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Cross-Cultural Discrepancies in Self-Appraisals

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Two studies examined self-appraisals in Japanese and Canadian samples. Study 1 included open-ended self-descriptions; Study 2 incorporated indirect measures of self-enhancing tendencies. In Study 1, the content analysis assessed spontaneous evaluations of self and others, private and relational self-statements, reflected appraisals, temporal and social comparisons, and evaluations of objects and events. Canadian participants typically provided self-enhancing self-descriptions. Japanese participants were generally evenhanded rather than self-critical or self-enhancing, although they were more favorable about relational than private aspects of self. In Study 2, Canadian participants reported that proud events felt closer in time and were easier to recall than similarly distant embarrassing events. Japanese participants reported that embarrassing and proud events felt equally far away and were equally memorable. The two studies provide evidence that Canadians possess stronger self-enhancing motivations than do Japanese and enable a cross-cultural analysis of several social psychological theories of self-appraisal.

Keywords: *culture; self-enhancement; social comparisons; temporal comparisons; self-appraisals*

East Asian participants do not appear to exhibit the self-enhancing tendencies of their Western counterparts. For example, Heine and Renshaw (2002) found that American participants evaluated themselves more positively than they were evaluated by their peers but that Japanese participants evaluated themselves less favorably than they were evaluated by their peers. Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, and Norasakkunkit (1997) asked college students to imagine the impact of various success and failure situations on their self-

esteem. Japanese participants rated failure situations as more relevant to their self-esteem; American participants assessed success situations as more pertinent to their self-esteem. In addition, Japanese participants viewed their self-esteem as changing more after failure, whereas Americans judged their self-esteem as changing more after success. These studies suggest that Japanese are more inclined than are their Western counterparts to focus on negative aspects of themselves.

Cross-cultural theorists have explained the more self-critical stance of Japanese by noting that individuals in East Asian cultures are especially motivated to gain social acceptance and cultivate and maintain social relationships (Ho, 1976; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). From this perspective, East Asians might adopt a critical orientation to identify aspects of themselves that could jeopardize their social acceptance. Once they discover such features, they strive to improve themselves with the goal of ensuring that others will view them favorably (Heine et al., 2001; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Kitayama et al., 1997).

Other researchers have argued that cultural differences in self-enhancement reflect experimental procedures that prevent researchers from detecting the self-enhancing motivations of East Asians. Conceivably, East

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Asians self-enhance in domains that are culturally important to them such as collectivist aspects of the self (Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003) or by viewing their groups in unrealistically positive terms (Muramoto & Yamaguchi, 1997). Alternatively, East Asians might feign modesty to conceal their true self-enhancing motivations (Kurman, 2003).

We report two new methodological approaches to the cross-cultural study of self-enhancing motivations. Most researchers have obtained participants' responses to structured questionnaires that directly assess self-appraisals (e.g., Heine & Renshaw, 2002). Other researchers examined participants' responses to hypothetical situations (e.g., Kitayama et al., 1997). Although such procedures allow researchers to exercise strong experimental control, the procedures also have drawbacks. Cultural differences in participants' interpretations of items in structured questionnaires (Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001) and their use of response scales (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995; Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002) can make cross-cultural comparisons misleading. Also, responses to hypothetical scenarios might not reflect how people would respond in everyday life and could be particularly susceptible to self-presentational concerns.

In the first study, we elicited open-ended self-descriptions from participants. With open-ended self-descriptions, participants are freed from experimental constraints and can focus on aspects that they consider most relevant. In one of the few cross-cultural studies of self-enhancement to use open-ended assessments, Ross, Xun, and Wilson (2002) randomly assigned Chinese immigrants to Canada to complete an open-ended self-description in either English or Chinese. When writing in Chinese, they provided similar numbers of favorable and unfavorable statements about personal aspects of themselves. Chinese Canadian participants writing in English and participants of European background provided more favorable than unfavorable personal self-statements. Ross et al. suggested that the use of the Chinese language activated the more self-critical East Asian identity in the Chinese Canadian immigrant group, whereas the English language activated the more self-enhancing Western identity in the same group (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000).

Unlike Ross et al. (2002) who studied bicultural Chinese Canadians, we compared students currently living in East Asia and North America. Bicultural immigrants might not be representative of those who remained in their home country. Even students temporarily studying abroad respond differently to measures of self-identity than do students remaining at home (Heine & Hamamura, 2004). As well, we conducted a more extensive content analysis of the descriptions than previous researchers.

Furthermore, in Study 1, we explored a psychological process, temporal self-appraisal, that appears to be linked to self-enhancement. Wilson and Ross (2001a) found that their Western participants were more critical of their past than of their current selves. Wilson and Ross argued that such retrospective criticism is motivated by a concern for self-enhancement. Individuals can be relatively pleased with their present self, because they regard it as superior to their former selves. Several studies have provided evidence that retrospective self-criticism is motivated by concerns for self-enhancement. Derogation of past selves is especially evident on important traits, occurs for self-appraisals but not for ratings of acquaintances, and is more pronounced among high than among low self-esteem individuals (Wilson & Ross, 2001a, 2001b).

