

# **Considering the Validity of Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Self-Report Measures**

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What Validity Criteria Exist for  
Comparisons of Cultures with  
Self-Report Measures?





# Reference-Group Effect

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- People come to understand themselves by comparing themselves to similar others. In different cultures, the comparison others are different, resulting in divergent standards.

**Please indicate your agreement  
with this item.**

	<b>Strongly</b>				<b>Strongly</b>
	<b>D</b>				<b>Agree</b>
<b>I am short.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

**Please indicate your agreement  
with this item.**

	<b>Strongly D isagree</b>			<b>Strongly A g ree</b>	
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>I am short.</b>					

<b>I am independent.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
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# Cultural Variation in Individualism/Collectivism

Review of all published studies  
(on PsycInfo) that compared  
scales measuring individualism  
and collectivism between North  
American and East Asian samples.

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Found 76 Relevant Comparisons

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Means are in the  
direction of the  
“Dominant View”

42

Means are in the  
opposite direction

34

Sign test:  $z=.80$ , ns

Asked 14 “Cultural Experts” to evaluate whether each item on Singelis’s (1994) Independence/Interdependence Scale was more characteristic of Japanese or North Americans.

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Found that **ALL** interdependent items were viewed as more characteristic of Japanese and **ALL** independent items were viewed as more characteristic of North Americans.

- There is a lack of convergent validity between this self-report data and the expert's predictions.

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- Furthermore, the self-report data is at odds with much other psychological research using diverse measures (e.g., Bond & Smith, 1994; Cousins, 1991; Ji, Zhang, & Nisbett, 2004; Kim & Markus, 1999; Suh, 2002).

# Study 1

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Asked Japanese and Canadians to complete Singelis's measure of independence/interdependence.

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We manipulated the reference-group by explicitly asking participants how they viewed themselves in comparison to specific others.

Importantly, our samples all had a great deal of familiarity with the two cultures.

# Manipulating Reference-Groups

Sample Item

## Standard Format

“I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.”

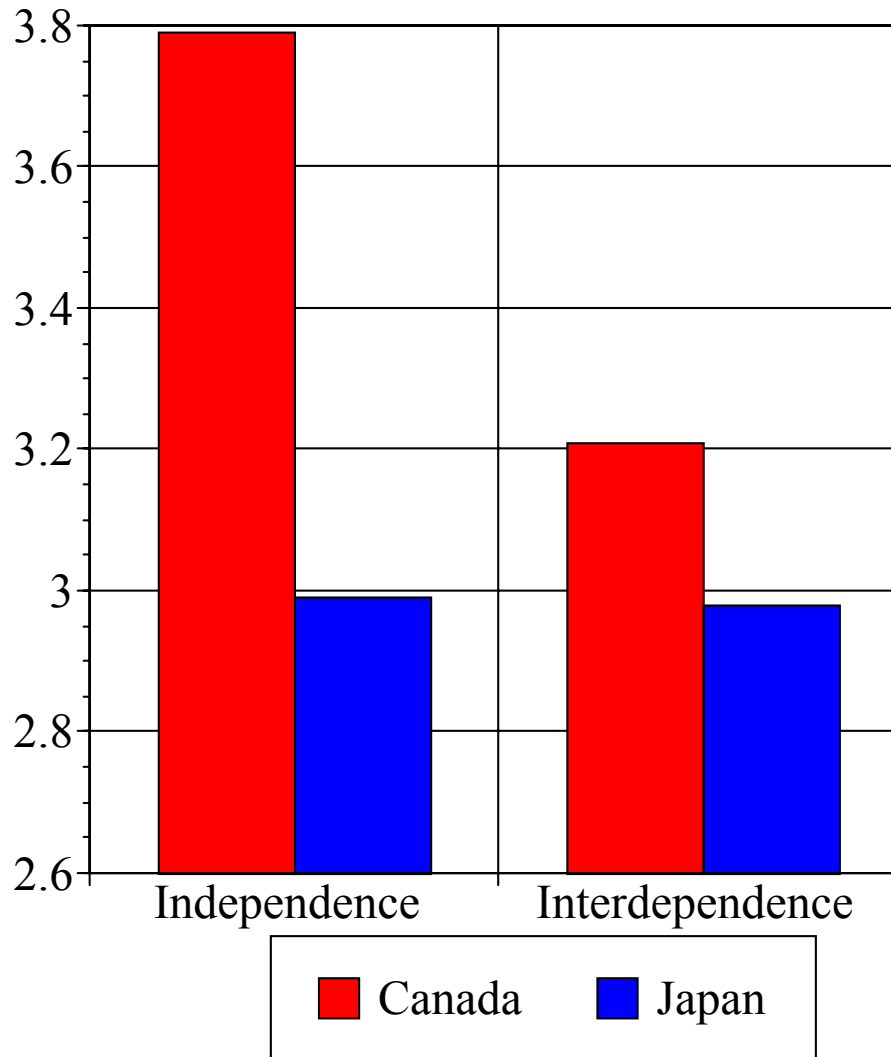
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## Cross-Cultural Referent Format

