

Parental influences on Hmong American adolescents' ethnic–racial identity

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Abstract:

This study examined associations between cultural socialization and Hmong American early adolescents' (n = 93) ethnic–racial identity in the context of the overall parent–adolescent relationship. Findings suggested that cultural socialization was positively related to ethnic exploration and resolution but not to affirmation. Involved–supportive parenting was not related to adolescent ethnic–racial identity either directly or as a moderator. Acculturation gaps, on the other hand, were indirectly related to ethnic affirmation via intergenerational conflict. In addition, indirect associations linking higher levels of cultural socialization to affirmation via conflict were found, but only at high levels of acculturation gaps. Findings and their implications are discussed. Our findings suggested that if Hmong American adolescents perceive that their parents are too traditionally Hmong, then when those parents attempt to teach their children about being Hmong or possibly attempt to boost pride in being Hmong, those attempts may create conflict in the family. That conflict, in turn, can lead to lowered feelings of pride in being Hmong.

Keywords: Hmong | acculturation gaps | ethnic identity | conflict | parent–adolescent relationships

Article:

A key developmental issue for adolescents in Asian American immigrant and refugee families involves establishing a sense of self with respect to the family's cultural group while also attending school, receiving media messages, and interacting with peers from “mainstream” American society. Researchers call the process of learning about the family's cultural group, understanding group membership, and identifying with cultural traditions, values, and behaviors ethnic–racial identity (ERI) development and consistently find that ERI is positively related to a host of desirable developmental outcomes during adolescence and into young adulthood (Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009; Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2010). Despite the importance of ERI in the development of adolescents from immigrant families, researchers still know little about how ERI develops, particularly in the case of Hmong Americans. There are likely a wide variety

of contextual factors that shape ERI (e.g., teachers, peers, and media; Nguyen, 2013); however, cultural socialization in the family is typically viewed as the primary influence (Neblett, Rivas-Drake, & Umaña-Taylor, 2012). Although studies consistently link familial cultural socialization to ERI, studies rarely consider how parent–adolescent relational factors either support or hinder cultural socialization efforts. A focus on the overall parent–adolescent relationship is needed, given research pointing to acculturation gaps and intergenerational conflicts as a root cause of family and adolescent problems in Asian American families (Ahn, Kim, & Park, 2008; Juang, Syed, & Takagi, 2007; Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000; Xiong, Eliason, Detzner, & Cleveland, 2005). As such, a primary goal of the current study is to examine factors related to the overall parent–adolescent relationships and their role in promoting or hindering the cultural socialization and ERI relationship.

The Importance of ERI in the Development of Adolescents From Diverse Cultural Groups

During adolescence, young people resolve questions regarding personal identifications with peer culture; the importance of educational, moral, and political values; and who the adolescent chooses to socialize with and date. Such processes form the basis for identity development and are resolved via the young person’s exploration of various lifestyle options and by eventually making commitments that lead to an achieved identity. Explorations are complicated for youth in immigrant and refugee families where there might be considerable cultural distance between parents’ values, attitudes, and behavioral expectations and those that the adolescent encounters in the peer group and at school (Supple, McCoy, & Wang, 2010; Umaña-Taylor & Yazedjian, 2006). The development of behavioral and value orientations related to family obligation, school achievement, language use, social success with peers, getting along with teachers, and experiences with discrimination, all add to the potentially complex development of ERI for adolescents in immigrant/refugee families.

Definitions of ethnic identity range from self-identification as a group member to exploration of group activities; acquisition of ethnic knowledge, traits, values, and behavioral roles; as well as positive or negative evaluations about the self and ethnic group (Kiang, 2008; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Parallel to identity development generally, early models of ERI development focused on adolescents’ exploration of behaviors, roles, traits, and customs of the group followed by commitments to various group-specific elements. In addition to exploration, components of ethnic identity may include an understanding of ethnic group membership (resolution) and feelings of connection, belonging, and pride toward one’s ethnicity (affirmation; for a detailed review, see Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004). For youth in immigrant families, ERI has been linked to self-esteem and academic success and found to protect adolescents from both general stressors and those specific to the experience of being ethnic minority (e.g., discrimination; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

To date, no studies have studied ERI development with samples of Hmong American early adolescents. Although evidence is limited, some studies suggest that, compared with other cultural groups, Hmong Americans report greater embarrassment of their parents (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001), who are perceived as retaining cultural traditions that are at odds with “mainstream” U.S. culture (Moua & Lamborn, 2010). Other studies, however, have suggested that Hmong American college students often attribute their success to their parents and to a

desire to forge strong identifications with being Hmong (Supple et al., 2010; Yang, 2003). Previous research also points to a lack of cultural knowledge among Hmong American youth as a source of frustration among Hmong elders, resulting from a lack of clear and direct communication between parents and adolescents about Hmong culture (Xiong et al., 2005; Yang, 2003). In sum, the limited available research suggests that ERI development for Hmong Americans may be intertwined with familial cultural influences, identification with the mainstream culture, and academic success.

