

SPIRITUALITY, CULTURE AND MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS  
IN THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

by

ELISE A. WOUTERLOOT

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We accept this thesis as conforming  
To the required standard

.....  
José F. Domene, PhD, Supervisor & Thesis Coordinator

.....  
Faith Auton-Cuff, PhD, Second Reader

.....  
Yuk Shuen Wong, External Examiner

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY  
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## ABSTRACT

Existing research has explored the encultured nature of the transition from adolescence to adulthood and the influence of parents during that transition. However, few studies have explored the joint influence of these factors on young women's transition process, namely what actions young women engage in as part of their efforts to become adults. Using an action theory framework, the present study began to address this deficiency by examining culture as an important factor to consider in how mothers and daughters jointly negotiate and work towards the daughter's transition to adulthood. The specific research questions were (a) how do mothers and daughters from a variety of cultural backgrounds jointly define and conceptualise adulthood, and (b) what is their joint action, as they engage in the process of facilitating the daughter's transition to adulthood? The action project method was used to analyze the data, including a comparative qualitative analysis of the patterns that emerged for dyads from minority (Asian, Latino, Caribbean) cultural backgrounds, and dyads from a majority (Western European) cultural background. These mothers and daughters defined adulthood in a variety of ways, both in terms of concrete markers (e.g., moving out of the family home) and more abstract notions (e.g., developing a more adult mutual relationship). They also engaged in a wide variety of action to achieve their transition goals. Numerous similarities between the two kinds of mothers and daughters also emerged (e.g., an emphasis on increasing independence), but there were also intriguing distinctives in the ways that they conceptualized adulthood (e.g., the importance of leaving home as a marker of adulthood) and related towards each other in this process (e.g., levels of expressed conflict; kinds of supportive activities that occurred).

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The transition to adulthood is a time of great significance and changing expectations in a person's life. Young people negotiate this transition with the aid of their families, friends and broader communities. Spiritual beliefs and values may also be important in the transition process, although empirical research in this area is limited. This study sought to address a substantial gap in the literature by exploring how mothers and daughters jointly work together to facilitate the daughter's transition to adulthood, in a sample that contained some mother-daughter dyads who were actively involved in a faith group, and some who were not.

*Transition to Adulthood*

For most young people in industrialized countries, the late teens through the twenties are years of profound change and importance. By the end of this period, most people have made life choices that have enduring ramifications. In the previous decade, researchers began to conceptualize the transition to adulthood in North America not as a rapid change in status, but as a prolonged and distinct period of development characterized by specific changes and exploration: emerging adulthood). Although having a prolonged period in which to make the transition to adulthood may be beneficial, the process is not always easy. Factors such as the absence of appropriate adult role models and the breakdown or rapid change of social and cultural systems around the individual may impede the process (World Health Organization, 1997). Individuals who experience such difficulties in transitioning to adulthood have been shown to be more likely to experience a host of negative consequences later in life, including decreased educational attainment and lower employment rates (Shanahan,



Mortimer & Kruger, 2002), increased risk for involvement in crime (Arnett, 2000), and increased risk for developing psychological disorders (Flanagan, Schulenberg & Fuligni, 1993; Nelson & Barry, 2005).

### *Conceptualization of Adulthood*

Traditional markers of attaining adult status include establishing a stable residence, finishing school, settling into long-term employment and committing to a long-term love relationship (Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hartmark & Gordon, 2003). However, research shows that these markers are perceived by young people to be of lowest importance among possible criteria considered necessary for perceiving themselves as having become adults (Arnett, 1997, 1998). Instead, Arnett reports that the most important criteria that they reported were individual qualities of character, including accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. He further states that these criteria appear to reflect the individualistic values of North American majority culture, in that they emphasize the capacity of the individual to stand alone as a self-sufficient person.

### *Context of the Transition*

The attainment of adulthood, and the period of emerging adulthood which precedes it, is best understood in the context of specific cultural norms and expectations, rather than as a universally applicable experience (Arnett, 2002). In North America, families with a strong religious identity and who are actively involved in their faith community may form such a distinct 'sub-culture,' with values, attitudes and behaviours that differ from non-religious families. Specifically, membership in different religious affiliations tends to carry different expectations and tendencies concerning two key parts

of the transition to adulthood: marriage and leaving the parental home. Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1988) note that traditional religious groups in North American society are more likely to link leaving home with marriage. They further state that participation in religious communities, as indicated by regular attendance, unquestionably reduces a young adult's likelihood of expecting premarital residential independence. Also, conservative Christians are more likely to be married at a younger age than their more liberal or deist counterparts (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Heaton & Goodman, 1985). Early life religious exposure may also influence young adults' childbearing attitudes and preferences as they transition to adulthood (Pearce, 2002).

#### *Spirituality in Emerging Adulthood*

Achieving independence by deciding what beliefs and values to hold onto is considered to be an important part of the transition to adulthood (Arnett, 1997, 1998). Emerging adults view developing independence from their parents' beliefs to be a good and necessary thing (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). This independence is not always equated with adoption of more relaxed religious standards and observances. Research has shown that some emerging adults chose, on their own initiative, to become more religiously observant than their parents, attributing this in some cases to the strong influence and support of their peers (Sinclair & Milner, 2005). Religious affiliation may be an important factor in the lives of emerging adults, as it influences norms and expectations of its young members. Attendance at a religious school also appears to be linked with stronger religious ties in beliefs and values (Barry & Nelson, 2005).

Prior research exploring the role of spirituality during emerging adulthood has concluded that these individuals tend to (a) question the beliefs in which they were

raised, (b) place greater emphasis on individual spirituality than affiliation with any particular religious institution and (c) pick and choose the aspects of religion that suit them best (Barry & Nelson, 2005). Emerging adults often combine concepts and practices from different religious and non-religious traditions in unique, highly individualized ways (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). Additionally, level of spiritual involvement may fluctuate over this developmental period. Religious participation tends to rise towards the end of emerging adulthood, as young people marry, have children, settle down personally and geographically, and express an increased spiritual need for religious involvement (Hoge, Johnson & Luidens, 1993). In combination, these patterns of findings highlight the processes whereby religion may serve as an important cultural context in which developmental change from emerging adulthood to adulthood may occur.

Although literature exists on both transition to adulthood and the role of spirituality in psychological development, little previous attention has been given to the role that active spiritual involvement has on transitioning to adulthood. Specifically, the ways which parents and youth from religious families conceptualize the process of transitioning to adulthood, and work together to negotiate this transition process have yet to be investigated. This question is an important one to address, given the encultured nature of emerging adulthood, the fact that families with strong religious involvement can be conceptualized as having a distinct sub-culture, and the distinct developmental outcomes that are associated with strong faith involvement (Barry & Nelson, 2005).

The present study was designed to explore these issues in a qualitative way, using Young and colleagues' (e.g., Collin & Young, 1992; Valach, Young & Lynam, 2002; Young, Valach & Domene, 2005) *action-project method* to examine the ways that young

women and their mothers work together to facilitate the daughters' transition to adulthood, and the role of active spiritual involvement in that process. Three main questions guided the analysis: (a) How do these participants jointly conceptualize adulthood? (b) What kinds of transition to adulthood projects are they engaged in together? (c) How do their actions and relationship as mothers and daughters work together to achieve these projects? Although the focus of the study changed in response to the specific themes that emerged during the process of analysis, this study was still able to provide insights into the behaviours, meanings, and dynamics that can occur between mothers and daughters during the daughter's transition to adulthood. The findings of this study add to existing knowledge about the transition to adulthood, and provide information that may be of use to practitioners implementing psycho-educational programs to promote successful transitions to adulthood. They also emphasize the importance of attending to contextual factors, such as spirituality, culture and relationships when engaging in psychotherapy with mothers and their emerging adult daughters. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this study.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

*Emerging Adulthood*

For most young people in industrialized countries, the late teens through the twenties are years of profound change and importance. By the end of this period, most people have made life choices that have enduring ramifications. In North America and other industrialized areas of the world, the transition to adulthood has shifted from a transitory period to a distinct stage in the life course, one that is characterized by change and exploration (Arnett, 2000).

An increasingly popular framework for research on individuals within the 18-25 age bracket is the concept of *emerging adulthood* (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Arnett & Jensen, 2002; Arnett & Tanner, 2005), a term that some developmental researchers have used to describe the experience of gradually making one's way into adulthood. According to Arnett and others, emerging adulthood is more dynamic, changeable and fluid than the term 'young adult,' and better captures the idea that many emerging adults do not see themselves as adolescents, but also do not perceive themselves to be adults either. In fact, they tend to adopt a 'roleless role', by having a wider scope of possible activities and being less constrained by role requirements than other age groups.

Emerging adulthood is not a new concept. Erik Erikson was one of the first to comment on the prolonged adolescence typical of industrialized societies, and on the psychosocial moratorium granted to young people in such societies "during which the young adult through free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of society" (Erikson, 1968, p.156, as cited in Arnett, 2000). Since Erikson's early work, many researchers have focused on this distinct life period, with a specific interest in the

conceptions of what signifies the attainment of adulthood (Arnett, 2001; Cohen, et al., 2003).

Bronfenbrenner (1986) proposed the term *chronosystems* for designating a research model that makes possible examining the influences on the person's developmental changes (and continuities) over time in the environment in which the person is living. The simplest form of a chronosystem focus is a life transition, in which transition to adulthood would be viewed as a normative transition, one that most people can expect to face in one form or another. This transition often serves as a direct impetus for developmental change. In this model, it is important to consider all aspects of the transitioning youth's context; biological, psychological, social and spiritual elements. This study will focus primarily on aspects of the young women's spiritual and social contexts, as they were the elements that emerged mostly readily in conversation. An important element pertaining to social contexts in the lives of many young people is the consideration of culture.

*Cross-cultural differences.* Although the stage of adolescence is prominent cross-culturally, only 20% of cultures around the world recognize a period between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Adulthood is usually signified by entry into marriage. Therefore, emerging adulthood is not a universally recognized period of development marked by distinct physiological changes, but appears to be a construct that exists only in cultures where the entry into adult roles and responsibilities is postponed until well past the late teens. Consequently, emerging adulthood, or lack thereof, is best understood as a characteristic of culture rather than biology.

Even within a single nation, there is cultural variation in the definition of emerging adulthood. In a study comparing First Nations Canadian and European Canadian college students, Cheah and Nelson (2004) demonstrated that the subjective understanding and importance associated with the different criteria are affected by emerging adults' level of acculturation (i.e., the process by which individuals adapt or react to a foreign culture). The more an individual identified with his or her aboriginal cultural heritage (as opposed to the majority culture), the more likely that person was to endorse criteria for adulthood that are reflective of his or her heritage culture's beliefs and values. The authors speculated that this may reflect the collectivistic need of the traditional aboriginal culture to maintain the balance and harmony of the group.

Research conducted by Nelson, Badger and Wu (2004), with a sample of 207 university students in China, provides further evidence of the encultured nature of the criteria that young people view as necessary for attaining adulthood. Their participants rated criteria such as "learn always to have good control over your emotions," "become less self-oriented, develop greater consideration for others," and "become capable of supporting parents financially" much higher than is typically seen in European cultures. The authors concluded that these conceptions tend to reflect the values and beliefs of the Chinese culture, and provide evidence for the significant role of culture in young people's conceptualization of adulthood.

A study from the United States compared the different meanings that African-American, Latino, Asian-American and Caucasian participants hold about the transition to adulthood (Arnett, 2003). The most striking similarity in participants' criteria for attainment of adulthood across all groups was having achieved independence from one's

parents. One difference between the three ethnic minority groups and the Caucasian group was the ethnic minority groups' stronger endorsement of the criteria of family capabilities; their capacity to care for a family of their own. The emphasis was on values that esteem family obligations, versus maintaining traditional family roles. Another difference was the ethnic minority groups' emphasis on the criteria of norm compliance, such as abiding by laws. Arnett concluded that these two differences involved endorsement of criteria that reflect collectivist values, such as being a good member of a family and citizen of a society.

In combination, these findings provide strong evidence that emerging adulthood is an encultured phenomenon, and that any thorough study of emerging adulthood requires an understanding of the cultural contexts that surround individuals at this stage in life. The most important criteria for having achieved adulthood, endorsed by the majority culture in North America, have been shown to be accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. However, the criteria for reaching adulthood differ across cultures within North America and many other cultures do not even have a distinct period between adolescence and adulthood. In the present study, the aspect of culture that was originally attended to in exploring the transition to adulthood is religion and spirituality, specifically the distinct culture and values that are often adopted by individuals who self-identify as being actively involved in a community of faith.

*Criteria for emerging adulthood.* One might suspect that young people would believe that they have reached adulthood when they have established a stable residence, completed all their schooling, settled into a permanent career, and committed themselves



to a long-term love relationship (Cohen et al., 2003). However, research shows that these status markers rank at the bottom of importance among possible criteria considered necessary for the attainment of adulthood (Arnett, 1997, 1998). Instead, existing research has found that the criteria that many endorse as most important in defining whether or not they have reached adulthood are character traits such as accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions (e.g., about beliefs and values), establishing an equal relationship with their parents, and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2001). Biological transitions, such as the physical capability to have children, were not deemed to be important at all (Nelson & Barry, 2002). The preferred criteria seem to reflect the individualistic values of North American majority culture, in that they emphasize the capacity of the individual to stand alone as a self-sufficient person (Arnett, 1998).

Leaving home, both psychologically and physically, is one of the normal expectations for a successful transition to adulthood (Levinson, 1986). Most young North Americans leave home for the first time by age 18 or 19 (Gutmann & Pullum-Pinon, 2002). A recent 10-year longitudinal study conducted in British Columbia, Canada, found that 80% of participants had earned at least one post-secondary credential in the decade following high school graduation. Many of these individuals spent several years in some combination of independent living and continued reliance on adults while pursuing post-secondary education. Two thirds of young women and half of young men were married or in a marriage-type relationship by the end of this time, and one quarter of women and 14% of men had become parents (Andres, 2002). Other research indicates that many emerging adults have periods during which they assume greater independence, followed

by periods in which a more childlike level of function is characteristic in some domains (e.g., resuming residence in the family home) (Cohen, et al., 2003).

*Achievement of criteria.* In Nelson and Barry's 2005 study of 232 college students from the United States, aged 18-25 years, participants who defined themselves as emerging adults used the same criteria for the attainment of adulthood as those who considered themselves to be adults. However, self-perceived adults felt they had fulfilled these criteria to a greater extent than their emerging adult peers. Perceiving oneself as an adult coincided with making progress towards the resolution of one's identity. Self-perceived adults also had a better sense of the characteristics they were looking for in a long-term romantic partner.

Research has also indicated that individuals who experience difficulties in achieving "adulthood" status are more likely to experience a host of negative developmental consequences. Factors such as the absence of suitable role models or the breakdown of the social or cultural context of the transitioning adult can contribute to the difficulty that some people experience (World Health Organization, 1997). The consequences include decreased educational attainment and lower employment rates (Shanahan, Mortimer & Kruger, 2002), increased risk for involvement in crime (Arnett, 2000) and increased risk for developing psychological disorders (Flanagan, Schulenberg & Fuligni, 1993; Nelson & Barry, 2005). These findings emphasize the need for further research to identify factors and resources that could aid youth in their transition to adulthood, such as the positive role that parents may be able to play in the process.

*Mother-Daughter Relationships*

The literature shows that the mother-daughter relationship is different from the father-daughter or mother-son relationships in many important ways (Russell & Saelbel, 1997; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Poole and Gelder (1985) also found that although daughters make more independent decisions than sons during adolescence, their mothers' opinions remain important to them at this age. Also, compared to mother-son relationships, it has been found that during adolescence, mothers and daughters discuss important issues more frequently and with greater self-disclosure (Noller & Callan, 1990), but also have more conflictual interactions with their mothers on a number of important domains of living (Ellis-Schwabe & Thornburg, 1986). These findings only partially support the widely held North American stereotype of difficult times between mothers and daughters as daughters become adolescents and then adults (Kenemore & Spira, 1996): there may be more conflict, but mothers and daughters continue to engage with each other.

Mothers are also still needed by their older adolescent and emerging adult daughters, but the ways in which they are needed are ever-changing throughout the transition and this change has an impact on their sense of self as a mother (Kenemore & Spira, 1996). Mothers are a primary source of advice and support for issues such as planning for future education, career and family (e.g., Dick & Rallis, 1991; Domene, Shapka & Keating, 2006; Kniveton, 2004; Paa & McWhirter, 2000; Tucker, Barber, & Eccles, 2001). The relationship also has an important impact on the daughter's sense of self and her psychological development. For example, Ruebush (1994) found that maternal empathy was significantly related to psychological separation in middle-

adolescent girls. It is evident that the mother-daughter relationship is an active one well past childhood, and has important implications for transition to adulthood issues.

The uniqueness of the mother-daughter relationship is also highlighted by studies comparing daughters' relationships with their fathers versus their mothers. For example, a large, Norwegian study found that daughters responded to conflict differently with their mothers than their fathers, being more facilitative and attentive to the mother in conflict negotiations (von der Lippe & Moller, 2000). Daughters perceive their mothers, more than their fathers, as the primary influence on their career development (Otto, 2000). Russell and Saebel (1997) found that communication within a mother-daughter relationship is different from a mother-son or father-son relationship. In conversations about dating and sexual issues, mother-daughter dyads communicated more extensively on the subject and there was more evidence for mutuality of positive emotions than in mother-son dyads (Lefkowitz, Boone, Sigman & Au, 2002). In terms of transmitting religious practices to adolescents, a Scottish study of 3, 414 participants, found that the mother's religious practice was a more powerful predictor than fathers' practice for daughters (Francis & Gibson, 1993).

