

# The Effect of Culture on Self-Construal: A Replication

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## INTRODUCTION

The theory of self-construal influencing how we define ourselves was introduced by the Markus and Kitayama (1991) study, Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) highlighted that people from collectivist cultures are high in interdependent self-construal whereas people from individualistic cultures are high in independent self-construal.

However, there are numerous inconsistencies in results concerning cultural variation and self-construal.

Talhem and colleagues (2017) proposed that specifying relationships and asking people about specific scenarios versus general values would be a better way to test for differences in self-construal in different cultures.

The reasoning behind conducting a pre-publication or pipeline study is that it allows the external validity to be represented when the study is published and minimizes the adversarial nature of replication.

## METHOD

### Participants = 135

- Age:  $M = 20.4$  years
- Gender: 46% female, 54% male
- Individualist: 75%, Collectivist: 25%

### Procedure:

- Recruited: SONA (0.5 course credit) or in person (candy/chips)
- Survey administered online (~15-20 minute completion)
- Coded participants as collectivist/individualist based on the country they grew up in using Hofstede's cultural dimensions

### Measure:

- Collectivism scale: included 32 questions that presented people with scenarios to react to
- Strongly agree/strongly disagree on 7-point Likert scale
  - "We should keep our aging parents with us in the home"
  - "You get a 60% on a midterm, and you might fail the class if you don't do better on the final exam. You're in a bad mood Your good friend criticizes you. "It's your fault. You need to study harder." This makes you feel worse. This friend is being a good friend."
- Demographic questions (i.e., race, political orientation, income)

## RESULTS

Figure 1. Means of collectivist and individualist survey responses

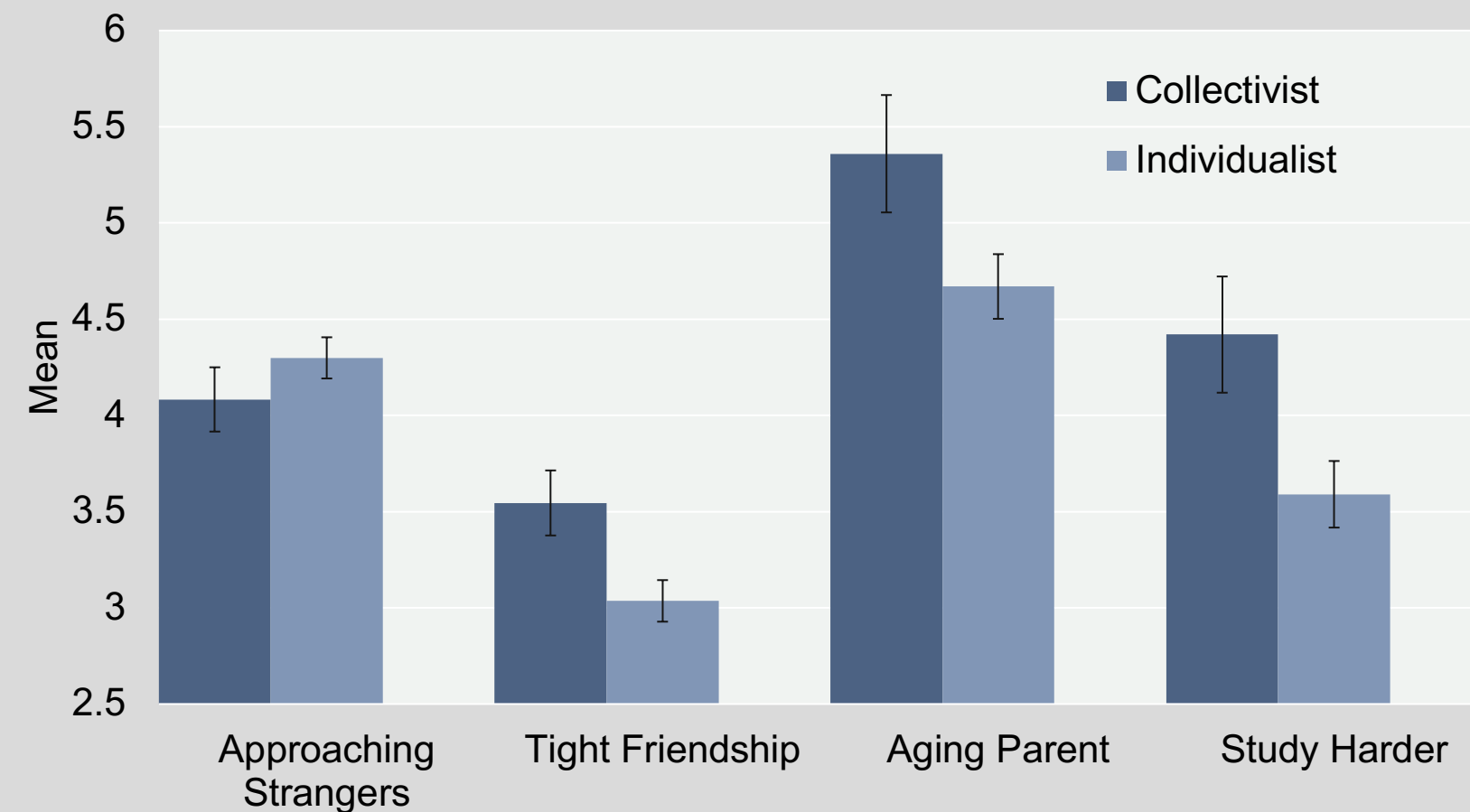


Figure 1. Comparison of means based on individualistic and collectivistic participants.

