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Autonomy and Relatedness in Adolescent-Parent Disagreements: Ethnic and Developmental Factors

Jean S. Phinney

California State University, Los Angeles

Tina Kim-Jo

University of California, Riverside

Saloniki Osorio

Perla Vilhjalmsdottir

California State University, Los Angeles

This study examines the way in which young people from diverse American ethnic backgrounds express autonomy and relatedness in their responses to disagreements with parents and the factors that influence their responses. Adolescents and emerging adults (N = 240) aged 14 to 22 years from four ethnic groups (European American, Mexican American, Armenian American, and Korean American) reported their projected actions (compliance, negotiation, self-assertion) and reasons for their actions in response to six hypothetical adolescent-parent disagreements and completed a scale of family interdependence. Participants from non-European backgrounds complied with parents more than did those from European backgrounds but did not differ in autonomy. Older European Americans used more family-oriented reasons than younger ones, and older Armenian and Mexican Americans were more assertive than younger ones. Family interdependence mediated ethnic differences in compliance and predicted self-assertion.

Keywords: *ethnicity, adolescence, conflict resolution, interdependence, family relationships*

The development of autonomy and relatedness is considered to be a central task of American adolescents. Research with European American ado-

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lescents (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994) has found that displays of autonomy and relatedness are positively associated with measures of ego development and self-esteem. During adolescence, young people must establish and maintain both a sense of self as an individual and connection to significant others (Grotevant & Cooper, 1998). Youniss and Smollar (1985) suggest that during adolescence the pattern of unilateral authority of parents is transformed to one of greater equality. Although this process is likely to result in increased conflict, at least in early adolescence, most adolescents maintain a harmonious relationship with their parents (Steinberg, 1990). By the time that they are in their twenties, most young people have a better relationship with their parents than they did when they were adolescents (Arnett, 2004).

Adolescent-parent relationships have been studied largely among European American adolescents, and the development of autonomy and relatedness may vary across cultural groups. Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz (2000) describe broad differences between developmental patterns in families in the United States and in Japan. They note that in the United States, adolescents tend to individuate from parents and transfer their allegiance to peers; in contrast, in Japan there is a greater emphasis on stability and continuity in the adolescent-parent relationship.

Similarly, family relationships differ among American ethnic groups. European American families are described as emphasizing independence and autonomy, whereas ethnic minority families from non-European cultural backgrounds have been described as emphasizing interdependence, harmonious relationships, obedience to parents, and respect for elders (Fulgini, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; McAdoo, 1993; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000). To the extent that ethnic minority adolescents adhere to values of family interdependence, the development of autonomy may be less emphasized, and relationships with parents may reflect greater closeness and deference than among European American adolescents. There has, however, been relatively little examination of the autonomy and relatedness in adolescent-parent relationships in diverse American ethnic groups.

Situations in which adolescents and parents disagree provide an opportunity to study autonomy and relatedness. In response to disagreements with parents, adolescents may focus on autonomy from their parents and assert their own wishes. Alternatively, they may focus on the relationship and try to maintain harmony by complying with their parents' wishes. In addition, the reasons that adolescents give for their actions can reveal attitudes about their relationship with parents. Reasons can be self-oriented or show consideration for others, regardless of whether one's behavior is self-assertive or compliant. In this study, we examined autonomy and relatedness across eth-

nic groups by assessing adolescents' and emerging adults' projected actions and reasons for their actions in response to hypothetical disagreements with parents. We explored ethnic and age differences in their responses and the extent to which the cultural value of family interdependence mediates these differences.

Ethnic Differences in Handling of Disagreements with Parents

Cross-cultural research has revealed broad differences in the ways in which disagreements are conceptualized and handled in different cultures (Markus & Lin, 1999). Markus and Lin (1999) suggest that in cultures that value individual autonomy, the most appropriate response to a disagreement is a direct expression of one's views. Open disagreement is allowed or even expected as a way of understanding and resolving differences. On the other hand, in cultures that value harmonious relationships, direct confrontation is seen as inappropriate. Compliance, negotiation, or withdrawal may be favored, to avoid conflict.

Research focusing on distinct cultures generally supports Markus and Lin (1999) in showing differences in conflict resolution between North American or European cultures and non-European cultures (Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarram, Pearson, & Villareal, 1997; Haar & Krahe, 1999). It is not clear, however, whether these differences extend to American ethnic groups. Immigrants to the United States from non-European cultures bring with them values from their country of origin, but through the process of acculturation they adapt to mainstream American values to varying degrees. Second-generation immigrants endorse traditional values of family interdependence to a lesser degree than the first generation (Fuligni et al., 1999; Phinney et al., 2000). Fuligni (1998) found that American adolescents from diverse ethnic groups, including European Americans, did not differ in levels of conflict and cohesion with their parents.

Furthermore, there are individual differences among ethnic group members, and ethnic group membership alone does not explain group differences in attitudes and behavior. Sue (1999) suggests that researchers need to identify the aspects of ethnicity that may account for ethnic differences. Cultural values are widely assumed to be the basis for many observed ethnic group differences in behavior. To understand cultural differences, specific cultural values should be assessed at the individual level and their relationship to outcomes of interest examined (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Phinney & Landin, 1998; Steinberg & Fletcher, 1998). In the current study, in addition to com-

paring ethnic groups, we examined the role of the cultural values of family interdependence as a mediator of ethnic differences.

To study cultural differences in the handling of disagreements and cultural values that may underlie these differences, we selected four American ethnic groups originating from four distinct cultural traditions: European, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American. Specifically, we studied adolescents and emerging adults from four groups: European American, Korean American, Armenian American, and Mexican American.

European Americans have been widely described as emphasizing a focus on the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and relative autonomy in family relationships (Rothbaum et al., 2000). The three ethnic minority groups differ in cultural values and beliefs, cultural practices, immigration history, and length of time in the United States. Nevertheless, each holds strong values of family interdependence. Korean Americans come from a culture that emphasizes harmonious parent-child relationships. Although they adopt some Western values of independence and self-reliance following immigration (U. Kim & Choi, 1994), they remain well above European Americans on traditional Asian values (B. Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1991). Armenian families in the United States hold strongly to traditional Armenian values of family closeness, expecting children to live at home until married and to marry within their own ethnic group (Bakalian, 1993). Both parents and adolescents in immigrant Armenian families hold stronger attitudes toward obligations to the family than do European Americans (Phinney et al., 2000). Among Mexican American families, cultural values of family interdependence are more strongly endorsed than among European American families, but they decline somewhat over generations (Marin & Marin, 1991; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). These ethnic groups hold values from their culture of origin that may differ among themselves, but they also are expected to differ from European American values.

To examine the cultural values that may underlie adolescent-parent relationships, we used a measure of family interdependence (Phinney & Madden, 1997) developed from descriptions of family attitudes in the literature on non-European ethnic groups (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Kagitcibasi, 1996) and specifically adapted to adolescents.

