

# Cultural Differences in Career Decision-Making Styles and Self-Efficacy

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This study examined the cultural relevance of two important career constructs: career decision-making style and career decision-making self-efficacy. Two distinct cultural groups of college students, Americans (N = 540) and Taiwanese (N = 1026), participated in this cross-cultural study. Results suggested that career decision-making styles have differential impacts on career decision-making self-efficacy, depending on the cultural background of the individuals. Results also showed significant differences in career decision-making style and career decision-making self-efficacy as a function of nationality and gender. Counseling implications and suggestions for future studies are discussed.

**Key Words:** decision-making; cognitive style; self-efficacy; cultural influence; career counseling; college students.

The cognitive revolution of the past several decades has shaped many recent developments in vocational psychology. For example, social-learning theory (Krumboltz, 1994), social-cognitive perspective (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1996), and the career information processing model (Peterson, Sampson, & Reardon, 1991) have emerged as significant theoretical frameworks in explaining educational and vocational behavior. In many ways, career development advances through cognitive mechanisms (Lent & Hackett, 1994). Vocational researchers of all theoretical persuasions have shown a tendency to include cognitive variables in their research (Borgen, 1991). The dramatic increase in the minority population in the United States and the intense cross-cultural interaction have also prompted researchers to reexamine the applicability of these cognitive views of career development for different cultural groups. The present study examined the cultural relevance of two important cognitive constructs: career decision-making style and career decision-making self-efficacy. Osipow (1999) suggested that these two cognitive variables are important in resolving career indecision—a highly studied career construct and a major concern of career psychologists for many years.

Career decision-making style as a cognitive construct has been shown to represent a unique component of vocational behavior and career development (Harren, 1979; Jepsen & Prediger, 1981; Super, 1980). Decision-making style has been defined as a habitual pattern individuals use in decision making (Driver, 1979) or individuals' characteristic model of perceiving and responding to decision-making tasks (Harren, 1979). Research on cognitive style has been traced to the concept of field dependence–independence. Among many different taxonomic classifications of decision-making styles, Harren's (1979) typology, rational (making decisions deliberately and logically), intuitive (making decisions based on feelings and emotional satisfaction), and dependent (making decisions based on the expectations and opinions of others), is the most widely recognized (Phillips, Friedlander, Paziienza, & Kost, 1985). The three different styles represent distinct sets of attitudes and behaviors used in decision-making tasks and vary as a function of the degree to which individuals take personal responsibility for decision making and the extent to which they use logic as differentiated from emotional decision-making approaches. Driver, Brousseau, and Hunsaker (1990) postulated that individuals have a primary decision-making style and a secondary style. That is, while an individual's approach to a given decisional task may be characterized by one predominant style, elements of other styles can be present (Harren, 1979).

Although Harren (1979) suggested that the most effective approach to decision making is the use of a rational style, studies have been inconclusive. For instance, a rational decision-making style has been found to be associated with career maturity (Blustein, 1987; Dilley, 1965), planning and information

gathering (Jepsen, 1974), ego identity (Blustein & Phillips, 1990), career decisiveness (Lunneborg, 1978; Mau, 1995), problem solving efficacy (Heppner, 1978; Phillips, Paziienza, & Ferrin, 1984a), and occupational certainty (Mau & Jepsen, 1992). In contrast, a nonrational decision-making style tends to be inversely related to progress in resolving various career tasks (Blustein & Phillips, 1990; Mau & Jepsen, 1992; Osipow & Reed, 1985). Although a rational decision-making style is generally postulated as an ideal style, some (Chartrand, Rose, Elliott, Marmarosh, & Caldwell, 1993; Mau, 1995; Phillips, Paziienza, & Walsh, 1984b; Phillips & Strohmer, 1982; Rubinton, 1980) have indicated that a rational style is either negligibly or not necessarily associated with progress in career-related tasks. These inconsistent findings indicate that the effectiveness of a rational decision-making style may be situational, depending on the personal/cultural factors as well as on the decisional tasks under study (Mau, 1995).

