

The Family Expectations for University Degrees in America and Japan

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Abstract

This study compares and contrasts motivational and expectation outcomes parents have for their child or children as a university student. Factors of this study are what the expectations of parents, both American and Japanese, in how a university degree enhances the student's lives, what the cultural aspects that help students decide what their major should be, and how American and Japanese parents work with students to complete their degrees. A Japanese and English survey was created to help identify the family expectations of university degrees, from American student's point of view and Japanese student's point of view. The survey contained a total of 30 American students and 30 Japanese students. This research reflects that Japanese parents do not strictly monitor the performance of students but have very high expectations for their children to graduate. American parents demonstrated a neutral feeling about their children achieving a university degree. Japanese parents showed a low tolerance for their children if they fail to complete college. American parents give their children support and motivation if they finish college or not.

1. Significance of the Study

When I studied abroad, I noticed a difference in the attitudes of the students and their motivation for being in college and achieving a college degree. To get to the source of my curiousness, the parents became my target research. Why and how parents are inspiring and influencing them to become successful in college became an interest of mine during my stay.

2. Research Questions

- 1) What are the expectations of parents, both American and Japanese, in how a university degree enhances the student's lives?
- 2) What are the cultural aspects that help students decide what their major should be?
- 3) How do American and Japanese parents work with students to complete their degrees?

3. Background Research

3.1. Japanese and American Education System

There are four major college levels in America; State college and University, Private Universities, Community College and Institute of Technology. Through these collegiate institutions, students first undergo undergraduate education to achieve a Bachelors of Arts degree. After Undergrad education, students may attend Graduate education where students pursue a Masters degree and higher (Understanding the American Education, 2015).

Japanese higher education institutions include National Universities, Public Universities and Junior colleges, and Private Universities. The goal for Japanese students is to attend the most prestigious schools; for example, Tokyo University. Public and Private Universities are not so prestigious and have less strict regulations. Just like American students, Japanese students also go through undergrad education however, general education courses aren't encouraged. Therefore, the first, two years, Japanese students devote time to clubs and other activities. Japanese students may attend Graduate education but, the program is not as important for students as it is for Americans because there isn't suitable job employment for the program. On a good note, once Japanese students enroll into college, most likely they will graduate. (丸山 2004)

Americans have multiple opportunities to enroll in college but Japan's process of college enrollment is competitive. Graduate education is encouraged in America to strive for high paying careers but its minor in Japan due to limited job positions in research laboratories (Understanding the American Education, 2015).

For Undergraduate students in America, the first two years is dedicated to the general education courses such as math, science, history, and ext. However, in Japan, general education courses aren't encouraged. Therefore, the first two years of undergrad students is dedicated to clubs and other activities (Maruyama, 2004).

Graduate School is advanced education in America and considered important to establish advanced job positions. Due to limited suitable employment in Japan, Graduate education is not a priority for students who have graduated from undergraduate education (Maruyama, 2004).

- High school and College graduation ratings

Seventy five percent of Americans graduate high school and a total of ninety three percent of student's graduate high school. In addition, thirty nine percent of high school graduates, at the age of eighteen and above, enter universities or community college which is quite low. Japanese high school graduates, at the age of eighteen, enter universities or junior colleges which is essentially higher than the United States because the U.S

has over four thousand more schools than Japan. (Higher Education in the U.S, 2015)

Even though America has over 4,000 more colleges than Japan, Japanese have a higher percentage in completing college. Once enrolling in a university in Japan, most likely they will graduate. Japan has an only ten percent college drop-out rating. Due to economic reasons, such as tuition increase, Americans have a high drop-out rate of forty five percent. (丸山 2004) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yW7o5UltLhc>)

- College Entrance Exams

In America, students can take various exams multiple times but in Japan, you have one chance to take the college admission exam. In Japan, the entrance exams are rigorous national competitions because there're limited amount of spots in the prestigious colleges (Maruyama, 2004). Therefore, Japanese students attend cram school to accumulate many more hours of studying without breaks (Higher Education in Japan 2010).

Also, the admission process is a bit different. All universities select entering students based on G.P.A, PSAT, ACT, AP, TOEFL, and/or SAT exams. The exams previously stated are placement and aptitude tests. Which college a student applies to, determines which of these exams should be taken. In contrast, Japanese students must study for only one admission exam. They have two days to complete the exam which consists of multiple subjects, including foreign language. In some schools, writing an essay or an interview would be a secondary test (Taking College Entrance Exams, 2014). Unfortunately, if a Japanese student fails to pass the admission exam, the student must wait the following year to retake it. In the shoes of an American student they can retake the tests multiple times in the same year.

- How do Japanese and American Students choose their Major?

