FEATURE

Acculturative Dissonance, Ethnic Identity, and Youth Violence

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Studies suggest that the process of acculturation for immigrant youth, particularly for second-generation youth, is significantly associated with delinquency and violence. This study explored the acculturation–violence link with respect to acculturative dissonance and ethnic identity. The results revealed in a sample of 329 Chinese, Cambodian, Mien/Laotian, and Vietnamese youth that acculturative dissonance was significantly predictive of serious violence, with full mediation through peer delinquency. Ethnic identity was not significantly associated with peer delinquency or serious violence. Although acculturative dissonance and ethnic identity accounted for a small percentage of variance in violence compared with peer delinquency, it cannot be discounted as trivial. Structural equation analyses provided support for both measurement and structural invariance across the four ethnic groups, lending support for cross-cultural comparisons. The results also lend support for the inclusion of cultural factors in youth violence prevention and intervention efforts.

Keywords: acculturation, Asian American, youth, delinquency, ethnic identity

There appears to be a positive relationship between acculturation and delinquency (Boutakidis, Guerra, & Soriano, 2006; Sampson, Morenoff, & Raudenbush, 2005; Sommers, Fagan, & Baskin, 1993; Wall, Power, & Arbona, 1993; Wong, 1999; Yue, 1993). Second-generation youth have often shown higher rates of delinquency and violence than their first-generation counterparts, and this appears consistent across different racial and ethnic groups (Boutakidis et al., 2006)—but why second-generation youth? Researchers have proposed that the process of immigration and acculturation can differentially result in changes in beliefs, values, and attitudes for youth and their parents that may lead to greater intergenerational or intercultural conflict. Rumbaut and Portes (2002) used the term *acculturative dissonance* to reflect the general conflict that occurs when parent and youth cultural systems clash as a result of the differential acculturation experienced by parents and youth. Acculturative dissonance, in turn, may propel youth to find support elsewhere and may lead to maladaptive behaviors, such as delinquency and violence.

Others have proposed that the process of acculturation influences changes in ethnic identity. Whereas first-generation youth may have more commitment and a stronger identification to their culture of origin—which, in turn, may protect them against adverse experiences and influences (e.g., delinquent peers)—second-

generation youth may have experiences of greater identity diffusion or confusion as they grapple to understand their parents' native culture and the mainstream host culture in consolidating their own ethnic identity. As a result, others (e.g., peers and friends) may exert a stronger influence in shaping their attitudes and behaviors. In this study, we examined these two constructs, acculturative dissonance and ethnic identity, as they influenced violent offending for Chinese and Southeast Asian youth. Additionally, because peer delinquency has been shown to be a strong, robust factor for youth delinquency (Kim & Goto, 2000; Le, Monfared, & Stockdale, 2005), we explored whether peer delinquency, as a more proximal variable, was a mediator of these more distal, cultural factors.

Acculturative Dissonance

Acculturation is defined as a process of changes in beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors as a result of contact with another culture (Berry, 1980). Immigrant youth's acculturation is influenced by both the parents' level of acculturation (e.g., generational status; Gilbert, 1991) and their own unique personal experiences and interactions with others. Higher rates of acculturative dissonance may stem from the differential rates of acculturation between youth and their parents. In general, the rate of acculturation for children and youth occurs more rapidly than that for their parents (Falicov, 1996; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980, 1993). This may result in family conflict, which is a risk factor for delinquency (Hawkins & Weis, 1985). For example, Nguyen and Williams (1989) noted that, among Vietnamese Americans, there was a substantial gap between adolescents and their parents with respect to endorsement of traditional values (e.g., obedience to parents, respect for authority) and that this gap was highly correlated with length of residency in the United States. Although intergenerational conflict is a known phenomenon among youth and parents in

general, for immigrant and ethnic minority youth, cultural differences (e.g., acculturative dissonance) with their parents may further exacerbate the normal intergenerational conflict.

