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Symposium Title: Racial Discrimination and Psychological Outcomes: The Influence of Ethnic Identity

Presentation 1: Ethnic Identity, Perceived Discrimination, and Birth Family Curiosity among Adopted Korean American Adolescents

Empirical studies on ethnic identity, perceived discrimination and adjustment have traditionally focused on immigrant and native-born adolescents from racial minority groups. These studies have found discrimination to have a negative effect on development and ethnic identity to have a protective effect against discrimination. The purpose of this study was to extend this line of research to adolescents who were adopted internationally from South Korea.

Korean American adolescents who were adopted internationally are confronted with multiple paradoxes as both a racial minority and as an adopted individual (Lee, 2003). Raised by affluent, well-educated White parents, they are protected from many of the acculturative stressors experienced by immigrant children and are perceived and often treated by family and the local community as honorary Whites (Shiao & Tuan, 2008). These privileges, however, diminish over time as adopted individuals are increasingly exposed to racial and ethnic discrimination by peers and strangers during adolescence (Meier, 1999). Additionally, adolescence marks a period of increased questions and possible confusion over what it means to be adopted (Grotevant, 1997). In particular, many adopted Korean Americans begin to increasingly wonder about their birth family and what life might have been like had they not been adopted. Few empirical studies have examined the impact of perceived discrimination and birth family curiosity on behavioral development and no studies to our knowledge have examined ethnic identity as a possible moderator variable in this population.

Using data from a larger NIMH-funded study on the cultural socialization and mental health of internationally adopted children and adolescents from South Korea, this study focuses on the self-report of 193 adolescents (90 male, 103 female), ages 13-18 years-old, and one adoptive parent (84% mothers). Average age at adoption was 7 months, ranging from 3-63 months. Adolescents and parents both completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ: Goodman, 1997) which was aggregated to measure emotional, peer, conduct, and hyperactivity problems. Adolescents also completed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) and measures of perceived discrimination and birth family curiosity that were developed specifically for this study.

Using hierarchical multiple regression analyses with child age, age at adoption, and gender as covariates, we tested ethnic identity as a moderator of perceived discrimination and birth family curiosity on the four SDQ subscales. For peer, conduct, and hyperactivity problems, there were no statistically significant covariate, main, and interaction effects. For emotional problems, there were statistically significant covariate, main, and interaction effects. Adolescent girls had more emotional problems than boys. Also, ethnic identity was positively correlated with emotional problems; more importantly, ethnic identity moderated the association between perceived discrimination and emotional problems. Specifically, adolescents with higher ethnic identity scores reported similar levels of emotional problems regardless of level of discrimination. Contrary to expectation, adolescents with lower ethnic identity scores reported more problem behaviors when perceived discrimination was lower, not higher.

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Presentation 2: A Longitudinal Examination of Parenting Behaviors and Perceived Discrimination Predicting Latino Adolescents' Ethnic Identity

Identity formation is a central task of adolescence and for many ethnic minority adolescents it involves feelings and conceptions about their ethnic group membership. Because Latinos are at an increased risk for several negative outcomes (Joiner et al., 2001) and ethnic identity has been recognized as a significant protective resource for Latinos (Romero & Roberts, 2003), it is important to understand the factors that predict ethnic identity formation among Latinos. Drawing from ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), we examined proximal contextual factors such as parenting behaviors (familial ethnic socialization, parental warmth/support) and perceived discrimination as predictors of ethnic identity exploration, affirmation, and resolution. Because gender differences have emerged in trajectories of ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, & Guimond, in press), we also examined variability by gender.

Data were from a 4-year longitudinal study of 323 Latino adolescents (50.5% male) attending one of five high schools in the Midwestern U.S. At Wave 1 (W1), participants were 15.31 years old, on average. Most self-identified as being of Mexican origin (e.g., 77.1%) and 71.8% were born in the United States. Retention was 84% at Wave 4. Each year, adolescents completed a self-administered questionnaire, which included measures of ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004; α ranged .79 to .89 across all subscales and waves), familial ethnic socialization (Umaña-Taylor, 2001; W1 α = .94), maternal and paternal warmth/support (Peterson, 1982; W1 α s = .80 and .88, respectively), and perceived discrimination (adapted from Whitbeck et al., 2001; W2 α = .89).

