

Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Self-Construal, Cognition, and Communication

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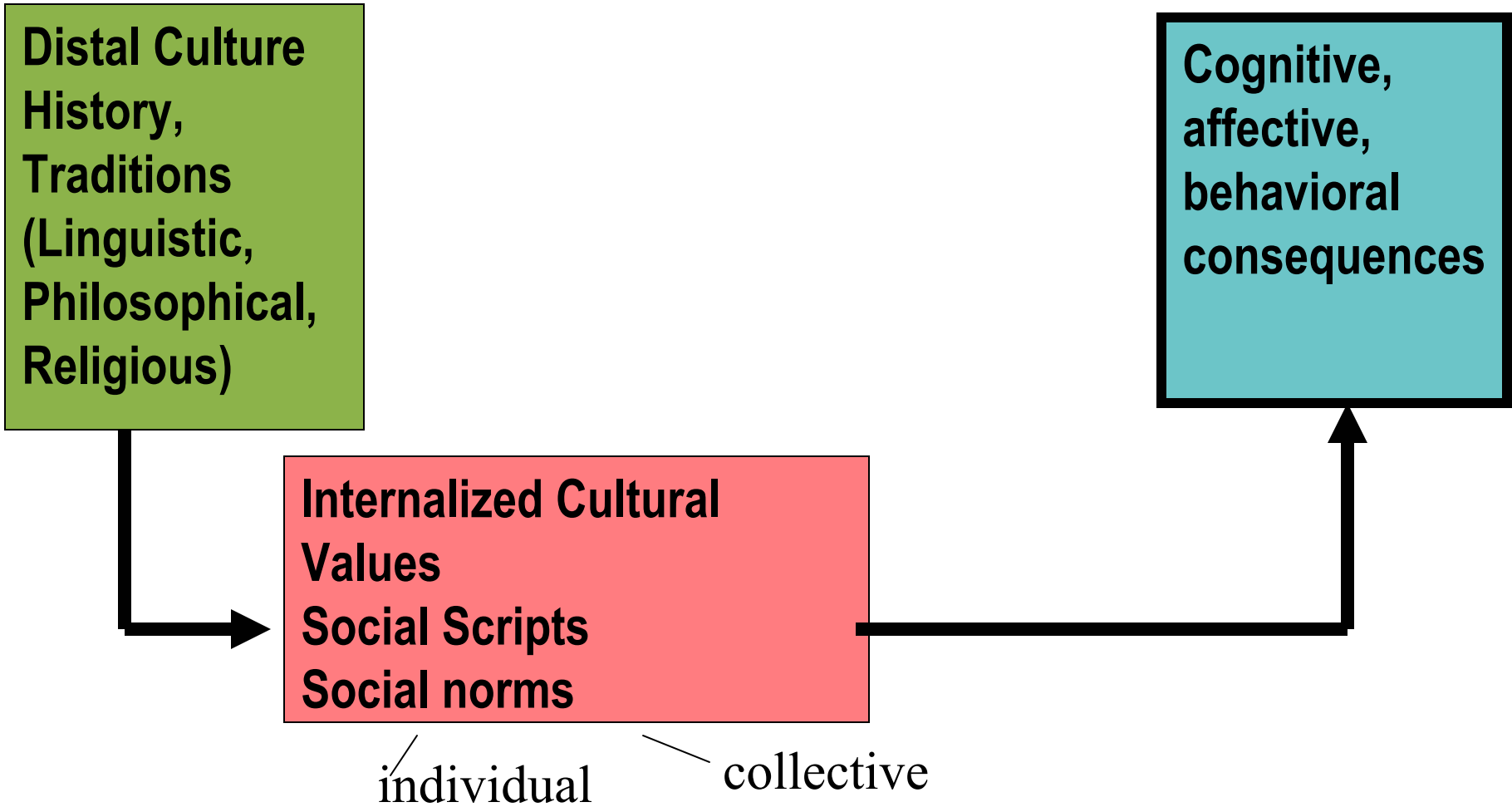
**Distal Culture
History, Traditions
(Linguistic, Philosophical,
Religious)**



