



The Personal and Interpersonal Character of Choice: Sociocultural Variation, Desire for Control, and Rejection Avoidance

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The Personal and Interpersonal Character of Choice: Sociocultural Variation, Desire for Control, and Rejection Avoidance

選択の個人的および対人的な特徴：
社会文化的差異、コントロール志向、拒絶回避

神戸大学大学院人文学研究科博士課程後期課程
社会動態専攻

Charis Eisen

Abstract

The present research adds to the understanding of sociocultural variation in emphases on the personal and interpersonal character of choice. Utilizing three student (Study 1) and non-student samples (Study 2), I examined sociocultural variation in workplace choice and found that compared to North Americans and Germans, Japanese tended to give greater consideration to family opinions in their choice of workplace. Moreover, as predicted, desire for control (i.e., the motivation to have control over various events) was stronger for North Americans and Germans than Japanese, and partly explained sociocultural differences in personal and interpersonal emphases in workplace choice. Using scenario-based studies, Study 3 found that, compared to Germans, Japanese people showed greater acceptance of an interpersonally constructed choice (i.e., vicarious choice by an ingroup member on behalf of the entire group). Adopting mediation analyses and a priming method, Study 4 identified rejection avoidance to partly explain culturally diverse responses to vicarious choices. In Study 5, German students' motivation following a task they had chosen by themselves was higher as compared to a task ostensibly chosen by a group member vicariously, while Japanese students' motivation was facilitated when they believed that a group member had chosen for them. Together, the studies described in this dissertation show that personal choice is not as highly cherished and does not evoke the same consequences in East Asian cultures as in Western cultures, even for highly consequential decisions. Rather, choices which incorporate important others are likely desired, accepted, positively evaluated and motivating in East Asian sociocultural contexts. This is partly due to sociocultural contexts promoting varying degrees of desire for control, and to the fact that interpersonally constructed choices bear a low risk of social rejection, which is a primary concern for interdependently oriented people.

Keywords: Culture, Agency, Choice, Desire for Control, Rejection Avoidance

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Chapter I

Introduction

In the past few decades, possibilities for individual choices have increased drastically in wealthy industrialized societies. People can now choose almost every aspect of their lives, whether the question involves clothing, product choice, investments, privacy settings, medical care, vacations, computer settings, professions, politics, religions, spouses, pension plans or life-prolonging measures. The choices they make impact their future life course. People make choices all the time, even when they choose to follow someone else's choice, or when they choose how to respond to circumstances obtruded on them. Some choices may appear trivial, such as choosing which socks to wear, while other choices, such as choosing a workplace, may appear more important. Regardless of the perceived significance of a certain decision, choice means choosing one option out of a multitude of alternatives and initiates behavior that enables the pursuit of the chosen course of action.

Beyond doubt, the choices people make remarkably shape the courses of their lives. However, what characterizes choice? Does the nature of choice lie in autonomous self-expression or rather in the dynamic interdependence of the self and its social environment? In this dissertation, I will present support for the claim that sociocultural backgrounds provide people with frequently encountered situations and norms that shape people's choice behavior by emphasizing the personal and the interpersonal character of choice to different degrees.

Sociocultural Psychology

In concert with many scholars, I believe that the human psyche is defined by and defines its social surrounding, and that the capacity for culture-making and culture-sharing is at the core of the human species' evolutionary advantage (e.g., Henrich, 2015). Likewise, psychologists—after many years of stating psychological laws in the same universal ways as

physical laws—have recently increased their focus on culture.

Sociocultural¹ psychological research emphasizes the fact that people are inseparable from their social worlds; they require and mutually constitute each other. People act and thereby construct their worlds; however, their thinking, doing and feeling is in turn shaped by sociocultural contexts, including relations with other people, beliefs, ideas, values, practices, products, and institutions. Sociocultural participation creates meanings, reflects these meanings in products and practices, and provides resources and blueprints for action (Shweder, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 2010). However, these meanings, products, and practices are not fixed and not shared equally among all members of a given society. Accordingly, culture is not seen as monolithic or a trait inherent to specific groups, but is rather defined as follows:

Culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of historically derived and selected ideas and their embodiment in institutions, practices, and artifacts; cultural patterns may, on one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action (this definition is based on Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952 and was summarized by Adams and Markus, 2004, p.341).

This definition highlights that rather than being a stable set of beliefs or values that reside inside people, culture consists of patterns and is substantially shared and constantly in the process of creation (see Figure 1) (Shweder, 1991, 2003; Adams & Markus, 2004; Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Culture is spread by social interaction and individuals are socialized into their sociocultural contexts. Culture is dynamic and prone to constant change in both subtle and tangible ways.

¹ Like Markus & Hamedani (2007), I use the term sociocultural rather than cultural to include both, meanings (i.e., ideas, images, representations, attitudes, values, prototypes and stereotypes) and sociostructural elements (i.e., cultural products, interpersonal interactions, institutional practices and systems).

Based on this understanding of dynamic mutual constitution of individuals and sociocultural elements, sociocultural psychology seeks to disclose systematic principles underlying psychological and sociocultural variation. The focus of sociocultural psychological research is therefore on “implicit and explicit patterns of meaning, practices, and artifacts distributed throughout the contexts in which people participate, and on how people are engaged, invoked, incorporated, contested or changed by agents to complete themselves and guide their behavior” (Markus & Hamedani, 2007, p.12). The self as the center of consciousness and agency reflects sociocultural patterns and, therefore, provides a clue to the question of how persistent engagement in a specific sociocultural environment requires—as well as fosters—specific psychological tendencies.

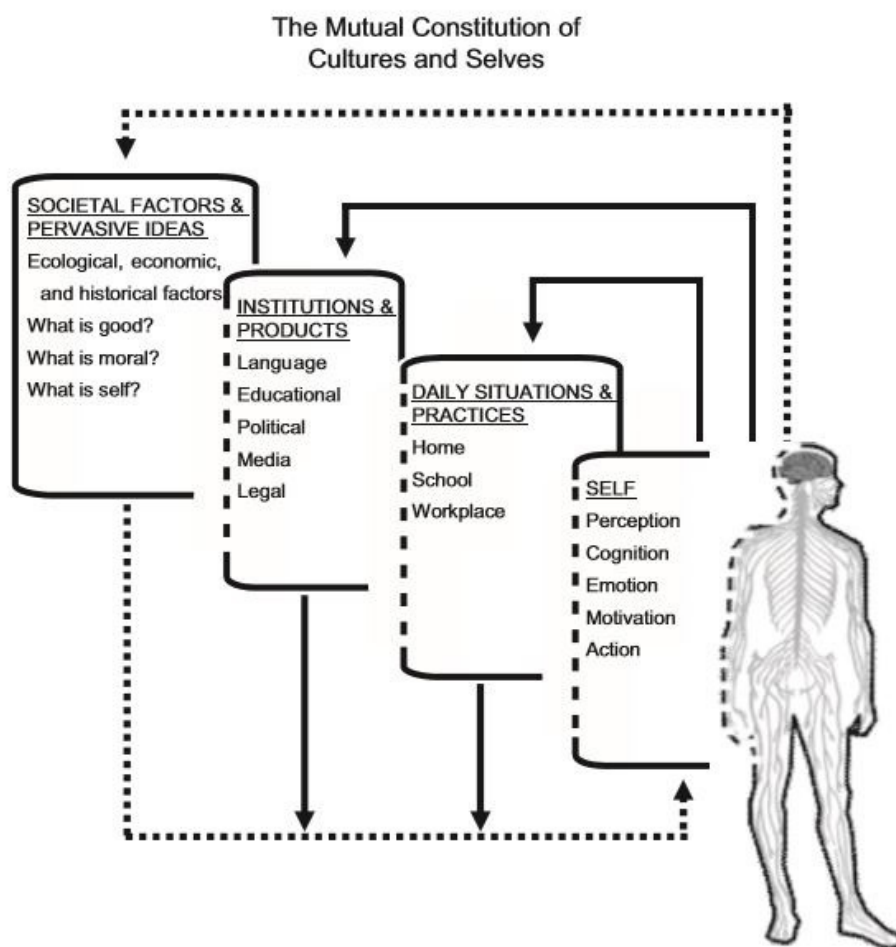


Figure 1. The mutual constitution of culture and selves (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

Sociocultural Self-Construals

In 1991, Markus and Kitayama wrote an epoch-making article about cognitive, emotional and motivational implications of distinct self-construals that sociocultural contexts promote to different extents². Accordingly, an individual's self-construal is defined for a specific behavior, situation and time. By recurring frequently, a form of self-construal may become dominant for an individual: As sociocultural contexts foster specific situations that demand specific behaviors and ways of being, individuals learn to construct themselves in order to match these sociocultural expectations.

Western sociocultural contexts, such as those in North America or Europe, promote an independent construction of the self. The self is understood as distinct and separated from its surrounding interpersonal context, relatively autonomous, and defined through internal attributes such as thoughts, goals, attitudes, motives, beliefs, abilities, and preferences. Expression and realization of these internal attributes, for example through personal choice, leads to affirmations of the self and positive evaluations (Triandis, 1989; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Kitayama, Duffy, & Uchida, 2007). This independent self-construal is illustrated in Figure 2.

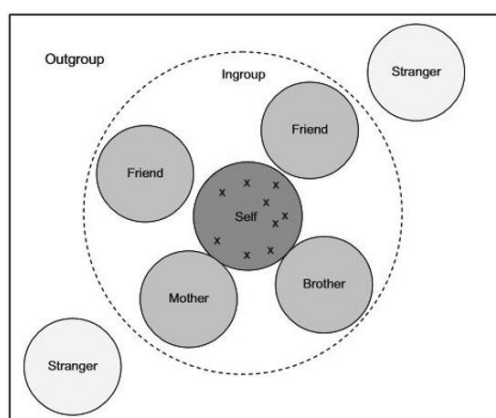


Figure 2. Illustration of the independent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

² This distinction has also been referred to as egocentric versus sociocentric selves (Shweder & Bourne, 1984) and individualism versus collectivism (Triandis, 1989).

Eastern sociocultural contexts, such as those in East and South Asia, conversely, promote an interdependent construction of the self, which emphasizes social relations. The self is understood as fundamentally connected to important others, and these social relations primarily define the self. Social concepts such as reciprocity, belonging, loyalty, respect, politeness, and obligations are crucial. Assurance to meet social roles, norms, and expectations of others leads to affirmations of the self and positive evaluations (Heine & Lehman, 1997; Kitayama, Park, Sevincer, Karasawa, & Uskul, 2009). This interdependent self-construal is illustrated in Figure 3.

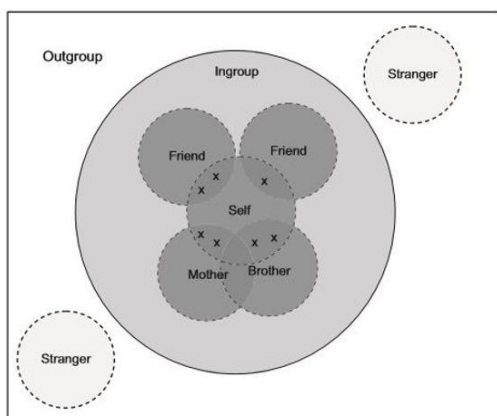


Figure 3. Illustration of the interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

There is a large amount of evidence for sociocultural variation in self-construals and their reflection in individuals' psychological tendencies. These tendencies include cognition, emotion, motivation, and behavior. For instance, people with predominantly independent selves tend to pay attention to focal objects, while people with predominantly interdependent selves show more holistic attention (Masuda & Nisbett, 2001). Independent selves are also more likely to experience disengaging emotions (i.e., emotions that are grounded in autonomy and cut off from social relationships), like pride or anger, while interdependent selves experience more engaging emotions (i.e., derived from social relatedness), like friendly feelings or guilt (Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006). Divergent self-construals also

cause variation in motivations to maintain self-esteem or social approval (Kitayama & Imada, 2008), attributional styles (Morris & Peng, 1994), and tendencies to influence social others or to adjust to them (Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, 2002). In addition, neuroscientific research (Zhu, Zhang, Fan, & Han, 2007) has shown that the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC), the brain region that is known to be activated during self-processing, is activated as strongly when Chinese participants think about their mothers as when they think about themselves. On the contrary, Western participants show mPFC activation only when they think about themselves. This would suggest similar neural representations of the self and close others for Chinese, but distinct representations for Westerners.

Self-Construals and Agency

Sociocultural self-construals are closely related to understandings of what it means to be an agent. The independent self-construal predominant in Western sociocultural environments corresponds to a disjoint model of agency, which defines actions as freely chosen, contingent on one's own preferences, goals, intentions, and motives. Actions that are independent of others and express autonomy are evaluated positively while considering close others' opinions is often understood as an obligation that undermines the self. On the contrary, in many East Asian sociocultural contexts, a conjoint model of agency is predominant. According to the conjoint model of agency, actions are responsive to others' obligations and expectations. Good actions promote interdependence with and adjustment to others. One's behavior is considered a means to respond to duties, responsibilities and social expectations. "Preferences, goals, and intentions are interpersonally anchored" (Markus & Kitayama, 2003, p.7). Rather than being a matter of personal responsibility, well-being can be achieved by being part of a good relationship (Kitayama & Uchida, 2005; Markus, Uchida, Omoregie, Townsend, & Kitayama, 2006)

These sociocultural models of agency build the basis for individual behavior. Across a myriad of situations, these understandings (unconsciously) advise individuals on either emphasizing personal, autonomous choice or social connectedness and conformity. A Western independent perspective oftentimes considers the opportunity to make a personal choice and express one's own individual preferences the gold standard. However, an East Asian interdependent perspective might lead people to evaluate a person who insists on expressing his or her preferences as immature, as the habit and expectation of making personal choices can be counterproductive to the goal of cohesion with important others. Likewise, East Asian contexts encourage attending and adjusting to others, behaviors that would be understood as lacking agency because they are counterproductive to disjoint agents who strive to be unique and independent of others.³

Literature Review: Sociocultural Variation in the Concept of Choice

The Abundance of Choice

These sociocultural differences in what it means to be a good agent have extensive consequences concerning the meaning, function, and reactions to various choice situations. Accordingly, previous research has identified significant sociocultural variation in the concept of choice. Findings indicate that compared to Asians, Westerners consider many more actions to be personal choices. Savani, Markus, Naidu, Kumar, and Berlia (2010) asked European American and Indian participants to complete the same series of 12 actions that required

³ I would like to emphasize that both self-construals and models of action likely exist in all individuals and in all sociocultural contexts (Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991; Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Therefore, it is not possible to simply classify people in a dichotomous way as independent (interdependent) or as having a disjoint (conjoint) understanding of agency. Rather, sociocultural contexts promote these divergent understandings to different degrees, leading to a greater prevalence of independent selves and disjoint models of agency in the West and a greater prevalence of interdependent selves and conjoint models of agency in East Asia.

selecting one out of several alternatives and asked then how many choices they had made during this experiment. While European Americans reported around eight choices, Indians reported on average less than four choices. Hence, there are sociocultural differences in what is perceived to be a choice. It would seem that the act of personal selection defines choice better in Western than in Asian contexts, and that the perceived ubiquity of personal choice is a rather Western phenomenon. The authors argue that construing an action as a personal choice makes Westerners feel that they have freely and autonomously acted in accordance with their own inner attributes and thereby fulfilled the normative way of action in their sociocultural context, giving the act of personal choice a special meaning. However, as normative action involves social relatedness in Asia, the absence of a social context disqualifies many actions, including personal choices, from holding a special meaning.

Functions of Choice

Furthermore, the function of choice would seem to depend on the dominant self-construal. When asked to choose one out of a set of five pens, consisting of four pens of the same and one pen of another color, 78% of European American adults chose the unique pen, while only 31% of East Asian adults did so (Kim & Markus, 1999). This finding indicates that people express different aspects of themselves, such as uniqueness or conformity, through their daily-life choices. People with a rather independent self tend to prefer a direct form of self-expression through choice focusing on internal aspects of the self, whereas people with a rather interdependent self tend to choose in order to express external aspects, like group belonging (Kim & Sherman, 2007; Kim & Drolet, 2003, 2009). This striving for conformity was also replicated in group settings among Koreans (Yoon, Suk, Lee, & Park, 2011).

