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The goal of this study is to explore the relationship between a parent-child acculturation gap and both depression and self-esteem in adolescent children of Mexican immigrant parents. Using linear regression models, I tested the impact of the acculturation gap on adolescent self-esteem, then on adolescent depression. Next, I used a mediation analysis to test the indirect impact of the acculturation gap on self-esteem and depression through intergenerational conflict. Further, I used a mediation analysis to test the effect of the acculturation gap on both self-esteem and depression through conflict and family cohesion simultaneously. Finally, I tested the same constructs in a moderated mediation analysis using the Griffen formula, which specifically measures relational ambivalence (the presence of both simultaneous positive and negative relationship characteristics). I then compared the results of all mediation analyses to determine which model accounted for the greatest variance in the two outcomes.

Findings suggested that while the presence of intergenerational conflict significantly strengthened the impact of an intergenerational acculturation gap on depression, the addition of family cohesion-signaling ambivalence-was not more predictive of depression than conflict alone. On the other hand, results indicated that while conflict alone did not predict lower self-esteem in adolescents, the presence of ambivalence did have a significant negative impact on self-esteem.

AMBIVALENCE AS A POTENTIAL MEDIATOR OF ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN

THE ACCULTURATION GAP AND MEXICAN AMERICAN

ADOLESCENTS' WELL-BEING

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, 12.9 percent of the population of the United States was foreign-born, and this figure is expected to increase rapidly through the middle of the 21st century with Latino and Asian immigrants driving that increase (Grieco et al., 2012). By 2043, non-whites in the US will become the majority population, largely due to immigration and high birthrates among some immigrant groups (Demko & Torres-Gil, 2015). As generations 1.5 (those born outside of the US, but arriving here in early childhood) and 2 (those born in the US to immigrant parents) of these groups come of age, they will not only have to undertake what is arguably the most important developmental work of adolescence, identity formation (Erikson, 1964; Marcia, 1980), but do so within a unique context. They must navigate an external society in which they—and others like them, as a group—are gaining power in a culture that values power, even as they are also confronted with increasing levels of racial tension and widening levels of economic inequality.

At the same time, they may be confronted at home with parents who hold different cultural values than those of non-immigrant Americans, creating a discontinuity between home and school (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990; Kwak, 2003; Paat, 2013). This may compel them to choose between the values of their parents, and the values of the society to which they have belonged to for most (or all) of their lives. As

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they may be seeking greater autonomy, their parents might wish for more control, more closeness, or greater family conformity to the values of their birth country (Eccles et al., 1991; Fuligni, 1998; Love & Buriel, 2007; Phinney, Chavira, & Williamson, 1992). This, in turn, may lead to intergenerational conflict, which has been widely associated with negative outcomes in adolescence for youth from immigrant families (Paul R. Smokowski, Chapman, & Bacallao, 2007; Szapocznik, Santisteban, Kurtines, Perez-Vidal, & Hervis, 1984; Vega, Khoury, Zimmerman, Gil, & Warheit, 1995). Moreover, perceptions that immigrant adolescents have of their social environment can have a significant impact—both direct and indirect—on their developmental trajectories (Ayón, Marsiglia, & Bermudez-Parsai, 2010; Harrison et al., 1990; Vega et al., 1995).

My interest in conducting this study arose from questions about the emotions immigrant adolescents might experience when faced with multiple conflicting messages from society and parents, particularly when an acculturation gap exists; in other words, when their level of acculturation varies significantly from the level of acculturation of their parents. Would the process of navigating conflicting messages lead to feelings of ambivalence in adolescents, and would that ambivalence affect their psychological well-being? These questions were driven, in part, by previous research into the dynamics of relationships between adult children and their aging parents. This body of research has shown that shifting power differentials and societal role expectations can lead to ambivalence, which in turn can impact psychosocial outcomes. I argue that similar power shifts could occur in immigrant families, as rapidly acculturating children gain more skills in the larger societal context than their parents, and often gain responsibility

and authority within the family as a result. Additionally, these shifts may occur even as parents are trying to preserve the cultural values of their home countries and retain parental authority over their children.

In order to examine the potential role of ambivalence in relationships between adolescents and parents in immigrant families, and more specifically, its role in mediating the association between a parent-child acculturation gap and psychosocial outcomes, this study drew upon survey data from more than 500 adolescents with Mexican immigrant parents (collected as part of the larger Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Adolescents from Mexican immigrant families represent an important group for study. Latinos are one of the largest immigrant groups in the US (Vargas, Roosa, Knight, & O'Donnell, 2013), and Mexican immigrants make up over 60% of this number (Zeiders et al, 2013). They have also been demonstrated to be among the lowest in educational expectations and achievement compared to those from other immigrant groups (A. Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

This low achievement has been associated with low levels of maternal education and family income among Mexican immigrant families, which has been suggested as a factor that influences child well-being through high parental stress (Altschul, 2012). Additionally, acculturative stress may be greater among adolescents from Mexican immigrant families than for other groups, because the geographic proximity of the United States to Mexico may lead to a greater level of expectation among the immigrant community that Mexican cultural values be retained (Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1989). Finally, high levels of racially-motivated discrimination have been reported by Mexican

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immigrants (Pérez, Fortuna, & Alegria, 2008), and such discrimination has been

identified as one factor contributing to a higher risk of internalizing problems in

Mexican-origin adolescents (Zeiders, Roosa, Knight, & Gonzales, 2013).

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to address the broad questions informing my study, I used theoretical concepts and the existing body of literature in immigrant family studies to examine aspects of the acculturation process as it impacts the psychosocial well-being of immigrant families with adolescent children. More specifically, I will describe the Acculturation Gap-Distress theoretical model, and I will describe some of the work that has been done to expand upon theoretical and methodological approaches to both acculturation and the acculturation gap. I will also discuss intergenerational ambivalence and offer suggestions by which the theoretical construct of ambivalence might inform research on the acculturation gap between immigrant parents and children, and how it might impact adolescent well-being.

Over the past thirty years, the complex and challenging topic of acculturation has received increasing attention by researchers, as the immigrant population in the United States has grown rapidly (Jung, 2013; Kang, 2006). Despite this heightened interest, at present there is little consensus among scholars as to how to conceptualize and measure acculturation (Rudmin, 2009). Few attempts have been made to develop theoretical models specifically addressing acculturation (Adrados, 1997; Phinney, 2011), and the construct has not been clearly defined (Negy & Woods, 1992). As a result, consensus on how to measure acculturation—and subsequently, how to measure a gap in acculturation

between parents and children—has been equally elusive (Bámaca-Colbert & Gayles, 2010).

The traditional variables used to examine acculturation have been unidimensional measures of English proficiency. Many scholars, however, prefer to look at more domains than just language, or have chosen a bidimensional construct, with orthogonal dimensions for both home and host culture (Costigan, 2011; Jung, 2013; Telzer, 2010). Others have opted for a person-centered approach, rather than a variable-centered approach (Bámaca-Colbert & Gayles, 2010), or have questioned the scale construction of most of the standard acculturation measures (Kang, 2006). As of yet, no measure of acculturation, or any measure of the acculturation gap that is based upon differences or mismatches in acculturation metrics (Costigan, 2011; Rudmin, 2009), has been agreed upon. A number of theoretical constructs have been advanced and tested, however, and some have achieved a reasonable amount of success.

For example, following in the footsteps of the ideal of the American "melting pot" or classic assimilation theory (Gordon, 1964), segmented assimilation theory (A. Portes & Zhou, 1993) has been widely used and reasonably well supported. Segmented assimilation theory holds that some immigrant groups tend to be downwardly mobile, some fairly static, and some upwardly mobile across time and generations. Not without controversy, its proponents have held to the idea that disadvantage follows some immigrants to the United States, where they repeat familiar patterns, and maintain a similar societal position (Zhou, 1997); importantly, however, segmented assimilation theory was the first to extensively discuss varying patterns of acculturation. Otherwise,

there have been few theories that have addressed the multi-faceted nature of the acculturative process (Rudmin, 2009), and fewer still that have directly addressed the role of both the family and the individual as actors in the interactive processes surrounding acculturation for adolescents.

The Acculturation Gap-Distress Model

A key feature differentiating many immigrant families with adolescent children from non-immigrant families is their struggle with role ambiguity and identity, family obligation and dependence, and shifts in power dynamics within parent/child relationships (A. Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). One widely-used theoretical model in the study of acculturation, the acculturation gap-distress model, is grounded in clinical practice. The model emerged from a desire to develop evidence-based practical interventions for immigrant families who were facing crises due to differing rates of acculturation between parents and adolescent children.

