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Autonomy-Supportive Parenting in Adolescence: Cultural Variability in the Contemporary United States

This review focuses on how the expression of parental autonomy support (particularly the promotion of independence and volitional functioning) and its impact on adolescent adjustment varies across cultural groups in the United States. We review history involving the conceptualization of parental autonomy support and its impact on adolescent development, discuss cross-cultural research focused on the expression and impact of autonomy support, review theoretical perspectives suggesting the importance of studying variability in parental autonomy support across cultural groups, and summarize research conducted in the United States across four racial/ethnic groups: European American, African American, Latinx, and Asian American. Much of this research does not adequately reflect current understanding regarding the forms of autonomy support, nor is it grounded in theoretical perspectives recognizing the role of culture in shaping parental behaviors. We conclude by discussing directions for further research to overcome existing shortcomings in this literature.

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Key Words: Adolescence, autonomy support, culture, ethnicity and cross-cultural issues, parenting.

Parents are a critical socialization source in children's lives (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000), but the nature of their influence changes across development. This is particularly evident during adolescence, a period during which physical, cognitive, and social forces converge to make the development of autonomy an especially salient aspect of psychosocial development. During adolescence, youth strive to achieve independence in how they think and act while maintaining emotional connections to parents (Van Petegem, Vansteenkiste, & Beyers, 2013). As adolescents work to achieve this balance, effective parenting is increasingly characterized by efforts to support autonomy development (Kouros & Garber, 2014). Not surprisingly, a substantial literature exists on the form and function of parental autonomy support as well as theoretical perspectives framing this area of inquiry. This literature has indicated that the form and function of autonomy support differ across countries that are characterized as having individualistic versus collectivistic orientations. Yet the study of parental autonomy support has often failed to recognize cultural diversity in the contemporary United States and variability in the ways autonomy support is expressed and has an impact on American youth from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds.

The focus of the current study is on parental autonomy support, broadly conceptualized as parenting practices that encourage

self-initiation, provide choice when possible, support freedom of expression and action, and encourage attending to and acceptance of personal preferences and desires (Eccles et al., 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Skinner & Edge, 2000; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003). Conceptual and empirical distinctions between two types of parental autonomy support—promotion of independence (PI) and promotion of volitional functioning (PVF)—will also be defined and discussed. Parental psychological control is often considered the conceptual antithesis of parental autonomy support, and it includes parenting practices that invalidate, manipulate, or induce guilt as a means to pressure adolescents into thinking or behaving in ways that align with parental wishes (Barber, 1996; Scharf & Goldner, 2018). These concepts have undergone significant changes from their conception to the present day. Therefore, we first present a brief chronological overview of research on autonomy-supportive parenting, followed by comprehensive descriptions of key concepts.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE PARENTING

Early Conceptualization of Autonomy Support

A unidimensional perspective on autonomy support and psychological control. The concept of autonomy-supportive parenting can be traced to an influential paper published in 1965 by Schaefer. Conducting a factor analysis of parental behaviors from the Child Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI; Schaefer, 1965), Schaefer identified a set of behaviors (including intrusiveness, control through guilt, and parental direction) that loaded on what he called a “psychological control” dimension. He then identified “psychological autonomy granting” (synonymous with “autonomy support”) as opposing psychological control on a single dimension, despite little empirical support for the premise.

The assumption that psychological control and psychological autonomy granting represented two ends of a single dimension went unchallenged for about 40 years. During these decades, psychological control and psychological autonomy granting were studied in relative isolation from each other (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Sierens 2009), but conceptualization issues persisted. For example, the assumption that psychological control

and autonomy support lie on opposite ends of the same spectrum was exemplified by some researchers’ decisions to measure autonomy support by reverse-scoring measures of psychological control (Gray & Steinberg, 1999).

Identification of autonomy support as a distinct construct. After an explicit call to reexamine the constructs of autonomy support and psychological control, as well as preliminary evidence suggesting a low correlation between measures of the two (Barber, Bean, & Erickson, 2002), Silk, Morris, Kanaya, and Steinberg (2003) conducted a factor analysis of 19 items from Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling’s (1992) psychological control and acceptance scales. Silk and colleagues found that a two-factor model was the optimal fit for the data. The correlation between autonomy support and psychological control was weak ($r = -.18$), and the constructs were differentially associated with indicators of adolescent well-being. The findings inspired new inquiries conceptualizing autonomy support and psychological control as distinct constructs. Current understanding in the field recognizes (a) the distinction between psychological control and autonomy support and (b) the presence of two components of autonomy support.

Psychological Control

Psychological control refers to parenting that hinders children’s socioemotional development through intrusion (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005); it manifests in passive-aggressive interactions or the use of intrusive tactics that often contain an element of hostility. Parents high in psychological control display intrusive behaviors through interruptions, undermining comments, or dismissiveness (Barber, 1996). Parents who are psychologically controlling may use coercion to invalidate adolescents’ perspectives, undermine their individuality, and deny adolescents’ independence by pressuring them to think and behave in ways that are consistent with parents’ own views (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Predictors of parental psychological control include parental competence difficulties (e.g., low self-esteem, high perfectionism), parent autonomy-relatedness difficulties (e.g., insecure attachment history, separation anxiety, depression), and child characteristics (Scharf & Goldner, 2018).

Parental psychological control negatively affects children's emotional well-being. It is associated with negative self-concept (Silk et al., 2003), internalizing problems (Barber, 1996; Gray & Steinberg, 1999), depressive symptoms, and antisocial behavior among children and adolescents (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Sher-Censor, Parke, & Coltrane, 2011). Recent meta-analyses show that parent psychological control is concurrently associated with internalizing and externalizing behavior problems during adolescence and also predicts increases in these problems over time (Pinquart 2017a, 2017b). Barber et al. (2005) reported that parental psychological control predicts adolescent depression for all demographic subgroups (defined in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity) in the United States and across multiple waves of data. In their review of the literature on parent psychological control, Scharf and Goldner (2018) concluded that psychological control is almost universally associated with negative outcomes for adolescents.

The Two Components of Autonomy Support

The most recent research on autonomy support has indicated that it comprises two components: promotion of independence and promotion of volitional functioning. Parental PI involves parenting practices that encourage youth to make decisions and solve problems for themselves, whereas parental PVF refers to parenting practices that encourage youth to behave based on self-endorsed interests (Soenens et al., 2007). Though related, the two constructs are conceptually and empirically distinct; a factor analysis performed by Soenens et al. (2007) indicated support for a two-factor structure that distinguishes these two components. In addition, Soenens and colleagues reported that PVF, but not PI, predicts adolescent adjustment. In subsequent work, Soenens et al. (2009) tested whether parental psychological control was correlated with or orthogonal to PI and PVF. Results from a cluster analysis indicated that psychological control and PI were distinct constructs, but psychological control and PVF represent a bipolar continuum; in other words, high levels of parental psychological control co-occur with low levels of parental PVF, and vice versa. For the purposes of the current review, we focus on PI and PVF, setting aside discussion of parental

psychological control beyond this recognition that it is dimensionally opposite from PVF.

