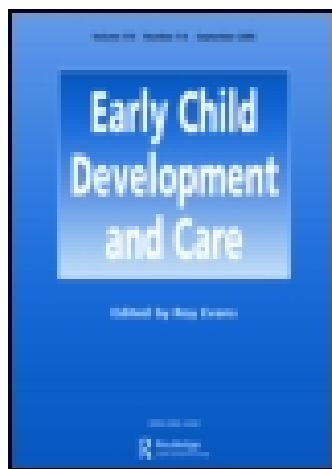


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Parental beliefs about young children's socialization across US ethnic groups: coexistence of independence and interdependence

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This study compared dimensions of independence and interdependence in parents' beliefs about daily child-rearing practices across four ethnic groups. Two questionnaires were completed by 310 parents of preschool-age children, and three belief constructs were identified. *Conformity* was least valued by European Americans. *Autonomy* was equally valued by European Americans and African Americans, and less by Asian Americans. There were no group differences in the importance of *prosocial*. Parental education was negatively associated with *conformity* except among Asian Americans, for whom education and *conformity* were positively associated. This study provides further evidence that differentiating the broad cultural orientations of independence and interdependence provides more accurate and sensitive cultural models of parenting. This study's findings may enhance the cultural competence of educators and community workers who interact with children and parents of diverse ethnic groups.

Keywords: *Cultural differences; Early childhood; Individualism–collectivism; Parental attitudes; Parent–child relationship; Socialization*

Introduction

Different cultural groups have different beliefs about what it means to parent a young child (LeVine, 1988; Harkness & Super, 1996; Garcia Coll & Pachter, 2002). When

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children of diverse backgrounds who live in the same communities begin school, they may experience ‘cultural discontinuities’ between their home and school environments (Tharp, 1989; Raeff *et al.*, 2000). Children reared in homes where independent choice and creativity are highly valued may find it challenging to adapt to classrooms where conformity to rules and collaboration with peers are expected. Inversely, children reared in homes where respect for authority is very important may find it difficult to express their personal preferences and individual uniqueness in classrooms. Although schools sometimes offer children educational resources and experiences that may not be available to them at home, it is important to ensure that these facilitative benefits of schools are not offset by the potentially detrimental psychological effects of cultural discontinuities (Obgu, 1982; Delgado-Gaitan, 1987).

Thus, in order to ‘make schools ready’ (Stipek, 2002) for all children, a better understanding of cultural differences in parental socialization models is necessary. Yet, there is a surprising scarcity of empirical research comparing parents’ socialization models across US ethnic groups, in particular among parents of young children (Hill, 2001). Furthermore, one of the most widely used theories for comparing cultural beliefs and practices, the individualism–collectivism framework, tends to classify ethnic minority groups as collectivistic (Greenfield, 1994; Triandis, 2001). Increasing evidence suggests that this classification may oversimplify and even inaccurately reflect the complexity of these parents’ socialization models. The aim of our study was to compare parents’ beliefs about socialization practices with preschool children among four ethnic groups living in the southwestern United States: Asian Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and European Americans.

Cultural models and the individualism–collectivism framework

Ecocultural and ecological theoretical perspectives propose that children are reared in multiple interrelated environments, and their development occurs through adaptation to those various environments given biological constraints (Whiting & Whiting, 1975; Berry, 1976; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Weisner, 2002). Accordingly, LeVine *et al.* (1994) suggest that parental behaviors are determined by three levels of conditions: species-level biological, population-level socioeconomic and population-level cultural models of parenting. Cultural models include the beliefs, goals and strategies shared by a cultural community that guide their actions and their interpretations of phenomena (D’Andrade, 1987; Holland & Quinn, 1987; LeVine, 1988). They serve as powerful analytic tools for understanding the complexity of parents’ and children’s experiences within ethnic groups (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001). Even if two groups value the same goal, such as social competence, the practices believed instrumental in achieving that goal may differ between the groups. Inversely, the goals motivating a specific practice, such as teaching emotional restraint, may differ across cultures (Bornstein, 1995; Garcia Coll & Pachter, 2002). Rather than portray groups as deficient when their beliefs differ from the

mainstream, the cultural models framework traces connections among a group's beliefs and goals, uncovering alternative strengths and pathways to healthy child outcomes (Garcia Coll *et al.*, 1996; Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001; Wong & Rowley, 2001; Greenfield *et al.*, 2003).