The goal of Japanese students is to graduate at a prestigious school. However each institution has a major field area such as business, science, or literature. The score result of the Japanese admission exam decides if the student is eligible to enroll into a prestigious school or one of the non-restricted schools. In Japan, the major of the student is pretty much decided for them whether they like it or not. (Maruyama, 2004)

American students can independently choose any field of study. Students even attend college as an 'undecided' major. Also, students are permitted to change their field multiple times. Advisors encourage students to decide which major to choose by the time they finish their general education courses. Therefore, by the middle of the end of sophomore year of college

is the time for American students to choose a major. (Higher Education in the U.S, 2015)

- How do Americans and Japanese enroll in an University

College enrollment is decided on the grades and scores (whatever admission test required) of students. Students are permitted to take the SAT or other enrollment exams multiple times and have many chances to build up their G.P.A. The purpose of high school in America is to gain the knowledge and basic skills of work and being social. Students sometimes purchase textbooks, hire tutors, or join study groups to prepare for enrollment exams. (Higher Education in Japan 2010)

College enrollment in Japan is decided on the score of the National College Admission Exam or the exam personally created by the particular University. There's only once chance to take this exam so it's very stressful. The sole purpose of high school is to gain the necessary knowledge to pass the entrance exam. For 3rd year students, the entrance exam becomes a great concern so, majority of students attend cram school to experience a lot more practice to prepare. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yW7o5UltLhc>)

3.2. Attitudes and Behavior of Parents towards university students

American parent's behaviors include giving rewards and they believe it promotes academic performance in their children. The reward can range from privileges and trust to money and luxury. Parental motivation is the key that determines college students' success for academic performance. (Vishtak, O. V., 2004) Positively motivating and inspiring are the fundamental characteristics for educational success. Attitude of parents affects and their level of acceptance affects the personality of their children. (Davis, K.D., Winsler, A., & Middleton, M. (2006)

Japanese parents are more disciplinary with their children and use guidance instead of rewards. Japanese parents do not strictly monitor their student's performance throughout their education in detail such as American parents. Their attitude is non-sympathetic if their child fails to graduate from college. (Dennis, J. M., Phinney, J. S., & Chuateco, L. I. 2005) Their behavior was very strict through high school because its sole purpose was to prepare them for the college admission exam. Once they enroll into a college, most likely students will graduate in four years. Therefore, Japanese parents are disciplinary but not as engaged emotionally in their children's collegiate lives. (Uji, M., Sakamoto, A., Adachi, K., & Kitamura, T. (2014)

3.3. Parent's expectations of their children's university degrees

American and Japanese parents have high expectations for their children to receive a university degree. Parents who are highly educated and have high expectations influence

their child's performance. Parents of low-income families also have high expectations. Children with only high-school diplomas won't get a good paying job so finishing college is essential for American parents and students. (Davis-Kean, P. E. 2005)

Japanese parents become disappointed if children begin college and fail to complete it. Graduating college is important to establish a great career. Japanese university training is different from business training. Japanese parents are very strict with children to graduate high school because again, its purpose was to prepare them for college enrollment. (Ushioji, M. 1997)

3.4. Support of Japanese and American parents with university students

American parents encourage feelings of competence and control. Boosting their child's self-esteem is one of their support systems. Engaging in positive emotions resulted in positive emotions within their children. (Oishi & Sullivan, 2005) Majority of American parents provide moderate financial support. Paying for college in America is difficult, but doable. (Graduate School of Education and Human Development 2012)

Japanese parents lack emotional support in their children. Thirty eight percent of students believe what they learn in school will be of no relevance after they graduate. Due to the limited academic monitoring from Japanese parents, students complete only seventy seven percent of homework. In Japan, it's unusual to borrow money from parents to pay for education. Sixty seven percent of students will be debt free. Also, for teachers, student preparations are far less strict after college enrollment and after the admission exam preparation so parents don't worry. (2011) <http://youtu.be/WPW4Lawq6d4>

3.5. Parental responses and interactions regarding university students' stress levels

American parents help manage their child's stress. They acknowledge the signs of stress and attempt to understand the causes of that stress. Lastly, they try to produce the best course of action to reduce child's stress. Eighty nine percent of Americans parents tell children to make time for exercise and recreational activities. (Emotional Health & Your College Student, 2008)

Japanese students who receive too much support may imply poor problem solving skills. Japanese parents aren't much involved in their children's collegiate education. Along with their children, Japanese parents are able to handle a lot of stress. The word, "*Ganbare!*" is commonly used to make children work harder. (露田・博美, 2002)

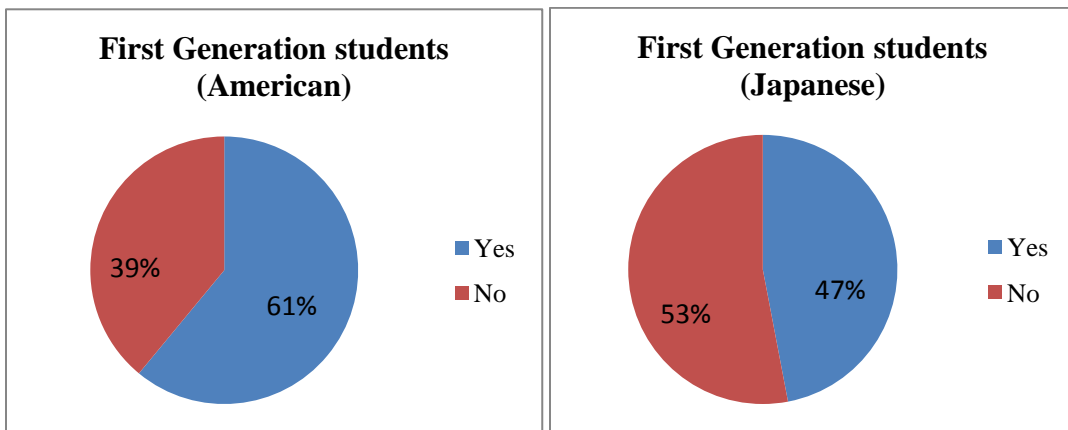
Regarding student stress levels, Japanese parents aren't emotionally connected and give very limited support but American parents produce the best course of action to help lower their child's stress level. (露田・博美, 2002)

5. Results

5.1: Research Question 1: What are the expectations of parents, both American and Japanese, in how a university degree enhances the student’s lives?

