

Providence College

DigitalCommons@Providence

Biology Student Scholarship

Biology

4-25-2023

Be Happy, But Not Too Happy: Taiwanese and American Childrearing Differences in Regulation of Ideal Affect.

Samantha Dietel
Providence College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/bio_students



Part of the [Biology Commons](#)

Dietel, Samantha, "Be Happy, But Not Too Happy: Taiwanese and American Childrearing Differences in Regulation of Ideal Affect." (2023). *Biology Student Scholarship*. 48.
https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/bio_students/48

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Biology at DigitalCommons@Providence. It has been accepted for inclusion in Biology Student Scholarship by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Providence. For more information, please contact dps@providence.edu.



Striving for happiness: American and Taiwanese parenting differences in ideal affect for their children

Samantha Dietel, Patrick Kelly, and Smaranda Lawrie
Providence College

Abstract

We sought to use Jeanne Tsai's Affect Valuation Theory to explore ideal affect, the emotional states that people ideally want to feel, in the context of parents. Ideal affect is culturally malleable in a way that affective values amongst cultures are transmitted and learned from as early as preschool. We examined ideal affect in childrearing practices from 434 Taiwanese and American parents. We found that both Taiwanese and American parents encouraged positive emotions, however, it American's placed greater emphasis on higher ideal affective states for their children, like feeling happy, excited, fun, and also while avoiding anger. The implications for our findings are further discussed.

Introduction

Background:

- How people feel—actual affect—differs to that of how people ideally want to feel—ideal affect—and cultural factors shape ideal affect more than actual affect (Tsai 2007).
- The Asian collectivist cultural norms tend to not seek out and value social support networks less than individualistic cultures for problem solving and stress management (Shelly et al. 2004, Kim 2006).
- European Americans reported providing emotion-focused support more frequently than problem-focused support, opposite of parents from Asian cultures who provided equivalent amounts of emotion-focused and problem-focused support (Chen et al., 2011).

Method

Participants:

- N = 434
 - USA N = 277 (M = 5.78%, F = 93.50%, Other = 0.72%)
 - Taiwan N = 157 (M = 20.38%, F = 79.62%)

Procedure:

- Qualtrics generated online survey, either in English or Taiwanese, was distributed to American and Taiwanese parents, respectively.
- Survey topics ranged from child emotional expectations, age-salient conversations, academics and extracurriculars, and parent-child relationship expectations.

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers so please answer honestly.

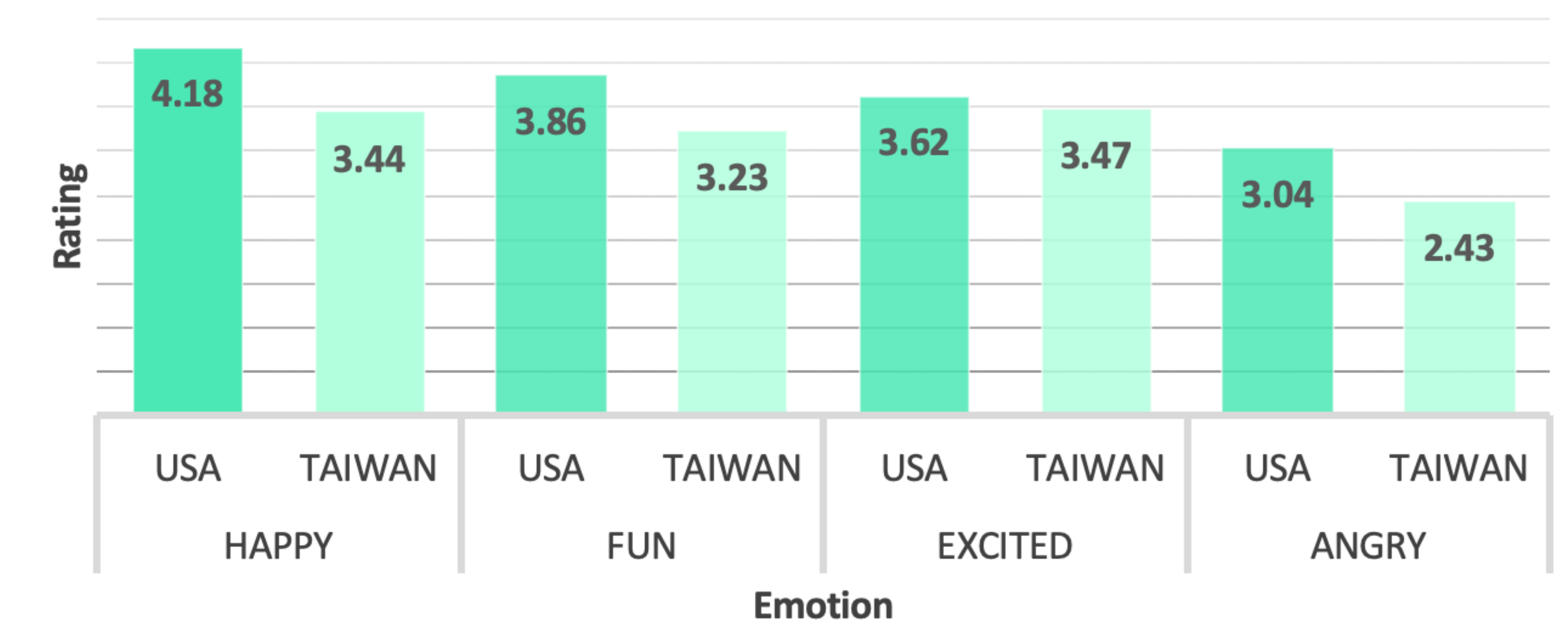
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I go out of my way to avoid my child feeling anxious.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go out of my way to avoid my child feeling angry.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go out of my way to avoid my child feeling sad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go out of my way to avoid my child feeling bored.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go out of my way to avoid my child feeling disappointed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go out of my way to ensure that my child feels happy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go out of my way to ensure that my child is having fun.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I go out of my way to ensure that my child is excited.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Research Questions:

1. How do Taiwanese and American parents differ in what emotions they emphasize for their children to experience/not experience?

Results

Positive Emotions: US and Taiwan



*All results identified here are significant

I go out of my way to:

ensure that my child is happy	ensure that my child is having fun	ensure that my child is excited	avoid my child feeling angry
An Independent Samples T Test was performed to compare US parents (M = 4.18, SD = .90) to the Taiwanese parents (M = 3.44, SD = 1.09) which showed US parents significantly go out of their way more to ensure their child's happiness, $t(429) = 7.59, p < .001$.	An Independent Samples T Test was performed to compare US parents (M = 3.86, SD = .87) to the Taiwanese parents (M = 3.23, SD = 1.22) which showed US parents significantly go out of their way more to ensure their child is having fun, $t(429) = 6.29, p < .001$.	An Independent Samples T Test was performed to compare US parents (M = 3.62, SD = .96) to the Taiwanese parents (M = 3.47, SD = 1.16) which showed US parents significantly go out of their way more to ensure their child is excited, $t(427) = 1.47, p < .001$.	An Independent Samples T Test was performed to compare US parents (M = 3.04, SD = 1.09) to the Taiwanese parents (M = 2.43, SD = 1.19) which showed USA participants significantly go out of their way more to avoid their child feeling angry, $t(427) = 5.37, p = .005$.

Discussion

Discussion:

- US parents went out of their way to ensure their children felt happy, excited, had fun, and avoided anger significantly more than Taiwanese parents.
- US parents feel more responsible for the emotions of their children more than Taiwanese parents.