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ORIGINAL PAPER

Effect of Cultural Identification and Family Affection on Coping Abilities in Missionary Kids

Jane O. Kim[1] · **Stacy Eltiti**[1] · **Nancy Crawford**[1] · **Jenny Pak**[1]

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Abstract

This exploratory study examined the role of missionary kids' (MKs) cultural identification and family affection on their abilities to cope with potentially traumatic events. A total of 156 MKs completed online questionnaires that assessed parental affection, cultural identification, and coping. The results demonstrated that greater verbal affection from mothers was related to increased coping for Western-identified MKs, whereas greater non-verbal forms of affection from mothers were related to increased coping for Asian-identified MKs. Another key finding was the distinction between MKs' ethnicity and cultural identification. This emphasizes the importance of understanding MKs' cultural identification as distinct, rather than congruent, to their ethnic background.

Keywords Missionary kids · Cultural identification · Ethnicity · Parental affection · Coping

Introduction

Missionary kids (MKs) are one group of individuals subsumed under the broader population of Third Culture Kids (Pollock et al. 2017; TCKs). MKs often move with their parents to several different countries during their developmental years (Pollock et al. 2017), and given their mobility may begin to identify with and adopt values of cultures that are distinct from their ethnic background (Berry 1990; Kim et al. 2017; Pollock and Van Reken 2009). While exposure to different cultures can lead to greater linguistic diversity and a broader worldview (Pollock et al. 2017), MKs' mobility and residence in often economically unstable countries can create vulnerabilities to potentially negative and traumatic events. These potentially negative and traumatic events can include witnessing of violence, repetitive loss, and unresolved grief. While many MKs move back to their parents' home country for college,

✉ Jane O. Kim

[1] La Mirada, United States

college-aged MKs were found to report lower levels of psychological well-being, lower sociocultural adaptation, and greater interpersonal distance from others compared to non-MK college students (Huff 2001; Klemens and Bikos 2009).

Ethnicity and Cultural Identification

Ethnic identity has been defined as an individual's identification with a group that shares a culture, phenotype, religion, language, or place of origin (Phinney 2003). However, an individual's ethnic identification is not static, but dynamic and multidimensional. While an individual's ethnic identity may be a component of his or her cultural identity, cultural identification may be more complex and multidimensional for MKs.

Cultural identity, as defined by Schwartz et al. (2008), involves an attachment to one's heritage or culture group. Additionally, cultural identification is a sense of belonging, which typically develops as children learn social rules and acceptable behaviors (Pollock et al. 2017). However, as previously mentioned, MKs often move to and from several countries and cultures during the period in which identity is formed. Along with navigating through these different cultures, MKs are also influenced by the rules and expectations of their parents' culture (Berry 1990). The development of cultural identity can become extremely complex and challenging for MKs, highlighted in Pollock et al.'s (2017) The Pol Van Cultural Identity Model, Expanded.

Importantly, cultural beliefs and values inevitably influence one's perceptions of the self and the other (Rothbaum et al. 2000). In order to explore these cultural differences, Markus and Kitayama (1991) compared the values of individualistic and collectivistic societies. The researchers found that members of individualistic cultures valued being unique and expressing their distinctness from others. Individuals from collectivist societies displayed more interdependent self-constructs and were influenced by the reactions of others. These differences suggest that while social support may buffer the negative effects of potentially traumatic events, the means by which support is demonstrated may differ based on culture. Culture, then, can influence the meaning, demonstration, and interpretation of affection and support within the family system (Wu and Chao 2005). In the present study, ethnicity and cultural identification were reported separately. (A Caucasian individual could identify with an Asian culture, and an Asian individual could identify with a Western culture.)

