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Measuring Acculturation Gap Conflicts among Hispanics: Implications for Psychosocial and Academic Adjustment

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Abstract

This study examined the factor structure and validity of the Acculturation Gap Conflicts Inventory (AGCI), a new instrument developed to measure the types of recurring conflicts that young people experience as part of the parent–child acculturation gap. Participants included 283 Hispanic young adults who completed the AGCI and existing measures of acculturation, family dynamics, psychosocial, and academic adjustment. Principal axis factor analysis revealed three factors with good internal consistency: Autonomy Conflicts, Conflicts over Preferred-Culture, and Dating/Being Out Late Conflicts. These factors correlated in the expected direction with acculturative stress and family dynamics variables. Autonomy Conflicts explained more than 25% of the variance in the acculturation gap conflicts items investigated, and this factor demonstrated incremental validity in predicting psychosocial and academic adjustment beyond the variance accounted for by other acculturative stress variables. The AGCI can be valuable to researchers from a variety of disciplines interested in measuring acculturation-related intergenerational conflicts among Hispanic youth that may be predictive of adjustment.

Keywords

acculturation; acculturation gap; intergenerational conflicts; academic behaviors; psychosocial adjustment

Hispanics living in the United States are exposed to many risk factors that have the potential to affect their economic outcomes and psychosocial adjustment (Jessor, 1991). Among other concerns, Hispanic adolescents report more depressive symptoms than adolescents from other ethnic groups (Peña et al., 2008). Depression and problems in psychological adjustment can significantly impede the ability of young people to maintain educational motivation and overcome obstacles. In fact, previous research has linked poor adjustment to lower grades and educational attainment among Hispanic adolescents (Alatorre & de Los Reyes, 1999; Bámaca-Colbert, Gayles, & Lara, 2011; Kessler, Berglund, Foster, Saunders,

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& Stang, 1995), and a review of 25 years of research shows that low educational attainment is associated with drug and alcohol use, which in turn increases the likelihood of legal trouble and unemployment among Hispanics (Ream & Rumberger, 2008; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Wallace, Pomery, Latimer, Martinez, and Salovey (2010) maintain that there is a great need to develop better instruments to aid in the prediction of problem behaviors that disproportionately affect ethnic minorities. The development of such measures may help researchers identify ways to promote optimal functioning and reduce educational disparities. The purpose of the present study is to examine the psychometric properties of a new measure of acculturation gap conflicts based on issues that are presumably more prevalent in Hispanic families. Thus, our study is designed to respond to the call from Wallace and colleagues to develop a predictive instrument of problem behaviors.

Acculturation Approach: Measurement Issues

Researchers have searched for acculturation-related factors to explain why some groups have more problem behaviors and underperform in school (Fuligni, 1997, 1998; Gil & Vega, 1996; Phinney & Vedder, 2006; Schwartz, Pantin, Prado, Sullivan, & Szapocznik, 2005; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008; Szapocznik, Scopetta, & King, 1978). Acculturation has been defined as the "process of psychological and behavioral change individuals and groups undergo as a consequence of long-term contact with another culture" (Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003, p. 108). For the present study, we are interested in any conditions that potentially affect events for immigrant families as a result of culture-based influences, regardless of the time needed for these changes to occur. Whether the actual corresponding changes and adaptations are superficial or profound, their impact on events will depend on how they are perceived by the family members who are undergoing an acculturation or enculturation[1] experience. We will focus on aspects endemic in the acculturation process that are associated with increased risk in psychosocial and academic outcomes.

In the acculturation literature, there are approximately 20 acculturation scales for Hispanics, with the number of items ranging from 4 to 69 (Cruz, Marshall, Bowling, & Villaveces, 2008). Rudmin (2009), Unger, Ritt-Olson, Wagner, Soto, and Baezconde-Garbanati (2007), and other authors have summarized the different types of existing scales and some of the problems associated with each. One approach to understanding an aspect of the acculturation process shifts the focus from the individual to that of the individual-in-context, specifically, the family context. This approach involves the concept of acculturation "gaps" or discrepancies between the parents' level of acculturation and that of their children. Its relevance contributing to the unique problems of youth from immigrant families was noted in Szapocznik, Kurtines, and Fernández (1980). The acculturation gap concept suggests that the issues affecting youth are the result of differences between the parents' and children's levels of acculturation (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2007; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Dennis, Basáñez, & Farhamand, 2010; Dinh & Nguyen, 2006; Lau et al., 2005; Pasch et al., 2006; Phinney & Ong, 2002; Schofield, Parke, Kim, & Coltrane, 2008; Tardif & Geva, 2006;

[1]Enculturation refers to the process of selectively retaining certain elements from one's culture of origin or selectively acquiring elements from the host culture (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010).

Unger, Ritt-Olson, Wagner, Soto, & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2009) and that the acculturation process can affect each family member differently. Acculturation gap conflicts may be particularly stressful because they have the potential to exacerbate the intergenerational conflicts commonly present in most families (Larson & Richards, 1994).

