Prospective Links Between Ethnic Socialization, Ethnic and American Identity, and Well-Being Among Asian-American Adolescents

By: Meaghan Gartner, Lisa Kiang, Andrew Supple

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Abstract:

Ethnic socialization and ethnic identity have been related to positive outcomes, but little research has examined these associations longitudinally. This three-wave study prospectively linked socialization messages at Time 1, ethnic identity and American identity at Time 2, and self-esteem and depressive symptoms at Time 3 in 147 (58 % female; 25 % first-generation) Asian-American adolescents. The results indicated positive links between cultural socialization messages and ethnic and American identity, though the latter association was significant only for females. Ethnic identity was positively related to self-esteem, and mediated the positive effect of cultural socialization on self-esteem. The promotion of mistrust was positively linked to self-esteem and negatively related to ethnic identity, though this latter association was significant for foreign-born youth only. Our findings highlight the importance of elucidating prospective links in identity development, and examining gender and generational differences within them.

Keywords: Ethnic socialization | American identity | Ethnic identity | Well-being | Asian-American

Article:

Introduction

Considering the ever-growing U.S. ethnic minority population, one current research priority is to determine what predicates positive adjustment within diverse ethnic groups. Ethnic identity in particular has been found to reap numerous benefits in adolescent development. Precise operationalizations have differed, but many researchers agree that ethnic identity is a multifaceted construct which can include, among other dimensions, affective components of ethnic pride or positive regard, exploratory aspects that highlight how much individuals are actively trying to learn more about their group, and ethnic centrality or the extent to which ethnicity is perceived as central or important to one's overall sense of self (Phinney *2003*; Sellers

et al.*1997*). With this multidimensional conceptualization in mind, prior work has consistently linked various subscales of ethnic identity with positive adolescent outcomes, including strengthened self-esteem, social competence, academic motivation, and positive affect (Hughes et al. *2009*; Rivas-Drake et al. *2009*; Smith and Silva *2011*; Tran and Lee *2010*). Although ethnic identity, broadly speaking, has been shown to be beneficial in a variety of ways, there still is a lack of complete understanding of how it develops to begin with. Ethnic socialization, the messages parents share about their home cultures and about what to expect in interactions with people from other cultures, is one way that ethnic identity development might be encouraged in children (Rivas-Drake *2011*; Schwartz et al. *2007*; Umaña-Taylor et al. *2009a*) yet, little longitudinal work has addressed how socialization and identity development are prospectively linked with each other and with adjustment over time (Hughes et al. *2006*).

The current study addresses this gap in the literature by integrating constructs of ethnic socialization, cultural identity, and psychological adjustment (e.g., self-esteem, depressive symptoms) into a single, prospective model. We further contribute to the literature by focusing not only on adolescents' ethnic identity, but also their American identity, which is often neglected in adolescent identity research despite recent work documenting effects of American identity that equal or even rival those of ethnic identity (Kiang et al. *2013*; Yip and Cross *2004*). We use a social identity framework and define both ethnic and American identity as reflecting group regard or pride and centrality of group membership (Sellers et al. *1997*). In addition, we focus on adolescents from Asian-American backgrounds, who have been notably underrepresented in the literature despite comprising one of the largest ethnic groups in the U.S. (U.S. Census *2011*). Our examination of prospective links across the high school years is meaningful given that this period is one during which identity formation and related processes are particularly salient, while also marking an important developmental transition into emerging adulthood (Arnett *2000*; Erikson *1968*).

Identity Development among Adolescents from Asian-American Backgrounds

Our focus on the Asian-American experience advances current research on ethnic socialization, which has largely focused on African-American and Latino families (Hughes et al. *2006*). Although some aspects of ethnic identity development might reflect universal processes regardless of ethnic background, a variety of circumstances and characteristics distinguish Asian-Americans from other ethnic minority and immigrant groups (e.g., historical context, reasons for migration, refugee status, distinct cultural values and traditions, language, phenotype) and could play important roles in adolescent identity formation (Kim *2001*). For instance, the model minority stereotype that depicts Asian-Americans as hardworking, intelligent, and successful (Oyserman and Sakamoto *1997*) is relatively unique to this group, and has potential implications for the types of socialization messages that parents impart to their children regarding their ethnic background and societal race relations.

Recent reports also suggest that individuals of Asian descent comprise the most rapidly growing ethnic group in the U.S., outpacing all other groups including Latinos (Hoeffel et al. *2012*). However, Asian-Americans remain understudied in the literature and, what research does exist has been limited in its near exclusive focus on areas of the U.S. that are metropolitan and ethnically diverse in nature. In the last few years, however, trends have shown that more and more minority families are immigrating to places that are not as historically diverse as large, urban cities like Los Angeles. Instead, immigrants are settling in places like the southern U.S., where in North Carolina specifically Asian-Americans have recently experienced rapid growth yet still comprise only 2 % of the statewide population (Reeves and Bennett *2003*; Suro and Tafoya *2004*). Prior research has suggested that adolescents living in these non-traditional immigrant communities perceive and experience their ethnicities differently than those living in traditional immigrant communities because these new settlement areas lack the processes, infrastructure, and resources that otherwise facilitate acculturation (Bailey *2005*; Hirschman and Massey *2008*). The geographic context in which minority adolescents are raised, including the extent to which minority groups are accepted in the community and the prevalence of racial discrimination, can impact the way adolescents experience day-to-day life and even the way they label themselves (for example, being more likely to use heritage labels than hyphenated American labels) (Kiang et al. *2011*; Portes and Rumbaut *2001*). Given the importance of geographic context but the relative dearth of focus on Asian-American families in new settlement communities in the current literature, our research seeks to provide more insight into the way that these adolescents in non-traditional immigrant receiving areas develop and are affected by their ethnic identity.