Cultural Socialization and Ethnic–Racial Identity

Cultural socialization refers to the transmission of values, attitudes, behaviors, and language that parents bring with them from their country of origin and attempt to pass onto their children being raised in the United States (Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & Ocampo, 1993; Moua & Lamborn, 2010). Young people's perceptions of their parents' attitudes (linked to ERI; Juang & Nguyen, 2010; Juang & Syed, 2010) are included in cultural socialization as are specific behaviors or activities parents engage in that promote cultural learning. These latter parental strategies may be passive (e.g., parents speak Hmong in the home) or more direct (e.g., attending events or telling stories) in their socialization of children regarding culture (Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Supple et al., 2010; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). Particularly for Hmong Americans, cultural socialization is likely the primary means by which children and adolescents learn about the culture of their parents, as there is little cultural socialization to be exposed to from, for example, "mainstream" media and non-Hmong community members.

Despite a strong theoretical basis and supportive findings from studies of children, evidence directly linking cultural socialization to adolescent ERI is mixed. For example, a study of Armenian, Vietnamese, and Mexican adolescents found greater evidence for indirect associations between cultural socialization and ERI via language proficiency and interaction with same-ethnic peers (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). Studies by Umaña-Taylor and colleagues, on the other hand, have consistently found that family cultural socialization (involving adolescents in cultural activities and interacting with group members) is a strong predictor of ethnic exploration and resolution (Umaña-Taylor, Alfaro, Bámaca, & Guimond, 2009; Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2010). Using the Umaña-Taylor measures in a sample of Latinos, Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, and Sands (2006) found direct associations between cultural socialization and ethnic exploration and resolution, but not between socialization and ethnic affirmation. This latter finding was qualified, however, by moderator effects suggesting positive associations between cultural socialization and ethnic affirmation when parental involvement was high, perceived neighborhood risk was low, and harsh parenting by mothers was low. A recent longitudinal study by Umaña-Taylor and Guimond (2010), conversely, found cultural socialization linked to ethnic affirmation only when adolescents were older, and a study of Dominican, Puerto Rican, African American, Chinese, and White sixth graders found that parental cultural socialization was positively related to ethnic centrality (prominence of ethnicity to one's identity) and pride (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009).

Studies of college students have linked indirect cultural socialization to ERI by focusing on respondents' perceptions of their parents' attitudes and values (e.g., highly valuing familial obligation) to greater ethnic pride and engagement/exploration among Chinese American youth

(Juang & Nguyen, 2010). Other studies with mixed-ethnicity college samples also found similar associations, but only to exploration and not ethnic commitment (Juang & Syed, 2010). These latter studies raise the possibility that parental cultural values and socialization might be more strongly linked to affirmation in older adolescence or that internalized positive feelings are more strongly linked to youth respondents' evaluations of their parents' attitudes and values. Taken together, the available evidence suggests parental teaching about culture and encouraging involvement in cultural activities is a key proximal process that promotes adolescent knowledge, attitudes regarding obligation, and involvement in cultural activities. The extent to which similar processes foster an internalized sense of pride in being a group member is less clear.