In chart 1 (below) reflects demographic data of the total amount of American and Japanese students completed my survey and the percentage of students who are first generation college students.

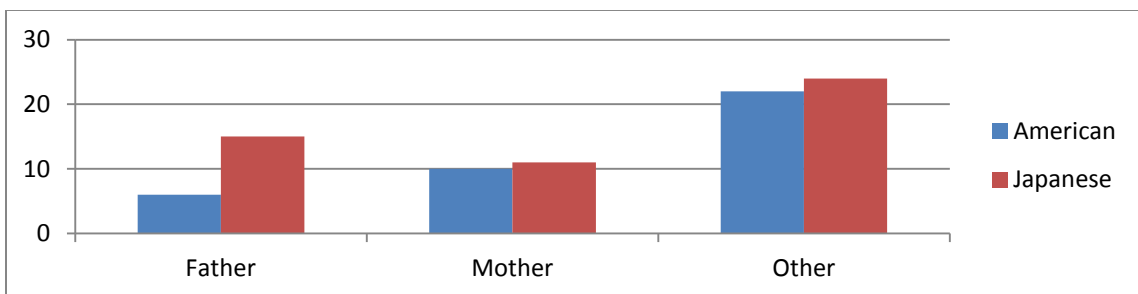
Chart 1: Demographic Data



From this data, out of the thirty American student participants, sixty one percent of those participants are first generation college students which are very high but common. There are forty seven percent of first generation Japanese students out of the total of thirty participants. In conclusion, these charts express that first generation college students are more common for Americans.

In Graph 1.2: shows additional demographic data of, “who has a college degree in your family?” Participants had choices of mother, father, and other or all.

Graph 1.2: Who has a college degree in your



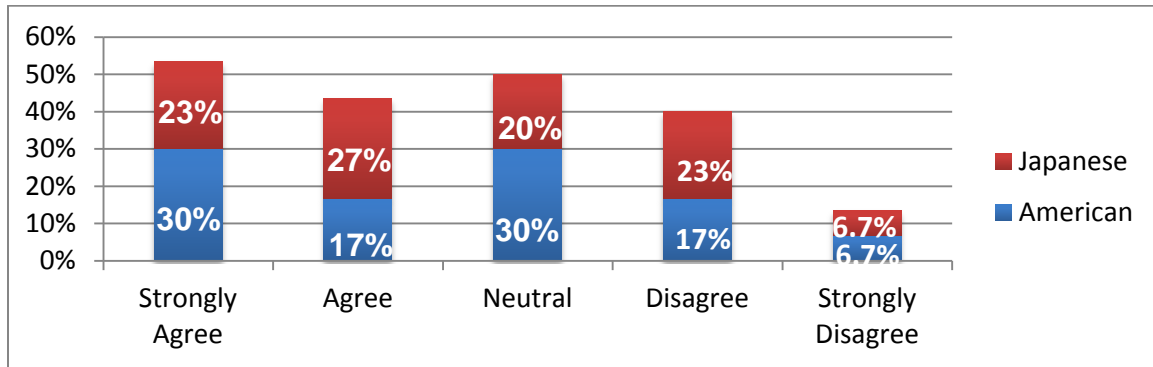
This data reflects that parents with college degrees are more common in Japan. (Graph 2) also correlates with (Chart 1) because first generation students in Japan are lower than

students in America. Parents and family members of Japanese students have more college degree background than American students.

The following data will reflect to research question one; what are the expectations of parents, both American and Japanese, in how a university degree enhances the student's lives?

In Graph 2: Shows responses to the question; is achieving a college degree important to your parents? Japanese and American students had four choices to choose from.

Graph 2: Is achieving a college degree important to your

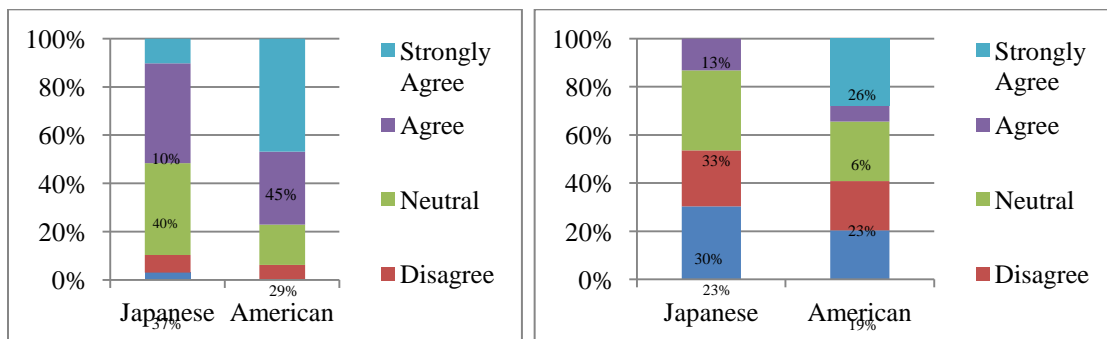


(Graph 2) shows 30% of American parents strongly believe that their child achieving a degree is essential. However, 27% of Japanese parents believe their child achieving a degree is essential. In conclusion, American and Japanese parents believe it's important for their child to get a college degree but Japanese parents value a college degree slightly more.

