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The Roles of Respect for Parental Authority and Parenting Practices in Parent–Child Conflict Among African American, Latino, and European American Families

Sara Villanueva Dixon,

Department of Psychology, School of Behavioral and Social Sciences, St. Edward's University

Julia A. Graber, and

Department of Psychology, University of Florida

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn

National Center for Children and Families, Teachers College, Columbia University, and College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University

Abstract

In this study, the authors examined whether parent–child conflict during the middle childhood years varied among families characterized as having different cultural traditions regarding issues of respect for parental authority and parenting practices. The sample included 133 African American, European American, and Latina girls (*M* age = 8.41 years) and their mothers. African American and Latina girls showed significantly more respect for parental authority than did European American girls. Furthermore, African American and Latina mothers reported significantly more intense arguments when respect was low than did European American mothers. Higher levels of discipline and better communication by mothers were both associated with reports of lower frequency of conflict; ethnicity did not moderate this association. Thus, respect for authority was most salient to group differences in conflict.

Keywords

parent–child relationships; parent–child conflict; respect; parenting practices

Research on the nature of conflict within parent–child relationships has traditionally focused on two developmental periods, early childhood and early adolescence. Parent–child conflict across the toddler and early preschool years is often frequent and an important arena for children's socialization (e.g., Dunn & Slomkowski, 1992). Similarly, early adolescence is often a time of increased emotional and physical distancing from parents (e.g., Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Steinberg, 2001), as well as a time during which the frequency and affective intensity of parent–child conflicts may be higher than at other ages (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998). But what is happening between parents and children during middle and late childhood? Research investigating conflictual interactions between parents and their children during this developmental time period is sparse at best. In addition, despite a growing literature on families of different ethnic and economic backgrounds (e.g., Cauce, Hiraga, Graves, & Gonzales, 1996; Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Fuligni, 1998; McLoyd & Smith, 2002; Smetana & Gaines, 1999), few investigations of parent–child

conflict have focused on identifying whether culturally based behaviors impact conflict differentially by ethnic or racial group. In the present investigation, we specifically examined parent–child conflicts in African American, Latino, and European American families to determine whether conflict varies among families characterized as having different cultural traditions and belief systems.

Children who enter adolescence with more conflictual relationships have been found to be at greater risk for more severe parent–child problems and poorer child outcomes during adolescence (Steinberg, 2001). In prior studies, both positive and negative emotional expressions and conflicts were more common in mother–child than in father–child interactions (Russell & Russell, 1987), a pattern that persists into adolescence (Collins & Laursen, 1992). Because mothers and daughters typically experience close, interdependent relationships, this dyad may be particularly prone to conflict when attempts to integrate individual goals and behaviors (while maintaining the close relationship) are put forth. However, very few investigations have examined mother–daughter interactions among families with different cultural contexts, especially among preadolescent girls.

Respect for Parental Authority

Many researchers have suggested that the changes in parent–child relationships that occur between late childhood and early adolescence are instigated by children’s growing desire to increase their sense of autonomy and independence; that is, children become less satisfied with parents’ authority over their personal lives as they mature (Smetana, 1989). If conflict in parent–child relationships is linked to autonomy and perceptions of parental authority, then conflict may have a cultural basis (Fuligni, 1998). Specifically, children’s respect for parental authority may be particularly salient to conflict in African American and Latino families.

African American Families

It has been suggested that within African American families, an extremely high value is placed on respecting, obeying, and learning from elders in the kinship network and community (Willis, 1992). Respect has been defined in terms of showing honor and esteem to authority figures and elders or deferring to a senior’s greater command of pertinent skills (Briggs, 1986). In investigations of parent–adolescent conflict among a homogeneous sample of middle-class African American families, parents indicated that they viewed conflicts with children in terms of respect for parents, obedience to authority, and the importance of cultural traditions (Smetana & Gaines, 1999; Smetana, Crean, & Daddis, 2002). In contrast, the young adolescents primarily viewed conflicts as issues of personal jurisdiction, that is, personal issues or individual concerns. Thus, different perceptions of conflict by parents and adolescents may have contributed to conflict in these families; however, consistent with prior studies of European American adolescents, these studies revealed that conflicts were relatively frequent, were low in intensity, and occurred over everyday, mundane issues. Other researchers have noted that African American adolescent girls and their mothers reported conflicting expectations for autonomy and closeness that stem from the hope that daughters will grow up self-reliant yet retain the expected loyalty and attachment to family and community (Cauce et al., 1996).

