they did examine how the participants' drug use at raves relate to their ethnic identities (Hunt, Moloney, and Evans 2008, 2011; Fazio et al. 2010). They identified three patterns of identity negotiation. One group argued that their drug use was

inconsistent with their identity as an “Asian American”- that is, they viewed their drug consumption as exceptional. A second group viewed their drug use as a natural outgrowth of their “Asian-American” identity, which suggests the hybridity and fluidity of being both “Asian” and “American.” The last group argued that drug use was normal and consistent with their identities as youth. These findings show that despite raves’ PLUR ideology of equality and celebration of diversity, Asian-heritage participants are conscious of their ethnicity at raves and consider whether and how their drug use at raves is consistent with society’s understandings of appropriate or expected behavior of members of their ethnic group. This research did not examine how experiences outside of raves may motivate drug use at raves and how drug use at raves might serve a purpose beyond the rave itself, such as to address cultural stressors experienced outside of raves. What remains to be explored is how ethnicity and its attendant cultural stressors may operate outside of raves, shaping both the motivation to attend and the experience of raves.

A major limitation of prior research on Asian-heritage rave participation is that it is based on one sample from one research team. More research on diverse samples is needed. This present study addresses the paucity of research on Asian-heritage rave participation by examining a sample of rave participants from Southern California. Southern California is an ideal location because it is one of the nation’s rave capitals and host to many raves organized by Insomniac Events and Hard Events, the leading rave organizers in the U.S.

This study

This study addresses the need for research on Asian-heritage young adults' participation in raves. It examines motivations for rave participation – in particular, how stress may motivate rave participation and shape the experience of raves.

Methods

The research was conducted by the author as the primary investigator, with the support of two undergraduate research assistants who were of Asian-heritage and had, as part of their personal networks, other Asian-heritage people who participated in raves. As an Asian-heritage young adult who has participated in more than 20 raves (music festivals and EDM club events) in Southern California and Las Vegas since 2010, the primary investigator is a member of the study's target population. The inclusion of the assistants ensured adequate recruitment of participants for the study. The research was approved by the Human Research Review Board at the University of California.

Sample

This qualitative, cross-sectional study involved a sample of 32 people, 18 women and 14 men (see Table 1 for sample demographics). Demographic questions were asked in the last portion of the interviews, so that participants could self-identify with their national affiliation. The sample size is consistent with the median sample size in qualitative studies using interviews (N = 31) (Mason 2010). Sampling ceased when thematic saturation was achieved (Miles and Huberman 1994). The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 24 years. People who self-identified as Asian or Asian American and had attended at least one rave in Southern California in the last year were eligible for the study.

The sample consisted of people from the following Asian subgroups: Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Thai, Indian, Hmong, Chinese-Taiwanese (Biracial), Taiwanese-Dutch (Biracial), Japanese-Chinese (Biracial), Cambodian-Chinese (Biracial), Chinese-Filipino (Biracial), and Filipino-African American (Biracial). Most participants were born in the United States; nine were foreign born. Regardless of their nativity, all but one participant were the child of at least one immigrant parent. The exceptional participant was a 4th generation American of Japanese-Chinese descent.

Recruitment and data collection

There were four methods of recruitment. First, potential participants were recruited from the personal networks of the research team. The research team nominated people who were eligible for the study and then, either sent an email to or contacted by phone these potential participants to invite them to participate. Second, the research team recruited participants in announcements made on two private (i.e., invite only) EDM community groups (EDM Madness and EDM Addicts) on Facebook, of which the primary investigator is a member. Third, the research team recruited participants via two email announcements: one to people on the email list for Asian Pacific Programs at a Southern California public university and one to all undergraduates on the public university's undergraduate email list. Fourth, at the end of each interview, the research team invited participants to refer potential participants, thereby employing snowball sampling. Participants were assured confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used in this report of results.

Data were collected from August 2016 to March 2017. In-person, semi-structured interviews were conducted in a public setting (e.g., café, library) in English, were audio recorded, and lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours. The interviews covered the following topics: frequency and type of raves attended, motivations for and experiences of rave participation, behavioral practices, including drug use, at raves, and participants' demographics (See interview protocol in Appendix 1). Participation was voluntary, and participants were entered in a raffle for a chance to win one of three VISA gift cards.