To describe and explain variations in cultural models across the world, researchers frequently utilize the individualism–collectivism framework according to which culture groups are classified as either ‘individualistic’ (mostly majority groups in western, industrialized nations) or ‘collectivistic’ (mostly in eastern and/or less industrialized nations, or among minority groups in western, industrialized nations) (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Triandis *et al.*, 1988). Accordingly, parents in collectivist cultures engage in practices that foster interdependence goals, such as relatedness and conformity to social norms, while parents in individualistic cultures prefer strategies aimed at encouraging independence and self-reliance (Richman *et al.*, 1988; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Greenfield, 1994; LeVine *et al.*, 1994). Some suggest that the individualism–collectivism framework lacks the power to explain cultural variations (Killen & Wainryb, 2000; Mascolo & Li, 2004), especially among groups with similar sociocultural histories, such as European-origin groups (Harkness *et al.*, 2000; Suizzo, 2004), or ethnic groups living in the same country (Harwood *et al.*, 2001). For example, in their meta-analysis of studies that used the individualism–collectivism framework, Oyserman *et al.* (2002) found, contrary to what this theory would predict, that African Americans and Latino Americans were no less individualistic than European Americans.

Families from different ethnic groups live side by side within communities, sharing socioeconomic resources and ecologies such as neighborhoods and schools. It can therefore be expected that they will have similar socialization strategies for their children, even as they also have distinct cultural models guiding those strategies. Furthermore, because families are engaged in the process of acculturation, they are likely to differ somewhat from the cultures from which they originate and have more in common with their neighboring families. Thus, although Latin American and Asian cultures are typically characterized as collectivistic, Latin American and Asian immigrants, especially those who have lived in the United States for some time, can be expected to hold more individualistic beliefs resembling those of their European-origin counterparts (Romero *et al.*, 2000; Bornstein & Cote, 2004). Furthermore, minority groups whose history in the United States is characterized by racism and oppression, such as African Americans, may have developed specific cultural values that enable adaptation and maintenance of psychological strength in the face of discrimination (Harrison *et al.*, 1990; Oyserman & Harrison, 1998). To capture cultural similarities and differences among such groups, it is necessary to differentiate the constructs of individualism and collectivism into dimensions.

Kagitçibasi (1994, 1996a, b) has argued that the construct of independence tends to confound two distinct dimensions: agency versus dependence, and separateness versus relatedness. Accordingly, she proposes three family socialization

models: an independence model (high agency, high separateness) that stresses socialization of self-reliant and relatively separate selves; an interdependence model (low agency, low separateness) that teaches obedience and stresses close family ties; and an emotional interdependence model (high agency, low separateness) that teaches self-reliance with close emotional ties with family. By differentiating independence, her theory enables the identification of this third socialization model in which a dimension of independence (agency) may coexist with a dimension of interdependence (relatedness), thus producing 'autonomous-related' selves. Each model is associated with a set of contextual factors including level of affluence, area of residence (urban/rural), family structure and size (nuclear/extended, high/low fertility), the value placed on children and cultural beliefs. Kagitçibasi (1996b) suggests that the emotional interdependence model is preferred by parents in affluent urban areas of industrialized, non-western nations, such as urban areas of Turkey, where fertility rates are low, family ties remain strong and parents invest in children's futures.

Research on ethnic minority parenting has shown that African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans prefer an interdependence socialization model (Harrison *et al.*, 1990; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Parke & Buriel, 1997), yet evidence suggests that differentiating the construct of independence might reveal a coexistence of independence and interdependence. Studies have found that Asians promote 'filial piety,' which includes family loyalty, respect for elders and conformity with social norms (Chiu, 1987; Jae & Chung, 1993; Wink *et al.*, 1997; Wu, 2001). These child-rearing beliefs are rooted in Confucian philosophy, which states that every individual is positioned within a hierarchy of relationships with male elders and authority figures at the top (Tu, 1985). From an early age, children must be taught to obey parents without question (Yi, 1993; Wang & Hsueh, 2000). Research on Latino parents has shown that they also value hierarchical family relations, and are concerned that their children be '*bien educado*' or properly reared and well mannered (Reese *et al.*, 1995; Azmitia *et al.*, 1996; Arcia & Johnson, 1998; Harwood *et al.*, 2002). Research suggests that African American parents also highly value family and kinship networks, and prefer a parenting style that emphasizes strict obedience to clear rules (Taylor, 1997; McAdoo, 2002).

Although these groups appear to share a general belief in the interdependent values of tradition and obedience, they also promote independence in their children. Chinese immigrant parents value personal control and independence as avenues to higher educational achievement (Lin & Fu, 1990). Latino parents, even recent immigrants and those of lower socioeconomic status groups, also list independence as an important socialization goal (Delgado & Ford, 1998), and have been found to be permissive and encourage their children's early autonomy (Levine & Bartz, 1979). African American parents, especially those with a strong racial identity, have also been found to promote independence in their children (Thomas, 2000). Our study tested the hypothesis that ethnic minority group parents might value dimensions of both interdependence and independence, and thus promote 'autonomous-relational' selves.

