

American and Chinese Children's Evaluations of Personal Domain Events and Resistance to Parental Authority

Judith G. Smetana
University of Rochester

Mun Wong
Hong Kong Institute of Education

Courtney Ball
University of Rochester

Jenny Yau
Azusa Pacific University

A total of 267 five-, seven-, and ten-year-olds ($M = 7.62$), 147 in Hong Kong and 120 in the United States, evaluated hypothetical personal (and moral) events described as either essential or peripheral to actors' identity. Except for young Chinese in the peripheral condition, straightforward personal events were overwhelmingly evaluated as acceptable based on personal justifications. Children primarily endorsed compliance, but attributed negative emotions to actors when mothers forbade personal choices, especially when described as essential to identity. Conventional justifications declined among Chinese children and pragmatic justifications for these judgments increased with age for all children, as did judgments that personal events were up to the child. Rules were seen as more legitimate and events were seen as more up to mothers to decide for moral than personal events.

A great deal of research has shown that children distinguish moral concepts (prescriptive judgments of right and wrong regarding others' rights, welfare, and fairness) and social conventions (the arbitrary, agreed-upon norms that regulate acts in different social contexts) as distinct from personal issues (see Killen & Rutland, 2011; Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 2011, for reviews). Personal issues pertain to claims to privacy, control over one's body, and personal preferences and choices regarding issues such as leisure activities and choice of friends. Unlike moral and conventional concepts, they are judged to be outside of the realm of legitimate adult authority. Although personal issues are seen as satisfying universal needs, both the boundaries and content of the personal domain may vary across cultures (Nucci, 1996; Smetana, 2002).

Several studies have shown that Chinese adolescents do assert autonomy or personal choices when they conflict with authority demands (see Helwig, 2006). Yet Chinese children are considered to be more oriented toward compliance and authority than are

American children (Chao, 1995; Chao & Tseng, 2002; Chen et al., 2003). Indeed, a recent study suggests that young Chinese children believe that they should obey their mothers when they explicitly forbid personal choices (Yau, Smetana, & Metzger, 2009). Therefore, the present study examined young children's judgments in situations where compliance to adult authority and personal desires conflict. We compared U.S. and Hong Kong Chinese children's evaluations of hypothetical personal (and moral) events that were depicted as prohibited by mothers and varying in their salience to the child's self and identity.

The Development of Personal Concepts

Children begin to identify personal issues and treat them as distinct from moral and conventional issues in early childhood. When prototypical personal issues are studied in straightforward, unconflicted situations, American children as young as 3 years of age evaluate them as up to the child (rather than as acts that are right or wrong) in different contexts and justify those choices as personal or as only affecting the actor (Killen & Smetana, 1999; Nucci, 1981). For instance, Nucci and Weber (1995) assessed 3- and 4-year-old children's judgments of personal events in hypothetical situations

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Judith Smetana, Department of Clinical and Social Sciences in Psychology, University of Rochester, Meliora Hall, RC 270266, Rochester, NY 14627. Electronic mail may be sent to smetana@psych.rochester.edu.

in which mothers expressed expectations regarding children's choices (e.g., "Barbara has two clean sweaters, a yellow one and a blue one. Barbara's favorite color is yellow, but Barbara's mom wants her to wear the blue one and says, 'Barbara, I want you to wear the blue sweater'"; p. 1443). Under these conditions, the majority of American preschool children asserted that children should not comply with mothers' wishes, that it is not right to have a rule dictating the choice, and that the decision should be up to the child. Likewise, Yau and Smetana (2003b) found that Chinese preschool children in Hong Kong overwhelmingly judged that personal choices were up to the child to decide, based on personal justifications.

While caregivers communicate about what is personal through their social messages and choices ("Would you rather draw or play with puzzles?"), children also resist and actively negotiate over what should be within their personal control (Killen & Smetana, 1999; Nucci & Weber, 1995). Theorists from different traditions (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Erikson, 1968; Nucci, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Smetana, 2002) have emphasized that asserting autonomy by maintaining control over personal issues is a basic psychological need that facilitates the establishment of a healthy sense of self, identity, and personal agency. This suggests that children may assert personal choices more in situations when those choices are seen as salient to their developing self and identity.

The Role of Essentialist Beliefs in Children's Personal Domain Judgments

Lagattuta, Nucci, and Bosacki (2010) explicitly tested this notion by examining 4- to 7-year-old American children's emotional and behavioral responses to personal (as compared to moral) domain restrictions when events were described as central to the child's identity. These researchers drew upon Gelman's (2003) developmental research on essentialist beliefs and particularly, on Gelman and Heyman's (1999) research. They found that when an actor's qualities are described as essentialized (e.g., the child really likes cookies, eats them all the time, and is called the "cookie eater") rather than peripheral (e.g., the child likes other foods as well and eats cookies only some of the time), children are more likely to believe that actors will engage in the behavior in the future, even if others do not or if the act is prohibited.

Lagattuta et al. (2010) found that children's judgments that story characters would comply with

moral rules and feel good about doing so increased significantly with age, but a different pattern was found for personal events. Children frequently predicted that actors would disobey rules that intruded on their personal domain, that they would continue to engage in personal acts in the future, and that they would feel good about doing so—especially when actions were described as essential to their identity. Although this study focused on children's predictions of actors' future behavior and emotions, the methods used in this study could prove useful for understanding variations in children's judgments of what hypothetical actors *should do* in situations where parents attempt to restrict the child's personal domain and *how children would feel* if personal choices were restricted. In particular, children may be more likely to endorse noncompliance and feel sad or angry when parents are depicted as forbidding the fulfillment of personal desires essential to the character's identity relative to peripheral desires. This manipulation may be especially powerful in cultures such as Asian ones that emphasize hierarchical social relationships and obedience toward authority. If asserting autonomy and control over personal issues is a basic psychological need, then highlighting the centrality of personal choices to the self may help the child coordinate the cultural focus on obedience to parental authority with their own needs for asserting personal preferences and desires.

Chinese Cultural Values, Parental Authority, and the Personal Domain

Traditional Chinese family life is organized around Confucian values (Chao, 1995). Beginning at an early age, Chinese children are socialized to be obedient, follow adults' commands, learn social norms from adult models, and develop self-constraint (Chen, 2000; Chen et al., 2003; Liu et al., 2005; Wu, 1996). Although compliance is expected in early childhood in Western cultures as well, researchers have claimed—and found—that there is more committed compliance and self-control and less overt protest in response to maternal interventions among Chinese than North American toddlers (Chen et al., 2003). This is consistent with the notion that compliance and self-control are emphasized more consistently and unconditionally among Chinese than North American mothers (Chao, 1995; Chao & Tseng, 2002).

Nevertheless, Chinese and American children assert their personal desires in similar ways. For instance, studies of Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong and Shenzhen (a special Economic Zone on the

Chinese mainland located in close proximity to Hong Kong) have indicated that Chinese adolescents, like their American peers, have conflicts with parents, reason about them mostly as issues of personal choice, and discuss these disagreements with parents (Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003a). These results were replicated recently with urban and rural Mainland Chinese adolescents from single- and multiple-child families (Chen-Gaddini, 2012). Furthermore, although Chinese youth view adolescent-parent conflicts as *ideally* resolved in their favor, they are primarily resolved by obeying parents' wishes (Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003a).

