

Standing Out in Canada and Japan

Romin W. Tafarodi and Tara C. Marshall

University of Toronto

Haruko Katsura

Hokkai Gakuen University

ABSTRACT The need for separation or individuation is held to be a prime motive in Western psychology. Varied accounts of the meaning of selfhood in Japan indicate that separation may be much less important—or as important—for understanding the construction of self-identity in that culture. We focus here on personal distinctiveness, one vehicle for separation from others. We propose that the desire for distinctiveness is not absent or negligible in Japan, but is subject to more constrained expression than in the West. The results of two studies comparing Japanese and Canadian students suggest that Japanese are less desirous of standing out for their own sake and more likely to experience this form of distinctiveness as aversive. The results also suggest that although Japanese and Canadians derive positive distinctiveness from much the same sources, Japanese are less gratified by this type of experience.

Since antiquity, social motivation has been understood as a dialectic of separation and attachment. In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes recounts how Zeus punished primeval humans by splitting them into separate halves. The result was love, a yearning for completion by

Romin W. Tafarodi, Department of Psychology; Tara C. Marshall, Department of Psychology; Haruko Katsura, Faculty of Humanities.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Romin W. Tafarodi, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto, 100 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3G3, Canada. E-mail may be sent to tafarodi@psych.utoronto.ca.

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the missing half: "So ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, and healing the state of [humanity]." Two-and-a-half millennia later, the need for attachment remains as central to conceptions of human nature (Bowlby, 1982; Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000; van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). The striving for individuality, autonomy, and distinctiveness—all reflecting the complementary need for separation—has received less sympathetic representation in ancient writing. From Loki to Lucifer, and Prometheus to Faustus, ambitious self-assertion has been equated with defiance of legitimate moral authority, a sin deserving of physical or spiritual exile. In fact, laudatory portrayal of this side of human nature is a relatively recent trend, reflecting the post-Enlightenment emphasis on individualism, self-determination, and egalitarianism within the liberal democratic polity (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996; de Tocqueville, 2000; Taylor, 1989). Consistent with this trend, modern psychology has embraced separation along with attachment, arguing that the opposing motives are in fact mutually supportive and that fulfillment of both is required for healthy development and well-being (Bakan, 1966; Brewer, 1991; de Charms, 1983; Erikson, 1963; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994; Mahler & McDevitt, 1989; Maslow, 1945; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The balance implicit in this position reflects the Western ideal of the unique, assertive, and self-directed individual who nonetheless remains empathetically attuned and connected to others (Riesman, Glazer, & Denney, 1961).

In this paper, we examine the universality of Western psychology's casting of social motivation as a balance of separation and attachment needs. We limit our focus to one aspect of separation, the need for personal distinctiveness. Specifically, we compare how positive and negative distinctiveness is experienced in Canada and Japan, two countries whose cultures are defined by dissimilar frameworks for understanding personal identity.

Comparing the Western and Japanese Self

The theoretical mainspring of cross-cultural psychology over the past two decades has been the contradistinction between societies described as emphasizing the independence, autonomy, and uniqueness of the individual and those described as emphasizing the inter-

dependence, mutual governance, and social identity of individuals (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Geertz, 1984; Heine, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Sampson, 1989; Shweder & Bourne, 1984). One empirical focus in this tradition has been comparison of individualistic Western and collectivistic Japanese conceptions of self and its implications for social behavior. These comparisons have generated valuable insights, revealing the cultural determination and relativity of many phenomena previously considered to be intrinsic and universal. At the same time, the binary conception of a culture's symbolic representation of selfhood as predominantly individuating or relational, egocentric or sociocentric, and independent or interdependent, has been criticized as unaccommodating of complex psychosocial realities (Ewing, 1990; Hollan, 1992; Lindholm, 1997; Spiro, 1993). For example, Rosenberger (1989, 1992) has questioned the purely social characterization of the Japanese, arguing for a distinctive reciprocity or mutual constitution of private and public identity in that culture (see also Shimizu, 2000). Such balance contrasts with the tendency of some theorists to downplay the significance of Japanese private identity and individuality. As Miller (1997) points out, the individual is not, in fact, devalued in Japan. To the contrary, a rich tradition of emphasis on originality, self-direction, and autonomy exists in that culture (Kashima, 2001; Schooler, 1998; Yamazaki, 1994). Consistent with this, Gudykunst, Yang, and Nishida (1987) found the Japanese to be somewhat higher in private self-consciousness than their American counterparts, suggesting at least as much concern with hidden thoughts, feelings, and motives in Japan. Similarly, Barnlund (1989) found the Japanese to be no more committed to self-sacrifice in their personal relationships than are Americans, consistent with Oyserman and colleagues' (2002) meta-analytic conclusion that Japanese are not, broadly speaking, more collectivistic than North Americans, as has been often assumed (see also Matsumoto, 1999; Takano & Osaka, 1999). Cousins (1989) found that the Japanese, relative to Americans, showed a greater tendency to describe themselves in highly abstract global terms, even while they were less likely to rely on pure psychological attributes. This pattern does not fit neatly with strong relativist claim that the self has little stable, context-free meaning for the Japanese. Rather, it reflects a balanced interdependence of private and public identity. Bachnik (1992b), for example, describes how the *omote* (front) and

ura (rear), and *soto* (outside) and *uchi* (inside), dichotomies serve as axes of social positioning in Japan. The centrality of these and related dualities in Japanese thought and language has been described in great detail by Doi (1981, 1986). The dualities are all subsumed by the broader distinction between private and public, which is prescriptively tied to informality-formality and impulsivity-restraint in Japan, just as it is to some degree in all cultures. Socialization is directed at developing *kejime*, proficiency at shifting across the dualities in accord with social conventions (Tobin, 1992). Whereas the relation of private to public is often seen as inverse or disjunctive in the West, the Japanese see each side of the duality as dependent on the other. Doi (1986) is most explicit in spelling out this cultural difference. According to him, the formality and constraint of the socially presented self provides the necessary scaffolding for the experience and expression of the inner self. Similarly, it is only by closely attending to and “secreting” aspects of the inner self that the Japanese are able to successfully modulate their presented selves across different contexts. Neither side could exist and develop without the other. This integrity is not emphasized in Western theory. Therefore, it would be a mistake to claim that the inner self is “less pronounced” in Japanese culture. It is clearly subject to greater suppression in the service of social harmony, but such control would appear to require more, not less, inner-directed attention (Lindholm, 1997). Lebra (1992) points out that the presented self is, in fact, valued less in Japanese culture than are the inner (private) and boundless (spiritual) aspects of self. Even so, the cultural ideal is to reconcile all aspects, not by effacing any one, but by bringing all into balance and harmony.