There is an increasing interest in Bandura's (1977, 1986) theory of self-efficacy expectation as both a mediator and outcome measure of career-related behaviors. Self-efficacy expectations refer to an individual's beliefs about his/her ability to perform a behavior that will produce desired outcomes. Bandura (1977) suggested that individuals who perceive themselves as capable tend to attempt and successfully execute tasks or activities. Self-efficacy serves as a generative mechanism through which individuals integrate and apply their existing cognitive, behavioral, and social skills to a task. Self-efficacy affects thought patterns and partly determines individuals' actions and their decisions to engage in a task, to put forth effort, and to persevere (Bandura, 1986). The self-efficacy theory has been applied to many specific domains of vocational behavior, such as occupational tasks and career exploratory behavior. Studies have found a strong relation between self-efficacy expectations and career indecision (for a review see Betz & Luzzo, 1996), career decision making (Luzzo, 1993, 1995), vocational identity (Munson & Savickas, 1998; Robbins, 1985), patterns of career choices (Giana-kos, 1999), commitment to leisure role (Munson & Savickas, 1998), career maturity (Luzzo, 1993, 1995), career exploratory behavior (Blustein, 1989), and career decision-making difficulty (Osipow & Gati, 1998).

Surprisingly, there were no studies that examined relations between these two important constructs. Only one study (Blustein, 1989) has investigated the relation between career decision-making self-efficacy and the extent of career exploratory behavior. Findings suggested that the more confidence people have in their decision-making capacities, the more likely that they will seek information about their career options. Career exploratory behavior resembles career decision-making style in that they both involve information-processing. This similarity suggests that there are significant relations between decision-making self-efficacy and the decision-making styles.

The present study tested the hypothesis that decision-making style and decision-making self-efficacy vary based on cultural orientation. Previous studies have indicated that Asian-Americans tend to be less autonomous, more dependent, and more conforming and obedient to authority (Abbot, 1970; Sue & Kirk, 1972). Studies on cognitive style also have indicated that individuals from a culture whose child-rearing practices encourage obedience in the child and conformance to parental authority are associated with the field-dependent cognitive style (Witkin, 1979). It is, therefore, reasonable to hypothesize that Taiwanese students are more likely to adopt a dependent style, whereas American students are more likely to adopt a rational style. Studies specifically focusing on Chinese Americans have generally suggested lower self-ratings for the Chinese when compared to their White counterparts (Huang, 1971; White & Chan, 1983). Cross-national studies also suggested that Asians tend to be more self-criticizing and Americans tend to be more self-enhancing (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). If self-efficacy is considered a subset of self-concept, as suggested by Pajares and Miller (1994), then it is likely that American students have a higher decision-making self-efficacy than Taiwanese students.

The purposes of this study were twofold: (1) to examine the relations between decision-making style and decision-making self-efficacy and (2) to determine if the relation is constant for both American and Taiwanese students. It has been suggested that the processes of self-concept and cognitive development may be different for men and women within a given cultural context (e.g., Gilligan, 1982).

Accordingly, the present study also examined gender differences in decision-making styles and self-efficacy.

## **METHOD**

### *Participants*

Participants (N = 1566) were drawn from two sources: an American sample and a Taiwanese sample. The American participants consisted of 540 undergraduate students (212 men, 323 women, 5 did not indicate) enrolled in a general required course at a large Midwestern university in the United States. Ages ranged from 15 to 54 (Mean, 22; Mode, 18; SD, 6.80). The majority of the students were freshmen (58%), 23% sophomores, 10.3% juniors, and 8.3% seniors. The ethnicity composition of the American participants was 74% Caucasian, 7.4% African American, 4.5% Hispanic, 5.6% Asian, 1.1% Native American, 2.6% International, 2.8% mixed race, and 2% did not indicate. The Taiwanese participants consisted of 1026 undergraduate students (474 men, 549 women, 3 did not indicate), solicited from 13 universities in 53 different fields of study. Ages ranged from 17 to 28 (Mean, 19.9, Mode, 18; SD, 1.82). The majority of Taiwanese students were freshmen (49%), 17.4% sophomores, 18.1% juniors, and 15.3% seniors.

### *Instruments*

**Assessment of career decision making.** (ACDM; Harren, 1978). Part I consisted of 30 items developed to assess the degree to which individuals rely on each of three decision-making styles: Rational (R), Intuitive (I), and Dependent (D). Each style was measured by a separate 10-item scale considered relatively independent. Sample items included, "I am very systematic when I go about making an important decision," "I often make a decision which is right for me without knowing why I made the decision," and "When I make a decision it is important to me what my friends think about it." Harren (1978) reported the test-retest reliabilities for these scales to be 0.85 for Rational, 0.76 for Intuitive, and 0.85 for Dependent. Test-retest reliabilities based on 93 Taiwanese students were 0.72(R), 0.65(I), and 0.78(D). The  $\alpha$  coefficients estimated based on the Taiwanese sample (N = 901) were 0.80(R), 0.66(I), and 0.77(D), respectively, and for the American sample (N = 528) were 0.77(R), 0.62(I), and 0.77(D), respectively.