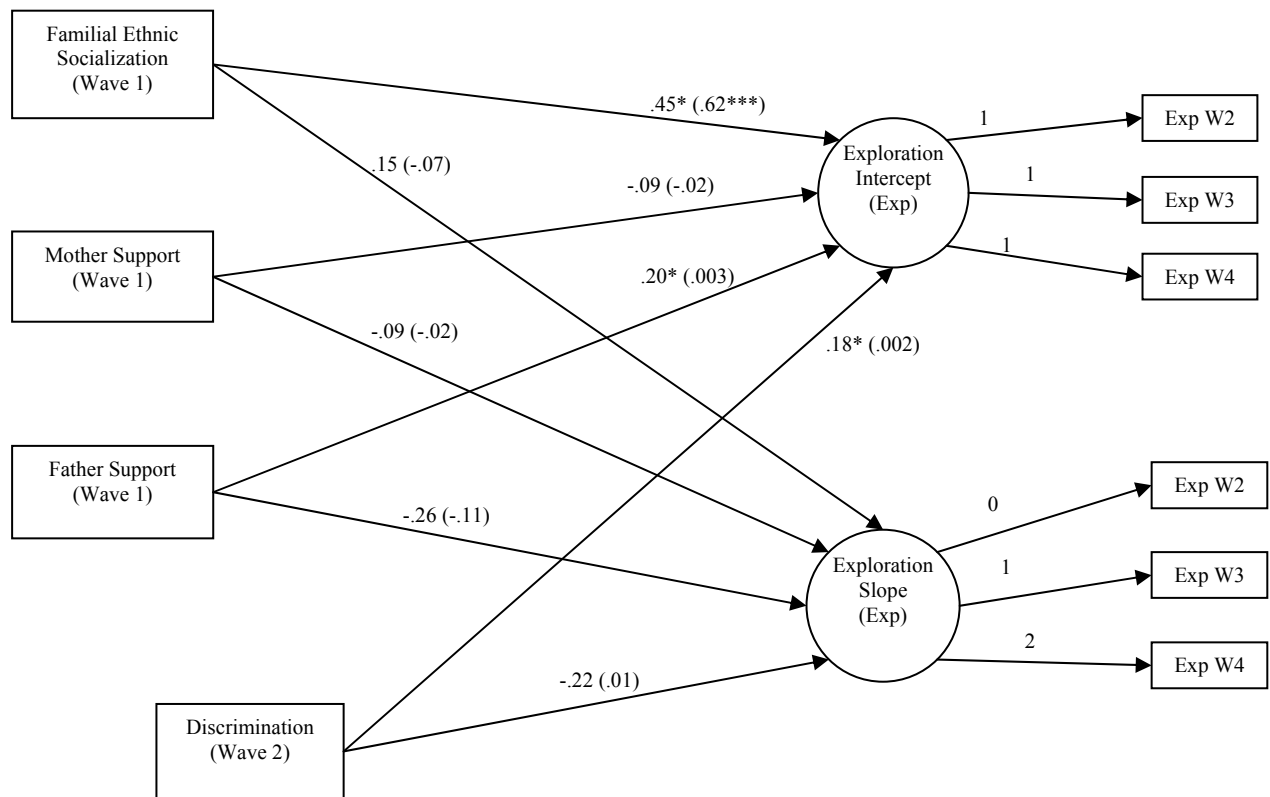
Multiple-group (i.e., boys v. girls) latent growth curve analyses estimated the prediction of growth in ethnic identity over a three-year period (W2 – W4) from familial ethnic socialization (W1), discrimination (W2), and maternal and paternal support (W1). Data on discrimination were not available at W1. Models were run for each ethnic identity component. Missing data were handled with multiple imputation procedures using NORM software (Schafer, 1999), resulting in the analysis of 5 imputed data sets using the TYPE=Imputation feature of Mplus 5.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 2006).