Kenemore and Spira (1996) describe the processes and challenges that adolescent girls encounter in transitioning to adulthood. Ideally, they move from a relationship that is characterized by the daughter's dependence on their mothers to one that is interdependent in which both members continue to grow and develop. They also face personal, social and familial pressures that are unique to their gender; including a higher risk for depression and suicide attempts, and must often become more assertive, aggressive and independent to reach the level of achievement of males. Apter (1990)

describes a process of differentiation in which an adolescent comes to recognize her own voice in her relationship with her mother. She discovers she has distinct views, a willingness to explore them, the ability to resolve conflicts, and an acceptance of the limitations of the relationship.

From the weight of the existing literature, it is clear that the mother-daughter relationship is a unique and important one during the time immediately preceding the daughter's transition to adulthood. Maternal influences remain important during emerging adulthood, although a majority of the literature has framed this topic as 'parental' influence, rather than specifically focusing on the mother-daughter relationship.

#### *Parental Influences on the Transition to Adulthood*

Even before they reach an age that formally denotes the beginning of emerging adulthood, adolescent youth are increasingly making their own decisions and parents' authority over these decisions declines. The challenge for parents and adolescents is to redefine their relationship and nurture new connections. The negotiation of independence and redefinition of relationships continues on into emerging adulthood, where many parents continue to figure prominently as a source of affection and instrumental aid (Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992). There are periods when the emerging adult may rely on their parents completely for financial support and other practical advice, and other times when they attempt to negotiate life's challenges on their own. The emerging adults tend to continue turning to their parents for affirmation and emotional support throughout their transition to adulthood and in the years beyond.

The process of individuation intensifies after the high school years, as emerging adults typically spend more time away from their families. Flanagan, Schulenberg and Fuligni (1993) examined parent-youth relationships in a sample of 440 undergraduate students, aged 18-26 years. They found that redefinition of relations with parents may be more problematic when parents and their emerging adult children are living under the same roof. Students living at home enjoyed less independence and reported lower levels of mutuality in their relationship, and were also more likely to perceive negative aspects of their relationships. Rejection of parents as role models was moderately endorsed by both emerging adults living at home and those away from home. It should be noted that the authors of this study recognised that residence is only one element in a larger social context that influences parent-child relationships during emerging adulthood.

Conflict styles and the emotional climate of the home can greatly impact the emerging adult during their transition. One study found that early emerging adults (18 years old) were at a higher risk for developing depressive symptoms or heightened expressed anger if their families had high levels of expressed conflict. These same emerging adults were also the fastest to improve, in terms of the symptoms, as they progressed through their transition (Galambos, Barker & Krahn, 2006). The amount of influence that a high conflict environment has on individuals is greatly reduced by the time they reach 25 years of age and beyond.

The majority of parents and children report their parent-child relationships as characterised by positive sentiment, support and affection (Thornton, Orbuch & Axinn, 1995). A North American study found that only a minority of parents and children would rate their relationship as very poor. In that study, emerging adult children mostly felt a

more positive and closer connection with their mothers than they did with their fathers. The study also indicated that, as they enter their twenties, most transitioning children reported an improvement in their relationships with both of their parents. This could reflect the young adults experiencing more independence and adult roles, and thereby developing a new appreciation for their parents and bringing more enjoyment into the relationship. It is clear that parents and family are important elements in the social context of young women. Another important element of social context for many is involvement in a faith community.

*Spirituality and the Transition to Adulthood*

*Spirituality.* North American families who are actively involved in their faith community and who endorse a strong religious identity, have values, attitudes and behaviours that differ from non-religious families. An individual's spirituality or religiosity can have wide-ranging impact on his or her values and family processes. Religiosity can be defined in terms of denominational identification, the regularity of church attendance, or the subjective dimension of personal religiosity (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1988). More recently, however, there has been preference in the research literature for the term 'spirituality' (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003). A possible common ground for spirituality and religion could be 'the search for the sacred.' This dynamic view of spirituality and religion centered on the search process and a sacred core offers potential for understanding the influence of these constructs in everyday life. Spirituality is a multidimensional phenomenon with both private and public modes (Pearce & Axinn, 1998). In the present study, personal spirituality and the active participation in a traditional religious community are both of interest.

This study examined spirituality from a cultural perspective, adopting the perspective that active participation in a spiritual or religious community group constitutes an important element of a person's culture. In North America, families with a strong religious identity and who are actively involved in their faith community form a distinct sub-culture. Their values, attitudes and behaviours differ from non-religious families. In general, ethnic and religious group identifications are fundamental factors accounting for differences in family structure and family norms, often of no less importance than income or education (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1988). In Canada, religion continues to be a dominant identifier of people in the nation. While the vast majority of modern Canadians continue to identify with religious organizations, they are less prepared to participate with regularity or to apply their religious faith to matters in their day-to-day lives (Posterski, 1995).

Research has documented strong links between religious involvement and (a) family values as evidenced by attitudes toward sex roles; (b) adolescent sexual behaviour and attitudes; and (c) family demographic patterns (age of marriage, proportions ever-married and ever-divorced). There is also some evidence linking religiosity and perceptions of the quality of mother-child relationships (Pearce & Axinn, 1998). Religious involvement appears to have a strong impact on the formation of young people's values. It is also important to consider the differences that may exist, depending on the religious denomination with which the young people affiliate.

*Differences in religious affiliation.* There are also indications that religious affiliation is associated with more traditional family norms in North America. When compared to those who state no religious preference, Catholics, Protestants and Mormons



are all more likely to marry, less likely to divorce, more likely to remarry after divorce and have larger families. Mormons have the highest rate of marriage and fertility, and the lowest rate of divorce. Catholics have a lower rate of marriage and divorce than Protestants (Wu & Balakrishman, 1995). It appears that expectations of marriage and fertility differ for people between people with a religious affiliation and those without, and even within different religious cultural contexts.

People coming from different religious backgrounds also have differing expectations and tendencies concerning marriage and leaving the parental home. Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1988) found that traditional religious groups in American society are more likely to link leaving home with marriage, and that participation in religious communities, as indicated by regular attendance, unquestionably reduces a young adult's likelihood of expecting premarital residential independence. Research also indicates that conservative Christians are more likely to be married at a younger age than their more liberal or deist counterparts (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). Early life religious exposure may influence young adults' childbearing attitudes and preferences as they transition to adulthood: in a sample of 861 mid-western families over an 18 year study, young adults with Catholic mothers or mothers who frequently attended religious services, were more likely to object to voluntary childlessness, believed that the average American should have more children, and desired many children for themselves (Pearce, 2002).

As an example of a minority religious culture, members of the Mormon Church in the United States tend to have a shortened and highly structured emerging adulthood period (Heaton & Goodman, 1985). The period of exploration before taking on adult

roles is shorter, as there is considerable social pressure placed on young Mormons to marry early and begin having children. Within this church, there are embedded cultural beliefs prohibiting premarital sex and emphasizing the desirability of large families (Heaton, 1992 as cited in Arnett, 2000). These findings highlight the processes whereby religion may serve as an important cultural context in which developmental change from emerging adulthood to adulthood may occur (Barry & Nelson, 2005). While many young people choose to affiliate with a traditional religious denomination, others form a more collaborative, unique and personal spirituality.

*Spiritual beliefs in emerging adults.* Emerging adults have a tendency to combine concepts and practices from different religious and non-religious traditions in unique, highly individualized ways, when developing their own spirituality (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). In their study of mid-western 21 to 28 year olds, religious beliefs were more likely than attendance at religious services to be important to emerging adults. However, despite the changes and combinations, most emerging adults retain some form of religious beliefs (Lefkowitz, 2005). These studies indicate that emerging adults express a high value on thinking for themselves with regards to religious questions and on forming a unique set of religious beliefs rather than accepting a ready-made dogma.

Emerging adults perceive their independence from their parents' beliefs as a good and necessary thing. In their view, simply accepting what their parents have taught them about religion, and carrying on the same religious traditions by default would represent a kind of failure; an abdication of their responsibility to think for themselves, to become independent from their parents, and to decide on their own beliefs. Quite consciously and deliberately, they seek to form a set of beliefs about religious questions that will

distinctly be their own (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). However, this independence is not always equated with adoption of more relaxed religious standards and observances. For example, research has shown that some Orthodox Jewish emerging adults chose, on their own initiative, to become more religiously observant than their parents, attributing this in some cases to the strong influence and support of their Jewish peers (Sinclair & Milner, 2005).

A university can either reinforce cultural standards and beliefs, or provide a climate conducive to exploration of one's identity and beliefs, including religious beliefs (Barry & Nelson, 2005). Sinclair and Milner (2005) found that attendance at a Jewish school was a significant predictor of the strength of Jewish identity and observance. In a study comparing 445, 18-20 year old undergraduate students from a Catholic, a Mormon and a public university, Barry and Nelson found differences in students' perceptions of the criteria for attaining adulthood. The public and Catholic university students were not settled on their religious beliefs, nor did they differ in terms of having achieved the criteria for emerging adulthood. Attending a Catholic institution was related to greater adherence to some aspects of their faith. Students from the Mormon university tended to adopt the institution's cultural beliefs and values rather than engaging in their own exploration. Mormons placed more emphasis on the following criteria: interdependence, norm compliance, biological transitions, and family capacities. They also saw themselves as having achieved the criteria to a greater extent than their peers in terms of independence, interdependence, norm compliance and family capacities. The authors note, however, that this study may have limited generalizability to other young Catholics

and Mormons, given the fact that young people choosing to attend a religious educational institution may be significantly different than their peers.

Overall, re-examining and exploring one's beliefs and values is an important task of emerging adulthood. Many young people believe that it is important to explore and solidify their spiritual beliefs independently from their childhood upbringing. Religious affiliation may be an important factor, as it influences norms and expectations of its young members. However, the value of the existing literature on emerging adulthood and spirituality is tempered by the fact that most of it was conducted in the United States, specifically the Mid-west. Many of these studies cited a lack of ethnic diversity among their limitations. The present study is intended to add richness to the existing literature, both by being conducted with a Canadian sample, and by having over half of the participants representing a minority culture. Additionally, much of the literature cited, with the exception of Sinclair and Milner's 2005 study, was quantitative in nature. It is anticipated that the present qualitative study will add depth and richness to the existing literature. It is clear that spirituality can aid in the formation of values and influence decision-making. Much of the time, the family is a strong influence of early spirituality and can act as a support for such values.

*Family processes.* Spirituality is likely to have a strong influence on family processes and dynamics. Most religious institutions disseminate the idea that positive relationships among family members are desirable. Pearce and Axinn (1998) sampled nearly 900 families longitudinally over 20 years in the mid-western United States, and found that many religious institutions offer both formal and informal support to families. Religiosity was found to have a much stronger impact on parenting and intergenerational

relationships than did religious affiliation. Evidently, religiosity is an important factor to consider when studying parent-child interactions.

Family norms and lifestyles may also be maintained and transmitted through interaction among those who share similar religious affiliations and exposure to religious family ideals in schools and church (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1988, This large-scale study with a representative sample, while not without its own limitations (e.g., the focus of institutional supports was limited to church and school), suggests that participation in social, political and cultural organizations also contributes to maintaining norms and lifestyles. More recently, Posterski (1995) found that most Canadians continue to believe in God and even identify as belonging to a particular religious denomination. The shift is seen in the waning of active participation in traditional religious institutions, and an increase in practice of a more personal spirituality.

Spirituality and religious congruence also play an important role in parents' and children's perceptions of their mutual relationships. Although somewhat dated, Richards (1991) found that the more 'religious' college students reported their parents to be, the closer the students felt to their mothers and fathers. These findings were present when students and their parents have similar perceptions about the importance of religious participation. Past literature has also shown that religious incongruence between parent and child is the biggest source of value incongruence in parent-child relationships. Value incongruence significantly lowers affective closeness between parent and child (Rossi & Rossi, 1990, as cited in Pearce & Axinn, 1998). Pearce and Axinn found that, for 18 year old adolescents who attended religious services with approximately the same frequency as their mothers, mothers report significantly better relationships with their adolescents.

Given the links between religiosity and family processes that are present in the literature, it was anticipated that spiritual involvement would be important to attend to in understanding the transition to adulthood projects of the mothers and their daughters in this study.

*Beliefs and values in emerging adults.* Emerging adulthood has been characterized as a time during which young people (a) question the beliefs in which they were raised, (b) place greater emphasis on individual spirituality than affiliation with a religious institution and (c) pick and choose the aspects of religion that suit them best (Barry & Nelson, 2005).

Independently forming one's own beliefs and values has been found to be an important developmental task in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 1997, 1998). Emerging adults themselves consider it important to re-examine the religious beliefs they have learned from their families, and to form a set of beliefs that are the product of their own independent reflections (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). In regards to emerging adults who adopted the same spiritual beliefs and values as their parents, one question that remains unanswered is whether they merely committed to their childhood beliefs and values without any further exploration, or arrived at the same choice as their parents after their own process of exploration (Nelson & Barry, 2002).

Hoge, Johnson and Luidens (1993) provide evidence that spirituality and religious involvement can change and fluctuate over the course of emerging adulthood. In a large-scale study of Americans aged 18 to 25, they found that that many young adults who had attended religious services frequently as children and adolescents reduce their religious participation in their late teens and twenties. Some of the reasons cited for this include

leaving home, becoming busy with other activities, doubting previously held beliefs, and simply losing interest in being involved in a religious institution. However, religious involvement tends to rise again in the late twenties, as young people marry, have children, settle down personally and geographically, and express an increased spiritual need for religious involvement. Additional evidence indicating that spirituality fluctuates during this developmental period is provided by Sinclair and Milner's (2005) recent qualitative study of Jewish youth, which revealed that participants in their twenties appeared more concerned than their younger, adolescent counterparts to identify sources of spiritual meaning and value in their lives.

Religion has been linked to values and beliefs about family, and has been shown to be an important factor in family processes and norms for marriage and childbearing (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998). In the present study, it was anticipated that families with an active spiritual involvement would have different norms and expectations about values, beliefs and an adherence to a more traditional family structure than those who did not self-identify as spiritual.

### *Present Study*

*Theoretical framework.* I will be using Young, Valach and colleagues' *action theory* as the theoretical framework for this study. Action theory adopts a 'person-in-context' frame of understanding, in which human action is conceptualized as intentional and goal-directed, and occurring between multiple people working together to achieve some common goal (Valach Young & Lynam, 2002). It undertakes to bring together goal-directed, functional and causal explanations of actions in a way that captures the context that surrounds individuals (Young et al., 2005). Human action is theorized to be

embedded within specific social and cultural contexts, which should be attended to when formulating an understanding of that action.

Action theory interprets human experiences through action. Action is conceptualised as goal-oriented and occurring in short periods of time. Any action can be understood through three lenses or perspectives: (a) the perspective of *manifest behaviour*, which refers to the observable sequence of behaviours that occur within an action; (b) the perspective of *internal processes*, which encompasses the subjective thoughts and feelings that a person experiences during the action; and (c) the perspective of *social meaning*, which refers to the explanations and interpretations that people construct about their action, when describing it to others.

Another central concept within action theory is the notion of *project*. When a series of actions coalesce and combine around a common goal over time, the resultant goal and actions accompanying it can be understood as a project. Thus, projects reflect peoples' longer-term goals, and are achieved through peoples' intentional actions. Projects are typically negotiated and constructed between two or more individuals, and open to re-negotiation over time. Projects can be formed around any goal-oriented human phenomenon. Examples of the kinds of projects that have emerged in previous action theory research include suicide projects, health promotion projects, relationship improvement/maintenance projects, occupational/educational development projects, and independence negotiation projects (Young, Valach et al, 2002).

In terms of its paradigm assumptions, action theory has been described as a form of social constructionism (Young, Valach et al, 2002). The theory also assumes a predominantly constructivist ontological stance, although it simultaneously accepts the



existence of “true” external realities that researchers should attempt to accurately capture (Domene, 2005). The epistemology of the method is also predominantly constructionist, in that it is transactional/subjectivist. Research findings are viewed as creations, but creations that are grounded in external action and data. These creations are the product of the consensus discussion of multiple researchers, engaged in a hermeneutic circle between the data, their life experiences and backgrounds of the analysis, and the principles of action theory. The aim of inquiry in any study grounded within action theory is to understand, reconstruct and describe a human process (e.g., the transition to adulthood), in terms of the actions and projects that are involved in that process.

The implications of these paradigm assumptions are that a human phenomenon should be understood as complex and multidimensional, and comprising a multitude of actions and projects that are constructed and engaged in by different people working together. Thus the process of transitioning to adulthood would be defined as something that occurs within an individual’s own social context, and involves not only the person who is reaching towards adulthood, but also other significant individuals that are involved in the transition process, such as his or her parents. These assumptions promote a holistic, open and flexible approach that is highly suitable for counselling psychology (Young, et al., 2005).

*Transition to adulthood from an action theory perspective.* The transition to adulthood can be explored using Young, Valach and colleagues’ (2002) action theory. Within this framework, the transition process is defined as something that occurs actively rather than something that happens to people: Individuals formulate goals related to their criteria of adulthood (e.g., establishing their own stable residence; completing their

desired education; entering a desired long-term career; finding a romantic partner and having children), and work to achieve those goals through their short-term actions (e.g., applying to university) and longer-term projects (e.g., deciding on a career path).

An action theoretical perspective on the transition to adulthood also emphasizes the social nature of the process: emerging adults jointly undertake the transition with other important individuals in their lives (e.g., negotiating partial financial support from parents to live away from home during university; seeking advice from friends about potential romantic partners). Given the importance of parents in the process of transitioning to adulthood (e.g., Flanagan, et al., 1993; Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992), I have chosen to focus specifically on the joint actions and projects that emerging adults engage in with their mothers, rather than on transition projects that they may form with their fathers, siblings, friends, teachers, or romantic partners.

