Despite recent downward trends, youth violence continues to be a significant concern in the United States, as evidenced by recent calls for action (Office of the Surgeon General, 2001). Furthermore, rates of youth violence in this country are still among the highest in the industrial world (Cunningham, 2000). As discussed by Smith and Guerra (introduction, this volume) and throughout this book, epidemiological studies generally show that ethnic minority youth are disproportionately and adversely affected by violence, both as perpetrators and victims.

Much of the work examining the plight of ethnic minority groups in light of the changing urban landscape and the impact on violence has emphasized conditions and consequences for African Americans (as discussed by Guerra and Williams, chap. 1, this volume). However, attempts to increase one’s understanding of the relation between ethnicity and youth violence in the United States also must consider the influence of immigration and acculturation on development and behavior. Indeed, since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, there has been a sharp increase in the number of immigrants to the United States. Clearly, certain children and adolescents from specific ethnic groups that make up this immigration surge
are the primary focus of attention. For example, recent estimates indicate that approximately 40% of the Latino population and 60% of the Asian-Pacific Islander population are foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997, 2004). Since 1990, the number of children in immigrant families has expanded almost seven times faster than for native-born families (Hernández, 2004). As a result, many ethnic minority youth have at least one foreign-born parent. It is difficult to provide an accurate portrait of these youth without taking into account the impact of being raised by parents who were themselves raised in a different culture.

Being the child of immigrants can exert a profound impact on development and behavior. Clearly, this impact is greatest for children who were born in a different country but came to the United States during childhood and for children who are first-generation residents (i.e., they were born in the United States to parents who were born outside of the United States). In this chapter, we examine a subset of mechanisms related to immigrant families that are likely to be of greatest relevance for youth violence etiology and prevention. First, we describe the immigrant population in terms of relevant background characteristics, including socioeconomic status, areas of settlement, access to resources, language ability, and school achievement. These factors can either increase risk for violence or buffer children from adverse circumstances. Next, we review the literature on acculturation and adaptation, with a particular focus on the mechanisms through which this process can contribute to aggression and violence. In particular, we highlight the importance of cultural frameworks and cultural norms related to violence of both the native and host culture and the impact of stressors associated with acculturation. Of most relevance to youth violence, we emphasize those stressors that place additional burdens on the family system. We then turn to a discussion of biculturalism and its influence on adjustment. We conclude with a discussion of implications of immigration and acculturation for youth violence prevention research and practice.

IMMIGRANT YOUTH: RECENT TRENDS

Before the 1950s, most immigrants to the United States were from northern and western European countries; however, the latter part of the 20th century saw a marked shift in immigration patterns. Whereas European immigration fell to about 10% of total immigrants, there was a large increase in immigration from other countries. Indeed, approximately 85% of immigrants were from Asia and Latin America, followed by immigrants from Caribbean countries (Martin & Midgley, 1994). Although on average, immigrants who entered the United States in the 1980s or later are more economically disadvantaged than native-born Americans or those who entered pre-1980, there is still a great deal of socioeconomic diversity among immigrants. These differences tend to follow national origin, although there are additional variations within regions.

Immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean tend to be less educated and less occupationally skilled than immigrants from Asia (Hernández, 2004). This difference can be traced to the admission criteria specified in the Immigration Act of 1965. Country origin was eliminated as a qualification for obtaining an immigrant visa (which had given preference to European relatives), and a preference system was established that gave priority to individuals with special skills needed in the U.S. labor market or with family members already in the country. Because of earlier exclusionary policies, few individuals from Asia were already living in the United States by midcentury; therefore, the majority of Asian immigrants during this time were admitted by virtue of their occupational and professional skills.

There are also regional differences within Asian immigrants that stem from historical and political circumstances. For instance, a large number of immigrants from Laos and Cambodia were admitted to the United States under special humanitarian provisions, many of whom are members of rural groups, such as the Hmong and Lao, with little formal education and high levels of poverty. Although there are also distinctions among Latino immigrants, in many cases, they entered the United States as agricultural workers or manual laborers, with relatively little formal schooling. Many of these workers were granted residency in the 1980s based on an amnesty policy. Still, there are a disproportionate number of undocumented Latin American immigrants, and this contributes to their disadvantaged socioeconomic status and associated problems (Fix & Passel, 1994; Nightingale & Fix, 2004).

