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Conceptions of the Transition to Adulthood in Koreans, Asian-Australians and European-Australians*

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Abstract: Relatively little research has examined conceptions of the transition to adulthood in young people from Asian backgrounds. Korea is of particular interest as it has experienced rapid economic growth and social change. We compared perceptions of adulthood in relatively collectivist Koreans and Asian-Australians in comparison to more individualistic European-Australians. Participants were comprised of 188 Korean, 272 European-Australian and 118 Asian-Australian university students aged between eighteen and twenty-nine years. Young Koreans embraced criteria related to interdependence, norm compliance, and role transitions congruent with their traditional collectivist perspective. At the same time, they also embraced individualistic values as reflected in their endorsement of independence criteria. The Asian-Australians also highly rated criteria related to interdependence, role transitions and family capacities in comparison to the European-Australians but also embraced individualism to some extent, which could be due to the effects of acculturation and influences of the majority individualistic culture.

Keywords: emerging adulthood, Korean, collectivist, individualist, Asian-Australian

I. Introduction

In the last 50 years or so, there have been rapid social and demographic changes in developing and western industrialised countries. In particular, young adults have experienced

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quite dramatic shifts in role expectations and associated responsibilities. Traditional roles associated with adulthood such as getting married, having children, supporting a family and having a long-term career, previously considered as markers of adulthood, have substantially changed (Arnett, 2000, 2001). The age at which these roles are achieved (or if they are achieved at all) tends to be later compared to previous generations. For example, people now have a tendency to start families later, switch careers more often, and take longer to finish education than they did fifty or so years ago. This extension of these volitional years where young people are still deciding their career, study or other future choices while prolonging "settling down" has been characterized as a distinct life period. This "emerging adulthood" period is considered to occur in-between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 1994). It is conceptualised as a period characterised by distinct changes and transitions for individuals aged between eighteen years and mid or late twenties.

The introduction of this additional developmental stage of emerging adulthood has not been without its critics. An alternative view is that this development is an integral element of "early adulthood" rather than a distinct stage (Cote, 2014; Hendry & Kloep, 2010). Moreover, it is not a universal stage in development but is shaped by socio-cultural and economic factors. It appears to predominantly apply to affluent western middle class young people who have access to higher education, greater environmental resources and opportunities for social mobility (Bynner, 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2010). Thus, this emerging adulthood stage occurs in cultures that allow for a protracted period of identity exploration and individualism among young people who are no longer adolescents, but who also do not yet self-identify as young adults. Increasing resources and fast growing economies allow emerging adults in industrialised countries to have a wider selection of future pathways, but this has also lead to confusion of their status in society (Arnett, 2000). Many individuals in individualistic, developed societies feel as if they are in an ambiguous in-between state of transition (Arnett & Padilla- Walker, 2015; Sirsch, Dreher, Mayr & Willinger, 2009; Zacarés, Serra & Torres, 2015). In contrast, young adults from low socio-economic backgrounds and developing countries are typically propelled into adulthood more rapidly, leav-

ing little time to adjust and explore their entry into adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Syed & Mitchell, 2013).

The majority of previous studies have investigated emerging adulthood in developed western nations using a similar questionnaire methodology as used by Arnett (1997, 2001, 2003) in the United States, which includes Sweden (Westberg, 2004), Austria (Sirsch, Dreher, Mayr, & Willinger, 2009), Denmark (Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015), Romania (Nelson, 2009), Israel (Mayseless & Scharf, 2003) and Argentina (Facio & Micocci, 2003). In general, this research has found that emerging adults in western countries tend to respond to the question "Do you feel that you have reached adulthood?" with neither "yes" nor "no," but "in some ways yes, in some ways no." In addition, the top three criteria for attaining adulthood status have been found to be "are accepting responsibility for one's self", "making independent decisions", and "financial independence" (Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015).