The previously described research indicating that emerging adults with strong religious affiliations have some distinct beliefs and values from their non-religious peers (e.g., Arnett & Arnett, 2002; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1988; Pearce & Axinn, 1998) provides some theoretical justification for attending to religious involvement as an important part of emerging adults' cultural contexts, as they formulate and work towards their transition goals. Thus, this study sought to explore participants' transition to adulthood projects in light of their religious involvement.

Although no previous action theory studies have attended to families' spirituality as a cultural context in which their joint actions and projects are embedded, there is research suggesting that cultural contexts are generally important to attend to, when using this particular framework for conducting research. Specifically, previous studies have

revealed that there are distinctions in the health promotion actions and projects of parents and adolescents from Indo-Canadian cultural backgrounds than from European Canadian families (Young, Lynam et al., 2001); and that the career development actions and projects of Chinese Canadian families are distinct in several ways from those of European Canadian families (Young, Valach et al., 2001; Young, Ball, Valach, Turkel & Wong, 2003).

*Research question.* As with many forms of qualitative research, the purpose of this study is best described in terms of an objective addressed by a number of guiding questions, rather than specific hypotheses. The original objective of this exploratory qualitative research study was to describe the ways that mothers and their emerging adult daughters jointly negotiate the transition to adulthood, attending specifically to spiritual involvement as a potentially influential cultural context on the transition process. The objective changed somewhat during the analysis process, to include culture as a distinct grouping characteristic. Three main questions guided the analysis:

1. How do these participants jointly conceptualize adulthood?
2. What kinds of transition to adulthood projects are they engaged in together?
3. What are their actions and relationship as mothers and daughters work together to achieve these projects?

For each of these questions, similarities and differences that emerged for different groups of participants were also attended to (initially, dyads with and without an active faith involvement; subsequently, dyads from a ‘majority’ or ‘minority’ cultural background). These questions were addressed using Young, Valach and colleagues’ action theory

framework for understanding the phenomenon, and procedures derived from the action-project research method that is associated with that theory.

## CHAPTER 3: METHOD

### *Suitability of the Design*

The research design that was used is a variant of Young and colleagues' *action-project method* (Valach et al., 2002; Young et al., 2000; Young et al., 2005). The action-project method is a comprehensive approach to qualitative research, which attends to the manifest behaviours, internal processes, and social meanings that are present for pairs of participants who are jointly engaged in projects related to some aspect of their lives, over time (see Figure 1).

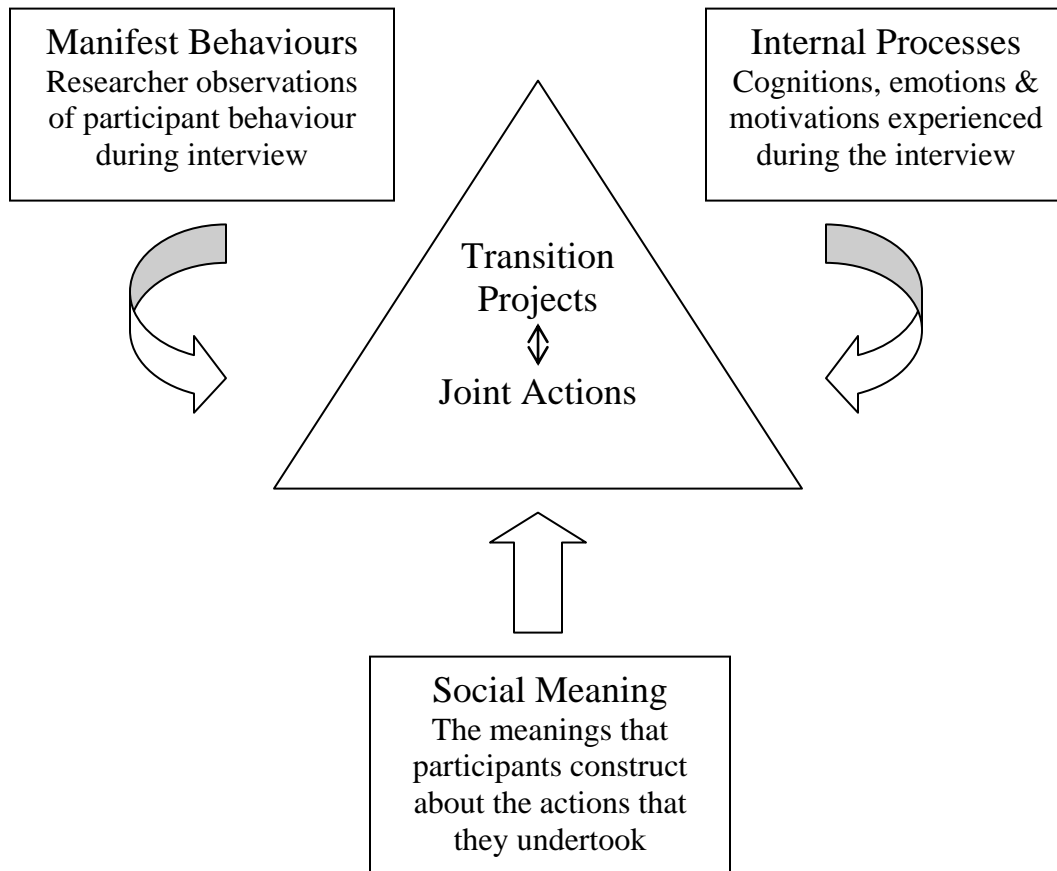


Figure 1. Transitions projects and joint actions: Manifest behaviours, internal processes & social meaning.

This method is embedded in action theory and as such, it accepts the paradigmatic assumptions previously described in Chapter Two. This method is an appropriate choice for the present study for several reasons. First, it provides a holistic, action-focused, dyadic framework for analysis that attends to both the mother and the daughter. This holistic approach allows for a deeper exploration of the nature of the phenomenon than would be possible with quantitative methods. Second, data used in this study were originally collected for a larger study, according to the action-project methodology procedures for data collection. This precludes changes to the method for data collection. Although the analyses could have been conducted according to other qualitative research methods, the time and resources existed to carry out the team-based consensus analyses according to the original action-project method. Furthermore, the research questions addressed in the present study are completely embedded in this method.

The first question pertained to the conversations and other joint activities of mothers and daughters, as they work together to facilitate the daughter's transition to adulthood over a six-month period. The desire to examine the joint actions undertaken by pairs of individuals working towards common goals over time and the focus on processes rather than outcomes fits with the purpose of the action-project method. The benefits of using a method that explores a phenomenon over time, as opposed to the single time-point interviews that typify many other forms of qualitative research, include having a stronger sense that the emergent themes are true to the participants' experiences, when the same themes are repeated over time.

The other research question explored the issue of how adulthood is defined and constructed in families who are actively involved in spiritual practices and the ways that

these definitions are similar and distinct from the ways that adulthood is defined in families with no spiritual involvement. This question involves comparing emergent themes from two groups of participants who have been separated according to a salient contextual feature in the participants' lives; their level of spiritual involvement.

Fortunately, the action project method has recently been expanded to permit these kinds of qualitative comparative analyses (Domene, 2005). Domene's procedure provides a way to systematically identify and describe similarities and differences between sets of dyads, in a way that remains consistent with the principles and paradigm assumptions of action theory. It is important to note that this type of comparative analysis is completely different from between-groups comparisons in quantitative research. It focuses on action and the processes that people engage in to reach their goals, rather than independent and dependent variables, it attends to the contexts of the individual dyads rather than relying solely on aggregated data and it is descriptive, rather than designed to make causal connections between the two groups.

### *The Original Study*

Note that the data used in this study were obtained from a larger study on the transition to adulthood, described more fully in Zaidman-Zait et al., 2005. During the analysis phase of the original study, the possibility emerged that the parent-youth dyads with an active spiritual involvement were distinct in important ways from those dyads without an active spiritual involvement. This unanticipated pattern that was noticed within the findings was deemed worthy of further exploration by the original research team (J. F. Domene, personal communication, May 12, 2006). As a systematic



exploration of this possibility, the present study is, in part, a response to the patterns that appeared to be emerging in the original study.

*Data collection.* In the original study, data was collected from 20 parent-youth participant dyads. Participants were self-selected by means of responding to the advertisements in local media (e.g., newspapers, posted flyers). The action-project method was used to collect data, a process that involved conducting three interviews and monitoring project-related actions over 6 months per dyad. The first interview involved several parts: (a) a warm-up period to familiarize the participants with the research setting, and collect background information; (b) a video-taped conversation between the parent and the youth about the transition to adulthood; and (c), a *self-confrontation procedure*, which involved playing the video-tape of the conversation back to the participants to obtain information on their cognitive and emotional processes at the time, and the meanings they created around the different parts of their conversation.

Next, the research team completed a preliminary analysis of the data, which involved delineating the sequences of action that emerged in the first interview, and tentatively identifying a transition project. The results of the preliminary analysis were written-up in a narrative format. Each participant dyad was then presented with the narratives of the preliminary analysis and encouraged to give their feedback during a second interview. In that second interview, the dyad and the interviewers also collaboratively selected a transition project for monitoring.

For the subsequent six months, the dyad engaged in a monitoring period, during which time (a) the participants recorded their project-related activities in written log-books, and (b) the interviewers maintained telephone contact with the dyads

approximately every two weeks. At the end of the monitoring period, participants returned for a third and final interview. This involved another video-taped conversation by the mother and daughter, followed by a self-confrontation procedure with each member of the dyad. At the end of the third interview, participants were debriefed about their research involvement. As with the first interview, the focus of the joint conversation was the transition to adulthood, and issues that were salient to the parents and youth, six to eight months after the original interview.

*Previous data analysis.* For each dyad, information from all three data collection times, the self-report logs, and telephone monitoring reports were examined via the systematic, action-theoretical form of thematic analysis described in Valach et al., 2002 and Young et al., 2005. In the first round of analysis, information derived from this procedure was used to generate three descriptive narrative summaries of how adulthood is conceptualized for each dyad, and their goals for transition to adulthood. In the second round of analysis, the analysis process was applied to all the information collected from the dyad, to uncover the goals, actions taken, progress made, and themes that emerged as they worked together in facilitating the daughter's transition to adulthood. The product of this final within-case analysis is a written summary displaying the themes, issues and experiences that were the most salient for each dyad over time.

### *Present Study*

*Research team.* The present study, designed to explore the role of active faith involvement and the transition to adulthood, was conducted by a team of three researchers. The first team-member is the author of the present study and for the following two paragraphs; I will refer to myself in the first person. My name is Elise

Wouterloot; I am a 25 year old, female researcher with a bachelor's degree in honours psychology, and a background in health and counselling psychology. My own transition to adulthood began at the age of 18 when I moved to another province to pursue university studies. I supported myself financially almost completely throughout my undergraduate degree, and became fully financially independent in the years that followed. I recently moved back into my family home in order to pursue a Master's degree. I have been actively involved in my faith throughout high school and university, and currently participate in the same Christian community as my parents. I am of European heritage, and was born, raised and educated in Canada. I also completed part of my university studies in the Netherlands. My father emigrated from the Netherlands at the age of 6, and my mother is Canadian-born Italian/German. English is my first language; I am fluent in French and have studied Dutch, Spanish and Arabic modern languages.

Because I am presently undergoing my own transition to adulthood, and am actively engaged with my mother in doing so, my perspectives on the phenomenon are based upon current experience. In my own transition, the influence of my parents has been very significant, particularly in my reliance on them for emotional support and aid in decision-making. This is particularly true of my relationship with my mother, with whom I communicate very closely, and spend much of my time. This study was completed in fulfillment of my MA thesis requirements. I was not involved in the original, larger research study. At the beginning of the study my expectation was that there would be differences in the conceptualizations of adulthood and associated expectations of adulthood between the two groups of mother-daughter dyads.

The second team-member is Dr. José Domene, a 34 year old male researcher, with a background in vocational psychology, child and youth mental health, and family therapy. His own transition to adulthood began with leaving home to pursue university education at age 18, with financial independence from parents occurring several years later, followed by marriage at age 25. He did not develop an active faith involvement until university, and is now involved in a different branch of Christianity than that of his parents. He is of Mexican and Chinese ethnicity, but completed most of his schooling in Commonwealth countries (Britain, Australia, and Canada) and speaks English as his native language. He immigrated to Canada with his parents, at 17 years of age.

In terms of his pre-existing perspective on the research topic, Dr. Domene believed that (a) the transition to adulthood is, indeed a joint project that occurs between an individual and other significant persons in that individual's life, and (b) that mothers are a particularly significant person, at least with respect to the occupational and educational planning aspects of the transition to adulthood. Moreover, he was involved at all stages of data collection and analysis in the original study, including identifying spiritual involvement as a possibly important factor in interpreting and understanding the participants' transition to adulthood projects. He expected that several important distinctions would emerge in the transition to adulthood projects of the two sets of mothers and daughters.

The third team-member is Tamara Williams, a 25 year old, female researcher with a background in health science research, and child and youth mental health. She has a master's degree in counselling psychology. Although her transition to adulthood began at 18 years when she left home to pursue university education, financial independence was

not achieved until several years after. She has been actively involved in her Christian faith since early childhood and finds it a necessary source of strength and support in daily living. Due to the close bond between herself and her parents, she found their support essential in many areas of her life during this transition including emotionally, spiritually and in regards to decision making. Ms. Williams also found the support of the extended family and greater community invaluable. She was not involved in the original study and participated as a researcher to diversify her experiences in the field. Although she had no strong preconceptions about the phenomenon being studied, she was curious to see if any differences would emerge between the two sets of mothers and daughters.

### *Participants*

This study utilized data that were originally collected for a larger Canadian study on the transition to adulthood projects of youth and their parents. In the original study, data were obtained from 20 parent-youth dyads, living in an urban center in British Columbia. During the analysis process, six dyads characterized themselves as having an active faith involvement, and reported engaging in spiritual practices, such as prayer and volunteering within their church, as part of their transition to adulthood. Four of these were mother-daughter dyads from various branches of Christianity; one was a mother and daughter from a Buddhist faith community; and the final one was a mother-son dyad from a practicing Jewish family. Due to prior research indicating that the relationship between mothers and daughters is distinct in many ways from the relationships between mothers and sons, the mother-son dyad was omitted from the present study (Russell & Saebel, 1997). The remaining five mother-daughter dyads in the original study (i.e., those who did not self-identify as being involved in a religion and showed no other evidence of

an active faith involvement) formed the comparison group. Ten dyads was deemed to be an adequate sample, based on its comparability with sample sizes used in a number of previous action project method studies (e.g., Turkel, 2003; Young et al., 1999; Young, Ball, Valach, Turkel, & Wong, 2003).

Therefore, the final sample consisted of five mother-daughter dyads who self-identified as actively involved in their faith community (four Christians, one Buddhist), and five mother-daughter dyads whose interviews and actions did not indicate any active faith involvement. See Table 1 for demographic information for the ten participating dyads.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of the Mother-Daughter Dyads*

Dyad	Active spiritual involvement	Cultural background	People in household	Family income	Age (mother/daughter)	Daughter's education level	Mother's occupation
01	No	European – Canadian	mother, 1 child	N/A	39 / 18	Grade 12	College instructor
02	Yes	Caribbean – Canadian	mother, 4 children, grand-mother	N/A	44 / 18	Grade 12	Lawyer
05	No	European – Canadian	mother, 2 children	> \$75,000	53 / 18	Grade 12	Accountant
07	Yes	Chinese – Canadian	mother, 2 children	> \$75,000	48 / 19	1st year university	Researcher
10	No	European – Canadian	mother, 2 children	> \$75,000	45 / 18	Grade 12	Accountant

Table 1 (cont)

*Demographic Characteristics of the Mother-Daughter Dyads*

Dyad	Active spiritual involvement	Cultural background	People in household	Family income	Age (mother/daughter)	Daughter's education level	Mother's occupation
25	Yes	Latino – Canadian	mother, 4 children	> \$75,000	45 / 18	1st year university	Property manager
27	Yes	Chinese – Canadian	mother, 2 children	> \$75,000	47 / 17	Grade 11	College instructor
28	No	European – Canadian	mother, step-father, 2 children	> \$75,000	44 / 19	1 <sup>st</sup> year university	Nurse
29	No	Japanese (mother)/ Hungarian (father)	Mother, 2 children	> \$75,000	58 / 18	Grade 12	Researcher
30	Yes	Indian / Malaysian – Canadian	Mother, 3 children	< \$20,000	41 / 18	Grade 12	Translator (part-time)



*Data Set*

The data set used in the present study consisted of the following set of data for each mother-daughter dyad: (a) video- and audio-recordings of every section of the first and third interviews (in transcript and original audio-visual format), (b) the narrative descriptions that were presented to participants in the second interviews, and (c) notes from telephone contact interviews and participants' journal entries from the monitoring period. Additionally, a final descriptive summary of the data for each dyad was generated as part of the analysis process in the original study. These within-case analytical summaries were also included in the data set.

*Procedures for the Present Study*

The analysis was conducted according to a framework that addresses the specific research questions addressed in this study, and incorporates dimensions of joint action that have been identified and reported upon in previous action-project studies (e.g., Young et al., 2001, 2003, 2006). Specifically, the research team organized the findings according to three organizing questions:

1. What are the meanings and subjective understandings the participants constructed around their transition to adulthood?
2. What are the kinds of transition to adulthood projects that were evident, and did these projects change over time?
3. How did participants engage work together to achieve these projects: What were the dyads' joint actions and mutual relationship/interactional style, as they engaged in their transition projects together?

The procedural framework for the analyses is the action-project method, which is grounded in the theoretical framework of action theory. The method of analysis that will be used is Domene's (2005) recent extension of the action-project method, a comparative qualitative analysis process that has two stages: (a) identification of themes within each of the two groups of participants, and (b) the patterns of similarity and difference that emerge when the findings from one group are examined in comparison to the findings from the other group. It is important to note that, in this method of analysis, the faith involvement, or any other way of dividing participants into groups, should be understood as only one factor in the overall context of the individuals' transition to adulthood. The research method is not designed to conclude that active faith involvement is the cause of any patterns of similarity and difference that emerge. Instead, it is designed to provide a richer, more complex description of the phenomenon of mothers and daughters working together to facilitate the daughter's transition to adulthood than could be obtained by simply examining the sample as a whole.