**Cognitive,
affective,
behavioral
consequences**

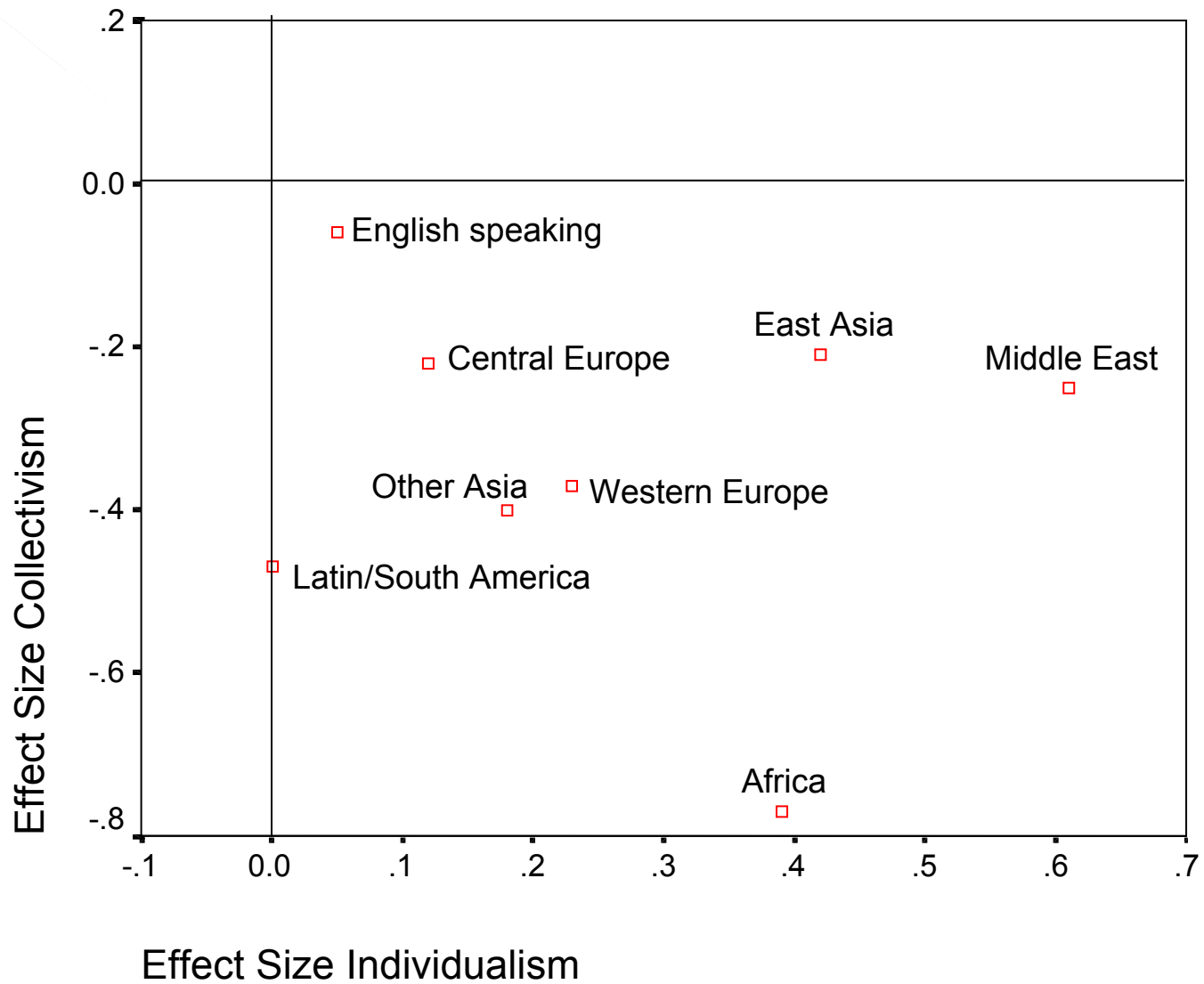
A Truism

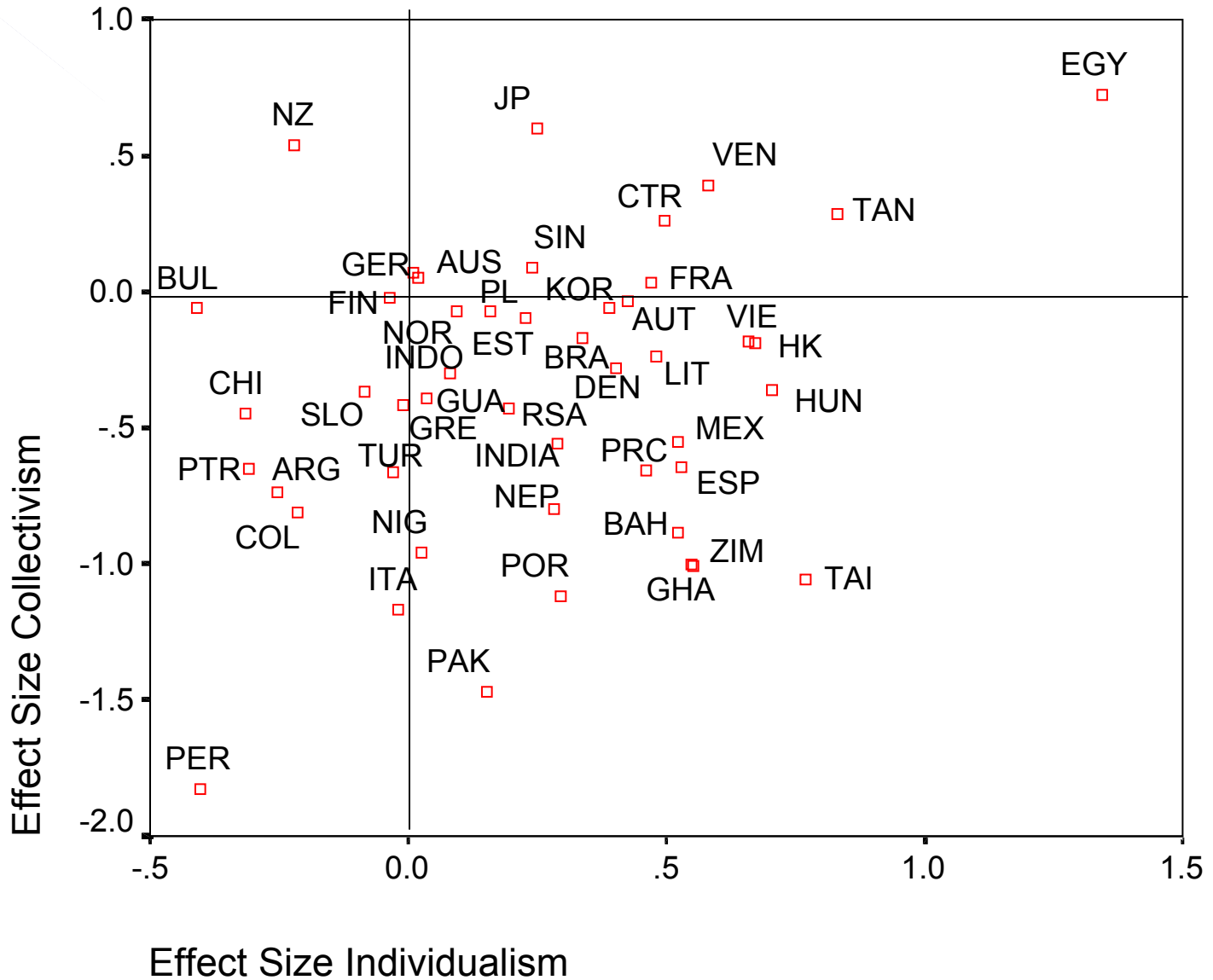
- Western cultures
 - emphasize an *independent* perspective on the self
 - see the self as distinct from others
- Other cultures
 - emphasize an *interdependent* perspective on the self
 - see the self as interconnected with others
- This is more often asserted than tested.



A Meta-Analysis

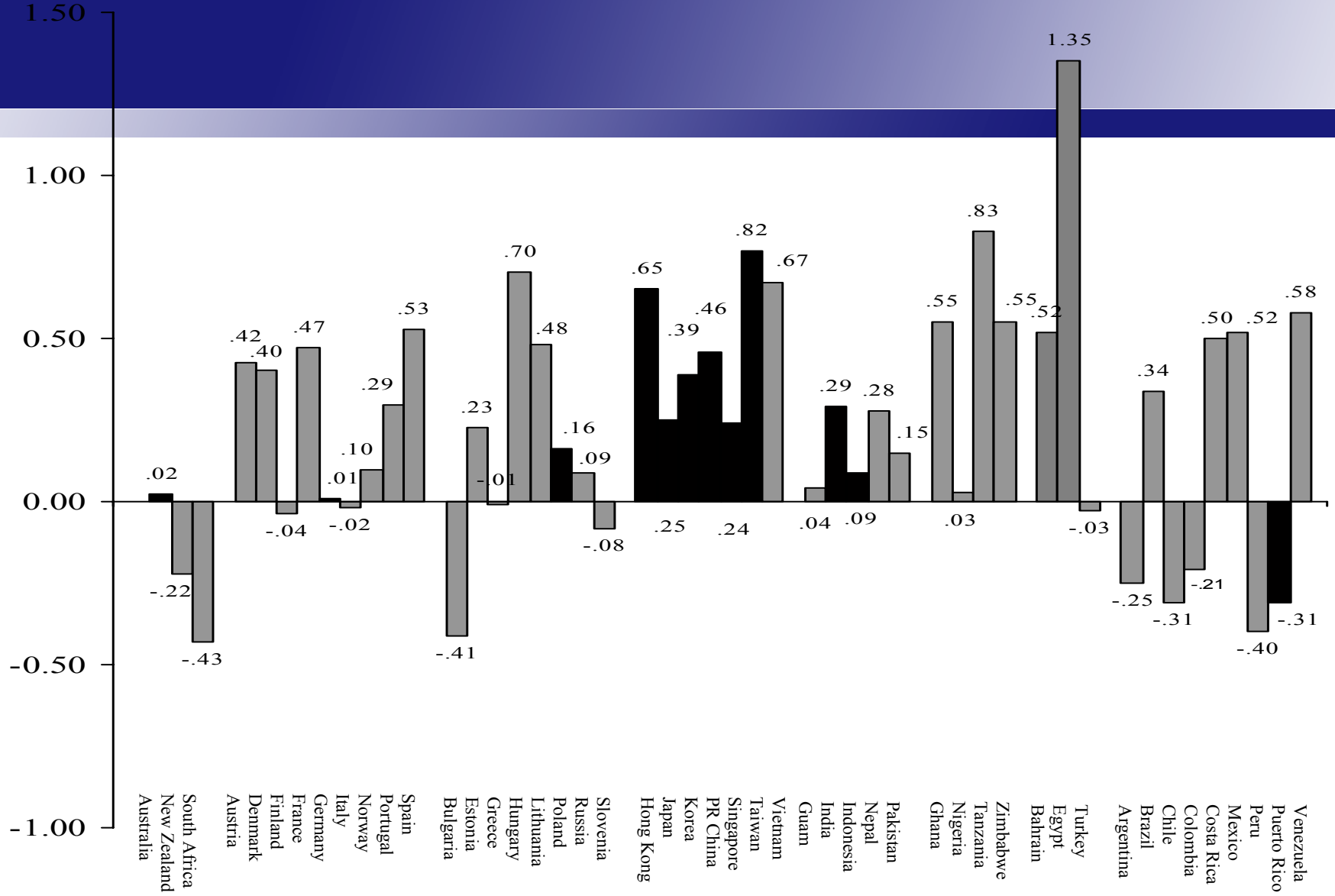
- Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, (2002). Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Evaluation of Theoretical Assumptions and Meta-Analyses. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 3-73.
- Included
 - 83 different studies that assessed IND and COL
 - 170 studies that addressed psychological implications of IND and COL