Acculturative dissonance also differs from typical parent–adolescent conflict in that the conflict stems from differences in beliefs, values, and attitudes associated with the immigration and acculturation processes, compared with the normal developmental processes of individuation and autonomy. Immigrant youth, such as Asian youth, may be particularly at risk for alienation from their parents because of acculturative dissonance. Acculturative dissonance leading to conflict may occur in Asian families because parents usually adhere to traditional cultural values, whereas their children tend to adopt more "American" values and lifestyles (Szapocznik & Hernandez, 1988). This conflict may negatively affect the relationship and communication quality between the youth and their parents, which can undermine the supportive nature of these relationships (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). The loss of such support and the presence of strain in the relationship may place youth at higher risk for behavioral problems. Researchers have argued that factors facilitating the development of youth gangs among Asian Americans is due to the breakdown of the family as a result of migration/adaptation stresses and acculturative dissonance (Bankston, 1998).

What potential mechanism links acculturative dissonance and delinquency? One idea concerns opportunity structure or social control theory. As the generation or cultural gap widens because of differences in rate of acculturation between youth and their parents, parents may have less disciplinary control or influence over their children. As parents' ability to control or monitor their child's behavior decreases, the influence of peers may become more salient. Other theories, such as the social development model (Hawkins & Weis, 1985), also suggest that weak attachment to or alienation from conventional parents may lead to development of problem behavior proneness. Indeed, acculturated youth in general tend to become more involved in systems outside of the family, such as peer groups and group activities (Reuschenberg & Buriel, 1989). The presence of acculturative dissonance may, in fact, propel youth to even greater external affiliations for support or understanding. Wall et al. (1993) suggested that Latino youth who were more acculturated were more likely to affiliate with peers than adults, more willing to defy authority, and more likely to tolerate delinquent activities. Samaniego and Gonzales (1999) reported that the relationship between acculturation and delinquency among Mexican American youth was mediated by negative peer relations, family conflict, and parental monitoring.

Previous researchers have also examined facets of acculturation (e.g., cultural assimilation) in relation to social bonding and social learning theories (e.g., Wong, 1999). Specifically, as Asian youth assimilate into the more mainstream host culture, including the youth culture, this is likely to weaken traditional, hierarchical parent–child relations and cultural expectations that youth are to obey and respect parents' wishes without question (Lin & Liu, 1993). Rumbaut and Portes (2002) reported that acculturative dissonance resulted in the weakening of parental control in a Mexican immigrant sample. Such weakening of parental control may also be translated into an increase in the youth's associations with deviant friends. As such, one process by which acculturative dissonance relates to delinquency is through the immigrant youth's increased affiliation with delinquent peers.

Ethnic Identity

The process of acculturation may also result in changes in one's loyalty and commitment to one's culture of origin, as well as a change in sense of belonging to the host culture (Berry, 1980). Erikson (1968) believed that identity achievement that begins in adolescence is the most important developmental task of all individuals. For ethnic minority youth, this developmental task may be further complicated by culture and acculturation. Immigrant youth must grapple not only with issues of loyalty and commitment to their own culture of origin but also with adjustment to the mainstream host culture, including the youth culture.

Ethnic identity is the subjective sense of belonging to a group or culture (Phinney, 1990). It involves search/exploration and commitment to a cultural group. For minority youth, associations with the mainstream and ethnic culture can take on a variety of forms. Youth can (a) assimilate into the majority culture by rejecting their own culture (assimilation), (b) reject the majority culture and retain their ethnic culture (separation), (c) maintain ties to both majority and minority cultures (biculturalism), or (d) identify with neither culture (marginalization). Although most studies of ethnic identity have focused on Black adolescents (e.g., Marshall, 1995), recent studies have included Latino and Asian youth (e.g., Lysne & Levy, 1997; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). To date, studies suggest that different factors may influence the process of ethnic identity development, including immigration history, differences in parents' ethnic identities and ethnic socialization, and the ethnic make-up of the school that the adolescent attends (Quintana, Castaneda-English, & Ybarra, 1999; Rumbaut, 1996). Studies have also examined how ethnic identity is associated with different development outcomes, such as self-esteem and risk behavior. For instance, a strong ethnic identity has been associated with higher self-esteem and self-efficacy among minority adolescents (e.g., Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997). Maintaining ties to both cultures (i.e., biculturalism or bicultural self-efficacy) have also been associated with better psychological adjustment (e.g., Bankston & Zhou, 1995; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Getton, 1993). Bicultural self-efficacy refers to having the competency, skills, and ability to communicate and adjust to roles in two or more cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Soriano, Rivera, Williams, Daley, & Reznik, 2004).

