

## Acculturation conflict in Latino youth: Discrimination, ethnic identity, and depressive symptoms

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### **Abstract:**

Objectives: Patterns of parent–adolescent conflict differ between immigrant and nonimmigrant families living in the United States (Fuligni, 1998). Despite this, there is limited empirical literature examining the nuanced nature of parent–adolescent conflict in immigrant families. To fill this gap, the current study examined the role of 2 types of conflict (i.e., general and acculturation) in predicting psychosocial outcomes (i.e., depressive symptoms and ethnic identity) among Latino adolescents, and whether these relationships differ within the context of peer discrimination.

Method: All survey administration was completed in the participating school’s cafeteria. The sample consisted of 7th through 10th graders ( $n = 172$ ) with a mean age of 14.01 years ( $SD = 1.32$ ). The sample consisted of 53% females, and was primarily Mexican in origin (78%).

Results: As hypothesized, parent–adolescent acculturation conflict uniquely predicted greater depressive symptoms and lower ethnic private regard, even when controlling for parent–adolescent general conflict. However, acculturation conflict predicted lower ethnic private regard only in the presence of greater peer discrimination. More specifically, peer discrimination moderated the relation between acculturation conflict and ethnic private regard such that adolescents who reported the highest levels of acculturation conflict and peer discrimination reported the lowest levels of ethnic private regard.

Conclusions: These results suggest that for Latino youth and their families, acculturation conflict may be particularly problematic, as compared with general conflict. In addition, youth who face ethnicity-based stressors in both familial and school contexts are especially at risk in their ethnic identity development.

**Keywords:** Acculturation | Conflict | Discrimination | Ethnic Identity | Major Depression | Parent Child Relations | Peer Relations | Symptoms | Latinos/Latinas

**Article:**

A majority of Latino children in the United States (52%) are U.S.-born with at least one foreign-born parent, whereas another 11% of Latino children are foreign-born and growing up in the United States (Fry & Passel, 2009). These numbers highlight the importance of understanding experiences of acculturation as they impact Latino youth. Latino families face multiple stressors, including those related to their ethnicity or minority status (e.g., acculturative stress and discrimination) and those that are more universal in nature (e.g., parent–adolescent conflict and economic stress; Stein, Gonzalez, & Huq, 2012). Although parent–adolescent conflict has largely been conceptualized as a relevant stressor across ethnic groups, the acculturation process, which is a unique stressor, has the potential to influence the content of parent–adolescent conflict. Indeed, recent studies have begun to explore a more nuanced understanding of the specific content of parent–adolescent conflict in immigrant groups and its impact on psychosocial functioning.

In the parent–adolescent literature, conflict has primarily been defined as the extent to which the parent–adolescent relationship is contentious and hostile (Steinberg & Silk, 2002), but the source or content of conflict is seldom examined. In this study, general conflict is defined as conflict that is broad in nature (i.e., arguing in general) and not explicitly linked to culture; whereas consistent with existing literature, acculturation conflict is defined as conflict that explicitly relates to differences in cultural values between parents and their children due to differential acculturation (Juang, Syed, & Cookston, 2012; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Acculturation conflict has been distinguished from other types of parent–adolescent conflict as uniquely influencing family functioning and adolescent outcomes in immigrant Chinese American households (Juang, Syed, Cookston, Wang, & Kim, 2012). However, few studies have specifically examined acculturation conflict and its effects on psychosocial outcomes in Latino youth (see Lui, 2014 for review). Instead, the majority of the literature has been inconsistent and has focused on the examination of acculturation gaps (defined as a discrepancy between a parent and a child regarding their acculturation status) predicting negative outcomes in Latino youth (see Telzer, 2010 for review). Some studies with Asian and Latino families found that acculturation gaps were related to greater family conflict, anxiety, depression, conduct problems, substance abuse, and lower self-esteem (e.g., Juang, Syed, & Takagi, 2007; Liu, Benner, Lau, & Kim, 2009; Martinez, 2006; Phinney & Vedder, 2006), whereas other studies found that acculturation gaps were not predictive of parent–adolescent conflict, adolescent adjustment problems, or negative outcomes in Latino youth (Lau et al., 2005; Pasch et al., 2006). A nuanced examination of conflict in immigrant families may shed some light on the inconsistent findings. To our knowledge, no studies have examined acculturation conflict and its unique effects, as compared with other types of parent–adolescent conflict, in Latino youth. There has been some research with Asian American immigrant youth regarding this question; and it would be important to determine whether the presence of both general conflict and acculturation conflict, as unique but related constructs, is consistent across more than one immigrant ethnic group. Notably, differences between Asian and Latino cultural values and potential differences in the nature of discrimination that Asian and Latino youth face, may hamper the generalizability of studies with