Research on European American parents has shown that they place less emphasis on the interdependence values of conformity and respect for family and group hierarchies than parents of other ethnic groups (Chao, 1994; Rodriguez *et al.*, 1999). Practices aimed at fostering independence, such as encouraging children to do things on their own and develop unique selves, are highly valued among these parents (Richman *et al.*, 1988; Harkness *et al.*, 1992). However, European American parents also believe it important that children be socially competent, which includes acquiring prosocial skills such as sharing and empathy that enable individuals to participate as equals within groups of their peers (Kennedy, 1992). This evidence suggests that while European Americans are often classified as independent, they may equally value the relatedness dimension of interdependence.

The primary research aim of this study was to investigate US ethnic group parents' beliefs about the importance of specific socialization practices with young children to learn how ethnicity might shape those beliefs. We adopted a 'sociocultural activity' perspective (Rogoff, 2003) in this study by focusing not on abstract beliefs or values, but on beliefs about daily practices that parents living in shared communities engage in with their children. We explored whether beliefs about practices would be interconnected, forming cultural models representing dimensions of independence and interdependence—and if so, how these would vary across groups. In accordance with Kagitçibasi's theory, we expected to find two dimensions of independence (agency and separateness) and two dimensions of interdependence (conformity to group norms and social competence). We hypothesized that conformity would be more valued by the three ethnic minority groups than by European Americans for several reasons. First, tradition and conformity to group norms are highly valued cultural beliefs among these groups. Among Asians in particular, the philosophy of Confucius has been an importance influence on child-rearing beliefs (Yi, 1993; Wu, 2001). Second, tradition and conformity may serve as unifying, protective factors against discrimination for some groups (Harrison *et al.*, 1990). We hypothesized that agency might also serve a protective function, and might therefore be highly valued not only by European Americans, but by ethnic minority groups. Finally, we expected all groups would equally value prosocial skills, and that the two belief constructs of agency and prosocial skills would not be opposed as both self-direction and relatedness are universal human needs (Kagitçibasi, 1996b).

Because sociodemographic factors have been found to explain variations in parenting (see Bornstein & Bradley, 2003), we further examined the relative effects of these factors on parents' beliefs. Maternal education has been linked to parental behaviors such as encouraging children's mastery (Turner & Johnson, 2003) and relying less on traditional roles (LeVine *et al.*, 2001). We therefore hypothesized that maternal education would generally be positively associated with autonomy beliefs and negatively associated with conformity beliefs. However, because research on these questions in US ethnic groups is relatively scarce, we further speculated that the relations between parental education and socialization belief constructs might vary in direction and/or magnitude across groups.

Method

Participants

A sample of 310 parents, 283 mothers and 27 fathers, of infants and young children (between one day and six years old) was recruited in two major cities in the southwestern United States. The sample included 57 Asian American, 40 African American, 80 Latino and 133 European American parents. The Asian American sample was composed mostly of Chinese-origin parents (83%), and the Latino sample included mostly Mexican-origin parents (74%), of which 31% were immigrants, 15% were first generation and the remaining 54% were second generation or higher. To obtain a representative sample of both working and non-working parents, we identified daycare centers, parent organizations, community centers and churches frequented by parents of young children through personal and professional contacts. Because family structures vary across these four groups, the adult family member living in the same household as the child and who was the child's primary caregiver completed the questionnaires. The mean parental age was 34.79 years (standard deviation [SD] = 5.77) and ranged from 21 to 52 years. Asian Americans and European Americans were older, on average, than African Americans (see Table 1). Parents were recruited from a range of socioeconomic status groups as measured by years of schooling completed: the mean parent education level was 6.14 (SD = 0.90), or one to three years of college. Asian Americans and European Americans had higher levels of schooling, on average, than did Latinos and African Americans (see Table 1). Most of the parents in the sample were married (86.1%). The average number of children per family was 1.86 (SD = 0.84), and about one-third (35.8%) of parents had one child, nearly one-half (48.1%) had two children and 16.0% had more than two children.

Measures

Background information. Each participant was asked to provide basic sociodemographic information including his or her age, ethnic background, family size and education level (measured as years of schooling completed).