Analysis

The investigator used inductive analysis and thematic coding. The software, Dedoose for Mac, was used to organize, code, highlight, and locate findings in the primary data. With respect to reliability, recoding was done rigorously and systemically according to what the participants emphasized during the interviews and according to prior literature (Ryan and Bernard 2005). Preliminary analysis identified overall themes in the data. Stress as a motivation to attend raves emerged as a major theme. Subsequent analysis, therefore, honed in on this theme to identify types of stress, their relation to the motivation to attend raves, and the ways in which rave participation addressed that stress. It also compared patterns of motivations for rave attendance by nativity and gender. However, the analysis showed no differences. Due to the size and composition of the sample, a comparison of Asian subgroups was not possible.

Codes included motivations for attending raves, type of stressors, racial/ethnic stereotypes, identity issues such as being Asian and/or American, raves as stress relief,

nativity, gender, sexual orientation, and other demographics. Detailed descriptions for the codes are provided below.

The codes that captured participants' motivations for attending raves included stress, music, collective experience, and drug use. Music, collective experience, and drug use, according to the participants, were motivations in that they were the mechanisms by which stress was reduced at raves. Two types of stressors were identified: general stressors and cultural stressors associated with being of Asian heritage. General stressors included stress associated with everyday life and formal responsibilities at school or work. Cultural stressors included the expectation to be the model minority, high expectation from family, parent-child acculturation differences, and discrimination due to sexual orientation from one's own ethnic community. Codes for raves as stress relief included how rave music, drug use, and collective experience, including the PLUR ethos and presence of friends, facilitated stress relief.

Participants were assigned codes for their nativity (foreign born or U.S. born), gender (female or male), sexual orientation (heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay), and their ethnic self-label (Asian, Asian American, ethnounational identity, or some combination).

Results

Raves as Stress Relief

All participants described stress as a motivation to attend raves and viewed rave participation as a way to relieve stress. Six participants reported that they attend raves to relieve general stressors. For instance, "to get a break from reality," from their "mundane

life” or formal responsibilities at school or work. Twenty-six participants described cultural stressors associated with being of Asian heritage, such as the expectation to be a model minority, family’s high expectations, parent-child acculturation differences, and heterosexism. No one reported that both types of stress motivated them to attend raves.

General stressors. Participants described stress arising from everyday life and the demands of school or work (n = 6). These stressors were related to “passing midterms/and exams,” “the transition from being in college to the job market”, “getting promotions,” and “meeting deadlines.” Participants highlighted that raves helped to relieve stress because it was a “break from everyday life,” “something exciting and fun,” and a form of “reward for hard work.” For example, Jennifer (age 20, 2nd generation, Thai, female) stated:

“My motivation is just to get out of the mundane life. It helps my mental health. To have a good experience and really bond with people there. As a third-year (student in college), I’ve done so much. I’ve also stretched myself out really thin. I’m finding it hard to be happy with myself. I’ve been feeling like I wasn’t good enough. I felt like I was half-assing everything. All my relationships with people, including my parents, my friends, and the people I work with, they were kind of deteriorating in little ways, and I felt it. I spend a lot of time stressing about all the work I have to do. And so, it feels mundane because I’m going through everyday just thinking about the next hour, like what stuff I have to do. It’s hard to feel happy. And I know everything that I’m doing now is working towards later, but it’s hard to see that right away, right? I don’t get that instant gratification.”

However, at raves, she stated: “If I go to rave, I’ll literally get the happy drug, right? An instant gratification.” In her life, Jennifer feels overwhelmed by the demands on her and the discipline it takes to forgo instant gratification to meet them. At raves, in contrast, Jennifer can shed her future orientation, focus on the present, and get instant gratification.

Cultural stressors: the expectation to be a model minority. The most commonly reported stressor was the dominant society’s expectation for the participant to be a model minority (n = 17). Participants described the pressure to be a model minority in a variety of ways: to be on a “science track” in school, to become a “doctor” or “engineer”, to be “good at math,” to be a “nerd”, to be “passive,” and to be “disciplined.” Participants described feeling stressed if they either could not meet these expectations or if they chose different paths, such as pursuing careers in entertainment, dance, or public relations or an education in philosophy or humanities rather than in medicine or engineering. For example, Gina’s (age 20, 2nd generation, ¾ Chinese ¼ Vietnamese, female) account exemplifies the expectation to be the model minority. She stated:

“In America especially, Asians are supposed to be the model minority. It’s the pressure to be successful, the pressure to make money. I realize that a lot of people do want me to be a pushover too.”