With respect to delinquent behavior and violence, although studies with Black youth have generally found a negative relationship between ethnic identity and maladaptive behavior (i.e., positive identity with one culture has been found to protect against delinquency; e.g., Arbona, Jackson, McCoy, & Blakely, 1999; McMahon & Watts, 2002), studies with immigrant youth, particularly Latino youth, have yielded more mixed and complex findings (e.g., Arbona et al., 1999). In some respect, the mixed findings may be due to the type of delinquent and violent behavior explored (e.g., general delinquency vs. serious violence) or the facets of ethnic identity considered (e.g., ethnic pride, ethnic affiliation, endorsement of values). Some studies even suggest that, for Latino youth, there appears to be no relation between ethnic identity and violence (Arbona et al., 1999; French, Kim, & Pillado, 2006; Samaniego & Gonzales, 1999). For Asian youth, because there have been such few studies, the relation between ethnic identity and delinquency/violence remains open and inconclusive.

As a theoretical perspective, control theory may offer a rationale for a hypothesized relation between ethnic identity and delinquency/violence. Control theory proposes that certain cultural groups endorse certain worldviews and norms that encourage harmonious relationships. According to this theory, individuals who are more closely tied to their ethnic roots are more likely to endorse these cultural worldviews, which are antithetical to violence. For instance, the low base rate of violence among Chinese youth is arguably due to the Chinese cultural emphasis on conformity, family solidarity, maintaining harmonious relationships, and respect for authority (Fong, 1973). In a study involving Latinos, Blacks, Asians, and Whites, Ting-Tommey et al. (2000) examined the roles of ethnic identity and conflict management styles when dealing with interpersonal conflict and found that, for some cultural groups such as Asians and Latinos, ethnic identity is a protective factor for youth violence because of its association with a conflict management style that avoids conflict.

With respect to acculturative dissonance, a strong sense of ethnic identity is likely to be negatively associated with acculturative dissonance because youth values, beliefs, and attitudes, being similar with those of their parents, would less likely be a cause of conflict in youth–parent relationships. Likewise, because youth with a bicultural identity are able to comfortably navigate between both their parents' culture and the host culture, they may be more flexible and understanding about their parents' cultural perspectives and therefore less likely to have conflict with their parents. Along the same lines, having a strong sense of ethnic identity would be negatively associated with delinquent peers because youth who have strong affiliation with their cultural group would likely enjoy the benefits of having strong bonds with members of the group (family, community), as well as having a sense of meaning and purpose that ethnic cultures provide.

The Present Study

The present study focuses on highlighting two potential processes behind the acculturation–violence link for immigrant youth. The first process concerns the relation between acculturative dissonance and youth violence. On the basis of a synthesis of the limited literature, we hypothesized that acculturative dissonance would be positively associated with youth violence. Youth who experience greater conflict with their parents on the basis of differences in cultural values, mainly stemming from the process of acculturation, are more likely to engage in youth violence. The second process concerns ethnic identity. Here, on the basis of control theory, we hypothesized that ethnic identity would be negatively associated with youth violence so that youth who have a stronger ethnic identity (e.g., more commitment to their ethnic culture) are less likely to engage in violence. For both predictors (acculturative dissonance and ethnic identity), we hypothesized that peer delinquency would mediate the relationship between these two cultural predictors and youth violence. We modeled these relationships across four different Asian ethnic groups (Chinese, Cambodian, Lao/Mien, and Vietnamese) and tested for both measurement and structural invariance.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The sample for this study was taken from a larger project examining the risks and protective factors for delinquency among Asian/Pacific Islander youth (see Le et al., 2005, for details). Overall, the sample included 329 Chinese and Southeast Asian youth recruited from two public schools and five community-based organizations in Oakland, CA. Each youth was compensated $25 to participate in a face-to-face, structured, private interview that lasted about 1 hr. Parental consent was obtained prior to youth assent.

Respondents ranged in age from 10 to 18 years old, with an average age of 14.5 years across the groups. Gender was fairly equally distributed, with slightly more females in the Lao/Mien group and more males in the Chinese and Cambodian groups. The majority of the youth were second-generation status, except for Vietnamese youth who were fairly equally divided between first- and second-generation status.

Measures

Gender. Gender was based on respondent's identification and was coded as either 0 for male or 1 for female.