Asian youth for Latinos. Thus, this study will contribute to the literature on the nature of parent–adolescent conflict in Latino families and possibly highlight an acculturation-related family process that is similar across multiple immigrant ethnic groups. Our study will fill a significant gap in the current literature by examining the unique role of acculturation conflict compared with general conflict in predicting two psychosocial outcomes in Latino adolescents (i.e., ethnic identity, depressive symptoms), and whether these relationships are moderated by experiences of peer discrimination.

## Theoretical Considerations

Two theoretical frameworks guide the current study: the acculturation gap–distress model (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993) and the integrative model of child development (García Coll et al., 1996). The acculturation gap–distress model posits that parent–child acculturation gaps lead to increased family conflict, which in turn, leads to youth maladjustment (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). Maladjustment can be broad ranging and may include internalizing and externalizing symptoms, and impaired identity development. In their integrative theoretical model, García Coll and colleagues (1996) posit that social position (i.e., Latino ethnicity) indirectly affects cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development through experiences across multiple settings (i.e., school, home) for ethnic minority youth. This highlights the need to consider family functioning within the broader experiences of social position and discrimination. The integrative model suggests that adaptive culture (i.e., acculturation) may directly impact child outcomes, but may also influence child and family characteristics, which in turn impact child outcomes. Furthermore, the impact of discrimination is central to this model, proposing that discrimination may interact with familial processes in predicting developmental outcomes (e.g., García Coll et al., 1996), yet limited empirical studies have examined the intersection of discrimination and parent–child relationships in Latino families.

## General Versus Acculturation Conflict

A number of studies examined the effects of parent–adolescent conflict in Latino families, and generally concluded that conflict predicts greater internalizing and externalizing symptoms (e.g., Chung, Flook, & Fuligni, 2009; Formoso, Gonzales, & Aiken, 2000; Gonzales, Deardorff, Formoso, Barr, & Barrera, 2006; Kuhlberg, Peña, & Zayas, 2010). However, the measures used in these studies only assessed frequency of arguments or the quality of the parent–adolescent relationship, but did not specifically assess multiple types of parent–adolescent conflict or the content of the conflict. Because the content of the conflict will likely influence the adolescent’s response (Phinney, Kim-Jo, Osorio, & Vilhjalmsson, 2005), it is important to disentangle whether the content of the conflict in Latino families uniquely impacts adolescent outcomes. In immigrant families, it is possible that the content of some conflict may surround issues of differential acculturation between parents and their adolescents.

Toward this end, newer research has in fact examined the effects of acculturation conflict in both Latino and Asian-origin youth and their families. In immigrant Chinese households, acculturation conflict predicted more negative parenting, worse parent–adolescent relationships, and lower family cohesion when compared with other types of conflict (Juang, Syed, Cookston, et al., 2012). In a more diverse sample, acculturation conflict led family members to feel

culturally distant and disconnected from one another, as some members adopted the cultural characteristics of the dominant culture and others retained those of the heritage one (Castillo, Conoley, Brossart, & Quiros, 2007). Taken together, these two studies suggest that acculturation conflict may lead to alienation and distancing from parents, which may have a unique impact on the identity processes and emotional well-being of immigrant youth.

In addition to impacting family functioning, parent–adolescent acculturation conflict has been associated with greater depressive symptoms, lower self-esteem, greater conduct problems, and poor academic performance in Latinos (Dennis, Basañez, & Farahmand, 2010; Formoso et al., 2000; Gonzales et al., 2006). Yet, the majority of these studies do not distinguish between the effects of acculturation conflict and general conflict, making it unclear whether it is the content of the conflict that leads to these maladaptive outcomes or just the presence of conflict more generally. There is a similar lack of clarity when examining the acculturative stress literature. Acculturative stress measures typically include parent–adolescent acculturation conflict, and some studies found that greater levels of acculturative stress also predicted internalizing symptoms (e.g., Hovey & King, 1996; Romero, Carvajal, Valle, & Orduña, 2007). These studies are hampered by the fact that they do not specifically distinguish acculturation conflict from other aspects of acculturative stress.