Effect size d

Individualism



English-speaking

Western Europe

Central Europe

East Asia

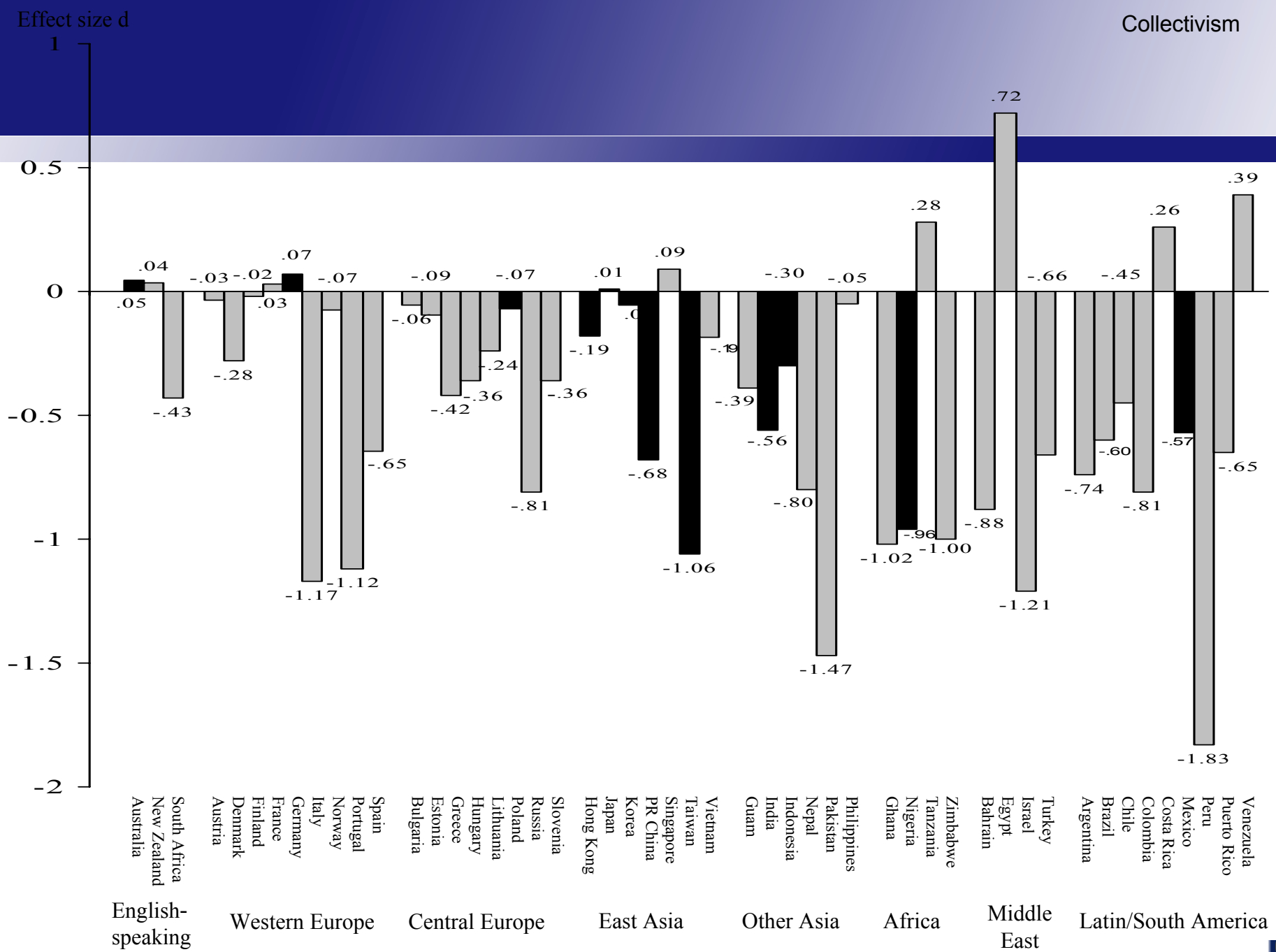
Other Asia

Middle East Africa

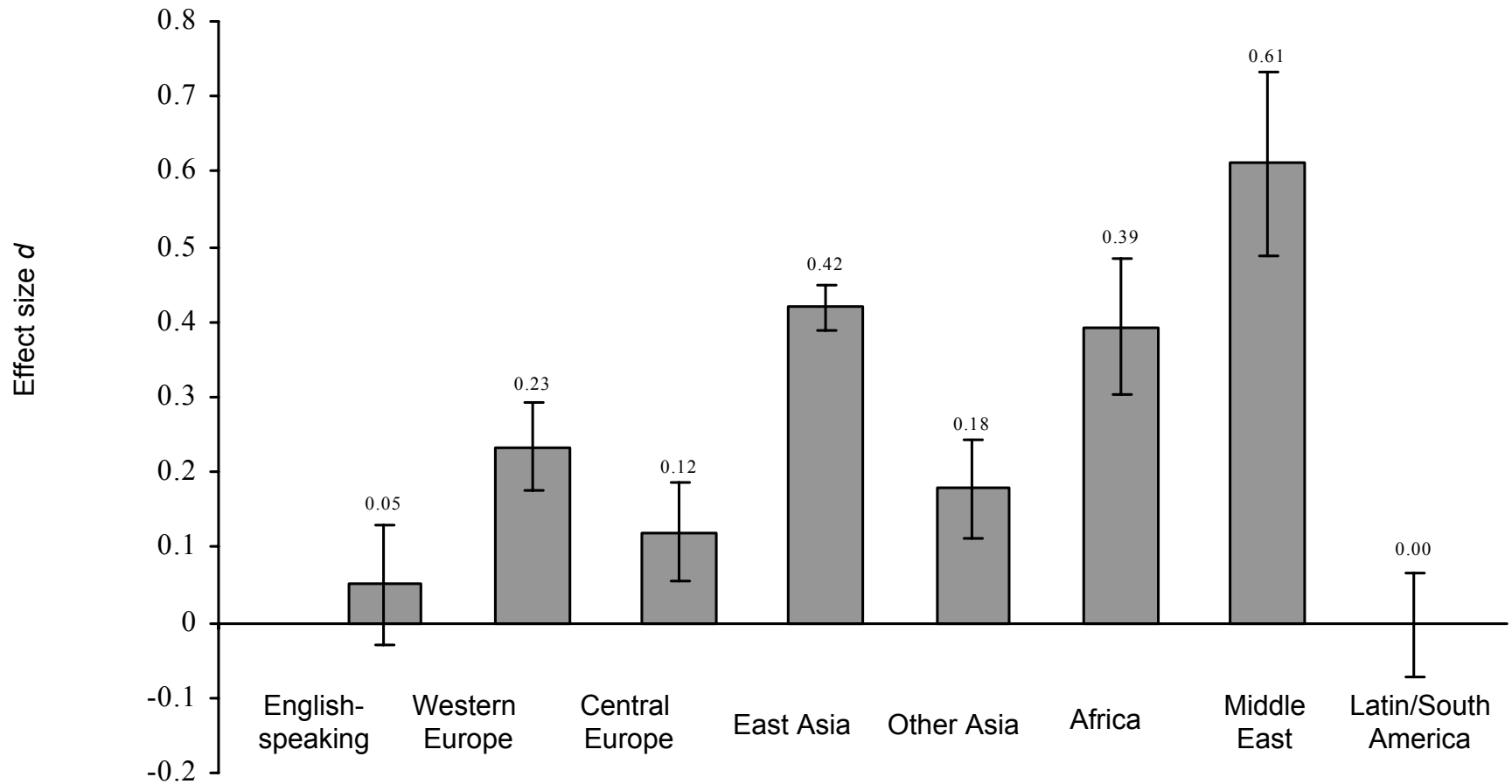
Latin/South America



Collectivism

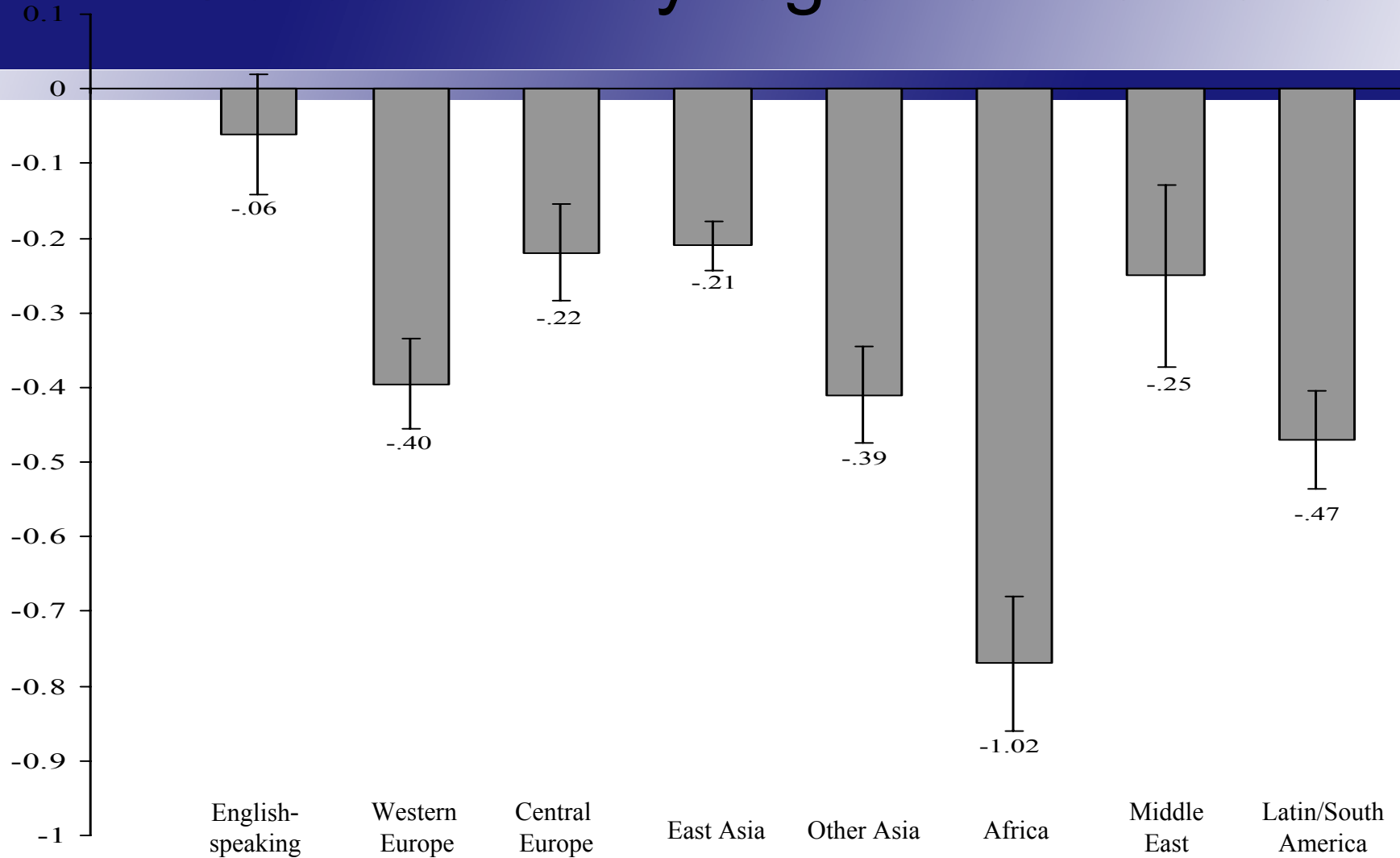


INDIVIDUALISM BY REGION



Effect size d

Collectivism by region of the world



Note: Israel was not included in this analysis.



