

Self-esteem and culture: Differences in cognitive self-evaluations or affective self-regard?

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Although people from East Asian countries consistently report lower self-esteem than do those from Western countries, the origins of this difference are unclear. We conducted two studies to illuminate this issue. Study 1 found that Chinese participants appraised themselves less positively than American participants on a cognitive measure of self-evaluations, but cultural differences were absent on a measure of affective self-regard. Moreover, cultural differences in global self-esteem were eliminated once cognitive self-evaluations were statistically controlled. Study 2 found that cultural differences in modesty underlie cultural differences in cognitive self-evaluations. These findings suggest that Chinese feel as positively toward themselves as Americans do, but are less inclined to evaluate themselves in an excessively positive manner.

Key words: competence, culture, self-esteem, self-love.

Introduction

People from East Asian countries score lower on self-report measures of global self-esteem than do those from Western countries (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). Although the effect itself is well established, its interpretation remains unclear. It could mean that East Asians like themselves less than do Westerners, or it could also mean that East Asians like themselves as much as Westerners, but are less inclined to evaluate themselves in an excessively positive manner.

These possibilities highlight that global self-esteem scales measure two related, but conceptually distinct, aspects of self-worth: cognitively based self-evaluations and affectively based feelings of self-regard (Tafarodi & Swann, 1996). The former term refers to judgments about one's competencies, talents, and attributes (e.g. I am intelligent or I am incompetent), whereas the latter refers to how people feel about themselves (e.g. I am proud of myself or I am ashamed of myself).¹

In the present report, we use this distinction to clarify the nature of cultural differences in self-esteem. Our research was guided by three hypotheses. (a) First, we predicted that cultural differences would be more apparent for cognitive self-evaluations than for affective self-regard. (b) Second, we predicted that cultural differences in cognitive self-evaluations would mediate cultural differences in global

self-esteem. (c) Third, we predicted that norms of modesty would underlie cultural differences in cognitive self-evaluations.

With respect to the first of these hypotheses, cultural differences are commonly found when it comes to cognitively based self-evaluations. Across a range of attributes, Americans, Canadians, and Western Europeans describe themselves more positively than do East Asians. These differences tend to be especially large when people evaluate their agentic qualities (e.g. 'How capable are you?') (Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005), but they also occur when people evaluate their communal qualities (e.g. 'How cooperative are you?') (Heine, Kitayama, & Hamamura, 2007). Because self-esteem scales tap these cognitively based judgments, these differences could explain why Americans (and other Westerners) score higher on self-esteem scales than do East Asians.

Whether cultural differences emerge for items that assess affective self-regard is less clear. Tafarodi and Swann (1996) found that American college students scored higher than Chinese college students on a measure of self-competence, but the reverse was true for a measure of self-liking (once self-competence had been statistically removed). If we assume that self-liking is fundamentally an affective construct, this finding suggests that East Asians do not feel worse about themselves than do Westerners.

Implicit measures of self-esteem also support this hypothesis. Cultural differences are generally small or non-existent when implicit attitudes toward the self are assessed (Kitayama & Karasawa, 1997; Kobayashi & Greenwald, 2003; Yamaguchi *et al.*, 2007). Because implicit attitudes are thought to be more strongly influenced by affective associations than cognitive evaluations (Gawronski &

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Bodenhausen, 2006), the lack of cultural differences in implicit self-esteem provides additional evidence that cultural differences are small when we examine how people feel about themselves.

Finally, there are theoretical reasons to question whether cultures differ in affective self-regard. Self-love is presumed by many theorists to be a universal human motivation (Becker, 1968), and even researchers who emphasize the importance of cross-cultural differences in self-evaluations acknowledge that Asians like themselves every bit as much as do Westerners (Heine, 2003; Heine *et al.*, 2007). To the extent that this is so, we should find small cultural differences in affective self-regard.

