

Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal: An Examination of Migration History and  
Gender in Chinese- and European-Canadians

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### **Abstract**

Regardless of country of residence, individuals of East Asian background typically report higher interdependent and lower independent self-construal than European-descent individuals. Despite previous work that have been done in people of East Asian descent in Western societies, little is known about the differences in their self-construal in relation to their migration history to the West. Additionally, gender influences on self-construal and the correlation between the two self-construal dimensions among this population remain unclear, given the mixed findings in existing literature. The current study discusses self-construal findings from Chinese-descent and European-descent individuals in Canada in relation to their migration history and gender. We hypothesized that individuals with an earlier migration history to Canada as well as men will report higher independent and lower interdependent self-construal. Students at a Canadian university ( $n = 524$ ) completed the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994) and survey questions related to their gender, ethnicity, and migration history to Canada. Results of the study found that European-descent individuals and men reported higher independent self-construal than Chinese-descent individuals and women, respectively. Individuals with earlier migration history to Canada also reported higher independent self-construal. Correlations between independent and interdependent self-construal were found to be significantly higher in Chinese-Canadians who migrated to Canada around high school time than in any other group. Culturally-bound gender differences, reference-group effect, cultural differences between contemporary urban China and Chinese enclave communities in the West, and possible explanations for the unique experience of the high school migration group, are discussed.

*Keywords:* migration history, gender, self-construal, Chinese-Canadians

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In cultural psychology, it is generally accepted that people from collectivistic societies tend to espouse a stronger interdependent self-construal, while people from individualistic societies tend to espouse a stronger independent self-construal (Heine et al., 2002; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994; Singelis & Sharkey, 1995). Yet, along with the rise of globalization, exchange of cultural ideas have become increasingly commonplace (Goldin & Reinert, 2010). The Chinese diaspora is no exception to this phenomenon (Jandt, 2004). For example, as an active participant in international trade and affairs, People's Republic of China has seen remarkable economic growth as well as increase in endorsement of individualism over the past four decades (Cao, 2009; Steele & Lynch, 2013). Younger generations in China exhibit lower interdependent self-construal than older generations (Rao et al., 2001). Alongside these cultural trends, Chinese individuals continue to migrate to Western nations to study, work, and live (Goodkind, 2019). These individuals therefore must navigate both Chinese and Western culture, and their associated values and patterns of self-construal. Given the rising population of these individuals in Western countries such as Canada, the self-construal experience of Chinese/East Asian-descent individuals in Western countries has garnered substantial interest as a research topic (Barry & Garner, 2001; Goodkind, 2019; Norasakkunkit & Kalick, 2002).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) identified two aspects of self-construal to describe the ways in which Japanese and American individuals define themselves. Those with a high interdependent self-construal tend to view themselves as closely connected to others, while those with a high independent self-construal tend to view themselves as unique and separate from others. Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that both interdependent and independent self-

construal is present in each individual, but that specific cultural contexts may promote one or the other more strongly. Correlational analyses in multiple populations have shown that interdependent and independent self-construal are not opposite ends of a singular spectrum, but rather two distinct dimensions that coexist at varying levels within the same individual (Cross et al., 2011; Jonason et al., 2017; Kemmelmeier & Oyserman, 2001). This two-dimensional approach is consistent with the original conceptualization by Markus and Kitayama (1991), as well as the framework used in Singelis (1994)'s Self-Construal Scale.

Individuals from more individualistic societies, such as North America and Western Europe, generally report higher independent self-construal and lower interdependent self-construal than individuals from more collectivistic societies, such as East Asia and Africa (Cheng et al., 2011; Heine et al., 2002). It is thus unsurprising that Singelis and Sharkey (1995) found Asian-Americans to report lower independent and higher interdependent self-construal than their European-American counterparts. More recently, Hong and Woody (2007) , Heine et al. (2002), and Walker et al. (2001) respectively found Korean-descent, Japanese-descent, and Chinese-descent individuals in Canada to report lower levels of independent self-construal than their European-descent counterparts. Walker et al. (2001) and Heine et al. (2002) additionally found that Chinese-descent and Japanese-descent individuals reported higher interdependent self-construal than their European-descent counterparts. This suggested that East Asian-descent individuals generally retained some collectivistic values from their cultural upbringing.