Ethnic Socialization and Ethnic Identity

Given that ethnic socialization messages are thought to be ways in which children learn about their ethnicity and ethnic background, ethnic socialization has been found to be cross-sectionally related to ethnic identity, specifically ethnic centrality (McHale et al. *2006*; Rivas-Drake et al. *2009*). Conceptually, ethnic socialization messages have been often categorized under three broad categories: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and the promotion of mistrust (Hughes et al. *2006*). The aim of the two latter themes is to raise awareness of the potential negative reactions that children from a minority group might experience in dealing with people from other cultures, while the first theme of cultural socialization promotes an environment of exploration, education, and pride surrounding children's home culture (Hughes et al. *2006*). Notably, when cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and the promotion of mistrust have been examined separately in the literature, it is cultural socialization, the promotion of positive messages concerning the children's home culture, which tends to be linked most strongly to ethnic identity (Hughes et al. *2009*; McHale et al. *2006*; Rivas-Drake *2011*). While current research focusing specifically on Asian-Americans is limited in comparison to other minority populations, several studies also have found a cross-sectional association between cultural

socialization and ethnic identity development within this population (Rivas-Drake et al. *2009*; Tran and Lee *2010*).

Although, theoretically speaking, ethnic socialization is expected to contribute to higher levels of ethnic identity, little longitudinal research has examined how ethnic socialization and ethnic identity are linked over time (Hughes et al. *2006*). As one notable exception, Umaña-Taylor et al. (*2009a*) found that positive cultural socialization messages were predictive of ethnic identity development among Latino adolescents, as measured through Eriksonian dimensions of ethnic exploration and commitment. We similarly expected a prospective association to exist when we consider the content of cultural socialization messages in particular, which encourage engagement with and reverence for children's home culture. These positive messages and promotion of exposure to the home culture could foster an environment of ethnic exploration and identity development in that the family's ethnicity is clearly emphasized as a central aspect of identity. Given the trends in the literature, largely established concurrently, we hypothesized that cultural socialization would be positively and prospectively related to ethnic identity dimensions of regard and centrality.

Although less explored in the current literature, some recent research on second-generation Haitians suggests that negative socialization messages, such as the promotion of mistrust (i.e., messages that encourage adolescents to be wary of other ethnicities), might hinder ethnic identity exploration, thereby intentionally or inadvertently alienating individuals from their own ethnicities and subsequent identity development (Joseph and Hunter *2011*). Research examining the links between the promotion of mistrust messages and identity development specifically among Asian-Americans has not yet been established; however, based on prior research with other groups, we generally expected that the promotion of mistrust would be negatively related to adolescents' ethnic identity development.

On the other hand, while preparation for bias messages might also appear on the surface to be as negative as the promotion of mistrust, such messages might actually serve more of an adaptive purpose for adolescents. Specifically, preparation for bias involves parents' direct efforts to enhance children's awareness of discrimination and prepare them to cope with negative treatment (Hughes et al. *2006*). Some researchers focusing on ethnically diverse youth, including Asian-Americans, have hypothesized that preparation for bias messages provide healthy suggestions in terms of how to handle proactively potentially negative interactions that minority adolescents might encounter, while the promotion of mistrust messages might merely encourage children to expect this mistreatment from people of other ethnic groups and interpret interactions in ways which confirm this expectation (Huynh and Fuligni *2008*; Tran and Lee *2010*). Since preparation for bias might allow minority adolescents to be prepared for and healthily respond to negative interactions with other ethnic groups, it is possible that these messages might provide a psychological "barrier" against the deleterious consequences of these negative interactions, as well as boost ethnic identity development. Indeed, among a college-aged sample of Asian-Americans, socialization experiences that directly addressed discussions about race and racism

were associated with identity schemas that emphasize racial awareness and exploration (Alvarez et al. *2006*). Thus, unlike the promotion of mistrust, we expected that preparation for bias messages would be positively related to ethnic identity development.

Ethnic Socialization and American Identity

Unlike ethnic identity, the associations between ethnic socialization and American identity are not as obvious, perhaps because links between ethnic and American identity themselves are much less agreed upon. Some research has found that ethnic and American identities develop in tandem and are positively correlated, suggesting that the two sources of identity need not be mutually exclusive and therefore both can be a product of socialization messages (Berry *2003*; Bautista de Domanico et al. *1994*; Schwartz and Zamboanga *2008*). For example, if cultural socialization helps to strengthen ethnic identification, it is possible that, in the process, adolescents' American identity development also is triggered and strengthened. These expectations would be consistent with orthogonal models of biculturalism, which suggest that ethnic and American identities are formed in non-competing and potentially complementary ways (Bautista de Domanico et al. *1994*; Berry *2003*; Schwartz and Zamboanga *2008*). However, alternative perspectives have noted that some individuals might feel as though ethnic and American forms of identity cannot exist cohesively or meaningfully within one person (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos *2005*; Haritatos and Benet-Martínez *2002*; Phinney and Devich-Navarro *1997*). Hence, cultural socialization messages which presumably boost ethnic identity might be unrelated or even inversely related to American identity. Although the literature has been largely mixed, more contemporary approaches tend to support orthogonal models of identity change (Berry*2003*; Schwartz and Zamboanga *2008*). As such, we expected that cultural socialization messages would be positively associated with not only ethnic identity but American identity as well.