Family Affection and Coping

While the previous literature has indicated social support as a buffer to the stressors MKs face (Davis et al. 2010; Davis et al. 2013; Huff 2001), the expression of social support, particularly parental support, may differ in non-Western cultures. For example, while individualistic cultures emphasize uniqueness and self-affirmation (Heine et al. 1999) Japanese self-esteem has been found to involve self-criticism and self-discipline. These qualities interplay with the collectivistic values of interdependence

and obligation toward others (Markus and Kitayama 1991). In these ways, Eastern cultures do not value positive self-regard and striving toward uniqueness in the same way as those in Western cultures. Affection, then, may also rely less on overt expressions of care in Eastern cultures.

Additionally, families in individualistic societies remain more egalitarian in nature and greater control may be perceived negatively in this context. However, Lehrer (1996) found that Korean parents considered high levels of control and greater involvement as a demonstration of love and interest in the lives of their children (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Pak 2006). However, while Korean parents interpreted control as a demonstration of care, the children's perceptions of the high levels of control were not assessed for in the study.

Depending on the acculturation of their first-generation parents, second-generation immigrants may face clashing values between their peers and parents. In a study by Kim (2005), Korean-American families were sampled to assess for the various outcomes of parental control. These families were divided into American-born and Korean-born adolescents. The results demonstrated that Korean-born adolescents' reports of parental control were not associated with perceptions of acceptance or rejection. American-born adolescents' perceptions of higher parental control were associated with perceptions of parental hostility/aggression and undifferentiated rejection. Parental control had differing interpretations and consequences for American-born and Korean-born adolescents, suggesting the importance of culture and cultural identification in the process of emotional development.

Further investigating cultural differences in family affection, Park et al. (2009) conducted a study assessing parental affection, the Asian-value gap, and the parent–child relationship for Asian-American participants. The majority of the participants were first- or second-generation immigrants with first-generation parents. In their study, Park et al. found that mother–child relationships were rated as significantly more positive and affectionate compared to father–child relationships. Additionally, Park et al. found that more participants perceived their parents to communicate supportive affection rather than verbal affection. These findings demonstrated the impact of culture on the demonstration and interpretations of affection in non-Western families, as well as the differing relationships among various parent–child dyads.

MKs as a Unique Population

Highlighting the impact of MKs' cultural identification, Kim et al. (2017) investigated how ethnicity and cultural identification impacted MKs' perceptions of parental affection and coping abilities. The results of Kim et al.'s study found unexpected differences between measures of parental affection and coping based on participants' self-identified cultural identification rather than based on their ethnic background. Specifically, mother's verbal affectionate communication and all forms of father's affectionate communication on the Affectionate Communication Index (Floyd and Morman 1998) were significantly positively correlated with coping abilities for Asian-identified MKs, but were not for Western-identified MKs based on

participants' cultural identification. However, when the data were analyzed by ethnicity none of the correlations between affectionate communication and coping were significant for either Asian or Caucasian MKs.

While the sample size in Kim et al.'s (2017) study was limited due to the unique population being sampled, to the researchers' knowledge, it was the first study to investigate differences between Caucasian and Asian MKs. Kim et al.'s study was additionally the first study to explore differences between MKs' ethnicity and cultural identification. However, while Kim et al. used a subjective measure of cultural identification, an objective measure of cultural identification may have provided more substantiated results regarding participants' cultural affinity. The purpose of the present study was to utilize Kim et al.'s findings, which highlighted the need for further exploration of ethnicity and cultural identification, and explore the impact of cultural identification on MKs' perceptions of parental affection and coping using objective measures. In particular, the study investigated whether family affection buffered against potentially traumatic events differently based on ethnicity compared to cultural identification.

Based on the findings of Kim et al.'s (2017) study, it was hypothesized that mothers' and fathers' verbal affectionate communication would be positively correlated with coping abilities for Asian-identified MKs. Fathers' direct, non-verbal affectionate communication and fathers' indirect, non-verbal affectionate communication were also predicted to be positively related to coping abilities for Asian-identified MKs. These relationships were not predicted to be significant for Western-identified MKs. In line with the findings of Kim et al. (2017), no significant correlations were predicted for Asian or Caucasian MKs.