Practitioners working with these immigrant families began to notice that these divergent patterns of acculturation seemed to be exacerbating the normative struggle between adolescent desire for autonomy and identity development, and parental desire for control and relatedness. For those families, there was a sense of helplessness and frustration on the part of parents who felt they were losing control of their children (A. Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), and equal frustration on the part of their children, who were envious of the freedom that teenagers from non-immigrant families were allowed (Jose Szapocznik & William M Kurtines, 1993; Szapocznik et al., 1984).

Based partially on anecdotal evidence, the acculturation gap-distress model has found only mixed empirical support over the years, despite being widely accepted amongst researchers (Lau et al., 2005; Schofield, Parke, Kim, & Coltrane, 2008; Telzer, 2010). The proposed mechanism by which the acculturation gap negatively impacts youth outcomes and maladjustment in the original model is through the mediating effect of parent/child conflict. While conceptually logical, there have been suggestions that the simplicity of the model has led to either mistaken or inflated attribution of impact to the acculturation gap alone, when the complexity of the acculturation process—especially when considered within the context of parent/child relationships—suggests that other factors may have a greater impact on outcomes.

Additionally, it is possible that rapid acculturation in adolescence may lead to both negative and positive outcomes (Lau et al., 2005; Schwartz et al., 2015), suggesting the presence of significant factors outside of the scope of the theory. While perhaps intended to be parsimonious, the simplicity of the original model may ultimately be inadequate to the task of framing a highly complex construct (Costigan, 2011; Phinney, 2011). Thus, more complex conceptual and analytic models that include the potential role of contextual factors have been proposed (Birman, 2006; M. Kim & I. K. Park, 2011; Kim, Chen, Li, Huang, & Moon, 2009; Telzer, 2010), suggesting possible directions for future theory development as greater understanding of the mechanisms of acculturation and its impact on family relationships is gained.

Telzer's version of the model, for example, is bi-dimensional, and takes into account differing rates and directions of acculturation for both parents and children.

Further, she has conceptualized the mediating variable as "family functioning" rather than "intergenerational conflict", and characterizes the outcome variable as "youth adjustment" instead of "maladjustment", in order to emphasize healthy adaptation. Finally, the model accounts for the possibility of contextual moderators, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, parental education, or family composition (Telzer, 2010). The expansions included in Telzer's model offer just a few examples of ways by which the Acculturation Gap-Distress model could more effectively capture the diversity of immigrant family life.

Intergenerational Ambivalence

Some of the most influential theoretical work to address the interplay of positive and negative emotions and the importance of role perception within parent/child relationships can be found in the field of gerontology. The Solidarity-Conflict model as originally proposed by Bengston and Roberts (1991) portrayed intergenerational solidarity as being built around a core of affection and association, and strongly supported by the exchange of resources that are perceived by family members as reciprocal and mutually beneficial. While early versions of this model conceptualized solidarity as the normative defining characteristic of intergenerational relationship, later refinements integrated conflict as a component of healthy family functioning (Parrott & Bengtson, 1999) in order to better capture the nuances of intergenerational relationships (Katz, Lowenstein, Phillips, & Daatland, 2005; Lowenstein, 2007; Van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006). Yet even the inclusion of conflict as a component of all family relationships has been overly reductive, isolating positive and negative emotions from

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one another and limiting their range (Connidis & McMullin, 2002). Thus, a new question

was introduced: a healthy relationship might have alternating periods of harmony and

disharmony, but could both states operate simultaneously as a stable feature of the

relationship? If so, how would this condition of "mixed feelings", or ambivalence,

impact family functioning and individual outcomes?

While ambivalence can be present in any intimate relationship, the idea that

ambivalence might be particularly relevant to relationships undergoing rapid internal

changes—especially those under pressure from conflicting messages about societal

expectations—provided the impetus for the current study. In 1999, Lüscher and Pillemer

proposed that researchers interested in aging begin to consider relationship ambivalence

as an "orienting" concept, rather than as a full theoretical perspective (Lüscher &

Pillemer, 1998, p. 414). Grounded in both sociology and psychology, ambivalence

reflects the mixed feelings inherent in many close personal relationships; it is defined as

occurring "when polarizing simultaneous emotions, thoughts, social relations, and

structures that are considered relevant for the constitution of individual or collective

identities are interpreted as temporarily, or even permanently, irreconcilable" (Lüscher,

2002, p.587). Although used in existing literature to consider relationships between older

adults and their adult children, Lüscher and Pillemer's definition of ambivalence can

easily be applied to immigrant parent/adolescent child relationships, which have unique

polarizing qualities at different levels of analysis and feature both sociological and

psychological stressors.

The sociological perspective holds that the shifting norms in our unstructured postmodern society lead to the necessity of adopting different roles, with different requirements and expectations that are sometimes in opposition to, or incompatible with, one another (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998; Weigert, 1991). From a psychological perspective, these roles reinforce a societal "assumption of dichotomy" that is nowhere more evident than in the feelings frequently elicited by the demands of family care (Dressel & Clark, 1990) caregiving roles can be sources of stress, even as they provide opportunities for warmth and connectedness (Abel & Nelson, 1990). In the relationships between aging parents and adult children, the strains of these multiple roles, compounded by changes in authority and relationship boundaries, can lead to high levels of ambivalence (Van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006). While largely generated by societal expectations, these feelings of ambivalence are also influenced by individual experience, and are frequently characterized by internal conflict.

Connidis and McMullin (2002) agreed in large part with the concept of intergenerational ambivalence as described by Lüscher and Pillemer. They stressed, however, the nature of ambivalence as a permanent feature of close family ties, one that could bridge gaps between individual action and societal expectations and reduce feelings of conflictedness through the exercise of personal agency, but that would by necessity change over time, as ongoing enactment of roles and navigation of relationships would require change and adaptation (Connidis & McMullin, 2002b). This crucial linking of individual choice and the contradictions inherent in social relationships reaching "beyond the isolation of the family" (Connidis & McMullin, 2002b, p.560) nevertheless

specifically addressed the ambivalent feelings experienced within family relationships involving caretaking roles throughout the life course (Connidis & McMullin, 2002b). They viewed both solidarity and conflict as transitory relational states resulting from individual efforts to resolve unavoidable feelings of ambivalence through action (Connidis & McMullin, 2002a).

In summary, the Solidarity-Conflict Model provides a useful lens through which to examine intergenerational relationships, but it minimizes and pathologizes conflict—a normative aspect of all intimate relationships—in comparison to assumed solidarity. Especially in the study of immigrant families, however, there may be so much variation among family structures, norms, and roles that the model becomes overly reductive: solidarity may not hold as much significance as other family characteristics, both at a family and at a cultural level, or it may manifest itself differently in different cultures. Additionally, pressures from societal norms and expectations that are not consistent with those held by families' countries of origin may cause changes in levels of intergenerational solidarity, especially in families with dissonant levels of acculturation between generations.

Much of the lack of nuance in the Solidarity-Conflict Model is compensated for by the ambivalence construct, which directly addresses the tension generated by changes in the balance of power and authority between parents and children. This construct effectively captures the emergent properties of the interaction between positive and negative intergenerational relationship characteristics, and can potentially provide a useful expansion of the Acculturation Gap-Distress Model, which looks specifically at

immigrant parent/adolescent child relationships, but may be too simplistic. Mixed

support for the model demonstrates its potential, while underscoring the need for

refinements in both the model itself, and the measures used to test it.

CHAPTER III

EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

Acculturation Processes for Adolescents

One of the most commonly cited definitions of acculturation describes it as a

process that "comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals

having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent

changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield, Linton, &

Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). For adolescents walking the line between their familial culture

of origin and an often uncertain or hostile environment in the United States, the tricky

task of identity formation and individuation becomes even more challenging, as they try

to sort out relationships and occupational choices while negotiating society as an ethnic

minority (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007).

Adolescents can reject the culture of their parents outright; can function on the

outskirts of majority culture; can embrace their native culture to the exclusion of the

majority culture; or can try to move between the two and claim a sense of belonging to

both (Berry et al., 2006; Kwak, 2003). Previous research has shown that the ability to

navigate both cultures leads to better psychosocial outcomes for immigrant adolescents

(Phinney et al., 1992; A. Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Steinberg &

Morris, 2001). Because culture is such a vital component of family processes, child

rearing beliefs, identity formation, and social and emotional development (Choi, 2002;

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Kagitcibasi, 2013a; Swanson et al., 2003), the interaction between a family's culture of origin and mainstream culture exerts a correspondingly powerful influence over the development of immigrant children and adolescents (Jose Szapocznik & William M. Kurtines, 1993).