Parent–Adolescent Relationships and Ethnic–Racial Identity

A major focus of research on Asian American adolescents is on strains in the parent–child relationship that result when parental cultural orientations are rooted in the country of origin while the adolescent is developing a contrasting cultural orientation more consistent with values, attitudes, and behaviors related to the host country (Ahn et al., 2008; Juang, Syed, & Takagi, 2007; Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008; Yang, 2003). Previous research suggests that acculturation gaps lead to increased conflicts with parents (both regarding cultural issues and normative issues of adolescence), which can result in lowered supportive interactions and are viewed as the cause of deviance and psychological dysfunction for adolescents and parents (Birman, 2006; Dinh & Nguyen, 2006; Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002; Juang et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2000; Tsai-Chae & Nagata, 2008; Xiong, Rettig, & Tuicompepee, 2008). Although there is a significant body of research linking acculturation gaps to conflict and psychological distress in adolescents, how culture-related conflicts may interfere with the ability to internalize positive feelings regarding group membership is unknown. Studies do suggest that certain socialization efforts (e.g., promoting felt obligation) and their culturally related outcomes (e.g., providing assistance to parents) might draw adolescents closer to parents and promote the internalization of cultural socialization messages by creating greater involvement and pride in one's familial cultural heritage (Juang & Nguyen, 2010; Kiang & Fuligni, 2009). On the other hand, conflict and cultural dissonance, particularly when they result from adolescents perceiving that their parents are too traditional, engage in cultural practices that are viewed as coercive, fail to show empathy for the child's situation, or accuse the children of "not being Hmong enough," may represent culturally based proximal processes that induce Asian immigrant adolescents to deidentify from parents. Consequently, acculturation gaps may lead to greater conflict in the family, which may, in turn, lead to adolescents devaluing parental values (Costigan & Dokis, 2006) and developing negative attitudes regarding what it means to be Hmong (Supple et al., 2010; Supple & Cavanaugh, 2013).

In addition to possible direct associations between acculturation gaps and ethnic identity, acculturation gaps might alter cultural socialization efforts by parents. For example, cultural socialization influences on ERI may depend on the adolescent's perception that socialization efforts are reasonable and supportive versus forced, overly traditional, or as failing to acknowledge that the child is "growing up American" (Supple et al., 2010). It is possible that cultural messages are more readily internalized or accepted by adolescents (particularly messages that are oriented toward more collectivistic values; Schönplflug & Bilz, 2009) where parents are more supportive and sensitive and less autocratic in their approach to child-rearing.

Given that many Hmong parents engage in “traditional Asian parenting,” with relatively few outward expressions of love and warmth, high levels of behavioral control, and parental emphasis on respect for elders and traditional cultural practices, it is likely that cultural socialization often occurs in relatively low-support contexts (Lee, 2001; Lee, Jung, Su, Tran, & Bahrassa, 2009; Supple et al., 2010; Supple & Small, 2006; Xiong et al., 2005, 2008; Yang, 2003). Although Hmong parents may engage in restrictive parenting to protect their children and promote Hmong traditions, some adolescents may perceive these efforts as overly intrusive and as conveying a lack of trust (Lee et al., 2009; Supple et al., 2010; Xiong et al., 2005). This perceived lack of trust, in turn, can create conflicts and undermine ERI development. This study proposes, consequently, that cultural socialization may be associated with elevated conflict and lowered ERI among adolescents who perceive greater acculturation gaps with their parents. This approach also helps to disentangle culturally based conflicts, from more “normative” conflicts that are typical of adolescence regardless of cultural group membership (Juang, Syed, Cookston, Wang, & Kim, 2012).

Involved–supportive parenting includes expressing care and concern, checking homework, and being aware of youths’ whereabouts and free-time activities (Brody, Kim, Murry, & Brown, 2005). In Hmong American families, parental love may be more often conveyed through sacrificing, “being there,” attempting to support schoolwork, and placing restrictions on adolescents’ activities and social interactions rather than outward expressions like affection (Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Supple et al., 2010; Xiong et al., 2005). The few available studies have suggested that parental warmth, behavioral control, and autonomy granting were positively related to ethnic pride but unrelated to ethnic knowledge among Chinese American and Chinese-Australian 10th- and 11th-grade students (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). Studies of Latinos have produced mixed results, with Umaña-Taylor and Guimond (2010) finding a positive association between support from fathers and ethnic exploration for male adolescents, whereas Supple and colleagues (2006) found that harsh parenting in Latino samples was associated with lowered ethnic affirmation, but support from parents and monitoring were unrelated to ERI.

Although presenting a mixed set of results, previous research points to parenting behaviors that promote intergenerational connections as a potentially key proximal process, promoting adolescents’ identification with their cultural group. In addition, ongoing interactions with parents that express caring, concern, and maintenance of a good relationship may lead to adolescents feeling close to parents and as more likely to internalize positive messages about being Hmong. A limited body of research has suggested that cultural socialization messages may result in more positive internalized views of the group when parents are warm and supportive (Davey, Fish, Askew, & Robila, 2003; Kiang & Fuligni, 2009; Su & Costigan, 2009) and less well internalized views when parents are harsh or too strongly emphasize children taking on cultural behaviors and values (Cheng & Kuo, 2000; Supple et al., 2006, 2010). As such, in the context of high involved–supportive parenting, the expectation is that cultural socialization will have stronger associations with ERI.