In Graph 3.1 & 3.4: shows results of whether parents believe your degree has given the child a future plan after graduation.

Graph 3.1 & 3.2: Do your parents believe your degree has given you a future plan after graduation?

Degree helped me choose an area I want to work in Parents have a different career path than I have

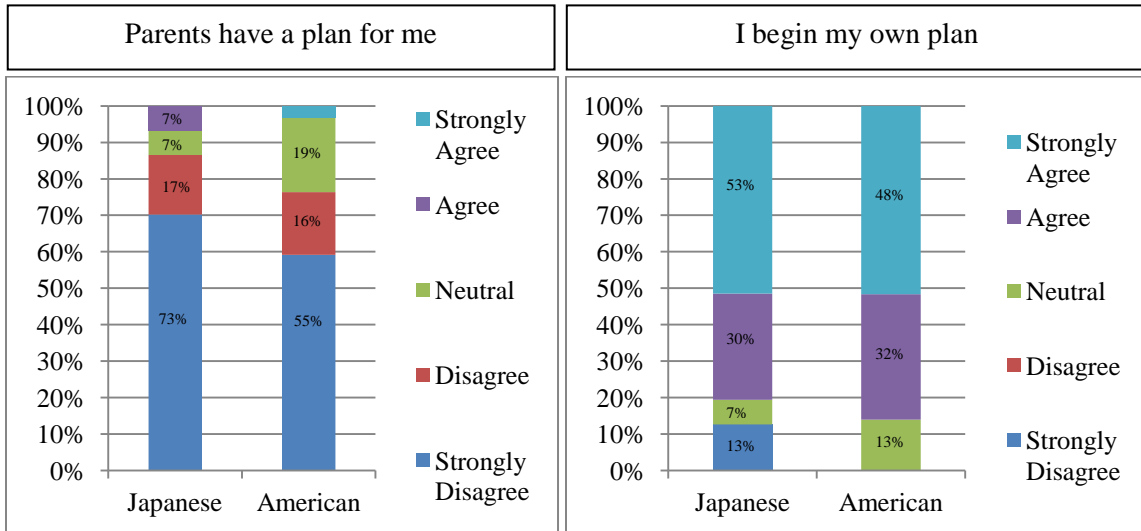


7% 16% 19%

6%

Graph 3.1& 3.2 shows a 74% of American students agreed that their degree help them choose the area that they want to work in. Only 13% of Japanese students agreed their parents have a different career path than they have. 53% students surveyed they have similar career paths of parents. From this fact, American parents believe their children's college degree gives them a future plan.

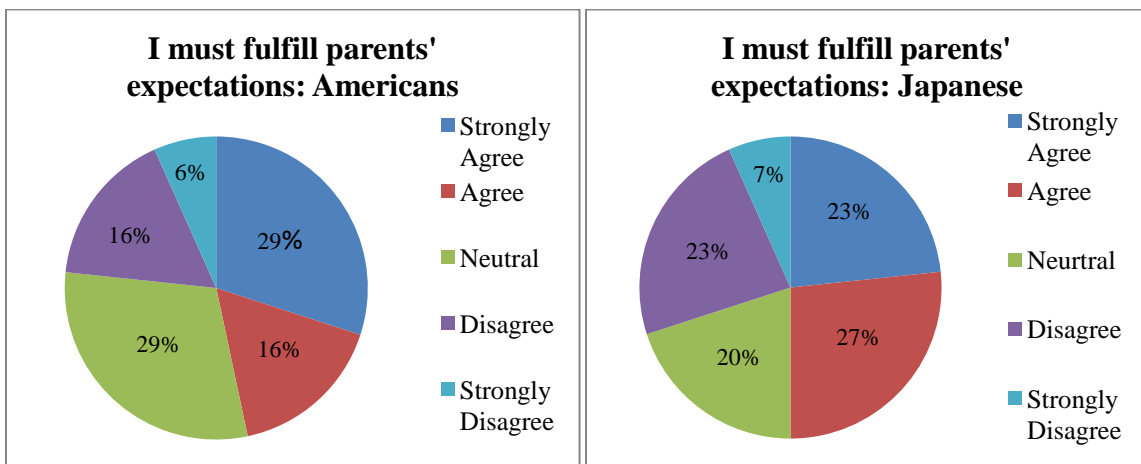
Graph 3.3 & 3.4: Do your parents believe your degree has given you a future plan after graduation?



Both graphs show very similar responses from Japanese and American students. Large percentage of students disagree that their parents have a plan for them. Also, a large percentage of students responded that they begin their own plan after graduation.

Chart 4.1-4.4: expresses how parents make an impact on students' motivation to achieve a college degree.

