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Cultural Differences in Parenting Styles and their Effects on Teens' Self-Esteem,
Perceived Parental Relationship Satisfaction, and Self Satisfaction

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Abstract

It is commonly understood that adolescence can be a time when teens attempt to reconcile their own desires and needs with the wishes of their parents. While some adolescents get through this period of time without many problems, others tend to experience many negative effects. It is possible that the parent's role in the relationship may play a part in the development of teenager's self-esteem and self-satisfaction. Cultural values such as the Asian American emphasis on interdependence and family harmony may influence the type of parenting style these parents may choose to adopt. A study was performed with 156 teenagers from central New Jersey to determine the effects of parenting styles on teenagers' self-esteem and overall satisfaction with their parents and themselves. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between race and authoritative parenting style, however, significant differences were found in that Asian American parents tended to be more authoritarian than their Caucasian counterparts. Furthermore, authoritative parenting was found to be associated with higher self esteem and satisfaction. Findings from the study are discussed in terms of the impact of cultural expectations on adolescents' satisfaction with self and with their parents.

Cultural Differences in Parenting Styles and their Effects on Teens' Self-Esteem, Perceived Parental Relationship Satisfaction, and Self Satisfaction

Introduction

Popular psychology often addresses the question of nature versus nurture. Some argue that an environment has the ability to shape a child's lifestyle, personality, self-concept, etc; while others believe that these things are inherent in the child. For most people, a child's parents are the most influential people in their lives up until the teen years. Most children are dependent upon their parents for food, shelter, finances, and companionship for the first 18 years of their lives. Parental love as well as punishments can exert a great influence on children. During the teenage years, however, some children may feel that they have developed a sense of self and would like to break free from their parents. However, the dependency on their parents in other areas of their life could potentially serve as an encumbrance to the teen's true independence. For this reason, the teen's need for independence and the parent's wishes for the teen are often in conflict.

This present study addresses the effects of parenting styles on the teen's self-esteem, self-satisfaction, and satisfaction with their parental relationships. It explores the type of parenting style that leads to a healthy sense of self. It addresses the question of whether or not a strict, authoritarian parenting style really hinders the child from developing a strong sense of self. Conversely, it seeks to find whether or not a loose, permissive parenting style could actually allow the teen to develop a better sense of self. Or perhaps it is a balanced, authoritative parenting style that really provides the healthiest relationship between teenagers and their parents.

Furthermore, this study also addresses the issue of race on parenting styles. In particular, whether or not there is a difference in parenting style among Asian American

parents and Caucasian parents. Cultural values, the parent's status as a first versus older generation immigrants, and lifestyles and morals might also play an important part in the parent's style of interaction with their children.

Background/Previous Research

Parenting Styles

According to Baumrind, there are three types of parenting styles. Authoritarian parenting “attempts to shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct... any deviations will result in “forceful measures to curb self-will” (Baumrind, 1968). Children raised under authoritarian parents are under the absolute authority of their parents, and are stripped of their own independence and freedom to do as they please. Every action and every life decision is decided by the child's parents. Parents hold the attitude that they are the authority figure, and children are encouraged to be submissive at the expense of their own desires. Conversely, a permissive parent “allows the child to regulate his own activities as much as possible” (Baumrind, 1968). Children with permissive parents are often encouraged to exert their own independence and to make their own decisions in life. These children often have very little parental guidance in life's decisions. Parents give up their positions as authority figures and treat their children as their peers with their own agendas. Between these two extremes is authoritative parenting. An authoritative parent “directs the child's activities... in a rational, issue-oriented manner... [and] encourages verbal give and take” (Baumrind, 1968). Children are encouraged to make their own decisions and exert their own freedom, however boundaries are established and compromises with parents must be made. Rather than dictate their child, authoritative parents listen to their child's point of

view and make suggestions and provide direction. Because older children, especially teenagers, have an innate psychological need to assert their independence and develop their independent sense of self apart from their parents, much previous research has concluded that this type of parenting yields the healthiest and most emotionally and mentally stable children- at least for Western cultures.

Cultural Factors

The type of parenting style used by parents may be determined by the parent's own cultural heritage. According to researchers, the primary cultural difference between Caucasian Americans and Asian American culture is the concept of independence versus interdependence. While Caucasian American society embraces independence and emphasizes self-expression, personal uniqueness, and self-sufficiency, Asian society emphasizes interdependence, group solidarity, social hierarchy, and personal humility (Wang & Leichtman, 2000). Teenagers are at the stage in their lives where they want to break free from parental control and assert their own independence. Studies have shown that this assertion of independence can result in greater conflict and "less cohesion with their parents, often with direct negative effects on their psychological well-being" (Collins & Russell, 1991). This effect may be seen more in the cultural demands of Asian American parents.

With regards to personal autonomy, Caucasian American parents are concerned with their child's ability to build a "sense of self" (Wang & Leichtman, 2000). The child's ability to gain independence, assertiveness, and self-expression at an early age is emphasized. Children are offered choices in their daily lives in order to encourage them to practice asserting themselves. Being able to actively influence their own lives provides

these children with a strong sense of self in that it allows them to feel that they are in control of their lives. This feeling of control, in turn, strengthens their self-esteem and makes them happier. Rather than remind children of past experiences that may hurt their self-esteem or make them feel ashamed, Caucasian American parents tend to remind children of past experiences that are of entertainment and affirmation. This acts to protect the child's self-esteem even further (Wang & Leichtman, 2000).