Hispanic immigrant families often prioritize characteristics commonly associated with collectivistic cultural orientations, such as family relatedness or interdependence (Kagitcibasi, 2013b), and can offer family members a sense of support and acceptance that serves to buffer some of the harsher effects of a host country that may not always seem welcoming. At the same time, a strong sense of connection to a community that is not a part of the majority culture may lead to difficulties with acculturation, which can lead to stress (Cano et al., 2015; Lorenzo-Blanco & Unger, 2015). This sense of connectedness may also lead some to be more attuned to discrimination and racism as experienced by members of the collective (Goldston et al., 2008). It can be difficult for many children who have spent the majority of their lives in this country, and feel the allure of American culture with all its benefits, to understand why they are being rejected by elements of American society (Ayón et al., 2010; P. R. Portes & Zady, 2002).

Unfortunately, first experiences of overt discrimination—and full awareness of the differences between ethnic minorities and the majority culture—often occur during adolescence, when identity formation already poses a challenge for many (P. R. Portes & Zady, 2002). Perceived discrimination has been demonstrated to be associated with an increased risk for depression and low self-esteem in adolescents (Ayón et al., 2010; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). Additionally, some immigrant adolescents have

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experienced trauma, separation, and loss of family members in their native countries either before or during their migration journey (Goldston et al., 2008), which puts them at further risk for negative mental health outcomes. Research has shown that many immigrant families have, or learn, mechanisms that allow them to overcome many of these obstacles (Cort, 2010), but the process of acculturation can undermine some of these processes and destabilize family systems, particularly if parents resist adaptation (Kagitcibasi, 2013a; Jose Szapocznik & William M Kurtines, 1993).

Intergenerational Conflict

Research on immigrant families has focused particular attention on differing rates of acculturation between children and parents as a significant risk factor not present in non-immigrant families (Fuligni, 1997; Greenberger & Chen, 1996; P. R. Portes & Zady, 2002; Wu & Chao, 2011). For Hispanic adolescents who have acculturated more rapidly than their parents, intergenerational dissonance can create tension and conflict within families (Goldston et al., 2008), as parents try to negotiate relationships with children who operate with a different set of rules than their own (Cort, 2010; Kwak, 2003; Szapocznik et al., 1984; Tardif & Geva, 2006). This conflict can lead to a variety of internalizing symptoms (Li, 2014; Paul R. Smokowski et al., 2007). For adolescents of Mexican origin, in particular, family conflict has been found to be the strongest predictor of self-esteem problems (A. Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Paul R. Smokowski et al., 2007).

This dynamic can be especially risky for those adolescents who feel cut off from the support of their parents because of conflict, and yet do not feel accepted by mainstream culture, as their sense of isolation can lead to problems with depression and

low self-esteem (Paul Richard Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2010; Zeiders, Roosa, Knight, & Gonzales, 2013). According to one study, the combination of intergenerational conflict, differing rates of acculturation between parents and children, and lack of maternal support were predictive of the worst mental health outcomes in immigrant adolescents (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014). Conversely, other research has demonstrated that a warm parenting style and an absence of intergenerational conflict contributes significantly to a broad range of positive mental health outcomes for both Hispanic and Asian teenagers (Gonzales, Deardorff, Formoso, Barr, & Barrera, 2006; Greenberger & Chen, 1996).

Within conflicted parent-child relationships, some characteristics are common to Hispanic adolescents whose desire for family closeness is frequently at odds with a concurrent desire for autonomy and individuation similar to that of their European American peers (Eccles et al., 1991; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Kagitcibasi, 2013a; Kwak, 2003; Love & Buriel, 2007; Andrea J. Romero, 2013; Andrea J Romero, Edwards, Bauman, & Ritter, 2014). Further, parents and teens from collectivistic cultural backgrounds cite decision-making and autonomy as the most frequent source of arguments between them (Fuligni et al., 1999). Despite numerous differences between and within cultural groups, the literature indicates that conflict can lead to serious negative outcomes for adolescents from immigrant families in general.

Immigrant Adolescent Well-being

Previous research has found a connection between stress and a variety of negative psychosocial outcomes in children (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, & Wadsworth,

2001), which may be more pronounced in the children of immigrants (Alva & de Los

Reyes, 1999; Romero & Roberts, 2003). For adolescents in Mexican-origin families,

studies have identified multiple forms of culture-specific stress, such as discrimination

(Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007), neighborhood violence (Ramírez García,

Manongdo, & Cruz-Santiago, 2010), fear of deportation (Romero & Roberts, 2003) and

the pressure of family obligations (Alva & de Los Reyes, 1999). Additionally, the

acculturation process can lead to acculturative stress, which can be exacerbated by

parent-child conflict that may result if families navigate this process at different rates (A.

Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). For immigrant adolescents from a wide range of cultural

backgrounds, intergenerational conflict has been significantly linked with depression

(Cano et al., 2015; Cicchetti et al., 2014; Gonzales et al., 2006; Hovey & King, 1996;

Lorenzo-Blanco & Unger, 2015; Paul Richard Smokowski et al., 2010; Vargas, Roosa,

Knight, & O'Donnell, 2013).

Mexican adolescents have been shown to have higher than average rates of

depression (Joiner, Perez, Berenson, & Marquina, 2001), suicidal ideation, and suicide

attempts (Canino & Roberts, 2001; Duarté-Vélez & Bernal, 2008; Umaña-Taylor &

Updegraff, 2007). Another risk factor for adolescents from immigrant families is that

internalizing symptoms may not present in an identical manner to those of non-

immigrants, so they might not be noticed or recognized as depression by people who

might otherwise help them. One study found that individuals from cultures placing a

greater value on the maintenance of power dynamics and hierarchies were more skilled at

emotional suppression (Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa, 2008), suggesting a means by

which signs of depression could be masked. Finally, individuals from some cultural groups, particularly Latinos, report strong moral and religious objections against suicide (Oquendo, Dragatsi, Harkavy-Friedman, & Currier, 2005; Range et al., 1999), and thus are more likely to compartmentalize those thoughts. Interestingly, in adulthood, Latinos report having significantly fewer suicidal thoughts, and have lower rates of suicide attempts than the US population overall (Oquendo et al., 2005). However, that rate climbs with each successive generation, and—as with adolescents—is linked significantly to individual level of acculturation relative to family and friends (Range et al., 1999).

Lower levels of self-esteem can also result from confusion about ethnic identity or a rejection of ethnic identity in favor of identification with the majority culture (P. R. Portes & Zady, 2002), and thus a struggle to develop a clear ethnic identity can reduce the buffering effects that self-esteem provides between stress and depression (Romero & Roberts, 2003). In turn, stress, depression, discrimination, and parent-child conflict have all been associated with lower levels of self-esteem in Latino adolescents (P. R. Portes & Zady, 2002), which in turn have been associated with negative outcomes such as poor academic performance (Umaña-Taylor, Wong, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2012). As such, any or all of these factors could be a direct or indirect part of a developmental cascade that may be one primary mechanism of the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage (Altschul, 2012). For example, poverty contributes to parental stress, less effective parenting, negative psychosocial impact on children, low academic achievement, and thence to poverty in the next generation. Higher levels of perception of discrimination

have also been associated with lower self-esteem (Rumbaut, 1994), suggesting that low

self-esteem could potentially "magnify" the negative effects of discrimination.

CHAPTER IV

THE CURRENT STUDY

The goal of this study is to explore the relationship between a parent-child acculturation gap and both depression and self-esteem in adolescent children of Mexican immigrant parents. Because these adolescents, on average, report high levels of depression and perceived discrimination, and have low academic achievement relative to that of adolescents from other ethnic backgrounds, it is important that we gain a more nuanced understanding of the processes influencing Mexican immigrant families. To that end, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1) Is an acculturation gap between parents and adolescent children in Mexican immigrant families significantly associated with adolescent depression and self-esteem?

RQ2) Is the association between an acculturation gap and adolescent depression/self-esteem mediated by conflict, or "distress"?

RQ3) Does a combination of family cohesion and conflict—conceptualized by this study as intergenerational ambivalence—explain more variance in outcomes than conflict alone, as a mediator of the association between an acculturation gap and adolescent depression/self-esteem?

These questions have been framed within the Acculturation Gap-Stress Hypothesis, and partially refer to the theoretical concept of intergenerational ambivalence, as it offers one

means by which to measure positive and negative relationship characteristics simultaneously. This concept has heretofore been examined almost exclusively in studies of relationships between aging adults and their adult children.

