

How does the cultural construct of individualism-collectivism relate to global self-esteem? It is proposed that highly collectivist cultures promote the development of one dimension of global self-esteem (generalized self-liking) but challenge the development of the other (generalized self-competence), whereas highly individualist cultures are characterized by the inverse asymmetry. This *cultural trade-off hypothesis* was investigated by comparing a sample of 302 Chinese with a sample of 343 American college students. The cross-cultural equivalence of the two-dimensional model of self-esteem was first assessed and found to be adequate. Given the high intercorrelation of the 2 self-esteem dimensions, only the unique or non-common part of each dimension was used in hypothesis testing. As predicted, the Chinese were lower in self-competence but higher in self-liking than the Americans. Caveats and implications are discussed.

INDIVIDUALISM-COLLECTIVISM AND GLOBAL SELF-ESTEEM Evidence for a Cultural Trade-Off

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Over the past decade, the construct of individualism-collectivism has received much attention in cross-cultural psychology. Highly collectivist cultures are defined as those that emphasize social interdependence, connectedness, and mutual deference or compromise as dominant values. Highly individualist cultures are defined oppositely, as those that emphasize independence, autonomy in choice and action, and social assertiveness (Triandis, 1989; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). The incompatibility in value systems that distinguishes these two types of cultures implies not only opposing prescriptions for social conduct, but also different patterns

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of self-understanding for individuals living within the cultures. It has been suggested, for example, that the distinct construals of self that separate highly collectivist cultures from highly individualist cultures may be reflected in differences in the form and sources of self-esteem (Luk & Bond, 1992). Markus and Kitayama (1991) have gone as far as to suggest that the very notion of self-esteem may be primarily a Western concept, having less relevance for the interdependent construal of self that characterizes highly collectivist societies. This would imply that a construct as central to mainstream psychological theory as self-esteem may in fact be culture-specific.

Investigations into the equivalence of self-esteem instruments across cultures have addressed this question directly. The cross-cultural equivalence of a given instrument can be evaluated at several levels (see Hui & Triandis, 1985). Most commonly, this involves examining both the relations between the various dimensions of the construct being measured (within-construct equivalence) and the relations between the construct and theoretically related constructs (between-construct equivalence). Parallel associative structures across cultures imply that a common construct is being measured.

Examples of research comparing highly individualist and highly collectivist cultures on the structure of self-esteem include studies by Watkins and Gutierrez (1989) and Watkins, Fleming, and Alfon (1989). Both studies provide some evidence for the cross-cultural validity of Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton's (1976) hierarchical, multifaceted model of self-esteem. In these studies, the responses of Filipino high school students to either the Self Description Questionnaire (SDQ; Marsh, 1988) or the Self-Rating Scale (SRS; Fleming & Courtney, 1984) were used to assess the appropriateness of Shavelson et al.'s model, which had already been supported using Australian and American high school and college students. The Filipino results provide some support for the model and suggest a fair degree of structural similarity across cultures. Similarity has also been shown using the responses of Korean (Song & Hattie, 1984) and Hong Kong students (Chung & Watkins, 1992; Lo, 1989). Taken together, these studies suggest that the construct of self-esteem, as measured by instruments representing the hierarchical, multifaceted model, is roughly similar in Asian countries considered to be highly collectivist and Western countries considered to be highly individualist.

SELF-COMPETENCE AND SELF-LIKING

Shavelson et al.'s model reflects the hierarchical nature of the self-concept and features distinct facets of self-evaluation that differ in their level of specificity. These range from domain-specific factors such as self-perceived math ability at the bottom of the hierarchy to a general self-evaluation factor

at the top. It is possible to broadly refer to this entire self-valuative network as *self-esteem*. Alternatively, it could be held that only the apical "general" factor represents context- and content-free trait self-esteem as that construct is often used in psychological theory (see Rosenberg, 1979).¹ In this view, the lower-order facets are taken as domain-specific self-evaluations that function as *sources* of a unidimensional self-esteem; they are not themselves "facets" of self-esteem.

The contention that global self-esteem is unidimensional, however, contrasts with claims that it is itself experienced two-dimensionally, as a generalized sense of efficacy and a generalized sense of social worth (Franks & Marolla, 1976; Gecas, 1971). Tafarodi and Swann (1995) have dubbed the two dimensions "self-competence" and "self-liking" and suggested that they jointly constitute global self-esteem as distinct though highly correlated parts. Their contention is supported by evidence that self-liking and self-competence hold differential relations with theoretically linked constructs.

According to Tafarodi and Swann (1995), an individual's generalized attitude of self-liking is founded on others' appraisals of the individual's personal worth. These appraisals are perceived as reflected in the actions of others toward the individual. The cognitive capacity to appraise one's own personal worth develops through the internalization of these social reflections and continues to be influenced by them (Mead, 1934). As such, self-liking can be seen as the more social or "outer" dimension of self-esteem.