Standing Out Across Cultures

Beyond the shortcomings of simple, dichotomized cultural perspectives, there is reason to doubt the claim that separation is of negligible import for understanding the non-Western self. Starting in infancy, the achievement and elaboration of self-other differentiation is critical for normal socioemotional development (Harter, 1998; Stern, 1985, 1995). Beyond infancy, awareness of the boundaries of the self is fundamental to the child’s emerging theory of mind and intentionality (Gopnik & Meltzoff, 1994; Mayes & Cohen, 1996). It is equally important for the dynamic integration and con-

solidation of self-identity that occurs during adolescence (Harter, 1998). Given this profound developmental significance, it is unsurprising that weak or problematic individuation is associated with psychological disorder (Auerbach & Blatt, 2001; de Bonis, De Boeck, Lida-Pulik, & Feline, 1995; Miller, Atlas, & Arsenio, 1993), as much in non-Western as Western cultures (Foa & Chatterjee, 1974). Therefore, the clear demarcation of the physical and psychological self, as subjectively experienced, appears to be a hallmark of mental health. If so, the constitutional motives that subserve the “bounding” of personal identity cannot be assumed to vanish in adulthood anymore than do complementary attachment motives. Rather, the contours of the self are presumably maintained in homeostatic fashion (Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).

Admittedly, nearly all the research mentioned above in support of the importance of self-other separation has been conducted in the West. This is hardly evidence of universality. We argue, however, that clear awareness of oneself as an individual, embodied mentality that exists distinct from other mentalities and the physical environment is a logically necessary foundation for successful interchange with the world, including effective communication, role-taking, and emotional connection with others. In this fundamental sense, the bounded self can be assumed to be universal. Nevertheless, the behavioral expression of those motives that maintain the self-other boundary as the organizing axis of consciousness must be culturally specific, reflecting each society’s moral frameworks and opportunity structures. The pursuit of personal distinctiveness, we believe, is one such motive. Distinguishing oneself vis-à-vis others is the clearest vehicle for separation and necessarily enhances the boundaries of the self. We begin by asking how this motive applies to the Japanese, who have been described in the social psychological literature as being distinctively concerned with social harmony, interdependence, group identity, and fitting in—features that suggest devaluation of individuality.

Is there evidence of a need for personal distinctiveness in Japan? Although the research directly addressing this question is scant, a few findings are suggestive. To begin with, the Japanese have been found to have less need for uniqueness than Westerners, at least as reflected in self-report measures (Yamaguchi, 1994; Yamaguchi, Kuhlman, & Sugimori, 1995). Similarly, Kim and Markus (1999) have demonstrated less preference for unique objects among Kore-

ans than European Americans, consistent with their claim that East Asians (including Japanese) are more inclined than Westerners to view uniqueness as undesirable deviance. The uniqueness at issue in all these studies, however, involved distinctiveness for its own sake (e.g., endorsing an item indicating a desire for nonconformity, choosing a pen of less common color), rather than distinctiveness tied to merit or excellence. As we will argue, both forms of distinctiveness can serve as means of separation.

Elsewhere, the uniqueness of the private self has been identified as a prominent aspect of ego experience for Japanese (Watanabe & Komatsu, 1999), contrary to their radically sociocentric characterization. More importantly, uniqueness deprivation (being made to feel ordinary or common) has been found to prompt assertion of individuality in Japan (Ueno, 1984, 1986; Yamaoka, 1989, 1995), just as it does in North America (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Furthermore, comparative analysis of television commercials has revealed that the uniqueness of the marketed product or selling proposition is emphasized even more in Japan than in the United States (Ramaprasad & Hasegawa, 1992). Finally, although Japanese approaches to psychotherapy are adapted to the distinctive social realities of that culture, personal distinctiveness, private conscience, and the need for independent self-reflection are nonetheless emphasized as guiding principles (Murata, 1972; Tatara, 1974), much as they are in the West. This pattern suggests that the desire for distinction is not absent in Japan, however modulated it may be. Even so, there may be significant differences in how this separation motive is expressed in Japan and the West. To address this issue, we need to introduce a conceptual refinement.

Horizontal and Vertical Distinctiveness

There are two basic ways to achieve distinction. The first involves standing out from others through peculiarity. Expressing a preference for a painting that most others dislike, wearing an unusual article of clothing, acquiring a rare commodity, assuming an odd nickname, and taking up an uncommon hobby are all examples of this form. Because such distinctiveness is not inherently “good” or “bad” in evaluative significance, it does not in most cases convey social superiority or inferiority. As such, we will refer to this form of

distinction as *horizontal*. The second form involves standing out from others on the basis of distinctive success or failure. In the classroom, both the exceptional overachiever and the incorrigible underachiever achieve a degree of separation and conspicuousness. Likewise, distinction can be derived from being adored or shunned by others to a remarkable degree, as it can from rising up the corporate ranks with extraordinary speed or not at all where advancement is typical. Because of the clear normative significance of being “better” or “worse” than others who pursue the same goals, we will refer to this form of distinction as *vertical*.

