

According to the cultural trade-off hypothesis, individualism and collectivism entail inverse costs and benefits for the two dimensions of global self-esteem. Specifically, individualism is described as promoting the development of self-competence but inhibiting the development of self-liking. Collectivism is described as doing the opposite. To examine the hypothesis, Malaysian (collectivist) and British (individualist) students were compared on their self-liking and self-competence. Consistent with predictions, Malaysians were significantly lower in self-competence when self-liking was held constant but were higher in self-liking when self-competence was held constant. The differences, however, were not reliable after statistically equating the cultural groups on two derived dimensions of individualism-collectivism—deference to the direction of relatives and connectedness to parents—suggesting that these dimensions might account for the trade-off in self-esteem.

SELF-ESTEEM AND THE CULTURAL TRADE-OFF

Evidence for the Role of Individualism-Collectivism

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How is self-esteem related to culture? The impractical breadth of this question requires a narrowed focus on specific aspects of culture with known nomological relations. One cultural construct that has received much empirical attention over the past 20 years is individualism-collectivism (I-C). Best conceptualized as a cultural “syndrome” (Triandis, 1994, 1995), I-C incorporates a host of etic and emic dimensions that account for behavioral variation both within and across cultures. The multidimensionality of I-C is generally accepted, although its precise form (Kim, Triandis, Kagitçibasi, Choi & Yoon, 1994) and legitimate explanatory scope (Fijneman, Willemsen, & Poortinga, 1996; Kagitçibasi, 1994) are still being debated. Despite this conceptual looseness, empirical contrasts of individualist and collectivist socie-

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ties have yielded valuable insights, highlighting both the relativity of social psychological theory and the functional commonalities in behavior across differing cultural contexts.

One focus of cultural comparison has been the self. Generally, the self in collectivist cultures has been described as enmeshed, ensembled, interdependent, and contextualized. By contrast, the self in individualist cultures has been described as self-contained, isolated, independent, and clearly bounded (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Sampson, 1989). This characterization seems to suggest qualitative differences in self-construal as a function of I-C. It is as plausible, however, that the differences are of degree rather than of kind. Triandis (1994), for example, suggests that both collectivists and individualists experience private, public, and collective self-awareness but that the relative degrees of focus on these separate aspects differ markedly, with collectivists primarily attuned to the public and collective aspects of self and individuals to the private aspects of self (see also Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991). Implicit in this position is the assumption of essential qualitative similarity in self-construal.

Narrowing the issue, it can be asked whether the basic structure of the valuative component of the self, self-esteem, is shared across cultures. One approach to this question has been to examine the hierarchical factor structure of specific self-valuations for individuals living in different cultures. Results using this strategy have suggested a fair degree of uniformity (Chung & Watkins, 1992; Lo, 1989; Song & Hattie, 1984; Watkins, Fleming, & Alfon, 1989; Watkins & Gutierrez, 1989). Although basic uniformity in covariance structures does not itself reflect metric equivalence, it does support the cross-cultural validity of the constructs measured by self-esteem instruments (Hui & Triandis, 1985). Cross-cultural validity, in turn, warrants examination of possible scalar differences across cultures, albeit with the caution that any found might reflect metric disparities stemming from response factors rather than substantive distinctions.

I-C AND SELF-ESTEEM

Comparisons of individualist and collectivist cultures on self-esteem instruments have revealed lower scores among collectivists (Chiu, 1993; Page & Cheng, 1992; Stigler, Smith, & Mao, 1985). Because these differences may reflect greater self-effacement or modesty among collectivists (Bond, Leung, & Wan, 1982), cultural differences in response style (Nunnally, 1967), a relative deficit in private self-esteem (Chiu, 1993), or some combination of these factors, they are difficult to interpret. Concerning response style, the two "sets" most commonly discussed in association with

the collectivist orientation are acquiescence and “moderacy,” or avoidance of scale end points (Leung & Bond, 1989). For scales balanced on positively and negatively worded items, however, the net biasing effect of acquiescence is likely to be minimal because its influence on positive items is offset by its symmetric influence on negative items. As for moderacy, it has been shown to have less of an impact than might be expected on patterns of scalar differences across cultures (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995). In cases where it does present a significant obstacle to interpretation, scale collapsing strategies can be used.

To circumvent the problem of scale equivalence in cross-cultural comparisons of self-esteem, Bond and Cheung (1983) used the Twenty Statements Test (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), allowing respondents to spontaneously define their self-concepts in terms of personally salient features. When self-esteem was indexed as the ratio of positive to negative self-definitions, Japanese and Hong Kong students were lower on average than American students. Though recognizing the potential confound of self-presentational concerns, the authors tentatively interpreted the differences as reflecting substantive differences in self-valuation.