In contrast, self-competence is defined as deriving from a personal history of successful goal-directed behaviour. Specifically, it is described as the generalized sense of efficacy that reflects the chronic level of correspondence between personal intentions and the outcomes of actions directed at realizing those intentions (see White, 1959, 1963). As such, self-competence can be seen as the more autonomous or "inner" dimension of self-esteem.²

Though self-liking and self-competence are conceived as distinct aspects of self-esteem, a high degree of interdependence is expected, for the following reasons. An individual's sense of efficacy usually corresponds roughly to how others gauge that person's competence. This is due to the shared standards, goals, and priorities that define social existence.

Performance that suggests competence is praised by others for both aesthetic reasons and the instrumental value it holds in social exchange and cooperative activity. This would imply that demonstrated competence tends to elicit from others the very positive appraisals that foster a private sense of social worth or self-liking.

In turn, high self-liking can be expected to promote confident goalseeking in social contexts. Given the assumed basis for self-liking, those who are high in it would tend to be comfortable and confident in social contexts, where

they feel liked and accepted. This would provide a marked advantage in meeting social goals, and thereby contribute to the development of self-competence (Coopersmith, 1967).

Addressing the reciprocal determination of the two dimensions of self-esteem, Gecas (1972) has suggested that persons high on one dimension but low on the other should not be found easily. In line with this, Tafarodi and Swann (1995) have found the two dimensions to be highly intercorrelated. This high intercorrelation demands that efforts to specify the distinctive relation of each dimension with other constructs requires effectively holding the other dimension constant. With this requirement in mind, it becomes possible to make specific predictions about how self-competence and self-liking might differ in highly collectivist versus highly individualist societies.

THE CULTURAL TRADE-OFF HYPOTHESIS

It is argued here that a highly collectivist cultural orientation, which prescribes sensitivity to the needs of others and subordination of personal needs and goals to collective ones, is especially conducive to the development of self-liking. This contention is based on the assumption that social acceptance is promoted by adjusting one's private intentions to better fit with the perceived wishes of those in one's social milieu. It is, after all, much easier to like someone you regularly interact with when that individual is mindful of and positively responsive to your often tacit wishes and expectations. This is likely to be true in all cultures. Theoretically, then, because a highly collectivist social orientation is expressed as social sensitivity and pleasing or accommodating those one interacts with, the probability of receiving positive reflected appraisals from others would be maximized. The promotion of self-liking would thereby be maximized. In complementary fashion, social conflict and the negative reflected appraisals it engenders would be minimized.

At the same time, however, the tendency to reflexively defer in instances where personal wishes and preferences do not dovetail with those of others would necessarily constrain choice and the ability to define oneself through freely chosen activity. Because any constraint on choice is essentially a loss of control, and self-perceived control is integral to the experience of efficacy, it is plausible that the very collectivist orientation that promotes self-liking might hinder the development of self-competence. If true, then it could be said that the feature of highly collectivist cultures that tends to maximize self-liking—subordination of personal to collective wishes—tends to present a challenge to self-competence.

An inverse argument can be made in considering the social dynamic that characterizes highly individualist cultures. Here independence, assertiveness,

and the priority of the self over the collective are emphasized. Conformity is shunned as a sign of weakness and "zero-sum" competition is celebrated. Discrepancies between personal intentions and the wishes of others are often ignored, often in the name of rugged individualism. In the extreme case, this reduces to "everyone for themselves." Such a lack of social modulation in behaviour invites conflict and frustration as social reactions. As a result, aggression and disfavour more often occur. This implies that overall, reflected appraisals are less positive in valuative tone, leaving the average individual with less self-liking. The cost in self-esteem, however, may be balanced with a gain. A greater latitude in personal choice and self-expression would be afforded by a decreased respect for the needs of the collective. This partial liberation of the self from the other would leave individuals with an expanded sense of control over what they can do and who they can be. As a result, self-competence would be boosted. If true, then the highly individualist culture, in inverse contrast to the highly collectivist society, may be characterized as promoting self-competence but challenging self-liking.

This speculative framework offers a clear set of predictions for how self-esteem would relate to the individualism-collectivism dimension in cross-cultural comparisons. Namely, self-liking should be higher and self-competence lower in a highly collectivist society than in a highly individualist society. This pattern of differences reflects what we will refer to as the *cultural trade-off hypothesis*.

Unfortunately, past research offers little in the way of direct tests of the cultural trade-off hypothesis. Most comparisons of *global* self-esteem in highly collectivist and highly individualist cultures have used measures such as Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, which assume a unidimensional construct. These studies have generally found global self-esteem scores to be lower on average in highly collectivist cultures than in highly individualist cultures. Explanations of this difference have emphasized the self-effacing tendencies of those from highly collectivist cultures (see Bond, Leung, & Wan, 1982) rather than interpreting the difference as a relative deficit in self-esteem.