The primary cultural significance of the horizontal-vertical distinction lies in its relation to nonconformity. Both forms of distinction provide separation, but willful horizontal distinction can be taken as impropriety or nonconformity to conventions and morals, a tendency that others may view with disapproval. Although this potential significance is not tantamount to the clear-cut social standing afforded by vertical distinction, it may discourage or suppress horizontal expression of individuality in cultures that place a premium on formality, tradition, and prescribed conduct. In hydraulic fashion, such suppression would intensify the desire for vertical distinction at culturally sanctioned activities that cannot be judged “wrong” in any way. Japan has been described as just such a propriety-focused culture. In contrast to the relative looseness and latitude that define Western social practices, Japanese culture is known for its elaborate framework of tacit rules and strictures that constrain the spontaneous expression of personal impulses (Bachnik, 1992a; Doi, 1981, 1986; Hsu, 1983; Lebra, 1992; Okabe, 1983). As such, the Japanese should be especially disinclined to pursue horizontal distinctiveness. This reasoning allows some comparative hypotheses. To the extent that both Japanese and North Americans are motivated to stand out from others, pleasant distinctiveness experiences should more often be of the vertical type for Japanese than for North Americans. Conversely, unpleasant distinctiveness experiences should more often be of the horizontal type for Japanese than for North Americans. To test these complementary hypotheses, we asked Canadian and Japanese students to recall events in their life that produced strong feelings of positive or negative distinctiveness (Study 1). We then sought to clarify the private and public emotional significance of such events for the two cultural groups (Study 2).

Study 1

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 53 (29 women and 24 men) undergraduate students at the University of Toronto and 51 (26 women and 25 men) undergraduate students at Hokkai Gakuen University in Sapporo, Japan. To sharpen the cultural contrast, we ensured that none of the Canadians were of Asian ethnicity (89% were of European ethnicity). All Japanese participants were of Japanese ethnicity. The cultural groups were similar in age, $t(102) = 1.34$, $p = .18$ ($M_s = 18.68$ and 18.51 for Canadians and Japanese, respectively; range = 17-20), and gender ratio, $\chi^2(1) = .15$, $p = .70$.

Materials and Procedure

Two questionnaires were administered to all participants. Japanese participants completed Japanese-language versions of the questionnaires that had been produced from the English-language originals using back-translation to maximize equivalence. Participants at both universities elected to complete the questionnaire as part of a course-related research experience.

Need for Uniqueness Scale (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). The NUS was included to test the possibility that the Japanese are lower in need for uniqueness than Canadians, consistent with past findings (Yamaguchi, 1994; Yamaguchi et al., 1995). The magnitude of this difference would appear to reflect the relative salience of striving for personal distinctiveness within the two cultures. The measure consists of 16 first-person statements (e.g., "People often say I'm a non-conformist," "I prefer to blend in with my social group") that reflect the presence or absence of uniqueness motivation. Respondents indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement using a 5-point Likert-type scale, anchored with *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*.

Distinctiveness Life Events Questionnaire (DLEQ). This open-ended questionnaire was expressly designed for the study. It requires participants to recall the five most personally significant events from their past that produced a positive sense of personal distinctiveness and the five most significant events that produced a negative sense of personal distinctiveness. Each event is described in a few sentences. The age of the respondent at the time of each event and the emotional intensity of each event are also reported, the latter on a 9-point Likert-type scale anchored with *very mild* and *very intense*. This additional information was aimed at helping us interpret any qualitative differences found.

RESULTS

Need for Uniqueness

Ratings for negative NUS items were reverse-scored so that higher ratings uniformly reflected higher need for uniqueness. To test the claim that Japanese are lower than Canadians on this dimension, we conducted a 2 (cultural group) \times 2 (gender) ANOVA with $\alpha = .05$ on summated NUS score. No effects were significant (all $ps > .12$). Closer examination, however, revealed that the summated score was not a clear-cut basis of comparison. Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficient for the items was .77 and .82 for the Japanese and Canadians, respectively. These values did not differ significantly according to Feldt's (1969; Feldt, Woodruff, & Salih, 1987) test, $F(52, 50) = 1.28$, $p = .19$. Despite adequate alphas, item intercorrelations showed considerable range: $-.29$ to $.57$ for Japanese and $-.11$ to $.64$ for Canadians. The wide range hints at significant heterogeneity among the NUS items (see also Miyashita, 1991; Tepper & Hoyle, 1996). To reveal latent structure, we conducted principal factor analysis of the 16 items separately for the two cultural samples.¹ The first two factors accounted for 91% and 92% of the common variance for Japanese and Canadians, respectively. For both samples, the eigenvalues for these factors were clearly discontinuous with the rest when monotonically plotted. Accordingly, only two factors were retained for rotation. An oblique rotation (promax) was used to allow for correlated factors. The resulting factor intercorrelations were .26 and .30 for Japanese and Canadians, respectively. The coefficient of congruence (see Gorsuch, 1983) was used to assess similarity of loadings for matching factors in the two samples. MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, and Hong (1999) have recommended that coefficient values of .92 to .98 be taken as indicating "good" match and values of .98 to 1.00 as indicating "excellent" match. Coefficients of congruence for the two rotated NUS factors were .92 and .93, providing good evidence of parallel factors and justifying combining the samples for the purpose of factor interpretation and estimation of

1. The modest sample sizes could not be trusted to produce reliable factor solutions. To overcome this problem, we supplemented the data used in the exploratory factor analyses with the responses of students of similar age at the same two universities who also had completed the NUS. This allowed analysis of data for 176 Japanese (81 women and 95 men) and 174 Canadians (94 women and 80 men).

factor scores. Examination of both the factor pattern and factor structure in the combined sample supported interpretation of the first factor as *group-mindedness* (e.g., “I place a lot of value on my membership in social groups,” “I like the sense of belonging I get when I’m part of a group,” “I’m not much of a team player”) and the second as *desire to be different* (e.g., “I like being different,” “I like standing out in a crowd,” “I dislike being the odd one out”). Factor-based scales were created by averaging ratings on items with high loadings on each factor. This included six items ($\alpha = .72$) for group-mindedness and five items ($\alpha = .67$) for desire to be different. Scores on these factor-based scales were compared across groups in 2 (cultural group) \times 2 (gender) ANOVAs. Results revealed that the Japanese were no more group-minded than the Canadians (all $ps > .14$). For desire to be different, in contrast, the main effect for culture was significant, $F(1, 100) = 5.19$, $p = .02$ (all other $ps > .76$), with the Canadians higher than the Japanese ($M_s = 3.83$ vs. 3.50). Although this pattern is broadly consistent with past evidence of lower need for uniqueness in Japanese than Westerners, it also suggests that the difference is limited to a particular facet of the construct.