**Career decision-making self-efficacy scale—Short form.** (CDMSE-SF; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996). This was a 25-item scale that assessed an individual's belief that he or she can successfully complete tasks necessary to make career decisions. Sample items include, "Make a plan of your goals for the next five years" and "Find information about graduate or professional schools." Items were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (no confidence at all) to 5 (complete confidence). The CDMSE consists of five subscales: accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, making plans for the future, and problem solving. Estimates of internal consistency ranged from 0.73 to 0.83 for the subscales and 0.94 for the total score (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996). There is considerable evidence of reliability and validity of this scale (Betz & Luzzo, 1996). The estimated  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.92 for the total score based on the Taiwanese sample (N = 863) and 0.94 for the American sample (N = 529). The test-retest reliability based on 93 Taiwanese students was 0.83.

### *Procedure*

To ensure accuracy in this cross-cultural study, a rigorous procedure was taken in establishing a valid Chinese version of measures. The measures were first translated into Chinese by a native Chinese speaker and back-translated into English by another native Chinese speaker. Both translators were bilingual and had obtained doctoral degrees in the United States. The back-translated version was compared with the original version for meaning accuracy by a native English speaker who has a master's degree in counseling. Revisions were made to those items that were translated inaccurately. Three native Chinese speakers then reviewed the translated Chinese version, one having a doctoral degree, one a

doctoral candidate, and one having a bachelor’s degree. The Chinese version was pilot-tested on 80 undergraduate students. Students made comments regarding the clarity of the questions. In addition, 12 students were interviewed to solicit additional feedback. Another revision was made as a result of the pilot study. A test–retest reliability study (4-week period) was conducted on the final version based on 93 undergraduate students enrolled in a general education course. The reliabilities of the measures were reported under Instruments.

*Data Analysis*

Of the 1566 participants, 105 were not included in the analyses because of either uncompleted (N = 44) or invalid (N = 64) responses or both (N = 3). An effort was made to verify if students had answered the questions carefully. Questions that were phrased as “please skip this item” were added to the questionnaires. Participants who skipped the questions suggested that they had read the question carefully, whereas participants who had responded to those validity items were considered less careful and were excluded from the analyses. Consequently, the final sample consisted of 1461 participants.

Canonical correlation analysis was employed to study the relations between career decision-making styles and self-efficacy. Career decision-making styles were considered personal variables that may shape behavioral strategies for making career choices, whereas career decision-making self-efficacy items actually deal with confidence in enacting certain choice behaviors and therefore were treated as dependent variables.

Chi-square statistics were used to examine if there were cultural differences in the distribution of the primary decision-making style. The participants’ primary decision-making style was determined based on the highest scores among the three decision-making styles and if the three scores were differentiated, i.e., greater than 1 SD. To determine if there were cultural differences in the extent of decision-making self-efficacy and style, a 2 (country) x 2 (sex) multivariate analysis of variance was conducted. To ensure a comparable sample for analyses, differences in age and grade between American and Taiwanese students were first examined. Significant differences were found in age [F(1, 1418),  $p < 79.73$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ] and grade [ $\chi^2(4, 1433) = 50.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ]. Consequently, age and grade were used as covariants in the analyses.

**TABLE 1**  
**Adjusted Means and Standard Deviations of Decision-Making Styles and Self-Efficacy**

	American (N = 494)	Taiwanese (N = 870)	F	Male (N = 657)	Female (N = 707)	F
Rational	7.20	7.55	5.58*	7.38	7.37	.01
Intuitive	4.60	4.41	1.79	4.56	4.46	.56
Dependent	3.14	5.96	332.35***	4.31	4.80	11.06**
Efficacy	94.27	82.14	183.26***	88.95	87.45	3.14

Note. 193 cases were excluded in the listwise multivariate analysis.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**RESULTS**