Speculative explanations of substantively lower self-esteem in collectivists have pointed to factors such as cultural tightness, less willingness to disregard failure and shortcomings, attributional style, lack of choice in behavioral investment, greater tendency for guilt and shame, and pessimism (Bond & Cheung, 1983; Chiu, 1993; Kitayama, Markus, & Lieberman, 1995; Triandis, 1995). In considering this issue, it is important to avoid the fallacy of assuming that lower self-esteem, at either the cultural or individual level, is similarly reflective of maladjustment across cultures. Cultural differences in self-understanding are the result of extended social evolution. Therefore, their interpretation must take into account culture-specific adaptive significance. Even so, it appears somewhat odd that collectivist cultures, with their common emphasis on social integration and support—factors known to promote self-esteem in Western cultures (Bettencourt & Dorr, 1997; Cooper-Smith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1979)—should be uniformly associated with lower self-esteem. To make sense of this, Tafarodi and Swann (1996) offered an alternative account, suggesting that collectivism and individualism entail inverse costs and benefits for self-esteem. Accordingly, they characterized the influence of I-C on self-valuation as a “cultural trade-off” whereby the same cultural elements that promote the development of one dimension of self-esteem inhibit the development of another. If so, then collectivism is not uniformly related to lower self-esteem as has been assumed.

THE CULTURAL TRADE-OFF HYPOTHESIS

Global self-esteem can be conceived as consisting of two correlated but distinct attitudinal dimensions: *self-competence* (SC) and *self-liking* (SL) (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). The former refers to the generalized sense of one's efficacy or power, and the latter refers to the generalized sense of one's worth as a social object (see also Franks & Marolla, 1976; Gecas, 1971). SC is the valuative experience of overall agency, the inherently positive awareness of oneself as capable that results from successfully imposing one's will on the environment. SL, by contrast, is the valuation of personhood—one's worth as a social entity with reference to internalized standards of good and bad. Whereas SC is a relatively autonomous valuation determined by chronic success and failure in meeting personal goals, SL requires reference to socially transmitted values defining what constitutes a worthy person. Accordingly, SL is sensitive to interpersonal feedback expressing approval or disapproval, whereas SC is sensitive to environmental feedback signaling the presence or absence of control and self-determination. The two dimensions appear to be functionally distinct in relation to behavior (Tafarodi, 1998; Tafarodi & Vu, 1997), yet they are highly correlated. The latter presumably is due in large part to the causal significance each has for the other (to be addressed later). Methodologically, the correlation necessitates holding each dimension of self-esteem constant when examining the distinctive nomological relations of the other.

The two-dimensional model affords specific predictions concerning the significance of I-C for self-valuation, as outlined by Tafarodi and Swann (1996). Namely, a collectivist cultural orientation that prescribes deference, social sensitivity, and subordination of personal goals to collective concerns should be especially conducive to the development of the SL dimension of self-esteem. Harmonization of personal behavior with the norms, needs, and expectations of one's in-groups should promote social acceptance and approval by these groups, be they family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers. Reflected appraisals conveying this acceptance and approval should promote the individual's private sense of social worth or SL.

By contrast, an individualist cultural orientation, emphasizing independence, assertiveness, and the priority of the self over the collective, should be inimical to the development of SL. Here, discrepancies between personal intentions and the wishes and expectations of others often are ignored or dismissed as the unavoidable price of legitimate autonomy, self-expression, and initiative. The lack of social modulation implied inevitably breeds interpersonal friction as in-group members chafe against the individual's socially

discordant behavior. Greater in-group conflict and mutual frustration result, with reflected appraisals often expressing disfavor and rejection of the individual. Such negative appraisals convey lack of social worth and, therefore, should lead to lower SL.

An obverse argument applies to the SC dimension of self-esteem. A high degree of deference and abnegation for the sake of others entails a partial surrender of autonomy, freedom of choice, and self-determination, all of which relate to personal control over one's life. Insofar as the collectivist orientation requires this surrender of control, the growth of SC would be inhibited. Control is, after all, integral to the experience of efficacy or competence (deCharms, 1968/1983; White, 1963). By contrast, decreased respect for the needs of the collective would afford the individualist greater latitude for self-expression, behavioral choice, and identity formation. The result would be an expanded sense of control, promoting the development of SC.

The aspects of I-C highlighted in this account are those relating to deference to others, especially deference to the wishes, needs, or direction of others, as opposed to the assertion of one's own impulses and predilections. A mirror-image relation of these aspects to self-esteem is postulated, whereby collectivism fosters SL but challenges SC and individualism fosters SC but challenges SL. With regard to scalar comparisons across cultural groups, this trade-off hypothesis predicts that collectivists should be higher than individualists on the part of SL that is independent of SC, whereas individualists should be higher than collectivists on the part of SC that is independent of SL.