China presents a particularly promising population for investigating these issues. Partially owing to the single child policy currently in effect, Chinese children receive a great deal of parental attention and care (Wang & Ollendick, 2001). Theoretically, this attention should foster a secure attachment and instill feelings of self-love and affective self-regard (Bowlby, 1979). At the same time, the Confucian tradition emphasizes modesty, deference, and self-effacement. Early in life, Chinese children are discouraged from bragging about themselves and are taught to avoid self-aggrandizement, especially at the expense of others. In concert, these childrearing traditions should shape the expression of self-esteem, leading to high levels of self-love but low levels of expressed self-competence (Tafarodi & Swann, 1996).

Study 1

In an initial investigation, we asked American and Chinese participants to complete three self-report measures that assessed global self-esteem, cognitive self-evaluations, and affective self-regard. We expected (a) to replicate the usual tendency for East Asians to report lower self-esteem than Westerners; (b) to find that cultural differences are greater for cognitive self-evaluations than for affective self-regard; and (c) to show that cultural differences in global self-esteem are significantly reduced once cognitive self-evaluations are statistically controlled.

Method

Participants

The American sample consisted of 36 undergraduates attending the University of Washington (nine males). All had identified themselves as being of European descent. The Chinese sample consisted of 39 undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology courses at East China Normal University (seven males). American students par-

ticipated in exchange for course credit, whereas Chinese students were paid 10 Chinese yuan for their participation. All participants were tested individually with questionnaires given via computer. All measures were presented in random order.

Measures

The data used in this report were gathered as part of a larger study of self-evaluations in America and China. All translations were performed by the first author and another individual fluent in Chinese and English, with back-translations conducted to ensure comparability.

Three questionnaires are of interest here. First, all participants completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This scale is a well-validated and widely used measure of global self-esteem. In the present research, participants answered each of the 10 items using a four-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree; 3 = strongly agree). After reversing the scoring for five negatively worded items, a total self-esteem score was found by summing the 10 responses.

Two other self-report questionnaires were used to supplement this measure. To assess affectively based feelings of self-regard, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they generally feel four self-relevant emotions (ashamed, humiliated, proud, pleased with myself). Previous research has shown that these items are closely related to, although not identical with, global self-esteem (Brown & Dutton, 1995; Dutton & Brown, 1997; Brown & Marshall, 2001; Bernichon, Cook, & Brown, 2003). Each item was answered using a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all; 5 = very much) and, after reversing the scoring for the negatively worded items, an affective self-regard scale was formed by summing across the four items.

To assess cognitively based self-evaluations, participants were asked to indicate how well eight attributes described them. One-half of the items referred to positive qualities (attractive, competent, intelligent, kind) and one-half referred to negative qualities (unattractive, unfriendly, unintelligent, unkind). The participants indicated how well each item described them using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very much). After reversing the scoring for the negatively worded items, a cognitive self-evaluation measure was formed by summing across the eight items.²

Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the reliabilities and intercorrelations among the three measures, separately within each culture. The reliabilities were generally acceptable, although the measure of affective self-regard was less reliable in China than in America. With respect to the correlations, the three

Table 1 Reliabilities and intercorrelations among global self-esteem, cognitive self-evaluations, and affective self-regard as a function of culture: Study 1

	America			China		
	Global self-esteem	Cognitive self-evaluations	Affective self-regard	Global self-esteem	Cognitive self-evaluations	Affective self-regard
Global self-esteem scale	0.89	0.54***	0.40*	0.83	0.67***	0.42**
Cognitive self-evaluations		0.74	0.01		0.82	0.54***
Affective self-regard			0.76			0.52

Within each country, reliabilities appear on the diagonal; correlations appear above the diagonal. * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$.

measures tended to be highly correlated with one exception: In America, cognitive self-evaluations were unrelated to affective self-regard. Finally, in both cultures, scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were significantly correlated with cognitive self-evaluations and affective self-regard.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Previous research has found that East Asians score lower on self-report measures of self-esteem than do Americans, Canadians, and Western Europeans (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). Replicating prior research, our Chinese participants reported lower levels of global self-esteem ($M = 20.33$) than our European American participants ($M = 22.78$), $t(73) = 2.14$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$.³