$\chi^2$  analyses suggested that there was a significant difference in the primary style distribution between American and Taiwanese students [ $\chi^2(2, 1460) = 95.04$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ]. The majority of students (60%), regardless of gender and nationality, reported that they endorsed a rational approach to career decision making. Sixty-six percent of American students endorsed the rational style, whereas 56% of Taiwanese students endorsed the rational style. Similarly, 23.5% of American students, compared to 11.9% of Taiwanese students, endorsed the intuitive style of decision making. Although the dependent style was

the least likely to be endorsed by the American students (10.7%), it is the second most likely style endorsed by the Taiwanese students (32.0%). No gender difference in distribution of decision-making style was found [ $\chi^2(2, 1453) = .80, p < 0.67$ ]. MANCOVA was conducted on the scores for three subscales of the decision-making styles (rational, intuitive, and dependent) and the career decision-making self-efficacy, with age and grade as the covariates. The adjusted means and standard deviations for the four measures are summarized in Table 1. Significant multivariate differences were found as a function of nationality [ $F(4, 1355) = 112.7, p < 0.001$ ] and gender [ $F(4, 1355) = 3.16, p < 0.013$ ]. Subsequent univariate analyses indicated significant differences in rational style [ $F(4, 1434) = 4.45, p < 0.035$ ], dependent style [ $F(4, 1434) = 317.06, p < 0.001$ ], and career decision-making self-efficacy [ $F(4, 1434) = 186.12, p < 0.001$ ] as a function of nationality. Taiwanese students scored significantly higher on rational style (adjusted M, 7.55) and dependent style (adjusted M, 5.96) than did American students, while American students (adjusted M, 94.27) scored higher on decision-making self-efficacy than did Taiwanese students (adjusted M, 82.14). Significant differences in dependent style [ $F(4, 1434) = 11.49, p < 0.001$ ] were also found as a function of gender. Female students (adjusted M, 4.80) scored significantly higher on dependent style than male students (adjusted M, 4.31). Significant interaction between gender and country was found for career decision-making self-efficacy [ $F(1, 1434) = 7.51, p < 0.006$ ]. Taiwanese male students (adjusted M, 84.1) scored significantly higher on decision-making self-efficacy than did Taiwanese female students (adjusted M, 80.3). There were no significant differences in decision-making self-efficacy between American male and female students.

**TABLE 2**  
**Correlations among Decision-Making Style and Self-Efficacy by Nationality**

	R	I	D	GS	OI	PL	PS	SA
Rational (R)		-0.47	-0.14	0.31	0.33	0.41	0.30	0.33
Intuitive (I)	-0.43		0.06	-0.02	-0.09	-0.10	-0.08	-0.06
Dependent (D)	-0.06	0.16		-0.32	-0.21	-0.30	-0.36	-0.35
Goal setting (GS)	0.16	-0.05	-0.36		0.60	0.70	0.66	0.74
Occupational information (OI)	0.19	-0.04	-0.23	0.59		0.69	0.58	0.63
Planning (PL)	0.24	-0.10	-0.37	0.70	0.74		0.67	0.71
Problem solving (PS)	0.24	-0.09	-0.32	0.60	0.64	0.73		0.67
Self-appraisal (SA)	0.25	-0.09	-0.30	0.71	0.65	0.72	0.69	

Note. Lower triangle, American sample; upper triangle, Taiwanese sample. For  $r \geq 0.08, p < 0.05$ ; for  $r \geq 0.10, p < 0.01$ .

Table 2 presents the zero-order correlations among career decision-making style measures and self-efficacy measures by nationality. In general, the rational style was positively associated with self-efficacy measures and the dependent style was negatively associated with self-efficacy measures. The relation between the intuitive style and self-efficacy measures was not significant. An inspection of the magnitude of the correlation coefficients among the three style measures suggests low correlations between the dependent style and the intuitive style and between the dependent and the rational style. However, the intuitive style appeared to be moderately associated with the rational style, suggesting that these two measures may be less domain independent.

To give insight into the relation, the canonical analysis was first performed on the total sample to determine if there is a significant association between the three decision-making style measures (i.e., rational, intuitive, and dependent) and the five decision-making self-efficacy measures (i.e., goal setting,

occupational information, planning, problem solving, and self-appraisal). The results of this analysis were significant and accounted for 32% of the variance between the two sets of variables [ $r_c = 0.56$ ;  $F(15, 3763) = 37.53$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ]. Separate canonical analyses were then performed on the four subsamples: American, Taiwanese, male, and female. Results suggested significant canonical correlations between decision-making style and self-efficacy for American students [ $r_c = 0.46$ ;  $F(15, 1394) = 9.21$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ], Taiwanese students [ $r_c = 0.52$ ;  $F(15, 2593) = 23.85$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ], male students [ $r_c = 0.53$ ;  $F(15, 1935) = 17.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ], and female students [ $r_c = 0.58$ ;  $F(15, 1993) = 23.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ]. Correlations between the variables and the canonical variates by nationality are reported in Table 3 and by gender in Table 4. Given the relatively smaller canonical coefficients associated with the second and third roots, only the first canonical root was interpreted. Examining the magnitude of the canonical variates suggested that the first canonical root was best represented by the dependent style and all of the self-efficacy measures for American students, whereas for the Taiwanese students, the first canonical root was best represented by the rational style and the self-efficacy measures. In other words, while low dependent style was most predictive of decision-making self-efficacy for American students, the rational style was more predictive of decision-making self-efficacy for Taiwanese students. Results also revealed that there was no significant gender difference in the first pair of canonical variates. The dependent style appeared to be more predictive of decision-making self-efficacy than other styles regardless of students' gender.