Consistent with the finding that Chinese children assert personal choices, Helwig and his colleagues have shown that Chinese adolescents endorse self-determination rights even when they conflict with authority desires (Lahat, Helwig, Yang, Tan, & Liu, 2009) and choose democratic over authority-based decision making in family contexts (Helwig, Arnold, Tan, & Boyd, 2003). In the latter study, as well as in the studies of adolescent-parent conflict (Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003b), and consistent with theoretical accounts that highlight the importance of identity development during adolescence (Erikson, 1968), appeals to personal jurisdiction increased with age during the teen years.

Although young Chinese children strongly endorse personal choices when there are no references to maternal expectations or prohibitions (Yau & Smetana, 2003b), the results are less clear in the few studies that have directly pitted younger Chinese children's personal concepts against authority prohibitions. Zhang (1996, published in Chinese) reported that 5-year-olds viewed parents as having more legitimate authority regarding friendship choices (a personal issue) and as requiring more obedience than did 7- to 13-year-olds. Across ages, children were divided regarding the legitimacy of parental authority for the personal issues, but the majority believed that they should obey parents.

Further research has shown that Chinese 4- to 7-year-olds' judgments of compliance vary according to the setting (public, school, and home), children's familiarity with different authority figures (mothers, teachers, person in charge, or strangers), and domain of the event (moral, conventional, and personal; Yau et al., 2009). In this study, authority figures directly forbade personal choices. Yau et al. (2009) found that Chinese children do not necessarily believe they should follow all commands from adults. Across ages, Chinese children strongly affirmed the need to obey authority sanctions for moral and conventional issues, but they were more

likely to reject adult authority commands when the events infringed on their personal domain. Across different contexts and consistent with Zhang (1996), one third to one half of the responses regarding personal issues were that children should obey different authority figures, especially mothers. Thus, when presented with authority commands that differed from the actor's personal desires, Chinese children did not consistently endorse noncompliance, although with increasing age, children more often referred to personal choices to justify disobedience to mothers' commands.

Yau et al.'s (2009) study differed from past research in the United States on the personal domain, where mothers (or other adults) have been described as having different expectations or preferences than children but not as explicitly prohibiting children's personal choices (Killen & Smetana, 1999; Nucci, 1981; Nucci & Weber, 1995). Thus, we do not know whether Yau et al.'s and Zhang's (1996) results reflect a distinctively Chinese orientation toward compliance and obedience to authority, or if apparent differences in children's responses in Hong Kong and the United States are due to the way maternal expectations were presented. Yau et al. concluded that as children develop more distinct personal boundaries, they may more consistently reject an authority's demand for obedience regarding personal issues.

The Present Study

Thus, past research suggests that young Chinese children view personal choices as just as permissible as do U.S. children, but that they may comply more with parental authority than American children do. However, we know of no studies directly comparing the personal domain judgments of young children in the United States and Asia. As studies of personal domain concepts have varied in the explicitness with which adult prohibitions regarding personal events have been depicted, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about cultural differences. Therefore, the overall aim of this study was to examine how 4- to 10-year-old children in Hong Kong and the United States balance claims to personal jurisdiction with compliance to maternal authority. Hong Kong offers an interesting comparison to the United States because it is economically developed and has a strong educational system, but still retains a focus on traditional Confucian values. Thus, differences in children's judgments can be attributed to cultural values rather than to economic and educational differences.

To accomplish our study aims, we examined children's evaluations of personal actions that were either described as essential or peripheral to the child's identity, based on Lagattuta et al.'s (2010) methods. Our study differed from this past research in that we assessed what children thought actors *ought* to do (rather than their predictions about what story actors *would* do now and in the future) and how children *would feel* if they could not engage in the desired action. Assessing emotion attributions allowed us to determine whether children who prioritized obedience to authority over personal desires felt positively or not about their choices. Based on past research (Yau & Smetana, 2003b), we hypothesized that both Chinese and American children would evaluate personal acts as permissible based on personal justifications when they were described in prototypical, unconflicted situations (with no competing parental prohibitions). Because we hypothesized that nearly all children would view these events as personal, we did not expect that manipulating the salience of identity concerns would influence these judgments.

Past research also suggested that when mothers were depicted as explicitly forbidding children's personal choices, children would be mixed in their evaluations of whether they must comply with mothers' commands. Yau et al. (2009) and, more generally, the hierarchical nature of parent-child relationships and the emphasis on compliance in Chinese culture (Chao & Tseng, 2002) led us to expect that: (a) judgments of compliance would be greater among Chinese than American children based primarily on conventional justifications pertaining to authority and punishment avoidance; (b) based on developmental research on personal domain judgments (Killen & Smetana, 1999; Nucci, 1981), judgments of noncompliance would increase with age for all children, although perhaps more among American than Chinese children; and (c) when mothers forbade personal choices, children would primarily attribute negative emotions (sadness, unhappiness, and anger) to the actors and would view personal events as up to the child to decide. In addition, we expected that (d) when mothers forbade personal desires described as essential rather than peripheral to the actor's identity, children would be more likely to believe that they should not comply based on personal reasons, view personal events as more up to the child (rather than the mother) to decide, and attribute more negative emotions to actors.

We further hypothesized that these judgments would be moderated by culture and age. Although

Lagattuta et al. (2010) found that essentializing personal choices only influenced the judgments of the oldest children in their study (e.g., 7-year-olds), this study focused on more complex judgments (e.g., noncompliance + feel good, combined) than we did here. Because Chinese children, and particularly young ones, may be more oriented toward behavioral compliance than U.S. children, we expected that highlighting the salience of personal choices for identity would have more of an effect on young Chinese than American children's judgments. We did not necessarily expect to find differences in older (7- and 10-year-old) Chinese and American children's evaluations when personal events were described as essential to the self because in this condition, and as previous research has shown (e.g., Nucci, 1981), as children grow older, personal choices may become more important.

To determine whether evaluations of compliance and resistance to authority were particular to the personal domain or reflected more general orientations toward authority, we also included a moral event in which the actor wants to commit a moral transgression to engage in the desired activity (e.g., grab a desired toy). We compared Chinese and American children's judgments of moral versus personal events on several dimensions, including act acceptability, justifications, rule legitimacy, decisions regarding compliance, and decision locus (mother or child). We expected that: (a) across ages and cultures, children would judge personal desires as more acceptable and more up to the child to decide than moral transgressions, based on fairness and welfare concerns; (b) rules would be seen as more legitimate for moral than personal events; and (c) compliance would be greater for moral than personal events. We did not expect that manipulating the salience of moral events for identity would affect these judgments.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 267 children, 147 children from Hong Kong ($M_{\text{age}} = 7.62$ years, $SD = 2.37$) and 120 children from a mid-sized city in the Northeastern United States ($M_{\text{age}} = 7.63$, $SD = 2.15$). The Hong Kong sample was drawn from two primary schools and two kindergartens in a district serving lower-middle-class families based on parents' occupations and educational levels. The sample included 47 four- to five-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 4.72$ years, $SD = 0.27$, 25 males), 51 seven- to eight-

year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 7.52$ years, $SD = 0.30$, 27 males), and 49 nine- to ten-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 10.50$ years, $SD = 0.37$, 25 males). The U.S. sample was drawn from after-school programs, mostly in a suburban area serving primarily lower-middle-class families, and included 40 four- to five-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 5.21$ years, $SD = 0.51$, 20 males), 40 seven- to eight-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 7.44$ years, $SD = 0.59$, 20 males), and 40 ten-year-olds ($M_{\text{age}} = 10.23$ years, $SD = 0.70$, 20 males). For brevity, we refer to these as 5-, 7-, and 10-year-olds. Reflecting the geographical area from which they were recruited, American children were of European (72%), African (16%), Asian (3%), or other (9%, primarily biracial) backgrounds.