Parental beliefs about practices. Parental beliefs about practices were measured with the 'Beliefs about Infants and Young Children—Multicultural' (BIYC-MC) questionnaire. This is a revised and expanded version of the Beliefs and Ideas about Infants and Young Children (Suizzo, 2004) questionnaire that was originally developed to compare the cultural models of European American and French parents. The BIYC-MC contains 20 items that assess the importance attached by parents to specific, daily practices with one to three year olds in a variety of contexts. The domains of interest to parents of toddlers covered by this questionnaire include encouragement of child autonomy and limit setting and strictness. Several items on the BIYC-MC were derived from the Home-School Connection Questionnaire (Okagaki & Frensch, 1998), which has been used in multiethnic studies of parenting beliefs. The Home-School Connection Questionnaire measures degree of importance attached by parents

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of sample by ethnic group ($n = 310$)

	All	Asian American ($n = 57$)	African American ($n = 40$)	Latino American ($n = 80$)	European American ($n = 133$)
Parent's age					
Mean (SD)	34.79 (5.77)	36.16 ^a (4.95)	31.33 ^b (6.00)	33.83 ^{a,b} (5.68)	35.80 ^a (5.62)
Range	21–52	25–52	22–47	21–52	23–52
Number of children					
Mean (SD)	1.86 (0.84)	1.82 (0.66)	1.98 (0.97)	1.89 (1.01)	1.82 (0.75)
Range	1–6	1–3	1–5	1–6	1–4
First-born child's age (months)					
Mean (SD)	68.17 (48.81)	76.12 (50.91)	73.64 (60.97)	69.56 (48.65)	32.25 (43.43)
Range	0.50–331	3–264	4–204	0.50–223	6–331
Years of schooling					
Mean (SD)	6.14 (0.90)	6.46 ^a (.68)	5.58 ^b (0.93)	5.81 ^b (1.03)	6.38 ^a (0.75)
Range	4–7	4–7	4–7	4–7	4–7

Notes: Means in the same row that do not share superscript letters differ at $p < 0.05$ after Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons.

to various skills associated with three socialization goal constructs: autonomy (e.g. make decisions on his/her own, work through problems on his/her own), conformity (e.g. obey adults without questioning, respect adults and people in authority) and traditional gender role behaviors (e.g. learn to cook, learn to do basic car repairs). Items were also derived from the 'strictness' and 'encouragement of independence' scales of the Questionnaire on Parental Attitudes (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984), and from the 'social scale' of the Q-Sort Inventory of Parenting Behaviors (Lawton *et al.*, 1983) that measures social orientation and skills.

To ensure the 'cultural validity' of the BIYC-MC, because subjective meanings of broad concepts may vary across cultures (McLoyd, 1999), we interviewed mothers from each group in their native language when necessary. Mothers were interviewed by trained researchers of the same ethnic group and were asked to describe their beliefs, socialization goals and daily practices with their children. Beliefs about practices relevant to the constructs of interest that were mentioned across several interviews of mothers from one or more groups were added to the questionnaire. The final BIYC-MC was translated into Chinese and Spanish, then reviewed and backtranslated by bilingual, native speakers of each language to ensure that the original meanings were preserved in the translations. Level of importance attached to each practice was measured using a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'not important' to 'extremely important,' with a separate category for 'disagree.'

Data analysis

Because less than 0.5% of the data points were missing in this sample, we imputed the ethnic group means for each item and replaced all missing values with these imputed values (Rovine & Delaney, 1990). Exploratory factor analyses were then conducted on all socialization practice beliefs. The method of factor extraction used was principal axis factoring (Affifi & Clark, 1990), and to determine the number of factors to retain in the final solution we considered Catell's Scree test (Catell, 1966) and theoretical interpretability. The Scree test suggested a three-factor solution and factors were theoretically meaningful. As we expected the factors to be uncorrelated or moderately correlated, we performed oblique rotations (Stevens, 1996) with Kaiser Normalization (Kaiser, 1960). To interpret the dimension underlying each factor, absolute loadings rounding to at least 0.3 were considered salient (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987) and items that cross-loaded across factors were omitted from the final scale. We generated scales by calculating the means of items that loaded together on a single factor, and estimated the internal reliabilities of these scales using the Cronbach alpha statistic. Internal reliabilities of each scale in each of the four groups were also estimated to ensure that they held meaning across the groups. Accordingly, three belief scales, corresponding to the three factors derived from factor analysis, were used in the study; all three had acceptable overall reliability estimates. The first scale was *conformity* ($\alpha = 0.83$), the second was *autonomy* ($\alpha = 0.69$) and the third was *prosocial* ($\alpha = 0.78$). Reliability estimates for each scale per group ranged from 0.76 to 0.82 for *conformity*, from 0.51 to 0.74 for *autonomy* and from 0.72 to 0.80 for *prosocial*.

Multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to determine the effects of ethnicity controlling for parental age, number of children, age of first-born child and parental education on the three dependent variables. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine group differences in each dependent variable, controlling for parental education. Pearson correlations were estimated to examine bivariate relations between each of the sociodemographic variables and each of the belief scales. Finally, hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted to measure the relative effects of parental education on *conformity*, controlling for parental age, number of children and age of firstborn child. Dummy variables were created to represent membership in each group, and the group with the lowest mean on this scale, European Americans, served as the baseline and was therefore not included in the analyses. Interactions between parental education and each of the four groups were tested and were included in the model when they were found to predict that belief scale.