Inconsistent Measures in Acculturation Gap Research

Parent–child acculturation discrepancies have been conceptualized and measured differently across studies. Some researchers (e.g., Farver, Bhadha, & Narang, 2002; Lau et al., 2005; Pasch et al., 2006) focus on the match/mismatch between parents and children based on Berry's (1997) quadrants of acculturation strategies (i.e., a gap exists if the parent and child do not share the same pattern of assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization). Other researchers obtain cultural orientation scores and then compute the difference between the scores of children and parents (e.g., Lau et al., 2005; Merali, 2001; Schofield et al., 2008; Smokowski et al., 2008) or focus on the interaction of children's and parents' scores (e.g., Costigan & Dokis, 2006). Furthermore, although some studies examine discrepancies between the self-reported scores of parents and young people, others prefer to measure youths' perceptions of the intergenerational discrepancy—by asking them to report their own cultural orientation as well as their parents' orientation, and then computing the difference between those scores (e.g., Dinh & Nguyen, 2006; Unger et al., 2009).

Conflicting Findings in Acculturation Gap Research

The use of inconsistent measures is coupled with conflicting findings. According to several studies, the acculturation gap is predictive of problem behaviors. For example, it has been linked to problems in family functioning (Smokowski et al., 2008), poorer quality of parent–child relationship (Dinh & Nguyen, 2006), greater number of conflicts (Tardif & Geva, 2006), lower life satisfaction (Phinney & Ong, 2002), and more disagreements over family obligations (Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000). Among Hispanic youth in particular, the acculturation gap has been found to predict conduct problems (Lau et al., 2005), internalizing behaviors (Schofield et al., 2008), and increased risk of substance use (Felix-Ortiz, Fernandez, & Newcomb, 1998; Martinez, 2006; Unger et al., 2009). However, some studies claim that the gap or "acculturation discrepancies" are not useful predictors (Smokowski et al., 2008) and have failed to find an association between it and negative outcomes for Hispanic youth (Davidson & Cardemil, 2009; Lau et al., 2005; Pasch et al., 2006).

To reconcile some of the inconsistencies in findings, it may be necessary to reconsider the assumptions underlying the assessments made when measuring acculturation gaps: What is it about the acculturation gap that really affects the functioning of young people and their families? Although studies focus on discrepancies in the cultural orientations of parents and young people, most do not assess whether those discrepancies actually generate distress. Most survey instruments commonly used to measure the acculturation gap do not contain items that directly measure disagreement, tension, or problems of communication and distress resulting from the gap between parents and their offspring. Perhaps having children choose a different acculturation strategy than their parents—as measured by language

preference, media use, self-identification, or friendship preferences—is not necessarily predictive of problems. Parents could be happy to have their children translate for them and could be proud to see their children become more Americanized than themselves. Both parent and child may be able to respect and even enjoy the differences inherent to the acculturation gap. Therefore, it is reasonable that we focus on finding the acculturation-related issues or topics of discussion that increase tension and create unresolved conflicts between immigrant parents and their children.

The Acculturation Gap and Acculturative Stress Measures

The concept of acculturative stress refers to the sources of stress that exist during the acculturation process. When measuring acculturation gap conflicts, we seek to explore the sources of stress that exist when there are acculturation gaps. In the literature on acculturative stress, some measures have been developed that assess the extent to which individuals experience problems with family members as a result of the acculturation process and almost seem to capture acculturation gap conflicts. For example, in the 24-item Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturation Stress Scale by Mena, Padilla, and Maldonado (1987), there are three relevant items: “My family does not want me to move away but I would like to,” “It bothers me that my family members I am close to do not understand my American values,” and “Close family members and I have conflicting expectations about my future.” The four-item Acculturation Conflict scale by Gil and Vega (1996) has two items that seem directly related to acculturation gap conflicts: “How often do you have problems with your family because you prefer American customs?” and “How often do you get upset at parents because they don’t know American ways?” The Hispanic Stress Inventory by Cervantes, Padilla, and Salgado de Snyder (1991) has a cultural/family conflict scale that involves the extent to which family members have had problems, arguments, or experience conflicting values. However, none of the items in that inventory are specific to conflicts occurring between young people and their parents. Finally, the Multidimensional Acculturative Stress Inventory (MASI) by Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, and Garcia-Hernandez (2002) contains subscales relating to English competency pressures, Spanish competency pressures, pressure to acculturate, and pressure against acculturation. However, though some of the items relate to problems that young people may experience as a result of the acculturation gap (e.g., “I have had conflicts with others because I prefer American customs over Mexican/Latino ones”), these items are not specific to problems with family members or parents.

Thus, although existing acculturative stress measures include some items relating to intergenerational stressors, there remains a need to develop measures that directly examine the types of disagreements and conflicts that young people experience with their parents as a result of the acculturation gap. Measures that gauge whether adolescents or young adult children are actually experiencing acculturation disagreements and tensions would aid in the prediction of problem behaviors and personal distress. Pasch et al. (2006) suggested that existing acculturation gap scales lack sufficient detail and argued that “other unexplored dimensions of parent-child conflict, such as intensity or subject matter of conflict, may be important” (p. 83). The present study follows that recommendation and continues the effort of shifting the focus of analysis away from differences in degrees of acculturation or

acculturation strategies between parents and children to the actual topics of disagreement that are at play.

Developing the Acculturation Gap Conflicts Inventory

This study examines the factor structure and validity of a relatively new intergenerational conflict measure aimed at exploring acculturation gap issues that increase the likelihood of problematic behaviors in adolescents and young adults: the Acculturation Gap Conflicts Inventory (AGCI). An early version of the questionnaire used in the present study was initially developed and reported in Dennis et al. (2010). In that study, acculturative conflicts between parents and young adults were related to higher depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem, after controlling for other measures of family dynamics. A more comprehensive survey questionnaire was created by gathering and adapting items relating to intergenerational acculturative conflicts from existing acculturative stress measures (Gil & Vega, 1996; Mena et al., 1987; Rodriguez et al., 2002), and additional items were written based on content provided by focus groups with young adults. Although the literature cited earlier largely focuses on adolescent populations, the results of our focus groups with Latinos whose ages ranged from late adolescence to young adulthood suggested that conflicts with parents regarding differences in values and expectations remained salient as they made the transition to adulthood. The new measure was designed to tap into the ways in which young people experience the acculturation gap by reflecting the types of recurring conflicts they experience with their parents.