Asian Americans, on the other hand, have a completely different view on personal autonomy. The focus on an interdependent view of the self is what drives Asian American parents to ensure that their children develop a sense of connectedness with their families (Wang & Leichtman, 2000). Personal autonomy is ignored as Asian American parents place a strong emphasis on obedience, reliability, proper behavior, social obligation, and group achievement. In order to preserve harmony within the family unit, children are expected to develop self-restraint and attunement to others. The ability to tell the "face color" of other people is characteristic of a good child. In contrast to Caucasian Americans, Asian American parents often remind children of past transgressions and invoked moral standards and social norms. This results in future obedience and a sense of shame, which may also lead to a decrease in self-esteem. These reprimands act to convey social norms and behavioral standards rather than allow for the child to freely express himself.

Furthermore, Asian Americans place an important emphasis on the family unit (Rothbaum, Morelli, Pott, & Liu, 2000). Adherence to authority reinforces the child's place and security within the family. Children are expected to obey and respect authority, get along with others, and learn good moral character. The concept of "independence" is associated with becoming contributing members of the family rather than developing a

sense of their own self. One woman stated that “Chinese family relations are so strong, and I don’t think you should break it [sic] just because you grow up” (Rothbaum et al, 2000), providing further support for the nature of interdependence within the Chinese culture. Another Chinese woman links herself to her children by stating, “You feel that your kids are part of yourself, kind of an extension” (Rothbaum et al, 2000). This is the antithesis of Caucasian values of independence.

Acculturation

These polar opposite differences between the two cultures can create cultural tensions for Asian American teenagers growing up in the United States. These teens are faced with the challenge of acculturation with the American culture, while trying hard not to upset their more traditional Asian parents. It is found that the ability to maintain identification with “both one’s own culture and the mainstream culture predicted higher levels of self-esteem” (Phinney et al, 1992), and that the “level of acculturation has a dramatic impact on the development of self-esteem” (Caetano, 1987). However, for Asian American teenagers growing up in the United States, trying to compromise the two very different cultures is a difficult, if not impossible, task. The result is often “conflicts between traditional values of parents and the new values embraced by their children” (Buki, Ma, & Strom, 2003) which may affect the psychological well-being of these Asian American teenagers. Having a duo identity may cause a lack of consistency in one’s identity, which may create confusion in these teens as to who they really are. These conflicts “generally begin to occur during adolescence over issues of autonomy and independence” (Laursen & Collins, 1994). This is due to the cultural differences between Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans. While Caucasian American parents support

their child's assertion of independence, Asian Americans view this assertion of independence as a threat to the family bond and harmony that traditional Asian societies embrace. For this reason, the suppression of independence may cause the child to feel depressed in that they do not have the same privileges as their non-Asian peers. Parents' adherence to traditional values was found to be a "positive predictor of depression for Korean American college students but not for European Americans" (Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987).

The difficulty with acculturation may also affect the Asian American teenager's social life. The intrapersonal adjustments and frustrations could affect interpersonal relationships as well. Without a strong sense of self, it is often difficult for one to relate to others in a healthy manner. In a study by Rhee, Chang, and Rhee (2003), "Caucasian students reported having more friends than their Asian counterparts". This finding suggests that Asian American teenagers may have "higher levels of social isolation, greater social rejection, and possibly poorer interpersonal skills" (Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003). This is perhaps due to the fact that Asian Americans were not given the chance to develop their own sense of self, and without this strong concept of the self, it may be difficult to relate to others. The same study further showed that "Caucasian students had a significantly higher level of self-esteem than their Asian peers" (Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003), suggesting that interpersonal skills and the formation of a separate identity may contribute to self-esteem as well.

Furthermore, Rhee and colleagues (2003) found that the ability to communicate openly with parents and express one's own feelings may also be a strong predictor of self-esteem. The study showed that while Caucasian American students were more likely to be

assertive in voicing their opinions to their parents, “Asian adolescents expressed more difficulty discussing problems with their parents, and tended to be more careful about what they say to their parents” (Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003). This is perhaps the Asian American teens are afraid of disapproval from their parents, and in an interdependent family unit, disapproval from the parents is a huge burden on the teen as well. This suppression of emotion and failure to openly express one’s personal concerns may cause bottled up frustration, which may also lead to lower self-esteem and depression. The fact that the Asian adolescents who did communicate more openly with their parents had higher self-esteem confirms this idea (Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003).

Asian American Parenting

Previous research has concluded that Asian American parents tend to be more strict and controlling of their children. Research has found that Asian American teenagers face "unrealistic parental expectations in terms of academic and career achievements; parental overinvolvement in their children's lives; parents' overall tendency to exclude their children in the decision-making process; and negative attitudes towards their children's behaviors and lifestyles" (Lee, 1997; Stevenson & Lee, 1990; Uba, 1994; Way & Chen, 2000). The concept of harmony and interdependence is so strong within the culture that parents feel the need to control their children more since their children’s behaviors, accomplishments, and attitudes are a reflection on the parents. Asian Americans are strong believers in the idea that “children are supposed to sacrifice their own desires for the benefit of the family” (Uba, 1994). If the child’s desires conflict with the desires of the family as a whole, that desire must be suppressed in order to provide collective benefit for the family unit.

Asian American parents “cling to traditional notions of filial piety demanding unquestioning obedience, strict parental discipline, and control of children” (Chiu, 1987; Huang, 1997; Nguyen, 1992). In a study done by Dornbush, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, and Fraleigh (1987), Asian American parents scored the highest on a scale of authoritarian parenting, providing support for the idea that Asian Americans tend to be stricter.

Additionally, Asian American parents exert “more control than European American parents over their children’s selection of clothes, extracurricular activities, and courses of study” (Yao, 1985), which is basically every area of the child’s life. Furthermore, it is “not uncommon to hear about Asian American children whose college major was decided by their parents (Uba, 1994). An extreme case is seen in a college student who could not move out of his parents house because the parent told him that moving out “meant he did not appreciate everything she had done for him” (Uba, 1994).