Ethnicity. From a list of 20 different ethnicities (e.g., Caucasian, Chinese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hawaiian, Laotian, Mien, Tongan), respondents were asked to select the ethnic group with which they identified the most. If a respondent did not identify an ethnicity, the mother's ethnicity was used (10% of cases).

Generation status. Generation status was based on the respondent's self-report as first generation (born outside the United States), second generation (born in the United States but at least one parent was born outside the United States), third generation (respondent and both parents were born in United States), and up to fifth generation. All respondents fell within first- and second-generation status.

Peer delinquency. Peer delinquency was based on a commonly used 16-item measure that has demonstrated good reliability and validity (see Thornberry, Lizotte, Krohn, Farnworth, & Jang, 1994). For various delinquent activities (e.g., damaging property, stealing, joyriding, hitting), respondents were asked to estimate how many of their friends had engaged in such activities during the past 6 months. Responses were categorized as none, few, half, most, and all. Higher scores indicated greater levels of peer delinquency.

Ethnic identity. Ethnic identity was measured using a nine-item modified version of the Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1990). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to a series of statements regarding ethnic identity exploration/search and ethnic identity belonging/commitment on a scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4). Examples of items included, "I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group," "I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly my own ethnic group," "I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me," "I have a strong commitment to improve life in my ethnic community," and "I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me." A higher score indicated a stronger sense of ethnic identity. Three items from the original scale were

dropped because of focus-group and field-testing results of the survey measures, which revealed that this population had difficulty understanding and responding to these three items of ethnic identity.

Acculturative dissonance. Six items were used to assess acculturative dissonance. These items asked (a) whether the respondent behaves differently from how parents tell the respondent to behave, (b) whether the respondent agrees with parental values but does not always act consistently with them, (c) whether the respondent's parents criticize American values, (d) whether the respondent experiences conflict between the American values and their parents' native values, (e) whether the youth has felt a sense of loss and confusion being in the United States, and (f) whether the youth can deal with different cultural demands (American and Asian) expected of youth (reverse scored). Respondents rated their agreement as strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), somewhat agree (3), or strongly agree (4). The items were scaled so that a higher score indicated greater acculturative dissonance.

Serious violence. We assessed serious violence using five items from a larger scale of delinquency (Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985) that asked about serious violent behaviors. Respondents were asked the number of times in the past 6 months they had (a) attacked someone with a weapon or with the idea of seriously hurting or killing him or her, (b) used a weapon or force to get money or things from people, (c) robbed someone, (d) physically hurt or threatened to hurt someone to get him or her to have sex, and (e) been involved in gang fights. Internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) of the aforementioned scales by ethnic group are shown in Table 1.

Latent Variables and Scales

Three predictor latent variables, acculturative dissonance, ethnic identity, and peer delinquency, were defined by creating item

parcels (Kishton & Widaman, 1994). Parcels were created so that three indicators (parcels) defined each latent variable, and scale items were randomly assigned to each parcel under the constraint that each parcel within a scale maintained the same number of items wherever possible. Internal consistency reliabilities of the three predictor variables using parcels as indicators were as follows: (a) 0.53 for acculturative dissonance, (b) 0.72 for ethnic identity, and (c) 0.93 for peer delinquency. The criterion variable, serious violence, was the summation of the counts (number of acts committed) from the five serious violence variables.

Analysis

We analyzed factorial invariance and structural relations among the latent variables using Mplus 3.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 2003). It is important to establish factorial invariance in cross-cultural studies to ensure that certain quantitative relationships of each latent variable to its indicator variables are the same (invariant) for each group (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Bermudez, Maslach, & Ruch, 2000). Establishing such invariance ensures that scores on both the latent and manifest variables are comparable across groups.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and internal consistency alphas of the four manifest scales for the ethnic groups are shown in Table 1, and correlations among the scales and variables are shown in the Appendix for ethnic groups. Although no definitive conclusions can be made without first establishing factorial invariance, it is instructive to distinguish trends in these data. Across the ethnic groups, there were no significant differences in acculturation dissonance or serious violence (see Table 1). Vietnamese youth, however, scored significantly lower than Cambodian youth on ethnic identity, and Chinese youth scored significantly lower than Cambodian and Lao/Mien youth on peer delinquency. Overall, Cambodian youth tended to score higher than the other groups on ethnic identity and peer delinquency. For raw scores on serious violence, the Scheffé test is untenable because of unequal variances among the groups. An analysis on square-root-transformed scores revealed that Chinese youth scored significantly lower ($p < .01$) than Cambodian youth on serious violence.