*Within-group analysis.* The first stage of the present study was to identify the constructs and themes that were prevalent across (a) the four mother-daughter dyads in the active faith involvement group and, separately, (b) the five dyads that formed the other group of mothers and daughters. As per standard action-project methodology for summarizing themes that emerge across an entire sample of participants (e.g., Young et al., 2001), this analysis involved attending to both the aspects of the transition to adulthood that are unique to a specific dyad, and those that emerge across each group.

To identify the themes and patterns for each group, research team members began by individually reviewing the themes and categories that were present within each dyad,

in preparation for the analysis meeting. Next, a series of team meetings occurred, which involved discussing different perspectives and interpretations of the data to reach consensus decisions about what themes and constructs could be considered to be typical for each group, for each of the five issues of interest in this study. This discussion involved drawing on evidence from the data, action theory, and team members' own background experiences and preconceptions about the transition to adulthood. The process involved identifying alternative possible interpretations about what was occurring within the group, and discuss the relative merits of the different interpretations, until a consensus opinion emerged as to the best interpretation.

*Between-groups analysis.* The second stage of the analysis involved a comparative qualitative analysis to identify similarities and differences from the themes that emerged from the two different groups. Again, the team-based consensus analysis strategy was used to evaluate whether the two groups were similar or different for each emergent theme. At this stage of analysis, the criterion of *practical significance* was used to evaluate whether any given theme is sufficiently distinct to warrant the conclusion that it is a difference. Building on the work of Miles and Huberman (1994) and Kirk (1996), Domene (2005) proposed that, in qualitative analysis within the action-project method, the question of whether a difference exists is based on whether the degree of difference is of sufficient magnitude to be noticeable and useful in real world terms. That is, were the specific ways that a theme manifested different enough so as to be considered distinct if they were encountered in daily life? If not, the two groups were considered to be similar (for that particular theme): If so, then it would be concluded that a difference was present. When making these judgements of similarity and difference, the research team attended

not only to frequency of occurrences, but also to the subjective importance that participants attributed to their experience, as it was understood by the researchers. Some differences and similarities were clearly evident. However, for some aspects of the data set, there was an extended process of discussing and negotiating possible interpretations involved in reaching a consensus decision. This should not be surprising, given the extensive nature of the data set and the different preconceptions that the individual team members brought to the analysis.

The final stage of analysis involved returning to the original data provided by individual dyads within each group, to ground the findings in concrete examples and to ensure that the tentative patterns of similarities and differences reflected the actual lived experiences of the nine sets of mothers and daughters. According to Domene (2005), this is necessary to ensure that the analysis process did not aggregate the data to such a degree as to be no longer reflective of the actual participants. To complete this final stage of analysis, the principal investigator reviewed the data sets of participants in an attempt to find confirming and refuting examples of each identified similarity or difference. Many of the initial findings had to be rejected because of disconfirming examples, which resulted in the re-grouping of dyads. After this re-grouping, no further themes had to be rejected.

### *Rigour*

Young et al. (2005) propose that there are two criteria by which action-project research is evaluated for rigour: (a) a method should be rigorous in its application and (b) the researchers should be able to provide defensible reasoning in the interpretations offered. The application of the method in the present study was rigorous. The procedures

for gathering and analysing data were comprehensive and systematic. Multiple kinds of data, representing all the perspectives on action that are described within action theory were collected (information on manifest behaviour was obtained from the joint conversation and monitoring logs; information on internal processes and social meaning were obtained from the self-confrontations and telephone monitoring calls). Additionally, different modes of data collection were also represented in the data set: direct observation of mother-daughter conversations, self-report logging of participants' activities over time, and semi-structured interviews. This provided a more comprehensive data set than examining data from only a single perspective on action (e.g., behavioural observation alone).

The reasoning used to generate the conclusions can be defended in a number of ways. The method is grounded in the empirically supported principles of action theory. Steps were taken to ensure that the findings that are generated are consistent with the participants' experiences, both during data collection, and at the end of the analysis process (e.g., referring to participants' original data sets when identifying common patterns at the within-group level of analysis; grounding the between-groups findings in concrete examples from the individual participants). Additionally, the consensus-based discussion process has been repeatedly proven to be an effective way of analysing data in action-project studies (e.g., Young et al., 2000, 2001, 2003, 2006; Zaidman-Zait et al., 2005), and has also begun to be used in comparative research conducted within the action theory framework (e.g., Domene, Arim & Young, in press).

A number of credibility and trustworthiness checks were also implemented to increase the defensibility of the reasoning. To begin with, a system of member-checking

was put in place during data collection in the original study. The participants had several opportunities to review the researchers' interpretations of the data, during the self-confrontation portions of the first and third interview, and in the second interview. Their feedback was valued, and incorporated into the data set to ensure that the data adequately represented their lived experience.

In the present study, using consensus-based analysis to develop the findings at all phases of data analysis contributed to the rigour. Multiple possible interpretations were identified and discussed by a team of three analysts, to reduce the likelihood that any single researcher's biases or perspective might systematically distort the categories and conclusions drawn from the data. Therefore, the final interpretations are constructions that reflect the consensus opinion of several different individuals, who served as checks to each others' biases and preconceptions. Additionally, the results of intermediary within-groups stage of analysis has been documented in the following chapter, and notes from the analysis meetings have been attached as appendices (see appendices B to C), thus permitting readers to evaluate the authenticity of the process for themselves. The reasoning used in the analysis will therefore be transparent, and available for readers to critique for themselves.

Another way that has been used to increase the defensibility of the conclusions in previous action-project research (e.g., Domene, et al., in press; Young et al., 2003) is to have a researcher, who is familiar with the method and phenomenon being studied, audit the findings, to determine whether the interpretations resonate with his or her experience. For this study, the preliminary description of the comparative findings was reviewed by Dr. Richard Young, professor in the Educational and Counselling Psychology and

Special Education department at the University of British Columbia. He is a developer of action theory and the action-project method, and was the principal investigator for the larger study from which these data were drawn. However, he was not involved in the present analyses, beyond auditing the findings.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As described in the previous chapter, this study was conducted because researchers from the larger transition to adulthood study, from which these data were drawn, suspected the presence of distinct patterns of action for those dyads who were actively involved in some form of spiritual practice or religion. However, over the course of conducting the formal comparative analysis of those with active spiritual involvement and those without, all three members of the research team separately noted that there was one dyad that did not fit well with the way that the groups were formed. This mother and daughter did not self-identify as actively spiritually involved or report engaging in any spirituality-related action, yet many of the themes that emerged for this dyad, and even overall conversational interaction, seemed to fit with the dyads in the active spiritual involvement group rather than the other group. In fact, it was remarked in one of the consensus analysis team meetings that, apart from the fact that they had no spiritual involvement, the patterns of themes that emerged for this dyad would have made them a good exemplar of the actively spiritually involved group.

*Redefining the Comparison*

Given the presence of this apparently contradictory case, the research team realized that they needed to be open to the possibility that active spiritual involvement may, in fact, not be the most salient characteristic to understand the distinct groups that appeared to be present in the data set. In discussing other possibilities, the team came to realize that the five ‘active spiritual involvement’ dyads and the one ‘not actively spiritually involved’ dyad shared another important, likely influential, characteristic. Specifically, although all ten daughters in the sample had been born and raised in Canada,



the mothers in these six dyads were immigrants to Canada. They shared a common characteristic of having been raised in another culture: Chinese, Latino, Caribbean, Japanese and Indian/Malaysian. These cultural characteristics were not only observable from the demographic information, but were mentioned as a relevant and important contextual factor in the conversations (e.g., some dyads spoke a language other than English or French in the home). Conversely, the mothers of the formerly 'non-active spiritual involvement' group (after removing the non-conforming dyad) were all of European-Canadian descent, spoke English primarily in the home, and were themselves born and raised in Canada. In their conversations, the theme of cultural or ethnic heritage as an important and relevant contextual factor did not emerge. Finally, one of the researchers noted that some of the patterns that were emerging from the modified groups fit existing studies on cross-cultural family relationships just as well as it did the research on spirituality (e.g., the theme of independence and leaving the family home was far less important in the group of six dyads with a Latino, Asian or Caribbean background, than the group of four dyads of European descent).

After careful consideration, discussion and debate, the research team reached the consensus decision to re-form the analysis group: the four dyads with a European background in one group (labelled *majority culture*) and the remaining six dyads in a separate group that was given the label *minority culture*. The minority culture mothers, while having different countries of origin, share the characteristic that their cultural heritage is very different from the Anglo-French traditions that are dominant in Canada. There was some debate as to whether the labels "collectivist culture" and "individualist culture" would have been more appropriate. However, the principal investigator had

some objections to that categorization system, perceiving these categories to be too sweeping and failing to capture the subtleties and nuances unique to these dyads. Particularly since many of the dyads were multicultural (Canada and another), and two daughters were of multiracial heritage. The labels of ‘collectivist’ and ‘individualist’ seemed less appropriate for this qualitative study - I wanted to group the dyads in an organic and respectful manner, without such assumption-laden labels. Additionally, there was some concern that using those labels would create too much of a predisposition to see certain kinds of differences in the data, than the more theoretically-neutral labels of majority culture and minority culture.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) suggests some limitations of grouping people according to ‘social addresses such as geography or social background. Specifically, this is an environmental label that does attend to what the environment is like, what people are living there, what they are doing, or how the activities could affect the child. One of the advantages of using this qualitative method, rather than a more traditional statistical comparison of groups based on a social background variable, is that it is designed to capture more of the context around peoples’ actions and joint projects than would be possible in quantitative research (Valach et al., 2002). Additionally, the comparison procedure contains safeguards to prevent the unique set of information and circumstances of each dyad from being aggregated and reduced beyond recognition (Domene, 2005). Therefore, it can be stated with some confidence that, in this study, information about the participants’ cultural background experiences has been captured beyond a simple ‘social address’ label. Before describing the results of this revised comparative analysis,

however, it is necessary to locate the issue of culture and the transition to adulthood within the existing literature.

*Culture and Emerging Adulthood*

*Culture and the transition to adulthood.* Past research findings provide strong evidence that emerging adulthood is an encultured phenomenon, and that any thorough study of emerging adulthood requires an understanding of the cultural contexts that surround individuals at this stage in life (Arnett, 2003). Religion may serve as an important cultural context in which developmental change from emerging adulthood to adulthood may occur (Barry & Nelson, 2005). For ethnic and racial minorities, for outsiders of all sorts and in some ways for girls and women, the process of identity formation may be especially complicated and difficult (Goodenow & Espin, 1993). Goodenow and Espin also report that, while strong ties to one's ethnic group and extended family may be an essential and valued part of personal identity, in many North American communities minority group heritage is devalued by the dominant culture.

*Cultural identity.* The degree to which one identifies with one's own culture or ethnic group defines cultural identity. Kester and Marshall (2003) found that, for a sample of 59 Chinese-Canadian mother-adolescent dyads, ethnic identity scores were positively correlated between mothers and daughters, but not mothers and sons. This suggests that it is possible for mother-adolescent daughters to share a strong bond of cultural identity, and emphasizes how ethnic group identity can be passed down as a part of gender socialization. Kester and Marshall also found that length of time living in Canada was not associated with the degree to which the individuals identified with the majority Canadian culture or their original Chinese culture. Ethnic identification is a type

of group identification in which the individuals perceive themselves and their cultural group as intertwined, and define themselves by the same attributes and characteristics that define that group (Mael & Tetric, 1992). Similarly, Cheah and Nelson (2004) explored the influence of culture on transition to adulthood in a sample of 69 Canadian Aboriginal students (mostly of Cree and Mik'maq heritage) and 132 European Canadian students, aged 18-25, with approximately 70% of participants being female and 30% being male. They found that, for these aboriginal Canadian youth, the more an individual identified with his or her First Nations cultural heritage, the more likely he or she was to endorse criteria for adulthood that are reflective of that culture's beliefs and values.

Gender is another important factor to consider in conjunction with culture, in the development of identity during emerging adulthood. Young women are likely to place more value on maintaining close relationships and ties; in valuing family relationships, they may seek not so much to separate from the family, but to gain a new and more adult role and voice within it (Gilligan, 1986). One study of five Latina adolescents in the United States revealed that these young women chose their mothers as the person who they most admired or wanted to be like. The relationship between mothers and daughters (except in the one case in which the youth had left home to immigrate to the United States alone) seemed to be a very close one. Characteristically, the girls discussed serious problems and issues with their mothers, who, in turn, seemed to want to maintain a close relationship (Goodenow & Espin, 1993).

Taken together, these findings suggest that cultural identification and participation may have an impact on young women's transition to adulthood. Belonging to a minority or majority culture presents its own unique challenges during the transition period. It may

affect the mother-daughter relationship in many different ways. Cultural values also appear to play an important role in defining the conceptualizations of adulthood and the expectations for the transition.

*Variation within culture.* At the same time, it must be recognized that minority group status is also experienced differently depending on the individuals within the group in question. For example, within a single minority language community (e.g., Spanish-speaking immigrants to the United States), differences in social class and in country of origin may have important implications in terms of one's "place" in and adaptation to American culture (Szalay & Inn, 1988). Experiences of adolescents of minority cultures may also vary depending on factors such as social class. For example, a child from a professional family from Colombia, coming to the United States for educational purposes, will have an entirely different experience of acculturation from one whose impoverished family fled from the civil war in El Salvador (Goodenow & Espin, 1993).

Although the majority culture in Canada is different from that of the United States in a number of important ways, the same principle of recognizing that there can be a wide variety of experiences among different individuals within a specific minority culture group continues to apply. Nevertheless, it remains important to explore the possibility that minority versus majority cultural group status will provide a meaningful way to deepen the understanding of the transition-related projects and actions of this sample of mothers and daughters from a range of different cultural backgrounds. The results of such an exploration are presented next, with specific findings being discussed in relation to the existing literature base.

*Comparative Analysis Findings*

Bearing in mind the redefined comparison groups of “majority culture” and “minority culture” participants and the literature on culture and emerging adulthood, an action-project comparative analysis was applied to the data. The procedures described in chapter 3 were used to identify similarities and differences, as follows. The first stage of analysis involved identifying the themes that could be considered common among the minority culture dyads and, separately, the themes that could be considered common in the majority culture group. Given the discursive nature of the team-based, consensus decision-making process, the only available record of the analysis is in the form of the meeting notes written by the principal investigator. These have been made available in appendix B, for readers to audit. The results of this intermediary stage of analysis have been summarized in narrative form and are also available for review (see appendix A). Subsequently, the emergent themes for each group were reviewed in relation to each other, to identify patterns of similarity and difference. Notes from those analysis meetings are available in appendix C.

The preliminary findings for this study then underwent two procedures to establish rigour. First, data from all 10 dyads were individually reviewed to confirm the legitimacy of the between-groups analysis, and to ground the findings in actual data. None of the conclusions were deemed to be incompatible with the information obtained from the individual dyads. Examples of the themes from individual cases have been incorporated directly into the description of similarities and differences. The resultant description of the findings was then sent to the auditor. His audit of the findings revealed an agreement with the majority of the findings. On one point, he was unsure of how well

a particular finding fit with the data, and requested that the team review this item, and the associated interpretations, more closely. Upon doing so, the research team found that the perceived inconsistency was due to unclear wording, and appropriate modifications were made to the text, resulting in the following final description of findings.

A number of similarities, as well as several distinctive themes emerged between the two mothers and daughters from minority cultural backgrounds, and the mothers and daughters from majority cultural backgrounds. These findings have been organized according to the four specific issues listed in the methods chapter. Participants' meanings and subjective understandings of adulthood is the second topic. Finally, similarities and differences in the ways that dyads worked to achieve their projects, including their relationship and interactional styles are delineated. Throughout this description, the findings have been illustrated with examples and, where possible, discussed in terms of previous research.

The attainment of adulthood, and the period of emerging adulthood which precedes it, is best understood in the context of specific cultural norms and expectations, rather than as a universally applicable experience (Arnett, 2002). Emerging adulthood, as a distinct life period, may be characteristic of a North American experience. Although 'adolescence' is a prominent stage in most cultures, only 20% of cultures would recognize 'emerging adulthood' as a distinct life phase before adulthood (Arnett, 2000). All of the mothers in the minority culture group were born and raised in countries outside of North America and, consequently, may have had a very different experience than their daughters at 16-19 years old. This being said, it is possible that the mothers and daughters in the majority culture group also had very different experiences. The 'delayed

adolescence' that is a feature of the transition to adulthood in 2007 may not have been present in the lives of women 20 to 30 years ago. As one of the majority culture group mothers described it:

I was married at 19...And I guess 'cause I took business all in school, so my background is business, so, you know, for me it's automatic and you just learned it and I learned it really young, I mean, you know...because of being out on my own when I was her age. And I put my husband through school, so I worked and he went to school and we had all the things that we had to pay for come out of my salary.

### *Conceptualizations of Adulthood*

A number of different understandings of adulthood emerged from participants' conversations, self-reflections, and other action over the course of the study. This could also be understood as the features that distinguish adulthood from adolescence, in each dyad's conceptualization of adulthood. The most commonly used criterion for defining adulthood in the literature is achieving independence, financially, residentially and sometimes emotionally (Cohen, et al., 2003). However, this conceptualization may particularly reflect the values of American majority culture, in that it emphasizes the capacity of the individual to stand alone as a self-sufficient person (Arnett, 1998). It was interesting to determine whether the emphasis on independence emerged similarly across both participant groups, and what other criteria beyond independence were involved in these participants' conceptualizations of adulthood.

