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Acculturation-Based and Everyday Family Conflict in Chinese American Families

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Abstract

Everyday conflict (studied primarily among European American families) is viewed as an assertion of autonomy from parents that is normative during adolescence. Acculturation-based conflict (studied primarily among Asian-and Latino-heritage families) is viewed as a threat to relatedness with parents rather than the normative assertion of autonomy. Our overarching goal for the chapter is to integrate our knowledge of these two types of family conflict that have been studied separately to arrive at a new understanding of what family conflict means for Chinese American adolescents and their parents.

One way to conceptualize the roles of family and culture for child development is to flip the *graphic* version of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model inside out—so that the individual is not within the innermost circle and culture a distant outer, but where culture is in the center, radiating out to affect all the microsystems, including the family (Goodnow, 2011). Doing so would be consistent with Bronfenbrenner's *written* description of his theory, where culture takes a central position in understanding child development within the context of the family. This visual reconceptualization would help highlight how the *proximal processes* (e.g., parenting) that Bronfenbrenner hypothesized were so important for human development are themselves cultural in nature (see Figure 2.1). We adopt this perspective in the current chapter as we consider how developmental goals, rooted in a particular cultural value system, contribute to the meaning of parent and adolescent conflict among Chinese American families.

The dimension of individualism–collectivism (IC) is one of the most widely studied aspects of culture (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 2001). Individualism refers to a value system that emphasizes the self, the “I,” the autonomous individual, where individual needs take precedence over group (such as family) needs. Collectivism refers to a value system that emphasizes others, the “we,” the interconnected individual within groups, where group needs take precedence over individual needs. Individualism–collectivism value systems are believed to correspond to both the family context and individuals' own sense of self and have been used as a way to explain cultural variations across many aspects of human development, including differences in parenting and socialization behaviors, beliefs, and goals. In the family context, IC parallels a perceived emphasis on autonomy or relatedness within the parent–child relationship (Ka itçiba i, 2005). In terms of a sense of self, IC ostensibly facilitates the development of an independent or interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Taken together, the cultural values of IC correspond to parenting practices focused on autonomy or relatedness aimed at fostering the development of an independent or an interdependent self (Figure 2.1). In this chapter, we focus on the constructs of autonomy and relatedness to reinterpret our views of parent–adolescent conflict in Chinese American families.

The dichotomous view of IC and autonomy versus relatedness is deeply embedded in our notions of parent–child relationships and child development. A common proposition is that in Western cultures (e.g., North America, Western Europe, Australia) a primary developmental goal that parents have for their children is to promote autonomy as one form of individualism. In contrast, in Eastern cultures (e.g., Asian countries), a primary developmental goal is to promote relatedness as an expression of collectivism. We know, however, that this dichotomous view of concepts and cultures is far too simplistic. Indeed, the either/or characterizations of IC and autonomy-relatedness have been soundly rejected, both conceptually and empirically (Ka itçiba i, 2005; Matsumoto, 1999; Nsamenang, 2011; Okazaki & Saw, 2011; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Smetana, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008).

Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2008) offer a provocative new framework that retains the theoretically useful aspects of IC without the limitations inherent in a static and polar model. In their model, parents' developmental goals for autonomy and relatedness exist simultaneously in all cultures, but relate to one another in various ways: conflicting (e.g., relatedness is emphasized over autonomy), additive (both are viewed as desirable), or functionally dependent (one is necessary for promoting the other). Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2008) emphasize that these relations can change depending on the situation, developmental period, and sociohistorical context. The authors note that for immigrant families, the changing relation between autonomy and relatedness may be especially challenging, as parents must deal with fulfilling both developmental goals in a different environment. Tamis-LeMonda and colleagues' model offers a useful way to understand the complex manifestations of behavior aligned with I and C. Such a model calls for research that examines the role of both I and C *within* a single cultural group. Accordingly, in this chapter we examine both notions of I (autonomy) and C (relatedness) within one population—Chinese American families.

Despite recent theoretical advances, the polar dichotomy of IC and autonomy-relatedness continues to play an important role in our understanding of child development and has led to two disparate literatures on family conflict during adolescence: everyday conflict and acculturation-based conflict. In our review of these literatures, we took notice of an implicit alignment with the polar conceptualization of IC. Everyday conflict, which has been studied primarily among European American families, is viewed as an assertion of autonomy from parents that is normative during adolescence (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Acculturation-based conflict, which has been studied primarily among Asian- and Latino-heritage families (both characterized as emphasizing family interdependence), is viewed as a threat to relatedness with parents rather than the normative assertion of autonomy (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Thus, in contrast to everyday conflict, acculturation-based conflict tends to be viewed more negatively and is rarely considered to be developmentally normative or adaptive (e.g., Kwak, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001). As we will propose later in this chapter, it is possible that both types of conflict are normative and adaptive, but the existing literature generally aligns everyday conflict and acculturation-based conflict differentially, at least with regard to long-term development and well-being.