Outside of North America, Shim et al. (2014) found that, among international students in Germany from East Asia, longer length of stay in Germany was associated with higher independent self-construal and lower interdependent self-construal; however, they found no significant difference between international students and second-generation immigrants of East

Asian descent. To date, no other study has investigated the differences in self-construal among bicultural individuals along their developmental and migration histories with regards to exposure to heritage and host cultures.

Associations between the two dimensions of self-construal have shown mixed results, from positive to negative to non-significant, regardless of ethnicity studied. Among East Asian participants, correlations have ranged from non-significant to .46 (Barry & Garner, 2001; Bresnahan et al., 2005; Cheng et al., 2011; Hong & Woody, 2007; Jonason et al., 2017; Lam, 2006; Liu & Goto, 2007; Ren et al., 2013; Shim et al., 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016). Among Western populations, correlations in existing literature range from -.31 to .27 (Bresnahan et al., 2005; Cheng et al., 2011; Duncan et al., 2013; Hong & Woody, 2007; Maas et al., 2019; Rohmann et al., 2019). As well, significant demographic heterogeneity exists between studies in terms of nationality, age, and acculturation experiences. Delineation of the pattern of association between the two dimensions of self-construal may spare insight on the psychosocial experience of individuals with multicultural identities, and thereby be valuable to the development of more effective social policies and mental health care delivery in multicultural societies.

Examination of self-construal must consider not only cultural, but also gender differences. Many gender theorists have argued that women are more likely to prioritize interpersonal relationships and view themselves as connected to others, in part due to gender differences in socialization (see Cross & Madson, 1997 for a review). Indeed, Italian and Scottish (Duncan et al., 2013), and German (Rohmann et al., 2019) women reported higher interdependent self-construal than their male counterparts. Interestingly, no significant gender differences were found in interdependent self-construal among Asian-American and Euro-American samples (Levinson et al., 2011). On the other hand, American women of Asian and

European descent (Levinson et al., 2011) and German women (Rohmann et al., 2019) were found to report lower independent self-construal than their male counterparts, but the same findings were not seen in Scottish or Italian samples (Duncan et al., 2013). While patriarchal values remain mainstream in East Asia, Western Europe, as well as North America, different cultures may have varying expectations of gender roles (Marshall, 2008; Neculăesei, 2015). An investigation into the intersectionality of self-construal therefore may be meaningful for understanding individual differences along orthogonal axes of socially ascribed identities such as gender and ethnicity.

As migration to Western societies from East Asia has spanned nearly two decades of cultural shifts towards individualism, one aim of the current study is to discuss updated findings from Chinese-descent individuals who have arrived in Canada within this time frame. Despite the considerable amount of research that has been done on differences between Asian-descent (including Chinese-descent) individuals and European-descent individuals in Western societies in their self-construal, little is known about the self-construal differences among Asian-descent individuals in terms of their migration history to Western societies. This study therefore aims to examine the differences in self-construal between groups of Chinese-Canadians to further elucidate the relationship between self-construal and cultural influences. Moreover, this paper seeks to elucidate the relationship between the two self-construal dimensions, including any interaction effect with cultural influences. Lastly, this study further investigates gender differences in self-construal in Euro- and Chinese-Canadians to complement previous findings.