*Independent living.* Independent living appeared to be a very important criterion for reaching adulthood in most of the dyads in the majority culture group. In contrast,



there was a noticeable absence of this way of conceptualizing adulthood in the actions of the minority culture dyads: It emerged as important for only one mother and daughter in the minority culture group. Many of the daughters were not yet in the position to live independently, primarily for financial reasons, but looked forward to it for the future. One daughter from the majority culture group stated that, although it made more financial sense to live with her mother right now, she would rather live on her own.

Like, honestly, I would really rather live by myself; or with a roommate or something like that. Just 'cause I like, I really like change and, I just can't do it. (laughs) It would just be too much....But, like, I mean I'll have to live on my own eventually, like I'm not gonna spend all, like, four to six years at university living with my mom, so eventually I'm gonna have to do this.

This same daughter, though acknowledging the likelihood of needing to live with her mother, was determined to be firm about her boundaries and need for personal space.

Mother: But the reality is, you have to pay it [rent] back, right, so, if I did happen to live in the same city, it might make sense to live with me, to have a big enough place that you could live with me...

Daughter: As long as my door locks.

For another daughter in the majority culture group, the ability to live independently from the family home was a top priority, even if it would be financially difficult. She would rather live with her best friend than be debt-free.

See, I would much rather like, I don't really care about loans, you know?

Like, if I have debt, that's one thing, like I have a long time to work it off,

you know what I mean? Like, but I don't have a long time to move in with my best friend.

For other daughters, different priorities took precedence over living independently. One daughter in the majority culture group believed that owning her own car was the most important priority, even if it meant delaying her move to independent living. She believed having independent transportation to be an important step in defining her as a new adult.

I...that's true, but I wanna buy a car anyways. Like, I want, that's what, that's what I want to do right now, like, if I get the settlement from the guy. Like, I want to buy a car, like I want, I even want to that, you know, like I even want to take out a loan and buy a car now. Just like get a nice car, like, one that I'll have for a while, you know? Like, not get a piece of shit car that's like, I'm only getting it to drive around; like, if I'm gonna get a car, like, I'd rather get one that I would keep for a while, and, you know, pay it off, and it would be, you know? Yeah, yeah, see that's what I wanted to do, was stay home but have a car. Like, I really want my own car, like I'd rather, I'd rather live at home for, like, three more years and have a car, like, I just want one.

The same daughter later spoke about how leaving home was not really an option that she was considering at this moment. She feels that she has enough independent space in her parental home for now.

I like being by myself, like I love my favourite time, that's why when I'm home by myself I can do whatever I want, but like, I wouldn't consider living by myself.

While independent living was a criterion that was important for most dyads in the majority culture group, several dyads in the minority culture group had different views on this criterion. The absence of an emphasis on living independently in the minority culture group's conceptualization of adulthood may, in part, be explained by the fact that many of these dyads drew their expectations for daughters from their cultural norms. For example, one of the dyads expressed acceptance of the daughter's reluctance to live independently as a facet of the culture in which she was raised.

Daughter: No. No, I don't think I'm ready to move out yet, 'cause I don't have that experience with really paying bills. I don't have my own cell phone. I don't know what that's like. I don't know what paying internet bills are like, or feeding myself, having to buy my own T and T food. (both laugh) Well wait—you do that anyways! But um, I think...no, I'm not ready. And I think the whole—like, the Chinese thing of being...

Mother: Staying at home.

Daughter: Yeah. Like its okay to be at home and kind of, you know, we'll take care of you until you are ready and that I can handle.

Confirming this dyad's experience, research shows that the conceptualizations of adulthood of Chinese adolescents often reflects the values and beliefs of the Chinese culture, and this provides evidence for the significant role of culture in young people's conceptualization of adulthood (Nelson et al., 2004).

When seeking explanations for this difference between the groups, the spiritual involvement of the dyads in the minority cultural group must also be recognized. Although not explicitly present in the participants' data, prior research has shown that people from traditional religious families are more likely to link leaving home with marriage (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1988). Given the relatively young age of the daughters in the sample, it may well be that marriage and leaving home are far from the minds of the minority culture dyads at this time. In contrast, only one of the majority culture dyads linked living independently with moving in with a romantic partner. Without that link, living independently may be more salient at an early age for families with a North American/European cultural background. Unfortunately, the links between spirituality, marriage and independent living were not probed for in the data collection, so this possible interpretation of the difference between the groups must be regarded as speculative at the present time.

*Independent decision-making.* Although independent living was largely absent in the data provided by dyads from the minority culture group, independence as a criterion for adulthood was still present. For these participants, independence was conceptualized primarily in terms of making decisions independently. This was not, however, a difference between the groups: independent decision-making emerged as an important criterion for adulthood in both the majority and minority culture group. This echoes the existing literature, in which emerging adults reported that one of the most important criteria for achieving adulthood is making independent decisions (Arnett, 1997, 1998). They stated that the most important independent decisions would deal with finances and

career choice. One daughter from the minority culture group saw independent decision-making as a key to achieving adulthood.

I'm turning nineteen; I guess I'm an adult. But yeah there's not much ah, of behaviour transition. Because I think that it just when time um...um maybe, because of experience. Adults have more experience so they can make decisions um based on their experiences.

The path to independent decision-making was not always smooth and consistent. In some situations, participants perceived the daughters as already being able to make decisions like adults, but in other situations, they perceived the daughters as acting more like adolescents. This unevenness in developing the ability to make decisions independently was echoed in both groups of dyads. One daughter from the minority culture group described feeling trapped between adolescent and adult worlds, when it came to this aspect of transitioning to adulthood.

Yeah. So, but I think that this year, especially after summer when I opened the café, I feel like I'm progressing more into becoming, like I feel like I'm an adult now. I don't feel like I'm, well, at certain times when I, maybe when I'm with my friends, I still feel like I'm a teenager, but when I'm with people that are, I think, maybe...um...older than me or something, I feel like I'm an adult. Or when I'm doing, making say business decisions for the restaurant, um, I feel like I'm 26 or something (laughs). A lot older.

Similarly, a majority culture mother spoke about the dichotomy of having an adolescent daughter who made independent decisions, but still relied on her parents in many other ways: "Well, you are reliant. You're dependent on us, but you're able to

make decisions without us having to cart you around everywhere.” This speaks to the achievement of some independent decision-making, but simultaneously, the notion that full independence is a process rather than a single event.

*Romantic relationships.* A traditional marker of attaining adulthood status is committing to a long-term love relationship (Cohen, et al., 2003). It was a theme that emerged as important in both groups. Some of the meanings and values of forming adult romantic relationships were different in the majority and minority culture groups. Two of the daughters in the majority culture group were involved in romantic relationships and hoped to move in with their boyfriends. The theme of cohabitation with a boyfriend did not emerge in the minority culture group. For some of the dyads who were actively spiritually involved, the faith-based values also influenced their perception of romantic relationships. For one daughter in the minority culture group, the spiritual participation had very practical applications to her transition to adulthood, particularly on the issue of dating. She declared that she was not yet interested in dating, because her pool of potential suitors in the community was limited at the moment.

Because everybody who I would date like all the guys who are members of the church who are around my age—they’re all in the missions now right... especially with the way that you know that we would date with church standards and everything you know

For one daughter in the majority culture group, the experience of being in a romantic relationship was not necessarily a positive or fulfilling one. Through it, however, she realized her priorities were spending time with her friends, working hard at school and having fun.

Cause like, I guess I never really did that in my grade twelve year, and like that's supposed to be about like, grade twelve's supposed to be fun, and like, I never did that, I had a boyfriend, I was always with him, like, I guess I wasn't even really happy with him, but like I was so focused on like having a boyfriend kind of thing, it was my first boyfriend., so I was very focused on it, and I was very...I guess kind of just, totally in that, well, I kind of ignored my friends, like I'd hang out with them, once a weekend, but I kind of ignored them like, and I, I spent my time out there, like I spent my time with him, and I never went out when they were all going out, I just was never in the mood and like, although I thought I was happy, like, you really see I wasn't happy and like, once I broke up [incomprehensible] and just like, always happy, I never go through my depressed, like sometimes people go through it and they like are so sad, and they like, and I haven't gone through one of those at all, and like, I'm with my friends all the time, and like they totally notice the change in me and stuff, so I was just saying that, like, how I'm totally, I'm totally just in to having fun right now and being happy like that's like my main thing right now like, school, I can do that later, everything else I can do later, but this is me right now, and stuff.

*Mother's involvement and daughter responsibility.* Existing literature indicates that emerging adults believe one of the most important criteria for achieving adulthood is the individual quality of character of accepting responsibility for one's self (Arnett, 1997, 1998). The data from this study provided only partial support for this definition of adulthood: for mothers and daughters in both groups, the theme that emerged was an

active attempt to balance the daughter's responsibility for herself with the mother's continued involvement in the daughter's life. In many of the dyads, the daughter was actively seeking independence, to a greater degree than the mother was comfortable with. This daughter from the minority culture group voiced her desire to have a bit more freedom:

So I would appreciate it if you just if you let it go and I feel like more of adult when, you know everyday I can...um...plan my schedule without worrying about, um, what other people will think.

However, it must be recognized that for some dyads in both groups, the interaction was in the opposite direction, with the mother encouraging the daughter towards independence, sometimes even when the daughter was reluctant to take it on. In either case, these findings support the claim of Lempers and Clark-Lempers (1992), who found that negotiation of independence and redefinition of relationships continues into emerging adulthood, where many parents continue to figure prominently as a source of affection and instrumental aid.

In particular, the mother's involvement in providing instrumental aid in the form of assistance with financial matters was commonly observed in both groups of dyads. Though many of the daughters wanted more freedom with their friends and curfews, most of them welcomed the fact that their mothers continued to take care of the bills. Many of the mothers continued to have control of the daughter's financial matters. In the dyads in which this was the case, the daughters did not seem to mind relinquishing this piece of financial control.



Yeah. And I want my own independence. And I can fit it into my own schedule without having to bring you in. Except sometimes - you're really picky about that VISA card.

This vacillation between wanting independence and also wanting the mother's continued involvement is also consistent with existing research. Most emerging adults have areas or periods of their life in which they are quite 'adult' and others where they regress to more child-like functions (Cohen, et al., 2003).

Overall, the ways that adulthood were conceptualized by these two sets of mothers and early emerging adult daughters were similar in some ways, but distinct in others. The ability to make decisions independently and the presence of an active negotiation between daughter self-responsibility and mother involvement emerged in similar ways for the two groups. What was different between majority culture dyads and minority culture dyads was in the importance attached to living independently and romantic relationships, as adulthood was conceptualized. Living independently was a salient aspect of adulthood for the mothers and daughters in the majority culture group but was distant, if present at all, for the mothers and daughters in the minority culture group. Romantic relationships were an important theme in several of the dyads (from both groups) although differences in values shaped views about them. For example, a few of the daughters in the majority culture group spoke about moving in with their boyfriends, but none of the daughters in the minority culture group did. Not surprisingly, these conceptualizations of adulthood carried through into the types of transition to adulthood projects that the two sets of dyads engaged in over the course of their research involvement.

*Types of Projects*

Participants engaged in a variety of joint projects related to the daughters' transition to adulthood. Projects that emerged as similar across the two groups included transitioning into university, negotiating age-appropriate levels of independence and figuring out appropriate parenting for daughters who have proceeded beyond adolescence. These projects were the only ones that emerged in the majority culture group. Although all these projects were present for minority culture dyads as well, it should be noted that a number of additional projects also emerged in this group, specifically projects relating to faith and culture.

*Transition to university.* Research reveals that a traditional marker for achieving adulthood is actually the completion of school, so the decision to go for further education would be the first step towards the achievement of this marker (Cohen, et al., 2003). The literature also shows that the transition to university is a common one for emerging adults in British Columbia, with 80% of young people within the province having earned at least one post-secondary credential (Andres, 2002).

Consistent with existing research, a project that commonly emerged for dyads in both groups was to work on the daughter's transition to university or college. Though many of the dyads worked together to achieve this project, there appeared to be a discrepancy between mothers' and daughters' expectations about university studies and life. Many of the daughters had a very simplistic view of course, residence and meal plans all falling in to place. As this daughter from the majority culture group mentioned, she is not particularly concerned about receiving a place in residence, "Dude, like, I'm gonna apply, but if I applied, even later in the year, it's guaranteed. They'll kick some

third year out... is what they'll do. They've got, like, a -load of housing." On the other hand, mothers often attempted to balance this simplistic view of the transition to university with a voice of experience. In a self-confrontation, one mother from the majority culture group described wanting to prepare her daughter for the myriad of challenges she may face, living away from home, "I guess I was trying to sort of get her to think a little bit about next year, and, you know, when you get to university, it's, you know things open up so much." Another mother, this one from the minority culture group, echoed this desire to prepare her daughter:

I sort of see that, um, I think there would be more of a transition when she gets into university, in terms of, um...sort of the, like, her after-school time, I guess. There's gonna be a lot more happening for her, and while we'll know where she is and all that sort of stuff, I think we, you know, there's so much more she's gonna be doing on her own, um, than she does now, just because of the nature of university. Um, you know, obviously she'll be probably home a lot later on weekends. (laughs) And you know, so I think that kind of, there'll be that kind of transition, I think, when she starts university, and I mean she, I can see it, because I've been there, but, you know, she may not see it yet. But I can tell that it'll be an exciting time.

Most of the dyads that identified the transition to university as their primary project related to the transition to adulthood during that period of their lives were able to maintain their focus on this project. In fact, several of them achieved this project over the course of their research involvement, with daughters having begun university studies, and were settling into their new lives, either away from home or simply their new lives as

university students living in the family home. One daughter from the minority culture group, reviewing her progress at the end of her research involvement noted:

I just, you know, tried to get used to university, whereas I already did that and I'm kind of comfortable with this university life so I started, you know, giving my time out to volunteering and to, you know, take part in, you know, my program and faculty.

*Independence.* Another project that emerged in both groups of dyads was the project of independence. Arnett (2003) found that this was the primary characteristic that defined the achievement of adulthood, and that this definition is evident cross-culturally. In this study, negotiating independence tended to involve a 'give-and-take' between mothers and daughters, accompanied by a desire to maintain at least some level of support and relationship in many of the dyads. Both mother and daughter engaged in trying on and testing out the new boundaries, which often involved empowering the daughter to make more of her own decisions. For example:

Mother: Do you feel that mom is - is giving enough space so that you can sort of sort things out?

Daughter: Yeah.

In both groups, there was often an emphasis on the mothers providing more trust and support, in light of their daughters growing independence. As one mother described it:

You're open with me to anything and I hope that you know that I trust in you and that's why I don't ask you. You know I trust completely that when you tell me "I'm going to be late because I'm going to go to this" and that I

trust, so I hope that you know that and you can tell me anything cause I have all the, my best interests in you.

Although the existence of independence projects was a similarity between the groups, the meaning of independence within those projects differed between dyads in the majority culture group and the dyads in the minority culture group. An element of participants' independence projects that was more predominant in the majority culture group was the tendency to equate independence with separation, especially from the perspective of the daughters. With one exception, this was not true of the mothers and daughters in the minority culture group. In the following example, one of the daughters with a majority culture background expressed a clear message that the need for contact was more her mother's than her own.

Mother: OK, how often do you think we might talk to one another?

Daughter: Oh my god, you're gonna call, like, everyday for the first month.

No, I don't know, like...

Mother: It's true though, we might talk to one another quite often.

Daughter: Um, I guess. I don't know. You're, you'll pay for my cell phone bill. You can decide. (laughs).

This daughter's self-confrontation revealed her perspective even more clearly. She claimed that although her mother would miss her when she went away to university, she would not miss her mother at all.

Another extreme example of this link between independence and separation that was evident in the majority culture group was the situation of one dyad where the relationship was punctuated by high levels of conflict. The daughter perceived the mother

to be highly controlling and that her only option to achieve independence was to move in with her boyfriend, creating a physical separation of herself from her parents. By the end of the study, this daughter had all but achieved the independence in the sense of separation, to the point where she and her mother had little more to discuss.

Daughter: Yeah, we don't talk about anything.

Mother: What?

Daughter: We don't talk about anything at all.

Mother: Well, what is there to talk about?

In contrast to the tendency to equate independence with separation, mothers and daughters within the minority culture group tended to define independence primarily in terms of the daughters' functional skills, such as being able to take care of their own finances, be able to meet their own transportation needs and make responsible decisions for one's self. For these dyads, independence projects tended to revolve around developing the ability to live by oneself, emanating from the daughter's desire to separate emotionally from the parent.

*Independence and values.* Another element of independence projects that was unique to the mothers and daughters from a minority cultural background was a linkage between independence and values, and the shared perception that the mother knew the daughter better than most other people. Specifically, although mothers and daughters jointly worked on promoting the daughters' independence, they also sought to retain the underlying values of the family. This theme is emphasized in the following statement made by one of the mothers in a joint conversation with her daughter.

I know the values you have, and some of your friends mightn't share those values. And they will encourage you to do something that would be contrary to what you would, want to do, but sometimes, I know you don't, you don't succumb to peer pressure but sometimes you find it out yourself. So, I think it's good that we can talk about it, so I can reinforce, yeah, you're right, you know, you doing, you're on the right track or, you're thinking the right way and so.

During her self-confrontation interview, this mother explained her motivation for discussing values and peer pressure with her daughter.

Mother: You know that, um, 'cause of course she talks to her friends too, but, you know, it's sort of, you know, they might have, and I think over time too, like, they probably, her core friends now probably do have the same values, but I think over time, that will change.

Researcher: Hm-mm.

Mother: Um. But she's pretty determined so far, anyway. So I, I just wanted to sort of, explain to her that that's fine. She, she's not one to succumb to peer pressure.

Although this process involved the daughter making decisions more independently, there remained a strong emphasis on maintaining a connection with the family's values.