Results

Beliefs about socialization practices

Three factors were identified that explained 52.70% of the total variance among the socialization practice beliefs with toddlers. The first, *conformity*, resembled Kagitçibasi's (1996a) 'control/obedience' dimension and contained practices such as teaching children to conform to social norms dictated by age hierarchy. The second was *autonomy* and contained practices associated with both the 'agency' dimension (feed one's self, do things on one's own), and the 'separateness' dimension (encourage child play alone) proposed by Kagitçibasi. The third factor was *prosocial*, and comprised group-oriented, prosocial skills such as sharing toys and showing empathy with others.

The belief construct with the highest overall mean across all four groups was *prosocial*, which was considered very important on average (mean = 3.94, SD = 0.78), while *conformity* was viewed as only somewhat important (mean = 3.00, SD = 0.97). *Autonomy* was considered somewhat to very important across the four groups (mean = 3.86, SD = 0.70). Because some belief constructs were intercorrelated, we first conducted a multivariate analysis of variance of the three dependent variables, controlling for parental education. This test revealed a main effect of ethnicity [$F(9,915) = 10.54, p < 0.001, \eta_p^2 = 0.09$], as well as a main effect of parental education [$F(3,303) = 9.26, p < 0.001, \eta_p^2 = 0.08$]. Follow-up univariate tests of each of the three belief scales, controlling for parental education, revealed a main effect of ethnicity on all but *prosocial* (see Table 2). Ethnicity therefore explained at least a portion of the variance in each of these belief scales even when controlling for parental education. There was a main effect of parental education on only one belief scale, *conformity* [$F(3,305) = 2.19, p < 0.001, \eta_p^2 = 0.08$]. This is the only belief scale for which both ethnicity and parental education contributed to explaining variation.

We examined post-hoc pairwise comparisons by group with Bonferroni adjustments of the significance value and found the following ethnic group differences (see

Table 2. Internal reliabilities, means and standard deviations of socialization practice belief constructs by ethnic group, controlling for maternal education ($n = 310$)

Belief scale (number of items)	Mean (SD)				Analysis of variance	
	Asian American ($n = 57$)	African American ($n = 40$)	Latino American ($n = 80$)	European American ($n = 133$)	$F(3,305)$	Effect size
Conformity (7)	3.47 ^a (0.11)	3.64 ^a (0.13)	3.09 ^b (0.09)	2.55 ^c (0.07)	28.19 ^{***}	0.22
Autonomy (5)	3.73 ^a (0.09)	3.85 ^{a,b} (0.11)	3.70 ^a (0.08)	4.02 ^b (0.06)	4.41 ^{**}	0.04
Prosocial (4)	4.19 ^a (0.10)	3.98 ^{a,b} (0.13)	3.89 ^{a,b} (0.09)	3.86 ^b (0.07)	2.59	0.03

Notes: Responses to belief scales correspond to the following scale values: 0 = disagree, 1 = not important, 2 = a little important, 3 = important, 4 = very important, 5 = extremely important. Means in the same row that do not share superscript letters differ at $p < 0.05$ after Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons. Effect sizes measured with partial η^2 . * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 2): European Americans believed *conformity* to be less important than did the three other groups [$F(3,305) = 28.19, p < 0.001, \eta_p^2 = 0.22$]. Post-hoc comparisons of the individual practice-beliefs within this cultural model confirmed the existence of within-group differences in all six traditional practices—using proper table manners, obeying elders, not interrupting adult conversation, properly greeting visitors, using formal terms when greeting adults, and teaching children to behave in gender-appropriate ways—all of which were least valued by European American parents [$F = 11.80, 19.23, 14.74, 9.36, 15.2, \text{ and } 29.43$, respectively; all degrees of freedom values = 3,306; all p values < 0.001].

European Americans believed *autonomy* to be more important than Latinos and Asian Americans but did not differ from African Americans on this scale [$F(3,305) = 4.41, p < 0.01, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$] (see Table 3). Looking at the items reflecting various types of *autonomy*, we found mixed results. European Americans highly valued three ‘agency’ practices: encouraging children to develop their individual tastes, encouraging children to do things on their own and letting children feed themselves even if this causes a mess. They differed significantly from Latinos for all three, and from Asians only on ‘let children feed themselves.’ Asian Americans attributed the least importance of all groups to encouraging children to make their own choices, and this mean was significantly lower than those of both European and Latino Americans. We examined differences in importance attributed to the single item ‘encourage child to play alone’ that appeared associated with the autonomy dimension of ‘separateness.’ Univariate analysis of variance of this variable revealed that unlike the ‘agency’ items, there were no ethnic group differences in mean importance of this item. These findings support the findings of previous studies that various types of independence are valued differently by different ethnic groups, and that the value placed on socializing children to become independent varies across contexts.

