Subjective Experience of Autonomy and Psychological Well-Being: A Cross-Cultural Study with Korean American and European American Young Adults

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SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF AUTONOMY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING:
A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY WITH KOREAN AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN AMERICAN YOUNG ADULTS

by

ESTHER LEE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York 2019
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A Cross-Cultural Study with Korean American and European American Young Adults

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Esther Lee

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Subjective Experience of Autonomy and Psychological Well-Being:

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by

Esther Lee

Advisor: Paul Wachtel

This study aimed to explore whether parenting beliefs and practices that might promote academic or professional achievements also undermine aspects of psychological well-being. Specifically, the study focused on the relationship between the experience of subjective autonomy and psychological well-being measured in terms of self-esteem, flourishing, and life satisfaction. The sample consisted of 86 second-generation Korean Americans (KAs) and 99 European Americans (EAs) ages 25-35. Perceived parental autonomy support (versus psychological control) and perceived parental modernity (versus traditionalism) were also examined for group differences and associations with psychological well-being. As a group, KAs perceived greater parental psychological control and parental traditionalism and lower levels of subjective autonomy. For both KAs and EAs, subjective autonomy was associated with psychological well-being. The connotations of a few parenting dimensions and psychological well-being indicators varied by ethnicity and acculturation; these variations are discussed as are overall implications for future research and practice.

The implication of these findings is that the impediment to autonomy may stem from the presence of psychological control rather than the absence of autonomy support. Furthermore, contrary to some studies that regard the effects of parental psychological control as culturally
syntonic, the findings of the present study indicate that perceived psychological control is negatively correlated with self-esteem among KAs as well as among EAs. For KAs, the experience of subjective autonomy is correlated with some indicators of psychological well-being, particularly those that pertain to the self as an individual, but less so for aspects of psychological well-being that bear on relationships or subjective standards, values, and aspirations. However, the findings of the present study indicate that the experience of autonomy is relevant to the psychological well-being of KAs, as it is to that of EAs.
Acknowledgements

My committee chair, Paul Wachtel—
I could not have completed this dissertation without your steadfast support, intellectual and emotional. I am grateful for your patient reassurance every time I turned to you in my many moments of frustration and discouragement. Your mentorship enabled me to embark on this work and see it through to completion.

My committee members, Deidre Anglin, Ben Harris, Monique Bowen, and Diana Puñales—
You have been an integral part of my learning and training at City, through your example and through your teachings. So it is especially meaningful for me that you are also part of my culminating work at City.

My cohort and friends at City—
You must know how proud and happy I am to be counted among you all.

My sisters, Michelle and Gloria—
What strength I receive from your love and confidence in me! This dissertation has us in it through and through.

My lifelong chingoo, Kyung Eun—
You embody so much of what is to be treasured in Korean culture. Thank you for being a true friend and fellow strong woman.

My favorite person, Clive—
It is a joy to be your mom, to know you and to be part of your life. This dissertation is dedicated to you. It holds my love and wish for you: for you to thrive and have a meaningful, satisfying life.
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Introduction

In the halo of the model minority portrayal of Asian Americans, the effects of parental styles and behaviors on the academic performance of Asian American children have been a predominant focus of research on the Asian American population. However, research on the psychological well-being of Asian American young adults, especially as they leave the direct care of their parents in the cultural enclave of the family to navigate mainstream society, has been largely overlooked. Partially addressing this gap, the current study aims to examine the relationship between subjective autonomy and psychosocial well-being of Korean American young adults in comparison to European American young adults.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Brief on Asian Americans (2012), the Asian American population increased more than four times faster than the total U.S. population between 2000 and 2010, emerging as the fastest-growing minority group with a 43 percent increase from 10.2 million to 14.7 million during the 10-year period. Among the Asian American minority, the Korean American population has increased by 39 percent from 2000 to 2010 and ranks fifth in size with 1.7 million Korean immigrants in the U.S. as of 2010. But despite the rapid growth, research examining the psychosocial well-being of Asian Americans has been sparse (Zhou, Tao, Chen, Main, et al., 2012; Juang, Qin, & Park, 2013). Furthermore, the dominance of the model minority image of Asian Americans in academic and public discourse has led to a preponderance of research efforts on academic performance and socioeconomic achievements when studying the Asian American population (Juang et al., 2013). Thus, while studies on Asian Americans have examined the effects of parental styles on the educational performance of children (Zhou et al., 2012; Juang et al., 2013), psychological well-being has been a peripheral subject of interest. Moreover, many of the studies focus on school-aged
children or college students so that the effects of parenting as the children reach young adulthood are not explored.

The current study focused on Korean Americans, since the group ‘Asian American’ is a composite of many different ethnic groups that converge and diverge culturally at various points. However, the study would be pertinent for the wider group of Asian Americans who inevitably face having to negotiate the balance between their Asian heritage and mainstream American culture (Kim, Im, Nahm, & Hong, 2011). Present in this process of negotiation is the experience of Otherness, both subjectively and as observed by mainstream American society, that has been noted as a racial dynamic in which Asian Americans have been pegged as “radically different” and thus inscrutable and perpetually foreign to mainstream America (Hook, 2015). As Asian Americans negotiate this cultural balance, they are also striving to achieve “a reasonable balance of both relatedness and self-definition” as do individuals with cultural origins in the Western world (Blatt, 2008). Cross-cultural studies on Asian Americans, however, can inadvertently legitimize the Otherness of Asian Americans when they emphasize cultural interpretations without fully acknowledging aspects of the Asian American experience that may be a more general human phenomenon or experience.

The present study used the frame of Self-Determination Theory, which holds autonomy as a universal basic human psychological need (Ryan & Deci, 2000) rather than one confined to individualism of the West, and examined the relevance of subjective experience of autonomy to the psychological well-being of Korean American (KA) and European American (EA) young adults. Specifically, the study focused on the relationship between the experience of subjective autonomy and psychological well-being measured in terms of self-esteem, flourishing, and life satisfaction to reflect a eudemonic conceptualization of wellness. In doing so, the study also
examined group differences in parental autonomy support versus psychological control and parental modernity versus parental traditionalism as perceived and recollected by the participants about their parents’ childrearing beliefs and practices.

As a group, KAs perceived more parental psychological control and parental traditionalism from both parents but not less parental autonomy support or parental progressivism than EA. KA as a group also reported lower subjective autonomy. The implication of these findings is that the impediment to autonomy may stem from the presence of psychological control rather than the absence of autonomy support. Furthermore, contrary to some studies that neutralize the effects of parental psychological control as culturally syntonic, the findings of the present study indicate that perceived psychological control is negatively correlated with self-esteem among KAs as well as among EAs.

The present study found that subjective autonomy was generally associated with psychological well-being among both KAs and EA and that it was a greater contributor in predicting psychological well-being than ethnicity, income, education, acculturation, or enculturation. Although subjective autonomy was shown to have stronger correlations with more indicators of psychological well-being among EAs, the overall findings of the current study indicate that subjective autonomy contributes to the psychological well-being of the young adult participants regardless of their ethnicity and cultural background.

**Literature Review**

The literature review that follows provides the rationale for conceptualizing autonomy beyond the constrictions of individualism and abstract philosophy. The definition of autonomy as used in the present study is provided and distinguished from other terms and concepts that have been inaccurately used interchangeably with autonomy. The review also provides literature on
other concepts central to the present study: enculturation/acculturation, parental autonomy support, parental modernity, and eudemonic psychological well-being.

**Beyond the Collectivism-Individualism Dichotomy**

Asian Americans comprise a diverse group with multiple subcultures that have often been mischaracterized or generalized using a collectivism-individualism binary. It is additionally the case that the vast majority of psychological studies on Asians and Asian Americans are conceptualized around this binary. Often without a nuanced distinction between how individualistic and collectivistic frames operate within a culture versus the self-within-culture, such studies have been used to corroborate generalizations about Asian people and culture.

However, individualism and collectivism exist in different degrees in all cultures. As aptly noted by Hung (2016), a problematic assumption underlies the collectivist-individualistic binary: the assumption that observations made at the cultural level would apply directly at the individual level so that individuals from a particular culture are assumed to act in ways prescribed by the values and beliefs ascribed to the culture.

The collectivism-individualism dichotomy conceptualizes people at opposite poles. At the individualistic pole, people are regarded as separate and independent from others and as valuing individual achievements and uniqueness; at the collectivist pole, people are thought of as deriving a sense of self from group membership and prioritizing group harmony over individual needs and desires. The use of this binary fails to capture the complex ways in which individuals’ intrapsychic states interact with cultural contexts. Wachtel’s (2014) cyclical psychodynamics offers a valuable perspective: “…the inner world, the intimate world, and the world of society and culture are reciprocally consequential for each other, continually maintaining and changing each other…None of them exists without the other or has meaning apart from each other” (p. 27). Beyond the simplistic binary is the reality that cultural norms do not dictate or translate
directly to the phenomenological experiences of individuals.

With the recognition that the rigidity inherent in the collectivism-individualism dichotomy would distort the understanding of cultural differences (Omi, 2012) and the experiences of individuals within particular cultures, some scholars have proposed more nuanced and complex models to conceptualize the interplay between individualism and collectivism. For one, Kagitcibasi (2005) posits that collectivism and individualism exist on separate dimensions and that various cultures locate themselves at different points along these dimensions. Triandis (1995) adds the horizontal/vertical distinction to the collectivism-individualism binary. Horizontality denotes an attitude of equality and verticality a hierarchical structure amongst the members of the cultural society. Omi (2012), noting the presence of collectivism in the US, proposes the upward/downward variation to collectivism. Upward (or promotive) collectivism present in the US allows individuals to choose which groups they commit to, to express their own opinions, and to “not have to commit to groups they are forced to be a member of for whatever reason” (p.413). Thus, autonomy is embedded in this variation of collectivism. In contrast, downward (or repressive) collectivism present in Japan results in individuals feeling lost apart from conformity to others in their society.

It is apparent that the dichotomy does not hold in the real world, especially as intercultural exposure is facilitated by and a new, shared culture builds around modern information technology and communications media (Vargas & Kemmelmeier, 2013). In a meta-analysis comparing African, Asian, Latino, and European Americans in the U.S. for differences in horizontal-vertical collectivism-individualism dimensions, Vargas and Kemmelmeier found that there were no ethnic/racial differences in the level of collectivism (both horizontal and vertical), although European Americans measured higher in vertical individualism than African and Latino
Americans. The authors posit the role of “cultural convergence” in interpreting the lack of group differences, especially among young Americans (noting that the studies included in the meta-analysis focused on college student participants) living through contemporary cultural processes with the advent of the Internet to facilitate dissemination of information and social exchange.

Related to the simplistic research frame constructed around the individualism-collectivist is the “cultural (mis)attribution bias” evidenced in a recent meta-analysis of studies in psychology spanning the decade 2005-2014 conducted in the United States (Causadias, Vitriol, & Atkin, 2018). The authors define cultural (mis)attribution bias as the tendency to perceive individuals of racial or ethnic minority groups to have traits, beliefs, and behaviors shaped *primarily* by cultural processes and to see those from the White majority as “autonomous and independent actors” (p.243) influenced mostly by psychological processes and less by cultural influences. Such assumption disregards the indisputable fact that all individuals are permeated by culture shared by their communities, passed on and negotiated through generations at the individual and societal levels. Furthermore, such bias condones the easy use of culture as an explanatory variable for observations about minority groups, thus limiting the psychological interpretations of behavior and cognition and disregarding the complex operation of culture at the individual and societal levels. In challenging the individualism-collectivism dichotomy and cultural (mis)attribution bias, the current study sought to consider the cultural and generational influences on the autonomy-support participants perceive to have received from their parents as well as the psychological impact of the perceived parental autonomy-support and the current levels of autonomous functioning on the participants’ subjective well-being in young adulthood for both Korean American and European American participants.
The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) Frame: Extricating Autonomy from Individualism

An important aspect of psychosocial adjustment and well-being is a sense of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000; 2006a). However, autonomy has been regarded a uniquely Western concept (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), relevant and salutary only to individuals of individualistic cultures. Joining the theoretical position of acknowledging cultural differences but also appreciating a universality to basic human nature and psychological processes, the premise of this study is that Asian Americans are not excluded from the need for a sense of autonomy for psychological well-being. In particular, this study will rely on the universalist view of Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan et al., 2000) to define and consider the concept of autonomy. SDT is a theory of human motivation and personality that pertains to the dynamics of autonomy, its definition being regulation of the self by the self in the way the human individual functions (Ryan & Deci, 2004). The theory also considers the social and cultural elements that facilitate or deter the individual’s sense of volition, as well as psychological well-being. The theory asserts that autonomy, competence, and relatedness foster the forms of volition, motivation, and investment in activities most conducive to high-quality performance, persistent commitment, and creativity (Ryan et al., 2000).