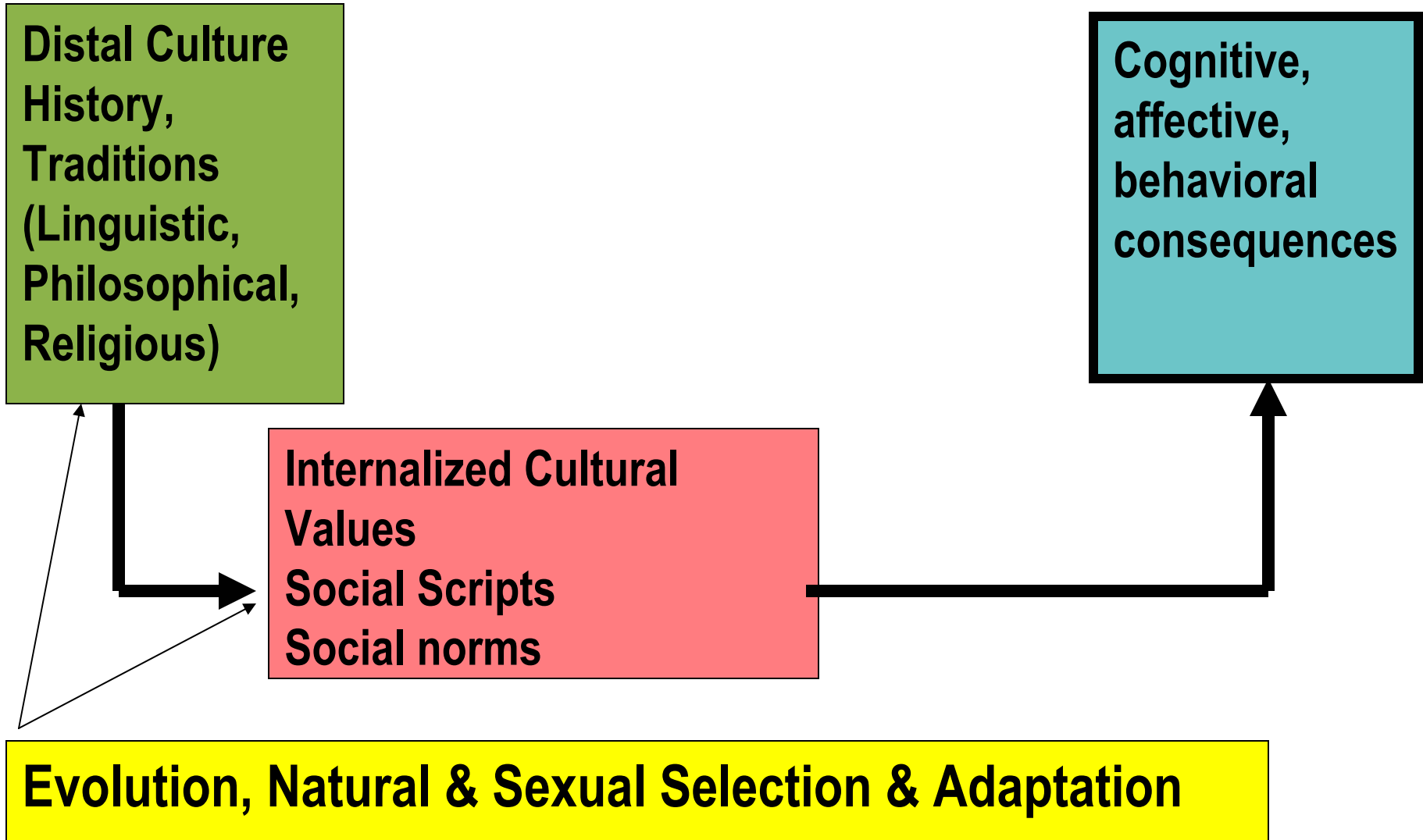
Country Differences

- European Americans are:
 - More individualistic than Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Indians
 - Effect sizes for Japan, Korea, India are small, large only for Chinese heritage groups
 - More collectivist than Chinese, Indians
 - *Not* less collectivistic than Japanese or Koreans
- Chinese fit the truism:
 - They are both less individualistic and more collectivistic than European Americans and most Europeans.
 - Effect sizes moderate to large, stable across scale content
 - For Japanese and Koreans, effects are small and not stable across scale content.
- Understudied areas – Middle East, Africa, Latin America may hold more promise for showing large differences

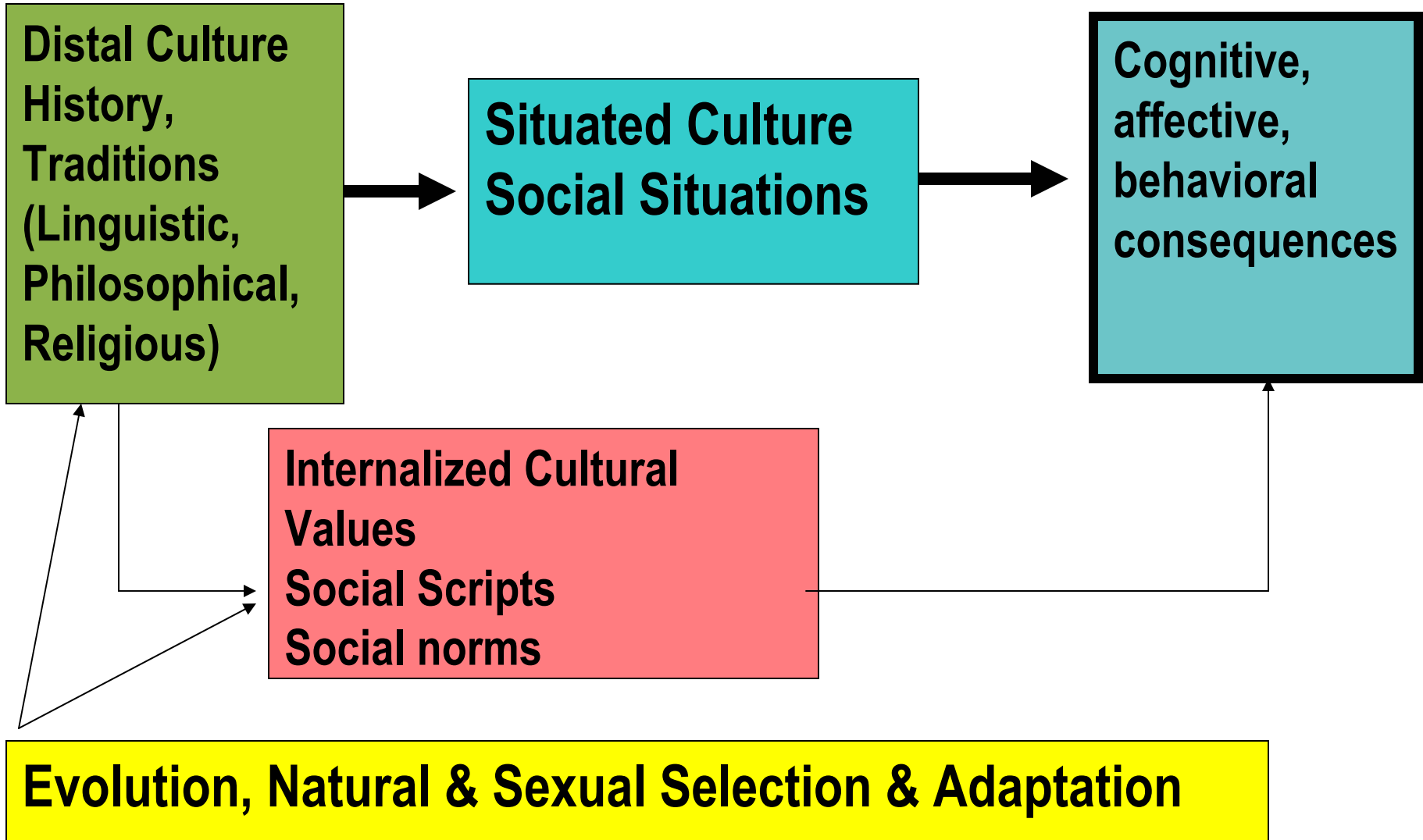
Consequences of IND/COL

- Review identifies reliable cross-national differences with regard to
 - Self-concept,
 - Well-being,
 - Relationality (ways of engaging with others)
 - Cognitive style
- But can we safely attribute these differences to differences in IND/COL?