More relevant is a study by Page and Cheng (1992), who used the semantic differential to measure the attitudes of Taiwanese and American counselling students toward the "real me." The two affective meaning dimensions of "evaluation" and "potency" (Osgood, 1962) were measured separately. Evaluation and potency, when applied to judgments of self, roughly correspond with self-liking and self-competence (see Franks & Marolla, 1976). Consistent with the self-effacement view, the authors found both dimensions to be lower for the Chinese sample than for the American sample. However, these results are difficult to interpret because the authors make no mention

of the intercorrelation between the two attitude dimensions in their context of self-judgment. If high, this commonality could obscure differences across groups on the independent parts of the two constructs. In addition, the authors do not reveal which of Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum's (1957) semantic differentials were used to represent evaluation and potency. If any of the word pairs addressed specific (e.g., "honest-dishonest") rather than global (e.g., "strong-weak") qualities, then the measure would not be a *direct* index of self-competence and self-liking, which are constructs defined at the global or nonspecific level. In the present conceptualization of self-esteem, specific facets of self-evaluation, such as honesty or beauty, are *antecedents* of the global dimensions of self-esteem, not *indicators* of them. In fact, self-perceived honesty and beauty may hold little or no relation to the global self-esteem of some individuals. Given this lack of information, the significance of the authors' findings for the cultural trade-off hypothesis is left unclear.

A related study by Stigler, Smith, and Mao (1985) measured the self-perceptions of fifth-grade Taiwanese students of their domain-specific competencies. Objective indicators of the students' competencies were also obtained. Comparing the results with American norms, it was found that Taiwanese students down-rated themselves in relation to the objective indicators, in line with the self-effacement view. General self-worth was also found to be lower in the Taiwanese sample. However, because this was measured using an amalgam of self-competence and self-liking items, all of which were highly intercorrelated, it is not clear what the difference means for the present hypothesis.

Given the lack of direct tests of the cultural trade-off hypothesis, we sought to measure self-competence and self-liking in comparable samples of American and mainland Chinese college students. These two countries provide a clear contrast between a culture that is known to be highly collectivist (China) and a culture that is known to be highly individualist (United States) (Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990). As a basis for meaningful testing, the within-construct and between-construct equivalence of a self-esteem measure across the two cultures was gauged.³ Sample differences in mean levels of self-competence and self-liking were then examined in light of predictions.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 343 American college students (185 men and 158 women) at the University of Texas at Austin and 302 Chinese college students

(179 men, 113 women, 10 unspecified) at Fudan University and Shanghai Jain Cai Institute, both in Shanghai. The modal age was 19 for both groups.

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

Students were tested in groups of 20 to 30. Each student anonymously completed several short questionnaires. In creating the Chinese version of the materials, all questionnaires had been translated and blindly back-translated through several iterations to maximize equivalence in meaning across cultures (see Bracken & Barona, 1991). Two of the questionnaires administered are pertinent here.

Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale (SLCS). The SLCS (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995) is a 20-item self-report measure of self-esteem consisting of two 10-item subscales, one designed to measure the global dimension of self-competence and the other the global dimension of self-liking (see Appendix). Respondents indicate degree of agreement with items reflecting low or high self-competence and self-liking. Both subscales have an equal number of positively and negatively worded items. Responses are given on a 5-point Likert-type scale, anchored at the bottom with *strongly disagree* and at the top with *strongly agree*. In validating the SLCS, Tafarodi and Swann (1995) found Cronbach coefficient alphas of .89 and .92 for the self-liking and self-competence subscales, respectively. The subscales were correlated at .69. The uncorrected test-retest reliability for a 3-week interval was .80 and .79 for self-liking and self-competence, respectively. In addition, evidence supporting the discriminant validity of the subscales was reported.

Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ). The SAQ (Pelham & Swann, 1989) measures domain-specific self-valuations and the centrality or importance of each self-valuation for the respondent. Respondents rate themselves on several ability dimensions using a 1 (bottom 5% of the ability distribution for their age, sex, and college cohort) to 10 (top 5%) scale, and also rate how much they care about each dimension on a 1 (*not at all important*) to 9 (*very important*) scale. The five dimensions are academic, social, athletic, artistic/musical ability, and physical attractiveness. The first four of these are specific self-perceived competencies and, according to the present conceptualization of self-esteem, are direct antecedents⁴ of generalized self-competence but not direct antecedents of generalized self-liking. Physical attractiveness, in contrast, is not a "competency." Although it may be to some degree enhanced through activities that alter physical appearance, it is clearly not a performance-defined (i.e., competence-related) dimension as are the other SAQ dimen-

sions. Rather, the valuation of one's own physical appearance is largely a *social* valuation. For most people, it has much more to do with experiencing oneself as a pleasing or unpleasing social object than with successful or unsuccessful goal-determined action. The value of the latter is not primarily dependent upon social meaning; the value of the former is. For this reason, self-perceived physical attractiveness is taken to be a direct antecedent of self-liking but not self-competence. This predicted discriminant pattern of associations of the SAQ dimensions with self-competence and self-liking, if it holds to the same degree in both the American and the Chinese samples, would evince a degree of between-construct cross-cultural equivalence for the SLCS and the model of self-esteem on which it is based.