Although there is robust literature on both types of conflict, researchers have not systematically considered these two types of conflict together. Lacking in the literature, for example, is evidence on whether these types of conflict are conceptually distinct, and if so, how they are related, whether they uniquely predict adolescent adjustment, if they affect parent–child relationships in the same way, and if they serve different purposes and promote different developmental goals that parents have for their children. We attempt to address these shortcomings in this chapter. Our overarching goal, then, is to explore and integrate our knowledge of the two types of family conflict to arrive at a new understanding of what family conflict means for Chinese American adolescents and their parents.

Acculturation-Based Conflict and Everyday Conflict: Two Parallel Literatures

For adolescents in immigrant families, researchers have conceptualized parent–adolescent conflict as rooted in the acculturation process. Because adolescents tend to adopt the values and behaviors of the mainstream culture faster and more strongly than their parents (Cheung, Chudek, & Heine, 2011; Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Kwak, 2003; Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000), parents and adolescents may experience acculturation dissonance—a mismatch in their cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001). This dissonance can be disturbing and lead to greater parent–adolescent conflict over core cultural beliefs (Juang, Syed, & Takagi, 2007; Kwak, 2003; Lee et al., 2000; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001; Qin, 2006). Thus, acculturation theorists propose that parents and adolescents engage in conflict primarily because of clashing cultural values. Rivera et al. (2008) have described this type of acculturation-based conflict for Latino-heritage families as “conflict that might arise because of the tension of fitting into the cultural norms of strong families and achieving more personal goals” (p. 363). Lee et al. (2000) have identified specific acculturation-based conflicts for Asian American youth

centered around culturally salient issues such as respect for elders, academic achievement, and sacrificing personal goals for the sake of the family. Indeed, evidence suggests that acculturation-based conflict is a contributor to a variety of problems for Asian-heritage youth, including low self-esteem, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and somatization (Juang et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2000; Lim, Yeh, Liang, Lau, & McCabe, 2009; Qin, 2006). However, none of these studies have considered or tested whether acculturation-based conflict is temporary or possibly adaptive for promoting the developmental goals of autonomy or relatedness.

In contrast to literature on acculturation-based conflict, the bulk of research on normative “everyday” conflict (e.g., over household chores, schoolwork) has primarily focused on European American families (see Laursen et al., 1998, for a review). Further, everyday conflict has been explicitly related to the developmental goal of autonomy (Fuligni, 1998; Smetana, 2002; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Smetana (2002) notes that in the early family conflict literature, finding that parents and adolescents engaged in conflict over everyday issues was somewhat of a surprise. Originally, researchers believed that parents and adolescents argued over more serious, deeper values. However, large-scale survey studies showed that parents and adolescents generally agreed on important values (Offer, 1969). Where they disagreed concerned social conventional issues, or “everyday” issues that were based on conventional (familial or societal) ways of doing things such as regarding homework, doing household chores, and what to wear. The finding that European American families tend to engage in conflict around everyday issues to a greater degree than deeper value-based issues led researchers to focus on how conflict over everyday issues was developmentally important. The emergence of research on immigrant families' adjustment to the United States helped revive the focus on values, as immigrant families occupy a unique context in which they are negotiating two or more potentially conflicting value systems. As a result, value-based conflict may occur more frequently within immigrant families, which may or may not coincide with conflict around everyday issues. Indeed, the literature of family conflict in immigrant families has seldom focused on everyday conflict, which is opposite of the literature with nonimmigrant families.

The few existing studies found that, in general, ethnic minority immigrant families (such as with Mexican, Chinese, and Filipino heritage), engaged in similar levels of everyday conflict as their European American counterparts (Chen, Greenberger, Lester, Dong, & Guo, 1998; Fuligni, 1998; Greenberger & Chen, 1996). Overall, for most adolescents of various cultural groups everyday conflict appears to be quite moderate. This type of conflict over everyday issues is viewed as normative, temporary, and functional, as it realigns the parent–adolescent relationship (Laursen, et al., 1998) and facilitates the development of autonomy (or individuation) for youth of various cultural backgrounds (Fuligni, 1998; Smetana, 2002; Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Yau & Smetana, 1996). Further, it is argued that this realignment ultimately establishes a parent–adolescent relationship that is “less contentious, more egalitarian, and less volatile” (Steinberg & Morris, 2001, p. 88). Thus, everyday conflict is viewed as normative and developmentally adaptive; in contrast, acculturation-based conflict is not.

In sum, the literature on everyday conflict, such as arguing over homework or doing household chores, suggests that these issues are relevant for most adolescents, regardless of immigrant status (Smetana, 2002). In contrast, the literature on acculturation-based conflict, or conflict rooted in differences over particular cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs, suggests that these issues may be relevant for immigrant adolescents specifically (Kwak, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001). Importantly, these two bodies of literature have demonstrated that both types of conflict are salient for Chinese-heritage adolescents. In contrast to everyday conflict, acculturation-based conflict has been viewed in a much more negative light. Although everyday and acculturation-based conflicts have been studied in Chinese American populations, researchers have not merged these two literatures to ask two important questions: “How are these two types of conflict related?” and “Do they each uniquely predict adolescent adjustment?” We address these questions now.