Several studies have been conducted in the Asian region, namely in China (Badger, Nelson, & Barry, 2006; Nelson, Badger, & Wu, 2004; Nelson, Duan, & Padilla-Walker, 2011; Zhong & Arnett, 2014), Korea (Ahn & Kim, 2012), and India (Seiter & Nelson, 2011). Asian research has revealed some similarities or commonalities in responses related to adulthood status but have shown some differences from Western cultures (Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015). When the Indian participants were asked whether they felt they had achieved adulthood, 61% of the participants across the sample answered "yes", 14% answered "no" and 26% responded with "in some respects yes, in some respects no", which is quite distinct from the typical pattern of responses found in western countries. Moreover, the family capacities scale was the highest ranked criteria overall for the Indian participants, which illustrates the importance of family in Indian society. In addition, young people in India valued emotional self-control and abiding by social norms (Seiter & Nelson, 2011). Although a Korean study (Ahn & Kim, 2012) did not measure perceived adulthood status among emerging adults, Korean participants believed family capacities including "capable of supporting family financially" and "capable of keeping a family physically safe" to be important. Chinese participants also considered family capacities to be important and en-

dorsed "become capable of caring for children" and "caring for parents" as among the most important criteria for adulthood (Zhong & Arnett, 2014). It is broadly expected that Asian collectivist cultures will place relatively high value on family capacities, norm compliance, social relations and interdependence than individualistic cultures (e.g. Arnett, 2003; Piumatti, Garroc, Pipitonec, Di Vita, & Rabaglietti, 2016; Zhong & Arnett, 2014).

Emerging adulthood appears to play a more influential role in individualistic cultures compared to collectivist cultures (Arnett, 2000; Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Individualistic Western societies such as America, Australia, Canada, Denmark and Sweden place greater emphasis on independence and self-expression whereas collectivist Asian societies such as China, and India value interdependence and communal benefit (Triandis, 1995). Globalisation and acculturation processes can also influence role expectations and associated responsibilities (Jensen, 2003). Globalisation can accelerate the process of individualisation (Yoon, 2006). As an illustration, the influence of individualism on a traditionally collectivist culture, Greece, has been investigated (Petrogiannis, 2011). It was found that participants ranked criteria related to independence equally as high as those of norm compliance and family capacity criteria. Similarly, Korean emerging adults valued the item of independence, "accept responsibility for the consequences of your action" as an important criteria for adulthood (Ahn & Kim, 2012). This indicates that individuals in Greece and Korea had retained conceptions of the transition towards adulthood characteristic of collectivist cultures, but had also adopted individualistic conceptions.

Many western countries such as Australia, United States, Canada are very heterogeneous, multicultural societies. This aspect was addressed in a study conducted by Arnett (2003) with Asian-Americans, African-Americans and Latinos in comparison to White-Americans. It was hypothesized that due to the traditional collectivist background of Asian, African, and Latino cultures, these individuals would rank interdependence, norm compliance, family capacities and role transitions more highly than White-Americans. This was only partially supported as 70% of the participants ranked independent conceptions such as "accepting responsibility for one's actions", "making independent decisions" and "becoming financially

independent" highly across all ethnic groups. Despite differences in cultural background, there were similarities across cultural groups with all ethnic groups becoming more self-sufficient, responsible, and independent due to the processes of acculturation. However, individuals of Asian, African and Latino ethnicity also ranked criteria reflecting concern and obligation for others more highly than White-Americans, indicating they may experience a bicultural conception of adulthood due to their collectivist cultural background but individualist Western environment (Arnett, 2003). Notably, Asian-Americans and African-Americans were more likely than the White-Americans to support the criteria on the norm compliance and role transitions subscales. Also, Asian-Americans scored higher than the White-Americans on the interdependence subscale.

An Australian study was conducted with University students (Weier & Lee, 2015) enrolled in an Introduction to Psychology unit (72% females). As well as completing a 40-item criterion for adulthood survey (based on Arnett, 1997, 2001), participants were also asked to list items that made them feel like adults and did not make them feel like adults. As expected, it was found that the majority of participants felt that they were in some ways adults, and in some ways not. In line with previous results on western nations, the two highest rated criteria on the individualism subscale were "establishing financial independence" and "accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's own actions." However, in comparison to Arnett's (2001) study, Australian participants were more likely to endorse norm compliance, role transitions and family capacities. This could be due to the multicultural nature of the participants in the Australian study. In the Weier and Lee (2015) study, they did not differentiate between different ethnic groups, whereas in the current study, we distinguished between European-Australians and Asian-Australians to see how different family backgrounds are related to the perception of adulthood.