Conceptual Framework Guiding This Study and Hypotheses

This study tests four specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Consistent with previous studies, we anticipate that although cultural socialization is positively associated with ethnic exploration and resolution, it will not be associated with affirmation.

Hypothesis 2: Associations between cultural socialization and all three aspect of ERI will be stronger at higher levels of involved–supportive parenting.

Hypothesis 3: There will be an indirect association linking acculturation gaps to ethnic affirmation via increased intergenerational conflict.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a negative conditional indirect association in which cultural socialization in the context of high acculturation gaps will be associated with greater intergenerational conflict, which will, in turn, be associated with lowered ethnic affirmation.

This study integrates research on Hmong American parent–adolescent relationships with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory to develop a conceptual model describing how parent–adolescent relationships and cultural socialization influence adolescent ERI. Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) proposed that proximal processes comprise frequent and ongoing interactions with individuals, places, and cultural symbols and that these interactions represent the “engine that drives” development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). Proximal processes occur in environmental settings varying from smaller social units (i.e., microsystems) such as families, schools, or peer groups to larger units (i.e., the macrosystem) that include cultural influences. Most importantly, Bronfenbrenner emphasized that proximal processes are shaped by individual characteristics, the contexts within which processes occur, and time (i.e., the person–process–context–time model). For example, macrosystem characteristics such as cultural beliefs, values, and attitudes likely influence how proximal processes shape development but also shape proximal processes within microsystems.

Put to the current study, the model we propose has three elements of the parent–adolescent relationship, three ERI outcomes, and one mediator. Our conceptual model (Figure 1) proposes cultural socialization is the primary proximal process that is expected to promote ethnic exploration and resolution, but not necessarily affirmation. We propose that other processes in the family may have greater relevance that are specific to ethnic affirmation, acting as moderator variables. These other family process variables are proposed to strengthen socialization effects (in the case of involved–supportive parenting) or lead to potential conflicts (acculturation gaps). Each of these process variables are context variables in the family microsystem that serve to alter the nature of proximal processes by either promoting feelings of closeness to parents (and thus Hmong cultural orientations) or distance and conflict with parents (and potentially deidentification). More specifically, we suggest that associations between cultural associations and ERI will be stronger at higher levels of involved–supportive parenting. On the other hand, we propose that cultural socialization will be indirectly related to reduced ethnic affirmation at higher levels of acculturation gaps because of increased conflict with parents. More specifically, when parents discuss Hmong cultural history, take children to cultural events, play music, or use their native language at home, there could be increased conflict if those cultural socialization efforts take place in the context of greater acculturation gaps. What we propose is a moderated–mediation association where cultural socialization is hypothesized to lead to increased conflict, which, in turn, is associated with lower affirmation, but only in cases where adolescents report high levels of acculturation gaps.

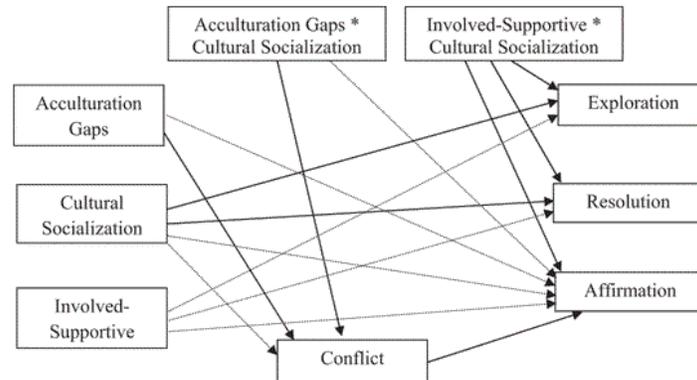


Figure 1. Conceptual model linking cultural socialization, acculturation gaps, and involved-supportive parenting to three elements of ethnic-racial identity. Solid lined arrows indicate hypothesized relationships, dashed lines represent parameters that are estimated but not expected to be statistically significant (for purposes of testing indirect and moderator associations), and omitted paths indicate associations specified to be zero.

Method

Participants

The sample included 93 Hmong American middle-school students from a single county in North Carolina. The county from which respondents were drawn is home to the seventh largest Hmong American population in the United States (Hmong American Partnership, 2010). The average age of the sample was 13 years ($SD = 1.28$), 59% of the respondents were male, and 97% of the respondents were born in the United States (the others were born in Laos or Thailand and moved to the United States as infants). The majority (82%) of the respondents lived with two biological parents, with 93% of mothers and 98% of fathers reported as born in Southeast Asia (mostly in Laos). Although 84% of the sample indicated that they felt as if their families' socioeconomic status was "about average" or above, 73% indicated that they qualified for free or reduced-price lunch programs at school. Although all adolescents indicated that they spoke English, 29% reported mostly speaking Hmong at home, 44% reported speaking both English and Hmong at home, and 26% reported mostly speaking English at home.