The concept of ambivalence will be used here, however, as a means to examine the complex nature of parent/child relationships in immigrant families–in this case, Mexican immigrant families with 2nd generation adolescent children. The foundation of the Acculturation Gap-Stress Hypothesis rests upon the premise that negative interactions within parent-child relationships mediate the association between an acculturation gap and adolescent outcomes. In this study, I am interested in determining if the tension generated by the interplay of combined positive and negative relationship factors— operationalized as family cohesion and conflict—will predict more variation in outcomes than conflict alone.

To the best of my knowledge, no previous research focusing on this population has included a consideration of intergenerational ambivalence as described by Connidis and McMullin (2002) and Lüscher and Pillemer (1998), with a focus on the interaction between individual processes (including role ambiguity and identity formation), family dynamics, and social structures. Additionally, I have not found any suggested modifications to the Acculturation Gap-Distress Hypothesis that have changed the fundamental core of the model, which is the mediating effect of "distress" on the relationship between the acculturation gap and either depression or self-esteem. Thus, I will bridge those gaps by hypothesizing the following:

H1) There is a significant association (positive for depression, negative for self-esteem) between a parent-child acculturation gap and levels of depression and self-esteem in adolescents from immigrant families.

H2) These associations are mediated by parent-child conflict.

H3) Intergenerational ambivalence (which captures the presence of positive and negative relationship characteristics simultaneously) will predict more variation in adolescent depression and self-esteem than conflict alone, and will predict worse outcomes.

This study will not only provide new insight into the development of Mexican immigrant adolescents in the United States, a group which has received increasing attention from scholars in the past decade, but it will introduce a potential new use of a theoretical concept that has generated much interest and controversy through its application to the study of older adults. Additionally, it will attempt to expand the acculturation gap-distress model, which has previously used negative relationship characteristics, such as conflict, to measure "distress" as a mediator between the acculturation gap and maladaptive outcomes. It will do so by considering intergenerational ambivalence (which contains elements of both negative and positive emotions and behavior) as a possible expansion of the model.

As such, the study will address a number of gaps in both the empirical and theoretical literature focusing on the areas of immigrant family and adolescent studies, with the objective of informing the development of support strategies and interventions for a group that has been growing rapidly in both numbers and social relevance.

CHAPTER V

METHOD

The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study

The current study drew upon data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), which was designed to capture the adaptation of 2nd generation immigrant adolescents to life in the United States across a ten-year span, beginning just before (or during) the first year in high school, and ending in early adulthood. Schools with high numbers of immigrant students were selected from two metropolitan areas known for their wide ethnic diversity: Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and San Diego, California. Eligible students must have had at least one parent born outside of the United States, and the student must have been born in the United States, or have immigrated before the age of 12 years and have lived in the US for at least 5 years prior to data collection. Data were collected at three time points: in 1992-1993, when participants were in 8th and 9th grades (T1), in 1995-1996, as they approached the end of high school (T2), and finally as young adults in 2001-2003 (T3). Additionally, one-half of the parents of the T2 sample were randomly selected to participate in the 2nd survey. Because of its sample size (N=5,262), which included a large subsample of Mexican origin adolescents at T1 (N=755), and because of its focus on gathering a wide range of data on immigrant families, the CILS allowed the current study to examine a population of interest in large enough numbers to address more complex questions than would have been possible with a local survey.

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Analysis Sample

Although the CILS is a longitudinal study, only data from T2 were used for the present study given that it was the only time point at which all variables of interest were measured. Analyses presented here focus on the subsample of Mexican origin adolescents interviewed at T2 (N=508). Those adolescents who reported that they did not live with either biological parent (N=2) were excluded from the analysis, as both acculturation gap and intergenerational ambivalence are conceptualized here as being a feature of the parent/child relationship. Other demographic information collected for the CILS and considered for this study were age, grade, gender, income, US citizenship status, time in the US, parents' occupational and educational information, and family composition (see Table 1).

Although not all demographic variables were included in the analyses, the above information serves as general context within which to orient study findings. This study sample was 49.5 percent female, and 71.9 percent of the adolescent participants were U.S. citizens. An average of 4 people lived in each household. Of the parents involved in the study, the majority were employed, with 55 percent of the mothers reporting that they were employed outside of the home, and 71 percent of the fathers. 46.3 percent of the mothers were reported by their children to be US citizens, along with 43.2 percent of the fathers. It should be noted, however, that over half the values for those items were missing, indicating that a majority of the children did not answer those questions. Finally, 33.1 percent of the mothers had less than an elementary-level education, 22.6 percent had graduated from high school, and 12.8 percent reported at least some college.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Analysis Sample

Variable	%	M	SD	Range
Child characteristics at Wave 1				
Age	-	14.2	.84	12-17
Child is female	49.5	-	-	-
Child is US citizen	71.9	-	-	-
Parent characteristics at Wave 2				
Married*	43.4	-	-	-
Mother is US citizen (Wave 1)	46.3	-	-	-
Father is US citizen (Wave 1)	43.2	-	-	-
Mother is employed	55.0	-	-	-
Father is employed	71.0	-	-	-
Mother's education				
Elementary or less	33.1	-	-	-
Middle school	16.3	-	-	-
Some high school	15.2	-	-	-
High school graduate	22.6	-	-	-
Some college	8.5	-	-	-
College graduate or more	4.3	-	-	-
Father's education		-	-	-
Elementary or less	31.2	-	-	-
Middle school	14.5	-	-	-
Some high school	16.1	-	-	-
High school graduate	19.4	-	-	-
Some college	13.7	-	-	-
College graduate or more	5.1	-	-	-
Household characteristics at Wave 2				
Number living in household		4.27	1.63	1-10

Measurement

In this study, both the predictor variable (parent/child acculturation gap) and the

mediating variables (negative relationship characteristics and positive relationship

characteristics) were measured by using observed variables within the CILS data to create

latent variables through exploratory factor analysis. All factor analyses used principal

components analysis, with no rotation. Outcome variables (self-esteem and depression)

were measured using composite variables already created within the CILS dataset. Because of the complexity of these measurements, each variable (and its components) will be described following the same order in which they are presented in the conceptual model (Figure 1), moving from left to right.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model
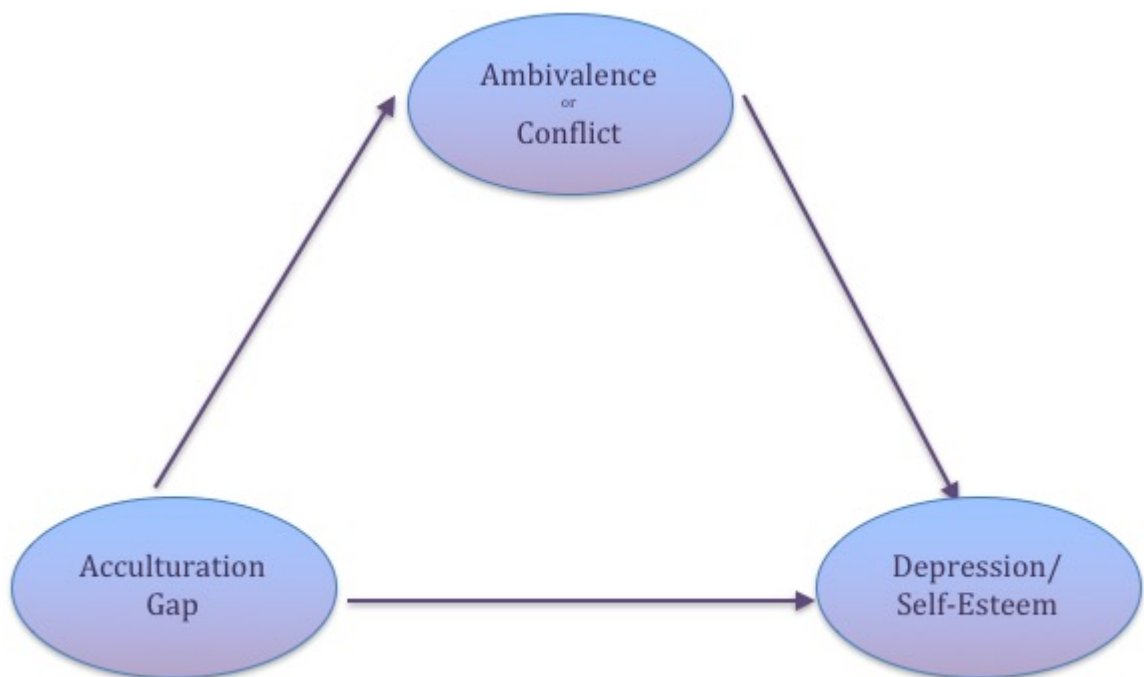
Independent Variable: Acculturation gap. English language proficiency was the primary focus of gap measurement in the CILS study, because the principal investigators on the CILS (Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut) viewed language acquisition and bilingualism as being the primary drivers behind dissonant acculturation patterns in families (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Language use has long been the standard for measuring acculturation, although it is seen by some scientists as being too

unidimensional to reflect the nuances of a complex process. The CILS survey included

several additional items related to preferences for American ways of doing things that

could be relevant to a multi-dimensional acculturation gap measure (see Table 2). These

were evaluated—and ultimately used—as an alternative to the English proficiency-based

indicator of the acculturation gap, as described below.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variables Included in Factor Analysis of Acculturation
Gap

