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Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor, Ruchi Bhanot and Nana Shin

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# Ethnic Identity Formation During Adolescence

## The Critical Role of Families

Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor

*Arizona State University*

Ruchi Bhanot

Nana Shin

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

An ecological model of ethnic identity was examined among 639 adolescents of Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Salvadoran descent. Using structural equation modeling and, specifically, multiple group comparisons, findings indicated that familial ethnic socialization (FES) played a significant role in the process of ethnic identity formation for all adolescents, regardless of ethnic background. Specifically, adolescents' reports of FES were significantly and positively associated with their reports of exploration, commitment, and affirmation and belonging toward their ethnic background. These results are consistent with empirical work that has found familial socialization to be a central component of ethnic identity formation among children, and with theoretical work on adolescents, which has emphasized the important role of families in the process ethnic identity formation.

**Keywords:** *ethnic identity; family socialization; Chinese; Vietnamese; Salvadoran; Asian Indian; Filipino*

Ethnic identity refers to the degree to which individuals have explored their ethnicity, are clear about what their ethnic group membership means to them, and identify with their ethnic group (Phinney, 1996). Ethnic identity has proven to be an important aspect of adolescents' developmental experiences, as it has been related to their psychological well-being (Umaña-

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Taylor, Diversi, & Fine, 2002), academic achievement (Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999), and abilities to cope with discrimination and racism (Dubow, Pargament, Boxer, & Tarakeshwar, 2000). Yet we know little about the factors that influence the development of adolescents' ethnic identities. While theorists have suggested that families play an important role in this process (e.g., Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992), few have examined these theoretical assertions. As such, the current study tested an ecological model of ethnic identity formation in which a combination of community, familial, and individual factors were examined among adolescents of Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Salvadoran, and Asian Indian descent living in the United States.

### **Ecological Theory**

Bronfenbrenner (1989) suggested that the properties of individuals and their environments interact to produce constancy and change in individuals' characteristics during the life course. Furthermore, scholars argue that it is critical to determine the influence of broader environmental contexts in which adolescents' lives are embedded (e.g., school, neighborhood) on developmental processes and outcomes (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Support for these theoretical assertions has been evidenced in numerous studies that focused on parenting behaviors (Pinderhughes, Nix, Foster, Jones, & The Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2001), racial socialization (Hughes & Johnson, 2001), and parent-child relationships (Murry, Brown, Brody, Cutrona, & Simons, 2001); and findings indicate that the multiple contexts in which children's lives are embedded account for significant variation in developmental outcomes.

### **Ecological Model of Ethnic Identity Development**

Consistent with this idea, the current study explored the interface of individual, familial, and school characteristics to better understand adolescents' ethnic identity. Specifically, an ecological model of ethnic identity formation (see Umaña-Taylor, 2001) was tested. This model examines how contextual environmental factors interact with adolescents' individual characteristics to influence ethnic identity development (see Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004, for a detailed description). Specifically, microecological factors (e.g., the representation of the adolescent's ethnic group in the neighborhood) and macroecological factors (e.g., socioeconomic status [SES]) are theorized to influence ethnic socialization, which, in turn, is expected to influence adolescents' ethnic identity formation. In addition, the model suggests that adoles-

cents' social and cognitive maturity levels will moderate the relationship between ethnic socialization and ethnic identity.

This model was previously examined with Mexican-origin adolescents (see Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004), and findings indicated that those who reported fewer same ethnic group members attending their schools tended to report higher levels of familial ethnic socialization (FES). Furthermore, the fewer family members who had been born in the United States, the more that adolescents tended to report that their families were socializing them about their ethnicity. Finally, adolescents who reported that their families were socializing them about their ethnicity also tended to report that they had explored their ethnicity, felt good about their ethnic background, and felt a strong commitment to their ethnic identity. In addition, it is possible that adolescents who reported fewer same ethnic group members in their schools reported higher levels of FES because the salience of ethnicity increased in dissonant environments (i.e., fewer same ethnic group members; Rumbaut, 1995) and, in turn, prompted adolescents to elicit more ethnic socialization from their families (e.g., asking more questions about ethnicity).

These findings underscored the critical influence of ecological factors on adolescents' ethnic identity formation, at least among Mexican-origin adolescents. Consequently, the current study examined whether the relations that emerged among Mexican-origin adolescents in support of the theoretical model would emerge with adolescents from Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Salvadoran, and Asian Indian backgrounds. To better contextualize the current study, a brief overview of each of these populations, including their histories in the United States and the existing work on their ethnic identity, follows. As these overviews illustrate, ecological factors play a potential role in the process of ethnic identity formation.

### **Chinese Adolescents**

Although Chinese immigrants have had a long history in the United States dating back to the California Gold Rush, 70% of the Chinese population came to the United States after 1965; and, as result, second-generation immigrants are a relatively young population (Wong, 1995). Scholars who have examined ethnic identity among Chinese adolescents indicate that FES plays a central role in the process of ethnic identity formation (Kibria, 2002; Lu, 2001; Luo & Wiseman, 2000). Families socialize their children about their Chinese culture by attending cultural events, maintaining memberships in Chinese community organizations, teaching the native language, and exposure to extended family (Lu, 2001; Luo & Wiseman, 2000).