We now describe the two dimensions of parental autonomy support in greater detail, including conceptual definitions, theoretical underpinnings, and relevance across cultural context.

Promotion of independence. PI focuses on autonomy development as a process that involves distancing from parents and embracing new roles and responsibilities (Soenens et al., 2009). Parents who are high in PI attempt to understand their children's perspectives, encourage children's individuality, respect different opinions through validation (Silk et al., 2003), and encourage both self-expression and decision making in order to engender independence (Barber et al., 2002; Goodman & Gotlib, 1999). Parents high in PI encourage adolescents to rely on themselves, rather than parents, to solve problems or make decisions. In contrast, parents low in PI do not engage in these behaviors and may demand that adolescents conform to parent wishes or depend on parents to make decisions.

The construct of PI is typically framed by separation-individuation theory (Blos, 1979), which posits that adolescents must have the opportunity to psychologically and emotionally distance themselves from parents in order to make independent decisions. In other words, autonomy and relatedness are conceptually opposed such that adolescents must detach from relationships with parents to become autonomous. However, Kağıtçıbaşı (2013) argued that this premise has not been empirically supported, particularly in samples of parent-adolescent dyads outside of individualistic, Western societies. Kağıtçıbaşı posits that viewing relatedness and autonomy as conflicting forces is logically flawed because they are distinct constructs. The extent to which parents engage in PI and its links to indicators of adolescent adjustment are, in fact, highly dependent on sociocultural context. Extending Kağıtçıbaşı's (2013) argument, it is possible that associations between parental PI and indicators of adolescent adjustment vary by cultural group within the United States as well. Because the relatedness-autonomy dichotomy embedded in separation-individuation theory that informs understanding of parental PI is not useful in many non-Western countries, it follows that this might also be true for cultural groups in

the United States that are characterized by a greater emphasis on connection as opposed to individualism. Specifically, PI may be more frequently observed and more strongly linked with positive adolescent adjustment within European American U.S. families rather than ethnic minority families.

Promotion of volitional functioning. According to Soenens et al. (2009), parents who engage in PI cannot be sure that adolescents who engage in independent behaviors are behaving authentically. Children may perform independent actions because of external pressure from parents rather than of their own will. The second component of autonomy support, PVF, emphasizes alignment of thoughts and actions. When parents engage in PVF, they encourage engagement in independent behaviors because they are fully endorsed and controlled by the adolescent. Parents who engage in PVF support adolescents' autonomy development through perspective taking and the allowance of open exchange (Marbell-Pierre, Grolnick, Stewart, & Raftery-Helmer, 2019). Perspective taking involves acknowledgment and acceptance of young people's perspectives, whereas open exchange involves encouraging dialogue and the expression of youth opinions. Parental PVF is framed by self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which considers autonomous functioning necessary for well-being and not in opposition to relatedness. Autonomous functioning is achieved when every action completed by an individual aligns with his or her self-concept or is fully endorsed by the individual based on that individual's values and beliefs. SDT is noteworthy for its premise that the needs for autonomy and connection are universally experienced across all cultures (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which suggests that the construct of PVF may be beneficial to adolescents from all cultural backgrounds.

Individualistic cultures are those in which individuals' development of autonomy and independence are highly valued, whereas collectivistic cultures value group cohesion, loyalty, and protection of the extended family (Hofstede, 2011). Cross-cultural research on PVF has indicated that it functions in different ways than PI does within individualistic versus collectivistic societies. For example, Marbell-Pierre et al. (2019) distinguished two aspects of autonomy support: perspective taking and decision making. Perspective taking involved parents

acknowledging and accepting their children's perspectives and was akin to PVF. It was more prevalent in Ghana—a country that endorses collectivistic socialization goals—than in the United States, and it predicted positive adjustment among adolescents from both the United States and Ghana. Decision making involved supporting adolescents' own decision making and was akin to PI. It was more prevalent in the United States—a country that endorses individualistic socialization goals—and was associated with positive adjustment only among U.S. adolescents. Similarly, Fousiani, van Petegem, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, and Chen (2014) examined the impact of PI and PVF on adolescent autonomy within individualistic (Belgium) and collectivistic (Greek) samples, and their findings indicated the universal importance of PVF in relation to adolescents' self-endorsed motives. Chirkov and Ryan (2001) and Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, and Kaplan (2003) further reported that parental PVF is positively associated with adolescent well-being and negatively associated with internalizing problems for South Korean, Russian, Turkish, and U.S. samples. Together, these studies suggest that PVF, but not PI, supports adolescents in their efforts to behave in ways that are authentic (consistent with their own values and perspectives) and is linked with positive youth adjustment across both individualistic and collectivistic societies. In contrast, PI appears to be associated with positive adjustment only for youth in individualistic societies. To date, little work exists that considers variations in the prevalence and sequelae of PI and PVF across ethnic groups in the United States.

Given the considerable cultural diversity that characterizes the United States, we suggest that the use and impact of parental PI and PVF may differ across ethnic groups in the United States. These differences are predicted to mirror findings from research that documents differences between collectivistic and individualistic countries. Specifically, use of PI is likely more prevalent in European American families than in ethnic minority families in the United States. In addition, parental PVF is likely to be linked with positive adjustment among adolescents from all ethnic backgrounds in the United States, whereas PI may be linked with positive adjustment only among European American adolescents. As support for these predictions, we turn to a substantial theoretical literature

focused on ways in which cultural context shapes and frames parenting.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF PARENTING IN CONTEXT

Cultural, social, and historical factors influence parenting beliefs, values, goals, and attitudes about child rearing (Bornstein, 2018; García-Coll et al., 1996). These beliefs, values, goals, and attitudes shape parental behaviors, which in turn influence the environments and experiences to which children are exposed (Bornstein, 2018; Harkness & Super, 1992).

