

Rules, obligation to obey, and obedience: Age-related differences in three cultures

Nancy Darling Bard College

Patricio Cumsille Universidad Católica de Chile

Liane Peña-Alampay Ateneo de Manila University

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Autonomy in cross-cultural context:

- All cultures have a period where children learn to function independently (Schlegel & Barry, 1998)
 - The construct of autonomy captures this process, but is conceptually complex:
 - Includes psychological components: self as distinct from parent
 - Includes behavioral components: self-regulation, behavioral independence
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Autonomy as the development of a distinct sense of self

- Past research has suggested that American youth of Asian or Pacific ancestry develop autonomy later than those from European backgrounds (Fuligni, et. al 1998; 2002).
 - This work emphasizes the emotional aspects of autonomy (self as separate), and may be culturally inappropriate in societies that emphasize interdependence and where the self is embedded in social context and relationships.
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Autonomy as self-governance

- Question 1: How does autonomy differ with age?
 - Rules (parental attempts to govern adolescents' behavior)
 - Legitimacy beliefs (adolescents' acknowledgment that parents have the right to govern behavior)
 - Obligation to obey (adolescents' acknowledgment that parents' right to govern behavior supercedes their own right to self-governance)
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Autonomy as self-governance

- Question 1: How does autonomy change with age?
 - Question 2: What are the predictors of autonomy?
 - Social context: country
 - Characteristics of the adolescent: age, gender
 - Characteristic of the parent-adolescent dyad: parenting style
 - Characteristics of the issue: domain
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Autonomy as self-governance

- Question 1: How does autonomy change with age?
 - Question 2: What are the predictors of autonomy?
 - Question 3: Does increasing autonomy imply a *decrease* in obedience?
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Method: Sample

- The Philippines, Chile, and the United States vary in the emphasis placed on familialism, parental obedience, and parental control
 - Philippines high in all three
 - Chile high in familialism, but low in expectations of parental obedience and control
 - US low in all three
 - Youth recruited from both public and private schools in major cities (Manila, Santiago, Miami)
 - Similar levels of urbanicity
 - Common Hispanic heritage
 - 384 Chilean youths (13-19)
 - 155 Filipino youths (13-21)
 - 204 US youths (15-20)
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Method: Protocol

- Self-report surveys group administered in school settings
 - Surveys were administered in Spanish (Santiago), Tagalog (Manila) and both Spanish and English (Miami), with Spanish instruments translated idiomatically for both contexts
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Method: Measures

- Demographic information:
 - Country
 - Age (recoded 12-13, 14-15, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21)
 - Authoritativeness
 - Modified PSI-II (Darling & Toyakawa, 1997)
 - 12 items, rated separately for mothers and fathers, then combined into single 24 item scale ($\alpha=.83$)
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Method: Measures

- *Strategic Disclosure Questionnaire*
 - Adolescents answered 9 questions about each of 20 issues
 - Issues were chosen to reflect areas which past research and focus groups in each country suggest parents commonly try to control:
 - Examples:
 - How you dress
 - How well you do in school
 - How much time you spend on the telephone
 - Drinking
 - Where you go with your friends
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Method: Domains

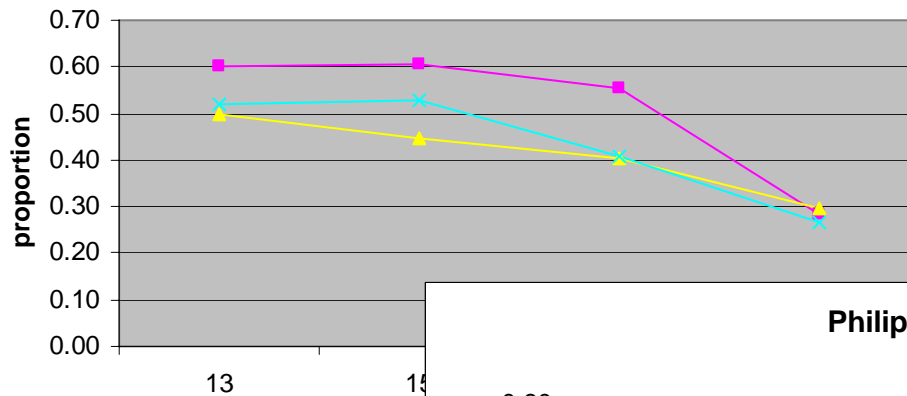
- Personal
 - How you dress
 - How you spend your free time
 - Type of TV shows, movies or videos you watch
 - Joining clubs or activities
 - How you spend your money
 - Friends
 - Hanging out with people your parents think are troublemakers
 - Who your friends are
 - Safety
 - Smoking
 - Drug use
 - Alcohol use
 - Conventional
 - How much time you spend on the phone
 - When and how you do your homework
 - How well you do in school
 - Social
 - Where you go with your friends
 - Your relationship with the opposite sex
 - Hanging out after school
 - Hanging out in public places after dinner
 - What time you come home at night
 - Your relationship with your boyfriend/girlfriend
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Method: Measures