As noted previously, relatively little attention has focused on examining young people's perceptions of adulthood in Asia even though there has been rapid economic development in many of these countries. Korea has an economy that is on a par with many European countries. Within a mere generation, Korea has dramatically developed in terms of educational opportunities and attainment, which is in striking contrast with their parents' gen-

eration (Park, 2013). In particular, Korean students were listed within the 10 top-ranking countries and regions in reading, math, and science (OECD, 2010). These developments have given young people the opportunity to study and remain as students for an extended period. Consequently, this has produced a prolonged transition period from school to work. As rapid economic and social development accelerates the individualization process, young Koreans will value independence (e.g., Jensen, 2003; Yoon, 2006). On the other hand, traditional confucian norms still exert an influence on people's behaviours and belief systems in Korea (Park, 2013). Consequently, there are strong traditional beliefs about marriage and childbearing for example. An additional consideration is that many young people still live at home with parents.

The aim of the current study was to investigate whether conceptions of transitions to adulthood differ between relatively collectivist Koreans and Asian-Australians in comparison to more individualistic European-Australians. It was predicted that the European-Australians would more strongly endorse the independence subscale, while young adults in Korea would be more likely to endorse the interdependence subscale in their conceptions of transition towards adulthood. As the Asian-Australians have a collectivist background, they could also similarly endorse the interdependence subscale. Alternatively due to acculturation, young Koreans and Asian-Australians may have similar conceptions of transitions towards adulthood as the European-Australians and primarily endorse the independence subscale. Collectivist cultures tend to value items related to interdependence, norm compliance and family values higher than those from individualistic cultures that value independence. In addition, if participants are experiencing a prolonged period of emerging adulthood, individuals may consider themselves to be in an ambiguous state of in-between adulthood.

II. Method

1. Participants

The participants were 188 Koreans, 272 European-Australians and 118 Asian-

Australians aged between eighteen and twenty-nine years. The university students were recruited from two regional universities in Australia and Korea. Participants either resided in Australia or Korea. The European-Australian participants had Australian, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, and Mediterranean parents whereas the Asian-Australian participants had Vietnamese, Chinese, Thai, South Korean, Indian, Sri Lankan, and Malaysian parents. The background characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

2. Measures

Data were collected using a thirty-nine item questionnaire previously devised and used by Arnett (1998, 2001, 2003). This questionnaire includes seven separate subscales; independence, interdependence, role transition, norm compliance, biological transitions, chronological transitions and family capacities. The questionnaire was translated into Korean (Brislin, 1970). Participants were asked whether or not they believed the criteria listed must be achieved before a person can be considered to have reached adulthood, and they were asked to answer yes or no for each item. Participants were also asked "Do you think you have reached adulthood?" to gauge their personal perspective on adult status. Responses to this question were "yes", "no", or "in some ways yes, in some ways no".

Table 1. Demographic information of Asian-Australians, European-Australians and Koreans

Characteristics	Asian-Australians *N*=118	European-Australians *N*= 250	Koreans *N*= 188
Female (%)	60	83	65
Male (%)	40	17	35
Age(mean and standard deviation)	22.21 (2.38)	22.54 (3.25)	20.83 (1.64)
Married or in long-term relationship (%)	38	46	0
Children (At least one child)	0	0	0
Born in Australia (%)	77	96	0
Born in Korea (%)	0	0	100
Mother's Education level (mean and standard deviation)	1.53 (.84)	2.14 (.87)	1.69 (.97)
1: High school graduate or less (%)	66	24	61
2: Certificate/Diploma (%)	20	47	9
3: Bachelor Degree or higher (%)	14	29	30

III. Results

1. Perceived adulthood status

A series of one-way analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were used to compare the perceived status of adulthood between Koreans, Asian-Australians, and European- Australians responses to the question about whether they had reached adulthood (1 = no, 2 = yes and no, 3 = yes) as the dependent variable. Covariates were included to partial out the effects of age, gender and mother's education (which was used to represent the family's socio-economic status). Results are shown in Table 2. Results revealed that European-Australians considered themselves to be more adult-like in comparison to Koreans, $F(1, 436) = 21.54$, $p < .001$ and Asian-Australians, $F(1, 304) = 8.78$, $p = .003$. There was no significant difference between Koreans and Asian-Australians ($p > .2$). The majority of participants from all three cultural groups responded to the question about perceived adulthood status with "in some respects yes, in some respects no" (see Table 2). There were no significant differences in perceived adult status between males and females.