Asian Americans teenagers are typically stereotyped to be very successful in the academic realms. This has to do with parenting practices as well. Parents often expect a perfect academic record from their children, however, it is found that these expectations of children’s “general academic achievement were often unrealistic and beyond the abilities of children” (Shon & Ja, 1982). This could potentially cause psychological distress and depression in the child because they are constantly reaching for these unattainable goals. In addition, Chinese parents often fail to praise their children for academic achievements, because it is expected of them. The absence of praise and encouragement, in addition to punishment for failure, may have adverse consequences on the mental health of these Asian American teenagers.

Are these parenting practices harmful? It is possible that although Caucasian Americans are shocked at the strict parenting practices of Asian Americans, the Asian American teenagers themselves do not believe these practices to be harmful. Therefore, it may not hurt them the way Caucasian Americans believe that it may. Further research has provided evidence for this as well.

Harmful Across Cultures?

Previous research has explored whether or not these harsh parenting practices among Asian American parents really cause any harm to the child. Since Asian American culture “supports strict discipline and overprotection of children” (Chung, 1997), it is possible that since strict parenting is culturally accepted, therefore, has its own benefits within the culture. Although research has indicated that authoritative parenting yields the most stable child in Western cultures, it is possible that authoritative parenting may not have the same effects on Asian Americans since Asian Americans have completely different cultural norms which emphasize “parental respect more than closeness and intimacy” (Chao, 2001). Gorman (1998) hypothesized that authoritative parenting may not have the same effect on Chinese adolescents since the Chinese concept of “chiao shun” and “guan” (training) is culturally accepted and is perceived differently among the Chinese. Since it is so widely accepted within the culture, children do not have much to complain about. This is a question of nature vs. nurture. Are there universal psychological needs for teenage independence across cultures? Or do cultural norms and values shape the psychological needs of teenagers?

A study by Lowinger & Kwok (2001) concluded that there are universal psychological needs for teenagers to be independent across cultures. Although parental

overprotection is culturally tolerated in traditional Asian societies, it “may result in significant psychopathology for Asian children growing up in modern Western societies” (Lowinger & Kwok, 2001). Parental overprotection is further a “causative factor in various forms of maladjustment and psychopathology in Asian children and adolescents” (Chung, 2000, April; Ekblad, 1988).

However, this maladjustment among Asian American adolescents may be due to the fact that Asian American teenagers see their non-Asian peers being treated a certain way, and wonder why they are not being treated in the same way. Perhaps it is the comparison of themselves versus other people that is causing the psychological distress. Overprotective parents are often “resented and opposed by children who desire the freedoms available to their non-Asian peers, creating significant parent-child conflict” (Lau et al., 1990; Lau & Yeung, 1996; Lee et al., 2000). Since autonomy is stifled, children raised in an overprotective environment will experience “identity diffusion, a lack of a sense of continuity about who one is, what one wants to accomplish in life, and how one relates to others” (Erikson, 1950, 1959). Evidence that Chinese American youth who had been born in the United States experienced significantly more psychological distress than Chinese Americans who lived in Hong Kong further supports the hypothesis that it is a comparison to their peers that is causing the distress. Asian American teenagers see that there may be something out there that is better than what they have and they want it. Conversely, the teens in their native country fail to see this cultural difference, and apparently it does not cause as much harm. This struggle of coping with the cultural difference may be what causes most of the psychological distress and even interpersonal conflict between the teen and the parents.

Further evidence shows that autonomy and the ability for one to decide for themselves may be a universal psychological need, non-dependent on comparisons across cultures. The Self Determination Theory states that “people have the natural inclination to engage in activities that are experienced as self-chosen or volitional” (Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, Soenens, 2005), regardless of cultural values. This suggests that people have a universal need to develop a sense of self, separate from any other human being, even family members.

Again Vansteenkiste et al (2005) sought to explore whether autonomy is a purely western concept and is not applicable to eastern cultures. This debate provides the base for this study. Results of the study showed that autonomous study motivation, when the teen chooses to study on their own as opposed to being forced to study by their parents, “positively predicted attitude, concentration, time management, and active study behavior... [and was] negative correlated to performance anxiety” (Vansteenkiste et al, 2005). Conversely, controlled motivation was “negatively predicted attitude, concentration, time management... [and was] positively correlated with performance anxiety, passive-avoidant school behavior, and dropping out” (Vansteenkiste et al, 2005). This provides evidence that self-motivated behavior and the ability to decide for oneself is necessary for success in the academic areas in life.

A second study showed that autonomous study motivation not only had an effect on learning outcomes, but there was also relationship between autonomy and well-being. Autonomous learning was “positively related to well-being and vitality... and negatively related to depression” (Vansteenkiste et al, 2005), while controlled motivation lead to the opposite. Furthermore, a study by Pettit, Laird, Dodge Bates, & Criss (2001) found that the

psychological control exerted by parents onto their children in all areas of life “was associated with higher levels of anxiety/depression and delinquent behavior”. The conclusion made from these studies is that the need for personal autonomy is a universal psychological need rather than a strictly Western norm.

The Study

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not specific parenting styles (permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative) have an influence on the teenager’s self-esteem and self-concept. Specifically, a cross-cultural comparison will be done to see whether or not Asian American parents are truly more authoritarian than Caucasian parents and to determine whether Asian American parents’ ideals for their children are higher. This impossible-to-achieve ideal may place a harder strain on Asian American teenagers, and in turn cause them to feel less confident about themselves. Furthermore, a comparison across generation status will show if acculturation has an effect on parenting styles.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis explores the types of parenting styles and their effects on teens. Teens are at a stage in their development where independence and self will are necessary to ensure a healthy growth emotionally and mentally. Therefore, when parents exert too much control on the teen, it may cause them to suffer since they are not being allowed to assert themselves. Conversely, without much parental support and guidance, the teen may be confused and choose the wrong things in life. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the healthiest type of relationship is an authoritative one in which the parent acts as a guide for their children’s independent growth.