Cognitive self-evaluations and affective self-regard

The present research was designed to distinguish between cognitively based self-evaluations and affectively based feelings of self-regard. To examine this issue, we submitted the data to a 2 (Culture) \times 2 (Measure: Cognitive self-evaluations vs Affective self-regard) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA), with the latter factor treated as a repeated measure. The ANOVA revealed the predicted Culture \times Measure interaction, $F_{1,73} = 9.60$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.12$. As shown in Table 2, simple effects confirmed that the Americans scored higher than the Chinese on the cognitive self-evaluation measure, $t(73) = 2.60$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$, but the two groups scored comparably on the affective measure of self-regard, $t(73) = 1.77$, *ns*.⁴

Mediation

To this point, we have seen that Chinese score lower on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale than do European Americans, and that cultural differences are greater for cognitive self-evaluations than for affective self-regard. We have yet to

Table 2 Cognitive self-evaluations and affective self-regard as a function of culture: Study 1

Scale	Country	
	America	China
Cognitive self-evaluations	5.90 (0.60)	5.54 (0.83)
Affective self-regard	3.68 (0.81)	3.93 (0.51)

Values in parentheses are standard deviations.

establish, however, that cultural differences in cognitive self-evaluations mediate cultural differences in global self-esteem.

We conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to examine this issue. First, we used culture (dummy coded 0 = America; 1 = China) and cognitive self-evaluations to predict global self-esteem. Each predictor was centred around its respective mean, and entered in Step 1. In Step 2, we entered a cross-product term representing the interaction between the two variables.

If cognitive self-evaluations mediate cultural differences in self-esteem, we should find that the effect of culture on self-esteem is reduced or eliminated once cognitive self-evaluations are statistically controlled. The left-hand column in Table 3 shows just such an effect. With both predictors entered simultaneously, cognitive self-evaluations predict self-esteem, but culture does not. A Sobel's test (Sobel, 1982) provided further evidence of mediation, confirming that cognitive self-evaluations significantly reduced cultural differences in global self-esteem, $Z = 2.04$, $p < 0.05$. The lack of any Culture \times Cognitive self-evaluations interaction is also of interest, as it suggests that the association between cognitive self-evaluations, and global self-esteem does not vary between the two cultures.

The right-hand side of Table 3 shows a comparable set of analyses using affective self-regard as a predictor. Here, both main effects are significant, indicating that cultural differences in self-esteem are not due to cultural differences

Table 3 Hierarchical regression analyses predicting global self-esteem: Study 1

	Cognitive self-evaluations		Affective self-regard	
	<i>b</i>	ΔR^2	<i>b</i>	ΔR^2
Step 1		0.39***		0.22***
Culture	-0.82		-3.23**	
Self-regard	4.36***		3.18**	
Step 2		0.02		0.00
Culture \times Self-regard	-1.99		0.48	

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$.

in affective self-regard. Finally, as before, the interaction is not significant, indicating that the association between affective self-regard and global self-esteem is the same in China as in America.

Summary

The present study revealed two important findings. First, although our Chinese participants appraised themselves less favourably than our Americans on a cognitive measure of self-evaluations, they did not appraise themselves less favourably on an affective measure of self-regard. Second, although cultural differences were found on a commonly used measure of global self-esteem, these differences were eliminated when cognitive self-evaluations were taken into account. Collectively, these findings indicate that cultural differences in self-regard are primarily cognitive in origin.

Admittedly, this interpretation rests on a null finding (i.e. cultures didn't differ on affective self-regard). Conceivably, the lack of cultural differences on the affective self-regard measure occurred not because Americans and Chinese feel equally good about themselves (as we have argued), but because the items don't measure feelings of self-worth at all. This interpretation is made more plausible by the scale's relatively low reliability.