Specifically related to Umaña-Taylor's model, researchers have found that ethnic composition and generational status can influence Chinese adolescents' ethnic identity. For example, high concentration of ethnic group members in one's environment led to increased ethnic behaviors (Luo & Wiseman, 2000), while low concentration of group members led to increased salience of ethnicity because of difference from the "norm" (Lee, 1999). Similarly, Kibria (2002) found that the social landscape was critical for understanding Chinese American's identity formation. Specifically, those who did not experience hostility from the majority culture in their social context tended to assimilate to U.S. culture; and, therefore, there appeared to be a loss of ethnic identity for this group when compared to those experiencing a hostile context and, consequently, less assimilation. Finally, researchers found that adherence to U.S. values (e.g., individualistic) increased with generational status and length of time in the United States (Tsai, 2000; Wink, 1997).

### **Filipino Adolescents**

Filipinos also have an extended history with the United States, as the Philippines was under U.S. rule for 44 years and gained its independence from the U.S. in 1946 (Agbayani-Siewart, 2002). Scholars suggest that the experience of being under U.S. rule had a significant psychological impact on Filipino immigrants, making them feel inferior to U.S. Americans and unwilling to demand an equal status (Pido, 1997). In line with this idea, researchers have found that Filipino adolescents report significantly less ethnic pride than their African American and Latino counterparts (Rotheram-Borus, Lightfoot, Moraes, Dopkins, & LaCour, 1998). Accordingly, second-generation and third-generation Filipinos in the United States have faced substantial opposition from their parents and grandparents in matters of family and individual values (Posadas, 1999c). While traditional Filipino values include winning the approval of elders, maintaining group harmony, and extended kin networks, U.S. beliefs foster a sense of individuality, competition, and material success (Agbayani-Siewart, 2002; Posadas, 1999b, 1999c).

Although few studies have explored ethnic identity among Filipinos, in line with Umaña-Taylor's model, existing work suggests that families actively socialize their children about their ethnic background. For example, to instill cultural roots, many parents send their children to the Philippines to live with relatives (Agbayani-Siewart, 2002). Other forms of FES include teaching native dances and Filipino martial arts, living with extended kin, and decorating homes with native art and objects (Posadas, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c). Filipinos who have married non-Filipinos also exhibit patterns of

ethnic socialization such as taking their children to the Philippines and maintaining an extended kin network (Bautista, 1998; Dearing, 1997).

Among Filipinos, our existing knowledge of ethnic identity formation and related outcomes is limited, as these issues have remained relatively unexplored. Existing work, however, suggests that ethnic socialization is an important part of family life for Filipino adolescents (Posadas, 1999b, 1999c), and also that Filipino adolescents' ethnic identity is associated with important behavioral outcomes (Rotheram-Borus, 1990).

### **Vietnamese Adolescents**

Vietnamese immigrants have a more recent immigration history in the United States, as the first major wave of immigration began in the 1970s (Rumbaut, 1995). Vietnamese immigrants have experienced a struggle for identity, as many of them were dispersed around the United States by refugee settlement programs (Bankston, 2000). Previous research suggests that ethnic identity is associated with positive outcomes in Vietnamese youth. For instance, increased integration in the Vietnamese community has been associated with decreased problematic behavior and high academic achievement (Bankston & Zhou, 1997). Furthermore, use of ethnic language and participation in ethnic community activities has been associated with lower levels of substance abuse (Bankston & Zhou, 1995b). Finally, ethnic identity has been positively associated with various indices of mental health among Vietnamese populations (Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997; Roberts et al., 1999), thus, underscoring the need to better understand the factors that influence the development of a positive ethnic identity.

Research suggests that active participation in religious events and church attendance act as effective ethnic socialization tools by Vietnamese families within the United States (Bankston & Zhou, 1995a, 1995b). Vietnamese communities also provide experiences with ethnic socialization as adolescents participate in community-wide cultural events (Bankston & Zhou, 1997). An excellent illustration of familial and community-wide ethnic socialization is "Little Saigon," a Vietnamese enclave located in Westminster, California (Mazumdar, Mazumdar, Docuyan, & McLaughlin, 2000). Vietnamese families bring their children to this community to provide exposure to the native language, public rituals, architecture, food, and clothing specific to Vietnamese culture, which reinforces ethnic identity among children.

Finally, findings from numerous studies lend support for the relationships described in Umaña-Taylor's model. In a study of multiple ethnic groups, researchers found that Vietnamese adolescents, who were a significant

numerical minority in their school, reported the highest levels of exploration regarding ethnicity (Romero & Roberts, 1998), thus, lending support for the idea that ethnic composition of schools may play an important role in the process of ethnic identity formation among Vietnamese adolescents. Furthermore, researchers have found a positive relationship between parental ethnic socialization and ethnic language proficiency (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001), suggesting that Vietnamese families play an important role in influencing adolescents' ethnic behaviors. Finally, researchers have found a significant relationship between generational status and ethnic identity, as evidenced by higher levels of ethnic identity among first-generation Vietnamese immigrant adolescents living in Vietnamese communities within the United States (Bankston & Zhou, 1995a).

### **Asian Indian Adolescents**

Similar to the Vietnamese population, Asian Indians have a more recent history of immigration to the United States. The migration of Asian Indian populations, which includes individuals from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka has been driven primarily by economic or educational reasons (Campbell & McLean, 2002; Shankar & Balgopal, 2001; Sheth, 1995). Because of their extensive history of colonization, in which cultural values and traditions have been maintained, these populations continue to honor their traditional values and customs despite immigration to other countries (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997).