The SDT framework has its philosophical foundation in existentialism (Ryan et al., 2004). Prior to the advent of existentialism in the 19th century, teachings of organized religion formed and restricted thinking; pedagogy was the inculcation of what to think rather than to think for oneself with curiosity. Existentialism refuted the theological notions of absolute meaning in human existence, urging individuals to create meaning to their own existence by acting according to their authentic feelings and thoughts rather than simply conform to social and cultural dictates (Wein, 2018).
In addition, SDT also aligns with the phenomenological stance of existentialism in its definition of autonomy as the *subjective experience of volition* (Ryan et al., 2000). In existential phenomenology, the subjective experience of the individual is the substance of meaning. Thus, operating within the SDT frame, this study will define and assess autonomy as a *phenomenological autonomy*, or the subjective experience of volition rather than absolute free will, detached from environmental influences or unaffected by the constraints of the human condition.

While cultural relativism has tethered the concept of autonomy to the individualism pole of the dichotomy, the alternative perspective is that along with cultural variations there exists a universality to certain developmental needs. Proponents of SDT who support this alternative perspective make an important qualification to their claim of universality of autonomy (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003, p.107):

…first recognize the specific definition of autonomy within SDT as volition, or the inner endorsement of one’s actions and lifestyle. A person who has fully assimilated or integrated ambient cultural values is, therefore, highly autonomous from this perspective. However, when autonomy is defined as independence or separateness, it is probably not a universal need—in fact, within SDT, independence is not conceptualized as a need at all. On the contrary, the theory suggests that independence is not a very common, nor typically a particularly healthy, human state (Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Instead, according to SDT, humans have a basic need to be connected with others, and they thrive best in contexts of relatedness and mutuality (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Behaviors can have different motivational origins for the individual—i.e., rooted in autonomy or heteronomy—even if they have the same external manifestation. The assumption that individuals
lack autonomy, adhere to tradition, or rely on parental guidance if they function well in groups stems from the conflation of autonomy with independence and/or individualism. It is important to note that when people willingly endorse and espouse collectivist values, then they are exercising autonomy. Thus, autonomy does not need to be confined to individualism or excluded from collectivism. (Chirkov et al., 2003)

Cultural differences exist, however, at the level of autonomy support afforded to individuals, and the difference in autonomy support may reflect the degree to which a culture is collectivistic or individualistic. Individuals in a cultural environment that supports autonomy are more likely to have opportunities to develop autonomy and would also seek autonomy as a valued aspect of well-being. The level of acculturation into such a cultural environment from one that de-emphasizes autonomy would affect the degree to which the acculturating individual would value and seek autonomy for oneself and/or support autonomy for others. Therefore, issues of acculturation seem important to assess in the current study.

**Acculturation**

Acculturation is the process of change that an individual undergoes in attitudes, values, and identity as a result of encountering other cultures. The bi-dimensional model of acculturation developed by Berry (1980) distinguishes between “contact and participation” and “cultural maintenance.” The former represents the extent to which one becomes involve in other cultural groups or remains primarily among one’s own cultural enclave. The latter represents the extent to which cultural identify and characteristics are valued and maintained. Asian American scholars have noted that the cultural maintenance dimension would be better represented under the broader concept of enculturation, which is the process of socialization into and/or maintenance of the norms of one’s heritage culture (Kim, Ahn, & Lam, 2009). In the current
study, both acculturation and enculturation are assessed by use of the Vancouver Index of Acculturation, which has one subscale to measure heritage culture orientation and another to measure American culture orientation.

Acculturation research pertaining to Asian Americans has indicated that an individual may be considered separated, integrated or assimilated (Suinn, Ahuna, & Khoo, 1992). A separated individual retains ethnic beliefs, traditions, and practices of the Asian culture but refuses or is unable to adjust to American culture. An integrated individual has a bicultural orientation characterized by the maintenance of the Asian heritage values and traditions and incorporation of American values and traditions. An assimilated individual rejects the Asian heritage values and traditions and incorporates the values, traditions, and behaviors of American culture.

In general, the body of literature that investigates the relationship of level of acculturation with measures of well-being among Asian Americans has shown that Asian Americans who are integrated (i.e., bicultural) tend to be more psychologically well than those who are separated or assimilated (Chae & Foley, 2010). More specifically, Asian American high school and college students who identified themselves as bicultural showed higher levels of self-esteem and self-concept (Phinney, Chavira, & Williamson, 1992).

Related to acculturation and enculturation is the separate concept of ethnic or cultural identity, which “may be thought of as an aspect of acculturation, in which the concern is with individuals and the focus is on how they relate to their own group as a subgroup of the larger society” (Phinney, 1990, p. 501). Within a bidimensional frame of acculturation, individuals from ethnic minority groups can have either high or low endorsement of both their own heritage and American cultures, and a strong ethnic identity does not necessarily imply low acculturation. Thus, an individual can have a firm Asian ethnic identity and a high level of acculturation.
**Autonomy Defined and Differentiated**

In defining autonomy, it needs to be differentiated from closely related concepts such as independence, individuation, or detachment, especially since some of the arguments against autonomy stem from just such lack of precise differentiation. Although autonomy is often used synonymously with independence, instances of, for example, *willing* relatedness or *compulsive* avoidance of dependence necessitate differentiating between the two concepts. Autonomy relates not so much to the individual’s independence or dependence from others (i.e., relatedness to and care for others) as it does to the individual’s self-endorsement of the particular stance. According to SDT, the achievement of autonomy does not exclude the need for relatedness; in fact, relatedness – *along with* autonomy and competence – undergirds reflective self-regulation and psychological well-being. Thus, autonomy need not be pitted against relatedness as it may be when defined as independence. (Ryan et al., 2000)

Furthermore, the concept of autonomy draws a distinction between self-regulation and self-control and between volition and intention. While all organized actions are predicated by intention, not all intentional acts are autonomous. And while autonomous behavior is regulated, it allows for flexibility and access to a fullness of experience, rather than the rigidity and suppression involved in self-control. Thus, autonomy can be characterized by “a quality of self-regulation, characterized by an open processing of possibilities and a matching of these with sensibilities, needs, and known constraints” (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006b, p. 797).

SDT defines autonomy closely to its etymological definition of self-governance, which refers to the initiation and regulation of actions by the self. Autonomous behaviors are perceived as willingly endorsed by the self, so that the individual is able to live out “the characteristic sense
of integrity and volition essential to autonomy” (Ryan et al., 2006b, p.796) and hold a coherent sense of self. In contrast, heteronomy is regulation external to the self “by forces experienced as alien or pressuring, be they inner impulses or demands, or external contingencies of reward and punishment” (Ryan et al., 2006b, p. 796). Therefore, individuals are most autonomous when they act from their authentic interests, values, and beliefs that have been fully integrated (Chirkov et al., 2003).

It is important to note that the autonomy defined by SDT and used in the current study is a *felt* autonomy and also a *relative* autonomy. Felt autonomy is largely the subjective experience of autonomy, the sense of autonomy the individual feels in self-volition in behaviors and self-endorsement of beliefs and values. Relative autonomy refers to the existence of a continuum, rather than a categorical binary, in the experience and exercise of autonomy (Chirkov, Ryan, & Scheldon, 2010). SDT has delineated forms of regulation in terms of the degree of autonomy involved. Intrinsic motivation reflects a high degree of autonomy, in that it is the experience of volition and engaging in action with full willingness. Actions involving extrinsic motivation can vary in degree of autonomy. The least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is *external regulation*, which solicits behavior motivated to gain external rewards or avoid punishments. *Introjected regulation* reflects a greater exercise of autonomy in that the motivation for behavior lies in internal contingencies – for example, to avoid feelings of guilt or to feel good about oneself. Further increasingly autonomous is *identified regulation*, in which the individual personally values and endorses the reasons for regulation. *Integrated regulation*, still a form of external regulation, is highly autonomous in that the identified reasons for regulation is experienced as authentic and congruous with the self and mindful reflection underlies espoused beliefs and behaviors. (Ryan et al., 2000; 2006a)
In this study, the self-report measure Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF; Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2012) is used to ascertain the participants’ level of autonomous functioning and this will be compared with their corresponding measures of perceived parental autonomy support and psychological well-being.

**Autonomy and Nonconscious Determinants of Behavior**

Referencing the work of the phenomenological philosopher Alexander Pfander, Ryan and Deci (2006a) describe autonomy as experienced in self-determined acts that reflect one’s will. And that while external influences and inner urges (such as the unconscious drives posited by Freud) may well provide the motivation for self-determined acts, these autonomous acts are then *endorsed* by the self. Thus, the authors assert that “autonomy is not restricted to “independent” initiatives but also applies to acts reflecting wholehearted consent to external inputs or inducements” (Ryan et al., 2006a, p.1560).

In addressing the issue of unconscious motivations more directly, Ryan and Deci (2006a) argue that autonomous motivations are not analogous to conscious motivations. The authors elaborate that unconscious primers can prompt either heteronomous or autonomous behaviors and differentiate between two types of unconsciously activated behaviors: the automatic and the automatized. Automatic behaviors are driven by control or compulsion and not easily amenable to the active choice of the individual (thus heteronomous). Automatized behaviors on the other hand are those that upon reflection would cohere with the individual’s values or needs and could be changed if deemed no longer congruent (thus autonomous). These behaviors become automatized for efficiency since capacity for conscious processing is limited, but if they were mindfully considered they would be fully endorsed by the individual.

SDT’s definition of autonomy differs from that of schools of thought that define will or
autonomy as independence from causality other than that originating from the self. In fact, the
theory maintains that the initial causes of action are rarely autogenous to the self. However, it
also maintains that “people’s autonomy lies not in being independent causes but in exercising
their capacity to reflectively endorse or reject prompted actions” (Ryan et al., 2006a, p.1574).
Additionally, SDT asserts that unconscious motives can control behavior and that mindfulness—
the awareness of the occurrences and experiences of the present moment—moderates the effects
of implicit motives to remedy the heteronomy of unconscious control. Lastly, when autonomy is
construed as illusory, the illusion pertains to the control over outcomes rather than the autonomy
of behaviors. (Ryan et al., 2006a)

**Autonomy and Independence from Environmental Influences.**

Behaviorism attributes the control of behaviors to reinforcements external to the self. All
behavioral organization is attributed to the organization of such reinforcements without any
internal integrative process in the individual (Ryan et al., 2006a). However, the concept of
intrinsic motivation (Ryan et al., 2000) refutes the all-encompassing influence of reinforcements.
Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in behaviors for the inherent satisfaction of engaging in
them regardless of external outcomes. While there are contradictory research findings, there have
been studies that suggest intrinsic motivation is undermined by external reinforcements (Ryan et
al., 2000). Even when these reinforcements increase performance or outcome, such increase does
not equate to an increase in intrinsic motivation. In fact, SDT warns against the harmful effects
of rewards in undermining autonomy, precisely because such rewards can easily blind
individuals to their own values and needs and lead them to abandon reflective consideration of
their actions.

The concept of autonomy does not rule out the effects of environmental influence. In fact,
during the early years of development, most behaviors are regulated externally. Autonomy is developed via integration of these external regulations, so that they become coherent with the individual’s overall sense of an authentic self. Integration differs from introjections, which are external regulations that have been taken in without internal processing in the self. Thus, introjections tend to drive compulsions and other unconscious workings of rigid defensive mechanisms that lead to psychological distress. Unintegrated regulation, as opposed to the self-regulation of autonomy, typically develops as an adaptation to being controlled or being valued conditionally on performance rather than the self. (Ryan et al., 2006a; Miller, 1979)

**Parental Autonomy Support**

A long-standing theme in the Western literature on parenting and human development is the encouragement of autonomy and self-regulation in contrast with the deleterious impact of psychologically controlling parenting practices that impede autonomy (Ryan et al., 2006b). In the psychoanalytic literature, autonomy has been written about as an integral aspect of the sense of self (Bach, 2002), the True Self (Winnicott, 1965), and as a child’s fundamental need to be “regarded and respected as the person he really is at any given time, and as the center—the central actor—in [one’s] own activity” (Miller, 1979, p.7). Thus, parenting attitudes and practices that do not support the development of autonomy have been associated with disturbances in one’s sense of the self (Bach, 1985; Miller, 1979) and lack of a vibrant existence.

Antithetical to parental psychological control is parental autonomy support for the child that allows the child to thrive as his or her authentic self and progress through development to maintain a coherent sense of self, which Ryan et al. (2006b) conceptualize as “that set of coherently organized processes, structures, and energies that are the developmental outcome of organismic integration” (p.801). The coherence and integration arise from parental autonomy-
support which the authors define as “attempts [by the parents] to grasp and acknowledge the child’s perspective, use minimal controls to foster behavior, and provide choice when possible” (p.815). When such parenting is provided, the child will understand and internalize the reasons for self-regulation and will feel understood. As the authors emphasize, it is important to note that autonomy support does not equate to “permissiveness, neglect, or the absence of action on the part of the parent, but instead conveys an active support of the child’s capacity to be self-initiating and autonomous” (p. 815).