Table 2. Perceived adulthood status (%) in Asian-Australians, European-Australians and Koreans

	Asian-Australians	European-Australians	Koreans
Yes	23	43	22
In some respects yes, in some respects no	73	56	67
No	4	4	11

The percentages of participants endorsing items in each subscale are displayed in Table 3. The internal reliabilities of the subscales were independence (.42), interdependence (.53), role transitions (.76), norm compliance (.79), biological transitions (.63), chronological transitions (.44), and family capacities (.84). A series of one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were conducted to compare the 7 subscales from the transition to adulthood questionnaire in the three cultural groups: Korean, Asian-Australian and European-Australian. Covariates were included to partial out the effects of age, gender and mother's

education.

Post hoc comparisons using a Bonferroni adjusted p value of .016 were conducted. They revealed that European-Australians scored lower on independence than Koreans ($t(436) = 3.22$. $p = .001$) but were not significantly different from Asian-Australians ($t(366) = 2.05$, $p = .04$) and Koreans and Asian-Australians were not significantly different ($p > .4$). For interdependence, Koreans scored higher than European-Australians ($t(436) = 9.76$, $p < .001$) and Asian-Australians ($t(304) = 4.66$, $p < .001$). In turn, Asian-Australians also scored significantly higher on interdependence than European-Australians ($t(366) = 3.32$, $p = .001$). For role transitions, European-Australians scored significantly lower than Koreans ($t(436) = 6.29$, $p < .001$) and Asian-Europeans ($t(366) = 4.33$, $p < .001$). Koreans and Asian-Australians were not significantly different ($p > .2$). For norm compliance, Koreans scored significantly higher than European-Australians ($t(436) = 11.39$, $p < .001$) and Asian-Europeans ($t(304) = 9.89$, $p < .001$). European-Australians and Asian- Australians were not significantly different ($p > .7$). For biological transitions, Asian-Australians scored significantly higher than Koreans ($t(304) = 3.30$, $p = .001$). There were no significant differences between Koreans and European-Australians and between European-Australians and Asian-Australians (ps $> .1$). For chronological transitions, there was no significant difference between any of the cultural groups (ps $> .1$). For family capacities, the Koreans scored significantly lower than the Asian-Australians ($t(304) = 3.85$, $p < .001$) but there was no significant difference between Koreans and European- Australians ($p > .4$) and between European-Australians and Asian-Australians ($t(366) = 2.18$, $p = .03$).

The covariate age was found to be significant for norm compliance, $F(1, 534) = 9.94$, $p = .002$ and chronological transitions, $F(1, 534) = 11.44$, $p = .001$. For norm compliance, it was found that younger Koreans were more likely to endorse these conceptions of adulthood than older respondents. For chronological transitions, older Asian-Australians were more likely to endorse these conceptions of adulthood than younger respondents. No other covariates were found to be significant for the subscales.

Table 3. Mean subscale scores (%) for Asian-Australians, European-Australians and Koreans on the transition to adulthood questionnaire (standard deviation)

Subscale	Asian-Australians	European-Australians	Koreans	*F* value	*p* value
Independence	64.55[ab] (18.33)	60.03[b] (20.24)	66.31[a] (20.79)	5.56	.004
Interdependence	49.26[b] (26.67)	40.14[c] (24.81)	62.90[a] (24.83)	33.00	<.001
Role transition	31.36[a] (29.65)	18.46[b] (25.45)	35.19[a] (29.58)	17.13	<.001
Norm compliance	42.74[b] (29.31)	41.72[b] (30.02)	70.83[a] (18.87)	55.21	<.001
Biological transitions	32.73[a] (29.68)	27.69[b] (30.17)	22.92[b] (23.17)	4.40	.013
Chronological transitions	41.81 (29.84)	38.28 (31.29)	43.52 (32.50)	1.03	nsd
Family capacities	49.31[a] (38.62)	40.00[ab] (38.16)	36.46[b] (18.82)	5.60	.003

Note. Different subscripts, such as a, b, and c, indicate that means in the same row significantly differ in the Bonferroni post hoc comparisons.