We hypothesized that 1) Euro-Canadians will report higher levels of independent and lower levels of interdependent self-construal compared to Chinese-Canadians, 2) Chinese-Canadians who arrived in Canada later in their developmental trajectory will report lower levels

of independent and higher levels of interdependent self-construal compared to Chinese-Canadians who arrived in Canada earlier in their lifetime, and 3) women will report higher levels of interdependent and lower levels of independent self-construal than men regardless of cultural upbringing. Given the mixed results in the literature, we did not make a specific prediction with regards to the association between the two dimensions of self-construal, and this section of the analysis was intended to be exploratory in nature.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Undergraduate students (57.4% women) who self-identified as being of European (n = 183) or Chinese (n = 341) ethnic descent were recruited from a large western Canadian university as part of a larger study which also gathered data on individuals of other ethnic backgrounds on a wide range of topics involving culture, sexuality, and personality traits. Individuals over the age of 18 who self-rated their English ability as “fair” or better were invited to participate. Data was collected before the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Procedures**

Participants were recruited through the university’s online psychology human subject pool system. The study was advertised as involving culture and individual differences. Those interested were directed to an online survey hosted on Fluidsurveys (<http://www.fluidsurveys.com>; now defunct). Upon access, individuals had the opportunity to review consent documents explaining their rights as participants, data security and confidentiality. If individuals consented to participate, they then completed a series of online surveys. After completion of the surveys, participants attended an online debriefing session,

during which the intent of the study was explained and invitation to contact the researchers was extended in case of further concerns or questions. In compensation for their participation, individuals received one bonus mark towards an undergraduate psychology class at the university. All methods and procedures were reviewed and approved by the institutional behavioural research ethics board.

### **Measures**

Demographic information on age and sex were collected. In addition, experiences in Canada or Western culture were assessed via self-reports of ethnicity, country of birth, age of arrival in Canada, and reason for coming to Canada.

Time of arrival in Canada in relation to schooling was reported by participants by selecting one of the following options that most fit them: “I was born in Canada”, “I came to Canada before or while attending elementary school (i.e. grades K-7)”, “I came to Canada immediately before or while attending high school (i.e. grades 8-12)”, “I came to Canada immediately before, while, or after attending post-secondary education (i.e. university or college)”.

The Self-Construal Scale (SCS) was used to assess levels of independent and interdependent self-construal (Singelis, 1994). The SCS consists of 12 statements pertaining to independent self-construal and 12 statements pertaining to interdependent self-construal. Participants rated their endorsement of each statement on a 7-point scale. The interdependent subscale included statements such as “I would sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in”, and the independent subscale included statements such as “I act the same way no matter who I am with”. Scores on each subscale range from 12 to 84, with higher subscale score indicating greater identification with the corresponding self-construal. In the current sample, the



Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the interdependence subscale was .82 and .82 for European-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian participants respectively. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the independent subscale was .82 and .87 for European-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian participants respectively.

### **Data Analysis**

Independent t-tests were conducted to determine broad ethnic differences in each self-construal dimension. The entire sample was then split into the following five groups in terms of migration history: European-descent Canadians (EC), Chinese-Canadians born in Canada (CBC), Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before or during elementary school (CE), Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before or during high school (CH), and Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before, during, or after post-secondary education (CU). Means and standard deviations of each self-construal dimension for each migration history group and gender were computed. Two-way ANOVA analyses were conducted to examine the effects of membership in each migration history group and gender on each self-construal dimension. Post-hoc comparisons were performed to examine mean differences between each of the five migration history groups in each self-construal dimension. Pearson's  $r$  correlations were calculated to examine zero-order associations between the two self-construal subscale scores for each migration history group. Independent z-tests of transformed correlation coefficients were performed to assess for significant differences in interdependent-independent correlations between the four Chinese-Canadian migration history groups. Given the limited age range in this undergraduate sample, age was not used as a study variable. Z-score comparisons of correlations between groups were computed using the online calculator by Lenhard and Lenhard (2014). IBM SPSS Statistics for Mac, Version 28 was used for all other statistical analyses.