In contrast, Gina stated, “Raves, once you’re inside, no one watches what you do. You’re free to do whatever you want.” In society, Gina feels expected to be a model minority, a certain kind of Asian. At raves, she feels no expectations; she can be a model or not, Asian or not because it was perceived to be a space that was free of ethnicity.

Gina described another way that raves relieve stress associated with being Asian: they provide a space that is free not only of expectation but also of discrimination. In society, she experiences discrimination. She stated:

“I’m really bad at math, but at work the other day, my boss was like, ‘Oh, are you good at math?’ and I said, ‘Uh, no.’ He then continued and said, ‘Are you good at fractions?’ and I said, ‘No,’ but he was still trying to have me measure and convert something. That’s not part of my job. I guess people look at you and expect something, like you’re supposed to be really fobby¹, really nice, be good at math, even if you tell them you’re not.”

Gina described raves, in contrast to her workplace, as places free of discrimination and stereotyping. She stated: “I think both Asian and Asian Americans come to raves. It’s racially inclusive. I’ve never heard anything negative or seen discrimination at raves.”

Gina believed that at raves her Asian identity did not make her vulnerable to discrimination, thereby, relieving that stress.

Joshua (age 19, 2nd generation, Chinese-Taiwanese, male), a college student, also shared his experience of the expectation to be a model minority: “There’s that Asian stereotype that you have to do really good in school, and even more after college. Get a good job... like be a doctor.”

In contrast, he stated:

¹ Fobby or fob (fresh off the boat) is a derogatory label applied to immigrants from Asia who are perceived not to have assimilated to mainstream American culture.

“But at the rave, I forget about all of that and just let go and focus on having a good time that night. Everyone’s so kind and welcoming. It feels good. The shivers go through your body. It just makes you feel good about yourself because you’re with everyone that’s enjoying the same music as you.”

Joshua explains how in society he feels pressure to live up to the Asian stereotype and compete for success, but at raves, he feels no such pressure. In contrast, he does not have to be a specific kind of Asian or even Asian; he can connect with other ravers on the basis of a shared interest in the music. Furthermore, rather than competition, Joshua feels connection with and support from other ravers. Finally, rather than feeling bad about himself for possibly failing to fulfill a stereotype or achieve success, he feels good about himself at raves.

Collective experience found at raves also played a role in relieving stress. The comments of Heidi (age 21, 2nd generation Taiwanese, female) echo those of many participants who highlighted the significance of raves’ PLUR ethos in relieving their culture-related stress. She stated:

“The history of raves is very inclusive. It doesn’t matter what ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation you are. They’re *really* inclusive. Doesn’t matter what you are, they just accept you. You’re here as a music lover. You have the same common interests as me and that’s all that takes. It doesn’t take more than that.”

As these cases illustrate, the focus at raves was on enjoying the music, having a collective experience, enjoying the present moment, and embodying the PLUR ideology. It was not on conforming to societal expectations associated with being Asian, having an

individual experience, focusing on the future, or distinguishing oneself from other people. Thus, raves were perceived to relieve the stress caused by expectations to fulfill the model minority stereotype.

Cultural stressors: meeting family expectations. A second stressor reported by the participants was the high expectations of their family, typically parents, for the participants' performance in society (n = 9). For participants in college, the expectations entailed "getting good grades", "being involved in extracurricular activities", and "coming back home on the weekends." For participants who were employed and older, the expectation was to provide "financial support to parents," which suggested the pressure to display filial piety² for Asian-heritage young adults. For example, Elle (age 21, 2nd generation, Taiwanese, female), a college student, described her parents' high expectations of her:

"I think it's an Asian thing... My parents have always been like, 'You do this. You do this. This is what you do,' And being around students who are taking five AP classes for high school and going to Yale, Purdue, Princeton, Stanford, you're like, 'Oh, shit.' So that's what I mean by 'disciplined'... And by 'discipline,' I don't mean just studying. I also mean extracurricular (*activities*). Like my mom,