Throughout history, entry into the United States was often a ticket to improved economic status. In recent years, times have been more difficult for immigrants. Globalization and deindustrialization have placed constraints on the economy with fewer opportunities for upward mobility. Immigrants of color also face roadblocks not experienced by their White, European counterparts (Nightingale & Fix, 2004). As McLoyd (1998) noted, "European immigrants confronted dilemmas born of conflicting cultures, but they had the advantage of being uniformly White" (p. 7). Furthermore, most recent immigrants have settled in large, urban metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago. To the extent that these immigrants are poor and unskilled, they are also more likely to reside in some of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods of these urban centers.

In these settings, immigrant families are more likely to be exposed to harsh conditions, including exposure to violence, scarce resources, and difficulty accessing services. These difficulties are likely to be compounded additionally for nonlegal residents who are often uninformed about available services or reluctant to access those services. Limited language proficiency...
and lack of knowledge about local school systems can compromise parents’ abilities to serve as brokers for their children’s education and development. In overburdened and troubled urban school systems, a lack of parental involvement can compound any difficulties children might already face (Fix & Passel, 2003; Takanashi, 2004). Because children of immigrant parents often are more proficient in English than their parents, they frequently serve as translators. In this role, the parent-child status hierarchy is inverted, and children can easily filter information parents receive about their progress (e.g., reports from school, grades, etc.). In addition, although educational research suggests that some teachers encourage the aspirations of ethnic minority and immigrant students, there are also studies that point to low teacher expectations for students from immigrant families and the resulting detrimental effects on academic progress (McDonnell & Hill, 1993).

Still, there is not a clear-cut relation between immigrant status and educational achievement. There appears to be great variation within ethnic subgroups as well as across generations. In general, earlier generations tend to perform better than later generations, particularly among Asian families (Puligini, 1997). Children from certain Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam tend to outperform children from Latin American countries (Kao & Tienda, 1995), but they also tend to outperform children from other Asian groups such as the Lao and Hmong (Rumbaut, 1994). Researchers have suggested that this declining emphasis on education by subsequent generations also may portend an increase in problem behaviors across generations (Steinberg, 1996).

The differential outcomes for immigrant children most likely depend on a host of factors related to the adaptation process. These outcomes (e.g., low school achievement, parental discord), in turn, can increase risk for violence. As discussed by Smith and Guerra (introduction, this volume), many risk factors are shared across all majority and minority ethnic groups (e.g., low school achievement) but are more likely to be experienced by some ethnic minority groups because of the conditions of development they face. For this reason, a better understanding of the adjustment process and how it affects development and behavior can also increase one’s understanding of risk for violence among children from immigrant families. A salient component of this adjustment process involves the manner in which these families assimilate to the standards, norms, rules, and demands of the host society. Furthermore, this adjustment often involves adjustment to multiple cultural realms. As Boykin and colleagues have discussed (Boykin, 1986; Boykin & Toms, 1985), immigrant families who are members of disadvantaged ethnic minority groups in the United States have to negotiate three cultural realms: (a) the indigenous ethnic culture and associated values from their native country; (b) the new mainstream culture of the host country; and (c) the component of the new host country culture that embodies the elements of minority ethnic status.

ACCULTURATION AND ADAPTATION

To date, most research examining cultural issues has focused primarily on acculturation. Acculturation involves an ongoing adjustment to the social and cultural differences between one’s country of origin and the new country of residence. Several definitions that highlight different aspects of acculturation have been offered. For instance, Moyerman and Forman (1992) defined acculturation as the “process whereby the attitudes and/or behaviors of persons from one culture are modified as a result of contact with a different culture” (p. 78). Berry (1995) defined acculturation as the steadily increasing influence of cultural forces that exist outside of one’s native, first, or heritage culture. Acculturation, therefore, must be distinguished from enculturation or socialization where the influencing forces come from within one’s culture. Acculturation, therefore, must be distinguished from acculturation as the steadily increasing influence of cultural forces that exist outside of one’s native, first, or heritage culture. Acculturation, therefore, must be distinguished from acculturation as the steadily increasing influence of cultural forces that exist outside of one’s native, first, or heritage culture. Acculturation, therefore, must be distinguished from acculturation as the steadily increasing influence of cultural forces that exist outside of one’s native, first, or heritage culture. Acculturation, therefore, must be distinguished from acculturation as the steadily increasing influence of cultural forces that exist outside of one’s native, first, or heritage culture. Acculturation, therefore, must be distinguished from acculturation as the steadily increasing influence of cultural forces that exist outside of one’s native, first, or heritage culture. Acculturation, therefore, must be distinguished from acculturation as the steadily increasing influence of cultural forces that exist outside of one’s native, first, or heritage culture.
the old and the new culture (or subculture) that are accepted or rejected. In this manner, the important question is not whether or not children acculturate to the United States, but to which aspects of American culture they will acculturate. This is particularly important in relation to youth problem behaviors and violence, as the "acceptability" of these behaviors within the normative youth culture in the United States is generally rather high.