**TABLE 3**  
**Correlations between Variables and the Canonical Roots by Nationality**

Variables	American			Taiwanese		
	Root 1	Root 2	Root 3	Root 1	Root 2	Root 3
Style						
Rational	0.54	-0.84	0.07	0.80	0.59	-0.12
Intuitive	-0.20	0.33	-0.92	-0.19	-0.35	0.92
Dependent	-0.87	-0.48	-0.11	-0.70	0.69	0.19
Efficacy						
Goal setting	0.84	0.38	-0.31	0.82	-0.24	0.48
Occupational information	0.68	-0.22	-0.63	0.72	0.43	0.07
Planning	0.94	-0.09	-0.03	0.93	0.29	0.01
Problem solving	0.85	-0.20	0.04	0.83	-0.29	-0.35
Self-appraisal	0.80	-0.38	-0.23	0.88	-0.13	0.13
Canonical correlation						
Coefficient	0.46**	0.14	0.06	0.52**	0.18*	0.09

\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*  $p < 0.001$

## DISCUSSION

One of the purposes of this study was to investigate the cultural differences in decision-making styles and self-efficacy. Overall, the majority of the students, regardless of whether they were American or Taiwanese, reported that they endorsed a rational style of decision making. These findings generally accord with those of other studies (e.g., Leong, Leong, & Hoffman, 1987; Mau, 1995; Niles, Erford, Hunt, & Watts, 1997). Higher education typically values rational/systematic approaches to learning and thinking. College students are likely to develop such decision-making styles for career decisions from the exposure to this highly rational environment (Mau & Jepsen, 1992; Mau, 1995). Although a smaller percentage of Taiwanese students than American students endorsed a rational approach to career decision making, their average score on rational style was actually higher than those of the American students when age

and grade were taken into consideration. Only 16% of the entire sample scored highest in the intuitive decision-making style. Although significantly more American students than Taiwanese students endorsed the intuitive style, there was no significant difference in the average score. For the dependent style, Taiwanese students significantly outscored/outnumbered the American students both in percentage and in average score. As expected, Taiwanese students are more likely than American students to adopt a dependent decision-making style. The culture of Taiwanese students emphasizes social conformity and collective decisions. The self is made meaningful primarily in reference to those of social relation (e.g., family, workplace, and classroom), of which the self is a participating part (Ames, Dissanayake, & Kasulis, 1994). Self-enhancement or self-assertion may not be the primary concern of these individuals. Unlike American students, who tend to make their own career decisions, Taiwanese students tend to make career decisions that conformed to familial and societal expectations. While perceived negatively by most Americans, seeking approval from parents and other authority figures, such as teachers and elders, before making important decisions is often deemed appropriate. In contrast, the contemporary North American culture involves a wide variety of practices that highlight the importance and necessity of making personal choices, forming judgments, and having one's own opinions (Wierzbicka, 1994). The fact that the Taiwanese students scored significantly higher in both dependent and rational styles than did the American students appears to be consistent with the relatively independent relation of the two decision-making styles suggested by Harren (1978). While Americans may consider rational style most appropriate, it may be necessary for the Taiwanese students to use different decision-making styles in order to function effectively in their society.

**TABLE 4**  
**Correlations between Variables and the Canonical Roots by Gender**

Variables	Males			Females		
	Root 1	Root 2	Root 3	Root 1	Root 2	Root 3
<b>Style</b>						
Rational	0.58	0.19	-0.79	0.50	-0.79	0.36
Intuitive	-0.26	-0.95	0.15	-0.07	0.13	-0.99
Dependent	-0.84	-0.02	-0.55	-0.89	-0.45	0.01
<b>Efficacy</b>						
Goal setting	0.79	-0.57	-0.04	0.79	0.11	-0.33
Occupational information	0.73	-0.17	0.49	0.77	-0.09	0.16
Planning	0.95	0.02	-0.11	0.92	-0.08	0.29
Problem solving	0.83	0.20	0.04	0.92	0.32	-0.01
Self-appraisal	0.84	-0.03	0.37	0.90	-0.34	-0.27
<b>Canonical correlation</b>						
Coefficient	0.53**	0.09	0.06	0.58**	0.17*	0.06