Variable	M	SD	Range
Child prefers American way of doing things	2.3	.637	0-3
Parents prefer American way of doing things	1.66	.705	0-3
Parent-child gap in preference for American way	.293	.508	0-3
Child reports trouble with parents for doing things differently	3.33	1.09	1-5
Language preference	3.73	1.13	1-5

N = 562

English language proficiency. This measure of acculturation gap required both

parents and children to answer identical questions in order for a difference score between

the two to be accurately calculated. Four questions assessed skill in speaking,

understanding, reading, and writing English (for example, "How well do you speak

English?"), and were scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all* (1) to *very*

well (4). For each of these four items, a gap score was calculated by using the absolute

value of the difference between parent score and child score. The absolute difference

score was used in this case, rather than the raw difference score, because this study was

concerned with the magnitude of the difference between parents and children rather than

the direction of the difference (Bámaca-Colbert & Gayles, 2010). A small percentage of

cases (5 percent) had at least one negative difference score (indicating that parents had

better English skills than children). Because there were not enough instances of this to examine differences by direction of gap, the decision was made to have the analysis variable be about magnitude of difference.

     Preference for American way. Because of the limited ability that English proficiency items have to capture acculturation on their own, other items were examined for use in an acculturation gap measure. Other than the language proficiency items, another three items assessed the childrens' affinity for US culture over Mexican culture, their perception of their parents' affinity for US culture over Mexican culture, and the extent to which the children believed the difference between their own affinity for US culture and that of their parents caused conflict in the parent-child relationship. The questions included: "How often do you prefer American ways of doing things?", "How often do your parents prefer American ways of doing things?", and "And how often do you get in trouble because your way of doing things is different from that of your parents?". These items were scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *all of the time* (1) and *never* (4), and straightforwardly addressed the child's perception of both their own and their parents' levels of acculturation, as well as the influence of acculturation on family dynamics. These three items were listed in consecutive order in the CILS questionnaire, implying that the third question–which was worded as a follow-up to the previous question, but did not include a reference to "American way" in the wording–was nevertheless asking the child to address how their relationship with their parents was impacted by any perceived acculturative dissonance. Scores for the first and second questions were used to calculate a gap score using the absolute value of the difference

between the parent's preference for the American way of doing things, as perceived by the child, and the child's own preference.

Finally, an exploratory factor analysis was done on all of the English proficiency items and the American way preference items, including both individual items and parent-child gap scores. This was done, in part, because all of the items were not scored on the same metric and thus could not be accurately compared to one another. The results of the factor analysis suggested two factors did exist—English proficiency and American way preferences—but the English proficiency score limited the sample size to the number of parents, so only the factor score for American way preference was used to measure acculturation gap in the primary analyses.

Mediator: Ambivalence. For the purposes of this study, intergenerational ambivalence was operationalized in two different ways, in order to explore different combinations of positive and negative relationship characteristics. The goal was to determine which approach could most effectively capture the effect of an interaction of positive and negative emotions on outcomes, over and above the effect of negative relationship characteristics alone. For both measures, factor analysis was used to determine which of a number of possible relationship characteristics–both emotional and behavioral–might comprise the ambivalence construct. Then, factor scores were combined to create each variable: for the first, the positive and negative factor scores were multiplied, and the resulting interaction term was used as one operationalization of ambivalence.

For the second, a variable was calculated using the Griffin formula (Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995), which has been widely used to evaluate indirect measures of relationship ambivalence. This formula does not just evaluate the presence and/or intensity of positive and negative emotions, but also assesses the balance between the magnitude of positive and negative emotions, which is the determinant of ambivalent–versus positive, neutral, or negative–relationships (Lendon, Silverstein, & Giarrusso, 2014).

Ambivalence = [(Positive + Negative)/2 − | Positive − Negative|] + 1.5.

Positive relationship characteristics. One set of seven items was included in the initial factor analysis seeking to create a composite variable representing the positive dimensions of parent/child relationships. These items included the following questions: "How important is each of the following to you in your life? Living close to parents and relatives." This item was scored on a 3-point Likert scale, ranging from *not important* (1) to *very important* (3), and represented the desire for physical proximity in the relationship. Another set of questions included the following items: "How often is each of the following true about your immediate family (the people you live with)? Family members like to spend free time with each other." "Family members feel very close to each other." "Family togetherness is very important." These three items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *never* (1) *to always* (5), and represented family cohesion.

Finally, the items "Please indicate how you feel about the following statements: If someone has the chance to help a person get a job, it is always better to choose a relative rather than a friend." "When someone has a serious problem, only relatives can help." "When looking for a job a person should find a job near his/her parents even if it means losing a better job somewhere else." were scored on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from *agree a lot* (1) to *disagree a lot* (4), and represented familism.

Of the above items, the proximity item did not load with the other items during the factor analysis, and did not seem strongly related to the other items conceptually, and thus was discarded. The other two relationship dimensions were confirmed through the analysis as forming two clear factors, but when the factors were tested, familism did not load on either factor and was also removed from the variable. Thus, only the family cohesion items were found to have good predictive value in these models, and the construct "positive relationship characteristics" was therefore operationalized solely as cohesion for the purposes of this study, and will be referred to as "cohesion".

Negative relationship characteristics. Five items were included in the factor analysis used to create a composite variable representing the negative dimensions of parent/child relationships. These items included the following questions: "How important is each of the following to you in your life? Getting away from this community." "Getting away from my parents." These two items were scored on a 3-point Likert scale, ranging from *not important* (1) to *very important* (3), and represented a need for physical space or less proximity. Next, the following three questions were scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *very true* (1) to *not true at all* (4), and

represented conflict in the relationship: "Please answer how true each statement is for you. My parents do not like me very much." "My parents and I often argue because we don't share the same goals." "My parents are usually not very interested in what I say."

As with the positive dimensions, included items were scored on different scales, so factor analyses were conducted to check factor loadings; the three items related to conflict all loaded on one factor, while the others did not seem to be related. Thus, the final factor score only included the three items representing conflict, so the construct "negative relationship characteristics" was operationalized as conflict for the purposes of this study, and will be referred to as "conflict".

Dependent Variable: Depression. Depression was assessed by using a 4-item subset ($\alpha = .77$), of the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D), an instrument very commonly used to measure self-reported depressive symptoms. Both the original 20-item scale and the short-form scale measure depressive symptoms experienced by the respondents during the previous week (Radloff, 1977). The items from the CES-D questionnaire included on the 4-item subset of the CES-D include: "I did not feel like eating"; "I could not get going" "I felt depressed"; and "I felt sad" (see Table 3). All four questions were scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *rarely* (1) to *most of the time* (4), the 4 scores were added, and mean scores were computed and used to create the composite variable. The Cronbach's alpha for the depression composite score was .77 at Wave 2, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Youth Well-being Measures (DVs), Wave 2

Variable	M	SD	Range
Depressive symptoms	1.64	.659	1.00-3.00
Self-esteem	3.36	.503	1.60-2.40

Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study Wave 2, 1995-1996
n=562

Dependent Variable: Self-esteem. Self-esteem was assessed in the CILS using

the 10-item Rosenberg self-esteem scale ($\alpha = .78$), an instrument widely used to measure

self-reported levels of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). Items included the questions "I

certainly feel useless at times", "I feel I do not have much to be proud of", "All in all, I

am inclined to feel that I am a failure", "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself", "At

times I think I am no good at all", "I feel that I have a number of good qualities", "I feel

that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others", "I wish I could have

more respect for myself", "I take a positive attitude toward myself", and "I do things as

well as other people" (see Table 3). All items were scored on a 4-point Likert scale

ranging from *agree a lot* (1) to *disagree a lot* (4), and mean scores were used to create the

composite variable after reverse coding of negatively-worded items. The self-esteem

composite score was found to have an acceptable level of internal consistency, with a

Cronbach's alpha of .78 at Wave 2.