Similar to other Eastern cultures, common cultural values among Asian Indians include patriarchal systems, traditional gender roles, familial piety, and collectivism (Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002), which tend to run counter to values propagated by the Western culture. Existing work suggests that Asian Indians struggle in balancing these polarized belief systems as they construct their ethnic identities (Hegde, 1998; Kurian, 1986; Srinivasan, 2001). However, a factor that can facilitate this process and positively influence individuals' psychosocial development is FES (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Farver et al., 2002).

Parents instill in their children the values, customs, and ideals of their Asian Indian background (Dasgupta, 1998). Various methods of FES, such as speaking native language at home, maintaining religious practices at home, celebrating religious holidays, and encouraging their children to learn traditional dances and music from their native country, have been documented among Asian Indian populations (Bagley, Bolitho, & Bertrand, 2001; Min, 2000). In line with Umaña-Taylor's (2001) model of ethnic iden-

tity formation, findings indicate that families play a central role in the process of ethnic identity formation among Asian Indian adolescents (Farver et al., 2002). Furthermore, findings suggest that the relationship between ethnic socialization and ethnic identity is further magnified when children are in contexts where their ethnic group is a distinct numerical minority (Buchignani, 1980; Shanker & Balgopal, 2001). In addition, findings suggest that the salience of ethnicity increases for Asian Indians when they are numerical minorities in their social contexts (Hutnik, 1991; Saeed, Blain, & Forbes, 1999).

### Salvadoran Adolescents

Although research on Latino's ethnic identity has been increasing, the majority of our knowledge is based primarily on Mexican-origin populations. Researchers have yet to examine ethnic identity among Salvadoran adolescents. It is important to examine other Latino groups such as Central Americans given that this group constitutes one of the fastest growing Latino immigrant groups in the United States (Logan, 2001). Furthermore, although individuals of Mexican and Salvadoran descent fall under the pan-ethnic label of "Latino," each has different experiences. For example, the majority of Salvadorans in the United States have fled El Salvador because of political instability, and their possibilities for returning are limited (Mumford, 2000). On the other hand, the majority of Mexican immigrants come to the United States for economic reasons, and many expect to return to their native country. These differences in immigration experiences could translate into differences in the attachment that is felt toward their country of origin. It is possible that because Salvadorans are not seeking to return to their country, they may be less inclined to preserve their cultural identification (through generations) and more inclined to assimilate than Mexican immigrants who come to the United States with the expectation of making money and returning "home." On the other hand, it could be that Salvadorans yearn for their country, something that they cannot have, and, as a result, have a romanticized notion of their culture and are, therefore, more resistant to assimilation. Finally, we may find that there are no differences in Salvadorans' and Mexicans' focus on their native cultures. As such, it is critical to better understand these possible differences and/or similarities rather than assuming that all Latinos have similar experiences.

As a whole, the existing research on Latinos suggests that (a) ethnic identity tends to follow a developmental progression such that exploration and commitment regarding ethnicity increases with age (Martinez & Dukes,



1997; Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Chavira, 1992), (b) ethnic identity is positively related to adolescents' psychological well-being (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2002), and (c) ethnic identity is influenced by the family (e.g., ethnic socialization, generational status).

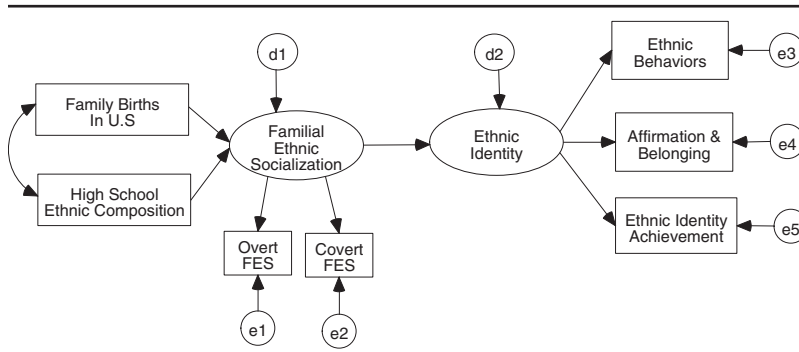
As evidenced by this brief review, the ethnic groups examined in the current study have diverse histories in the United States, and the existing knowledge of ethnic identity among these groups varies considerably. Nevertheless, the groups share important commonalities with regard to traditional cultural values. Specifically, all five groups adhere to a traditionally patriarchal family structure where gender roles are clearly defined (Espiritu, 2001; Farver et al., 2002; Garcia-Preto, 1996; Kibria, 1993, 2002; Wolf, 1997); all groups are rooted in a collectivistic ideology in which the needs of the group are emphasized over individual needs (Chung, 1992; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Kibria, 1993; Ross-Sheriff, 1992); all groups emphasize the central role of the family, which is consistent with a collectivistic orientation (Chung, 1992; Cooper, Baker, Polichar, & Welsh, 1993; Garcia-Preto, 1996; Kibria, 1993; Ross-Sheriff, 1992; Zhou, 1997); the influence of social context on individuals' lives is evident across all groups (Hutnik, 1991; Kibria, 2002; Menjivar, 1997; Saeed et al., 1999; Zhou, 1997); and, finally, studies have demonstrated variations in cultural values based on generational status in the United States for all groups (Bankston & Zhou, 1995a; Dasgupta, 1998; Dawson & Gifford, 2001; Fuligni, 1998; Kulig, 1998; Tsai, 2000; Vaidyanathan & Naidoo, 1991; Wink, 1997). Accordingly, the relationships described in the model of ethnic identity formation should be applicable across ethnic groups because the diversity in immigration experience, social context, and FES is accounted for in the model. Furthermore, although the influence of ecological factors on ethnic identity formation has not been explicitly examined among the multiple groups, the combination of findings provides preliminary evidence to suggest that Umaña-Taylor's (2001) model may be applicable across these populations.

## Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to examine Umaña-Taylor's model (2001) of ethnic identity among Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Asian Indian, and Salvadoran adolescents living in the United States. The following hypotheses were tested:

*Hypothesis 1:* Higher familial births in the United States will be associated with lower levels of familial ethnic socialization.

**Figure 1**  
**Structural Model**



Note: FES = familial ethnic socialization.

*Hypothesis 2:* Higher levels of same ethnic group members in adolescents' high schools will be associated with lower levels of familial ethnic socialization.

*Hypothesis 3:* Higher levels of familial ethnic socialization will be associated with higher levels of ethnic identity (see Figure 1).

Also, the following research questions were explored:

*Research Question 1:* To what extent is the direction of the relationships in the models similar across groups?

*Research Question 2:* To what extent is the strength of the relationships similar across groups?

## Method

### Procedure and Sample

Data were taken from a larger study designed to examine adolescents' ethnic identity formation. Data were gathered from adolescents who were attending one of three high schools in a large southwestern city. Schools had varied ethnic compositions; one school was predominantly Latino (96% Latino, 1% Black, 2% White, 1% Other), while the other two schools were more ethnically diverse (i.e., 45% Latino, 20% White, 15% Black, and 20% Other; and 45% White, 20% Black, 15% Latino, and 20% Other). Adolescents ranged in age from 13 to 25 years ( $M = 15.52$ ). Of the 639 participants, 39% were Asian Indian ( $n = 249$ ), 22.7% were Vietnamese ( $n = 145$ ), 10.9%

were Chinese ( $n = 70$ ), 13.6% were Filipino ( $n = 87$ ), and 13.8% were Salvadoran ( $n = 88$ ).<sup>1</sup> Almost all ethnic groups demonstrated a balanced gender ratio, with the exception of Filipino adolescents (male  $n = 35$ , female  $n = 51$ ; one did not report gender).

Adolescents completed youth assent forms, and a letter describing the study was sent home with each student, allowing participation to be voluntary. Parents who did not want their child to participate had 1 week to return the letter. Adolescents completed a self-administered questionnaire. Students who did not participate in the study completed an alternate assignment, which was determined by each teacher.

## Measures

*Ethnic group membership.* To determine adolescents' ethnic group membership, adolescents' answers to the question "What is your specific ethnic group?" were used to categorize adolescents into a specific group (e.g., Asian Indian, Vietnamese). If there was no response available for this question, their answer to the following question was used to determine their ethnicity, "In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be . . ." If adolescents did not provide a specific ethnic group for either of those questions (e.g., they answered "Asian"), their answers to their mother's country of birth and their father's country of birth were examined.

*Familial births in the United States.* Generational status was assessed using the variable familial births in the United States. Adolescents were asked to report their own country of birth, and the country of birth for each parent, each paternal grandparent, and each maternal grandparent. Because only 11 participants (4 Chinese, 3 Asian Indian, and 4 Salvadoran) reported that their parents or grandparents were born in the United States, they were excluded from the analyses. This variable was coded as a 0 or 1, with 0 indicating that no one in the immediate family was born in the United States and 1 indicating that one family member was born in the United States.

*Perceived high school ethnic composition.* Adolescents' perceptions of the ethnic composition of their schools was determined with their response to the following question, "Thinking about your high school, what percentage of the people in your school do you think are [your specific ethnic group]?" Response choices ranged from 1 (*very few, less than 20%*) to 5 (*a lot, more than 75%*).

*Familial ethnic socialization.* A measure of FES was developed by the first author for use in the larger study. The Familial Ethnic Socialization Measure (FESM; Umaña-Taylor, 2001) included nine items, scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, which assessed adolescents' perceptions of the extent to which their families socialize them about their ethnicity. Two subscales included in the measure assess aspects of overt (e.g., "My family discusses the importance of knowing about my ethnic/cultural background") and covert (e.g., "My family listens to music sung or played by artists from my ethnic and/or cultural background") FES. Coefficient alphas for the overall measure ranged from .81 to .86 (see Table 1 for coefficient alphas of subscales).

*Ethnic identity achievement.* Ethnic identity achievement was measured using Phinney's (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). This 14-item measure was developed for use with ethnically diverse samples and has been used with various ethnic groups, including African American, Central American, Mexican American, Dominican, Puerto Rican, Japanese, Haitian, and European Americans. The MEIM includes three subscales: ethnic behaviors (e.g., "I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs"), affirmation and belonging (e.g., "I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments"), and ethnic identity achievement (e.g., "In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group"). Responses are scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale, with end points 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 4 (*strongly agree*). In the current study, coefficient alphas for the overall measure ranged from .79 to .81.