Grolnick and Ryan (1989) propose that three aspects of parenting facilitate development of the child’s capacity to self-regulate and navigate social contexts: 1) parental autonomy support, 2) structure, and 3) involvement. The authors’ findings suggest that parental failure to provide these “necessary nutriments” leads to poor adjustment and achievement and vulnerabilities to more profound disturbances. Furthermore, contrary to the conceptualization of autonomy as a process of detachment from parents, Ryan and Lynch (1989) argue that autonomy is fostered by attachment and reliance on parents. The authors suggest that adolescents often detach from parents because parents have been excessively controlling and/or uninvolved. In contrast, adolescents whose parents provide both involvement and autonomy-support have no need to give up attachment to achieve autonomy: “Rather than having to trade off relatedness for autonomy, such adolescents can maintain both, precisely because in an autonomy-supportive context the parent-adolescent relationship itself changes in accord with developing adolescent capacities and needs” (Ryan et al., 2006b, p.820).

In the context of an authority-subordinate relationship, such as a parent-child or teacher-student relationship, autonomy-support from the authority is key in the subordinate’s development of autonomous self-regulation and ability to thrive. Autonomy-support is a difficult
skill that requires “respect, patience, self-reflection, and genuine caring” (Chirkov et al., 2010, p. 40). For parents, it is understandably difficult to encourage autonomy in a child, because doing so often requires foregoing what may be the more immediately expedient and satisfactory result. However, autonomy support does not require foregoing of structure and discipline in childrearing, which can be provided in ways compatible with autonomy support rather than as psychological control or punishment. (Chirkov et al., 2010)

According to Ryan et al. (2006b), Winnicott has described parental autonomy support in terms of what he named the “holding environment”: the parent is attentive to the infant’s impulses, emotions, and dissatisfaction before they become intolerable and is attuned to the infant’s communication of needs and desires. The authors draw from Winnicott to explicate the need for this kind of responsive holding environment to foster the development of the infant’s self-agency and vivacity:

To the extent that the child is left alone with strong, unsatisfied urges, the child may either suppress them because they are so threatening or be overwhelmed by them, ending up disoriented. The experience of being responded to and thus, in a sense, regulated by an empathic other is therefore crucial to the child’s developing the capacities for regulating himself or herself (p.826).

The predominant view in cross-cultural research has upheld cultural differences in the impact of autonomy on an individual’s development and psychological well-being (Supple, Ghazarian, Peterson, & Bush, 2009). Cross-cultural studies have supported the view that Asian American parents generally espouse different beliefs on parental autonomy-support and control when compared with White American parents. Studies have reported that Asian American parents tend to engage in authoritarian parenting more than White American parents (Chao,
1994; Park, Kim, Chiang, & Ju, 2010) and that they tend to exercise higher levels of psychological control (Chao & Aque, 2009) and de-emphasize autonomy (Supple et al, 2009).

On the cultural nuances of parenting styles, Chao (1994; 2001) asserts that Baumrind’s authoritarian parenting style does not capture the cultural meaning imbued into Chinese parenting ideologies: guan and chiao shun. Guan means “to govern” or “to care,” and seems to reflect a vertical structure in the parent-child relationship. Chiao shun encompasses the idea of training the child to appropriate behaviors. In studies of Chinese immigrants, Chao (1994; 2001) found that Chinese American children felt close to their parents and achieved high levels of school performance even when their parents engaged in authoritarian parenting practices, unlike European American children whose parents were authoritarian. Findings from such studies led to the conclusion that autonomy was not a need for healthy psychological functioning and adjustment for Chinese American children because of the differing cultural context.

On the other hand, a significant body of research has accumulated more recently that indicates positive developmental outcomes of autonomy-support in adolescents across cultures, including those with collectivist ideologies. More specifically, adolescents with high levels of perceived closeness with parents, authoritative behavioral control from parents, and parental autonomy-support in making personal decisions experience improvements in outcomes related to psychological well-being (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Luyckx, Goossens, Beyers, et al., 2007). Behavioral control, in this context, is parental monitoring and limit setting that provides structure, whereas psychological control is intrusive and manipulative control that deters psychological and emotional development (Steinberg, 1990). And in fact, the meta-analysis performed by Pinquart and Kauser (2018) found no support for Chao’s (2001) suggestion that authoritative parenting may be associated with less positive outcomes for children in collectivist
societies of East Asia than in the individualistic countries of the West. They also found that authoritative parenting was associated with fewer internalizing and externalizing problems in children across cultures (specifically from North American, Western Europe, East Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia, Arab-Muslim countries, and Australia/New Zealand). Therefore, while cultural meanings and culture-specific concepts in Asian American parenting are certainly important to consider, overemphasizing cultural variance to negate the relevance of autonomy could impede our understanding of the process of achieving psychological well-being for Asian American youths.

**Parental Modernity**

Another relevant angle to exploring parenting differences is in terms of modern versus traditional child-rearing beliefs and practices. Traditional parenting aligns with parental authoritarianism, which includes the belief in the absolute authority of the parent, isolation of the child from outside influences, intrusiveness, the stance that the child learns passively, and the idea of breaking the will of the child. Modern, or progressive, parenting aligns with a democratic approach in which children are encouraged to verbalize ideas, engage in imagination and play, and learn actively through self-directed exploration. Parental progressivism comprises a respect for the rights of others – especially for those with less privilege and power, an active stance toward learning, and the possession of relevant knowledge (Schaefer & Edgerton, 1985; Schafer, 1991).

It is then quite self-evident that a progressive parenting approach would include autonomy-support as an important aspect of child-rearing. In considering the modern-traditional dimension of parenting approaches, it is possible to view that autonomy-support is not simply a parenting practice ascribed to individualism but a modernization of parenting beliefs and practices. The
consideration of generational changes in parenting approaches reflects the reality that even in individualistic societies, such as the one in the US, autonomy is not always encouraged in parenting practices, further extricating the concept of autonomy from individualism.

Some of the distinctions that are made between White American and Asian American parenting ideologies may in fact not be cultural but generational. A survey of several generations back across almost all societies—East, West, or in less developed parts of the world—would reveal assumptions and practices that deviate considerably from modern parenting. That is, in almost all societies, traditional parenting was once the norm. The different cultural values observed in different societies in the present day are thus the result both of differences intrinsic to the various cultural traditions and differences in how much a particular culture has moved away from what was once a widely shared ("traditional") set of assumptions, varying in content but within a similar frame.

Important to the premise of this study, it is entirely plausible that some Korean American parents have a more modern parenting stance while some European American parents have a more traditional stance. It would be meaningful to be able to ascertain, even preliminarily, the possible interaction between the culture and modernity dimensions of parenting beliefs and the ways each dimension relates to autonomy experienced by the participants. The limitation of the study is that the modern-traditional aspect of parenting will be measured as perceived by the participants as they retroactively reflect on their parents’ behaviors without necessarily knowing the parents’ beliefs behind the parenting practices. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that parenting practices would reflect parenting beliefs and that in turn these beliefs were communicated to the participants, even if implicitly. The participant’s perception of parental modernity will be measured by modifying the Parent Modernity Scale (PMS; Schaefer et al.,
1985), which is a self-report measure designed to be completed by parents.

**Psychological Well-Being**

In assessing psychological well-being, the intent of this study was to measure psychosocial functioning beyond the realm of academic performance, since previous related studies on Asian Americans have focused on academic functioning as a measure of well-being. For the purposes of this study, three constructs were selected to attempt to capture the concept of eudemonic psychological well-being: self-esteem, flourishing, and satisfaction with life.

Eudaimonia is a form of happiness conceptualized first by Socrates as the fulfillment of some fundamental desire humanity has for higher meaning in life that is driven by exercise of reason and thoughtful adherence to moral values. Eudaimonic happiness is not a feeling state but the full engagement and realization of one’s human capacities, leading to a sense of satisfaction upon evaluation of one’s life. It is contrasted with hedonistic pleasure derived from sensual enjoyment and satisfaction of biological drives. In that autonomy defined by SDT is a continuing process of rationally reflecting on and deciding on values and practices to be integrated into the individual’s own conception of an authentic self, autonomy underlies the individual’s ability to achieve eudemonic happiness. Kant notes eudaimonic happiness as counter to egotistical individualism since rational human beings would perceive that individual happiness is attainable only as part of the well-being of their societal collective (Chirkov et al., 2003). Although the current study does not utilize a single scale to measure eudamonia, it uses the scales that tap into the individual’s relationship with the self and others in assessing subjective wellness.

The concept of *flourishing* was introduced by Keyes (2002; 2007) as a departure from defining mental health as the absence of pathology. Keyes asserts that mental health and mental illness are not poles on a single dimension but that each lies on its own continuum. Flourishing is
defined as the “presence of mental health” and juxtaposed to *languishing*, defined as the absence of mental illness. Keyes further describes components of flourishing as emotional vitality and positive social functioning. Thus, in including flourishing, this study aimed to expand the assessment of psychological well-being beyond the lack psychopathology and beyond the individual’s ability to function or perform to assess the individual’s subjective sense of meaningfulness and fulfillment in life. The Flourishing Scale (Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Choi, Oishi & Biswas-Diener, 2009b) used to measure flourishing in the current study incorporates SDT’s view of competence, relatedness, and self-acceptance universal needs that contribute to one’s thriving in life.

The concept of flourishing taps into self-esteem in the way it was defined by Rosenberg (1965) as self-acceptance and a basic feeling of self-worth. High self-esteem has been established in many studies as one of the strongest predictors of subjective well-being, although some studies have identified weaker or more complex effects (Diener, 1984). In the current study, global self-esteem (rather than self-esteem in specific domains of life) as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was included as part of psychological well-being.

**Study Objective and Hypotheses**

The current study sought to move away from deferring to the rigid demarcation between collectivist and individualistic cultures and from the concomitant assumptions placed on individuals based this dichotomous division that could result in a facile use of culture as an ill-defined explanatory variable to a psychological outcome. The present study aimed to assess the psychological impact of autonomy as well as perceived parental beliefs and practices that encourage or discourage the development of autonomy on the eudemonic well-being of individuals across two ethnic groups conventionally placed at culturally opposite ends of the
collectivist-individualist dimension.

To that end, three hypotheses were established. First, it was hypothesized that differences will exist between the Korean American and European American groups in their perception of the childrearing beliefs and practices of their parents related to supports for the development of autonomy and its suppression by psychological control. The implication here is that the participants’ perceptions will be at least somewhat reflective of the actual beliefs and practices of the parents and that the differences noted in their perceptions would also be reflective of differences in the actual parenting. The focus of parenting beliefs was on the dimension of parental progressivism versus traditionalism while the focus of parenting behaviors was on the dimension of autonomy support versus psychological control.

Second, it was hypothesized that despite the differences (perceived and/or actual) in the parents’ childrearing beliefs and practices and regardless of the participants’ ethnicity and cultural background, subjective experience of autonomy contributes to the participants’ psychological well-being. This hypothesis stems from the theoretical view that autonomy is a universal psychological need and a necessary component of psychological well-being.

While the psychological need for subjective autonomy may exist across cultures, supports for the development of autonomy may differ between cultures. The extent to which individuals from different cultures seek, experience, and manifest autonomy may also vary. Thus, it was also hypothesized that levels of acculturation to mainstream American culture or enculturation to one’s heritage culture would affect the relationship between autonomy and psychological well-being.

The overarching aim of the study was to examine whether the subjective experience of autonomy is pertinent to the psychological well-being of individuals from cultural origins.
conventionally seen as collectivistic, as well as for those from cultures seen as individualistic.

**Method**

The study is a correlational design aimed to test three hypotheses: 1) Korean American (KA) young adults’ perceptions and experiences of their parents’ child-rearing beliefs and practices differ from that of European American (EA) young adults, 2) an individual’s subjective experience of autonomy contributes to the psychological well-being regardless of ethnicity and cultural background, and 3) acculturation may affect the association between subjective autonomy and psychological well-being, in general and particularly for KAs.

**Participants**

Young adult participants of European and Korean ethnicities were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Eligible participants: 1) were between the ages of 25 and 35; 2) identified as either European/White American or Korean American; 3) reported that they were either born in the U.S. or immigrated to the U.S. prior to age 6; 4) reported proficiency in English; 5) reported that parents are either both ethnically Korean or both European/White and reside in the US. The study aimed to recruit 100 KA participants and 100 EA participants. In order to mitigate the confounding effects of acculturation levels, participants were limited to those born in the U.S. or those who immigrated to the U.S. prior to being school age, following the definition for second-generation Korean Americans as used in existing literature (Kim, Knudson-Martin, & Tuttle, 2014). Since most children begin elementary school at age 6, immigration prior to age 6 was selected as the cutoff for study participation eligibility.