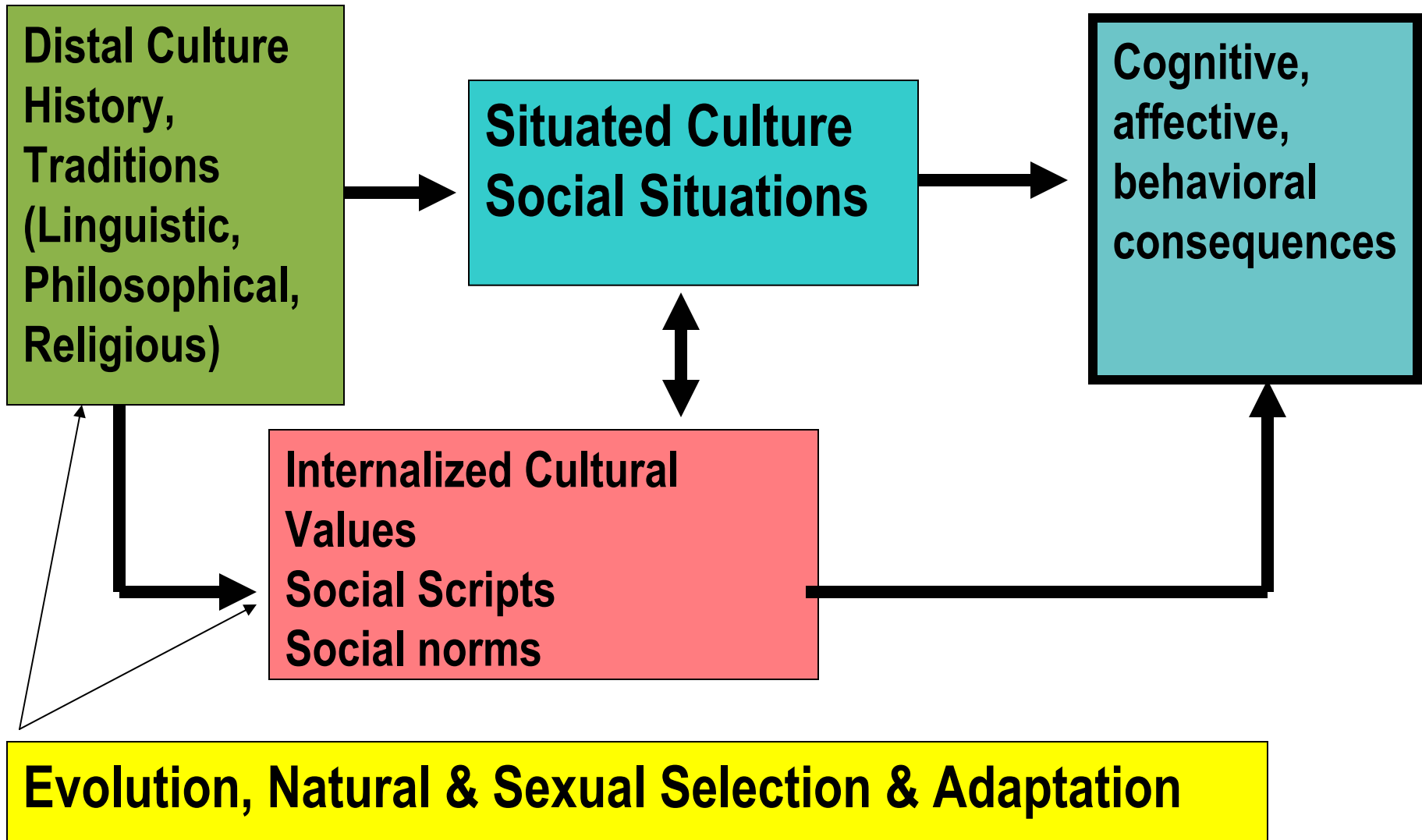
Individual and Collective



Individual and collective



Individual and Collective



Individual and Collective

**Situated Culture
Social Situations**

**Distal Culture
History,
Traditions
(Linguistic,
Philosophical,
Religious)**

**Cognitive,
affective,
behavioral
consequences**

**Subjective
construal of the
situation**

**Internalized Cultural
Values
Social Scripts
Social norms**

Evolution, Natural & Sexual Selection & Adaptation

Isolating IND/COL

- To test the assumed causal role of IND/COL we can use priming procedures that make one or the other social orientation temporarily available.
- Assumes that *all* people possess the relevant knowledge and routines
 - After all, all societies that have no way of eliciting a sense of connection, obligation, and loyalty will not last long, and all individuals sometimes "doing your own thing."
- Cultures differ primarily in whether one set is chronically more accessible than the other.

Preview

- Report on priming experiments that temporarily induce independent vs. interdependent self-construals
 - Perception
 - Memory
 - Cognition & communication
- Highlight methodological implications
- Implications for the conceptualization of cultural differences

Basic Perceptual Processes

Separating target and context

Culture & Perception

- Our systematic review suggests collectivism is related to
 - incorporating the social into self- descriptions
 - using context to describe the self
 - using contextual information in making decisions, particularly if reminded of context
- Does how we think about ourselves and our social world influence perception more generally?

Priming Task

- Independence Prime

I go to the city often. My anticipation fills me as I see the skyscrapers come into view. I allow myself to explore every corner, never letting an attraction escape me....

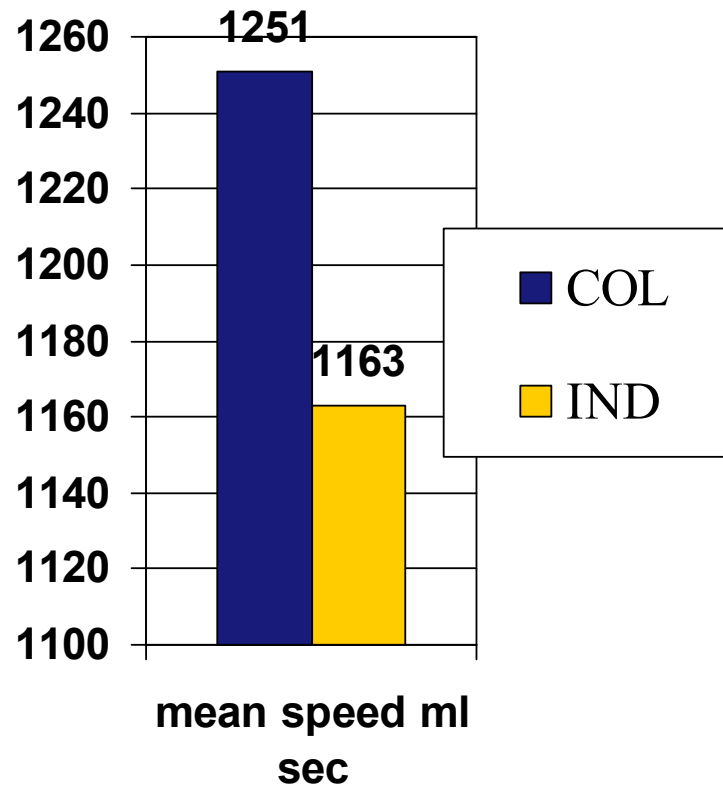
- Interdependence Prime

We go to the city often. Our anticipation fills us as we see the skyscrapers come into view. We allow ourselves to explore every corner, never letting an attraction escape us...

Stroop Task

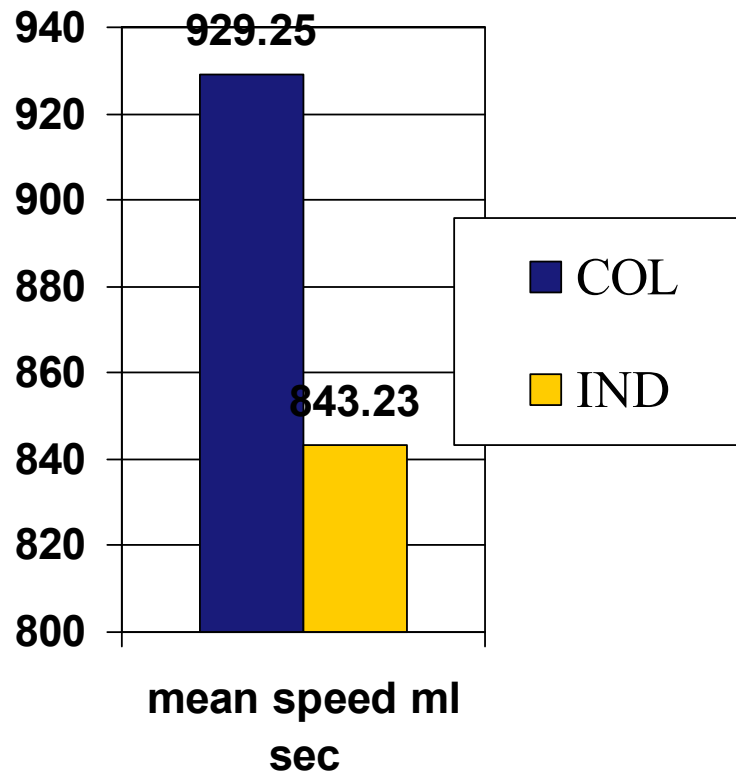
- Does the higher attention to context under COL interfere with the separation of target and context features?
- Stroop task
 - red red
 - requires separating or pulling apart word from color,
 - should be impeded by interdependence prime.