## Results

Prior to testing our structural model, measurement models were examined for each ethnic group using a confirmatory factor analysis to determine whether the indicator variables were adequately measuring the latent variables (Hatcher, 1994; Loehlin, 1998; see Table 1 for bivariate correlations). Two indicators defined FES as a latent variable: overt FES and covert FES. These indicators were determined based on the previous work of Umaña-Taylor and Fine (2004). Overt FES assessed socialization experiences that had an intentional or planned nature, and covert FES assessed instances of daily life in which socialization regarding ethnicity was occurring, although perhaps not through planned events or activities. In addition, three indicators defined ethnic identity achievement: ethnic behaviors, affirmation and

**Table 1**  
**Coefficient Alphas Correlations Among Observed Variables By Ethnic Group**  
 (sample size presented within parentheses)

	2	3	4	5	6	7	$\alpha$
<b>Asian Indian adolescents</b>							
1. High school ethnic composition	.13* (186)	.11 (195)	.15* (195)	.03 (195)	.01 (195)	.13* (195)	
2. Births in the United States		-.08 (231)	-.01 (231)	.03 (231)	-.18** (231)	-.14* (231)	
3. Familial ethnic socialization—overt			.68*** (249)	.52*** (249)	.45*** (249)	.64*** (249)	.83
4. Familial ethnic socialization—covert				.35*** (249)	.38*** (249)	.42*** (249)	.69
5. Ethnic identity—ethnic behaviors					.51*** (249)	.59*** (249)	.56
6. Ethnic identity—affirmation & belonging						.65*** (249)	.84
7. Ethnic identity—ethnic identity achievement							.78
<b>Chinese adolescents</b>							
1. High school ethnic composition	.29* (52)	-.06 (62)	.07 (62)	.13 (62)	-.04 (62)	-.003 (62)	
2. Births in the United States		.22* (58)	.44*** (58)	.31** (58)	.24* (58)	.06 (58)	
3. Familial ethnic socialization—overt			.43*** (70)	.55*** (70)	.40*** (70)	.46*** (70)	.87
4. Familial ethnic socialization—covert				.44*** (70)	.30** (70)	.25* (70)	.63
5. Ethnic identity—ethnic behaviors					.36** (70)	.42*** (70)	.65
6. Ethnic identity—affirmation & belonging						.41*** (70)	.83
7. Ethnic identity—ethnic identity achievement							.63
<b>Filipino adolescents</b>							
1. High school ethnic composition	-.15 (74)	-.01 (78)	.14 (78)	.04 (78)	.18 (78)	.10 (78)	
2. Births in the United States		-.01 (81)	-.06 (81)	.12 (81)	-.09 (81)	-.14 (81)	
3. Familial ethnic socialization—overt			.58*** (87)	.53*** (87)	.45*** (87)	.58*** (87)	.84

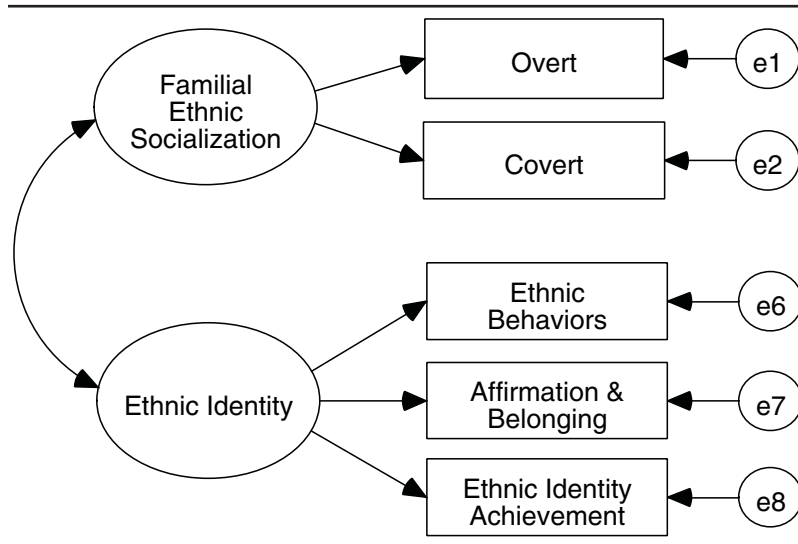
(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

	2	3	4	5	6	7	$\alpha$
4. Familial ethnic socialization-covert				.44*** (87)	.43*** (87)	.41*** (87)	.53
5. Ethnic identity-ethnic behaviors					.46*** (87)	.43*** (87)	.59
6. Ethnic identity-affirmation & belonging						.56*** (87)	.80
7. Ethnic identity-ethnic identity achievement							.64
Salvadoran adolescents							
1. High school ethnic composition	-.39** (42)	-.07 (53)	.03 (53)	.02 (53)	-.30* (53)	.001 (53)	
2. Births in the United States		.09 (69)	.00 (69)	-.11 (69)	.15 (69)	.04 (69)	
3. Familial ethnic socialization-overt			.58*** (88)	.48*** (88)	.42*** (88)	.63*** (88)	.78
4. Familial ethnic socialization-covert				.39*** (88)	.40*** (88)	.49*** (88)	.72
5. Ethnic identity-ethnic behaviors					.39*** (88)	.49*** (88)	.36
6. Ethnic identity-affirmation & belonging							.74
7. Ethnic identity-ethnic identity achievement						.51*** (88)	.66
Vietnamese adolescents							
1. High school ethnic composition	-.20* (116)	-.06 (124)	-.17* (124)	-.01 (124)	.00 (124)	.02 (124)	
2. Births in the United States		.08 (136)	.21** (136)	-.12 (136)	.23** (136)	-.02 (136)	
3. Familial ethnic socialization-overt			.53*** (145)	.33*** (145)	.29*** (145)	.47*** (145)	.78
4. Familial ethnic socialization-covert				.27** (145)	.43*** (145)	.34*** (145)	.68
5. Ethnic identity-ethnic behaviors					.32*** (145)	.49*** (145)	.67
6. Ethnic identity-affirmation & belonging							.62
7. Ethnic identity-ethnic identity achievement						.50*** (145)	.79

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . All tests were one-tailed.