Latino Families

The Latino culture also has strong connections regarding family that tie together people from various Latin American cultures such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Cuban. Enduring traditional values for Latino families typically include a deep sense of family loyalty; extended family and social support networks; and an emphasis on

interpersonal relatedness, relationships, and mutual respect (Fitzpatrick & Travieso, 1980; García Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1995; Vega, Hough, & Romero, 1983). According to Latino culture, a well-educated, well-raised child is generally considered to be “tranquilo, obediente, y respetuoso”— calm, obedient, and respectful toward adults (Briggs, 1986; García Coll et al., 1995; Williams & Williams, 1979). Harwood, Miller, and Irizarry (1995) proposed the concept of *proper demeanor*, which encompasses an understanding of courtesy or behavior appropriate with others of a particular age, sex, or social status, that has similarities with conceptualizations of respect. Qualitative studies with Puerto Rican mothers of infants indicated that this concept was important in their expectations of child behavior and long-term socialization goals (Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, & Miller, 2002). For the most part, these investigations have been descriptive and qualitative in nature and involve infants and young children. In one of the few studies to address these issues with older children, Fuligni (1998) asked adolescents of different cultural backgrounds whether they thought they should argue with their parents when they disagree. Non-European teenagers (Mexican and Philipino) were the least willing to openly contradict their parents; in addition, Latino adolescents felt that it was inappropriate to argue with or talk back to parents. Despite these attitudinal differences, adolescents reported similar levels of conflict and cohesion with their parents.

Hypothetically, mothers and daughters in Latino and African American cultures may have different experiences regarding conflict than do European American families. Both African American and Latino families encourage family interdependence and emphasize obedience and respect toward elders and parental authority; as such, the role of children’s respect for parental authority may play a similar role in mother–daughter conflict for these two groups in comparison to European American families. However, prior studies have not demonstrated group differences in the number or frequency of conflicts among young adolescents and their parents. Notably, the Fuligni study (1998) was limited to adolescent reports of conflict. It may be that ethnic differences in conflict, if they exist, are more likely to occur for parents as they may place greater value on obedience and respect for authority than children do. In the present study, we investigated associations of girls’ respect for maternal authority with both maternal and daughter perceptions of conflict.

Parenting Practices

Along with potential differences in children’s behaviors in parent–child interactions, it has been shown that there are cultural differences in parent behaviors, which can also have an effect on parent–child relationships and interactions. Much of the parenting literature has focused on authoritative versus authoritarian parenting practices, with authoritative parenting behaviors including reasoning with their children about problems, encouraging independence, and using less physical punishment and authoritarian parenting behaviors including more focus on control, obedience, and use physical punishment (Baumrind, 1972; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Historically, parenting practices of ethnic and minority families have been conceptualized as those of the “other” group, which are compared with the “standard” group, defined by practices of European American, middleclass parents (García Coll & Pachter, 2002). Authoritarian parenting practices have been found, in many studies, to be more common among ethnic minorities, while not showing associated negative child outcomes typically found with European American children raised within the same parenting style (e.g., García Coll et al., 1995; Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000). Moreover, maternal control has been described in some research as a protective factor, with the amount of control optimal for adolescent development varying by environmental risk (Mason, Cauce, Gonzales, & Hiraga, 1996). A limited number of investigations have considered how maternal practices influence parent–child conflict among families with different cultural traditions.

Current Investigation

In the current investigation, we examined respect for parental authority, parenting practices, and conflict in a diverse sample of girls and their mothers. First, with the current study, we specifically focused on the middle childhood age period to examine parent– child conflict within a developmental period that has virtually been ignored. Second, the focus of the current investigation was on parent– child conflicts in African American, Latino, and European American families so we could examine whether conflict varies among families characterized as having different cultural traditions. Third, we examined whether child characteristics such as respect for parental authority play a role in mother– daughter conflict prior to adolescence. To date, most researchers have used single-item self-reports to measure respect or have inferred that “respect for authority” was a critical factor in parent– child relationships among African American and Latino families without systematically measuring the construct. In the present study, we use observational methods to assess girls’ respect for authority during videotaped interactions with their mothers. It was expected that associations between respect and mother– daughter conflict would be moderated by ethnicity. Finally, because previous research has yielded mixed results regarding ethnic differences in parenting behaviors (e.g., discipline techniques) and their role in parent– child interactions, we considered how specific practices (nurturance, restrictiveness, and communication) varied within group and whether associations of these behaviors with conflict were moderated by ethnicity. Because a variety of factors such as socioeconomic status, family structure, and maternal age can either directly or indirectly affect the quality of family relationships and, more specifically, parent– child relationships (e.g., Conger et al., 1994; McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo, & Borquez, 1994), these constructs were accounted for in the analyses.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of 133 African American, European American, and Latina third-grade girls (45, 65, and 23, respectively) and their mothers were included. Girls were 8.41 years of age ($SD = 0.60$) and mothers were 35.36 years of age ($SD = 6.82$) on average. Girls and their families were from racially integrated, working- and middle-class communities in a large metropolitan area. The demographics of the families enrolled in the study are comparable to census tract data on families in these communities.