A total of 200 participants met eligibility criteria and initiated the survey. After removing participants who completed the surveys in less than five minutes, responded in inconsistent manner (e.g., reported having no contact with a parent on some items while indicating having
had contact with the same parent in other items), and/or provided answers indicating ineligibility, the final sample included a total of 185 participants consisting of KA, \( n = 86 \) and EA, \( n = 99 \).

**Measures**

**Sociodemographic information.** The following sociodemographic information was obtained: age, sex, first and primary languages, country of birth for the participants and their parents if not the U.S., age at immigration if not born in the U.S., the year of each parent’s immigration to the U.S. if parent not born in the U.S., relationship status of the participants and their parents, education levels of the participants and their parents, and income levels of participants. Education level of participants was assessed by providing response options ranging from High school graduate/GED (coded 1) to Doctorate degree (coded 8) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Education level of parents was assessed by providing response options ranging from Some high school (coded 1) to Doctorate degree (coded 9) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Relationship status of participants and parents was determined by providing the following response options: married/common law marriage, never married, separated, divorced, and/or widowed. Relationship status for both participants and their parents were later recoded as either Married/common law marriage (coded 1) or Other (coded 0). Employment was assessed by providing the following response options: employed part-time, employed full-time, unemployed and looking for work, unemployed and not looking for work, student, military, or other to be specified. For the purposes of the study, employment was later coded as Employed (coded 0) and Other (coded 1). Income level was assessed by providing the following response options from \(<10K/year\) (coded 1) to \(>200K/year\) (coded 12). These sociodemographic data were collected to understand the sample characteristics and to control for confounding effects on the measures of
psychological well-being.

The recency of parental immigration was based on the year (ex. 1981) reported by the participants as the year their mother and/or father immigrated to the U.S. The earliest year of a parent’s immigration in the sample was 1955 and the latest 2010. Thus, recency was coded as follows for the exploratory analyses performed, so that a higher number means more recent immigration: 1 = 1951-1960, 2 = 1961-1970, 3 = 1971-1980, 4 = 1981-1990, 5 = 1991-2000, and 6 = 2001-2010. If the parent was born in the U.S., recency was coded 0.

**Measure of acculturation and enculturation: Vancouver index of acculturation** (VIA; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). The VIA is a 20-item self-report measure on a four-point scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) that includes two subscales: Heritage (VIAH) and mainstream American (VIAA) scales. VIAH consists of 10 items regarding an ethnic heritage orientation (e.g. “I often follow _____ culture traditions”), reflective of enculturation. VIAA of 10 items regarding a mainstream orientation (e.g. “I often follow mainstream American culture traditions”), reflective of acculturation. The measure assesses for enculturation and acculturation across several domains, including values, social relationships, and adherence to traditions. The authors of the measure reported that the Heritage dimension was highly internally consistent in the Chinese, East Asian, and miscellaneous samples (α = .91, .92, and .91, respectively). The Mainstream dimension also yielded high Cronbach’s alpha coefficients in the Chinese, East Asian, and miscellaneous samples (α = .89, .85, and .87). Reliability analysis in the current study yielded high Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for both KAs (VIAH, α = .89; VIAA, α = .88) and EAs (VIAH, α = .88; VIAA, α = .91).

**Measure of perceived parental autonomy support and psychological control: Perceived parental autonomy support scale** (P-PASS; Mageau, Ranger, Joussemet, Koestner, Moreau, &
Developed within the SDT frame, the P-PASS assesses the participant’s perception of autonomy support and psychological control in both the participant’s mother and father. It is a 24-item self-report measure with each item on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 7 (very strongly agree). The autonomy support subscale consists of items pertaining to the parent’s offering of choices to the child within certain limits, explaining the rationale for demands, rules, and limits, and awareness and acceptance of the child’s feelings. The psychological control subscale includes items that pertain to the parent’s threatening to punish the child, inducing guilt, and emphasis of performative achievements.

The use of the scale in this study produced the following four variables: maternal autonomy support (MAS), paternal autonomy support (PAS), maternal psychological control (MPC), and paternal psychological control (PPC). Psychometric analysis performed on the French version of the scale by the authors indicated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$) and established its convergent and divergent validity. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients obtained in the reliability analysis in the current study for the four subscales ranged from .84 to .95 for KAs and from .93 to .96 for EAs.

**Measure of perceived parental progressivism and traditionalism: Parental modernity scale** (PMS; Schaefer et al., 1985). The PMS is a 30-item self-report measure of traditional, authoritarian parental beliefs and progressive, democratic parental beliefs. Each item is rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Two subscale scores are computed: Progressive Beliefs and Traditional Beliefs. The Progressive Beliefs subscale includes statements such as “Children should be allowed to disagree with adults if they feel their own ideas are better” and “A child’s ideas should be seriously considered in making family decisions.” The Traditional Beliefs scale includes items such as “Children should not question
the authority of their parents” and “Children will be bad unless they are taught what is right.”

Although the measure was constructed to be completed by parents, it was modified for the purposes of the current study to have the participants report on their perception of their parents’ beliefs about child-rearing. The use of the scale in the current study produced four variables: maternal progressivism (MP), paternal progressivism (PP), maternal traditionalism (MP), and paternal traditionalism (PP). The reliability analysis of the subscales yielded Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .80 to .84 for KAs and .81 to .91 for EAs.

**Measure of subjective autonomy: Index of autonomous functioning** (IAF; Weinstein et al., 2012). Developed in the SDT framework, the IAF is a 15-item self-report measure of autonomy comprising three subscales that assess authorship/self-congruence, interest-taking, and susceptibility to control, as well as a total score that comprises the subscales. Each item is rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (completely true). For the purposes of the current study a total IAF score was obtained by averaging the item scores for the 15 items, with items 2, 6, 7, 11, and 14 reverse scored. It includes items such as “My decisions represent my most important values and feelings,” “I often reflect on why I react the way I do,” and “My actions are congruent with who I really am.”

Validity of the IAF has been established through its correlations to indicators of well-being, including the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) used in the current study, which aligns with the theoretical expectation that autonomy promotes a sense of well-being. Internal reliabilities were satisfactory across seven studies leading to the development of the IAF, $\alpha = .84-.89$ for authorship/self-congruence, $\alpha = .79-.83$ for interest-taking, and $\alpha = .81-.87$ for susceptibility to control. Reliability analysis of the index in the current study yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .70 for KAs and .77 for EAs.
**Measures of psychological well-being.** The following three scales were utilized to capture the eudemonic notion of psychological well-being.

*Rosenberg self-esteem scale* (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965). The RSES is a 10-item scale that assesses both positive and negative feelings about oneself to arrive at a measure of global self-worth. Each item is rated on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). The scale ranges from 0-40 with the total score obtained by reversing items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. It includes statements such as “I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others” and “I wish I could have more respect for myself.” An update on the psychometrics of the scale established its reliability at $\alpha = .91$ for a U.S. adult sample and satisfactory clinical validity (Sinclair, Blais, Gansler, Sandberg, Bistis, & LoCicero, 2010). In the current study, reliability analysis for the scale yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .88 for KAs and .95 for EAs.

*Flourishing scale* (FS; Diener et al., 2009b). The FS is an eight-item self-report measure on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strong disagreement) to 7 (strong agreement). It produces a single psychological well-being score by assessing domains such as “relationships, self-esteem, purpose in life, and optimism.” The authors reference SDT’s universal psychological needs, such as competence, relatedness, and self-acceptance, as some of the aspects of well-being assessed by the scale. Items on the scale include statements such as “I lead a purposeful and meaningful life” and “I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.” The scale was normed on college students, and scores range from 8 to 56, with high scores indicating a positive view of oneself in important domains of human functioning. Reliability was high ($\alpha = .87$) and convergence validity was established with other psychological well-being scales. In the current study, reliability analysis yielded Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .95 for KAs and .94 for EAs.
The satisfaction with life scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The SWLS is a five-item self-report measure on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). It assesses for an overall evaluation of life to arrive at a measure of life satisfaction. Items include statements such as “The conditions of my life are excellent” and “The conditions of my life are excellent.” Normed on college-age students, the criterion validity coefficient for the SWLS is .68 in terms of a life satisfaction rating made by interviewing each subject about their life. The reliability analysis in the current study yielded a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .92 for KAs and .95 for EAs.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis 1. Independent T-tests were performed to compare the two ethnic participant groups on variables pertaining to perceptions of maternal and paternal parenting beliefs and practices: maternal autonomy support (MAS), paternal autonomy support (PAS), maternal psychological control (MPC), and paternal psychological control (PPC) obtained from subscales of the Perceived-Parental Autonomy Support Scale and maternal progressivism (MP), paternal progressivism (PP), maternal traditionalism (MT), and paternal traditionalism (PT) from the Parental Modernity Scale. To further analyze the association between ethnicity and participant perception of parental beliefs and practices while controlling for relevant covariates, regression analyses were conducted.

Hypothesis 2. Bivariate correlational analysis was used to examine the association between subjective experience of autonomy (IAF) and psychological well-being (RSES, FS, and SWLS). Once correlations were established between the autonomy and psychological well-being variables, regression analyses including relevant covariates (i.e., ethnicity, sex, education, income, enculturation, and acculturation) to control for confounding. To mitigate the occurrence
of Type I errors in the multiple correlations being performed, the $p$-value for significance was reduced to .025. Bonferroni correction was not used because its routine use is not recommended due to its conservative calculation of $p$-values that can result in Type II errors (Pernegar, 1998; Armstrong, 2014).

**Hypothesis 3.** The moderating effect of acculturation, as measured by VIAA and VIAH, on the relationship between subjective experience of autonomy (IAF) and psychological well-being (RSES, FS, and SWLS) was tested by regression analyses using the Process macro add-on (Hayes, 2017). The analyses examined testing for moderation by VIAA alone (i.e., VIAA x IAF), VIAH alone (i.e., VIAH x IAF) using model 1 of Process, and both VIAA and VIAH together (i.e., VIAA and VIAH x IAF) using model 2 of Process to determine interaction with IAF that might affect each of the three variables used to measure psychological well-being separately. For the one significant regression model identified, the Johnson Neyman technique was used to determine the levels of acculturation at which the relationship between IAF and the psychological well-being variables are significant.

**Results**

**Demographic Characteristics**

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the total sample ($N = 185$), Korean Americans (KA, $n = 86$), European Americans (EA, $n = 99$), and effect sizes. Table 2 further breaks down the details of education levels of participants and their parents as well as participant income information into percentage comparisons. KAs and EAs differed on first language, level of education, income, the father’s level of education, and the relationship status of biological parents (table 1). Difference in the first language reported by KA and EA was expected. 11% of KAs reported their first language as Korean, $\chi^2(1, N = 184) = 12.32, p < .001$. However, all
participants across groups, except one, reported their primary language as English. Independent samples t-tests showed that KAs reported higher level of education for themselves, higher level of education for their fathers, and higher income than EAs. Chi-square test also indicated that 86% of the biological parents of KAs are married as compared with 49% of the biological parents of EAs, \( \chi^2(4, N = 185) = 27.59, p < .001 \).

**Hypothesis 1: Differences in Perceptions of Parenting Beliefs and Practices**

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for the total sample \((N = 185)\), KAs \((n = 86)\), EAs \((n = 99)\), and effect sizes. Independent samples t-tests showed that KAs reported perceiving higher levels of psychological control and traditional parenting attitudes from both mothers and fathers than EAs. And although KAs reported lower level subjective autonomous functioning, no group level differences were identified for perceived autonomy support from parents.

The results of the regression analyses testing the association of ethnicity to the participant’s perception of their parents’ child-rearing beliefs and practices are presented in tables 4 and 5. Covariates included in the analyses are sex, education, income, enculturation, and acculturation. Ethnicity was not shown to have a statistically significant relationship with the participants’ perception of autonomy support from mothers, \( F(6, 177) = 1.494, p = .183, \) adj. \( R^2 = .016 \), or of autonomy support from fathers, \( F(6, 168) = 1.870, p = .089, \) adj. \( R^2 = .029 \). However, Korean ethnicity and greater enculturation predicted greater perception of maternal psychological control, \( F(6, 177) = 3.112, p < .01, \) adj. \( R^2 = .065 \). Korean ethnicity was also associated with higher perception of paternal psychological control, \( F(6, 170) = 4.771, p < .0005, \) adj. \( R^2 = .114 \).