Procedures

Homeroom teachers distributed parental consent forms (in Hmong and English) to middle-school students identified by school records as being Hmong. Students who returned signed consent forms were given a questionnaire to complete during their homeroom period. A total of 95 students provided both a completed consent form and questionnaire, which corresponded to a response rate of around 50% (there were no comparable data to consider how respondents differed from nonrespondents). All questionnaires were completed in English and took roughly 30 min to complete. The measures selected for this study have been previously used in studies of immigrant adolescents and were also validated via focus groups with Hmong American college students selected for this survey. Two participants returned questionnaires with significant missing data across survey items, and those participants were excluded from the final sample (resulting in a sample size of 93).

Measures

Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity was assessed with Umaña-Taylor's 17-item Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004), which includes three subscales: Exploration, Resolution, and Affirmation. Exploration used seven items to assess learning about culture through participation in group activities or exposure to cultural information (e.g., "I have experienced things that reflect my ethnicity, such as eating food, listening to music, and watching movies"; $\alpha = .73$). Resolution used four items to refer to adolescent awareness and understanding of group membership (e.g., "I know what my ethnicity means to me"; $\alpha = .76$). Affirmation used six items to assess the extent to which adolescents have internalized views of pride in one's ethnic group (e.g., "My feelings about my ethnicity are mostly negative"; $\alpha = .81$). Previous studies suggest that these three elements of the EIS are empirically distinct and that they should be analyzed separately (Supple et al., 2006). Response options were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (does not describe me at all) to 5 (describes me very well), with affirmation items reverse-coded, so higher scores indicated greater affirmation. The factor structure of the EIS has been demonstrated across a number of ethnic groups and has been used with studies of Asian American youth (Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007).

Family cultural socialization

Family cultural socialization was measured with the 12-item Family Ethnic Socialization measure (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). Sample items include "My family talks about how important it is to know about my ethnic/cultural background" and "My family teaches me about the values and beliefs of our ethnic/cultural background." Response options range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), $\alpha = .88$. Although originally designed for use with Latinx youth, this measure has been used in studies of Asian American youth (Juang, Yoo, & Atkin, 2017) and has demonstrated adequate reliability (Juang & Syed, 2010).

Involved-supportive parenting

Questionnaire items included perceptions of parental knowledge of free-time activities and support of academics for mothers and fathers separately. Given very high correlations between the four measures of parental behaviors ($r > .75$), maternal and paternal support and maternal and paternal monitoring variables were combined to create a summary variable labeled "involved-supportive."

The monitoring/knowledge measure comprised six items designed to capture parental knowledge of adolescents' free-time activities, friends, and spending habits (e.g., "This parent knows who I am with when I am out"; Peterson & Bush, 1999). Response options ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree ($\alpha = .73$ for mother reports and $\alpha = .75$ for father reports). Parental support was assessed with seven items capturing parental behaviors supportive of the child doing well in school (e.g., "This parent makes me feel good when I do well in school"; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gomez, 2003). Response options ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree ($\alpha = .73$ for mother reports and $\alpha = .76$ for father reports). These measures have been administered in a cross-national study of over 30 countries and have also been used in studies of immigrant adolescents in the United States.

Perceived acculturation gaps

The Asian American Family Conflicts Scale (Lee et al., 2000) was used to assess respondents' view of an acculturation gap with their parents. Disagreements with parents resulting from parental cultural values and beliefs were assessed with 10 items. Original items were altered to say "Hmong" and sample items included "My parents expect me to behave like a proper Hmong, but I feel my parents are being too traditional" and "I want to state my own opinion, but my parents consider it to be disrespectful to talk back." Although often used to measure conflict, based on a qualitative study of Hmong American college students (Supple et al., 2010) this measure was elected to represent the major source of acculturative stress in Hmong youths' lives: acculturation gaps with parents. Response options ranged from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always), $\alpha = .83$.