Relatedly, Savani, Markus, and Conner (2008) have illustrated that although North American and Indian people both construct internal preferences, Indians are less likely to base

their choices upon these preferences. The link between preferences and choices, say the authors, expresses the self in disjoint agency contexts, but not when people construe agency conjointly (i.e., as responsive to other people's expectations), because doing so might require restraining one's own inner preferences. In a similar vein, Kokkoris, Kuehnen and Yan (2013) have argued that the ideal level of exclusiveness of preference depends on sociocultural contexts: Expressing likes and dislikes articulates the distinctiveness of the self and enables people to display normative disjoint agency, whereas expressing likes only portrays adjustability, enabling people to display normative conjoint agency.

Meaningful Choices

Choosing between options means to give up positive features of rejected options and to accept negative features of the chosen option. This might make choosers aware of possible negative aspects of their choice and hence lead to unpleasant feelings known as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). People were found to justify their choice in order to reduce their dissonance if the choice is meaningfully connected to their selves (Brehm, 1956; Cooper & Fazio, 1984). However, as selves are affected by sociocultural contexts, criteria for meaningfulness differ, and sociocultural variation has been found in choice justification. For people with predominantly independent selves, personal free choice allows influencing the environment along with expressing the self and is thus meaningful. For people with predominantly interdependent selves, personal choice does not fulfill the goal of social interdependence and is therefore valued less. Nevertheless, if a choice involves interpersonal aspects, it can be of great relevance.

Correspondingly, the classical choice justification effect was found for Canadians when they chose privately for themselves, but not for Japanese (Heine & Lehman, 1997). Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus, and Suzuki (2004) argued that this is due to the absence of any

relational concern in the paradigm, and manipulated this relational concern with a priming method. They found that European Americans justified their choices in the absence of any relational concern, while Japanese showed such a dissonance effect only when social others were primed. Similarly, Hoshino-Browne et al. (2005) found that European Canadians justified their choices only when they made them for themselves, whereas Asian Canadians and Japanese justified their choices only when they chose for a friend.

The claim that interpersonally constructed choices are of reduced importance for Westerners is further supported by studies finding that European Americans' choice justification significantly decreased when social others were primed during choice (Imada & Kitayama, 2010). Further, exposure to cues of social others while choosing a task lowered performance (Na & Kitayama, 2012) in Western participants. This likely occurred because they perceived their choice to be constrained by others and therefore inauthentic of themselves. In contrast, people from an Asian cultural background showed a significant choice justification effect when social others were primed (Imada & Kitayama, 2010) and social priming facilitated performance (Na & Kitayama, 2012), supporting the claim that choice is meaningful for Asians when it is interpersonally constructed.

Likewise, Poehlmann, Carranza, Hannover, and Iyengar (2007) showed that self-construals were associated with memory for options in personal choices and choices for an important other. They asked participants with varying independent and interdependent orientations to choose a watch either for themselves or for their mothers and asked them later in a surprise memory test to judge whether specific watches were among their options during choice or not. Illustrating an emphasis on personal choices, independently oriented participants correctly recognized more watches when they had chosen for themselves as compared to when they had chosen for their mothers. Importantly, interdependently oriented individuals were more attentive to the options when choosing for their mothers as compared

to when choosing for themselves.

Together, these studies elucidate socioculturally diverse criteria for choice to be meaningful: choice needs to be personal and unhindered for independent Westerners but interpersonally constructed for interdependent East Asians.

Reactions to Not Having Personal Choice

If personal choices are less important for Asians, not having personal choice should not affect them as negatively as Westerners. Research indicates that this is indeed the case. Savani et al. (2008, Study 5) explored how North American and South Asian Indian students evaluate items in two different conditions. A free choice condition allowed participants to choose one out of five equally likable pens, which they were asked to test and evaluate on a number of different dimensions before they could take it home. In another condition (the usurped choice condition), participants first chose one out of five pens, but then the experimenter denied them their choice and gave them another pen to evaluate and take home. Comparing these conditions, the researchers found that North Americans indicated they liked the pen less in the usurped choice condition than in the free choice condition, while Indian participants rated the items equally likable in both conditions.

Similarly, Jonas et al. (2009) explored sociocultural variation in reactance. When people feel that someone or something constrains their freedom by limiting their choices or range of alternatives, they likely experience reactance, that is, a motivational state directed toward the reestablishment of the threatened freedom (Brehm, 1966). Compared to people from interdependent sociocultural backgrounds (Chinese, Malaysian, Japanese and Asian American), people from independent sociocultural backgrounds (British, French, German, Swedish, Italian and European American) showed more reactance when they had to give up their personal freedom because of another's request or a new policy. This reflects sociocultural

differences in sensitivity to threats to personal freedoms, as for example in the case of not having personal choice.

Together, these results suggest that denying personal choice has negative consequences for Western people, but not necessarily for Asians.

The Motivating Effect of Choice

Motivational consequences of choice have been the topic of social psychological research for a long time. Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, and Deci (1978) found that college students who personally chose a puzzle were significantly more motivated to work on the puzzle than students who were assigned to work on the same puzzle. Since this seminal finding, in North America (i.e., the United States and Canada) alone, more than 40 studies have provided further details about the motivating effect of personal choice, as a recent meta-analysis expounded (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008).

However, research by Iyengar and Lepper (1999) provoked a debate about whether the motivating effect of personal choice generalizes beyond the Western world. The researchers focused on motivational consequences of having in- or out- group members choose vicariously. They compared how motivated European American and Asian American children were when working on a task across three conditions. The personal choice condition allowed the children to choose the task (Study 1) or task-related specifics (Study 2) themselves. In the outgroup choice condition, an unfamiliar experimenter (Study 1) or preferences of younger students from another school (Study 2) determined the task or task-related specifics. Children in the ingroup choice condition were told that their mothers (Study 1) or their classmates (Study 2) had chosen a task/task-related specifics for them. In line with previous research on the positive effects of personal choice in Western samples, European American children's motivation was highest in the personal choice condition and significantly lower in both the

ingroup and outgroup choice conditions, which did not differ from one another. In contrast, the motivation of Asian American children was highest in the ingroup choice condition, significantly lower in the personal choice condition, and even lower in the outgroup choice condition.

Although these insights fit well into the literature arguing that Asian cultures promote a rather conjoint model of agency, whereas Western cultures promote a more disjoint understanding of agency, other researchers reported that they were not able to completely replicate Iyengar and Lepper's findings (Bao, 2005; Bao & Lam, 2008; Rudy et al., 2015).

In research by Bao and Lam (2005, 2008), Hong Kong Chinese children reported greater motivation (i.e., liking and interest, measured by 2 self-report items) and performed better following personal choice as compared to when their mothers chose a task for them. However, an additional behavioral measure of motivation showed the opposite pattern (in line with Iyengar and Lepper): when the children had the choice to either engage in the same word-search task or to do something else in a free-play period following the experiment, the majority of the children in the mother choice conditions (65%) preferred to continue the word search, while only 30% of the participants in the child choice conditions did so (Bao, 2005).

Similarly, Rudy et al. (2015) found mixed results concerning the motivating effect of own and vicarious choice across cultures. In their first study, they asked Indian, Chinese and European American undergraduates to imagine scenarios in which a decision about their education needed to be made, and to report how they would feel and think if i) their parents made the decision without discussing it with them and ii) they made the decision without discussing it with their parents. Motivation was measured with one item ("I would enjoy doing what my parents/I decided"). In their second study, they asked Indian and European American participants to generate their own decision situations, and to imagine that i) their parents had made the decision without discussing it with them and ii) they made the decision without

discussing it with their parents. Motivation was assessed by asking participants to rate their agreement with six items (e.g., “I would enjoy doing what I/my parents decided”). Consistent with their hypotheses, their Asian samples reported greater motivation when they imagined their parents chose for them as compared to their American sample. However, their findings concerning the difference in motivation within the Asian samples between the own choice condition and the parental choice condition were mixed (though the exact values are not reported): In their first study, in stark contrast to Iyengar and Lepper (1999), they found Chinese and Indian undergraduates to report greater motivation after imagining their own choice as compared to their parents’ vicarious choice. However, Indian undergraduates in their Study 2 reported being more motivated when their parents choose for them as compared to when they chose for themselves.

In sum, whereas an ingroup member’s choice was found to facilitate motivation above the level of personal choice among Asian American children, this finding could not be fully replicated with Hong Kong Chinese children or with Chinese and Indian undergraduate students and therefore, more research is needed to clarify the motivational effect of vicarious choice.

The Present Research

In the present work, I focus on sociocultural variation in strivings for and consequences of personally and interpersonally constructed choices and explore underlying mechanisms. I aim to extend the current literature in four important directions.

First, previous research has mainly examined the product choices of people from different sociocultural backgrounds. It is still unclear whether the striving for independent personal choice of Westerners and the striving to incorporate significant others of Asians extend to choices that are more consequential. Previous research has illustrated that people use different strategies to decide on more or less important issues (e.g., Ladouceur et al., 1995;

Milgram & Tenne, 2000) and that the importance of a decision can affect reactions (Savani et al., 2010; Li, Masuda, & Russell, 2014). Therefore, Chapter II (Studies 1 and 2) investigates whether sociocultural differences in the striving for unconstrained, personal choice as opposed to the incorporation of important others' opinions in one's choice can be generalized to a consequential choice—workplace choice.

Second, sociocultural contexts affect individuals by providing them with particular kinds of regularly encountered situations, and the experiences in these socioculturally shaped situations lead to habitual ways of thinking about oneself and the world (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). Thus, research should include frequently encountered situations of various cultures to avoid biases. However, although prior cross-cultural research has illustrated sociocultural variation in emphasizing the personal or the interpersonal character of choice, previous research mostly explores the importance and consequences of personal choices and tests how well Western theories fit other sociocultural contexts (but see the research on choice justification, which includes public choices, and the research on motivation following vicarious choice for exceptions). This very Western perspective cannot account for the psychological processes of diverse sociocultural backgrounds, where greater weight is put on the self in its social contexts than on independent self-expression through personal choice. Given the significance of interpersonally constructed choices for interdependently oriented people, it seems to be of vast importance to focus on the importance and consequences of interpersonally constructed choice situations. Thus, in Chapter III (Studies 3 to 5), I focus on frequently occurring interpersonal choice situations: when one ingroup member chooses on behalf of the entire group, thereby depriving individual members of their personal choices. I explore consequences of this vicarious choice for Western and East Asian students and adults.

Third, little is known about the precise mechanisms underlying sociocultural

differences in choice. Which critical variables account for the production and perpetuation of sociocultural emphases on the personal or interpersonal character of choice? Answering this question could not only explain sociocultural variation but could also clarify the mechanisms behind psychological processes more generally (Heine & Norenzayan, 2006). Previous research assumes that sociocultural differences in choice are based on distinctions of individualism and collectivism, independence and interdependence or disjoint and conjoint agency often without empirically investigating specific mechanisms. The present research tackles this problem: Chapter II includes an investigation of the reason for divergent emphases in workplace choice, and Chapter III focuses on the reason for sociocultural differences in reactions to vicarious choice.

Fourth, as previous research has tested European and Asian American children who live in the US as well as US American, Indian, Japanese and Chinese students, more research is needed to determine whether similar sociocultural differences can be found between other Asians in Asia and Europeans in Europe. Particularly, past studies have shown that North Americans are more independent than Western Europeans in various implicit measurements of independence, including context sensitivity and predictors of happiness, while East Asians are less independent than both Western groups (Kitayama, et al., 2009). These results suggest that not only Western cultural heritage but also the history of voluntary settlement characteristic of North American cultures foster the ethos of independence as proposed by the voluntary settlement hypothesis (Kitayama, Ishii, Imada, Takemura, & Ramaswamy, 2006; Kitayama et al., 2009). However, it remains to be examined whether the same patterns can be found related to choice and agency.

Chapter II

Sociocultural Contexts, Desire for Control, and Workplace Choice

As reviewed in the previous chapter, prior studies have documented sociocultural differences in the construal, function, and significance of choice. Whereas Westerners tend to venerate the principle of liberal, unhindered personal choice, East Asians place greater importance on choices made in interpersonal contexts. Extending these previous findings, in this chapter, I address whether these sociocultural differences can be observed in choices that have significant implications in individuals' real lives, such as the choice of one's workplace (hereafter, referred to as workplace choice). How do sociocultural contexts affect whether people construct their workplace choice as a personal or an interpersonal choice?

Evidence of sociocultural differences in factors people are likely to consider in their workplace choice is still limited (but see Lee & Ramaswami, 2013). Related to the personal or interpersonal character of such a choice, Brew, Hesketh, and Taylor (2001) collected data from Australian students of European and Chinese descent and investigated the level of familial influence on their career choice. Chinese Australian students were more inclined to respect family wishes than European Australians, who were more inclined to make their own decisions about their careers. In the present research, I tested North American, German, and Japanese students and adults, examining whether the finding that cultural context affects workplace choice (causing it to be more based on personal or interpersonal considerations) can be extended to these three sociocultural contexts.

In addition to elucidating sociocultural differences in the construal of workplace choice, the second purpose of the present research was to explore a psychological mechanism underlying these differences. I focused on the desire for control as a mediator that may, at least partly, explain why workplace choice is understood as a more personal or interpersonal choice depending on sociocultural context. In Western cultures, where independence and autonomy

of the self are stressed, personal control is often seen as a virtue (Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Accordingly, North Americans are more likely than Japanese to report that they have influenced the people and events in their lives (Morling et al., 2002). It can be supposed that people who desire to control the environment themselves are more likely to follow personal beliefs and goals rather than incorporate their close others' opinions and thus construe workplace choice rather personally than interpersonally. Nevertheless, no studies, to my knowledge, have examined the association between desire for control⁴ and workplace choice cross-culturally.

The Present Research

I hypothesized that when choosing a workplace, Japanese would be more likely to incorporate their social context into the choice, and thus consider their family members' opinions more than Westerners. In contrast, Westerners would shun others' influence on their personal choice and thus would be more likely to choose merely based on their own preferences, independent of the social context. Moreover, I explore a possibility that sociocultural differences in choice are associated with different levels of desire for control. I examine whether the desire for control, which is expected to be higher in Western people such as North Americans and Germans than in East Asians such as Japanese, leads people to choose a workplace that emphasizes personal choice rather than interpersonal considerations.

In the present research, adopting the method of triangulation (Medin, Unsworth, & Hirschfeld, 2007), I employed three cultural group comparisons and chose North Americans and Germans as Western groups. Past studies have shown that North Americans are more

⁴ Desire for control refers to personal control over one's environment, in this research. The concept does not include what Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder (1982) call secondary control, what Spector, Sanchez, Siu, Salgado, & Ma (2004) call socioinstrumental control, or what Morling and Fiske (1999) call harmony control, nor does it include collective or proxy control (Yamaguchi, 2001).

independent than Germans in various implicit measurements of independence, while Japanese are less independent than both Western groups (Kitayama et al., 2009). Given this, in addition to the hypotheses regarding East-West differences and their underlying mechanism, I expect to find systematic differences between North Americans and Germans in terms of workplace decisions: as a result of stronger independence, compared to Germans, North Americans' preference for choosing their workplace independent of others' influence should be stronger.

Study 1: Students' Workplace Choice

Method

Materials. All materials were initially developed in English. They were then translated into German and Japanese and back-translated into English by independent translators. Finally, back-translated materials were checked for consistency with the original English language materials. This process ensured the uniformity of materials across cultures.