Age and the Handling of Adolescent-Parent Disagreements

In addition to cultural influences, autonomy and relatedness are likely to differ with age. Research suggests that there are developmental changes in

the responses to adolescent-parent disagreements. Studies with predominantly European American adolescents show that during early adolescence, young people begin to question parental authority and assert their own authority (Conger & Ge, 1999; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). With increasing age, adolescents are less willing to accept parental authority (Fuligni, 1998). From early to midadolescence, conflicts with parents increase in affective intensity (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998). However, the number of conflicts decreases from early to late adolescence and the affective intensity levels off by late adolescence (Laursen et al., 1998). Steinberg (1990) suggests that the adolescent-parent relationship becomes less contentious and more egalitarian with age. Conflict resolution strategies become more adultlike during adolescence with the increasing ability to use negotiation (Collins & Laursen, 1992; Reese-Weber, 2000). Insofar as autonomy seeking increases during adolescence (Smetana, 1995), self-assertion should increase and compliance decline with age.

For American young people from families whose roots are not in Western European cultures, the age differences in autonomy seeking are less clear. Although they may grow up in families that emphasize harmony in relationships and obedience to parents, as they approach adulthood they must increasingly make decisions about their own future. Markus and Kitayama (1998) point out that even within cultures that place a strong emphasis on interdependence, the individuality of each person is clearly recognized. These authors also note that the way in which individual distinctiveness is accomplished in such cultures has not been explored. In this study, to investigate developmental differences in the expression of autonomy and relatedness, we included three age groups: middle adolescents (ages 14-15), late adolescents (ages 16-18), and emerging adults (ages 19-22).

Situational Factors in Adolescent-Parent Disagreements

An additional factor in the handling of disagreements is the particular issue on which the adolescent and parent disagree. Behavior in response to disagreements is likely to be strongly influenced by the source of disagreement, although there has been little research on this topic. In studies of adolescent-parent disagreements, much of the research has focused on everyday conflicts such as those over chores and curfews (Barber, 1994; Smetana, 1995). However, actual disagreements can range from the quarrels over minor issues such as doing one's chores to differences over important life decisions such as choice of a career. Adolescents are more likely to assert their autonomy in dealing with important issues that they consider to be their own prerogative than in daily activities such as chores (Smetana, 1995).

There are also cultural differences in the meaning of particular types of disagreements (Song, Smetana, & Kim, 1991). Choice of a dating partner or of a college major is generally seen in European American families as the prerogative of adolescents, but in many immigrant cultures these issues are topics that concern the family and about which parental views should be considered. To explore the role of situational factors in the handling of disagreements, we used a range of situations, including typical everyday disagreements, important life decisions, and situations likely to differ across ethnic groups.

The hypothetical situations used in this study represented potential sources of disagreement, not necessarily open conflicts. Disagreements may or may not result in conflicts, defined in terms of open verbal or behavioral opposition (Laursen et al., 1998). Open expression of opposition to parents can be avoided, and such avoidance may occur more often among young people from cultural backgrounds that value harmony in family relationships. Adolescents and emerging adults from such cultures may comply with parents' wishes even when they disagree with them. Therefore, the vignettes used in the study involve disagreements; conflicts may result from the disagreement, but alternative responses that avoid conflict are also possible.

Summary and Hypotheses

The issues that we addressed were (a) the way adolescents and emerging adults from four American ethnic backgrounds express autonomy and relatedness in their responses to disagreements with parents and (b) the factors that influence their responses, including ethnicity, cultural values, age, and situation. Middle and late adolescents and emerging adults from four ethnic groups reported their projected actions and the reasons for their actions in response to hypothetical disagreements with their parents, and they completed a measure of family interdependence. We expected that young people from the three ethnic minority groups, compared to European Americans, would show higher levels of compliance with parental wishes and lower levels of self-assertion, as well as greater concern for family as a reason for their actions. We also expected them to endorse the cultural value of family interdependence more strongly than the European Americans. We explored whether the expected ethnic differences in actions and reasons were mediated by family interdependence.

We also examined age differences in actions and reasons in response to disagreements with parents. We expected that older participants, compared to younger, would report less compliance with parental wishes and

more self-assertion but would also more often report negotiating solutions. We explored the possible mediating effect of family interdependence in age differences.

In addition, we considered the role of the particular situation. We expected that the type of disagreement would influence participants' responses. Young people across all ethnic groups were expected to be more assertive in disagreements over major issues that affect their future than in minor daily disagreements.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 240 adolescents and emerging adults, 60 from each of four ethnic groups (European American, Korean American, Armenian American, and Mexican American). All participants reported that they and both parents were from the same ethnic group. They were selected from three age groups: middle school, ages 14-15 ($n = 80$, $M = 14.6$, $SD = 0.53$); high school, ages 16-18 ($n = 80$, $M = 17.2$, $SD = 0.71$); and college, ages 19-22 ($n = 80$, $M = 19.9$, $SD = 0.97$), with equal numbers of males and females from each ethnic group. Virtually all the junior and senior high school students lived at home with their parents. Most of the college students lived at home, as is typical in these ethnic and low-income communities. Thus, while attending college, they are still an integral part of their families. Data regarding socioeconomic status (SES) were not collected in this study. Although prior research in these communities (Phinney, Ferguson, & Tate, 1997; Phinney et al., 2000) shows that the four ethnic groups are likely to differ in SES, research has also shown that ethnic group differences in variables of the type examined in this study (i.e., cultural values in the family) are not strongly associated with SES and remain significant when SES is controlled (Fuligni et al., 1999; Phinney et al., 2000). Table 1 gives a demographic description of the sample.

The middle and late adolescents were recruited primarily from ethnically diverse middle schools and high schools serving immigrant and ethnic minority communities in Los Angeles with largely lower middle-class and working-class populations. Schools were identified as having large numbers of at least two of the ethnic groups of interest. Research assistants visited classes taken by all students, such as social studies classes, and explained the study. Interested participants were given parent consent forms to take home

TABLE 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	<i>Armenian American (n = 60)</i>	<i>Korean American (n =60)</i>	<i>Mexican American (n = 60)</i>	<i>European American (n =60)</i>	<i>Total (N = 240)</i>
Gender					
Males	27	32	30	31	120
Females	33	28	30	29	120
Age					
14-15	20	20	20	20	80
16-18	20	20	20	20	80
19-22	20	20	20	20	80
Birthplace					
US	11	27	49	52	139
Foreign	49	33	11	08	101
Living at home	98.3%	91.7%	91.5%	93.0%	93.6%

and have signed; those who returned signed forms completed the surveys. The surveys included questions about the mother's and father's ethnic background, and only surveys from students who identified themselves and both parents as belonging to one of the groups of interest were included. In some schools, surveys were completed in intact classrooms. In schools that did not allow this, students completed the surveys after school. In such cases, pizza and drinks were offered as an incentive to participate. Because of the relatively low numbers of the Korean American and European American students in the schools and the difficulty of completing the sample in each age and gender group, we recruited 21% of the Korean American adolescents and 13% of the European American adolescents from youth groups in the same communities. Interested adolescents obtained parental consent and were surveyed in their youth group. The survey took 30 to 40 minutes to complete.