Furthermore, the desires of an individual to assimilate may be met by resistance from members of the majority culture. An immigrant's desires or plans for how the process of acculturation should proceed must be met by an accommodating society. On the other hand, attempts at biculturalism may be met by members of one's ethnic community with resistance, such as accusations of "selling out." Overall, research has shown that members of different immigrant ethnic groups experience unique sociocultural circumstances that may limit avenues of acculturation. This process has been detailed in Zhou's recent work on segmented assimilation (Bankston & Zhou, 1997; Zhou, 2003). Other researchers are also wary of closed statements regarding acculturation and assimilation, preferring to view them as dynamic, intergenerational processes (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

Acculturation, Adjustment, and Youth Violence

Acculturation is a multifaceted process with a complex influence on adjustment. One prominent line of research has focused on the relation between acculturation and a range of adjustment difficulties. For instance, acculturation has been associated with a number of negative outcomes including child abuse (Mitchell, 1980), delinquency (Berlin, 1987; Buriel, Cetina, & Vasquez, 1982), gang membership (Soriano, 1994), and substance abuse (Caetano, 1987; Hartung, 1987; Neff, Hoppe, & Perez, 1987). Acculturation has also been linked to mental health difficulties including personality adjustment problems (Hoffmann, Dana, & Bolton, 1985; Padilla, Wagatsuma, & Lindholm, 1985), self-disclosure (Franco, Malloy, & Gonzales, 1984; Pomales, 1987), expressions of pathology in psychiatric patients (Price & Cuellar, 1981), stress (Martinez, 1983; Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987), and a variety of other mental disorders (Burnham, Hough, Kanno, Escobar, & Teller, 1987).

The link between acculturation and violence is even more complex. Indeed, some studies have found a link between low levels of acculturation and violence, while other studies have shown that higher levels of acculturation are associated with violence. For example, with regard to domestic violence among Latino populations, some studies have found that acculturation is significantly correlated with male partner violence, with higher levels of acculturation linked to higher levels of female partner assaults (Sorenson & Telles, 1991). In contrast, other research suggests the opposite pattern (Champion, 1996). Still other studies indicate that average-to-high levels of acculturation are most detrimental. In one recent study of Latino couples, Caetano and Schafer (2000) found that medium-acculturated couples showed the highest levels of male-to-female and female-to-male violence followed by those scoring highest on acculturation.

Although few studies have looked at the direct link between acculturation and youth violence, they tend to suggest the negative impact of acculturation. For example, Sommers, Fagan, and Baskin (1993) found higher levels of adolescent acculturation were also associated with higher levels of interpersonal violence. The literature on acculturation and risk factors associated with youth violence also seems to point to the negative consequences of acculturation. Indeed, a recent study by Soriano, Rivera, Williams, Daley, and Rehm (2004) found that although ethnic identity and bicultural self-efficacy were protective factors, acculturation was a potential risk factor for youth violence. Similar patterns have been found when looking at other types of adolescent problem behavior. For example, studies have shown more highly acculturated youth to be at greater risk for substance use (Caetano, 1987; Marin & Flores, 1994; Markides, Krause, & Mendes-Delen, 1988) and delinquency (Rodriguez, 1996; Wong, 1997).

Clearly these discrepant findings suggest that the influence of acculturation on outcomes including violence is not necessarily straightforward. Otherwise stated, different facets of the acculturation process may contribute to adjustment, albeit in a somewhat different fashion. As mentioned previously, we propose that acculturation impacts violence via two primary mechanisms: (a) the cultural frameworks and cultural norms related to violence of both the native and host culture; and (b) the impact of stressors associated with acculturation, particularly those stressors that compromise the family system.

Cultural Frameworks and Cultural Norms

There is a long history of research in the social sciences examining the influence of culture on cognition and behavior (Goodnow, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1995; Triandis, 1989). Some of this research has focused on broad frameworks that highlight distinct dimensions of culture. Other studies have examined specific norms and values that influence behavior. Connecting this to the acculturation process, it may be that acculturation from a less violent culture predicts increases in violence, while acculturation from a more violent to a less violent culture predicts decreases in violence. In this manner, whether acculturation, per se, relates to an increase in violence depends, in part, on the norms of the host and new cultures and the extent...
of the individual’s acculturation. These cultural influences on violence may stem from broad dimensions of a culture or specific norms, as described below.

