

Not Happy to Decide By Myself:

Cultural Differences and Similarities in College Students' Decision-Making with Parents

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Abstract

This correlational study set out to show east-west differences in parents' role in emerging adults' decision-making and their relations to satisfaction with educational progress and life in three samples (Japanese, Asian Americans, and White Americans). Contrary to hypotheses, Japanese students reported more independent decision-making ("I decide by myself") in life goals than both Asian and White Americans; and satisfaction with education and life was positively correlated to increased parental

Introduction

- ★ The universality of autonomy for happiness has been debated by social and cultural psychologists (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).
- ★ In the transition to adulthood issues of autonomy and a rearrangement of parents' contribution to older youths' long-term planning are at the forefront (Arnett, 2000).
- ★ Cultural differences in parenting styles (Chao, 1994) led us to predict that Asian parents would retain involvement in their older youth's life goals.
- ★ Consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) we also predicted that satisfaction would be positively correlated to independent decision-making.

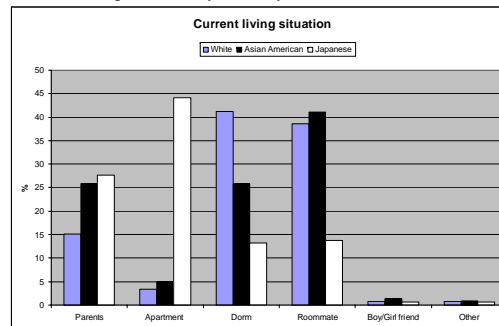
Study Hypotheses

- ① Mean differences in educational decision-making: White Americans were expected to be more autonomous, followed by Asian Americans and Japanese
- ② Cultural Similarities in positive relations between autonomous decision making and subjective well-being

Sample

- *502 College Students
120 White American; 226 Asian Americans; 156 Japanese
- *Mean Age = 20.0 (SD=1.43)
- *62.6% Female
- *Parents' Educational Background
Japanese (M=5.12: graduating 4 year college or more)>
Whites (M=2.23: graduating junior high school or more)>
A. American (M=2.05: graduating junior high school or more)
- *Different Students' Current Living Situation
($\chi^2(10, N = 495) = 149.44, p < .001$)
Whites 41.2%: dormitories
Asian American 41.1%: apartments with roommates
Japanese 44.1%: single apartment

Current Living Situation by Ethnicity



Measures

Subjective Well-Being

(SWB; Pavot & Diener, 1993; 5 items, 4pt. Scale)

If I could have live my life over, I would change almost nothing

Educational Satisfaction

(Chang, 2007; 8 items, 4pt. scale)

The speed at which you are completing your degree

Educational and Life Goal Decision Making with Parents

(Chang, 2007; 20 items 5-pt. scale)

What course I should take

What full-time job I should take

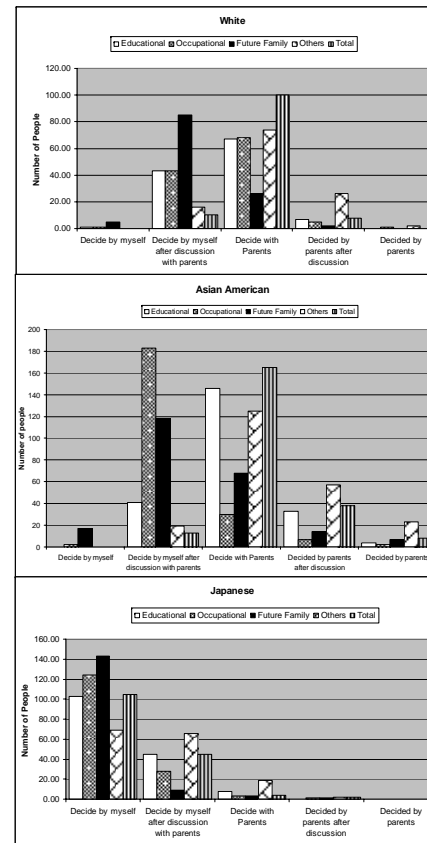
When I should have a baby

Whether I should travel or not

Results and Conclusions

Japanese students decided independently of parents

Responses to Decision Making



Across cultures, satisfaction was HIGHER when parents were more involved with decision-making

Correlation between Subjective Well-Being/Educational Satisfaction and Decision Making.

	Educational Satisfaction	Subjective Well Being
Educational Decision Making	0.22***	0.15**
Occupational Decision Making	0.23***	0.14**
Future Family's Decision Making	0.25***	0.16**
Daily Activities Decision Making	0.22***	0.12**
Decision Making	0.25***	0.15**

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

Fisher's Test indicated (6 out of 60 items had significant differences between cultures, especially between Asian American and Japanese) there were more similarities than differences across culture for correlation between decision making and SWB

Discussion and Limitations

- This study was correlational. Thus, the causal direction of influence can not be determined.
- The sample of parent's educational background and students' living situation were biased, which might influence on results