As an initial test of these predictions, Tafarodi and Swann (1996) compared the SL and SC of Chinese (highly collectivist) and American (highly individualist) college students after first confirming construct equivalence across the two groups. The results were consistent with the hypothesis: The Chinese were higher in residualized SL but lower in residualized SC. The study, however, offered no evidence that aspects of I-C were behind the observed group differences. The Chinese and American societies are disparate on a host of cultural dimensions having little to do with I-C. That one or more of these unrelated dimensions account for the differences in self-esteem is equally plausible. Clearly, then, there is a need for evidence implicating I-C. Confidence in the theory also would be bolstered by convergent confirmation of the hypothesis using cultural contrasts other than Chinese versus American. Single-contrast evidence is weakened by the possibility that observed differences are due to the singularities of two cultural configurations rather than to the broader cultural parameters addressed by the theory.

The present study was aimed at providing both convergent confirmation of the hypothesis and correlational evidence for the role of I-C. Specifically, Malaysian (collectivist: Bochner, 1994; Burns & Brady, 1992) and British

(individualist: Hofstede, 1984, 1991) students were compared on their SL and SC after first confirming construct equivalence. Derived dimensions of I-C were then tested for their adequacy in accounting for the differences found.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 94 individuals (20 women and 74 men) of British nationality and 92 individuals (31 women and 61 men) of Malaysian nationality, all full-time students at the University of Wales, Cardiff.¹ Most of the Malaysians were sojourners with plans to return to Malaysia after completing their programs of study. The two groups did not differ significantly in age, $t < 1$ ($M_s = 22.72$ and 23.27 for British and Malaysian students, respectively).

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

All participants completed identical questionnaires at home and returned them in postage-paid envelopes. The questionnaire consisted of 12 measures, only 2 of which are relevant here.

Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale. The Self-Liking/Self-Competence Scale (SLCS) (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995) is a 20-item self-report measure of self-esteem consisting of two 10-item subscales, one measuring SC and the other measuring SL. Respondents indicate their degree of agreement with global statements reflecting low or high SC (e.g., "I don't succeed at much," "I am a capable person") and low or high SL (e.g., "I tend to devalue myself," "I like myself"). The two subscales have an equal number of positively and negatively worded items. Responses are made on a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored by *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*. Tafarodi and Swann (1995) reported Cronbach's alphas of .89 and .92, and uncorrected test-retest (3-week interval) reliabilities of .80 and .78, for SL and SC, respectively. They also reported confirmation of the SLCS's a priori two-factor structure and evidence for the discriminant validity of its highly correlated subscales. These findings support the conceptualization of SL and SC as interdependent yet distinct dimensions of global self-valuation.

Individualism-Collectivism Scale. The Individualism-Collectivism Scale (INDCOL) (Hui, 1988) is a widely used measure of feelings, beliefs, inten-

tions, and behaviors that are consistent with an individualist or a collectivist cultural orientation. Hui (1988) reported a consistent pattern of construct validation (see also Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988; Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985). To accommodate intraindividual variability in I-C across social domains, the INDCOL consists of subscales addressing relations with one's spouse, parents, kin, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. Two subscales, Co-workers and Neighbors, were not included in the present application. The Co-workers subscale includes items addressing relations with colleagues and classmates. We feared that the Malaysian students, most of whom were temporary residents in a foreign country, would feel somewhat detached and distant from their mainly British colleagues and classmates. The detachment might obscure collectivist tendencies in the domain represented by these items. The same concern justified leaving out the Neighbors subscale. Finally, 3 items (1 in the Parents subscale and 2 in the Friends subscale) were omitted because they did not conform to the Likert-scale format common to all other items. Inclusion of incongruent items often produces method factors that cloud the interpretation of substantive dimensionality.

RESULTS

To enhance the cultural integrity of the Malaysian sample, those who had lived in Britain for 10 or more years (11 participants) were eliminated. The remaining participants had lived in Britain for an average of 10.2 months. An additional 3 participants were eliminated as univariate or multivariate outliers on the variables analyzed in what follows.

EXTRACTING DIMENSIONS OF I-C

Due to the surprising lack of published exploratory or confirmatory factor analyses of the INDCOL examined independent of other scales (C. H. Hui, personal communication, October 17, 1997), its latent structure is indeterminate. Therefore, an exploratory factor analysis was justified. Prior to analysis, responses to all INDCOL items representing an individualist orientation were reflected (reverse scored) so that higher ratings uniformly represented a collectivist orientation. To extract common factors, responses to the 39 items were combined across groups and submitted to a principal factor analysis.² Kaiser's (1970) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) was used to identify and eliminate items sharing little common variance ($MSA < .50$) with the rest. Thus, 7 extraneous items (1 in the Spouse subscale, 4 in the Parents

subscale, and 2 in the Friends subscale) were eliminated, leaving 32 INDCOL items for reanalysis.

Four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 emerged. These accounted for 80% of the common variance and appeared as discontinuous with the remaining factors when monotonically plotted. Because separate facets of I-C have been found to intercorrelate, oblique promax rotation was used to facilitate interpretation while allowing for associated factors.