Triandis (1996) developed a cultural classification system to distinguish cultures on key dimensions. These dimensions include individualism-collectivism, cultural complexity, and tight versus loose cultures. Individualistic cultures stress individual goals, achievements, and rights as well as personal autonomy and independence. Collectivistic cultures emphasize group goals, group harmony, and group needs, often subordinating individual needs. Cultural complexity is a wide-ranging dimension, covering everything from the number of languages spoken in a community and occupational opportunities, to the number of recognized religious. Tightness versus looseness refers to tolerance of deviations from cultural norms. Typically, the more heterogeneous a society, the more loose the system. These dimensions can and do interact to produce unique systems. For example, complex cultures tend also to be loose because of the degree of heterogeneity present, which provides members a variety of groups to join or leave, making enforcement of norms more difficult. Nevertheless, classification along any one dimension does not necessarily predict the classification in the remaining ones. For example, the United States is considered an individualistic, complex, and loose culture, whereas Thailand is considered collectivistic, complex, and loose (Pelto, 1968).

Dimensions such as individualism versus collectivism are useful tools for characterizing cultures and societies and may be particularly relevant to one’s understanding of violence. However, within this framework, these tools do not apply to individuals. Rather, individuals may be classified as having tendencies toward idocentrism (inwardly and achievement-oriented) or allocentrism (outwardly and socially oriented; Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985). Therefore, one may have idocentrics within collectivistic cultures and allocentrics within individualistic ones. This classification system can provide valuable information at the broad country and culture level, as well as the individual level, allowing for both a nomothetic and idiographic understanding of the role of culture in human behavior.

The framework of individualism and collectivism was originally meant to classify large groups, often based on nationality (Singelis, 1994). The United States, for example, is considered an individualistic nation. In contrast, Japan is considered a highly collectivistic culture. As such, interpersonal harmony and the avoidance of conflict is not only highly valued, it is among the most important cultural principles and goes hand in hand with being Japanese (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). Given this cultural priority, the Japanese have created social institutions and customs in the service of avoiding interpersonal conflict (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1989). It should come as no surprise, then, that Japan has among the lowest rates of interpersonal violence in the industrialized world, with one seventh the per-capita homicide rate of the United States (White Paper on Crime, 1998).

Other studies point to the tendency for individuals in collectivistic cultures to prefer nonconfrontational methods of conflict resolution. In contrast, more confrontational and adversarial methods tend to be more prevalent within individualistic cultures, increasing the likelihood of violent outcomes (Gille & Carment, 1997). For example, Chinese individuals are more likely to use obliging and compromising tactics when faced with interpersonal conflict, as compared with European Americans (Ting-Toomey, 1985). Likewise, native Latino populations regularly endorse the culturally salient value of simpatia that calls for individuals to avoid interpersonal conflict in favor of harmony and to defer to elders (Padilla, 1995), as well as emphasizing a sense of obligation to the family that can serve to motivate youth (Cooper, 2003). Both Chinese and native Latino cultures have been classified as collectivistic.

Individualism and collectivism also have been linked with associated risk factors for violence. For example, one outcome of living in a collectivistic culture is a much lower risk of family disruption and divorce. Collectivistic cultures report much lower rates of divorce and single-parent families than more individualistic cultures, such as in the United States (Triandis, 1994). In the case of lower divorce rates, collectivistic cultures may be tied to the emphasis on familial obligation and cohesion as well as the subordination of individual desires (Dion & Dion, 1995). In turn, a more stable family system may foster a greater degree of adolescent adjustment, while a less stable family system (e.g., absentee fathers, single-parent households) may increase risk for violent and delinquent behavior (Lykken, 2000; Triandis, 1994).

Although collectivism appears to be predictive of lower overall violence rates, this relation is also complex. What it may do is create circumstances and social expectations that reduce the likelihood of certain kinds of violence. For example, although the average rates of interpersonal violence are lower in collectivistic cultures, group-on-group violence is often higher (Triandis, 2000). Furthermore, within any given country or society, there are many subgroups defined along lines such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. These subgroups have their unique cultural frameworks and associated subcultural values that emerge at the regional and local levels (Sanchez-Burks, Nisbett, & Ybarra, 2000).

For instance, elaborate norms around youth violence often develop within specific neighborhoods. These norms often emerge in response to the difficult circumstances experienced by many youth, particularly those growing up in disadvantaged inner-city settings. A compelling example of the influence of local belief systems related to violence has been illustrated...
stances led to the creation of an oppositional, street subculture in which violent and criminal behavior became a viable alternative to more mainstream values. In part, this street culture emerged because of the lack of opportunities for advancement and security. In this sense, the cultural values, or "street codes" are functionally no different than that of any cultural group that must adapt to specific conditions.