Unconditional growth curve analyses suggested both an intercept and slope latent factor for exploration and resolution models (see Figures 1 and 2), and an intercept only model for affirmation. Higher familial ethnic socialization predicted higher exploration and resolution, but not affirmation, for both

boys and girls. Gender differences emerged such that higher perceived discrimination predicted higher exploration and lower affirmation for boys only. Furthermore, as boys perceived fathers to be more supportive, they also tended to report higher exploration. Finally, boys who reported higher levels of familial ethnic socialization at W1 tended to demonstrate steeper growth in resolution from W2 through W4.

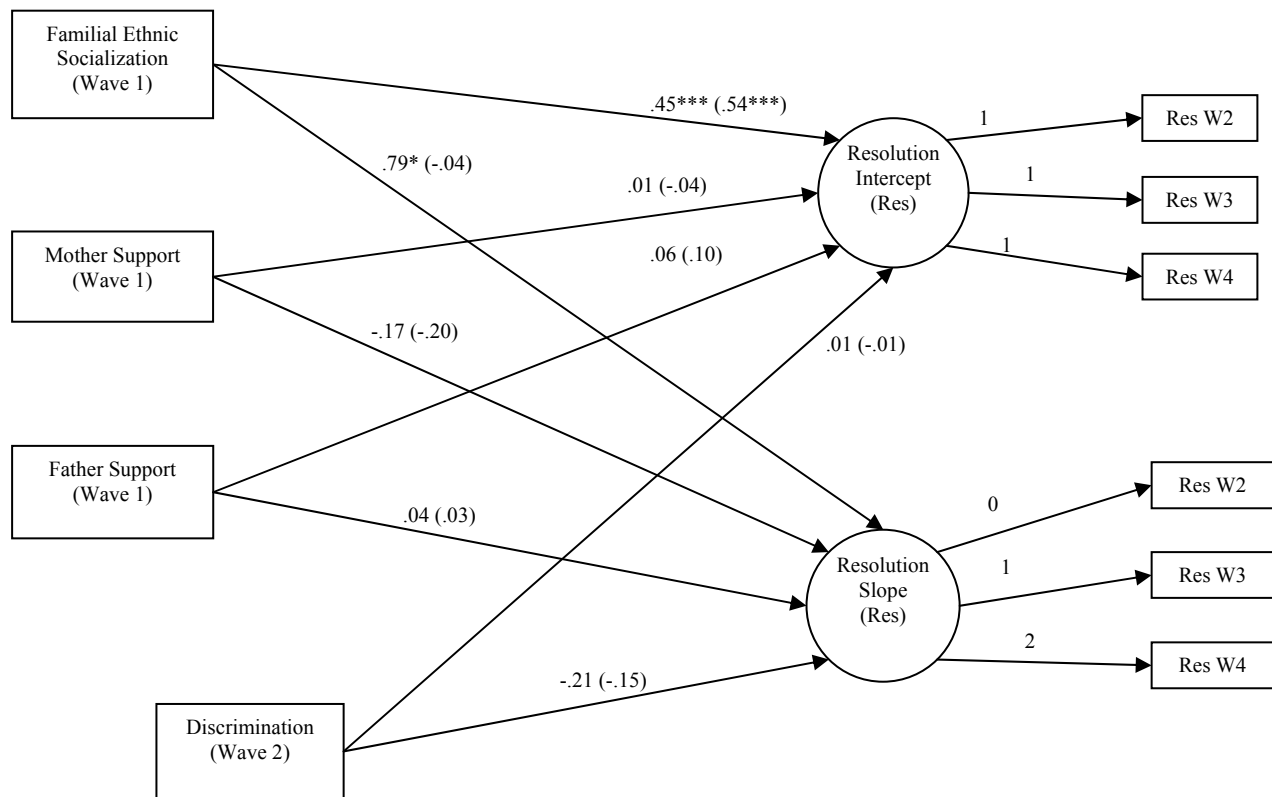
Findings underscore the central role of familial ethnic socialization for ethnic identity exploration and resolution. Furthermore, they highlight the importance of examining associations separately by gender, as discrimination appears to be a particularly salient construct for boys' ethnic identity. Finally, findings emphasize the need to examine the components of ethnic identity independent of one another; although higher levels of discrimination were associated with increased exploration, but lower levels of affirmation.