### **Results**

### Self-Construal in Chinese- and European-Canadians

There was no significant ethnicity effect in interdependent self-construal,  $t(502) = -.44, p = .663$ , with Chinese-Canadians ( $M = 57.24, SD = 10.74$ ) reporting similar scores as Euro-Canadians ( $M = 56.82, SD = 9.70$ ), 95% CI  $[-2.32, 1.48]$ ,  $d = -.04$ . A significant ethnicity effect was seen in independent self-construal,  $t(499) = 3.92, p < .001$ , with Chinese-Canadians ( $M = 51.89, SD = 10.10$ ) reporting lower scores than Euro-Canadians ( $M = 55.63, SD = 10.47$ ), 95% CI  $[1.87, 5.62]$ ,  $d = .36$ . Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 1.

### Chinese-Canadian Migration History and Gender

Two-way ANOVA showed that migration history and gender explained a significant proportion of the variance of interdependent self-construal ( $F(9, 481) = 3.12, p = .001, \eta^2 = .06$ ). There was no significant interaction effect between migration history and gender ( $F(4, 481) = 2.02, p = .091$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$ ). Migration history had a statistically significant effect on interdependent self-construal ( $F(4, 481) = 4.21, p = .002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ ). Gender did not have a significant effect on interdependent self-construal ( $F(4, 481) = 4.21, p = .086$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .01$ ).

Tukey's HSD test found that the mean value of interdependent self-construal score was significantly different between Chinese-Canadians born in Canada and Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before or during high school. There was no statistically significant difference between any other groups in mean interdependent self-construal scores.

Two-way ANOVA showed that migration history and gender explained a significant proportion of the variance of independent self-construal ( $F(9, 478) = 7.02, p = .000, \eta^2 = .12$ ). There was no significant interaction effect between migration history and gender ( $F(4, 478) = 1.99, p = .095$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$ ). Migration history had a statistically significant effect on

independent self-construal ( $F(4, 478) = 8.36, p = .000$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .07$ ). Gender also had a significant effect on independent self-construal ( $F(4, 478) = 14.55, p = .000$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ ).

Tukey's HSD test found that the mean value of independent self-construal score was significantly different between Euro-Canadians and Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before or during high school, between Euro-Canadians and Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before, during, or after post-secondary school, as well as between Chinese-Canadians born in Canada and Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before, during, or after post-secondary school. There was no statistically significant difference between any other groups in mean independent self-construal scores.

Pearson's  $r$  was computed to examine the linear association between interdependent subscale score and independent subscale score in each migration history group (see Table 2). There was a significant positive correlation between the two dimensions in Chinese-Canadians born in Canada, in Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before or during elementary school, in Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before or during high school, and in Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before, during, or after post-secondary school. No significant correlation was found in European-Canadians. Correlation between the two self-construal dimensions in Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada immediately before or during high school was found to be significantly higher than the correlation in each of the other Chinese-Canadian groups (see Table 3). No significant difference in correlations was found among other comparisons between Chinese-Canadian groups.

### **Discussion**

The current study examined the difference in interdependent and independent self-construal between Euro-Canadians and Chinese-Canadians. Difference in self-construal was

analyzed in relation to exposure to migration history and gender. Relationship between the two dimensions of self-construal were explored in relation to migration history.

Consistent with our hypothesis, as well as previous findings, European-descent individuals scored higher than Chinese-descent individuals in independent self-construal. As well, migrating to Canada later in one's education trajectory was negatively correlated to independent self-construal score. Specifically, Euro-Canadian individuals scored significantly higher in independent self-construal than Chinese-Canadians individuals who came to Canada immediately before or during high school and Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada immediately before, during, or after post-secondary education, but not Chinese-Canadian individuals born in Canada or Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada immediately before or during elementary school.

Contrary to our expectations, as well as previous findings in which Euro-Canadian individuals tended to score lower in interdependent self-construal than Chinese-Canadian individuals, no ethnic differences in interdependent self-construal scores were seen between Euro-Canadians and Chinese-Canadians., This pattern held both for Chinese-Canadian participants as a whole or when split into more specific groups based on migration history. As well, migrating to Canada later in one's education trajectory was not associated with increased interdependent self-construal.