To demonstrate the validity and utility of the AGCI, we examine the extent to which it correlates with existing measures of acculturation, acculturative stress, family dynamics, and psychosocial adjustment in a sample of Hispanic young adults. The acculturation gap and the intergenerational conflicts associated with the gap should occur more frequently when children are more acculturated to American culture and are less oriented to Hispanic culture (Szapocznik et al., 1978) as measured by scales such as the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II; Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995). Likewise, they should be highest among first- (both parents and children born outside the United States) and second-generation (i.e., parents are born outside the United States, children in the United States) immigrant children who are typically more acculturated than parents; thus, acculturation gap conflicts should be negatively correlated with generation status. Furthermore, such conflicts should be associated with other measures of acculturative stress, particularly those types of stress included on the MASI (Rodriguez et al., 2002): English and Spanish competency pressures and pressure to acculturate. According to theory, acculturation gap conflicts also should be related to higher levels of family conflict and lower levels of family cohesion as measured by the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1986). If the psychological impact of experiencing increased acculturative conflicts with parents is negative, the measure also should correlate with lower psychosocial adjustment in the form of greater depressive symptoms, lower self-esteem, and lower academic motivation (i.e., academic engagement and confidence). With regard to discriminant validity, we expect acculturation gap disagreements to be uncorrelated with socioeconomic status (SES) or parent education as acculturation gap conflicts may occur among Latino families regardless of SES level. With regard to incremental validity, the

expectation is that the acculturation gap conflicts factors account for the variance in psychosocial adjustment beyond that explained by established scales of acculturative stress.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants included 283 Hispanic young adults (102 male, 181 female) ranging in age from 18 to 32 years (M = 20.07, SD = 2.59) who volunteered to participate in a family relationships survey conducted in 2008–2009 at the Multicultural Research Laboratory of California State University Los Angeles. Only the data from those reporting a Hispanic ethnic origin were selected for analyses; the criteria for the study also excluded multiethnic participants and those who did not have living parents or guardians with whom they maintained contact. Most of the participants were recruited from the university subject pool: 69% were freshmen or sophomores, 26% were juniors or seniors, and 2% were graduate students. In addition, 3% were recruited from a local community college campus. Participants completed survey packets in the research lab or were given packets while in their classrooms to take home. Researchers later collected the completed packets from those participants.

With regard to generation status, 32 respondents were first-generation immigrants (born outside the United States), 184 were second generation (born in the United States, both parents born outside the United States), 26 participants were generation 2.5 (born in the United States, one parent born in the United States, one parent outside the United States), and 37 were third generation or greater (born in the United States, both parents born in the United States). Within the sample, 61.5% of the participants were of Mexican origin, 13.4% were of Central American origin, 1.4% of South American origin, 8.1% reported two or more Latino/Hispanic cultural groups, and 15.5% did not state their country of origin. This sample is similar to the demographics of Latino young people in the United States as a whole, for which Latinos represent 40% of the population, 62% of whom are of Mexican origin and two thirds of whom were born in the United States (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009).

The majority of the participants lived at home with parents (83%) and 55% were employed. Of the participants in our study, 49.5% of their mothers and 56.3% of their fathers had less than a high school education, 17.3% of their mothers and 16.3% of their fathers had a high school diploma, and 31.8% of their mothers and 27.4% of their fathers had at least some college education. The socioeconomic characteristics of this sample are reflective of the university and community college from which they were recruited. The university that the majority of participants attended is a commuter campus where 51% of the students are Hispanic/Latino, more than 85% come from Los Angeles and the surrounding community, and 76% receive financial aid.

Measures

Demographic variables—These variables included a dichotomous variable for gender (coded as 1 = female, 2 = male), and a SES measure using a single item that asked about standard of living on a 5-point scale ranging from very poor, poor, just getting by, and living

comfortably to very well-off (Aseltine, Gore, & Colten, 1994). We also included parents' highest level of education, which was rated on a 9-point scale (1 = none, 9 = graduate or professional education). Participants reported on both their mother's and father's education levels; the parent's highest education level was used for the analyses. Generation status was measured by asking participants to report their parents' country of birth and coding responses into one of four categories: Generation 1 (foreign-born respondents with two foreign-born parents), Generation 2 (respondents born in the United States with two foreign-born parents), Generation 2.5 (U.S.-born respondents with one foreign-born parent and one U.S.-born parent), and Generation 3 or greater (U.S.-born respondents with two U.S.-born parents).