Plan of Analysis

After first conducting preliminary analyses in order to inspect the data, recode

negatively-worded items when necessary, generate descriptive statistics for all variables,

and create all analysis variables as described in previous sections, I ran bivariate

correlations to examine and confirm the strength of the associations between the

composite variables I created for the acculturation gap, intergenerational ambivalence, and the control variables (see Table 4).   I then tested four separate linear regression models for each of the two outcomes in order to answer my three research questions: Model 1 used linear regression analyses to answer RQ1 by testing the association between the independent variable (acculturation gap) and each of the two dependent variables (depression and self-esteem). Model 2 used mediation analyses to answer RQ2 by determining if the association between the acculturation gap and depression/self-esteem operated indirectly through conflict. Models 3 and 4 used mediation analyses to answer RQ3 by testing two variables as mediators that operationalized the construct of ambivalence. Model 3 used a moderated mediation analysis to determine if the impact of the acculturation gap on depression/self-esteem operated through an interaction between cohesion and conflict, such that cohesion served to exacerbate the impact of conflict on depression/self-esteem. Model 4 examined whether a single construct, ambivalence (as calculated using cohesion and conflict scores in the Griffin formula), functioned as a mediator between the acculturation gap and depression/self-esteem.

I compared the results of Models 2, 3, and 4, to see which model predicted the most variance in the two outcomes, depression and self-esteem. All analyses were conducted using SPSS (version 23.0), with all mediation analyses conducted in the PROCESS macro, V.2.13.2 (Columbus, OH: Hayes), which uses parametric bootstrapping to estimate confidence intervals.

Table 4. Pearson's Correlations for All Analysis Variables

	Female	Maternal education	Accult. Gap	Cohesion	Conflict	Ambivalence	Self-esteem	Depression
Female	1	-.143**	-.091*	.011	-.042	-.031	-.040	.185**
Maternal Education		1	.020	-.93*	.047	-.019	.078	-.056
Acculturation Gap			1	-.129**	.301**	-.074	-.028	.117**
Cohesion				1	-.416**	.538**	.134**	-.339**
Conflict					1	-.119**	-.339	.374**
Ambivalence						1	-.018	-.109*
Self-esteem							1	-.437**
Depression								1

N=508

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

Bivariate correlations for all analysis variables can be found in the table above (Table 4). Most correlations, although not all, were significant and consistent with expected associations. The acculturation gap was negatively correlated with cohesion (r =-.129, p < .01), positively correlated with conflict (r =. 301, p < .01), but not correlated with ambivalence. Acculturation gap was also positively correlated with depression (r =-.117, p < .01), and had a negative relationship with self-esteem, although that relationship was not significant (r =-.028, *NS*).

In addition, cohesion was positively correlated with self-esteem (r =.134, p < .01), and negatively correlated with conflict (r =-.416, p < .01) and depression (r =-.339, p < .01). Likewise, conflict was positively correlated with depression (r =.374, p < .01). The two ambivalence variables were also similarly associated with depression, although the interaction term was slightly more highly correlated with depression (r =-.154, p < .01) than the ambivalence construct using the Griffin formula (r =-.109, p < .01).

Model 1 Findings

Model 1 was intended to test Hypothesis 1 and establish the presence of a significant relationship between the acculturation gap and either depression or self-esteem, using two simple linear regression analyses to test the total effect of the

independent variable (acculturation gap) on each of the two dependent variables

(depression and self-esteem), controlling for gender and maternal education. The results

for this Model are presented in the first set of columns in Table 5 for depression and in

Table 6 for self-esteem. While results showed that the acculturation gap was significantly

associated with depression ($B = .088, p < .01$), it was not associated with self-esteem (B

$= -.014, NS$). The overall variance in depression explained by the variables included in

Model 1 was 5.3%, while almost no variance in self-esteem was explained ($R^2 = .009$).

Despite a long-standing belief among many researchers that a lack of a significant

total effect between independent variable and dependent variable precludes the testing of

a mediating effect between the two (Baron & Kenny, 1986), some scholars have argued

more recently that the lack of a such a significant effect does not eliminate the possibility

of mediation (Hayes, 2009; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). For example, if there is a sound

theoretical basis for including an independent variable even if its relationship with the

dependent variable is predicted to have a small effect size (perhaps because it is a distal

process), or if a suppression effect is believed to be present, mediation analyses should be

included despite the absence of a significant total effect of the independent variable on

the dependent variable (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). For this reason, all models were tested

as planned, including the self-esteem models.

Model 2 Findings

Next, Hypothesis 2 was tested using a simple mediation analysis to determine if

the relationship between the acculturation gap and depression/self-esteem was operating

through conflict. As shown in the second set of columns in Table 5, conflict was found

Table 5. Linear Regression Analyses for Mediators of the Association Between Parent/Child Acculturation Gap and Adolescent Depression: Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study Wave 2

Variable	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3				Model 4			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Gender	.241	.057	4.23	.000	.239	.053	4.52	.000	.243	.053	4.59	.000	.235	.057	4.12	.000
Mother's education	-.019	.019	-1.05	.293	-.023	.017	-1.65	.100	-.029	.017	-1.74	.081	-.021	.019	-1.16	.247
Acculturation gap	.088	.028	3.13	.002	.008	.028	.281	.780	.005	.027	.190	.850	.006	.028	.220	.826
Negative relationship					.254	.027	9.31	.000	.228	.030	7.60	.000	.236	.030	7.90	.000
Positive relationship									-.039	.030	-1.31	.191	-.040	.034	-1.15	.252
Negative relationship x Positive relationship									-.031	.023	-1.35	.176				
Ambivalence													-.016	.029	-.549	.583
R^2				.053				.190				.199				.196

N=508

Table 6. Linear Regression Analyses for Mediators of the Association Between Parent/Child Acculturation Gap and Adolescent Self-esteem: Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study Wave 2

Variable	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3				Model 4			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Gender	-.040	.046	-.870	.385	-.039	.043	-.929	.353	-.033	.042	-.771	.441	-.040	.046	-.874	.382
Mother's education	.025	.015	1.72	.087	.032	.014	2.26	.024	.036	.014	2.62	.009	.025	.015	1.71	.089
Acculturation gap	-.014	.022	-.611	.541	.044	.022	1.98	.049	.043	.022	1.94	.054	.046	.022	2.05	.041
Negative relationship					-.187	.022	-8.45	.000	-.173	.024	-7.24	.000	-.150	.024	-6.28	.000
Positive relationship									.085	.024	3.60	.000	.117	.027	4.26	.000
Negative relationship x Positive relationship									-.061	.018	-3.29	.001				
Ambivalence													-.079	.023	-.348	.001
R^2				.009				.132				.163				.165

N=508

to be a significant predictor of depression ($B = .254$, $p < .01$), and the previously-established significant direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable became non-significant ($B = .008$, *NS*), thereby establishing mediation. This finding suggests that a greater acculturation gap was associated with higher levels of depression through conflict. Notably, 19 percent of the variance in depression was explained by Model 2, an almost 14 percent increase over Model 1, demonstrating that the inclusion of conflict to the model added substantial explanatory power, $F(1, 508) = 42.8$, $p < .001$.

Although no significant total effect of the acculturation gap on self-esteem was found when testing Model 1, the insertion of the mediator (negative relationship characteristics) into Model 2 revealed a significant negative association between negative relationship characteristics ($B = -.187$, $p < .01$) and self-esteem, as well as a significant *positive* association between acculturation gap and self-esteem ($B = .044$, $p < .05$). The presence of a suppression effect in Model 2 was also checked by confirming that A x B (-.053) was the opposite sign from C'(.043) (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

These results suggest that not only does conflict act to suppress the impact of the acculturation gap on self-esteem, the acculturation gap may have both negative and positive implications for self-esteem that are obscured in the basic model examining only the direct effect of the acculturation gap. Once the significant mediation of the negative effects of the gap on self-esteem through conflict is taken into account, higher levels of acculturation gap are associated with higher levels of self-esteem.

Model 3 and 4 Findings

The final series of analyses sought to test whether ambivalence (as the integration of positive relationship characteristics and negative relationship characteristics) as a mediating mechanism of the acculturation gap would predict more variation in both depression and self-esteem than conflict alone. Two constructions of ambivalence were tested in Model 3 and Model 4. First, in Model 3, ambivalence was operationalized as an interaction between the conflict factor score and the cohesion factor score. The interaction effect was modeled as a moderated mediation, in which the effect of the acculturation gap operating through conflict would vary with levels of cohesion. Then, in Model 4, Griffin's formula was used to operationalize ambivalence and test the same set of associations.