Workplace choice vignette. I constructed a vignette following the procedure of previous research investigating individualist-collectivist differences in decision-making (Brew et al., 2001). To the extent possible, I used a concrete as opposed to an abstract scenario to avoid potential confounds inherent to cross-cultural comparisons (Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997). The vignette opposed an interpersonal versus personal emphasis in workplace choice by describing a workplace consistent with parental expectation but conflicting with the participant's personal career aspirations, versus a workplace where the reverse was true. Participants read:

Imagine that you got two job offers from different companies and you need to decide quickly. Both companies are offering you a stable job and an average salary. You will have to work 5 days a week and overtime work will be paid. One company aligns with your parents' expectations

and desires for you, so choosing that one will make them very happy.

The other company deals with topics you are interested in, but your parents do not understand these topics nor your interest in them so it does not meet their expectations.

Adopting a scale used in Brew et al. (2001), I measured preference for workplace using a 9-point bipolar scale (1 = the workplace depicting interpersonal choice, 9 = the workplace depicting personal choice). Furthermore, six questions assayed for the reasoning behind a particular workplace preference again measured on a 9-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 9 = strongly agree). There were three questions regarding interpersonal reasons (e.g., “My family knows what is best for me”) and three questions regarding personal reasons (e.g., “It is important for my future happiness that I make my own decisions about my career”).

The desirability of control scale. Burger and Cooper (1979) developed a scale to measure the level of “motivation to control the events in one’s life” (p. 381). The scale consists of 20 items (e.g., “I enjoy having control over my own destiny”, see Appendix A for the other items). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Reasonable reliabilities were confirmed in each of the three cultures (North Americans: $\alpha = .81$, Germans: $\alpha = .73$, Japanese: $\alpha = .80$).

Participants and procedure. One hundred thirty-one European American students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (37 males, 94 females), 86 German students at the University of Mannheim (31 males, 55 females), and 81 Japanese students at Kobe University (44 males, 37 females) participated in the study.

Participants read the vignette, indicated their preference for one of the two workplaces, and answered six questions regarding the reasons for their choice. Finally, participants completed the measure of desire for control.

Dependent variable: (Inter-) personal Emphasis Index. I created an index representing participants' emphases on the interpersonal or personal character of their workplace choice by calculating the mean of their decision for one of the workplaces and their agreement to the items measuring interpersonal and personal reasons for their choice. This index served as the primary dependent variable. Higher ratings on the index indicate a greater emphasis on personal workplace choice (i.e., choosing independently of others), while lower ratings indicate a greater emphasis on interpersonal workplace choice (i.e., consideration of family opinions). Reliability analyses confirmed the validity of this procedure ($\alpha_{\text{German}} = .72$, $\alpha_{\text{Japanese}} = .64$, $\alpha_{\text{North American}} = .68$).

Results

There were significant age differences among the three cultures, $F(2, 294) = 44.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$. Also, regression analyses showed that the emphasis on the interpersonal character of the workplace choice decreased with age, $b = .08$, $SE = .04$, $t(295) = 2.11$, $p = .04$. Thus, I controlled for age in the following analyses. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for each cultural group.

I conducted an analysis of covariance controlling for age to test for differences between the three cultures in the (inter-)personal emphasis index. A significant main effect of culture, $F(2, 293) = 7.89$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$, emerged. As predicted, compared to German participants, Japanese participants put greater emphasis on the interpersonal character of their workplace choice, $t(293) = 3.95$, Tukey's adjusted $p < .001$, $r = .22$. The same tendency was found in the comparison between Japanese and North Americans, although the difference was only marginally significant, $t(293) = 2.28$, Tukey's adjusted $p = .06$, $r = .13$. Moreover, there was no significant difference between Germans and North Americans in the emphasis on the

interpersonal or personal character of choice, $t(293) = 2.02$, Tukey's adjusted $p = .11$, $r = .12$.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics for the variables for each cultural group in Study 1.

	Japanese		Germans		North Americans	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age (years)	19.59	0.89	21.15	2.38	18.93	1.54
(Inter-)personal Emphasis Index	6.18	1.33	7.02	1.20	6.54	1.17
Desire for Control	4.39	0.71	4.97	0.55	4.95	0.65

Note. Concerning the interpretation of the (inter-)personal emphasis index, lower values represent an emphasis on interpersonal aspects when choosing a workplace while higher values represent an emphasis on personal aspects when choosing a workplace. Concerning the interpretation of the desire for control values, the higher the value the higher the desire for personal control.

Underlying mechanism: the desire for control. As displayed in Table 1, Germans and North Americans scored higher on the desirability of control scale than Japanese, $F(2, 295) = 22.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$; $t(295) = 5.81$, $p < .001$, $r = .32$ for the German – Japanese contrast, $t(295) = 6.17$, $p < .001$, $r = .34$, for the North American – Japanese contrast. No significant difference was found between Germans and North Americans, $t(295) = 0.20$, $p = .85$. These results are in line with prior research that found that North Americans want to influence their surroundings stronger than Japanese (e.g., Morling et al., 2002).

To see the mechanism that underlies the sociocultural differences, I investigated whether the desire for control mediates the differences of (inter-)personal emphasis between Japanese and Westerners (Germans and North Americans, respectively) in their workplace choice. I dummy coded culture (Japanese = 0 vs. German = 1, and Japanese = 0 vs. North Americans = 1) and conducted a linear regression analysis with culture as the predictor and (inter-)personal character of the choice as the dependent measure. Compared to Japanese,

Germans and North Americans gave less priority to the interpersonal context, $b = .81$, $SE = .21$, $t(164) = 3.78$, $p < .001$, and $b = .43$, $SE = .18$, $t(208) = 2.40$, $p = .02$, respectively. The desire for control significantly predicted (inter-)personal emphasis, $b = .56$, $SE = .15$, $t(163) = 3.70$, $p < .001$, while the effect of culture was still significant in the German contrast, $b = .47$, $SE = .23$, $t(163) = 2.06$, $p = .04$. On the other hand, the desire for control somewhat predicted (inter-)personal emphasis, $b = .23$, $SE = .12$, $t(207) = 1.82$, $p = .07$, and the effect of culture became nonsignificant, $b = .30$, $SE = .19$, $t(207) = 1.59$, $p = .11$ in the American contrast. A bootstrap analysis (bootstrap sample = 10000) revealed a significant indirect effect in the German contrast (95% CI [0.12, 0.56]), however, the American contrast was nonsignificant (95% CI [-0.03, 0.30]) (see Figure 4). This suggests that the desire for control partially mediates sociocultural differences in (inter-)personal emphasis in workplace choice, although the mediation effect is weak in the Japanese-American comparison.

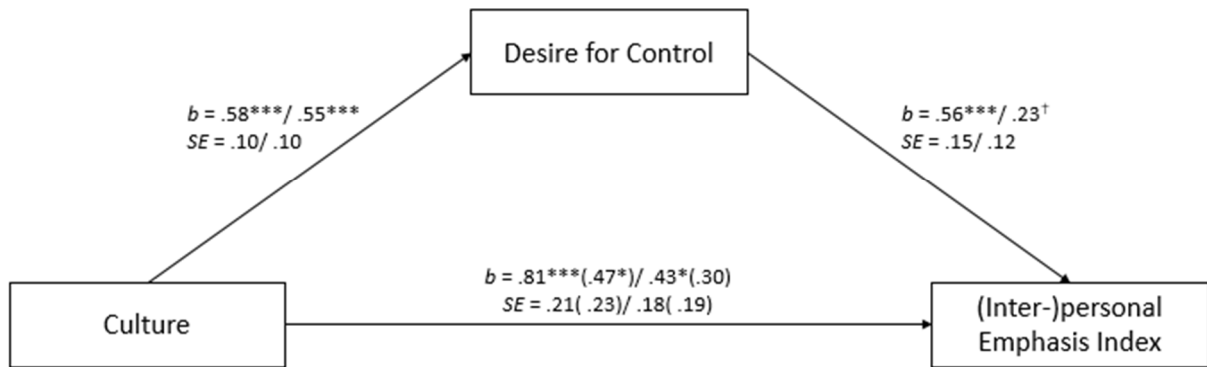


Figure 4. The desire for control as a mediator of the sociocultural differences in the (inter-)personal emphasis in Study 1. Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are shown. Coefficients indicating the relationship between culture and (inter-)personal emphasis after controlling for the desire for control are given in parentheses. Left: Japanese (0) - German (1) comparison. Right: Japanese (0) – North American (1) comparison.

⁺ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

Study 2: Adults' Workplace Choice

Study 2 investigated the same hypotheses concerning sociocultural differences in workplace choice and their underlying mechanisms in a sample consisting of working adults. While students usually do not have work experience and might, therefore, choose their workplace in accordance with their conception of an ideal workplace based on information they get from other people or the media, non-student adults should have a more realistic conception since they have actual work experience. Furthermore, I included a measure of socioeconomic status in Study 2, because socioeconomic status has been found to relate to choice. Particularly, Stephens, Fryberg, and Markus (2011) found that although working-class Americans view choice positively overall, they are less likely than middle-class Americans to reject a gift chosen by an experimenter and instead choose for themselves if they are offered personal choice. Thus, social class might influence how likely people are to choose their workplace according to their own or their family members' preferences. To exclude social status differences as a possible confounding variable, I included measurements of and controlled for objective and subjective socioeconomic status in the following analyses.

I used online survey services and administered the same questionnaire as in Study 1 to non-student adults in the U.S., Germany, and Japan to examine whether sociocultural differences in workplace choice extend to them as well.

Method

Materials. The materials were the same as in Study 1 with two exceptions. First, I changed the family influence vignette so that it opposes workplaces with which one's "family" (instead of "parents") agrees or disagrees. Second, I included questions on subjective and objective socioeconomic status (SES). I assessed objective SES by asking participants about their education (i.e., "What is your highest educational attainment?") and their yearly income

(i.e., “What is your income?”). Educational attainment was assessed on a 6-point scale (1 = some high school, 2 = completed high school, 3 = some college, 4 = completed college, 5 = some postgraduate, and 6 = postgraduate degree). The level of income was assessed on an 8-point scale (1 < \$20,000, 2 = \$20,000–\$40,000, 3 = \$40,000–\$60,000, 4 = \$60,000–\$80,000, 5 = \$80,000–\$100,000, 6 = \$100,000–\$120,000, 7 = \$120,000–\$140,000, and 8 > \$140,000). The questionnaires asked participants to indicate their income in the currency of their country. Thus, North American participants chose between the options explained above in USD, German participants indicated their income in the equivalent amount of Euro, and Japanese participants reported their income in JPY. The two measures were standardized and averaged for each of the cultures to produce an indicator of objective SES. To measure subjective SES, participants were presented with a picture of a 10-rung ladder and asked to place themselves on the ladder based on where they stand compared to other people in their country (adopted from Adler et al., 1994). They were assigned scores ranging from 1 (lowest rung) to 10 (highest rung).

Participants and Procedure. Three hundred and forty-three non-student adults from three different cultures participated in this study: 123 North Americans (54 men, 69 women), 114 Germans (63 men, 51 women), and 106 Japanese (53 men, 53 women). They came from various cities in the three countries and worked in various fields. Participants were recruited using online crowdsourcing services, specifically Amazon’s Mechanical Turk for Americans, WorkHub for Germans, and Macromill for Japanese. All three crowdsourcing services have a pool of internet users at their disposal and participants were rewarded with a small monetary compensation adapted to the respective service’s norms.

The procedure was the same as in Study 1, however, participants completed the additional SES questions, and the study was conducted online.

Dependent variable. As in Study 1, the dependent variable was the mean value of the decision for a workplace emphasizing interpersonal or personal aspects, and the agreement to interpersonal and personal reasons for that choice, respectively ($\alpha_{\text{German}} = .80$, $\alpha_{\text{Japanese}} = .74$, $\alpha_{\text{North American}} = .67$).

Results

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for each cultural group. There were significant differences among the three cultures in educational attainment, $F(2, 340) = 4.66$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$, yearly income, $F(2, 340) = 3.74$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .02$, and subjective SES, $F(2, 340) = 12.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$, whereas mean age differed non-significantly across cultures, $F(2, 340) = 1.99$, $p = .14$, $\eta^2 = .01$. I controlled for age, objective SES (i.e., the index created by standardizing educational attainment and income), and subjective SES in the following analyses.

Table 2.

Descriptive statistics for the variables for each cultural group in Study 2.

	Japanese		Germans		North Americans	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age (years)	34.83	8.44	34.20	6.34	36.74	13.89
Educational attainment	3.23	1.18	3.64	1.02	3.62	1.18
Yearly income	1.96	1.10	2.41	1.33	2.39	1.49
Subjective SES	4.36	1.83	5.53	1.76	4.79	1.80
(Inter-)personal Emphasis Index	5.04	1.27	6.14	1.41	5.88	1.54
Desire for Control	4.16	0.58	4.96	0.61	4.95	0.74

Note. Concerning the interpretation of the (inter-)personal emphasis index, lower values represent the emphasis on interpersonal aspects when choosing a workplace while higher values represent the emphasis on personal aspects when choosing a workplace. Concerning the interpretation of the desire for control values, the higher the value the higher the desire for personal control.

An ANCOVA showed a main effect of culture, $F(2, 337) = 18.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$. As predicted, compared to Germans and North Americans, Japanese were significantly more likely to attend to the interpersonal context in their workplace choice, $t(337) = 5.95$, Tukey's adjusted $p < .001, r = .31$, and $t(337) = 4.36$, Tukey's adjusted $p < .001, r = .23$, respectively. There was no significant difference in the level of (inter-)personal emphasis between Germans and North Americans, $t(337) = 1.90$, Tukey's adjusted $p = .14, r = .10$.

Underlying mechanism: the desire for control. Reasonable reliabilities were confirmed for the desirability of control scale in the three cultures (North Americans: $\alpha = .81$, Germans: $\alpha = .75$, Japanese: $\alpha = .78$). As in Study 1, Germans and North Americans scored higher than Japanese on the scale, $F(2, 340) = 55.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24, t(340) = 9.14, p < .001, r = .44$, for the German – Japanese contrast, $t(340) = 7.22, p < .001, r = .36$, for the North American – Japanese contrast. There was no significant difference between Germans and North Americans, $t(340) = 0.09, p = .93, r = .01$.

Mediation analyses comparing Japanese (0) and Germans/Americans (1) were performed regarding (inter-)personal emphasis. The desire for control significantly predicted (inter-)personal emphasis in the German – Japanese contrast, $b = .60, SE = .15, t(214) = 3.90, p < .001$, and in the American – Japanese contrast, $b = .46, SE = .14, t(223) = 3.24, p = .001$. Compared to Japanese, Germans and North Americans put less emphasis on the interpersonal context in their workplace choice, $b = 1.19, SE = .19, t(215) = 6.16, p < .001$, and $b = .82, SE = .19, t(224) = 4.32, p < .001$, respectively. This effect became weaker after controlling for desire for control, $b = .71, SE = .22, t(214) = 3.19, p = .002$; $b = .47, SE = .21, t(223) = 2.20, p = .03$, for German and American contrasts, respectively (see Figure 5). Bootstrap analyses (bootstrap samples = 10000) revealed significant indirect effects (95% CI [0.23, 0.73] and [0.13, 0.61] for German and American contrasts, respectively). In spite of the nonsignificant

indirect effect on (inter-)personal emphasis in the comparison of Japanese and American students in Study 1, the indirect effect became significant in Study 2 testing non-student adults.