Stroop Task



- U.S. students
- Primed
 - COL (“we”) vs. IND (“I”)
- DV
 - color Stroop task (red red)
- Oyserman, Sorensen, Cha, Schwarz (2004)

Stroop Task



- Korean female students
- Primed
 - COL (“we”) vs. IND (“I”)
- DV
 - color Stroop task (red red)
- Oyserman, Sorensen, Cha, Schwarz (2004)

What Do You See?

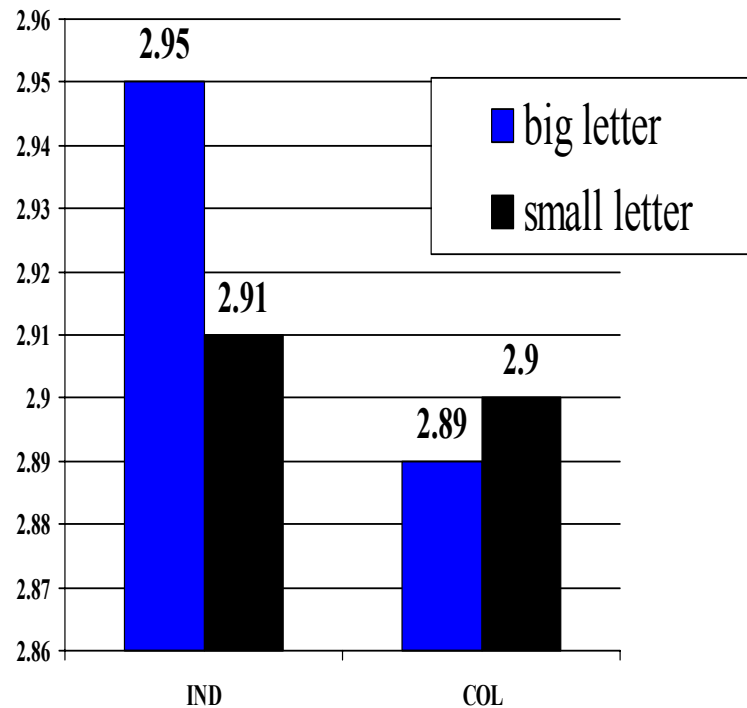
```
F           F
F           F
F           F
FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF
F           F
F           F
F           F
```

```
1           2
H           F
```

“Relational” vs. “Pop-Out” Processing

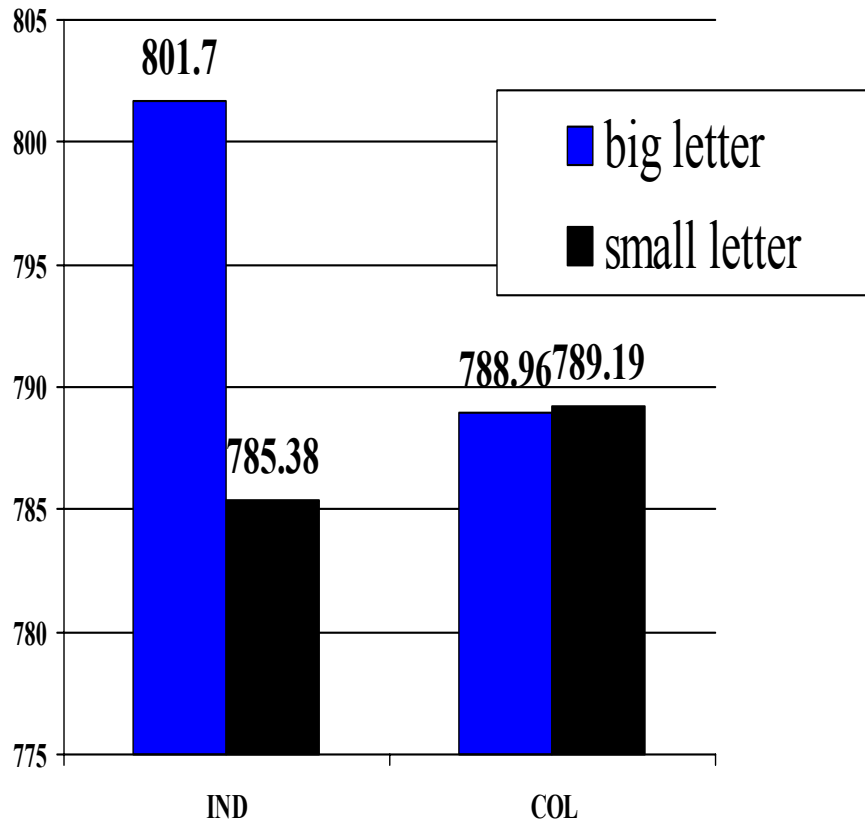
- Picture shows a large H, made up of small F's.
- Participants asked to find either
 - the large letter (relational processing)
 - the little letter (pop-out processing)
- Hypotheses
 - relational processing faster under COL
 - Pop-out processing faster under IND
 - Both *within* subjects

“Relational” vs. “Pop-Out” Processing



- U.S. students
 - N = 30
- Primed
 - COL (“we”) vs. IND (“I”)
- Task
 - Identify big vs. small letter
- DV
 - Time (log ml sec)
- Kuhnen & Oyserman, 2002

“Relational” vs. “Pop-Out” Processing



- Korean students
 - N = 31, between subjects
- Primed
 - COL (“we”) vs. IND (“I”)
- Task
 - Identify big letter (small letter)
- DV
 - Time ml sec
- Cha, Oyserman, Schwarz, 2004