Rotated factor intercorrelations were modest (greatest $r = .20$), producing a factor pattern (standardized regression coefficients) and factor structure (correlations) that were highly similar. The factor pattern alone was therefore sufficient for guiding factor interpretation. Indicative items were defined as those with loadings $\leq -.40$ or $\geq .40$ on one factor and between $-.25$ and $.25$ on the other three factors. These items appear in Table 1.

Factor 1 was interpreted as deference to the direction of relatives (Def-Rel), Factor 2 as connectedness to parents (Con-Par), Factor 3 as confiding in others (Confide), and Factor 4 as instrumental interdependence with others (Ins-Int). Only one factor, Con-Par, was represented exclusively by items from one INDCOL subscale, suggesting that the a priori domain distinctions that define the subscales might not accurately reflect the underlying structure of the measure. Relating these factors to the trade-off hypothesis, Def-Rel appears to most clearly reflect the dialectical others versus self aspect of I-C theorized to be critical for cultural differences in self-esteem. Reflexive deference to the judgment of relatives compromises the freedom to do as one chooses; therefore, it constrains and challenges the growth of SC. At the same time, such deference is socially harmonizing and pleasing to one's relatives, who accordingly extend more approval to those who defer to their wishes rather than defy them. This approval benefits SL. The Con-Par factor also seems relevant insofar as socioemotional closeness to parents implies both constraining obligations and received love. The other two factors are prima facie less relevant.

Estimated factor scores were computed from the 32 INDCOL items. In comparing cultural groups on these scores, the Malaysians were expected to be higher, at least on the two factors that seem theoretically relevant for self-esteem. To examine group differences, 2 (Culture) \times 2 (Gender) analyses of variance were conducted for each of the four factors. For Def-Rel, only nationality emerged as significant, $\alpha = .05$, $F(1, 168) = 75.60$, $p < .0001$, with the Malaysians higher than the British as expected. For Con-Par, only nationality was significant, $F(1, 168) = 5.70$, $p = .02$, with the Malaysians again higher. For Confide, only nationality was significant, but with the British unexpectedly higher than the Malaysians, $F(1, 168) = 34.78$, $p < .0001$. For Ins-Int, only gender emerged as significant, $F(1, 168) = 5.03$, $p = .03$, with

TABLE 1
Individualism-Collectivism Scale Items
With High Factor Loadings (promax rotation)

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Standardized Loading</i> | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | <i>Factor 1</i> | <i>Factor 2</i> | <i>Factor 3</i> | <i>Factor 4</i> |
| Teenagers should listen to their parents' advice on dating. | <i>.45</i> | .14 | -.13 | -.02 |
| Whether one spends an income extravagantly or stingily is of no concern to one's relatives (e.g., cousins, uncles).* | <i>.44</i> | -.19 | .02 | .15 |
| When deciding what kind of education to have, I would pay absolutely no attention to my uncle's advice.* | <i>.42</i> | .04 | -.16 | .22 |
| When deciding what kind of work to do, I definitely would pay attention to the views of relatives of my generation. | <i>.40</i> | -.04 | -.08 | .17 |
| If one is interested in a job about which the spouse is not very enthusiastic, then one should apply for it anyway.* | <i>.40</i> | -.10 | -.03 | -.11 |
| Children should not feel honored even if the father was highly praised and given an award by a government official for his contribution and service to the community.* | -.04 | <i>.60</i> | -.05 | .06 |
| These days, parents are too stringent with their kids, stunting the development of initiative.* | -.21 | <i>.52</i> | .06 | -.06 |
| I would not share my ideas and newly acquired knowledge with my parents.* | -.06 | <i>.50</i> | .00 | .08 |
| Even if the child won the Nobel Prize, the parents should not feel honored in any way.* | .02 | <i>.49</i> | .04 | .04 |
| It is reasonable for a son to continue his father's business. | .14 | <i>.43</i> | -.09 | -.05 |
| I would rather struggle through a personal problem by myself than discuss it with my friends.* | .04 | .08 | <i>.54</i> | .07 |
| I never have told my parents the number of sons I want to have.* | -.08 | .24 | <i>.41</i> | -.23 |
| Each immediate family has its own problems unique to itself. It does not help to tell relatives about one's problems.* | .10 | -.12 | <i>.40</i> | .15 |
| I would help, within my means, if a relative told me that he or she is having financial difficulty. | .03 | .06 | -.06 | <i>.53</i> |
| I can count on my relatives for help if I find myself in any kind of trouble. | -.09 | .21 | .00 | <i>.49</i> |
| I would not let my cousin use my car (if I had one).* | .09 | -.08 | .03 | <i>.41</i> |

NOTE: All loadings $\geq .40$ in absolute value are italicized.