Method

Participants

The sample included 109 women and 46 men. One participant did not indicate gender. Participants were between the ages of 18–25 ($M = 20.94$, SD = 2.51) and were children of Protestant missionaries. Each participant spent at least 2 years on the mission field before the age of 18, and participants spent an average of 10 years ($M = 10.47$, SD = 6.488) in their first mission placement. Participants were not excluded based on their current country of residence, and may have been residing in or beyond the USA at the time of survey completion. Only participants with non-divorced, married, living parents were included in the sample in order to increase control over other variables that could impact the perception of parent–child closeness and parental affection.

Participants were recruited through five Christian schools in the USA, one school for MKs in Europe, two mission organizations, and through snowball sampling. Participants were obtained through multicultural organizations and clubs on campus and re-entry programs associated with the school. Participants self-selected and volunteered for the study if they felt they met the criteria. Contingent on the academic course and professor approval in one university, participants were given the

opportunity to receive course credit or extra credit for their participation. All participants were eligible to enter into a raffle for an Amazon.com $20 gift certificate upon completing the survey as. Ethical approval for the present study was obtained from Biola University's Protection of Human Rights in Research Committee.

Of the 156 participants, 56.4% of participants reported their ethnicity as White, 32.1% were Asian, 7.7% reported being bi-racial, and 3.8% were of other ethnicities. Other ethnicities included Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American/American-Indian, and "other" ethnicities. Furthermore, 44.9% of participants self-reported that they were identified most with North American or European culture, 34.6% self-reported that they were identified most with Asian culture, and 20.5% reported identifying most with another culture. Other cultures included those of the Middle East, Central/South America, Africa, Oceania, New Zealand, and Australia. Based on the Orthogonal Cultural Identification Scale (OCIS; Oetting and Beauvais 1990–1991), 32.7% of participants were identified most with White American/Anglo culture and 14.1% of participants were identified most with Asian/Asian-American culture.

Materials

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire asked participants to indicate their age, gender, year in school, and ethnicity. The passport country, current country of residence, and country or culture most identified with were reported for the participant as well as for his or her mother and father. Participants were given the option to mark just one country or culture they identified. This was done in order to compare these responses with the OCIS. Participants were also asked to report the location of each of their mission field placement(s), length of time spent in each country, age during each placement, and parents' marital status.

Affectionate Communication Index (ACI)

The ACI (Floyd and Morman 1998) is composed of 18 items and was used to measure participants' perception of verbal (ACI-V), direct non-verbal (ACI-DNV), and indirect non-verbal (ACI-INV) affectionate communication given to them by their mother and father. A sample ACI-DNV item was, "Hugs you," while an ACI-INV item was, "Helps you with a problem." Participants responded on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*never)* to 7 *(always)* with higher scores indicating higher perception of parental affectionate communication. The alpha coefficients across parent–child dyads, reported in the study by Park et al. (2009), ranged from .84 to .92. The instructions were changed to ask participants how each parent showed affection to them. Two of the items were changed to fit the present study and replicate the measures used in the study by Park et al. "Says he/she is one of your best friends" and "Says he/she is a good friend" were changed to "Says you're a good son/daughter" and "Says 'you make me proud.'"

Perceived Ability to Cope with Trauma (PACT)

The PACT (Bonanno et al. 2011) is comprised of 20 items and was used to measure participants' ability to take their focus away from their daily routine and place their attention on processing through a potentially traumatic event. This scale also measured a participant's ability to move beyond a potentially traumatic event. Participants responded on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 *(not at all able)* to 5 *(extremely able)* with higher scores indicating greater ability to cope with potentially traumatic events. The alpha coefficients, reported in the article by Bonanno et al. (2011), were .91 for the forward focus items and .78 for trauma focus items.