The emerging adults were recruited in two community colleges and an urban commuter state university whose students were predominantly from the same ethnic minority communities as the high schools. The colleges and university serve lower-middle-class and working-class populations. Surveys were completed either in general education classes or out of class for special credit. As with the high school students, only surveys from those who identified themselves and both parents from the groups of interest were included.

Materials

Data were collected using a survey that included six vignettes portraying hypothetical disagreements. Participants responded by writing open-ended responses to each vignette, stating what they would do in the situation (their projected action) and the reason for their action. The survey also included demographic questions and a scale of family interdependence.

Vignettes

Six vignettes were developed for this study through a series of steps to ensure that they were representative of adolescent-parent disagreements across diverse ethnic and age groups and included a range of situations from typical everyday issues, ranging from chores to long-term issues that affect the adolescent's future. First, open-ended interviews were conducted with 18 college students representing each of the four ethnic groups included in the study. The students were asked about the types of disagreements that they had with their parents, both currently and during their adolescence. A group of research assistants from all the ethnic groups in the study then discussed the various types of disagreements that emerged from the interviews in terms of their relevance to their own culture. Based on these discussions, eight examples were selected as being typical of adolescent-parent disagreements generally or of particular relevance to families from the cultures of interest. A vignette was generated to exemplify each of the eight disagreements, and a questionnaire was developed in which each vignette was presented followed by open-ended questions: what the participant would do in the situation (projected action), why he or she would do it (reason), and whether the situation were likely to occur in his or her family. The questionnaire was given to nine high school students and nine college students from diverse backgrounds. Based on this pilot study, six vignettes were selected as being representative of adolescent-parent disagreements across the four ethnic groups.

The six final vignettes are shown in Table 2. Each vignette was followed by open-ended questions that elicited the respondent's projected *action* and the *reason* for the action. Open-ended questions were used to obtain responses that reflect the range of views from diverse age and ethnic groups.

Family Interdependence

We measured the cultural value of family interdependence with a scale developed to assess the value that adolescents place on close, interdependent

TABLE 2: Vignettes Used to Elicit Projected Actions and Reasons

-
1. *Chores.* You are living at home with your parents. When your parents come back from work, you are watching your favorite TV show. They notice that you have not done your usual chores and ask you to do them right away. You are in the middle of the show and want to finish watching it.
 2. *Concert.* A popular band that you like is giving a concert. You and your friends decide to attend the event. However, your parents do not want you to go to the concert.
 3. *Family dinner.* A weekly family gathering is planned for the coming Friday night at your house. Everyone knows that Friday nights are family dinner nights. On Tuesday, some friends invite you to a big party that they are having on Friday. When you tell your parents about this, they say that it is important for the family to be together for the Friday dinner.
 4. *Major.* Your parents have very strong ideas about what major and career you should choose. However, your own career interests are different than what your parents want. Now you need to make a choice about what courses to take.
 5. *Dating.* You have recently met someone of a different ethnic background whom you find attractive. You have gone out together several times and you enjoy each other's company. You know that your parents prefer that you date and eventually marry someone from your own ethnic group.
 6. *Moving out.* Imagine that you have been living at home, but you feel that you are old enough to move out of your parents' house and get your own place. Your parents do not feel that you should move out.
-

relationships with their parents (Phinney & Madden, 1997). The scale has been shown to be reliable in prior research with adolescents from diverse ethnic groups (Phinney & Madden, 1997; Cronbach's alpha = .78, with a range of .71 to .86 across five ethnic groups). The original scale was revised to eliminate two items that might overlap with responses to the vignettes: one concerning obedience to parents and another dealing with not arguing with parents. The resulting eight-item scale is shown in the appendix. Respondents rated the extent to which each item was important to them on a 5-point scale from 1 = *not at all important* to 5 = *very important*. Cronbach's alpha was .82, with a range of .75 to .83 across the four ethnic groups.

Demographic Variables

Participants reported their own and their parents' ethnicity, age, gender, birthplace, and current place of residence.

Selection, Coding, and Scoring of Vignettes

The data collection procedures described above resulted in varying numbers of surveys across ethnic, gender, and age groups. Our target sample was 240 participants (with equal numbers across ethnic groups, age groups, and gender), resulting in 1,440 vignettes (6 per participant). The task of coding this large number of vignettes, with two responses per vignette (actions and reasons), was very time-consuming, and coding additional vignettes was beyond the resources of the project. Therefore, a random selection was made of 240 surveys from among all those eligible to obtain the desired distribution by ethnicity, gender, and age group.

Coding categories for *projected actions* were derived initially from prior cross-cultural research on adolescent-parent disagreements (e.g., Haar & Krahe, 1999), which suggests three types of reactions to conflict situations: self-assertion, compliance, or compromise/negotiation. We examined the projected actions from the pilot study data to determine the extent to which the responses reflected these categories and found clear evidence of the three types of responses. In addition, a few adolescents reported that they would do what they wanted but would not tell their parents what they did, or that the situation posed no problem, as the adolescent and parent would agree. Based on these data, two categories, deceit and no disagreement, were added. Five mutually exclusive categories were defined (see Table 3).

Reasons given for actions were expected on the basis of the pilot study to reflect self-interest, concern for parents, or mutual concern. In addition, some adolescents in the pilot sample reported parental coercion as the reason for their actions. We, therefore, added a category involving force or punishment as a reason. When there was no disagreement in the situation, no reason was required. The mutually exclusive categories for reasons are shown in Table 3.

Of the 1,440 vignettes, 24 vignettes (two from each ethnic and age group) were randomly selected and independently coded by six research assistants representing the ethnic groups in the study. Coders then compared and discussed their coding and the rationale for their decisions, and definitions were clarified. The remaining vignettes were coded independently by pairs of research assistants. In the relatively rare case where more than one action or reason was mentioned, only the first was coded. The intercoder reliability coefficients for actions and reasons were, respectively, $kappa = .73$ and $.65$.¹

The coded responses for actions and reasons were categorical data that cannot be analyzed with parametric statistics. Therefore, responses for each participant were converted into proportions of each category across all vignettes, for example, how often compliance was used in the six vignettes.