In terms of preparation for bias and the promotion of mistrust, our hypotheses were more exploratory. Existing research suggests that greater perceptions of discrimination experiences could serve to undermine individuals' connectedness with the mainstream (Sellers and Shelton *2003*; Sellers et al. *2006*). Hence, socialization messages that emphasize societal inequities and the idea that people from other ethnic groups might not respect them could foster adolescents' distrust of mainstream society and discourage them from developing a strong sense of American identity. We thus expected to find inverse associations between American identity and socialization messages characterized by preparation for bias and the promotion of mistrust.

Prospective Links between Socialization and Adjustment

Many studies have found ethnic socialization, in some cases cultural socialization in particular, to be associated with various positive adjustment outcomes, including self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, resilience against discrimination, and psychosocial well-being (Hughes et al. *2006*, *2009*). These findings have been replicated across a variety of ethnic groups, including

Asian-American adolescents (Tran and Lee *2010*), Latino college students (Rivas-Drake *2011*), and African-American adolescents (Stevenson and Arrington *2009*). Hence, we also expected to find direct, positive associations between cultural socialization and psychological adjustment.

The current literature also appears to be fairly unequivocal concerning the deleterious consequences of negative socialization messages, particularly the promotion of mistrust. These messages have been linked with decreased ethnic identity exploration, worsened academic performance and social competence, and increased externalizing behaviors (Caughy et al. *2006*; Huynh and Fuligni *2008*; Joseph and Hunter *2011*; Tran and Lee *2010*). Some researchers focusing on ethnically diverse youth, including Asian-Americans, have hypothesized that the negative effects of these socialization messages are due to the fact that they merely encourage children to expect mistreatment from people of other ethnic groups, interpret interactions in ways which confirm this expectation, and fail to provide healthy, proactive suggestions in terms of how to handle these interactions, as preparation for bias messages often do (Huynh and Fuligni *2008*; Tran and Lee *2010*). While the impact of preparation for bias messages is not well established in the literature, we expected, given the potential for these messages to "safeguard" minority adolescents from negative interactions with other groups, that these would be positively related to psychological adjustment. However, inverse associations between the promotion of mistrust and psychological adjustment were anticipated.

Direct effects aside, to the extent that ethnic socialization, in particular, messages concerning cultural socialization, precedes ethnic identity development, it is possible that ethnic identity serves as a mediator between cultural socialization and adjustment (Hughes et al. *2006*, *2009*). For example, among Latino college students, the associations between cultural socialization and self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and other outcomes were partially mediated by ethnic identity, or centrality and public regard more specifically (Rivas-Drake *2011*). Among late adolescents from Asian-American backgrounds, Tran and Lee (*2010*) also found that cultural socialization messages were linked to social competence through ethnic identity as measured through dimensions of ethnic pride, clarity, and exploration. The current study extends such prior work to a younger adolescent sample, and similarly expected that any positive effects of cultural socialization on adjustment would be explained, at least in part, by ethnic identity. Further, although our hypotheses regarding the mediating role of American identity were more exploratory given the lack of existing work, we also expected that American identity could help explain positive links between socialization and outcomes. In light of an adaptive bicultural identity in which both ethnic and American identities are thought to promote adjustment (Bautista de Domanico et al. *1994*; Kiang et al. *2013*), cultural socialization was expected to enhance American identity and, in turn, American identity was expected to promote positive outcomes.

Moderation by Gender and Generational Status

Given prior work supporting gender and generational differences in ethnic socialization (Tran and Lee *2010*; Umaña-Taylor et. al *2009a*, *b*), it was important to control for these variables and explore their possible moderating effects. In terms of gender, research on Asian American youth has suggested that parents tend to view their daughters as being primarily responsible for transmitting cultural and family values (Qin *2003*; Supple et al. *2010*). Drawing on research from Hmong American families, an additional explanation for these trends is that parents tend to be stricter with their daughters while allowing their sons more social freedom (Xiong et al. *2004*). As a result, daughters might spend more time at home, are naturally more tied in their families, and learn more about their cultural background (Supple et al. *2010*). Associations between ethnic socialization messages, identity, and outcomes might therefore be stronger among girls compared to boys.

Generational status is also important to consider given that prior work has found that the greater the generational status (the more family generations that are born in the United States), the less cultural socialization in general that occurs and/or the less open adolescents are to these ethnic messages (Masuda et al. *1970*; Umaña-Taylor et al. *2009a*). Researchers have reasoned that more recent immigration entails a greater familial connection and need to maintain cultural traditions, which in turn promotes ethnic identity development among children (Huynh and Fuligni *2008*). Indeed, Tran and Lee (*2010*) found that the amount of cultural socialization Asian American adolescents received from their families was negatively related to their being born in the United States. Additionally, Umaña-Taylor et al. (*2009a*) found that the negative relationship between generational status and ethnic identity exploration among Latino adolescents was fully mediated by cultural socialization. That is, with increases in generational status, adolescents reported lower levels of family cultural socialization which, in turn, was associated with and helped explain the lower levels of ethnic identity found among second and later generation youth. It follows, then, that less cultural socialization might be expected for second-generation Asian-Americans compared to the first-generation, and that the impact of such socialization on adolescents' subsequent identity and outcomes might be weaker for the second-generation as well.