OCIS

The OCIS (Oetting and Beauvais 1990–1991) is a measure of cultural identification, and is composed of 30 items with six base questions. The items assess the behaviors and attitudes of Anglo, Asian, Spanish, African-American, and American-Indian cultures. The OCIS has been validated with Native American and Mexican-American adolescents (Oetting and Beauvais 1990–1991), and Asian-American university students (Johnson et al. 2002). Participants were asked to rate their level of cultural identification (Anglo, Asian, Spanish, African America, and American-Indian) for each base question. The measure uses a 4-point scale ranging from 1 *(none at all)* to 4 *(a lot)*. High identification with a culture was indicated by an average score of 3 or higher. Medium identification was indicated by an average score of 2, and low identification was indicated by an average score of 1 or lower. In a review of the psychometric properties of the OCIS for Asian Americans, the alpha scores on the subscales ranged from .55 to .77 (Johnson et al. 2002). Considering the potentially complex and multifaceted nature of cultural identification, "other culture" or "another way of life" was included as an optional response. Participants who responded with "other culture" or "another way of life" were asked to specify which other culture or other way of life.

In addition, participants completed the Affective Orientation Scale (AOS; Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield 1990), Relational Closeness Inventory (RCI; Berscheid et al. 1989), and Family Assessment Device (FAD; Epstein et al. 1993). The findings from these questionnaires were not substantial to the conclusions of the present study and will be reported elsewhere.

Procedures

Before administering the survey, participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form electronically. Afterward, participants completed the demographics questionnaire, OCIS, ACI, and PACT in randomized order. The ACI was completed for each parent due to the potential differences in affection and closeness among each parent–child dyad. Participants completed the surveys

electronically through Survey Monkey, an online survey tool. Participants were estimated to complete the questionnaires in approximately 40 min.

Data Analysis

An average score for items loading onto the ACI-V, ACI-DNV, and ACI-INV (Floyd and Morman 1998) subtests was used to calculate each parent's verbal, direct/non-verbal, and indirect/non-verbal affective communication score. To assess for cultural identification using the OCIS, participants were asked to indicate which culture they most identified with in relation to six base questions. The culture that received the highest frequency of endorsements from the participant was considered the culture that he or she most identified with (Oetting and Beauvais 1990–1991). An overall coping ability score was calculated through the PACT scale (Bonanno et al. 2011) using the following calculation: (Forward Focus + Trauma Focus) − |Forward Focus − Trauma Focus|.

Participants who failed to respond to more than 20% of at least one measure were excluded from the study. Mean substitutions were utilized for questionnaires with missing data that were 80% or more complete. Participants who completed at least 80% of one measure, but did not complete other measures, were excluded in the analyses that involved the missing measures. Additionally, a power analysis was run, which revealed that 46 participants were needed to obtain a power level of .80, detecting a low-to-moderate strength correlation.

Using the OCIS to measure cultural identification, the relationship between family affection and the ability to cope for Western-identified and Asian-identified MKs were examined using a series of bivariate correlations. Bivariate correlations were also run between the measure of family affection and coping abilities for Caucasian and Asian MKs. It is of note that the following results are based on a larger study that included several other hypotheses and analyses.

Results

Congruence of Ethnicity, Subjective Cultural Identification, and OCIS

In order to determine whether participants' cultural identification corresponded well with their ethnicity, Chi-square analyses were performed between ethnicity, subjective cultural identification, and the OCIS. When examining the relationship between participants' report on the OCIS and their subjective cultural identification, the data demonstrated that MKs responded congruently on these measures. Participants did not significantly differ in their self-report of cultural identification from how they responded on the OCIS (see Table 1 for a complete list of Chi-square analyses). However, as was expected, MKs' ethnicity was incongruent with their subjective cultural identification and incongruent with their responses on the OCIS. MKs' ethnic background was a poor indication of what country or culture MKs subjectively were identified most with or what culture they most identified with on the OCIS.