Factorial and Structural Invariance

Table 2 presents the fit index values for various levels of measurement and factorial invariance. Here it is apparent that the fit is reduced at each level of parameter restrictions (e.g., from baseline to weak factorial invariance). However, strong factorial invariance, Model 02, is defensible on the basis of fit indices (Tucker–Lewis index [TLI] > 0.95 and the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.058). With strong factorial invariance supported, direct relations among the path coefficients in the ensuing structural models, as well as mean comparisons on both the latent and manifest levels (see Table 1), may be made with the confidence that observed differences among ethnic groups are based on measures that are equivalent for each ethnic group.

On the basis of the aforementioned results of measurement invariance, we next investigated structural relations in which three

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Internal Consistency Reliability on Manifest Scales

Group	Acculturative dissonance	Ethnic identity	Peer delinquency	Serious violence
Ethnic group				
Cambodian ($n = 112$)				
Mean	2.44[a]	3.34[b]	12.54[b]	1.19
SD	0.45	0.36	11.73	2.94
α	0.43	0.67	0.94	
Chinese ($n = 64$)				
Mean	2.42[a]	3.21[ab]	6.00[a]	0.13
SD	0.44	0.41	6.69	0.49
α	0.56	0.75	0.88	
Lao/Mien ($n = 67$)				
Mean	2.52[a]	3.31[ab]	10.93[b]	1.10
SD	0.53	0.35	11.08	3.56
α	0.64	0.65	0.93	
Vietnamese ($n = 86$)				
Mean	2.49[a]	3.16[a]	8.35[ab]	0.62
SD	0.47	0.40	9.43	2.89
α	0.58	0.69	0.86	

Note. For ethnic groups, means within a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different, $p < .05$, Scheffé.

Table 2
Fit Indices of Factorial Invariance Measurement Models

Model (group invariance)	χ^2	df	p	χ^2:df	$\Delta \chi^2$	Δ df	$\Delta\chi^2$:Δdf	RMSEA	TLI	CFI
Measurement models										
00. Baseline (configural invariance)	137.72	120	.13	1.15				.042	.978	.985
01. Model 00 + Λ invariant (weak factorial invariance)	167.80	138	.04	1.22	30.08	18	1.67	.051	.968	.975
02. Model 01 + τ invariant (strong factorial invariance)	198.81	156	.01	1.27	31.01	18	1.72	.058	.959	.956
03. Model 02 + Λ invariant (strict factorial invariance)	251.87	183	<.01	1.38	53.06	27	1.97	.068	.944	.943
Structural models										
02A. No mediation	266.66	164		1.63				.068	.943	.948
02B. Partial mediation	198.81	156	.01	1.27				.058	.959	.956
02C. Full mediation	202.10	164	.02	1.23				.053	.965	.968

structural models were compared with strong factorial measurement invariance constraints maintained. That is, for all factors, each factor indicator (parcel) loading and intercept was constrained to equality across the four ethnic groups, but the path coefficients among the factors were allowed to vary freely across ethnic groups. In the first model, acculturation dissonance, ethnic identity, and peer delinquency were separate predictors of serious violence, with acculturation dissonance and ethnic identity allowed to correlate. Thus, in this model, there was no mediation. In the second model, acculturation dissonance and ethnic identity (allowed to correlate) were predictors of both peer delinquency and serious violence; peer delinquency, in turn, was a predictor of serious violence. This second model represented partial mediation of acculturation dissonance and ethnic identity through peer delinquency. In the final model, the paths from acculturation dissonance and ethnic identity to serious violence were constrained to 0, representing full mediation of acculturation dissonance and ethnic identity through peer delinquency. The fit index values for the

three structural models are listed in Table 2 for the ethnic groups. Here, it is readily apparent that the full mediation model, Model 02C, was the best fitting model because this model had the lowest χ^2/df ratio (1.23), as well as the lowest RMSEA (0.053) and highest TLI value (0.965). The estimated path coefficients for all three structural models are shown in Table 3. Of particular interest, of course, are the estimated path coefficients for Model 03C, full mediation through peer delinquency.