The results for Model 3, with depression as the dependent variable, are presented in Table 5. Here, the coefficient for the interaction term was insignificant, suggesting that the association of conflict with depression did not vary across different levels of cohesion (B = -.031, NS); the R^2 for Model 3 compared to Model 2 only increased from .190 to .199, which only marginally increased predictive power, $F(1, 508) = 2.81$, p < .10. When Model 3 was run with self-esteem as the dependent variable, however, the coefficient for the interaction term was found to be significant (B = -.061, p < .01; see Table 5). As shown in Figure 2, levels of the indirect effect of conflict varied by the level of cohesion, such that there was a greater negative effect of conflict on the relationship between acculturation gap and self-esteem in the presence of higher level of cohesion. The

percentage of variance in self-esteem explained by Model 3 was 16.3 percent, which

represented a significant increase from Model 2, $F(1, 508) = 9.11$, p < .01.

Figure 2. Moderated Mediation Model
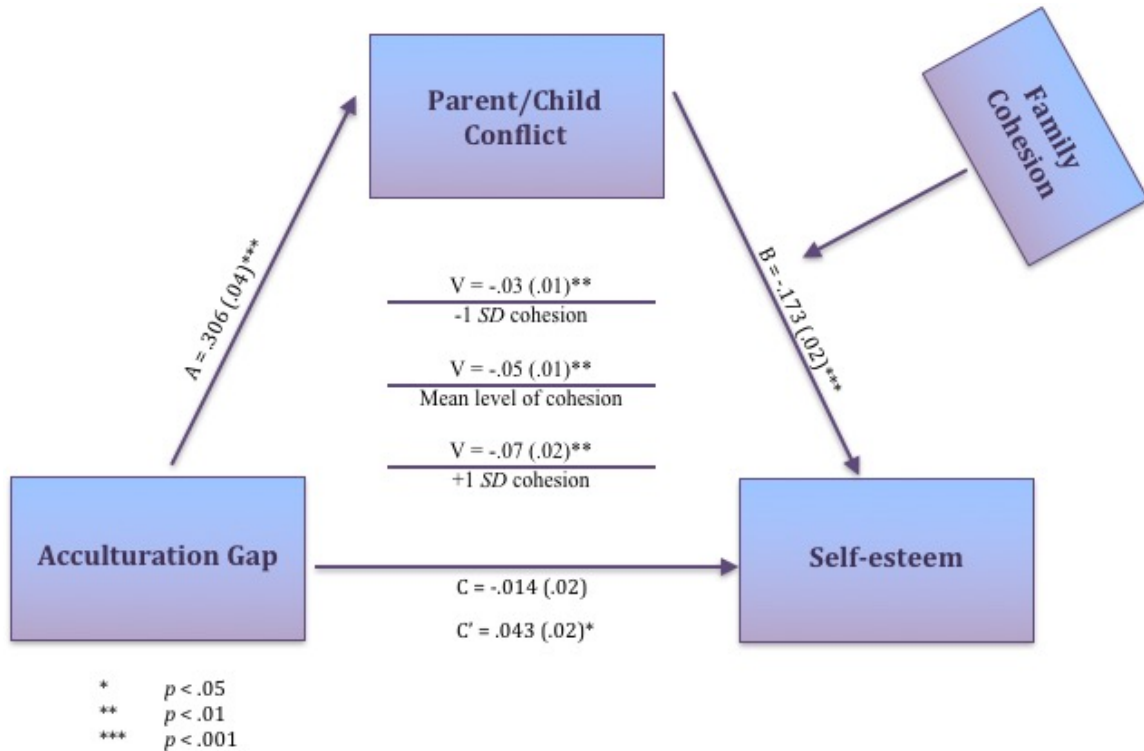
For depression, the Model 4 results testing the Griffin variable mirrored the

Model 3 results in that the coefficient testing the mediation effect of ambivalence was not

significant (B = -.016, NS), R^2 = .196, and did not increase predictive power significantly

over Model 2, $F(1, 508) = 1.88$, NS. Likewise, the results for Model 4 with self-esteem

as the dependent variable were similar to those of Model 3 in suggesting a significant

effect of ambivalence (B = -.079, $p < .01$). The percentage of variance in self-esteem

explained by this model was 16.5, which was almost identical to the R^2 of Model 3, and

also represented a significant increase in predictive power over Model 2, $F(1, 508) =$ 9.90, p < .01. This finding indicates—as with the previous moderated mediation analysis—that cohesion, when operating simultaneously with conflict, has a negative effect on self-esteem in adolescents who perceive that there is an acculturation gap between themselves and their parents.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION

The goals of this study were to examine the impact of an acculturation gap in Mexican immigrant families with adolescent children, especially as it is conceptualized in the Acculturation Gap-Distress Model, and to explore the concept of intergenerational ambivalence as a potential mediator in that model in place of conflict. These goals were motivated by an interest in determining if positive relationship characteristics, when interacting with negative relationship characteristics, might actually generate more inner tension in adolescents than conflict alone (which is often used to operationalize negative emotions and behaviors in parent/child relationships).

Guided by the study of intergenerational conflict in relationships between older parents and their adult children, which is often exacerbated by shifting roles and power differentials (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991), I envisioned a similar dynamic for the children of Mexican immigrant parents. This relationship dynamic would be characterized by change and divided loyalties leading to ambivalence, as children of immigrant families feel both the strong pull of family ties, offering both protection and obligation, and that of American culture. In this chapter, I will discuss the study's findings in relation to: 1) the acculturation gap, 2) intergenerational ambivalence, 2) implications for theory, 3) implications for practice, 4) the strengths and limitations of the study, and 5) areas for future research.

Acculturation Gap

Although scholars have primarily approached the acculturation gap between parents and children as a source of tension in parent-child relationships, there is little consensus, thus far, regarding the significance of the gap's impact on outcomes (Costigan, 2011; Telzer, 2010). One immediate difficulty presenting itself to researchers in the area of acculturation is that of inconsistent conceptualization and measurement of acculturation. Past research often limited the discussion of acculturation to the acquisition of English speaking skills and American customs, with the corresponding loss of the language and customs of the heritage culture as an implicit part of that acquisition (Jung, 2013). Additionally, acculturation was represented as a uniformly positive process for immigrants, with the benefits of "full" membership in American society suggested as the desired end goal of the acculturation process (Bámaca-Colbert & Gayles, 2010). Likewise, then, the acculturation gap has been seen relatively simplistically, as a primarily language-based difference favoring the children over parents and leading to conflict and negative outcomes.

The findings of this study suggest, instead, a more complex picture whereby the acculturation gap—which captured the child's perception of both cultural and language preferences—did have the straightforward impact on adolescent depression. This impact operated primarily through conflict, as framed by the Acculturation Gap-Distress Model. The relationship between the acculturation gap and self-esteem, however, was less much less clear. While the association between the gap and self-esteem was, unsurprisingly, negative, the weak/insignificant impact of the gap, the role cohesion played in the

mediation process, and the presence of a suppression effect, all suggested that outcomes

other than depression might fit less neatly within the limited confines of the

Acculturation Gap-Distress Model.

Intergenerational Ambivalence

The examination of the concept of ambivalence, as it has been applied in

gerontology, was thought to be promising as a potential contributor to the psychosocial

well-being of immigrant adolescents for two reasons, both having to do with role salience

and identity formation. First, as children move freely between two cultures and explore

their own sense of emerging identity, they may have to navigate multiple substantial role

shifts that can occur within immigrant families, as children pick up English speaking

skills more easily than their parents and gain familiarity with mainstream American

culture through greater exposure. This acumen, especially when combined with family

traits based in the heritage culture, and emphasizing loyalty to family, might contribute to

situations where the child gains responsibility and power within the family.

At a time when identity formation and exploration of self are primary

developmental tasks, adolescents asked to assume more responsible roles than those of

their American friends might respond by feeling a greater sense of self-efficacy and

importance within the family structure, or they might feel restricted by those roles

(Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). Parents may, in turn, respond to a perceived loss of

authority by becoming more authoritarian, or they may work proactively to adapt to a

more typically American way of life (Costigan, 2011). Any of these changes could lead

to ambivalence within adolescents, as they are bound—willingly or reluctantly—to family, yet also exposed to a culture that emphasizes individuation.