Design and Procedures

In both settings, parental permission was obtained from all parents, and assent was obtained from children 7 years of age and up. Trained interviewers individually interviewed children in a quiet location in or outside their classrooms. Interviews took approximately 25–35 min and typically were completed in two sessions for the youngest ages. In Hong Kong, interviews were conducted in Cantonese and were tape recorded and then transcribed for coding. In the United States, a research assistant accompanied the interviewer and entered children's responses into computerized checklists or recorded children's justifications and emotion responses (described elsewhere in this article) verbatim for later coding. Stories and interviews were originally developed in English and translated into Cantonese by bilingual speakers.

The interviewer spent time with children to make them feel comfortable prior to commencing the interviews. First, the child was trained in using a 5-point Likert scale. Children were asked to describe something they really, really like to do and then shown the corresponding rating on a 5-point "Star Scale" with stars of increasing size. The interviewer described something she really, really liked to do and then according to the star rating, things that she sometimes liked to do, but that were not very important to her or were not her favorite thing. Children had to demonstrate understanding of the scale before the interview commenced.

In this study, condition (essential vs. peripheral) was treated as a between-subjects factor, with half of the boys and girls at each age (or nearly so, in Hong Kong) assigned to each condition. This was done to reduce the demands on the participants, as the interview was lengthy, and to minimize confusion

that might result from switching the condition during the interview. Thus, each child was read four stories describing different characters, accompanied by a series of pictures illustrating the stories. Three stories described a child wanting to engage in a personal activity, and one story described a child wanting to engage in a moral transgression. The personal activities were as follows: playing with a puzzle, putting on a costume (ballerina for girls and Superhero for boys), and drawing a picture. For the moral activity, children were described as liking to play with a toy (doll for girls and robot for boys) and wanting to grab the toy from another child playing with it. Order of the personal activities was counterbalanced within ages and conditions. Due to the length of the sessions and because responses regarding the moral story were of less interest theoretically, the moral activity was always described last. In addition, choices in the stories (e.g., "Should she play with puzzles or leave the puzzles alone?") also were counterbalanced to avoid response sets.

In both countries, the sex of the story actors was matched to the child. In Hong Kong, both the names of the characters and all the drawings depicted Chinese children, whereas in the United States, American names were used and children were shown pictures with characters of light or darker skin tone depending on their race. Thus, there were six versions of the pictures (male and female Chinese or non-Asian-appearing children who were light or darker in skin tone).

Interviews

Children were first shown a picture of a child engaging in an activity and told that the child likes to engage in that activity (examples of the stories and pictures are in Table 1 and Figure 1, respectively). In keeping with Lagattuta et al. (2010), each activity in the essential condition was described as something the story actor does all the time, that he or she strongly identifies with (e.g., "In fact, Josh thinks of himself as Josh the Puzzle Master"), and that the actor is good at and makes him or her happy. This was illustrated in the next card, which had four pictures depicting the actor engaging in the activity at different times of the day and in different places. In contrast, each activity in the peripheral condition was described as something the story actor likes to do some of the time, along with other activities he or she does most of the time. The actor was not described as identifying with the activity, and children were told that the activity makes the actor feel just OK. In this

Table 1
Examples of Essential and Peripheral Condition Stories for Personal and Moral Events

Personal story: Essential condition	Personal story: Peripheral condition
<p>Card 1: John likes to play with puzzles.</p> <p>Card 2: John plays with puzzles almost every day. He plays with puzzles after school, on Sundays, before dinner, and before going to bed. In fact, John thinks of himself as "John the Puzzle Master." "John the Puzzle Master" thinks he is good at playing puzzles and that makes him feel happy about himself.</p> <p>Card 3: Well, the next day, John needs to find something to play with again after doing his homework. Remember John really wants to play with puzzles. Right now, John really wants to play with puzzles but his mother says, "John, you should not play with puzzles!" John's mother leaves the room. John thinks about what he should do next.</p>	<p>This is John.</p> <p>John likes to play with puzzles some of the time. But most of the time, he does other things. He plays with toy cars, video games, matching card games. John thinks he plays okay with puzzles and that makes him feel OK about himself.</p> <p>Well, the next day, John needs to find something to play with again after doing his homework. Remember John only sometimes wants to play with puzzles. Right now, John wants to play with puzzles but his mother says, "John, you should not play with puzzles!" John's mother leaves the room. John thinks about what he should do next.</p>
Moral story: Essential condition	Moral story: Peripheral condition
<p>Card 1: Maya likes to play with dolls.</p> <p>Card 2: Maya plays with dolls almost every day. She plays with dolls after school, on Sundays, before dinner, and before going to bed. In fact, Maya thinks of herself as "Maya the Doll Fan." "Maya the Doll Fan" thinks she plays well with the dolls and that makes her feel happy about herself.</p> <p>Card 3: Well, the next day, Maya needs to find something to do. Remember Maya really likes to play with dolls. Right now, Maya wants to play with her sister's doll but her sister is playing with the doll. Maya wants to grab her sister's doll from her, but her mother says, "Maya, you should not grab your sister's doll!" Maya's mother leaves the room. Maya thinks about what she should do next.</p>	<p>This is Maya.</p> <p>Maya likes to play with dolls some of the time. But most of the time, she does other things. She reads, makes crafts, and plays matching card games. Maya thinks she plays quite okay with dolls and that makes her feel OK about herself.</p> <p>Well, the next day, Maya needs to find something to do. Remember Maya only sometimes likes to play with dolls. Right now, Maya wants to play with her sister's doll but her sister is playing with the doll. Maya wants to grab her sister's doll from her, but her mother says, "Maya, you should not grab your sister's doll!" Maya's mother leaves the room. Maya thinks about what she should do next.</p>

Note. Cards refer to the pictures. Examples are in Figure 1.

