

Developmental Flexibility in the Age of Globalization: Autonomy and Identity Development Among Immigrant Adolescents

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Abstract

The socioeconomic and cultural changes that result from an increasingly interconnected world have been speculated to have important implications for the nature of adolescent development. Unfortunately, the historical time necessary for these changes to take place means that definitive research on the impact of globalization necessarily will be slow in forthcoming. Adolescents from immigrant families, however, already experience the social and cultural shifts thought to typify globalization, and an analysis of their experiences could shed light on what to expect as existing national barriers become more permeable. The value of flexibility in the face of great social and cultural change appears to be the dominant theme from research on immigrant youth, although that flexibility can be constrained by socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial stratification systems in host societies. This review highlights the implications of these findings for what may lie ahead for teenagers as globalization continues to expand.

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AUTONOMY, IDENTITY, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Preparing a child to become a functioning and integrated member of adult society is perhaps the fundamental task of the adolescent period. Indeed, it can be argued that much of adolescent development boils down to issues of autonomy and identity. Many of the changes in family and peer relationships, psychological and behavioral adjustment, and achievement that take place during the teenage years reflect efforts on the parts of youth, families, and communities to address questions facing adolescents such as, Who am I? Where do I belong? What can I decide or do for myself? When do I need to respond to the needs and wishes of others? Although questions of identity and autonomy persist throughout the life course, they have particular salience during the adolescent period (Erikson 1968). If the questions are ignored or not answered successfully, psychological and behavioral dysfunction can develop that will place youth on problematic trajectories toward a difficult transition to adulthood (Côté 2009).

Cultural and historical analyses have suggested that the development of autonomy and identity can be particularly challenging in modern and rapidly changing societies. Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and even G. Stanley Hall—considered by many to be the “father” of the field of adolescence—noted in the early twentieth century that the adolescent period appeared to be more difficult in Western, industrialized countries than in other societies (Benedict 1934, Hall 1916, Mead 1928/1978). Social historians agreed, noting that economic changes within the same society—such as the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America—disrupted long-established answers to the questions of autonomy and identity for youth (Modell & Goodman 1990). The two fundamental reasons for historical disruption and international variation appeared to be the rapid pace of socioeconomic change and the introduction of new cultural ideas that challenged traditional norms of children’s relations with their families and communities. For example, moving from family-based, subsistence economies to industrial, market economies during the Industrial Revolution provided more opportunities for youth to pursue occupations and resources away from the home (Modell & Goodman 1990). The resulting mobility opened more diverse pathways from adolescence into adulthood. These changes converged to increase the options available to youth as they tried to answer the fundamental questions of autonomy and

identity. Although greater choice has its own intrinsic value, it also brings about less clarity. Less clarity, in turn, can make a transitional period such as adolescence more difficult (Benedict 1934).

Like the Industrial Revolution in the past, the contemporary forces of globalization promise to bring about wide-ranging social and cultural changes in the twenty-first century. The integration of national economies and international commerce, the growing migration across the world, the increasing ease of international travel, and the dramatic rise of the Internet have resulted in a world in which the cultural and social barriers between societies are more permeable than before (Arnett 2002, Larson 2002, Larson et al. 2009). Interactions between societies are certainly nothing new, and every society throughout history has experienced changes that threaten established norms and practices. Yet the convergence of numerous trends appears to be shifting cultural interactions into being truly global. Although not all segments of society experience the same level of international integration, it is becoming increasingly easy to experience norms, practices, and opportunities quite different from those traditionally found in one's own society (Jensen & Arnett 2012, Jensen et al. 2011). It also is increasingly difficult for families and communities to shield children and adolescents from such exposure.

How will globalization work to shape adolescent development? Although most discussions of the impact of globalization on child development have focused on child policy and welfare (e.g., public education, child labor; Larson 2002, Larson et al. 2009), a few recent formulations have implications for adolescent autonomy and identity. Kagitcibasi and Greenfield, in separate models of the impact of social change on family life, predict that the rise of globalization—and the associated increase in cultural contact and socioeconomic development—will result in a shift from family interdependence during adolescence to an emphasis upon individualism and independence (Greenfield 2009, Kagitcibasi 2005). The resulting challenge to existing family norms, in turn, will create greater discord between adolescents and their families (Kwak 2003). In terms of identity, Jensen and Arnett have predicted that as identity options and pathways become more diverse, identity development should become more challenging and protracted, with higher rates of identity confusion, which is the inability to develop a sense of identity or belonging to a social group (Arnett 2002, Jensen et al. 2011). Consistent with Benedict's (1934) ideas about how a greater diversity of options serves to limit clarity and increase difficulty, several theorists have predicted that globalization will make the development of autonomy and identity more challenging and difficult for adolescents. At the same time, this challenge can bring about greater opportunities to develop multiple pathways of autonomy and identity development.

Given the relative recency and speed of globalization, there have been more theoretical formulations of what the social changes may bring than empirical studies actually testing those formulations (for notable exceptions, see Greenfield et al. 2003b; Manago 2012, 2014). Rigorous tests of the impact of globalization on adolescent development require the passage of time necessary for historical comparisons, but there exists a group of youth who already have been directly experiencing many social and cultural changes characteristic of globalization. Adolescents from immigrant families, those who were immigrants themselves and those born in the host country whose parents immigrated, represent a model population from whom potential lessons about the impact of globalization could be inferred.

IMMIGRANT ADOLESCENTS AT THE FOREFRONT OF GLOBALIZATION

Immigrants and their families are driving forces of globalization; most formulations include worldwide migration as one of the key features of globalization (e.g., Arnett 2002, Jensen & Arnett 2012). Between 1980 and 2015, the worldwide population of migrants more than doubled to a

total of 231,522,000 (Migr. Policy Inst. Data Hub 2014). When people move across borders in great numbers and settle in new societies, they generate the cultural interactions and international connections that provide fertile ground for the forces of globalization. Before and after they immigrate, migrants precipitate international exchanges of information and resources. In doing so, they increase knowledge of diverse cultural norms, establish international communication networks, and create flows of financial resources that influence their countries of origin and destination. Importantly, whereas these changes take some time to permeate the broader society and indirectly affect natives who do not migrate, immigrants experience globalization directly on a first-hand, daily basis. In contrast to the past, contemporary immigrants no longer have to leave their old world completely behind. Given the relative ease of international communication and transportation, their experience more closely approximates the intersection of cultures and societies thought to typify globalization.