The literature reveals that most emerging adults view their independence from their parents' beliefs and values as a good and necessary thing (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). Although the daughters in the minority culture group questioned other aspects of their lives (e.g., curfews, access to independent transportation, and romantic relationship

advice), they did not appear to have a desire to deviate from their family's religious beliefs or other cultural values. There are at least two possible explanations for why the findings in this study differed from previous research in the literature. First, the daughters in this sample were at the younger end of emerging adulthood (17-19 years old). It is possible that the process of seeking different values will not fully emerge until later on in this developmental stage. Additionally, 94% of the participants in the Arnett and Jensen (2002) study were not from minority cultures. Perhaps the desire to differentiate oneself from parental values is a particularly North American tendency? This latter possibility may also explain why the theme of maintaining the family's values during the process of seeking independence was not strongly present in the majority culture group.

*Parenting.* The final type of project that was identified as present in both groups was engagement in a parenting project. This typically involved the dyad engaging around the mother attempting to shift her parenting to ways that were more appropriate to the daughter's new developmental stage. For some, the parenting project involved adapting existing rules and expectations to allow for the daughter's increasing need for independence. One mother spoke about her new role in her daughter's life.

Yeah. I really think it's important to add to kid's knowledge about, you know, what they're doing by giving them sort of ideas to explore, but to let them actually make their decisions.

Other mothers experienced difficulty achieving this flexibility and acceptance of changing roles, which often led to conflict.



Like as a parent I want to be supportive but at the same time I kind of trying to teach them... kind of where do you come in and provide that cushion or safety net and where to you kind of step back a little bit.

For many of the mothers in both groups, it was an ongoing challenge to redefine their own roles in the lives of their daughters as they transition to adulthood. Although parenting projects tended not to be a major focus of the dyad's joint actions on their own, these projects often occurred in conjunction with the independence projects that were an explicit focus in both groups of dyads. As daughters began to transition to adulthood by becoming more independent, the mothers engaged in this process by changing their parenting.

*Spiritual involvement.* One emergent project that was unique to the minority culture group was that of spiritual involvement, which emerged in five of the six dyads. Although participants did not focus on these projects to a large extent, it was an important project in this group. Spiritual involvement projects ranged from attending temple together on a regular basis to numerous mentions during the joint conversations and a strong emphasis on spirituality-related activities during the monitoring period. For one dyad, spirituality was extremely important and influenced almost all aspects of the transition to adulthood. The daughter explained this influence as follows:

Cause you know not every family's Christian but basically we make our decisions and our talks are around what God wants us to do and um, like, just him leading us... To do, you know, every day we ask for him to direct our paths.... Yeah, and, and um, like, I don't really think about, a lot about

the future or have a lot of expectations. I mean I do have dreams. But if God's plan is something else, then I can't do anything about it.

Her mother echoed this statement that God had a plan for her life, and that all things would be best achieved if they were in line with what God wanted.

For children come to be adult, they follow God's leading. And they search which way God likes us to do. Sometime if we decide what we want more, but if that's not good for God, he can, God cannot, you know, help us to be true. If we know which one is the good for God and which one God wants, wants to, us to do, OK, that's easy, to reach.

This dyad seemed to have very high agreement on the role of God in their lives. They also reported having a strong relationship, based in large part on their shared spiritual beliefs. In fact, all of the mothers and daughters in the minority culture group spoke about their relationships as being very close and connected. Since many of them were actively spiritually involved, they spoke about their faith being a common and special bond they shared. Within their faith communities, some of these dyads participate in activities and volunteer work together, which may further strengthen their bond. Research also shows that many religious institutions disseminate the idea that positive relationships among family members are desirable (Pierce & Axinn, 1998). It may be a part of their spiritual beliefs that family is an important gift to be cherished, and that a harmonious relationship should be a priority.

*Cultural involvement.* Several of the participants in the minority culture group, but none of the participants in the majority cultural group described active cultural involvement as part of the transition to adulthood process. One manifestation of cultural

involvement was that the mother's cultural background provided many of the expectations and values for the dyad, in addition to the dyad's spiritual involvement. One of the daughters illustrated her desire for participation in her mother's culture by having her mother teach her Japanese as a part of her transition to adulthood, which would aid her in entry into the world of work.

Yeah, I would really like you to teach me Japanese. You said you were gonna make up those sheets—well, you didn't say. I asked you to and you said okay to making those, like coming up with lessons to teach me, because I think it would be really helpful if I had that and then I'd be more confident about going to apply to a Japanese restaurant because that Japanese restaurant is always advertising for help.

Another aspect of cultural involvement was identification with the mother's culture of origin and having positive sentiments about belonging to this culture. Most dyads, even though the daughters were born and raised in Canada, showed a desire to participate more actively in their cultural heritage, rather than separate themselves from it. For example, the participant who sought to learn Japanese also reported

I'd like to work in a restaurant. I think it'd be fun. The thing is, what restaurant would I work in and a Japanese restaurant is one of the ones I'd like to work in, just because it's more fun there and the food's more interesting and you know, Japanese people are very—they're polite, you know?

A few of the daughters in the minority culture group also expressed a desire to maintain a connection to their mothers' culture of origin, in conjunction with

transitioning to university or planning for future independent living. One daughter expressed this desire for connectedness to her culture when she went to university: “I want to try a cultural...club. Do they have, like, a Trinidadian club?” The joint participation in a minority culture seemed to be a bonding point for the dyads in this group, and was mostly spoken about in a very positive light by both the daughters and mothers.

From these data, it would appear that many participants in this group were not only engaged in transition to adulthood projects, but also ‘culture projects’ as they pursued their other projects. These have been defined by Young and colleagues, in their work on career development projects in Chinese-Canadian families, as “goals and projects that can be explicitly labeled as cultural” (2003, p. 299) and involve such things as acknowledging the bicultural nature of their lives in Canada, and incorporating one’s cultural heritage into their sense of identity. Although none of the dyads used the language of “culture project,” their cultural involvement appears to fit within Young and colleagues’ definition.

Overall, the kinds of projects that emerged for the two groups of mothers and daughters appeared to be quite distinct from each other. The projects pertaining to faith and culture were unique to the minority culture group. At the same time, the similarities that emerged cannot be ignored. Both groups emphasized the importance of continued education and career development, and negotiating independence.

*Joint Action and Relationship*

The third question addressed in this study dealt with similarities and differences in the ways that participants engaged together and related to each other during their pursuit of transition to adulthood projects.

*Joint activities.* Many of the dyads, particularly those in the minority culture group, emphasized the importance of doing mother-daughter activities together, both in terms of achieving their projects but also in terms of their day to day relationship. These activities ranged from everyday chores or outings to actively planning and researching tasks important to specific aspects of the transition to adulthood, like getting into university.

Mother: You just have to do some research [regarding a job & car payments], and you have to get on the internet, and check out, you know, what, what it would cost.

Daughter: Will you do that with me?

Mother: Sure... and then if you, you know, decide that you want to look into something and, and do that.

However, there were some exceptions to this pattern that must be recognized. During the self-confrontation interviews, two of the daughters in the majority group described themselves as not needing or wanting to engage in activities with their mother (this is despite the fact that information from monitoring logs and other data sources revealed that they did, indeed, engage actively with their mothers around specific transitions, such as applying to university and leaving home). The other exception is that the quantity of joint activities tended to taper off in a few of the dyads over time, as mothers became busy, or daughters found full time employment or became busy with

university. This tapering was present in both majority culture dyads and minority culture dyads, but not to a sufficient degree to permit the judgement that it was “common” in either group.

*Promoting independence.* Given the fact that independence was a major part of the way that dyads defined adulthood and that many dyads across both groups had projects related to developing independence, it is not surprising that many of the actions that participants undertook in the study revolved around promoting independence. One similarity that emerged is that many of the mothers in both groups continued to provide their input on their daughter’s decisions and choices, even when it was not welcome. The following mother, from the majority culture group, had some opinions about time-management that were not necessarily shared by her daughter. Despite this disagreement, the mother willingly shared her concerns with the daughter.

Mother: It’s not that I don’t think you have good time management. I think that you still try to do too much in that time. And, uh...

Daughter: I try to jam pack—you know - action every minute of the day.

Don’t wanna waste it.

Several of the daughters, particularly those from the majority culture group, felt frustrated with the process of defining these new boundaries of independence. They felt they had to negotiate a little more actively, by having conversations about their independence needs. This daughter from the minority culture group illustrates her bid for independent decision-making.

But sometimes I feel like you don’t—you worry about me too much, like, when you worry about me too much I feel like I’m 12 years old...you don’t

think I am old enough to....to....to make my own decisions. That makes me feel like I'm very young and immature...Because I thought when you're an adult, you get to make your own decisions and you're free of any parental, um, guidelines or something.

This pattern of interacting appeared to be one where the daughters were pulling, and sometimes struggling to achieve more independence. As the daughters pulled, mothers sometimes resisted, but sometimes let go. Most of the daughters in this group had already achieved many elements of functional independence, and many of them sought increasing emotional independence as well. One daughter describes her feelings about going home for the holidays:

Well, if you wanna see me, then I'll come back. If you don't, then I'll stay there.

If you don't want me to come, then I'll stay there, I don't care. I'm not flying myself home; I'll just stay there the whole time. I really don't care.

In contrast to this pulling, the dominant pattern of acting to achieve independence projects in the minority culture group was a tendency for mothers to push (in the sense of actively encouraging and challenging) daughters to take on more independence, sometimes beyond what they were comfortable with. Many mothers in this group continued to provide for their daughter's functional needs. For example:

Like, she studies until 12:00 at night and in the mornings she gets up at 6:00 and she has to do homework, study. Housework, I don't make her do anything. Like, there are no chores that she maybe do at home. I drop her at

school and then I bring her back and I make things easier. I want to make life easier for her so she can concentrate more time on studying.

This finding, however, was not universally consistent throughout the group. In a couple of the minority culture dyads, working on independence projects was led by the daughters, or was a process where sometimes one would take the lead, and sometimes the other would.

The difference in how the two groups engaged around their independence projects may, in part, be due to the different ways that independence was understood in the two groups; Specifically, the fact that participants in the minority group did not equate independence with emotional separation. All six of the dyads in this group reported having and wanting a close and connected mother-daughter relationship. Pearce and Axinn (1998) found that congruence in spiritual beliefs and practices greatly increased the likelihood of self-rating the relationship as positive. Since many of the dyads in the minority culture group were also actively spiritually involved, this could partially account for the highly positive relationship ratings seen in this group.

*Open communication.* A common pattern of action that emerged in both the groups was the daughters' use of their mothers as a sounding board for feedback, and sometimes even for advice. Reciprocally, mothers were, for the most part, willing to serve as sounding-boards and advisors. This openness in communication between the mothers and daughters was re-negotiated on a regular basis, as is evident in the description provided by this mother from the minority culture group.

I don't, I guess there's a little bit of asking me, but I think it's more for me just keeping, you know, having the line communication open, so that these



things will come up. I don't think she sits there and thinks, oh, I should ask my mom how I should go about this. But, I think that, you know, because we talk about it, that you know, she would, you know, it would come up that she's thinking of, doing so-and-so.

Open communication during engagement in joint projects has also been observed in previous action project research, being reported in Young et al's (2006) study of younger adolescents and parents and Domene et al's (in press) comparative study of mother-daughter and mother-son action around career projects. It would appear that, even with this somewhat older sample, maintaining open lines of communication remains an important component in the process of achieving joint projects.

*Conflict.* A facet of the transition to adulthood projects in the majority culture group was the presence of expressed conflict between the mothers and the daughters. Although two of the four dyads described their relationship as being close and connected initially, conflict emerged as they engaged in their projects over time.

Mother: Okay, so what else are we doing for your transition to adulthood?

Daughter: You aren't doing anything. You just come home, yell at me for not picking up my coat.

Mother: Well that's true.

Daughter: And then bitch about your messy house and the fact that we have a giant snake living in the basement.

Mother: (laughs) Okay, well that's what I do. What are you doing?

Daughter: I'm pretending you don't exist.

In this case, as in many of the instances of conflict in the data set, the conflict appeared to be a means of distancing from the mother, and related to efforts to achieve independence through separation.

The other two dyads within the majority culture group characterized their relationship as being not close emotionally, right from the start, and their interactions were wrought with conflict on an ongoing basis. During their final interview, one mother from a dyad with a particularly conflictual relationship informed her daughter that they were not going to talk about their fights during the interview, because it had nothing to do with the transition to adulthood. Her daughter replied:

Oh maybe you don't think that but maybe it actually does. Maybe it's showing how we communicate and that can show the transition phase...that seems logical...you know, I mean. The fact that we're always arguing with each other might be a sign of my, of our independent personalities.

These conflicts may be serving multiple purposes in the mother-daughter relationship, including serving as a way for the daughter to draw away from dependence on her mother and to achieve independence through separation. This is consistent with existing research demonstrating that the early age transitioning adolescents tend to have more conflictual relationships with their parents, but that as they enter their twenties, most transitioning children reported an improvement in their relationships with both of their parents (Thornton, Arbuch & Axinn, 1995).

Conflict in the minority culture group was not noted as frequently, or to the same level of intensity as the majority culture group. This could be due to the presence of actual closer, less conflictual relationships, the fact that independence was not equated

with separation in this group, or simply a function of cultural discomfort with expressing conflict or revealing a lack of harmony to outsiders.

Similar to the findings for the minority cultural group in this study, Young et al.'s (2003) study of joint projects in Chinese Canadian families also revealed a pattern of reducing conflict by acquiescing and identifying with parental perspectives, at least in part out of a desire to show respect. This is intriguing, given two other findings from previous research. First, moderate levels of conflict and emotional distance are seen as functional in transforming the unilateral parent-child relationships of middle childhood to more mutual relations of late adolescence and young adulthood (Holmbeck, 1996). Additionally, conflict has also been observed to be a normal part of parent-adolescent engagement in joint projects and does not appear to be linked to the degree of progress that is made on the project (e.g., Domene, et al., in press). However, neither of these studies had samples that adequately reflected the cultural backgrounds of the dyads in this study's "minority culture" group. How functional conflict (or the lack of it) is in the process of transitioning to adulthood for these kinds of families remains an open question. The one clear answer that has emerged thus far is that cultural background appears to matter in understanding the links between conflict and joint projects related to the transition to adulthood

The question of the function of conflict across different cultural groups is an important one to address, given the fact that conflict styles and the emotional climate of the home have been shown to have potentially serious impacts on the emerging adult during their transition. Specifically, early emerging adults are at a higher risk for developing depressive symptoms or heightened expressed anger if their families had high

levels of expressed conflict (Galambos, et al., 2006). Furthermore, aversive parent-adolescent relationships – in particular, high levels of adolescent-parent conflict – predict a range of psychosocial problems during adolescence, including drug and alcohol use, delinquency, and premarital sexual relations (Smetana, Abernathy & Harris, 2000).

### *Conclusions*

In summary, this study revealed a number of interesting findings about the meanings and subjective understandings that mothers and daughters constructed around their transition to adulthood. Every dyad in the majority culture group listed independent living, and independent handling of finances as important characteristics of adulthood, which are consistent with the literature. Dyads from both groups emphasized the importance of the daughters making their own decisions, and seeking support from their mothers when needed. A few daughters in both groups mentioned that having a romantic relationship was an important part of becoming an adult. The major difference that emerged was that all minority culture dyads expressed a cultural, and in most cases, faith-related meaning surrounding their transition to adulthood, whereas none of the majority culture dyads did so. The emergence of spiritual and cultural projects as important in the transition to adulthood process of some young women, highlight issues that are often understated in the existing literature: spirituality and culture can be important to young women's transition process. These findings emphasize the importance of attending to multiple contexts in the lives of these emerging adult women.

In terms of the transition projects that participants engaged in, some dyads in both groups identified the transition to university as their primary joint project, which makes sense given the fact that all the daughters were between 17 and 19 years. Independence

projects were also commonly found in both sets of dyads, although there were somewhat different understandings of what independence involves across the two groups. One project that was evident in the minority cultural group but did not emerge in the other group was a project pertaining to values and faith, and their impact on decision-making.

The final question addressed in this study pertained to the interactional style and actions that mothers engaged in as they pursued their transition to adulthood projects. Both groups were similar in that the primary activity that they engaged in was to have conversations about their projects. A focus for many of the conversations dealt with advice giving and seeking. In the majority culture group, all of the daughters were pushing for independence to some degree. By contrast, in the minority culture group, only two out of six dyads showed the daughters pulling for independence; the other four were hesitating and needing to be pushed by their mothers.

#### *Future Directions and Implications*

*Directions for research.* These findings provide some insight into the transition to adulthood projects of two groups of mothers and daughters: one with a European cultural background, and the other from a range of cultural backgrounds that can be considered minorities in Canada. The comparative analysis offers a clearer sense of some of the similarities and differences that are present as the dyads from minority and majority cultures worked together to facilitate the daughters' transition to adulthood. The themes that arose in both groups contribute to the existing literature on emerging adulthood. Given the lack of literature on the transition to adulthood in the context of belonging to a minority cultural group and having an active faith involvement, these findings provide a potential starting point for further systematic investigation on this topic.

Specifically, the larger study from which these data were drawn was focused on transition to adulthood in general, with culture, and to a lesser extent active spiritual involvement, spontaneously emerging as important contextual features. Participants were not specifically asked about how their spirituality or cultural background influenced the transition to adulthood. Future researchers could inquire about the role of spirituality and/or culture in the process more directly, in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the many ways that the culture of their family may influence young women's process of becoming adults.

Also, five of the six the dyads who self-identified as spiritual were actively involved in Christian communities. It would be interesting to determine the conceptualizations of adulthood, transition projects, and joint actions of mothers and daughters from other religious communities and faith backgrounds. It would also be important to have dyads from the majority culture who were actively spiritually involved, as well as dyads from a minority culture who were not. This would add to the themes revealed in the present study's findings, and would be interesting to note if they are similar or different.