These types of contradictions are what lie at the very heart of ambivalence, and this study revolves around the idea that ambivalence may capture an influence over behavior and emotion that is qualitatively different from that exerted by intergenerational conflict. Thus, these findings—while not definitive—are certainly suggestive. Depression, a negative outcome, appears to be influenced exclusively by negative relationship dimensions. Self-esteem, on the other hand, does appear to be impacted negatively by the presence of positive parent-child relationship dimensions interacting with the negative. What is not clear from these findings, however, is whether the variables included in the ambivalence models are capturing different aspects of ambivalence or how negative and positive relationship characteristics influence one another. Nevertheless, the self-esteem findings suggest that cohesion exerts a consistent influence over the emotions generated by conflict such that it amplifies the negative effect over self-esteem.

One possible explanation for these findings could be that the internal tension generated by conflicting loyalties—family versus self or heritage culture versus American culture—might prove a barrier to a developing adolescent's emerging identity, leading to confusion and uncertainty. Additionally, however, the positive association between the acculturation gap and self-esteem once the effect of ambivalence is accounted for suggests that perhaps greater responsibility within the family allows adolescents to develop a greater sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem if conflict does not

develop. It is possible that parents may have more difficulty with changes in roles than their adolescent children, and may compensate in ways that contribute to higher levels of conflict.

Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice

Despite the clear finding that the association between acculturation gap and depression was mediated by conflict with little contribution from cohesion, the implications of the study results for potential theoretical development are evident. Most obviously, the group of analyses examining depression provide support for the Acculturation Gap-Distress Model, which has been widely used and referenced, but has received mixed support from previous research.

Most discussion around this inconsistent performance has centered around the simplistic design of the model, and the likelihood that numerous factors influence the relationship between the acculturation gap and adolescent outcomes, above and beyond the mediating presence of conflict. For example, Telzer's (2010) expansion of the model allowed for bidirectional effects of both acculturation and enculturation, and included family contextual factors as a moderator. Additionally, it has been acknowledged that inconsistency in the conceptualization and measurement of acculturation—and the gap— could impact the ability of the model to adequately encompass every one of those alternative conceptualizations and measurements (Bámaca-Colbert & Gayles, 2010; Jung, 2013).

As such, the possibility has been raised by this study that ambivalence could offer a useful addition to the ability of the Acculturation Gap-Distress Model to explain

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variance in psychosocial outcomes for immigrant adolescents in some cases. The

presence of significant effects in the two ambivalence models in the analyses examining

self-esteem only accounted for approximately 3 percent of the variance above that

explained by conflict alone. Nevertheless, they support the idea that the inclusion of

positive relationship characteristics may serve to provide a level of richness and detail to

a heretofore unidimensional construct within the Acculturation Gap-Distress Model.

Additionally, it is possible that other outcomes would be better explained by

higher levels of positive characteristics than negative, or that the contribution of other

family contextual factors—such as familism—could partially determine whether

ambivalence exerted a stronger influence over outcomes, or conflict. Thus, this study

both provided support for the existing model in one instance, and argued for its possible

further expansion in another.

In addition to the implications for the Acculturation Gap-Distress Model, this

study also provides limited support for the theoretical construct of ambivalence as a

useful inclusion in the study of immigrant families with adolescent children. Two

alternative measurement approaches were used to capture ambivalence: a simple

interaction of the negative and positive relationship scores, and the Griffin formula,

which more specifically identifies the simultaneous presence of relatively intense

negative and positive emotions or behaviors.

Conceptually, the Griffin formula should more accurately capture ambivalence;

however, there was little variation in the results across the two types of measures (Model

3 and Model 4), and this study cannot recommend a preferred measure. The slight but

significant increase in the predictive power of the self-esteem models when the ambivalence terms were included suggests however, that the ambivalence construct merits further exploration within this population. Moreover, the results of this study indicate that ambivalence should not be limited in future studies to gerontology, but should receive wider attention and examination with different groups. Overall, it seems that existing theory best supports the use of the ambivalence construct in the study of those families undergoing changes necessitating the renegotiation of intrafamilial roles and authority, and experiencing stress as a result.

This study was intended to serve as an initial exploration into the possible modification of the Acculturation Gap-Distress model using the concept of intergenerational ambivalence as an alternative conceptualization of "distress" as used within the model. As the study of immigrant families gains momentum, and culture assumes a greater role in our consideration of development in all domains, more attention needs to be focused on reaching consensus on definitions and measures of cultural constructs. Additionally, weaknesses and oversimplifications in current theory must be identified and addressed. An over-reliance on outmoded theory carries with it the risk that both between-group and within-group variation will be missed, and gaps in our understanding of areas that are crucial to the future success of immigrants will remain unfilled. Ultimately, theoretical and conceptual advances, along with more sophisticated statistical methods for addressing complex research questions, will lead to improvement in direct supports and interventions for both recent arrivals, and those immigrants who continue to change and adapt with longer residence in the United States.

Strengths and Limitations of the Current Study

As with many studies using secondary data, there were limitations imposed upon the study by the limitations in the data. Because many items were not consistent across time points, it was necessary to limit the analysis to data collected at Wave 2, limiting the ability to infer causal relationships and utilize the longitudinal data to its greatest potential. Another restricting factor was the focus on a unidimensional, English-proficiency centered measure of acculturation. This author supports the idea of a measure of the acculturation and the gap that includes multiple dimensions addressing not only language and general affinity for life in the United States, but more detailed aspects of cultural beliefs and allegiance, and elements of cultural choice and preference. Such measures would also accommodate both acculturation and enculturation simultaneously, and acculturation (or cultural) gap would be measured directly, or bi-directionally. Obviously, few of these options were possible for the current study.

Additionally, most studies including indirect measures of ambivalence include more dimensions of both positive and negative relationships than were used here. Perhaps most importantly, the measure of positive relationship characteristics included only family cohesion items, which may have been less effective at measuring internal tension resulting from interpersonal relationships than a measure of individual closeness or intimacy between parent and child would have been. Further, measures for single constructs included individual, dyadic, and whole-family items, and there were questions related to both actions and feelings, all of which might have led to less than ideal clarity in the composite measures.

Finally, there may have been limitations in the ability of the Mexican sample to provide the best assessment of intergenerational ambivalence. While initially chosen because of their high levels of familism—which was thought to be a necessary component of the positive relationship measure, but ultimately was not used in the composite variable—the Mexican sample also had low levels of conflict. Because the Griffin formula is designed to assign a higher ambivalence score when both high negative and high positive scores are present, a sample with high positive (cohesion) but low negative (conflict) would not receive a high ambivalence score.

The similarity between the results of Models 3 and 4 supports the idea that the Mexican sample was not sufficiently ambivalent to fully examine this construct. The assumption is that the positive/negative interaction would not differentiate between levels of positive and negative, and would only capture the strength of the interaction. Thus, scores rating high on cohesion and low on conflict would not be weighted any differently than scores rating medium high on both, although the second score would actually demonstrate the presence of more ambivalence. The Griffin formula, however, was designed to capture just such nuance, so it can be inferred by the almost-identical results for models 3 and 4 that the nuance did not exist in this sample.

Areas for Future Research

Next steps for future research include addressing the methodological limitations of this study and testing ambivalence again to better judge whether further research beyond the exploratory level was warranted. Within this dataset, the logical next approach would be to use the same variables to examine different cultural groups, as well

as different outcomes, and compare results. For example, the CILS has at least two other ethnic groups—Filipinos and Cubans—with sample sizes that are at least as large as the Mexican sample, but may have different levels of both conflict and cohesion, and a comparison of these two groups with the Mexicans could be very informative. Additionally, it is possible that some of the items that were eliminated from the ambivalence measure in this study could be retained for samples with different characteristics, which might provide more detail about the nature of ambivalence.

Overall, more work should be done to assess whether ambivalence could be productively studied in other populations, and to test direct measures of ambivalence with these populations, as it is a construct that would appear to have to have the potential for wider application than is currently seen. Another potential study would be a comparison of ambivalence in adolescents from immigrant families and those from non-immigrant families, or a comparison between adult child/older adult parent dyads and adolescent child/adult parent dyads.

Finally, the Acculturation Gap-Distress Model should be meaningfully expanded for different cultural groups, and those expansions should be tested before widespread continued use. The model has been supported frequently enough that a strong argument could be made against abandoning it entirely, as it clearly is capturing useful information within its framework. At the same time, it has been unsupported frequently enough that it seems clear to continue its use without keeping its current limitations firmly in mind would invite the possibility of invalid findings with little potential for replication.

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