Adolescents in immigrant families, in particular, are at the forefront of the globalization experience. More than their parents, they truly function at the intersection of the new host society and the cultural traditions of their family's native country. By virtue of their enrollment in schools and greater comfort with the languages spoken in host societies, teenagers often are asked to be the intermediary for parents who have less comfort and ability to interact with businesses, institutions, and official agencies (Buriel et al. 1998, Fuligni & Telzer 2012). At the same time, adolescents experience the socialization efforts of their immigrant parents, who endeavor to maintain the cultural traditions with which they were raised themselves (Umaña-Taylor et al. 2009, Umaña-Taylor & Bámaca 2004). Although virtually all immigrant parents aspire for their children's success in the new country, parents often fear that such success will come at the expense of cherished norms and values that may conflict with those of the host society (Umaña-Taylor & Bámaca 2004). Significantly, these norms and values typically revolve around fundamental questions of autonomy and identity: Who is the teenager going to be? How will she describe herself? Will he leave or remain part of the family?

Immigrant teenagers, therefore, are at the nexus of the social and cultural changes by which globalization is thought to change the nature of the adolescent period. Reviewing the autonomy and identity development of this population can provide insights into what might be expected if globalization continues to increase international connectedness and make existing cultural barriers more permeable. Fortunately, research on immigrant youth has blossomed in the past decade. Out of the total of 2,988 citations between 1962 and 2013 that were obtained from a PubMed search of the phrase "immigrant adolescents," 2,293 were published in the years 2004 to 2013. Much of this work has focused upon immigrants to the United States and Canada, with more research in recent years including nations in Europe such as the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Germany. Most of the immigrants to these countries come from nations or national regions that are typically less economically developed and differ dramatically in many cultural norms and traditions (e.g., Latin America, Asian, North Africa, and the Middle East). As such, analyzing how youth in these families negotiate their autonomy and identity in societies that contrast sharply with those of their native countries can approximate studying the impact of the types of social and cultural changes thought to typify globalization.

Our review focuses on studies of the development of autonomy and identity, which have been two common topics of research among adolescents from immigrant families. Given the existence of numerous other reviews addressing specifically the psychological, behavioral, and educational adjustment of immigrant youth, we do not focus on adjustment per se and refer readers to other papers on this topic (Crosnoe 2011, Fuligni 1998c). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that adolescents from immigrant families often demonstrate levels of psychological, behavioral, and educational adjustment that are either equal to or even greater than those of their peers

from native-born families. These surprising levels of success exist despite the challenges inherent in adapting to a new and different society and become even greater when these challenges are empirically controlled. Therefore, an analysis of youth from immigrant families not only can provide a glimpse into how teenagers will come to navigate an increasingly globalized world as they develop their sense of autonomy and identity, it also may provide insights into how they can do it successfully.

THE VALUE OF FLEXIBILITY

The overriding theme that emerged from our review is the value of flexibility in the context of dramatic social and cultural change. In contrast to classic views about immigrant assimilation, teenagers generally avoid false dichotomies between “old” and “new,” and few of them take “all or none” approaches to autonomy and identity. Instead, adolescents from immigrant families find multiple ways to be simultaneously close to their families and to be independent and autonomous. They pick and choose which native cultural traditions to endorse and which norms and values of the host society to adopt. They generally avoid being forced into a single ethnic or racial identity category and are disinclined to make a categorical choice between identifying with their native background and adopting the national identity of their new host country. Immigrant teenagers instead often create new, hybridized identities that combine different ethnic categories and can change according to the setting or context in which they find themselves. All of this flexibility in the face of change appears to occur with little evidence of diminished psychological, behavioral, and educational adjustment when compared to their peers from native-born families (Crosnoe 2011, Fuligni 1998c). In fact, greater flexibility is often associated with better adjustment among immigrant youth themselves (Berry et al. 2006).

When one considers the evolutionary significance of the developmental period of puberty and adolescence, it should come as no surprise that teenagers from immigrant families exhibit flexibility in the face of social change and that they do so successfully. Change is characteristic of the period itself—adolescence generally begins with the biological changes of puberty and is accompanied by other cognitive, emotional, and social changes (Spear 2010). Social relationships outside of the family come to greater prominence as concerns about social status and interest in sexuality rise in importance (Brown & Larson 2009). The magnitude and social significance of these changes may vary across societies and history, but it is generally agreed that a recognized and distinct period of developmental change surrounds the pubertal and postpubertal period and exists in virtually all cultures and even across several primate species (Schlegel & Barry 1991, Spear 2010). Collectively, the multiple changes have been theorized as being essential for moving children, either literally or figuratively, out of the natal family so that they can participate in reproduction and become contributing members of the larger community.

Flexibility in dealing with the changes of adolescence even may be programmed into epigenetic development. It had long been proposed that the increase in reward seeking and risky behavior typical of adolescence among humans and other primates was designed to propel children to seek new environments and enable them to intuit the imperatives of the larger social world into which they must fit. Recent advances in developmental neuroscience have confirmed these propositions, highlighting a peak in the sensitivity of the mesolimbic reward system to several types of hedonic and social rewards during the teenage years (Galván 2013). Initial formulations paired this reward sensitivity with immaturity in cognitive control systems (e.g., in the prefrontal cortex), but accumulated research in recent years suggests that flexibility in cognitive control systems may be a more accurate portrayal of the adolescent period (Crone & Dahl 2012). Adolescents demonstrate great situational variability in their response to experimental tasks of reward and cognitive control,

suggesting that they are perhaps hypersensitive to the demands and salience of different environmental conditions. If so, adolescents would appear to be well prepared for the changing social contexts inherent in the immigration process, enabling them to demonstrate great flexibility when reconciling competing cultural and social norms as they develop their autonomy and identity.