The Current Study

To our knowledge, this is one of the first studies to examine socialization messages, ethnic and American identity, and adolescent adjustment in a single model and over time in an attempt to understand the longitudinal links among them. Given the importance of positive psychological adjustment for youth, in particular for those of minority ethnic groups, it is imperative to discern not only the immediate effects of ethnic socialization, but also long-term effects over years of development and during the transitional adolescent period during which identity issues are commonly at the forefront. We focus on self-esteem and depressive symptoms as two primary indicators of well-being. Three waves of data were collected yearly and began in 10th to 11th grades. We hypothesized that positive socialization messages (i.e., cultural socialization) would be positively associated with ethnic and American identity development over time while negative

socialization messages (i.e., the promotion of mistrust) would be negatively associated with ethnic and American identity development. Preparation for bias was expected to be positively associated with ethnic identity and also inversely linked to American identity. Further, we hypothesized that ethnic and American identity would be directly linked to positive psychological adjustment (e.g., increased self-esteem, decreased depressive symptoms), and that ethnic and/or American identity would significantly mediate any direct effects of socialization on adjustment. We also explored whether associations would be affected by both gender and generational status, in that cultural socialization messages would be most prevalent for females and first-generation youth.

Methods

Participants

Participants were Asian-American adolescents residing in the Southeastern U.S. The original sample consisted of 180 9th (48.3 %) and 10th graders (60 % female; 74 % second-generation) recruited from six public high schools. Based on adolescents' self-report, the panethnic Asian sample represented a variety of ethnic groups including: Hmong (28 %), multiethnic (mostly within Asian groups, e.g., Chinese and Vietnamese) (22 %), South Asian (11 %), Chinese (8 %), pan-ethnic (8 %), and small clusters such as Montagnard, Laotian, Vietnamese, Filipino/a, Japanese, Korean, and Thai (23 %).

Ethnic socialization was not assessed until Wave 2 of the study; hence, the current paper focuses on adolescents who participated in Waves 2–4. In Wave 2 of data collection, the retention rate of the original sample was approximately 91 %. About 87 % of the original sample was retained in Wave 3, and 67 % in Wave 4. Preliminary analyses examining attrition showed that rates of missingness across the multiple waves of data collection were not systematic and did not vary by demographic variables or key study variables. After taking attrition and missing data into account, our analyses were based on a final sample of 147.

Procedures

Adolescents were recruited from six public high schools in the Southeastern U.S., identified through a stratified cluster design. These schools were characterized as having an Asian student body that was relatively high for the area (range from 4 to 6 %). The schools differed in overall size, achievement, and socioeconomic status. In small group settings, students who were identified as Asian through school matriculation demographic forms were invited to participate in a study on the social and cultural issues that affect their daily lives. At a follow-up visit, students with signed consent forms (approximately 60 % of those invited) were reassembled and immediately given a packet of questionnaires to complete during school time. All recruitment forms and questionnaires were provided in English. The questionnaires took 30–45 min to complete.

Participants completed follow-up surveys once a year for three additional years. The questionnaire remained largely consistent in content and length throughout each wave. For Waves 2 and 3, researchers returned to the schools to distribute questionnaires during class time. Participants were sent questionnaires in the mail if they were no longer in school or if they were absent the day the surveys were administered. For Wave 4, since our older cohort was presumably 1 year post-high school, we collected data entirely through postal mail. Participants received $25 in compensation for their time in Wave 1 of the study (which involved an additional daily diary component), $15 for participating in Waves 2 and 3 each, and $20 for participating in Wave 4.

Measures

Ethnic Socialization

A 13-item measure was used to assess ethnic socialization (Hughes and Chen *1997*). Adolescents were asked to think about their discussions with their parents in the past year and indicate how many times their parents talked about specific issues. The Cultural Socialization subscale consists of five items (e.g., encouraged you to read books concerns the history of traditions of your ethnicity). The Preparation for Bias subscale consists of six items (e.g., told you that people might limit you because of your ethnicity). Two items comprise the Promotion of Mistrust subscale (e.g., done or said things to keep you from trusting students from other ethnic groups). For each subscale, items were rated on a 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Six or More Times* scale, with higher scores reflect greater frequency of socialization messages. Internal consistencies ranged from .87 to .91 across waves and subscales.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity was measured with a shortened adaptation of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) used in prior work (Yip et al. *2006*). Items were modified to be relevant to and completed by members of any ethnic group. Two subscales were included. The 4-item Private Regard subscale measures adolescents' positive feelings toward their ethnic group. Sample items read, "I feel good about being a member of my ethnic group," and, "I feel that my ethnic group has made valuable contributions to this society". The 4-item Centrality subscale assesses whether individuals feel their ethnicity is central to their self-concept. Sample items read, "In general, being a member of my ethnic group is an important part of my self-image," and, "I have a strong sense of belonging to my ethnic group". Items are scored from 1 = S*trongly Disagree* to 5 = S*trongly Agree* with higher scores reflecting higher regard and centrality. Internal consistencies ranged from .87 to .91 across the multiple waves of the study and across specific subscales. For the current study, ethnic Regard and Centrality were aggregated to form a single index of ethnic identity due to their strong correlation ($r = .82$, $p < .001$).