Although we recognize these interpretations, we believe other aspects of our data attest to the scale's utility. First, the face validity of the items is very high. Indeed, it would be difficult to think of items that are more relevant to affective self-regard than asking people to indicate how proud of themselves, pleased with themselves, humiliated, or ashamed of themselves they are. Second, these items have been shown in previous research to be related to global self-esteem (Brown & Dutton, 1995; Dutton & Brown, 1997; Brown & Marshall, 2001; Bernichon *et al.*, 2003). Finally, and most importantly, this was also true in the present study. In China, as well as in America, self-esteem and affective self-regard were significantly correlated ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$, and, $r = 0.40$, $p = 0.01$, for China and America, respectively). It was not the case, then, that the

items failed to tap important components of self-regard. Instead, it was simply the case that cultural differences in affective self-regard were minimal.

Study 2

It is interesting to consider why East Asians are more modest about their attributes and abilities than are Westerners. Two possibilities suggest themselves. First, they might privately think they are just as competent as Americans, but publicly refrain from saying so because of norms of modesty (Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Kurman, 2003). Alternatively, they might genuinely believe they lack competence, perhaps because their culture encourages people to acknowledge their weaknesses as a prelude to self-improvement (Heine, Takata, & Lehman, 2000).

We conducted a second study to examine these issues. In addition to completing measures of cognitive self-evaluations and affective self-regard, we also had participants complete a measure of modesty developed by Whetstone, Okun, and Cialdini (1992) and used by Kurman and colleagues (Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Kurman, 2003). If cultural differences in self-competence are due to cultural differences in modesty, these differences should be greatly reduced or eliminated once cultural differences in modesty are taken into account. Conversely, if cultural differences in self-competence reflect true, private differences in perceived competence, controlling for modesty ought not to reduce cultural differences.

Method

Participants

The American sample comprised 64 undergraduates attending the University of Washington (25 males), and the Chinese sample comprised 68 undergraduates attending East China Normal University (12 males). As in Study 1, all

of the students participated as part of a larger investigation concerning self-evaluations in America and China, and all were tested individually with questionnaires given via computer.

Measures

Three measures were used in this investigation. As in Study 1, participants completed the cognitive measure of self-evaluations and the affective measure of self-regard. Participants also completed the nine-item Inclination Toward Modesty subscale of the Modest Responding Scale (Whetstone *et al.*, 1992).⁵ Sample items include ‘I believe it is impolite to talk excessively about one’s achievements, even if they are outstanding’. and ‘It’s difficult for me to talk about my strengths to others even when I know I possess them’. Participants answered each item using a seven-point Likert scale with appropriate endpoints. Finally, the three measures were presented in counterbalanced order.

Results and discussion

Cognitive self-evaluations and affective self-regard

After reversing the scoring for the negatively worded items in each scale, we formed measures of cognitive self-evaluations and affective self-regard. The internal reliabilities of the two scales were similar to the values found in Study 1. For the cognitive self-evaluation measure, $\alpha = 0.79$ and $\alpha = 0.81$, for America and China, respectively. For the affective self-regard measure, $\alpha = 0.63$ and $\alpha = 0.48$, for America and China, respectively. Finally, in contrast to the findings of Study 1, cognitive self-evaluations and affective self-regard were significantly correlated in America ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$) and in China ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$).

Next, we performed a 2 (Culture) \times 2 (Measure: Cognitive self-evaluation *vs* affective self-regard) mixed ANOVA, with the latter factor treated as a repeated measure. Replicating our earlier results, the ANOVA revealed the predicted Culture \times Measure interaction, $F_{1,130} = 12.39$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$. Table 4 shows that, as in Study 1, the Americans scored higher than the Chinese on the self-evaluation measure, $t(130) = 3.85$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.10$, but the two groups scored comparably on the affective measure of self-regard, $t(130) = 1.13$, *ns*.

Modesty

It is widely recognized that cultural norms of modesty are stronger in East Asian countries than in North American countries and the countries of Western Europe (Markus &

Table 4 Cognitive self-evaluations and affective self-regard as a function of culture: Study 2

Scale	Country	
	America	China
Cognitive self-evaluations	5.81 (0.65)	5.49 (0.73)
Affective self-regard	3.86 (0.63)	3.96 (0.47)

Values in parentheses are standard deviations.