Nevertheless, there are limits to this flexibility. Studies show how adolescents from immigrant families still must function within the constraints created by levels of socioeconomic resources and the rigidity of the ethnic and racial categorization systems they encounter in their host societies. Immigration does not offer youth with a blank slate or place them on equal economic and social footing with other adolescents. Like their native-born peers, adolescents from immigrant families must contend with social stratification systems that will push them toward some opportunities for autonomy and identity and away from others (Portes & Rumbaut 2006). Given that the economic and ethnic backgrounds of many immigrant families place them at a relative disadvantage in the social hierarchies of their host societies, the level of flexibility shown by their adolescents within those constraints can be considered that much more remarkable.

Below, we describe the flexibility in the autonomy and identity development of adolescents from immigrant families in two areas: (*a*) family relationships and (*b*) ethnic identity and cultural orientation. We first present the fundamental issues of autonomy and identity development within each of these areas and then characterize the general trends across immigrant youth and how they demonstrate flexibility in their contexts of social and cultural change. We also discuss how this flexibility nevertheless can be limited by socioeconomic resources and the existing social and ethnic categorization system within host societies. Finally, we close the review with a discussion of the lessons learned from the experiences of immigrant youth for helping us to understand the potential impact of globalization on adolescent development.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

A fundamental task of the adolescent period involves constructing an individual identity and establishing a sense of independence and self-reliance (Grotevant & Cooper 1986, Hill & Holmbeck 1986, Phinney et al. 2005, Smollar & Youniss 1989). Autonomy development is critical in shaping adolescents to become self-sufficient individuals who can function and successfully adapt to changes in the environment and across the life span. Central to the development of autonomy is one's individuation from the family, which inevitably initiates changes in adolescents' relationships with their parents and family members. Autonomy development is in itself, to some degree, a process of disengagement from the family. Yet, as adolescents face the challenges of being a teenager and transition into new social contexts and roles, their family continues to serve as an important source of support and guidance. Autonomy development, therefore, is best conceived as a simultaneous process of individuation and maintenance of family connectedness (Grotevant & Cooper 1986, Hill & Holmbeck 1986, Phinney et al. 2005, Smollar & Youniss 1989).

The challenge facing youth from immigrant families is that what is considered to be the normative balance between autonomy and family connectedness often differs between their families' heritage culture and that of the host society (Kwak 2003). In many immigrant-receiving nations, particularly those in Europe and North America, child socialization goals promote children's autonomy and independence from the family (Greenfield et al. 2003a, Kagitcibasi 2012, Markus & Kitayama 1991). In contrast, the majority of immigrant families to these countries come from societies in Asia, Latin America, and Africa where collectivistic values emphasize family interdependence, cohesion, and solidarity (Fuligni 1998a). In these immigrant cultures, children are encouraged to think about their identity in relation to the larger family context rather than as individuals separate from their family. A key question, therefore, is how the intersection of these

different cultural value systems influences the maintenance of family connectedness among children from immigrant families as they progress through the teenage years.

Research indicates that immigrant youth manage to balance the cultural imperatives for individuation and connectedness by taking a flexible approach to their relationships with their families. In some ways, they assert their developing sense of autonomy and self-reliance in their relationships with their parents in a manner very similar to their peers from nonimmigrant families. In other ways, they maintain a sense of connection to the family that greatly surpasses that of their peers. This unique combination of autonomy and family connection is evident when one separately examines (a) levels of conflict and cohesion within the parent-adolescent dyad and (b) adolescents' sense of obligation and duty to the larger family unit.

Conflict and Cohesion with Parents

Perhaps the earliest indication of adolescents' growing desire for autonomy is the occurrence of greater parent-child conflict at the transition to adolescence (Laursen et al. 1998; Steinberg 1990, 2001). Conflicts and disagreements with parents provide opportunities for adolescents to express their opinions and assert their independence. Many of these disagreements typically revolve around mundane issues (e.g., chores, curfews, bedtimes) and reflect children's desire to have greater jurisdiction over their own lives (Smetana & Asquith 1994). If parent-child conflicts are a reflection of normative developmental processes for youth to establish greater autonomy and individuate from their parents, to what extent do adolescents from immigrant families engage in conflict with their families?

Despite coming from cultural traditions that emphasize family solidarity and parental respect, adolescents from immigrant families argue with their parents as frequently as do their peers from nonimmigrant families (Chung et al. 2009, Fuligni 1998b, Phinney et al. 2005). One study of teenagers from diverse immigrant backgrounds, including those from Armenian, Mexican, Korean, and European heritages, found that all youth were equally likely to report that they would voice their individual beliefs in response to hypothetical scenarios involving parent-child disagreements (Phinney et al. 2005). Another study observed no differences between immigrant and nonimmigrant adolescents' reported levels of disagreements about everyday issues (e.g., spending money, chores) with parents (Fuligni 1998b). Similar results were obtained when youth were asked to report the frequency of conflict with parents using a daily diary method across a two-week period (Chung et al. 2009). Occasionally, a study will suggest even higher rates of conflict among immigrant families than among nonimmigrants, although those observations are somewhat rare (Qin et al. 2012b). Furthermore, both longitudinal and cross-sectional studies show stability in the similarity between immigrant and nonimmigrant adolescents' frequency of family conflict over time (Chung et al. 2009, Fuligni 1998b, Phinney et al. 2005). Although conflict does not increase in frequency across the adolescent period (Laursen et al. 1998), the stability in frequency coupled with the decline in the amount of time parents and teens spend together (Larson & Richards 1991) means that the overall relationship begins to feel more conflictual than before.