Only one past study to our knowledge has examined whether acculturation conflict predicts psychosocial outcomes above and beyond the effects of other types of parent–adolescent conflict in immigrant families. In their study of Chinese American adolescents, Juang et al. (2012) found that acculturation conflict is a unique predictor of psychological functioning, after accounting for conflict over minor issues that often characterize the period of adolescence. In particular, these researchers found that acculturation conflict was associated with greater loneliness, depressive symptoms, delinquency, and lower self esteem.

### **Ethnic Identity**

Theoretically, the emergence of parent–adolescent conflict coincides with central developmental tasks of adolescence such as identity development (Marcia, 1994). Ethnic private regard has been found to be predictive of adaptive functioning in Latino youth (e.g., Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow, & Fuligni, 2006). A recent meta-analysis suggests that different aspects of ethnic identity may function differently as they relate to outcomes because certain aspects of ethnic identity incorporate an affective component while others do not (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). For this reason, in this study we will examine ethnic private regard, an affective component of ethnic identity, which refers to the extent to which an individual feels positively or negatively toward one's own ethnic group (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997.)

Existing research links certain aspects of familial relationships with an adolescent's ethnic identity (e.g., Okagaki & Moore, 2000). The majority of this research has surrounded racial/ethnic socialization, the transmission of information regarding race and ethnicity from adults to children (Hughes et al., 2006), which has been found to play an integral role in ethnic identity development among Latino youth (e.g., Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, & Sands, 2006; Umaña-Taylor & Guimond, 2010). Positive family functioning, including familial support, parental warmth, autonomy granting, and family cohesion, has also been associated with stronger

ethnic identity in ethnic minority adolescents (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992).

Despite evidence that family plays an important role in ethnic identity development for youth, no past studies, to our knowledge, have examined the role of parent–adolescent acculturation conflict in immigrant families as it relates to an adolescent’s ethnic identity. This is important because intergenerational differences may be substantial among immigrant families (Kwak, 2003), and the conflict surrounding acculturation may have important implications for identity development. Conflict surrounding issues of acculturation may interfere with positive ethnic socialization practices; and instead of receiving positive messages about their ethnic group, these adolescents may be faced with more negative messages associated with their ethnicity.

### **Depressive Symptoms**

The interpersonal life-stress model of depression posits that problematic interpersonal experiences (family- and peer-related stress) can lead to greater depressive symptoms in youth (Rudolph et al., 2000). Some research suggests that as a group, Latino youth exhibit significantly greater depressive symptoms as compared to African American and non-Latino white youth (Twenge & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002). Notably, there are different prevalence rates of depression across different Latino subethnic groups and generation status (e.g., Mościcki, Locke, Rae, & Boyd, 1989; Oquendo et al., 2001), which reflects the complex nature of understanding depression in these groups. In their study of an ethnically diverse sample of middle school students, Roberts, Roberts, and Chen (1997) found that Mexican American youth exhibited the highest risk for depression. A number of factors such as discrimination, acculturative stress, and parent–adolescent conflict have been found to predict greater depressive symptoms in Latino youth (e.g., Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Kuhlberg et al., 2010; Romero et al., 2007).

As mentioned above, it is possible that parent–adolescent acculturation conflict may be captured in the acculturative stress measures used in past studies. Similarly, some of the past studies examining parent–adolescent conflict in immigrant families may be tapping into acculturation conflict along with other types of parent–adolescent conflict but not directly measuring this construct. For these reasons, understanding the direct relation between acculturation conflict, an interpersonal family stressor, and depressive symptoms in Latino youth may be particularly salient as it offers a more nuanced understanding of how the acculturation process impacts immigrant families. In fact, in one study with Latino college students, acculturation conflict was a significant predictor of greater depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem, after controlling for generation status and other family variables, suggesting that this type of conflict predicts uniquely above other types of family functioning (Dennis et al., 2010). However, no past study has examined the differential impact of various types of parent–adolescent conflict on psychosocial outcomes for Latino adolescents.