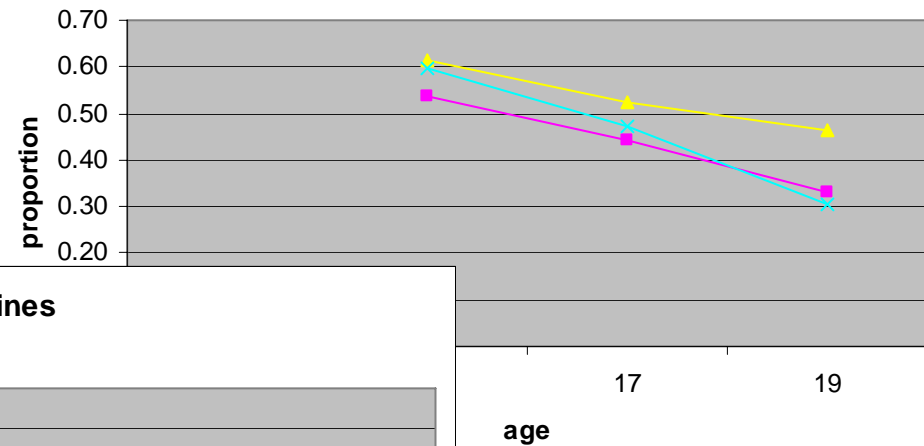
- Rules
 - Do your parents have clear rules or expectations about the issue? (Yes/No)
 - Beliefs in the legitimacy of parental authority
Is it okay for parents to set rules (Yes/No)
 - Obligation to obey
 - If you disagree, do you HAVE TO obey? (Yes/No)
 - Obedience
 - How often do you OBEY your parents with regards to this issue? (1=Never/5=Always)
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Question 1: How does autonomy change with age?