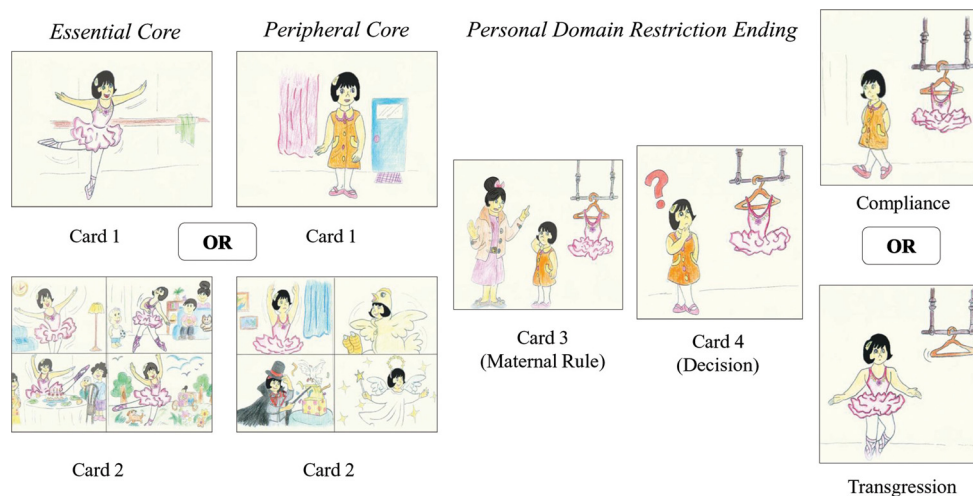


Figure 1. Example illustration for personal domain story.

condition, the four illustrations on the card showed the actor engaging in the target personal event as well as three other activities.

Control questions and evaluations of act acceptability. After the event was described, children were asked three control questions to ensure that they understood the salient aspects of the stories. They responded regarding the story actor's preferences ("Does Josh like to play with puzzles all of the time or only sometimes?"), self-evaluations ("Does Josh feel just okay or happy about himself when he is playing with puzzles?"), and importance assessed using the star scale ("How important do you think playing with puzzles is to Josh?"). The answer choices were presented in counterbalanced order. The event description was repeated until the child answered all of the control questions correctly. Then, children were shown the first card again. Children in the essential condition were told that the child *really* wants to engage in the activity, whereas children in the peripheral condition were told, "Even though Josh only sometimes wants to play with puzzles, today he wants to play with a puzzle." Participants were asked whether it was alright for him to engage in the activity and why it was permissible or not, assessing their judgments of *act acceptability* and their *justifications* for their judgment.

Control questions, evaluations of behavioral decisions, and emotion attributions. The next set of questions assessed children's judgments, justifications, and emotion attributions when the mother prohibited the act. Children were shown the third card, which depicted the mother talking to the child. They were told, "Well, the next day, Josh needs to find something to do. Remember, Josh really wants to play with puzzles [in the essential condition] or only sometimes wants to play with puzzles [in the peripheral condition]. Right now, Josh wants to play with puzzles, but his mother says, "Josh, you should not play with puzzles!" Josh's mother leaves the room, and Josh thinks about what he should do next." Again, children were asked two control questions, ensuring that they understood the rule ("What rule did his mother say?") and what the actor really desired ("What does Josh really want to do?").

Once they demonstrated their understanding, children in the essential condition were told, "He really, really thinks playing with puzzles is important," whereas children in the peripheral condition were told, "He thinks playing with puzzles is only sort of important" and shown the corresponding stars to illustrate. Then, participants in both conditions were asked: (a) what should the actor do, assessing their *decision to comply or resist*; (b) why?, assessing

their *justifications for their decision*; (c) who should decide, the mom or the child?, assessing *decision locus*; (d) is it alright or not alright for the mother to tell the child not to engage in the activity?, assessing *judgments of rule acceptability*; and (e) how would the actor feel if he or she never, ever got to engage in the activity? (e.g., play with puzzles), assessing their *emotion attributions*.

Control questions and evaluations of the moral event. For the moral event, the actor was described as liking to play with a toy. As with the personal events, the description of the moral event varied in the essential and peripheral conditions, and children had to pass the same three control questions demonstrating their understanding of the condition. Children were shown a card depicting the mother talking to the child and told,

Well, the next day, Jake needs to find something to do. Remember, Jake really [or only sometimes] likes to play with robots, but right now he wants to play with his brother's robot, even though his brother is already playing with the robot. His mother says, "Jake, you should not grab your brother's robot!" Jake's mother leaves the room, and Jake thinks about what he should do next.

Again, children had to respond correctly to the two control questions regarding what the mother said and what the actor wanted. Then, participants were asked what the actor should do and why, assessing their *decisions to resist or comply* and their *justifications for the decision*. This was followed by questions pertaining to *rule acceptability*, *decision locus*, and *act acceptability* ("Jake really, really [kind of] wants to play with the robot. He thinks playing with the robot is really, really important [or sort of important]. If Mom didn't say anything at all, would it be alright for Jake to grab the robot from his brother?"). This was followed by *justifications* ("Why?") for their acceptability judgments.

Coding. Judgments of act acceptability were coded as 0 = *not acceptable* or 1 = *acceptable*. Responses regarding decision locus were coded as 0 = *mothers should decide* or 1 = *child should decide*. Emotion responses were coded on a 4-point scale, with "don't know" or "uncodable" coded as 0, negative emotions (sad, unhappy, and disappointed) coded as 1, and neutral responses (OK, neither happy nor sad) or mixed ("kinda happy and kinda sad") coded as 2, and happy responses coded as 3. Using kappa, coding reliability, obtained on 20% of responses, was .98 in both the United States and Hong Kong.

The justification coding system, described in Table 2, was based on prior research and refined by the coauthors using a small proportion of responses from each country. Children typically gave only one justification response or coordinated two categories in their reasoning. In this case only the coordination category was coded. Responses were assigned a score of 1 if the category was used and a score of 0 if it was not. To ensure that responses were coded similarly in the two countries, a set of responses from Chinese children at different ages was translated from Chinese to English, and Chinese coders, both fluent in English, reviewed a small set of U.S. children's responses so that agreement in coding could be obtained. In each setting, two coders then coded 20% of responses; kappas were .98 in Hong Kong and .84 in the United States. To control for the number of responses, mean proportions of responses were obtained.

Results

As a first step in the analyses, we examined whether children's responses to the three personal events differed. Analyses revealed few significant main effects or interactions, and therefore, the three personal events were combined for subsequent analyses. Likewise, although we had no specific hypotheses regarding sex differences in children's

evaluations, we conducted preliminary analyses to test for sex differences, but very few emerged. Therefore, child sex was omitted from further consideration.

As analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been found to be robust with dichotomous data (see Winer, Brown, & Michels, 1991; see also Wainryb, Shaw, Laupa, & Smith, 2001, for a comparison of the use of ANOVAs and repeated measures log-linear models for dichotomous data), we employed parametric procedures (ANOVAs) on judgments and justifications to allow for efficient analyses of possible interaction effects. For analyses conducted on proportions, arcsine transformations were performed to correct for non-normality (Winer et al., 1991). Because analyses using transformed and untransformed scores did not differ, however, we report means and analyses for untransformed scores.