Procedure

Girls and their families were recruited via public schools in their communities when the girls were in third grade. Girls received flyers and mothers were instructed to have their daughters bring back to their classroom or mail to the project office a card with their name, address, and telephone number if they were interested in getting more information on the study. Approximately 85% of parents who sent back this information participated. Informed consent was obtained from mothers for their own participation and for their child’s participation. Girls provided their assent for participation. Home visits were conducted with two data collectors (one of the same ethnicity as the child whenever possible). Mothers and girls also completed survey measures in the 3 days following the home visit. Families received \$60 for their participation, and girls received a t-shirt at the end of the home visit. Institutional review board approval for the study was obtained from the sponsor institution (Teachers College, Columbia University).

During the home visit, girls and their mothers were given a checklist of conflicts and were asked to identify which issues they had had disagreements about in the past. Girls completed

the checklist via interview with a data collector. Mothers completed the checklist on their own. Data collectors chose two items that were endorsed by both mother and daughter for use in the subsequent discussion. Mothers and daughters were instructed to discuss these two issues (for 5–7 min) using the following questions as guides in their discussion: (a) “What is the problem?” (b) “How does the problem begin?” (c) “Who becomes involved in the problem?” (d) “What might be done to avoid this problem in the future?” Interactions were videotaped.

Girls’ and mothers’ behaviors were scored using coding schemes that have been used with racially diverse families (Graber et al., 1999; Melby et al., 1998). Reliability was monitored throughout the coding process and checked on 20% of all interactions (i.e., the “gold standard” coder compared with other coders). The order in which coders scored mother or daughter was counterbalanced. The gold standard coder was of Latino descent (Sara Villanueva Dixon). Coding was conducted prior to developing this research project.

Measures

Parent– child conflict—Girls and their mothers reported on conflicts using the Issues Checklist (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992). This measure has been used among parents and children ages 9 through 16 years and covers commonly occurring issues (e.g., keeping one’s bedroom clean, doing chores). For each item endorsed, the frequency with which the conflict occurred was rated on a 3-point scale (1 = *monthly*, 2 = *weekly*, 3 = *daily*); items were summed to assess overall frequency of conflict. The intensity of the conflict was also rated on a 3-point scale (0 = *not heated*, 1 = *heated*, 2 = *very heated*). The intensity variable was scored by taking the mean of the conflict intensity rating for each item that was endorsed. Separate variables were created for mothers’ and daughters’ reports on the frequency and intensity of conflict.

Child respect—A measure of respect was created from two scale scores assessing girls’ behavior during the interaction. These scales were Listener Responsiveness and Defiance (Melby et al., 1998). Listener Responsiveness assessed how actively and attentively girls listened to their mothers during the interaction task on a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = *not at all characteristic* to 5 = *mainly characteristic*). Indicators of listener responsiveness included physically attending or orienting to the speaker; showing interest in what the other person is saying via eye contact, head nods, and so on; and acknowledging and validating the speaker. The interrater reliability for this scale was 83% exact agreement. The Defiance Scale tapped the extent to which the child responded to the mother in a defiant manner using a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *mainly characteristic*). Indicators of defiance were actively disobeying or ignoring the parent, engaging in activities contrary to the request of the parent, and so on. The interrater reliability for this scale was 94% exact agreement. As indicated, the Defiance Scale measures the extent to which the child actively ignores or disobeys the parent and the Listener Responsiveness scale measures the extent to which the child attends to, shows interest in, acknowledges, and validates what her mother is saying. The two scales are summed such that high listener responsiveness and low defiance (reversed scored) result in high scores for respect.

Parental attitudes and practices—Mothers completed the Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR; Block, 1965) to assess disciplinary behaviors and general socializing behaviors. Items were assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = *never* to 5 = *almost always*) and were scored into two subscales tapping nurturant and restrictive (disciplinary) practices. This measure has demonstrated reliability with ethnically and economically diverse samples of mothers (e.g., Lim & Park, 1994), although the actual reliabilities as

assessed by Cronbach's alpha in the present sample were low ($\alpha = .66$ for restrictiveness, $\alpha = .54$ for nurturance).