In line with our hypothesis, and with Levinson et al. (2011)'s findings in Asian-Americans and Caucasians, both Euro-Canadian and Chinese-Canadian women in this study scored lower in independent self-construal than their male counterparts. Contrary to our hypothesis, no significant gender difference emerged in interdependent self-construal scores. This contrasts with Duncan et al. (2013) and Rohmann et al. (2019)'s findings in Italian,

Scottish, and German samples, in which women scored higher in interdependent self-construal than men. As well, in Duncan et al. (2013)'s study with Italian and Scottish samples, no gender difference in independent self-construal was seen. However, our current findings were consistent with Levinson et al. (2011)'s findings in Asian-Americans and Caucasians, in which gender difference in interdependent self-construal was non-significant. Taken together, gender differences in self-construal in North America (regardless of ethnicity) seem to show a different pattern than in Europe. More studies are needed to confirm this trend and to explore other pertinent aspects of this seemingly culturally-bound phenomenon.

Consistent with our hypotheses, among Chinese-Canadian individuals, those born in Canada scored significantly higher in independent self-construal than those who came to Canada immediately before, during, or after post-secondary education. Taken together with the significant results between Euro-Canadian individuals and Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada for high school/university, this suggests that independent self-construal increases with more Canadian or Western cultural influence. In the current study, significant differences emerged across groups that differed from each other by at least three critical developmental periods, which are operationalized in this study as 1) Chinese familial environment at birth, 2) Chinese cultural influence up to elementary school, 3) Chinese cultural influence up to high school, and 4) Chinese cultural influence up to university. This is consistent with both Markus and Kitayama (1991)'s original description of the two types of self-construal, as well as existing findings in which higher Western acculturation is associated with higher independent self-construal (Barry & Garner, 2001; Shim et al., 2014; Walker et al., 2001)

The current study found that, among Chinese-Canadian individuals, those born in Canada scored highest in interdependent self-construal, while those who came to Canada immediately

before or during high school scored lowest in this dimension. This is in contrast with our expectation and the pattern seen for independent self-construal. This is also inconsistent with the model proposed by Markus and Kitayama (1991), in which higher East Asian cultural acculturation is associated with higher interdependent self-construal. One potential explanation for this result is the reference-group effect, wherein people compare themselves to different salient reference groups (Heine et al., 2002). It is possible that the reference group most salient to the Chinese-Canadian individuals born in Canada were the Euro-descent Canadians, resulting in the Canadian-born Chinese participants rating themselves as more interdependent on the Likert scale. Meanwhile, the reference group most salient to the Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada around high school may have been Chinese individuals living in China or those who came to Canada for university, resulting in this group of participants rating themselves as less interdependent. Future studies may eliminate this reference-group effect by explicitly stating the reference group on the questionnaire, or by using an implicit self-construal task in which participants' behaviours are studied (Cross et al., 2011; Heine et al., 2002).

Another potential explanation for this difference between Chinese-Canadian individuals born in Canada and Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada around high school is a cohort effect of the rapidly changing cultural zeitgeist in contemporary urban China, where the latter group most likely lived in before coming to Canada. The Chinese-descent individuals born in Canada may have had a familial upbringing with parents that left their heritage country before significant cultural shifts towards individualism have occurred. As well, the same Chinese-descent individuals born in a Western locale with a prominent Chinese community may also have grown up in tightly-knit cultural enclaves with highly enculturated peer experiences that inclined them to develop more interdependent self-construal (Murdie, 2011). On the other hand,

Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada around high school time may have had significant peer and familial experiences in highly-industrialized Chinese cities, where collectivistic and individualistic values have become increasingly intertwined in the mainstream culture, leading them to develop lower interdependent self-construal (Guo, 2013; Guo & Devoretz, 2006). Though not collected as a datapoint in this study, Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada later on may be more likely to be only-children due to the One-Child Policy in China between 1980 to 2016 (Cameron et al., 2013). This experience of growing up without siblings may reduce one's identity as being closely connected to others (Cameron et al., 2013).