² Although, there is no monolithic "Asian culture," many believe in a Confucian philosophy called filial piety (Chinese: 孝, xiào), which is a virtue of respect for one's parents, elders, and ancestors and the norms to provide financial support and elderly care. For a detailed look, see Li, Xiaowei, Hong Zou, Yan Liu, and Qing Zhou (2014) in "The Relationships of Family Socioeconomic Status, Parent-Adolescent Conflict, and Filial Piety to Adolescents' Family Functioning in Mainland China." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 23(1): 29-38.

she put me in all these extracurriculars, like ice skating, gymnastics, piano, etc. Everyday she'd be like, 'Do this for this for this long. Go to tutoring from 4 to 6. Then, practice piano for an hour.' That's what I mean by disciplined. And I gotta fit into the standards. I like to stay disciplined...you know, somewhat 'cause that's how I was raised by my parents."

However, Elle stated that at raves the requirement to be "disciplined" disappeared. She explained: "Going to raves is something that's different. It's not my daily life kind of thing. You can let loose, have fun with friends and strangers too." In her daily life, Elle was expected by her parents to perform well academically. In contrast, her parents had no expectation about her performance at raves; their expectations were not relevant there. Thus, Elle did not have to be disciplined at raves, thereby relieving that specific stressor.

Older participants described feeling pressure from parents to eventually, if not presently, provide financial support for them. For example, Abigail (age 24, 2nd generation, Korean, female) stated:

"Parents obviously have expectations for you, and it was more so obvious when I was in high school because they are breathing down your neck and making sure you're gonna do well and get into college. But pretty much after college, my parents have definitely loosened up a lot, but that expectation doesn't leave because me doing well and them having expectations is a given. My parents have done so much for me, being immigrants and all. I want to be successful. I want to give back to them. I think that being Korean-American, you obviously want to be successful, and Koreans care a lot about rank and social class...but at the same

time being an American, you also wanna be successful and stand out... It's like coming from two different places to, you know, push you to be good, great."

Abigail explained how raves and the use of drugs at raves relieved the stress associated with the pressure to give back to her parents:

"Music is a way to escape from society, you know? Drink, smoke, take drugs, listen to music... What's great about doing drugs is getting a different perspective in life. It's to be detached from your everyday life. It's another way of letting go, getting a fresh perspective and also not focusing so hard on yourself. Just enjoying the moment and really appreciating it, seeing people differently and even see yourself differently. It's just a weekend where you just forget about everything in life and appreciate the now."

As Abigail's words suggest, in her life she felt stressed because she had to focus on the future, which involved the desire to give back to her immigrant parents. However, at raves she believed that she could relax and focus on the present, which was centered on listening to music, enjoying the effects of the drugs, and social bonding with her friends. Thus, spending a weekend at a rave to escape those stressors was, for her, a meaningful experience, one that, she felt, helped her mental health.

Drug use, as noted by Abigail, at raves was commonly reported to be one of the mechanisms that reduced stress. Tom (Age 22 1st generation Chinese, male) also explained:

"Ecstasy helps you loosen up in your mind. You're more open to dancing and jumping. It makes the lights and music better too. It gives you more energy if you

are at a music festival. It also gives you really happy feelings. It gives you a sense of euphoria.”

Participants described not only physiological benefits but also emotional benefits of MDMA use. They said the drugs made them feel happy.

Andrew (age 24, 2nd generation, Korean American, male) provided another example of how parental expectations can motivate rave participation. He described the demands associated with being a child of Asian immigrants and, in particular, being a “first son.”

“Anyone who has an Asian parent will understand. Especially the first son and the first grandson is huge. You’re the next head of household. So you’re kind of expected to take care of your family like your father did and your grandfather did.”

Andrew described how raves relieved his stress:

“It’s my way of having fun and relieving stress. And if you have a way of relieving all that stress, it does help you think a little more clearly. I think it does help me function better in the real world. A lot of people who bottle that up, they are so stressed out all the time that you can’t think straight. The experience that you have at these events ...definitely you can’t compare it to anything else. It’s a whole another experience than if you just have a Friday night out, you know, at a bar with friends. Trance music itself is a very emotion-invoking music. You add that with all the good vibes with the people at the whole event with the people who you love that you go with. On top of that, everyone’s drugged out. A lot of

people say that ecstasy was used as a therapeutic drug in the 70's because it does help people open up and you do.”

