

Exploring Culturally Relevant Factors of Suicidality in Asian Americans and Asian Immigrants

Janelle Y. Wee, B.S., Jingyan Gu, B.A., & Keyne C. Law, Ph.D

Seattle Pacific University



INTRODUCTION

- Suicide is 10th leading cause of death in U.S. (CDC, 2017)
- Suicide is the 8th leading cause of death for Asian Americans in U.S. (Hijoka et al., 2012)
- From 1960 to 2016, there was a 2,597% increase in Asian immigrants into U.S. (Zong, et al., 2016)
- Existing theories, risk factors, and protective factors for suicide have shown some
- Applicability to minority populations (Forte et al., 2018)
- Further exploration of culturally relevant theories and factors is needed for these specific ethnic populations

AIMS

- Explore culturally relevant risk factors, protective factors, and theories
- Uncover the cultural implications of the process of cultural preservation while living in and integrating a dissimilar culture
- Identify gaps in existing literature

METHODS

- Databases: PsycInfo and Google Scholar
- Key search terms: Suicide, Asian Americans, Immigrant, Ethnic Identity, Racial Identity
- Years of Publication: 2008 to 2018

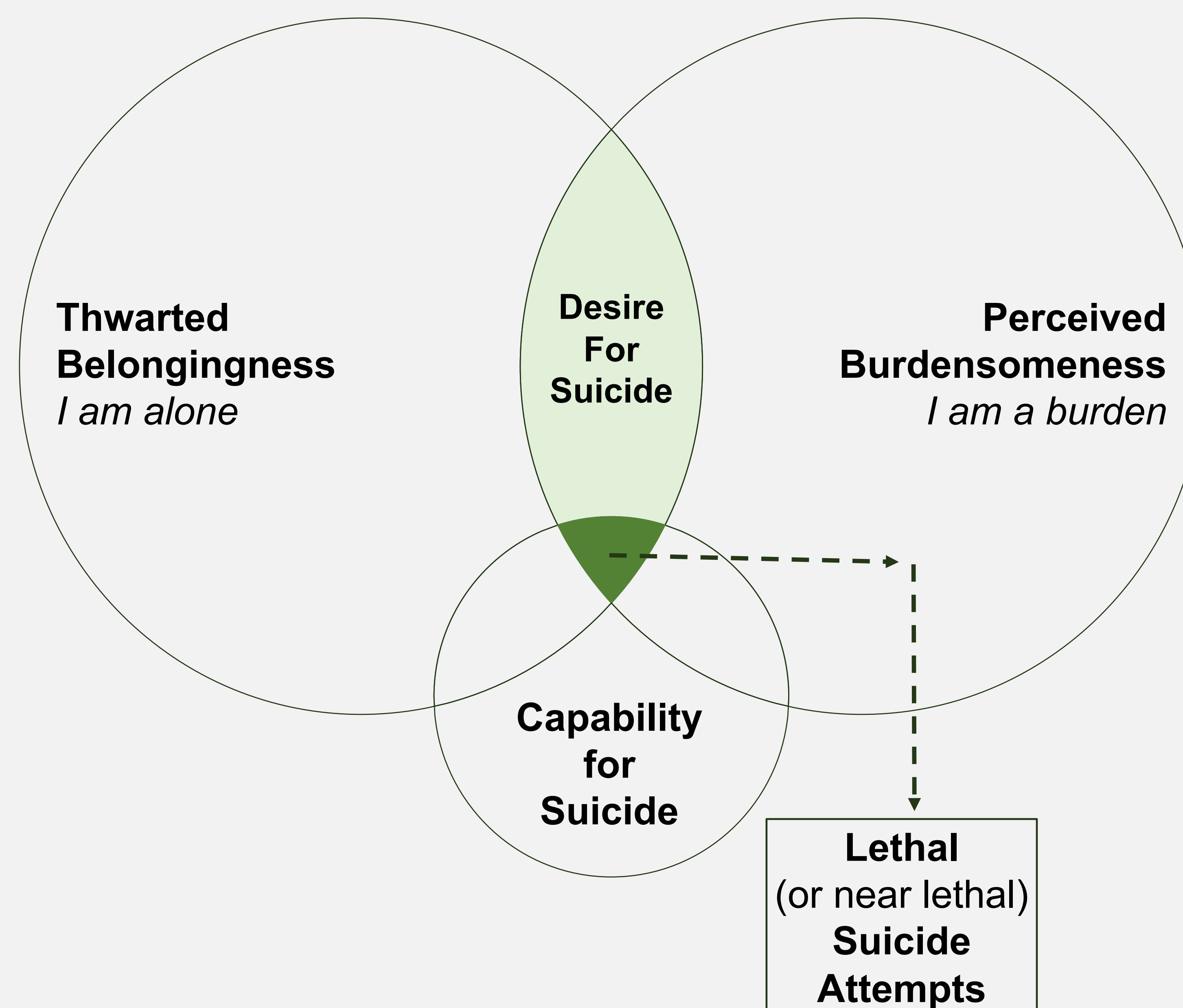


Figure 1. Assumptions of Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide

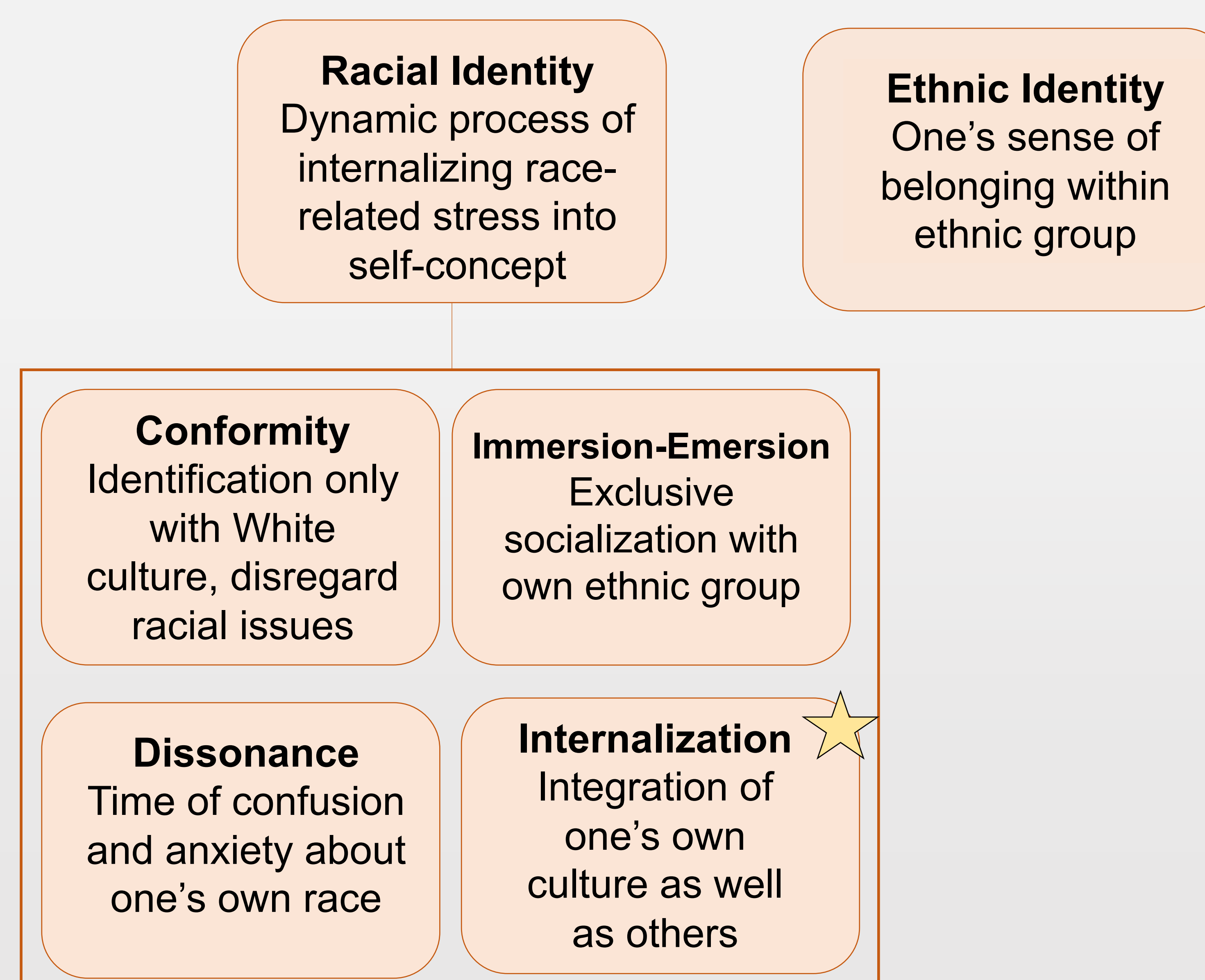


Figure 2. Racial Identity Theory and Ethnic Identity Theory

RESULTS

- U.S. Born Asian-American women exhibited higher risk for suicidal ideation and behavior compared to Immigrant Asian population (Duldulao et al., 2009)
- Shared risk factors between general population and Asian American population include depression, female gender, anxiety, and existing chronic condition (Cheng et al., 2010)
- No current study on Racial Identity and its applications to suicidality in Asian American and immigrant populations
- Ethnic identity may serve as buffer against suicide risk by providing sense of belonging and social support (Cheng et al., 2010)
- Mixed Methods study on Asian American College Students' Suicide Ideation (Wong et al., 2011)
 - Perceived burdensomeness was positively associated with suicidal ideation
 - Thwarted belongingness was less robust predictive factor

DISCUSSION

- Joiner's (2005) interpersonal theory is fairly applicable to minority populations, but Ethnic Identity and Racial Identity Theory would provide more specificity to Asian populations
- A specific form of thwarted belongingness, such as disconnectedness from family or ethnic group, may be a more robust predictor (Wong et al., 2011) to be studied further
- Consider that DSM-5 disorders may manifest differently in Asian cultures suggesting that criteria may not be a good indicator for suicide risk in Asian Americans (Range et al., 1999)