Kitayama, 1991). Accordingly, we predicted that our Chinese participants would score higher on a measure of modesty than would our American participants. This proved to be the case. After summing participants’ responses to the nine-item modesty scale, we found that our Chinese participants reported being more modest ($M = 38.02$) than our American participants ($M = 33.50$), $t(130) = 2.80$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$.

Mediation

The preceding results set the stage for our primary analyses. If cultural differences in cognitive self-evaluations depend on cultural differences in modesty, we should find that the effect of culture on cognitive self-evaluations is reduced or eliminated once modesty is statistically controlled. To test this hypothesis, we performed a hierarchical regression analysis on cognitive self-evaluations, using mean centred predictors of culture (dummy coded: 0 = America, 1 = China) and modesty as predictors. The main effect of modesty was highly significant ($b = -0.03$, $p < 0.001$), but the main effect of culture was not ($p > 0.10$), suggesting that cultural differences in modesty can explain cultural differences in cognitive self-evaluations. A Sobel’s test (Sobel, 1982) confirmed this interpretation, showing that cultural differences in self-evaluations were reduced when modesty was statistically controlled, $Z = 2.40$, $p < 0.05$. Finally, the Culture \times Modesty interaction did not even approach significance ($p > 0.40$), establishing that the relation between modesty and cognitive self-evaluations is comparable across cultures.

Correlational analyses

Insofar as culture predicts cognitive self-evaluations and modesty, but not affective self-regard, it would seem that modesty is more strongly related to cognitive self-evaluations than affective self-regard. After first determining that the correlations did not differ between the American and Chinese samples, we tested this hypothesis by collapsing across cultures and computing the

correlations between modesty and the two forms of self-regard. As predicted, modesty was more strongly correlated with cognitive self-evaluations ($r = -0.41$) than with affective self-regard ($r = -0.21$), $Z = 2.26$, $p < 0.025$. Although this finding might be due to the specific items on the scale we used to measure modesty, it may also be that cultural norms of modesty apply mostly to boasts about one's competencies and accomplishments, rather than to descriptions about how one feels about oneself. Said differently, cultures seem to differ more with regard to their tolerance for brag-gadocio than their proscriptions against liking oneself.

It is also possible that affective self-regard is more stable than cognitive self-evaluations. A great number of psychologists of diverse theoretical stripe have argued that affective self-regard forms early in life in response to temperamental and relational factors (Erikson, 1963; Bowlby, 1979). In contrast, self-evaluations are thought to be more variable and influenced by a host of contextual factors, such as the social setting, recent events, priming effects, or frame of reference. Modesty might constitute an additional contextual factor that exerts a greater influence on cognitive self-evaluations than affective self-regard.

General discussion

Although previous research has found that people from East Asian countries report lower levels of global self-esteem than do those from Western countries (Schmitt & Allik, 2005), the source of this difference has not been clearly identified. In the present paper, we examined whether the origins of this difference are primarily cognitive or affective. Our findings point to cognitive factors. Although our Chinese participants appraised themselves less favourably than our Americans on a cognitive measure of self-evaluation, they did not appraise themselves less favourably on an affective measure of self-regard. Moreover, cultural differences in global self-esteem were eliminated once cognitive self-evaluations were statistically controlled. Taken together, these findings suggest that cultural differences in global self-esteem reflect cognitive rather than affective factors.

Study 2 examined why people from East Asian cultures evaluate themselves less positively than do Americans. We hypothesized that cultural differences in norms of modesty underlie these differences. In accordance with our predictions, our Chinese participants scored higher on a measure of modesty than did our American participants, and cultural differences in cognitive self-evaluations were greatly reduced once modesty scores were statistically controlled. Along with other research (Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Kurman, 2003), these findings suggest that cultural norms of modesty temper cognitive self-evaluations in China.