To the extent that arguing with parents is an indicator of adolescents' assertion of a degree of autonomy, the similarity in rates of parent-child conflict across immigrant generations suggests that immigrant youth are adopting a pursuit of autonomy that is normative in their host societies. But that is not to say that cultural traditions of parental respect in many immigrant families do not play a role. In fact, evidence suggests that the assertions of independence evidence in parent-adolescent conflict actually would be greater in immigrant families if it weren't for such traditions. Cultural values related to respect, family solidarity, and social harmony discourage children from openly disagreeing with their parents even more than they already do (Fuligni 1998b; Juang et al.

2007, 2012; Phinney et al. 2005; Qin et al. 2012a). For example, Phinney and her colleagues (2005) found that strong values of family interdependence led Korean immigrant youth to be more likely to comply with their parents when they actually disagreed with them. Adolescents from immigrant families are more likely to express the belief that it is not acceptable to openly disagree with their parents, even though the actual rate of their conflicts with parents is no different from that of nonimmigrant teenagers (Fuligni 1998b). It appears, therefore, that adolescents from immigrant families argue with their parents at rates similar to those of their native-born peers even though their cultural traditions suggest they should not. Importantly, immigrant youth are aware of this inconsistency when reflecting upon their disagreements, acknowledging respect for their parents while also expressing a need for independence (Phinney et al. 2005). Nevertheless, traditional cultural values may mask some level of familial and internal tension that youth from immigrant families do not explicitly express, thereby potentially limiting the extent to which they feel they can assert their autonomy at home.

In addition to conflict, the levels and changes in emotional closeness between adolescents and their parents are additional indicators of the development of autonomy. Although very low levels of closeness are undesirable and predictive of poor adjustment (Ryan & Lynch 1989), a gradual emotional distancing between children and their parents is a fairly typical part of the autonomy process in adolescence in many immigrant-receiving societies (Collins & Steinberg 2006, Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn 1991, Shearer et al. 2005, Steinberg 1990, Steinberg & Silk 2002). As has been found with parent-child conflict, youth from immigrant families report levels of emotional closeness and cohesion with their parents similar to those of their peers from nonimmigrant families despite being more likely to come from cultural traditions that emphasize family togetherness (Fuligni 1998b, Hardway & Fuligni 2006). In fact, immigrant youth from some ethnic backgrounds—such as those from Chinese families—report lower levels of cohesion with their parents than do their peers from nonimmigrant families (Hardway & Fuligni 2006). Finally, as is the case for those from nonimmigrant families, adolescents from immigrant families report declining levels of closeness with their mothers and fathers across the high school years (Tsai et al. 2012). These developmental trends show very similar patterns for youth across different immigrant generations.

The extent to which the conflict and cohesion between youth from immigrant families and their parents mirror those of their peers from nonimmigrant families may seem surprising, given the cultural values of family solidarity and respect of which the immigrant teenagers themselves are well aware and often endorse (Fuligni 1998b, Phinney et al. 2005). One reason for the unexpected pattern is the role of language ability and language use in family relationships. Although immigrant youth often possess a basic knowledge of their parents' native language, there is great variability in their proficiency in the language and their willingness to use it (Portes & Rumbaut 2006). Several studies have suggested that the dynamics of native language loss can compromise family interactions, resulting in poorer parent-adolescent relationships than would be expected given the cultural traditions of immigrant families (Baer & Schmitz 2007, Ho & Birman 2010, Luo & Wiseman 2000, Oh & Fuligni 2010, Tseng & Fuligni 2000). Yet it is important to note that even immigrant adolescents' decision to learn, retain, and use their parents' native language can be considered a reflection of the development of autonomy, and it is likely that language ability and family relationships have reciprocal effects upon one another.

Disagreeing with and becoming less close to parents across the years of adolescence, despite the endorsement of cultural traditions to the contrary, likely reflects the desire for immigrant teenagers to pursue a sense of independence and autonomy from parents in a way that is consistent with the norms of their new societies. As with their peers from nonimmigrant families, adolescents do not seek complete separation from parents. Rather, they develop a sense of individuation from their mothers and fathers that provides them with the room to develop their sense of self and identity

(Phinney et al. 2005). Perhaps immigrant youth feel able to adopt this new norm of autonomy development because they simultaneously maintain a different type of connection to the family that is strongly consistent with their heritage cultures and quite distinct from the traditions in their new societies. This flexibility in their ability to develop a sense of autonomy while maintaining a traditional tie to the family lies in the distinction between closeness in dyadic relationships with their parents and connection to the family as a larger social group.

Obligation and Assistance to the Family

The values of familism and filial piety strongly held in the heritage cultures of many immigrant families emphasize the role of children to support, assist, and take into account the needs and wishes of the family when making significant life decisions (Greenfield et al. 2003a). Importantly, this obligation to help and consider the family does not necessitate closer dyadic relationships between children and their parents relative to nonimmigrant families. Instead, this type of family connection implies a strong identification with the larger family unit, including parents, siblings, and extended family, and the obligation to help one another derives from the fact that members are all part of the same family. Fuligni & Flook (2005) argued that family membership serves as a critical social identity for youth. As is the case with other social identities such as those defined by larger groups according to religion or gender, identification with the family implies a certain set of obligations to consider the needs of the group and assist group members when necessary (Hogg 2003, Tajfel & Turner 2001). This culturally based identification with the family becomes even more enhanced among immigrants because their status as newcomers and recognizable minorities in their host societies creates the sense of external threat that tends to increase internal group identification (Fuligni & Flook 2005, Hogg 2003).

The group-level nature of family obligation and assistance provides youth from immigrant families additional means to flexibly maintain a key aspect of family connection from their heritage culture at the same time as they pursue a level of autonomy within the context of their dyadic relationships with their parents. Interestingly, values of family obligation and assistance only diminish slightly across subsequent generations and remain strong among ethnic minority youth whose parents and grandparents were immigrants. This sense of obligation is significantly stronger than that of their peers from the majority ethnic groups in their host societies and has been found among Asians and Latin Americans in the United States (Baca Zinn 1994, Buriel & Rivera 1980, Cauce & Rodríguez 2002, Freeberg & Stein 1996, Keefe 1984, Leu et al. 2012, Marin & Marin 1991, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco 1995, Uba 1994, Valenzuela & Dornbusch 1994, Vega 1990, Zhou & Bankston 1998) and among immigrants from multiple ethnic backgrounds in several European nations such as the Netherlands, Italy, Norway, and Sweden (Laghi et al. 2014, Sam & Virta 2003, van Geel & Vedder 2011, Vedder et al. 2009).