We conducted five sets of analyses. First, we examined judgments of act acceptability and justifications for those judgments for personal events in the straightforward, unconflicted situation. This was followed by analyses of judgments and justifications regarding whether the actor should comply with or resist maternal prohibitions. The next analyses focused on judgments of decision locus (who should decide) and emotion attributions. All these analyses were run with country (Hong Kong vs. United States), condition (essential vs. peripheral),

Table 2
Justification Categories

Category	Definition/examples
Moral	Appeals to fairness or others' welfare ("She can hurt someone's feelings")
Personal	Personal preferences and choices, interests, fun, or the need for autonomy or making personal choices ("Because its one of his favorite things to do and it's his choice," "Because he can do what he wants to do")
Conventional	References to maternal authority, punishment avoidance, the need to follow rules, and actors' roles and hierarchical relationships ("Her mom told her not to, and she makes the rules," "She'll get in big trouble," "Mom and dad ... are older [and] make the decisions")
Psychological	Appeals to the mother's good intentions, the child's character or traits, the quality or nature of the mother-child relationship, or the need to please the mother ("Because it makes her mom happy—to make her proud of him for trying something new," "Because it makes him feel good about himself")
Pragmatic	Appeals to practical needs and consequences or the need for novelty ("What if it gets ripped and torn?" "Because kids get bored of wearing the same thing all the time")
Undifferentiated Other/uncodable	Acts are described as bad or not nice without elaboration ("It's bad," "It's just not nice")
Personal/conventional coordinations	References to the presence or absence of authority are explicitly linked with personal preferences (e.g., "Because she should think of what she wants to do instead of letting her mom boss her around all the time," "She should do what she likes because her mother did not say anything")
Moral/conventional coordinations	References to authority or punishment concerns are explicitly linked with appeals to justice, fairness, or welfare ("Because his parents would probably punish him ... plus it's just not the right thing to do because it's not very nice.")

and age (three groups) as between-subjects factors. The final set of analyses compared responses regarding moral and personal events for the various dimensions (judgments of act and rule acceptability, decision locus, decisions regarding what the actor should do, and corresponding justifications). As in the previous analyses, we examined country, condition, and age as between-subjects factors, but type of event (moral vs. personal) was treated as a within-subject factor. In all analyses, significant interactions were examined with tests of simple effects and, where appropriate, Bonferroni-corrected *t* tests. As done in past research, only justification categories comprising 10% or more of total responses were analyzed.

Judgments and Justifications Regarding the Acceptability of Personal Events

Judgments. Mean responses for children’s judgments of act acceptability in the initial, straightforward situation (with no maternal response) are shown in Table 3. As hypothesized, both American and Chinese children overwhelmingly judged personal events to be permissible. Contrary to expectations, however, we found significant main effects as a function of country, $F(1, 255) = 20.36, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$; condition, $F(1, 255) = 9.83, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$; and age, $F(2, 255) = 12.45, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$. Significant two-way interactions were

further qualified by a significant three-way interaction, $F(2, 255) = 6.03, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .05$, which was unexpected but largely consistent with our general hypotheses. That is, young Chinese children (5-year-olds) treated personal events as less acceptable in the peripheral than in the essential condition or than U.S. children did in either condition. Furthermore, in the peripheral condition, Chinese 7- and 10-year-olds treated personal events as more acceptable than did 5-year-olds, but all other 7- and 10-year-olds did not differ. Thus, except for young Chinese children in the peripheral condition, judgments that personal events were acceptable did not differ by age, culture, or condition.

Justifications for acceptability. Also consistent with expectations, children’s justifications for the acceptability of personal activities in the initial, unconflicted situation were primarily personal ($M = 0.66$) or involved a coordination of personal and conventional justifications ($M = 0.15$). Pragmatic ($M = 0.07$), conventional ($M = 0.03$), and psychological ($M = 0.02$) justifications were used infrequently and thus were not analyzed further. (Means for these two justifications are provided next, but for brevity are not tabled.)

Personal justifications for act acceptability increased with age such that 10-year-olds gave significantly more personal justifications than did 5-year-olds, $F(2, 255) = 5.30, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$, $M_s = 0.74, 0.58$; 7-year-olds did not differ $M = 0.66$.

Table 3

Means for Judgments of Acceptability, Evaluations of Decisions to Comply or Resist Maternal Prohibitions, and Emotion Attributions for Personal Events

Ages	Hong Kong								United States							
	Essential condition				Peripheral condition				Essential condition				Peripheral condition			
	5	7	10	M	5	7	10	M	5	7	10	M	5	7	10	M
Judgments																
Acceptability	.90	.95	.97	.94	.59 _a	.92 _b	.97 _b	.84	.98	1.00	.97	.98	.97	.93	1.00	.97
Comply/resist	.19	.15	.13	.16	.10	.13	.26	.17	.15	.17	.20	.17	.37	.15	.22	.24
Decision locus	.29	.38	.52	.40	.19 _a	.19 _a	.79 _b	.40	.27 _a	.23 _a	.63 _b	.38	.45 _a	.58	.83 _b	.62
Emotion attrib	1.01	1.00	1.01	1.01	1.09	1.03	1.20	1.11	1.00	1.00	1.02	1.01	1.08	1.03	1.02	1.04
Comply/resist justifications																
Conventional	.75 _a	.71	.58 _b	.70	.73 _a	.57 _b	.27 _c	.51	.80	.73	.57	.70	.55	.73	.70	.66
Personal	.18	.09	.06	.12	.15	.12	.27	.18	.13	.12	.17	.14	.28	.17	.18	.21
Conv/per coord	.00	.00	.06	.01	.00	.04	.03	.02	.00	.03	.02	.02	.02	.02	.03	.02
Pragmatic	.04	.16	.14	.10	.04	.09	.22	.12	.03	.08	.22	.11	.05	.08	.05	.06
Psychological	.00	.04	.11	.04	.00	.13	.21	.12	.02	.00	.00	.01	.02	.00	.00	.01
Other	.03	.00	.00	.01	.09	.04	.01	.05	.00	.00	.02	.01	.07	.00	.02	.03

Note. Comply/resist = evaluations to comply with or resist maternal prohibitions; Attrib = attributions; Conv/per coord = conventional/personal coordination. Subscripts indicate means that differ significantly.

A significant Country \times Condition interaction, $F(1, 255) = 11.11$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, indicated that, as expected, Chinese children gave more personal justifications when events were described as essential rather than peripheral to the self $M_s = 0.72, 0.62$, but American children did not differ, $M_s = 0.72, 0.72$.

The analysis of personal/conventional coordinations revealed significant main effects for country, $F(1, 255) = 23.04$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, and condition, $F(1, 255) = 13.18$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$; these effects were qualified by significant Country \times Condition, $F(1, 255) = 10.09$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, and Country \times Age, $F(2, 255) = 3.39$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, interactions. American children coordinated personal and conventional concerns more than Chinese children did in the essential condition ($M_s = 0.32, 0.10$) or than U.S. children did in the peripheral condition ($M_s = 0.32, 0.13$). (Chinese children in the essential vs. peripheral condition did not differ, $M = 0.10, 0.09$.)

Chinese 10-year-olds coordinated personal and conventional justifications more than 5-year-olds did, $M_s = 0.14, 0.00$, but American 5-, 7-, and 10-year-olds did not differ, $M_s = 0.23, 0.23, 0.20$, respectively.

Judgments and Justifications for Decisions to Comply With or Resist Maternal Authority

Judgments. As can be seen in Table 3, and contrary to expectations, most children judged that they should obey mothers and not engage in the personal act when it was described as prohibited by mothers. Furthermore, these judgments did not vary by country, condition, or age.

Justifications for compliance or resistance. Although judgments regarding decisions to comply with or resist maternal prohibitions did not vary according to study variables, their justifications for their judgments did. As hypothesized, children primarily employed conventional ($M = 0.61$), and much less frequently, personal and pragmatic reasons ($M_s = 0.16, 0.11$), to justify why hypothetical actors should comply with or resist mothers' prohibitions (see Table 3).