Of course, one could also conclude that cultural norms promote self-aggrandizement in America, and that the public self-evaluations of Americans are no less genuine than are the public self-evaluations of Chinese. Unfortunately, the modesty measure we used does not provide a way to test this hypothesis. One could, however, experimentally induce bragging and modesty in a laboratory study, and then determine whether American or Chinese participants are more affected by these manipulations.

Limitations

Before considering the implications of our findings, we wish to call attention to some limitations. First, like all cross-cultural research, subtle differences in translation and context can influence the findings (Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002). Second, we assessed only explicit attitudes that can be influenced by a lack of introspective awareness or self-presentational biases. Although there is reason to believe our findings would replicate when implicit attitudes are assessed (a point we consider in more detail below), we cannot be certain this is true.

Third, our sample sizes were rather small, and we studied only college students. Whether our findings apply to older adults or young adults is an unanswered question. We also failed to study different ethnic groups within China, leaving open the question of whether our findings apply to some groups but not others (Kashima *et al.*, 2004). The same is true with our American sample. The category 'European American' covers a lot of territory, and it may be that only some people of European descent tout their competence. For example, people from some of the Scandinavian countries (e.g. Sweden, Norway, or Finland) might be less self-congratulatory (Silvera & Seger, 2004). We also have no way of knowing whether our results apply to other East Asian countries. This limitation may be particularly relevant to Japan. Most cross-cultural research on self-enhancement and self-esteem has compared Japan and America (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Whether our findings would replicate in Japan is an interesting topic for future research.

It is also important to note that our scales were quite short, and our measure of cognitive self-evaluations included very few communal traits. This issue is important because some studies have found that cultural differences are less pronounced for communal qualities than agentic ones (Kurman, 2001; Brown & Kobayashi, 2002; Sedikides *et al.*, 2003). Although not all studies find such an effect (Heine *et al.*, 2007), it would be interesting to determine whether our findings hold true with a measure that included more communal traits.

Our results also appear to be inconsistent with findings reported by Eid and Diener (2001). These investigators found that Chinese college students felt it was less desirable

and appropriate to experience pride than did American college students. The Chinese students also reported feeling proud less often and intensely than the Americans. Although we can't say for sure, we suspect that asking participants 'how appropriate is it to feel proud?' might have led them to construe this emotion in terms of public conceit rather than a more personal self-love.

Finally, it's important to note that some of the arguments we have advanced in this paper have been offered elsewhere. For example, Tafarodi and Swann (1996) have argued that cultural differences are stronger for self-competence than for self-liking, and Kurman and colleagues have argued that modesty can explain cultural differences in self-evaluations (Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Kurman, 2003). Our findings extend and integrate these strands of research by showing that: (a) cultural differences typically found using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale – which is the most common measure of global self-esteem – are primarily due to cognitive self-evaluations rather than affective self-regard; and (b) modesty is more closely linked with cognitive self-evaluations than affective self-regard in China and America.

Implications

We believe our findings carry some important implications. First, they speak to the universal nature of self-love. Virtually all theories of human motivation accord a central role to a general need for positive self-feelings (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1951; Becker, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 1995). Supporting this contention, our Chinese participants reported liking themselves every bit as much as our European American participants. Along with other findings, these results suggest that self-love is as strong in East Asia as in North America and the countries of Western Europe (Brown, 2003; Heine, 2003; Sedikides *et al.*, 2003).

We would not have reached this conclusion had we only examined scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Because the Rosenberg scale assesses cognitive self-competence and affective self-regard, cultural differences are usually found when self-esteem is measured using this scale (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). When we statistically controlled for the effects of self-competence, however, leaving only the affective component of self-regard, cultural differences on the Rosenberg scale disappeared. This finding supports our claim that cultural differences in self-esteem arise from cultural differences in self-evaluations, with people from East Asian countries evaluating themselves less positively than people from Western countries.

This facet of our data also calls attention to the need to distinguish self-love from self-competence (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995, 1996). By extension, it also highlights the need to distinguish self-esteem from self-evaluations. Many self-esteem scales include subscales that measure self-

evaluations in individual domains (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976; Harter, 1990; Marsh, 1993). These scores are not synonymous with having high self-esteem, as many people who believe they are competent do not love themselves, and many people who love themselves do not boast about their competencies (Brown & Marshall, 2006). Our findings suggest that cross-cultural differences will be most pronounced when self-evaluations are used as an index of global self-esteem.