Mothers' communication behaviors—Mothers' communication behaviors during the interaction were assessed via two scales: Communication (Graber et al., 1999) and Listener Responsiveness (Melby et al., 1998). Communication competence was assessed with a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = *not at all competent* to 5 = *highly competent*). Indicators of communication competence were stating one's position clearly and concisely, validating and acknowledging the daughter's point of view, paraphrasing, and being fully engaged in the conversation. Interrater reliability for this scale was 94% exact agreement. The same Listener Responsiveness Scale that was scored for daughters was used to assess mothers' listening behaviors. Interrater reliability for this scale was 100%. Communication and Listener Responsiveness Scales were summed to tap mothers' communication behaviors, with high scores indicating better communication behaviors.

Relationship Quality—This scale assesses the observer's evaluation of the quality of the dyad's relationship using a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = *negative* to 5 = *positive*). A negative rating characterized the dyad's relationship as unhappy, conflicted, or uninvolved. A score of 3 characterized the relationship as being between the two extremes, neither excessively negative nor positive. A positive rating characterized the relationship as open, satisfying, pleasing, communicative, and warm. The interrater reliability for this scale was 94% agreement.

Family demographics and background—Mothers provided background information on themselves and the family. The median annual family income for all families was \$34,500 and the median family size was four members. Because a number of participants (approximately 20%) refused to release income data and it was not a significant variable in preliminary analyses, income was not included in analyses reported here. However, to be certain, we reran all analyses involving the use of covariates while including a dichotomous high–low income variable. Results were no different and the analyses therefore remain the same. The demographic data included in this investigation were mother's age, mother's marital status, mother's education, and race or ethnicity. Ethnicity was determined using self-report information provided by mothers during their interview. In cases where mother's and daughter's ethnicity did not match (e.g., mother reported herself as Latina and daughter as multiethnic), the mother's ethnicity was used, as it would be likely that mothers would provide daughters with the same cultural environment and expectations that have been customary for the mother. The term *Latino* includes people who identified themselves as being from Puerto Rican, Dominican, or Hispanic nonspecified decent (9%, 2%, and 7% of the entire sample, respectively). Similarly, the term *African American* includes people who identified themselves as being African American, Caribbean Islanders, and Black nonspecified decent (16%, 3%, and 12% of the entire sample, respectively). All demographic variables were used as dichotomous variables, with the exception of mother's age, which was used as a continuous variable. Marital status was coded as 0 = married, 1 = not married, with cohabitating couples included in the married category and single, divorced, and widowed mothers in the not-married category. Most of the mothers had high school diplomas or college degrees, with 65% of all mothers in our sample having any education surpassing a high school diploma. Hence, mother's education was dichotomized by categorizing mothers into two categories: 0 = high school diploma, general equivalency diploma, or less; 1 = any education surpassing high school diploma or GED.

Analysis Plan

Sample sizes, particularly when comparing ethnic groups, yielded cells that were too small to allow us to use more sophisticated statistical analyses such as structural equation modeling or other latent variable models. We therefore decided to proceed with analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) and regression. Analyses first examined ethnic group differences for child characteristics, maternal behaviors, and the conflict variables using ANCOVAs (controlling for demographic variables). Because examinations of all three ethnic groups resulted in small group sizes, orthogonal contrasts were also used, treating ethnicity as a three-level factor. Hierarchical regressions were used to determine if child and maternal variables predicted the conflict variables after accounting for demographic characteristics. The interaction of child and maternal variables with ethnic group was also included to test if ethnicity moderated these associations.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

In initial analyses, we examined group differences on demographic variables. Mothers' age differed by ethnic group, $F(2, 125) = 3.95, p < .05$, such that European American mothers were significantly older ($M = 37.02$ years, $SD = 6.55$ years) than African American ($M = 33.51$ years, $SD = 7.11$ years) and Latina mothers ($M = 34.10$ years, $SD = 6.03$ years). Significant differences were also found in marital status, with 72.3% of European American mothers, 73.9% of Latina mothers, and 33.3% of African American mothers being married, $\chi^2(2, N = 133) = 19.18, p < .001$. Educational attainment did not differ across groups.

Intercorrelations between all variables are shown in Table 1. Correlations among variables are generally low to moderate. Mothers' and daughters' conflict scores were moderately associated, and associations within mothers' and daughters' conflict scores were moderate to high. A few other associations were significant. Mothers' age is negatively associated with mothers' reports of the intensity of conflicts with daughters. Mothers' education is positively associated with mothers' communication behaviors and negatively associated with mothers' reports of nurturance. Moreover, mothers' communication behaviors are strongly associated with the quality of the relationship between mothers and daughters in the present sample. In general, mothers' reports of nurturance were not associated with other variables.