*Reverse-scored item.

women higher than men. These results suggest that Malaysian students are more collectivist than their British counterparts, specifically with respect to the tendency to defer to the guidance or direction of relatives as well as in regard to feelings of connectedness with parents. However, on the dimension of confiding in others, Malaysians might actually be less collectivist. Finally, instrumental interdependence with others appears to differentiate men from women rather than the Malaysians from the British. Before relating group differences in I-C to self-esteem, differences in SL and SC were examined.

TESTING THE CULTURAL TRADE-OFF HYPOTHESIS

Preliminary to testing, the within-construct validity of the SLCS was confirmed using multigroup confirmatory factor analysis. Namely, the a priori two-dimensional structure of the measure was adequately confirmed for the two samples, $\chi^2/df = 1.42$, CFI = .91. Moreover, the equivalence across the two cultural groups for the item factor loadings as well as for the factor intercorrelation was strongly confirmed using Lagrange multiplier tests (Bentler, 1995; Bollen, 1989). Only one of these parameter estimates (i.e., the factor loading for the SL item "I'm secure in my sense of self-worth") was even marginally disparate across groups, $\chi^2(1) = 4.18$, $p = .04$. Given (a) the negligible effect of this inequality on the relative fit indexes, (b) the fact that the standardized loading for this item was highly significant and of large magnitude for both groups (β s = .76 and .61 for the British and Malaysians, respectively), and (c) the singularity and marginal statistical significance of the difference, it was considered to be of minimal importance and, therefore, was disregarded in the analysis of scalar differences.

The British were predicted to have higher SC but lower SL than the Malaysians. The expected difference on SC was confirmed, $M_s = 39.28$ (British) versus 36.03 (Malaysians), $t(170) = 3.54$, $p = .0005$. The difference on SL was in the expected direction but not significant, $M_s = 35.37$ (British) versus 36.60 (Malaysians), $t(170) = -1.11$, $p = .27$. These raw means, however, cannot be expected to cleanly reflect the contrasting theoretical associations of SC and SL with I-C. Consistent with past research, the two dimensions of self-esteem were highly correlated ($r = .63$) in the present sample. The considerable overlap in variance confounds testing of unique associations and necessitates effectively holding each dimension of self-esteem constant while testing for a difference on the other. To accomplish this, the score on the SL subscale of the SLCS was simultaneously regressed on the SC score and dummy variables representing cultural group, gender, and the Group \times Gender interaction. Inclusion of gender in the model was recommended by the slightly higher male/female ratio in the British sample than in the Malaysian

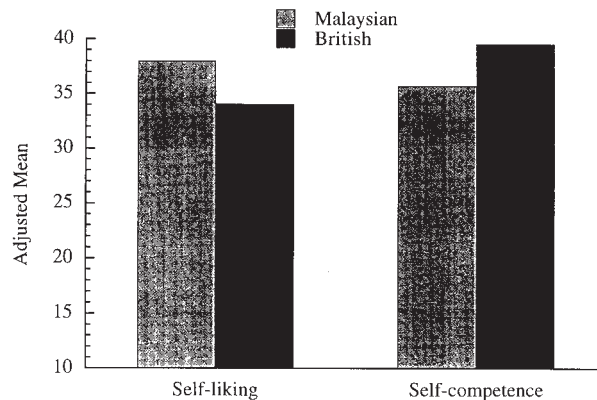


Figure 1: Adjusted Means on Self-Liking and Self-Competence for Malaysian ($n = 80$) and British ($n = 92$) Students

NOTE: Means were adjusted by using the score on each self-esteem dimension as a covariate in a between-group analysis of covariance on the other dimension. The possible range for both dimensions is 10 to 50.

sample, $\chi^2(1) = 4.44, p = .04$. Results revealed that independent of the obvious association for SC, there was an association for group, $\beta = .54, t(167) = 2.43, p = .02$. The sign of the coefficient reflects higher residualized SL for the Malaysians than for the British. Gender held no independent or interactive association, $ts < 1$. A parallel regression was conducted transposing SL and SC in the model. Independent of SL, there was an association for group, $\beta = -.56, t(167) = -2.63, p = .009$. The sign of the coefficient reflects higher residualized SC for the British than for the Malaysians. Again, gender held no association, $ts < 1$. Adjusted mean SL and SC scores are shown in Figure 1. These mirror-image differences converge with American versus Chinese and British versus Spanish comparisons (Tafarodi & Swann, 1996; Tafarodi & Walters, 1999) in providing support for the cultural trade-off hypothesis. The parallelism across studies in adjusted means is striking given the use of distinct cultural pairings to represent contrasts on I-C.