\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

The findings of this study suggested that Taiwanese students scored significantly lower on the decision-making self-efficacy measure than did American students. It is possible that the collective-oriented culture may have influenced Taiwanese students to rely less on individual abilities than on group efforts. Studies (e.g., Kitayama, Takagi, & Matsumoto, 1995; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992) that have compared academic achievement of Chinese/Taiwanese and American students have suggested that Chinese students tend to attribute their success to their efforts, whereas American students tend to attribute their success to their abilities or talents. This modest thinking may have caused Taiwanese students to give lower ratings on the statements about their ability to perform a given decision-making

task. In contrast, the individual-oriented culture may have encouraged American students to overestimate their own capacity to perform a particular task. Numerous studies conducted in North America have documented the pervasive tendency of American students to overemphasize the uniqueness of their own positive attributes (for reviews, see Gilovich, 1983). Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, and Norasakkunkit (1997) argued that the tendency for Americans to “self-enhance” or the tendency for Asians to “self-criticize” have positive social and psychological consequences. In fact, as Kitayama et al. (1997) argued, “holding a self-critical attitude vis-à-vis socially shared standards of excellence may be a symbolic act of affirming one’s belongingness to the social unit.” (p. 1247). In other words, the culture that is individual oriented is more conducive to fostering self-efficacy, while the collective-oriented culture may have inhibited the development of self-efficacy. Consistent with previous studies on cognitive style (e.g., Witkin, 1979), the present study suggested that females were more likely than males to endorse a dependent decision-making style regardless of whether they were American or Taiwanese. Operating slightly differently, male Taiwanese students scored significantly higher than female Taiwanese students in decision-making self-efficacy, but no significant gender difference was found for American students. It is possible that even in the same cultural environment, female Taiwanese students have more acute self-criticism experience than Taiwanese male students. Women in Asian countries tend to have lower social status and are often at the lower hierarchical decision-making ranks; hence they are likely to feel inadequate in making their own career decisions.

One of the most important findings of this study is that career decision-making self-efficacy is significantly associated with career decision-making style. In general, students who described themselves as rational in career decision making tended to perceive themselves as more competent in career decision making, whereas students who described themselves as dependent in decision making tended to perceive themselves less competent in decision making. However, the relations vary depending on the cultural background of the students. It is interesting to note that, for American students, the dependent decision-making style appeared to be more predictive of their self-efficacy belief than the rational style. In contrast, for Taiwanese students, the rational decision-making style is more predictive of their self-efficacy belief. In other words, for American students, the more dependent the person was in career decision making the less confident he/she was in making career decisions. For Taiwanese students, the more rational the person was in approaching career decisions, the more confident he/she was in making career decisions. The relatively less robust predictive power of the dependent style for Taiwanese students is consistent with the cultural belief that the dependent approach is not as negative as it is to the Americans. Importantly, gender did not emerge as a significant factor, suggesting that the effects may be equally important for men as for women.

It is important that helping professionals take into consideration the cultural differences in the helpees’ approach to career decision making. Being aware of the different styles a person could adopt in his/her decision-making approaches and being sensitive to the unique cultural backgrounds of the individual is very essential in effective cross-cultural counseling. Although the endorsement of a rational style could be positively linked to self-efficacy belief in career decision making, it may not have a uniform impact on different cultural groups. Rigidly imposing a particular style may be culturally insensitive, which in turn may create adverse effects or negative social consequences. Instead of endorsing a single style, it may be appropriate for counselors to help individuals develop different styles that are situationally or culturally appropriate (Mau, 1995).

The conclusions drawn are tentative due to some limitations of this study. First, the relations found among the variables in this study, although sizable, do not account for all of the variance. Future research could identify and explore other antecedents and outcomes of career decision-making self-efficacy and style. Second, cross-national research has more factors to consider. Differences in language, values, and educational and vocational structure are nuisances that require additional control procedures for making valid comparisons. The present study represents only a beginning in the exploration of cultural



influence on career decision-making processes. Although Asian Americans share similar cultural heritage with Asians, and to some extent with other minority groups, their educational/vocational experience may be quite different. Future studies could replicate on Asian Americans or other cultural groups, so that direct inference can be established.

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