(for Canadians)

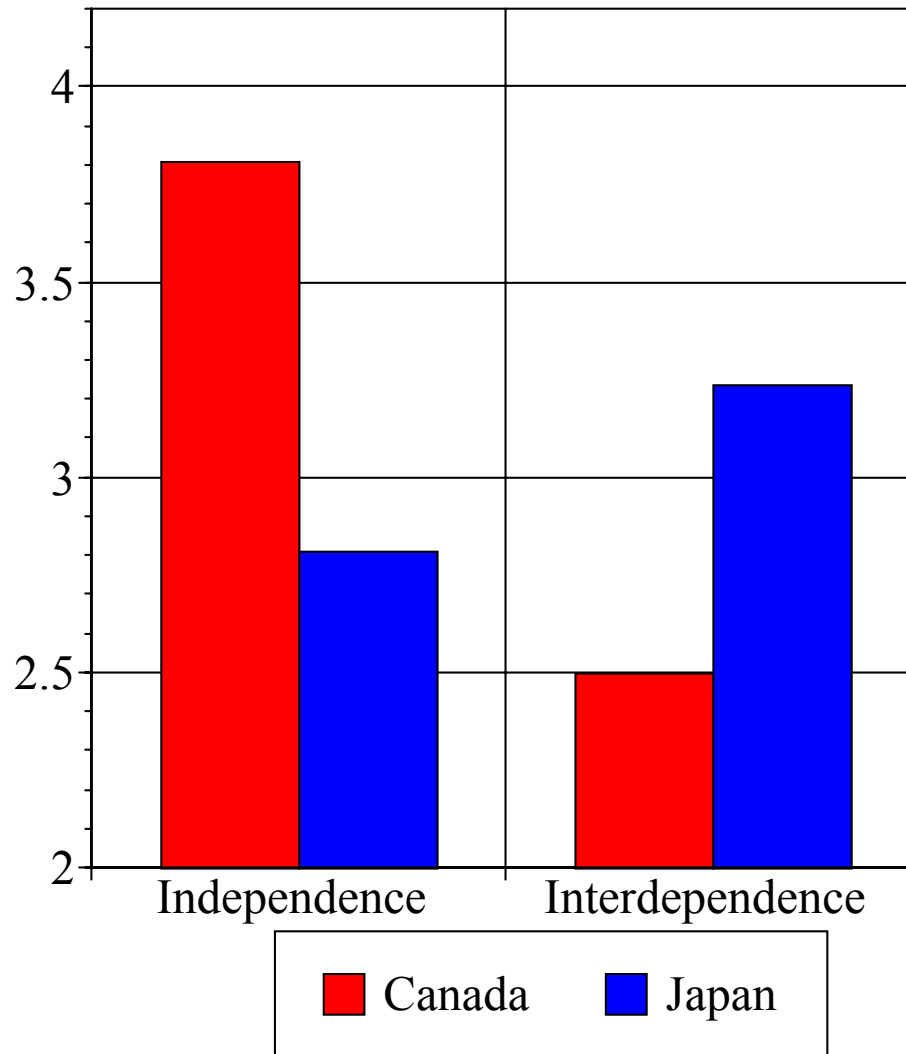
“Compared to most Japanese I know, I think I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.”