Mother and daughter reports of conflict were also compared using dependent-sample t tests. Analyses indicated that mothers and daughters did not have significantly different reports on conflict frequency. They did, however, show significant differences in the reported intensity of conflicts, $t(131) = 2.58, p < .05$, such that girls reported higher average intensity in disagreements than did mothers.

Ethnic Group Differences in Girls' Characteristics

A one-way ANCOVA was conducted to test whether girls' respect for parental authority varied by ethnicity (controlling for mothers' age, mothers' education, and marital status). The results indicated significant group differences, $F(2, 132) = 3.08, p < .05$, such that Latina and African American girls scored significantly higher on respect than did European American girls. (See Table 2 for means and standard deviations.)

ANCOVAs were also conducted to test for ethnic group differences in girls' reports of the frequency and intensity of conflict. Girls' reports of conflict did not differ by ethnic group.

Ethnic Group Differences in Maternal Behaviors

Similar ANCOVAs (controlling for mothers' education, mothers' age, and mothers' marital status) were conducted to test for ethnic group differences on maternal discipline, nurturance, and communication behaviors (see Table 2). Analyses revealed significant ethnic group differences, $F(2, 124) = 9.77, p < .001$, on restrictive discipline, such that African American and Latina mothers scored significantly higher than European American mothers on restrictive behaviors. Nurturance and communication did not differ by ethnic group.

ANCOVAs were also conducted to test for ethnic group differences in mothers' reports of the frequency and intensity of conflict. As with girls' reports, mothers' reports of conflict did not differ significantly by ethnic group.

An ANCOVA was also conducted examining relationship quality by ethnicity. The mean scores on relationship quality for the dyads indicated moderately positive scores across all three ethnic groups with no significant group differences (see Table 2).

Predicting Conflict

Separate hierarchical regressions were conducted to examine whether maternal behaviors (i.e., restrictiveness, nurturance, communication behaviors) or child behaviors (i.e., indicators of respect for parental authority) predicted each of the conflict variables (maternal or daughter report of frequency or intensity). Interaction effects of Behavior \times Ethnicity were also tested. The covariates (mothers' age, education, and marital status) were entered in Step 1, main effects in Step 2 (either child characteristics or maternal behaviors), and interaction terms in Step 3.

When examining respect as a possible predictor of conflict, results indicated that two models were significant; both were for maternal reports of conflict (see Table 3). Girls' respect for parental authority significantly predicted mothers' reports of the frequency of disagreements ($\beta = -.21, p < .05$), after accounting for demographic variables, with $F(6, 122) = 2.34, p < .04$, for the overall model. The interaction term did not add significantly to this model. In contrast, a significant Respect \times Ethnicity interaction effect was found for mothers' reports of how heated conflicts were with their daughters ($\beta = .97, p < .05$), $F(6, 122) = 4.27, p < .001$, for the overall model. As shown in Figure 1, for African American and Latino families, mothers reported that conflict was more heated when girls' respect was low; whereas for European American families, low levels of respect did not result in high levels of mother-reported intensity.

For maternal behaviors, none of the overall models were significant for maternal or child reports of conflict frequency or intensity. In two models, individual variables were significantly associated with one of the outcomes. Specifically, mothers' restrictive (disciplinary) behaviors were significantly associated with daughters' reports of frequency of disagreements ($\beta = .19, p < .05$). Also, mothers' communication behaviors were significantly associated with mothers' reports of frequency of disagreements ($\beta = .20, p < .05$). The significant individual β values found after accounting for the demographic factors on Step 1 of the models are consistent with the simple correlations reported in Table 1.

Discussion

In the present investigation, we considered specific maternal and child behaviors in an effort to uncover possible associations with parent-child conflict during the middle childhood period. Notably, girls' respectful behavior varied by ethnic or racial group such that European American girls had the lowest levels of respectful behavior in comparison to other

girls. Moreover, girls' respect for maternal authority was associated with maternal ratings of conflict with daughters, such that African American and Latina mothers reported more intense conflict with daughters when girls displayed lower levels of respect.

There were undoubtedly variations within ethnic groups that were not directly examined given our focus on group differences. Previous literature has noted the importance of considering between-group variation while recognizing variance within specific cultures (Markus, Steele, & Steele, 2002; Takahashi, Ohara, Antonucci, & Akiyama, 2002). At the same time, many cultures emphasize respect for elders and connectedness in family relationships, and, hence, these issues can be examined in part via group comparisons. Despite the fact that cultural beliefs such as respect for parental authority are thought to be important in family relationships, as Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, and Buriel (1990) have pointed out, empirical studies have rarely been conducted to determine whether families indeed hold these values and whether these belief systems influence members' relationships with one another.