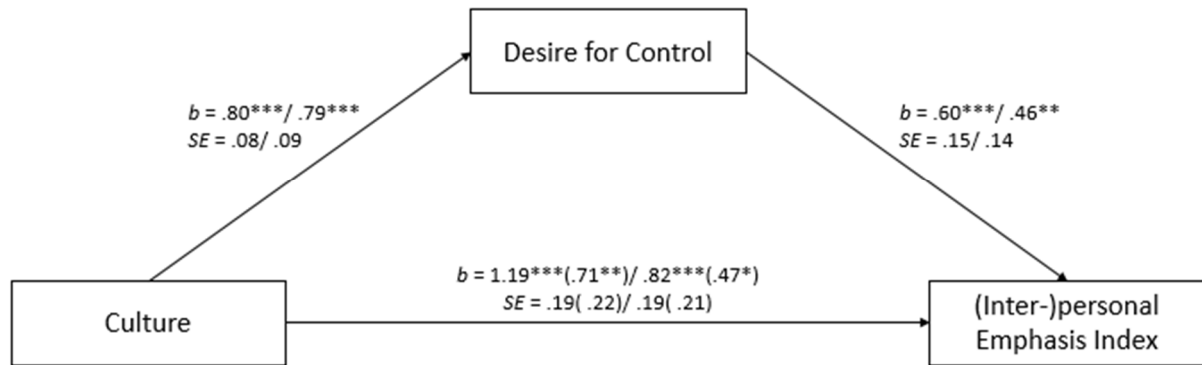


Figure 5. The desire for control as a mediator of the sociocultural differences in the (inter-)personal emphasis in Study 2. Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are shown. Coefficients indicating the relationship between culture and (inter-)personal emphasis after controlling for the desire for control are given in parentheses. Left: Japanese (0) - German (1) comparison. Right: Japanese (0) – North American (1) comparison.

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

Discussion

In two studies, with students (Study 1) and non-student adults (Study 2), I found sociocultural differences in how much people emphasize their personal preferences or important others' preferences in their workplace choice. Specifically, I found that Japanese people place more weight on family members' opinions regarding workplace choice than Westerners, who emphasize their own, personal preferences. Further, I found evidence that individual differences in the desire for control partly mediate these sociocultural differences.

Previous studies have shown that family members' influence, which may be seen as a restriction of personal freedom in the West, may be internalized and act as a powerful motivational force for people in East Asia (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Brew et al., 2001; Fu & Markus, 2014; Savani et al., 2010). My investigation expands on these findings, as it suggests

that, even for very important personal decisions such as workplace choice, Japanese are more likely to incorporate social context than Westerners.

Unexpectedly, I did not find a significant cultural difference between Germans and North Americans in the likeliness to consider others' opinions in their workplace choice. This was unanticipated as previous research suggested that North Americans would be more independent than Europeans. According to the voluntary settlement hypothesis (Kitayama et al., 2006), when Americans of mostly Western European origin settled in new Western frontiers, these new frontiers symbolized personal freedom, opportunities, and redemption, and encouraged the formation of a culture emphasizing the power of the individual. This historically driven emphasis on independence suggests that North Americans are more independent than Germans, and indeed, previous research confirmed this with implicit measurements of focused attention, the experience of disengaging emotions, and the relationship between happiness and personal achievements. However, other measurements, such as dispositional bias and symbolic self-inflation, did not confirm a greater independence among North Americans as compared to Germans. This might suggest that the history of voluntary settlement heightened some aspects of independence but not others, like dispositional bias or the desire for personal choice (Kitayama et al., 2009).

The exploration of an underlying mechanism to explain cultural variation contributes to the cross-cultural research on agency and choice by showing that culture (i.e., Japanese vs. Westerners) and workplace choice (i.e., a workplace emphasizing personal vs. interpersonal aspects) is not related in a simple binary fashion. Instead, this research suggests that culturally distinct workplace preferences are, at least partially, a consequence of individual differences in desire for control.

The present study was completely based on questionnaires. While I constructed the scenarios as realistically as possible (in accordance with the recommendation of Peng et al.,

1997), and while it is likely that participants' actual decisions would be very similar to their self-reported answers, future research should employ methods with more concrete behavioral outcomes.

Chapter III

Sociocultural Contexts, Rejection Avoidance, and Vicarious Choice

In daily life, people oftentimes choose vicariously for their ingroup members. For example, when working together with colleagues on a team project, it is a frequent practice that one of the members distributes tasks among all team members. This could provoke negative reactions in ingroup members who have a strong desire to decide autonomously based on their personal preferences. Alternatively, this could promote positive reactions in ingroup members who appreciate this fast and effortless way to get to a resolution for the whole group.

The current research investigates vicarious choice by an ingroup member and illustrates how an emphasis on the personal versus interpersonal character of that choice—which sociocultural contexts promote to different extents—affects individuals' reactions. Furthermore, to shed light on a potential mechanism underlying sociocultural variation, I focus on the motivation of avoiding social rejection.

Vicarious Choice

Vicarious choice seems to be one form of interpersonally constructed choice that is commonplace. Therefore, vicarious choice situations can contribute to the understanding of the way choice functions in interdependent sociocultural contexts. However, the literature on cultural variation in importance and consequences of vicarious choice is still limited and can be divided along the following two dimensions: Firstly, research can be classified according to whether the target of the psychological investigation is the chooser or the choice recipient. Secondly, studies differ in whether the chooser and choice recipient belong to the same group (ingroup) or to different groups (outgroup).

Consider the following studies (all of which were introduced in Chapter I). Hoshino-Browne et al. (2005) approached the topic of vicarious choice by focusing on the chooser's

perspective and suggest that Westerners do not care as much as Asians about making choices for their ingroup members; Asians highly value the act of choosing for friends. Savani et al. (2008, Study 5), by contrast, investigated cultural variation in reactions to vicarious choice from the perspective of choice recipients. They suggest that South Asians do not consider personal choice as positively as do North Americans; for South Asians, being the recipient of a vicarious choice by an outgroup member is liked equally as much as personal choice. Yet another study, by Jonas et al. (2009) approached the consequences of vicarious choice from a different angle by measuring psychological reactance, and suggests that there are sociocultural differences in negative reactions to vicarious choice. Finally, Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) findings illustrate sociocultural differences in motivational outcomes of having someone choose vicariously, and highlight the necessity to distinguish between ingroup choosers and outgroup choosers: For Asian American children, vicarious choice by an ingroup member raised performance above the levels of personal choice and vicarious choice by an outgroup member; for European American children, vicarious choices were—regardless of relationship between chooser and choice recipient—not as motivating as personal choices.

Although the dependent variables diverge (postdecisional justification, liking, reactance, motivation), together, these studies suggest sociocultural differences in the importance and consequences of vicarious choice. It would seem that both, choosing vicariously for an ingroup member and having an ingroup member choose on one's behalf is valued and might boost motivation, while having an outgroup member choose on one's behalf does not necessarily lead to positive consequences in Asian cultural contexts. In contrast, the literature conveys the impression that Western cultural contexts esteem personal choice, but do not value vicarious choice, regardless of whether individuals are choosers or choice recipients, and of whether the other is an ingroup or an outgroup member.

Studies have examined how choices made by higher-status ingroup (e.g., mother) or

outgroup (e.g., experimenter) choosers on behalf of the individual affect this individual's performance and judgments. However, vicarious choice situations in which an equal-status ingroup member decides on behalf of the entire group have not received sufficient attention—in spite of being frequent daily life occurrences. Examinations of the consequences of vicarious choices made for the whole group could add to the understanding of how agency is understood in various interdependent contexts. Therefore, the present research focuses on these vicarious choices and investigates reactions in two cultures.

Potential Mechanism

What are possible reasons for sociocultural differences in reactions to vicarious choice? Reactance theory (Brehm, 1966) offers an explanation for why people might respond negatively to having someone else choose vicariously: people assume that they are free to control aspects concerning themselves through personal choice, and another's vicarious choice threatens this freedom. Accordingly, negative reactions to vicarious choice could be based on the wish to re-establish this freedom and control. However, this reasoning relies upon the endeavor for independence and stresses individual internal attributes. Reactance theory cannot explain why some people respond positively to vicarious choice.

To shed light on this question, I focus on how much people are afraid of social rejection. Kitayama et al. (2004) suggested that the (imagined) presence of others generates anxiety about others' appraisals in their Japanese participants and that this interpersonal worry motivated them to justify their choices. Accordingly, Asians may be more likely than European Americans to be sensitive to social-evaluative threats because people with predominantly interdependent self-construals develop and maintain their identities through social evaluations, while people with predominantly independent self-construals define the self in terms of their own individual appraisals rather than other people's evaluations (Park & Kitayama, 2014).

This reasoning has received empirical support: Studies have shown that Asian people are highly vigilant of social-evaluative threats (Ishii, Miyamoto, Mayama, & Niedenthal, 2011), and respond psychologically even to very subtle social cues, such as an image of a watching face, insofar as there is a good chance that the observing person critically evaluates the watched person (Kitayama et al., 2004; Park & Kitayama, 2014). A concern with deviating from what one considers to represent the social standard or the expectations of other people would evoke anxiety; this anxiety would promote avoidance behaviors that reduce negative evaluation. Indeed, empirical research has shown that Asians oftentimes behave in a way that allows them to avoid any disruption of harmonious relationships: Compared to Westerners, East Asians more frequently engage in self-criticism (Heine, Takata, & Lehmann, 2000), are less willing to seek social support (Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008; Ishii, Mojaverian, Masuno, & Kim, 2017), and more frequently inhibit their desire to express disagreement (Hashimoto, Mojaverian, & Kim, 2012) in order to prevent social disapproval. However, although previous research convincingly explains that anxiety about others' appraisals constitutes part of the mechanism behind sociocultural differences in choice (Kitayama et al., 2004), to date, there is no direct empirical evidence (e.g., through mediation analyses) for the role this anxiety plays.

Hashimoto and Yamagishi (2013; 2016) also argued for the significant role of rejection avoidance. According to their theory, a society like the Japanese, which is maintained by mutual monitoring and sanctioning within fixed group boundaries, promotes heavy dependency of individuals on others. The closure of groups to outsiders and mutual commitment relationships makes rejection and ostracism by group members very harmful, as excluded individuals fail to obtain resources from the community-based cooperation system. The default strategy⁵ in adaptation to such societies is, therefore, to be sensitive to the needs

⁵ A default strategy is an ecologically rational decision rule that human and nonhuman animals use without conscious calculation (see Gigerenzer, 2000; Yamagishi, Hashimoto & Schug, 2008)

and expectations of other members of the group and not to offend them in order to avoid social rejection. In contrast, a society like Germany allows its members to find alternative interaction partners easily, and therefore, social rejection is not as deleterious. The default strategy for adapting to such an opened society is to express oneself while promoting cooperation with like-minded others. Indeed, Sato, Yuki, and Norasakkunkit (2014) have provided empirical evidence for the claim that being rejected is more threatening to East Asian people than for Westerners because the cost of being disliked and eventually excluded by others is greater in these societies, where finding alternative relationships is rather difficult. Other studies have consistently found that East Asians exhibit more pronounced rejection avoidance tendencies than Westerners (Yamaguchi, Kuhlman, & Sugimori, 1995; Garriss, Ohbuchi, Oikawa, & Harris, 2011; Hashimoto & Yamagishi, 2013, 2016).

The concern for others' appraisals might lead individuals to feel a threat of rejection from the group they belong to, particularly in situations in which all group members form a mutual commitment relationship and can observe individuals' behavior. Choosing based on one's inner attributes while ignoring the social context or failing to incorporate others' preferences could be seen as incongruent to social standards and thus potentially elicit rejection by the other group members. This would suggest that Japanese people might respond positively to vicarious choice by ingroup members in order to avoid rejection, while Germans, who are not as concerned about social approval, would be more likely to risk rejection and claim personal choice. I hypothesized, accordingly, that the sociocultural differences in reactions to vicarious choice can be partly explained by variation in levels of rejection avoidance.

The Present Research

Testing Germans and Japanese, the present research examined whether vicarious

choice by an ingroup member on behalf of the entire group evokes more positive reactions in Japanese than in Germans, and if so, whether this cultural difference is linked to variation in rejection avoidance. Based on previous research, I hypothesized that compared to Germans, Japanese would be more likely to accept vicarious choices by an ingroup member, evaluate the chooser more positively, and perform better and persist longer on a task based on vicarious choice relative to their own choice. Conversely, I also hypothesized that compared to Japanese, Germans would be more likely to demand personal choice as a reaction to vicarious choice by an ingroup member, evaluate the chooser more negatively, and perform better and persist longer on a task based on their own choice rather than a vicarious choice. Moreover, I hypothesized that sociocultural differences can partly be explained by varying degrees of rejection avoidance.

To test these hypotheses, I conducted three studies. Study 3 provided participants with possibilities to accept or reject a vicarious choice by an ingroup member, and requested evaluations of the chooser. In Study 4, I investigated the hypothesis concerning the mechanism behind sociocultural differences with mediation analyses and with a priming method. Finally, in Study 5, I measured performance and persistence following vicarious choice as compared to personal choice and random assignment.

Study 3a: Sociocultural Variation in Reactions to Vicarious Choice

Method

Participants. One hundred ten Japanese (55 men and 55 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 44.9$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 14.35$) and 99 German adults (49 men and 50 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 43.0$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.95$) were recruited through an online crowdsourcing service in each country (Macromill in Japan and Respondi AG in Germany). The participants were paid according to standard reimbursements for each service.

Procedure. I composed a questionnaire in Japanese and translated it into German. A bilingual third-party back-translated the questionnaire into Japanese, and I compared this back-translation to the original to assure that all questions were equal in meaning. I asked participants to imagine the following three scenarios:

1. You finished a big project at work and your colleagues and you go to celebrate this success with a business meal. At the restaurant, you find a menu, but one of your colleagues orders for the whole team without asking for individual preferences. (Food choice scenario)

2. You plan an event together with your coworkers, and there are many tasks to share. Someone needs to take care of the finances, someone needs to do advertising, someone needs to invite and take care of the guests, and someone needs to do the paperwork. One of your coworkers takes the lead and tells you and the others what to do without asking for individual preferences. (Work distribution scenario)

3. You are in a meeting and your boss asks for feedback about a new policy that he introduced last week. One of your colleagues answers in detail, representing the whole team without asking individual opinions. (Feedback scenario)

For each scenario, participants indicated on three items how likely they would be to accept the vicarious choice (food choice: “accept the decision of the colleague”, “eat and drink what has been ordered because it would be a waste not to do so”, “eat and drink what has been ordered because it would be impolite not to do so”; work distribution: “accept the decision and accomplish the tasks your coworker assigned to you”, “accomplish the task your coworker assigned to you because someone needs to do it”, “accomplish the task your coworker assigned to you because it would be impolite not to do so”; feedback: “accept that the colleague speaks

on behalf of the whole team”, “go along with your colleague’s report because someone needed to give feedback”, “go along with the colleague’s report because it would be impolite not to do so”).

In addition, on two items per scenario, participants indicated how likely they would be to demand personal choice (food choice: “choose something to eat and drink from the menu yourself”, “tell the colleague that you have a right to make your own choice”; work distribution: “choose the task you like best and declare that you want to do this and not what the coworker assigned to you”, “tell your coworker that you have a right to make your own choice”; feedback: “pipe up and declare your personal evaluation of the new policy”, “tell your colleague that you have a right to answer for yourself”). Participants indicate their likeliness to accept the vicarious or demand personal choice on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely), respectively.

Furthermore, participants indicated how positively (i.e., likable and sociable) and negatively (i.e., egoistic and dominant) they would evaluate the ingroup member who had chosen for the entire group in such a situation on 7-point scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Moreover, participants indicated their impression of how frequently such a situation occurs for each scenario on a 7-point scale. Finally, the participants answered demographic questions.

Results

Frequency. If vicarious choices are, as expected, more positively connoted in Japan as compared to Germany, it would be natural if vicarious choice situations were more frequent occurrences in Japan than in Germany. Indeed, across scenarios ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .82$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .76$), Japanese participants ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.10$) indicated that such situations are frequent daily life situations more than German participants did ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.61$, $t(207) = 3.86$, $p < .001$,

$d = 0.53$). However, as I was interested in consequences of vicarious choice situations independent of how frequent such situations occur, I statistically controlled for this variable in the following analyses.

Reaction. I calculated participants' likeliness to accept the vicarious choice ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .87$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .84$) and demand personal choice ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .74$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .71$) in all three scenarios and conducted ANCOVAs to investigate sociocultural differences. As predicted, Japanese participants ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.97$) were significantly more likely than German participants ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.29$) to accept the choices on their behalf: $F(1,206) = 24.03$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.10$. In addition, German participants ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.18$) were significantly more likely than Japanese participants ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.97$) to demand personal choice: $F(1, 206) = 57.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.22$.