How Are Acculturation-Based and Everyday Conflict Related and Do They Contribute Uniquely to Adolescent Well-Being?

In previous analyses of Chinese American families using some of the same data reported in this chapter, we found that acculturation-based conflict and everyday conflict were positively correlated and change in parallel over time—if one increased, so did the other (Juang, Syed, & Cookston, 2012). The correlation between the two types of conflict, however, was moderate over time ($r = .44, p < .001$), suggesting that these are two distinct types of conflict. Furthermore, we found that the two types of conflict are *unique* predictors of psychological functioning. Specifically, greater acculturation-based conflict predicted greater anxiety/somatization, loneliness, depressive symptoms, and self-esteem over and above the contribution of everyday conflict, which also consistently predicted poorer well-being. We also found that acculturation-based conflict was more consistently linked to adolescent well-being compared to everyday conflict. For instance, the relation between acculturation-based conflict and adolescent well-being was a dynamic one—when conflict increased over a 2-year period, there was a synchronized decrease in well-being over a 2-year period. This synchronized change was not seen for everyday conflict and well-being.

Taken together, the results of our earlier work highlight the importance of considering how the acculturation process contributes to parent–adolescent conflict concerning everyday issues and core cultural values. Thus, family conflict in immigrant families should capture both “normative” everyday issues as well as conflict explicitly related to differences in cultural values between parents and children. Based on our finding that the two types of conflict are related but distinct, future research could examine more in depth how these two types of conflict are linked. Researchers could, for instance, explore whether engaging in one type of conflict exacerbates engaging in another (testing for interaction effects), or whether one type of conflict precedes the development of the other. It could also be the case that greater parent–child acculturation discrepancies during late childhood set the stage for engaging in more everyday arguments during adolescence.

In this next section, we address two additional questions that have not yet been explored: “Do the two types of conflict affect parent–child relationships in the same way?” and “Do they potentially have different mechanisms that lead to well-being?” In other words, we

examine whether the two types of conflict have different consequences for parenting and family cohesion, and if so, how this ultimately contributes to adolescent well-being.

Pathways to Well-Being: An Integration of the Family Conflict Literatures

Viewed as a dynamic interplay rather than either/or, the IC and autonomy-relatedness frameworks are useful for understanding why there may be different pathways to child well-being from everyday and acculturation-based conflict. As reviewed earlier, there are divergent views of how the two types of conflict will affect family relationships. Although there is evidence that greater everyday conflict relates to less closeness with parents among European Americans (Laursen et al., 1998) and less parental warmth among Chinese Americans (Chen et al., 1998) and African Americans (Costigan, Cauce, & Etchison, 2007), the everyday conflict literature has emphasized that moderate levels of this type of conflict are developmentally appropriate and do not have long-term consequences (Laursen et al., 1998). The emphasis in this literature is the facilitation of adolescents' autonomy development. In general, there is agreement that everyday conflict, for most adolescents, does not permanently harm family relationships.

In contrast, the acculturation-based conflict literature has highlighted the disruptiveness of this type of conflict to family relationships, warning that when parents and adolescents acculturate at a different pace and end up culturally incongruent (e.g., the adolescent does not have a strong orientation to Chinese culture while his or her parents do), there will be negative consequences for the family. Because of Chinese-heritage families' emphasis on relatedness (e.g., family obligation, filial piety), acculturation-based conflict may be especially detrimental to parent-child relationships and family cohesion (Lee et al., 2000). Kim and colleagues, for instance, showed that parents who experience greater acculturation dissonance with their children also show less supportive parenting practices in terms of less monitoring, warmth, and use of inductive reasoning (Kim, Chen, Li, Huang, & Moon, 2009; Weaver & Kim, 2008). These findings suggest that acculturation-based conflicts arising from a lack of shared cultural understanding between parents and children (acculturation dissonance) may undermine the quality of parenting. Similarly, Qin (2006) proposed that parents and children who experience acculturation dissonance develop *parallel dual frames of reference* for appropriate parent-child relationships. In some families, parents have a frame of reference that is based on the values of heritage culture, whereas their adolescents have a frame of reference based on the values of the majority culture. These differences in frames of reference (or lack of shared understanding) can lead to poorer parent-adolescent communication, feelings of distance, and even alienation between parents and children over time. Taken together, this previous work suggests that acculturation-based conflicts can impair the quality of parenting and family relationships and, ultimately, lead to poorer adolescent well-being.

Based on these two literatures, we propose that acculturation-based conflict would relate to poorer adolescent well-being primarily by affecting the quality of parenting and lessening family cohesion. Everyday conflict, on the other hand, would also be related to poorer adolescent well-being, but we expect this type of conflict would not affect the quality of parenting and family cohesion to the same extent as acculturation-based conflict. In

empirical language, we expect that quality of parenting and family cohesion would be a more consistent mediator of the relation between acculturation-based conflict and adolescent well-being than for everyday conflict and well-being.