**Figure 2**  
**Measurement Model**



belonging, and ethnic identity achievement. The three variables were determined based on the theoretical conceptualization of the MEIM (Phinney, 1992), which suggests that these three distinct aspects of ethnic identity development are assessed in the measure. Both latent constructs were allowed to covary with one another (see Figure 2). An examination of the fit indices suggested that the measurement model was an acceptable fit for most groups (see Table 2). In determining model fit, it is recommended that one examine multiple fit indices (Byrne, 2001). Furthermore, it is recommended that a ratio of the  $\chi^2$  divided by the degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ) should be examined, rather than the  $\chi^2$  statistic alone, because of the sensitivity of the  $\chi^2$  statistic to sample size; a ratio less than 3 is considered to demonstrate adequate model fit (Kline, 1998).

After the measurement models were examined, we set out to examine our structural model with each ethnic group using maximum likelihood (ML) estimation. To estimate whether the same pattern of relationships held in different ethnic groups, we used the multiple-group comparison approach (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999; Bollen, 1989). In this approach, equivalence among samples is evaluated by constraints that impose identical estimates for the model's parameters (Byrne, 1994). In the current study, the equality constraints were imposed on path coefficients across the ethnic groups. This

**Table 2**  
**Fit Indices for the Measurement Model**  
**and Structural Model by Ethnic Group**

Fit Indices	Asian Indian ( <i>n</i> = 249)	Chinese ( <i>n</i> = 70)	Filipino ( <i>n</i> = 87)	Salvadoran ( <i>n</i> = 88)	Vietnamese ( <i>n</i> = 145)
Measurement model					
$\chi^2$ ( <i>df</i> = 4)	6.38	2.89	6.29	1.12	12.65*
$\chi^2/df$ ratio	1.59	.72	1.57	.28	3.16
NFI	.99	.97	.96	.99	.93
NNFI	.99	1.00	.96	1.00	.88
CFI	1.00	1.00	.98	1.00	.95
RMSEA	.05	.00	.08	.00	.12
Lower bound	.00	.00	.00	.00	.05
Upper bound	.12	.16	.20	.07	.20
Structural model					
$\chi^2$ ( <i>df</i> = 12)	27.62**	16.05	16.15	11.07	32.72**
$\chi^2/df$ ratio	2.3	1.34	1.35	.92	2.73
NFI	.95	.85	.90	.93	.85
NNFI	.93	.88	.93	1.00	.74
CFI	.97	.95	.97	1.00	.89
RMSEA	.07	.07	.06	.00	.11
Lower bound	.04	.00	.00	.00	.07
Upper bound	.11	.15	.14	.10	.16

Note: NFI = (Bentler-Bonnett's) Normed Fit Index; NNFI = Non-Normed Fit Index; CFI = (Bentler's) Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

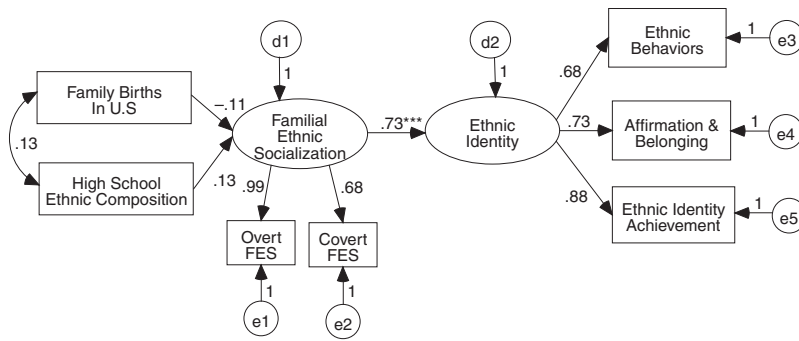
\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

constrained model demonstrated a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 121.92$ , *df* = 72, *p* = .00; (Bentler-Bonnett's) Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .99; Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = .99; (Bentler's) Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 1.00; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .03), which suggested that the model fit equally well across the five ethnic groups. However, because these results can be easily influenced by variable sample size among groups (Pomplun & Omar, 2001), we utilized a more conservative test of group difference by conducting separate path analyses for each group and comparing the goodness of fit across groups (see Figures 3 through 7).

Our findings indicated that while the path from FES to ethnic identity achievement was significant for every ethnic group, the paths from familial births in the United States and high school ethnic composition to FES were not significant for all groups. These results indicated that FES positively influenced ethnic identity achievement across all ethnic groups. The fit indices suggested that this model was a good fit for the Salvadoran group; an ade-

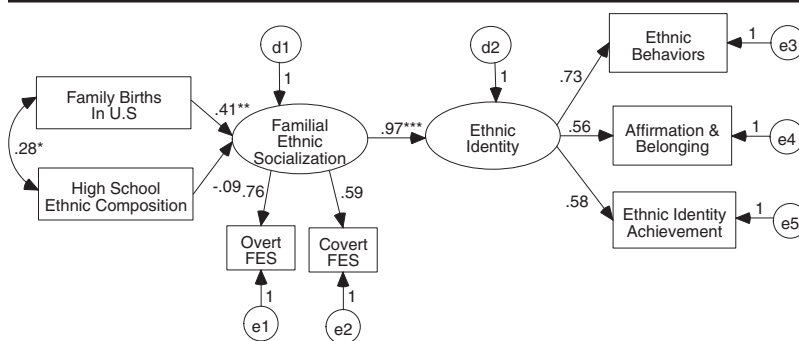


**Figure 3**  
Standardized Coefficients for Asian Indian Adolescents



Note: FES = familial ethnic socialization.  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