## Standard Item Comparison



Culture by Scale Interaction  
 $F(1, 85) = 2.90, p < .09.$

# Cross-Cultural Reference Groups Comparison



Culture by Scale Interaction  
 $F(1, 85) = 38.72, p < .0001.$

## 16 Items

Number of Items  
Consistent with the  
“Dominant View”

5

Number of Items  
Opposite of  
“Dominant View”

4

Number of Items  
Showing No  
Difference

7

16 Items		
Number of Items Consistent with the “Dominant View”	Number of Items Opposite of “Dominant View”	Number of Items Showing No Difference
5	4	7

## Cross-Cultural Reference Group Format 16 Items

Number of Items Consistent with the “Dominant View”	Number of Items Opposite of “Dominant View”	Number of Items Showing No Difference
13	0	3

# Study 2

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Contrasted Japanese and Canadians on Singelis's scale by focusing on naturally occurring reference groups.

## **Samples Used in Study**

**Canadians**

European-  
Canadians

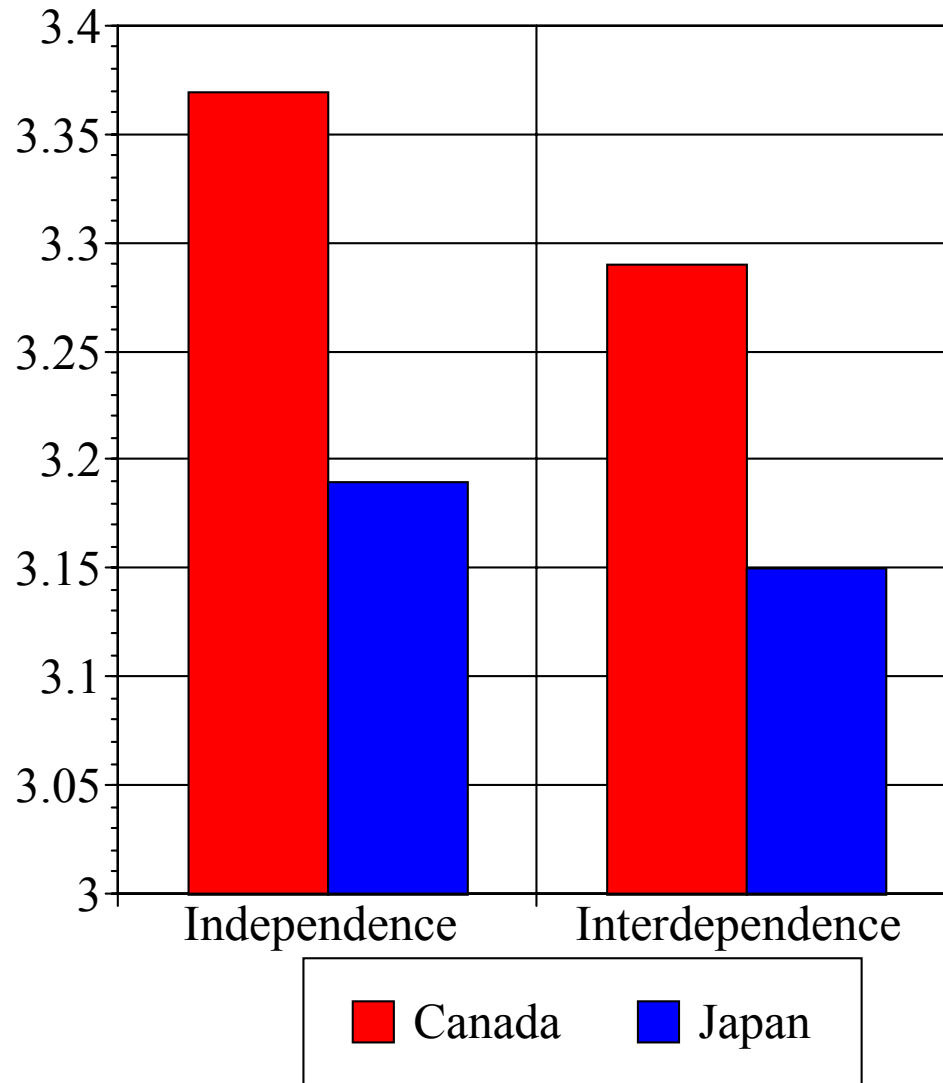
Asian-  
Canadians