### **Discrimination as a Moderator**

Consistent with the integrative model of child development (García Coll et al., 1996), parent–adolescent acculturation conflict moderated the effects of discrimination among Chinese American adolescents in predicting loneliness and anxiety, such that greater family acculturation

conflict exacerbated the negative effects of discrimination (Juang & Alvarez, 2010). Both parent–adolescent acculturation conflict and experiences of discrimination may lead to greater internalizing distress, as they are both ethnicity-related stressors. Similarly, their multiplicative effect may be particularly harmful in the development of ethnic identity as adolescents may feel like outsiders both in their home and school environments and may be conflicted about their own ethnicity. In line with the integrative model of child development (García Coll et al., 1996), Latino youth may have a similar experience; despite this, no past study has examined this question in Latino adolescents.

## **Current Study**

The current study examined two research questions: What is the differential impact of general and acculturation parent–adolescent conflict on depressive symptoms and ethnic private regard in Latino adolescents living in immigrant families? (Research Question 1); Does discrimination moderate the relation between acculturation conflict and these outcomes? (Research Question 2). In terms of the first question, we hypothesized that greater acculturation conflict would predict greater depressive symptoms and lower private regard, above and beyond the effects of general conflict. Regarding the second question, we hypothesized that discrimination would serve as a moderator for acculturation conflict on these psychosocial outcomes (depressive symptoms, private regard) such that high levels of discrimination and high levels of acculturation conflict would predict worse outcomes.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The sample consisted of 7th through 10th graders ( $n = 172$ ). The original sample consisted of 190 students, but there were missing data for 12 adolescents on some of the predictor and outcome variables and 6 adolescents' responses were identified as outliers. Thus, those cases were removed and the final sample included 172 adolescents with a mean age of 14.01 years ( $SD = 1.32$ ; 7th grade = 18%, 8th grade = 29%, 9th grade = 27%, 10th grade = 26%). The sample consisted of 52.9% females, and was primarily Mexican in origin (78%). The remainder of the sample was Latino mixed (parents from different countries of origin; 8%), Nicaraguan (2%), Dominican (2%) and Salvadorian (2%) backgrounds. Although the sample is majority of Mexican origin, Latino will be used for parsimony. In the year of the study, within this school district, 65% of children qualified for free/ reduced lunches. In the city, an estimated 65% of Latino families had a yearly household income less than \$35,000 and 53% of Latino individuals (ages 25 and older) had less than a high school diploma education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008–2012 American Community Survey.)

### **Procedure**

We recruited Latino youth in all 7th-through 10th-grade classrooms in one district in a southeastern state (two middle schools and one high school). In the year of the study, 34% of the students in the schools were Latino and this distribution was approximately equal across the three schools. All survey administration was completed in the participating school's cafeteria in

the fall of 2010. In addition to parental consent, the students were given a child assent form. One student chose to complete the Spanish version of the survey. Measures that were not available in Spanish were translated and back-translated, and then the research team resolved discrepancies jointly. The team also encouraged participants to ask for assistance, if needed, during the survey and checked each questionnaire to ensure the quality of the data. This study was conducted in compliance with the institution's Internal Review Board. For full methods and details, see (Stein et al., 2012).

## Measures

*General parent—adolescent conflict.* Three items from the NRI-Relationship Qualities Version (NRI-RQV; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) measuring parent–child conflict were used.

Participants rated the frequency of experiencing conflict from (1) *never* to (5) *always*. Sample item included, how often “Do you and this person argue with each other?” Adolescents reported on both their mothers and fathers, but because of missing data on fathers, reports of conflict with mothers were used for the entire sample. The scale has shown adequate psychometric properties (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) and was reliable in this sample for the items on mothers ( $\alpha = .77$ ). The items were averaged to represent experiences of general conflict.

*Parent—adolescent acculturation conflict.* Four items from the 20-item Bicultural Stress Scale (Romero & Roberts, 2003) were used to assess acculturation conflict. The items included experiences of conflict stemming from differential acculturation, language difficulties, and family obligation. The response scale ranged from (1) *not having experienced the stressor* to (5) *very stressful*. Sample item included, “I have argued with family members because I do not want to do some traditions.” The scale has shown adequate psychometric properties (Romero & Roberts, 2003). Reliability in this sample was adequate ( $\alpha = .69$ ). The items were averaged to represent experiences of acculturation conflict with parents.

*Racial/ethnic discrimination.* An 18-item subset from a 21-item discrimination measure developed by Way (1997) was used to assess peer racial/ethnic discrimination. The measure was based on in-depth, semistructured interviews with over 150 Black, Latino and Asian American adolescents (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Adolescents reported whether they experienced a specific discrimination event on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *never* to (5) *all the time*. Sample item included, “How often do you feel that other students in school make fun of you because of your race or ethnicity?” The scale has demonstrated adequate psychometric properties (Greene et al., 2006) and had adequate reliability in the current sample ( $\alpha = .95$ ). The items were averaged to represent experiences of discrimination.