In the current study, we operationalized the construct of respect by using observed behaviors during a conflict interaction between mothers and daughters. Such controlled observations of family interactions among different ethnic groups have rarely been done. In this study, daughters were scored on their listening behaviors, including attending to their mothers when mothers were speaking, not interrupting their mothers, and acknowledging their mothers' comments (nodding or verbally affirming what their mothers have said), and their defiant behaviors, including disobeying their mothers' requests, being unwilling to cooperate with their mothers, and ignoring their mothers during the interaction. Both sets of behaviors have been identified as components of respect for parental authority (e.g., Briggs, 1986; Harwood et al., 2002). Although the inclusion of observational data was a major strength of the current study, using both observations and self-reports on familial respect would likely prove to be of great heuristic value and would further advance research in this area.

In the present investigation, there were significant ethnic group differences in the level of respect that children have for parental authority. African American and Latina girls did indeed show more respect toward parental authority than European American girls did, supporting the idea that within African American and Latino families, children follow a cultural tradition that places value on respect for parental authority and respect for elders. As Smetana and Gaines (1999) pointed out, respect, obedience, and cultural traditions are seen as important social conventions that parents and children within particular ethnic groups abide by.

Results of the present investigation also indicate that children's respect for parental authority is a significant predictor of how mothers interpret conflict with their daughters. First, we found a main effect of respect on maternal report of frequency of conflicts. This finding demonstrates the importance that mothers place on being treated with respect by their daughters. Second, the interaction effect of respect and ethnicity indicated that African American and Latina mothers report significantly more intense arguments when respect is low than do European American mothers. Yet, girls' respect was not associated with their own reports of conflict with their mothers. These findings are similar to those of Fuligni (1998); in his study, despite holding different beliefs about respect for parental authority and individual autonomy, adolescents from various ethnic backgrounds reported strikingly similar amounts of conflict with their mothers. It should be noted that there are several methodological differences between the Fuligni study and the present investigation. We use an observed measure of respect whereas Fuligni used a paper-and-pencil report, and our sample was preadolescent whereas his comprised young adolescents. Most important,

though, both mother and daughter reports of conflict were examined in the present investigation. Our findings for girls' reports of conflict were consistent with those of Fuligni (1998), indicating that preadolescent girls and young adolescents may vary in their respect for parental authority, but such variations do not influence the nature of the conflict they report with parents. Inclusion of maternal reports clearly extended the delineation of the role of respect in parent-child conflict.

It is interesting that the only factor that was significantly associated with girls' reports of conflict was maternal disciplinary practices. In this case, stricter or harsher disciplinary practices as reported by the mothers were associated with lower frequency of conflict as reported by the daughters. Thus, findings were in line with prior reports that parents who emphasize restrictive behaviors have children who display fearful, timid, and conforming behaviors (Baumrind, 1972). It should be noted, however, that although specific coefficients were significant, the overall regression models (that controlled for demographic variables) were not significant. The regression coefficients were essentially the same as the weak correlations reported in Table 1, and the association was not moderated by ethnicity. At the same time, results indicated that African American and Latina mothers engage in more restrictive, disciplinary behaviors than do European American mothers. However, it is important to remember that no group differences were found in maternal nurturance (maternal report) or relationship quality (observed); both scores were moderately high across groups in this study. Findings for maternal nurturance should be interpreted with caution, though, given the lower reliability for this scale and the fact that it was not associated with any other constructs in this study.

Findings from this investigation closely mirrored results found in the parenting and socialization literatures (García Coll & Pachter, 2002; Harwood et al., 2002; Hughes, 2003; McAdoo, 2002) in which group differences have been found in the ways that parents manage their own and their children's beliefs and behaviors. Moreover, these findings are consistent with other studies that indicate that ethnic minority mothers exert more control over their children when they use parental control and restrictiveness as protective factors (Mason et al., 1996).

Other more general findings in this study warrant discussion. Results of the current investigation indicate that mothers and their daughters do not significantly differ in their reports of the frequency of conflicts. This finding seems to contradict the prevailing view that children generally report more conflicts than do parents, at least during early adolescence (Smetana, 1989). However, girls in the present investigation were in the middle- to late-childhood period. Moreover, mothers and daughters in the current sample did significantly differ on how heated they reported conflict to be, with girls reporting more intensity in conflict than mothers. This finding was consistent with early-adolescent research findings in the parent-child conflict literature (Laursen et al., 1998), suggesting that some differences in perceptions of parent-child conflict exist prior to adolescence and hence may not be indicative of changing relationships during that developmental period.