American Identity

As successfully done in prior work (Kiang et al. *2008*; Yip et al. *2008*), parallel items of the MIBI were used to assess American Private Regard and Centrality. Again, there were four items for each subscale. Items were scored similarly on a 5-point scale with higher scores reflecting higher identity. Internal consistencies ranged from .89 to .91, and subscales were combined to represent a single index of American identity due to their strong correlation ($r = .84$, $p < .001$).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was measured using the 10-item Rosenberg (*1986*) self-esteem scale. Items are rated on a 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree* scale, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. Sample items include, "I feel that I have a number of good qualities," and, "I take a positive attitude towards myself." This scale has been successfully used in prior research on ethnic minority and immigrant adolescents; however, given recent studies pointing to substantial method effects associated with the negatively worded Rosenberg items for ethnic minority youth (Supple and Plunkett *2011*), we followed recommendations to avoid bias by creating a summary score to represent positive self-esteem using the 5 positively worded items only (Marsh*1996*) Internal consistencies across waves ranged from .84 to .87.

Depressive Symptoms

The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale-10 (Andresen et al. *1994*) was used to assess adolescents' depressive symptoms experienced within the previous week. Ten items are scored from 0 = *rarely or none of the time* to 3 = *all of the time*. Higher scores indicate higher levels of depressive symptoms. The CESD has been widely used in prior research on immigrant and ethnic minority youth, including Asian Americans (Crockett et al. *2005*; Li and Hicks *2010*; Kiang et al. *2013*). Internal consistencies in the current study ranged from .77 to .80 across waves.

Gender/Generation

Demographic information was assessed through self-report. For our analyses, gender was coded as "0" for girls and "1" for boys. For generational status, adolescents who were foreign-born were coded as "0", and those born in the US were coded as "1".

Results

Bivariate Associations and Descriptives

Table 1 lists bivariate correlations, means, and standard deviations of primary study variables. As shown, ethnic socialization messages were positively correlated with each other, and specific messages entailing cultural socialization were positively correlated with ethnic identity. Preparation for bias and the promotion of mistrust messages were associated with higher levels of reported depressive symptoms. Notably, ethnic and American identities were positively correlated with each other.

Table 1. Bivariate associations and means (SDs) of primary study variables

	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**	**(6)**	**(7)**	*M* **(SD)**
10–11th grade								
(1) Cult. Soc.	–							2.88 (.98)
(2) Prep. Bias	.58***	–						2.26 (.95)
(3) Mistrust	.26***	.49***	–					1.84 (1.00)
11–12th grade								
(4) Eth. Id.	.36***	.12	−.04	–				4.17 (.91)
(5) Am. Id.	.02	−.09	−.11	.32***	–			4.09 (.92)
12th grade+								
(6) Self-Esteem	−.04	.00	.13	.14	.14	–		3.22 (.53)
(7) Depression	.06	.21*	.21*	−.11	−.17+	.14	–	1.09 (.64)