Finally, there were no ethnic group differences in beliefs about teaching children *prosocial* skills. An examination of group differences in the individual items associated

Table 3. Correlations among sociodemographic variables and belief scales ($n = 310$)

	Parent's age	Number of children	Oldest child's age	Years of school	Conformity	Autonomy	Prosocial
Parent's age	1.00						
Number of children	0.17**	1.00					
Oldest child's age	0.37**	0.63***	1.00				
Years of schooling	0.28***	-0.16**	-0.17**	1.00			
Conformity	-0.18**	0.13*	0.16**	-0.35***	1.00		
Autonomy	-0.10	-0.12*	-0.23***	0.03	-0.01	1.00	
Prosocial	-0.05	-0.05	-0.04	-0.10	0.49***	0.39***	1.00

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

with this cultural model confirmed that there were no significant differences among the groups on encouraging children to help others, teaching children to respect people who are different from them and teaching children to feel empathy for others. The parents in this sample generally believed these practices to be very important. Asian Americans considered it very important, and more important than European Americans, to teach children to share toys with others [$F(3,306) = 3.68$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$], and they viewed teaching children to say 'I'm sorry' as more important than both European Americans and Latinos [$F(3,306) = 4.83$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$]. Thus, although this set of practices appears to be highly and somewhat equally valued across ethnic groups, Asian Americans seem to value specific items slightly more on average than parents of one or more other groups.

Effects of sociodemographic variables

Pearson correlations were calculated for each of the dependent variables and four sociodemographic variables: parental age, number of children, age of firstborn child and parental education (see Table 3). Results indicated that parental education was associated with only one of the three belief constructs: parental education was negatively associated with *conformity* ($r = -0.35$, $p < 0.001$). Parents with more schooling rated these beliefs as less important than parents with less education. Negative associations were also found between parental age and *conformity*, suggesting that older parents attach less importance to these beliefs than younger parents and parents with fewer children. Number of children was positively associated with *conformity* ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$), and negatively associated with *autonomy* ($r = -0.12$, $p < 0.05$), although the magnitudes of these associations were low. Finally, parents who had been parents for a longer time (as measured by age of first-born child) were more likely to rate *conformity* as important, and *autonomy* as less important, than parents whose first-born child was younger.

To further examine the relations between these sociodemographic variables and each of the belief scales, we conducted three multiple regression analyses. For each analysis, we first entered as covariates the sociodemographic variables shown to be

significantly correlated with that outcome, and then entered dummy variables representing three of the four ethnic groups. When ethnicity was entered into the model, the effects of the sociodemographic variables were no longer significant for all but one of the three belief constructs: *conformity*. Ethnic group membership explained a large amount of variation in this belief scale ($R^2 = 0.32$), controlling for parental education (see Table 4). In addition, an interaction was found between parental education and Asian American ethnicity, suggesting that, unlike for the three other groups, among Asian Americans more years of schooling is associated with attributing greater importance to *conformity*. Figure 1 illustrates the relation between parental education and the importance attached to *conformity* for each ethnic group, and demonstrates the interaction between ethnicity and education for Asian American parents.

Discussion

The results of our study present a complex picture of the socialization beliefs held by US parents of different ethnic groups. We found both similarities and differences, confirming that both cultural and ecological factors shape parents' socialization models.

Coexistence of independence and interdependence

In response to our first question, whether beliefs about practices would be interconnected in parents' cultural models of children's socialization, three reliable scales were identified: *conformity*, *autonomy* and *prosocial*. Examining these results through the lens of Kagitçibasi's theory, we concluded that *conformity* can be viewed as a version of the 'control/obedience' dimension of parenting proposed as central to socialization in interdependence families. As hypothesized, parental education explained variation in *conformity* such that more educated parents were less likely to value this belief. For Asian Americans, however, schooling was positively associated with *conformity*. A possible explanation for this finding relates to the unique meaning of education among Asians. Formal education has a long history of being highly valued among Asians, and is viewed as a means to enhance family honor rather than as a modernizing force that can alienate the individual from his or her family (Uba, 1994). Research has shown that among Chinese-origin and Korean American families, adapting to modern society is often accomplished while preserving the values of duty to parents and elders stressed in the principles of Confucianism (Wang & Hsueh, 2000; Kim & Rohner, 2002). Because the majority of the Asian Americans in our sample were first generation or immigrants who are likely to hold more traditional values than later-generation families, collecting a more diverse sample with respect to generational status would elucidate the potential role of acculturation in the relation between education and traditional values.