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Model Fit Indices: $\chi^2 (10) = 32.49$
 CFI = .95
 SRMR = .03

Figure 1. Conditional Growth Model for Ethnic Identity Exploration in which all paths allowed to be free for boys and girls. Standardized coefficients presented for boys and (girls); * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$; W2 = Wave 2, W3 = Wave 3, and W4 = Wave 4.



Model Fit Indices: $\chi^2 (10) = 20.09$
 CFI = .97
 SRMR = .04

Figure 2. Conditional Growth Model for Ethnic Identity Resolution in which all paths allowed to be free for boys and girls. Standardized coefficients presented for boys and (girls); * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$. W2 = Wave 2, W3 = Wave 3, and W4 = Wave 4.

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Presentation 3: Racial Discrimination and Psychological Distress: The Impact of Ethnic Identity and Age Among Immigrant and United States-Born Asian Adults

Discrimination based on race and ethnicity is a normative experience for Asian in the United States (Goto, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2002); and research consistently finds discrimination is associated with

poorer mental health (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Even so, recent studies suggest that its harmful effects can be moderated by an individual's ethnic identification (Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999). In this study, we examine the influence of ethnic identity on the association between discrimination and mental health among a nationally-representative sample of Asian adults living in the United States. Specifically, we investigate whether these associations vary by one's life-stage context, as indicated by age and nativity.

There are two equally plausible hypotheses for how ethnic identity should affect the association between discrimination and health. Specifically, one might expect that if ethnic identity is a protective resource, then it may serve to buffer the negative effects of discrimination (Phinney, 1990). On the other hand, one might also expect that an individual reporting discrimination based on an important and central aspect of one's identity would report increased negativity (Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

The association between racial and ethnic discrimination and psychological distress was examined among 2047 Asians (ages 18-75) in the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS). Stratifying the sample by age (i.e., 18-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-75) and nativity status (i.e., immigrant versus United States-born), ethnic identity was tested as a protective or exacerbating factor for the association between discrimination and psychological distress.

As expected, discrimination was associated with increased distress for the entire sample. Among the immigrant subsample, despite reporting stronger ethnic identity than individuals born in the United States, ethnic identity did not moderate the association between discrimination and distress. Among individuals born in the United States, the effect of discrimination varied by age and ethnic identity. Regression analyses showed that ethnic identity buffered the effects of discrimination for U.S.-born individuals ages 41-50. The development of ethnic identity may include a repertoire of mechanisms for coping with discrimination (Phinney, 1990). Life span research suggests that this may be particularly true for individuals ages 41-50 since as individuals enter middle age, they better able to regulate emotional reactions to negative events (Cartensen, Pasupathi, Mayr, & Nesselroade, 2000).

For U.S.-born individuals ages 31-40, however, ethnic identity exacerbated the negative effects of discrimination. Research suggests that ethnic and racial identity development may not be unidirectional (Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006). Instead, although one may have undergone an identity search during

adolescence events in adulthood, such as marriage, may prompt a new identity search (Parham, 1989). Such events are particularly likely to occur between 31 and 40.

For U.S.-born individuals ages 51-75, ethnic identity also exacerbated the negative effects of discrimination. Life span research on emotional well-being finds that aging individuals restructure their goals to maximize happiness and minimize unhappiness (Cartensen, Pasupathi, Mayr, & Nesselroade, 2000). As such, being the target of discrimination may be especially noxious; particularly if discrimination is based on a central aspect of their identity.

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