Another direction for future research would be exploring the joint actions and projects that fathers and their children engage in, surrounding faith, culture and the transition of young people to adulthood. Given the work of Russell and Saelbel (1997) and others suggesting that fathers and mothers interact with sons and daughters in unique ways, examining the transition projects of father-daughter dyads is necessary to expand the picture of how young women and their parents jointly conceptualize, negotiate, and work towards achieving the transition to adulthood. Moreover, the comparative analyses

that are possible within the action-project method make it relatively easy to design a study aimed at exploring the patterns of similarity and difference in the transition to adulthood projects of mother-daughter dyads and father-daughter dyads.

*Implications for practice.* Given the descriptive, situated nature of the action-project method, and the fact that this study focused on normal developmental processes, this study provides a contribution to the research in counselling psychology. This study has contributed to knowledge of mother-daughter dynamics during a critical age period. The observed ways that minority culture dyads and majority culture dyads interacted around these particular projects may reflect the ways that they interact more generally. This study also provides a contribution to counselling psychology practice, by emphasizing the importance of attending to multiple facets the social and spiritual contexts of young clients. Knowledge about these dynamics will be helpful for practitioners who are seeing emerging adult female clients and their mothers for many issues, but particularly when the presenting problem relates to transitioning to university, negotiating appropriate independence, or figuring out how to act as a parent to someone who is becoming an adult. It also stressed the important of counsellors having multicultural and 'multi-spiritual' competencies in their practice. For many of these young women, spirituality and culture greatly influenced their values and relationships. It is important for counsellors to be both knowledgeable about these important contextual factors and amenable to inviting such conversations into counselling work. The findings also offer insight into the range and subtle differences in the unique meaning of independence for each of the dyads. It is evident from this study that the almost stereotypical desire for independence that is expressed during this developmental period

can actually mean very different things: negotiating and forming a less child-like relationship; developing the skills to function apart from parents in daily life; or achieving a greater degree of emotional separation. It is important for practitioners to clarify and understand the meaning of independence for their emerging adult clients, as it is not a simple, universally applied definition.

It is also hoped that the knowledge constructed in this study may provide an important preliminary step in the future promotion of faith- and culturally-based resources to facilitate youths' ability to successfully transition to adulthood. This study has confirmed the importance of considering cultural background and understanding the transition to adulthood as a process that occurs jointly between daughters and mothers. This can inform existing psycho-educational interventions designed to facilitate an optimal transition to adulthood for young women, such as Girls' Circle (Steese, Dollette, Phillips, Hossfeld & Taormina, 2005), Keystone Clubs (Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2000), Youth Pathways (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005), and portions of the career planning curriculum of the province of British Columbia's Ministry of Education. Such programs and courses should recognize that how the transition process proceeds, and even what is considered an 'optimal transition,' must take into account young women's cultural backgrounds (with culture defined as including both country of origin and faith background). Additionally, these programs can be adapted to involve mothers to a greater extent, either through concurrent sessions or by having mothers and daughters together for some of the sessions.

### *Limitations*



One limitation of the data set itself is that most of the dyads in the minority culture group comprised members who were also actively spiritually involved, whereas most members of the majority culture group did not self-identify as actively spiritually involved. Complicating this situation is the fact that the dyads in the majority culture group had a greater range of family statuses than in the minority culture group: Of these four families, one was a single parent family and the other was a blended family, with a mother and step-father. In contrast, with the exception of one dyad where the father had recently deceased, all of the mothers and daughters in the minority culture group were from intact families. Research shows that divorce can change the relationship between mothers and daughters. Divorce has a progressive impact on the mother-child relationship, with divorced mothers never gaining as much influence with their child as their married counterparts wield (Hetherington, 1981 as cited in Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

If the purpose of this study was to attribute the identified differences to the variable of “culture,” then spirituality and marital status would confound the interpretation of the results. Fortunately, this study was not designed to make causal attributions, but to provide an in-depth description of mothers’ and daughters’ experiences as they engaged in projects related to the transition to adulthood. Organizing the participants according to their cultural background has proven to be useful in revealing patterns that would otherwise have been obscured. However, it is clear that other research, employing quantitative methods, needs to be conducted to determine whether the emergent patterns of similarity and difference are caused by culture, spirituality, marital status, or any other specific demographic characteristic.

Another limitation is inherent in the socio-economic status of the participants. The majority of the dyads had annual family incomes of over \$75,000, with one dyad below \$20,000 and two dyads not reporting income. The participants were clearly not the “average” Canadian family, in terms of their disposable income. Much of the literature is focused on either middle or low socio-economic status participants. Some of the emergent themes in the present study may be different due to the participants’ financial situations. Examples of this include one dyad’s discussion of buying the daughter a car once she graduates from high school and most dyads’ expectation that the daughters will attend post-secondary education rather than entering the workforce after high school. A greater diversity of socio-economic statuses may reveal some differences in the emergent themes.

There are also some potential methodological limitations in this study. During the monitoring period, there was a wide range of journal participation, from diligent to non-existent. This poses a problem, in that many project related actions may have been omitted from the logs or forgotten in the six month period, despite researchers’ efforts to track progress with regular phone calls to participants. This problem has occurred in previous research (e.g., Young et al., 2006), and it has been recognized that the recorded patterns of actions are representative and illustrative of participants experiences, rather than exhaustive. Similarly, the conceptualizations of adulthood, transition to adulthood projects and the actions and relationships that were described in the present study must be recognized as only some of the experiences and themes that can occur, rather than a comprehensive listing of all the patterns that are possible.

Finally, given that comparative analysis is relatively new within the action-project

method (Domene, 2005), the present study is one of the first to incorporate between-groups comparisons onto the existing action-project framework. Indeed, only one previously published study has used the comparison procedures that were applied here—Domene, Arim and Young’s (in press) examination of mother-son and mother-daughter career development projects in early adolescence. With limited previous research to serve as a guide, there is the possibility that the present researcher team grouped participants in a haphazard fashion, misinterpreted criteria such as practical significance, or arrived at conclusions that are inconsistent with Young and colleague’s action theory must be considered. Fortunately, these risks were reduced by the facts that (a) the developer of the comparative analysis procedure for the action-project method was part of the present research team; and (b) the initial findings were audited by one of the co-developers of action theory, who provided feedback to the research team. It is hoped that the involvement of Dr Domene and Dr Young in the research process has mitigated these potential methodological problems.

Becoming an adult is a necessary and challenging transition in the lives of young women. They often negotiate this transition with the advice and support of their mothers. Their culture (whether majority or minority) plays an important and significant role in their transition to adulthood. Culture may comprise the family’s heritage and possibly spiritual involvement. This cultural involvement can shape the values and influence both the ways these young women conceptualize adulthood and the decisions they will make during their transition. All of these contextual elements - their faith, culture and their relationship with their mothers - help to guide and shape the adults these young women will become.

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## APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF THE WITHIN-GROUPS STAGE OF ANALYSIS

The following descriptions are summaries of the themes that were identified as common or typical of participants in each group, as they emerged out of the intermediary, “within-groups analysis” stage of the comparative analysis.

*Minority culture.* The first stage of comparative analysis was to identify the constructs and themes that were prevalent across (a) the six mother-daughter dyads in the minority culture group and, separately, (b) the four dyads that form the majority culture group. Attention was given to those aspects of the transition to adulthood that were unique to a specific dyad, as well as the themes that appeared across each group as a whole.

In the minority culture group, there were many common projects and meanings pertaining to the daughters’ transition to adulthood. Five of these dyads described being jointly involved in spiritual practices, ranging from religious service attendance, prayer time together, or volunteering within their faith community. For two of the dyads, the impact of spiritual involvement on the transition to adulthood was of great importance, with this theme being continually present in their conversations and other project-related action. They stated evaluating many of their choices in light of their spiritual beliefs and values.

The theme of culture was also very important to most of the dyads in this group. While one dyad mentioned it only once or twice, it was evident throughout the data provided by the other dyads in this group. Like spirituality for most of the dyads, culture seemed to serve as a strong bonding point between mothers and daughters. Several of the daughters spoke, or expressed a wish to learn, her mother’s native tongue. They would

often share jokes about belonging to their cultural group. Many of the daughters were responsible for the care of young or elderly extended family members, which they viewed as being normal given their cultural background, and worked their transition plans around seamlessly. Most of the daughters in this group planned to visit the mother's country of origin after completing high school, sometimes stating that it was important to connect with their heritage.

The theme of renegotiating independence as the daughters entered into adulthood was also clearly evident in this group. This process of negotiation occurred collaboratively with the mother, and tended to focus on finding a new balance that would lead towards a more 'adult' mutual relationship. The focus for many of the young women in this group was to gain functional independence (i.e., learning skills needed for banking, transportation and other independent living tasks). Several of the dyads emphasized the importance of learning these skills, while simultaneously maintaining an emotional closeness between mother and daughter. With one exception, the members of this group did not view gaining functional independence as also necessitating emotional independence. Several dyads in this group also stressed the importance of maintaining a good and close relationship, whatever the outcome in the transition project. Interestingly, for dyads in the group, the autonomy/independence component of the transition to adulthood tended to involve the mother encouraging their daughters, and the daughters having some reluctance to take hold of these new skills and challenges.

A recurring parenting task in this first group was the mothers' struggle to balance the cultural values and practices they were raised with, against the experience of their daughters growing up in Canada. They often questioned the expectations of parents in

Canada, and contrasted to the parenting practices and standards with which they were raised.

*Majority culture.* The second group in this study consisted of the participants who belonged to the majority culture. At this stage of analysis, the predominant theme around the transition to adulthood that emerged for dyads in this group was issues related to independence and autonomy. Many of the daughters in this group defined independence as gaining more separation from their parents, being able to make choices for themselves, and reducing the level of control that they perceived their mothers to be exerting on their lives. Many of the daughters in this group had already achieved some level of functional independence, and were using many of the skills they believed would be necessary for adult living. Additionally, by the end of their research involvement, daughters in this group were either living independently of the family home or just about to do so.

Most of the daughters conceptualized adulthood as involving emotional separation as well as functional independence. In fact, although they often engaged in joint action with their mothers during the process, they tended to view the transition to adulthood as an individual task, rather than a relational one to be shared with their mothers. Several of these dyads identified having quite a conflictual mother-daughter relationship, and hoped that the emotional and physical distance that would occur with adulthood would lessen the conflicts and facilitate the development of a better mutual relationship. Relationally, the conflict as a means of communication served a dual purpose; a means of connecting a distancing.

In this group, the transition projects were not predominantly initiated or maintained by the mother. Instead, two patterns emerged. Sometimes, daughters tended

to initiate, often striving for more freedom and control than their mothers were comfortable with. At other times, mother and daughter were in agreement, with a mutual engagement in promoting the daughter's independence. All of the daughters in this group viewed their mother's input as important, but most wanted to receive it on their own terms. Several admitted to appreciating and liking the mother's support in self-confrontations and telephone contacts, despite expressing frustrations that may have given the opposite impression in their observed and recorded actions.



APPENDIX B: NOTES FROM THE WITHIN-GROUP ANALYSIS TEAM

MEETINGS

*Within-Group*

*Minority Culture Group*

Projects.

3002- **Transition to Uni** work together, actively building a plan for the daughter that may be applied once high school ends.

planning for after HS: provincial exams, getting into uni. Then, maintenance / adjusting to uni; including managing school demands and still actively engaging in a social life

Other projects:

- **Independence/separation**- strike a balance between desiring her mother's input (validation) and being independent...the daughter includes deciding how much of her life should be negotiated with the parents; negotiating independence & how much to share with parents. Dtr has conflicting goals of seeking support and wanting independence
  - daughter pulling, mother holding back
- **Relationship**: desire to work on an adult mother-daughter relationship, as it shifted over time, and in relation to other people in dtr's life)

Some change in explicit (uni planning), but not in underlying. Original project attained

3007- **Future Planning** "working together to support the daughter in pursuing her dreams and goals, and with God's guidance to implement her path in life over the next several years, which includes education, marriage, children, and career"

general broadening of experiences in all areas, with encouragement and specific instrumental support from mother. God an integral part of both their lives, including joint activities (e.g., prayer), and as a guide to what paths to take.

Other projects:

- **Parenting:** The parent's actions and intentions were an integral component of this transition project. Not only did the mother help the daughter move toward her transition goals, but she reflected on her own process of dealing with the daughter becoming an adult.
- **Independence/Relationship** the daughter's independence is embedded. The mother-daughter relationship enhanced the daughter's progress toward independence (as defined by her), with their strong connection and shared values facilitating the jointness of goals and actions related to the transition project. ...  
mother pushing (but mixed feelings), dtr not really pulling- daughter does not feel the need to separate from the mother in order to be independent (except towards end of monitoring)

No change, progress was made

3025- **To negotiate a shift in their relationship with both mother and daughter trying on new roles.** (i.e., independence / relationship). Initiative at home (e.g., taking care of cousins); being more honest in relationship with mother... more like equals; more life experiences – driver's licence, summer job)

Dtr pulling, mother ambivalent- pushing (experiences) and holding back (own role).

Other projects:

- **Values/Faith:** Mother expected Dtr to uphold the values and standards that she learned from her family
- **Parenting:** Partly because of her strong wish to protect and comfort the daughter, the mother experienced ambivalence about letting go of her authority in order to give the daughter space to take risks and make mistakes. However, over time she reported that she was able to make changes in her parenting approach.

No change (despite dtr's perception); progress attained.

3027 – **Independence / Communication:** Promoting the daughter's independence by means of collaboration and cooperation; negotiating when there are differences of opinion, and working together to find solutions when challenges arise.

mother supports the daughter by offering her thoughts, opinions, and ideas when the daughter shares her experiences.

Other projects:

- **Parenting:** mother is self-reflective of her parenting practices, modifies them as dtr demonstrates responsibility. Dtr allows mtr to do so by being responsible; by end of project is giving mtr feedback on improving her parenting.

3029 **Independence:** A joint effort to help the daughter further develop her independence; mother guides, gives advice and educates the daughter so that she can develop key life skills, and the daughter seeks to be heard and understood, while actively considering and appreciating the mother's support.

Employment; finances/income; developing skills/experiences for future career;

“maturity”

Other projects:

- **Relationship:** daughter experiencing frustration towards the mother’s lack of understanding and mother becoming frustrated with what she perceives as the daughter’s immaturity and unnecessary self-doubt  
Mtr pushing, dtr ??? (seems like holding back)
- **Cultural project:** learning Japanese, getting more closely connected with that part of her bicultural heritage (Japanese mother, English father), exploring working in a Japanese restaurant

3030 - **Continuing to maintain a close and supportive relationship** that will facilitate taking on more adult roles. They have a very close relationship, and want to maintain it but simultaneously, the mtr wants the dtr to become less dependent / needing of mother’s approval.

Other projects:

- **transition to university.**
- **Independence:** functional (transport & independent travel, cooking skills, decision-making) and emotional (less reliance on each other)
- **Career development?:** extensive volunteering in order to enhance CV, for future academic / career purposes.

*Meaning of adulthood.*

3002: **Action:** university; new relationship with mother, role with family; away = move to basement; change in curfew / use of car; romantic relationships & trust / openness; more responsibility for finances.

Mother: greater responsibilities and decision-making; financial independence. To the mother transitioning does not necessarily include moving out of the family home. She describes the process as coming in “stages” and views her daughter as being a few years away from adulthood.

Daughter: “being more independent from your parents, being out there on your own, to provide for yourself, to have a job, living on your own, and getting your groceries and stuff like that”. Caretaking obligations (great-grandmother etc).

**Faith stuff:** Not a project, but overall the views the mother and daughter have about life parallel; aligning with their strong foundation in the Catholic faith. The mother considers her daughter capable of making correct decisions with respect to moral/value decisions; the mother feels that her daughter will make good choices, in part due to the guidance provided to her thus far by the family and their shared religion. Daughter sees herself following her parents’ expectations, which simply happen to correspond to her own.

**Culture stuff:** some of the mother-dtr conflict appears to be the result of differences in “Canadian” vs. “Caribbean” parenting practices, and standards for behaviour.

3007: **Action:** mother closely involved, now and into future; mother encouraging independence as practice for adulthood; dtr – developing self/ broadening experience; self-reflection; restaurant experience- opened and ran one for the summer; selecting university courses; brief interactions re: future romantic relationship

Mother: growing up- physical and psychological changes that require preparation (i.e., an active process). Responsibility to society – to care for others, (no longer being taken care of). Education: the early years of adulthood as an opportunity to devote time to getting an education before having the obligation of family. University years as opportunity for her daughter to find good friends for her future social life, and possibly a life partner with whom she can establish a family.

Daughter: learning and practicing behaviors that are appropriate for adults, and letting go of childish and less mature ways of being; responsibilities; relying less on parental assistance and becoming independent; planning ahead and making decisions on the basis of experience; getting an education; job; family; voting and paying taxes. She frequently alluded to education and career, having a family, and social, personal and spiritual growth as important markers of adulthood

**Faith stuff:** joint prayer; dtr developing relationship with God independent of mother; shared values / perspective most of the time (even for dtr's friendships, mostly); God and faith-values as underlying whole transition to adulthood & choices being made (e.g., kind of bf; kind of experiences being chosen).

**Culture Stuff:** This is a Chinese-Canadian and Christian family. The contributions of these cultural factors strongly impacted on the transition project, guiding the values, beliefs, goals, actions, and family relationships.

3025: **Action:** mother re-evaluating own role with dtr, relationship becoming more equal, until eventually will be “friend”; get summer job, get driver’s licence; accepting increased autonomy, independence, & making own choices; balancing school, job, & home responsibilities (pushed into responsibility for cousins); talks/guidance re: romantic relationship; career planning (characteristics of); dtr going out on own, finding own transport.