The Acculturation Gap Conflict Inventory—The AGCI was developed in part by adapting items from existing measures of acculturative stress[2] (Gil & Vega, 1996; Mena et al., 1987; Rodriguez et al., 2002) with the goal of applying it more specifically to detect family intergenerational conflicts among Hispanic young adults. Additional items were developed based on the content themes of four focus group discussions conducted at the Multicultural Research Lab of California State University, Los Angeles. Groups of four to six same-sex Hispanic college students were filmed sharing their experiences about how acculturation issues affect their family relationships. Participants were asked to describe the kinds of situations when they feel that they are "more American than their parents" or perceive more conflict with family members because they are "not traditional enough." Themes that occurred in two or more focus groups included disagreements over autonomy, dating, sex, language choice, food choice, and chores. Some of the items were written in a manner consistent with the Asian American Family Conflicts Scale by Lee, Choe, Kim, and Ngo (2000), which includes statements comparing what the parents want (or what they do) to what the young person would want or prefer (e.g., "I want to stay out late with friends but my parents think I should come home earlier"). Forty-nine acculturation gap conflict items were included and all were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree, almost never) to 7 (strongly agree, almost always).

Acculturation and family scales—In addition, established scales were included in the survey to explore how they would correlate with the newly proposed acculturation gap factors.

Acculturation was measured using Scale 1 of the Acculturation Rating for Mexican Americans-II (Cuellar et al., 1995), which includes 30 items rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely often or almost always). Since the ARSMA-II was developed for use with Mexican-origin participants, it was adapted for the purpose of this study for use

[2]From the Social, Attitudinal Familial, and Environmental Acculturation Stress Scale by Mena et al. (1987), the following three items were included with slight modifications: "My family does not want me to move away but I would like to," "It bothers me that my family members I am close to do not understand my American values," and "Close family members and I have conflicting expectations about my future." From the Acculturation Conflict scale by Gil and Vega (1996), modified versions of the following items were included: "How often do you have problems with your family because you prefer American customs?" "How often do you get upset at your parents because they don't know American ways?" and "How often do you feel uncomfortable having to choose between American and Latin ways of doing things?" From the Multidimensional Acculturation Stress Inventory by Rodriguez et al. (2002), the following items were adapted with modification: "I have had conflicts with others because I prefer American customs over Mexican/Latino ones" and "I feel uncomfortable because my family members do not know American ways of doing things."

with Latinos in general (e.g., “My contact with Mexico has been” was changed to “My contact with my culture of origin [e.g., Mexico, El Salvador, etc.] has been”). The item, “I like to identify myself as Mexican” was dropped and replaced with two items, “I like to identify myself with my culture of origin (e.g., Mexican, Salvadorian)” and “I like to identify myself as Latin American (e.g., Mexican American, Salvadorian American).” To score this scale, the 17 items relating to Latino orientation are averaged and the 14 items relating to Anglo orientation are averaged. The adapted scale evidenced good reliability for the Latino Orientation Subscale (α = .92) and for the Anglo Orientation Subscale (α = .78).

Acculturative Stress was measured using three of the four subscales from the MASI by Rodriguez et al. (2002). The first subscale was Spanish Competency Pressures, which included 7 items (α = .92), for example, “I feel pressure to learn Spanish.” The second subscale was English Competency Pressures, which included 7 items (α = .90), for example, “I don’t speak English or I don’t speak it well.” The third subscale was Pressure to Acculturate, which included 7 items (α = .86), for example, “It bothers me when people pressure me to assimilate to the American ways of doing things.” The last subscale from the MASI, Pressure Against Acculturation, was not included because some items from this subscale were adapted to create our proposed instrument and, thus, would overlap with the scale in question (see above). For all items from the MASI, participants rated “how stressful” each item was on an 8-point scale, with 0 = does not apply, 1 = not at all stressful, 4 = stressful, and 7 = extremely stressful.

Family conflict and family cohesion were assessed using two subscales from the Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1984). Family Cohesion (α = .84) included 9 items (e.g., “Family members really help and support one another,” “There is a feeling of togetherness in our family”). Family Conflict (α = .67) included 9 items (e.g., “We fight a lot in our family,” “Family members sometimes hit each other”). Items were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (not true) to 7 (very true).

Psychosocial and academic adjustment—This measure was measured with four variables: depressive symptoms, self-esteem, academic engagement, and academic self-confidence. Depressive Symptoms was assessed with the 20-item (sample α = .90) Center for Epidemiologic Studies–Depression (Radloff, 1977) scale, where participants indicate how often they have experienced various symptoms in the last week with ratings on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (rarely or none of the time/less than 1 day) to 4 (most or all of the time/5–7 days).

Self-esteem (sample α = .87) was measured using the Rosenberg Self-esteem Inventory (Rosenberg, 1965), which includes 10 statements rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Academic Engagement (sample α = .83) was measured using a scale that included 12 items (e.g., “I read most of the material assigned for class,” “I put full effort into homework,” “I get help from my professor if needed”). This brief scale was developed for the purpose of this study to measure the extent to which college students were engaged in positive

academic behaviors such as those discussed by Kuh, Pace, and Vesper (1997). The items were rated on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely).

Academic Confidence (sample α = .73) was also measured using a scale based on the academic commitment and self-efficacy scales created by Phinney and used with similar samples of Latino college students (see Phinney, Dennis, & Gutierrez, 2005; Phinney, Dennis, & Osorio, 2006). This scale included 6 items relating to the extent to which college students were committed to college and confident in their ability to complete their degree (e.g., "I definitely plan to graduate from college," "I am certain that college is right for me"). The items were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted with SPSS using Promax rotation and principal axis factoring (Osborne & Costello, 2005) to uncover the factor structure of the items in the AGCI. Bivariate Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the convergent validity of each subscale. To assess incremental validity, four hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, aimed at predicting each of the four adjustment variables (depressive symptoms, self-esteem, academic engagement, and academic confidence). For each, the three covariates (SES, gender, generation status) were entered as the first step of the model, the established acculturative stress scales were entered as the second step, and the acculturation gap conflict factors were entered as a block in the third step of the regression models. The generation status variable was analyzed as a continuous variable because preliminary analysis using analysis of variance revealed that acculturation gap conflicts did not significantly differ by generation status.