Two Longitudinal Studies: Testing Different Pathways to Well-Being for Two Types of Conflict

We draw upon two longitudinal studies of Chinese American families to test whether there are indeed different pathways to well-being depending on the type of conflict. The advantage of using two datasets is that it allows us to replicate findings as well as include a wider range of variables (measuring parenting, family, and adolescent well-being). Both studies collected data at two time points from adolescents residing in northern California; Study A took place in 2001 and 2003 (at mean age of 14.8 and 16.8 years), and Study B in 2002 and 2006 (at mean age of 13 and 17 years).

For this chapter, we included adolescent self-report data for all measures. Both datasets have the same measure of acculturation-based conflict. The 10-item acculturation-based conflict measure (Lee et al., 2000) includes culturally salient themes representing opposing parent–child views such as parents wanting adolescents to sacrifice personal interests for the sake of the family but adolescents feeling this is unfair, and adolescents doing well in school but parents' expectations always exceeding their performance. Each study used a different measure of everyday conflict, but both studies used measures that addressed “normative” issues during adolescence that were not culturally specific such as discussions over schoolwork and chores (see Table 2.1 for a summary of the samples and measures used in each study).

For the parenting and family variables (the mediators), Study A used one family cohesion measure and Study B used one quality of parent–adolescent relationship measure (adolescents' sense of alienation from parent) and four parenting measures (parental hostility, harsh parenting, parental control, and democratic parenting). With respect to adolescent well-being, Study A included four measures (depressive symptoms, somatization/anxiety, loneliness, and self-esteem) and Study B included two (depressive symptoms and delinquency). All indicators of well-being were assessed at both Times 1 and 2. Measures of conflict and parenting/family variables (mediators) were administered only at Time 2.

To test whether there were different pathways from the two types of conflict to adolescent well-being, we used path analysis and tested for mediation effects with MPlus 6.1 using maximum likelihood estimation (Muthén & Muthén, 2001). For each of the adolescent well-being measures, we specified a model whereby acculturation-based and everyday conflict predicted a mediator (one of the parenting and family variables), and the mediator predicted adolescent well-being. The direct effect from conflict to adolescent well-being was also included in the model. In all models, adolescent age, gender, generational status (U.S. born vs. foreign-born), parent education, and Time 1 baseline well-being (e.g., when predicting depressive symptoms at Time 2, the model included depressive symptoms at Time 1) were included as controls. Bootstrap analysis with 1,000 samples was used to test whether the mediated effects were significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Based on the range of these

mediated effect estimates, 95% confidence intervals for the distribution of the mediated effect estimates were calculated. Confidence intervals that do not include zero indicate that the mediated effect was significant at $p < .05$. Bootstrapping has the advantage of producing more-accurate Type I error rates and has more statistical power than single sample methods that assume a normal distribution for the mediated effect (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004).

The results from both datasets show a consistent pattern: When both types of conflict are considered within the same model, the relationship between acculturation-based conflict and adolescent well-being is mediated by parenting and family variables while everyday conflict is not (see Table 2.2 and Figure 2.2). More specifically, greater acculturation-based conflict predicted more parent–child alienation, parental hostility, parental control, less democratic parenting, and less family cohesion. The negative parenting and family variables in turn predicted poorer adolescent well-being (greater depressive symptoms, somatization/anxiety, loneliness, delinquency, and lower self-esteem). In contrast, greater everyday family conflict showed primarily direct effects to poorer adolescent well-being (and only one indirect effect). In sum, acculturation-based conflict is more closely linked to parenting and family processes than everyday conflict, suggesting that arguing about core cultural values has more negative consequences for quality of parenting, parent–adolescent relationships, and family cohesion more so than arguing about everyday issues.

One strength of our analysis is that we tested our mediated model with two separate datasets. The fact that we found similar patterns in both datasets bolsters the argument that acculturation-based conflict may be detrimental to adolescent well-being through its association with parenting and family cohesion. What accounts for the link between everyday conflict and adolescent well-being remains unclear, but the current analysis suggests that everyday conflict does not pose the same threat to the family environment as does acculturation-based conflict, indicating that these two forms of conflict evidence different pathways to well-being.

Our findings support the notion that the acculturation process for immigrant parents and adolescents can be challenging, leading to greater distress and maladjustment for family members. Our mediation analyses clarify how this might happen—acculturation-based conflicts are linked to poorer parenting, more distant parent–adolescent relationships, and less family closeness, and these more negative family relationships predict poorer adolescent adjustment. Why is it the case that acculturation-based conflict is more tightly linked with family relationships than everyday conflict? Acculturation-based conflict measures may be better at assessing conflict in Chinese American families because they identify culturally salient themes unavailable in everyday conflict measures. Higher scores on the acculturation-based conflict measure represent parents and adolescents who are clashing on core cultural values, which may be disturbing for parents if they sense their adolescents are rejecting values they deem important. However, we need longitudinal data to uncover how this unfolds in young adulthood—Do acculturation-based conflicts foreshadow a continued, conflictual parent–adolescent relationship in young adulthood? Or, as with everyday conflict, are these conflicts temporary and even functional? If everyday conflict literature is any indication, acculturation-based conflict, while detrimental to family relations in the

short-term, may not necessarily be detrimental in the long-term. We discuss this possibility in the last section of the chapter.