RESULTS

Within-Construct Equivalence

A multigroup confirmatory factor analysis using the EQS program (Bentler, 1989) was used to validate the two-dimensional structure of the SLCS across samples. The 10 self-competence items were modelled as indicators of one factor and the 10 self-liking items as indicators of a second factor. The fit of the a priori structure with the data is represented in Table 1. Four models were tested. The fit of these models was judged using two goodness-of-fit indices: the ratio of chi-squared to degrees of freedom and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; see Bentler, 1990). Both are widely used in assessing the fit of a covariance structure model with data. On the ratio, Bollen (1989) points out that there is little consensus on what represents a "good" fit, with upper-limit recommendations ranging from 2 to 5. As the index is power-sensitive (the ratio increases as a function of sample size), the fairly large sample in the present case more than justifies adopting the criterion of 3, which is perhaps the value most commonly used in psychological research. For the CFI, Bentler (1992) recommends a value greater than .90 as reflecting adequate fit.

All negatively worded items were reverse-scored (reflected) prior to analysis. In the initial test model, all error covariances were implicitly set to zero and no cross-sample equivalence constraints were imposed. The results revealed that all factor loadings were positive and highly significant in both samples, as expected. However, as can be seen in Table 1, the overall fit of the model was inadequate. It was suspected that valence-sensitive response bias might account for further covariation and thus improve the fit. Such bias would be reflected in positive covariances between the error terms of posi-

tively worded items, positive covariances between the error terms of negatively worded items, and *negative* covariances between the error terms of negative-positive item pairs. The multivariate Lagrange multiplier test was used to determine which covariances to estimate (with sign constraints as above) within this possible set. To avoid adding a host of parameters ad hoc and "over-fitting" the model, selection was limited to the six error covariances contributing the highest unique decrements to the model chi-squared for each sample. The model with these error covariances estimated achieved adequate fit (see Table 1).

Next, 21 constraints were imposed upon the prior model to test for structural equivalence across the two samples. These specified equivalence across samples for the loading of each item on its factor as well as equivalence across samples for the factor intercorrelation. This model represents parity in factor structure for the two samples. As can be seen in Table 1, the fit of the constrained model remained adequate. Thus the two-factor structure found in past validation of the SLCS was reflected in the present data and this structure was similar in the two samples, suggesting cross-cultural within-construct equivalence.

However, because the ultimate intent of the study was to test for predicted differences in average self-competence and self-liking across the two samples, it was important to check that every *individual* scale item included in the computation of subscale scores had equal factor loadings across samples. Moreover, because sample differences in *non-common* self-competence and self-liking were to be tested, it was critical to verify that the estimated intercorrelation of these two constructs was equal across samples. To accomplish this, the incremental fit (reduction in chi-square) obtained by releasing each of the 21 equivalence constraints was tested for significance ($\alpha = .05$) using the multivariate Lagrange multiplier test. Results showed that releasing the equivalence constraint for the estimated factor intercorrelation (.79) did not lead to significantly better fit. Of the 20 factor loading equivalence constraints, however, 6 (items 1, 10, 12, 17, 19, 20; see Appendix) provided significant incremental fit when removed. The improved fit of the model with these 6 equivalence constraints removed is shown in Table 1.

These results suggest that in spite of acceptable similarity in factor structure across samples, six items in the SLCS (five self-competence items and one self-liking item) could be suspected of holding at least slightly disparate meaning across samples. This may well have been due to inadvertent loss or change in meaning through translation. To avoid having these differences contaminate comparative tests of self-competence and self-liking scores, the six items were not used in the computation of those scores.

TABLE 1
Goodness of Fit Indices in Two-Sample
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of SLCS (*N* = 645)

<i>Model</i>	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	<i>CFI</i>
1. Error covariances fixed at zero	997.83	338	2.95	.87
2. Bias-consistent error covariances added	727.30	326	2.23	.92
3. 21 group equivalence constraints	779.65	347	2.25	.91
4. 6 constraints removed	734.53	341	2.15	.92

Between-Construct Equivalence and Test of Hypothesis

Stepwise multiple regression was used to simultaneously examine between-construct cross-cultural equivalence and test for the expected differences in self-esteem. Given the moderate correlation of the two reduced (the six items with disparate loadings deleted) subscale scores ($r = .56$), only their independent or non-common variability was examined in testing for equivalent linear relations across samples. This was done by regressing one subscale score on the other as the first step in the model. Subsequent stepwise addition of predictor variables was thereby aimed at accounting for that portion of variation on one dimension of self-esteem that was not shared with the other dimension of self-esteem.