Both cultural frameworks and cultural norms provide rules for social interaction that can decrease or increase the likelihood of violence within any group or setting. As discussed earlier, the United States is considered an individualistic culture that relies more on confrontation and adversarial exchanges than cooperation and harmony. In many disadvantaged areas, street codes have emerged that also sanction violence. Although the majority of individuals do not engage in violent and disruptive behavior, rates of violence are still extremely high. As Hudley and Taylor note (chap. 10, this volume), efforts to understand the influence of culture on violence in the United States must consider the long history of violence in America.

Not only is the United States among the most violent countries in the industrialized world, but violence in this country is often directed toward historically disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups. Furthermore, popular youth culture frequently glorifies violence as seen in media portrayals, video games, Internet sites, and sports. Given the "normative" status of violence, particularly among adolescents and young adults, adopting these mainstream values and norms may actually interfere with the positive development of youth from immigrant families and increase their risk for violence.

Against this normative backdrop, immigrant groups may also develop more violent subcultural norms in response to their particular life circumstances. Much as the code of the streets (Anderson, 1994, 1999) emerged in response to limited economic opportunities and high levels of fear and danger in African American communities, many immigrant youth develop their own codes to navigate their status and circumstances. As highlighted by French, Kim, and Pillado (chap. 2, this volume), youth from disadvantaged minority groups often have direct experiences with discrimination and lack of economic resources. In areas where these youth are concentrated, they may band together around a common belief system that articulates a set of reasons and causes for their plight.

In many cases, American society is viewed as denying access to conventional opportunities to ethnic minorities, particularly immigrants. White society may be seen as ultimately at fault, but youth from different ethnic groups or different regions within their ethnic group are seen as competitors (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991). Thus, a specific subculture emerges based on in-group/out-group differences that relies on violence to settle these differences, although the in-group/out-group differences are actually recreated within an ethnic group. For example, the southeastern part of the United States has seen a recent surge in Latino gang violence from gangs such as the Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13) who were formed in Los Angeles in the early 1980s by guerrillas and refugees fleeing the war in El Salvador but who have expanded over time across the country. Although they may protest anger against White society, much of their violence is intra-Latino, often between Central American and Mexican gangs (and including children of the earlier immigrants; Campo-Flores, 2003).

**Acculturative Stress and Family Systems**

The dilemma faced by ethnic youth in general, albeit more powerfully for immigrant ethnic youth, is striving to find a balance between the formative powers of their native or heritage culture and those of the majority culture. Efforts to establish a balance are often met with obstacles, whether they be driven by a desire to internalize fully and accept the values of one culture over another or a need to sift through and select certain aspects of each culture to follow. These obstacles can come from the adolescent's family and friends or from social institutions such as school and work. Whatever their source, these obstacles can produce stress in the adolescent. This stress, in turn, may increase an adolescent's vulnerability to a wide array of adjustment problems and other maladaptive outcomes. This process has been labeled acculturative stress. Berry (1994) has characterized acculturative stress as acculturation that is marked by difficulties in adjusting to the majority culture as well as an ambivalence between wanting to maintain ethnic values that create in-group cohesion and wanting to fit into the larger, dominant society and its culture.

Acculturative stress has been associated with negative outcomes for adults including psychological distress and reduced quality of life (Thoman & Suri, 2004). Similarly, it has been shown to portend negative adolescent outcomes, including increased drug and alcohol use, mental health problems, intrafamilial conflict, and even increased risk of physical illness (Masi, 1989; Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996; Vega & Gil, in press). Indeed, research indicates that acculturative stress hits adolescents particularly hard. One affected domain is the parent–adolescent relationship. Immigrant parents may fear that their children will gain undesirable traits and values from the new culture, while at the same time wanting them to gain the skills necessary to succeed in school and future occupational settings (Xenocostas, 1991). This dual demand may place added stress on the adolescent and be a source of conflict between parent and child that taxes the family system.
Immigrant families to the United States have always faced the prospect of having children who are torn between the traditional, ethnic values of their parental generation and the new and dynamic American cultural values. Rumbaut and Portes (2002) have conceptualized this as acculturative dissonance, defined as parent-child conflicts that arise when different cultural orientations clash. This is typically manifested when parents continue to adopt the cultural orientation of their native national or ethnic group while their children adopt values and goals connected more to the youth culture in the United States. In this fashion, high acculturation in adolescent youth may be linked to problems in parental control. For instance, in a recent study, Rumbaut and Portes (2002) found a high degree of dissonant acculturation and related lack of parental control in a Mexican immigrant sample. Similarly, Filmore (1991) found that immigrant parents reported difficulties in monitoring their children’s behavior when children did not speak their parent’s native language.

