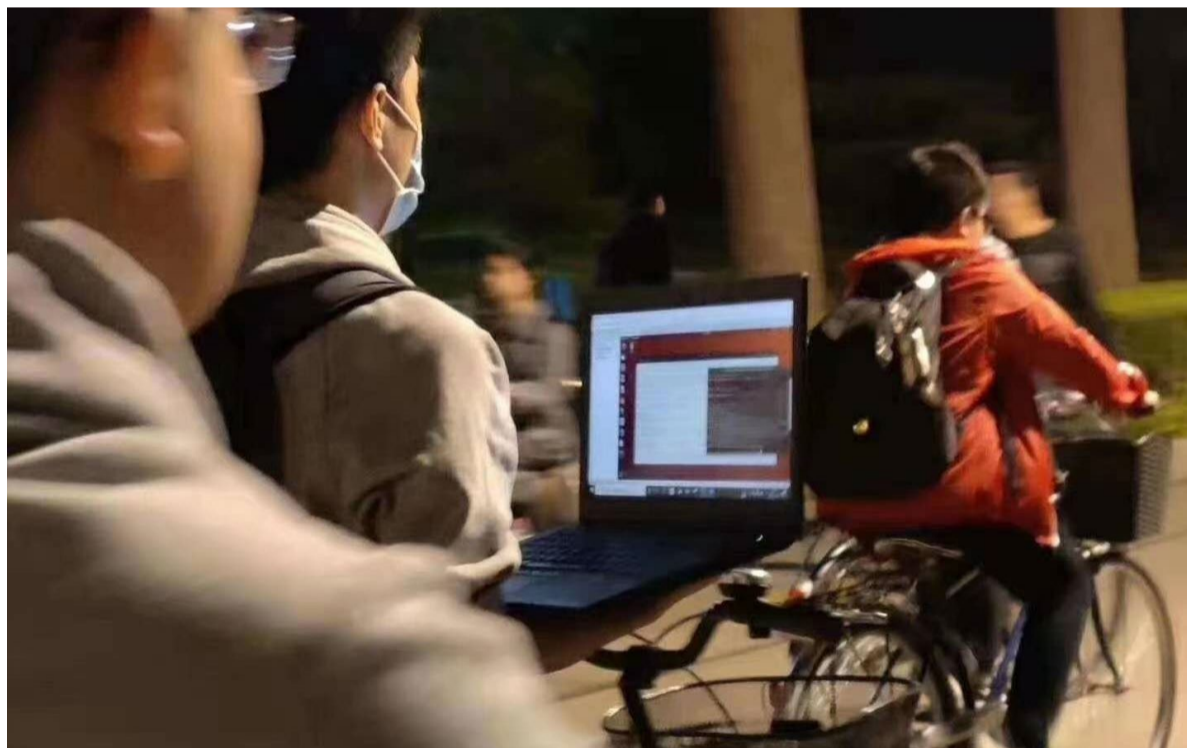


Social Comparison and Competition: the Reasons behind Involution in University Students and Fresh Graduates in China

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Involution (内卷) as an Internet buzzword has been vital in mainland China since 2020. It attracted public's attention two years ago after a picture was uploaded to social media, in which a Tsinghua University student was riding his bicycle while still working on his laptop.