Results

All variables were normally distributed. The ARSMA-II measures revealed good variability in acculturation orientation (for Anglo acculturation: mean = 3.94, SD = 0.49, skewness = −.72, kurtosis = 1.07; for Hispanic acculturation: mean = 3.72, SD = 0.74, skewness = −.49, and kurtosis = −.31). Means and standard deviations for other research variables are presented in Table 3.

Factor Analysis

Forty-nine Acculturation Gap Conflict items were factor analyzed using principal axis factor analysis as the extraction method and a Promax rotation method. Promax is an oblique method and was chosen over an orthogonal rotation method because the dimensions in the present study could not be assumed to be uncorrelated. The graph of the Scree test (Gorsuch, 1983) suggested three to four factors. After running multiple factor analyses at numbers below and above the number of factors emerging from the Scree test (as suggested by Osborne & Costello, 2005), a reduced total of 24 items remained and were found to cluster along three factors. For parsimony, only items that loaded onto only one factor at .50 or above were considered. The three acculturation gap factors identified distinct domains of disagreements with parents over issues of autonomy values, preferred culture, and dating or

being out late at night. See Tables 1 and 2 for a complete list of items and factor loadings, means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the three factors.

The first factor was named the Autonomy Conflicts subscale (α = .87), and it explained 25.7% of the variance according to the extraction sum of squares loadings. It included 11 items relating to conflicts with parents over issues of autonomy, independence, and values in general. Examples of these items include the following: “I wish my parents would interfere less with my life,” “I sometimes wish that my parents would allow me to be more independent,” and “I want to move out of the house or have done so already, but my parents don’t want me to.”

The second factor involved conflicts over Preferred Culture (α = .87), which explained 6.2% of the variance. This subscale included 7 items relating to tensions over the cultural orientation choices of parents and young people. It consisted of the following items: “My parents wish that I would practice the customs of my culture more than I do,” “My parents complain that I act too American,” “I get upset at my parents because they do not know American ways of doing things,” “I feel uncomfortable having to choose between my parents’ ways of doing things and American ways of doing things.”

The third factor involved conflicts over Dating and Being Out Late (α =.84), and it explained 4.5% of the variance. This subscale included 6 items relating to conflicts over dating and staying out at night with peers. Examples of these items include the following: “I want to stay out late with my friends but my parents think I should come home earlier,” “I want to spend a night out at a friend’s house but my parents don’t want me to,” “I would like to spend the night with my boyfriend or girlfriend, but my parents wouldn’t want me to.”

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Correlations between the three Acculturation Gap Conflicts factors and related variables are presented in Table 3. Contrary to the expectation that lower generation status would be related to increased acculturation gap conflicts, only Dating/being out late conflicts were weakly associated with lower generation status. The only acculturation gap factor associated with acculturation orientation was the Autonomy factor, which significantly correlated with lower Hispanic orientation. With regard to the acculturative stress variables, Preferred-culture conflicts were associated with all three acculturative stress variables (greater English competence pressures, Spanish competence pressures, and pressure to acculturate). Dating/being out late conflicts also were associated with more pressure to acculturate. It may be useful to note that the pressure to acculturate scale concerns feeling pressure from others, and may include both parents and peers.

As expected, the AGCI factors correlated positively with family conflicts and negatively with family cohesion (only Dating conflicts were not significantly related to family cohesion). For psychosocial and academic adjustment, the strongest correlations consistently involved Autonomy conflicts. Preferred-culture conflicts also were associated with lower academic engagement, and Dating conflicts were associated with greater depressive symptoms.

In general, the results confirmed discriminant validity: the acculturation gap conflicts factors were not significantly correlated with SES or parent education. In addition, we examined the correlation between these factors and gender. A significant correlation for Dating conflicts indicated that these were more common among female young adults.

Incremental Validity

The scales' incremental validity was satisfactorily confirmed for the dependent variables of self-esteem, academic confidence, and academic engagement, particularly with regard to the Autonomy conflicts factors (see Table 3). After controlling for gender, generation status, parents' education, and SES in the first step of each equation for these three dependent variables, and accounting for the three acculturative stress variables in the second step of each equation, the change in R2 was significant in each model when the acculturation gap conflicts factors were entered. For all dependent variables, the coefficient for Autonomy conflicts was statistically significant. This indicates that the AGCI can account for variance in psychosocial adjustment, beyond that explained by the MASI. In addition, the coefficient for Dating/being out late subscale was also significant in the third step of the equation for self-esteem. The value of the coefficient suggested that greater Dating/being out late conflicts were predictive of greater self-esteem. For depressive symptoms, although the change in R2 was not statistically significant in Step 3 of the model, the beta coefficient for the Autonomy factor and the total R2 for the overall model were significant.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the factor structure and validity of the AGCI. Factor analysis of these items revealed three factors, each of which demonstrated good internal consistency. The scales were developed to understand how the acculturation process affects the parent–child dyad in ways not fully captured by previous acculturation gap measures. We propose shifting from the traditional way in which acculturation gaps have been measured, because we believe that what causes distress is not only a result of a discrepancy between parents and offspring on level of Hispanic or American acculturation. Instead, it appears that the potentially problematic issues that could arise in any parent–child relationships are exacerbated among families undergoing the acculturation process. In the case of Hispanic young adults, these issues appear to center on three themes: autonomy, preferred-culture, and dating/being out late at night.