In this study, correlation between the two self-construal were found to be significantly higher in Chinese-Canadian individuals who arrived in Canada around high school time than any other migration history group. Again, the reference-group effect may serve as one possible explanation. We speculate that the Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada around high school may have been exposed to both cultures at the most similar degrees, and may in turn have two salient reference groups: Euro-Canadians and monocultural Chinese individuals. Those with a tendency to engage in upward social comparison may compare themselves to Euro-Canadian individuals on items related to independence, while comparing themselves to monocultural Chinese individuals on items related to interdependence. On the other hand, those with a tendency to engage in downward social comparison may compare themselves to monocultural Chinese individuals on independence items while comparing themselves to Euro-Canadian individuals on interdependence items. In the current study, Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada during high school, in particular, seem most prone to the effects of upward or downward social comparison given the balanced saliency of both reference groups. Nevertheless, this effect may not be limited those who arrived in Canada during high school, and

exists on a continuum of the relative saliency of each reference group for each individual. As well, reference-group effects may potentially reify a person's experience of self-construal via repeated comparisons to particular reference groups. For instance, one may experience themselves to espouse a stronger sense of interdependency if one frequently compares oneself to those who seem to espouse a significantly lower interdependent self-construal, and then engage in behaviours consistent with this identity.

Results from the current study suggests that Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada around high school seem most likely to exhibit either high levels of both dimensions of self-construal, or low levels of both dimensions. This suggests that they are prone to crystallize into either a bicultural or a marginal pattern of self-construal, as opposed to a predominantly interdependent or independent pattern (Lam et al 2006, Yamaguchi et al 2016). Therefore, the constructs of interdependent self-construal and independent self-construal may be more intricately intertwined in some populations. Given that most participants were 18-21 years old at the time of the study, Chinese-Canadian individuals who came to Canada during high school may have had the least time to establish firm ties to either Chinese culture or Canadian culture, or to develop a sense of belonging anywhere, echoing the finding that this group reported the lowest mean interdependent self-construal score. Marginalized individuals from this group may have had significant difficulty perceiving a sense of belonging or personal agency, presenting as low interdependent and independent self-construal scores. On the other hand, highly bicultural individuals from this group may have been able to establish a strong sense of belonging due to their strong sense of personal agency, despite cultural barriers. Alternatively, these highly bicultural individuals may have been able to develop a high sense of personal agency due to a



strong perception of support from both communities. Further research is necessary to understand the causes and potential confounds of this putative pattern.

Individuals with low interdependent and low independent self-construal may lack coping aids in the face of acculturative and other stressors, and be particularly vulnerable to experiencing psychosocial distress. Indeed, (Lam, 2006) and (Yamaguchi et al., 2016) found the bicultural group to have the best psychosocial outcomes, while the marginalized group was found to experience high levels of psychosocial distress compared to other groups. Liu and Goto (2007) suggests that interdependent and independent self-construal interact to affect mental health outcomes in people with two cultural identities. Thus, studying self-construal may be crucial in understanding protective and deleterious factors for mental health in people with more than one cultural identities.

### **Limitations**

Caution should be taken to extrapolate the results of the current study beyond the population studied due to several reasons. In the urban area where the study was conducted, a significant Chinese population resides alongside European-Canadians in a mosaic or enclave cultural model (Wickberg, 2007). Chinese-Canadian individuals in this metropolitan area are afforded abundant opportunities to continue participating in their heritage culture as well as to limit their assimilation into the mainstream culture, should they chose to do so (Balakrishnan, 2001). Despite the availability of online communities and trends towards globalization, East Asian-descent individuals in other Western locales may not experience the same level of heritage culture availability. Multi-site studies involving other Western locales, especially ones with a smaller Chinese cultural presence, may complement findings from the current study.

Longitudinal studies examining how patterns of self-construal may change across the lifespan would also be useful.