High acculturative dissonance among children of immigrant families does, indeed, weaken parents’ abilities to monitor their children’s behavior, it is also likely to portend increased problem behavior, given the well-known link between family functioning and adolescent maladjustment. In general, studies have shown that family problems including lack of emotional closeness, lack of involvement, and low levels of parental monitoring predict violence, delinquency, and future criminal behavior (Dishion & Kavanagh, 2003; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000; Hawkins, Laub, & Lauritsen, 1998; Hawkins, Laub, & Lauritsen, 1998; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). Furthermore, there is some evidence that family factors may be especially important for ethnic minorities. For example, Smith and Krohn (1995) found that family variables accounted for about twice as much of the variance in delinquent outcomes for Latino adolescents compared to their non-Hispanic White and African American counterparts.

In addition to the impact of acculturation on family functioning, it may also create a sense of injustice, particularly for children who did not experience the conditions of their parents’ native country. Immigrant parents may have come to the United States short on money and skills but long on hopes for a better future. Rather than poverty and lack of opportunity, they see a wealth of options tied to their willingness to work hard and sacrifice. However, their children, who may have been born in the United States or immigrated at a young age, see oppression rather than opportunity as the parents struggle to make ends meet. Particularly when their parents are members of a disadvantaged ethnic minority group. They see “White” society as taking advantage of their parents and consequently may feel further disenfranchised from conventional society. This disenfranchisement can lead to anger, frustration, and a search for like-minded youth to provide a collective refuge. In this fashion, the acculturative process can fuel the development of antisocial peer groups and youth gangs, both of which greatly increase risk for involvement in violence (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Short, 1997).

Another issue related to acculturative stress involves the particular developmental demands that arise in adolescence. Concurrent with their attempts at acculturating successfully, adolescents are also faced with issues of separation, individuation, and identity that arise at this developmental stage (Bapst, 1993). As discussed by French, Kim, and Fillado (chap. 2, this volume), adolescence marks a critical age in establishing a unique and autonomous self-identity. For an adolescent to successfully navigate this stage, he or she must integrate various identities and roles, for example, as a son or daughter, as a friend, as a student, and so on, despite the fact that these roles may seem to be incompatible. Successful integration leads to a cohesive sense of self versus a prolonged state of identity crisis and role confusion (Erikson, 1968).

This developmental task is equally relevant for immigrant adolescents, but it is somewhat more complicated. In addition to the various roles a native adolescent must integrate, immigrant and first-generation adolescents (and to a meaningful, but lesser extent, second-generation ethnic youth) must also cope with the often incompatible cultural roles they face. For example, adolescent youths immigrating from rural Mexico to Los Angeles face the challenge of combining a traditional, collectivistic Mexican cultural outlook with the more individualistic, industrialized, rapid-paced cultural outlook of a metropolitan American city. Not only must they deal with forming a cohesive sense of self, but this must be done while dealing with the added complications of differing cultural sensibilities and the acculturative stress this may entail.

**BICULTURALISM AND ADJUSTMENT**

As discussed earlier, the process of blending the native culture of one’s family with the host culture of a new country can create difficulties on several levels. Regardless of the particular models of acculturation or mechanisms for characterizing this process, it is clear that adaptations must be made as “integration” into the new culture unfolds. Different models have also been offered to describe the resolution of this process. For example, LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) discussed five distinct models of biculturalism that have been used to describe this integration: assimilation, acculturation, adaptation, multicultural, and fusion models.

Of greatest relevance to youth development and violence prevention, the alternation model highlights the importance of bicultural competence and its relation to adjustment. According to this model, an individual is...
able to gain competence within two cultures without having to choose between them. In this fashion, an individual can incorporate aspects of both their native and the majority culture, and choose the degree of affiliation with either culture. Bicultural youth are able to navigate through both cultural processes (that of the native as well as that of the host culture) and to adopt and integrate cultural values from two cultural groups. In so doing, they are able to navigate and function within both their ethnic community milieu as well as that of the host culture, altering their behavior to fit the specific demands of a particular social context. The alternation model assumes that youth can have a sense of belonging linked to both cultures.