For all ethnic groups in Model 03C (see Table 3), peer delinquency was a significant predictor of serious violence, with Cambodian youth showing the highest standardized estimate (0.61). For Cambodian youth, this substantively this translated to a 0.61-*SD* increase in serious violence for each one-unit standard deviation increase in peer delinquency. The estimated peer delinquency-to-serious violence coefficients for the other ethnic groups can be similarly interpreted. Also, for Cambodian and Chinese youth, acculturation dissonance was a significant predictor of peer delinquency. For Vietnamese youth, acculturation dis-

Table 3
Standardized Estimated Path Coefficients (and t-values) of Alternate Structural Models for Predicting Serious Violence From Acculturative Stress, Ethnic Identity, and Peer Delinquency

Ethnic group	Criterion = peer delinquency predictors		Criterion = serious violence predictors		
	Acculturative stress	Ethnic identity	Acculturative stress	Ethnic identity	Peer delinquency
Model 02A: No mediation through peer delinquency					
Cambodian			.01 (0.10)	.01 (0.05)	.46* (4.79)
Chinese			.15 (1.07)	−.06 (−0.46)	.47* (3.75)
Lao/Mien			−.09 (−0.70)	.02 (0.13)	.62* (5.21)
Vietnamese			.17 (1.07)	.07 (0.47)	.41* (3.69)
Model 02B: Partial mediation through peer delinquency					
Cambodian	.37* (2.46)	.03 (0.27)	.01 (0.10)	.00 (0.04)	.46* (4.19)
Chinese	.34* (2.04)	.21 (1.43)	.12 (0.87)	−.07 (−0.51)	.46* (3.39)
Lao/Mien	.08 (0.53)	−.23 (−1.53)	−.09 (−0.72)	.02 (0.20)	.62* (4.96)
Vietnamese	.32 (1.78)	.08 (0.56)	.19 (1.13)	.08 (0.57)	.38* (3.08)
Model 02C: Full mediation through peer delinquency					
Cambodian	.37* (2.45)	.03 (0.25)			.46* (4.71)
Chinese	.35* (2.07)	.20 (1.40)			.49* (3.86)
Lao/Mien	.08 (0.50)	−.23 (−1.51)			.61* (5.03)
Vietnamese	.33 (1.84)	−.15 (−1.00)			.43* (3.86)

Note. A cell with no values entered denotes that parameter fixed at 0.
*Denotes a statistically significant predictor, $p < .05$.

sonance achieved near significance as a predictor of peer delinquency—in fact, if a one-tailed test is assumed, significance would have been achieved, as the estimated t value of 1.84 exceeds a critical value of 1.65. Thus, the indirect effect of acculturation dissonance on serious violence through peer delinquency was as follows for each ethnic group: For Cambodian youth, 0.17 (0.37×0.46); for Chinese youth, 0.17 (0.35×0.49); for Lao/Mien youth, no effect; and for Vietnamese youth, 0.14 (0.33×0.43). Thus, for Cambodian youth, a 1-SD increase in acculturation dissonance results in a 0.17-SD increase in serious violence. Of course, these effects are at the latent level.

These structural equation modeling (SEM) results offer partial insight into the dynamics at the manifest level. Because peer delinquency was a strong predictor of serious violence, it makes sense that ethnic groups low in average peer delinquency would also be low in average serious violence. Indeed, this is the case. Returning to Table 1, it is noted that Cambodian and Lao/Mien youth had large mean scores in peer delinquency and serious violence, compared with Chinese and Vietnamese youth. However, the differential indirect effects of acculturation dissonance on serious violence across ethnic groups was not due to differences in acculturation dissonance means, as all ethnic groups scored essentially the same on this variable.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to investigate the roles of two cultural variables—acculturative dissonance and ethnic identity—in serious violent behavior among an ethnically diverse sample of Asian youth. It was predicted that both acculturative dissonance and ethnic identity would be related to serious violence and mediated by peer delinquency. The study revealed two patterns of interest. First, it was clear that, when these two cultural variables were pitted against each other, acculturation dissonance appeared to be the more salient, significant predictor associated with youth violence, at least among this ethnically diverse Asian American sample. That this relationship was mediated by peer delinquency suggests that one pathway by which immigrant youth engage in violent behavior is their association with delinquent peers because of conflict with their parents, arising out of intergenerational and/or intercultural differences. These findings suggest that the previously reported negative relationship between intergenerational/intercultural conflict, or acculturative dissonance, and delinquency can be better explained by the developmental processes associated with increased relations with peers, particularly delinquent ones.