Reliance on residualized, noncommon SL and SC was necessary to highlight the two correlated dimensions' unique and opposite relations with culture. This method of clarification, however, does not come without cost, as residualized constructs can present interpretive challenges (Lees & Neufeld, 1994). In the present case, however, the reciprocal determination that

underlies the SL-SC correlation is instructive. Specifically, that part of SL that is independent of SC presumably is that which neither confers any appreciable advantage in the development of competence nor derives from reflection on one's abilities. Thus, it would appear to reflect the self-perception of simple goodness of character irrespective of ability and achievement. This expression of SL, although contracted, should not be viewed as unconditional or otherwise essentially distinctive, for it surely involves subjective moral criteria. For example, seeing oneself as a "nice person" might have little bearing on competence but is as clearly dependent on rational self-evaluation as is any other aspect of SL. Similarly, the part of SC that neither feeds nor is facilitated by SL is the self-perception of that mundane efficacy that does not foster an appreciable degree of pride in one's own character. For example, most people do not find much private or public glory in their success at managing time. Even so, the self-perception of this ability serves as a commensurately weighted determinant of SC in exactly the same manner as any other. Supporting this interpretation of essential qualitative invariance, residualized SL and SC have been shown to relate to other variables in patterns that are consistent with the theoretical implications of the original (non-residualized) constructs (e.g., Tafarodi & Swann, 1996).

DOES I-C ACCOUNT FOR CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN SELF-ESTEEM?

As reported, Malaysian and British students differed on three of four dimensions of I-C as measured by the INDCOL. The Malaysians were higher on Def-Rel and Con-Par but lower on Confide. Before the importance of these factors for explaining cultural differences in self-esteem can be assessed, it must be shown that they are themselves associated with SL and SC. To do so, SL was simultaneously regressed on SC and the three factors. Similarly, SC was simultaneously regressed on SL and the three factors.³ Results are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Consistent with theory, Def-Rel and Con-Par were positively associated with SL but negatively associated with SC. Confide was not associated with either dimension, confirming its suspected irrelevance for the trade-off.

Finally, to test whether Def-Rel and Con-Par could together account for group differences in SL and SC, SL again was regressed on SC, group, gender, and the Group \times Gender interaction, but this time adding Def-Rel and Con-Par as predictors to the model. Similarly, SC again was regressed on SL, group, gender, and the Group \times Gender interaction, but with Def-Rel and Con-Par added. If group differences in self-esteem are indeed attributable to group differences in Def-Rel and Con-Par, then the Malaysians and British

TABLE 2
Summary of Simultaneous Regression for Individualism-Collectivism Scale Factors Predicting Self-Liking ($N = 172$)

| <i>Variable</i> | β | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-----------------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| Self-competence | .71 | 11.03 | < .0001 |
| Deference to the direction of relatives | .16 | 2.66 | .009 |
| Connectedness to parents | .13 | 2.04 | .04 |
| Confiding in others | -.05 | -.78 | .44 |

NOTE: $R^2 = .44$.

TABLE 3
Summary of Simultaneous Regression for Individualism-Collectivism Scale Factors Predicting Self-Competence ($N = 172$)

| <i>Variable</i> | β | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-----------------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| Self-liking | .60 | 11.03 | < .0001 |
| Deference to the direction of relatives | -.17 | -3.17 | .002 |
| Connectedness to parents | -.31 | -5.45 | < .0001 |
| Confiding in others | .06 | 1.16 | .25 |

NOTE: $R^2 = .54$.

should not differ in SL and SC when the groups are effectively equated on the two dimensions of I-C. Statistically, this would be reflected in no significant independent association for group in the new regressions (Baron & Kenny, 1986). To conduct tests of group differences in self-esteem that closely parallel those already conducted, the statistical significance of the group dummy variable was tested using error $df + 2$, offsetting the degrees of freedom lost through adding two predictors to the model. Results revealed no significant association of group with SL, $t(167) = 1.86$, $p = .07$, or with SC, $t(167) = -1.48$, $p = .14$. In other words, the residual group differences in SL and SC after equating on Def-Rel and Con-Par were not reliable, consistent with the claim that differences in I-C are the source of the cultural trade-off in self-esteem.

To ascribe a causal role to I-C based on these correlational results alone is admittedly speculative. The most obvious alternative interpretation is that cultural differences in self-esteem somehow cause cultural differences in Def-Rel and Con-Par rather than the reverse claim made here. Such a causal sequence, however, is grossly inconsistent with the theoretical antecedents of

I-C (Triandis, 1995). Nor is there any empirical evidence supporting the odd contention that cultural orientation is a consequence, rather than a cause, of self-esteem. Arguably, then, the best provisional interpretation of the finding that equating on two dimensions of I-C reduces the cross-cultural differences in self-esteem to nonsignificance is that I-C is responsible for those differences.