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This type of biculturalism implies that the ability to effectively switch between cultures will lessen an individual's anxiety and increase cognitive, behavioral, and psychological functioning (Rogler, Cortes, & Malagodi, 1991). As LaFromboise et al. (1993) commented, "Research suggests that individuals living in two cultures may find the experience to be more beneficial than living a monocultural lifestyle. The key to psychological well-being may well be the ability to develop and maintain competence in both cultures" (p. 402). For adolescents, bicultural competence can increase their ability to negotiate a number of important contexts and relationships, serving as a buffer against problem behavior and violence. In particular, bicultural competence has been associated with academic success, lower acculturative dissonance, close family relationships, positive self-identity, and access to supportive social capital. Bicultural competence, therefore, may be termed positive acculturation.

For example, Bankston and Zhou (1995) found strong positive associations between factors that mark biculturalism, for example, the ability of a child to speak his or her parents' native language fluently and strong ethnic identification, and measures of academic success and motivation for adolescents of Asian ethnicity. Similarly, Bankston and Zhou (1997) have shown that Chinese and Indian American children are more likely to succeed academically and avoid delinquent outcomes when they can cultivate both an "American" identity around values and goals alongside of the degree to which parents and adolescents can share their cultural values. Studies have supported this hypothesis. For instance, Hao and Bonstead-Burns (1998) found that Chinese and Korean immigrant adolescents agree with a greater percentage of parental expectations and goals, in comparison to Mexican immigrant adolescents. Chung (1998) found that differential rates of acculturation among Asian American families often leads to a clash of values, usually involving issues of adolescent autonomy and independence and marked by challenges to parental authority. Other studies have shown that both adolescents from immigrant families who are fluent in English but also maintain a linguistic community—that of the majority culture and context. Social capital refers to social networks and relations that youth have access to outside of the immediate family. Social capital can involve something as simple as having a support group of friends, or it may involve institutional structures, such as community support groups, church, and other religious groups, charity organizations, and
after-school and job placement programs. In explaining the concept of segmented assimilation—the different prospects of acculturation paths faced by different ethnic groups—Baldwin and Zhou (1997) noted how important social capital is for successful acculturation and economic adaptation, especially for new immigrants. For example, as they pointed out, Chinese ethnic enclaves are notably filled with such social support centers and provide recent immigrants with a convenient and effective means of overcoming the initial obstacles of living in a foreign country. Bicultural youth are able to access both ethnically centered social capital institutions, staffed by people who are from the same or similar native cultural background, as well as more widely available programs and services provided for all youth and families.

Bicultural Competence and Bicultural Efficacy

As we have discussed, bicultural competence implies an understanding of diverse cultures as well as the skills needed to select an optimal course of action. As youth become aware of the expectations within each culture, they learn about a wider range of acceptable behaviors and how best to navigate these multiple demands. Bicultural competence can also help shape a positive sense of identity as a member of a valued ethnic culture and also as a member of the mainstream culture. Negative messages from “White” culture can be counterbalanced by an appreciation and a celebration of the unique contributions of members of one’s ethnic group and/or individuals from one’s native country.

An important cognitive component of bicultural competence is bicultural efficacy. LaFromboise et al. (1993) defined bicultural efficacy as the “belief, or confidence, that one can live effectively, and in a satisfying manner, within two groups without compromising one’s sense of cultural identity” (p. 404). In this fashion, bicultural efficacy should enhance an individual’s confidence that they can learn and sustain a bicultural identity, develop effective support networks in both the ethnic and the majority culture, and persist in efforts to resolve competing demands as they unfold.

How can we encourage the development of bicultural competence and bicultural efficacy among ethnic and immigrant youth? One strategy is to actively encourage learning, opportunities, and experiences that cultivate knowledge and appreciation of ethnic culture in general, the specific ethnic culture(s) of participants, and skills in navigating ethnic and mainstream cultures. This conscious socialization process has been labeled proactive socialization (Hill, Soriano, Chen, & LaFromboise, 1994; Spencer, 1985).

Studies have shown that families who practice proactive socialization, where children are taught directly about the richness of their ethnic heritage as well as the consequences of their ethnicity in mainstream society, have children who are more competent and well-adjusted (Bowman, & Howard, 1985). Social institutions such as schools, clinics, neighborhood organizations, and volunteer groups can facilitate bicultural development by engaging in deliberate and active efforts to strengthen bicultural competence. This may be done as part of a general approach that highlights the contributions and strengths of one or more ethnic cultures. It also may be developed via specific training. For example, Szapocznik and colleagues provided bicultural effectiveness training to Cuban American families in conflict (Szapocznik, Santisteban, Kurtines, Perez-Vidal, & Hervis, 1984). They found that families who were able to develop a repertoire of bicultural social skills were less likely to report conflicts, and children were less likely to engage in problem behaviors such as drug use.