Korean ethnicity and higher enculturation predicted higher parenting traditionalism perceived about mothers, \( F(6,172) = 6.473, p < .0005, \) adj. \( R^2 = .156 \). Korean ethnicity also
predicted higher perception of paternal traditionalism, \( F(6,169) = 5.365, p < .0005, \text{adj. } R^2 = .130 \). No significant associations were found between ethnicity and perceived parental progressivism for either the mother, \( F(6, 176) = 0.838, p = .542, \text{adj. } R^2 = -.005 \), or the father, \( F(6, 170) = 1.862, p = .090, \text{adj. } R^2 = 0.062 \).

As hypothesized, differences were observed between the KAs and EAs in their perceived experience of their parents’ childrearing practices and beliefs: KAs perceived higher psychological control and parental traditionalism from both parents than EAs, although no differences were found for perceived parental autonomy support or parental progressivism.

**Hypothesis 2: Relationship between Autonomy and Psychological Well-Being**

Correlations observed in the total sample and by ethnicity are presented in tables 6,7, and 8. The bivariate correlational analyses indicate that subjective experience of autonomy and psychological well-being have a positive association in both ethnic groups. Although subjective autonomy seems to have stronger relationships with more indicators of psychological well-being among EAs, significant correlations are prominent among KAs as well. Among KAs (table 7), individuals who experienced greater subjective autonomy reported higher self-esteem \((r = .439)\) and flourishing \((r = .293)\), but not higher life satisfaction. KAs who reported greater sense of autonomy also reported greater perceived autonomy support \((r = .277)\) and progressive parenting beliefs \((r = .283)\) from their mothers as well as greater acculturation \((r = .350)\). Among KAs, but not EAs, paternal autonomy support correlated positively with life satisfaction \((r = .242)\). Also, KA participants who perceived higher maternal \((r = - .283)\) and paternal \((r = - .295)\) psychological control reported lower self-esteem.

Among EAs (table 8), individuals experiencing greater subjective autonomy reported higher self-esteem \((r = .491)\), flourishing \((r = .560)\), and life satisfaction \((r = .400)\). EAs who reported
greater subjective autonomy also reported greater perceived autonomy support from their mothers \((r = .212)\) as well as acculturation \((r = .240)\) and enculturation \((r = .263)\). Among EAs, but not KAs, higher maternal autonomy support correlated positively also with all three variables of psychological well-being \((r = .284 \text{ to } .384)\), and higher paternal autonomy support correlated with higher self-esteem \((r = .228)\). EAs who perceived higher maternal \((r = −.336)\), but not paternal, psychological control also reported lower self-esteem.

In both groups, parental autonomy support correlated with parental progressivism \((r = .690 \text{ to } .778)\), and parental psychological control correlated with parental traditionalism \((r = .253 \text{ to } .616)\). Although not all coefficients reached statistical significance, parental autonomy support and parental progressivism had a generally positive relationship with subjective experience of autonomy and psychological well-being while psychological control overall had a generally inverse relationship. And as expected, all three measures of psychological well-being correlated strongly and positively with each other for both groups.

The results of the regression analyses conducted to further examine the relationship between subjective autonomy and psychological well-being and to control for confounds are presented in table 9. Covariates included in the analyses are ethnicity, sex, education, income, enculturation, and acculturation. Greater subjective autonomy and income predicted higher self-esteem, \(F(7,169) = 19.64, p < .001, \text{ adj. } R^2 = .335\); greater level of flourishing, \(F(7,173) = 13.93, p < .001, \text{ adj. } R^2 = .426\); and greater life satisfaction, \(F(7,175) = 8.837, p < .001, \text{ adj. } R^2 = .232\). Subjective autonomy contributed the most in explaining the variance in all three measures of psychological well-being used in this study: self-esteem \((β = .639; p < .001)\), flourishing \((β = .517; p < .001)\), and life satisfaction \((β = .357; p < .001)\).
While income was also a significant contributor to self-esteem ($\beta = .252; p < .001$), flourishing ($\beta = .210; p < .001$), and life satisfaction ($\beta = .345; p < .001$), subjective autonomy was a greater contributor to each of these measures of psychological well-being. Ethnicity (KA = 0, EA = 1) predicted a slightly higher life satisfaction measure of psychological well-being for KAs, but subjective autonomy had a larger contribution in predicting life satisfaction over and beyond that of ethnicity ($\beta = -.167; p < .05$). It was also found that higher education level predicted lower flourishing ($\beta = -.149; p < .05$) and lower life satisfaction ($\beta = -.169; p < .05$). Acculturation, enculturation, and sex were not found to be significant contributors to psychological well-being in these models. These results overall support the hypothesis that subjective experience of autonomy is relevant to the psychological well-being of the young adult participants regardless of their ethnicity and cultural background.

**Hypothesis 3: Effect of Acculturation on the Relationship Between Subjective Autonomy and Psychological Well-Being**

Independent samples t-tests (table 3) showed that EAs reported slightly higher endorsement of American culture ($d = .38; p < .05$) and subjective autonomy ($d = .33; p < .05$) as a group than KAs. In the bivariate correlational analyses, acculturation was shown to be positively associated with subjective autonomy ($r = .350, p < .001$) among KAs. Among EAs, both enculturation ($r = .240; p < .05$) and acculturation ($r = .263; p < .01$) were positively associated with subjective autonomy as well as with flourishing ($r = .351; p < .001$ for enculturation and $r = .290; p < .01$ for acculturation). Acculturation and enculturation were positively associated in both KAs ($r = .505, p < .001$) and EAs ($r = .602, p < .001$).

As noted previously, neither acculturation nor enculturation were observed to contribute directly to any of the indicators of psychological well-being (table 9). Further analyses were
performed using the Process macros add-on (Hayes, 2017) to test the moderation effect of acculturation and enculturation on the relationship between subjective autonomy and each measure of psychological well-being. The only significant moderation effect (presented in table 10) was observed among only KAs for flourishing (FS) with only acculturation (VIA) as the moderator, $F(3, 82) = 5.52, p < .01, R^2 = .168, R^2\Delta = .082$. This interaction is illustrated in Figure 1.

The interaction was probed by testing the conditional effects of subjective autonomy at three levels of acculturation, at one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean. As shown in table 11, subjective autonomy was significantly related to flourishing when acculturation was at one standard deviation below the mean and at the mean ($p < .001$), but not when it was at one standard deviation above the mean ($p = .239$). The Johnson Neyman technique showed that the relationship between subjective autonomy and flourishing was significant when acculturation was less than .74 SDs above the mean but not significant with higher values of acculturation.

**Additional Findings**

The correlational analysis for the total sample indicated that the more recently parents immigrated to the US, the more traditional and psychologically controlling they were perceived to be by the participants. The year of immigration can be interpreted to reflect some degree the acculturation level of the parent. However, the correlations lost significance when the analysis was performed only for KAs, for whom the associations would have been more meaningful, probably due to too few data points to provide meaningful variance. Most of the parents of EAs were born in the U.S., and no data had been collected to identify the number of generations families of the EA participants have been in residence in the U.S. Thus, meaningful associations
were not established between parental traditionalism and recency of immigration.

An additional exploratory analysis was done to consider the relationship between parental relationship status and the study variables, particularly because of the difference in parental relationship status between the two ethnicities. Correlational analysis of the total sample indicated that participants whose parents were married reported higher maternal autonomy support ($r = -.169$) and that participants whose parents were not married (i.e., never married, separate, divorced) reported greater experience of subjective autonomy ($r = .199$). However, when analyzed separately by ethnicity, the correlations were no longer significant.

**Discussion**

The present study aimed to expand the scope of research on Asian Americans beyond childhood or adolescent academic performance in assessing their psychological functioning and wellness. It also sought to move away from deferring to the collectivist-individualist dichotomy and from using culture as a vague explanatory variable to psychological outcomes. Therefore, whereas many previous studies have treated the concept of autonomy as largely irrelevant to the needs of individuals from collectivist cultural contexts, the current study sought to examine whether subjective autonomy is pertinent to the psychological well-being of individuals from collectivistic cultural origins, as well as for those from individualistic cultures. Specifically, it sought to examine the relevance of subjective autonomy to the psychological well-being of Korean American (KA) and European American (EA) young adults in terms of self-esteem, flourishing, and life satisfaction.

The difference found in the current study between the two ethnic groups was in higher perceived parental psychological control and traditionalism among KAs, not in lower perceived parental autonomy support or progressivism. Since it was also found that KAs as a group also
reported a lower level of subjective autonomy, it can be speculated that the deterrent to the
development of autonomy is the exertion of parental psychological control rather than the lack of
autonomy support from parents. Additionally, contrary to some studies that assert that the
negative effects of parental psychological control are attenuated in collectivistic cultural
contexts, the findings of this study indicate that perceived psychological control is negatively
correlated with self-esteem among KAs as well as among EAs.

Looking more specifically at the various measures of well-being, the impact of the
experience of subjective autonomy among KAs was found to be more relevant to some indicators
of psychological well-being than others. In particular, those measures that pertain to the self as
an individual showed more impact than aspects of psychological well-being that bear on
relationships or subjective standards, values, and aspirations. Nonetheless, the findings of the
present study clearly support the relevance of subjective autonomy to the psychological well-
being of KAs.

Given the greater number and strength of positive correlations between perceived parental
support and measures of psychological well-being among the EA portion of the study population,
it seems plausible that while both KAs and EAs are vulnerable to the deleterious effects of
parental psychological control, EAs are more sensitive to the salutary effects of parental
autonomy support.

The lens of existing stereotypes about Asian Americans brings into view a limited and
stereotypic impression of Asian Americans as achievement-driven and successful in their upward
mobility in our society while obstructing the view to the psychosocial complexities and
contradictions that exist within this diverse group, both at the level of subgroups and of
individuals. The overarching premise of this study rests on the question of whether the parental
focus on academic and career achievements in our society that likely contributes to the socioeconomic upward mobility of Asian Americans as a group also comes with psychological costs. Specifically, the concern is that the very parenting approaches that contribute to high academic performance and professional achievements may be the same ones undermining essential aspects of psychological well-being.

Understandably, academic and professional aptitudes have been viewed as important aspects of psychological functioning and adjustment. By measure of academic performance, Asian Americans as a group would be deemed psychologically quite well-adjusted. As a simplistic but concrete example, while only 16 percent of the students in the New York City public school system are Asian, they comprise 62 percent of students at the elite specialized schools within the system (Harris & Hu, 2018). But in addition to the fact that many Asian American students fall outside this statistical category, it is also unclear that this kind of psychological adjustment and functioning necessarily translates later in life to psychological well-being that reflects a well-developed sense of self as well as a meaningful and satisfying experience of life. The second-generation Korean American author of an opinion piece in the New York Times (Park, 2018) articulates the psychological conflict that bears on the question at the core of the current study:

To my authoritarian father, all has gone according to plan. I excelled in school, attending Amherst College and Harvard Law School. I’ve embraced his conventional vision of success: I’m a lawyer. But like many second-generation immigrant overachievers, I’ve spent decades struggling with the paradox of my upbringing. Were the same childhood experiences that long evoked my resentment also responsible for my academic and professional achievements? And if so, was the trade-off between happiness and success worth it? (Italics added)
In the course of exploring the primary concern about parenting approaches among Asian Americans that emphasize achievement of academic and professional successes, other pertinent considerations and questions came up. For one, to avoid grouping as a single entity the different ethnicities— with variations in cultural values and practices that would affect approaches to parenting— within the Asian American category, the study selected Korean Americans as the target population. Some questions pertained to whether certain parenting approaches are intrinsic to Korean culture, part of immigrant culture, or present across cultures to varying degrees dependent on other psychosocial and economic variables, and whether Korean parents promote academic and professional achievements in ways that are particular to the Korean culture.

Evidence is present in the existing literature that excessive childrearing emphasis on academic achievement and successful career outcomes and the psychological control and lack of autonomy support that can be characteristic of such parenting focus are not unique just to KAs or to even the broader Asian American families. As plainly worded by the child and family psychologist Richard Weissbourd (2010) when he writes about such parenting particularly in affluent White communities, “Many parents today are simply craven about academic achievement” (p. 62). He is not addressing Asian American parents when he warns about the risks of such a focus in childrearing that can lead to a “meager sense of self.” He labels as “quintessential American tensions” the anxious wish parents push on to their children (in what is deemed to be a meritocracy in operation in our society) to reach the same benchmarks of success and have access to the same advantages they have. It may be that what is different is the prevalence of such childrearing emphasis in the two populations: whereas in the European American population it may be circumscribed mostly to certain demographic pockets of the population, they seem widespread among Asian Americans in general.
Thus, while the focus of the study is on KA, a cross-cultural component of comparing KA experiences with that of EA was incorporated. Although it was reasonable to assume that parenting approaches perceived by KA and EA participants at the group level would be different, it was important to evaluate that assumption and design the study to detect and verify the existence of the pertinent differences. Because of the cross-cultural component of the study, the discussion of results at times deviates from the focus on the experiences of KAs to a comparison between the two groups.