Based on Turiel's social domain theory (1983), Smetana's (1988, 2002) social domain perspective on family conflict proposes that one of the main reasons why adolescents and parents engage in conflict is that they tend to view the same issue through different lenses: Adolescents are more likely to view an issue as a personal concern whereas parents are more likely to view an issue as a social conventional concern. The crux of the disagreement, then, is divergent perceptions of who has the authority to decide what is appropriate. Although Smetana and colleagues have found that parents and adolescents diverge in their views of authority in both European American families and Hong Kong Chinese families (Smetana, 1988, 2002; Yau & Smetana, 1996), these divergent views may be heightened for immigrant Chinese American families and especially regarding acculturation-based issues. Consider, for example, the issue of respect. One of the items in the Asian American Family Conflict Scale (Lee et al., 2000) is "Your parents demand that you always show respect for elders, but you believe in showing respect only if they deserve it." Probably for most Chinese-heritage parents, not showing respect to elders may be a social conventional or even moral transgression. Their U.S.-born children, on the other hand, may view this as a personal transgression. Indeed, Smetana (2002) has argued that cultures vary in the range of issues that are considered under one's personal jurisdiction—some cultures will have a broader range than others. For Chinese American families, then, holding different viewpoints of authority—especially in relation to core cultural values of respect, achievement, and proper behavior—may undermine family relationships.

From an acculturation perspective, a slightly different interpretation is that Chinese American parents and adolescents hold parallel dual frames of reference (Qin, 2006) concerning the content of the social convention. Parents' frame of reference for what is conventional (and thus acceptable) regarding the issue of respect may be rooted more in traditional Chinese culture. In contrast, adolescents' frame of reference for what is conventional (and thus acceptable) regarding the issue of respect may be rooted more in mainstream American culture. Either way, from a social domain approach or acculturation perspective, parents and adolescents with unshared views in authority and/or values held, may have strained relationships that ultimately lead to poorer adolescent well-being.

In the end, what is considered an "everyday" versus "acculturation-based" conflict may be difficult to disentangle. We have argued, however, that everyday conflict has been traditionally conceived of as disagreements about relatively minor issues such as homework or chores (Smetana, 2002), whereas acculturation-based conflict has been conceived of as disagreements about more serious issues such as core cultural values (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001). We have also argued that the two types of conflict may be distinct, based on evidence that the two types of conflict uniquely predict several dimensions of well-being, and, are linked to well-being via different mechanisms, or pathways. Accordingly, an understanding of both types of conflicts is relevant and useful for advancing our understanding of parent-adolescent conflict among Chinese immigrant families.

Future Research on Family Conflict with Chinese Immigrant Families

In our analysis of Chinese American families, we found that parent–adolescent conflict, especially concerning issues arising specifically from the acculturation process, is challenging for adolescent adjustment. We also found evidence for differential pathways that explain why family conflict is associated with poorer adolescent adjustment. Our findings point the way for several future areas of inquiry.

General versus Domain-Specific Constructs

One implication from our findings is the need for domain specificity of constructs—both in type of conflict and type of parenting and family variables of interest. Our findings suggest that acculturation-based conflict may negatively affect family relationships whereas everyday conflict may not. The need for domain specific models of conflict is supported by Costigan and Dokis's work (2006) showing that parent–adolescent discrepancies along the Canadian dimension of acculturation did not relate to adolescent well-being, but discrepancies along the Chinese dimension (parents endorsing Chinese values and beliefs more than their children) did. The authors argue that parents most likely expect discrepancies in the Canadian dimension and encourage their children to adopt Canadian culture for their children to succeed. In contrast, parents and adolescents who cannot see eye to eye concerning their heritage culture is problematic (see also Updegraff, Umaña-Taylor, Perez-Brena, & Pflieger [this volume] for relevant findings concerning cultural orientation discrepancies and adjustment). Thus, different areas of conflict may not have the same impact on adolescent well-being. Qin, Chang, Han, and Chee's (this volume) qualitative approach identifies other domains of acculturation-based conflicts such as how parental educational pressure is communicated and discrepancies in parents' and adolescents' attitudes toward other races. Specifying the type of conflict and potential mediator(s) provides a stronger explanatory model for understanding pathways to adolescent well-being.