TABLE 3: Coding Criteria for Vignettes^a

<i>Projected Action</i>	<i>Description</i>
Compliance	Adolescent complies without question to parent's wishes or views (e.g., "I would just do what my parents want").
Negotiation	Adolescent asks, begs, argues, or negotiates, to get own way or work out a compromise (e.g., "I would plead with my parents to let me go") or engages in actions to demonstrate maturity and responsibility (e.g., "I would try to show to them that I am old enough").
Self-assertion	Adolescent openly follows own wishes (e.g., "I would do what I want to do"; "They can't stop me"; "It's my life").
Deceit	Adolescent secretly follows own wishes by being deceitful and/or manipulative (e.g., "I would go but tell them I am at a friend's house").
No disagreement	Adolescent holds the same beliefs as parents, or adolescent believes that parents would not oppose his or her choices (e.g., "I agree with my parents," or "My parents would let me do what I want").
<i>Reason</i>	<i>Description</i>
Family/parents	Importance of and commitment to the family and keeping harmony in the family; respect and concern for parents; obligation to obey parents (e.g., "My family is more important than friends," or "My parents are usually right").
Force	Force, actual or implied, by parents, to obtain compliance; to avoid parental anger or punishment (e.g., "I wouldn't want to get in trouble," or "They would get angry and ground me if I went").
Mutuality	To achieve mutual satisfaction so both adolescent and parents are satisfied (e.g., "Then everyone gets their way and is happy").
Self-interest	Short- or long-term self-interest (e.g., "It is what I want," "It is my right," "It is my life, so it's my choice," or "It doesn't matter what my parents have to say").
No conflict	The situation is not a problem or an issue (e.g., "My parents wouldn't stop me," or "I prefer not to marry outside of my ethnic group.")

a. *Deceit* and *No disagreement* occurred very rarely in the data and were not included in the analyses.

Arcsine transformations (2 times the arc sine of the square root of the proportion) were performed, as has been done in similar research (Yau & Smetana, 1996). This procedure normalizes the distribution of scores and results in

continuous individual scores for actions and reasons that can range from 0 to 3.14.

RESULTS

Plan of Analysis

Preliminary analyses were carried out to examine differences by birthplace in actions and reasons. Two-way (ethnicity by age) MANOVAs were carried out to examine ethnic and age differences in actions and reasons. These were followed by two-way (ethnicity by age) ANOVAs when the MANOVAs were significant. Similar two-way ANOVAs were used to examine ethnic and age differences in family interdependence. The relationship of family interdependence to actions and reasons was examined with bivariate correlations. The role of family interdependence as a mediating variable was evaluated by using it as a covariate in the MANOVAs and ANOVAs of actions and reasons.

Because the means for actions and reasons were proportions of each type of response across all six vignettes, there were no individual scores on actions and reasons for each vignette, and vignettes could not be used as a variable in overall analyses. Chi-square analyses of each vignette separately were used to explore ethnic differences. Graphs were created to illustrate variation across vignettes. Qualitative data were used to elaborate on the findings.

Preliminary Analyses by Birthplace

One-way MANOVAs by birthplace (U.S. or foreign) showed no significant effect of birthplace on actions or reasons. A one-way ANOVA showed no effect of birthplace on family interdependence. Birthplace was, therefore, not included in subsequent analyses.

Projected Actions

Descriptive analyses showed that self-assertion was the most frequent projected action ($M = 1.29$, $SD = 0.61$), followed closely by negotiation ($M = 1.16$, $SD = 0.62$) and then compliance ($M = 0.72$, $SD = 0.61$). Because there were few reported instances of deceitfulness and of no disagreement, they were dropped from the analyses.

TABLE 4: Multivariate and Univariate Analyses of Variance for Projected Actions by Ethnicity and Age

Source	MANOVA		ANOVA			
	df	F ^a	df	Compliance	Negotiation	Self-Assertion
				F	F	F
Ethnicity	(9, 675)	2.18*	(3, 225)	3.76**	1.98	0.85
Age group	(6, 448)	1.31	(2, 225)	1.27	1.61	2.03
Ethnicity x Age Group	(18, 675)	1.77*	(6, 225)	1.53	1.31	2.25*

a. Pillai's Trace.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.02$

The Role of Ethnicity and Age in Actions

We expected that adolescents' actions would vary by ethnicity and age. We carried out a 4 x 3 (ethnicity by age group) MANOVA with the three projected actions (compliance, negotiation, and self-assertion) as dependent variables (see Table 4). The MANOVA was significant for ethnicity. Separate analyses of variance showed that there was a significant ethnic group effect for compliance. As expected, the European Americans ($M = 0.53$) were less compliant than the other groups. Post hoc analyses showed that this difference was significant for the Koreans ($M = 0.86, p < .02$); there was a trend for the Armenians ($M = 0.82, p = .08$) but not for the Mexicans ($M = 0.66$). Contrary to expectations, there were no significant ethnic differences in self-assertion. There were also no significant ethnic differences in negotiation.

The MANOVA showed no age group differences in actions (see Table 4). However, there was a significant interaction of ethnicity by age. Separate ANOVAs for each action showed that the interaction was significant for self-assertion. Post hoc analyses indicated that self-assertion was higher in the oldest Armenian and Mexican American youth than in the youngest ones but did not differ by age for the other two ethnic groups.

In summary, ethnicity predicted compliance with the European Americans being least compliant, and the interaction of age and ethnicity predicted self-assertion with assertion being higher in older than younger Armenian and Mexican Americans.

The Role of Family Interdependence in Actions

To explore the mediating role of family interdependence, we first examined ethnic and age differences in interdependence. A 4 x 3 (ethnic group by

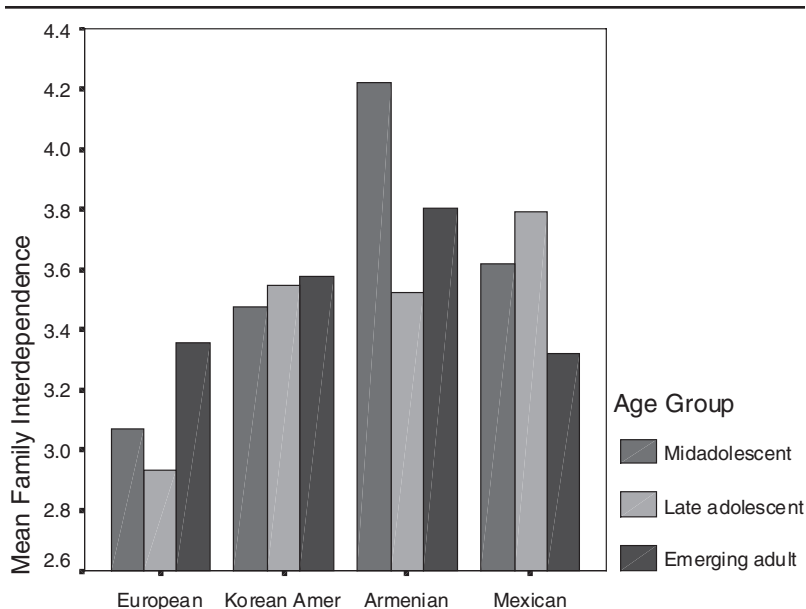


Figure 1. Family interdependence by ethnicity and age group, showing the interactive effect of ethnicity and age.

age group) analysis of variance of family interdependence showed a significant ethnic group difference, $F(3, 240) = 11.35, p < .001$. Bonferroni post hoc comparisons showed that, as expected, European Americans ($M = 3.16, SD = 0.73$) scored significantly lower on family interdependence than the other three ethnic groups; the three ethnic minority groups did not differ among themselves (Korean, $M = 3.59, SD = 0.74$; Armenian, $M = 3.92, SD = 0.68$; Mexican, $M = 3.58, SD = 0.78$).