Evaluation. I calculated how positively ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .84$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .68$) and negatively ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .83$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .80$) the participants would evaluate the ingroup member who had chosen for the entire group across scenarios and compared German and Japanese respondents. As predicted, Japanese people evaluated the chooser as more likable and sociable ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.80$) and less egoistic and dominant ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.01$) than Germans did (positive: $M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.23$, $F(1, 206) = 15.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$; negative: $M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.23$, $F(1, 206) = 28.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.12$).

Study 3b: Controlling for Social Status Perceptions

In Study 3a, I constructed the scenarios such that the person choosing for the entire group is a colleague and not an individual who is higher or lower in the social hierarchy. However, I did not make the equal status explicit and it was not clear whether participants might have assumed that the chooser is someone of a higher social status. Especially Japanese participants could be drawing on their real-world experiences and infer that a higher status person (or a proxy) chose for the group. Therefore, I conducted an additional study to eliminate

the possibility that cultural differences are side effects of differences in perceived social status.

Method

Participants. One hundred ten Japanese (55 men and 55 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 44.5$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.96$) and 100 German adults (50 men and 50 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 46.4$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 15.15$) were recruited through online crowdsourcing services in each country (Macromill in Japan and Respondi AG in Germany). The participants were paid according to standard reimbursements for their respective service.

Procedure. I asked participants to imagine the same three vicarious choice scenarios as in Study 3a, but added the information that the colleagues were all of the same status. In addition, I included an item that asked participants to indicate how strongly they agree to the statement “the colleague, who chose for the group, is high in rank” (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

As in Study 3a, participants indicated on three items per scenario how likely they would be to accept the vicarious choice, and, on two items per scenario, how likely they would be to demand personal choice. They also indicated how positively (i.e., likable and sociable) and negatively (i.e., egoistic and dominant) they would evaluate the ingroup member who had chosen for the entire group in such a situation on 7-point scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Finally, the participants answered demographic questions.

Results

Perceived Rank. Across scenarios ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .87$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .65$), Japanese participants ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.00$) and German participants ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.51$) perceived the rank of the chooser similarly, $t(208) = 1.67$, $p = .10$. Perceived rank correlated with reactions to vicarious choice (German sample: perceived rank and acceptance $r(98) = .53$, $p < .001$,

perceived rank and choice demand $r(98) = -.19, p = .051$; Japanese sample: perceived rank and acceptance $r(108) = .20, p = .035$, perceived rank and choice demand $r(108) = -.05, p = .629$). To preclude the possibility that perceptions of rank influenced participants' reactions, I statistically controlled for this variable in the following analyses.

Reaction. I calculated participants' likeliness to accept the vicarious choice ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .87, \alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .83$) and demand personal choice ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .75, \alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .79$) in all three scenarios and conducted ANCOVAs to investigate sociocultural differences. As predicted, Japanese participants ($M = 4.33, SD = 0.93$) were significantly more likely than German participants ($M = 3.38, SD = 1.24$) to accept the choices on their behalf: $F(1, 207) = 36.77, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.15$. In addition, German participants ($M = 4.94, SD = 1.13$) were significantly more likely than Japanese participants ($M = 3.89, SD = 1.02$) to demand personal choice, $F(1, 207) = 47.68, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.19$.

Evaluation. I calculated how positively ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .89, \alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .85$) and negatively ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .88, \alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .83$) the participants would evaluate the ingroup member who had chosen for the entire group across scenarios and compared German and Japanese respondents. As predicted, Japanese people evaluated the chooser as more likable and sociable ($M = 3.68, SD = 1.08$) and less egoistic and dominant ($M = 4.71, SD = 1.02$) than Germans did (positive: $M = 3.00, SD = 1.26, F(1, 207) = 14.48, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.07$; negative: $M = 5.06, SD = 1.38, F(1, 207) = 5.45, p = .020, \eta^2 = 0.03$).

Discussion

These studies investigated how individuals from different sociocultural backgrounds respond to situations in which a same-status ingroup member has made a choice for an entire group. Japanese participants were more likely to accept vicarious choices than Germans were. Furthermore, Germans were more likely than Japanese to demand personal choice in such

vicarious choice scenarios. Moreover, Japanese evaluated the chooser more positively, whereas Germans evaluated the chooser more negatively. Eliminating possible confounding effects of perceived frequency and social status, these results support the hypothesis that vicarious choice is more accepted and more positively connoted in East Asia as compared to Western Europe.

Study 4a: Individual Rejection Avoidance Tendencies as Mediator

Study 4 aimed at shedding light on the mechanism behind sociocultural differences in consequences of vicarious choice. Specifically, in Study 4a, I tested whether individual rejection avoidance tendencies can partly explain sociocultural differences in reactions to vicarious choices.

Method

Participants. Macromill and ResponDi AG recruited two community samples of 220 Japanese (110 men, 110 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 44.26$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.81$) and 212 German adults (116 men, 96 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 43.58$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 14.08$) and reimbursed participants according to each service's standard.

Procedure. In a questionnaire, I asked participants to imagine the same scenarios as in Study 3, and to indicate their likely reactions to these situations. For each scenario, three items asked participants how likely they would be to accept the vicarious choice, and two items asked how likely they would be to demand personal choice (see Study 3a). Participants marked their likely reaction on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely). Thereafter, participants answered to a scale to measure rejection avoidance tendencies (Hashimoto & Yamagishi, 2016). The specific items were “I find myself feeling anxious if people are watching me”, “I find myself being concerned about what others think of me”, “I often feel anxious about the nature of my relationships with others and their status

as compared to mine”, “I sometimes get so anxious about what other people might think that I am prevented from doing what I really want to do”, and “I often behave in a way that will keep others from disliking me”. Participants indicated how well each of these statements describes them on 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = doesn’t describe me at all, 7 = describes me very much). Finally, they answered demographic questions.

Results

Reaction. I calculated participants’ likeliness to accept the vicarious choice ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .87$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .85$) and demand personal choice ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .76$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .72$) over all three scenarios. A t-test to investigate sociocultural differences revealed that Japanese participants ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.97$) were significantly more likely than German participants ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.26$) to accept the vicarious choices, $t(430) = 8.58$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.83$. In addition, German participants ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 1.14$) were significantly more likely than Japanese participants ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.97$) to demand personal choice, $t(430) = 11.24$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.09$. Thus, the findings of Study 3 were replicated.

Mediation analyses. To analyze whether individual rejection avoidance tendencies constitute a factor underlying the sociocultural differences in reactions to vicarious choice, I first calculated rejection avoidance tendencies for each participant by merging the five items measuring this construct ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .82$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .85$). In line with previous research, I found that compared to Germans ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.33$), Japanese ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.11$) were more anxious about being rejected by others, $t(430) = 6.53$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.63$.

Next, I conducted mediation analyses to investigate the hypothesis that the sociocultural contexts provoke different levels of rejection avoidance, which in turn affect reactions to vicarious choices. I dummy coded Japanese culture as 0 and German culture as 1. Regressing culture on tendencies to accept vicarious choices, I found that culture is a

significant predictor, $b = .93$, $SE = .11$, $t(430) = 8.58$, $p < .001$. Culture also predicted rejection avoidance tendencies significantly, $b = .77$, $SE = .12$, $t(430) = 6.53$, $p < .001$. Individual rejection avoidance tendencies in turn affected reactions to vicarious choice, $b = .36$, $SE = .04$, $t(430) = 8.82$, $p < .001$. The predictive power of culture was reduced to $b = .65$, $SE = .11$, $t(430) = 6.23$, $p < .001$ when I controlled for rejection avoidance tendencies. Bootstrap analyses revealed a significant indirect effect (1000 samples): 95% CI [0.17, 0.41]. Hence, the cultural difference in acceptance of vicarious choice was partially mediated by rejection avoidance (Figure 6).

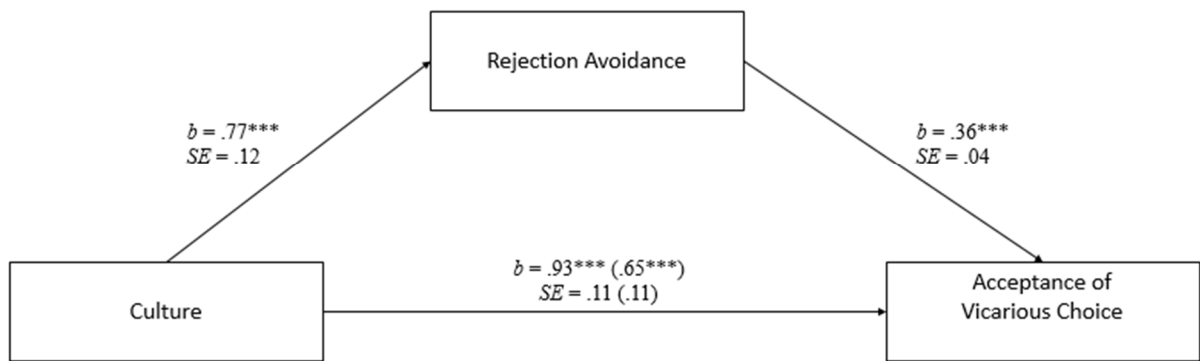


Figure 6. Individual levels of rejection avoidance as a mediator of the sociocultural differences in acceptance of vicarious choice in Study 4a. Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are shown. Coefficients indicating the relationship between culture and acceptance of vicarious choice after controlling for rejection avoidance tendencies are given in parentheses. *** $p < .001$.

Next, I tested whether rejection avoidance tendencies likewise mediated the cultural difference in choice demand. Culture was a significant predictor for choice demand, $b = -1.15$, $SE = .10$, $t(430) = -11.24$, $p < .001$. When I entered rejection avoidance simultaneously to an analysis of regression, the effect of culture was reduced, $b = -.99$, $SE = .10$, $t(430) = -9.50$, $p < .001$. Rejection avoidance predicted choice demand significantly, $b = -.21$, $SE = .04$, $t(430) = -5.05$, $p < .001$. Bootstrap analyses revealed a significant indirect effect (1000 samples, 95% CI [-.26, -.07]); hence, the cultural difference in choice demand was partially mediated

by rejection avoidance (Figure 7).

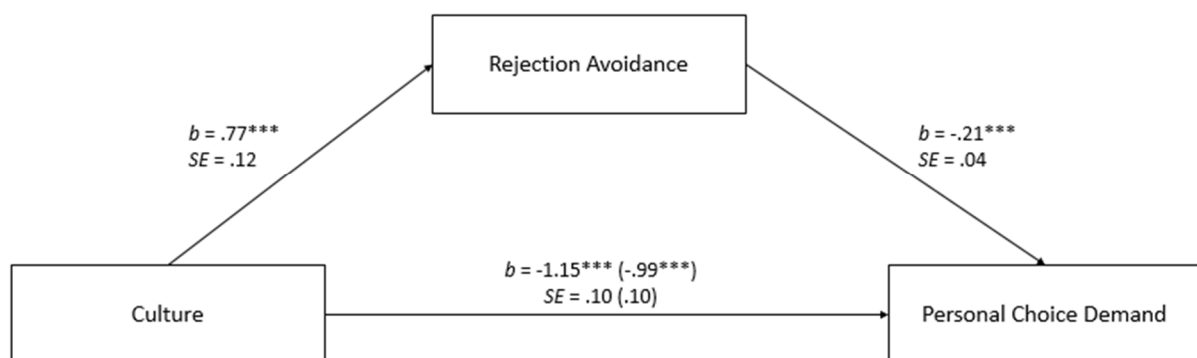


Figure 7. Individual levels of rejection avoidance as a mediator of the sociocultural differences in personal choice demand in Study 4a. Unstandardized coefficients and standard errors are shown. Coefficients indicating the relationship between culture and personal choice demand after controlling for rejection avoidance tendencies are given in parentheses.

*** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Focusing on individual rejection avoidance tendencies, this study investigated how sociocultural contexts promote varying consequences of vicarious choices. Replicating the findings of Study 3, I found that Japanese participants reported being more likely to accept vicarious choice than Germans, who reported to react with stronger personal choice demand. Moreover, mediation analyses indicated that this cultural difference occurred partly because Japanese were more eager to avoid social rejection.

These results give first insights into the mechanism behind sociocultural differences in reactions to vicarious choice. However, assessing people's chronic rejection avoidance tendencies, Study 4a was based on self-reports and might be compromised by people's inability to accurately report on their cultural beliefs. Therefore, to avoid the problems inherent to trait measures and to test whether temporarily induced rejection avoidance has the same effect on reactions to vicarious choice, I tested in Study 4b whether priming social rejection

sensitivity would cause divergent reactions to vicarious choice in Japanese and Germans. Manipulating the accessibility of rejection threats that are anticipated to be more chronically accessible in Japan than in Germany allows to examine whether such a manipulation leads people, in general, to respond to vicarious choice like most Japanese, that is, with greater acceptance and less personal choice demand.

Study 4b: Experimental Manipulation of Rejection Avoidance

Method

Participants. I recruited 105 German students at the University of Erfurt and 87 Japanese students at Kobe University. However, 13 Germans and 7 Japanese students failed to report a situation in which they were strongly rejected (the priming manipulation) and therefore were excluded from the analyses. The final sample consisted of 92 German (77 women, $M_{age} = 21.64$, $SD_{age} = 2.45$) and 80 Japanese students (47 women, $M_{age} = 19.87$, $SD_{age} = 0.87$)⁶.

Procedure. I adopted a priming method from Pickett, Gardner, and Knowles (2004) and asked half of the participants to recall a situation in which they were strongly rejected, while the other half of the participants recalled their walk to campus that day. Next, participants read the three scenarios of Studies 3 and 4a (slightly adjusted to fit students' daily life experiences) and indicated how likely they would be to accept the vicarious choice (three items) or demand personal choice (two items) on 7-point Likert-type scales. Finally, they answered demographic questions and were rewarded with 700 Yen or the equivalent of 6 Euros, respectively.

⁶ Although the German sample consisted of more female participants than the Japanese sample ($\chi^2(2, N = 172) = 13.64$, $p = .001$), there were no gender differences in acceptance ($t(170) = 0.58$, $p = .561$) or personal choice demand ($t(170) = -0.73$, $p = .464$).

Results

As in Studies 3 and 4a, I calculated participants' likeliness to accept the vicarious choice ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .69$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .74$) and demand personal choice ($\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .52$, $\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .62$) over all three scenarios. I ran two ANOVAs to test whether culture and priming condition had an influence on acceptance and choice demand, respectively. Regarding acceptance, Japanese students ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.91$) were significantly more likely than German students ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.89$) to accept the choices on their behalf, $F(1, 168) = 6.42$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2 = .037$. Importantly, regardless of culture, participants with heightened sensitivity towards social rejection ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.86$) were more likely to accept the ingroup member's choice than the control group ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.94$, $F(1, 168) = 4.60$, $p = .033$, $\eta^2 = .027$). The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 168) = 1.13$, $p = .289$. Similarly, German students ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 0.86$) were more likely to demand personal choice than Japanese students ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.98$, $F(1, 168) = 34.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .172$). Further, as predicted, rejection-primed participants ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.98$) were less likely to demand personal choice than the control group ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.99$, $F(1, 168) = 7.45$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .042$). The interaction of priming and culture was not significant, $F(1, 168) = .76$, $p = .385$.

Discussion

Study 4b further examined the role rejection avoidance plays in vicarious choice situations. In both cultures, inducing rejection sensitivity temporarily increased participants' likeliness to accept the choice on their behalf and decreased their likeliness to demand personal choice.