Furthermore, it has become increasingly common for Chinese-descent individuals to alternate between living in a variety of Western and East Asian locales during their upbringing, which may further complicate their pattern of self-construal (Guo, 2013). Chinese-descent individuals in this study were born in several regions in Asia, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Brunei. Significant cultural diversity along with differences in intra-continental migration histories exist among the Chinese populations in these different Asian regions (Ma & Cartier, 2003). It is unclear whether the participants of the current study lived in more than one region in Asia before coming to Canada. While collectivistic values are generally consistently upheld in Chinese communities throughout Asia, there are significant regional differences that may impact self-construal (Ma & Cartier, 2003). Future studies focusing on other East Asian ethnic groups in Western locales are needed to clarify the presence of similar findings. Similarly, studies involving people descending from other collectivistic societies (e.g. Hispanic, Eastern European, South Asian) residing in Western locales may further elucidate the relationship between interdependent and independent self-construal.

## **Conclusion**

The current study found that Euro-Canadian individuals reported higher independent self-construal than Chinese-Canadian individuals, while no significant differences emerged in interdependent self-construal. In the Euro- and Chinese-Canadian samples studied, women reported lower independent self-construal than men, and no difference was seen in interdependent self-construal. Independent self-construal was found to be higher in those with

earlier histories of migration to Canada. The difference in interdependent-independent correlations between groups of different migration histories suggests a more complicated relationship between the two self-construal dimensions than previously thought. The unexpected findings in Chinese-Canadians who came to Canada during high school suggests the value of further research in the experience of people with multiple cultural identities and its relationship with migration history and changes within cultures over time. Findings from the current study expand understanding of the nuances of multicultural as well as gendered identities and experiences, with potential implications in social policy, communication, and mental health care.

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Figure 1. Mean Self-Construct Scale interdependence and independence scores for European-Canadians (EC;  $n = 178$ ), Chinese-Canadians born in Canada (CBC;  $n = 122$ ), Chinese-Canadians who arrived in Canada during elementary school (CE;  $n = 59$ ), Chinese-Canadians who arrived in Canada during high school (CH;  $n = 47$ ), and Chinese-Canadians who arrived in Canada during university (CU;  $n = 85$ ). Error bars represent standard error of the mean.