There was no significant difference in family interdependence by age group, but there was a significant interaction of age and ethnicity, $F(6, 240) = 2.55, p < .05$. Figure 1 illustrates the interaction. Post hoc analyses showed that among the European Americans, family interdependence was endorsed more strongly by the oldest participants than by the youngest. The reverse was true for the Armenian and Mexican youth; family interdependence was higher in the youngest age group. As a result, ethnic group differences were significant in the youngest age group but not in the oldest group.

Bivariate correlations were calculated to examine the relationship of family interdependence to actions. Interdependence was significantly positively correlated with compliance ($r = .32, p < .01$) and negatively correlated with self-assertion ($r = -.38, p < .01$), but unrelated to negotiation.

TABLE 5: Multivariate and Univariate Analyses of Covariance for Reported Actions With Family Interdependence as Covariate

Source	MANOVA		ANOVA			
	df	F ^a	df	Compliance	Negotiation	Self-
				F	F	Assertion
Interdependence	(3, 222)	11.93***	(1, 222)	15.08***	1.43	24.95***
Ethnicity	(9, 672)	1.54	(3, 222)	1.98	2.17	0.31
Age group	(6, 446)	1.33	(2, 222)	1.14	1.61	2.12
Ethnicity x Age Group	(18, 672)	1.50	(6, 222)	1.43	1.20	1.41

a. Pillai's Trace.

*** $p < .001$.

In summary, family interdependence was significantly predicted by ethnicity and by the interaction of ethnicity and age, and it significantly predicted compliance and self-assertion. We, therefore, examined whether it mediated the ethnic differences.

The Mediating Effect of Family Interdependence in Actions

To examine the mediating effect of family interdependence, a 4 x 3 (ethnicity by age group) MANOVA was carried out with the three projected actions as dependent variables, similar to the analyses shown in Table 4, with family interdependence added as a covariate. Separate ANOVAs were carried out for each action. The results, summarized in Table 5, show that family interdependence was a significant predictor of actions, and specifically of compliance and self-assertion, consistent with the correlational analyses. Furthermore, with interdependence included in the model, ethnicity was no longer a significant predictor of compliance. These results indicate that family interdependence mediated the effect of ethnicity on compliance.

The ethnicity by age interaction for self-assertion that was significant in the earlier analyses (see Table 4) was not significant with interdependence included as a covariate (see Table 5). Family interdependence, which was lower in the oldest group of Armenians and Mexican Americans (see Figure 1), may explain the higher levels of self-assertion in older Armenians and Mexican Americans. In summary, differences in family interdependence underlie the ethnic and age differences in compliance and self-assertion.

Reasons

Of the four types of reasons given for the projected actions, self-interest ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 0.63$) was by far the most frequent, followed at lower levels by family/parents ($M = 0.64$, $SD = 0.64$), mutuality ($M = 0.32$, $SD = 0.48$), and force ($M = 0.21$, $SD = 0.39$). As would be expected, reasons were closely linked to actions; that is, certain reasons, such as self-interest, occurred most often with certain actions, such as self-assertion. Bivariate correlations showed that compliance was strongly correlated with two reasons: family/parents ($r = .68$) and self-interest ($r = -.54$). Self-assertion was correlated with the same two reasons but in the opposite direction: family/parents ($r = -.34$) and self-interest ($r = .41$). Negotiation was moderately correlated with mutual concern ($r = .30$).

The Role of Ethnicity and Age in Reasons

We expected that reasons would differ by ethnicity, with the three minority groups more often referring to family and parents as a reason for their actions. Because of the correlations described in the preceding paragraph, differences found in reasons could be attributed to the differences reported earlier for ethnicity; for example, higher levels of compliance among Koreans would be expected to lead to a greater use of family/parents as a reason. To examine ethnic differences in reasons independent of actions, the three actions were included as controls in the analyses.

We carried out a 4 x 3 (ethnicity by age group) MANOVA with the four predominant reasons (family, force, mutuality, and self-interest) as dependent variables and with the three actions included as covariates. The MANOVA showed no significant effect for ethnicity but a significant effect for age group (see Table 6). Subsequent ANOVAs, also shown in Table 6, showed significant age group differences in two reasons: family/parents and for self-interest. Post hoc tests indicated that the emerging adults used family/parents more and self-interest less as a reason than the other age groups. Furthermore, there was a significant interaction of ethnicity and age in the ANOVA for family/parents. Family/parents as a reason was used more by the oldest European Americans than by the youngest ones; for the other three groups, the age differences were not significant (see Figure 2).

The Role of Family Interdependence in Reasons

To explore the role family interdependence in reasons, a 4 x 3 (ethnicity by age group) MANOVA of reasons was conducted with family interdepen-

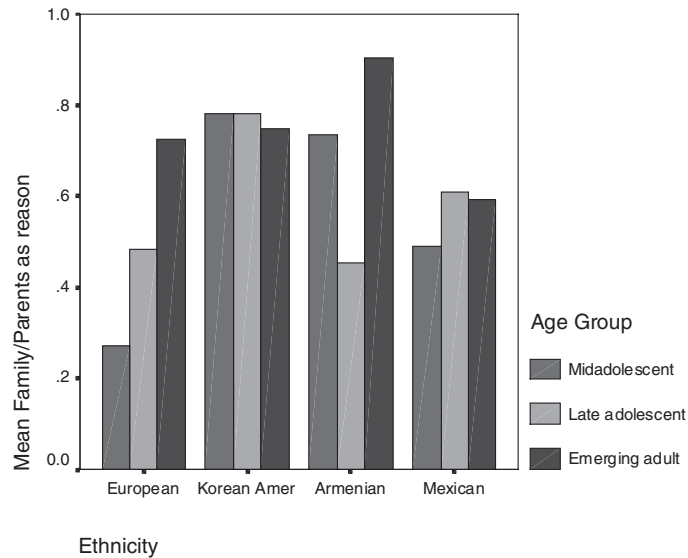


Figure 2. Frequency of use of family/parents as a reason, by ethnicity and age group, showing the interactive effect of ethnicity and age.

TABLE 6 Multivariate and Univariate Analyses of Variance for Reasons

Source	MANOVA		ANOVA				
	df	F ^a	df	Family F	Force F	Mutuality F	Self-int F
Ethnicity	(12, 663)	1.43	(3, 222)	0.25	0.17	1.09	0.37
Age group	(8, 440)	3.43***	(2, 222)	7.93***	0.18	1.37	4.22*
Ethnicity x Age group	(24, 888)	1.22	(6, 222)	2.29*	0.69	0.96	1.57

NOTE: The three actions, compliance, self-assertion, and negotiation, were included as controls but are not shown. Compliance and self-assertion were significant predictors of reasons, but negotiation was not. The complete table is available from the authors.

a. Pillai's Trace.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

dence included as a covariate. As before, the three actions were included as covariates. The results for ethnicity and age did not differ substantially from the previous MANOVA without the covariate (see Table 6), and the results are not shown. Family interdependence was not a significant predictor of reasons with actions controlled. Age group remained a significant predictor of

reasons with family interdependence included. ANOVAs carried out with family interdependence included were similar to the results in Table 6 and are not shown; age group remained a significant predictor of family/parents and self-interest. The interactive effect of ethnicity and age group on family/parents as a reason also remained significant.