3. Responses to items in the questionnaire

Table 4 shows the percentages of participants who approve a particular item in each subscale as a criterion that must be achieved for the transition to adulthood in order to compare the three cultural samples. The top three criteria that received the most endorsement by all three groups on the independence subscale were "accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions" (98%, 96%, 98% Asian-Australians, European-Australians, Koreans respectively); "decide on personal beliefs and values independently of parents or other influences" (88%, 83%, 88% Asian-Australians, European-Australians, Koreans respectively); and on the interdependence subscale were "become less self-orientated, develop greater consideration for others" (75%, 76%, 84% Asian-Australians, European-Australians, Koreans respectively). "Becoming financially independent" received high endorsements by the Asian- and European-Australians (86% and 76% respectively) but was not as highly endorsed by the Koreans (59%). Notably, the Koreans highly rated "learn always to have good control over your emotions" (96%) and "not deeply tied to parents emotionally" (70%) in comparison to the Australian groups. Notably, the Koreans also highly endorsed many of the norm

compliance statements, e.g., “drive safely”, “avoid drunk driving, petty crimes and illegal drugs” and “use contraception.”

Table 4. Percentage of participants agreeing that a criterion must be achieved for the transition to adulthood

Subscale	Items	Asian Australian	European Australian	Koreans
Independence	Establish equal relationship with parents	54	43	43
	Financially independent from parents	86	76	59
	No longer living in parent’ s household	42	43	40
	Not deeply tied to parents emotionally	18	20	70
	Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions	98	96	98
	Decide on personal beliefs and values independently of parents or other influences	88	83	88
Interdependence	Committed to long-term love relationship	19	10	37
	Make life-long commitments to others	34	22	37
	Learn always to have good control over your emotions	69	51	96
	Become less self-orientated, develop greater consideration for others	75	76	84
Role transition	Finish education	35	25	34
	Married	14	7	21
	Have at least one child	12	5	23
	Become employed full-time	41	26	42
	Settle into a long-term career	50	29	59
	Purchase house	36	19	32
Norm compliance	Avoid becoming drunk	21	18	21
	Avoid illegal drugs	34	40	86
	Avoid drunk driving	69	69	89
	Avoid committing petty crimes like vandalism and shoplifting	71	68	90
	Have no more than one sexual partner	20	12	35
	Drive safely and close to speed limit	53	61	92
	Avoid use of profanity/ vulgar language	27	26	66
	Use contraception if sexually active and not trying to conceive a child	45	43	84
Biological transitions	Grow to full height	45	39	35
	If a woman, become biologically capable of bearing children	35	25	7
	If a man, become biologically capable of fathering children	32	26	22
	Have had sexual intercourse	19	20	27
Chronological transitions	Have obtained driver’ s licence and can drive an automobile	47	36	54
	Reached age eighteen	45	54	43
	Reached age twenty-one	33	26	32

Subscale	Items	Asian Australian	European Australian	Koreans
Family capacities	If a woman, become capable of supporting a family financially	50	39	24
	If a man, become capable of supporting a family financially	50	35	47
	If a woman, become capable of caring for children	45	37	18
	If a man, become capable of caring for children	56	42	46
	If a woman, become capable of running a household	46	42	23
	If a man, become capable of running a household	48	46	46
	If a woman, become capable of keeping a family physically safe	42	39	25
	If a man, become capable of keeping a family physically safe	57	44	61