Conflict with parents

Conflict with parents was assessed using nine items to capture the frequency of adolescent-reported conflicts across multiple domains (designed by the authors). Six items were designed to assess conflict typical for most adolescents (e.g., "How frequently do you argue with your parents about schoolwork") and three were designed to be more specific to Hmong youth (e.g., "How often do you argue with parents about having to translate for them"). Response options ($\alpha = .84$) ranged from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). To be consistent with previous research on parent–youth conflict in Asian American families, we distinguished everyday conflict from conflicts arising from acculturation gaps. To empirically justify this decision using these data, we conducted a two-factor confirmatory factor analysis. A two-factor model demonstrated an adequate fit to these data ($\chi^2 = 183$, $df = 120$, $p = .001$, root mean square error of approximation = .06, comparative fit index = .90; McDonald & Ho, 2002) after specifying a few correlated uniquenesses. Those model alterations largely had to do with some content including language about being Hmong. Given the adequate model fit with few alterations, however, we considered this analysis to demonstrate adequate convergent validity (items loading in expected ways) and divergent validity (items not having numerous cross-loadings).

Results

Path models were estimated to evaluate the research questions of this study using Mplus (Figure 1). The model included only observed summary variables (no latent variables) and specified three endogenous outcomes (exploration, resolution, and affirmation), three exogenous variables (cultural socialization, acculturation gaps, and involved–supportive), and one mediator (conflict). In addition, interaction terms were included to assess moderated associations. These terms were created by multiplying mean-centered cultural socialization scores by involved–supportive parenting and by acculturation gaps. Cultural socialization was specified to have direct associations to all three ERI outcomes and an indirect association to affirmation via intergenerational conflict. Acculturation gaps were also specified as directly and indirectly associated with ethnic affirmation, whereas involved–supportive parenting was specified to be directly associated with all three ERI outcomes. The parental involvement-by-cultural socialization product term was specified to be directly associated with the three ERI outcomes,

whereas the acculturation gaps-by-cultural socialization term was directly linked to affirmation and conflict. Note that some paths were not explicitly tested by this model; however, we examined model modification indices to determine if any omitted paths would have resulted in substantial model misfit.

To evaluate the proposed moderated–mediation association, we used the Mplus model constraint command to create parameters representing conditional indirect associations at high, medium, and low levels of acculturation gaps (Hayes, 2013). This allows for a test of significance of indirect associations linking cultural socialization to lowered affirmation via increased conflicts at various levels of acculturation gaps. Statistical significance for these effects were evaluated using bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (CIs), where 95% CIs that do not include zero indicate that mediation is present (Thoemmes, MacKinnon, & Reiser, 2010). Recent simulation studies have suggested that sample sizes of roughly 80 to 100 are adequate to detect indirect effects that are small to medium in terms of effect sizes (Thoemmes et al., 2010) and that the bootstrapping approach increases power.

Results supported our first hypothesis in that while cultural socialization was significantly associated with ethnic exploration and resolution, there was no direct association with affirmation (Table 1). We also hypothesized that the associations between cultural socialization and ERI would be moderated by involved–supportive parenting. The results did not support those hypotheses, as the interaction terms representing the moderating effect of involved–supportive parenting were nonsignificant for all three ERI outcomes.

Table 1
Associations Between Predictors and Three ERI Outcomes

Predictor	Exploration			Resolution			Affirmation			Conflict		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Cultural socialization	.380**	.082	.460	.311**	.102	.358	.079	.079	.119	.117	.094	.102
Involved–supportive	.09	.141	.062	.274	.177	.179	.001	.106	.001			
Acculturation gaps							-.103	.081	-.164	.644**	.086	.600
Intergenerational conflict							-.180*	.072	-.310			
CS × AG interaction							.148	.096	.179	.336**	.115	.237
CS × IS interaction	.193	.175	.102	-.02	.229	-.01	-.003	.129	-.002			

Note. ERI = ethnic–racial identity; CS = cultural socialization; AG = acculturation gaps; IS = involved–supportive parenting.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Associations Between Predictors and Three ERI Outcomes

With respect to the third hypothesis, we did find that acculturation gaps were indirectly associated with ethnic affirmation via intergenerational conflict. The bootstrapped 95% CI for this indirect association did not include zero, indicating that an indirect association was present ($B = -.114$, $[-.206, -.022]$). In addition, the results suggested no direct association between acculturation gaps and affirmation, suggesting that any association between acculturation gaps and lowered ethnic affirmation is fully mediated by intergenerational conflict (the total effect was significant, indicating an overall association without considering the mediator).