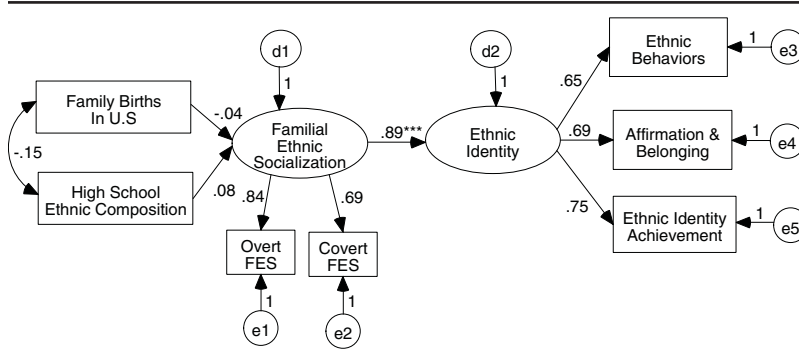
**Figure 4**  
Standardized Coefficients for Chinese Adolescents



Note: FES = familial ethnic socialization.  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

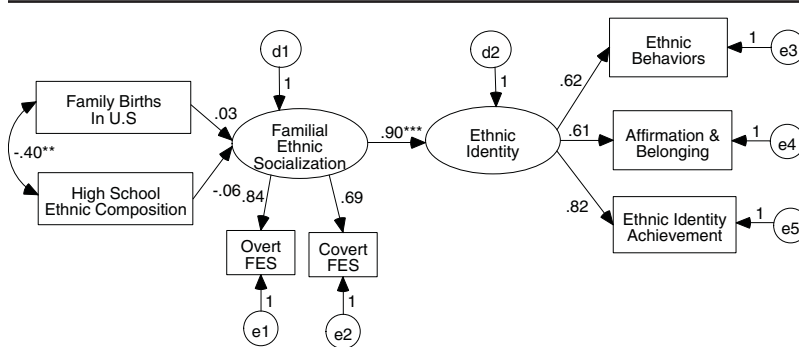
quate fit for the Asian Indian, Chinese, and Filipino groups; and a poor fit for the Vietnamese group (see Table 2). Furthermore, the model accounted for 2% (Asian Indian), 15% (Chinese), 1% (Filipino), .5% (Salvadoran), and 3% (Vietnamese) of the variance in FES and 52.8% (Asian Indian), 93% (Chinese), 79% (Filipino), 80% (Salvadoran), and 49% (Vietnamese) of the variance in ethnic identity achievement.

**Figure 5**  
Standardized Coefficients for Filipino Adolescents



Note: FES = familial ethnic socialization.  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Figure 6**  
Standardized Coefficients for Salvadoran Adolescents

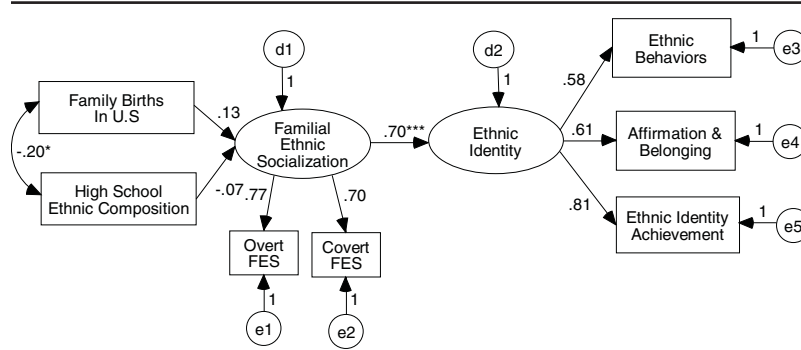


Note: FES = familial ethnic socialization.  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## Discussion

The current study used an ecological framework with which to understand the factors that influenced ethnic identity among adolescents from five different ethnic groups. The model explored the interrelations among adolescents' individual characteristics and several microecological

**Figure 7**  
**Standardized Coefficients for Vietnamese Adolescents**



Note: FES = familial ethnic socialization.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

and macroecological factors. Furthermore, we explored whether the model was comparable across the five ethnic groups included in this study. Generally, our findings suggested that FES was strongly related to ethnic identity achievement for Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Salvadoran adolescents. Thus, regardless of the fact that the five groups examined in the current study have varying cultural traditions, values, beliefs, and histories in the United States (as discussed previously), the familial context appears to be critical to all groups for adolescents' ethnic identity formation. In fact, the model examined in the current study accounted for more than one half of the variance in ethnic identity achievement for all groups except Vietnamese adolescents, for whom the model only explained 49% of the variance. Thus, this suggests that one commonality in the process of ethnic identity formation is the strong influence of families, which is consistent with previous findings among Mexican-origin adolescents (see Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004).