+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

Prospective Model

As shown in Fig. 1, models were estimated with ethnic socialization at Wave 2 (W2) predicting ethnic and American identity at Wave 3 (W3), and both socialization and identity predicting Wave 4 (W4) adjustment. Analyses were conducted using Mplus 6.0 and relied on full information maximum likelihood methods (FIML), which is the recommended approach to handle missing data (Acock *2005*). All study constructs were included as observed variables and paths were specified so that each indicator of ethnic socialization was directly linked to the outcomes (self-esteem and depressive symptoms) and the mediators (American and ethnic identity). In addition, paths were specified linking both American and ethnic identity to both outcomes (self-esteem and depressive symptoms). In order to examine mediating effects, we included commands for Mplus to produce 95 % bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals (95 % CI) to identify statistically significant indirect pathways. To the extent that an indirect effect is statistically significant, this suggests that mediation is present.
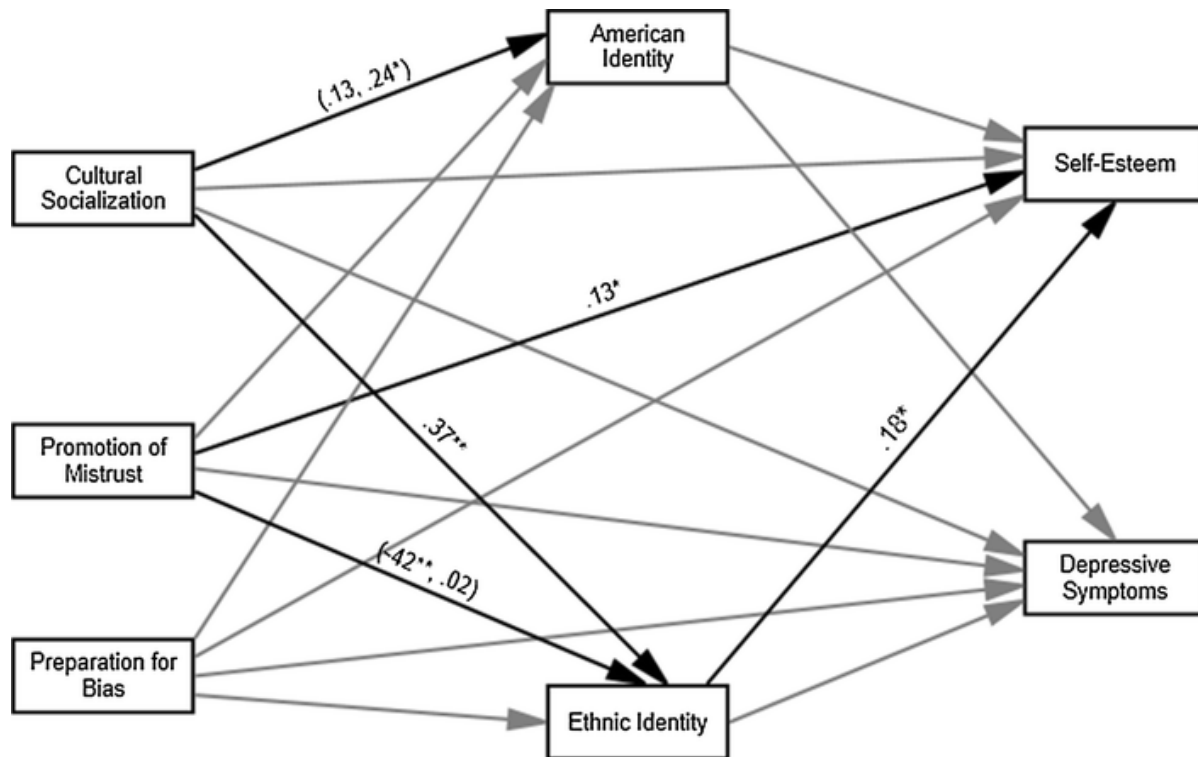
Fig. 1 $\chi^2 = 9.85$, $df = 15$, $p = .83$, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000, $n = 147$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. Unstandardized coefficients, nonsignificant paths are in *grayscale*, a significant difference in path from cultural socialization to American identity is in parentheses (boys, girls), as is the path from promotion of mistrust to ethnic identify that varied by generational status (born outside U.S., born in the U.S.). Residual terms and their correlated errors and correlations among the three indicators of ethnic socialization are all omitted from the figure

In addition to evaluating direct and indirect associations, we also considered whether associations between variables varied as a function of adolescent gender and generational status. Multi-group analyses were used to compare the fit of a model with path coefficients constrained to equality across groups (e.g., boys versus girls) to a model with these same coefficients freely varying across groups. Significant differences in model fit across the two models indicate variation in coefficients across the groups. An alternative approach in Mplus is to rely on modification indices provided in the output from the model constraining paths to equality that points to specific coefficients that, if they are freed, will result in significant improvements in model fit.

The first set of analyses evaluated the model in Fig. 1 to consider first if there was variation in paths across boys and girls. A second set of analyses determined whether paths varied as a function of generational status. After determining which paths could be set to equality across groups (e.g., boys versus girls) and which paths are best specified as varying across groups, indirect effects were evaluated. The model with all path coefficients set to equality across boys and girls fit these data well ($\chi^2 = 15.62$, $df = 16$, $p = .48$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0); however,

modification indices suggested that the path linking cultural socialization to American identity should be freed (i.e., not constrained to equality across boys and girls). After freeing that model constraint, there was an excellent fit to these data ($\chi^2 = 9.89$, $df = 15$, $p = .83$, $\Delta\chi^2 = 5.82$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$) suggesting that all paths can be set to equality across boys and girls with the exception of the path linking cultural socialization to American identity. Based on this final model, the results (presented in Fig. 1) suggested that cultural socialization was prospectively and positively related to ethnic identity and American identity (for girls) and that ethnic identity, in turn, was positively related to self-esteem. A statistically significant indirect effect for cultural socialization to self-esteem through ethnic identity ($B = .06$, 95 % CI = .02–.15) suggested that the association between cultural socialization and self-esteem was mediated by ethnic identity. That is, higher cultural socialization was associated with greater ethnic identity which, in turn, was related to higher self-esteem. The results also suggested that the promotion of mistrust at W2 was positively related to self-esteem at W4 while preparation for bias was unrelated to either identity measures or to the outcomes.

In an additional series of analyses, we considered a multi-group model to examine if associations between the study constructs varied as a function of adolescents' generational status. The first model constrained all coefficients to equality across two groups of respondents, those born outside of the U.S. and those born in the U.S. This model fit the data moderately well ($\chi^2 = 18.88$, $df = 16$, $p = .28$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .05); however, modification indices suggested that the path linking the promotion of mistrust to ethnic identity should be freely estimated across the groups. A subsequent model with all paths constrained to equality except for this path demonstrated an excellent fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 11.24$, $df = 15$, $p = .73$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 7.64$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$) suggesting that (see Fig. 1) the association between mistrust and lowered ethnic identity was more strongly related for respondents born outside of the U.S. Because there was an association linking the promotion of mistrust to ethnic identity and an association between ethnic identity and self-esteem, it was possible to evaluate the significance of an indirect association linking the promotion of mistrust to self-esteem via ethnic identity for the first generation adolescents. This indirect effect was statistically significant ($B = -.07$, 95 % CI = −.16 to −.01) and indicated that the promotion of mistrust may subsequently lower self-esteem for first generation adolescents by first leading to lowered ethnic identity. These findings also point to what is called inconsistent mediation as the promotion of mistrust may have both positive (directly related to self-esteem) and negative (if it lowers ethnic identity) effects so that the overall net effect of the promotion of mistrust on self-esteem may be negligible (MacKinnon et al. *2007*).