Study 5: Culture, Vicarious Choice, and Motivation

Studies 3 and 4 provided evidence for sociocultural differences in consequences of vicarious choice; however, they were based on self-reported reactions to imaginary scenarios. Given that behavioral and performance measures are indispensable for cross-cultural studies (Kitayama, 2002), assessing sociocultural differences in reaction to vicarious choice using such measurements would enhance understanding of those differences. Therefore, Study 5 builds upon previous research on motivational consequences of vicarious choice. As described in Chapter I, Iyengar and Lepper (1999) found that choices made by an ingroup member on behalf of Asian American children led to increased motivation as compared to the children's own or an outgroup member's choice. However, the fact that this finding could not be fully replicated with Hong Kong Chinese children or with Chinese and Indian undergraduate students illustrates the need for additional research on the motivational effect of vicarious choice.

Furthermore, my previous studies did not address the effect of vicarious choice as compared to personal choice and random assignment. Thus, I could not assess whether vicarious choice, relative to personal choice and random assignment, would lead to more positive consequences for Japanese individuals but more negative consequences for Germans. To examine these issues, I tested Germans and Japanese in Study 5 in a group setting and measured their performance on a task i) they had chosen themselves, ii) an ingroup member had chosen vicariously for them, or iii) that had been assigned to them by a computer. Based on Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) findings, I predicted that Japanese would perform better on a task chosen by an ingroup member compared to a task they had chosen themselves or a task assigned to them by a computer, whereas Germans would perform better on a task chosen by themselves than a task chosen by an ingroup member or a computer.

The group setting allowed me, furthermore, to add an exploratory investigation of the effects of social identity. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that a strong identification with an ingroup merges the self into the group and thereby increases efforts for the ingroup (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Hence, people might give their best following an ingroup member's vicarious choice when they perceive themselves as indistinguishable from the ingroup. Whereas the previous studies did not examine this possibility, I included measures of group identification in Study 5 with an exploratory purpose, and investigated whether levels of group identification affect reactions to an ingroup member's vicarious choice.

In addition, the design of the current study allows me to explore whether and to what extent cultural differences in vicarious choice and the effect of individual differences in rejection avoidance emerge in a group where only minimum (or no) commitment is needed. In the scenario studies (3 and 4), participants likely assumed that they are part of a closed mutually committed relationship with the other group members. In Study 5, I artificially created a group in the lab and thus group members did not depend on each other. Although they were told that they build a group, they were not evaluated based on their group performance, did not know each other's performance, and the likelihood that they would ever meet again was minimal. The design allowed me to test whether vicarious choice by a member of such a non-committed group elicits the same consequences as vicarious choice by a member of a group based on mutual commitment relationships among its members.

Notably, rejection by other group members should not lead to serious consequences under these circumstances. The effect of rejection avoidance could be limited to mutually committed interdependent groups, and if so, participants would not be anxious about potential social rejection by the other group members, and the effect of rejection avoidance would not appear in such a non-committed group created in the lab. Alternatively, Japanese people could

be constantly concerned about other people's appraisals because socialization in the interdependent Japanese culture teaches them to be sensitive and avoid potential rejection at all times. In this case, the threat of social rejection could facilitate motivation in a task chosen by a group member even in an artificially formed ingroup in the lab without actual mutual commitment and dependencies.

Method

Participants. I recruited Japanese students from Kobe University and German students from the University of Erfurt to participate in a study on “creativity” and offered individuals 1000 Yen or the equivalent of 8 Euros, respectively, for their participation. Four Japanese students who had lived in an individualistic Western country for more than a year and seven Germans who had lived in a collectivist country for more than a year were excluded from the data analyses. I also had to exclude three people who misunderstood the instructions and one person who suspected that there was no actual task choice, resulting in a sample of 114 Japanese (46 men and 68 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 19.5$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.02$) and 119 German (20 men and 99 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 22.7$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.11$) students. Although the ratio of female participants was significantly different across cultures ($\chi^2(1, N = 233) = 15.90$, $p < .001$), gender did not affect the dependent variables.

Procedure. Participants took part in this experiment in groups of three or four people. They were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (own choice condition: 42 Japanese, 46 Germans; vicarious choice condition: 41 Japanese, 41 Germans; assignment condition: 31 Japanese, 32 Germans).

After answering an unrelated questionnaire and the five items measuring individual rejection avoidance tendencies (I used the same items and response scale as in Study 4a, i.e., Hashimoto & Yamagishi, 2016), participants were asked to work together to color a geometric

pattern as they liked for ten minutes. They could speak to each other and work coordinately during the activity because the task was intended to create a group among participants.

The participants then returned to their individual booths, which enabled them to select and complete a task in an anonymous situation. Adopting Na and Kitayama (2012)'s procedure, each participant received information about three aspects of IQ (i.e., fluid, analytic, and creative intelligence) and was told that one of those aspects would be tested. Then, I asked the participants to follow the instructions on their computers, which differed across conditions. In the own choice condition, participants could select one aspect of intelligence they wanted to be tested on. In the assignment condition, participants were informed that the computer randomly assigned them to a task in which one of the aspects of intelligence was tested. In the vicarious choice condition, the participants were asked to choose a task to test one aspect of intelligence for every group member including themselves, but before they were able to submit their assignments to the server, a message popped up informing them that another group member had already chosen for the entire group. Then, the computer showed the participants what the group member had ostensibly chosen for the group. However, unbeknownst to the participants, without considering the choices of any participant in the vicarious choice condition, the computer assigned tests randomly to the participants. In all three conditions, participants were only informed of the task they would work on and did not know the tasks the other group members worked on. Participants in all three conditions received instructions on their IQ test and were told that they could quit the test at any time they wanted and could start answering the next questionnaire.

The participants then started to work on the IQ test⁷. In fact, regardless of their condition, all participants received the same version of the Remote Association Test (Mednick, 1962) in which they were asked to generate words that are associated with three hints (e.g., the hints “overseas trip”, “visa” and “identification” all relate to “passport”). The RAT has been used to investigate sociocultural differences in motivation (e.g., Heine et al., 2001; Na & Kitayama, 2012). I prepared 60 items by revising items used in Na and Kitayama (2012) and added new items to assure the test would be relatively easy to solve for people from both cultures (see Appendix B for instructions and stimulus materials of Study 5).

After ten minutes, the experimenter checked whether the participants were still working on the test and if so, asked them to quit the test and answer the next questionnaire. This last questionnaire included a manipulation check and five statements regarding group identification (“I feel a sense of belonging to the group”, “I identify as a member of the group”, “being a member of this group is important to me”, “I feel interconnected with the other members of the group”, and the reversed item “I do not feel interconnected to other group members”) to be answered on 7-point scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Finally, I asked the participants whether they noticed something suspicious, debriefed them and thanked them for their participation. As in the other studies, German-Japanese bilingual researchers translated and back-translated all materials to ensure equal meanings.

Results

Manipulation check. To check whether participants understood the manipulation correctly, I asked them how much they agreed to “the content of the intelligence test was based

⁷ The distribution of IQ tests in the three conditions was as follows: own choice condition: 23 analytic, 22 creative, 32 fluid; vicarious choice condition: 28 analytic, 28 creative, 26 fluid; assignment condition: 25 analytic, 18 creative, 20 fluid. There was no significant difference in the ratio of IQ tests across conditions: $\chi^2(4, N=233) = 1.94, p = .75$.

on my own choice” (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Analyzing strength of agreement to this statement, I found a main effect of condition in each culture (Japanese: $F(2, 111) = 16.10, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$, Germans: $F(2, 116) = 311.07, p < .001, \eta^2 = .84$), suggesting that the choice manipulation worked successfully in both cultures⁸.

Performance. A 2 (culture) x 3 (condition) ANOVA revealed the expected interaction effect^{9,10}: $F(2, 227) = 4.31, p = .014, \eta^2 = .04$. I tested the hypotheses by evaluating the differences in performance among the conditions separately for each culture. As predicted, planned comparisons revealed that German students performed significantly better in the own choice condition ($M = 38.26, SD = 8.52$) as compared to the vicarious choice condition ($M = 33.93, SD = 10.19$), $t(227) = 2.00, p = .046, d = 0.46$, and marginally better in the

⁸ In a 2 (culture) x 3 (condition) ANOVA, I found a highly significant main effect for condition, $F(2, 227) = 138.38, p < .001, \eta^2 = .55$. As expected, participants in the own choice condition ($M = 6.08, SD = 1.26$) felt significantly stronger that the content was based on their own choice than participants in the assignment ($M = 3.05, SD = 2.23, p < .001$) and in the vicarious choice ($M = 2.55, SD = 1.97, p < .001$) conditions, which differed significantly from each other ($p = .045$). The interaction effect was also significant: $F(2, 227) = 34.56, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$. German ($M = 6.33, SD = 1.16$) and Japanese participants ($M = 5.81, SD = 1.33$) in the own choice condition felt equally strongly that the content of the intelligence test was based on their own choice ($p = .102$). However, Japanese participants in the vicarious choice and assignment conditions felt more strongly than Germans that the content of the test was based on their own choice (vicarious choice: $M_{\text{Ger}} = 1.56, SD_{\text{Ger}} = 1.03; M_{\text{Jap}} = 3.54, SD_{\text{Jap}} = 2.19, p < .001$; assignment: $M_{\text{Ger}} = 1.37, SD_{\text{Ger}} = 0.83; M_{\text{Jap}} = 4.77, SD_{\text{Jap}} = 1.87, p < .001$).

⁹ A main effect for culture also emerged: German participants ($M = 35.66, SD = 10.03$) were on average much better at finding the correct answers than the Japanese participants ($M = 28.80, SD = 10.35$), $F(1, 227) = 25.10, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$. I did not anticipate this cultural difference, as I adopted the task from previous research in which European Americans and East Asians were found to perform equally well (Na & Kitayama, 2012). However, in another study that used the RAT cross-culturally, Westerners solved significantly more (easy) items on the RAT than East Asians (Heine et al., 2001). Hence, depending on the specific circumstances and items, the RAT may be more difficult for East Asians than for Westerners. Another explanation for the cultural difference in performance is the label as an experiment on creativity. Sociocultural differences related to creativity have been found repeatedly (Zhou & Su, 2010), and research comparing multiple countries has shown that Japanese people have the least confidence in their creativity (Adobe, 2012). Therefore, the label “creativity” might have threatened the Japanese participants, leading to reduced performance. The data cannot identify the factor causing the cultural difference in overall performance. However, it is important that the pattern of the interaction effect was fully consistent with the predictions.

¹⁰ The interaction effect remained significant when I controlled for the manipulation check question “the content of the intelligence test was based on my own choice”: $F(2, 226) = 4.02, p = .019$. Labelling of the intelligence test did not affect performance: $F(2, 230) = 1.13, p = .326$.

assignment condition ($M = 34.16$, $SD = 11.28$), $t(227) = 1.77$, $p = .078$, $d = 0.41$, (Figure 8). There was no difference between the vicarious choice condition and the assignment condition, $t(227) = 0.09$, $p = .923$, $d = 0.02$. In contrast, Japanese students performed significantly better in the vicarious choice condition ($M = 31.37$, $SD = 11.41$) as compared to the own choice condition ($M = 26.71$, $SD = 9.37$), $t(227) = 2.10$, $p = .036$, $d = 0.45$ (Figure 9). The assignment condition ($M = 28.23$, $SD = 9.72$) did not differ from either the own choice condition, $t(227) = 0.63$, $p = .527$, $d = 0.16$, or the vicarious choice condition, $t(227) = 1.31$, $p = .191$, $d = 0.30$.

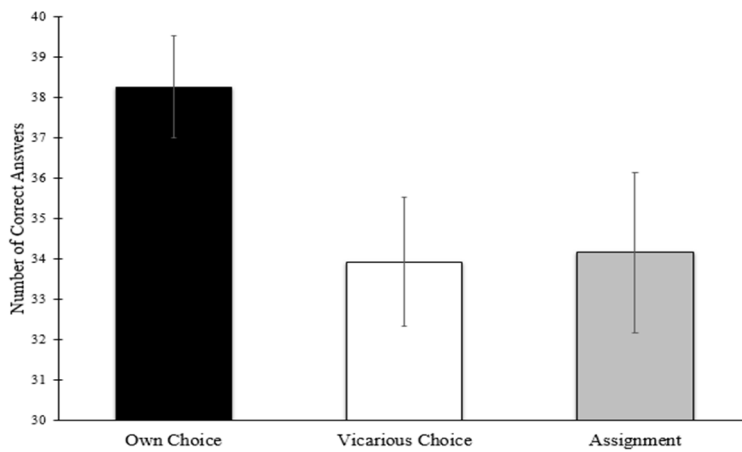


Figure 8. German participants' performance varied across conditions in Study 5. Error bars represent standard errors.

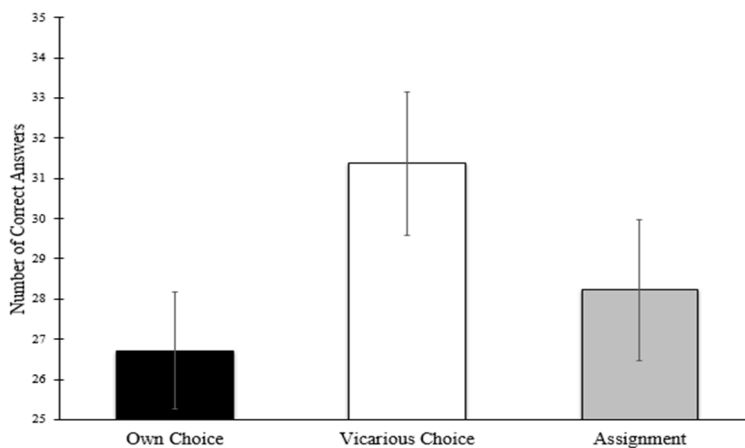


Figure 9. Japanese participants' performance varied across conditions in Study 5. Error bars represent standard errors.

Persistence. Allowing participants to decide on their own when to stop working on the task and move on to the next questionnaire enabled me to measure persistence as well. Participants worked on the tasks for an average of 467 seconds; however, one participant worked for less than one minute and two participants worked a little bit longer than ten minutes on the task. A 2 (culture) x 3 (condition) ANOVA on the time participants spent working on the task revealed a significant main effect for condition, $F(2, 227) = 3.67, p = .03, \eta^2 = .03$, and a significant main effect for culture, $F(1, 227) = 17.62, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$. However, consistent with my hypothesis, these effects were qualified by a significant interaction effect: $F(2, 227) = 7.51, p = .001, \eta^2 = .06$. Planned comparisons revealed that while German participants in the own choice condition ($M = 490.96s, SD = 73.27s$) worked longer than those in the assignment ($M = 423.19s, SD = 88.88s, t(227) = 3.06, p = .002, d = 0.41$) or vicarious choice conditions ($M = 406.44s, SD = 94.50s, t(227) = 4.10, p < .001, d = 0.54$), Japanese participants spent the least amount of time working in the own choice condition ($M = 477.24s, SD = 110.82s$), which was marginally shorter than that in the assignment condition ($M = 520.45s, SD = 76.89s, t(227) = -1.90, p = .059, d = 0.25$). Their persistence in the vicarious choice condition ($M = 483.10s, SD = 119.39s$) was not significantly different from the other conditions, assignment: $t(227) = -1.63, p = .104, d = 0.22$; own choice: $t(227) = -.278, p = .781, d = 0.04$ (Figures 10 and 11). Although the difference in persistence between the own and the vicarious choice conditions in the Japanese sample was not significant, it is noteworthy that the direction of the interaction is as expected and consistent with the results of performance¹¹.

¹¹ The interaction effect remained significant when I controlled for the manipulation check question “the content of the intelligence test was based on my own choice”: $F(2, 226) = 3.94, p = .021$. Labelling of the intelligence test did not affect persistence: $F(2, 230) = 1.40, p = .249$.