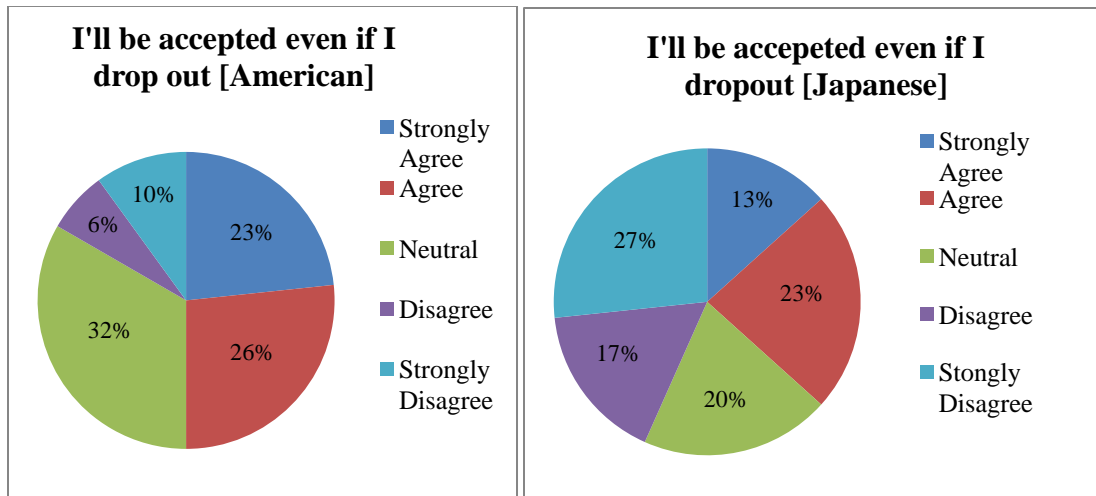
Chart 4.1: Value of Achieving a Degree



From this data, expectations of Japanese parents are much higher than American parents. In contrast, American parents have a calm expectation and will support their children.

Chart 4.2 shows the acceptance level of American and Japanese parents if students would drop out of college.

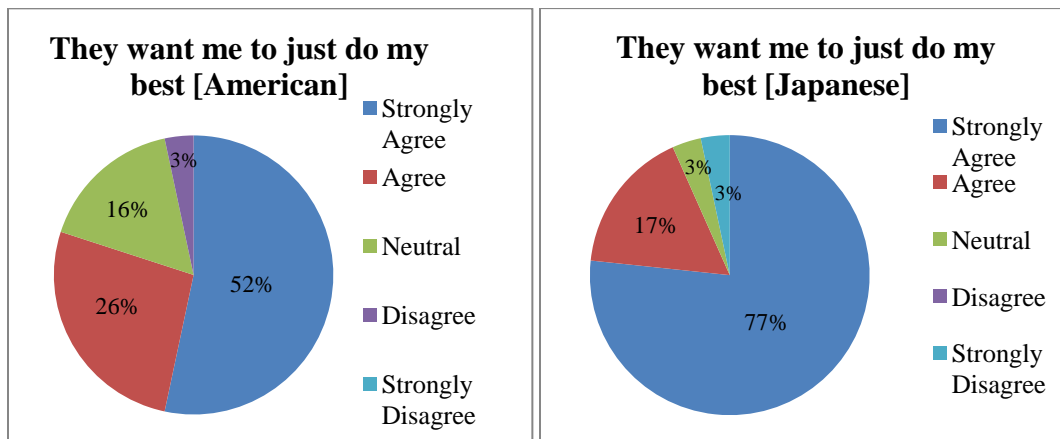
Chart 4.2: Acceptance



The data from this chart reflects Japanese parents are more non-sympathetic if children drop-out. On the other hand, American parents have a positive attitude if children dropout or not.

In Chart 4.3: shows the percentage of parents who want their children to do their best while they're in college.

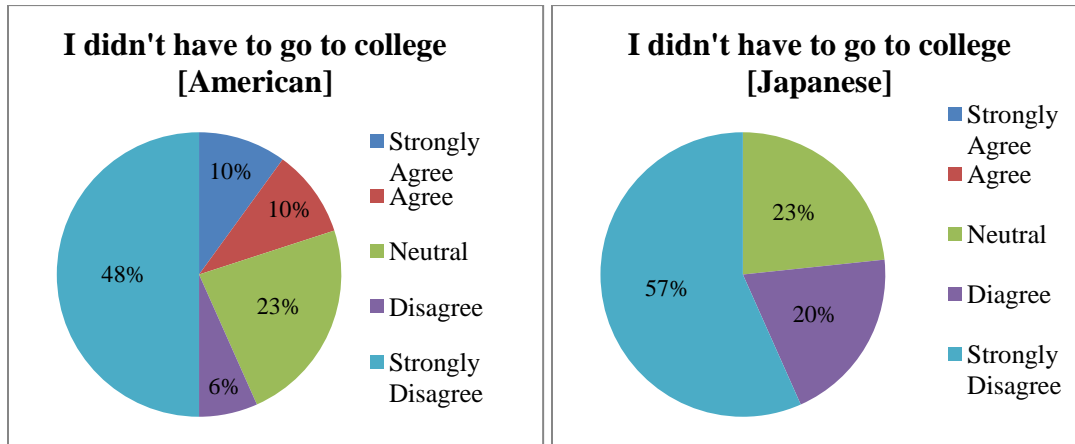
Chart 4.3: Effort



Both parents encourage their children to do their best to achieve degree. American and Japanese parents encourage their children to do their best to achieve a degree. As long as they make an effort to achieve a degree, American parents are satisfied.