The strong sense of obligation to the family is accompanied by significantly more acts of assistance, as well, with those from immigrant families providing more daily instrumental help (e.g., cleaning, running errands for parents, caring for siblings) and financial support to the family (Fuligni & Pedersen 2002, Hardway & Fuligni 2006). As with the value of family obligation, rates of family assistance decline only slightly across generations, suggesting that this particular type of connection to the family remains strong among the adolescents and grandchildren of immigrants. One reason why adolescents maintain this type of connection to the family can be seen in the psychological and motivational significance of family obligation and assistance. A desire to support and repay immigrant parents for bringing them to a new country for a better life can be seen in the consistent link between a sense of family obligation and greater academic motivation among immigrant youth, leading to high aspirations for college attendance and completion (Fuligni &

Tseng 1999, Phinney et al. 2006). In a daily diary study that included Asian and Latin American immigrants, Telzer & Fuligni (2009b) found that adolescents' daily family assistance contributed to elevated feelings of happiness by virtue of increasing a sense of role fulfillment of being a good family member. As such, acts of everyday assistance to the family are important ways by which immigrant youth meet the needs and expectations of their family, which in turn reinforces their feelings of family identification and membership.

At the same time, the ability to flexibly balance the tradition of family assistance and obligation with being a member of a new society can be more constrained for some immigrant youth than for others. Adolescents from immigrant families with fewer socioeconomic resources tend to have a particularly strong sense of obligation to the family, spend significantly more time helping the family on a daily basis, and provide more financial support to the family. These very high levels of obligation and assistance can have their costs. Adolescents with the highest levels of obligation have been found to have lower levels of performance in school than those with more moderate levels of obligation (Fuligni et al. 1999). An additional study found that Asian and Latin American youth had lower grade-point averages in years in which they spent more days helping the family as compared to other years (Telzer & Fuligni 2009a). Finally, the need to provide financial support to the family can reduce the ability of youth to persist in postsecondary education (Fuligni & Witkow 2004, Phinney et al. 2006). Limited family resources, therefore, can constrain the ability of immigrant youth to maintain an ideal amount of flexibility to pursue educational goals in the host society, which over time could constrain their occupational and economic mobility as adults. In this respect, perceived flexibility in the maintenance of family connectedness can inadvertently limit the pursuit of autonomy, such as in the domains of school and career, for some immigrant youth.

Summary

Adolescents from immigrant families flexibly pursue autonomy in some aspects of their family relationships and maintain connectedness in others. Within their dyadic relationships with their mothers and fathers, immigrant teenagers exhibit levels of and developmental changes in conflict and cohesion similar to those of their peers in their host societies. At the same time, immigrant youth possess a sense of obligation to assist and consider the needs of their families that is consistent with their heritage culture and is distinct from the norms of the host culture. Nevertheless, the ability to flexibly manage those obligations can be constrained by economic resources, with youth from poorer families having to assist their families at such high levels that it can interfere with their ability to pursue advanced education and maximize their economic potential as adults.

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND CULTURAL ORIENTATION

Identity development during the adolescent years is commonly broken down into the processes of personal and social identity development (Côté 2009). Personal or self-identity refers to individually specific characteristics such as personality, choices, and preferences. Social identity, in contrast, captures the extent to which adolescents come to the understanding of the social groups by which the larger society categorizes individuals (Hogg 2003, Ruble et al. 2004). These social groups and categories can be defined by any number of characteristics (e.g., gender, political orientation, age), but cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds are used as defining features of salient social categories in many societies. Adolescents' negotiation of these social categories and their discovery of where they fit comprise key aspects of the identity processes. For youth from immigrant families, this process has been primarily examined in terms of the development of their ethnic labeling and their orientations toward their heritage and host cultures.

Ethnic Labeling

The challenge for immigrants is that the specific social categories and the characteristics by which individuals are sorted into those categories can differ greatly across societies. For example, the US government—reflecting and perpetuating social categories in the larger society—places individuals into five dominant ethnic and racial categories: white, black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American (Portes & Rumbaut 2006). Many immigrants come to the United States from countries with no such categories and find themselves suddenly being labeled as Hispanic or Asian. The official categories, in turn, can have multiple labels, such as African American, Latino, and American Indian. Furthering the complexity is the category of American, which can have multiple interpretations and for which there is no clear official definition other than citizenship. For other receiving nations, social categories can be defined in additional ways (e.g., Muslim in the Netherlands, which is a religious and ethnic category; Verkuyten et al. 2012).

One of the most significant challenges facing immigrant teenagers, therefore, is the learning of the social categories into which their host societies divide people according to their cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds. This social knowledge is not typically possessed by their parents, who were socialized into the social categories in their countries of origin. The learning process for immigrant adolescents occurs simultaneously with their need to figure out where they fit into those categories and which ethnic and cultural labels they will use to describe themselves. As with cultural values and orientations, identity development for immigrant adolescents is typically cast as the need to choose between their old and new ethnic and cultural identities. For example, is a Chinese immigrant to the United States going to identify as Chinese, Asian, or American? Is a Moroccan immigrant to Germany going to identify as Moroccan, Muslim, or German? Research has suggested that the answer to these questions is, “It depends.” Immigrant youth demonstrate an impressive amount of flexibility in their ethnic and cultural identities, usually retaining some aspect of their national origin and often combining it with elements of the social categories of their new country (e.g., Asian American, Mexican American). Nevertheless, there are limits to this flexibility depending upon the rigidity of the boundaries that exist within the host countries.