Traditional contextual models applied to the study of family systems and child development often consider culture as part of a macrosystem that shapes parenting through its influence on more proximal factors. In contrast, recent theoretical models have begun to consider culture and ethnicity as themselves constituting proximal factors and central processes that operate within the individual. For example, García-Coll et al.'s (1996) integrative theory for the study of minority children conceptualizes social class, culture, ethnicity, and race as the “core” rather than the “periphery” of a theoretical understanding of child development. According to this theory, “adaptive cultural practices” directly influence parenting and child development, as well as potentially mediating influences of social stratifications on the development of children’s competencies. Similarly, developmental niche theory (Harkness & Super, 1992) conceptualizes culture as influencing parenting through its impact on parental beliefs about normative and nonnormative parenting practices, perceptions of children’s needs, and subsequent developmental goals. Further elaboration on developmental niche theory recognizes parental ethno-theories as shaped by culture and representing underlying motivations that function as goals and interpretations of experiences for parents (Harkness & Super, 1992). Ethno-theories are embedded in parent–child daily interactions and are derived from the cultural experiences in which such interactions occur, ultimately shaping parents’ decisions about socialization strategies. For example, Pomerantz, Ng, Cheung, and Qu (2014) concluded that parental socialization goals are rooted in cultural norms and values, which may explain the existence and persistence of learning-related parenting differences between Chinese and U.S. parents.

The constructs of individualism and collectivism have been criticized for offering a simplistic view of parenting (Tamis-LeMonda, 2003); however, they have been widely used as a theoretical framework to guide research questions and understand differences in parenting across cultural groups (e.g., Grusec, Rudy, & Martini; 1997; Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, & Miller, 2002). Keller’s bio-culture framework has added both breadth and depth to the concepts of individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations (Keller et al., 2004). Whereas individualism and collectivism traditionally have been defined as opposing and mutually exclusive constructs, the bio-culture framework favors using the concepts of independence and interdependence to frame the study of parental ethno-theories. Keller et al. (2004) proposed that developmental goals can be integrated into sociocultural orientations, such as independence (prioritizing success outside the family system) and interdependence (prioritizing and maintaining the family system). Sociocultural orientations are acquired through socialization processes involving socialization goals, parental beliefs, and parenting behaviors that are likely to differ according to the extent to which cultures emphasize independence versus interdependence.

AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE PARENTING AND CULTURE

Despite theoretical perspectives emphasizing the importance of understanding how cultural context shapes parenting behaviors, most research focused on understanding the meaning and functionality of parenting behaviors in the United States has been heavily influenced by work conducted with middle-class, European American families. This body of research has concluded that parental autonomy support is associated with positive adjustment for all adolescents (Kerig, Schulz, & Hauser, 2012). However, to understand the role of parental autonomy support in relation to adolescent development across racial/ethnic groups, it is important to integrate theoretical approaches that consider culture as directly influencing parenting behaviors through parental ethno-theories and socialization goals (García-Coll et al., 1996; Harkness & Super, 1992; Keller et al., 2004). Specifically, it is important to consider whether the meaning and impact on adolescent adjustment of both

parental PI and PVF differs across cultures. Parenting behaviors that work to promote independence during adolescence may be associated with adaptive behaviors only in cultures that promote independence over interdependence (Marbell-Pierre et al., 2019; Soenens et al., 2018). In contrast, parenting that promotes volitional functioning may be beneficial in cultural groups that prioritize either independence or interdependence (Soenens et al., 2018). This suggests that parenting behaviors may have different functionalities across cultural groups within a single country, with these functionalities aligning with the cultural values and socialization goals of groups (Deater-Deckard et al., 2011). The use of culturally informed and theoretically driven frameworks will enable scholars to better understand the prevalence and expression of autonomy-support and its links with adolescent adjustment across families from different racial/ethnic backgrounds in the United States.

There is a critical need for an expanded understanding of variability in the expression and impact of autonomy-supportive parenting in adolescence across cultural groups within the United States. With this in mind, we identified and now summarize the empirical literatures focused on autonomy-supportive parenting (specifically, parental PI and PVF) within four racial/ethnic groups in the United States that vary in their emphasis on independence versus interdependence. To identify potential studies, we conducted searches of article abstracts in the PsycINFO database in the summer of 2019 using combinations of terms for different ethnic groups, *parent**, and *autonomy*—for example, “(African American or Black or African-American or Black American) and parent* and autonomy.” We then located additional articles through review of reference lists for each article located in initial PsycINFO searches. Given the much-larger literature focused on European American parents, we omitted ethnicity search terms for this group, instead screening for a focus on autonomy supportive parenting using article titles, and we then checked the ethnic composition of samples in methodology sections. For each group, we consider not only the researchers’ conclusions but also whether the research was conducted within a theoretical framework that considered the cultural context in which autonomy-supportive parenting occurs. We focus specifically on race/ethnicity as a defining feature of variability, although we

recognize that race/ethnicity and socioeconomic background are inherently intertwined in the United States (García-Coll & Pachter, 2002). We also recognize that the paths of influence linking parenting and adolescent adjustment are bidirectional. However, our focus in this review is on what parents do, not what children or adolescents contribute to the autonomy process. Given our focus on autonomy-supportive parenting as particularly relevant during adolescence, empirical research focusing on children is not included in this review. In some cases, it is impossible to discuss the findings of a particular study without making reference to socioeconomic status, the bidirectional nature of influences, and the role of development, as some or all of these factors relate to the inquiry. However, our intent is that discussion of these topics will be peripheral and not a central focus of reviews.

Autonomy Support in European American Families

European American parents typically endorse stronger independence orientations than non-European American parents and hold socialization goals that value independence over interdependence for their children. Family interdependence values are lower among European American adolescents than among their Mexican American, Korean American, and Armenian American peers (Phinney, Kim-Jo, Osorio, & Vilhjalmssdottir, 2005). Independence orientations influence cultural goals and scripts surrounding autonomy support such that independent action and behavior are prioritized above relatedness and familial harmony. Therefore, European American parents may place more value on autonomy-supportive practices that prioritize an adolescent’s independence (consistent with PI) rather than those that prioritize interdependence (consistent with PVF). However, a mix of studies confirms the importance of both PI and PVF for European American families. The findings reported in this section are drawn from studies that either considered the experiences of exclusively European American families or contained samples with a majority of European American respondents.

Expression of autonomy support in adolescence in European American families. Researchers studying autonomy support often focus on

the types of decisions that adolescents and parents make in different domains of their lives. The extent to which parents support PI autonomy among adolescents can be inferred (albeit imperfectly) from the extent to which adolescents participate in decisions that affect their own lives. Focusing on European American adolescents only, Wray-Lake, Crouter, and McHale (2010) documented decision-making autonomy trajectories across adolescence by determining whether decisions were made by parents unilaterally, by parents and adolescents jointly, or by adolescents unilaterally. Results indicated that European American adolescent participation in decision making gradually increased from age 9 to 11, remained flat during early adolescence (age 11 to 13), and continued increasing from ages 13 to 18. During early adolescence, European American parents tended to make decisions unilaterally about chores, health, and curfew, but decisions about appearance, schoolwork, activities, and social life were made either jointly or unilaterally by the adolescent alone during this period. Decisions about curfew showed the most rapid change from parent unilateral to adolescent unilateral over time.