Mother: attainment of maturity; the ability to take initiative and responsibility for one's choices; evaluate parenting practices with her daughter

Daughter: moving out of the family home; getting a job and supporting herself; taking responsibility for herself and also claiming her independence;

**Faith stuff:** “Although the mother was willing to give the daughter some freedom to reach decisions in her own way, she expected her to uphold the values and standards that she learned from her family”. Dtr teaching music at church; Daughter joined a youth group of single young adults in church who meet on Sundays

3027 – **Action:** “a continuation of what she and the daughter have been doing all along, namely the mother offering guidance, education and support when the daughter needs it while allowing her to make many of her own decisions, and both parents encouraging the daughter to develop the life skills required to carry out the tasks of adulthood.”

Mother re-considering parenting practices in light of dtr's demonstrated maturity; both have a close relationship where they can take criticism from each other, and dtr feels comfortable telling mother stuff.

MTR: one stage of a lifelong process of growth and development. Independent living; skills to live that way "Life skills...I don't know how many years ago we started the new bank account and get them to be responsible financially....Those kind of things."

DTR: Conceptualizes the transition project as becoming independent, taking on responsibilities, and working hard.

**Faith stuff:** looking at life issues like dating / marriage from a Christian perspective.

Prayer and scripture reading together.

**Culture** and religion are not projects per se, but form the context around both projects. In particular the mother actively reflects on Canadian vs. Chinese parenting practices and expectations; and parent-child interactional styles in Canada vs. Singapore)

3029 **Action:** career and education; mtr actively trying to figure out how much she should be involved vs. let dtr take responsibility;

MTR: Developing an independence mindset; financial independence; learning responsibility and necessary life skills. For mtr to find a balance between parenting from a Japanese perspective and a Canadian perspective.

DTR: taking on responsibilities; getting a job; functioning independently; gaining confidence; taking care of household responsibilities & skills; finances

**Faith stuff:** none mentioned



**Culture stuff:** mtr trying to find a balance between parenting from a Japanese perspective and a Canadian perspective; dtr interested in exploring the Japanese side of her culture more

3030 – spending time and doing all kinds of activities together; independent transport-interest in getting driver’s license but finances led to compromise of getting bus pass, traveling more by self by bus; Had no trouble getting into university, or with course-work once in university; both mtr & dtr share details about their lives with each other, though that is declining towards the end of the study (a situation they are both happy with).

According to Mtr, Dtr seems to have achieved a fair degree of functional independence over the course of the research (independent travel & schedule, managing own life in many ways), but is still emotionally (over)reliant on the MTR

MTR: Personal responsibility for life activities and, ability to make own decisions, without relying on mtr’s input) (e.g., making decisions regarding post secondary education, learning life skills such as cooking and cleaning, and learning to make decisions that will help her maintain a good level of balance in her life (between school, friendships, physical activity and relaxation time)).

DTR: The daughter describes adulthood as a time of increasing responsibility, doing things more independently, and “being able to look after yourself.”

**Faith stuff:** Mtr & Dtr attend temple together regularly (presumably Hindu), but their faith involvement was otherwise not mentioned in the study.

**Culture stuff:** Culture was not explicitly addressed by the participants

*Activities.*

3002- Conversations; advice giving & seeking; taking more responsibility / giving more responsibility for school; trip to Barbados, more freedom (e.g, clubbing). Mother helping with pragmatics of getting into uni; negotiating openness, etc; disagreement over socializing vs. school

Context: Some sense of Caribbean vs. Canadian standards. Closeness of family across generations.

3007- Conversation; daily contact, even when physically apart (phone, internet); seeking/receiving encouragement & advice; mutual prayer; dtr self-reflection, thinking/worrying; dtr trying seeking out new experiences & roles; trip to China- connection with roots & family; caretaking role (for relatives from China) as practice for adulthood; opened and ran restaurant for the summer; working together at the restaurant; fun times together (shopping, Mandarin); mtr helping (however she can) with dtr studies; disagreement over socializing vs. school; taking leadership role in church

Context: culture and faith are big influencers. Summer spent with relatives, taking leadership with restaurant was important growth experience.

3025 - Conversations; dtr being more open and honest when expressing dissent / negatives; caretaking role (cousins from El Salvador); mother frequently challenged the daughter to be mature and take responsibility by "pushing" her, reminding her and lecturing; pushing dtr to take on more financial responsibilities (PCall 3); mtr changing

expectations, forcing dtr to do more for self; talking to her more as an adult; church involvement on “equal” level

Context: extended family obligations (cousins coming to stay);

3027 – conversations; discussing things like b-day party, prom, university courses, mother’s relationship with other dtr, dtr’s boyfriend problems; breakfasts out together, devotional time together; learning to drive, getting a visa card & banking responsibilities; coming together around what to do about younger dtr’s behaviour.

Context: cultural background are not a major focus, but rather forms the context around transition to adulthood: mother repeatedly reflects on how she needs to do things differently in Canadian context (as opposed to how things were when she was growing up in Singapore).

3029 – conversations; communication is direct and respectful; mtr sharing from own life experience & providing guidance; dtr selecting activities that will contribute to life goals;

Context: Recent death of father, and financial fall-out from that.

3030 – conversations (mtr feels as if dtr spends too much time sharing the minutiae of her life); civic activities together (volunteering at events; donating blood; helping with elections); walks together, cooking together, sewing together, shopping together, going to library together; applying to & deciding about university, and processing together what dtr is learning;

Context: Father has long-term illness, being cared for by both the mtr and the dtr. Part of mtr's pushing dtr to independence may reflect a perceived need by Mtr to spend more time caring for Ftr & younger sibs (PCall 3)

*Mother-daughter relationship.*

3002 – dtr somewhat pulling away, mtr struggling- sometimes pushing, sometimes holding back. Emotionally close & connected

3007 – Mtr trying to push dtr into adulthood, dtr not really pulling. Close and connected.

3025 – Mtr trying to push dtr into adulthood, dtr not really pulling. Close and connected.

3027 – Both are working together- mother pushing (in terms of teaching and providing support), and dtr pulling (in terms of speaking her mind; getting involved in career-related stuff; taking responsibilities). Egalitarian; mutual support; close and connected.

3029 - dtr hesitating, mtr trying to push; close and connected

3030 - mtr trying to push, dtr hesitating; close and connected (but mtr feeling somewhat stifled, then relieved as dtr gets too busy). Note that the communication is two-way, with mtr using dtr as sounding board, as well as the other way around (perhaps due to father's illness?)

*Majority Culture Group*

*Projects*

3001- **Transition to uni:** “preparations for changes in the upcoming year”... eventually became “facilitating the daughter’s transition to university.”

figuring out what to do next year & where; getting into uni; planning around living arrangements leaving home; figuring out finances; renegotiating their mutual relationship

Other projects:

- **Relationship project:** everything was embedded within a negotiation of how to relate to each other, now and at university. In particular, there is a large emotional undercurrent & conflicting opinions about the emotional side of the transition to uni
  - Dtr pushing away – mtr vacillating between holding back and knowing she has to let go
- **Mother’s transition Project:** As the daughter leaves home, the mother is facing a transition to single life, and choices of where to live/work in the future. The mother perceived her daughter as providing minimal support in dealing with the mother’s half of the daughter’s transition to adulthood. Instead, the mother seeks support for dealing with the transition from her own social network.
- **Independence/maturity Project:** The mother saw the daughter as someone in need of guidance and support, both instrumental and emotional. However, the daughter saw herself as mature and independent, and would only accept the mother’s assistance and support on her own terms (i.e., when she asked her mother for it).

The mother was learning to accept dtr's attitude, despite occasional frustration with the daughter not recognizing things that needed to be accomplished.

Same, project of getting accepted into university as completed, the project of transitioning to university (+ independence, + mother transition) as in progress

3005- **Proximal future planning:** "working together in building an environment that will promote optimal transitions at some time in the future."

employment opportunities and performance; buying a car; whether or not to postpone schooling; balancing socializing, work, schooling... became living in the moment/ enjoying the present; exploring different options/choices in detail, and their consequences

Other projects:

- **Independence Project** – Promotion of the daughter's independence became a major focus of the transitions project, as the daughter sought to assert her own independence, and the mother attempted to facilitate that by helping daughter to be aware of the implications of daughter's choices. Dtr also began to shift from disclosing / communicating everything, to being selective in what parts of her life she told her mtr about.

Both together at first, then dtr withdrawing, mtr allowing

Same focus, but decreased interest / salience: transition put on hold (except for independence / socializing part)

3010: **Transition to uni:** “engaged in making decisions around, and adjusting to the idea of the daughter going to university...” once at uni (away from home), shifted to *adjusting to living independently*.

time management to promote track and academic performance; choice of university; responsibility; leaving home and learning to care for self; balancing busy life (figuring out degree of extracurricular involvement);

Other projects:

- **Becoming a World-class Sprinter:** primarily the daughter’s goal, but supported by mtr; had been on-going through adolescence, but became more of a focus in uni. Mtr had been denied similar opportunities when younger; determined not to deny dtr the opportunity.
- **Relationship project:** Mother and daughter are also maintaining a connection so that daughter can receive support (dtr trusts mtr, likes involvement despite frustration), and so the mother can maintain a sense of purpose in her daughter’s life (mtr needs the relationship).

Mtr & Dtr both pulling at times, drawing close at time

- **Independence project:** dtr wanting to be recognized as independent, and validity of her choices (re: taking on stuff at uni), but also realizing the need for mtr’s support (esp. after illness). Mtr struggling with how much to let dtr’s choices stand, and how much to step in.

Same, substantial progress made, will be losing salience as dtr adjusts more.

3028: **Independence / support:** working towards a level of independence for the daughter through both arguing and actively negotiating given their differences of opinion and personalities.

Career decision / educational choices; life experiences; financial support/independence; serious romantic relationship; leaving home; mother letting go; healthier balance between closeness and independence

Other projects:

- **Relationship / communication project:** The ongoing mother-daughter conflict, which was their primary means of communication, was a linkage serving a relational purpose: It was a way of both connecting and distancing. Figuring out how to relate at this new stage of life. Both want to communicate better, but have difficulty doing so, until dtr leaves home

Mtr pulling, dtr pushing

Same, with the move out of the home as a major turning point

*Meaning of adulthood.*

3001 **Action:** moving out of family home; changing the relationship between mother & daughter (less connected) & adjusting to the move away from home; planning / managing finances; (NB: living apart is, in some sense, already a norm, b/c dtr spends holidays / summers with father in California); dtr to make choices independently (but with mtr's guidance & support).

MTR: managing daily responsibilities of independent living (e.g., housing, working, managing money). Mtr struggles with her role in the process- wanting to encourage



independence, but stepping in b/c she does not perceive her dtr as doing all she needs to (“parental responsibility”)

DTR: independence from everything; separation from your parents; own rules (e.g., curfew). NB: already sees self as (emotionally / cognitively) independent

3005 **Action:** car (transport independence); contributing to finances (and controlling own finances); getting broad experiences & explore different options before committing to a career path; keeping own hours and making own decisions; dtr keeping more of own life private from mtr

MTR: moving out of the home, becoming familiar with the daily realities of independent living, and deciding on a career path to pursue; turning 19 years old as an important marker

DTR: doesn't really have a sense of that, and doesn't WANT to. Knowing what she wants to do with the rest of her life (but not currently a priority)

3010 **Action:** living independently; making decisions for self (and having mtr be OK with that); developing the ability to prioritize and say “no”; still communicating with mtr to share info & get opinions, but just to consider, rather than to always accept (however, more open to parents' advice than in teen years); focusing on sprinting “career;” mtr learning new way to relate to dtr after she left; financial responsibility (if not independence, yet)

MTR: dtr's transition seems surreal "it's hard to believe that my baby is that old...the thought of her going away is really scary to me". As much change for mtr as for dtr.

Educational.

DTR: increasing responsibility and learning to care for her needs; maintaining close relationship with mtr.

3028 **Action:** finishing education and getting into career/work; making decisions and choices on own (from mtr's perspective, this also means making *good* choices); living away from parents; finding a new, more functional, way to relate to each other; serious romantic relationship; independent transportation

MTR: Responsibility for her own schooling; work and financial responsibility. Mtr learning to let go of responsibility for dtr, allowing dtr to act on own

DTR: making own choices; gaining independence; finding own way in life; autonomy and freedom from parental control; moving out; completing education and finding work in a field that reflects her values and interests.

*Activities.*

3001- conversations; mtr encouraging dtr to broaden her perspective & enlarge her perspective; dtr limiting / controlling conversations & interactions with mother; mtr giving advice, dtr seeking assistance, but rejecting advice at other times; joint engagement in university applying and deciding process; mtr providing instrumental support, taking care of details re: move to uni;

3005 – conversations (but level of disclosure & interaction decreased over time); mtr willing to let dtr learn by make mistakes / experiencing consequences of actions; mtr makes suggestins & describes consequences, but dtr gets to decide what to do; dtr choosing to live in the moment & prioritize partying / social life; dropping out of post-secondary; dtr focusing on work to earn \$

3010 – conversations (frequent despite the distance); mtr acting as sounding board; dtr intentionally keeping mtr informed and assuming the best intentions even when annoyed by mtr; mtr taking care of daily hassles so that dtr can focus on priorities (and encouraging dtr to do the same); dtr wanting to get involved in all aspects of uni life, including socializing; mtr giving more responsibilities to dtr; Sprinting career (& mother's own past lost opportunities), which cause a re-shuffle of what is typically associated with adulthood... less emphasis on employment & mtr willing to take care of daily life stuff so dtr can prioritize

3028 – conversations; arguments and fights; dtr actively asserting autonomy and freedom by going against mtr's advice; dtr seeking mtr's assistance when she needs it; mtr trying to listen and validate, but often falling into giving advice and suggestions; mtr's personal work on letting go of daughter; dtr moving in with boyfriend;

Dtr has history of mental health problems, which cause mtr to be very protective of her

*Mother-daughter relationship.*

3001: dtr pushing away – mtr vacillating; not emotionally close: “the house is too small for the two of us...I’ve never been friends with my mum...[I wish she would] just let me go.” relationship becoming closer to equals

3005: both together at first, then dtr withdrawing, mtr allowing; close and connected, but becoming less so over time.

3010: mtr & dtr both pushing at times, drawing close at others; close and connected

3028: dtr pushing away – mtr vacillating; conflictual and reactive, not emotionally close; dtr seems very much the adolescent in her internal processes, despite “adult” actions

APPENDIX C: NOTES FROM THE BETWEEN-GROUP ANALYSIS TEAM  
MEETINGS

*Between Groups*

First analysis.

What is the essence of group one?

- \*Projects: there was not one single thread that could capture all of them, apart from relationship, but all nine groups had this.
- Exclude the 'non-conformist dyad' (maybe), part of the conceptualization of adulthood involves ways to better myself (contribute to society, helping others etc.). View maturity as the main factor, rather than age.
- Project is 'together' and the mother will always be there for the daughter in case she needs them.
- Responsibility was present across both groups.
- \*Independence – mental maturity, realizing your role and how you contribute, it is more process oriented, internal. Less pressure or deadlines to become independent 'on paper.' Independence in terms of who you are. The results of this may look the same (living on own, being married etc.).
- \*Parenting project of the mom thinking about how she is contributing to the dynamic.
- Within the parenting project: also part of the relationship Level of engagement – calmer, connected, more active listening.
- Mutual respect?
- Conceptualization of adulthood: growing up, responsibility, less concrete stuff,

What is the essence of the second group?

- \*Independence - functional independence, moving out, buying groceries, paying bills. Behavioural, 'on paper', concrete markers. More pressure. More deadlines, either a 'pass/fail' and the focus is on outcome.
- \***Transition to university** – present in all of them ? First two more than last one.
- \*Moving out – (much more distinctive than in the faith group) by the end, 3 of the 4 had moved out.
- First daughter was disengaged, Second daughter was disengaged by the final interview, Third was mutual engagement, Fourth extremely disengaged.

Differences between group one and group two.

- Group one, more introspection & process of transitioning (looking at adulthood), versus just completing the motions and actions, and the functional things (e.g., paying bills, buying your own groceries).
- In both: conceptualization of adulthood – occupation and career related, getting an education.
- common theme: finances, group one is growing in to, group two is doing it. (this is an important characteristic in the literature).
- common conceptualization of adulthood – career & education, the idea of a new relationship (only a Project for the active faith ones, part of the definition of adulthood in all of them) that has to exist.

- common theme: making your own decisions and choices (the difference is that in the non-faith group they were doing this more actively ie. the daughter was pulling, and in the faith group this was being thrust upon them 2 out of 3 the mother was pushing the daughter).

*Cross-Themes*

*Second analysis.*

Majority Culture

- Parenting experience more “Canadian.” No culture was explicit in any of these groups; nor was religion.
- Many were conflictual more of a sense for the daughter ‘pulling’ for independence. - -
- Daughters were more initiating/wanting independence.
- ¾ were out of the home by the end of the project.
- ¾ more emotional distance, less emotional dependence from the daughter on the mother.
- Independence being more of a ‘complete break’ (with the exception of Third), and emotional distance.
- Many of them were functionally independent already (Third became functionally independent out of necessity).
- More about ‘me’ than ‘us.’
- Some relationships were largely conflict/distance focused (needing to repair...)

Minority Culture Group

- Involvement in spiritual practices (except non-conformist dyad).

- Ranged from none, going to temple together, all the way to evaluating choices based on their beliefs.
- Seeking of independence & autonomy, more in terms of function & skills (banking & busing) versus an emotional break.
- Possibly starting from a less independent place to begin with (skills alone).
- Be careful about causality statements!
- Focus on relationship... about maintaining a good relationship.
- Daughter is sometimes not taking enough independence.
- Parents being aware of what's expected of parents in Canada versus parents 'back home' (see it sometimes with resentment, some see that it fits).
- Activities were varied, and more variation within the groups than between the groups.