Focusing on specific topics of conflict may also be useful. In both of our datasets (mirroring Lee et al.'s 2000 study with Asian American college students), the top two acculturation-based conflicts were “Your parents always compare you to others, but you want them to accept you for being yourself,” and “You have done well in school, but your parents' academic expectations always exceed your performance.” For Chinese-heritage individuals, pressures to live up to high expectations academically and constant comparisons to others (who are doing well) appear to be central concerns for both adolescents and emerging adults. Other studies have documented the immense academic pressures that Chinese American parents place on their children. Qin's (2006, 2008) ethnographic studies of Chinese American adolescents and their families showed that adolescents were often overwhelmed by these high expectations. Because adolescents perceived their parents as caring only for their school performance and ignoring other aspects of their lives, adolescents and parents communicated less over time and became increasingly distant and alienated from one another. For intervention and prevention purposes, it will be important to focus on these two acculturation-based conflict issues as they are the most common. Future research could examine how and why parents and adolescents come to have such discrepant viewpoints concerning academic performance and social comparisons.

When Is Family Conflict Adaptive?

One limitation to our findings is that we solely focused on the negative impact of family conflict. Although most studies (including ours) have consistently found that conflict is related to negative adolescent well-being, a few studies have found otherwise. In some immigrant families, family conflict enriched family relationships by improving communication and promoting better understanding among family members (Stuart, Ward, Jose, & Narayanan, 2010). Thus, while conflict has been conceptualized primarily as important for promoting autonomy in the adolescent, it may also promote relatedness, a concept usually thought of (erroneously) as the opposite of autonomy (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008). Future research should examine more of the positive aspects of conflict beyond a general promotion of autonomy. For example, in the identity literature, conflict is generally discussed positively, as conflicts allow individuals to reflect on who they are and modify their identities in light of their current and perceived future goals (e.g., Bruner, 1990). Indeed, Smetana (2008) has recently called for a focus on the distinction between “constructive” versus “destructive” conflict. In other words, future research should focus on conflict that may be developmentally appropriate and that promotes certain developmental goals versus conflict that does more harm to family relationships.

It is still not clear whether acculturation-based conflict is more constructive or destructive. In our chapter, we could not directly address this. One way to find out is to focus on how conflicts are resolved. One step in this direction is Cookston et al.'s (this volume) chapter on who adolescents turn to to make sense of conflict with parents. Smetana (2008) argues that conflict resolution and not the actual conflict itself may be more consequential for parent–adolescent relationships and adolescent functioning. We know that in some Chinese American families, conflict-resolving strategies are not optimal. Qin and colleagues' (2006, current volume) work found that yelling, ignoring, and distancing were common ways that adolescents and parents dealt with conflict. Researchers could explore whether there are differences in intensity or emotionality of acculturation-based versus everyday conflict, whether there are differences in how these two types of conflict are usually resolved, and how conflict resolution contributes to whether conflict can be adaptive, maladaptive, or both.

The Consequences of Family Conflict Beyond Adolescence

The long-term impact of family conflict (particularly acculturation-based) on youth adjustment is unclear given the lack of longitudinal studies that have followed adolescents through young adulthood and beyond. Although it has been argued that moderate, everyday conflict does not have long-term negative consequences on the adolescent or family, we do not know if this is true for acculturation-based conflict, especially if this type of conflict is disruptive to family relationships. There is some evidence, however, that acculturation-based conflict in adolescence, similar to everyday conflict, may not have negative long-term consequences—at least for some families. A qualitative study of Korean American college students, for instance, found that a majority reported acculturation-related conflicts with parents during adolescence concerning high academic pressures and expectations, and communication difficulties (Kang, Okazaki, Abelmann, Kim-Prieto, & Shanshan, 2010). However, during emerging adulthood, the college students saw their parents differently and

could appreciate more fully their parents' behaviors even though they disapproved of and resented the way they parented when they were younger. Kang et al. (2010) conclude that although relationships between parents and adolescents were often difficult, by emerging adulthood a majority of Korean Americans could reconcile their difficult relationships and come to a greater understanding and appreciation of their parents. In other words, they were able to consider their parents' perspective, empathize, and reinterpret conflicts with parents in a constructive way. We know that with age comes maturation in perspective taking and a greater ability to understand another person's intentions and beliefs (Choudhury, Blakemore, & Charman, 2006; McLean & Thorne, 2003). Thus, young adults' perspectives on acculturation-based conflict, like everyday conflict, may be reinterpreted in a less negative, possibly even adaptive way, as children get older. Future studies (using both quantitative and qualitative approaches) could examine how youth make meaning of family conflict as they get older and focus on implications for their current relationships with their parents and their long-term adjustment.

Finally, studies could also focus on other ways that acculturation-based conflict may be adaptive in the long-term, for instance by helping adolescents and young adults clarify their own values and behaviors (promoting autonomy) to arrive at a better understanding of themselves and their parents (promoting relatedness). Using Tamis-LeMonda et al.'s (2008) dynamic IC framework, it may be the case that by young adulthood, parents' developmental goals have shifted in balance (e.g., moving from emphasizing relatedness to emphasizing both autonomy and relatedness) and manner of coexistence (e.g., moving from perceiving autonomy and relatedness as conflicting to functionally dependent). No research has yet examined how parents' developmental goals of autonomy and relatedness coexist and shift over time. Future research that examines how the meaning and consequences of family conflict changes within this dynamic IC framework is needed.