Researchers have also studied when parental autonomy support emerges and how it manifests in European American families. Soenens et al. (2018) argued that for Western families, parental PI is most relevant during developmental periods characterized by a need for distancing between children and parents in order to renegotiate boundaries and help children achieve self-reliance. Therefore, optimal European American parenting involves engaging in PI when adolescents are ready and express a desire for autonomy. European American parents tend to support greater decision-making autonomy in response to physical and cognitive changes that are indicative of pubertal maturation (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2001). European American adolescents who are more open to parental supervision tend to receive more parental decision-making autonomy support, perhaps because of their perceived responsibility and parental beliefs that excessive strictness is not necessary (Wray-Lake et al., 2010). Research also indicates that provision of parental autonomy support is a balancing act—European American parents who provide too much autonomy or who are excessively strict have adolescents who engage in more

risk-taking behaviors. Harris-McKoy (2016) reported that within a majority European American sample, parental support of moderate levels of decision-making autonomy was associated with the lowest levels of adolescent delinquency.

Autonomy support and adolescent well-being in European American families. Autonomy support has been linked with a range of indicators of positive adjustment among European American adolescents. Although research on parental autonomy support in European American families is extensive, conceptualization issues are quite prevalent. As a result, the literature contains some research that explicitly considers either PI or PVF, but also research that includes autonomy support measures that cannot be easily placed within the PI and PVF framework.

Several studies of parental autonomy support in European American families have focused on PVF (or measures that contain elements consistent with the conceptualization of PVF) and its association with greater psychosocial well-being among European American adolescents. In a study of European American adolescents, Allen, Hauser, Bell, and O'Connor (1994) used an observational measure of parental autonomy support developed by Allen, Hauser, Borman, and Worrell (1991) that tapped aspects of both autonomy and relatedness. For this reason, their measure was most consistent with the conceptualization of PVF, which incorporates autonomy and relatedness as coexistent, rather than conflicting, entities (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). Results indicated that higher levels of parental autonomy support measured in this manner were linked with stronger ego development and higher levels of self-esteem among European American adolescents. Using Soenens et al.'s (2007) measure of PVF, Inguglia, Ingoglia, Liga, Coco, and Cricchio (2015) found that more parental PVF was associated with fewer symptoms of anxiety and depressive among European American adolescents. This association was mediated by levels of adolescent autonomy development and relatedness with parents. Supple, Ghazarian, Peterson, and Bush (2009) developed a measure of autonomy support that contained elements of both PVF and PI but that the authors believed was "more conceptually similar" (p. 820) to the former. In a 90% European American sample, adolescents' perceptions of parental autonomy support were positively associated with the effort adolescents exerted in school. Hauser Kunz and

Grych (2013) used a measure of parental autonomy support that measured “parental promotion of independent expression, decision making, and volitional functioning (p. 83) during a discussion task. The inclusion of volitional functioning in this measure makes it more akin to PVF. In a sample of predominantly (70%) European American preadolescents, autonomy support by both mothers and fathers measured in this way was associated with fewer youth externalizing problems.

Some studies have included measures of parental autonomy support that incorporate elements of both PI and PVF that are difficult to untangle, making interpretation of findings difficult. With reference to Blos’s (1979) separation-individuation theory, which typically frames research focused on parental PI, Aquilino and Supple (2001) investigated how the use of democratic parenting predicted school performance across adolescence. Democratic parenting was measured by two items (“Parent allows child to help set rules” and “Parent praises child”), the first of which provides a small window on a behavior that is consistent with PI. Results indicated that greater use of democratic parenting predicted higher grades in school for younger adolescents (age 12) and higher feelings of personal efficacy for older adolescents (age 18). A more elaborated measure of autonomy support including items assessing PI was used by Cheung and Pomerantz (2011). Autonomy support was measured using 12 items adapted from several different existing measures. Adolescents indicated their agreement with statements such as “My parents allow me to make choices whenever possible.” Results indicated that parental autonomy support positively predicted European American adolescents’ self-perceptions of competence and greater use of self-regulated learning strategies over time. Using the same measure, Wang, Pomerantz, and Chen (2007) found that greater parental autonomy support predicted increased emotional well-being, decreased emotional ill-being, better school performance, and increased goal investment over time among European American adolescents. Silk et al. (2003) also included a measure of parental autonomy granting in their study, later reclassified as a measure of parental PI by Soenens et al. (2007). Higher levels of autonomy support (PI) were not associated with adolescent internalizing and externalizing problems but did predict more positive adolescent self-concept.

Conclusions regarding autonomy support in European American families. The development of autonomy during adolescence is a key socialization goal for European American families. Research with European American families indicates that adolescents increasingly participate in decision making as they grow older, engaging in substantial amounts of independent decision making late in adolescence (Wray-Lake et al., 2010). This is consistent with the strong orientation toward independence in this cultural group. Research with European American families supports the premise that parental autonomy support takes the form of both PI and PVF. There is some suggestion that parental PI in European American families is associated with higher school-related competencies and emotional well-being, but this conclusion is limited by the use of measures that do not explicitly assess PI. In contrast, parental PVF in European American families is a strong predictor of positive psychosocial well-being for adolescents, including higher levels of social skills and self-esteem, as well as fewer internalizing and externalizing behavior problems. These findings suggest that both parental PI and PVF may be relevant and effective strategies by which European American parents socialize adolescents. However, there is stronger evidence supporting the benefits of PVF than of PI.

Autonomy Support in African American Families

Interdependence is highly valued in African culture; likewise, as descendants of African slaves, it follows that autonomy development and its support within African American families must be understood with reference to cultural orientations that emphasize interdependence and relatedness (Kennedy & Winkle-Wagner, 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003). Such an approach is consistent with a conceptualization of behavioral autonomy that emphasizes freely making decisions and behaving for oneself while maintaining relationships with close others (Hill & Holmbeck, 1986). Among African American adolescents, decision making is not about making decisions without influence from others, but rather about owning and self-endorsing the decisions one makes even while being heavily influenced by close others. As members of a racialized system that has historically oppressed people of color, African

American parents' experiences with racism and discrimination shape their parenting (Murry et al., 2008), influencing the value they place on autonomy development and their strategies to support it among adolescents. The importance of self-direction and the alignment of values and actions stand in opposition to experiences of oppression and are particularly important within African American families (Brodsky & Vet, 2000). At the same time, African American parents are aware that the normative psychosocial task of achieving autonomy is more challenging for adolescents of color who are negotiating a broader social context characterized by racism and discrimination. As a result, African American parents are less likely to push for independent action by adolescents, instead encouraging adolescents to behave in a manner that is consistent with individual values and perspectives that are shaped by close family relationships and parental input (Smetana, 2000; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Daddis, 2004). For all these reasons, PVF is the form of autonomy that best aligns with African American cultural values and decision-making processes.