*Depressive symptoms.* The Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (Angold, Costello, Pickles, Winder, & Silver, 1987) was used to assess depressive symptoms. The 33-item Likert-type scale measured the extent to which adolescents experienced depressive symptoms in the past two weeks. The measure included items such as, “I didn’t enjoy anything at all” and adolescents reported whether the statement was (0) *not true*, (1) *sometimes true*, or (2) *mostly true*. This measure has demonstrated adequate psychometric properties (Daviss et al., 2006) and was reliable in this sample ( $\alpha = .94$ ). The items were averaged to represent depressive symptoms.

*Ethnic identity.* An adaptation of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1997) was used to measure ethnic identity as has been done in past multiethnic samples, including a Latino sample (e.g., Kiang et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009). In this adaptation, scales were shortened and items modified so that they could be relevant to and completed by members of any ethnic group (i.e., “I am happy that I am Black” was changed to “I am happy that I am a member of my ethnic group.”) All items were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of regard. The Private Regard subscale consisted of four items and measured the extent to which adolescents had positive feelings toward their ethnic group. In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha for the subscale was .93.

## Results

Preliminary analyses displayed that age was significantly related to discrimination,  $r = .22, p = .004$ , suggesting that older adolescents reported experiencing more discrimination. Similarly, gender was related to general conflict,  $t(170) = 3.26, p = .001, d = 0.50$ , depression,  $t(170) = 2.51, p = .013, d = 0.39$ , private regard,  $t(122) = 3.34, p = .001, d = 0.60$ , and discrimination,  $t(122) = -2.14, p = .034, d = -0.39$ , suggesting that females experienced more general conflict, more depressive symptoms, and a greater ethnic private regard than males; whereas males reported experiencing more discrimination than females. Thus, age and gender were entered as covariates in the analyses. Nativity status was not significantly related to any of the variables so it was excluded from the analyses. Means and correlations are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. General conflict	1.00				
2. Acculturation conflict	.19*	1.00			
3. Discrimination	.19*	.44**	1.00		
4. Depressive Sx	.28**	.25**	.24**	1.00	
5. Private Regard	-.04	-.21**	-.25**	-.09	1.00
Mean	2.38	2.03	1.57	.28	4.42
SD	.82	.85	.75	.29	.70

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

## Research Question 1

Hierarchical regression models were estimated to test whether acculturation conflict predicted depressive symptoms and ethnic private regard above and beyond general conflict. In each model, the first step included the covariates, the second step included general conflict, and the third step included acculturation conflict. For depressive symptoms (see Table 2, Steps 1–3), the covariates and general conflict accounted for 9.2% of the variance. In the next step, acculturation conflict was entered into the model and accounted for an additional 4.1% of variance in depressive symptoms, which was significant ( $R^2 = .13, F(4, 167) = 6.44, p < .001, F\Delta = 7.95, p = .005$ ). While controlling for age, gender, and general conflict, greater acculturation conflict significantly predicted greater depressive symptoms ( $\beta = 0.21, p = .005$ ). For private regard

(Table 3, Steps 1–3), the covariates and general conflict accounted for 8.3% of the variance. The next step, including acculturation conflict, accounted for an additional 3.7% of variance in private regard and was also significant ( $R^2 = .12$ ,  $F(4, 167) = 5.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $F\Delta = 7.06$ ,  $p = .009$ ). While controlling for age, gender, and general conflict, greater acculturation conflict significantly predicted lower ethnic private regard ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $p = .009$ ).

**Table 2.** Results of Regression Analyses Predicting Depressive Symptoms

Predictor	Step 1 $\beta$	Step 2 $\beta$	Step 3 $\beta$	Step 4 $\beta$
<b>Step 1 predictors</b>				
Age	.05	.02	.00	-.02
Gender	-.20*	-.13†	-.14†	-.17*
$R^2 = .04$				
<b>Step 2 predictors</b>				
General conflict		.24**	.20**	.15†
		$\Delta R^2 = .05$		
<b>Step 3 predictors</b>				
Acculturation conflict			.21**	.17*
		$\Delta R^2 = .04$		
<b>Step 4 predictors</b>				
Discrimination				.24**
Acculturation conflict $\times$				-.13
Discrimination				$\Delta R^2 = .01$