Predictor variables were created as follows. Self-ratings on the five SAQ dimensions were transformed to z scores and multiplied by their corresponding importance ratings. These cross-products scores were used in place of simple self-ratings. The cross-products method allows for each self-rating to be adjusted by the degree to which the person is invested in that particular domain (i.e., deems it personally important). For example, imagine a person who self-rates as quite unathletic relative to others (e.g., a z score of -1). If this person considers athletic ability to be high in personal importance, (say 8 on the 9-point scale), then their low ability self-rating could be expected to have considerable negative influence on their self-esteem. If the importance rating was 2 for the same self-rating, however, the negative relation could be expected to be weak at best. As discussed by Marsh (1986), the use of self-rating \times importance cross-products produces an expanded scale that is sensitive to such variation.

Indicator variables were created using dummy coding (0 and 1) to represent the two cultural samples and the two sexes. (The latter variable was included mainly to examine the possibility that cultural differences in self-esteem interact with sex.) All possible two-way and three-way interactions of the SAQ cross-products with sample and sex were used as predictors, as

was the Sample \times Sex interaction. This resulted in a total of 16 interaction terms in addition to the five SAQ predictors and two indicator variables.

As previously discussed, it was expected that only the physical attractiveness cross-product would significantly predict self-liking beyond prediction accounted for by self-competence. The remaining four SAQ dimensions were expected to predict self-competence beyond prediction accounted for by self-liking. Between-construct cross-cultural equivalence would be reflected in the absence of significant regression coefficients corresponding to *interactions* of the sample variable with the SAQ dimensions or sex. That is, the relations of these constructs with self-competence and self-liking, if the same for the two samples, would support the equivalence of the two self-esteem constructs across the two cultures. Assuming no significant interaction variables involving the sample variable, the regression coefficient corresponding to *the sample variable itself* provides a test for the hypothesized differences in self-esteem across the two samples.⁵

The results of the stepwise multiple regression for self-competence are listed in Table 2.⁶ After self-liking was entered into the model, three of the four SAQ ability dimensions that were expected to predict self-competence successively emerged as significant. The standardized coefficients are all positive, as predicted. An unexpected interaction was found for SAQ artistic/musical ability with sex in predicting self-competence. Given the specific dummy coding used, the positive standardized coefficient for this interaction variable reflects the fact that self-perceived artistic/musical ability is a stronger predictor of self-competence for women than for men (at least in the present context of multiple predictors).

Importantly, no interaction variables involving sample emerged as significant predictors. Given the specific dummy coding used, this allows the significant negative coefficient for sample, which was the first variable entered after self-liking, to be taken as confirming the prediction that self-competence (or at least that part of self-competence that is independent of self-liking) would be lower in the Chinese students than in the American students.

The results of the stepwise multiple regression for self-liking are listed in Table 3. After self-competence was entered into the model as the first step, only sample and self-perceived physical attractiveness emerged in successive steps as significant predictors. The standardized coefficient for physical attractiveness was positive, as expected. Given that sample was the first variable entered after self-competence, and given the dummy coding used, its positive regression coefficient indicates that self-liking was higher for the Chinese than for the American students, in line with prediction. Again, no interaction variables involving sample were significant.

TABLE 2
Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for
Variables Predicting Self-Competence (*N* = 628)

<i>Variable</i>	B	SE B	β	ΔR^2
Step 1: Self-liking	.25	.02	.46	.31
Step 2: Group	-2.88	.21	-.38	.20
Step 3: SAQ Intelligence	.45	.11	.12	.03
Step 4: SAQ Artistic/Musical Ability \times Sex	.30	.07	.12	.02
Step 5: SAQ Social Competence	.42	.12	.11	.01

NOTE: All p s < .001. No other predictor variables met the p < .05 criterion for inclusion in the model.

TABLE 3
Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for
Variables Predicting Self-Liking (*N* = 628)

<i>Variable</i>	B	SE B	β	ΔR^2
Step 1: Self-Competence	1.16	.07	.64	.31
Step 2: Group	3.72	.51	.27	.05
Step 3: SAQ Physical Attractiveness	.93	.24	.14	.02

NOTE: All p s < .0001. No other predictor variables met the p < .05 criterion for inclusion in the model.

Taken together, the results of the regressions support the discriminant validity of the two dimensions of self-esteem measured by the SLCS, with respect to their independent associations with the SAQ dimensions.⁷ Moreover, the pattern held equally for the two samples, evincing strong between-construct cross-cultural equivalence. This makes it possible to interpret the significant group differences in non-common self-competence and self-liking as consistent with the cultural trade-off hypothesis. The means reflecting these differences are listed in Table 4.