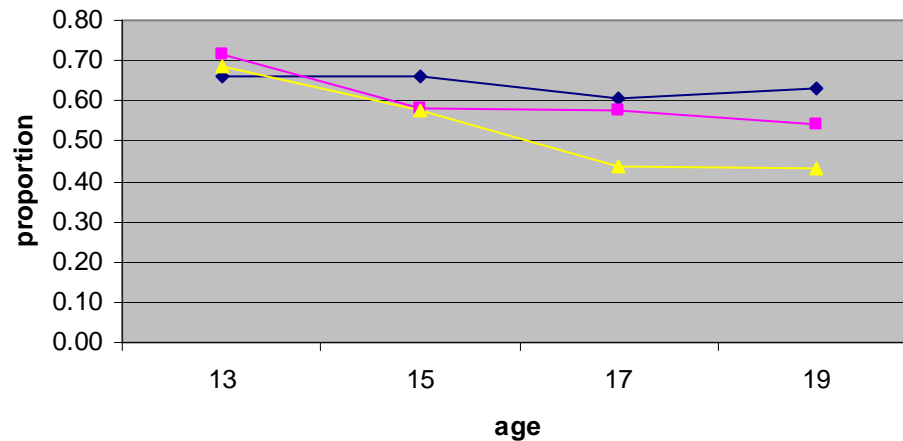
Chile



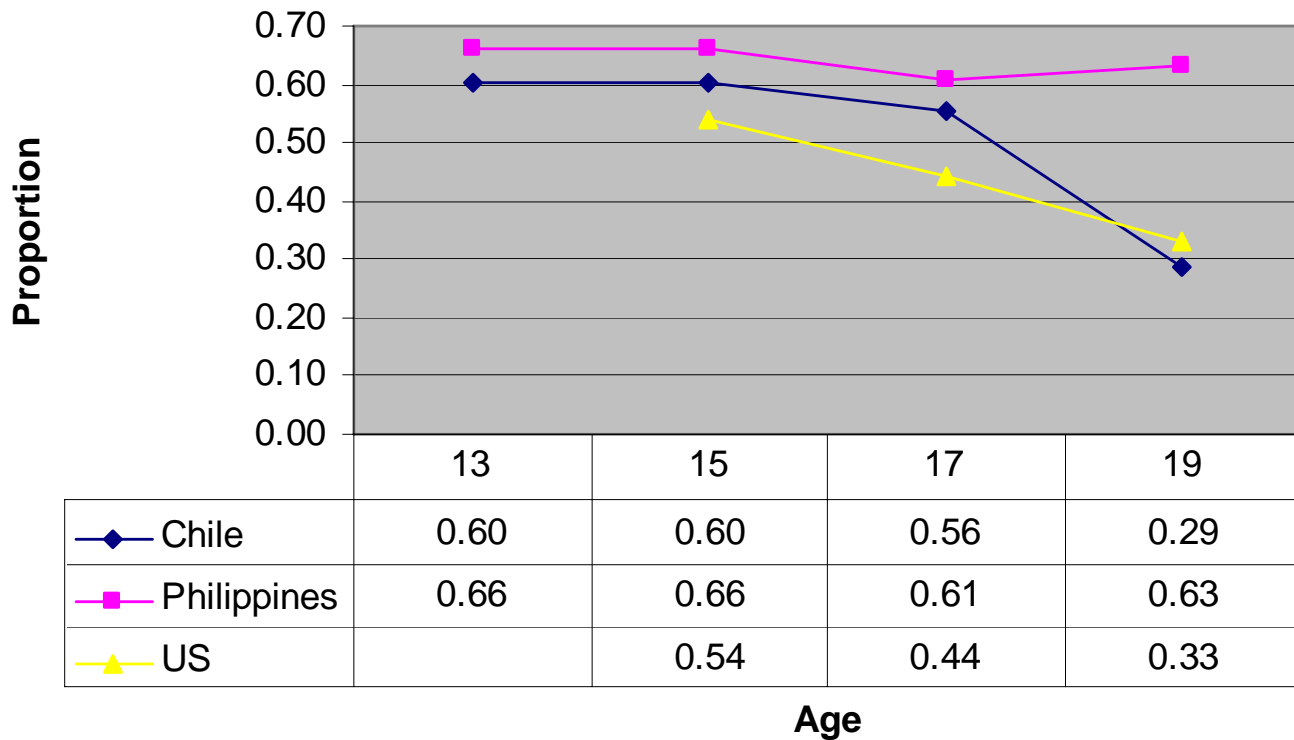
US



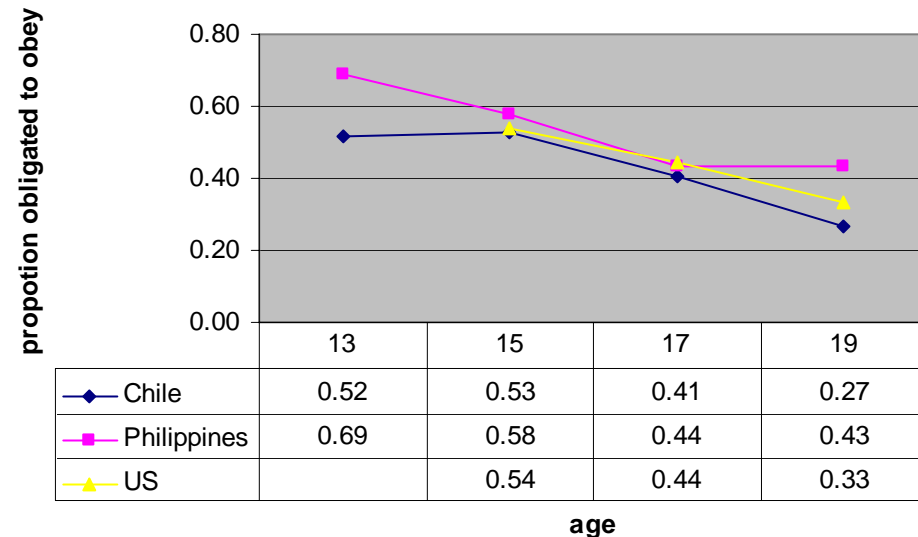
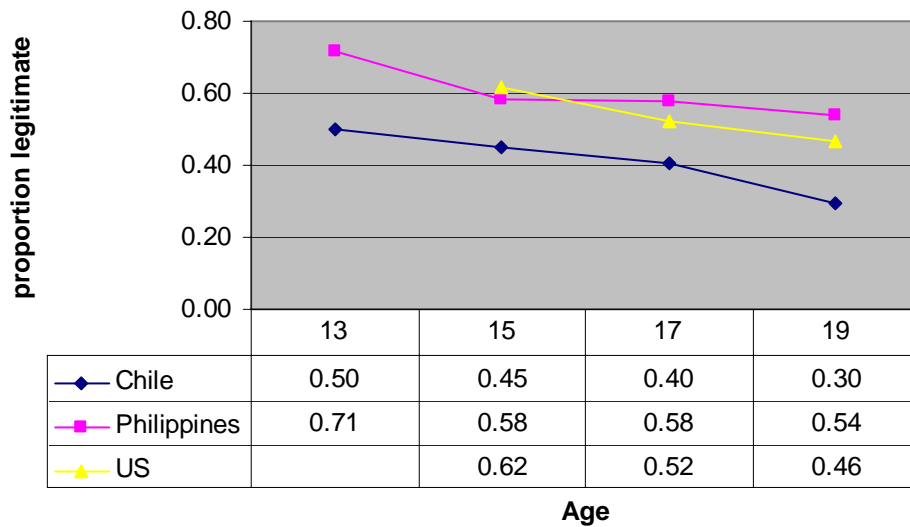
Philippines



Question 1: How does parent setting rules change with age?