Chart 4.4 states that students didn't have to go to college.

Chart 4.4: Didn't have to go to College



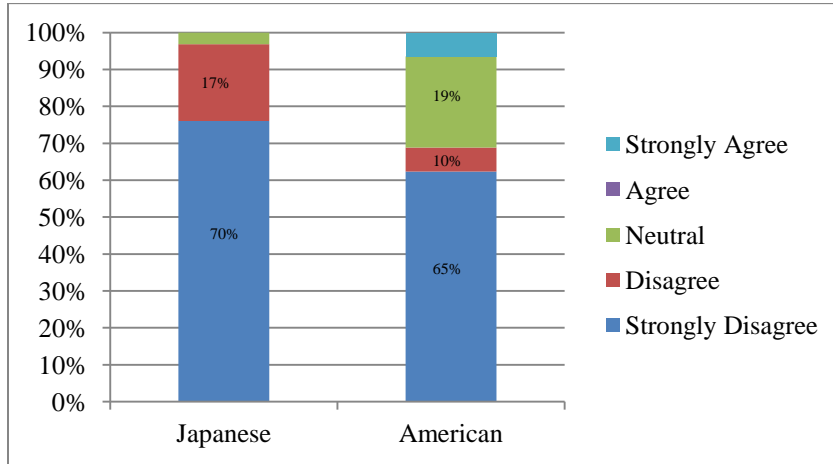
It's very clear in both the American and Japanese chart that both parents want their children to attend college. However, 43% of American students surveyed that they didn't have to attend college.

Summary of Research Question 1: Japanese parents have high expectations for children to get a degree to establish a career. Americans have a nonchalant expectation for children to get a degree however; their purpose of a degree is for children to be financially independent.

The following information reflect research question 2: What are the cultural aspects that help students decide what their major should be?

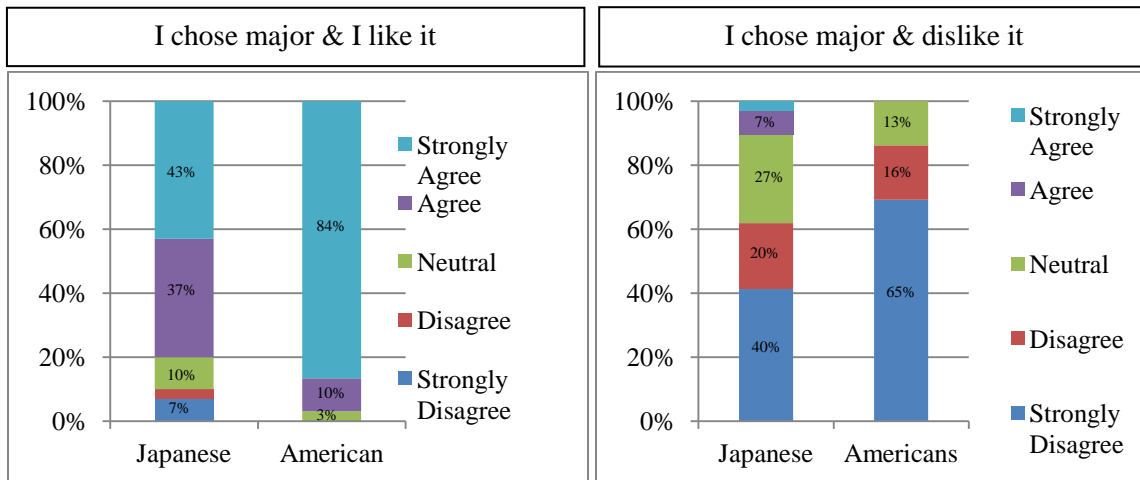
In Graph 5.1-5.4, explains the question: did your parents choose your major or at least motivate you to choose your major?

Graph 5.1: Did your parents choose your major or at least motivate you to choose your major?



American and Japanese parents are not an influence to students choosing their majors.

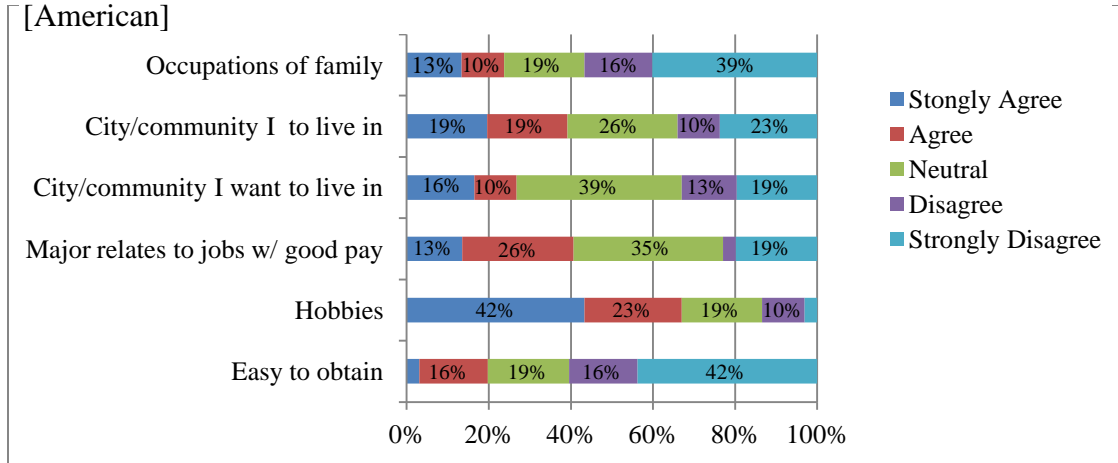
Graph 5.2& 5.3: Did your parents choose your major or at least motivate you to choose your major?