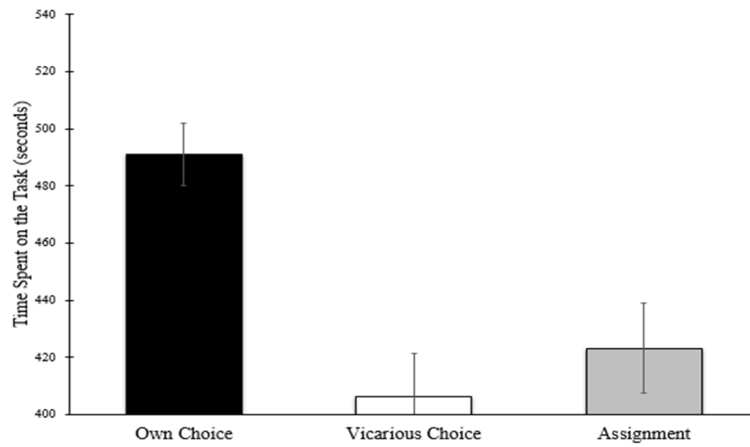


Figure 10. German participants' persistence varied across conditions in Study 5. Error bars represent standard errors.

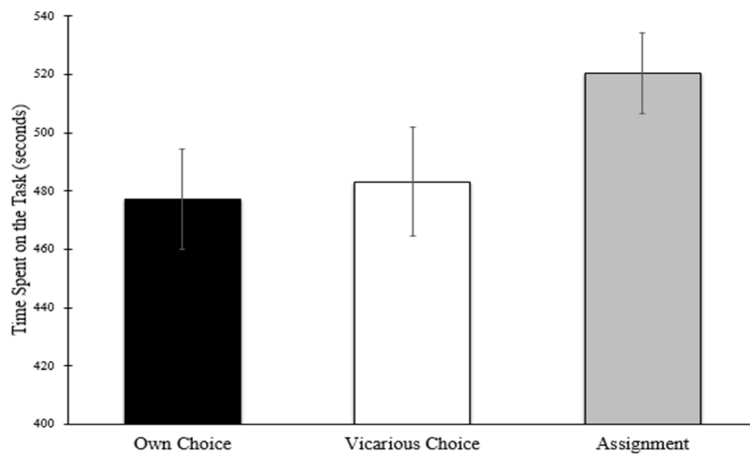


Figure 11. Japanese participants' persistence varied across conditions in Study 5. Error bars represent standard errors.

Group Identification. I merged the five questions of group identification to create a composite index ($\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .89$, $\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .89$). An analysis of variance testing the effect of culture and condition on this index revealed significant main effects, culture: $F(1, 227) = 21.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$; condition: $F(2, 227) = 3.79$, $p = .024$, $\eta^2 = .03$. The mean score of the group identification index was higher in Germans ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.38$) than in Japanese ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.23$). Participants in the assignment condition ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.10$) reported somewhat stronger group identification as participants in the own choice ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.32$; Tukey's

adjusted $p = .061$) and the vicarious choice ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.56$; Tukey's adjusted $p = .033$) conditions, which did not significantly differ from each other (Tukey's adjusted $p = .952$). Thus, the experience of choice itself might have somehow altered participants' group identification. Participants in the own choice condition might have developed a stronger focus on themselves, and not on the group, through their choice. Similarly, having an ingroup member choose vicariously might have elicited the impression that the group members are not equal and that participants cannot control this situation, which might have elicited psychological detachment from the group.

To investigate whether stronger feelings of group identification could have facilitated performance in the vicarious choice condition within cultures, I calculated the correlation of individuals' scores on this composite index, the number of correct answers and the time spent on the task. Regardless of culture, identification with the group was not associated with performance or persistence (Japanese: $r_{\text{performance}}(39) = -.07$, $p = .673$, $r_{\text{persistence}}(39) = .04$, $p = .791$; German: $r_{\text{performance}}(39) = -.06$, $p = .697$, $r_{\text{persistence}}(39) = -.11$, $p = .473$).

Rejection Avoidance. I merged the five items and created an index of individual rejection avoidance tendencies ($\alpha_{\text{Jap}} = .83$, $\alpha_{\text{Ger}} = .79$), as in Study 4a. Replicating the cultural difference, Japanese participants ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.07$) scored on average higher on this index than German participants ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.22$; $t(231) = 9.33$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.22$). However, these rejection avoidance tendencies did not correlate with performance or persistence in the vicarious choice condition, Japanese: performance $r(40) = -.21$, $p = .18$; persistence $r(40) = -.25$, $p = .11$; Germans: performance $r(39) = -.09$, $p = .57$; persistence $r(39) = -.13$, $p = .42$.

Discussion

The results support the hypothesis that consequences of personal and vicarious choices depend on sociocultural contexts. As predicted, German students performed better if they themselves had chosen the task to work on, as compared to when a group member had chosen on their behalf, whereas Japanese students showed the opposite pattern. Similarly, German students persisted longer on a task they had chosen themselves as compared to a task chosen on their behalf, whereas Japanese showed persistence differences in the opposite direction (though not significant). These results are largely consistent with the finding of Studies 3 and 4 in which Japanese participants showed more positive reactions to vicarious choices than Germans did. Importantly, using behavioral measures and showing that the cultural variation in consequences of vicarious choice extends to artificially formed groups enhances the validity of the results.

Although I found significant differences between conditions in performance, the other measurement of motivation, persistence, did confirm the hypothesis only partially (results were in the expected direction; however, Japanese did not persist significantly longer in the vicarious choice condition as compared to the own choice condition). This might be related to the manipulation I created for this experiment. The set-up is different from prior research using the same paradigm (Heine et al., 2001), in which participants were told that they could work on the test voluntarily subsequent to the experimental phase, while the experimenter ostensibly tried to fix a computer crash. Participants did not know how long it would take until the experimenter would come back, they were unaware of being observed, and free to either continue the task or to do anything else they wanted to. In contrast, I assessed persistence during the experimental phase and the participants knew that the experiment would end after the intelligence test. Hence, their persistence might have been affected by their plans for after the experiment or by their awareness of the fact that the results of their tests would be evaluated.

Germans reported stronger feelings of group identification than Japanese, and the level of group identification was not associated with individual performances in the vicarious choice condition. Despite strong group identification, vicarious choice by a member of the group, compared to personal choice, decreased performance and persistence in Germans. This would seem to dismiss an explanation based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); namely, that strong group identification merges the self into the group, thereby fostering depersonalization of the self-concept, leading people to respond with acceptance and high performance to vicarious choice. Yet, the results have to be interpreted with caution. Firstly, condition affected levels of group identification. Thus, to test effects of group identification, I should have measured it before (and not after) the choice manipulation. Secondly, I did not consider the intergroup contexts and social comparisons between groups assumed by social identity theory. Therefore, to fully explore the potential of social identity theory to explain choice reactions ingroup contexts, future research will be indispensable.

In Study 5, creating a group artificially in the lab, rejection avoidance tendencies were not associated with culturally different consequences of vicarious choice. This would suggest that the effect of rejection avoidance is limited to groups built on mutually committed relationships. This is in accordance with Hashimoto and Yamagishi's (2016) claim that individual behavior represents strategies to adapt to sociocultural contexts: If individuals form interdependent mutual commitment groups, avoiding social rejection is of vast importance. However, if individuals do not depend on each other and are not committed to the group, as in Study 5, they do not need to avoid potential rejection. Consistent with Study 4, which shows that rejection avoidance mediated the cultural differences partly, the results of Study 5 suggest that rejection avoidance is not an ultimate factor explaining sociocultural variation in choice. Rather, rejection avoidance would explain behavior in situations that include mutual commitment relationships among group members. Notably, such mutually committed groups

represent a crucial part of the Japanese society. Importantly, the predicted behavioral consequences of vicarious choice (i.e., reduced motivation for Germans and boosted motivation for Japanese) could be found even though group members were not mutually committed in Study 5.

Chapter IV

General Discussion

Sociocultural Dynamics of Choice

Humans are inevitably made up by culture, and constitute culture themselves (Shweder, 1991; Fiske et al., 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Psychological tendencies are enormously influenced by sociocultural habits, norms, products, rules, traditions, beliefs, and values. To further illustrate how sociocultural contexts and minds interact, the studies presented in the current dissertation focus on sociocultural impacts on the personal and interpersonal character of choice.

A vast body of literature approaches the topic of sociocultural variation in choice from a Western point of view, illustrating that personal choice is crucial for Westerners but not as much for Asians. However, prior research left unclear whether this extends to consequential choices and how interpersonally constructed choice functions. To elucidate these questions, I focused on workplace choice and vicarious choice by an ingroup member, and investigated the construction of choice in a series of studies in varying sociocultural contexts.

The research described in the previous chapters utilizes a variety of experimental methods, ranging from self-reports and priming to performance measures. This is important due to the tacit nature and deep-rootedness of culture (Kitayama, 2002). Moreover, the research includes student and adult samples from various regions of three different countries (USA, Germany, and Japan), diverse professions and large age ranges, suggesting that the findings generalize to other members of the respective sociocultural contexts.

Summary of Findings

The first two studies focused on workplace choice and showed that Japanese students and adults want to incorporate their important others' opinions in their workplace decisions more than German and US American students and adults. Further, this cultural difference was partly due to individual differences in desire for control: Westerners reported to wish for more personal control over the environment than Japanese, and this strong desire for control shaped their wishes to decide their workplace by themselves without considering family members' opinions.

The latter three studies focused on interpersonally constructed choice situations that occur frequently in East Asian cultures, namely, situations in which one group member decides vicariously for the entire group. In Study 3, Japanese reported being more likely to accept such vicarious choices than Germans, who were more likely to demand personal choice. In addition, Japanese evaluated the vicariously choosing group member in more positive and less negative terms than Germans. Studies 4a and 4b built upon these findings by examining the underlying mechanism behind the sociocultural differences. Specifically, the current research examined whether potential rejection by members of one's ingroup poses a greater threat to East Asians than to Westerners and whether divergent levels of rejection avoidance may help explain sociocultural differences in reactions to vicarious choice. Indeed, Study 4a revealed that compared to Germans, Japanese people are more likely to accept such a vicarious choice, at least partly to avoid negative social consequences like rejection from important others. Germans, on the other hand, were not as afraid of social rejection and were hence found to be more likely to demand personal choice. To explore this mechanism further, Study 4b heightened rejection sensitivity temporarily by priming half of the Japanese and German participants, and compared their reactions to vicarious choice with those of a control group. As expected, primed participants reported being more likely to accept vicarious choice, and

less likely to demand personal choice. Study 5 added behavioral evidence by illustrating that compared to personal choice, vicarious choice can facilitate motivation in Japanese students, whereas German students perform better and persist longer when they can choose themselves.

Together, these studies illustrate two different processes. On the one hand, they describe how the Western sociocultural emphasis on independence promotes high striving to personally control the environment and to choose independently of close others' expectations. On the other hand, interpersonally constructed choices lower the risk of social rejection, which is a primary motivation for interdependently oriented East Asian people, and thus choices that incorporate important others can be desired, accepted, positively evaluated and motivating.

Positioning this Research in the Literature

Previous research focusing on the personal and interpersonal character of choice has examined effects of the denial of personal choice on students' preferences and attitudes across cultures, the motivational effects of vicarious choice in bicultural children, and cultural variation in choice justification. Reflecting high sensitivity to threats to personal freedoms, Westerners evaluated items assigned by an experimenter more negatively (Savani et al., 2008) and showed stronger reactance when they had to give up their personal freedoms (Jonas et al., 2009). In contrast, Asians liked items they chose themselves and items chosen by others equally well and were likely to conform to an ingroup member's preference even if they had to give up their own preference (Graupmann et al., 2012). Further, while European American children's motivation was facilitated by their own choice and dampened if another person had chosen vicariously, Asian American children's motivation was boosted following an ingroup member's vicarious choice (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). In addition, studies on culture and choice justification (Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005; Kitayama et al., 2004; Imada & Kitayama, 2010; Na & Kitayama, 2012) have shown that North Americans mainly attach importance to

privately made choices and perform well on self-chosen tasks. In contrast, public choices, that is, choices that were made in the presence of (close) others, led East Asians to engage in choice justification and boosted their performance.

Aligning with these previous findings, over all five studies presented here, Westerners reacted adversely if their choice was not purely personally but rather interpersonally constructed. Westerners desired to choose their workplace based on their internal attributes (preferences), indicated to be likely to demand personal choice when a group member had chosen vicariously, and showed increased motivation when they had chosen a task to work on themselves. Conversely, East Asians were found to incorporate their close others' opinions in their workplace choice, accept vicarious choices, and showed increased motivation when an ingroup member had chosen a task for them to work on. Reactions to vicarious choice mirrored previously described culture-specific consequences of public choices. These findings provide further evidence for the claim that the character of choice is seen to be rather personal by people from Western cultures, and rather interpersonal by people from East Asian cultures.

This research builds on Kitayama et al.'s (2004) suggestion that the mechanism behind cultural variation in consequences of interpersonally constructed choice is linked to individuals' sensitivity to others' evaluation and anxiety about potential social rejection. Congruently, I found that interdependently oriented people are sensitive to vicarious choice because these choices offer ways to maintain social approval by meeting others' intentions and expectations. Falling short of these intentions and expectations could disrupt harmonious interdependence, and as Studies 4a and 4b show, strong concerns about such disruptions render Japanese to follow and accept vicarious choice. In contrast, resembling the deleterious effects of public choices on Westerners (Imada & Kitayama, 2010; Na & Kitayama, 2012), vicarious, or, more generally, interpersonally constructed choices might trigger a threat to independently

oriented people, leading them to reject these choices and to demand personal choice in order to regain their sense of autonomy (Jonas et al., 2009).

Contribution

Researchers are now aware that many psychological findings, including those on the significance and positive consequences of personal choice, are limited to people from Western, Industrial, Educated, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010; Markus & Schwartz, 2010). Extending previous findings, the present research provides additional evidence for the sociocultural promotion of emphases on the personal and interpersonal character of choice, especially concerning the following four aspects.

Consequential choices. First, the second chapter illustrated that rather than desiring personal control over the environment, Japanese people aspire to construct their choices interpersonally, even if these choices are of great personal significance. This extends previous research illustrating how sociocultural contexts promote the construction of product choice as personal or interpersonal.

Understanding interpersonally constructed choices. Second, sociocultural psychologists showed that situational definitions are created, selected and accumulated in a given culture and people adapt to those cultural situations (Kitayama et al., 1997). Nevertheless, most prior research on choice did not include non-Western typical choice situations. Therefore, the third chapter deepens the understanding of culture and choice by providing a better understanding of consequences of interpersonally constructed choice and the moderation effect of culture on these consequences.

The limited studies that have included interpersonal choice situations (e.g., Hoshino-Browne et al., 2005; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999) have primarily focused on the interpersonal

relationship between the self and a (close) other and therefore largely ignored group processes. By contrast, the present research illustrates that interpersonally constructed choice situations involving more than two people also evoke more positive consequences in Japanese than in Germans, suggesting that findings from previous research generalize to group contexts. This held even for artificially constructed non-committed groups: Japanese participants' motivation was facilitated by a group member's choice even though the group members did not depend on each other and were likely not to meet each other again.

Moreover, the present research contributes to the debate about the motivating effect of choice. My findings are in line with previous studies describing boosted motivation following vicarious choice by mothers and classmates in Asian American children (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). However, as described above, prior research trying to replicate these findings produced mixed results. Asking Chinese and Indian undergraduate students how much they would enjoy choosing by themselves and having their parents choose on their behalf, Rudy et al. (2015) found that their reports varied across studies. This might be due to the change in dependent variable or differences in the imagined choice-scenarios. Further, using performance as an indicator for motivation, Chinese children in Bao's (2005) and Bao and Lam's (2008) studies did not show the same results as Iyengar and Lepper (1999) or the present research: They performed better when they chose by themselves as compared to when their mothers chose a task for them. This might be due to the researchers' manipulation: Children in the own choice condition were explicitly told that others cannot choose by themselves but have to work on what their mothers had chosen for them, and children in the mother choice condition were explicitly told that others could choose by themselves. This knowledge of alternatives has been found to boost the motivating effect of personal choice over several studies (see Patall et al., 2008, p. 291). In stark contrast, in Iyengar and Lepper's (1999) studies and in the present study, participants did not know whether other participants were allowed to

choose or not. This suggests that the facilitating effect of vicarious choice for East Asians might, as the mirroring effect of personal choice for Westerners, depend on specific circumstances (Patall et al., 2008).