Expression of autonomy support in adolescence in African American families. Little research has been conducted with African American samples with the explicit goal of documenting the nature of parental autonomy support or how it may change across development. As a result, we are left to make inferences regarding these factors from a literature that has focused on patterns of decision making within African American families. African American families are characterized by hierarchical structures between caregivers and youth that emphasize obedience and respect for elders (Smetana, 2000). This emphasis on obedience fosters family expectations that youth comply with rules once they have been established (Smetana, 2000). The tendency for African American parents to place restrictions on youth behavioral autonomy (e.g., regulation of behavior and decision making; Collins et al., 2000; Daddis & Smetana, 2005) and provide obedience messages is considered a protective strategy by caregivers who seek to decrease the deleterious consequences of poor decision making in a society where African American youth are deemed at greater risk for experiencing acts of discrimination (Smetana et al., 2004).

Compared to European American middle-class families (Smetana & Asquith,

1994), among African American families research has indicated that while youth unilateral (independent) decision making happens infrequently, parent unilateral and joint decision making are common (Smetana, 2000; Smetana et al., 2004). African American parents tend to have later age expectations for youth autonomy and decision making in general, but especially pertaining to matters dealing with health and safety (Daddis & Smetana, 2005). Although it has not been explicitly studied, African American parents likely engage in more parent unilateral or joint decision making in an effort to protect youth from the consequences of poor youth unilateral decision making. The value of interdependence in African American culture may also contribute to the prevalence of joint decision making. Overall, parent unilateral and joint decision making have been identified as protective for African American adolescents (Smetana, 2000; Smetana et al., 2004).

Autonomy support and adolescent well-being in African American families. Very little research has been conducted examining associations between parental autonomy support and indicators of adolescent adjustment within African American samples. In the few existing studies, researchers have tended to rely on undifferentiated measures of autonomy support that do not explicitly pull apart the constructs of PI and PVF. As a result, the review that follows (a) discusses inferences that can be made about links between PI and PVF and indicators of well-being based on associations between broad measures of autonomy support and adolescent adjustment and (b) looks closely at measures of autonomy support used with African American samples to determine whether any of them explicitly measure (or are closely aligned to) PI or PVF.

Chilenski, Ridenour, Bequette, and Caldwell (2015) reported that African American parents' support of adolescents' free time was associated with higher grades, increased planning and decision-making skills, and less substance use, which suggests a positive relationship between early adolescents' receipt of parental autonomy support and school adjustment. In this study, autonomy support was measured by examining youth perceptions of parents' assistance accomplishing free time activities. A sample item included "My parents or guardians help me take responsibility for planning and organizing the

things I do in my free time.” Although this study did not explicitly state the form of autonomy being measured, the measure seems to align with PI, as it focuses on parents’ encouragement of youth independent planning and decision making in the personal domain.

Hill and Wang (2015) also examined a construct that resembled PI (decision-making opportunities) in relation to academic adjustment among adolescents, but they used self-determination and social cognitive theories to frame the study. In contrast to Chilenski et al. (2015), Hill and Wang found that autonomy support operationalized in this manner was not related to academic grades among African American adolescents. In this study, autonomy support was measured via mothers’ reports of autonomy support and decision-making opportunities. The authors concluded that the lack of an association between autonomy support and decision-making opportunities may have been due to a lower emphasis on autonomy development during adolescence in African American families. However, the findings could also be interpreted as consistent with the prediction that PI is less likely to be linked with adolescent adjustment in African American families. A limitation of this study was a mismatch between the theories that framed the study and the form of autonomy measured. Specifically, the authors used SDT as one of the guiding frameworks but did not include a measure of PVF, which best aligns with the form of autonomy supported by SDT.

In the only study to date explicitly measuring PVF within an African American sample, Zong et al. (2019) utilized a SDT framework and reported that moderate levels of PVF provided by parents during adolescence positively affected African American adolescents’ emotional adjustment and identity development. In this study, autonomy support was measured using a six-item scale specifically intended to measure parental PVF. However, a sample item on this scale was “My parents allow me to decide things for myself,” an item that seems more likely to assess parental PI rather than PVF.

This small literature documenting the generally positive impact of autonomy support on African American adolescents is countered by one additional study offering confusing patterns of findings regarding associations between parental autonomy support and indicators of adolescent adjustment. A careful look at this

research suggests that it was limited by a lack of specificity and consistency in how autonomy support was measured—with measurement not informed by current knowledge concerning the structure of autonomy support (i.e., the distinction between PI and PVF) or the distinction between autonomy support and psychological control. Clark, Novak, and Dupree (2002) measured autonomy support (referred to in this study as “psychological autonomy granting”) using a scale that consisted in large part of reverse-coded items measuring psychological control; they concluded that African American adolescents who viewed their parents as higher in psychological autonomy granting were less likely to engage in externalizing behaviors (outward expressions of anger). Psychological autonomy granting was not associated with adolescents’ self-perceptions of angry feelings or any of a range of positive coping strategies. A sample item from the psychological autonomy granting scale was “My parents say that you shouldn’t argue with adults.” Given the measurement and conceptualization problems in this study, it is difficult to draw many conclusions regarding its findings.

Conclusions regarding autonomy support in African American families. Parental support of African American adolescents’ autonomy is influenced by the cultural value of interdependence and a desire to shield youth from the deleterious consequences of poor youth unilateral decision making in a racialized system. African American parents practice more parent unilateral and joint decision making, reinforcing cultural values of obedience and respect. Parental autonomy support and its impact on adolescents is understudied among African American families. The research that has been conducted has been limited by a lack of specificity in defining the constructs being measured. Researchers have generally failed to distinguish between PI and PVF and examine the differential impact of each on adjustment among African American adolescents. However, the results of studies that have measured PI versus PVF (though perhaps not intentionally) are somewhat consistent with the premise that PVF supports adolescent well-being while PI is unassociated with adjustment in this population. Some studies focused on parental autonomy support in African American families have been framed by SDT, but none has included theoretical frameworks that focus primarily on

the role of culture in shaping the meaning and expression of parental autonomy support.