Test of a Corollary Hypothesis

It has been argued that individualists enjoy more latitude for self-determination in action than do collectivists and therefore can be expected to develop a greater sense of control in their lives, reflected in higher generalized self-competence. If so, would individualists also be higher in self-perceived

TABLE 4
**Mean Scores on Reduced SLCS Subscales for American ($n = 343$)
 and Chinese ($n = 302$) College Students**

<i>Subscale</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjusted M^a</i>
Self-competence	American	20.75	3.14	20.57
	Chinese	16.92	3.46	17.13
Self-liking	American	35.03	6.95	32.79
	Chinese	33.64	6.84	36.18

NOTE: Possible ranges of reduced subscales are 5-25 for self-competence and 9-45 for self-liking. Subscales were reduced by eliminating items found to have unequal factor loadings across groups.

a. Means adjusted by using score on each of the reduced subscales as a covariate in a between-group ANCOVA on the other reduced subscale. Group differences in adjusted means reflect significant differences in non-common self-competence and self-liking found in multiple regressions.

specific competencies?⁸ It does seem likely, for even if choice does not enhance actual competence, the increased control that is derived from choice might combine with any feelings of efficacy derived from the activity, thus boosting the overall experience of self-competence independent of performance level. The present data, however, are not optimal for addressing this possibility. The domain-specific self-ratings on the SAQ are explicitly *comparative*, with respondents judging themselves against the range of their reference group. Assuming differing comparative standards across cultures, any differences in *autonomously defined* competence might be obscured. (The SLCS does not involve comparative ratings and was therefore well-suited for testing the primary hypothesis.) Even so, group differences on the relevant SAQ dimensions were examined to see if they reflected the corollary hypothesis despite their limitations.

To simplify testing, self-ratings on the three SAQ dimensions that had emerged as significant independent predictors of self-competence (i.e., academic ability, social competence, and artistic/musical ability) were summed together to form one aggregate variable. To control for differences in the personal importance or centrality of these dimensions across individuals (and groups), an aggregate importance variable was created by combining the importance ratings for the same three SAQ dimensions. This importance variable was used as a covariate in the analysis. Finally, in keeping with the multiple regressions reported in the previous section, score on the self-liking subscale of the SLCS was entered in the model as a second covariate, effectively holding self-liking constant while testing for a group difference

TABLE 5
Mean Scores on SLCS-Related SAQ Dimensions for
American ($n = 343$) and Chinese ($n = 302$) College Students

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjusted M^a</i>
Self-competence-related aggregate ^b				
	American	20.00	3.78	19.73
	Chinese	17.77	4.10	18.07
Physical attractiveness				
	American	6.87	1.50	6.42
	Chinese	5.78	1.85	6.30

NOTE: Possible ranges of dimensions are 3-30 for self-competence-related aggregate and 1-10 for physical attractiveness.

a. Means adjusted for personal importance of the dimension(s) and either self-liking score or self-competence score.

b. The sum of self-rated academic ability, social competence, and artistic/musical ability.

on the aggregate of self-ratings related to self-competence. ANCOVA results revealed that, as expected, the Americans were higher than the Chinese on the summed self-ratings, $F(1, 640) = 36.84, p = .0001$ (see Table 5 for means and standard deviations).

To examine the possibility that the group difference found for non-common self-liking would also be reflected in that dimension's sole SAQ predictor—self-perceived physical attractiveness—a second ANCOVA was conducted. The rated personal importance of physical attractiveness and score on the self-competence subscale of the SLCS were entered in the model as covariates. The results revealed that the Chinese were not significantly higher than the Americans, as had been expected; in fact, there was little difference at all, $F(1, 640) = 0.75, p = .39$ (see Table 5 for means and standard deviations). This disconfirmation, however, should be taken relatively lightly for two reasons besides the comparative rating issue already mentioned.

First, it is difficult to see how the highly collectivist orientation of the Chinese would *specifically* facilitate positive social feedback on physical attractiveness. It is much easier to see how a person behaving in, say, a highly agreeable manner would cause others to see that person as having a highly agreeable disposition. The feedback others would offer the person would reflect this, and the person accordingly would come to see herself as highly agreeable. The same could be said for cooperativeness, the tendency for self-sacrifice, interpersonal awareness, politeness, and a host of other traits that reflect a highly collectivist orientation. It is doubtful, however, that a highly collectivist orientation would be expressed in a greater tendency to

make oneself appear physically attractive in the eyes of others, thereby garnering more positive feedback on this dimension. In fact—and this is the second point—given that physical attractiveness was deemed to be *less* personally important for the Chinese than for the Americans, $t(642) = 11.70$, $p < .0001$, it is arguable that references to physical attractiveness are likely to be less prominent in the regular feedback received by the former group. Statistically controlling for differences across participants in the *personal* importance of the dimension, as was done, does nothing toward overcoming this larger cultural difference.

Given its shortcomings as a basis for testing the corollary hypothesis, the failure of self-perceived physical attractiveness to parallel the group difference found for non-common self-liking is not terribly surprising and does not pose a significant challenge to the theory.

DISCUSSION

Bond (1991), in summarizing the findings of studies comparing the Chinese and American sense of self, states that “Chinese people consistently describe themselves in less positive terms than do Americans” (p. 34; see also Bond, 1986). Though this was true in the present case in relation to raw self-liking and self-competence scores,⁹ the adjusted means suggest a more complicated underlying difference. Namely, the sample drawn from a highly collectivist country, China, was lower in non-common self-competence but higher in non-common self-liking, as compared with their counterparts who had been drawn from a highly individualist country, the United States. This pattern provides initial confirmation of the cultural trade-off hypothesis. In addition, partial support was found for the corollary hypothesis that a similar pattern of differences applies to self-esteem-related specific self-ratings.