DISCUSSION

The results highlight the significance of I-C for understanding self-esteem across collectivist and individualist cultures. Specifically, a pair of derived dimensions suggestive of deference or social obligation to kin appeared to adequately account for differences in Malaysian and British self-esteem. Not only were the differences consistent with theory, but the two I-C dimensions identified as potentially responsible can be construed as representing a pitting of autonomy against social responsivity, the very dynamic theorized as critical for the link between culture and self-esteem. That both of these dimensions pertain to kin implicates the extended family as the primary vehicle of cultural forces relevant to personal self-valuation. This conclusion, however, is tentative at best given the reliance on a single measure of I-C that was modified to exclude two significant domains of non-kin relations. A more comprehensive investigation of the I-C syndrome in relation to self-esteem is required to assess the relative importance of familial and extrafamilial relations.

That the associations of Def-Rel and Con-Par with SL and SC were equivalent across the two cultural groups (as reflected in the absence of interactions) points to their possible etic significance for self-esteem. This fits with findings suggesting equivalence across cultures in the intracultural significance of collectivism (Yamaguchi, Kuhlman, & Sugimori, 1995). Examination of many other groups is required, however, before drawing any conclusions about cultural invariance in the role of the two I-C dimensions highlighted here.

Interestingly, Malaysians in the present sample were not consistently more collectivist than their British counterparts, as reflected in their greater reluctance to confide in others and their equivalent tendency toward instrumental interdependence (i.e., giving and receiving help). Such inconsistency highlights the variegated configuration of I-C in many cultures. For example, a similar pattern has been shown to characterize Japanese collectivism (Kashima et al., 1995). The inconsistency also suggests that whereas Malaysians have been found to express clear collectivist leanings in a range of

contexts (Bochner, 1994; Burns & Brady, 1992; Furnham & Muhiudeen, 1984; Shumacher & Barraclough, 1989), they might well appear as individualist in select others.

The importance of gender in the present study was limited to the finding that women of both cultural groups were higher than men on instrumental interdependence. This is consistent with evidence suggesting greater personal investment by women than by men in the interpersonal domain (Josephs, Markus, & Tafarodi, 1992). Gender differences did not emerge on the other I-C factors. Nor did gender qualify any of the critical interrelations of self-esteem, I-C, and cultural group examined. This pattern suggests that the two dimensions of I-C identified as critical for cultural differences in self-esteem might be distinct from social relational dimensions that differentiate men from women in intracultural and pancultural investigations. A similar conclusion was reached by Kashima et al. (1995), who used discriminant function analysis and found gender and culture to be represented on orthogonal multivariate dimensions. Because the preponderance of men in the present sample might have reduced statistical power in the testing of gender effects, however, the potential moderating significance of gender should not be discounted without further investigation.

Aspects of I-C pertaining to kin relations have been highlighted here. Throughout, these aspects have been implicitly assumed to be bipolar in relation to I-C. Thus, high connectedness to parents has been assumed to reflect a collectivist cultural orientation, and low connectedness to parents has been assumed to reflect an individualist orientation. It is equally conceivable, however, that connectedness is a facet of collectivism holding little relation to individualism. Or, its opposite quality—*independence from parents*—might be a facet of individualism holding little relation to collectivism.

Generally, examination of the factor pattern/structure is useful in identifying unipolar versus bipolar factors in relation to item categories (McDonald, 1985). However, because the INDCOL is not balanced by design on items representing collectivism (but not individualism) and individualism (but not collectivism), the conventional procedure of examining factor loadings and correlations without prior reverse scoring would be of limited use as a guide to polarity. Moreover, not all facets of I-C allow for the creation of items representing collectivism that, when negated, do not themselves represent individualism. Although some dimensions have been found to be free of this inherent bipolarity (Singelis, 1994), it is likely that dialectical aspects pertaining to self-other relations are not. For example, deference to the direction of relatives is arguably an aspect of collectivism. But, to be low on this dimension implies independence in decision making, arguably an aspect of individualism. Thus, bipolarity seems inherent to the two aspects due to the

mutually exclusive behaviors that reflect them. Supporting the notion of variation in polarity across dimensions of I-C, Rhee, Uleman, and Lee (1996) found kin-related collectivism and individualism to be highly inversely correlated, enough so to justify collapsing them into one bipolar dimension. The inverse correlation of non-kin-related individualism and collectivism, however, was relatively lower, recommending their conceptualization as separate unipolar dimensions. Because the two I-C factors identified as critical in the present study pertain to kin, the provisional assumption that they are bipolar is defensible.

The present findings are consistent with the claim that collectivism and individualism entail inverse costs and benefits to self-esteem. The “hydraulic” dynamic described by the trade-off hypothesis, however, relates only to the direct antecedents of SL and SC. It does not reflect the significant indirect benefits that these same antecedents afford the two dimensions. The high correlation of SL and SC suggests considerable overlap or shared ground, reflecting in part the causal significance each dimension has for the other. For example, SC, insofar as it is reality bound, implies actual competence, a socially rewarded quality. Hence, those high in SC tend to enjoy greater social acceptance and approval than do those low in SC. The victorious Olympian often is loved as much as respected by his or her country for the athletic achievement. It is no surprise, then, that those high in SC also tend to be high in SL. One implication of this relation is that any personal or cultural factor that boosts SC through fostering actual competence may indirectly boost SL.