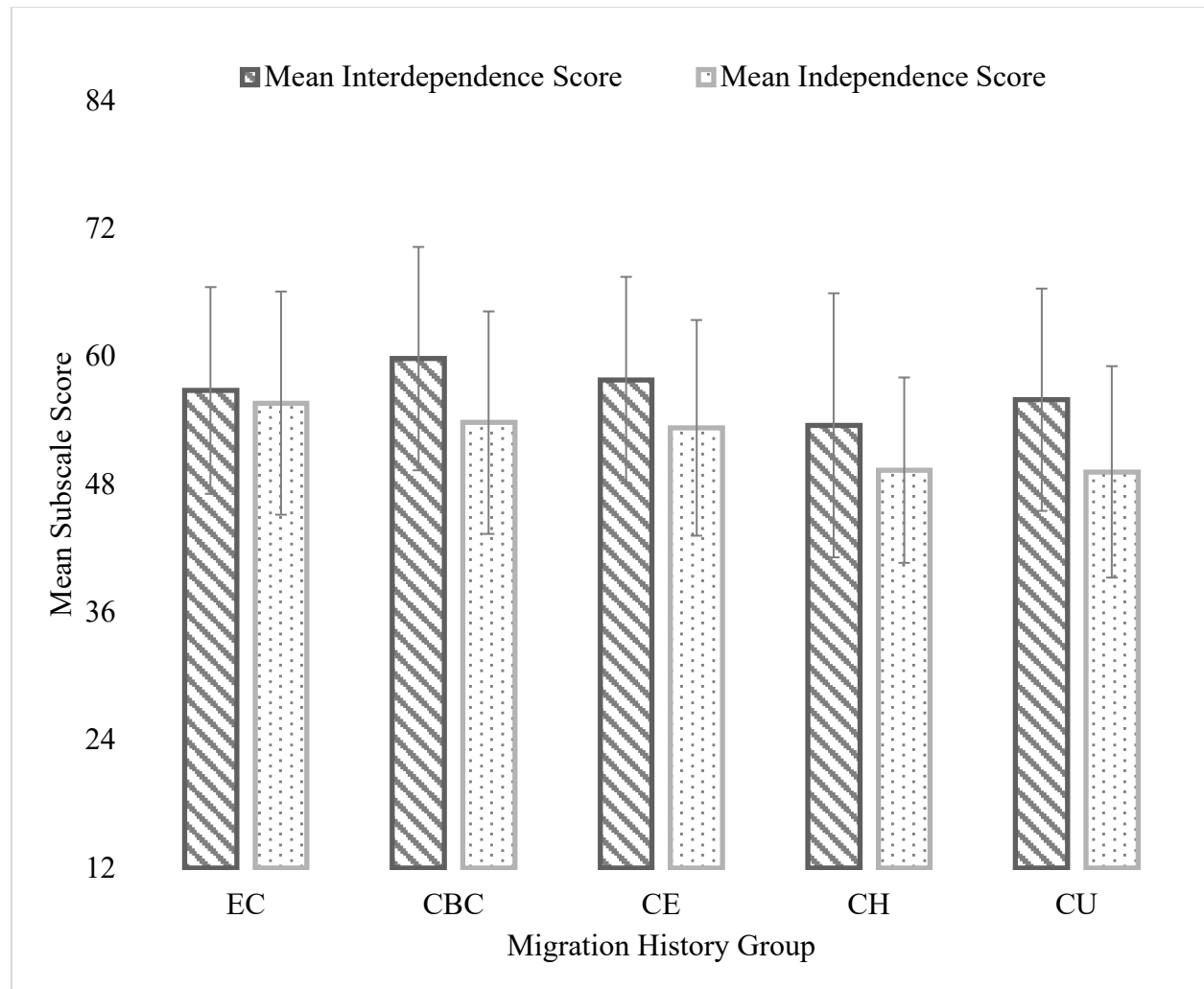


Table 1. Sample Size, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Interdependence and Independence Self-  
Construal Subscale Scores by Migration History Group and Gender.

Group	Interdependence ( <i>n; M ± SD</i> )			Independent ( <i>n; M ± SD</i> )		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
EC	110; 57.91 ± 8.67	68; 55.06 ± 11.01	178; 56.82 ± 9.70	110; 55.77 ± 10.08	68; 58.63 ± 10.47	178; 55.63 ± 10.47
CBC	68; 61.41 ± 9.80	54; 57.801 ± 11.05	122; 59.81 ± 10.48	67; 51.85 ± 10.05	53; 56.26 ± 10.49	120; 53.80 ± 10.44
CE	32; 57.16 ± 9.80	27; 58.56 ± 9.66	59; 57.80 ± 9.68	32; 49.19 ± 7.66	27; 58.19 ± 10.62	59; 53.31 ± 10.12
CH	30; 55.83 ± 12.20	17; 49.53 ± 9.80	47; 53.55 ± 12.39	31; 50.06 ± 8.89	16; 47.94 ± 8.41	47; 49.34 ± 8.70
CU	53; 55.09 ± 10.32	32; 57.38 ± 10.62	85; 55.95 ± 10.43	53; 47.87 ± 9.64	31; 51.42 ± 10.15	84; 49.18 ± 9.92
Total	293; 57.92 ± 9.94	198; 56.18 ± 11.04	491; 57.22 ± 10.42	293; 51.37 ± 9.84	195; 55.90 ± 10.76	488; 53.18 ± 10.44

Table 2. Pearson's  $r$  between Independent and Interdependent subscale scores in each migration history group

Group	EC	CBC	CE	CH	CU
$n$	176	120	60	46	85
$r$	.09	.28**	.39**	.77**	.34**
$p$	.248	.002	.002	<.001	.002

\*\*  $p < .01$

Table 3. Z-scores of comparison of correlations between Chinese-Canadian migration history groups

Group	CBC	CE	CH
CE	-.80		
CH	4.18***	3.05***	
CU	-.47	.35	3.60***

\*\*\*  $p < .001$