The last hypothesis suggested that there would be an indirect association linking cultural socialization to affirmation, but only at high levels of acculturation gaps. We estimated indirect pathways linking cultural socialization to affirmation via conflict at low (-1 SD), medium (the mean), and high ($+1$ SD) values of acculturation gaps. Statistical significance of indirect

associations at low, medium, and high values of acculturation gaps was evaluated by examining the bias-corrected, bootstrapped 95% CIs where any values in that interval including zero would result in the conclusion that the indirect association was nonsignificant. The results suggested that the indirect associations were, respectively, .028 [-.002, .112], -.02 [-.082, .013], and -.07 [-.19, -.01] at low, medium, and high values of acculturation gaps, respectively. These results suggested that as cultural socialization increased, there was an increasing negatively indirect association with affirmation via increased conflict at higher levels of acculturation gaps (Figure 2). Taken together, these findings suggest that although the overall indirect association of cultural socialization to affirmation via conflict is nonsignificant, that association becomes increasingly negative at higher levels of acculturation gaps and begins to become a significant association at around +1 SD on the acculturation gaps measure.

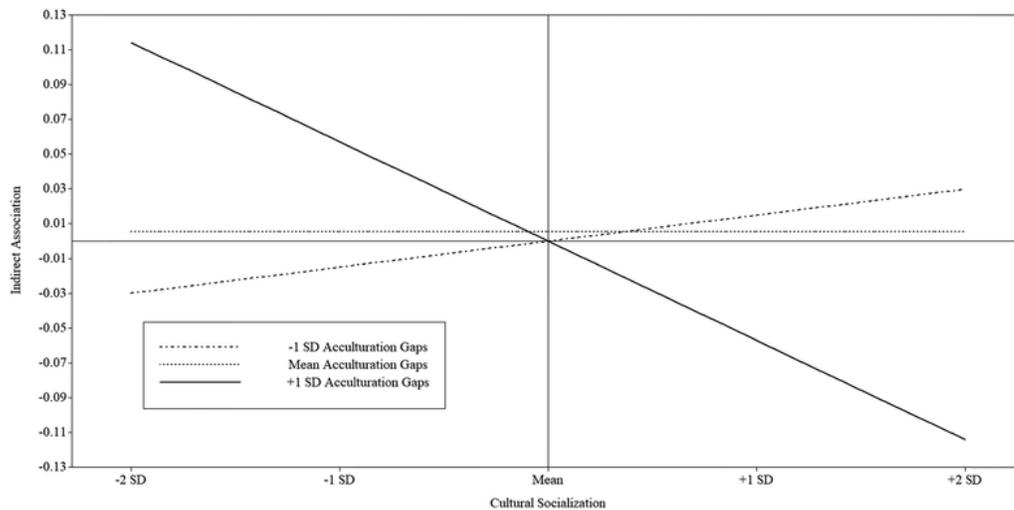


Figure 2. Conditional indirect associations linking cultural socialization to affirmation via intergenerational conflict. Indirect associations are plotted on y-axis at low, mean, and high levels of cultural socialization and acculturation gaps.

Discussion

These findings suggested that in reference to parental influence on ERI development for Hmong American early adolescents, (a) consistent with research conducted on other cultural groups, cultural socialization was related to knowledge, group activities, and ethnic behaviors, but not directly to positive feelings about being Hmong; (b) associations between cultural socialization and ERI were not moderated by involved-supportive parenting; (c) perceived acculturation gaps and conflict do not adversely influence group knowledge or engagement in activities, but may undermine positive feelings about being Hmong; and (d) under certain circumstances (high perceived acculturation gaps), cultural socialization may lead to greater intergenerational conflict, which may, in turn, lower feelings of ethnic affirmation.

One of the central findings was consistent with previous studies and suggested that although cultural socialization may be a key proximal process promoting greater ethnic exploration and resolution by adolescents, acculturation gaps and conflict may be more relevant for ethnic affirmation. A key implication is that socialization can clearly lead to learning culture but does not, in and of itself, promote pride in being Hmong. Such a finding is significant, given arguments that affirmation is the most essential element of ERI as a promotive and protective

factor related to positive youth development (Neblett et al., 2012). To the extent that ethnic affirmation may be the most salient element of adolescent ERI, researchers may continue to question whether cultural socialization is a primary factor in promoting this specific outcome. Moreover, findings from this study suggest that cultural socialization by parents, which occurs along with greater perceived acculturation gaps, may indirectly undermine positive feelings and resolved ideas about what it means to be Hmong. As Neblett and colleagues pointed out, there may be circumstances under which cultural socialization as a promotive factor may be harmful to youth of color. These results point to one possible scenario where this may occur: in contexts of high perceived acculturation gaps. A key implication of such a finding is that, although across familial contexts (high or low support, high or low acculturation gaps), cultural socialization may directly lead to greater cultural knowledge among early Hmong American adolescents, in certain contexts (high acculturation gaps), cultural socialization may have unintended effects and result in lower affirmation due to greater conflicts with parents. An additional interpretation may suggest that because this measure of acculturation gaps assesses—in part—adolescent's responses to perceived cultural socialization by parents (that might be viewed as overly traditional), those adolescents who are resistant to cultural messages may argue more with parents and be less likely to feel connected to Hmong American culture.