Temporal self-appraisal has not yet been explored across cultures. In Study 1, we obtained descriptions of both former and present selves to determine whether both Japanese and Canadian participants viewed their current selves more favorably than their earlier selves. If Japanese are less motivated by concerns for self-enhancement, then they might be no more disapproving of their past than of their current selves.

In Study 2, we adopted a more indirect approach to the study of self-enhancement. Ross and Wilson (2002) reported that Western participants felt farther away in time from earlier experiences with unfavorable implications for their current self-views than from equally distant experiences with flattering implications. For example, participants who performed poorly in a course felt more temporally distant from the course than did participants who performed well. This asymmetry in subjective time estimates occurs even when participants are first reminded of the exact date of the episode. According to Ross and Wilson, the asymmetry reflects the motivation to maintain favorable self-regard. Individuals can attribute a subjectively distant failure to an inferior former self and dissociate their current self from blame. In contrast, people can continue to claim credit for former accomplishments by feeling temporally close to such episodes. Subjectively recent accomplishments belong to the present self almost as much as to an earlier self. In support of their motivational interpretation, Ross and Wilson found that the temporal bias was stronger among high self-esteem individuals (Ross & Wilson, 2002) and that the bias disappeared after participants were given opportunities to affirm their self-worth in a different domain (Wilson & Ross, 2002).

If Japanese are not motivated to self-enhance, then they should feel equally distant from uncomplimentary and flattering experiences when actual time is controlled for. In this indirect approach to the study of self-enhancement, we do not explicitly ask participants to

provide self-appraisals. Estimates of subjective distance should be less vulnerable to self-presentational concerns, because the identity implications of participants' responses are less obvious. Moreover, we side step the problem of cross-cultural comparisons on structured scales, because our principal test of self-enhancement is within rather than between cultures. We expected Canadian participants to report that flattering past experiences feel subjectively closer than equally distant uncomplimentary experiences. We expected Japanese participants to exhibit no systematic bias in their subjective time estimates.

STUDY 1

Participants provided open-ended self-descriptions that we coded for various indications of self-enhancement. As well as describing what they were like at the time of the study, participants described what they were like 3 years earlier. We examined whether Japanese participants would reveal the retrospective self-criticism that Wilson and Ross (2001a) found with Canadian participants. By collecting two self-descriptions from each participant instead of one, we also obtained a richer data set. The variables we examine are not likely to appear spontaneously with great frequency in people's self-descriptions; we cast a broader net by doubling the number of self-descriptions obtained from each participant.

First, we coded the written descriptions for favorable and unfavorable self-evaluations. Canadian participants should spontaneously report a higher frequency of favorable self-appraisals and fewer unfavorable self-appraisals than their Japanese counterparts. Next, we identified three subcategories of self-evaluations.¹ The first two subcategories referred to evaluations of either a private or relational self. Statements describing internal qualities such as traits or states were coded as private self-statements; statements describing the self as part of a social category (e.g., family, religious groups, or ethnic groups) were coded as relational self-statements (Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991). East Asians might be more likely to self-enhance on culturally valued dimensions such as the relational self (Kurman, 2001; Sedikides et al., 2003), whereas North Americans might self-enhance on both private and relational dimensions of self. Past research testing this hypothesis with structured questionnaires has yielded mixed results. East Asians have been found both to self-enhance less on relational than on private aspects of themselves (Heine & Lehman, 1995) and to self-enhance more on relational than private aspects (Kurman, 2001; Sedikides et al., 2003).

Reports of reflected appraisals (statements that others evaluated them favorably or unfavorably) constituted the final subcategory of self-evaluations. If East Asians are especially concerned about the evaluations of others,

then Japanese participants should more readily access reflected appraisals from memory and report them more frequently than Canadian participants. In particular, Japanese participants should report a higher frequency of unfavorable reflected appraisals if they are concerned with identifying aspects of themselves that hinder social acceptance.

Second, we coded participants' favorable and unfavorable evaluations of other people. Predictions are less clear-cut for appraisals of others than for self-appraisals. Conceivably, Canadian participants can depict themselves more favorably by derogating other people. Alternatively, perhaps Japanese participants are more critical in general and therefore more disparaging of others as well as themselves. In previous research using structured questionnaires, North Americans tend to be more positive about others than are East Asians (Endo, Heine, & Lehman, 2000; Heine & Renshaw, 2002).

Third, we examined the social (contrasts to other people) and temporal (contrasts to earlier selves) comparisons reported by participants. There is little cross-cultural research on either type of comparison and little research on spontaneous comparisons, cross-cultural or not. Most comparisons are elicited in response to direct questions from researchers (Wilson & Ross, 2000; Wood, 1989). One advantage of direct probes is that participants are likely to produce comparisons. However, the answers participants can provide are constrained by the questions asked, and the experimenter's interest in comparison is obvious.