Table 1 Chi-square results between the OCIS, subjective cultural identification, and ethnicity for missionary kids

Measures	Pearson's Chi-square value	*N*	*df*	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
OCIS * Subj cultural ID	35.39	101	30	.229
Ethnicity * Subj cultural ID	41.51	156	15	< .001
Ethnicity * OCIS	67.10	101	18	< .001

OCIS orthogonal cultural identification scale; *Subj cultural ID* subjective cultural identification; *Ethnicity* subjective report of ethnicity

Correlation Analyses Based on the OCIS

Bivariate correlations were conducted between participants' ability to cope with potentially traumatic events (PACT) and mothers' and fathers' affectionate communication (ACI) for Asian-identified and Western-identified participants based on their responses to the OCIS. See Table 2 for *r* values and significance. While only mothers' verbal affection was predicted to be related to increased coping abilities for Asian-identified MKs, mothers' overall affectionate communication was significantly and positively related to coping abilities for Asian-identified MKs. A significant and positive correlation was also found between mothers' direct, non-verbal affection and coping for Asian-identified MKs. In other words, Asian-identified MKs demonstrated greater coping abilities when they perceived greater direct, non-verbal affection (e.g., hugs) from their mothers. While mothers' overall affectionate communication included mothers' verbal, direct/non-verbal, and indirect/non-verbal

Table 2 Correlations between parental affection and coping abilities based on the orthogonal cultural identification scale and ethnicity

Measure	PACT Western-identified (OCIS)	PACT Asian-identified (OCIS)	PACT Caucasian	PACT Asian
AOS	.038	− .013	.113	.161
ACI (Mother)	.266	.433*	.383**	.218
ACI-V (Mother)	.360*	.176	.334**	.198
ACI-DNV (Mother)	.131	.446*	.344**	.174
ACI-INV (Mother)	.282	.405	− .140	.228
ACI (Father)	.193	.121	.319**	.068
ACI-V (Father)	.112	.054	.272*	.007
ACI-DNV (Father)	.188	.030	.222	.066
ACI-INV (Father)	.201	.306	.386**	.112

AOS affective orientation scale; *ACI* affectionate communication index; *ACI-V* affectionate communication index-verbal; *ACI-DNV* affectionate communication index-direct/non-verbal; *ACI-INV* affectionate communication index-indirect/non-verbal; *PACT* perceived ability to cope with trauma

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

communication, as previously described, mothers' direct, non-verbal affection was the only sub-variable significantly related to increased coping for Asian-identified MKs. Interestingly, the only variable that was significantly correlated to coping for Western-identified MKs was mothers' verbal affectionate communication. As Western-identified MKs perceived greater demonstrations of verbal affection from their mothers (e.g., "I love you"), their coping abilities also increased. Contrary to what was predicted, fathers' affection was not significantly related to coping for Asian-identified MKs and no other variables were significantly related to coping for Asian- or Western-identified MKs.

Correlation Analyses Based on Ethnicity

Along with the bivariate correlations conducted based on cultural identification, bivariate correlations were also conducted between measures of parental affection and coping based on ethnicity. These exploratory analyses were conducted given the incongruent responses based on ethnicity and cultural identification and to further expand upon the findings from Kim et al.'s (2017) study. Table 2 consists of a list of the bivariate correlations between parental affection and coping based on MKs' ethnicity.

While the results demonstrated several significant and positive relationships between family affection and coping for Caucasian MKs, none of the correlations were significant for Asian MKs. Affectionate communication from mothers and fathers was particularly important for Caucasian MKs. Both mother's and father's overall affection communication was significantly positively related to coping for Caucasian MKs. Also in terms of mothers, greater verbal and direct/non-verbal affectionate communication from mothers was related to increased coping abilities for Caucasian MKs. In terms of fathers, verbal and indirect/non-verbal affectionate communication from fathers was also related to increased coping for Caucasian MKs. None of the other correlations were significant. These findings highlight the distinctions between MKs' perceptions of parental affection and coping based on ethnicity and cultural identification.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the impact of cultural identification and ethnicity on MKs' perception of parental affection and their abilities to cope with potentially traumatic events. The results from the current study highlighted the important distinction between ethnicity and cultural identification, terms that are often used synonymously in the literature. Importantly, MKs' cultural identification was not a good indication of their ethnic background, which is supported by the results of Kim's (2017) study and Pollock et al.'s (2017) discussion on MKs' cultural identity. The current study suggests that for the MKs, in particular, cultural identity should not be assumed based on ethnic background, and ethnic background should not be assumed based on MKs' cultural identity.