It is possible that an authoritarian parenting style may cause the child to rebel against their parent's wishes, rate their satisfaction with their parents lower, as well as cause the child to lose their own sense of self, independence, and self-esteem. Conversely, a permissive parenting style may cause the child to rate their satisfaction with their parents higher; however, without the guidance of a role-model, the child also loses their sense of self, independence, and self-esteem. Without someone to guide them as children, they do not know whether or not their decisions are correct and this relationship can be detrimental as well. Authoritarian parenting may cause rebellion as a result of dissatisfaction with the parental relationship, while permissive parenting may cause higher satisfaction and no need for rebellion. However, in both cases, lower self-esteem may still result due to the fact that the parents did not act as a strong role model for the teen.

Additionally, it is possible that some teens are happy with an authoritarian parent. They may be so used to it that it does not cause them to be upset or rebel. Rather than be angry at their parents for taking away their freedom, they may be thankful that their parents aren't putting them in a situation in which they do not know how to handle. Some teens are by nature not very independent, and prefer their parents to provide more direction for them. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the teenager's *perception* of the parenting style is more important than the actual parenting style. If a teen does not perceive the parent as being authoritarian, then they will still be able to develop their own sense of self.

The next prediction deals with the effects of race on parenting style. Culturally speaking, Asian Americans are more collectivist rather than individualistic. Asians place an importance on family and collective benefit rather than the child's own independent growth. The child's successes as well as failures are a reflection on their parents and family

as a whole. For this reason, Asian American immigrant parents will exert stronger control over the child, because this is what their culture has taught them. Punishment for failure to adhere strictly to authority ruling is also commonly accepted in the Asian culture.

Conversely, Caucasian Americans place a stronger focus on individualism. Children are taught from a young age to think for themselves and to be a unique individual apart from their parents.

Acculturation happens over time. As immigrants move to a new country, it will take time to learn the new culture and to be accustomed to their ways. Therefore, it would not be surprising if first generation Asian American immigrant parents place the hardest strain on their children. Since they have not yet been accustomed to American culture, they will be more likely to adhere to their traditional ways. Asian American immigrants who have been in the country longer may have slowly compromised traditional views with new ones.

In sum, the following hypotheses will be tested:

Hypothesis 1a: Authoritative parenting styles will be positively correlated with self-esteem and satisfaction with overall relationship with parents.

Hypothesis 1b: Both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles will be associated with lower self-esteem. However, authoritarian parenting will be associated with lower parental satisfaction while permissive parenting will be associated with higher parental satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1c: Teen's perception of the parenting style will be more influential than actual parenting style in predicting self-esteem and overall satisfaction with self and parental relationships.

Hypothesis 2: Asian American parents will be more likely to adopt an authoritarian parenting style while Caucasian American parents will be more likely to adopt the more authoritative to permissive parenting styles.

Hypothesis 3: Asian American immigrant parents will be more authoritarian the less time they have spent in the United States.

Methods

Participants

One hundred and fifty six participants were randomly selected to participate in the study. Participants were students ages 14-18 from a private high school in New Jersey. In order to increase the number of Asian-American participants, a primarily Asian-American Christian high school group was also sampled. There were 54 students from the Asian-American Christian high school group. Seventeen participants were omitted due to incomplete surveys, leaving 139 participants that were included in the data analysis. There were 59 males and 80 females. There were 68 Whites, 60 Asians, and 11 of a race other than White or Asian. Participation was voluntary. All participants were treated according to APA ethical guidelines.

Design

This study was primarily correlational. To determine the impact of parenting style on self-esteem, the independent variable was parenting style and the dependent variable was self-esteem. To determine how race affects parenting style, the independent variable was race and the dependent variable was parenting style. To determine how generation status affects parenting style, the independent variable was generation status and the dependent variable was parenting style.

Materials

The survey instrument consisted of 3 parts including parenting style, parental influence, self-esteem, and a demographics section. A 73-question survey was administered. Questions about the teenager's perception of their parent's control and parenting styles were included. Self-esteem as a result of parental relationships was assessed.

Parenting Styles

Teen's perceived level of parental control in their lives was measured by asking participants to estimate the percentage of the teen's own control versus their parents' control in their lives (see Appendix A). The teen was then asked to choose the parenting style that best describes their mother and father separately. The three types of parenting styles were permissive (they let you do whatever you want), authoritative (they guide you, but trust you to make your own decisions), and authoritarian (they exercise full authority over you). These definitions are taken from a modified version of Baumrind's Parental Authority Questionnaire. Fifteen randomly selected questions were taken directly from the original 60 question survey. Five statements that represented each type of parenting style were selected for use in this study (see Appendix B). The Parental Authority Questionnaire obtained a reliability rating of $\alpha = 0.67$ for authoritarian, $\alpha = 0.65$ for authoritative, and $\alpha = 0.57$ for permissive.