Horizontal versus Vertical Events

Not all 104 participants provided five positive and five negative events on the DLEQ. All, however, provided at least three events of each valence. To allow for clean comparisons across groups and categories, only the first three events listed by each participant were used in the analyses that follow.²

To compare the self-reported experience of distinctiveness across cultures, each distinctiveness event was categorized as either primarily horizontal or primarily vertical by two independent judges blind to the purposes of the study.³ Interjudge agreement was $\kappa = .76$ for

2. Supplementary analyses that included fourth and fifth events did not alter the pattern of results to be described. Including these events, however, complicates comparisons and limits the statistical analyses that can be appropriately conducted.

3. The Japanese events were translated prior to categorization. The two judges were Canadian and did not read Japanese, raising the possibility that the results might have been different had Japanese coders been used. Such an outcome is highly unlikely. The coders were trained to categorize events in a tightly prescribed manner, according to conceptual rules that defined vertical and horizontal distinctiveness events. These rules pertain to the basic positioning of the individual

Japanese and $\kappa = .77$ for Canadians, both adequate according to Landis and Koch's (1977) guidelines. All inconsistencies were resolved through discussion. Typical positive events were "Receiving an award for special achievement in math at my high school" (vertical) and "Being the only one among my friends to have had a chance meeting with [a film star]" (horizontal). Typical negative events were "Turning out to be the worst player on the [sports] team" (vertical) and "Feeling self-conscious at school when my unusual name was called out in public" (horizontal).

For both positive and negative events, the number of horizontal events for any participant was three minus the number of vertical events. Given this complete redundancy, we analyzed only the latter, treating it as an ordered categorical variable (0–3). Only one participant reported less than two vertical positive events and only five reported no vertical negative events. To avoid having the empty cells pose difficulties for valid statistical inference (see Hosmer & Lemeshow, 1989), we collapsed 0, 1, and 2 into a single category for positive events, thereby reducing the variable to two levels (<3, 3). Similarly, we collapsed 0 and 1 for negative events, thereby reducing the variable to three levels (<2, 2, 3). The two collapsed variables were not associated, $\chi^2(2) = 1.34$, $p = .51$, suggesting that the tendency to report vertical positive events was independent of the tendency to report vertical negative events.

Logistic regression was conducted using a cumulative logit model to accommodate the ordered three-category variable representing number of vertical negative events. The likelihood of reporting more versus fewer vertical positive and negative events was modeled as a function of cultural group, gender, and their interaction. For positive events, none of the three predictors were significant (all $ps > .18$). Eighty-eight percent of positive events reported by Japanese and 96% reported by Canadians were vertical. For negative events, a nonsignificant score test of proportional odds, $\chi^2(3) = 2.13$, $p = .55$, supported the critical assumption of the cumulative model that all nonintercept coefficients were equal for the two underlying

in relation to others as a consequence of each event. Such positioning could be readily inferred from the general form or structure of the event and would be equally apparent and otherwise similar across cultures. Even so, the possibility of cultural bias in the coding cannot be completely ruled out without independent classification by Japanese coders.

binary models—prediction of <2 vs. 2 and 2 vs. 3 events (see Allison, 1999). Of the predictors, only culture was significant, $B = 1.28$, $\chi^2(1) = 5.37$, $p = .02$ (all other $ps > .16$), reflecting the greater tendency of Canadians than Japanese to report vertical rather than horizontal negative events. Specifically, the predicted odds of reporting 3 rather than 2 or 2 rather than <2 vertical negative events was 3.59 times greater for Canadians than Japanese, controlling for gender. Seventy-five percent of negative events reported by Canadians and 62% reported by Japanese were vertical.

Recency and Emotional Intensity

For each event reported, the participant's age at the time of the event was subtracted from his or her age at the time of testing to index the recency of the event in years (i.e., smaller values indicate more recent events). Differences in the average recency of the three positive and three negative events were examined within a 2 (cultural group) \times 2 (gender) \times 2 (valence: positive vs. negative events) ANOVA, with the last factor treated as a repeated measure. Means and standard deviations appear in Table 1. Only the main effect for valence was significant, $F(1, 100) = 38.49$, $p < .0001$ (all other $ps > .08$), with participants reporting more recent positive than negative events ($Ms = 3.97$ and 5.78). The absence of cultural differences here dis-

Table 1
Recency and Emotional Intensity of Reported Events as a Function of Culture and Gender in Study 1

	Positive Events		Negative Events	
	Recency	Intensity	Recency	Intensity
Canadians				
Women	4.21 (2.83)	6.97 (1.35)	5.83 (2.35)	6.70 (1.17)
Men	3.39 (2.32)	6.85 (1.04)	6.44 (3.05)	5.56 (1.47)
Japanese				
Women	4.17 (2.40)	6.35 (1.53)	5.86 (2.70)	6.44 (1.13)
Men	4.07 (1.91)	5.77 (1.96)	5.00 (2.26)	5.89 (1.83)

Note. Standard deviations appear in parentheses. Scale range is 1–9 for self-rated emotional intensity; higher values reflect greater intensity. Recency values represent years since occurrence.

misses the possibility that one group reported more distant events than the other. Had that been the case, the significance of developmental stage would have confounded interpretation of the horizontal-vertical difference reported above.

A parallel 2 (cultural group) \times 2 (gender) \times 2 (valence) ANOVA was conducted on average emotional intensity ratings for positive and negative events. Means and standard deviations appear in Table 1. Significant effects were found for gender, $F(1, 100) = 5.95, p = .02$, valence, $F(1, 100) = 4.94, p = .03$, and the culture \times valence interaction, $F(1, 100) = 8.50, p = .004$ (all other $ps > .08$). The first effect was due to the tendency for women to provide higher intensity ratings than men ($Ms = 6.62$ and 6.01). The second effect was due to higher intensity ratings for positive than negative events ($Ms = 6.50$ and 6.18). However, decomposition of the culture \times valence interaction into simple effects revealed that the difference between positive and negative events held for Canadians, $F(1, 51) = 12.76, p = .0008$ ($Ms = 6.91$ and 6.18 , respectively), but not Japanese, $F(1, 49) = .25, p = .62$ ($Ms = 6.07$ and 6.17 , respectively). Alternative simple effect testing—by valence rather than culture—revealed that Canadians provided higher intensity ratings than did Japanese for positive, $F(1, 100) = 8.17, p = .005$, but not negative events, $F(1, 100) = .02, p = .90$.