Autonomy Support in Latinx Families

In Latinx families, conformity to family values, obedience, respect for the elderly, and maintenance of parental authority represent important socialization goals (Keller et al., 2004). The use of autonomy-supportive parenting practices during adolescence is influenced by the cultural values of familism, or prioritization of the family system; *respeto*, by which obedience and respectful hierarchical relationships are endorsed; and *educación*, by which good manners are stressed (Calzada, Huang, Anicama, Fernandez, & Brotman, 2012; Yau & Watkins, 2018). All these values are indicative of a strong emphasis on interdependence in Latinx cultures. The United States is a unique context, as Latino values endorsing interdependence, and individualistic values endorsing independence, are likely to coexist (Solís, Smetana, & Tasopoulos-Chan, 2017). Similar to African American parents, Latinx parents in the United States are raising their children in an environment characterized by racism and discrimination, as well as anti-immigrant sentiment. For these reasons, valuing interdependence may play a protective role in Latinx families. Few studies have examined changes in parental autonomy support and its effects on adolescent adjustment within Latinx American samples. Most of the research that has been conducted has focused on Mexican American adolescents and their mothers.

Expression of autonomy support in adolescence in Latinx families. Compared to European American middle-class parents, research has indicated that Latinx parents engage in less autonomy support (Fuligni, 1998), more unilateral decision making (Leyendecker & Lamb, 1999), and more modeling and directive practices, all of which are behaviors aligned with an interdependent worldview (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001). Mexican-born mothers living in the United States have later age expectations for children's autonomy and independent decision making than do mothers of Mexican descent who are born in the United States (Bámaca-Colbert, Umaña-Taylor, Espinosa-Hernandez, & Brown, 2012). Additionally, Latinx parents who are more U.S. oriented (e.g., English-speaking and/or bicultural) promote autonomy at younger

ages, and parents with younger age expectations for autonomy are more likely to promote independence in decision making (Roche et al., 2014). Specific to Latinx parents who live in the United States, the high use of rule setting and parental unilateral decision making may be a way to teach cultural values that can be transmitted only within the family context, compared to European American parents, who can rely on both family and institutions to teach independence (Bulcroft, Carmody, & Bulcroft, 1996).

In a recent qualitative study grounded in SDT, the authors sought to understand the meaning of autonomy-supportive parenting among Mexican American mothers with children in seventh and eighth grade. Mothers identified both PI and psychological control elements as key characteristics of parental autonomy support (Yau & Watkins, 2018). Specifically, mothers defined autonomy support as allowing adolescents to make their own decisions and expressing their own choices (PI) but also the mothers' own communication of clear directions and knowledge regarding "boundaries" and "limits" (p. 142). A limitation with this study was the mismatch between the guiding framework (SDT) and the type of autonomy described by mothers (PI). A study of low-income Mexican American mothers of 15-year-old girls indicated that mothers granted independence to adolescents in terms of decision making about physical appearance and group dating, but they continued to exert control in peer and social activities, household chores, and homework responsibilities (Romo, Mireles-Rios, & Lopez-Tello, 2014). These findings suggest that whereas Mexican American parents engage in autonomy support in the form of decision making, that support often occurs in combination with controlling and protective parenting practices.

Autonomy support and adolescent well-being in Latinx families. Relatively few studies have examined the effects of autonomy support on well-being among Latinx adolescents. Those studies that have been conducted have yielded complicated and/or mixed results. One explanation for this confusion is that researchers have tended to use measures of autonomy support as a general construct, failing to distinguish between PI and PVF.

Only a single study has examined associations between a conceptualization of parental

autonomy support that is closely aligned with PI and adjustment within a Latinx sample. Love and Buriel (2007) framed their study of eighth-grade Mexican American adolescents using a person–environment fit model with explicit acknowledgment of the ways specific Mexican socialization practices shaped the expression of parental autonomy support. Autonomy support (PI) was measured on the basis of the extent to which parents allowed or insisted on certain privileges and responsibilities (“I am expected to do household chores without being reminded”) or psychological autonomy granting (“When my parents are talking, I am allowed to give my advice”). The intent of the authors was to acknowledge the traditional values of interdependence and family obligation when defining autonomy support within Latinx immigrant families, thus explicitly recognizing the role of culture as shaping parental values and the expression of autonomy support. Love and Buriel reported no associations between autonomy support (PI) and levels of depression among adolescents. This finding is consistent with the premise that PI may not be linked with indicators of adjustment among adolescents from ethnic minority backgrounds.

To our knowledge, only one study has examined PVF among families from Latinx backgrounds. In a study framed by family systems theory, Sher-Censor et al. (2011) examined whether discrepancies in reports of PVF (measured in terms of parents’ encouragement of adolescents’ self-expressions and self-explorations) provided by Mexican American parents and their sixth-grade children were associated with adolescent well-being. Items assessing PVF included “My mother respects my opinions and encourages me to express them” and “My mother encourages me to be curious, to explore, and to question things.” Findings indicated that Mexican American parents perceived themselves as higher in PVF than adolescents perceived. Greater discrepancies in PVF perceptions were associated with more depressive symptoms and lower feelings of self-worth only among adolescent girls. These findings suggest that, in addition to examining the direct effects of PVF during adolescence, alignment of parents’ and adolescents’ perceptions regarding PVF may also have important implications for youth adjustment.

In a study of Latinx high school students that included Latinx fathers, associations

between psychological autonomy granting and self-esteem were examined (Bean & Northup, 2009). Psychological autonomy granting was measured using items that aligned with the construct of PVF, by which adolescents’ expression of feelings and opinions are encouraged (e.g., “encourages me to express my feelings and opinions”). Greater maternal autonomy support as PVF was associated with higher self-esteem among Latino boys, and both maternal and paternal PVF were associated with higher self-esteem among Latina girls. The authors noted that this particular sample was characterized by high levels of acculturation and that the acquisition of American cultural values of independence may have influenced parents to engage in higher levels of autonomy support than might be present among less acculturated Latinx parents.

Taken together, this scant literature suggests that although PI is not associated with adolescent well-being in this cultural group, PVF or similar constructs may be associated with greater well-being among Latinx American adolescents. However, it is important to consider the extent to which such benefit is driven by the type of autonomy examined, parent–adolescent goodness-of-fit, and exposure to American cultural values.