First, there is little evidence that adolescents from immigrant families abandon their cultural and national origins for the identities offered by their host societies. Virtually all youth include at least some reference to their families’ backgrounds in their ethnic identities. In the multinational study of immigrant youth, researchers (Berry et al. 2006) observed that immigrant adolescents across 13 different societies more strongly endorsed an ethnic identity than a national identity (i.e., that of the host society, e.g., German), averaging 4.3 on a 5-point scale. Similarly, a study of over 700 high school students in metropolitan Los Angeles noted that between 95% and 100% of first- and second-generation adolescents from Chinese and Mexican backgrounds included reference to their national or cultural origins in their preferred ethnic identifications (Fuligni et al. 2005). Similar patterns have been observed among adolescents from the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and other Latin American countries (Rumbaut 1994).

Second, a typical strategy for adolescents from immigrant families is to combine reference to their national and cultural origin with elements of social categories in their host societies. In the same study of Los Angeles high school students, between 41% and 85% of first- and second-generation adolescents included in their ethnic labels either American or a panethnic label typical of the United States (e.g., Latino), either by itself or in combination with another label (e.g., Chinese American; Fuligni et al. 2005). Similar proportions were observed in a survey of over 5,000 youth in San Diego, California, and in South Florida who came from countries as diverse as the Philippines, Columbia, China, Trinidad, and Laos (Rumbaut 1994).

Third, it is important to note that there is a fair amount of flexibility and variability within adolescents in their use of ethnic labels. Fuligni et al. (2005) reported that when adolescents are allowed to indicate multiple ethnic labels, those from immigrant families use significantly more different labels to describe themselves than do native-born teenagers. Additionally, there is a variation across time. A longitudinal analysis of the change in ethnic labeling among immigrant students across four years of high school revealed that although there was no normative developmental change in the types of labels used by adolescents, individual adolescents fluctuated from year to year in terms of whether they most closely identified with an ethnic label that focused on their national origin or some category typical in the United States (e.g., Latino, American; Fuligni et al. 2008).

Finally, the nature of ethnic identifications can vary across daily life and situations. The salience and importance of identifying as Chinese was shown to vary significantly on a daily level across a two-week period in a study of adolescents from Chinese immigrant families in New York City (Yip & Fuligni 2002). An additional study, employing a situational experience sampling method, observed significant situational variability in the salience of the identifying as Chinese such that the salience was stronger in settings with more Chinese individuals and family members and a greater use of the Chinese language (Yip 2005). Furthermore, a series of experiments by Verkuyten and colleagues has shown how the ethnic identification of youth from immigrant groups can be manipulated in an experimental context through the use of cultural symbols to change the valence of their values and attitudes toward their native and host cultures (Verkuyten & De Wolf 2002, Verkuyten & Pouliasi 2002).

Although flexibility in ethnic and cultural identification generally typifies the identity development of youth from immigrant families, it is important to note that there are limitations on that flexibility as a function of the rigidity of the social categories that are defined by host societies. Within the United States, racial categories defined by phenotypic features (e.g., skin color, facial features, hair) tend to be impermeable, and some categorizations (e.g., the racial categories of black and white) can override others. As a result, some ethnic and cultural identities are simply not available to youth from immigrant families. In the United States, a phenotypically black immigrant from Jamaica will not be able to identify as white, and those with Asian facial features will likely be unable to avoid being placed into some sort of Asian category by others. As such, few Asian or phenotypically black immigrant adolescents in the United States tend to choose white as an ethnic category (Fuligni et al. 2005, Waters 1999).

Similarly, in some national and historical contexts, it can be difficult to combine and integrate multiple ethnic and cultural identities. For example, one study in the Netherlands found that at a time of tensions and divergence between the Western and Muslim worlds, adolescents from Morocco have a difficult time combining their Moroccan, Muslim, and Dutch national identities; indeed, stronger Moroccan and Muslim identities are negatively related to Dutch identification (Verkuyten et al. 2012). In fact, in the cross-national study by Berry et al. (2006), the correlation between ethnic and national identities was consistently negative across most immigrant groups in nonsettler countries that are only recently experiencing increased immigration (e.g., Sweden, Norway, Germany). The correlation between ethnic and national identities was positive in traditional settler societies such as Canada, Australia, and the United States. Despite the apparent ability of immigrant youth to be flexible in their identity development, they will face limits to the types of social categories with which they can identify and integrate into their overall ethnic and cultural identity.

The constraints upon the identity options available to some immigrant youth are consistent with the idea of segmented assimilation, whereby newcomers to a society are channeled or segmented into different pathways of adaptation to a new society by virtue of the social stratifications

of the society (Portes & Zhou 1993). Just as ethnic categories create boundaries, the socioeconomic resources of immigrant youth can limit their potential identity developments. Studies have suggested that teenagers from families with lower levels of parental education and occupation are less likely to adopt identities that include reference to the national labels (e.g., American or German, whether by themselves or in some form of combination; Berry et al. 2006, Fuligni et al. 2005). This may be due to lack of perceived mobility in the host country among those with fewer resources.

Cultural Orientation

In addition to examining explicit self-labeling, researchers of cultural and ethnic identification have assessed adolescents' attitudes or orientations toward their heritage culture and the culture of their new society. Although not identity in the same way as is an explicit label used to describe oneself, cultural orientations represent the degree to which individuals appreciate and participate in behaviors, practices, and traditions that are typical of specific cultural traditions (Berry 1990). As such, they represent another way to examine how adolescents from immigrant families identify with their native and host societies and cultures. Additionally, the extent to which the orientations of youth differ from those of their parents provides a view into the development of autonomy within immigrant families.