The current study also aimed to examine whether the differences in perceived autonomy support and psychological control in parenting between the two ethnic groups would be due only to cultural differences undergirded by the collectivism-individualism binary. To that end, the dimension of parental modernity was included to ascertain traditional versus progressive parenting approaches in the participants’ recollected perception of their parents’ childrearing beliefs and practices. Schaefer and Edgerton (1985) conceptualized parental modernity as parenting beliefs that encourage self-direction in children, antithetical to traditional parenting beliefs that align with authoritarian expectations that children confirm to their parents’ wishes. Traditional parenting is not unique to collectivistic cultures; in fact, for centuries it was also the prevalent parenting stance even in individualistic cultures until the recent decades. Thus, progressiveness in parenting may be reflective of generational and historical shifts in parenting approaches as well as acculturative effects.

According to the data obtained in the current study, KAs as a group perceived more parental psychological control and traditionalism from both parents but not less parental autonomy support or progressivism than EAs. While recollected perceptions may not reflect actual parental beliefs or behaviors, the findings of the current study align with results of other studies that
indicate greater psychological control in parenting of collectivist cultures (Chao, 1994; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). As perceived by participants of both groups, higher parental autonomy support was associated with more progressive parenting beliefs and greater parental psychological control with more traditional parenting beliefs. And at the group level, KAs reported lower subjective experience of autonomy.

Although from some theoretical perspectives psychological control and autonomy support are conceptualized to exist on a single continuum, the Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale (P-PASS) used in this study assesses them on two subscales as two distinct factors. The participants’ perception of autonomy support or progressivism from their parents did not differ by ethnic group and was not predicted by ethnicity, enculturation, or acculturation. What differed by ethnicity was parental psychological control and traditionalism: Korean ethnicity and greater enculturation to heritage culture predicted perception of higher maternal psychological control and maternal traditionalism, and Korean ethnicity predicted perception of higher paternal psychological control and paternal traditionalism. Thus, it is plausible that impediment to the development of autonomy is the presence of psychological control in line with traditional parenting beliefs rather than the absence of autonomy support.

Among both KAs and EAs, only maternal parenting influences as perceived by the participants were correlated with their experience of subjective autonomy. Among KAs, perceived maternal autonomy support and progressivism were positively correlated with subjective autonomy; among EAs, perceived maternal autonomy support (but not progressivism) was positively correlated with subjective autonomy. It is plausible that fathers might have been less involved and less available than mothers in direct parenting—perhaps because more fathers worked outside the home than mothers or due to gender-role expectations—so that the parenting
behaviors and attitudes of fathers are less salient in the minds of the participants or had less direct impact on development.

Contrary to some studies that assert that the deleterious effects of parental psychological control are mitigated by collectivistic cultural contexts (e.g., Chao, 1994; Papps, Walker, Trimboli, & Trimboli, 1995), the findings of this study indicate that perceived psychological control is negatively correlated with self-esteem among KAs as well as among EAs. And although not reaching statistical significance, perceived parental psychological control among KAs shows negative associations also with the other two indicators of psychological well-being used in this study. It is also notable that for KAs, the only parental influence pertinent to greater life satisfaction was paternal autonomy support. No other parenting influence was positively associated with life satisfaction or the other two psychological well-being indicators among KAs. A group difference to be noted here between the two ethnicities is that perceived parental autonomy support correlated positively with more psychological well-being indicators among EAs than KAs. Pulling the he strands of data together, it can be speculated that while both KAs and EAs are susceptible to the negative effects of parental psychological control on aspects of psychological well-being, EAs are more sensitive to the benefits of parental autonomy support on psychological well-being.

In addition to maternal autonomy support and progressivism, acculturation to American culture was found to be positively correlated to the sense of autonomy for both groups. At the group level, EAs were more acculturated than KAs and experienced a greater sense of subjective autonomy than KAs. Among EAs, greater endorsement of both heritage and American cultures was associated with higher subjective experience of autonomy. Among KAs, participants more acculturated to American culture reported greater experience of subjective autonomy. And yet,
KAs who endorsed greater enculturation to Korean culture reported perceiving higher parental autonomy support and progressivism. A plausible explanation for this discrepancy is that the more enculturated KA participants are more likely ascribe to the cultural values of filial piety and avoidance of family shame (Kim et al., 2009) and thus less likely to report parenting beliefs or behaviors they believe may reflect negatively on themselves and/or their parents. Returning to the correlation between acculturation and subjective autonomy, it is plausible that mainstream American culture affords greater opportunities for individuals to receive support for autonomy development; and the more acculturated individuals, who would more often seek out and function within culturally American environments, would in turn continue to receive supports to develop and maintain their autonomous functioning.

However, of the greatest interest to the study was the relationship between subjective autonomy and psychological well-being, which was examined with the experience of the KA target group in mind in comparison with the EA group. As hypothesized, subjective experience of autonomy was associated with psychological well-being for both KAs and EAs. Among KAs, subjective autonomy was related to two of the three indicators of psychological well-being used in the study: self-esteem and flourishing. Among EAs, subjective autonomy was related to all three indicators of psychological well-being: self-esteem, flourishing, and life satisfaction. Although all three measures of psychological well-being correlated strongly and positively with each other in both KA and EA samples, they were observed to correlate differently to subjective autonomy across the two groups. While the strength of the association between self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and subjective autonomy as measured by the Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF) was similar in both groups, scores on the Flourishing Scale (FS) correlated at a diminished strength with subjective autonomy among KAs.
as compared to EAs. The relationship between life satisfaction as measured by the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) and subjective autonomy diverged even more between the two groups, with no association observed among KAs but a moderately strong correlation shown among EAs.

The RSES measures the participant’s global self-esteem or self-worth (rather than self-esteem in particular domains) by assessing both positive and negative feelings about the self. The FS has overlap with the RSES since it includes items on self-esteem in measuring the participant’s perception of success in significant areas of life with the additional domains of relationships, purpose and optimism (Diener & Diener, 2009a). Correspondingly, in the current study, the FS and the RSES were more strongly correlated to each other than the SWLS was to either scale among both KAs and EAs. The SWLS measures satisfaction with life as a whole (rather than as the summation of satisfaction scores from various domains of life) and is an assessment of satisfaction with one’s life involving a cognitive, judgmental process based on a comparison with a subjective standard one establishes for oneself (Diener et al., 1985).

The implication, particularly for KAs, from the above associations between subjective autonomy and psychological well-being and between the measures of psychological well-being is that the experience of subjective autonomy is relevant to some indicators of psychological well-being, particularly those that pertain to the self as an individual (i.e., the RSES), but less so for aspects of psychological well-being that bear on relationships (i.e., the FS) or subjective standards, values, and aspirations (i.e., the SWLS). It is plausible that individuals with high autonomous functioning and self-esteem do not necessarily experience flourishing or life satisfaction if, for example, these qualities propagate interpersonal discord with parents who may disparage autonomy or if the individuals are harshly self-critical about aspirations they could not attain.
At the same time, further analyses of the relationship between subjective autonomy and the indicators of psychological well-being using regression models controlling for ethnicity, sex, education, income, and acculturation/enculturation revealed that subjective autonomy contributes the most in explaining the variance in all three measures of psychological well-being used in this study. Although Korean ethnicity predicted a slightly higher life satisfaction, subjective autonomy had a larger contribution in predicting life satisfaction over and beyond that of ethnicity. Acculturation, enculturation, and sex were not found to be significant contributors to psychological well-being when covaried with subjective autonomy. While subjective autonomy seems to have stronger relationships with more indicators of psychological well-being among EAs, the overall findings support the hypothesis that the subjective experience of autonomy contributes to the psychological well-being of the young adult participants regardless of their ethnicity and cultural background.

Not surprisingly the most prominent predictive factor second to subjective autonomy for psychological well-being identified in the current study was income. Association was greater for life satisfaction than for self-esteem and flourishing. Income has well-established in existing literature as a contributor to life satisfaction and subjective well-being, with the caveat that higher income will not inevitably or infinitely lead to greater subjective well-being and that variance in income explains only a low proportion of the variance in life satisfaction (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). Furthermore, the subjective experience of wealth or lack may depend on the individuals’ level of desire (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2009). Aspiration level theory would posit that it is the gap between desired income (aspiration) and actual income (achievement) that is the significant factor in the relationship between income and psychological well-being (Frey et al., 2002).
As posited by Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs, predictive factors of life satisfaction shift from those related to the lower needs of safety to the higher needs of love and esteem as the lower needs are gratified. While this progression is likely universal, the degree to which satisfaction with these higher needs predicts general life satisfaction was found to vary across cultures, depending on salient cultural values (Oishi, Diener, Lucas, & Suh, 2009). According to the findings of existing research, self-esteem is less strongly associated with life satisfaction in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures (Diener et al., 2009a), while peaceable relationships and social supports was more strongly associated with life satisfaction in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures (Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997).

In the current study, the finding that life satisfaction was predicted to be higher for KAs when controlled for income (as well as the other pertinent covariates) could be explained by the possibility that, in keeping with collectivistic values, KAs assess life satisfaction by factors beyond individual income or relationship within only the nuclear family (i.e., spouse and/or children). At the same time, self-esteem was shown to associate with life satisfaction among KAs as strongly as it does among EAs. These results could plausibly be understood as reflective of integrative acculturation (i.e., bicultural orientation), wherein KAs would have retained aspects of their more collectivistic heritage values while also espousing aspects of the more individualistic values of American culture that come together to contribute to their assessment of life satisfaction.

Interestingly, and contrary to most findings reported in existing studies, the current study found that higher education predicted lower flourishing and life satisfaction when controlling for ethnicity, acculturation/enculturation, sex, and income. And although not statistically significant, education was also negatively associated with self-esteem. According to Castriota (2006), while
existing studies have usually shown a positive relationship between education and subjective well-being, some studies have found that individuals with higher levels of education reported lower life satisfaction when income was controlled for. One way the inverse relationship between education and psychological well-being could be explained is by the “rising aspirations” theory (Frey et al., 2002): the more education one has achieved, the more aspirations one will have toward greater achievement, so that satisfaction with one’s achievement is never sustained. The gap between aspiration and achievement is maintained as aspirations continue to rise.

Another explanation might be that “over-schooled” individuals who hold jobs that do not require the level of education they have obtained are unsatisfied (Castriota, 2006). In such cases, it is also more likely that the individuals are not utilizing skills or knowledge in their field of study and find the work less meaningful, so that they are less likely to experience flourishing.

In addition to the above plausible explanations, the inverse relationship between education and the indicators of psychological well-being also points back to the study’s question of whether the parenting emphasis on attainment of higher educational and professional achievements incurs psychological costs. The parental psychological control subscale of the Perceived Parental Autonomy Support Scale (P-PASS) used in this study includes items that pertain to “encouragement of performance” that ask about the participants’ perception of how much their parents believed or insisted that they should be “better than others” or be “the best.” Psychological control— as opposed to behavioral control provided through appropriate structures in authoritative parenting— is also a defining aspect of authoritarian parenting as defined by Baumrind (1971). It is plausible, then, that psychological control as a parenting practice promotes educational achievement and diminishes aspects of psychological well-being.

Speculating further, the greater parental psychological control perceived by KAs contributes to
greater levels of educational and economic achievements as compared to EAs but not to psychological well-being.

Lastly, when considering the relationship between subjective autonomy and psychological well-being the possible influence of acculturation/enculturation was examined, with the assumption that higher acculturation would increase the relationship between the two. The only significant moderating effect identified was of acculturation on the relationship between subjective autonomy and flourishing only for KAs. Enculturation did not show any moderating effect. The surprising aspect of the moderation effect was that subjective autonomy predicted flourishing to a greater degree when acculturation was lower and only when acculturation level was below .74 standard deviations above the mean. In other words, at the highest levels of acculturation (as measured by scores on the American orientation subscale of the VIA; VIAA), subjective autonomy did not contribute to flourishing. Individuals at these high scores on the VIAA would likely be categorized as assimilated, meaning that they would have likely rejected the values and traditions of the Korean culture and replaced them with those of American culture.

Although findings are mixed in ethnic minority studies examining the relationship between the level of acculturation and psychological well-being, studies more specific to Asian Americans in general have shown that Asian Americans with a bicultural (i.e., integration of heritage and American cultures) orientation tend to be more psychologically healthy than those with a separated (marginalized from mainstream culture) or assimilated orientations (Chae et al., 2010). In the attempt to understand the moderation effect found in the current study, it could be speculated that perhaps one-sided assimilation has even less salutary effects on psychological well-being than separation/marginalization. It could further be speculated that the process of
assimilation is antithetical to autonomous functioning, in that a blanket rejection of one’s heritage culture in adopting the values and behaviors of mainstream culture seems a compulsive act that bypasses thoughtful reflection on the meaning of such replacement that might lead to the individual denying an important part of one’s self.