Before considering implications, certain limitations of the study must be recognized. First, it should be remembered that no direct evidence for the scalar or metric equivalence of the SLCS across the two samples was provided. The demonstration of within- and between-construct cross-cultural equivalence, while increasing the likelihood of metric equivalence, does not directly reflect it. An item response theory (IRT) approach, assessing the probability of responding in a particular way to an item at varying levels of the latent construct, would be needed to carefully examine this aspect of the SLCS's cross-cultural equivalence (see McCrae, 1991). The issue of metric equivalence is all the more important in the present context, given that differences in response factors stemming from the Chinese tendency for self-effacement are quite likely. Differences in response factors could obvi-

ously result in misleading disparities in scores across samples. However, because the direction of difference was *opposite* for the non-common parts of two dimensions of self-esteem in the present case, a difference in response tendency could not in any simple fashion account for the findings.

A second limitation has to do with the samples used. Clearly the People's Republic of China and the United States are distinct on myriad cultural parameters in addition to individualism-collectivism. This complexity demands caution in ascribing the observed difference to any one parameter. Convergent evidence from cross-cultural comparisons of other countries and the sampling of populations other than students would be needed to reinforce the finding.¹⁰ It would also be necessary to show that the *intracultural* counterpart of collectivism-individualism—allocentrism-idiocentrism (Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985)—relates to self-esteem in a manner paralleling the present *intercultural* finding.

The implications of the results for cross-cultural self-theory are (fittingly) twofold. Both commonality and difference across cultures is reflected. As to commonality, the demonstration of similar within- and between-construct validity across samples provides support for the generality of the two-dimensional model of global self-esteem on which the SLCS is based. In contrast to Luk and Bond's (1992) suggestion that Western models may be inappropriate for understanding the antecedents of Chinese self-esteem, great similarity in antecedent-construct associations was found here.¹¹ The present results converge with past research suggesting similar self-concept structure across highly individualist and highly collectivist cultures (e.g., Watkins & Regmi, 1992). More important, however, the findings suggest a significant cross-cultural difference that is based on this common structure. Namely, confirmation of the cultural trade-off hypothesis offers up for serious consideration the novel contention that high collectivism and high individualism entail mutually inverse costs and benefits for global self-esteem.

In highly collectivist cultures, the tendency to surrender personal intentions when they conflict with the will of the collective may curtail the ability of individuals to experience autonomy and control in their lives. This would reduce the capacity to engage in relatively unbounded self-definition. For example, although it may be very common for American teenagers to act in opposition to the wishes of their parents, in accordance with the self-proclaimed right of "finding oneself," Chinese teenagers are much less likely to even proclaim such a right. In fact, the notion of self-discovery through following one's impulses is not a dominant idea in highly collectivist societies (Dien, 1983). Rather, the self is to be found within social relations; it is embedded in institutions (see Turner, 1976).

Forgoing one's own spontaneous desires and choices in deference to the collective may also reduce the experience of distinctiveness that derives from self-expressive action (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). This suggests a second reason why competence may be lower in highly collectivist cultures. Assuming that the potential for personal distinction through self-expressive choice is reduced, the pursuit of excellence—in the form of being distinctively good at something—may become exaggerated. This would imply a form of compensation. One reflection of such compensation would be very high ideals for performance. The higher the ideal, of course, the less efficacious one feels in the present. In the aggregate, this stringent internal calibration of success could contribute to relatively lowered self-competence in collectivist cultures. In highly individualist cultures, the need for distinctiveness would be at least partially met through individuality-asserting (nonconformist) actions. As such, there would be no compensatory inflation in the drive to excel.

On the other hand, a culture that puts a premium on social harmony would promote self-liking through socializing individuals to do that which leads others to accept and appreciate them. Paralleling this, intracultural investigations have found allocentrics to be higher in self-reported social support and quality of social support and lower in anomie, alienation, and loneliness than idiocentrics (Triandis et al., 1985; Triandis et al., 1988). Highly individualist cultures, which emphasize freedom of action and independence in the face of social pressure, are characterized by high degrees of intragroup conflict in addition to the intergroup conflict that is ubiquitous. That is, individuals in highly individualist cultures have more trouble getting along with members of their own groups than do individuals in highly collectivist cultures. Furthermore, when conflict does arise, individuals in collectivist cultures are more likely to use integrating and compromising styles of resolution, which reduce the risk of escalation, than are those from highly individualist cultures (Trubiskey, Ting-Toomey, & Lin, 1991).