The *autonomy* construct appeared closely aligned with Kagitçibasi's 'autonomy as agency' dimension as most of its beliefs were related to encouraging self-direction in children. Because only one item in this scale appeared to suggest separateness, we were not able to identify a distinct 'autonomy as separateness' dimension in this study.

Table 4. Hierarchical regression analysis predicting effects of ethnicity on importance of conformity, controlling for sociodemographic background variables ($n = 310$)

Variable	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	B	Standard error of B	β	B	Standard error of B	β	B	Standard error of B	β
Sociodemographic background									
Parental age	-0.03	0.01	-0.16**	-0.01	0.01	-0.09	-0.01	0.01	-0.07
Number of children	0.02	0.08	0.02	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.07	0.04
Age of first-born	0.003	0.001	0.16*	0.001	0.001	0.08	0.001	0.001	0.09
Parental education	-0.29	0.06	-0.27***	-0.24	0.06	-0.23***	-0.30	0.06	-0.28***
Ethnicity									
Asian American				0.91	0.13	0.36***	-0.92	1.09	-0.77***
African American				1.04	0.16	0.36***	1.00	0.15	0.35***
Latino American				0.52	0.12	0.24***	0.50	0.12	0.22***
Parental education x Asian American ethnicity							0.44	0.17	1.14**
R^2		0.15			0.32			0.34	
Change in R^2					0.17***			0.02**	

Notes: European American was used as the referent group for this analysis. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

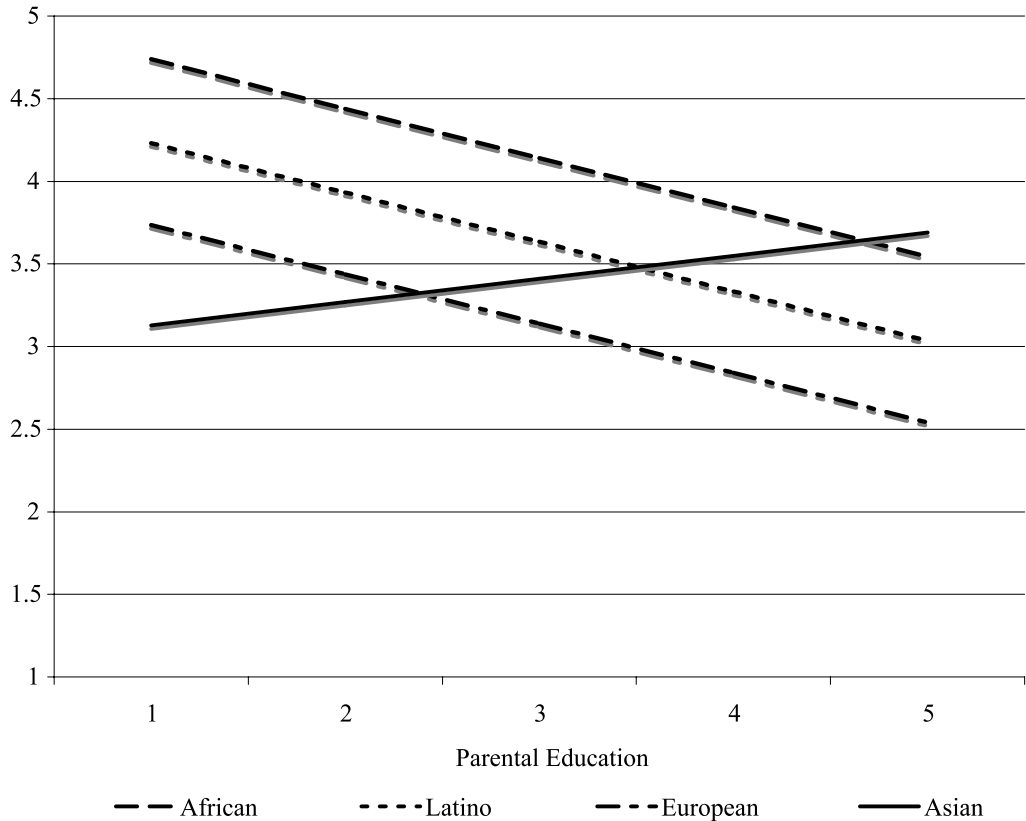


Figure 1. Multiple regression model predicting importance of conformity by ethnic group and parental education level ($n = 310$). Parental education levels: 1 = 10–11 years, 2 = 12 years (high school diploma), 3 = 13–15 years (some college), 4 = 16–17 years, 5 = 18 or more years (graduate school)

However, the *prosocial* construct represents a group orientation that may represent the ‘relatedness’ dimension. As hypothesized, all groups equally valued *prosocial*. The fact that *autonomy* and *prosocial* were positively related further supports the theory that both agency and belongingness are basic human needs and may coexist in socialization models. Furthermore, parental education level did not explain variation in *autonomy*, suggesting that among parents with at least a 10th-grade education, ‘agency’ is valued regardless of years of schooling.