\*  $p < .10$ . †  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 3.** Results of Regression Analyses Predicting Ethnic Private Regard

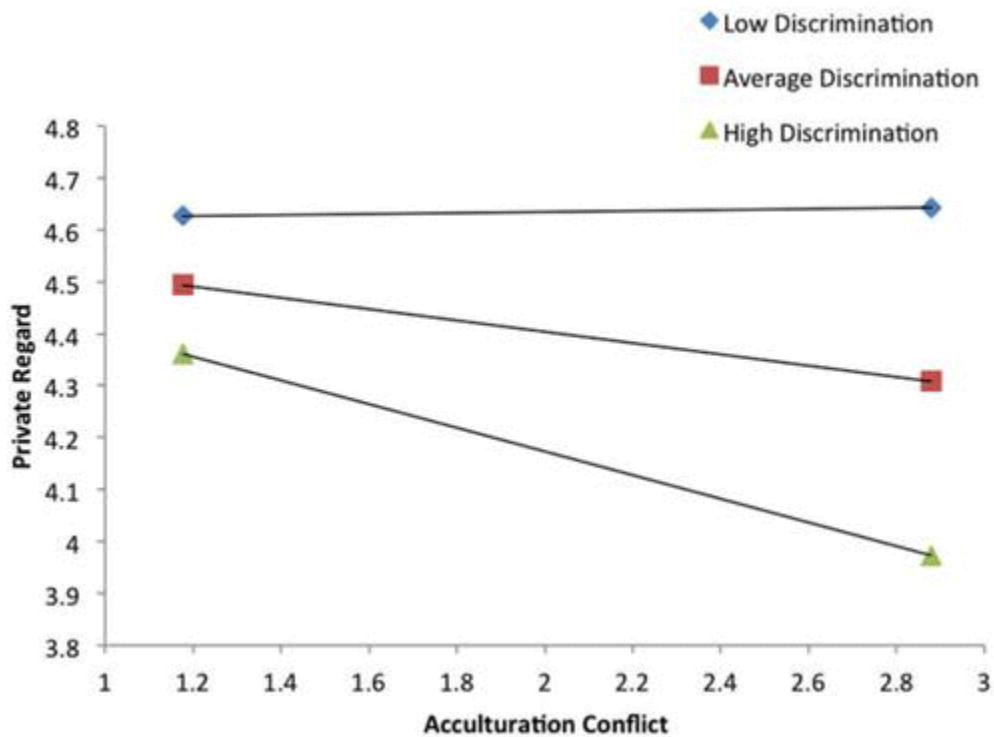
Predictor	Step 1 $\beta$	Step 2 $\beta$	Step 3 $\beta$	Step 4 $\beta$
<b>Step 1 predictors</b>				
Age	-.09	-.08	-.06	-.03
Gender	-.24**	-.27**	-.26**	-.24**
$R^2 = .08$				
<b>Step 2 predictors</b>				
General conflict		-.10	-.06	-.09
		$\Delta R^2 = .01$		
<b>Step 3 predictors</b>				
Acculturation conflict			-.20**	-.08
		$\Delta R^2 = .04$		
<b>Step 4 predictors</b>				
Discrimination				-.02
Acculturation conflict $\times$				-.26**
Discrimination				$\Delta R^2 = .05$

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

## Research Question 2

To determine whether discrimination moderated the relation between acculturation conflict and each of the outcomes (depressive symptoms and private regard), an additional step was added to the previous models. For each of these models (see Tables 2 and 3, Step 4), Step 4 included the

additional predictors of discrimination and the interaction term of acculturation conflict and discrimination. Per Aiken and West (1991), all predictor variables were centered and then the product term was created for acculturation conflict and discrimination. The interaction term was only significant in predicting ethnic private regard ( $R^2 = .18$ ,  $F(6, 165) = 6.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $F\Delta = 9.83$ ,  $p = .002$ ; See Table 3, Step 4). The inclusion of the interaction term in the model, accounted for an additional 4.9% of variance; however, the strength of the main effect of acculturation conflict on private regard was no longer significant. This may be a result of shared variance between acculturation conflict and discrimination,  $r = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ , and limited sample size. To further probe the interaction effect, we used the online calculation tool created by Preacher, Curran, and Bauer (2006). Simple slope values were calculated by assigning discrimination as the moderator variable and quantifying low discrimination as one standard deviation below the mean, average discrimination as being at the mean, and high discrimination as one standard deviation above the mean. Only the simple slope for high discrimination was significant ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $p = .002$ ; see Figure 1), such that individuals who experienced high levels of acculturation conflict at home and high levels of discrimination from peers were more likely to experience lower ethnic private regard. In the other model, the inclusion of the interaction term was not significant in predicting depressive symptoms.