Finally, there was no association between recency and emotional intensity for positive events, $r(104) = -.09, p = .39$, or negative events, $r(104) = .09, p = .36$, suggesting that distant events were not remembered as less emotionally significant than recent events.

Event Domains

The judges who categorized each event as primarily horizontal or vertical also categorized each event as falling within one of 14 domains: academic, employment (paid or unpaid), friends, family, romantic, sports, hobbies, arts (performance), body, possessions, moral/political opinions, social identity, aesthetic preferences, and other. The scheme was designed to be exhaustive on the basis of past research addressing the life space of university students. Interjudge agreement was $\kappa = .88$ for Japanese and $\kappa = .89$ for Canadians. As before, all inconsistencies were resolved through discussion.

With 14 domains and only 3 positive and 3 negative events per participant, the domain \times number of events (0–3) matrix was too

Table 2
Domains Accounting for at Least 5% of Reported Events as a Function of Culture and Gender in Study 1

Canadians		Japanese	
Women	Men	Women	Men
Positive Events			
academic (47)	academic (43)	arts (29)	academic (23)
arts (15)	sports (19)	academic (21)	sports (21)
sports (13)	arts (15)	other (12)	other (16)
employment (7)	body (7)	sports (10)	employment (7)
romantic (6)		body (8)	friends (7)
		hobbies (6)	hobbies (7)
			arts (7)
Negative Events			
body (21)	body (25)	body (33)	body (31)
family (16)	academic (15)	academic (13)	academic (13)
academic (15)	sports (13)	sports (13)	other (12)
friends (15)	other (11)	social identity (13)	sports (9)
social identity (13)	romantic (10)	other (13)	possessions (7)
sports (6)	family (7)		friends (5)
	social identity (7)		opinions (5)
	friends (6)		social identity (5)

Note. Percentages appear in parentheses.

sparse to allow for valid statistical testing of group differences. Neither would scale collapsing provide an adequate fix. Therefore, a simpler, descriptive approach was taken in comparing the domains represented in the reported events. Specifically, domains that accounted for at least 5% of the events reported by any of the four groups (Canadian and Japanese women and men) were arranged in order of prominence (see Table 2). The similarity in domain representation across groups is striking. For all groups, the bulk of positive events related to academic, artistic, and athletic endeavors, whereas the bulk of negative events related to the body (especially physical appearance), academic and athletic endeavors, and social identity. The greater prominence of the “other” category for the Japanese suggests that our coding scheme was not as exhaustive as had been hoped, at least for Japanese students. Closer examination of the events that fell in this category revealed that most of the pos-

itive events involved travel or the experience of novelty, whereas most of the negative events involved nonspecific loneliness or isolation.

DISCUSSION

The overwhelming finding from this study was the dominance of vertical events. Seventy-eight percent of the participants reported no horizontal positive events and 33% reported no horizontal negative events. Although the Japanese, as predicted, were more likely than Canadians to report horizontal negative events, even they reported more vertical than horizontal negative events (62% vs. 38%). The overall pattern suggests that the most memorable unpleasant experiences of separation in both cultures involve distinctive failure, rejection, inadequacy, or loss of social standing. Similarly, the most memorable gratifying experiences of separation in both cultures involve distinctive achievement or approval that confers prestige. Although this latter conclusion fits well with the morally constrained distinctiveness striving we posited for the Japanese, it also suggests that the dominant Western route to personal distinction is more aligned with social norms than is often assumed. In fact, and contrary to prediction, Canadians were as likely as Japanese to report vertical rather than horizontal positive events, implying that this form of separation is as prepotent in the West as in Japan. Given this pattern, it is ironic that none of the 16 items that make up the NUS, a scale developed in the United States, directly taps the desire for vertical distinction.⁴ Therefore, the confirmed difference on the desire-to-be-different factor of the NUS may have little bearing for the primary form of distinction that is pursued in both cultures. Moreover, as revealed in the analysis of event domains, even the specific types of events that carry positive and negative distinction appear to be rather similar in the two cultures, at least for university students. The same is true for the timing of the events, as reflected in the recency analysis.

The pattern of differences on the emotional intensity of reported events suggests that distinctiveness events carry more impact for women than for men. Also, positive but not negative events appear

4. The expanded, 32-item version of the NUS (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) contains only one such item ("Being a success in one's career means making a contribution that no one else has made").

to have more impact for Canadians than for Japanese. This in part may reflect self-presentational differences, with men being more prone than women to deny emotionality and Japanese exhibiting more modesty than Canadians in describing how good it feels to stand out from others.⁵ Alternatively, the latter, cultural difference may reflect the tendency of Japanese to derive less gratification from positive separation than do Canadians, even while the two groups are similar in how intensely they experience aversive forms of separation. The Japanese were, after all, lower on at least one aspect of need for uniqueness. This second possibility would be broadly consistent with claims that the Japanese are less preoccupied than Westerners with the ideal of feeling “good” about oneself (e.g., Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999).

We conducted Study 2 to clarify the basis of cultural differences in the emotional quality of distinctiveness experiences. Specifically, we aimed to confirm whether Japanese are indeed less privately gratified by positive distinctiveness, as suggested above. Furthermore, we sought to compare the form of this difference for horizontal versus vertical events. This comparison was not possible in Study 1 due to the lack of a fixed set of events. Study 2 involved having Japanese and Canadians rate typical emotional reactions to a standard set of events representing positive and negative distinctiveness. We used an expanded and more specific measure of emotional quality and minimized the possibility of confounding self-presentational concerns.