Parental Influence

The quality of the parent/teen relationship was assessed through the use of a parental influence questionnaire (Appendix C). Teens were asked to rate their perceived level of parental satisfaction in three areas of their life—academic, social, and personal; as

well as rating their own satisfaction in these particular areas. There were a total of 42 questions on a Likert scale that asked participants to choose the response based on a range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Items on the 7-point Likert scale included statements about the teen's academic life, such as "Overall, my parents are satisfied with my academic performance", or "I feel that my parents have/will have a strong influence on my choice of a career". Statements about the teen's social life included "My parents trust me to be responsible", and "My parents approve of the way I spend my weekends". Items measuring the teen's personal life included "My parents respect my privacy", or "There is a mutual respect relationship between my parents and I". Additionally, items on the 7-point Likert scale measured the teen's own perceptions of himself/herself with items such as "I am happy with my selection of friends", "I feel that I am mature and responsible to make my own choices", "I go against my parent's wishes because I feel like I'm being controlled", or "Overall, I am satisfied with my life" (Appendix D). These measurements of parent and self satisfaction were found to have a good reliability rating of $\alpha = 0.8343$.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was measured with the Rosenberg's 10-question self-esteem scale (1965) (see Appendix E). Teens were asked to rate the extent to which they believed themselves to possess good qualities, to be able to do things as well as others, to have a positive attitude towards themselves, to have respect for themselves, and to be overall satisfied with their lives. Negative statements measured the extent to which teens felt like failures, felt useless, did not have much to be proud of, and wished that they could respect themselves more. These statements were reverse scored. Open-ended questions asked about additional causes of conflict between teenagers and their parents (see Appendix F).

Demographics

The survey concluded with 8 additional demographic questions that asked for age, gender, race of oneself as well as race of both parents, and family composition. The survey originally included questions regarding citizenship. However, a mistake was made in that many first and second generation immigrants were also US Citizens, which made it hard to distinguish.

Procedure

Participants were selected by using a stratified sample from a private high school as well as a youth group from a local church. The selection of students in the youth group was done to ensure that enough Asian American students were included in the population; due to the fact that the private high school consisted of predominately Caucasian American students. Participants were asked to fill out a survey at the end of class and youth group meeting. The teachers and leaders were the ones administering the survey for both groups. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and gave consent before participating. They were asked to read and sign the informed consent form prior to participating. They were told that participation is optional and that they may choose to back out of the study at any time. There were no time constraints, but participants averaged 15-20 minutes to complete the survey. There was no debriefing because this study did not involve deception.

Results

To test the hypothesis that Asian Americans were more likely than Caucasian Americans students to report higher authoritarian parenting styles in their families, a chi-

squared test was done. There were no differences in frequencies of perceived parenting style between Asian and Caucasian students ($\chi^2 = 1.58$, *ns*).

To test the hypothesis that Asian American students would report a greater amount of authoritarian parenting and a lesser amount of authoritative parenting than Caucasian American students, an independent samples t-test was conducted. As predicted, scores on authoritarian parenting were significantly greater in the Asian American group (mean = 3.31, s.d. = .651) compared to the Caucasian American group (mean = 3.04, s.d. = .694); the t test statistic was -2.23, with 128 degrees of freedom and was significant at $p < .05$.

Scores on authoritative parenting were slightly greater in the Caucasian American group (mean = 3.46, s.d. = .675) compared to the Asian American group (mean = 3.38, s.d. = .734), however results were not significant.

To determine whether parenting style and perceptions of control were associated with beliefs about parents' satisfaction, own satisfaction, and self-esteem; Pearson correlations were computed. As predicted, the authoritarian parenting was negatively associated with self-esteem ($r = -0.172$; $p < .05$). Additionally, authoritarian parenting was negatively associated with ratings of parent satisfaction in all 3 realms: academic ($r = -0.285$; $p < 0.005$), social ($r = -0.396$; $p < 0.001$), and personal ($r = -0.263$; $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, authoritarian parenting was negatively associated with ratings of self-satisfaction in the social realm ($r = -0.157$; $p < 0.10$). Finally, authoritarian parenting was positively correlated with ratings of rebellion ($r = 0.337$; $p < 0.005$).

Authoritative parenting was positively correlated with ratings of parents' satisfaction in all 3 areas: academic ($r = 0.249$; $p < 0.01$), social ($r = 0.390$; $p < 0.001$), and personal ($r = 0.563$; $p < 0.001$). Authoritative parenting was also positively correlated with

greater ratings of confidence ($r = 0.229$; $p < 0.007$). Authoritative parenting was negatively associated with ratings of rebellion ($r = -0.375$; $p < 0.001$) (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Pearson Correlations Between Type of Parenting and Outcomes*

	Pearson Correlations Between Type of Parenting and Outcomes	
	Authoritarian Parenting	Authoritative Parenting
Self-Esteem	-0.172*	0.121
Parent Satisfaction		
Academic	-0.285**	0.249**
Social	-0.396***	0.390***
Personal	-0.263**	0.563***
Self Satisfaction		
Academic	0.034	0.047
Social	-0.157*	0.008
Rebellion	0.337***	-0.375
Confidence	-0.134	0.229**

Note. $N = 139$. † $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. Partial Correlation Coefficients are displayed above.

Perception of parental control was assessed with Pearson's correlations. Greater estimates of parental control are correlated with lower ratings of parents' satisfaction academically ($r = -0.191$, $p < 0.025$), socially ($r = -0.205$, $p < 0.016$), and personally ($r = -0.181$, $p < 0.034$); as well as greater ratings of rebellion ($r = 0.260$; $p < 0.002$) (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Pearson Correlations Between Perceptions of Parental Control and Outcomes*

	Parental Control
Self-Esteem	-0.91
Parent Satisfaction	
Academic	-0.191*
Social	-0.205*
Personal	-0.181*
Self Satisfaction	
Academic	-0.013
Social	-0.010
Rebellion	0.260**
Confidence	-0.041

Note. N = 139. † $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. Partial Correlation Coefficients are displayed above.

To test whether authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles independently predict self-esteem, satisfaction, and rebellion, simultaneous multiple regression analyses were conducted. Ratings of authoritarian and authoritative parenting were entered as predictors of self-esteem, satisfaction, and rebellion. When entered simultaneously with authoritative parenting, greater authoritarian parenting was marginally associated with lower self-esteem ($\beta = -0.156$, *ns*), lower ratings of parent satisfaction academically ($\beta = -0.246$, $p < 0.005$), socially ($\beta = -0.331$, $p < 0.001$), and personally ($\beta = -0.157$, $p < 0.05$). Authoritarian parenting was also associated with greater instances of rebellion ($\beta = 0.274$, $p < 0.001$).