IV. Discussion

The aim of the study was to compare conceptions of transition toward adulthood in relatively collectivist Koreans and Asian-Australians in comparison to more individualistic European- Australians. It is broadly expected that collectivist cultures will place relatively high value on interdependence, complying with social norms (by avoiding socially prohibited behaviors), completing socially recognized role transitions (such as getting married), and the capacity for fulfilling family roles, obligations and responsibilities (such as caring and providing financially for family members) than individualistic cultures (e.g., Arnett, 2003; Piumatti et al., 2016; Zhong & Arnett, 2014). This was partially supported as the Koreans highly endorsed the interdependence and norm compliance subscales in comparison to the European-Australians. Specifically, the Koreans highly rated many of the norm compliance statements (e.g., “drive safely, avoid drunk driving, petty crimes, and illegal drugs,” “use contraception”). For role transitions (e.g., “finish education, married, and become employed full-time”), both the collectivist Koreans and Asian-Australians’ ratings were higher than the individualist European-Australians. Note that complying with social norms and completing socially recognized traditional roles indicate the values of collectivist cultures. Our result indicates that more traditional roles and obligations are considered to be im-

portant in relation to transition to adulthood in the participants with an Asian background than with a European background.

The Asian-Australians rated family capacities more highly than either the Koreans or European-Australians. The strong emphasis on family in the Australians with an Asian background is in agreement with results found in other studies with Chinese and Indian participants (Seiter & Nelson, 2011; Zhong & Arnett, 2014). This reflects the importance of family and family obligations and responsibilities held by people with an Asian collectivist background. For the Koreans, it can be seen that there are gender differences in responses as they tended to rate the female-related lower than male-related criteria. Similarly, in the biological indicators, young Korean women rated lower on the item of "become biologically capable of bearing children" than young Korean men as well as Australian men and women participants. Our results of young Korean women devaluing biological and family traditional values tend to be different from those of Ahn and Kim's (2012) study where young Korean women rated traditional values higher than men. Gender differences among young Koreans may be further replicated in various young Korean samples in the near future.

The Koreans were found to more highly rate the independence subscale than the European-Australians or Asian Australians. An explanation for this unexpected trend is that the Koreans highly endorsed one of the criteria on the independence subscale namely "not being deeply tied to parents emotionally" (70%) in comparison to both the European-Australians (20%) and Asian-Australians (18%). Similar to the response of our Korean sample, Ahn and Kim (2012) reported that 82% of young Koreans considered this criterion important. On the other hand, the responses of the two Australian samples in this study are similar to those of American and European studies, ranging from 16% to 31% (Arnett, 2003; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015). This discrepancy between Korean studies and other cultural studies deserves further study in the future. Apart from the subscale item of "not being deeply tied to parents emotionally" the mean of other subscales of independence (65%) was not significantly different from European-Australians (68%). This result indicates that young Korean adults had conceptions of the transition towards adult-

hood characteristic of collectivist cultures, but had also adopted individualistic Western conceptions as has been found in other collectivist cultures such as Greece (Petrogiannis, 2011) as well as Asian-Americans (Arnett, 2003).

Interestingly, the Asian-Australians did not differ from the European-Australians on independence but did rate interdependence higher. Moreover, the Koreans rated on independence and interdependence higher than European-Australians. This appears to support the notion that young people with an Asian background but living in Australia and Korea have characteristics that combine both individualistic beliefs from the industrialized culture and also collectivist values related to obligations and responsibilities toward others drawn from their Asian backgrounds.

As well as culturally-shaped responses, notable commonalties were found across the three cultural groups. The two criteria that received the highest endorsements on the independence subscale by all three groups were "accept responsibility for your actions" (98%, 96%, 98%, Asian-Australians, European- Australians, Koreans respectively) and "decide on personal beliefs and values" (88%, 83%, 88%, Asian-Australians, European- Australians, Koreans respectively). The endorsement of these independent-related values is in line with findings from a majority of previous studies (e.g., Arnett, 2003; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015). In the current study "financial independence" was rated highly by the Australian-based participants (as has occurred in many other studies) but was not as highly endorsed by the Koreans.

In addition, in the interdependence subscale "become less self-orientated, develop greater consideration for others" was highly valued by all three groups (75%, 76%, 84%, Asian-Australians, European-Australians, Koreans respectively), which suggest that this interdependent value is an important criterion for adult transition regardless of culture. Similarly, other U.S. and European studies have shown more than 70 % support for the same item (Arnett, 2003; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015). The Koreans also highly endorsed having emotional self-control (96%) in the interdependence subscale, which is in line with results from another Korean study (Ahn & Kim, 2012) and other Asian collectivist cultures,

India (Seiter & Nelson, 2007) and China (Badger et al., 2006). Furthermore, no differences were found between the cultural groups in the chronological subscale. The chronological markers such as "turning age eighteen or twenty-one" do not appear to play a prominent role in conceptions of reaching adulthood status in comparison to some of the other subscales.