In the analysis of conventional justifications, significant main effects for country, $F(1, 255) = 8.20$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, and age, $F(2, 255) = 9.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, were qualified by a significant Country \times Age interaction, $F(2, 255) = 5.49$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. This revealed that conventional justifications for compliance declined with age, but only among Chinese children. Main effects for age in

pragmatic reasons, $F(2, 255) = 9.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, showed that 10-year-olds justified their decisions on pragmatic grounds more than 5- and 7-year-olds did, $M_s = 0.18, 0.04, 0.11$, respectively. There were no significant effects in the analysis of personal justifications.

Judgments Regarding Decision Locus

We had hypothesized that children would view personal choices as more up to the child than the mother as a function of age, and this hypothesis was confirmed. Personal events were seen as more up to the child by 10-year-olds than younger children, $F(2, 255) = 27.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$. Furthermore, our hypothesis that essentializing personal choices would have more of an effect on Chinese children, particularly young ones, than American children was partially confirmed. Significant main effects for country and condition, $F_s(1, 255) = 6.02, 4.83$, $p_s < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, were qualified by a significant Country \times Condition interaction, $F(1, 255) = 7.02$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, and in turn, by a significant three-way interaction, $F(2, 255) = 3.56$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. When personal events were described as peripheral to the self, all 10-year-olds viewed them as more up to the child to decide than did 5-year-olds. When seen as essential, U.S. 10-year-olds treated them as more up to the child than 5- and 7-year-olds did, but Chinese children did not differ.

Emotion Attributions

When asked how they would feel if they could never engage in the personal activity, children primarily reported feeling negative emotions. As only a small proportion (3%) of responses indicated that children did not know, and omitting them did not alter the results, these responses were retained in the analyses. A significant main effect for condition, $F(1, 255) = 5.88$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, revealed that although children overwhelmingly attributed negative emotions to the actor when mothers prohibited their personal choices, they reported more positive emotions when the events were described as less central to the self (e.g., in the peripheral condition), $M_s = 1.08, 1.01$, $SD_s = 0.29, 0.22$.

Judgments and Justifications for Moral Versus Personal Events

Act acceptability judgments. Consistent with hypotheses, and as shown in Table 4, the repeated

Table 4
Means for Judgments and Justifications for Personal and Moral Events

	Hong Kong				United States			
	Moral		Personal		Moral		Personal	
	Essen	Periph	Essen	Periph	Essen	Periph	Essen	Periph
Judgments								
Acceptability	.21 _a	.19 _a	.94 _b	.84 _b	.12 _a	.25 _a	.98 _b	.97 _b
Decision locus	.07 _a	.07 _a	.16 _b	.17 _b	.03 _a	.08 _a	.17 _b	.24 _b
Rule permmiss	.78	.85	.69	.77 _a	.77	.80	.57	.47 _b
Justifications for compliance/resistance								
Personal	.06	.11	.14	.18	.02 _a	.07 _a	.14 _b	.21 _b
Conventional	.45	.42	.59	.51	.22	.15	.70	.66
Moral	.34 _a	.31 _a	.01	.00	.42 _b	.45 _b	.00	.00
Moral/conv	.01	.07	.00	.00	.28	.26	.00	.00
Pragmatic	.03	.01	.14	.12	.02	.00	.11	.06
Psychological	.03	.01	.11	.11	.00	.02	.01	.01
Other	.08	.07	.02	.07	.12	.12	.03	.05

Note. Essen = essential; Periph = peripheral; Permiss = permissibility; Moral/conv = moral/conventional coordination. Justifications for personal/conventional coordinations were included in the "Other" category due to low frequencies. Means with different subscripts differ significantly.

measures ANOVA showed that personal events were seen as more permissible than moral events, $F(1, 250) = 730.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .75$, $M_s = 0.93$, 0.19 . Although there were a number of significant interactions, they replicated the findings reported previously for personal events and thus are not discussed further.

Justifications for act acceptability. Justifications for personal events were primarily personal or involved coordinations of personal and conventional reasons, as reported earlier. In contrast, and as expected, children primarily justified the (un)acceptability of moral events with moral, conventional, or undifferentiated reasons, $M_s = 0.39$, 0.17 , 0.10 , respectively. Children rarely coordinated moral and conventional concerns or used personal, psychological, or pragmatic reasons to justify why moral transgressions were unacceptable, $M_s = 0.09$, 0.05 , 0.03 , 0.01 , respectively, and thus these responses were not analyzed further.

Moral justifications did not vary by age, country, or condition, but analyses revealed that undifferentiated reasons were used more by American than Chinese children, $F(1, 250) = 30.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, $M_s = 0.20$, 0.00 , whereas conventional justifications were used more by Chinese than American children, $F(1, 250) = 14.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$, $M_s = 0.25$, 0.08 . Furthermore, 5-year-olds justified moral events with conventional justifications more than 10-year-olds did, $F(2, 250) = 6.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, $M_s = 0.27$, 0.08 .

Rule acceptability. Overall, and as shown in Table 4, children judged that rules were more acceptable for moral than for personal events, $F(1, 248) = 31.89$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, $M_s = 0.77$, 0.63 . A significant Event Type \times Age interaction, $F(2, 248) = 9.02$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, showed that 5-year-olds did not distinguish between the acceptability of moral and personal rules, $M_s = 0.54$, 0.54 , but 7-year-olds, $M_s = 0.91$, 0.71 , and 10-year-olds, $M_s = 0.85$, 0.59 , did. Finally, a significant Event Type \times Country \times Condition interaction, $F(2, 248) = 5.30$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, showed that in the peripheral condition, rules regarding personal events were seen as more acceptable by Chinese than U.S. children, but rules regarding moral events did not differ.

Judgments and justifications regarding whether to comply or resist with maternal authority. Means for judgments and justifications are presented in Table 4. Although the majority of children indicated that they should comply with mothers when they forbade personal activities, children endorsed non-compliance more for personal than moral events, $F(1, 253) = 31.89$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, $M_s = 0.18$, 0.06 . These evaluations did not vary by country, condition, or age.

Justifications for whether the actor should comply with mothers' commands regarding moral events were primarily moral or conventional or, for American children, involved a coordination of those reasons. Analyses revealed that moral justifications

were used more by American than Chinese children, $F(1, 250) = 3.49, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .39$, and more by 7- and 10-year-olds than 5-year-olds, $F(2, 250) = 5.04, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04, Ms = 0.43, 0.35, 0.24$. There were no other significant effects, nor were there significant effects in the analysis of coordinated reasons.

In contrast, justifications for compliance versus resistance for personal events were primarily conventional, personal, pragmatic, or, for Chinese children, psychological. As analyses of these justifications were discussed previously, they are not repeated here. But as conventional justifications were used to justify compliance for both moral and personal events, we compared their use with a repeated measures ANOVA. A significant main effect for event type, $F(1, 253) = 92.30, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .27$, was qualified by a significant Country \times Type of Event interaction, $F(1, 253) = 35.84, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .12$. U.S. children used conventional reasons more for personal than moral events, $Ms = 0.68, 0.18$, whereas Chinese children did not differ, $Ms = 0.54, 0.44$.