The three scales measure topics of disagreement that are present in the parent–child relationship but become more salient due to the process of acculturation—which can be expected to affect each family member differently. The issues identified in the research are all potential sources of conflict in Hispanic families. However, not all sources of conflict should be assumed to produce negative outcomes in the form of depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, and problematic academic behaviors. Instead, each source of conflict can have a different impact on each outcome, and some factors may even produce positive effects. For example, conflicts over dating were correlated with greater self-esteem (perhaps because young adults feel somehow protected by parents who are restrictive in that realm). We also must consider the bidirectional nature of intergenerational conflicts as the current

psychological state of the family members can affect the likelihood that conflicts occur. Young adults with high self-esteem and confidence may be more likely to take part in the kinds of social activities with others that create the impetus for conflicts with parents over dating. The fact that acculturative stress is not perfectly aligned with our acculturation gap conflicts factors may be evidence that conflicts do not necessarily produce stress (Szapocznik et al., 1980) and that some conflicts can provide the opportunity for improved family dynamics, for children to become more mature and to feel more important.

Although some of the issues reflected in the AGCI could be present in any ordinary relationship between young people and parents (regardless of acculturation), they are based on issues that were salient in the focus groups we conducted. The factor analysis included items culled from existing acculturative stress measures that were relevant to acculturative differences between parents and young people. Importantly, by conducting the focus groups and asking about the types of situations where young people perceive a conflict due to being "more American" or "less Hispanic" than their parents (or also just differently acculturated compared with the expectation of the other family members), we were able to uncover themes not reflected in previous instruments.

The first conflicts factor related mainly to autonomy disagreements between parents and young adults. Autonomy was a commonly occurring theme in the focus groups, which is consistent with the experiences described by Hispanic youth in qualitative studies (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001, 2004). According to the results, autonomy conflicts should be closely considered in programs created to improve the mental health, family functioning, and achievement of immigrant families. Autonomy Conflicts was the factor most strongly associated with adjustment problems including low self-esteem, academic engagement, and academic confidence. This factor was a significant predictor of these variables, even after accounting for acculturative stress as measured by the MASI. Furthermore, there was a significant bivariate correlation between autonomy and increased depressive symptoms, though this relationship was not statistically significant after controlling for acculturative stress. In cultures with traditional values like that of Hispanics, the expectation is for offspring to remain emotionally close to the family regardless of age, and young people are often expected to live at home with parents until married, and to follow their parents' rules even as young adults.[3]

Conflicts over autonomy may be a specific source of disagreement with parents for Hispanic young people living in the American culture that values self-reliance and the ability to make decisions independently, while simultaneously dealing with obligations to fulfill the expectations of parents whose culture of origin rewards interdependence. For example, according to data from the World Values Survey (World Values Survey Association, 2009), although 61% of people in the United States agreed independence is "a quality that children can be encouraged to learn at home," only 42% of Mexicans and 36% of Salvadorans endorsed this view (Inglehart, Basáñez, Díez-Medrano, Halman, & Luijkx, 2004). Among

[3]One indicator from the World Values Survey (2004–2006) that may illustrate this point is the percentage of people (above the age of 18 years) from each culture who live with their parents: In Guatemala, 40% of respondents lived with their parents, and in Mexico 31% did, whereas in the United States, only 11% of respondents lived with parents (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org).

emerging adults, Hispanics have been found to report greater sense of obligation to abide by and respect parental authority than European Americans (Fuligni, 2007). Although having conflicts with parents over autonomy is a normative part of development, these issues may be intensified among Hispanic young people and persist longer into adulthood due to their parents' more traditional expectations. Future research can benefit from using AGCI to better understand family dynamics, including a search for ways in which value conflicts can be reduced. Hispanic parents may benefit from knowledge regarding the importance of "allowing" their adult children to be more autonomous and support their children's decision making. The cases of successful Hispanic women in the United States, such as those reported by Gándara (1982) and Ceballo (2004), suggest that an upbringing in which independent behavior is emphasized may have the most optimal outcomes for Latinos in America.

The factor analysis of the Acculturation Gap Conflicts questionnaire also uncovered a factor relating to preferred culture (which included items relating to feeling conflicted over choosing between cultures, the perception that their parents think they are "too American," and feelings of embarrassment because their parents do not know American ways). Although this factor was not strongly associated with adjustment, it did correlate negatively and significantly with academic engagement, suggesting that culture preference disagreements are a distraction that takes time away from school, perhaps by depleting people's energy to focus on readings and homework. Preferred culture tensions were also significantly related to the acculturative stress subscales, including both English and Spanish competency pressures and with greater family conflict and less cohesion. Taken together, the results suggest that preferred-culture tensions are most common among young people who are also experiencing pressures from others regarding their cultural orientation, regardless of what this orientation is.

On first glance, the issues in Factor 3 (dating and staying out late with friends) might seem to belong in the same category as autonomy conflicts. However, the items relating to dating and peers loaded onto a separate factor, indicating that these issues represent a distinct set of problems among Hispanics, and they are only moderately correlated with other autonomy conflicts. Thus, there may be Hispanic young adults who disagree with some of their parents' rules and values but whose beliefs regarding dating are not in conflict. Our finding seems consistent with prior research by Shalom Schwartz (1994) summarized in Bond and Smith (1996), regarding the existence of two types of distinct values related to autonomy: intellectual autonomy (referring to issues of "self-direction") and affective autonomy (referring to issues centered around hedonism and in having an "exciting life"). That is, although Factor 1 could reflect "intellectual autonomy" values, Factor 3, Dating/Going out Late, could reflect "affective autonomy" values.