Discussion

Adolescence marks a period of development that is rife with questions about identity and how one fits in terms of the many cultural and social groups that exist (Erikson *1968*). To date, researchers have explored links between socialization messages and ethnic identity (McHale et al. *2006*; Rivas-Drake et al. *2009*; Umaña-Taylor et al. *2009a*), socialization and adjustment

(Hughes et al. *2006, 2009*; Tran and Lee *2010*), and identity and adjustment (Kiang et al. *2013*; Phinney *2003*); yet, research examining all of these constructs in the same model and over time has been scarce. The primary purpose of this research was to elucidate prospective associations among these key developmental variables, with the addition of American identification as well. More specifically, we first examined whether ethnic socialization messages were prospectively linked to ethnic and American identity. We then examined whether ethnic and American identities were prospectively linked to self-esteem and depressive symptoms, as well as whether these cultural identities significantly mediated associations between socialization and outcomes. In addition, we considered gender and generational status as important demographic factors that could influence the amount, type, or effect of ethnic socialization messages on identity and outcomes.

In terms of our first research question, our results were consistent with hypotheses in that ethnic socialization, specifically cultural socialization messages that convey cultural knowledge and pride, were prospectively linked to both ethnic and American identity development, though the latter result was only found for girls. These positive associations between cultural socialization and both types of identity support a bicultural model of identity development (Berry *2003*). That is, consistent with prior work (Bautista de Domanico et al. *1994*; Schwartz and Zamboanga *2008*), ethnic and American identity are not mutually exclusive and appear to develop simultaneously as a function of receiving positive messages about one's ethnic or cultural group. While it may seem counterintuitive, one possibility for the finding that cultural socialization or the encouragement to explore what one's cultural group membership means during adolescence is related to both ethnic and American identity may be that, in teaching about specific Asian cultural beliefs and practices, parents lay the foundation for children to actively think about and begin to develop other identifications, not only to the cultural group of their parents but also to the larger cultural group of their peers. This process might be particularly salient for girls from Asian American backgrounds who are often perceived as primary transmitters of cultural values, are socialized to remain close to home, and might therefore experience more direct cultural messages from parents (Supple et al. *2010*). Our results thus highlight the utility of examining not only ethnic identity but also American identity development in minority populations. Particularly for girls, there seemed to be an indirect association whereby greater cultural socialization by parents promoted *both* ethnic and American identity, with the former then linked to higher levels of self-esteem.

Indeed, cultural socialization was found to be prospectively linked with self-esteem, both indirectly and directly, which emphasizes the important role that positive messages regarding one's cultural and ethnic background play in promoting healthy adjustment among Asian American youth. More precisely, the association between cultural socialization messages and self-esteem was due in part to ethnic identity development, as hypothesized. Extending recent findings (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al. *2009*; Rivas-Drake *2011*; Tran and Lee *2010*; Umaña-Taylor et. al *2009a*, *b*) with our prospective model, we found evidence for cultural socialization to precede

stronger levels of ethnic identity which, in turn, has a positive association with self-esteem. Hence, one of the reasons why cultural socialization has been positively linked to adolescent outcomes can be explained by the stronger levels of ethnic identity that such socialization messages impart. Adolescence is theoretically a time when youth are highly concerned about establishing who they are and what defines them (Erikson *1968*). Our results suggest that parents' efforts to foster their children's ethnic understanding during this crucial developmental period could have sustained and positive effects in promoting their sense of identity as well as their overall self-evaluation.

Another contribution of this study to the existing literature is the finding that the promotion of mistrust messages has significant long-term effects on well-being, that is, they were positively related to self-esteem two years after being initially reported. However, the direction of the association between the promotion of mistrust and self-esteem was contrary to our hypotheses. Prior work has suggested that the promotion of mistrust constitutes a negative socialization message and encourages inter-ethnic hostility and other negative social and psychological outcomes (Caughy et al. *2006*; Huynh and Fuligni *2008*; Joseph and Hunter *2011*; Tran and Lee *2010*). In fact, our data show that, at the bivariate level, the promotion of mistrust and preparation for bias messages indeed were associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms; however, these associations were not statistically significant in our final, prospective model. It is thus unclear why, in our sample, the promotion of mistrust was actually positively associated with self-esteem. Despite messages regarding mistrust of other groups appearing negatively biased, perhaps they present a harsh reality that allows adolescents to attribute any negative experiences to racial and social issues that are external to the self, thereby preserving their sense of self-esteem in the process. This interpretation would be consistent with prior work suggesting that African Americans with low public regard who believe that others and society have poor views of their group can protect themselves from negative effects of perceived discrimination, perhaps by psychologically distancing themselves from these discriminatory perceptions (Sellers and Shelton *2003*).