When entered simultaneously with authoritarian parenting, greater authoritative parenting was associated with greater ratings of parent satisfaction academically ($\beta = 0.201$, $p < 0.05$), socially ($\beta = 0.323$, $p < 0.001$), and personally ($\beta = 0.531$, $p < 0.001$). Authoritative parenting was also associated with greater self-esteem ($\beta = 0.094$, $p < 0.10$),

greater confidence ($\beta = 0.211, p < 0.10$), and lower instances of rebellion ($\beta = -0.321, p < 0.001$). This is further evidence that there is an effect of one style independent of the other style (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Outcomes from Parenting Style*

	Self-Esteem			R	Total R ²
	B	β	SE		
				.198*	.039*
Authoritarian Parenting	-.117*	-.156*	.126		
Authoritative Parenting	.064*	.094*	.120		
	Parent Satisfaction (Academic)			R	Total R ²
	B	β	SE		
				0.347***	0.120***
Authoritarian Parenting	-0.433	-0.246	0.145		
Authoritative Parenting	0.339**	0.201**	0.139		
	Parent Satisfaction (Social)			R	Total R ²
	B	β	SE		
				0.505***	0.255***
Authoritarian Parenting	-0.477***	- 0.331***	0.109		
Authoritative Parenting	0.466***	0.323***	0.105		
	Parent Satisfaction (Personal)			R	Total R ²
	B	β	SE		
				0.582***	0.339***
Authoritarian Parenting	-0.249**	- 0.157**	0.113		
Authoritative Parenting	0.807***	0.531***	0.108		

	Rebellion				
	B	β	SE	R	Total R ²
				0.461***	0.213***
Authoritarian Parenting	0.486***	0.274***	0.138		
Authoritative Parenting	-0.546***	-0.321***	0.132		
	Confidence				
	B	β	SE	R	Total R ²
				.247*	.061*
Authoritarian Parenting	-.138	-.093	.126		
Authoritative Parenting	.300*	.211*	.120		

Note. $N = 148$. † $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

To test whether self-satisfaction was more highly correlated with parent satisfaction for Asian American versus Caucasian American students, a correlational analysis was done. To test if the correlation is stronger for Asian-American adolescents, the Pearson correlation was found for self and parent satisfaction. Then the correlations were standardized into a Fisher Z' . The correlation for Asian American adolescents was .488 ($p < .001$) and the correlation for Caucasian American adolescents was .353 ($p < .01$). These correlations were converted to Fisher Z ; scores, and a z -statistic was computed. Results indicated that the correlation was significantly greater for Asian American students compared to Caucasian American students. The observed z was 3.81. Therefore, parent satisfaction is significantly associated with own satisfaction such that greater parent satisfaction is positively associated with greater self-satisfaction.

Discussion

Adolescence is a time where teens are exploring their own identity with the guidance of their parents. During this time, parents play an important role in the teen's

development of self. Cultural values may be important determinants of the type of parenting style that these parents decide to adopt. The Asian emphasis on familial interdependence may affect the way parents treat their adolescents. Asian American parents may not be as willing to allow their child to choose for themselves because of the fact that the child's decisions may reflect the family as a whole. Caucasian American values of independence may cause parents to allot more decision making roles to the child since the child's decisions do not go back to reflect the family as a whole. The amount of control and the level of demand from parents may influence many areas of the teen's development of self and identity. Both too much and too little parent involvement was predicted to have negative effects.

The primary goal of this study was to explore whether or not cultural differences exist in determining the type of parenting style that parents of adolescents choose to adopt. Furthermore, the study explores whether parenting style has an effect on the adolescent's development of self and satisfaction with themselves.

An important question to consider was whether or not authoritative parenting styles were positively correlated with self-esteem and satisfaction with overall relationship with parents. Results indicated that authoritative parenting was positively correlated with ratings of perceived parents' satisfaction in academics, social, and personal areas of the adolescent's life. This is consistent with previous research by Baumrind (1968) that teenagers need a balance between their own independence and the guidance of their parents. Since adolescents are at a stage in their lives where being independent is important in creating a sense of self, too much direction from their parents could potentially hinder their ability to learn and experiment for themselves. If parents are constantly telling their

teen exactly what to do, the teen will never be placed in a situation where they need to act on their own. Consequently, when they become adults, they may lack the ability or skill to think on their feet and make effective decisions. Conversely, not enough direction from their parents could be detrimental in that adolescents are still growing and learning.

Without proper guidance, they may get lost or stray in the wrong direction.

Another area of interest was to explore whether or not authoritarian parenting would harm the teen's development of self. As predicted, authoritarian parenting was negatively associated with self-esteem and ratings of parent satisfaction. Furthermore, authoritarian parenting was negatively associated with ratings of self-satisfaction in the social realm. Finally, authoritarian parenting was positively correlated with ratings of rebellion. The excess demand and pressure from parents could cause the teen to feel like their self-worth is constantly being challenged. A controlling parent may be indirectly conveying the message that they do not trust their teen enough to allow him to make his own decisions. If the teen perceives the control in that way, he may feel that the parent is not satisfied with him and that could decrease his self-esteem. The feeling that his parents are not satisfied with him could cause him to lower his satisfaction ratings with himself, which could also affect his social relations with his peers; explaining the negative correlation with ratings of self-satisfaction in the social realm. For certain teens, the demand from parents could create annoyance and reactance. Since their independence is being threatened, they may feel the urge to rebel and assert their independence against their parents. The reactance theory states that the more one is prevented from doing something, the more attractive it becomes.