Influence in the opposite direction also is likely. That is, although interpersonal feedback is primarily a determinant of SL, it also may indirectly affect SC. This is because an accepting social milieu provides opportunities for and otherwise supports the emergence of actual personal competence. A loving parent, for example, often feeds both aspects of the child’s self-esteem. High collectivism or individualism, therefore, should not be viewed as uniformly inhibitory for the development of either dimension of self-esteem because pathways of indirect influence moderate any loss attributable to cultural challenge. Still, in terms of direct causation, a hydraulic characterization seems justified.

Some theorists have suggested that the maintenance of self-esteem in collectivist versus individualist cultures is guided by starkly different imperatives. Most notably, Kitayama et al. (1995) argued that the cultural demands of social modulation and “fitting in” emphasized in collectivist Japan require preoccupation with and correction of negative features of self so as to maximize conformity with the expectations of others. In the individualist United States, by contrast, focus on and accentuation of positive features of the self

are promoted by the cultural imperative of independence and “standing out” (see also Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Kitayama et al. (1995) claimed that these opposing emphases—self-depreciation in Japan and self-enhancement in the United States—are in large part responsible for the generally lower global self-esteem in Japanese than in Americans. As this argument can be extended to other collectivist cultures that emphasize conformity, including that of Malaysia, it is relevant to the present findings.

Discounting the possibility that Malaysian collectivism is associated with self-depreciation, there was no significant difference between the two cultural groups on aggregate self-esteem (raw SL + raw SC), $t(170) = 1.09$, $p = .28$, $M_s = 74.65$ (British) and 72.63 (Malaysians). Although the exclusive reliance on students in this study demands caution in drawing cultural generalizations, this parity is at least suggestive of the possibility that self-depreciation, whether self-presentational or genuine, might not be as central an aspect of collectivism as suggested by Kitayama et al.’s (1995) analysis of the Japanese example. Moreover, any theory that holds collectivism to generally curtail individual self-esteem is incommensurate with the mirror-image group differences found here on noncommon SL and SC. Rather, collectivism appears to be associated with both lower and higher self-esteem in the two-dimensional sense, as does individualism. This is the form of cultural trade-off.

Our theory helps to reconcile the seemingly contradictory findings of Radford, Mann, Ohta, and Nakane (1993) and Watson and Morris (1994). Radford et al. (1993) found higher decisional self-esteem (confidence in oneself as a decision maker) among individualists (Australian students) relative to collectivists (Japanese students). By contrast, Watson and Morris found individualism among Americans to be associated with lower global self-esteem. Although cross-cultural comparisons should not be confused with intracultural associations, it would be somewhat puzzling if individualism held opposite relations with self-esteem at the two levels, as suggested by this pair of studies. The discrepancy, however, is readily resolved in light of the two-dimensional model. Decisional self-esteem is best construed as a self-valuation subordinately related to SC. The Radford et al. findings, therefore, converge with those of this study in revealing lower SC in collectivist cultures. In the Watson and Morris study, self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg’s (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, which, although consisting of both indicators of SC and SL (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995), is more strongly reflective of SL in the aggregate. That the authors found a negative association with individualism, therefore, is consistent with expectation. The results of the two studies, then, are not ultimately contradictory; in fact, they support separate aspects of the trade-off hypothesis.

We conclude by suggesting that cross-cultural research over the past 20 years or so has considered the potential costs of collectivism for individual self-esteem without giving equal attention to what the benefits might be. A new focus that accommodates the dimensionality of global self-esteem may provide a more balanced view of cultural dynamics as they determine how we feel about ourselves.

NOTES

1. Although the ethnic identities of the Malaysian participants were not recorded, the composition can be safely assumed to reflect the sample pool—approximately one half Malay, one quarter Chinese, and one quarter Indian. In any case, the modest sample size would have precluded reliable testing of ethnic differences on the associations examined. The separate ethnicities, however, have been found to hold similar attitudes in contrast to individualist cultures (Furnham & Muhiudeen, 1984; Shumacher & Barraclough, 1989).

2. The large number of INDCOL items in relation to sample size disallowed conducting reliable factor analyses on the Malaysian and British responses separately. Also, double standardization of responses (Leung & Bond, 1989) was not appropriate because the ultimate intent was to estimate factor scores that would preserve scalar differences across cultures. Neither was simple within-subjects standardization of responses justified (Triandis, 1995). Although within-subjects standardization can eliminate the influence of differential response bias, it can also obscure substantively meaningful scalar differences, depending on the heterogeneity of the item set.

3. Multiplicative terms representing the Group \times Factor and the Gender \times Factor interactions were included as predictors (along with group and gender) in initial runs. Because no interactions were significant, all were dropped (along with group and gender) from the models to preserve degrees of freedom and focus testing (Darlington, 1990).

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