In summary, neither ethnicity nor family interdependence predicted reasons with actions controlled. Rather, age group was a significant predictor of the reasons that young people used. Self-interest was used less by older than younger participants from all groups, and family/parents was used more by older than by younger European Americans.

Variation Across Vignettes

Because the actions were categorical data that were scored as proportions across all six vignettes, differences by vignette cannot be analyzed with analyses of variance. Therefore, we examined the frequencies of actions for each vignette separately and used chi-square analyses to examine ethnic group differences. There were significant ethnic differences in actions for vignette 3, family dinner, $\chi^2(df=6) = 16.95, p = .01$, and for Vignette 5, dating, $\chi^2(df=6) = 13.38, p = .05$. For the family dinner, there was greater compliance among Koreans (45.0%), Armenians (31.6%), and Mexicans (39.0%) than among European Americans (16.4%). For the dating vignette, European Americans and Mexicans were lower on compliance than the other two groups.

Descriptively, the patterns of actions by ethnicity for each vignette were similar across ethnic groups (see Figure 3). Compliance was highest for the family dinner in all groups except for the European Americans and was almost nonexistent for the choice of a major. Self-assertion was the predominant projected action in the choice of a partner and of a college major, but it was rare in the case of the family dinner. Negotiation was relatively high for chores, concert, and family dinner but very low for the choice of a partner and of a major.

Qualitative Data Analyses

The open-ended responses provide insights that go beyond the quantitative results. Qualitative differences in attitudes among the ethnic groups were apparent in the stated reasons the participants gave for their actions, even when the frequency of responses did not differ by ethnicity. These differences were particularly evident in the use of parents or family as a reason for

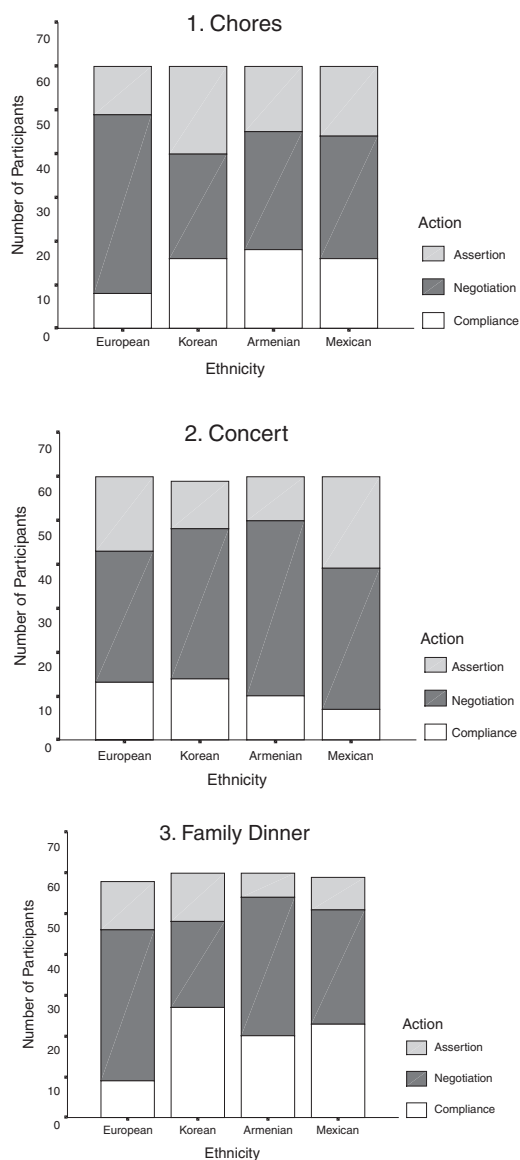


Figure 3. Frequency of projected actions (self-assertion, negotiation, and compliance) by ethnicity, for each vignette.

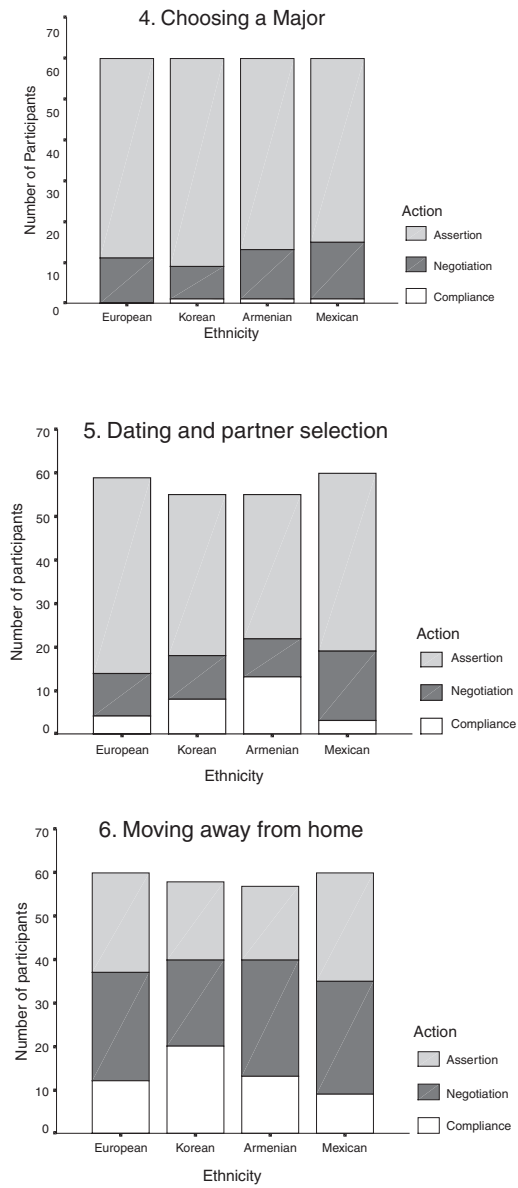


Figure 3 (continued)

compliance, the use of self-interest as a reason for self-assertion, and the reasons for negotiation.

Reasons for Compliance

In explaining why they would comply with their parents' wishes, all participants most often mentioned family or parents. Across all ethnic groups, respect for parents was a common theme (e.g., "I respect my parents' opinions"). However, beyond these types of reasons, qualitatively different attitudes toward family were apparent in the way respondents talked about parents and family (see Table 7, top). European American participants focused on trust in parents and a belief that parents were right or had good reasons for opposing the adolescent; for example, they stated that "I listen to my parents," or "My parents generally have good reasons." They only infrequently expressed warmth and closeness in their reasons. Most of their responses in this category involved mention of *parents*; only rarely was the broader term *family* used.