Study 2

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 95 (48 women and 47 men) Canadian undergraduate students and 100 (50 women and 50 men) Japanese undergraduate students from the same universities as in Study 1. Selection ensured that all Japanese participants were of Japanese ethnicity and all Canadians were of European ethnicity (with no Asian ethnicity in cases of mixed background). The cultural groups were similar in age, $t(193) = .34, p = .73$

5. In related research, we have found evidence of restraint in self- as compared to typical-other-ratings of emotional reactions. The difference is greater in relation to positive events, hinting that modesty may be a concern.

($M_s = 19.01$ and 18.97 for Canadians and Japanese, respectively; range = 17–23), and gender ratio, $\chi^2(1) = .01$, $p = .94$.

Materials and Procedure

All participants completed the Reactions to Distinctiveness Questionnaire (RDQ), which had been created for the study. As before, Japanese participants completed a Japanese-language version that had been produced from the English-language original using back-translation to maximize equivalence. The RDQ consists of single-statement descriptions of vertical positive events (e.g., “Running as a candidate for student council and beating out a large number of well-qualified opponents to win the election”), horizontal positive events (e.g., “Being the only winner of a lottery where the prize is a trip to a faraway island that few people have been to”), vertical negative events (e.g., “Achieving the slowest time at a long-distance running competition”), and horizontal negative events (e.g., “Discovering that one is the only member of a large group of friends who has not yet seen a popular film”). Each of the four categories was represented by three events created to have similar significance in the two cultures, in light of the findings of Study 1 and the judgment of bicultural informants. The twelve events appeared in a random order, one event per page.

Below each event, Canadian women were asked to provide several ratings to describe the emotional reaction of “the typical Canadian female university student of your age” to the event in question. Canadian men did the same for the typical male Canadian university student of their age, as did Japanese women and men for the typical Japanese university student of their gender and age. The four emotional dimensions for positive events were feeling “distinctive,” “happy,” “proud,” and “superior.” The four matching emotional dimensions for negative events were feeling “distinctive,” “unhappy,” “ashamed,” and “inferior.” The dimensions were chosen to capture the basic emotional character, in both cultures, of standing out from others in a good or bad way. Each was rated on a 9-point scale, with 1 labeled *very weak* and 9 *very strong*. The choice of typical-other-ratings over self-ratings was intended to minimize the self-presentational concerns that are heightened when one describes one’s own imagined reactions to events. At the same time, we assumed that students would have sufficient knowledge of their same-sex peer group to provide ratings that corresponded with the defining behavioral tendencies of that group. To help us further disentangle cultural differences in self-presentation from inner experience, participants rated each emotional dimension twice. The first rating was of the typical peer group member’s *private reaction*. The second rating was of the person’s *apparent reaction*, as

perceived by others in the situation. This decoupling also allowed us to examine the possibility of differences in emotional transparency and restraint across cultures. More generally, it accommodated the pronounced duality of the Japanese self discussed earlier.

RESULTS

One challenge for scalar comparisons across culturally dissimilar groups is the possibility of differences in response style (Clarke, 2000; Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997). Care must be taken not to confuse such differences with distance on the latent dimensions represented by the scales. We were specifically concerned here with the possibility of greater reluctance by the Japanese to use extreme scale points (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995). The results revealed no evidence of this problem. In using the 9-point scale, Canadians and Japanese were roughly comparable in the extent to which they chose the extreme points 1 (7% and 11% of the 96 ratings, respectively), 2 (6% and 6%), 8 (16% and 11%), and 9 (20% and 24%). As such, scale collapsing or re-centering was not necessary.

Ratings of the four dimensions were highly coherent for all events, suggesting a dominant commonality of emotional intensity. Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficient for the four ratings ranged from .66–.92 ($M = .79$) across the twelve events for private reactions and .68–.89 ($M = .76$) for apparent reactions, a fair degree of internal consistency for such a small number of items (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Feldt's (1969) test confirmed equal within-event reliability for Japanese and Canadians for both private ($p = .14$) and apparent ($p = .22$) reactions. To enhance reliability and facilitate analysis, the four ratings were averaged to create a single index of emotional intensity. We then examined consistency within the four event categories (vertical and horizontal positive, vertical and horizontal negative). With only three events per category, each addressing a qualitatively different situation, high coefficient alphas cannot be expected. Consistent with this, the alphas ranged from .60–.74 ($M = .67$) across the four categories for private reactions and .60–.69 ($M = .63$) for public reactions. Given the minimal size of the event sets, however, we accepted this moderate degree of reliability as adequate for our purposes. Feldt's (1969) test confirmed equal within-set reliability for Japanese and Canadians for both private ($p = .27$) and apparent ($p = .42$) reactions. To further enhance reli-

Table 3
 Emotional Intensity of Distinctiveness Events as a Function of Culture and Gender in Study 2

	Positive Events		Negative Events	
	Vertical	Horizontal	Vertical	Horizontal
Canadians				
Women				
Private reaction	8.31 (0.44)	6.77 (0.92)	7.20 (1.42)	5.35 (1.02)
Apparent reaction	6.56 (1.19)	5.66 (1.19)	4.87 (1.23)	3.78 (1.07)
Men				
Private reaction	8.36 (0.43)	6.49 (0.99)	7.39 (1.13)	5.12 (1.18)
Apparent reaction	6.58 (1.01)	5.78 (1.17)	4.71 (1.04)	3.46 (1.10)
Japanese				
Women				
Private reaction	8.16 (0.94)	6.43 (1.42)	7.19 (1.19)	5.19 (1.37)
Apparent reaction	6.36 (1.27)	5.48 (1.20)	5.05 (1.29)	4.14 (1.23)
Men				
Private reaction	7.20 (1.56)	5.74 (1.12)	6.46 (1.58)	4.48 (1.32)
Apparent reaction	6.00 (1.76)	4.98 (1.21)	5.07 (1.49)	4.03 (1.40)

Note. Values represent emotional intensity ratings (scale range = 1–9) averaged across four dimensions and three events within each category. Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

ability and facilitate analysis, emotional intensity was averaged across the three events representing each category.