Conclusion

We began the chapter with the notion of turning Bronfenbrenner's graphic model inside out—where the outer circle of culture is the center point for understanding family dynamics such as family conflict. By taking a cultural perspective and focusing on the cultural dimensions of IC, we argued that researchers have highlighted everyday conflict as important for the promotion of an individualistic orientation (autonomy) while acculturation-based conflict for potentially diminishing a collectivistic orientation (relatedness). Based on our integration of these two literatures on conflict, our analysis of two datasets, Smetana's (2002) social domain approach and Tamis-LeMonda et al.'s (2008) dynamic IC theoretical framework, we argue that a deeper understanding of both types of conflict are important for Chinese American adolescent development. Although the two types of conflict are related and uniquely predict poorer adolescent well-being, only acculturation-based conflict is linked to poorer well-being via parenting and family relationships. Implications for family interventions would be to focus on acculturation-based conflicts to prevent family relationships from eroding. Future research should continue to address how adolescents make meaning of everyday and acculturation-based conflict, follow adolescents through to young adulthood, and focus on conflict resolution. By exploring these aspects of conflict more thoroughly and longitudinally, we might find that, as with

everyday conflict, moderate levels of acculturation-based conflict during adolescence is normative, temporary, and, ultimately, developmentally adaptive in terms of promoting both autonomy and relatedness.

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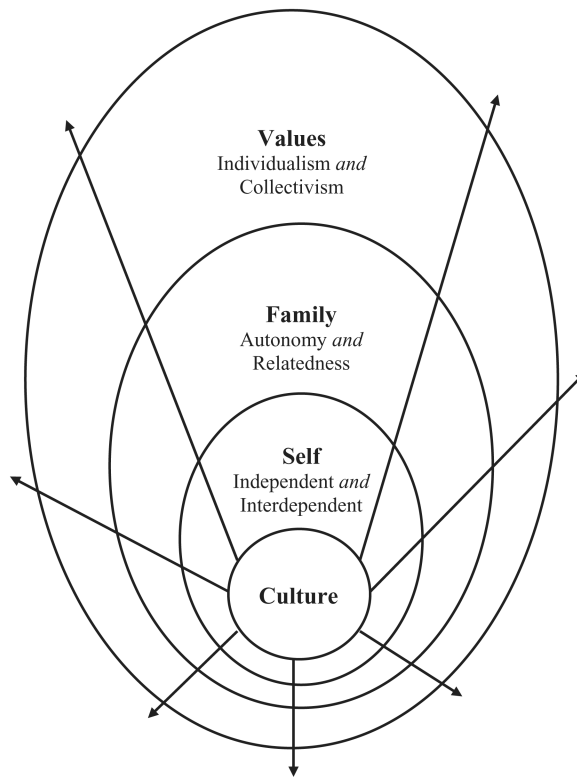


Figure 2.1. Conceptual model of culture in relation to self, family, and broader value system, based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems diagram, but with culture depicted at the core instead of the outer circle

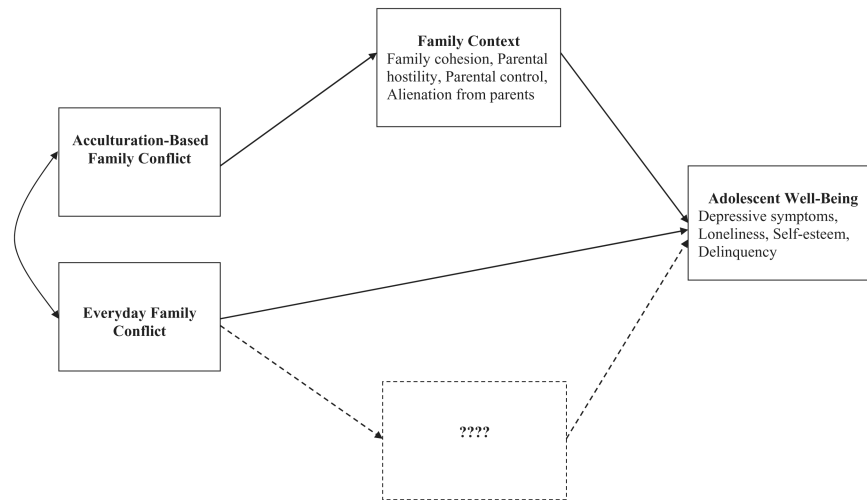


Figure 2.2. Summary of findings integrated into a schematic model in which acculturation-based conflict and everyday conflict each uniquely predicts poorer adolescent well-being through different pathways. Acculturation-based conflict operates through family factors. On the basis of our findings, the mechanism for everyday conflict remains unknown, but tests of the model provide evidence against several parenting and family factors.