In addition to proactive socialization and direct intervention, bicultural competence is facilitated by the development of stable external support...
networks in both cultures. Individuals and families who can call on the resources of both their ethnic culture as well as the mainstream culture should be better able to manage the stress of acculturation. This cultural social capital can be enhanced by programs and policies that link immigrants and ethnic groups together (e.g., housing practices, cultural centers) as well as programs that increase access to mainstream services for immigrant families.

Cultural Support for Harmony and Nonviolence

Cultures vary on general dimensions (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism) as well as specific beliefs, values, and norms. In some cases, these variations fluctuate by factors such as region, neighborhood, income, generational status, subculture, or ethnic identification. Still, these cultural influences can work to encourage or discourage violence. For example, collectivistic cultures place greater emphasis on group needs and group harmony as compared with individual needs. This emphasis has been associated with lower rates of interpersonal violence, and is likely to promote harmony rather than conflict. In contrast, the United States has been classified as an individualistic culture, with relatively high rates of interpersonal violence.

As such, strategies that build on the collectivistic values of ethnic and immigrant cultures should be helpful in preventing youth violence. In many of these cultures different core values can be identified that best reflect these dimensions. For Latinos, suminta emphasizes the importance of avoiding interpersonal conflict in favor of harmony and deference to elders. Asian cultural codes emphasize connection to the sociocultural order that is sustained through harmonious social relations. Native American culture, although varied across tribal entities, frequently emphasizes harmony, respect, generosity, and community responsibility for individual problems. Traditional African American culture also emphasizes collective values such as harmony, interrelatedness, communalism, mutuality, and spirituality.

In some cases, these collectivistic values and associated norms can promote violence when they are tied to specific subcultures or groups of ethnic individuals bonded together against other groups. This bonding together within a smaller ethnic enclave, although perhaps adaptive in terms of access to resources and social capital, can also result in an extreme case of collective identity that is strengthened by competition with nonmembers. Consider the history of ethnic gangs in the United States—immigrant and ethnic youth often bound by ethnic and neighborhood identification and frequently engaged in intraethnic conflict based on distinctions such as country of origin, regions within an area, or even specific streets in a neighborhood (Sánchez-Jankowski, 1991). For this reason, it is important to simultaneously promote cultural beliefs and values within a group and to promote understanding of the cultural beliefs and values of other groups (Wessler, 2003).

Promoting Intergroup Understanding and Positive Attitudes

One of the risks of promoting awareness of an individual's ethnic culture is that the differences rather than the similarities across cultures may become more salient. Pride in one's ethnic group may generate disdain for other groups, particularly if those groups are perceived as somehow related to one's disadvantaged status. Arguably, ethnic minority and immigrant youth in the United States may hold negative attitudes toward the dominant White society resulting in anger, frustration, and lack of engagement in conventional (i.e., "White") opportunities. However, this in-group/out-group bias may also occur within any ethnic group where others are perceived as being responsible for their plight (e.g., see Parker & Tuthill's discussion of White violence in chap. 8, this volume). The history of war is often a history of ethnic, religious, or national conflict based on intergroup differences.

In this regard, bicultural (or multicultural) competence should be seen as a reciprocal process whereby individuals simultaneously learn about their own ethnic heritage and learn to appreciate the diverse ethnic heritage of others. This can be facilitated by educational interventions that teach youth about different cultures. It can also be facilitated via opportunities for contact with youth and adults from other cultures. Indeed, the length and time of contact individuals have with members of other cultural groups has a strong impact on their attitudes toward both their own and other cultures (Berry, 1984).

CONCLUSION

Attempts to understand ethnicity, culture, and youth violence and to develop appropriate prevention strategies and programs must consider the effect of immigration to the United States on large groups of minority youth and families. In addition to ethnic minority status, immigrant children often face additional roadblocks not encountered by their more acculturated or native peers. Prevention strategies that enhance bicultural competence, build on norms and beliefs promoting nonviolence, and promote intergroup acceptance are particularly important for immigrant youth. These strategies should be evaluated carefully in future research on youth violence prevention with ethnic and immigrant youth.

YOUTH VIOLENCE, IMMIGRATION, ACCULTURATION
REFERENCES


II

YOUTH VIOLENCE AND PREVENTION IN SPECIFIC ETHNIC GROUPS