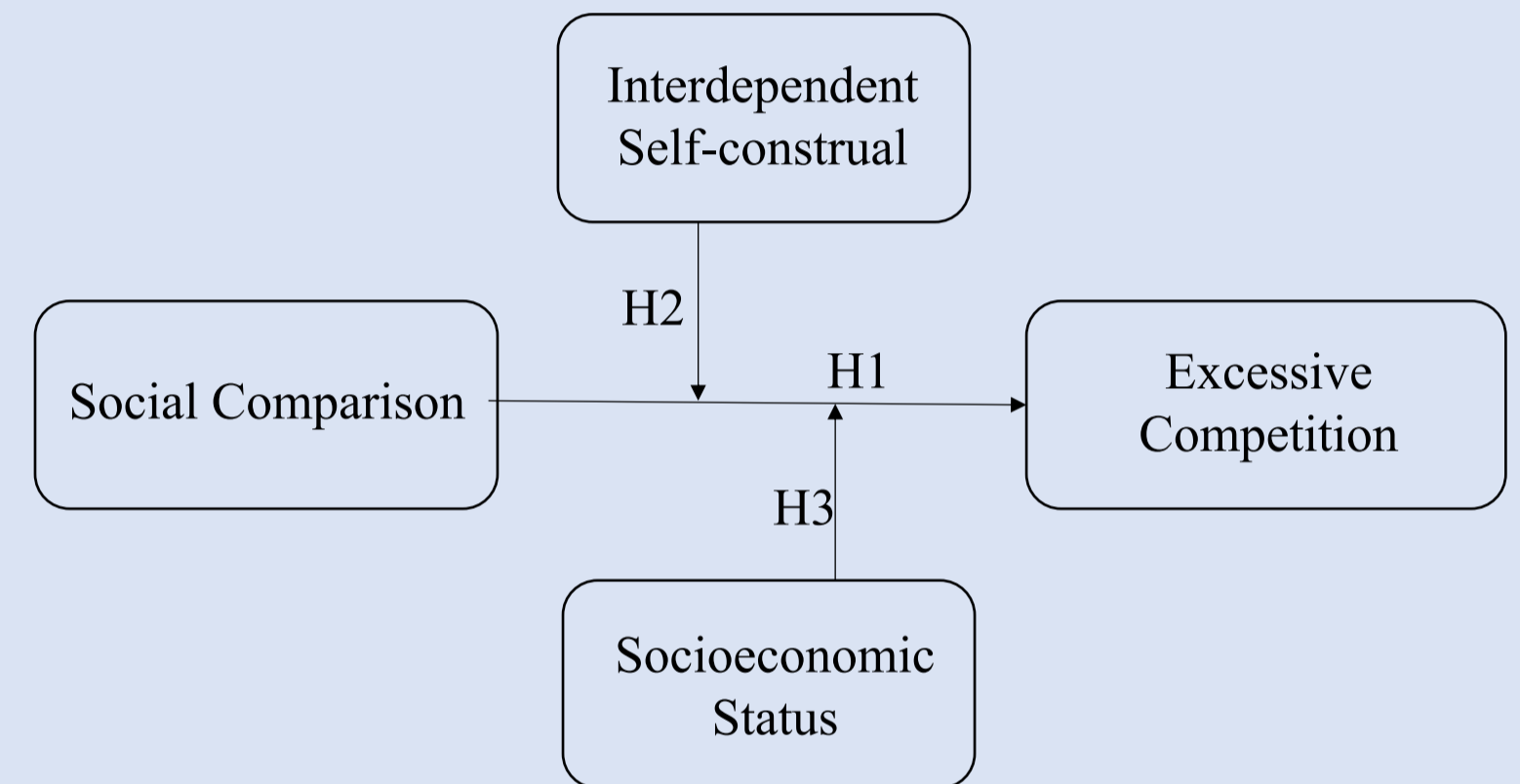


Theory Development

The theories behind the phenomenon, comparison and competition, have been studied by researchers for a long time.

We parallel individual-level involution to corporate-level excessive competition that appeared in Japan's economy in the last century.

And we set two factors, interdependent self-construal and socioeconomic status, as moderators in our research model.



Hypothesis 1: Social comparison has a positive effect on excessive competition.

Hypothesis 2: Self-construal moderates the relationship between social comparison and excessive competition, such that the positive effect of social comparison on excessive competition is exaggerated for those individuals who hold more interdependent self-construal.

Hypothesis 3: Socioeconomic status moderates the relationship between social comparison and excessive competition, such that the positive effect of social comparison on excessive competition is strengthened for those individuals who are in low socioeconomic status.