Control was thought to be associated with authoritarian parenting. It was predicted that greater estimates of parental control are correlated with lower ratings of parents' satisfaction academically, socially, and personally; and this hypothesis was supported. This shows that authoritarian parents are also associated with greater levels of parental control. More control also leads to greater ratings of rebellion. Control may produce reactance in that the teen is upset at his inability to control his own life and will react assertively through rebellion.

Permissive parenting was not analyzed due to the low number of permissive parents in the sample. This could potentially be due to socioeconomic status. All participants came from upper middle class families. Further research should explore parenting of adolescents in lower socioeconomic status families. It is possible that teens may be satisfied with permissive parents since they feel that their parents are honoring their wishes and accepting the teen as an individual. However, by being too permissive, the teen may get out of control because there are no boundaries that set him back. It could be possible that these teens are the ones who get in trouble with the law because they are not receiving enough attention in their homes. Further research should explore the effects of permissive parenting on teens.

The question of whether perceived parenting style or actual parenting style had a greater influence in predicting teen's self-esteem and satisfaction was also explored. This hypothesis did not obtain significant support. It is possible that since the scale measuring perception was only one question, it did not accurately measure perception. Further research should address this issue and find out why this is the case.

The interdependence of Asian American cultures would predict that Asian American parents would exert more control and influence over their teenagers. Results confirmed this prediction. Asian American parents were more likely to adopt an authoritarian parenting style. This hypothesis supports previous research on interdependent cultures and the tendency of Asian American parents to assert more influence on their children due to the interdependent nature of their culture. However, Caucasian American parents were not found to be more likely to adopt the more authoritative to permissive parenting styles. Again, socioeconomic status could be an issue here. All of the Caucasian American adolescents in the sample were from an expensive private school. Parents who spend that money on their children's education are more likely to put excess pressure on their children.

It will be interesting to explore generational effects and the process of acculturation on the type of parenting style that parents choose. Since second generation Asian Americans have spent more time in the United States, they may have adopted parts of the Western culture into their own culture. Consequently, they may parent their child the way a Caucasian parent would do so. This hypothesis could not be tested for two reasons. First, it is unlikely that many Asian Americans parents in the United States today are second generation. Most second generation Asian Americans today are still adolescents and young adults. Future research could explore how these Asian American adolescents today will go about parenting their own children in the future. Another reason this hypothesis was not tested is due to a minor error in the questionnaire. The fact that first and second generation immigrants can also be United States citizens was not accounted for in the survey.

Limitations/ Further Research

This present study is not without its limitations. The entire sample is made up of participants from a particular geographic location. Almost all of the participants are from wealthy, white-collar, high income families. About half of the sample was made up of private school students whose parents pay a very high tuition, with very little financial aid. Additionally, over half of the participants were religiously affiliated with some Christian denomination. Christian morals and values may play a large role in the participant's perception of their relationship with their parents. Social desirability could not be ruled out in responses. Participants might have answered the survey based on what they would like to be rather than who they really are. Some teens may not be willing to report negative information about their parents.

There were several participants (seventeen) who were omitted for reasons such as leaving over half of the survey blank, refusal to answer some crucial questions such as race, or simply not taking the survey seriously. This may also be a biasing factor in the results.

Conclusions

Results of this study have important implications for adolescent parenting. Because of the teenager's desire for control of their own lives, it is very difficult for teens to adjust when the parent adapts an authoritarian parenting style. Consequently, when parents are too authoritarian, it is at the expense of the adolescent's self-esteem, self satisfaction, and perception of their parent's satisfaction. It can also increase rebellion and decrease confidence. Although some limitations prevented these results to be generalized, results do indicate that the best style of parenting is to allot some control to the adolescent while

maintaining the right amount of parental guidance. Future research can be done to improve the results. Generational effects in Asian American immigrants could provide insight into the acculturation process. By looking at a more diverse sample, issues such as socioeconomic status or parental education level can be addressed.

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Appendix A

Measure of Perceived Control, Perceived Parenting Style, and Perceived Satisfaction

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the effects of teenage relationships with parents on the teen's lifestyle. The following questions will ask about your relationship with your parents.

Please answer the following questions honestly. All answers will remain anonymous.

1. Please indicate the level of control you feel that you have over your life as opposed to your parent's control over your life on a scale from 0-100%.

(For example, if you feel like your parents control your ENTIRE life, you would put 0% for your own control and 100% for your parent's. If they control only a small portion of your life, you may put 20% for their control and 80% for your own control)

Your Control _____%

Your Parents Control _____%

2. The following are 3 types of parenting styles. Please circle the one that most describes your **MOTHER**:

PERMISSIVE (they let you do whatever you want)

AUTHORITATIVE (they guide you, but trust you to make your own decisions)

AUTHORITATARIAN (they exercise full authority over you)

Now, please circle the parenting style that most describes your **FATHER**:

PERMISSIVE (they let you do whatever you want)

AUTHORITATIVE (they guide you, but trust you to make your own decisions)

AUTHORITATARIAN (they exercise full authority over you)

3. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being the WORST and 10 being the BEST, please indicate the overall quality of/ your overall satisfaction with your relationship with your parents.

Worst										Best
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

4. If you had to choose one of your parents as being more influential in your life, which one **DO YOU FEEL** has more influence in your life? Please circle your response.

Mother

Father

Both Influence Me Equally

Appendix B

Parental Authority Questionnaire
Baumrind (1968)

Keeping the more influential parent in mind (or both), please answer the following questions.

For each of the following questions, indicate the number on the 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) that best describes how that statement applies to you and your parents.