Several limitations to the present investigation should be considered. First, because this study reported findings from a single point in time, longitudinal examinations of parent-child interactions would give a clearer, more accurate picture of the influence of the variables assessed in this study on parent-child conflict over time. Because the present investigation was not longitudinal in nature, direction of effects can not be determined. Second, given that this was a selective sample of certain communities in a large metropolitan area, the findings may not apply to groups of mothers and daughters in other contexts. Because of the somewhat homogenous nature of the sample used in the current investigation, caution must be used when generalizing the findings to other populations,

particularly with regard to the income and education variables. Most mothers in this sample, for example, had a high school diploma or more, and there were no difference between ethnic groups in educational attainment; however, findings may differ among families with low maternal education. Moreover, because of limitations due to the sample size, it was not possible to separate the sample into more specific subgroups. For example, separating Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Dominican participants into distinct subgroups could yield different results. The present study admittedly operates under limited statistical power when examining ethnic group differences. Further, a measure of ethnic identity was not included in this investigation. Ethnic identity could be more important or salient than the ethnic or racial categories themselves (Spencer, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1991). Thus, mothers and daughters who identify more strongly with a particular group might emphasize respect for parental authority more strongly than those who identify less strongly with their ethnic group. Similarly, another limitation of this study concerns within-group variations. As mentioned earlier, there are undoubtedly variations within ethnic groups that were not directly examined given our focus on group differences. Finally, the issue of respect, although discussed parenthetically in research, has not been extensively investigated empirically. Because little work has been done in this area, a measure of respect had to be created for this study. In addition to observed measures, like the one used in the present study, the development of self-report measures of respect and comparisons across methodologies would be an important future step.

In line with prior recommendations (e.g., Fuligni, 1998), this study has combined self-reported conflict measures from mothers and daughters with observed mother–daughter behaviors in conflict tasks to assess conflict in a more complete, holistic manner. Findings of the present investigation expanded current conflict research to include examination of mother–daughter conflict during preadolescence. The findings also serve to both support previous literature in the area of parent–adolescent conflict examining differences across ethnicities and cultures and extend the literature specifically in the area of ethnic and cultural traditions such as respect for parental authority. Girls’ respect for parental authority was associated with aspects of the parent–child relationship, in this case, conflict, at least as perceived by mothers.

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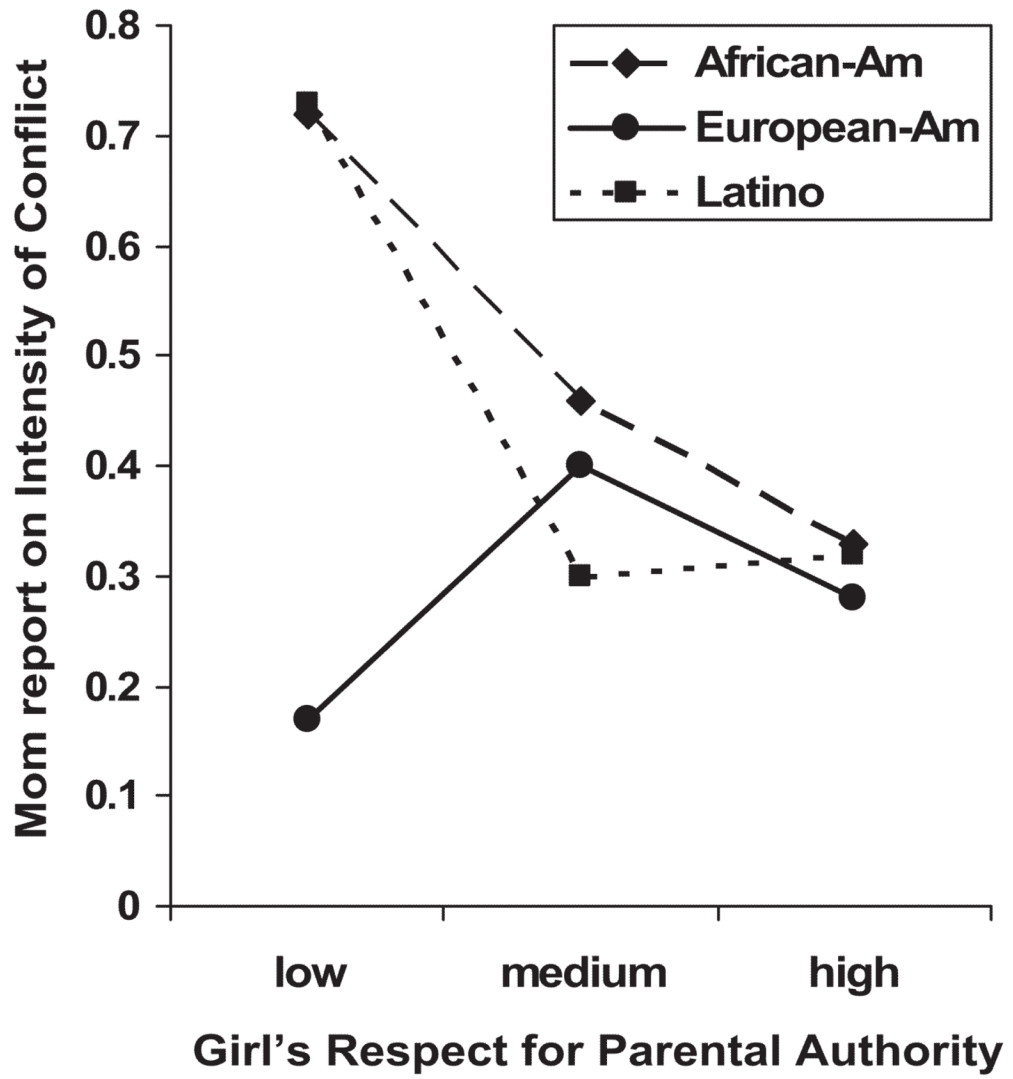