Discussion

Previous research has shown that children in a wide variety of cultures, including Asian ones, establish a personal domain, or an arena of personal choice and control that is beyond the realm of societal regulation and moral concern (Nucci, 1996, 2001; Smetana, 2002, 2011). But research also indicates that a significant number of young Chinese children also judge that they should obey their mothers when they explicitly forbid personal choices (Yau et al., 2009; Zhang, 1996). These responses have been interpreted as reflecting a distinctively Chinese cultural orientation toward compliance to parental authority (Chao & Tseng, 2002). However, most of the previous research examining American children's personal domain judgments has depicted adult authorities in hypothetical situations making firm requests rather than explicitly prohibiting personal desires. Furthermore, the effects of essentializing personal choices have not been examined across cultures. Thus, this study makes a novel contribution to the literature by comparing Chinese and American children's evaluations of personal (and moral) events in hypothetical, unconflicted situations and in situations where mothers were described as forbidding personal desires varying in their centrality to the self.

The results demonstrated that both American and Chinese children overwhelmingly viewed straightforward personal events as permissible. However, when mothers prohibited personal choices, children largely endorsed compliance, but believed that the actors would feel bad about being unable to fulfill personal desires, and children were nearly evenly split in viewing personal events as up to the child to decide. As described in more detail below, evaluations also changed with age, varied by country, and differed when personal choices were described as essential versus peripheral to actors' identity.

Children's Evaluations of Straightforward Personal Choices

As expected, and consistent with a large body of research (reviewed in Nucci, 1996, 2001; Smetana, 2002, 2011), 4- to 10-year-olds in this study viewed straightforward personal choices as acceptable, based primarily on personal justifications. These judgments also differed from evaluations of moral transgressions, which were seen as legitimately regulated by rules and not permissible, based primarily on moral and conventional justifications.

Although we did not expect to find effects for age, country, or condition in children's acceptability judgments, these factors were found to interact in a complex way. That is, judgments of the acceptability of engaging in straightforward personal events were at nearly ceiling levels for all children, except for Chinese 5-year-olds in the peripheral condition. Children in this condition were less likely than other children to view personal acts as acceptable, and furthermore, they also rated rules regarding personal events as more acceptable than did all other children. By 7 years of age, however, Chinese and American children's acceptability judgments for personal events were indistinguishable. Thus, when the centrality of personal choices for children's identity was not emphasized, young Chinese children were less likely to view those choices and more likely to view mothers' rules as acceptable.

Furthermore, justifications for the acceptability of personal events were primarily personal, and less frequently, involved a coordination of personal and conventional concerns. Also as expected, characterizing personal desires as essential to the character's self and identity seemed to highlight the salience of personal events for Chinese children; in this condition, they gave more personal justifications than American children did (or than did their peers

in the peripheral condition). In contrast, when personal choices were depicted as essential to actors' selves, American children were more likely than Chinese children to coordinate personal concerns and reasons for why conventional concerns did not apply (e.g., "Because if he wants to do it, he should just do it. He shouldn't just care about his mom's rule"). Thus, highlighting the essential nature of personal events seemed to attune children in both cultures to considerations that were less characteristic of their culture.

We also observed age-related increases in children's personal evaluations, including their judgments that personal choices are acceptable, their use of personal justifications, and for Chinese children, their coordination of personal and conventional reasons. Thus, by late childhood, children largely viewed personal activities as legitimately under their control, based on personal justifications or their explicit recognition that conventional considerations did not impinge on their personal choices. Furthermore, although not captured by our coding system, we observed age-related differences in the sophistication of children's personal reasoning. For instance, 5-year-olds primarily referred to personal desires and preferences (e.g., "Because he wants to" or "Because she likes it"), whereas by 10 years of age, children's conceptualizations became noticeably more complex (e.g., "Because he should be the one to decide what to play with because he is the one who is going to draw," "Because since it's a hobby of hers, she should work at it," "Because it's something that she likes and she is special in her own way").

Thus, although young children asserted their personal choices in unconflicted situations, their notions became more firmly established, elaborated, and sophisticated with age. Furthermore, highlighting the salience of personal choices to the self seemed to accelerate young Chinese children's development along this path. Thus, contrary to the notion that enculturation leads to increasing variability across cultures, cultural differences were most evident among younger children and largely disappeared by late childhood. These findings are consistent with the view that the construction of personal jurisdiction is a human developmental phenomenon (Nucci, 1996, 2001). Furthermore, our results are very similar to Nucci, Camino, and Sapiro (1996), who found that contextual (e.g., social class) differences in Brazilian children's personal domain judgments were evident at younger ages, but disappeared among older children.

Children's Evaluations of Resistance Versus Compliance to Maternal Authority

Although most children viewed straightforward personal events as acceptable, the majority of children both in Hong Kong and the United States also judged that children ought to obey mothers when they explicitly prohibited children's personal choices. Although Chinese parents are said to stress obedience to authority (Chao & Tseng, 2002) and traditionally socialize their children to develop self-constraint and obedience to adults' commands (Chao, 1995; Wu, 1996), these judgments did not differ as a function of country, condition, or age. This finding does not negate the importance of obedience in Chinese childrearing, nor do we know whether differences between Chinese and American children would be found if their actual behavior in such situations had been observed (e.g., Chen et al., 2003; Liu et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, the results for American children differed from much previous research on the personal domain, which has found that American children are more willing than observed here to endorse resistance to mothers' expectations when they conflict with children's personal desires (Nucci & Weber, 1995). There are several possible explanations of our findings. One is that our results may differ from past research because we described mothers as explicitly forbidding personal choices ("No, you cannot ..."), whereas in past research, mothers were described as guiding or expecting different choices ("I want you to ..."). Describing mothers' wishes in this latter way may suggest to children that they have more leeway to protest and negotiate those choices than was the case in this study. Indeed, this is consistent with the results of Nucci and Weber's (1995) observational study, which showed that mothers often communicated personal choices to young children in exactly this way.

Another explanation comes from previous research examining how children of different ages prioritize different authority attributes such as social position, knowledge, and adult status (Laupa, 1991). Although this research has focused primarily on teacher and peer authority in school and in the context of moral events such as turn taking, Laupa (1991) found that U.S. first graders were more likely than older children to assume that an adult who occupies a particular social position must have superior knowledge and thus has legitimate authority. This suggests that children, and particularly young ones, may assume that if mothers explicitly

forbid personal choices, they have the authority to do so and have good reasons for their prohibitions. Consistent with this interpretation, children often spontaneously supplied reasons (usually coded as pragmatic) that supported mothers' prohibitions (e.g., "She should not keep wearing the ballerina costume, because otherwise it might be covered with stains") and questioned why mothers forbid the event. However, Laupa's findings, as well as the age trends observed here, suggest that this orientation to legitimize maternal authority declines with age during childhood and is not generalizable to acts in other domains, as even young children have been found to disobey parents' commands to commit moral transgressions (Damon, 1977; Zhang, 1996).