These findings are consistent with the intergenerational conflict and/or acculturative dissonance perspective, which argues that minority and immigrant youth face adjustment problems when they have to grapple with the cultural differences between their parents' culture of origin and the host culture (e.g., Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). Asian American youth who (a) fail to fulfill the dual expectations of becoming proficient in English and doing well in school and (b) become "too Americanized" may become marginalized and susceptible to deviant influences (Kitano & Sue, 1973). Gradual divergence of perspective in values, beliefs, and ideals can lead to intergenerational/intercultural conflict. In fact, it is the difference in acculturation rate between the youth and parents that accounts for intergenerational conflict (Chung, 2001).

Because the generation gap between parents and youth may be widened by intercultural conflict (due to acculturation) and the differentials between the youth and parents' level of acculturation, this may produce even greater conflict among family members, as well as separation from family members, thus potentially increasing the pressure or motivation for youth to use alcohol and engage in deviant behaviors (Falicov, 1996). In a sample of Mexican American youth, Rumbaut and Portes (2002) showed that a high degree of acculturative dissonance was related to diminished parental control. Similarly, Wong (1991) found that differences in native language fluency between the parents and their children were related to difficulties in parental monitoring. Dinh, Roosa, Tein, and Lopez (2002) demonstrated that parental involvement partially mediated the relationship between acculturation and problem behavior among Hispanic youth. It is well established that higher levels of family problems and lower levels of parental support, engagement, and monitoring are associated with greater violence and delinquency (Dishion & Kavanaugh, 2003; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000). Because family variables are important predictors of delinquency and violence for ethnic youth (Smith & Krohn, 1995), it is not surprising that acculturative dissonance was a significant predictor of serious violence, operating through peer delinquency among this sample of Asian American youth.

On the other hand, ethnic identity was not a significant predictor of serious violence, with magnitudes that were mixed across the different groups. This finding is perhaps similar to those in studies with other immigrant youth (e.g., Latinos) that did not find a significant association between ethnic identity and delinquency or violence (Arbona et al., 1999; French et al., 2006). In light of more significant predictors such as acculturative dissonance, ethnic identity appears to explain minimal variance in outcomes. It is noteworthy that neither acculturative dissonance nor ethnic identity was particularly significant for Lao/Mien youth, whereas acculturative dissonance could not be discounted for the other groups. It is unclear why this would be so, as Lao/Mien youth shared similar immigration experiences and stressors with Cambodian and Vietnamese youth. Future studies are needed to highlight the unique differences among these different groups with respect to delinquency and violence. It is also important to acknowledge that ethnic identity is not a static phenomenon but changes over time depending on the youth's level of identity development and may vary in terms of its predictive significance across developmental ages and ethnicity (French et al., 2006). It may also be that different facets of ethnic identity (e.g., affiliation, pride, behavior) need to be considered with respect to youth outcomes.

Prevention/Interventions

The collective findings also provide some important implications for prevention and intervention programs for immigrant youth and families. The first implication is that for immigrant populations, such as Asians, an emphasis on fostering harmonious relationships between youth and their parents is important in deterring youth from delinquent friends and behavior. Researchers have proposed that one problem arising from the differential rates of acculturation between the youth and the parents is the lack of effective communication and that this communication barrier can

negatively affect the quality of the youth–parent relationship, resulting in negative outcomes for both parties (Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). Interventions such as the Strengthening of the Intergenerational/Intercultural Ties in Immigrant Chinese American Families intervention (Ying, 1999), which proposes to reduce conflict and detachment from family members, may be promising in deterring deviant behavior among immigrant youth. Interventions that facilitate cohesive parent–youth engagement and understanding are likely to promote positive development. One plausible way to ensure that youth maintain stronger cultural ties to their parental culture (and in so doing perhaps slow their rate of acculturation relative to that of their parents, leading to reduced acculturative dissonance) is for them to maintain fluency in the native language. Programs that help adolescents maintain or establish fluency in their native language might be another avenue for intervention/prevention of acculturative dissonance.