Figure 2. Percentage of items with means supporting or opposing hypothesis (i.e., people who grew up in collectivistic countries are indeed higher in collectivistic responses). ( $\chi^2 = 3.13, p = .08$ )

Figure 3. Percentage of items at significant significance with means supporting or opposing hypothesis ( $\chi^2 = 3.60, p = .06$ ).

The p values of Figure 2 and 3 indicate that the number of differences in the predicted direction are marginally greater than what we could expect through chance.

Figure 2.

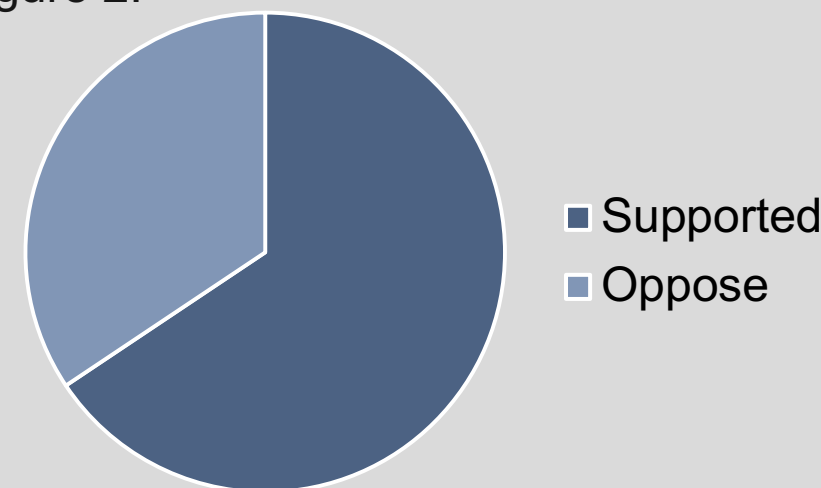
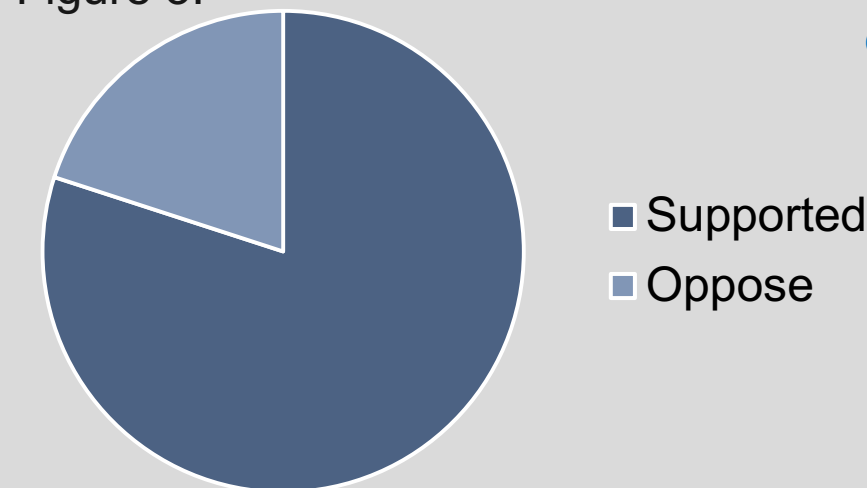


Figure 3.



## DISCUSSION

Although the hypothesis that an individual's culture has an effect on an individual's self-construal is only marginally supported in this particular study, these results have several implications concerning the debate of self-construal theory. That is, we can neither be too sure if culture does effect one's self-construal or if there are confounding variables that can better explain for an individual's self-construal.

We suspect that there are several reasons as to why the results were marginal ranging from the sample, the measurement, and the analyses used by the original researcher.

Foremost, several questions within the survey may have been unclear to the participants as the wording may have been strange. Additionally, items within the survey may not have accurately measured individualistic or collectivistic responses.

Additionally, instead of accounting for the variations of how collectivist or individualist a country may be, participants are dichotomously labeled by Talhem et al. as either collectivistic or individualistic based on whether a country meets or surpasses the 50% mark of collectivism. If a country should score a 51% in collectivism and a 49% in individualism, that particular country would had been coded as a collectivistic country under Talhelm et al.

Future research should refine items and subscales and code for culture on a spectrum.