Underlying Mechanisms. Third, focusing on the desire for control (Chapter II) and rejection avoidance (Chapter III), these studies identify critical variables that account for cultural variation more precisely, thereby informing the field about the way cultural contexts affect individuals' emphases on the personal and interpersonal character of choice (Heine & Norenzayan, 2006). As I have shown, a stronger desire for control partly explains why Germans are less likely than Japanese to construct their workplace choice interpersonally. Moreover, stronger concerns about potential rejection render Japanese to follow and accept vicarious choice. In contrast, Germans were not concerned about social rejection as much and were, therefore, more likely to reject vicarious choices and demand personal choice in order to regain their sense of autonomy. Therefore, it would seem that people from sociocultural contexts that value independence and autonomy strongly strive to control the events in their lives themselves and therefore cherish personal choice and try to avoid interference by others. In contrast, people from sociocultural contexts that value connectedness with close others should be sensitive to interpersonally constructed choices, including vicarious choices, in part because these choices imply others' intentions and expectations. Falling short of these intentions and expectations would result in social rejection or exclusion.

The desire for control and rejection avoidance tendencies might partially explain sociocultural differences in other interpersonally constructed choices. For example, variation in strength of rejection avoidance tendencies might explain why Asians are more likely to show conformity, while Westerners strive to express their uniqueness in their choices (Kim & Markus, 1999), or why Westerners show greater psychological reactance than Asians when another deprives them of their personal choice (Jonas et al., 2009). I look forward to future

research examining the role of the desire for control and rejection avoidance in other choice situations.

Yet, the results also indicate that the desire for control and rejection avoidance tendencies cannot fully explain sociocultural differences in choice: I found only partial mediation in Studies 1, 2, and 4a, and Study 5 suggested that the effect of rejection avoidance is limited to committed groups in which group members depend on each other. Additional testing for mediation of sociocultural differences will be necessary in order to shed light on the precise construction of choice in diverse sociocultural contexts. Elucidating the mechanism behind sociocultural differences contributes greatly to the field of cultural psychology and advances it by going beyond the typical East-West dichotomy. In addition, it informs psychology in general about the processes underlying individual behavior (Heine & Norenzayan, 2006).

Cultural Comparisons. Finally, while most of the findings in previous research come from comparisons between North American and Asian cultures, this dissertation includes German participants in all five studies. The German samples were found to strive strongly for personal, independent choice, as were the North American samples in the literature. Similarly, the limited previous studies utilizing Western European samples have illustrated that particularly independently oriented British, French, German, Austrian, Swedish or Italian participants showed reactance when they had to give up their personal freedoms because of another's request (Graupmann et al., 2012; Jonas et al., 2009). Although some previous findings have proposed differences in the emphasis on individual achievement and self-promotion between North Americans and Western Europeans (Kitayama et al., 2009), the findings related to choice and agency would suggest that differences between these cultures in the tendency to condemn social influence are negligible. Studies 1 and 2 included US-American and German samples, allowing for direct comparisons between the two Western

groups. I did not find evidence for Americans being more independent than Germans; there was no significant difference between the two Western groups in the emphasis on personal or interpersonal aspects in their workplace decisions.

Limitations and Future Directions

I hope that my research has improved understanding about the personal and interpersonal character of choice promoted by divergent sociocultural contexts. However, I focused on specific kinds of choices, namely workplace choice and vicarious choice. Regarding vicarious choice, I further narrowed my focus by examining how people react if an ingroup member chooses vicariously in a group setting. It is still unclear whether the results extend to outgroup members, dyads, and to chooser-choice-recipient relationships of varying power balances. Moreover, I focused on choice-recipients' reactions and did not investigate the situations from the chooser's or observer's perspectives. In future work, I consider it important to investigate other interpersonal choice situations varying in social relationships and choice domains.

Further, these studies investigated reactions to workplace choice and vicarious choice situations, but these reactions might depend upon specific circumstances that I have not explored. For example, reactions to having an ingroup member choose vicariously might depend upon how satisfied the choice recipient is with the chooser's decision. I did neither mention nor measure this, but in future research, it would be interesting to see whether and how specific circumstances of choice situations lead to varying reactions across cultures.

Moreover, while the present research focuses on the desire for control and rejection avoidance as part of the mechanism behind sociocultural differences in reactions to vicarious choice, other underlying sources likely play a role. Specifically, previous research provided evidence that sociocultural contexts influence individual levels of self-esteem, self-monitoring,

trust, social dominance orientation, and loci of control. These factors might also be relevant when studying psychological reactions to personally and interpersonally constructed choices. Future research is needed to specify the precise factors and their interactions to completely understand the underlying mechanism behind diverse reactions to choice situations.

In addition, to get a broader understanding of culture and choice, further research should examine the degree to which observed choice preferences represent widespread cultural norms. Many cultural differences are explained by unpacking the country effect into effects of individual-level characteristics (like individuals' desire for control or tendencies to avoid social rejection). However, Zou et al. (2009) argued that key cultural differences are carried by differences in individuals' perceptions of their culture's consensus beliefs, and proposed that individuals who perceive traditional views to be culturally consensual behave and think in culturally stereotypical ways. Therefore, examining values and preferences that members perceive to be widespread in their culture concerning the personal and interpersonal character of choice remains another topic for future research.

Finally, to understand and predict behavior, it is crucial to include multiple different aspects of sociocultural environments. Previous research has illustrated that socioeconomic status relates to varying degrees of striving for control and choice (Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Stephens et al., 2011) and suggests within-country differences by region (Kitayama et al., 2006) and religion (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, & Hamedani, 2013). Therefore, in future work, it is important to investigate how other forms of cultures, including social class, gender, religion, language cohorts, region, and professions, shape reactions to specific choice-related situations.

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Appendix A

The Desire for Control Scale

Please read the following statements and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by circling one number on the scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

1.	I prefer a job where I have a lot of control over what I do and when I do it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	I enjoy political participation because I want to have as much of a say in running government as possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	I try to avoid situations where someone else tells me what to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	I would prefer to be a leader than a follower.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	I enjoy being able to influence the actions of others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	I am careful to check everything on an automobile before I leave for a long trip.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Others usually know what is best for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	I enjoy making my own decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	I enjoy having control over my own destiny.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10.	I would rather someone else take over the leadership role when I am involved in a group project.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	I consider myself to be generally more capable of handling situations than others are.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	I would rather run my own business and make my own mistakes than listen to someone else's orders.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	I like to get a good idea of what a job is all about before I begin.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	When I see a problem, I prefer to do something about it rather than sit by and let it continue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	When it comes to orders, I would rather give them than receive them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	I wish I could push many of life's daily decisions off on someone else.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	When driving, I try to avoid putting myself in a situation where I could be hurt by another person's mistake.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	I prefer to avoid situations where someone else has to tell me what it is I should be doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	There are many situations in which I would prefer only one choice rather than having to make a decision.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	I like to wait and see if someone else is going to solve a problem so that I don't have to be bothered by it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Items 7, 10, 16, 19 & 20 are reversed coded (1 = 7, 2 = 6, 3 = 5, 4 = 4, 5 = 3, 6 = 2, 7 = 1).
The higher the score, the more people need to feel in control of the events in their lives.

Source:

Burger, J. M., & Cooper, H. M. (1979). The desirability of control. *Motivation and Emotion*, 3, 381-393.

Appendix B

Stimuli and Instructions of Study 5

IQ-Test Choice/ Assignment

Own Choice Condition:

Please choose one of the components of IQ you want to be tested in based on the information you received.

The screenshot shows a box titled "You" containing three radio button options: "Fluid Intelligence" (which is selected), "Analytic Intelligence", and "Creative Intelligence". Below these options is a rectangular button labeled "Choice".

(after participants' selection): You selected the *fluid/analytic/creative* intelligence test. Please wait until the experimenter starts the test for you.

Vicarious Choice Condition:

Please choose a component of intelligence to be tested for yourself and your group members. The names of your group members were anonymized, they will be displayed as person A, B, and C. Please choose for person A, B, and C one component each and click on the choice button. Please also choose the component of intelligence you want to be tested in. Your choices will be send to the server and you will be informed about the results thereafter.

The screenshot displays four identical choice boxes arranged horizontally. Each box is titled with a label: "A", "B", "C", and "You". Inside each box, there are three radio button options: "Fluid intelligence", "Analytic intelligence", and "Creative intelligence". At the bottom of each box is a rectangular button labeled "Choice".

(8 seconds after the participants started selecting components for their group members and themselves): A member of your group has already chosen components to be tested for all group members. This information has been sent to the server and is now being processed.

(shortly after): A member of your group has decided about the components of intelligence to be tested. The *fluid/analytic/creative* intelligence test has been selected for you. Please wait until the experimenter starts the test for you.

Assignment Condition:

The computer now chooses a component of intelligence to be tested for you.
The result will be displayed if you click on >>



(After clicking): The computer assigned you to the *fluid/analytic/creative* intelligence test.
Please wait until the experimenter starts the test for you.

IQ-Test Instructions

This is a test that is known to measure *fluid/analytic/creative* intelligence. There are many questions. In each question, you are provided with three hints. You are then to choose the word that best relates to EACH of these 3 hints. The answer may relate to each of the hints in a variety of different ways: for example, the answer and the hint may be synonyms, they may combine to form a compound word, or the hint may be the main characteristic of the answer, etc. However, there is only ONE correct answer to each question.

Here are two example questions. Explanations have also been provided for these examples.

Hint 1	Hint 2	Hint 3	Answer	Explanation
alcohol	carbon dioxide	wheat	<i>beer</i>	Beer contains alcohol, beer contains carbon dioxide, beer is made from wheat
track	travel	conductor	<i>train</i>	Trains operate on rail tracks, people travel by train, conductors work aboard the train

Verbal Instructions Concerning the RAT

“Now, I would like to ask you to start working on the intelligence test. You can quit the test at any time you want to. To do so, just click on the X in the upper right corner of this window. After quitting the test, please answer to the next questionnaire, which is opened in the background. Do you have questions so far? If not, please start working on the task.”

RAT Items in Japanese

ヒント 1	ヒント 2	ヒント 3	答え
デジタル	レンズ	フラッシュ	カメラ
レーザー	コンピューター	紙	プリンター
辛い	食べ物	インド	カレー

矢	愛	ハート	キューピッド
細菌	コンピューター	伝染	ウイルス
砂漠	水	蜃気楼	オアシス
チケット	スクリーン	ポップコーン	映画館
$E=MC^2$	天才	相対性	アインシュタイン
オゾン	気温	エルニーニョ	温暖化
写真家	有名人	追っかけ	パパラッチ
虫	夏	吸血鬼	蚊
ツーピース	ビーチ	女性	水着
動物	袋	オーストラリア	カンガルー
コーヒー	甘い	白	砂糖
動物	朝	卵	鶏
騒音	審判	口	笛
4 年	スポーツ	ギリシャ	オリンピック
赤と緑	停止	車	信号
本	ブリタニカ	調べる	百科事典
海外旅行	ビザ	身分証明	パスポート
鼻	木の人形	嘘	ピノキオ
動物	格子	動物園	檻
ハムレット	作家	ロミオとジュリエット	シェイクスピア

木	贈り物	冬	クリスマス
AM／FM	ステレオ	D J	ラジオ
黒	液体	中東	石油
乗り物	旅	空	飛行機
水	冷たい	固体	氷
黒板	書く	黒板ふき	チョーク
夢	夜	ベッド	睡眠
潮の満ち引き	夜	円形	月
エジプト	腐る	保尊	ミイラ
コーヒー	目覚める	興奮剤	カフェイン
賞	スイス	ダイナマイト	ノーベル
白	空	足跡	雪
フランス	ワータルロー	皇帝	ナポレオン
展示品	建築	美術	博物館
北極	スケート	冷たい	氷
棚	知識	虫	本
頭痛	酒	眠い	二日酔い
泣く	野菜	皮	たまねぎ
新聞	リサイクル	切る	紙
緑	コーヒー	ポット	茶
フランス	失脚	戦争	革命

The Personal and Interpersonal Character of Choice

骨	見張り	リード	犬
2月14日	愛	恋人	バレンタインデー
魚	波	塩辛い	海
ケーキ	記念	年	誕生日
イカ	8	海	タコ
動物	悪臭	縞模様	スカンク
クマ	白と黒	中国	パンダ
白昼	ファンタジー	睡眠	夢
ドア	開く	ロッカー	鍵
トマト	フライドポテト	香辛料	ケチャップ
汗	眠る	怖い	悪夢
日焼け	日中	輝く	太陽
豆	煎る	カップ	コーヒー
注射	縫う	タトゥー	針
池	虫	変態	カエル
ボウル	ビネガー	野菜	サラダ

RAT Items in German

Hinweis1	Hinweis2	Hinweis3	Antwort
digital	Linse	Blitz	Kamera
Laser	Computer	Papier	Drucker

scharf	Essen	Indien	Curry
Pfeil	Liebe	Herz	Amor
Krankheitserreger	Computer	ansteckend	Virus
Wüste	Wasser	Trugbild	Fata Morgana/ Oase
Ticket	Bildschirm	Popcorn	Kino
$E=MC^2$	Genie	Relativität	Einstein
Ozon	Temperatur	El NIÑO	Globale Erwärmung
Photographen	Prominente	folgen	Paparazzi
Ungeziefer	Sommer	Vampire	Moskito/ Schnake/ Mücke
Zweiteiler	Strand	Frau	Bikini
Tier	Beutel	Australien	Känguru
Kaffee	süß	weiß	Kondensmilch
Tier	Morgen	Ei	Huhn
Lärm	Schiedsrichter	Lippen	Pfeife
4 Jahre	Sport	Griechenland	Olympia
rot & grün	Stopp	Autos	Ampel
Buch	Britannica	nachschlagen	Enzyklopädie
Auslandsreise	Visum	Identifikation	Reisepass/ Ausweis
Nase	hölzerne Puppe	Lüge	Pinocchio
Tier	Gitterstäbe	Zoo	Käfig
Hamlet	Schriftsteller	Romeo & Julia	Shakespeare

Baum	Geschenke	Winter	Weihnachten
AM/FM	Stereo	DJ	Radio
schwarz	flüssig	Nahost	Öl
Vehikel	Reise	Himmel	Flugzeug
Wasser	kalt	fest	Eis
Tafel	schreiben	Radierer	Kreide
Traum	Nacht	Bett	schlafen
Gezeiten	Nacht	Kreis	Mond
Ägypten	verwesen	konservieren	Mumie
Kaffee	wach	stimulierend	Coffein
Preis	Schweiz	Dynamit	Nobel
weiß	Himmel	Fußabdrücke	Schnee
Frankreich	Waterloo	Kaiser	Napoleon
Ausstellung	Gebäude	Kunst	Museum
Nordpol	skaten	kalt	Eis
Regal	Wissen	Wurm	Buch
Kopfschmerz	Alkohol	müde	Kater
weinen	Gemüse	schälen	Zwiebel
Zeitung	recycle	schneiden	Papier
grün	Kaffee	Kanne	Tee
französisch	stürzen	Krieg	Revolution
Knochen	bewachen	Leine	Hund
14-Feb	Liebe	Schatz	Valentinstag
Fisch	Welle	salzig	Meer

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Kuchen	Jubiläum	Alter	Geburtstag
Tintenfisch	acht	Ozean	Krake
Tier	Geruch	Streifen	Skunk/ Stinktief
Bär	schwarz & weiß	China	Panda
Tag	Phantasie	Schlaf	Traum
Tür	öffnen	Schließfach	Schlüssel
Tomaten	Pommes	Würze	Ketchup
Schweiß	schlafen	Angst	Alptraum
verbrennen	Tag	scheinen	Sonne
Bohne	rösten	Tasse	Kaffee
Spritze	sticken	Tattoo	Nadel
Teich	Insekten	Metamorphose	Frosch
Schale	Essig	Gemüse	Salat

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