Gender comparisons in the present study indicated that women scored significantly higher than men on dating/being out late conflicts. Raffaelli and Ontai (2004) also found that the topic of dating is especially problematic for Hispanic females for whom parents often express greater concern over preventing sexual activity. Latinas report that these conflicts over dating and spending time out with peers are sometimes frustrating, especially when

they perceive differential treatment in comparison to male relatives who may be accorded more freedom (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004).

In summary, examining the correlates of the three scales in AGCI provided moderate evidence for convergent and discriminant validity. Conflicts over autonomy were related to greater problems in family and psychosocial adjustment, although preferred culture conflicts correlated in the expected direction with acculturative stress and family dynamics variables. The former also showed evidence of incremental validity in predicting adjustment variables beyond the variance accounted for by other acculturative stress variables. The fact that in general the three AGCI factors were not significantly related to acculturation as measured by ARSMA (Cuellar et al., 1995) could suggest that Hispanic young adults are able to be bicultural and successfully switch from one orientation to the other depending on situations; that is, they may endorse a generally highly Hispanic orientation but still have a problem with the values of their parents with regard to specific issues related to autonomy and dating, or they may indicate a high Anglo orientation and not have disagreements over culture preference. The only exception was that autonomy conflicts were negatively correlated with Hispanic orientation, indicating that conflicts over independence may be more likely to occur among immigrant families where youth report a low Hispanic orientation.

Limitations and Implications

The present study is limited by the use of a sample of college students because we cannot ensure that our findings can be generalized to the larger population of young adults who are not enrolled in college. An additional limitation is that the AGCI was specifically created for use with Hispanic young adults and late adolescents. Youth from other immigrant groups who also are experiencing acculturation gaps may not be as likely to engage the same problematic behaviors because the acculturation experience may be different for Hispanics compared with other groups. New Hispanics/Latinos are continually arriving to the United States, given Mexico's geographical proximity and the large wage gap for manual labor between the two countries (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Thus, the constant influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants may uniquely help preserve the language and some elements of the Hispanic culture while making socioeconomic assimilation exceptionally difficult for this group owing to stereotypes and negative expectations. It is possible that with some modifications to items referring to Latino or Hispanic culture, the factors uncovered in the present study may be relevant to other immigrant groups. Nevertheless, researchers must examine the cross-cultural equivalency of such modifications.

The content of the scales also are most reflective of issues relating to adolescence and emerging adulthood, and thus may not be well suited for use with other age groups. The subscales relating to autonomy and dating conflicts are most clearly germane to the developmental period where independence and identity development are salient issues. Although the sample of the present study only included young adults, we believe that these issues are likely to be relevant to adolescents as well, and future research can examine the extent to which this is true. As discussed above, these issues are also common intergenerational conflicts present in nonimmigrant families (Smetana, 2005). Although we expect and have found some evidence (e.g., Dennis et al., 2010) that these issues are

somewhat more pervasive among Hispanic families due to the compounding of normative generational differences with the addition of cultural differences, empirical comparisons of the responses of youth from nonimmigrant groups is warranted to reach this conclusion with more confidence.

Another limitation that must be mentioned is that the scales presented measure the extent to which young people experience intergenerational conflicts with parents, but they do not specifically measure the extent of distress experienced as a result of these conflicts. Mere disagreements and frequency of conflicts with parents are not always harmful to adolescent adjustment (Adams & Laursen, 2007). Disagreements may simply provide opportunities for interaction in the family that reassure family members that they care for each other. Conflict may just be a way of communicating, an excuse to fulfill a “need for relatedness” (Ryan & Deci, 2000) within families. Fulfilling this need or restoring a sense of self may be one of the reasons why we observed a positive relationship between self-esteem and dating/being out late conflicts when other factors were controlled. After accounting for other factors, young adults who are asserting their desire to date and spend time with peers may be those who are more confident in their desires. This exception aside, however, the other acculturation gap conflicts subscales were primarily associated with problematic outcomes including increased acculturative stress, family conflict, and adjustment problems. Most of these associations were in the weak to moderate range, but they might have been stronger if the acculturation gap survey items were to ask about feelings more directly or to include a separate rating scale for responders to report the extent to which these conflicts cause distress. Acculturation gap measures in future studies should attempt to delve deeper into negative emotions and topics of discussion present in families in which acculturation is relevant.

We believe the three scales in the AGCI could be of value to researchers from a variety of disciplines who are interested in measuring intergenerational conflicts among Hispanic youth. Improving survey research tools that assess acculturation factors affecting family relationships is of value because it will increase researchers’ ability to predict potentially problematic academic behaviors and the likelihood that youth will experience difficulties in psychosocial adjustment. Interventions (family counseling, campaign ads, TV program content, workshops, etc.) that aim to encourage optimal outcomes for Hispanic youth can benefit from knowledge gained from such research.