**Figure 1.** Simple slopes plot for the moderation of acculturation conflict and peer discrimination. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

## Discussion

Latino youth experience unique stressors such as acculturation stress and discrimination (Stein et al., 2012), yet few studies have examined one particular aspect of acculturative stress, parent–adolescent acculturation conflict, and how it impacts Latino youth. This current study examined

two important questions regarding Latino youth and acculturation-based stressors. The first question examined whether parent–adolescent acculturation conflict predicted depressive symptoms and ethnic private regard above and beyond the influence of general conflict; the second research question explored the moderating effect of peer discrimination. We found that acculturation conflict predicted depressive symptoms and ethnic private regard, above and beyond general conflict. However, the effect of acculturation conflict on ethnic private regard was dependent upon the level of peer discrimination, demonstrating that acculturation conflict and experiences of peer discrimination had a multiplicative effect in predicting ethnic private regard. These findings are consistent with the acculturation gap–distress model (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993) because greater parent–adolescent conflict predicted youth maladjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms). Additionally, in her review of the acculturation gap–distress model, Telzer (2010) proposed that individual and contextual factors might moderate the first relation in this model (acculturation gaps predicting family functioning). Considering the current study finding that greater acculturation conflict only predicted lower private regard in the presence of greater peer discrimination, it may also be important to consider contextual factors for the second part of the acculturation gap–distress model (family functioning predicting youth adjustment). Similarly, these study findings are also consistent with the integrative model of child development (García Coll et al., 1996) as we found that a family process related to acculturation, interacts with peer discrimination in predicting a developmental outcome, ethnic identity.

This is the first study to examine the unique effects of acculturation conflict on depressive symptoms and ethnic identity in Latino youth, and it is consistent with findings with Asian immigrant youth (Juang, Syed, Cookston, et al., 2012). Acculturation conflict accounted for unique variability even after accounting for general conflict, which suggests that content of conflict between immigrant parents and their children matters. Thus, there is something about arguments regarding acculturation-based issues, as compared with the presence of conflict more generally, which may predict worse outcomes in adolescents from immigrant families. Moreover, these findings suggest that Latino families are likely to experience different types of parent–adolescent conflict. As suggested in the Asian American literature, acculturation conflict may have a different mechanism as compared to other types of conflict in how it predicts outcomes among adolescents (Juang, Syed, Cookston, et al., 2012). More specifically, acculturation conflict may influence various aspects of the immigrant parent–adolescent relationship in a way that is unique from other types of conflict (e.g., alienation, hostility; Juang, Syed, Cookston, et al., 2012). The current study findings with Latino adolescents along with the existing research with Asian Americans, suggest that there may be a similar pattern of parent–adolescent conflict across different immigrant ethnic groups.

Additionally, this study also adds to the acculturation and depression literature with Latino youth, which is particularly important as there is an increasing number of Latino youth in the US (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011) and because Latino youth exhibit a high risk for depressive symptoms (Roberts et al., 1997; Twenge & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002). Latino cultural values emphasize the importance of maintaining strong family ties and harmonious relationships (Cauce & Domenech-Rodríguez, 2002). Thus, greater acculturation conflict with one's parents may lead to greater depressive symptoms as an adolescent may feel that s/he is violating a cultural norm and disappointing the family.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the current ethnic identity literature as it highlights how disagreements about acculturation-based issues may negatively influence an adolescent's ethnic identity development. These disagreements with parents may make Latino adolescents feel that they are not "Latino enough" and possibly lead to more negative feelings about their ethnic group. Despite evidence that family plays an integral role in ethnic identity development for Latino youth, and that parents are one of the most influential socializing agents for their children (Chao & Otsuki-Clutter, 2011), to date and to our knowledge, no other studies have examined the relation between acculturation conflict and ethnic identity in Latino youth. This finding has important implications because many forms of identity, including ethnic identity, become especially salient during the period of adolescence (French, Seidman, Allen, & Aber, 2006). A positive ethnic identity is integral because positive ethnic-racial affect is related to more favorable psychosocial adjustment (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014) and can provide a buffer when youth are faced with stressful experiences (Kiang et al., 2006; Shelton et al., 2005).