In his life, Andrew felt pressure to display filial piety, especially as first son. However, at raves, he had no special role; thus, there were no expectations to fulfill. Thus, he saw raves as providing a break from the stress associated with filial piety.

Janelle (age 20, 2nd generation, Taiwanese American) also described raves as a way to find relief from the pressure of parental expectations:

“These days, a lot of Asian Americans are using it as a form of escape and, I guess, unification. As an Asian American, I think that we face a lot of pressure in everyday lives... face a lot of pressure from their parents. So I think that a lot of Asian Americans might use it as an escape, might use it as an ‘I’m gonna reward myself’ kind of thing.”

Like many other participants, Janelle found raves to be a space in which she is free from meeting parents’ expectations and thus, reduced that stress. For her, raves are even a form of reward for the work involved in trying to live up to parental expectations in her daily life.

Cultural stressors: parent-child acculturation differences. Five participants described experiencing stress associated with parent-child acculturation differences (n = 5). The case of Jennifer (age 20, 2nd generation, Thai, female), a college student pursuing a PhD in Philosophy, exemplifies this point. Here, she describes the parent-child acculturation differences between her and her father:

“I get kind of internally frustrated when trying to explain what my major is, or what I’m trying to do with getting more education instead of getting education to get a job, which is, I think, what they intended for me. I think I can better explain what I’m trying to do and what I value that if I knew Thai better, but I don’t. I’m still salty at my dad because he was talking to my uncle one time - and this was like a lunch or something, they were sitting a little further away from me, but I could still hear their conversation. My dad was saying, ‘After college she wants to do more college, especially become a teacher.’ And he laughed at that, and I was like, ‘Yo.’ Try to be a professor, try to do research? Try and reach out to youngins and try to teach them.”

Although in her life, Jennifer feels different from her father, she does not feel different from the people who attend raves. She describes feeling one with them:

“With this environment that accepts you no matter what. You leave everything behind the gate. You’re here now, and the music is here now. And all your friends are here now. It’s a whole different world. You know, we take care of each other. Even the act of taking care of somebody - even if it’s a stranger, it connects you to them. And I think that those kinds of relationships are things that I value, even if they are hyped up with drugs and stuff. It’s still a moment that you shared.”

Jennifer describes how the PLUR ethos of acceptance and unity foster an environment of acceptance. She feels that raves provide acceptance of her for who she is – something she feels that her father does not always provide. Furthermore, raves highlight what

participants have in common whereas in Jennifer's family the differences between her and her parents are in full relief.

Cultural stressors: discrimination due to sexual orientation. Two participants identified as members of the LGBT community and described raves as providing relief from discrimination due to sexual orientation by members of their own ethnic community and mainstream society (n = 2). For example, Tom (age 22, 1st generation, Chinese, male), who identified as bisexual, stated: "For me, one of my big stressors from my family is that I'm bisexual, and my family doesn't accept bisexuality." In addition to the stigma he faced within his family, he stated: "There's stigma in the gay community against Asian people in general. Some people put on Grindr³ or Tinder⁴, 'No rice,' which is really offensive." Although Tom experienced discrimination in his life, he explained that raves provide relief from the stress associated with that discrimination because they were perceived as spaces that were free from discrimination. He explained: "My friends know I'm bisexual. We go to raves all together. It's kinda like this 4-6 hour period where you're not thinking about anything. You can be *yourself*. You let out all that pent up stress or anger you have."

Like Tom, Jennifer (age 20, 2nd generation, Thai, female), who identified as gay, highlighted the discrimination she faced within her own ethnic community for being gay. She stated: "Asian communities generally look down on homosexuality. Out of everything, my sexuality's the most easy to hide. When I do bring it up sometimes, I'll

³ A popular LGBTQ social network and dating software application

⁴ A popular dating software application among teenagers and young adults

get these microaggressions.” Jennifer contrasted her daily life experience with her experience at raves. Like Tom, Jennifer felt that she could be her “true self” at raves. She stated: “Being able to be in a place where I wouldn’t be judged. Being in a place where other people are just really focused on enjoyment and where I can be my most true self. That’s what the rave scene is like.” In both cases, raves were described as spaces that facilitate authenticity and openness. This contrasts with the participants’ ethnic families and communities in which they feel they must present a false self and hide their sexual orientation.