Similar to the findings for ethnic labeling, studies of cultural orientations indicate a strong degree of flexibility among immigrant teenagers by which they generally avoid false dichotomies between the old and the new cultures. First, immigrant teenagers generally profess fairly positive views of both their heritage and host societies. When studies employ separate measurement of the two types of orientations—the preferred method that avoids forcing respondents to choose one over the other—immigrant adolescents from a variety of backgrounds in a variety of settings score above the mid point on measures of their orientation toward both their heritage and host cultures. This pattern has been found among diverse immigrant groups in several settlement societies, including Asian immigrants to Canada and the United States (Chan & Birman 2009, Costigan & Dokis 2006b, Juang & Nguyen 2009), Turkish immigrants to Bulgaria (Dimitrova et al. 2013), Arab immigrant youth in Canada (Paterson & Hakim-Larson 2012), and foreign-born teens of diverse origins in France and Canada (Berry & Sabatier 2010).

Whether immigrant youth report a stronger orientation toward one culture or another varies across samples and contexts. There is a slight tendency for immigrant adolescents in countries that only recently have experienced rising immigration to more strongly endorse heritage over host culture (Dimitrova et al. 2013); the patterns are opposite in long-time immigrant-receiving nations such as Canada and the United States (Chan & Birman 2009, Costigan & Dokis 2006b, Juang & Nguyen 2009), although Berry & Sabatier (2010) observed differentially stronger heritage orientation in both Canada and France. Interestingly, studies that have examined multiple immigrant groups in new host societies have observed that adolescents from groups who experienced a more welcoming response by the larger society (e.g., Surinamese in the Netherlands) are higher in orientation toward the host culture than their heritage culture, whereas the opposite is the case among those who experience greater negativity (e.g., Moroccans in the Netherlands; Guengoer & Bornstein 2009, Motti-Stefanidi et al. 2008).

Another way of assessing the flexibility of the cultural orientations of immigrant teenagers has been to estimate the associations between the separate measures of heritage and host cultures. A negative correlation would indicate that the two orientations would be in opposition to one another, suggesting that individuals have a difficult time integrating the two, whereas a lack of an association or a positive correlation suggests that the two traditions are not conflictual and

perhaps even could be combined. Overall, studies suggest that possessing a strong orientation toward one cultural tradition does not prevent youth from holding the same view of the others. Heritage and host cultural orientations have been found to be generally unassociated with one another (Costigan & Su 2004, Dimitrova et al. 2013, Paterson & Hakim-Larson 2012). If there is a negative association, it has tended to be quite small in magnitude (e.g., $r = -0.19$; Juang & Nguyen 2009).

The general lack of association between heritage and host cultural orientations suggests a great deal of variation in the extent to which immigrant youth identify with one society or culture versus the other. Taking advantage of the separate measure of each type of orientation, some investigators have examined the existence of different combinations of orientations. Nguyen & von Eye (2002) employed a confirmatory factor analysis to determine the factor structure in measures of orientation toward heritage and host cultures simultaneously and reported that a bidimensional structure, by which youth could be either high or low in heritage and host cultures, was the best representation of the data.

Given that most immigrant teenagers rate both cultural orientations above the midpoint, it logically follows that the most common type of pattern would be adolescents possessing a strong orientation to both cultures, which acculturation theorists call an integration orientation (Berry 1990). An integration pattern has generally been the most common pattern observed when the two different types of cultural orientation are assessed together, demonstrating the high level of flexibility among youth from immigrant families who find themselves in the context of two, often different, cultural orientations. Similar results have been observed in studies that have employed separate scales of the four different patterns of orienting toward the heritage and host societies. For example, in their international study of immigrant adolescents from diverse ethnic backgrounds in 13 different countries, Berry and colleagues (2006) found that integration (e.g., “I want to have friends of both German and Turkish backgrounds”) was the most preferred type of acculturation across all of the societies ($M = 3.90$ on a 5-point scale) and was much more strongly endorsed than separation, assimilation, and marginalization.

Finally, adolescents from immigrant backgrounds demonstrate another form of flexibility in cultural orientation by picking and choosing which aspects of the heritage and host cultures they prefer. Birman and colleagues (2002) observed that whereas Soviet Jewish refugee youth more strongly identified with a Russian than an American cultural orientation, they showed an obvious preference for the English over the Russian language and for American behaviors (e.g., music, entertainment) over Russian behaviors. In another study, youth from Mexican immigrant families in the United States believed in the importance of maintaining the cultural traditions of family support and respect but were less willing to endorse the idea of continuing traditional gender roles (Knight et al. 2010). Studies that have examined separate aspects of cultural orientation consistently have found that adolescents from immigrant families demonstrate the ability to select specific aspects of the heritage culture they want to maintain and combine with particular features of the host culture (Guengoer & Bornstein 2009, Ying et al. 2008).

The flexibility in the cultural orientation of youth from immigrant families, although impressive, has not been consistently observed in a uniformly positive light. An early and enduring topic of study within the area of cultural orientation has been the acculturation gap between immigrant adolescents and their parents, whereby the tendency for youth to more quickly adopt and identify with the host culture in comparison with parents creates a large difference in cultural orientation within the family (Szapocznik & Kurtines 1993). This gap, in turn, has been theorized to be a risk factor for immigrant adolescents because it has been purported to create higher levels of discord in the family and distress among immigrant adolescents themselves (Kwak 2003, Szapocznik & Kurtines 1993).

The emerging body of evidence discussed previously suggesting that conflict and estrangement are no higher in immigrant families than in other families, coupled with the tendency for immigrant youth to demonstrate levels of psychological well-being that are similar to those of their native-born peers, is reason to doubt the acculturation gap and distress hypothesis. More directly, a recent close review of the acculturation gap literature suggests little evidence for the idea that immigrant youth with a stronger orientation to the host culture in comparison with their parents experience higher levels of family discord and distress (Telzer 2010). In fact, there is some indication that this type of gap may be advantageous to the youth and the family. Telzer (2010) argued that this stands to reason, given the importance of learning and adopting at least some aspects of the host culture in order for the immigrant youth to function successfully in their new society. Being able to adopt norms and practices of a new culture in a manner distinct from their parents without creating undue discord and distress is a strong testament to the skill and value of flexibility among adolescents from immigrant families.