It was not the case, however, that the correlates of global self-esteem varied from one culture to the next (Table 3). Instead, both measures of self-regard predicted global self-esteem to a comparable degree in China and in America. Thus, even though cognitive self-evaluations are lower in China than in America, they are not less predictive of global self-esteem. This finding suggests that global self-esteem is experienced similarly across dissimilar cultures (Tafarodi & Swann, 1996; Kobayashi & Brown, 2003; Brown, Cai, Oakes, & Deng, unpubl data, 2007).

In emphasizing their comparatively low self-evaluations, we do not wish to leave the impression that our Chinese participants were critical of themselves. In fact, their cognitive self-evaluations fell well above the scale mid-point in both of our studies. It was only in comparison with the highly favourable self-views of Westerners that they appeared self-deprecating (see also Falbo *et al.*, 1997; Brown & Kobayashi, 2002; Sedikides *et al.*, 2003).

The present findings are also consistent with accumulating evidence from implicit measures of self-regard. Cultural differences are rarely found when implicit measures of self-regard are assessed (Kitayama & Karasawa, 1997; Kobayashi & Greenwald, 2003; Yamaguchi *et al.*, 2007). This finding is readily interpretable if we conclude, as others have argued, that implicit attitude measures principally tap the affective component of an attitude, and explicit attitude measures reflect affective and cognitive components (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006). In terms of our research, implicit measures of self-esteem may be said to assess affective self-regard rather than cognitive self-evaluations. Because cultures differ little in affective self-regard, cultural differences in implicit measures of self-esteem will generally be small or non-existent.

Our findings also bear on the cross-cultural correlates of self-esteem. Diener and Diener (1995) found that self-esteem was a better predictor of subjective well-being in Western countries than in East Asian countries. These researchers speculated that self-esteem may simply be less important in East Asian countries, a conclusion shared by other theorists (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Heine *et al.*, 1999). Whether this conclusion applies to cognitive self-evaluations or affective self-regard is an important topic for future research.

Finally, we think it's important to emphasize that a consensus now exists on the nature of cultural differences in

self-esteem, with substantial agreement on the following facts: (a) people the world over strive to feel good about themselves; (b) cultures dictate what qualities people should have in order to feel good about themselves; (c) Asians score lower on self-esteem scales than do Westerners; (d) these differences arise because Asians evaluate their characteristics less positively, not because they like themselves less than do Westerners; and (e) cultural differences in self-evaluations depend, at least in part, on cultural differences in norms of modesty (Brown, 2003; Heine, 2003; Kurman, 2003; Heine *et al.*, 2007). With these conclusions now established, researchers are better positioned to examine the precise ways in which cultures shape self-evaluations and self-feelings.

End notes

1. Throughout this paper we are careful to distinguish among the following three terms: global self-esteem (i.e. overall feelings of self-acceptance and self-love); cognitive self-evaluations (i.e. specific judgments about one's abilities, attributes, or traits); and affective self-regard (i.e. emotions that express how proud or ashamed one is of oneself).
2. Preliminary analyses showed that scale valence did not interact with any of the findings of interest in this article. Consequently, we ignore this variable in all reported analyses.
3. In both studies reported in this paper, preliminary analyses revealed no significant gender effects and the data are presented collapsed across this variable.
4. The two measures were assessed using two different scales in order to minimize response biases. As a consequence, the ANOVA revealed a theoretically meaningless main effect of measure, with scores on the cognitive measure being greater than scores on the affective measure, $F_{1,73} = 372.43$, $p < 0.001$.
5. We used this subscale because of its face validity and because Kurman and Sriram (2002) found it had the highest internal reliability of the three subscales that comprise the overall measure. The internal reliabilities in our sample were also high (American, $\alpha = 0.82$; China, $\alpha = 0.86$).

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