1		3		5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. Even if the children didn't agree, my parents felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what they thought was right. _____
2. Whenever my parents told me to do something, they expected me to do it immediately without asking any questions. _____
3. Once family policy has been established, my parents discuss the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family. _____
4. My parents direct the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline. _____
5. My parents have always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to. _____
6. My parents did NOT feel that I needed to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority had established them. _____
7. I know what my mother expects of me, but I also feel free to discuss those expectations with my parents when I felt that they were unreasonable. _____
8. My parents seldom give me expectations and guidelines for my behavior. _____
9. My parents let me know what behavior they expected of me, and if I didn't meet those expectations, they punished me. _____

10. My parents allow me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from them. _____
11. My parents give me direction for my behavior and activities and they expected me to follow their direction, but they were always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me. _____
12. My parents allow me to form my own point of view on family matters and they generally allow me to decide for myself what I am going to do. _____
13. My parents often told me exactly what they wanted me to do and how they expected me to do it. _____
14. My parents give me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but they also understood when I disagreed with them. _____
15. My parents do not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in the family. _____

Appendix C

Measures of Perceived Parent Satisfaction (Academic, Social, and Personal)

Use the scale below for the next few questions. Please fill in each blank with the number you believe best represents your feelings about the following statements.

1 _____ 4 _____ 7
 Strongly Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly
 Disagree Agree

The following statements will ask about your **PARENTS'** feelings towards you.

ACADEMICS

1. Overall, my parents are satisfied with my academic performance _____
2. My parents approve of the way I spend my free time _____
3. My parents support my decision to choose my own extracurricular activities _____
4. I feel that my parents have/ will have a strong influence on my choice of colleges _____
5. I feel that my parents have/ will have a strong influence on my choice of a career _____

SOCIAL

6. My parents approve of my selection of friends _____
7. If I were to have a boyfriend/girlfriend of another race, my parents would approve _____
8. If I wanted a romantic relationship right now, my parents would support me _____
9. My parents want me to be like their friend's children _____
10. My parents trust me to be responsible _____
11. I do not have a curfew _____
12. My parents let me make my own decisions _____
13. My parents approve of the way I spend my weekends _____

PERSONAL

14. My parents like my choice in clothing _____
15. My parents like the way I do my make-up _____
16. My parents respect my independence _____
17. Generally, I feel that my parents are too overprotective _____
18. My parents respect my privacy _____
19. I feel like I can talk to my parents about anything _____
20. My parents are my best friends _____
21. My parents try to be my best friends _____
22. There is a mutual respect relationship between my parents and I _____

Appendix D

Measures of Self-Satisfaction (Academic, Social, Personal)
Measures of Rebellion & Confidence

Use the scale below for the next few questions. Please fill in each blank with the number you believe best represents your feelings about the following statements.

1 _____ 4 _____ 7
Strongly Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly
Disagree Agree

The following statements will ask about **YOUR OWN** feelings about yourself.

23. Overall, I am satisfied with my academic performance _____
24. I'm happy with the way I spend my free time _____
25. I choose my own extracurricular activities and I enjoy them very much _____
26. My choice in college is my own, my parents are not involved _____
27. My choice in my future career will be my decision, my parents are not involved

28. I am happy with my selection of friends _____
29. I am currently involved in a romantic relationship _____ (yes/no)
30. I am satisfied with myself and I don't need to compare myself to others _____
31. I feel that I am mature and responsible to make my own choices _____
32. I spend my weekends well and I make responsible decisions _____
33. I tend to rebel against my parent's wishes _____
34. I go against my parent's wishes just to make them mad _____
35. I go against my parent's wishes because I feel like I'm being controlled _____
36. I wish my parents would stop controlling my life _____
37. Overall, I am satisfied with my life _____
38. I am considered popular in school _____
39. Generally, the kids at school all like me _____
40. I like to take on leadership roles _____

41. I feel that I am too shy to take on leadership roles _____

42. I dread going to school because the other kids don't like me _____

Appendix E

Self-Esteem Scale
Rosenberg (1965)

Please answer the following questions about **YOURSELF**

STATEMENT		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	I certainly feel useless at times.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	At times I think I am no good at all.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix F

Open-Ended Concluding Questions & Demographics

Please answer the following open-ended questions as honestly and as completely as possible.

1. What are the top 3 things you fight with your parents about?

2. Please name some other factors NOT included in this survey that you believe is a common cause of conflict between teenagers and their parents

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Race: (choose one)

- ____ White/Caucasian
____ Asian/ Pacific Islander
____ African American
____ Hispanic
____ Native American
____ Other

Race of Mother: (choose one)

- ____ White/Caucasian
____ Asian/ Pacific Islander
____ African American
____ Hispanic
____ Native American
____ Other

Race of Father: (choose one)

- ____ White/Caucasian

- _____ Asian/ Pacific Islander
- _____ African American
- _____ Hispanic
- _____ Native American
- _____ Other

Are your parents: (check one)

- _____ US Citizens
- _____ 1st Generation Immigrants
- _____ 2nd Generation Immigrants
- _____ Other

Household Demographics:

Do you live with...

(Check One):

Single Mother _____

Single Father _____

Both Parents _____

Other _____

Number of Brothers _____

Number of Sisters _____

Thank you for participating in this survey.

Carnegie Mellon

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November 28, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that on November 28, 2006, Mimi Chang submitted an Honors Thesis entitled “Cultural Differences in Parenting Styles and their Effects on Teens’ Self-Esteem, Perceived Parental Relationship Satisfaction, and Self Satisfaction” to the Psychology Department. This thesis has been judged to be acceptable for purposes of fulfilling the requirements to graduate with College Honors.

Sincerely,

Dr. Chante Cox-Boyd
Thesis Advisor

Dr. Michael Scheier
Head, Department of Psychology

Dr. Joseph E. Devine
Dean, College of Humanities & Social
Sciences