Question 1: How does legitimacy and obligation to obey change with age?



Question 2: What are the predictors of autonomy?

- Predict legitimacy of parental authority and obligation to obey from:
 - Social context: country
 - Characteristics of the adolescent: age, gender
 - Characteristic of the parent-adolescent dyad: parenting style
 - Characteristic of the issue:
 - domain
- Nested data analyzed with HLM:
 - Issue within person
 - 1312 responses nested within 725 individuals

	legitimacy	obligation to obey
Between-person		
Intercept	2.05***	1.39***
Age	-0.17***	-0.23***
Philippines	0.40***	0.16***
Chile	-0.57***	-0.04****
Authoritativeness	0.64***	0.42***
Within-person (issue level)		
Personal	-2.76***	-2.17***
Friends	-2.05***	-1.77***
Social	-1.84***	-1.37***
Conventional	-1.47***	-1.08***

Question 2: What are the predictors of autonomy?

- Likelihood that an issue is governed by rules . . .
 - is highest in Philippines, followed by Chile, then the US
 - declines with age
 - positively related to authoritativeness
 - highest in Safety domain, lowest in Personal domain
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Question 3: What are the predictors of obedience?

- Between person variance predicted by:
 - Age
 - Country
 - Authoritativeness
 - Within person variance predicted by:
 - Rule
 - Obligation to obey
 - Legitimacy of parental authority
 - Domain
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■ The outcome variable is OBEY

■ Final estimation of fixed effects:

Fixed Effect	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-ratio	Approx. d.f.	P-value

For INTRCPT1, B0					
INTRCPT2, G00	2.858818	0.048983	58.364	721	0.000
AGE, G01	-0.047348	0.011275	-4.199	721	0.000
AUTHOR, G02	0.353593	0.035397	9.989	721	0.000
CHILE, G03	-0.199246	0.049461	-4.028	721	0.000
PHILIP, G04	0.104019	0.056476	1.842	721	0.065
For OK slope, B1					
INTRCPT2, G10	0.195489	0.021381	9.143	725	0.000
For HT slope, B2					
INTRCPT2, G20	0.305062	0.021961	13.891	725	0.000
For RULE slope, B3					
INTRCPT2, G30	0.090208	0.020011	4.508	725	0.000
For PERSONAL slope, B4					
INTRCPT2, G40	-0.556868	0.031896	-17.459	725	0.000
For FRIENDS slope, B5					
INTRCPT2, G50	-0.473580	0.033609	-14.091	725	0.000
For SOCIAL slope, B6					
INTRCPT2, G60	-0.437308	0.028869	-15.148	725	0.000
For CONVEN slope, B7					
INTRCPT2, G70	-0.341279	0.032385	-10.538	725	0.000

Question 3: What are the predictors of obedience?

- The likelihood that adolescents report obeying rules is . . .
 - Lower in Chile than in the US or the Philippines
 - Lower for older than for younger adolescents
 - Higher when parents are seen as authoritative
 - Higher when:
 - There is an explicit rule
 - Youth believe parents have legitimate authority over the issue
 - Youth believe they are obliged to obey
 - Highest in Safety domain
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Results: Summary

- In general, both parent and youth's expectations for youth self-governance increase with age (fewer rules, lower legitimacy and obligation to obey)
 - Authoritativeness is associated with *lower* expectations for self-governance
 - This is contradictory to past research suggesting that authoritativeness was associated with greater psychological autonomy
 - Obedience is predicted by parental governance
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Discussion: Authoritativeness and self-governance

- Past research has consistently found that youth with authoritative parents are better at self-regulation and more autonomous
 - These results suggest that youth who see their parents as authoritative grant greater legitimacy of authority and more obligation to obey and report greater obedience. Parents also exert greater governance by setting more rules
 - Can these be reconciled?
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Discussion: Authoritativeness and self-governance

- Two explanations:
 - Results are contradictory and result from an as-yet-unexplained difference in methodology
 - Self-governance of behavior is distinct from psychological autonomy
 - Is disobedience a sign of autonomy? *No*
 - Is the understanding that a parent may have a duty to set reasonable rules that one may choose to disregard symptomatic of a mature distinction between self and other? *Perhaps*
 - Does the internalization of parental values, which may result from and predict greater beliefs in parental legitimacy and higher obligation to obey, allow one to make autonomous decision supportive of obedience? *Probably*
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Question 1: How does obedience change with age?