Furthermore, acculturation conflict was only negatively predictive of private regard in the context of high levels of peer discrimination. Thus, the combination of receiving negative messages about one's ethnicity in two separate contexts, the home and the school, impacts how an adolescent feels about being a part of his or her ethnic group. This finding highlights that receiving negative messages about one's ethnic group in two separate contexts exacerbates the negative impact the ethnicity-based stressors have on ethnic private regard. An adolescent may feel that s/he is not "Latino enough" for parents, yet not "American enough" for peers. This is especially important as Neblett, Rivas-Drake, and Umaña-Taylor (2012) highlight that ethnic private regard may be one of the most salient promotive factors for ethnic minority youth.

Although this study has some significant strengths, there are limitations that should also be considered. One limitation is the lack of longitudinal data. Future studies should examine acculturation conflict and its influence on psychosocial outcomes, particularly ethnic identity, longitudinally to establish directionality. It is possible that an adolescent's ethnic identity may impact future levels of acculturation conflict, but, until longitudinal data are examined, this question cannot be thoroughly examined. In addition, we could not examine Latino subethnicity differences because of our small sample size. The majority of our sample was of Mexican-origin, limiting the opportunity to examine subethnic differences. Future studies should examine whether these relationships exist across different subgroups. This is especially important given the different prevalence rates of depression across different subethnic Latino groups (Roberts et al., 1997.) An additional limitation is that we did not have specific socioeconomic status information for each family, as our study was a school-based data collection. Furthermore, adolescents reported retrospectively on conflict with their parents, which although meaningful, is only one way to measure parent-adolescent conflict in families. In the future, it would be beneficial to also conduct a greater number of daily diary studies to capture parent-adolescent conflict as it occurs (e.g., Chung et al., 2009; Kiang & Fuligni, 2009) and determine whether there is a consensus across retrospective and daily measurements of parent-adolescent conflict.

One implication of these study results is that parent-adolescent conflict in immigrant families is a nuanced construct. When examining parent-adolescent conflict in immigrant families, researchers should assess for the content of conflict, because as this study suggests, the content

of conflict is an integral piece. In this study, our measurement of conflict was a limitation (i.e., number of items.) To thoroughly examine acculturation conflict, we need to refine and strengthen our measurement of parent–adolescent conflict for immigrant families. A refined instrument, specifically addressing the content, attributions, frequency, and intensity of conflict issues, would provide researchers the ability to gain a more nuanced understanding of conflict. When measuring conflict generally (i.e., frequency of arguments), it is largely unclear what the arguments and disagreements are regarding; thus, having a refined measure that assesses an adolescent’s meaning-making and attributions regarding conflictual experiences would be particularly useful in disentangling the impact of general conflict and acculturation conflict. Although parent–adolescent conflict, in general, is regarded as normative, there is also a lack of clarity in the field regarding whether acculturation conflict for adolescents growing up in immigrant families is in fact normative (yet harmful) as well.

Another implication of this study is that a greater understanding of acculturation conflict may help explain some of the mixed findings in the acculturation-gap literature. Some studies suggest that acculturation gaps lead to poor psychosocial outcomes, whereas others find that these gaps are unrelated to psychosocial outcomes for immigrant youth (See Telzer, 2010 for review). As suggested by Telzer (2010), rather than solely examining the presence of parent–adolescent acculturation gaps, researchers should examine the contexts in which gaps leads to conflict. It is also important to then explore how different types of conflict predict various outcomes, and the contextual factors that impact this relation as well.

The participants in this study were adolescents living in an emerging Latino community. Adolescents in an emerging community may be particularly vulnerable because of limited resources. Future empirical studies may examine acculturation conflict with adolescents in an established Latino community as well as those living in an emerging Latino community to determine possible differences and similarities between the two groups, allowing for greater generalizability of study results.

Regarding clinical implications, this study highlights the importance of working with Latino parents and adolescents regarding the acculturation process and conflict that may occur surrounding differential values. Understanding the nature of acculturation conflict and how it impacts Latino youth is especially salient as Latino Americans who report higher family cultural conflict are more likely to utilize mental health services (Chang, Natsuaki, & Chen, 2013).

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