Figure 1. Respect by ethnicity interaction effect on mother's report of how heated conflicts are with daughter.

Table 1

Intercorrelations Among Independent and Dependent Measures

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Mother's age	—	.271**	-.183*	-.173	-.105	.065	.149	-.108	.015	-.049	.012	-.313**
2. Mother's education		—	-.055	-.191*	-.250**	.094	.339**	-.110	-.046	.039	-.100	-.040
3. Marital status			—	.029	.014	-.315**	-.231**	-.069	-.049	.190*	.073	.175*
4. Mother's discipline				—	.175	-.203*	-.209*	.038	.181*	.047	-.025	.044
5. Mother's nurturance					—	.032	.034	-.130	-.137	-.083	-.072	-.030
6. Relationship quality						—	.595**	.445*	-.150	-.223*	-.162	-.143
7. Mother's communication behaviors							—	.185*	-.119	-.214	-.169	-.156
8. Respect for parental authority								—	.100	-.164	.006	-.087
9. Daughter's frequency of conflicts									—	.189*	.431**	.237**
10. Mother's frequency of conflicts										—	.188*	.380**
11. Daughter's intensity of conflicts											—	.205*
12. Mother's intensity of conflicts												—

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 2
 Mean Reports of Maternal Behaviors, Child Behaviors, and Conflict for Mothers and Daughters by Ethnicity

Report	African American (n = 45)		Latina (n = 23)		European American (n = 65)		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Mother conflict							
Frequency	19.01	9.42	18.71	10.64	17.07	7.29	0.75
Intensity	0.40	0.35	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.25	1.04
Daughter conflict							
Frequency	18.51	11.34	20.10	11.19	17.99	11.49	0.36
Intensity	0.50	0.45	0.55	0.49	0.39	0.41	1.46
Mother behavior							
Restrictive discipline	3.07	0.67	3.04	0.74	2.48	0.62	9.77***
Nurturance	4.64	0.32	4.57	0.72	4.63	0.33	0.21
Communication behaviors	7.00	1.78	7.22	1.45	7.66	1.39	2.56
Daughter behavior							
Adolescent respect	7.49	1.42	7.78	1.04	6.85	2.17	3.08*
Dyad behavior							
Dyad relationship quality	3.11	0.86	3.22	0.74	3.43	0.87	2.01

Note. Number of issues, frequency, and intensity ranged from a minimum of 0 to 21.26, 47.50, and 1.61, respectively.

* $p < .05$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 3
 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Child Behaviors Predicting Conflict

Variable	B	SE	β	R ²	ΔR^2
Child behaviors on mother report of frequency of conflict					
Step 1				.041	
Mother's age	-0.074	0.121	-.059		
Mother's education	2.029	01.7	.113		
Mother's marital status	2.943	1.594	.168		
Step 2				.085	.044
Respect for parental authority	- 1.030	0.440	-.214*		
Ethnicity	- 1.368	1.651	-.080		
Step 3				.108	.023
Respect \times Ethnicity	0.864	0.498	.747		
Child behaviors on mother report of intensity of conflict					
Step 1				.129	
Mother's age	-0.015	0.004	-.350		
Mother's education	0.093	0.058	.146		
Mother's marital status	0.058	0.054	.094		
Step 2				.142	.013
Respect for parental authority	-0.019	0.015	-.116		
Ethnicity	-0.006	0.057	-.010		
Step 3				.181	.039*
Respect \times Ethnicity	0.039	0.017	.972*		

* $p < .05$.