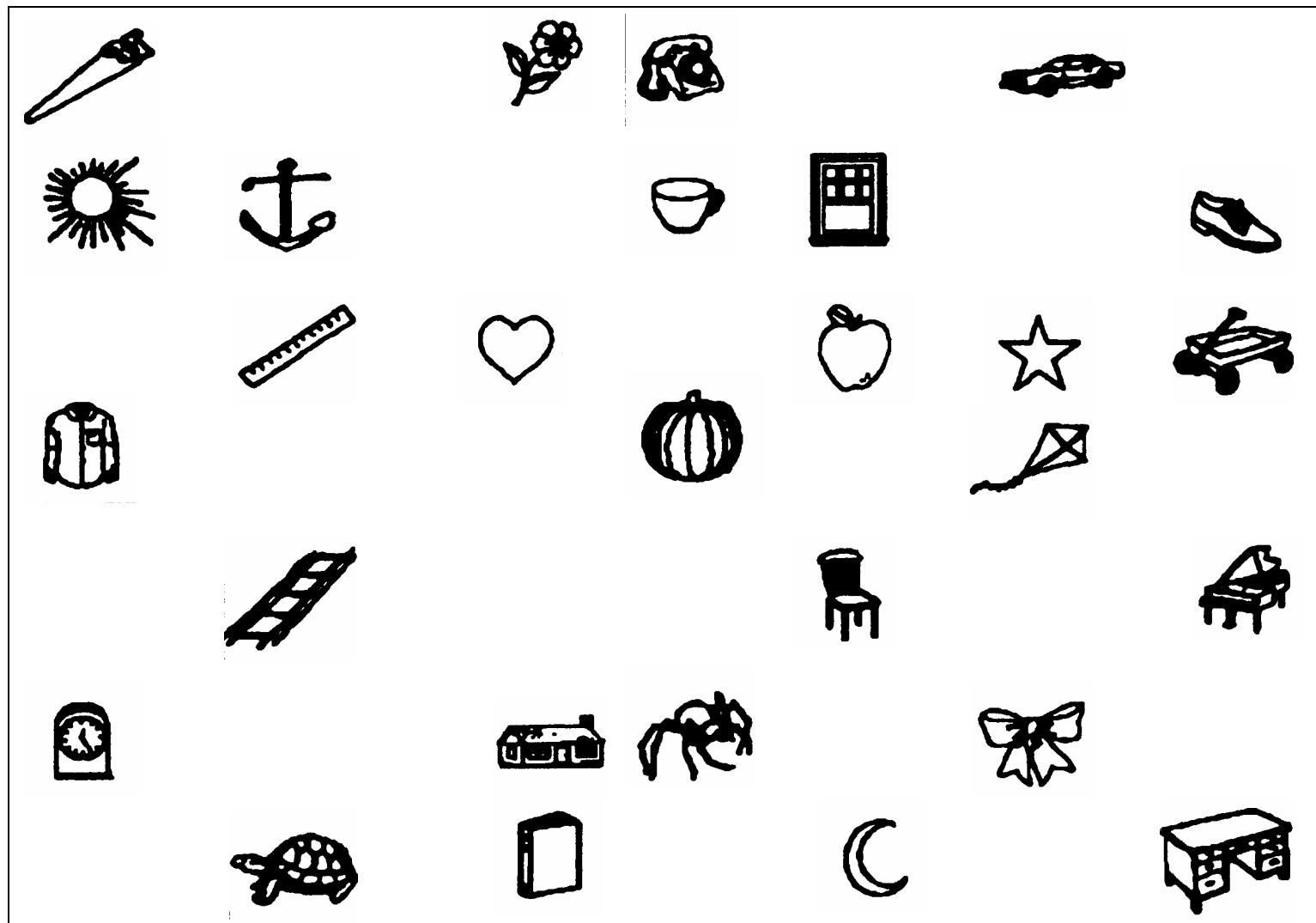
Memory

Memory for objects and context

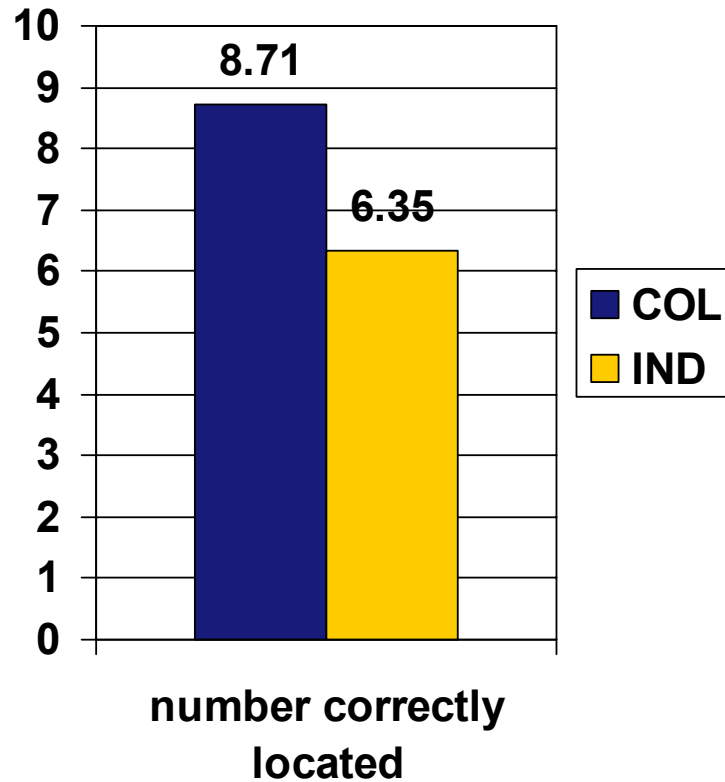
Memory for Objects and Context

- Does COL facilitate memory for the context in which objects are presented?
- If interdependent ss spontaneously process stimuli as contextually situated, they should perform better at a situated memory task than independent ss
- Material adapted from Chalfonte and Johnson (1996).

Memory Task

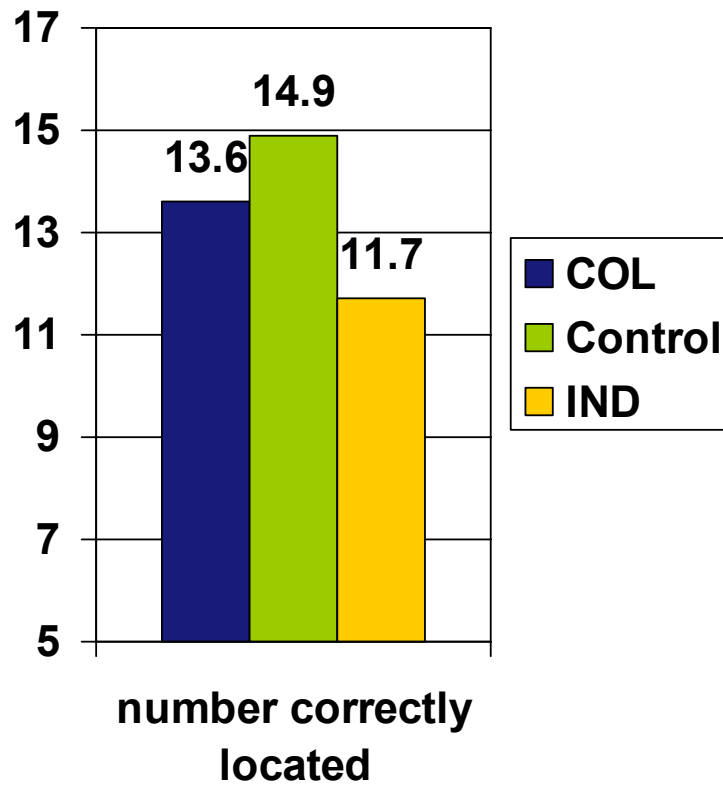


Memory for Objects & Context



- U.S. students
 - N = 34
- Primed
 - COL (“we”) vs. IND (“I”)
- Task
 - View display 90 seconds
 - Told is a memory task
 - Recall items and place on grid
- DV
 - Items correctly placed (+/- one space)
- Kuhnen & Oyserman, 2002

Korean Replication



- Korean students
 - N = 66
- Primed
 - COL (“we”) vs. IND (“I”); no-prime Control
- Task
 - View display 90 seconds
 - Told is a memory task
 - Recall items and place on grid
- DV
 - Items correctly placed (+/- one space)
- *Cha, 2004*

Cognition & Communication

- Interdependence cultures put a premium on
 - Connection, fitting in, attending to one's own obligations
 - and the relational obligations of others.
- Taking the common ground into account
- This requires monitoring of the social context.

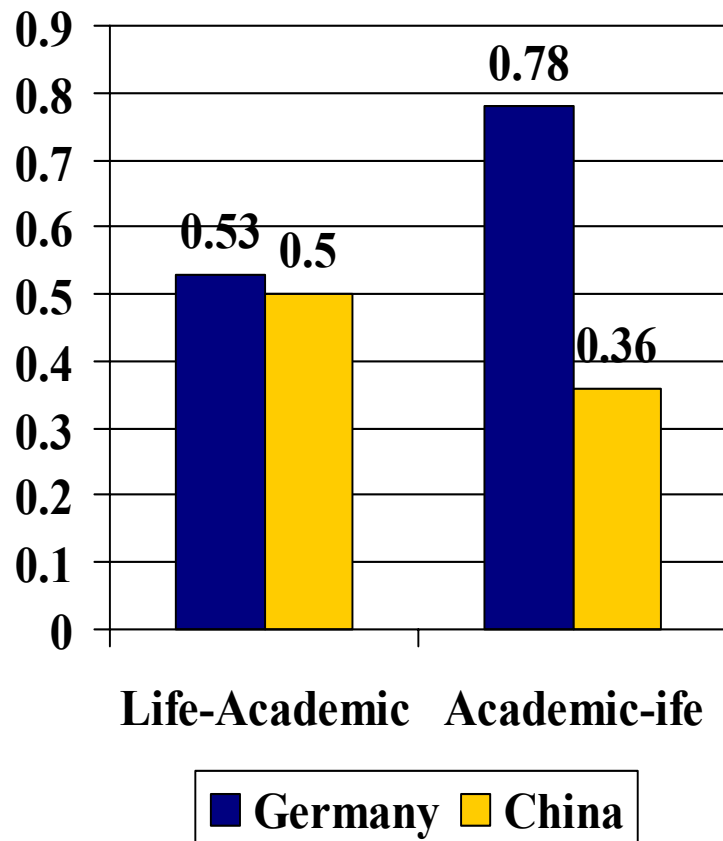
Culture and Conversational Conduct

- Interdependence calls for maintaining relationships.
- Reading “between the lines” is more highly valued than direct expression.
 - If the speaker needs to be very explicit, the listener has failed!

Culture and Conversational Conduct

- To “read between the lines” listeners need
 - to monitor the common ground
 - to take the context into account
- Does culture influence sensitivity to common ground, in the example of possibly redundant questions and effort to provide new information?