In contrast, the Koreans mentioned family as often as parents in their reasons for compliance. They talked about the importance of family and of obeying and honoring parents (e.g., "I would do what is best for my family," and "I must obey my parents with respect"). Such attitudes were never mentioned by the European Americans. The Armenians, compared to other groups, showed more warmth and feelings of closeness in their reasons. One emerging adult stated, "Family gatherings are important; it brings the family closer." Armenians were the only group that specifically mentioned love of family and parents as a reason for compliance. Typical statements were "I love and respect my parents," and "I love my family and want their satisfaction." The Mexicans often showed caring and concern for family members as a reason for compliance, attitudes that were not common in the other groups. A middle adolescent stated, "I wouldn't want them to suffer; I would rather they be happier than me." A late adolescent commented, "I respect my guardian, my aunt; she comes home tired from work." Overall, participants from the three ethnic groups expressed stronger feelings of relatedness with parents than did the European Americans. The European Americans' statements suggest a relationship based more on acceptance of parents' legitimate authority than on feelings of closeness.

In addition to mentioning family or parents, some respondents gave self-oriented reasons for compliance. This occurred almost entirely with the European Americans, who gave reasons for compliance such as, "You earn points for their good side in the future," and "To get back to the program as soon as possible." Self-oriented reasons for compliance were rarely used by

TABLE 7: Examples of Reasons for Compliance and Negotiation by Ethnicity and Age

	Middle Adolescents	Late Adolescents	Emerging Adults
Reasons for compliance, involving parents/family			
European Americans	My parents feel it would be best for me. My parents don't want me to go. I honor my parents' decision. I would do what is best for my family.	My parents are usually right. I listen to my parents. I must obey my parents with respect. I don't want to upset my parents.	My parents generally have good reasons. I put first commitments first. Friends come and go but families are forever. Family dinners are important to them.
Korean Americans	I love and respect my parents. I don't want to lose their trust in me.	I love my family and want their satisfaction. I should listen to them and not disobey them.	I love and respect my parents; I would honor their reasons. Family gatherings are important; it brings the family closer.
Armenian Americans	I would do anything for my family. I wouldn't want them to suffer; I would rather they be happier than me.	I like my family. I respect my guardian—my aunt; she comes home tired from work.	I have the most respect for my family. My mom needs to come home and relax in a nice, clean home.
Mexican Americans	To convince my parents to let me go	So I may understand their argument and debate the situation	Talking with them works, they'd understand.
Reasons for Negotiation			
European Americans	So that they might reconsider I can be content as well as my parents. I hate arguing, so I always find the way to peace.	Both my parents and I would be happy.	So they would understand it's important I don't want to argue with my parents. If my parents don't like that person I won't get married to him.
Korean Americans	So everyone would be happy I won't get them angry, and we will both get what we want.	That way you'll be satisfied and you'll satisfy your parents.	To be both places and not disappoint my parents That way my parents won't be upset.
Armenian Americans	That way we'll know how much we trust each other.	To please everyone at the same time To compromise and not get them upset	I want to respect the family but also go to the party.
Mexican Americans			

the other three groups except in the vignette about moving away from home. In this case, both Armenian and Mexican Americans gave the self-oriented reason of saving money. An Armenian stated that he would comply with his parents' wish for him to stay at home: "If I stay home, my parents could help me financially." A Mexican adolescent said, "I'd save money that way."

Reasons for Self-Assertion

In explaining why they would assert their own desires against those of their parents, participants from all groups typically gave self-oriented reasons, usually simply stating, for example, that they would go to the concert because they wanted to. However, in the ethnic minority groups, especially the Armenian and Mexican Americans, self-interest as a reason was often tempered by reference to respect or consideration for the parents or family. Among the Armenians, one late adolescent said, "I'm not trying to disrespect them, just make my own life"; another said she would go to the concert against her parents' wishes because "concerts are not everyday, but your parents are always there for you." An emerging Armenian adult stated, "I respect them but at the same time I'm an adult, and I make my own decisions." A Mexican American midadolescent stated, "I'd go to the party [and miss the family dinner]. I'd apologize the next day to the whole family." Even when asserting their autonomy, these young people seemed to be keeping in mind their relationship to the family. This consideration for parents or family when being assertive occurred rarely among the European Americans.

Reasons for Negotiation

The reasons that participants gave for negotiating most often focused on trying to persuade the parents to let them do what they wanted. These reasons were used across all groups. Nevertheless, adolescents from the three ethnic minority groups were more likely than the Europeans to mention wanting to find a compromise, make everyone happy, or avoid upsetting or angering their parents (see Table 7, bottom). A Korean American late adolescent said she would negotiate so that "Both my parents and I would be happy." An Armenian early adolescent commented that if she negotiated, "I won't get them angry, and we will both get what we want." A Mexican American middle adolescent negotiated "to please everyone at the same time." The European Americans more often talked about debating the situation and trying to convince their parents. Typical responses were "To convince my parents to let me go," and "Talking to them works; they'd understand."

Overall, the qualitative data show that young people from all groups used reasons expressing both autonomy and relatedness. However, the reasons given by European Americans suggest a more self-oriented relationship, whether being assertive or complying with parents. Participants from the other three groups made more reference to family respect and closeness, not only when complying but also when asserting themselves or negotiating.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the way American adolescents and emerging adults from Korean, Armenian, Mexican, and European American backgrounds express autonomy and relatedness in their projected actions and reasons in response to hypothetical disagreements with parents. We examined ethnic group, age, and situational factors related to participants' actions and reasons. To study the processes underlying group differences, we assessed family interdependence at the individual level and examined its mediating role in responses.

Ethnic differences were most evident in the expression of relatedness. Relatedness is seen in the participants' compliance with parental wishes, the reasons that they give for their projected actions, and values they endorse. Although the cultures of origin of the three ethnic minority groups differ in many ways, they have in common an emphasis on interdependence and close family relationships (Bakalian, 1993; B. Kim, et al., 1991; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993). We expected adolescents and emerging adults from Korean, Armenian, and Mexican backgrounds, compared to European Americans, to show more evidence of relatedness. Our expectations were generally supported but with some variation among the minority groups.

Participants from the three minority groups complied with parents more than did the European Americans; this difference was significant for the Korean Americans, and there was a trend for Armenians. These results are in accord with evidence that disagreements in non-European cultures, compared to European or American cultures, are more likely to be handled by compliance to avoid open conflict (Markus & Lin, 1999). Both Korean Americans and Armenian Americans reflect cultural values emphasizing the obligation of children to respect and obey their parents (Bakalian, 1993; U. Kim & Choi, 1994).

The reasons given for actions revealed ethnic differences in the quality of the relationship with parents. Participants from the three minority groups gave reasons for complying that reflect respect and concern for their parents and the importance of family to a greater extent than did the European Ameri-

cans. Even when the minority respondents did not comply with parents, they often showed concern for their parents, a response rarely seen among the European Americans.

In contrast, the European Americans tended to give reasons for complying that either reflected self-interest or else suggested acceptance of parents' legitimate authority, rather than feelings of closeness. Although the European Americans were no more assertive than the other groups in their projected actions, their reasons for self-assertion tended to show less consideration for their parents. When they reported that they would negotiate with their parents, it is often to get what they wanted, rather than to satisfy everyone.