Although further work would need to be done to replicate or compare our findings with other geographic samples, another possible reason why this unexpected effect was found was due to the context from which our sample was drawn. The Southeastern U.S. represents a new or emerging immigrant community for newcomer families in that this region is only recently becoming accustomed to having an immigrant population (Massey *2008*). Hence, the Asian-American youth in this study were coming of age in a community where their groups (while growing) represent a very small percentage of the population. A shortage of social and institutional supports is often characteristic of such areas (Bailey *2005*). Perhaps, in these communities, active attempts from parents to shield and isolate their children from the majority culture can be beneficial, at least in the short term. Clearly, more research that focuses on developmental processes among these understudied geographic areas is needed.

The fact that a significant association between cultural socialization messages and American identity was found only for girls, another possible focus for future research could be on possible gender differences in ethnic socialization, ethnic and American identity development, and psychological adjustment outcomes. Indeed, prior research has established that older children tend to be more exposed to preparation for bias and the promotion of mistrust messages, and that socialization tends to occur differently for boys and girls in terms of message types and also message frequency (Hughes et al. *2006*; Supple et al. *2010*). Similarly, future research should continue to consider generational status as a possible moderator. In our sample, the promotion of mistrust messages was associated with lower levels of ethnic identity, but only for adolescents who were foreign-born. Messages that promote mistrust of other cultural groups might be given by parents in an attempt to protect their children's ethnic identity and shield them from negative cultural interactions, regardless of generational status. However, for adolescents who are more recently adjusting to American life, it appears as though such messages may actually backfire and serve to distance them from their home culture. Future research that more specifically investigates acculturation processes could help to explicate these patterns of results.

Despite the noteworthy findings of our present research, several limitations should be discussed. For example, one potential limitation of this study is our sample in terms of its relatively small size and pan-ethnic nature. Future studies may examine individual Asian ethnic groups in an effort to determine if the effects we have reported differ or are exacerbated among these specific groups. Further, while the sample we utilized came from a region of the U.S. (the Southeast) that has been relatively understudied, the dynamics of minority groups within the majority culture in this particular region could potentially affect our findings and thus might limit generalizability. Along these similar lines, the panethnic nature of our sample, which is a necessity in areas of the U.S. where Asian Americans represent such a small proportion of the population, limits the investigation of potentially important intra-group variability. Hence, although we contribute to the literature by extending our understanding of socialization and identity processes to a vastly under-researched sample, the inherent challenges related to recruiting participants from emerging immigrant areas present limitations to generalizability. Lastly, additional variables and alternative pathways also should be taken into account in future research. In terms of outcomes, while we focused on self-esteem and depressive symptoms as two primary indicators of psychological adjustment, other studies could further our findings by utilizing different and more diverse markers of well-being, perhaps incorporating social and interpersonal indicators of adjustment as well. Given that some socialization messages might directly emerge from experiences of discrimination or negative social interactions, including such perceptions of or encounters with rejection or stereotypes would be worthwhile in further mapping out processes of identity development. More specific family relationship variables also could be considered. For instance, it is possible that ethnic socialization, as measured in the current study, is simply a proxy for positive or close parent–child relationships. Alternatively, prior research suggests that ethnic socialization messages might be more effective in contributing to children's ethnic identity if the parent–child relationship is a positive one (Wilson and Constantine *1999*). Either

way, incorporating additional variables in future modeling efforts could help to provide a more complete picture of adolescents' ethnic identity formation. Limitations notwithstanding, the results from our model provide meaningful information on how ethnic socialization helps to form adolescents' developing ethnic and American identities, and how both socialization and identity processes are prospectively connected to key indicators of adjustment.

Conclusions

Establishing a sense of ethnic identity is an important developmental task (Erikson *1968*), and one that is particularly salient for adolescents from ethnic minority or immigrant backgrounds. Our prospective model suggests that one way to promote a positive sense of ethnic identity over time is to provide adolescents with positive messages of cultural socialization that emphasize ethnic pride and understanding. Importantly, such messages can serve to promote a sense of bicultural competence as well (Berry *2003*), given their positive links with American identity, especially for girls. Another implication of our model is that ethnic identity, in turn, promotes self-esteem over time, mediating the positive effect of cultural socialization. The sustained impact of socialization on adjustment can be seen also through the prospective association between the promotion of mistrust messages and self-esteem.

Socialization messages thus appear highly potent with effects that persist over years. Notably, while messages that promote of mistrust were beneficial to youths' self-esteem, they were negatively associated with ethnic identity among those of the first-generation. Further research that investigates generational differences in mistrust messages in particular and replicates our overall findings with other Asian and non-Asian samples could move our understanding of identity processes forward. Nonetheless, our model provides initial empirical evidence based on multi-wave data that supports a complex interplay between the messages that adolescents receive about their ethnic background, their sense of ethnic and American identity, and their subsequent psychological adjustment, as measured through self-esteem.

Author contributions

LK designed and coordinated the larger study from which this manuscript is based. MG conceived of this manuscript's research questions and drafted the manuscript with assistance from LK. AS performed the statistical analyses and helped to draft specific sections of the manuscript. All authors participated in the interpretation of the data, read, revised, and approved the final manuscript.

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