Another plausible explanation for the higher acculturation level contributing to lower psychological well-being is the effect of “intergenerational discrepancy” (Suinn, 2010). High acculturation can be distressing if the participant has adopted America values and behaviors, while their parents have maintained their attachment to their heritage culture. Analysis of data collected in 1994 as part of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study has linked intergenerational discrepancy of acculturation as perceived by Asian American adolescents to depression in the adolescents (Ying & Han, 2007). The current study may have not uncovered the impact of acculturation on the relationship between subjective autonomy and psychological well-being because only the acculturation level of the participants was considered rather than the gap in the acculturation levels of the participants and their parents.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of the current study. First, recruitment for this study was done through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online crowdsourcing platform that allows for convenience sampling. While MTurk has been deemed a viable recruitment platform (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), there remains a slight risk to data integrity. Attempts were made in the current study to ensure data integrity by removing data from surveys completed without adequate time investment or with inaccurate or inconsistent information.

Additionally, MTurk samples differ from the general population in that they are younger,
more liberal, and more educated, more unemployed or underemployed, and include more European and Asian Americans. Clinical and personality studies suggest that MTurk workers report elevated levels of social anxiety, emotion dysregulation, and features of the autism spectrum and that they are more introverted than college or community samples and report lower self-esteem (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016). Thus, these sample characteristics may have affected the findings of the current study.

Another limitation of this study is the reliance on the young adult participants’ perceptions of their parents’ childrearing beliefs and behaviors as remembered from years growing up. For those participants who have children, parenthood could influence their recollection of their parents’ practices. Therefore, the data is limited by the biases of subjectivity, perception, and memory. The association between perceived parental autonomy support/psychological control and the current experience of subjective autonomy is particularly vulnerable to these biases. However, use of data relying on perception has been well established in prior research (e.g., Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dombusch, 1991), with findings of those studies congruent with others that have used parent self-report (Kim & Chung, 2003). Furthermore, the current study was interested primarily in understanding the effect of perceived parental autonomy support on the young adult’s felt autonomy and psychological well-being.

Relatedly, the cross-sectional design of data collection is another limitation of the study that precludes determination of causation. Although theory and findings of other studies suggest a causal relationship with the development of subjective autonomy as a prerequisite for psychological well-being, it is possible, for example, that participants with greater psychological well-being have a positive reframing of discouraging or conflictual experiences with their parents as they reflect on their years growing up.
Furthermore, the study lacked statistical power for more complex data analyses when examining variables separately by ethnicity for within-group differences. This limitation may have prevented more robust findings about the possible role of acculturation/enculturation in moderating the relationship between subjective autonomy and psychological well-being.

**Future Directions**

Although there was valid rationale for utilizing data based on the experience and perception of the participants according to their recollection about their parents, the inclusion of parents to obtain information directly from them in future studies would serve to confirm and extend findings of this and other studies that rely on perceived parenting beliefs or practices. Moreover, future studies could include a qualitative component in which a portion of the participants (i.e., adult children and their parents) are interviewed to provide clarification on the meaning of the participants’ responses on the scales and insight into the parent-child relationships that might not be captured or accurately reflected in survey responses and identify developmental and psychological issues that may be present uniquely for KAs.

A salient between-group difference noted in the current study was the relationship status of the participants' biological parents. The experience of parental divorce in the course of growing up is a psychologically significant event, albeit not a determining factor since divorce can be positive or negative, both in terms of whether the divorce process was harmonious or acrimonious and in terms of whether the divorce resulted in alleviating a chronically tense and conflictual family situation. When in the developmental span the divorce occurred would also bear on the psychological impact of the divorce. Although not enough of the pertinent information was available in the data collected, correlations between parental relationship status and the study variables were considered given that divorce is a psychologically relevant variable.
While maternal autonomy support was higher when parents were married and subjective autonomy higher when parents were not married at the total sample level, these correlations lost significance when the study sample was separated by ethnicity. Despite the plausible associations between parental marriage status and traditionalism and cultural orientations, none were found in the current study. It would be worthwhile in future studies to further examine the possible relationship of parental relationship status with variables of parental behavior and beliefs and the effect on the development of subjective autonomy and psychological well-being.

Another important factor to further examine in future studies is the acculturation level of parents and, relatedly, the number of generations the participant’s family has resided in the US. With the immigration histories of the various ethnic groups to the US, it would be reasonable to assume that by and large KA families are more recent immigrants to the US than EA families. Perhaps EA parents with more recent immigration histories would espouse more traditional parenting beliefs than the parents of the EA parents in the current study. Thus, it is plausible that differences that might appear to be cultural differences between KAs and EAs are actually, at least in part, attributable to recency of immigration and acculturation/enculturation over generations. To distinguish more clearly between the effects of cultural differences and accumulation of acculturation over the generations, a comparison of only first-generation EA or KA participants would be an apropos study.

Based on the between-group findings obtained in the current study, future research should also focus on within-group differences among KAs in how subjective autonomy relates to psychological well-being and how demographic, developmental, psychological, and cultural factors affect the relationship. One such endeavor would be to further examine the role of acculturation level as it relates to autonomy and psychological well-being in KAs. In the current
study, the VIA was used to assess for acculturation and enculturation because the sample included EAs and the scale could be used for individuals of any ethnic origin. However, the VIA does not provide a way to combine the two subscale scores into a composite score that would correspond to an acculturation orientation (i.e., separation, integration, or assimilation). An acculturation scale specific to Asian Americans, such as the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (Suinn et al., 1992), that produces a single score that places individuals into an acculturation orientation may provide more meaningful and nuanced information about the role of acculturation among Korean Americans with regard to the development of autonomy and its relationship to psychological well-being.

Another interesting research direction would be to examine the relationship between subjective autonomy and acculturation. Individuals may choose to maintain the values and practices of their heritage culture or to adopt those of American culture from a place of thoughtful reflection and self-endorsement of the values and practices. Which cultural values and practices they choose would determine their level of acculturation and enculturation, but the process of arriving at the choice would be autonomous in either case. On the other hand, if individuals are foreclosed from acculturating due to parental control or adopt American practices mostly in response to demands to fit into American society, neither process would involve much autonomy. The process of acculturation and enculturation may occur with varying degrees of autonomy, and meaningful cultural integration would require the introspection and thoughtful assessment integral to autonomous functioning.

Finally, the psychological variables used in the current study should be analyzed in conjunction with the participants’ academic performance in youth to assess the relationships between parenting, academics, and psychological well-being in an integrated study to identify
what aspects of parenting might encourage or discourage academic performance versus psychological well-being and attempt to identify parenting beliefs and practices that might encourage both.

**Conclusion**

The previously quoted Korean American op-ed writer poses yet another pertinent question (Park, 2018): “Today, many second-generation Americans like me are at a parenting crossroads: Do we replicate the severe, controlling parenting styles many of us were raised with — methods that we often assume shaped our own success?”

Parental support for autonomy, as defined in this study within the SDT frame, is not a push toward individualistic notions of independence or even self-assertion. It is the support of the ongoing conscious reflection that allows the developing individual to decide on values and practices to be integrated into his or her own conception of a coherent, authentic self. Regardless of whether one comes from an individualist or collectivist cultural origin or whether one’s sense of self builds primarily from individual achievements or interactions with a collective community, parental autonomy support is the provision of opportunities for the individual to reflect on what is being integrated into one’s sense of self.

The current study has shown that even for individuals from a collectivistic cultural background perceived parental psychological control is associated with negative outcomes to psychological well-being and that the experience of subjective autonomy is relevant to their psychological well-being. While some studies have justified the use of psychological control in Asian parenting as culturally syntonic and the development of autonomy culturally dystonic, the findings of the current study support the view that autonomy is an important aspect of psychological well-being for Asian Americans.
Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Total Sample, by Ethnicity, and Effect Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Sample $(N = 185)$</th>
<th>KA $(n = 86)$</th>
<th>EA $(n = 99)$</th>
<th>Effect Size $d$</th>
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</thead>
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<td>$M$ $SD$</td>
<td>$M$ $SD$</td>
<td>$M$ $SD$</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>31.04 2.76</td>
<td>30.91 2.85</td>
<td>31.16 2.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5.33 1.61</td>
<td>5.63 1.65</td>
<td>5.07 1.54</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother’s Education</td>
<td>4.17 2.04</td>
<td>4.02 1.97</td>
<td>4.30 2.11</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s Education</td>
<td>4.42 2.17</td>
<td>4.78 2.14</td>
<td>4.10 2.16</td>
<td>0.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>4.68 2.56</td>
<td>5.24 2.45</td>
<td>4.19 2.56</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$n$ $%$</th>
<th>$n$ $%$</th>
<th>$n$ $%$</th>
<th>$\phi$</th>
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<td>44 51.2</td>
<td>56 56.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>42 48.8</td>
<td>43 43.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country of Birth is US</td>
<td>178 96.2</td>
<td>81 94.2</td>
<td>97 98.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Language is English</td>
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<td>75 88.2</td>
<td>99 100.0</td>
<td>0.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Language is English</td>
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<td>99 100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship Status is Married</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has Children</td>
<td>74 40.0</td>
<td>34 39.5</td>
<td>40 40.4</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (Full- or Part-time)</td>
<td>166 89.7</td>
<td>81 94.2</td>
<td>85 85.9</td>
<td>−0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological Parents Married</td>
<td>113 61.1</td>
<td>74 86.0</td>
<td>49 49.5</td>
<td>−0.39***</td>
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Note: Continuous variables were tested with the Independent Samples T-Test. Categorical variables were tested with Chi-square tests. $d =$ Cohen’s effect size measure for mean comparisons by ethnicity. $\phi =$ the phi coefficient, an effect size measure for associations between two dichotomous variables in a 2x2 chi-square contingency table; it is equivalent to Pearson’s r. Variables are coded as follows. Education level is coded from 1 (High school graduate/GED) to 8 (Doctorate degree) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Education level of parents is coded from 1 (Some high school) to 9 (Doctorate) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Country of birth: 0 = US, 1 = Other. First and primary languages: 0 = English, 1 = Other. Relationship status of participants and parents: 1 = Married/Common law marriage, 0 = Other (i.e., never married, separated, divorced, and/or widowed). Employment: 0 = Employed, 1 = Other (i.e., unemployed and/or student). * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$
### Education and Income for Total Sample and by Ethnicity

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<th>Total Sample (N = 185)</th>
<th>KA (n = 86)</th>
<th>EA (n = 99)</th>
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<td>58 (31.4)</td>
<td>24 (27.9)</td>
<td>34 (34.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2- or 4-Year College</td>
<td>105 (56.7)</td>
<td>45 (52.3)</td>
<td>60 (60.6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>22 (11.9)</td>
<td>17 (19.8)</td>
<td>5 (5.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mother’s Education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>11 (5.9)</td>
<td>5 (5.8)</td>
<td>6 (6.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School/GED/Vocational Training</td>
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<td>44 (51.2)</td>
<td>44 (44.4)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>34 (39.5)</td>
<td>41 (41.4)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Father’s Education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>9 (4.9)</td>
<td>3 (3.5)</td>
<td>6 (6.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School/GED/Vocational Training</td>
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<td>34 (39.5)</td>
<td>55 (55.6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2- or 4-Year College</td>
<td>65 (35.1)</td>
<td>38 (44.2)</td>
<td>27 (27.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
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<td>11 (12.8)</td>
<td>11 (11.1)</td>
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<td>≤10K</td>
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<td>13 (13.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10K to 40K</td>
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<td>40K to 70K</td>
<td>56 (30.4)</td>
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<td>70K to 100K</td>
<td>23 (12.5)</td>
<td>15 (17.4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>100K-200K</td>
<td>5 (2.7)</td>
<td>2 (2.3)</td>
<td>3 (3.1)</td>
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</table>

aTotal Sample (N = 184) and EA (n = 98) for income due to missing data.
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Variable</th>
<th>Total Sample (N = 185)</th>
<th>KA (n = 86)</th>
<th>EA (n = 99)</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enculturation (VIAH)</td>
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<td>73.38</td>
<td>12.73</td>
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<td>12.32</td>
<td>79.78</td>
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<td>Perceived Autonomy Support</td>
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<td>18.01</td>
<td>56.97</td>
<td>16.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paternal(^a) (PAS)</td>
<td>53.42</td>
<td>18.17</td>
<td>54.17</td>
<td>17.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Psychological Control</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal (MPC)</td>
<td>48.19</td>
<td>16.75</td>
<td>52.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paternal(^a) (PPC)</td>
<td>48.06</td>
<td>16.49</td>
<td>53.89</td>
<td>13.20</td>
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<td>Progressive Parental Beliefs</td>
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<td>Paternal(^a) (PP)</td>
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<td>21.78</td>
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<td>Traditional Parental Beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal (MT)</td>
<td>63.20</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>65.93</td>
<td>8.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paternal(^a) (PT)</td>
<td>64.13</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>66.89</td>
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<td>0.52</td>
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<td>0.45</td>
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<td>Self–Esteem (RSES)</td>
<td>29.54</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>29.29</td>
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<td>Flourishing (FS)</td>
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<td>9.26</td>
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<td>9.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Life (SWLS)</td>
<td>23.31</td>
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</table>