This data reflects that American students independently choose their area of study.

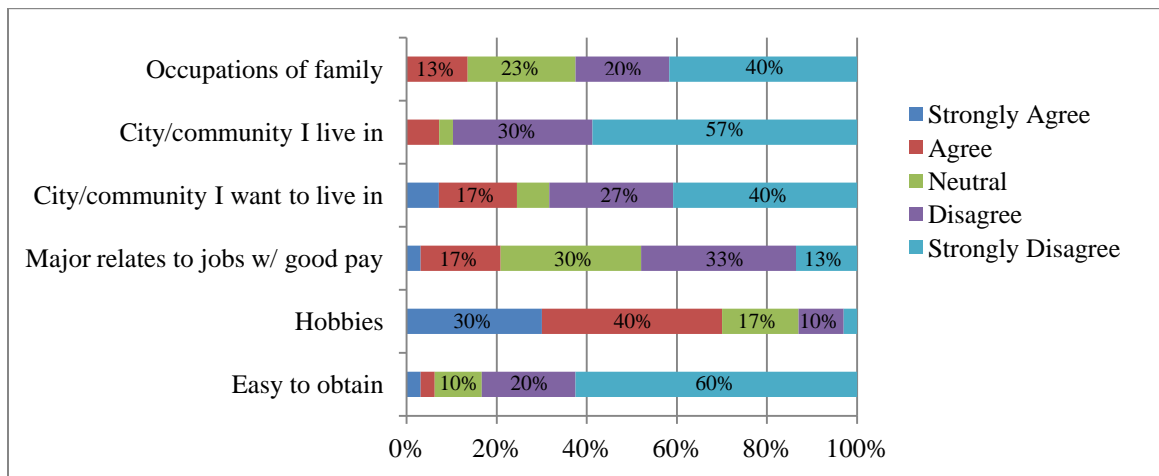
Graphs 6.1-6.2 are responses to the various characteristics that encourage students to choose their major.

Graph 6.1: What are the characteristics that encourage you to choose your major [American]



This data reflects for Americans that hobbies, high paying jobs, and where they live, impact their decision of choosing a major. Occupations of family are not an influence.

(Graph 6.2) What are the characteristics that encourage you to choose your major? [Japanese]



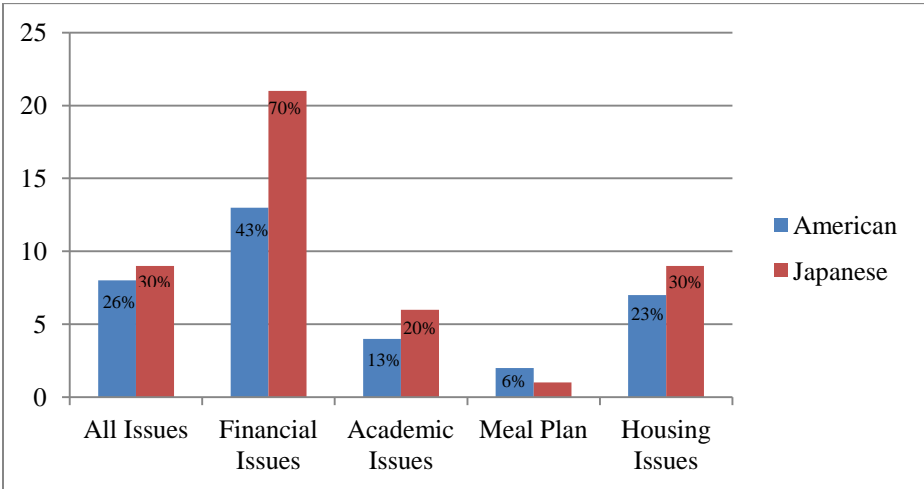
For Japanese students, hobbies impact their decision of choosing a major. High paying jobs and where students live and want to live is not priority.

Summary of Research question 2: Regarding children choosing their major, parents are not an influence. American students choose their major based on their interests and future high-paying jobs. Career fields influences the choice of major for Japanese students.

The following questions reflect Research Question 3: How do American and Japanese parents work with students to complete their degrees?

Graph 7 shows if students consult with their parents if and when there are stressed during their college education.