Table 2.1
Summary of Two Longitudinal Studies of Chinese American Adolescents

	Study A (N = 274)	Study B (N = 444)
Mean age (<i>SD</i>)	14.8 years (.73) at T1, 16.8 (.77) at T2	13.0 years (.73) at T1, 17.05 (.80) at T2
Parent education	For mothers, 30% had less than a high school degree and 70% completed a high school degree or higher. For fathers, 38% had less than high school degree and 62% completed a high school degree or higher	For mothers, 32% had less than a high school degree and 68% completed high school degree or higher. For fathers, 37% had less than a high school degree and 63% completed a high school degree or higher
Gender	57% Female	54% Female
Generational status	70% U.S. born, 30% foreign-born	75% U.S. born, 25% foreign-born
Measures		
Acculturation-based family conflict	Asian American Family Conflict Scale-Likelihood (Lee et al., 2000; $\alpha = .87$)	Asian American Family Conflict Scale-Likelihood (Lee et al., 2000; $\alpha = .92$)
Everyday conflict	Issues Checklist – Frequency (Prinz, Foster, Kent, & O’Leary 1979; $\alpha = .85$)	Intergenerational Conflict Inventory (Chung, 2001; $\alpha = .88$)
Depressive symptoms	Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (Radloff, 1977; $\alpha = .85$)	Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (Radloff, 1977; $\alpha = .91$)
Somatization/anxiety	Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis, 1993; $\alpha = .83$)	—
Loneliness	The Revised UCLA Loneliness Questionnaire (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980; $\alpha = .89$)	—
Self-esteem	Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1989; $\alpha = .85$)	—
Delinquency	—	Youth Self Report (Achenbach, 1991; $\alpha = .68$)
Family cohesion	Family Cohesion subscale from the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales II (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle 1983; $\alpha = .84$).	—
Sense of alienation	—	Alienation subscale of Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; $\alpha = .87$)
Parental hostility	—	Adapted from Iowa Youth and Families Project (Conger & Elder, 1994; $\alpha = .91$)
Harsh parenting	—	Adapted from Iowa Youth and Families Project (Conger & Elder, 1994; Kim & Ge, 2000; $\alpha = .77$)
Parent control	—	Psychological control (Barber, 1996; $\alpha = .91$)
Democratic parenting	—	Parenting Practices Questionnaire (Robinson, Mandleco, Olson, & Hart, 1995; $\alpha = .86$)

Table 2.2
Parenting/Family Variable Mediators of Acculturation-Based and Everyday Conflict to Adolescent Well-Being: Summary of Two Datasets

Mediator	Adolescent Adjustment	Acculturation-Based Conflict	95% CI	Everyday Conflict	95% CI
Family cohesion	Depressive symptoms	$\beta = .072, p = .011$	[.016, .128]	$\beta = .038, p = .033$	[.003, .073]
Family cohesion	Loneliness	$\beta = .061, p = .019$	[.010, .112]	$\beta = .032, p = .048$	[.000, .064]
Family cohesion	Somatization/anxiety	$\beta = .035, p = .049$	[.000, .070]	$\beta = .018, p = .108$	[-.004, .041]
Family cohesion	Self-esteem	$\beta = -.067, p = .014$	[-.065, -.007]	$\beta = -.035, p = .047$	[-.042, .000]
Sense of alienation	Depressive symptoms	$\beta = .198, p = .019$	[.033, .363]	$\beta = .006, p = .733$	[-.028, .040]
Parental hostility	Depressive symptoms	$\beta = .121, p = .028$	[.013, .230]	$\beta = .009, p = .476$	[-.015, .033]
Harsh parenting	Depressive symptoms	$\beta = .036, p = .073$	[-.003, .076]	$\beta = .008, p = .331$	[-.008, .023]
Parental control	Depressive symptoms	$\beta = .129, p = .029$	[.013, .246]	$\beta = .031, p = .066$	[-.002, .064]
Democratic parenting	Depressive symptoms	$\beta = .057, p = .067$	[-.004, .119]	$\beta = .011, p = .183$	[-.005, .026]
Sense of alienation	Delinquency	$\beta = .090, p = .034$	[.007, .174]	$\beta = .002, p = .859$	[-.016, .019]
Parental hostility	Delinquency	$\beta = .064, p = .068$	[-.001, .133]	$\beta = .005, p = .475$	[-.009, .020]
Harsh parenting	Delinquency	$\beta = .052, p = .048$	[.000, .103]	$\beta = .012, p = .287$	[-.010, .033]
Parental control	Delinquency	$\beta = .079, p = .049$	[.000, .158]	$\beta = .021, p = .093$	[-.004, .046]
Democratic parenting	Delinquency	$\beta = .081, p = .037$	[.005, .157]	$\beta = .011, p = .141$	[-.005, .039]

Note: Adolescent age, gender, generational status, parent education, and well-being assessed at Time 1 were controlled for in these analyses using Mplus testing indirect (mediated) effects. Models with a significant indirect effect of conflict to adolescent adjustment through a parenting/family variable are bolded. CI = confidence interval.