Note: \(^a\) Missing paternal data for 7 participants who had no contact with their fathers; n = 178. Statistics for variables were calculated excluding cases with missing data for that variable. \(d\) = Cohen’s effect size measure for mean comparisons by ethnicity. Variables are measured on likert-type scales with higher scores indicating greater levels of the variables. \(^*\) \(p < .05\); \(^**\) \(p < .01\); \(^***\) \(p < .001\)
### Table 4

*Coefficients for Regression Analyses of Perceived Parental Autonomy Support*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maternal Autonomy Support (MAS)</th>
<th>Paternal Autonomy Support (PAS)</th>
<th>Maternal Psychological Control (MPC)</th>
<th>Paternal Psychological Control (PPC)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>b</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>10.431</td>
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<td>46.269</td>
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<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<td>-.095</td>
<td>-.370</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>5.326</td>
<td>2.704</td>
<td>.147</td>
<td>5.660</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.669</td>
<td>.892</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>-.379</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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<td>.471</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enculturation</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>.281</td>
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<td>-.016</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>-.199</td>
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</table>

Adj. \( R^2 \) \( .016 \) \( .029 \) \( \mathbf{0.065^*} \) \( \mathbf{.114^{***}} \)

Note: Ethnicity: 0 = KA, 1 = EA. Sex: 0 = Female, 1 = Male. Education level is coded from 1 (High school graduate/GED) to 8 (Doctorate degree) with higher scores indicating greater levels of education. Income is coded from 1 (< $10K/yr) to 12 (> $200K/yr). Enculturation and acculturation measured by the subscales of Vancouver Index of Acculturation with higher scores indicating greater corresponding cultural orientation. MAS, PAS, MPC, and PPC are measured by the subscales of the Perceived-Parental Autonomy Support Scale, coded from 1 = Do not agree at all, 2 = Hardly agree, 3 = Slightly agree, 4 = Somewhat agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly agree, 7 = Very strongly agree. *\( p < .05 \); **\( p < .01 \); ***\( p < .001 \)

### Table 5

*Coefficients for Regression Analyses of Parental Modernity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maternal Progressivism (MP)</th>
<th>Paternal Progressivism (PP)</th>
<th>Maternal Traditionalism (MT)</th>
<th>Paternal Traditionalism (PT)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>SE</td>
<td>β</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>Ethnicity</td>
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Adj. \( R^2 \) \( -.005 \) \( .062 \) \( \mathbf{.156^{***}} \) \( \mathbf{.130^{***}} \)

Note: Ethnicity: 0 = KA, 1 = EA. Sex: 0 = Female, 1 = Male. Education level is coded from 1 (High school graduate/GED) to 8 (Doctorate degree) with higher scores indicating greater levels of education. Income is coded from 1 (< $10K/yr) to 12 (> $200K/yr). Enculturation and acculturation measured by the subscales of Vancouver Index of Acculturation with higher scores indicating greater corresponding cultural orientation. MP, PP, MT, and PT are measured by the subscales of the Parental Modernity Scale, coded from 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly disagree. *\( p < .05 \); **\( p < .01 \); ***\( p < .001 \)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Sample Correlations</th>
<th>VIAH</th>
<th>VIAA</th>
<th>MAS</th>
<th>PAS</th>
<th>MPC</th>
<th>PPC</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>PP</th>
<th>MT</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>IAF</th>
<th>RSES</th>
<th>FS</th>
<th>SWLS</th>
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<td>Maternal Progressivism (MP)</td>
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<td>.704*** .507*** -.276*** -.072</td>
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<td>.094</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>-.231** .370*** .581*** -.051</td>
<td>-.258*** .726***</td>
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<td>.318***</td>
<td>.217**</td>
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<td>.067</td>
<td>.229**</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>-.044</td>
<td>-.047</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.150</td>
<td>.282*** .172*</td>
<td>-.317*** -.219**</td>
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<td>Satisfaction with Life (SWLS)</td>
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<td>.084</td>
<td>.287***</td>
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</table>

Note: Correlations reported in r for continuous variables and ρ for dichotomous or rank variables. Education level is coded from 1 (High school graduate/GED) to 8 (Doctorate degree) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Education level of parents is coded from 1 (Some high school) to 9 (Doctorate) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Income is coded from 1 (< $10K/yr) to 12 (> $200K/yr). Country of birth: 0 = US, 1 = Other. First and primary languages: 0 = English, 1 = Other. Relationship status of participants and parents: 1 = Married/Common law marriage, 0 = Other (i.e., never married, separated, divorced, and/or widowed). Employment: 0 = Employed, 1 = Other (i.e., unemployed and/or student). * p < .025 (2-tailed); ** p < .01 (2-tailed); *** p < .001 (2-tailed)
Table 7

**Korean American Sample Correlations**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VIAH</th>
<th>VIAA</th>
<th>MAS</th>
<th>PAS</th>
<th>MPC</th>
<th>PPC</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>PP</th>
<th>MT</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>IAF</th>
<th>RSES</th>
<th>FS</th>
<th>SWLS</th>
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<td>.523 ***</td>
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<td>.091</td>
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<td>-.127</td>
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<td>-.025</td>
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<td>.109</td>
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<td>.587 ***</td>
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Note: Correlations reported in r for continuous variables and p for dichotomous or rank variables. Education level is coded from 1 (High school graduate/GED) to 8 (Doctorate degree) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Education level of parents is coded from 1 (Some high school) to 9 (Doctorate) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Income is coded from 1 (< $10K/yr) to 12 (> $200K/yr). Country of birth: 0 = US, 1 = Other. First and primary languages: 0 = English, 1 = Other. Relationship status of participants and parents: 1 = Married/Common law marriage, 0 = Other (i.e., never married, separated, divorced, and/or widowed). Employment: 0 = Employed, 1 = Other (i.e., unemployed and/or student). *p < .025 (2-tailed); **p < .01 (2-tailed); ***p < .001 (2-tailed)
Table 8

**European American Sample Correlations**

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<tr>
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<th>VIAH</th>
<th>VIAA</th>
<th>MAS</th>
<th>PAS</th>
<th>MPC</th>
<th>PPC</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>PP</th>
<th>MT</th>
<th>PT</th>
<th>IAF</th>
<th>RSES</th>
<th>FS</th>
<th>SWLS</th>
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<td>.751***</td>
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<td>.005</td>
<td>.690***</td>
<td>.470***</td>
<td>-.319**</td>
<td>-.093</td>
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<td>Maternal Traditionalism (MT)</td>
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<td>.112</td>
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<td>-.068</td>
<td>.523***</td>
<td>.397***</td>
<td>-.263**</td>
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<td>.500***</td>
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<td>-.483***</td>
<td>.599***</td>
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<td>.145</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>.188</td>
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<td>.069</td>
<td>.012</td>
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<td>.384***</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>-.336***</td>
<td>-.189</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.491***</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flourishing (FS)</td>
<td>.351***</td>
<td>.290***</td>
<td>.319**</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>-.211</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>.239*</td>
<td>-.063</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.560***</td>
<td>.756***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Life (SWLS)</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.284**</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>-.153</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.265**</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.400***</td>
<td>.561***</td>
<td>.699***</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age | .050 | .144 | .208 | .082 | -.163 | -.019 | .111 | -.025 | -.027 | .167 | .109 | .161 | .134 | .095 |  -  |     |    |    |    |     |

Education | .181 | .061 | .024 | .050 | .001 | -.093 | .070 | .098 | -.115 | -.115 | -.082 | -.093 | -.057 | -.059 |  -  |     |    |    |    |     |

Income | .147 | .138 | .255* | .142 | -.100 | .041 | .055 | -.035 | .021 | .113 | -.067 | .235* | .262** | .367*** |  -  |     |    |    |    |     |

Sex | -.098 | -.115 | .270** | .191 | -.135 | .010 | .186 | .152 | -.024 | .070 | -.112 | .065 | -.020 | -.107 |  -  |     |    |    |    |     |

Country of Birth | .163 | -.121 | -.195 | -.221 | .129 | .150 | -.168 | -.170 | -.018 | -.039 | .020 | -.137 | -.086 | -.204 |  -  |     |    |    |    |     |

Relationship Status | .175 | .110 | -.174 | -.205 | .177 | .251* | -.005 | -.222 | .162 | .304** | .192 | .156 | .251* | .323** |  -  |     |    |    |    |     |

Children | -.159 | -.214 | .100 | .081 | -.125 | -.205 | -.016 | .098 | -.146 | -.220 | -.123 | -.161 | -.212 | -.317** |  -  |     |    |    |    |     |

Employment | -.047 | -.067 | -.177 | -.184 | .037 | -.029 | -.250* | -.292** | -.090 | -.046 | -.092 | -.164 | -.126 | -.185 |  -  |     |    |    |    |     |

Relationship Status of Parents | .048 | .137 | -.081 | -.110 | -.085 | -.087 | -.057 | .009 | .054 | .122 | .165 | .016 | -.041 | -.138 |  -  |     |    |    |    |     |

Note: Correlations reported in $r$ for continuous variables and $\rho$ for dichotomous or rank variables. Education level is coded from 1 (High school graduate/GED) to 8 (Doctorate degree) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Education level of parents is coded from 1 (Some high school) to 9 (Doctorate) with higher mean scores indicating greater levels of education. Income is coded from 1 (< $10K/yr) to 12 (> $200K/yr). Country of birth: 0 = US, 1 = Other. First and primary languages: 0 = English, 1 = Other. Relationship status of participants and parents: 1 = Married/Common law marriage, 0 = Other (i.e., never married, separated, divorced, and/or widowed). Employment: 0 = Employed, 1 = Other (i.e., unemployed and/or student). * $p < .025$ (2-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed); *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)
Table 9

Coefficients for Regression Analyses of Psychological Well–Being on Subjective Autonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rosenberg Self–Esteem Scale (RSES)</th>
<th>Flourishing Scale (FS)</th>
<th>Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy (IAF)</td>
<td>7.743 .746 .639 ***</td>
<td>8.485 1.070 .517 ***</td>
<td>5.460 1.066 .357 ***</td>
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<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>.167 .746 .014</td>
<td>−1.579 1.088 −.093</td>
<td>−2.625 1.080 −.167 *</td>
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<td>−.639 1.052 −.038</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>−.821 .345 −.169 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.612 .153 .252 ***</td>
<td>.699 .223 .210 **</td>
<td>1.057 .221 .345 ***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enculturation</td>
<td>.013 .032 .027</td>
<td>.065 .047 .103</td>
<td>.046 .047 .079</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td>−.030 .036 −.060</td>
<td>.025 .053 .036</td>
<td>−.027 .053 −.042</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adj. R²  .426 ***  .335 ***  .232 ***

Note: Autonomy is measured by the Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF), coded from 1 (Not at all true) to 5 (Completely true), with higher scores indicating greater subjective experience of autonomous functioning. Ethnicity is coded 0 = KA, 1 = EA. Sex: 0 = Female, 1 = Male. Education level is coded from 1 (High school graduate/GED) to 8 (Doctorate degree) with higher scores indicating greater levels of education. Income is coded from 1 (< $10K/yr) to 12 (> $200K/yr). Enculturation and acculturation measured by the subscales of Vancouver Index of Acculturation with higher scores indicating greater corresponding cultural orientation. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Table 10

Non–standardized Coefficients for Moderating Effect of Acculturation (VIAA) on the Relationship between Autonomy (IAF) and Flourishing (FS) for KAs (n = 86)

<p>| | | | |</p>
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<td>b</td>
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<td>95% CI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>−227.958</td>
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<td>IAF x VIAA</td>
<td>−.521</td>
<td>.183 **</td>
<td>−.886</td>
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</table>

R²  .168 **
IAF x VIAA ΔR²  .082 **

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Table 11

Conditional Effects of Subjective Autonomy (IAF) on Flourishing (FS)

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>95% CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation (VIAA)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1SD below mean</td>
<td>14.955</td>
<td>3.854 ***</td>
<td>7.289</td>
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<td>9.700</td>
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<tr>
<td>1SD above mean</td>
<td>2.880</td>
<td>2.430</td>
<td>−1.953</td>
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</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Figure 1

Interaction Between Acculturation (VIAA) and Subjective Experience of Autonomy (IAF) in Relationship to Flourishing (FS) for KAs
References


New measures of wellbeing: Flourishing and positive and negative feelings. Social Indicators Research, 39, 247-266.


and adjustment. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 79(1), 49.