Theoretically, the pan-cultural impact of FES on ethnic identity underscores the importance of espousing an ecological approach and, more important, including an examination of family processes when developing an understanding of adolescent developmental processes. Furthermore, our findings provide empirical support for theoretical assertions (i.e., Keefe, 1992; Phinney, 1996; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992) that have emphasized the critical influence of families on individuals' ethnic identity. Although theorists have alluded to this relation, there has been limited empirical work in which familial influences have been examined in relation to adolescents' eth-

nic identity; rather, familial influences have been examined primarily in relation to children's ethnic identity development (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). Thus, the current work is critical in that it provides empirical support for this important relation among adolescents.

Although our findings suggest that FES is a central aspect of ethnic identity formation for adolescents from all backgrounds, the relationships involving the influence of familial births in the United States and high school ethnic composition on FES were not significant. While high school ethnic composition and generational status appeared to be critical contextual factors that predicted Mexican-origin adolescents' ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004), these findings were not replicated for all groups examined in the current study. Thus, our findings suggest that although the exploration of context and its influence on adolescents' ethnic identity formation is critical, the specific elements of context that are relevant may vary across cultures.

It is important to recognize a number of possibilities that may shed light on these results. First, a major limitation of the current study is that there was limited variability in familial births in the United States for the ethnic subgroups included in the current study. Only adolescents who reported that no one in their immediate family had been born in the United States (i.e., 0 familial births) or that only one person in their immediate family had been born in the United States (i.e., 1 familial birth) were included in the current study; thus, we had a restricted range in terms of generational status. It is possible that because of this restricted range, we were unable to capture the relationship that exists between generational status and FES. Put differently, it is possible that differences in levels of FES begin to emerge after families have been in the United States for multiple generations, and we were unable to capture this with our sample because they were all first-generation or second-generation immigrants. In previous work with Mexican-origin adolescents, variability on familial births was much larger. Thus, this may partially explain why familial births in the United States emerged as a significant contributor in the model with Mexican-origin adolescents, but not among the ethnic groups included in the current study. Theoretically, one would expect the relationship between familial births in the United States (i.e., generational status) and FES to hold for all immigrant groups, given the acculturation literature which suggests that families increasingly adopt mainstream values and beliefs, and their native values and beliefs begin to dissipate with increased generations in the United States (Alba, 1990; Lay & Verkuyten, 1999; Portes & Schauffler, 1994; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987).

In a similar vein, it is possible that we were unable to capture the influence of high school ethnic composition on FES because of limited variability in

high school ethnic composition. Although respondents' schools were ethnically diverse, none of the school contexts demonstrated a majority Asian ethnic composition. Thus, it is possible that lack of variability limited our ability to detect an influence of ethnic composition on the study variables. As such, future researchers should ensure greater sample variability on key study variables such as generational status and ethnic composition of schools to examine these possible relationships and explore whether our null findings were because of restricted variance. On a related note, because schools did not gather specific ethnic group data (e.g., Vietnamese) and only had data available for pan-ethnic groups (e.g., Asian), we were unable to verify whether students' perceptions of ethnic composition were accurate.

Finally, future studies should include larger and equal numbers of specific ethnic group members (e.g., Vietnamese, Salvadoran) in their studies to be able to examine the processes discussed here among individual ethnic groups. Although some processes may be similar across groups (e.g., the positive relationship between FES and ethnic identity achievement), others may vary based on specific group membership. In the current study, this was clearly the case with regard to the differences in the amount of variance explained. For instance, although 80% and 93% of the variance in ethnic identity achievement was explained by the model for Salvadoran and Chinese adolescents, respectively, only 49% and 53% of the variance in ethnic identity achievement was explained by the model for Vietnamese and Asian Indian adolescents, respectively. Thus, although overall our findings suggest that FES plays a critical role in ethnic identity achievement for all groups, for some groups the variance explained appeared to be considerably less and, perhaps, could be explained by factors that were not examined here.

It is also possible that statistical differences did not emerge between groups because of limited (and varied) sample sizes for the various groups (i.e., sample sizes for Chinese, Filipino, and Salvadoran adolescents ranged from 70 to 88, while sample sizes for Asian Indian and Vietnamese adolescents were 249 and 145, respectively). Thus, future studies should ensure sufficient power to detect the relationships tested and to include additional predictors that may be unique to particular ethnic groups. Clearly, more work is needed before we are able to draw conclusions about the relationship between school context and FES practices. Nevertheless, it is critical to understand how such contextual factors influence development (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Understanding how adolescents' school and familial contexts are related to their experiences with ethnic socialization will be essential to gaining a deeper understanding of adolescents' ethnic identity formation. Although the current study was limited with respect to specific ethnic group sample size and variability on generational status and high school ethnic

composition, it provides a model from which to begin to think about these important relationships.

In closing, the current study highlights the important relationship between FES practices and adolescents' ethnic identity. Consistent with an ecological framework, the current study demonstrates that what families are doing with regard to ethnic socialization appears to be critical for adolescents' ethnic identity. Furthermore, this appears to be the case for multiple ethnic minority groups in the United States, and, most important, for specific subgroups (e.g., Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino). It is important to acknowledge that the current study only utilized self-report measures, and future studies should consist of multiple informants to include varied perspectives on the multiple contexts within which adolescents' lives are embedded. Bronfenbrenner (1989) suggested that human developmental outcomes are a function of the interaction of individuals with their environments. Our findings directly support this theoretical premise and underscore the importance of examining individual development within various settings.

## Note

1. Although data were gathered from 650 adolescents, 11 participants were excluded from the current analyses because they had parents or grandparents who were born in the United States and, therefore, differed in generational status from the majority of participants.

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