Additionally, while the current study predicted fathers' affection to be related to increased coping abilities for Asian-identified MKs, greater affectionate communication from mothers was found to be related to increased coping abilities for both Asian-identified and Western-identified MKs, based on the OCIS. Specifically, more direct, non-verbal communication (e.g., hugs, holding hands, sitting close together) from mothers was related to increased coping for Asian-identified MKs, and more verbal affectionate communication from mothers was related to increased coping for Western-identified and Caucasian MKs.

While these results contradicted findings from Kim et al.'s (2017) study and the hypotheses of the current study based on Kim et al.'s previous findings, the results were consistent with the findings from Uba (1994) and Park et al. (2009). Uba described Asian fathers as authoritative and strict, while mothers were thought to provide for emotional needs. Park and colleagues also found that Asian-American participants perceived their mothers and fathers to communicate greater non-verbal affection than verbal affection. The contradictory findings between the current study and Kim et al.'s (2017) study may have resulted from differences in how cultural identification was defined or assessed, given the different focuses of these studies.

The purpose of Kim et al.'s (2017) study was primarily to assess for cultural differences between family affection and coping abilities and thus asked participants to indicate their subjective cultural identification in a free-response box as part of their demographic information. Given the unexpected results from Kim et al.'s study that found differences between participants' cultural identification and ethnicity, the present study further explored differences between ethnicity and cultural identification using a more objective measure of cultural identification (OCIS). The OCIS assessed MKs' behaviors and attitudes through a 30-item questionnaire and, based on their responses on the OCIS, indicated which culture MKs were identified most with (e.g., Anglo, Asian, Spanish, African-American, or American-Indian). The differing results between Kim et al.'s (2017) study and the current study may have been due to the differences between how cultural identification was reported as well as potential differences in the construct or components of cultural identification assessed in these studies. Kim et al.'s (2017) study may have assessed for participants' perception of their cultural identification based on their own interpretation of what cultural identification constitutes, while cultural identification in the current study reflected the ways in which participants interpreted and considered the items of the OCIS. While Johnson et al.'s (2002) study found that the OCIS and the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale, which was developed by Suinn et al. (1992) and used as a measure of acculturation, assessed related, but separate constructs, further study is needed to investigate how cultural identification and acculturation are defined, assessed, and interpreted in these scales.

Additionally, contrary to what was predicted and the findings of Kim et al. (2017), significant relationships were also found when the data were examined based on ethnicity. In fact, almost all forms of affectionate communication from mothers and fathers were related to increased coping abilities for Caucasian MKs, but not for Asian MKs. It is of note, however, that constructs such as *closeness* or *distance* may be particularly complex for Asian and Asian-American participants (Pak 2017). As Pak (2017) described, parenting roles in Asian cultures may be divided in order to complement

each other, rather than be balanced for each parent, thus influencing the ways in which children perceive *closeness* or *distance*. The current exploratory study suggests the need for continued research assessing parental affection in non-Western cultures and exploring the influence of MKs' cultural identity in the process of emotional development. The results also highlight the difficulties in assessing non-verbal forms of affection through quantitative measures. Given the complexities involved in emotional processing, qualitative studies may provide valuable insight into the experience of MKs and other TCKs (e.g., children of mobile military and business personnel), as these groups of individuals may hold similarities in their overall experiences, but have a significant number of experiences that are distinct from one another as well.