Conclusions regarding autonomy support in Latinx families. Both parental expectations regarding adolescents’ autonomy and the degree to which Latinx parents engage in autonomy-supportive parenting practices both are likely influenced by the extent to which parents endorse Latinx cultural values (familism, *educación*, and *respeto*) and the extent to which parent–child relationships are hierarchically structured. However, most studies of autonomy support in Latinx families have failed to incorporate theoretical frameworks that recognize the role of culture in shaping the meaning of autonomy support and its effects on adolescent well-being. Another limitation of this literature is the lack of attention to heterogeneity within and between Latinx families, variation in levels of parental endorsement of Latinx socialization goals, and the coexistence of interdependence and independence orientations. Research focused on PI (or constructs akin to PI) indicates few links between levels of PI and the well-being of Latinx adolescents, which is consistent with the premise that PI

is more beneficial to U.S. adolescents whose cultural backgrounds emphasize independence. However, this literature suggests that PVF may be more strongly associated with adjustment among Latinx adolescents, perhaps as a result of high values for interdependence.

Autonomy Support in Asian American Families

Similar to Latinx families residing in the United States, Asian American adolescents are likely to have parents who emphasize cultural values of interdependence and family relatedness in a broader social context in which the value of independence is frequently endorsed. In Asian cultures, parent-child relationships are often hierarchically structured, and cultural values of obedience, familial obligation, and respect for the elders are primary socialization goals (Russell, Crockett, & Chao, 2010). Asian American parents are more likely to engage in unilateral parental decision making than are European American parents (Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005). Yet despite the importance of these values and socialization goals in Asian cultures, research on the expression of parental autonomy support and decision making and its links to Asian American adolescents' well-being has typically failed to address the cultural and acculturation contexts that represent the experiences of families of Asian background who reside in the United States.

Expression of autonomy support in adolescence in Asian American families. Little research has been conducted focused on describing autonomy support in Asian American families. Asian American parents do appear to engage in less autonomy-supportive parenting across adolescence than do European American parents (Fuligni, 1998). A small empirical literature has focused on autonomy development from the perspective of Asian American adolescents. In a study guided by SDT, Kiang and Bhattacharjee (2019) examined developmental changes in autonomy support and their effects on the psychological well-being of Asian American high school students. These authors defined autonomy support only in terms of independent decision making (a component of PI), omitting any consideration of PVF. In terms of developmental change, findings suggested that adolescent-reported independent decision making did not increase across high school;

however, there was variability in trajectories of adolescent-reported autonomy support that related to levels of parent-adolescent closeness and cohesion. Specifically, increases in father-adolescent closeness were associated with increases in adolescent autonomy.

Given the emphasis in Asian American families on the socialization values of obedience, family obligation, and interdependence, it has been suggested that the conceptualization of autonomy as independence may not fully apply to this group. Qualitative studies have indicated that Asian American adolescents do not perceive autonomy as being independent from their parents but rather as feeling autonomous while still being dependent on their parents (Russell, Crockett, & Chao, 2010). Because their cultural values emphasize satisfaction and maintenance of harmony, Asian American parents may not engage in socialization practices to teach adolescents to make independent decisions, instead emphasizing the importance of consulting and taking into account parents' perspective before making decisions (Chen, Vansteenkiste, Beyers, Soenens, & Van Petegem, 2013). Families from Asian backgrounds have been described as highly performance oriented. It is possible that this emphasis on performance might be another factor that leads parents to avoid engaging in autonomy-supportive practices that promote the development of independence during adolescence (Ng, Pomerantz, & Deng, 2014).

PVF may provide a better description of how Asian American parents support autonomy among adolescents. Asian American parents who engage in PVF socialize their children to consider their parents' perspective while still encouraging them to make decisions based on their own motives. As a result, individual decision making is based on well-internalized motives rather than external pressure from parents (Chen et al., 2013). Two qualitative studies provide support for this premise by highlighting the fundamental roles of parental beliefs and socialization values of interdependence in expression of autonomy support in Asian American families. In qualitative interviews, first-generation Chinese immigrant mothers reported the desire to promote independence among children but not to pressure children to become independent (Cheah, Leung, & Zhou, 2013), a description that is consistent with the construct of PVF. In qualitative interviews, Chinese American adolescents reported making

decisions that took their parents' advice into consideration as a result of parents' knowledge and care, but still perceived a sense of volitional freedom (Russell, Chu, Crockett, & Lee, 2010).

Autonomy support and adolescent well-being in Asian American families. Despite a descriptive literature suggesting that autonomy support in Asian American families is more likely understood and expressed in terms of PVF rather than PI, these distinct constructs have been understudied in relation to indicators of adolescent adjustment. When it exists, this literature has not been framed by theoretical perspectives recognizing the role of culture in shaping the expression and functionality of parental autonomy support. For example, Pong et al. (2005) used a social capital perspective to examine associations between types of decision making and school performance (operationalized as grade-point average) in a diverse sample of adolescents and parents across three immigrant generations. Findings indicated that Asian parents, particularly parents of third-generation Asian American youth, engage in more unilateral decision making than European American or Latinx parents (suggesting less autonomy support, particularly PI). However, the extent to which parents or adolescents engage in unilateral decision making was not associated with adolescent school performance for any of the ethnic groups, consistent with the premise that PI (or at least something akin to it) might not be linked with adjustment among U.S. adolescents from ethnic minority groups. In the aforementioned study by Kiang and Bhattacharjee (2019), higher levels of independent decision making (a component of PI) were associated with fewer depression symptoms among adolescents only in the context of higher levels of mother–adolescent cohesion. The authors discussed these findings with recognition of the importance of considering the role of culture as a key factor that influences the parent–child relationships and autonomy development during adolescence. Consistent with the emphasis on family relatedness in Asian American families, these findings suggest that the combination of greater independence and close, cohesive family relationships has positive implications for adolescents' well-being.

In a study of Chinese American adolescents and their first-generation immigrant parents, PVF was positively associated with academic achievement; this association was mediated by

better emotion regulation (Liew, Kwok, Chang, Chang, & Yeh, 2014). This study was grounded in SDT, and low levels of parental psychological control were used to measure PVF (e.g., "I am always trying to change how my child feels or thinks about things"—reverse coded). Although findings from previous work do suggest that parental PVF and parental psychological control are related (Soenens et al., 2009), a measurement strategy that measures only one end of a dimension should be regarded as questionable.