Discussion

This study examined Asian-heritage young adults’ motivations for participating in raves in Southern California. A major motivation for attending raves were that they viewed raves as spaces where they could relieve stress. Two types of stress were reported: general stressors (i.e., break from daily life, school and work) and cultural stressors (i.e., expectation to be the model minority stereotype, meeting parent’s expectations, parent-child acculturation differences, and discrimination due to sexual orientation). The finding that raves may relieve general stressors is consistent with prior literature (Joe-Laidler and Hunt 2013). For participants who reported to relieve general stressors at raves, their participation did not appear to be a form of countercultural resistance (Hill 2002; Hitzler and Pfadenhauer 2002; Kosmicki 2001; Riley, Griffin and Morey 2010) or hedonism (Redhead 1992, 1995; Reynolds 1999) as some prior cultural studies have suggested. In contrast, because they highlighted that they attend raves to escape from their “mundane lives” and as “a form of reward,” their participation could be

understood as a form of therapy. While their participation could be seen as hedonistic because they seek immediate gratification by not focusing on their social expectations and responsibilities at raves, that the participants described raves as a temporary “break” suggests that they are cognizant that they must transition back into mainstream society when the raves are over. However, the finding that raves may relieve cultural stressors, which were more common in the sample than general stressors, is new. The participants’ descriptions of their daily lives contrasted with their descriptions of raves, such that raves are present-oriented places free of the demands and expectations of other people and society more broadly and full of positive support and experience.

Lessons learned about the Asian-heritage experience in the U.S. This research responded to the call for more research on Asian-heritage people, particularly Asian-heritage young adults (Lee and Zhou 2004). The findings in the present study highlight various ways in which Asian-heritage young adults experience cultural stressors. They are consistent with previous research on the negative health effects of the acculturation process (Costigan and Dokis 2006; Hwang 2006), discrimination and stereotyping (Kawai 2005; Lee 2015; Zhou and Xiong 2005; Chao et al. 2013) among Asian-heritage people (Hahm, Lahiff, and Guterman 2003, 2004; Kim, Ahn, and Lam 2009; Kim et al. 2009). This study also revealed other cultural stressors: high family expectations and discrimination due to sexual orientation. These sources of stress, especially stressors related to cultural issues, suggest that they are not free from discrimination by mainstream society, and they participate in raves because they feel it frees them of these specific expectations.

The most commonly reported stressor in the sample was the model minority stereotype. This study showed that ascribing characteristics and stereotypes to racial ethnic groups result in detrimental consequences. This finding is consistent with prior research showing that the model minority stereotype is one of the most pervasive stereotypes today (Lee 2015), causing negative consequences among Asian-heritage young adults (Zhou and Xiong 2005; Chao et al. 2013). The stereotype operates as a form of discrimination in 21st century. Given that model minority stereotype is the number one reported stressor, this research highlights the need for more efforts to dispel the model minority myth in society.

Lessons learned about raves. Previous research on raves focused on raves' PLUR ethos (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007), escapist and collective elements (Bennet and Peterson 2004), patterns of MDMA use (Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007), and participant demographics (Measham, Parker, and Aldridge 1998; Anderson and Kavanaugh 2007). The findings in this study are consistent with prior work on raves regarding the age and gender distribution of rave attendees and the patterns of drug consumption at raves. In other words, the Asian-heritage young adults in this sample are similar to "traditional" ravers in terms of age and gender and patterns of drug consumption at raves. The present study's contribution is primarily in terms of understanding the how various stressors motivate rave participation and how raves are perceived to relieve stress among Asian-heritage young adults, an emerging demographic group in the rave scene (Hunt et al. 2005; Hunt, Moloney, and Evans 2010).