Limitations

As previously discussed, the included measures were intended to be more sensitive to non-explicit forms of affection but may have been limited in their ability to do so. The indirect, non-verbal items on the ACI (Floyd and Morman 1998), for example, while intending to assess for more supportive behaviors, still involve outward expression. While the current study intended to assess for more indirect forms of parental expression, the study utilized measures developed by Caucasian researchers (e.g., Berscheid et al. 1989; Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield 1990; Epstein et al. 1993; Floyd and Morman 1998). The measures themselves may have retained bias toward Western values and norms, impacting the results. Again, while attempting to assess for more supportive behaviors, the ways in which the items were phrased ("My father influenced the ways I feel about myself") may not have been sensitive to the collectivistic values of interdependence. The results, again, demonstrate the complexities involved in emotional processing and family affection, particularly in Asian cultures, and the difficulties assessing participants' underlying values rather than their external behaviors (Pak 2017).

Additionally, the majority of the participants included were Caucasian and female. While the researcher attempted to include an equal number of Caucasian and Asian MKs, the majority of the participants were Caucasian. Approximately one-third of the sample was Asian. Additionally, over two-thirds of the participants were female, while less than one-third were male. These variables may have impacted the power to detect significance in the smaller groups. Along with the unbalanced number of women and men and members of minority groups, 41 participants did not complete enough of the items to be included in the study. Additionally, with the findings presented, this study also included several lengthy measures that may have attributed to the participants not completing several items.

Conclusions and Implications

The present study investigated the relationship between parental affection and coping abilities for MKs, taking into account differences in MKs' ethnicity and cultural identification, terms that are often used synonymously and

interchangeably in the literature. Given that MKs' responses on the cultural identification measure were not a good indication of their ethnic background, the findings suggested that for MKs, these two constructs are distinct from one another and may or may not be congruent within the same individual. To the researcher's knowledge, the current study was the second study, after Kim et al. (2017), to highlight differences between MKs' cultural identification and ethnicity, and the first to provide statistical evidence for the distinction between these constructs.

This study additionally demonstrated significant relationships between parental affection and coping abilities for MKs based on both cultural identification and ethnicity. The results found that for both Asian-identified and Western-identified MKs, a greater perception of affectionate communication from their mothers was related to increased abilities to cope with potentially traumatic events. Specifically, more direct, non-verbal communication from mothers was suggested to increase coping for Asian-identified MKs, and more verbal affectionate communication from mothers was suggested to increase coping for Western-identified and Caucasian MKs.

The results of the current study, while exploratory, hold important implications for clinicians and mental health workers interacting with MKs and TCKs. The main findings emphasize the need for clinicians to be wary of assuming cultural identification from TCKs' ethnic background or phenotype. Given that TCKs may hold cultural values that remain distinct from their ethnic background, clinicians should evaluate the cultural appropriateness of various assessment measures and diagnoses utilizing both the ethnic background and cultural identification of TCKs. Along with paying particular attention to the cultural identity of TCKs, clinicians working with this population may additionally benefit from understanding the various factors that influence TCKs' emotional development and family system.

For MKs in particular, the Christian culture as well as MKs' ethnicity and cultural identification may influence the interpretation and impact of potentially traumatic events, suffering, and pain. Given the differences in how suffering, pain, and healing are understood among cultures (Brandão 1993; Brueggemann 2015; Bujo 1992), future studies may continue to explore clinical techniques that promote healing in non-Western cultures. In particular, it would be beneficial for future research to focus on the mechanisms of change that remain distinct for individuals from non-Western cultures or identify with non-Western cultures.

While yielding important findings, it is evident that the identity development of MKs and TCKs remains complex and further research developing and utilizing culturally relevant and sensitive measures is necessary. In particular, the current exploratory study highlights the difficulties in assessing constructs, such as affection and emotional processing, primarily demonstrated through non-verbal forms of communication (Pak 2017). This study highlights the limitations of the current measures to assess participants' underlying values rather than their external behaviors. It is the hope of the researchers that the current study will be used as a basis to further explore nuances in the identity development of MKs and other TCKs, which in turn will lead to more culturally informed clinical practice.

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