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Table 1

Rotated Pattern Matrix Showing Factor Loadings for Acculturation Gap Conflicts Inventory

Factor 1: Autonomy Conflicts *(alpha=.87)*	**Loading**		
	Factor 1	**Factor 2**	**Factor 3**
I wish my parents would be more accepting of the way I am.	**.785**	.101	−.161
My parents and I have different expectations about my future.	**.769**	−.021	−.215
I wish my parents would interfere less with my life.	**.761**	−.180	.078
My parents and I have different views about life.	**.757**	−.051	−.231
My parents and I have different values.	**.688**	.132	−.300
It bothers me that my parents do not understand my values.	**.631**	.144	−.098
It is hard for me to express disagreement with my parents.	**.625**	−.092	.024
My parents do not understand what it is like to be in my generation.	**.589**	.003	.030
I want to move out of the house or have done so, but my parents don't want me to.	**.547**	−.082	.200
I wish that parents would allow me to be more independent.	**.534**	−.109	.218
Factor 2: Cultural Preference Conflicts (*alpha=.87*)			
I feel uncomfortable having to choose between my parents' ways of doing things and American ways of doing things.	−.173	**.787**	.082
I've had some problems in my family because I prefer American customs.	.010	**.751**	.004
I feel uncomfortable because I have to choose between Latin and non-Latin ways of doing things.	−.090	**.716**	.050
My parents complain that I act too American.	.034	**.694**	.017
I get upset at my parents because they do not know the American way of doing things.	.128	**.787**	−.155
I've been embarrassed of my parents because they do not know the American way of doing things.	.023	**.751**	−.115
My parents wish I would practice customs of my culture more than I do.	.204	**.554**	−.065
Factor 3: Dating and Being Out Late Conflicts (*alpha=.84)*			
I want to spend time with my boyfriend/girlfriend but my parents think I should do something else.	−.154	.054	**.814**
I would like to spend the night with my boyfriend/girlfriend but my parents wouldn't want me to.	−.214	.036	**.732**
I want to have a boyfriend/girlfriend but my parents don't think I should have a serious relationship.	−.172	.030	**.677**
I want to go on dates but my parents don't want me to date.	−.073	.053	**.659**
I want to spend night at a friend's house, but my parents don't want me to.	.125	−.128	**.656**
I want to stay out late with friends but my parents think I should come home earlier.	.219	−.137	**.603**

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations with Acculturation Gap Disagreement Factors (n = 283).

	Autonomy/Values Conflicts	Preferred-Culture Conflicts	Dating/Being Out Late Conflicts
	M **= 3.72** ***SD*** **=1.27**	***M*** **= 1.99** ***SD*** **= 1.08**	***M*** **= 3.17** ***SD*** **= 1.60**
Acculturation Gap Conflict Scales:			
Autonomy Conflicts	-		
Culture Preference Conflicts	.35**	-	
Dating/Being Out Late Conflicts	.41**	.32**	-
Demographics:			
Gender	.07	.10	−.21**
Generation Status	−.04	−.09	−.12*
SES	−.10	−.09	−.05
Parents' highest education	.02	.01	−.11
Acculturation and Family Scales:			
ARSMA Anglo orientation	−.09	−.08	.05
ARSMA Hispanic orientation	−.12*	−.09	.05
MASI Pressure for English comp	.03	.26**	.05
MASI Pressure for Spanish comp	.12	.15**	.06
MASI Pressure to Acculturate	.11	.30**	.22**
FES Family Cohesion	−.51**	−.21**	−.10
FES Family Conflict	.43**	.21**	.18**
Psychosocial and academic adjustment variables:			
Depressive symptoms	.18**	.11	.14*
Self-esteem	−.25**	−.11	.00
Academic engagement	−.20**	−.16**	−.06
Academic confidence	−.20**	−.06	.02

Note. SES = socioeconomic status; ARSMA = Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans; MASI = Multidimensional Acculturative Stress Inventory. Gender coding: 1 = female,2 = male. The Acculturation Conflicts factors are on a scale from 1 to 7, where I indicated low.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression of the Incremental Validity of Acculturation Gap Conflicts for Psychosocial Adjustment and Academic Behavior Variables

		Depressive symptoms (from 1 to 4)		Self-esteem (from 1 to 5)		Academic engagement (from 1 to 7)		Academic confidence (from 1 to 7)	
		(*M* = 1.54, *SD* = 0.46)		(*M* = 5.26, *SD* = .82)		(*M* = 5.72, *SD* = .82)		(*M* = 6.14, *SD* = 0.80)	
Step	**Variable**	**ΔR^2**	**Final β**	**ΔR^2**	**Final β**	**ΔR^2**	**Final β**	**ΔR^2**	**Final β**
1	SES	.04	−.13	.04*	.17**	.06**	.07	.06**	.18**
	Parents' highest education		.18*		.04		−.02		−.03
	Gender		−.13*		.06		−.20**		−.10
	Generation status		−.06		−.02		−.04		−.06
2	MASI Spanish comp. pressures	.05**	.09	.01	−.04	.02	.04	.01	.04
	MASI English comp. pressures		.04		−.07		−.12		−.12
	MASI Pressure to acculturate		.17*		−.03		.00		−.02
3	Autonomy Conflicts	.03	.17*	.07**	−.28**	.03*	−.17*	.03*	−.22**
	Preferred-culture conflicts		−.03		−.03		−.07		.05
	Dating/being out late conflicts		.01		.15*		−.00		.05
	Total R^2 (Adj. R^2)	.11** (.08)		.13** (.09)		.12* (.09)		.10* (.07)	

Note. SES = socioeconomic status; MASI = Multidimensional Acculturative Stress Inventory. Gender coding: 1 = female, 2 = male.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.