What do these findings on Asian-heritage rave participation suggest regarding the debate about raves' social value? Unlike the prevailing view in public health research that suggests that raves are sites of risks (Arria et al. 2002; Yacoubian et al. 2003; Engels 2004; Libiseller et al. 2005; Armenian et al. 2013), this present study allowed for the possibility of raves to also produce benefits. The results revealed that Asian-heritage young adults use raves for a specific purpose – that is, to relieve stress, blow off steam, and be social. Participants described mainstream society as highly valuing individualism, competition, and material success. In contrast, they described rave society as highly valuing collectivism, mutual aid, and pleasure. Furthermore, raves were perceived as unique spaces that were free of expectations and stereotypes associated with ethnicity and provide freedom – for some people, to just be, and for others, to be their true, authentic selves. In contrast to some prior cultural studies research on raves (Hill 2002; Hitzler and Pfadenhauer 2002; Kosmicki 2001; Riley, Griffin and Morey 2010), rave participation in this sample did not appear to be political or oppositional. Although participants described feelings of exclusion and/or opposition in their daily lives, they did not describe their rave participation as making a statement about those experiences or as speaking about those experiences to any audience, either at a rave or in society. Instead, the participants described rave participation as excusing them from the need to deal with those experiences. For this reason, they attend raves for a specific period of time, like attending a retreat, to relieve stress. When a rave ends, they return to society, with all its expectations and demands, albeit with a better drive and renewed positive outlook on life. Given that participants emphasized that raves offer a unique experience, future research

should examine the similarities and/or differences across various settings, such as concerts, bars, or other popular social settings that may relieve stress.

Rave participation in this sample did not appear to have signs of the hedonism some cultural scholars identified at raves (Redhead 1992, 1995; Reynolds 1999). Participants choose to attend raves. They are not apathetic about society, going to raves to avoid their societal responsibilities. Rather, they are engaged actors seeking specific outcomes; they seek relief from stress so that they can fulfill their responsibilities (work, school, family obligations, etc.).

Participants reported that music, collective experience, and drug use were the mechanisms by which stress was reduced at raves. These three features of raves operate together. The shared interest in rave music fosters solidarity among the participants. The PLUR ethos reinforces the collective experience by promoting a positive, inclusive environment. Lastly, the drug use, particularly of MDMA, not only enhances the sensory experience of raves but also fosters feelings of pleasure and connectedness, which is consistent with the PLUR ethos.

The finding of drug use in the sample of Asian-heritage young adults provides further evidence dispelling the model minority myth about Asian-heritage people. They too engage in risk behavior. That said, this study found that drug use at raves was related to stress relief. Although prior research found that Asian-heritage rave participants experience feel a need to reconcile their drug use with their identity (Hunt, Moloney, and Evans 2008, 2011; Fazio et al. 2010), it did not address whether and how drug use relates to participants' stress as a motivation to attend raves. The present study found that

participants associate drug use at raves with relief from stress because the effects provided uplifted, relaxed feelings, such as euphoria and bliss. These results are consistent with other research showing MDMA to increase the activities of neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, providing users with feelings of mental stimulation, emotional warmth, empathy, general sense of well-being and decreased anxiety (NIH 2006). A simplistic interpretation would be that participants' choice to use drugs is hedonistic or as a way to escape life's responsibilities and indulge in pleasure for pleasure's sake. If this were the case, we would expect the participants to use drugs in multiple settings, not just at raves. However, participants reported that they take MDMA only at raves. They use at raves because in that setting MDMA foster connectedness to other participants (Joe-Laidler and Hunt 2013), an experience that contrasted with their experiences of disconnection in their daily lives. While the health risk associated with drug use is not diminished at raves, this present study sheds light on how raves could offer health benefits for participants, by relieving stress. In sum, whether the participants experienced general stressors or cultural stressors, they experience raves as therapeutic, enabling them to fulfill their societal expectations and roles when they re-enter mainstream society. Participants view raves as an effective coping mechanism; they find a supportive community at raves that enables them to better function in society.

Future research can examine whether the perceived stress relief at raves is consistent across types of raves and types of participant ethnic identities. The experiences at all-ethnicity raves may differ from those at Asian-specific raves. Asian-specific raves may provide more stress relief than all-ethnicity raves because they provide a stronger

community and solidarity among the Asian-heritage community. It may also be useful to build on prior research on Asian-heritage rave participants (Moloney and Hunt 2016) by examining how a person's ethnic self-label (hyphenated, panethnic or ethnonational) may relate to motivations for and experience of rave attendance. People who have self-identify with their ethnicity or panethnicity may be more attracted to Asian-specific raves because their ethnicity is more salient than those who identify with the hyphenated labels.