Also in accordance with our hypothesis, we found that *autonomy* was highly valued by parents of ethnic minority and by European American parents. In fact, there were no significant differences in the means of European and of African American parents; both valued *autonomy* equally highly. An important finding from this study is that African American parents appear to consider both *autonomy* and *conformity* to be very important, suggesting that these constructs may not be opposed in African American cultural models of parenting. This finding corroborates findings of several recent

studies of African Americans showing a similar coexistence of individualistic and collectivistic values (Oyserman *et al.*, 2002; Phinney *et al.*, 2005). This finding may be explained by the belief in racial socialization practices that promote both the collectivistic values of politeness, group loyalty and ethnic pride, and the individualistic values of achievement, self-respect and self-confidence (Peters, 2002; Hughes, 2003). Future studies are needed to examine the extent to which these practices are utilized by parents of preschool age children and to investigate relations between dimensions of racial socialization and the importance of autonomy and conformity among African Americans.

Finally, with respect to intracultural variations in beliefs according to sociodemographic variables, as hypothesized, we found that parental education was negatively associated with *conformity*, even after controlling for family size and parental age. When ethnicity was added to the models predicting *autonomy* and *prosocial*, however, none of the sociodemographic variables continued to explain a significant amount of variation in these dependent variables. We conclude that ethnicity explained more variation in parents' beliefs than did sociodemographic factors, confirming the robustness of cultural values in parents' beliefs about socialization.

This study has several limitations as well as several unique strengths. First, because only parents with at least a 10th-grade education were selected, the results of this study cannot be generalized to less educated parents from lower socioeconomic status levels. Even with this limitation, however, we found a significant effect of parental education on two belief constructs. Collecting data on a broader range of educational levels would enable a more thorough investigation of the interaction between parental education and ethnicity in predicting beliefs. Similarly, because the majority of parents in this sample were married, we caution that these results may not extend to single-parent households. Second, intra-group variations with regard to country of origin and generation or acculturation level could not be examined in this study due to insufficient sample sizes. Because acculturation has been shown to affect differentially cultural beliefs and values within a particular ethnic group (see Buriel, 1993; Abe-Kim *et al.*, 2001; Kwak, 2003), it would be important to probe further how dimensions of independence and interdependence vary within these groups according to acculturation level. Third, our questionnaire did not sufficiently differentiate the independence scale; to measure the dimension of 'autonomy as separateness,' future studies should include additional items assessing this dimension. Finally, the magnitudes of the differences in parental beliefs that we identified were generally small even if statistically significant. To provide a complex picture of actual parenting practices in these groups and how differences in beliefs about practices may be instantiated in actual daily practices, we plan to follow up this study with in-depth interviews and observations of parent-child activities in specific settings.

Implications

The multi-ethnic practice beliefs questionnaire used in this study brings together ideas from each group to examine the possibility that socialization beliefs and

practices previously associated with a single culture may in fact be shared by several cultures. Few studies have culled the unique beliefs of each culture from the pool of ethnic groups living in a single community and tested the extent to which these beliefs may be shared across cultures. Using this method and the cultural models theoretical framework enabled us to show that minority ethnic groups socialize their children to be both independent and interdependent, holding beliefs in both agency and conformity, thereby fitting the 'emotional interdependence' model proposed by Kagitcibasi. Furthermore, our findings demonstrate that among all groups, dimensions of independence and interdependence can coexist, and even be positively related in how parents think about their children's socialization.

Children are more likely to achieve success when their learning environments at home and at school reflect similar, positive and nurturing beliefs and practices (Harrison *et al.*, 1990). This study provides information about children's diverse home environments that may help educators and community workers increase their cultural competence when interacting with diverse families. For example, the importance of *conformity* among ethnic minority group parents may at times conflict with efforts to teach and promote egalitarian values and practices in classrooms. Being more aware of the importance to parents of maintaining traditional values, educators may be better prepared for communicating with these families and for designing curricula and teaching practices that take account of these socialization preferences. Similarly, the high degree of importance attached to *autonomy* among all parents suggests that teaching practices aimed at promoting independent and creative thinking and self-regulated learning are in line with socialization goals children are exposed to in their homes.

Finally, the interaction between parental education and *conformity* among Asian Americans suggests that obtaining more education may serve somewhat different functions for this group. Further research on the meaning of educational attainment and how these vary across ethnic groups and according to factors such as educational level and acculturation status is warranted. Better understanding the complex cultural models linking parents' short-term socialization goals, daily practices and long-term aspirations for their children is an important piece of the mission to ensure that all children have positive learning experiences and achieve to their full potential in schools.

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