Nevertheless, acculturation gaps that result from differences in children's and parents' orientations to their heritage rather than host culture have more significant implications for family relationships (Costigan & Dokis 2006a, Ho & Birman 2010, Kwak 2003, Smokowski et al. 2009). For example, youth who identified with Vietnamese culture less strongly than did their parents reported lower levels of cohesion and satisfaction with their parents relative to their peers who expressed a connection toward Vietnamese culture that was equal to or stronger than that of their parents (Ho & Birman 2010). Similarly, adolescents who reported using Chinese media less than their mothers did also reported high levels of family conflict (Costigan & Dokis 2006a). Finally, when there was a mismatch in children's and mothers' Chinese language use in either direction (i.e., adolescents reported using Chinese language more than their mothers did or vice versa), adolescents reported more conflict with their parents (Costigan & Dokis 2006a). Importantly, these studies noted that discrepancies in adolescents' and parents' adherence to the host culture were not deleterious to parent-child relationships (Costigan & Dokis 2006a, Ho & Birman 2010, Lau et al. 2005, Smokowski et al. 2009).

Although these findings suggest that the mismatch in orientation toward the heritage rather than host culture can lead to family discord, the primary driver of these associations seems to be adolescents' orientation toward the heritage culture. That is, given that immigrant parents uniformly demonstrate high levels of identification with the culture in which they were raised, any variation in the mismatch is largely due to the level of the youth's affiliation with their parents' cultural traditions. It is likely that immigrant adolescents' adherence to the heritage cultural beliefs, practices, and language that their parents endorse helps to validate their acceptance of and respect for their family's cultural roots, which in turn helps to maintain close familial ties. An alternative hypothesis is that family strain and conflict create the mismatch in orientation toward the heritage culture in that adolescents in such situations may be less likely to accept their parents' traditional norms and practices. Whatever the direction of the effect, it appears that the flexibility with which adolescents from immigrant families can develop their cultural orientation—at least in terms of avoiding the family discord known to be a risk factor for negative adjustment—is constrained by the need to maintain at least some type of attachment toward the family's cultural origin.

Summary

Youth from immigrant families negotiate the complexity of reconciling the social categories and cultural values from their families' countries of origin with those of the host society in flexible and novel ways. Rather than being forced into making binary decisions between the two, adolescents

appear to find creative ways to combine them, whether by using different multiple or hybrid ethnic labels across times and situations or by picking or choosing which aspects of their heritage and host cultures they wish to adopt and maintain. Flexibility has its limits, however, and there are some ethnic boundaries in the host societies that youth are unable to surmount, and failing to adopt at least some aspects of their heritage culture appears to be disadvantageous for their adjustment.

CONCLUSION

In many ways, the experiences of youth from immigrant families offer a window into how globalization may eventually shape the identity and autonomy development of adolescents more broadly. Immigrant teens encounter rapid social and economic change. They are preparing themselves for societies that can differ dramatically from those of their parents' generation. Cultural diversity and the potential conflict between their cultural background and that of the new society challenge them to find novel ways to express their identity and independence while maintaining connectedness to their family and native culture. The body of research that we reviewed suggests that immigrant adolescents do this by maintaining a degree of flexibility in their identity and autonomy development that allows them to incorporate features of both the old and the new cultures. Judging from their relatively healthy levels of psychological and behavioral adjustment, such flexibility appears to serve them well.

Our conclusions should be considered in light of the limitations of existing research. Longitudinal designs are somewhat rare, resulting in only limited knowledge about true developmental trajectories of identity and autonomy among immigrant youth. Some studies include only one immigrant generation and are unable to make direct contrasts across multiple generations of youth. Systematic research on the direct role of peer relationships is scarce, leaving a critical factor in identity and autonomy development relatively unexplored. Studies of immigrants tend to be from North America and other traditional immigrant-receiving societies, although work in countries that are new to receiving immigrants has begun to increase.

Finally, it is important to note that immigrants and their families represent a select group of people who usually leave their native countries voluntarily to pursue opportunities in a new society (Portes & Rumbaut 2006). Therefore, it is not certain that we will see identical patterns among those who do not migrate and instead experience globalization's introduction of new and different social norms in their native countries. Nevertheless, even youth who do not migrate are often at the forefront of globalization in their native countries, adopting different norms and pursuing new social, educational, and occupational opportunities (Greenfield 2009, Jensen & Arnett 2012, Larson et al. 2009, Manago 2012). Therefore, we believe that the many of patterns of identity and autonomy development that have been observed among immigrants foreshadow the future experiences of many of those who stay in their native countries.

Our review suggests five key lessons (outlined in the sidebar, *Lessons Learned from Immigrant Youth About Flexibility in the Midst of Globalization*) about navigating one's autonomy and identity development in the context of dramatic social and culture change that, in combination with the remarkable level of adjustment among those from immigrant families, offer a roadmap of sorts for the increasing numbers of adolescents around the world who will encounter globalization. These lessons highlight the importance of flexibility and the remarkable ability of adolescents from varied cultural origins to exhibit flexibility in diverse social contexts.

At the same time, flexibility has its limits, and the socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial stratification systems that exist in most countries continue to place powerful boundaries upon the options available for youths' autonomy and identity. Whether such social stratifications will be reduced or

LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMMIGRANT YOUTH ABOUT FLEXIBILITY IN THE MIDST OF GLOBALIZATION

1. There are multiple ways to develop autonomy and still remain close to the family.
2. It is possible to embrace the new culture while hanging on to the old.
3. Multiple and hybridized ethnic and cultural identities can be adopted.
4. Dominant ethnic and racial categories nevertheless can be difficult to overcome.
5. Socioeconomic resources will continue to shape the range of flexibility that is possible.

exacerbated by globalization remains a matter of debate, but the experiences of immigrant youth highlight how there will still be boundaries that even adolescents—whose biological and brain development prime them to adapt to changing social environments—will find it difficult to cross.

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