

Rethinking Culture and Self-Construal: China as a Middle Land

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ABSTRACT. Amid criticisms of current paper-and-pencil type questionnaires measuring self-construal across cultural groups, the authors used a graphic representation scale to examine whether Anglo Canadians ($N = 220$) were more independent than Mainland Chinese ($N = 196$) and Indians ($N = 212$) in construing their relationships with closest family member, family members, closest friend, friends, (other) relatives, colleagues, and neighbors. Data generated 5 intriguing findings: (a) Chinese were more interdependent than Canadians but less so than Indians, indicating that Chinese culture has become more individualistic. (b) Canadians were more independent than Chinese in 6 relationship dimensions but were as interdependent as Chinese in self-closest-friend connectedness, somewhat contradicting 1 assumption of theories of independent-interdependent self-construal and individualism-collectivism (I-C). (c) Canadians were more independent than Indians in all relationship dimensions, supporting theories of independent-interdependent self-construal and I-C. (d) Chinese were as interdependent as Indians in self-closest-family-member, self-close-family-members, and self-relatives connectedness but more independent than Indians in the other categories of self-other relationships. (e) Participants' age did not have strong correlations with variables measuring self-construal in any sample, indicating that a person's attachment style may not change greatly over a lifespan. The authors discussed theoretical and methodological implications.

Key words: comparing Asians and Canadians, cross-cultural studies, individualism-collectivism, self-construal, self-other relationships