**Japanese**

Returnee  
Japanese

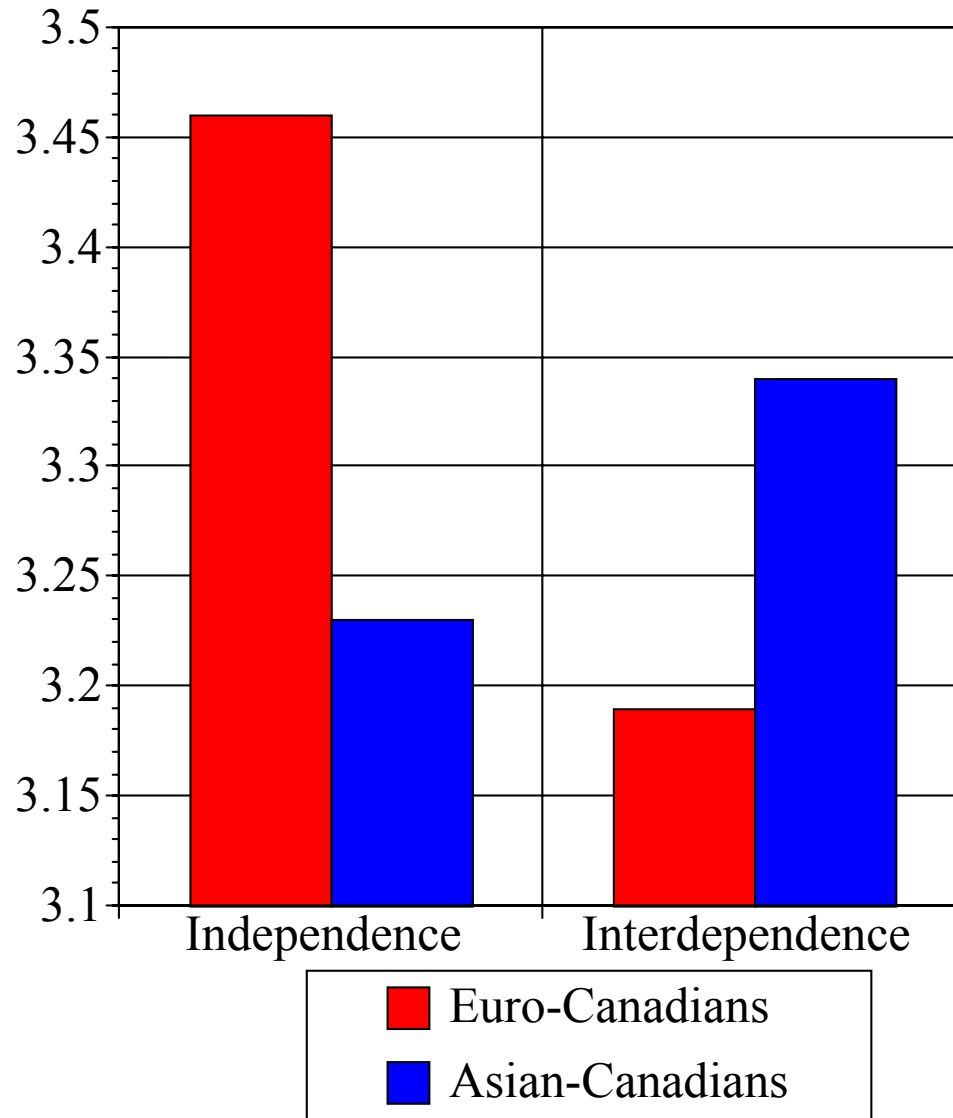
“Japan-Bound”  
Japanese

# Standard Item Comparison



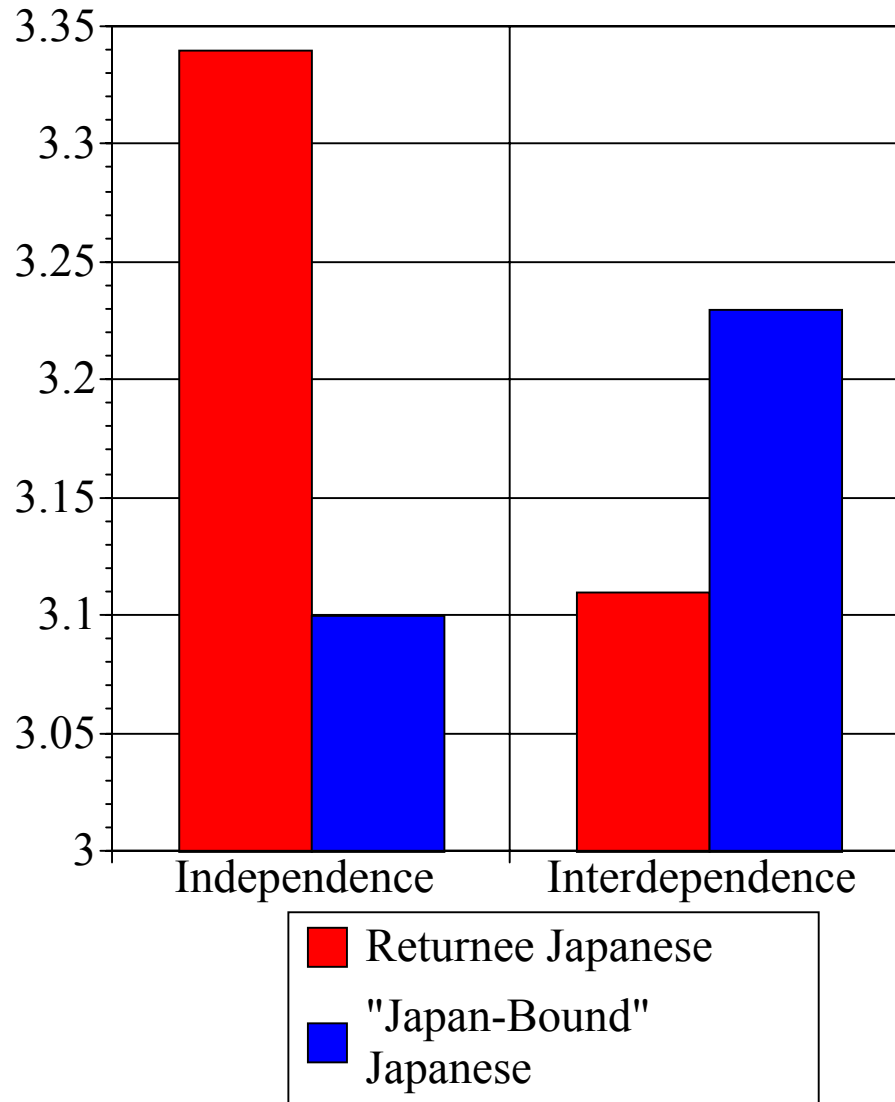
Culture by Scale Interaction  
 $F(1, 1690) < 1, \underline{ns.}$

# Canadian Samples



Culture by Scale Interaction  
 $F(1, 1144) = 53.81, p < .0001.$

# Japanese Samples



Culture by Scale Interaction  
 $F(1, 540) = 20.86, p < .0001.$

Number of Items  
Consistent with the  
“Dominant View”

7

16 Items

Number of Items  
Opposite of  
“Dominant View”

4

Number of Items  
Showing No  
Difference

5

16 Items		
Number of Items Consistent with the "Dominant View"	Number of Items Opposite of "Dominant View"	Number of Items Showing No Difference
7	4	5

"Western" vs. "Eastern" Reference Group  
16 Items

Number of Items Consistent with the "Dominant View"	Number of Items Opposite of "Dominant View"	Number of Items Showing No Difference
13	1	2

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- Cross-cultural research on Protestant Work Ethic.
- Cross-cultural comparisons of incremental and entity theories of self.
- Comparisons of health across people of different ages.
- Comparisons across the sexes on stereotyped characteristics.

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- Utilize culture level measures (e.g., Vandello & Cohen, 1999).
- Compare conditions within cultures, in particular, by benefiting from the control of the experimental method (e.g., Lee et al., 2000; Sanchez-Burks et al., 2000).

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# What can we do?

- Contrast how different cultural groups respond to culturally consistent/inconsistent messages (e.g., Heine et al., 2001).
- Employ behavioral or physiological dependent measures (e.g., Cohen et al., 1996; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999).
- Most importantly, use multiple methods and look for convergence.

Thank you.

Acknowledgments

Darrin Lehman

Kaiping Peng

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