Differences in emotional intensity were examined within a 2 (cultural group) \times 2 (gender) \times 2 (valence) \times 2 (event type: vertical, horizontal) \times 2 (reaction type: private, public) ANOVA, with the last three factors treated as nested repeated measures. Means and standard deviation appear in Table 3. Significant effects were found for culture, $F(1, 191) = 5.85, p = .02$, gender, $F(1, 191) = 6.36, p = .01$, valence, $F(1, 191) = 425.18, p < .0001$, culture \times valence, $F(1, 191) = 14.30, p = .0002$, event type, $F(1, 191) = 620.66, p < .0001$, reaction type, $F(1, 191) = 470.24, p < .0001$, culture \times reaction type, $F(1, 191) = 12.67, p = .0005$, culture \times gender \times reaction type, $F(1, 191) = 4.19, p = .04$, valence \times event type, $F(1, 191) = 8.36, p = .004$, valence \times reaction type, $F(1, 191) = 30.99, p < .0001$, culture \times valence \times reaction type, $F(1, 191) = 19.78, p < .0001$, culture \times gender \times valence \times reaction type, $F(1, 191) = 5.38, p = .02$, event type \times reaction type,

$F(1, 191) = 206.60, p < .0001$, and culture \times gender \times event type \times reaction type, $F(1, 191) = 6.88, p = .009$.

The first four effects converge with the findings of Study 1. Namely, women provided higher intensity ratings than men ($M_s = 6.03$ and 5.73), positive events were rated as more intense than negative events ($M_s = 6.55$ and 5.22), and Canadians provided higher intensity ratings than did Japanese for positive, $F(1, 191) = 17.15, p < .0001$ ($M_s = 6.82$ and 6.29), but not negative events, $F(1, 191) = .06, p = .80$ ($M_s = 5.23$ and 5.20). The main effects for both culture and valence were due largely to the group difference for positive events.

The remaining effects involved the vertical-horizontal and private-apparent distinctions. On the whole, vertical events were rated as more intense than horizontal events ($M_s = 6.59$ and 5.18), and private emotion was rated as more intense than apparent emotion ($M_s = 6.61$ and 5.16). These main effects, however, were qualified, as reflected in the interactions. The vertical-horizontal difference was greater for negative ($M_s = 5.99$ and 4.44) than positive events ($M_s = 7.18$ and 5.91), and for private ($M_s = 7.53$ and 5.69) than apparent reactions ($M_s = 5.65$ and 4.66). Although the greater vertical-horizontal difference for private than public reactions held in all four groups, it was somewhat greater for Canadian men and Japanese women than for Canadian women and Japanese men, accounting for the culture \times gender \times event type \times reaction type interaction. Furthermore, the greater intensity of private than apparent emotion was more pronounced for Canadians ($M_s = 6.87$ and 5.18) than for Japanese ($M_s = 6.35$ and 5.14), due mainly to the tendency of Canadians to provide higher ratings than the Japanese on private, $F(1, 191) = 16.15, p < .0001$, but not apparent emotion, $F(1, 191) = .09, p = .77$. This pattern was itself more pronounced for men than for women, accounting for the culture \times gender \times reaction type interaction, with the gender difference greater for negative than positive events, accounting for the culture \times gender \times valence \times reaction type interaction.

DISCUSSION

The results reinforce and extend the findings of Study 1. Because participants were describing the reactions of the typical member of their same-sex peer group, and not themselves, the potential for self-

deception and socially desirable responding was minimal. Even so, women again rated distinctiveness events as having more impact than did men, for both private and public reactions. Also, Canadians again rated positive but not negative events as having more impact than did Japanese. This difference, however, was due mainly to the tendency of Canadians to rate private but not public reactions more strongly than did Japanese. This was especially true for men. The pattern suggests that the cultural difference in reactions to positive distinction does not relate so much to the outward expression of emotion, which is similarly intense in the two cultures. Rather, it relates to the private significance of standing out in a positive way. This is an important specification. It implies that positive distinction feels better in Canada than in Japan, despite the apparent similarity in the strength of its emotional display in the two cultures. All participants rated their same-sex peers as feeling more emotions than they show, but Canadians, especially men, claimed greater private-public disparity than did Japanese. Insofar as the magnitude of private-public disparity reflects restraint in emotional expression, this pattern would appear to challenge the long-standing view of the Japanese as “suppressors” (Hsu, 1983) and “paragons of politeness” (Benedict, 1989). Alternatively, it may be that Japanese read greater sentiment in subtle emotional displays.

Finally, vertical events, especially negative ones, were rated as having more impact than horizontal events, especially at the private level. This fits with the dominance of vertical events in Study 1. Distinctiveness events that do not involve social or material success/failure might be expected to be less emotionally significant than those that do—across cultures—so this finding is perhaps hardly surprising.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We began with the question of whether the need for separation is as significant for understanding Japanese as Western thought and behavior. We contrasted the strong relativist position, which suggests that it is not, against the universalist-structuralist position, which suggests that it is. The focus of our analysis was on one motive that reflects separation and individuation, the desire for personal distinction. Indirect evidence that the Japanese do at times pursue, value, and emphasize distinctiveness led us to propose that this motive is

not unimportant in Japan. However, we recognized that the dissimilar cultural constraints that define social life in Japan and the West may give rise to divergent expressions of the same underlying motive. The vertical-horizontal distinction was introduced to frame our expectations for what these differences might be. Specifically, we hypothesized that Japanese are less inclined than Westerners to pursue horizontal, or nonhierarchical, distinctiveness, given the greater risk in Japan that such distinctiveness will be seen by others as questionable “deviance” (see Kim & Markus, 1999). The Japanese, we argued, are more inclined than Westerners to opt for vertical distinction, which involves culturally sanctioned pursuits that carry little risk of disapproval. We also proposed that horizontal forms of unpleasant distinctiveness would be more typical for Japanese than for Westerners, given the former’s greater emphasis on propriety and social regulation and the latter’s greater tolerance for idiosyncrasy and freedom of expression.