Current findings also add to the literature by suggesting that acculturation gaps create conflict in the family, which in turn is associated with lower ethnic affirmation. Such findings are consistent with research linking acculturation gaps, conflict, and deviance in Hmong adolescents and suggest that part of these associations (conflicts to problem behaviors) may result from adolescent deidentification from Hmong culture and from parents, specifically when parents are viewed as too traditional. Our findings are also consistent with previous research suggesting that contextual factors have varying influences on different elements of adolescent ERI and support arguments to continue studying how various contextual influences relate to multiple dimensions of ERI (Juang & Nguyen, 2010; Supple et al., 2006). It should be noted that a recent study (Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2010) suggested that effects of cultural socialization on ethnic affirmation may be delayed until later in development and, consequently, the current findings may be relevant for early adolescence only.

Contrary to our expectations and to previous studies, involved-supportive parenting was unrelated either directly or indirectly to ethnic identity outcomes (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992; Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2010). Moreover, these findings did not support previous arguments that cultural socialization messages might be more strongly internalized in the context of a relationship with parents characterized by closeness and involvement (Su & Costigan, 2009; Supple et al., 2006), as there was no evidence that involved-supportive parenting moderated associations between cultural socialization and ERI. Although bivariate correlations suggested that involved-supportive parenting may be related to ERI outcomes (Table 2), these associations were not significant when aspects of conflict were included in the analysis. In sum, parenting that is indicative of behaviors conveying support, concern, and care may play a less significant role in ERI development for Hmong American early adolescents than do perceived acculturation gaps and intergenerational conflict. This would be consistent with previous studies specific to Hmong Americans, suggesting that support from parents is less often associated with adolescent outcomes for Hmong Americans compared with other cultural groups (Supple & Small, 2006).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Key Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age	—								
Gender	-.06	—							
Cultural socialization	.07	.16	—						
Acculturation gaps	.08	.17	.17	—					
Involved-supportive	-.11	.21*	.29**	-.03	—				
Conflict	.14	.02	.16	.60**	-.10	—			
Exploration	.12	.18	.49**	.04	.21*	-.03	—		
Resolution	.16	.16	.41**	-.04	.28**	-.17	.66**	—	
Affirmation	-.10	-.04	.00	-.36**	.07	-.39**	.14	.23*	—
<i>M</i>	13		3.92	2.68	3.11	2.52	2.97	3.10	3.58
<i>SD</i>	1.28		0.76	0.81	0.43	0.87	0.63	0.66	0.52

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Key Study Variables

Limitations of this study included a reliance on self-reported data from adolescents, the inclusion of measures assessing only ethnic identification (rather than both ethnic/national or bicultural identifications), and the cross-sectional nature of the data. Future studies with Hmong American adolescents should include actual gaps that are created by collecting data from parents and youth or potentially adding observational data. Similarly, the current study relied on adolescent reports of cultural socialization messages; thus, future work should examine whether these align with parental reports in a Hmong sample and whether parent reports operate differently in predicting gaps, conflict, and ERI. In reference to the limited measurement strategy, recent studies (Nguyen, 2013) also suggest that a sense of collective identity and pride should be separated out from ERI, and these two constructs are more sensitive to the influence of peer interactions, rather than as resulting from family cultural socialization. As such, the current study missed out on a potentially important influence above and beyond family when considering ethnic affirmation. In addition, longitudinal studies would be helpful in drawing conclusions regarding how cultural socialization efforts are associated with changes over time in ethnic identity. Moreover, the cross-sectional nature of these data makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions regarding cultural socialization or acculturation gaps as causes of ERI development. It is possible that parents alter their socialization strategies depending on the specific child's own degree of ERI or family circumstances.

Despite these limitations, the results of the current study add to the cultural socialization and adolescent ERI literature. Whereas previous studies point to overwhelming positive influences of cultural socialization messages on ERI, our findings point to more nuanced processes whereby family circumstances (e.g., acculturation gaps and parent-adolescent conflict) should be considered for a fuller picture and more complete understanding of ERI development to emerge.

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