Limitations. The findings should be interpreted in view of several limitations. First, this research focused on Asian-heritage young adults from Southern California. The findings may not generalizable to all Asian-heritage young adults. Due to the size and composition of the sample, a comparison of Asian subgroups was not possible. Future research can examine whether and how motivations to attend and experiences of raves varies by subgroup and geographic region. Second, this study examined rave participation at one point in time. Future research could employ longitudinal methods to assess the relation between stress and rave attendance and experience.

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**Table 1:
Sample Demographics**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Generation	Ethnic Self Label	National Affiliation
Molly	Female	19	2nd	Hmong-American	Hmong
Rachel	Female	19	4th	Japanese, Chinese	Japanese, Chinese
Jennifer	Female	20	2nd	Thai-American	Thai
Kimberly	Female	20	2nd	Asian	Laos, Chinese
Susan	Female	20	2nd	Cambodian, Chinese	Cambodian, Chinese
Allison	Female	20	2nd	Asian American	Korean American
Sofia	Female	20	2nd	Asian American	Vietnamese
Courtney	Female	20	2nd	Asian	Taiwanese
Gina	Female	20	2nd	Chinese, Vietnamese	Chinese, Vietnamese
Janelle	Female	20	2nd	Taiwanese-American	Taiwanese
Helen	Female	21	1st	Korean	Korean
Janet	Female	21	2nd	Asian	Filipino

Jane	Female	21	2nd	Filipino-African American	Filipino
Heidi	Female	21	2nd	Asian American	Taiwanese
Elle	Female	21	2nd	Asian	Taiwanese
Belen	Female	22	1st	Korean	Korean
Abigail	Female	24	2nd	Asian American and Korean American	Korean
Kristen	Female	24	2nd	Korean-American	Korean
Jackson	Male	19	1st	Asian American	Taiwanese
Joshua	Male	19	2nd	Chinese-Taiwanese	Chinese- Taiwanese
Tony	Male	20	1st	Korean American	Korean
Ben	Male	20	2nd	Asian American	Indian
Ronald	Male	20	2nd	Asian American	Vietnamese
Billy	Male	21	1st	Vietnamese	Vietnamese
Albert	Male	21	2nd	Filipino	Filipino
Jared	Male	21	2nd	Chinese	Chinese
Tom	Male	22	1st	Asian	Chinese
Conner	Male	22	1st	Chinese-Filipino	Chinese- Filipino
Christopher	Male	24	1st	Korean	Korean

Daniel	Male	24	1st	Taiwanese, Dutch	Taiwanese, Dutch
Jason	Male	24	2nd	Korean American	Korean
James	Male	24	2nd	Asian American and Korean	Korean

Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

Attendance

1. Please tell me about your current participation at raves.
2. Has your participation in raves always been this way?
 - a. Do you attend less or more events than in the past?
 - b. If your attendance has changed, why do you think that it has changed?
3. Is your family aware of your participation at raves?
 - a. If so, how do they feel about it?
 - b. What do you think they know about raves?
 - c. How does their knowledge inform their reaction to your participation in raves?

Motivation for attendance

4. Why do you go to raves?
 - a. What are the reasons you go?
5. As you may know, P.L.U.R. is the credo of the rave scene:
 - a. Does it factor into your motivation to attend raves?
 - b. How?
 - c. Why?

Identity

6. Do you identify yourself as a raver? Why/Why not?
 - a. How prominent is this identify for you?
 - b. How does this identity relate to your other identities?
7. Do other people (family, friends, other ravers) see you as a raver?

8. What is it like to participate in raves as an Asian/Asian American?

9. Do you feel like raves are racially/ethnically inclusive?

a. How?

b. Why?

Participation

10. When you go to raves, how do you usually participate?

a. What types of things do you do at the raves?

b. Why?

11. In what P.L.U.R.-specific things do you participate?

a. Why?

12. Describe your experience of raves.

a. What are the benefits participating in raves for you?

b. What are the disadvantages participating in raves for you?

13. Is there anything else you want to share with me about your participation in raves and how you experience them?

Let's conclude with a few simple demographic questions about you.

1. What is your age in years today?

2. What is your race/ethnicity?

3. What Asian subgroup are you (i.e., how do you self identify in regards to ethnicity)?

4. In what country were you born?

5. In what country were your parents born?

6. What is your occupation?

7. What is your gender?

Thank you for your participation.