The results of our two studies comparing Japanese and Canadian students present a more complex picture, one that bridges the strong relativist and universalist positions. To begin with, the two cultural groups were comparable in their overall need for uniqueness, a trait that is highly redundant with desire for distinctiveness (see also Hayashi & Weiss, 1994). Closer examination, however, revealed that the Japanese were lower in the desire to be different, the aspect of need for uniqueness that best parallels the distinctiveness motive conceived here. Because none of the scale items that served as indicators of this factor captures the essence of what we have called vertical distinctiveness, focusing instead on standing out from others for its sake (e.g., being the “odd one out”), the desire-to-be-different factor appears closer to what we have called horizontal distinctiveness. If so, the group difference on this dimension is in fact consistent with our hypothesis that the Japanese are relatively disinclined toward horizontal distinction. This hypothesis received clearer support from the greater tendency of Japanese than Canadians to recall negative horizontal experiences in Study 1.

Shifting from difference to similarity, Japanese were no more likely than Canadians to report positive vertical events in Study 1. This finding was inconsistent with our prediction. The disconfirmation, however, was not due to this form of distinction being any less dominant for the Japanese than was expected. Rather, it was due to the unexpectedly comparable dominance of positive vertical events

for Canadians. Contrary to the maverick independence so idealized and celebrated in the West, the most meaningful and gratifying source of distinction for Canadians appears to be normatively defined social success and achievement. This disjunction recalls Spiro's (1993, 1996) admonition that the formal prescriptive ideals within a culture should not be confused with life on the ground. A people are rarely who they aspire to be.

Descriptive content analysis of the life experiences reported in Study 1 revealed further similarity. Much the same domains were represented across cultures, to much the same extent. This suggests that the sorts of life experience that produce memorable distinctiveness in Japan are comparable to those in the West. Of course, the exclusive reliance on student samples in our studies may have produced greater symmetry than would have been the case for older, less urbanized samples (Schooler, 1998). Future research should aim at extending beyond this over-utilized demographic group if wider cultural conclusions are to be drawn. This caveat aside, it is highly unlikely that prominent aspects of cultural character would be completely absent among the younger, educated Japanese examined.

Analysis of the emotional character of distinctiveness events revealed additional cultural differences. Most notably, the Japanese rated positive but not negative events as less emotionally intense than did Canadians. This difference held in both studies, despite the shift from self-report to judgments of another's reactions. Furthermore, as revealed in Study 2, the pattern was clearest in relation to the rating of privately experienced emotion, discounting the possibility that differential concerns over the public expression of emotion lay behind the difference. In fact, ratings of outwardly displayed emotion were highly similar across cultures. The pattern of greater private-public disparity among Canadians than Japanese was somewhat surprising in light of the stereotypic belief that the Japanese restrain self-related emotion (but see Matsumoto, Kasri, & Kooken, 1999, for a distinct example of less disparity among the Japanese). According to the results, it would be more accurate to say that the Japanese do not derive as much gratification as do Westerners from positive distinction, even while they suffer as much from negative distinction. This difference offers some support for the relativist commitment to the top-down construction of emotion (e.g., Mesquita, 2001), suggesting that the thrill of vertical distinction may be weaker in Japan than the West, presumably because it is not rein-

forced to the same extent during socialization. Of course, to say that a motive is weaker is not to say that it is absent. Why this cultural difference should be most pronounced for men, and why women should, on the whole, find standing out from others to be more intense an experience, is less clear. Additional research is needed to explore the role of gender in this regard.

The major limitation of this research is that the behavior measured was several steps removed from the phenomenon at issue. Admittedly, we never examined how Japanese and Canadians spontaneously pursue and experience distinctiveness *in vivo*. Rather, we asked them to recall and describe personally significant events from the past and to make judgments about how similar others would react to various hypothetical situations that were described in brief. Although such behavior should reflect cultural characteristics that pertain to the desire for distinction, it remains possible that a different pattern of results would have resulted from a more naturalistic approach. Compelling analogue studies that model the online experience of standing out from others in positive and negative ways therefore remain as a desideratum for future research. The challenge of such research will be to design situations that are both natural and highly similar in meaning across cultures.

In summary, our comparison of the distinctiveness motive in Japan and Canada revealed an interesting composite of commonality and difference. On one hand, the Japanese appear to be less desirous of standing out for their own sake and less emotionally affected by positive distinction. On the other hand, they are similar to Westerners in the intensity of their reactions to negative distinction, even while they are more likely to find horizontal distinction aversive. Finally, Japan and Canada are similar in the sorts of experiences that confer personally significant distinction in their cultures, suggesting opportunity structures that are perhaps more comparable than we, and many others, have assumed. This, at least, is true for university students living in the post-bubble-economy Japan. At its broadest, this pattern suggests that it is as wrong to say that the Japanese do not need separation as to say that Westerners do not need attachment. The cultural differences that do exist are not consistent with categorical references to the presence or absence of motives. As Doi (1981) points out in his illuminating explanation of the Japanese phrase *jibun ga aru* ("to have a self," considered desirable): "If the individual is submersed completely in the group, he has no *jibun*. . . . A

person is said to have a *jibun* when he can maintain an independent self that is never negated by membership in the group....But this does not mean, conversely, that to behave selfishly without submerging oneself in the group is enough to produce a *jibun*....It is, in short, extremely difficult to have a *jibun*.” (pp. 134–140). The compromise, argues Doi, is to align one’s own interests with those of the group without losing touch with either. Vertical distinction, as we have described it, offers just such a compromise in the pursuit of individuality. Moreover, given its dominance in both populations examined here, this may be as true in the West as it is in Japan.

In presenting a preliminary comparative portrait of the experience of standing out in Japan and Canada, this paper introduced a distinction between two basic forms of standing out—vertical and horizontal. This differentiation offers a promising point of entry for examining separation motives in a manner that accommodates dissimilar cultural realities with distinct opportunity structures. To the best of our knowledge, vertical distinctiveness has not been recognized as an important source of self-other demarcation in cross-cultural approaches to identity expression. The present studies suggest that researchers would profit from incorporating both forms of distinctiveness in their theories of how and where different cultures position the individual within society.

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