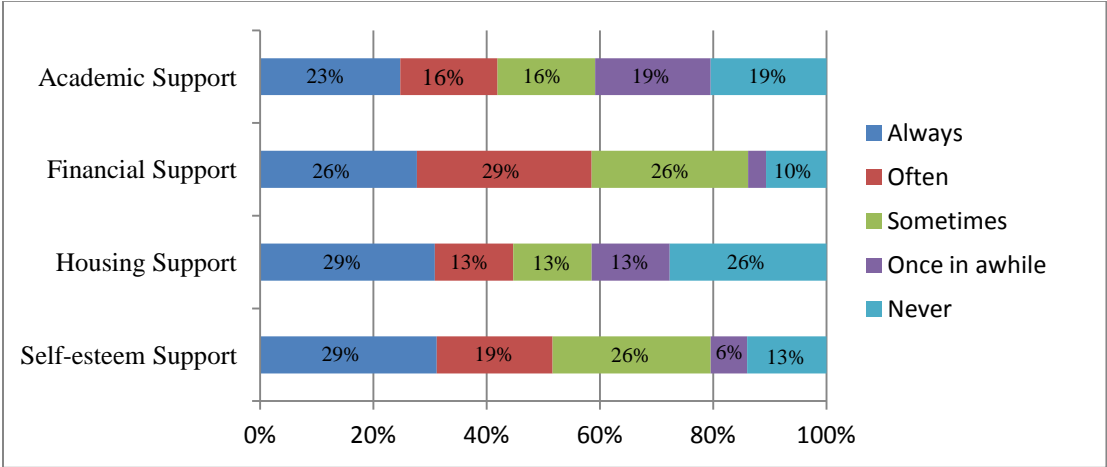
Graph 7: Support



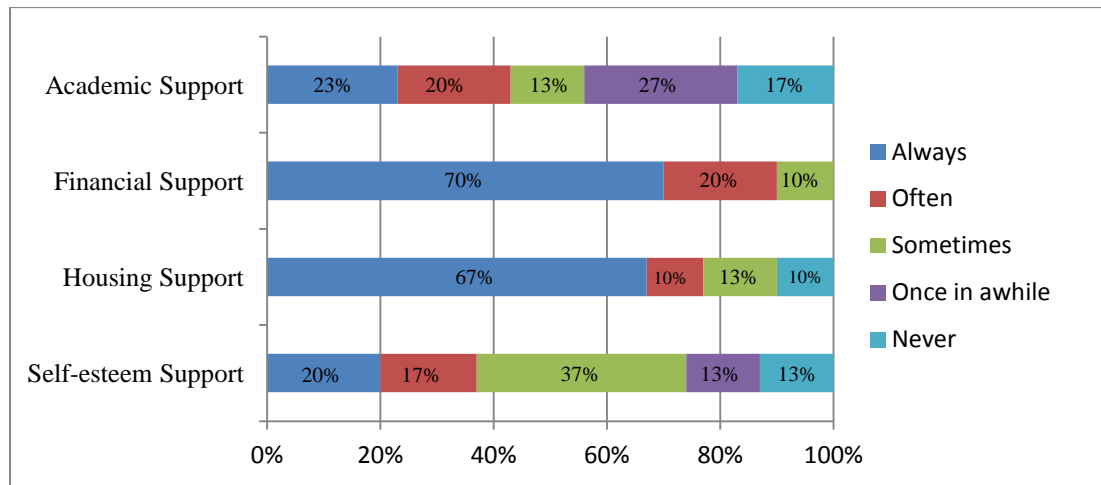
Of all issues, American students are more financially independent. Japanese students attempt to reach out to their parents more often than American students.

Graph 8.1-8.2 reflects which following support do university students attain from their parents through their education.

(Graph 8.1) Do you get the following support often from your parents? (American)



Graph 8.2: Do you get the following support often from your parents? (Japanese)



From the data in graph 8.1 and 8.2, American parents support their children in every category. Japanese parents give their children only financial and housing support. There were many first generation American and Japanese students. Therefore the low rating for academic support was not surprising. The dramatic difference for survey question three, from this chart, was the self-esteem support. This support rated high for American students but, neutral to no support for Japanese students. This shows that American parents support and motivate their children in multiple ways. Japanese parents provide what's necessary but aren't emotionally involved with their children through their collegiate education.

Summary of Research Question 3: American parents give housing, financial, self-esteem, and academic support to their children. American parents strictly monitor children's performance. Japanese parents provide mostly financial and housing support for children however; they don't monitor their performance throughout collegiate journey.

5. Conclusion

Japanese and American parents both expect their children to get a college degree but the way they support their children is different. The idea parents have with their children of college degrees are deeply affected by the difference in the Japanese and American school system, the structure of society, and society's expectations. The premise for Japanese students is that they will definitely graduate college once enrolled, therefore the students don't have anxiety but vice versa in the United States

6. Discussion of Results

Japanese parents highly expect their children to establish a great career. American parents expect children to be more financially stable. American parents are very involved in student's collegiate education and Japanese parents provide necessities. Japanese

parents have higher expectations than American parents but, American parents are more supporting and accepting.

7. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the thirty Japanese and the thirty American students I have come into contact with. Therefore, the information and results are not credible on a national and world wide level.

8. Future Study

Furthering my study, I would like to go more in depth of the limitations of Graduate study and how to expand its attention. Also, experimenting results of college graduate students in the workforce is a topic worth researching. Next, I would like to view the results of the students who drop out of college in America and Japan.

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