The value placed on family interdependence appears to underlie these differences. Current thinking about cultural research emphasizes the need to go beyond the identification of differences based on cultural group membership and identify the underlying values and attitudes that account for group differences (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Phinney & Landin, 1998; Sue, 1999). In the current study, Korean, Armenian, and Mexican American participants endorsed family interdependence significantly more strongly than did the European American participants, a finding in accord with prior research on these groups (Bakalian, 1993; Chia et al., 1994; U. Kim & Choi, 1994; Marin & Marin, 1991; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993). Furthermore, endorsement of family interdependence mediated the ethnic differences in compliance and reduced to nonsignificance the interactive effect of ethnicity and age on self-assertion. These results highlight the importance of studying the values and attitudes that may underlie group differences, rather than simply using demographic or "social address" categories (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) in studying cultural differences.

The expression of autonomy, contrary to expectations, showed no overall ethnic differences. Autonomy is reflected primarily in participants' assertion of their own desires, as well as in giving self-oriented reasons. Across all four ethnic groups, respondents showed a strong tendency to assert themselves in response to disagreements with parents. Self-assertion was particularly common in situations of central importance to the young person's future, such as choosing a college major and selecting a dating partner. These results show the strong tendency to express autonomy even among those adolescents and emerging adults who strongly endorse values of family interdependence. Autonomy clearly coexists with relatedness in these young people (Killen & Wainryb, 2000).

Although there were few overall age differences, there were interactions of ethnicity and age that suggest age changes in some groups. European Americans showed a developmental trend toward greater relatedness with

increasing age. Although the projected actions of European Americans showed little difference with age, their reasons and values indicate greater concern for the relationship with parents among the older participants. Youniss and Smollar (1985) describe adolescent development as moving from unilateral relationships to mutuality. This mutuality can be seen in the greater use of reasons that show consideration for their parents among the older European Americans. At the same time, there was a stronger endorsement of family interdependence in the oldest group. The European American emerging adults seem less focused on asserting their autonomy, which is perhaps relatively well established at this age; instead, they can relate to their parents in a way that reflects greater equality. Rather than transferring their allegiance from parents to friends (Rothbaum et al., 2000), they may begin to relate to their parents as friends or equals, at least in those families where this is possible. As a result, their relationship with their parents is likely to be more positive than it was when they were adolescents.

For two of the ethnic minority groups, an opposite trend is apparent. For the Armenian and Mexican American participants, self-assertion was relatively low and family interdependence relatively high in the youngest participants, but the reverse was found in the oldest group, suggesting a trend toward greater autonomy. Even in cultures such as these that emphasize parental authority and family closeness, with increasing age there are fewer areas in which adolescents accept parental constraints on their actions. Young people begin to take greater responsibility for making their own decisions about their lives (Smetana, 1995).

However, the age differences among the Armenians and Mexicans do not appear to be simply an adaptation to American norms of greater autonomy (Rothbaum et al., 2000). Even though the older Mexican and Armenian youth asserted themselves more, they showed continued concern with family relationships in the reasons they gave. The higher levels of assertiveness were accompanied by the view that the parents, although often disagreeing with them, generally respected the adolescents' decisions or eventually would come to accept them. As suggested by other research (Bakalian, 1993; Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1989), emerging adults continue to value close relationships with families as they become more independent.

The Korean Americans are the most compliant of all the groups, and they showed no age differences in actions, reasons, and values. The Korean Americans may reflect the process of "encapsulation," that is, maintenance of traditional Korean values through avoidance of contact with countervailing influences, as was shown in a study comparing Korean American and Korean adolescents (Kim-Jo, 2003).

The particular situation also influenced responses. Across all groups, compliance was higher in some situations than others. Situational differences in compliance were most apparent in the three minority groups, where some situations carry strong cultural meaning. Attending a family dinner elicited greater compliance from the three minority groups than other situations. Armenians, relative to other groups, were more likely to comply in the selection of a dating partner and in moving away from home, both situations that are subject to cultural norms.

There are a number of limitations to this study that should be kept in mind. The data were based on hypothetical, not real, disagreements, and participants' responses in real situations might differ from those they gave to hypothetical vignettes. The data were self-reported, and we have no independent evidence on their responses. Future research would benefit from data regarding resolution of actual disagreements. The type of data and relatively small numbers of participants in each cell limited the types of analyses possible by ethnicity, age, and vignette; larger sample sizes would provide the possibility of a clearer understanding of the interactions among these variables. Because the four ethnic groups may differ in ways that were not assessed, such as SES and acculturation, comparisons across the groups should be interpreted with caution and replicated with larger samples that allow for appropriate statistical controls.

In spite of these limitations, the results provide new evidence on cultural and developmental factors in the ways adolescents and emerging adults from diverse American ethnic groups express autonomy and relatedness in the relationships with parents. Guisinger and Blatt (1994) state that "the coordination and integration of autonomy and relatedness in the process of identity formation is essential if the individual is to enter into the adult phase of the life cycle" (p. 108). Yet the way in which these two needs are coordinated has been little studied across diverse groups.

Our results suggest that American adolescents and emerging adults from non-European backgrounds emphasize relatedness in handling disagreements with parents more than do those from European backgrounds, specifically in complying more and showing greater concern for parents and family in their reasons. Yet the age differences show that, at least for Armenian and Mexican Americans, there is greater autonomy expressed among the oldest than youngest members of these groups. The implication is that whereas they maintain relatedness with the family, they become more autonomous with age. In contrast, European Americans demonstrate less relatedness compared to the other groups; they comply less and use fewer reasons focused on family closeness. However, older European Americans demonstrate more concern with family than younger ones, particularly in their reasons, suggest-

ing an increase in family relatedness with age. As a result, the four groups appear more similar as emerging adults than as adolescents. Furthermore, the results show that across groups, ethnic differences are best understood in terms of the strength of the underlying value of interdependence among family members.

Appendix Family Interdependence

Ask yourself: How important is it for me

1. To satisfy my family's needs even when my own needs are different?
 2. To be available to family members when they need help?
 3. To spend time with my family?
 4. To consult with my parents before making decisions?
 5. To put my family's needs before my own?
 6. To live at home with my parents until I am married?
 7. To spend time with my parents after I no longer live with them?
 8. To have my parents live with me when they get older?
-

NOTE: Cronbach's alpha = .82.

NOTE

1. Cohen's kappa is a conservative estimate of agreement that corrects for proportion of agreement that might occur by chance. It, therefore, underestimates agreement when most responses are in one category, as was the case for reasons (see Results). Kappas of 0.61 to 0.80 indicate substantial agreement.

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Jean Phinney received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles. She is currently a Professor at California State University, Los Angeles. Her research over the past 20 years has centered on ethnic identity and cultural factors in development, with a particular focus on adolescents and young adults.

Tina Kim-Jo is currently enrolled in a social psychology doctoral program at the University of California, Riverside. She is interested in the cross-cultural study of identity and ethnicity among Korean adolescents in diverse settings, including the United States, Korea, and Japan.

Saloniki Ososrio and Perla Vilhjaldottir received Master's Degrees from California State University, Los Angeles.