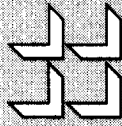


Cross-Cultural Notes



Under this heading are brief reports of studies that provide comparable data from two or more societies, using a standard measuring instrument. These Notes consist of a summary of the study's procedure and as many details about the results as space allows. Additional details concerning the results can be obtained by communicating directly with the author.

Social Desirability Among Canadian and Japanese Students

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RESEARCHERS WHO CONDUCT cross-cultural studies with questionnaires have been challenged by the issue of response bias (Smith & Bond, 1993). Whether findings of cross-cultural differences in such studies actually reflect differences in the constructs being studied or differences in response styles is difficult to determine. Cultural differences have been observed with respect to a moderation response bias; answers given by Japanese respondents to a questionnaire tended to be closer than those of U.S. respondents to the midpoint on Likert-type scales (Stening & Everett, 1984; Zax & Takahashi, 1967).

Social desirability bias, the tendency to answer in a manner that is socially desirable instead of expressing one's true feelings (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Paulhus, 1991), is the type of response bias researchers have studied most. Socially desirable response sets may differ across societies. For example, Japanese distinguish between their public responses, *tatemae*, and their true feelings, *honne* (Doi, 1986). If Japanese make this type of distinction when

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they answer anonymous questionnaires, then any cross-cultural comparisons would be problematical.

Lai and Linden (1993) compared the responses of Asian-Canadians and European-Canadians, using the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1991), and found no differences in social desirability between the two groups for either component of the BIDR (self-deception or impression management). In the present study we also compared the response sets of two groups, using the BIDR, but the cultures of the groups we compared—Canadian and Japanese—were more distinct than those of the two groups compared by Lai and Linden.

The Canadian sample, 74 students of European descent (46 men and 28 women) who were studying introductory psychology at the University of British Columbia, completed a questionnaire that included the BIDR. The Japanese sample, 93 students (39 men and 54 women) from Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan, completed the same questionnaire in Japanese a few days after they arrived at the University of British Columbia for an exchange program. The original, English version of the questionnaire was translated into Japanese and then back-translated into English by a second translator so we could ensure that the two versions of the BIDR were comparable in meaning (Brislin, 1970).

The results of univariate analyses of variance indicated that there were no significant differences between the two samples for the Self-Deception subscale, $M_s = 81.96$ and 78.89 for Canadians and Japanese, respectively, $F(1, 163) = 1.31$, $p > .25$, or for the Impression Management subscale, $M_s = 66.45$ and 69.09 for Canadians and Japanese, respectively, $F(1, 163) = .90$, *ns*. Although there was no significant sex difference for the Self-Deception subscale, $M_s = 78.4$ and 82.0 for men and women, respectively, $F(1, 163) = 2.22$, $p > .10$, the women had significantly higher impression management scores than the men did, $M_s = 72.5$ and 63.5 for women and men, respectively, $F(1, 163) = 11.02$, $p < .002$. There were no Culture \times Sex interactions, both $F_s < 1$.

In the context of an anonymous questionnaire, then, there was no evidence that the responses of the Japanese were more socially desirable than those of the Canadians. A tentative conclusion is that comparisons of the responses of Japanese and North Americans—at least for students—on anonymous questionnaires are not confounded by socially desirable response sets. However, because the Japanese sample in the present study was made up of exchange students, the issue of generalizability must be considered.

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Received November 9, 1994