Life-Satisfaction and Academic Satisfaction



- Students; Heidelberg, Germany & Beijing, China
- Life - Academic vs. Academic - Life
- Redundancy:
 - L-A: not redundant
 - A-L: redundant
 - No lead-in
- *Haberstroh, Oyserman et al., JESP, 2002*

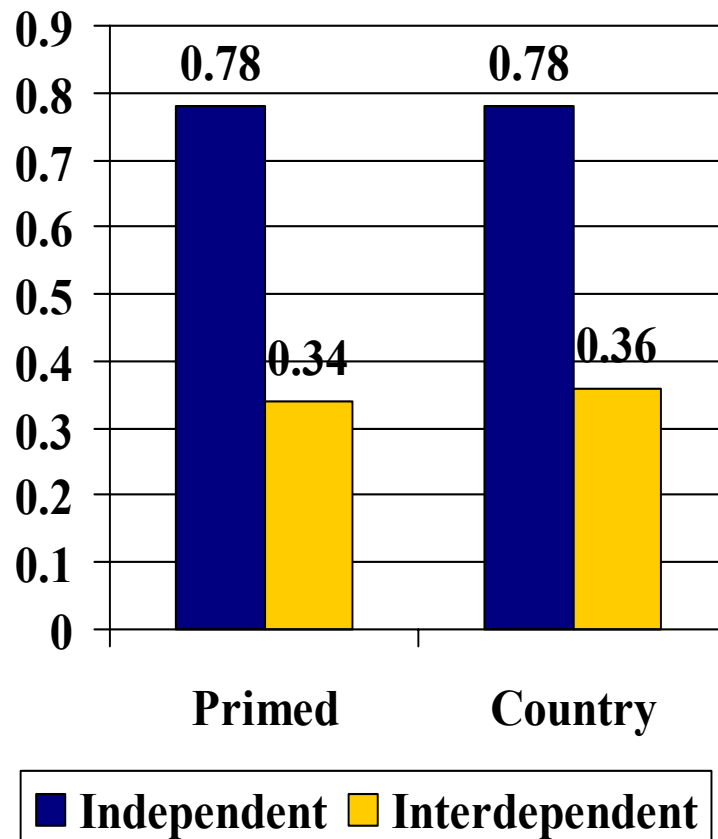
Culture and Conversational Conduct

- Different substantive conclusions:
 - Academic satisfaction contributes **equally** to life-satisfaction in both countries (life-academic)
 - Academic satisfaction contributes **more** in Germany (academic-life)
 - Latter apparently confirms that individual achievement is more important in individualistic cultures....
- All due to respondents' sensitivity to conversational context??

Turning Germans Into Chinese

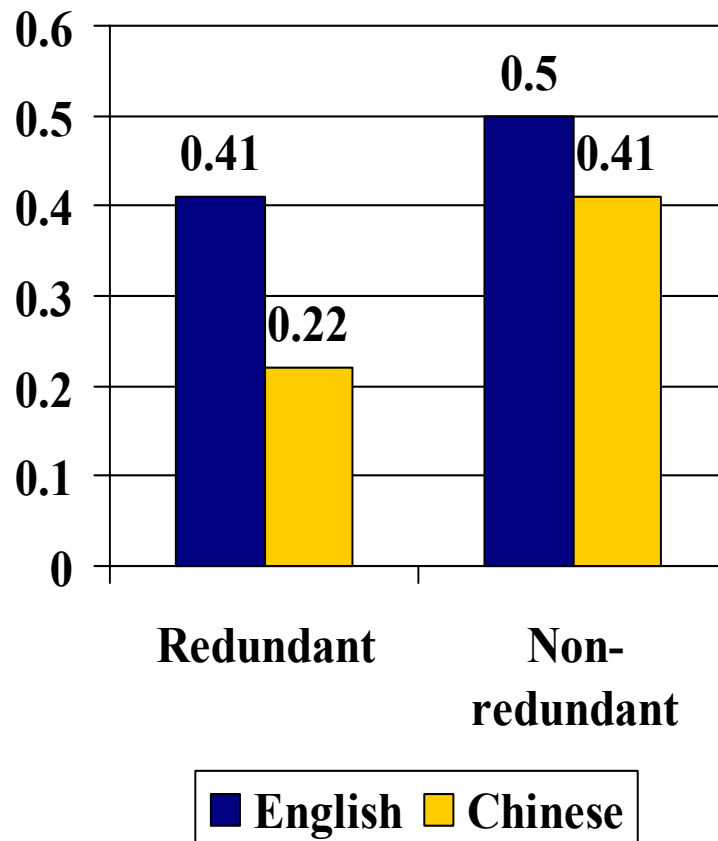
- If the key difference is sensitivity to conversational context, Germans should respond like Chinese when put into an *interdependent* frame of mind.
- Independence/interdependence priming
 - Read paragraph about trip to city
 - Circle pronouns (I vs. we)
 - Adapted from Brewer & Gardner, 1996

Turning Germans Into Chinese



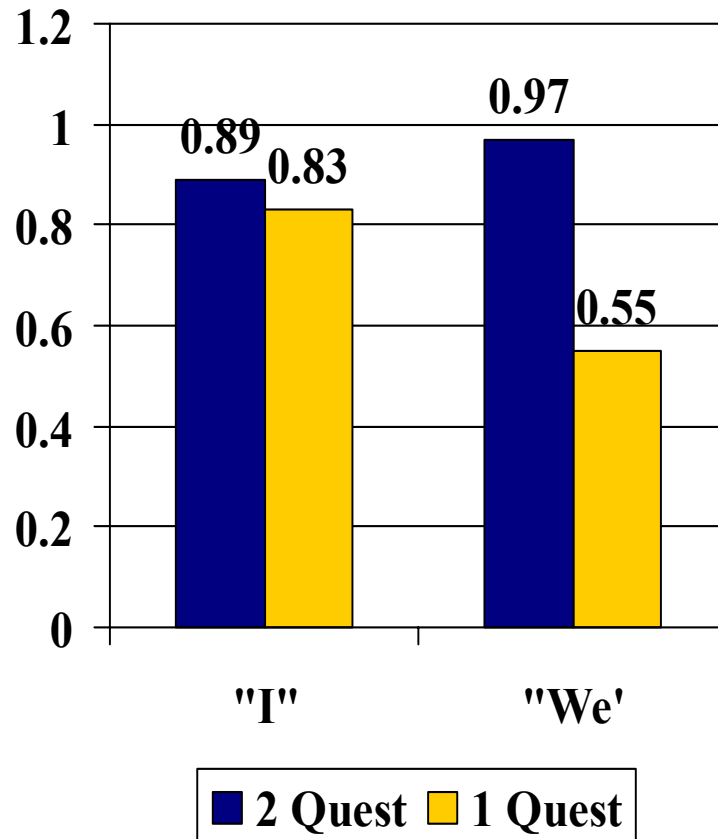
- Students; Heidelberg, Germany
- I vs. we primed
- Redundant only: Academic - Life
- Comparison: Germans vs. Chinese, no prime
- *Haberstroh, Oyserman et al., JESP, 2002*

Turning Chinese into Americans (lite)



- Students; Hong Kong
- English, Chinese language
- Redundant: Academic - Life
- Non-redundant: Life-Academic
- *Chen, Chang, Oyserman, Schwarz, 2004*

Happiness and Satisfaction: Impact of Interdependence



- German students
- I-primed vs. we-primed
- Happiness & Satisfaction
 - Not redundant: last & first questions in 2 different Q.
 - Redundant: Last 2 questions in same Q.; *no* joint lead-in
- *Haberstroh, Oyserman et al., JESP, 2002*

Conclusions

- Interpersonal orientation influences conversational conduct:
 - Chronically (Chinese) or temporarily (we-primed) interdependent individuals pay more attention to the common ground
 - than chronically (Germans) or temporarily (I-primed) independent individuals.

Conclusions

- The resulting differences in question interpretation
 - are *pragmatic* (speaker meaning)
 - not semantic (meaning of words)
- Pragmatic differences
 - are not captured by translation and backtranslation
 - may be captured by cognitive pretests in both cultures
 - provided context is maintained

Take Home Points

- Differences in the obtained reports may be due to
 - actual differences in attitudes or behavior
 - difference in response process
 - unknown mix of both
- Unless we understand these processes, cross-cultural studies will face many “surprises.”

Source articles

- PROCESS MODEL of HOW CULTURE INFLUENCES BEHAVIOR
 - Oyserman, D., Kemmelmeier, M. & Coon, H. (2002). Cultural Psychology, A New Look. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 110-117.
- META-ANALYSES, DISCUSSION OF LIMITATIONS OF VARIOUS MEASUREMENT METHODS, SUMMARY OF WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF CULTURE
 - Oyserman, D., Coon, H., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Evaluation of Theoretical Assumptions and Meta-Analyses. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 3-73.
- PRIMING STUDIES SHOWING THAT CULTURE INFLUENCES WHAT WE PERCEIVE AND REMEMBER
 - Kuhnen, U., & Oyserman, D. (2002) Thinking about the self influences thinking in general: Cognitive consequences of salient self-concept. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 492-499.
- PRIMING STUDIES SHOWING THAT CULTURE INFLUENCES SENSITIVITY TO THE COMMUNICATIVE CONTEXT
 - Haberstroh, S., Oyserman, D., Schwarz, N., Kuhnen, U., & Ji, L. (2002). Is the interdependent self more sensitive to question context than the independent self? Self-construal and the observation of conversational norms. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 323-329.