Our results also differed from Lagattuta et al. (2010), who, like us, depicted characters in situations where mothers explicitly prohibited personal choices. Children in their study were somewhat more likely to endorse noncompliance than we found in our study, but this may be because they assessed children's explanations regarding what children *would* do now and in the future rather than what children believe that they *ought* to do, as we did here. Furthermore, our results are more comparable to Lagattuta et al. (2010) when emotion attributions are considered. We found that although children strongly believed that they should comply with mothers' prohibitions, they also overwhelmingly believed that actors would feel negative emotions (anger, sadness, unhappiness, and fear) if they could not pursue their personal choices. Also as hypothesized, children judged that giving up their personal desires was less negative (and more neutral) when they were depicted as peripheral to the story character's self and identity.

In addition, children were more likely with age to view personal decisions as up to the child, rather than their mothers. Kochanska, Aksan, and Koenig (1995) have asserted that successful socialization is characterized by "committed compliance," in which the child eagerly embraces and endorses the mother's point of view. However, the responses obtained here are more consistent with the notion of situational compliance, where children believe they should cooperate, but not because they are committed to the mother's agenda. Furthermore, committed compliance, which is typically assessed in the social-conventional context of a clean-up task, has been found to increase with age. In contrast, our findings suggest a different developmental trajectory. Older children in our study continued to endorse compliance to mothers' wishes when they

forbade personal choices, but they increasingly viewed these decisions as not within mothers' purview to make.

This is consistent with previous research on adolescents' reasoning about adolescent-parent conflict on the Chinese mainland, in Hong Kong, and the United States (Chen-Gaddini, 2012; Smetana, 1989; Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003b; Zhang & Fuligni, 2006). This research has found that both Chinese and American children—as young as age 10 and thus equivalent to the oldest ages in this study—justified their perspectives on conflicts primarily with appeals to personal choice, viewed conflictive issues as up to them to decide, and evaluated parents as being unfair in their requests (Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003b). Indeed, although we did not code these responses, children in this study also sometimes prefaced their justifications for compliance with statements like, "That would be really mean" or "Why would mothers do that?" indicating that hypothetical mothers' requests were seen as unexpected or unreasonable. However, much like what we observed here, past research has shown that parent-adolescent conflicts are resolved by deferring to parents' wishes (Smetana, 1989; Yau & Smetana, 1996, 2003b). Thus, in the transition to adolescence, children may become more likely to contest parental authority while still deferring to parents. Indeed, the power balance in the family does not appear to shift until adolescence ends, or later.

Although we did not find age differences in children's judgments of compliance with mothers' expectations, we did find age differences and variations by condition in their justifications for doing so. Children's justifications for obedience were primarily social-conventional and focused on adult authority, punishment, and social roles. As with personal reasons, young children were able to articulate justifications, but we also observed changes with age in the sophistication of these reasons. For instance, 5-year-olds' conventional justifications were simple and authority or punishment oriented (e.g., "Because he got to listen to his mom," "Because then her mom won't put her in time-out," or "Because his mommy said no"). When older children endorsed authority, however, they embellished their responses and found other positive reasons for compliance (e.g., "Because it would be disobeying her mother and also a chance for her not to wear what she always wears").

Furthermore, children's conventional justifications declined with age, particularly among Chinese children, and, although these reasons were

relatively low in frequency, pragmatic justifications increased. Thus, with age, children became less concerned with authority and more concerned with the practical consequences of adhering and not adhering to these expectations (e.g., "Because if he only plays with puzzles without doing other things, he would not learn other things"). This is consistent with research in other cultural contexts, which has found that individuals may choose to adhere to restrictive conventional expectations because they fear the possible deleterious consequences of not doing so (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998). In addition, pragmatism is characteristic of the Chinese worldview; Chinese parents and teachers emphasize that children should not waste time and should keep things well organized (Sue & Kirk, 1973).

Comparisons Between Personal and Moral Events

Consistent with past research (Killen & Smetana, 1999; Lagattuta et al., 2010; Nucci, 1981; Yau & Smetana, 2003b), children endorsed more noncompliance for personal than for moral events, based on personal justifications. Children very rarely endorsed resistance to mothers for moral events and reasoned about why hypothetical actors should comply with moral prohibitions primarily with moral justifications. These justifications were rarely used for personal events. Furthermore, moral justifications increased with age. Thus, in contrast to personal events, children increasingly understood that moral rules are based on the harmful consequences of the acts for others rather than the need to obey authority. These findings demonstrate that responses do not reflect a general orientation toward authority, but rather reflect domain-specific patterns.

In addition, children more positively evaluated rules regarding moral than personal events. This is consistent with a great deal of research showing that although moral violations are considered wrong, whether or not they are governed by rules, they are judged to be legitimately regulated by rules (see Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 2006, 2011). Like Lagattuta et al. (2010), we found that young children's evaluations of rules regarding moral and personal events did not differ. This was primarily because young Chinese children more positively evaluated rules regarding personal events, particularly when described in the peripheral condition. It is also worth noting that our personal and moral scenarios were not completely equivalent, as it may have been clearer why the mother prohibited the moral than the personal activity.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although we employed stringent procedures to make sure that the interviews, pictorial stimuli, and coding were equivalent across cultural contexts, as in any cross-cultural research, we cannot be sure that children in Hong Kong and the United States interpreted the stories in the same way. In addition, although our U.S. sample was primarily European American, it included children from different ethnic groups. We believe that this decision was warranted, as the sample was representative of the region from which it was drawn as well as the ethnic diversity of the United States. It also should be noted that although our sample included a few Asian children, several of them were ethnically Chinese but adopted into European American families. Nevertheless, future research should examine whether our findings are replicated in different samples and among American children from different ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, previous research has reported some variations in children's evaluations of personal issues as a function of social class (at least in Brazil; Nucci et al., 1996). As our samples were primarily lower middle class, caution should be taken in generalizing the results beyond this group.

In addition, we focused here only on maternal prohibitions. Therefore, we do not know whether similar responses would be obtained if children evaluated paternal prohibitions, particularly as fathers are generally less directly involved in childrearing than are mothers. It would be particularly interesting to study children's judgments of paternal authority cross-culturally, given the importance of filial piety in Chinese culture (Chao & Tseng, 2002).

Finally, we selected stimuli for study that children in both Hong Kong and the United States would treat as personal, but it is important to note that the boundaries and content of the personal domain vary cross-culturally (Nucci, 1996; Smetana, 2002, 2011), as well as within cultures, for instance, as a function of social class or urbanization (Chen-Gardini, 2012; Nucci et al., 1996; Zhang & Fuligni, 2006). Although we found that differences between Chinese and American children's evaluations were primarily among the youngest age group and largely disappeared by middle childhood, longitudinal research would be needed to fully test developmental hypotheses.

Furthermore, our description of events as essential versus peripheral to the child's identity served to increase the salience of the personal domain,

particularly in straightforward situations and among young children, but it did not influence judgments of compliance. It would be fruitful to examine how parents' disciplinary practices, parenting, and enforcement of rules, as well as beliefs about children's obligations to obey parents (Darling, Cumsille, & Martinez, 2007) influence these evaluations. Future research should examine how judgments of personal choice in situations where children's personal domains are restricted unfold as children move into adolescence. It would be interesting to determine how personal desires and beliefs about compliance become more coordinated—or lead to different forms of negotiation—as children grow older.

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