

*MBS 98-10*

Chinese and Americans Agree on What's Fair, but disagree on What's Best in Societal Decisions Affecting Health and Safety Risks

Wen-Qiang Bian, L. Robin Keller

---

Through surveys of students and junior professionals and interviews with business and government executives, we studied Chinese choices and fairness perceptions in the risky health-and-safety decisions. The survey responses were compared with American responses from an earlier study by Keller and Sarin. The survey results show that the American and Chinese respondents had similar fairness perceptions, but the Chinese did not make decisions that were consistent with their fairness perceptions while the Americans did. We found that the middle-aged Chinese professionals tended to make choices that were more different from the Americans than were the choices of the young Chinese management students. It is likely that these discrepancies were caused by cultural differences, with the younger Chinese tending to face a stronger Western influence. The insights from the survey results were enriched by interviews, which revealed fairness perceptions of Chinese business and government executives. A framework to interpret cultural influences on decision making was also proposed.