The forgoing suggests a "hydraulic" dynamic relating culture to the two dimensions of self-esteem. Whereas this may be true when considering the distinctive or non-common parts of self-competence and self-liking, it should be remembered that there is a considerable degree of shared ground within these two constructs. Gains to this shared ground through either self-competence or self-liking would serve to increase both dimensions. For example, being liked and accepted by others *because* one is a good tennis player would mean that success in tennis would increase self-liking as well as self-competence. Given such indirect causation, it would be a mistake to think that high individualism or collectivism *uniformly* starves one dimension of self-esteem by helping feed the other.

Clearly, the cultural trade-off hypothesis and the etiological aspects of self-competence and self-liking on which it is premised require extensive testing. What can be said at this point is that the two-dimensional model of self-esteem glimmers as a promising point of entry for investigating the social dynamics of self-esteem across cultures.

APPENDIX

SLCS Items

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1. (SC) Owing to my capabilities, I have much potential.
 2. (SL) I feel comfortable about myself.
 3. (SC) I don't succeed at much.
 4. (SC) I have done well in life so far.
 5. (SC) I perform very well at a number of things.
 6. (SL) It is often unpleasant for me to think about myself.
 7. (SL) I tend to devalue myself.
 8. (SL) I focus on my strengths.
 9. (SL) I feel worthless at times.
 10. (SC) I am a capable person.
 11. (SC) I do not have much to be proud of.
 12. (SL) I'm secure in my sense of self-worth.
 13. (SL) I like myself.
 14. (SL) I do not have enough respect for myself.
 15. (SC) I am talented.
 16. (SL) I feel good about who I am.
 17. (SC) I am not very competent.
 18. (SL) I have a negative attitude toward myself.
 19. (SC) I deal poorly with challenges.
 20. (SC) I perform inadequately in many important situations.
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NOTE: SC = self-competence; SL = self-liking.

NOTES

1. The question of which conceptualization of self-esteem is more heuristically useful is beyond the scope of this article. Moreover, such a question may be misplaced, for the two perspectives can be seen as more complementary than contradictory. Whether one limits the term self-esteem to denoting the global (i.e., domain-independent) construct, or uses it more broadly to include specific self-perceived competencies, is ultimately a matter of pragmatic preference. In either case, however, a clear distinction should be maintained between what is *antecedent to* and what is *constitutive of* global self-esteem as an experienced attitude.

2. See Franks and Marolla (1976) for a similar "inner-outer" distinction.

3. Though the demonstration of parallel associative structure doesn't speak directly to the question of whether a construct is being indexed on the same metric across cultures (scalar equivalence), it does render the assumption somewhat less hazardous.

4. By *direct* antecedent we mean a causal antecedent, or source, that affects one dimension of self-esteem directly rather than through the mediation of the other, correlated dimension. The latter type of association would reflect an *indirect* causal path. It should also be pointed out that the casting of specific self-perceived competencies as antecedents of self-esteem does not dismiss the possibility that self-esteem might itself influence the self-perception of specific competencies. However, only the former causal directionality is pertinent here.

5. Though collinearity among predictors is always a concern in multiple regression, it is arguably a far less serious problem than most researchers assume (see Darlington, 1990). Significant collinearity, as might be expected in the present case, leads to increased standard errors for the partial regression slopes of the collinear predictors, thereby decreasing the power of the significance tests for their regression coefficients. However, the very large sample size being used here would more than offset any reduction of power attributable to moderately intercorrelated predictors.

6. Ten participants who had not indicated their sex and 7 participants with other missing data were eliminated from the analysis.

7. The one anomaly in the results was that self-perceived athletic ability did not emerge as a significant independent predictor of non-common self-competence, as expected. This failure is not readily explicable. It may be that athletic performance is not as pertinent for the self-esteem of most college students as it is for school-age adolescents, who regularly encounter sports as part of the standard curriculum.

8. We thank Kwok Leung for raising this possibility.

9. The difference in the American and Chinese means on *unadjusted* (raw) self-liking scores, although significant, $t(643) = 2.55, p < .05$, was in fact quite small compared to the difference in the means for unadjusted self-competence, $t(643) = 14.66, p < .0001$. In a somewhat smaller sample, a difference of that magnitude would not have reached statistical significance. The same is not true of either sample difference in the adjusted means: $t(642) = 6.69, p < .001$, and $t(642) = -18.75, p < .001$, for self-competence and self-liking, respectively.

10. Perhaps relevant here is the authors' unpublished finding that first-year students at the University of Texas at Austin who identified themselves as Asian-American showed significantly lower self-competence but equivalent self-liking compared to other first-year students. It is speculated that the absence of higher self-liking in Asian-Americans, as would be expected in line with the cultural trade-off hypothesis, is a result of their minority status in the United States and the distinctive experiences that attach to that. In this view, the benefits for self-liking of being raised within a collectivist U.S. subculture are offset by the costs of being a visible minority (see Chen & Yang, 1986).

11. It should be noted, however, that a much wider set of constructs, including the self-perceived personality traits used by Luk and Bond, would need to be related to self-competence and self-liking to adequately address their contention.

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