Interventions for particular ethnic groups such as Asian Americans may consider reinforcing culturally based protective factors, such as the cultural value of collectivism (Le & Stockdale, 2005). Such an intervention, which is designed to enhance the understanding of the positive aspects of Asian heritage and culture and to encourage greater identification on an individual level with these cultural features, would facilitate greater congruence between the parents' culture and the host culture, which in turn may reduce the intercultural conflict between youth and parents. Whaley (2003) argued that, within the cognitive–cultural perspective, maladaptive behaviors such as violence are a consequence of underdevelopment or imbalance in some aspect of the self (e.g., personal, cultural, social) or adoption of social roles that undermine integration of the individual self or cultural self. Interventions may also consider an educational component of helping new immigrants to understand the acculturation process, the potential conflict that may arise from the differential rate of acculturation between the children and parents, and ways to reduce this conflict. Effective communication seems a crucial key factor in preventing this type of conflict. In general, there needs to be more attention within prevention/intervention programs to include elements of culture (Hill, Chen, & LaFromboise, 1994; Soriano et al., 2004)

Unfortunately, culturally specific or culturally competent preventions/interventions for youth violence are egregiously limited (Hudley & Taylor, 2006; Wright & Zimmerman, 2006). Moreover, the few programs that do include cultural features in youth violence programs have not been evaluated, so it still remains open as to what feature of culture is most important to include and to consider in prevention and intervention programs related to violence (Wright & Zimmerman, 2006).

Limitations

Despite the interesting findings revealed in this study, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, one clear limitation concerns the measure of acculturative dissonance. This measure was based on only six items, and although we were able to attenuate problems of reliability using structural equation modeling and demonstrate measurement invariance across the four groups, it still remains limited as an operational definition of acculturative dissonance. What is promising, however, is that despite this measurement consideration, it was a stronger predictor of violence than the more established construct and measure of

ethnic identity. Nevertheless, a more validated measure of acculturative dissonance—and one that discriminates from typical parent–adolescent conflict, such as the Family Conflict subscale in the Acculturation, Habits, and Interests Multicultural Scale for Adolescents (i.e., the AHIMSA Acculturation Scale; Unger et al., 2002)—may be useful in future studies of delinquency and violence.

The second limitation concerns the cross-sectional nature of the study. We do not know, for instance, whether acculturative dissonance leads to peer delinquency and violence or whether violent offending results in peer delinquency and acculturative dissonance, although we developed and tested our models with acculturative dissonance as the exogenous predictor. The models in which serious violence was the exogenous predictor yielded poor model fit. Nevertheless, the cross-sectional nature of the sample does not permit ascertaining causality. Another limitation that deserves consideration is the use of youth self-reported peer delinquency to assess peer delinquency. Youth reports of peer delinquency tend to be biased in the direction of the youth's delinquent involvement. However, this method of assessing peer delinquency is widely used and generally considered valid despite this potential limitation (Thornberry et al., 1994). Finally, the study sample was limited to Chinese and Southeast Asian youth from a particular low-income inner-city community of the United States. As such, generalizations to other immigrant populations, other social classes, and other regions are limited.

Conclusion

Immigrant youth development is an important issue for the United States, especially with the projected growth rate among the immigrant population that is expected to increase from its current 11.5% of the U.S. population to more than 14.8% by 2010 (Camarota, 2002). How immigrant youth successfully adapt to and become effectively socialized and integrated into the host culture is indeed an important research topic. Likewise, prevention/intervention programs that facilitate the process of adaptation and acculturation will increasingly become even more important, as will the evaluation of these programs, as societies become even more multicultural.

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Appendix

Intercorrelations Among Manifest Scales

	AD	EI	PD	SV
Cambodian (*n* = 112)				
Acculturative Dissonance	1.000			
Ethnic Identity	.088	1.000		
Peer Delinquency	.224	.085	1.000	
Serious Violence	.111	.044	.460	1.000
Chinese (*n* = 64)				
Acculturative Dissonance	1.000			
Ethnic Identity	−.012	1.000		
Peer Delinquency	.181	.130	1.000	
Serious Violence	.196	−.008	.458	1.000
Lao/Mien (*n* = 67)				
Acculturative Dissonance	1.000			
Ethnic Identity	.074	1.000		
Peer Delinquency	.032	−.158	1.000	
Serious Violence	−.047	−.084	.591	1.000
Vietnamese (*n* = 86)				
Acculturative Dissonance	1.000			
Ethnic Identity	−.271	1.000		
Peer Delinquency	.300	−.214	1.000	
Serious Violence	.198	−.096	.412	1.000