Conclusions regarding autonomy support in Asian American families. A restricted literature on parental autonomy support in Asian American families has focused primarily on describing how adolescents and their parents perceive such support, as well as how autonomy support is intertwined with family connectedness within this group. Qualitative interviews with Asian American adolescents and parents suggest that conceptualizations of autonomy support are more closely related to PVF than to PI in this group. However, very little research has focused on associations between autonomy support and indicators of adolescent well-being. Research that has been conducted suggests that a construct akin to PI—decision-making patterns—was unassociated with Asian American adolescents' academic achievement, but PVF (albeit imperfectly measured) was linked with higher levels of achievement. However, there is tremendous need for replication of these findings with measures of autonomy support that are specifically designed to assess the constructs of PI and PVF. Although research focused on Asian American families has tended to explain findings in terms of parental beliefs and socialization goals specific to this racial/ethnic group, individual studies have typically failed to examine these cultural factors explicitly. Another critical limitation of this literature is that most studies fail to acknowledge that autonomy support expressed as PVF occurs in the context of cultural values for both independence and interdependence. As suggested by Kağıtçıbaşı (2013), the term *autonomy-relatedness* may be a better descriptor of Asian American parenting in which both autonomy and interdependence are endorsed. As a result, the question to ask regarding the effects of parental autonomy support on youth adjustment is not whether parents promote independent decision making, but rather what the extent is to which Asian American

adolescents internalize their parents' perspectives regarding decisions. This is consistent with the idea that promotion of self-endorsement and volitional functioning are universally beneficial during adolescence (Ryan & Deci, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The most current perspective regarding the conceptualization of parental autonomy support differentiates two forms of support—PI and PVF—which are differentially valued, expressed, and linked with adolescent well-being in countries that are defined in terms of collectivistic versus individualistic orientations (Fousiani et al., 2014). Following the literature reviewed here, such differences likely also characterize the nature of autonomy support in different ethnic groups in the United States. Although PVF appears to be amenable to generalizability across ethnic groups, PI seems less relevant and effective in promoting adolescent adjustment in ethnic minority families in the United States than in European American families. However, it is also possible that PI is beneficial to all adolescents but should be defined and operationalized differently by culture. This possibility is suggested by recent research with Mexican American families indicating mothers perceive PI as an important component of autonomy support but express PI in a context of parental structure and protection (Romo et al., 2014; Yau & Watkins, 2018). It is also possible that within racial/ethnic groups that have been historically marginalized and subjected to experiences of prejudice and discrimination, parental PI applies more to the personal domain (e.g., media viewing choices) but is less relevant within the prudential domain (e.g., issues related to safety), in which the stakes are higher in families of color.

Researchers studying parenting in different ethnic groups in the United States have adopted a wide range of strategies, observational and questionnaire based, for measuring parental autonomy support. Rarely have measures been selected or developed with consideration of the distinction between supporting adolescents in their efforts to act independently (PI) and acting authentically in the context of close relationships and exchange of values with parents (PVF). This confusion is further exacerbated by researchers' recognition of the two theories that

have traditionally framed the study of parental autonomy support (separation-individuation theory and SDT) but a concurrent lack of precision in matching these theories to measures of PI and PVF, respectively. In addition, researchers have failed to apply to the study of parental autonomy support theoretical perspectives that recognize the role of culture in shaping parenting practices and their impact in ethnic minority families (for an exception, see Love & Buriel, 2007). On the basis of these concerns, we offer the following suggestions regarding potential directions for future research focused on parental autonomy support conducted with diverse ethnic groups in the United States.

First, it is of critical importance that research on autonomy-supportive parenting in the United States be designed with explicit recognition of the type of autonomy support being measured (PI or PVF). Researchers should not only be highly familiar with current perspectives on these constructs but also understand the different theoretical perspectives that inform each and be sure that such perspectives are acknowledged as framing empirical work focused on PI or PVF. Far too often, researchers have used different measures of the same construct or measures that do not clearly differentiate between PI and PVF. The result is a literature that is difficult to interpret and that lends itself to inaccurate conclusions regarding similarities and differences in the expression and consequences of parental autonomy support across different cultural groups. Furthermore, researchers should carefully consider specific items on any measure of PI or PVF to be sure that they are consistent with the construct being measured. If the items on a measure do not clearly map onto the constructs of either PI or PVF (and not both), then use of the measure will not move the field forward. Instead, its inclusion in a study is likely to add further confusion to a literature that already lacks clarity.

Second, research should be conducted using reliable, comprehensive, and elaborated measures of the construct(s) of interest (PI or PVF). Existing research is far too often characterized by seemingly haphazard selection of measures of constructs. Researchers should seek out publications that document measure development and be sure that such publications clearly acknowledge the distinction between PI and PVF and indicate which is the focus of a given measure. Currently, only one measure exists that includes

subscales for both PI and PVF (named as such) having been created by Soenens et al. (2007, 2009). This measure has been drawn from items on a range of measures of autonomy support with each item carefully evaluated in terms of its relevance to one or the other of the two autonomy support constructs (PI or PVF). However, the Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale (P-PASS; Mageau et al., 2015) includes a subscale that, though labeled as a measure of perceived autonomy support, is explicitly described as a measure of PVF with reference to its origins in SDT. It is of critical importance that researchers be diligent in terms of understanding what they are measuring. Measures should also be rigorously tested for measurement equivalence given the diverse ethnic backgrounds of families in the United States and research indicating that the form and function of PI and PVF likely different across ethnic groups.

Third, across all ethnic groups there is a need for research on parental autonomy support that goes beyond simple correlational designs focused on linking some aspect of autonomy support with indicators of adolescent adjustment. Longitudinal research is needed to demonstrate the predictive nature of such associations. Research that considers the manner in which PI and PVF might interact to predict indicators of adolescent adjustment will provide a more elaborated and fine-tuned understanding. Person-centered approaches that identify groupings of adolescents whose parents are characterized by exposure to distinct combinations of PI and PVF might be particularly informative.

Finally, it is critical that research on parental autonomy support conducted in the United States adopts a perspective on parenting in ethnic minority families that recognizes the roles of culture and parental ethno-theories as shaping the expression and meaning of autonomy supportive parenting. To move forward our understanding in this area, the field would benefit from high-quality qualitative research focused on identifying the microprocesses that characterize autonomy support in different ethnic groups and/or focus on the ways such adolescents interpret and respond to their parents' PI and PVF behaviors.

Research conducted in recent years has broadly expanded the understanding of the form and function of parental autonomy support and has started to address questions of how its value and expression may vary across the globe. There

is clear empirical evidence indicating that the prevalence and impact of PI and PVF vary across countries (Fousiani et al., 2014; Marbell-Pierre et al., 2019); however, such comparisons often assume within-country homogeneity of cultural beliefs and values. Such homogeneity does not characterize the contemporary United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The diversity that characterizes the contemporary United States lends itself to rich and complex patterns of parenting behaviors that reflect both the cultural backgrounds of families and the multiple contexts that frame those backgrounds. Researchers who recognize and value this diversity have a tremendous opportunity available to them to broaden the current understanding of the structure and function of autonomy support. However, taking advantage of this opportunity will require explicit consideration of the multiple issues outlined in this article.

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