Moreover, we did find that the majority of respondents perceived that they were in the ambiguous in-between adulthood status of "in some respects yes, in some respects no" (73% Asian-Australians, 56% European-Australians, 67% Koreans). In contrast, an Indian study reported that only 29% Indian young people aged 18 to 26 considered themselves to have an ambiguous in-between status whereas 61% of them perceived that they had achieved adulthood (Seiter & Nelson, 2011). This ambiguous in-between adult status has been found to be associated with a protracted period of identity that typically occurs in affluent countries such as Korea and Australia where young people have access to higher education, greater environmental resources and opportunities (Bynner, 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2010). Interestingly, the European-Australians considered themselves to be more adult-like (43%) than the Koreans (22%) or Asian-Australians (23%). Another Australian study showed that 10% of young Australian participants reported they were more adult-like (Weier & Lee, 2014). The average age of the participants in Weier and Lee (2014) was 19 years old, but since our European-Australian participants were 22, older participants were more likely to believe they had reached adulthood (e.g. Weier & Lee, 2014). But since the average age of participants in European-Australia and Asian-Australia was similar in our study, we need to look further into why European-Australians perceive them as more adult-like than Asian-Australians in future research. Furthermore, our results from the three particular samples did not support the view that emerging adulthood appears to have a greater impact on individualistic cultures than on collectivist cultures (Arnett, 2000; Schlegel & Barry, 1991).

In conclusion, so far relatively little research has examined conceptions of transition to adulthood in young people from Asian backgrounds. This is of particular interest as many Asian countries have undergone or are undergoing rapid social and economic change. Korea,

in particular, has experienced rapid economic growth in recent times resulting in increased and extended educational opportunities for young people. As expected, young Koreans embrace criteria related to interdependence, norm compliance, and role transitions congruent with their traditional collectivist perspective. At the same time, they also embrace individualist values as reflected in their endorsement of independence criteria. This could be partially due to the effects of globalization, which is creating increased individualism and greater convergence and homogeneity across countries in many social and behavioral aspects of life (Brown & Lauder, 1996). The Asian-Australians also highly rated criteria related to interdependence, biological and role transitions and family capacities in comparison to the European-Australians but also embraced individualism to some extent as reflected in their endorsement of criteria in the independence subscale. This illustrates how cultural values of family obligations and consideration for others persist in the Australians with an Asian background but is also influenced by the majority individualist culture.

Our research fills the gap in empirical evidence that is lacking in existing research, and thus provides theoretical and practical implications. First, the majority of respondents in our study perceived that they were in the ambiguous in-between adulthood status, suggesting that emerging adulthood appears to have a major impact on not only collectivist cultures but also individualistic cultures, although previous studies reported them to have a stronger impact on individualistic cultures (Arnett, 2000; Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Second, our results appear to support previous findings in that young people with an Asian background living in developed countries such as Australia and Korea have characteristics that combine both individualistic beliefs from the industrialized culture and also traditional collectivist values (Ahn & Kim, 2012; Jensen, 2003; Petrogiannis, 2011; Yoon, 2006). Third, our results partially support the previous findings that collectivist cultures will place relatively high value on interdependence than individualistic cultures (Arnett, 2003; Zhang & Arnett, 2014; Piumatti et al., 2016). Among the interdependence-related subscales, Koreans value norm compliance highly, whereas Asian-Australians value biological transition and family capacities. This suggests that while Asian studies have shown some similarities in responses,

some specific responses are shaped by specific cultures (Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015). Despite its many advantages, the study has limitations by using limited and small samples. In particular, the tendency of young Korean women to devalue biological and family traditional values in this study could be further replicated and pursued in various Korean samples in future studies. Future research is needed to further investigate what criteria are considered to be most important in marking the transition to adulthood in Asian young people.

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