What cultural differences might we expect in the types of comparisons reported? With their more interdependent sense of self, East Asians might focus more on social comparisons than would their Western counterparts. White and Lehman (in press) asked explicitly about comparisons. They found that, relative to European Canadians, Asian Canadians reported engaging more frequently in social comparisons. Also relative to European Canadians, Asian Canadians were more likely to seek social comparison after an experimentally induced mediocre performance on a task. In the current study, then, Japanese participants might focus more in their self-description on how they compare to others. Conversely, Canadian respondents, with their more individualistic orientation, might be more concerned with how they have changed over time.

From the perspective of self-enhancement motivation, the important cultural predictions concern the direction rather than the overall frequency of comparisons. Comparisons can be upward (comparing to a superior other person or a superior past self), downward (comparing to an inferior other person or an inferior past self), or on the same level (comparing to a similar other person or past self). When objective standards are

lacking, individuals can best determine their status on various dimensions by invoking same-level comparisons (Albert, 1977; Festinger, 1954) and can best enhance their self-worth by engaging in downward comparisons (Wills, 1981; Wilson & Ross, 2000). In making comparisons, Westerners are sometimes interested in accurate self-assessment and at other times are more concerned with self-enhancement (Wills, 1981; Wilson & Ross, 2000; Wood, 1989). In the present study, then, Canadian participants can be expected to report both same-level and downward social and temporal comparisons (Wilson & Ross, 2000). If East Asians are self-critical, they may prefer upward comparisons. On the other hand, if East Asians are interested in accurately assessing their flaws rather than simply being critical, they may prefer the possibly more informative same-level comparisons. From this perspective, it would seem that Japanese participants might focus on same-level or upward social and temporal comparisons. There is no research evidence to support this hypothesis, however. White and Lehman (in press) did not examine same-level comparisons. They did find that Asian Canadians reported that upward social comparisons were more appropriate than did European Canadian participants. Also, following a mediocre performance, Asian Canadians engaged in both more upward and downward social comparisons than did European Canadians.

Finally, we coded the self-descriptions for two additional measures: participants' spontaneous assessments of objects (e.g., possessions) and events (e.g., school activities, parties, etc.) in their lives. If, as Prentice (1987) observed, possessions serve a self-expressive function, then objects should be appraised similarly to other aspects of self, and Canadian participants should offer more favorable evaluations than their Japanese counterparts. These additional measures enabled us to determine whether cultural differences in self-criticism reflect a more general orientation. Relative to Canadians, are Japanese participants more critical only of themselves, or do they adopt a less favorable outlook toward various aspects of their social and object world?

METHOD

Participants

The Canadian sample consisted of 125 students (88 women and 37 men) enrolled in introductory psychology courses at the University of Waterloo. They received course credit for their participation. The Japanese sample consisted of 186 students (116 women, 65 men, and 5 who did not report their gender) enrolled in introductory psychology courses at Tokyo University. The two samples did not differ in gender distribution, $\chi^2(1, N = 306) = 1.33$, or age, $F(1, 307) = 1.26$.

Procedure

Participants described what they are like now and what they were like at 16 years of age with the order of the descriptions counterbalanced across participants. For most participants, the 16-year-old self was about 3 years earlier. Participants were provided with the following instructions regarding how they should describe themselves:

In this study, we are interested in how people describe themselves at different points in time. You will be asked to describe yourself by writing about yourself in the spaces provided. You may write about anything, for example, memories of your behaviors, thoughts, emotions, or events that seem relevant to you in describing yourself accurately at each point in time. Please provide an honest and detailed self-description that fills up as much of the space provided as possible.

They were presented with 13 lines in which to write their description (about half of a page).

Coding Scheme

The Japanese self-descriptions were translated into English by a Japanese Canadian research assistant and checked for accuracy by an independent translator. Any comments that would allow a reader to infer home country (e.g., names of universities or cities) were deleted from the descriptions. Prior to coding, the descriptions were parsed into idea units. An idea unit is a phrase that communicates one complete idea, action, thought, feeling, or detail. Each idea unit was coded for the presence or absence of three types of appraisals: self-appraisals (e.g., "I was a good student"), evaluations of other people (e.g., "My classmates were all kind"), and evaluations of events and objects ("I disliked school very much"). Next, raters sorted through the self-appraisals and identified evaluations of the private self (e.g., "I am honest"), the relational self (e.g., "I get along well with my teammates"), as well as reflected appraisals (e.g., "My teacher thought I was fooling around too much"). Each appraisal was coded as favorable or unfavorable.

Initially, events and objects were coded separately, but the two categories were combined for purposes of analysis because of their infrequency. We also originally included a neutral category for the various appraisals. Except in the case of reflected appraisals, use of the neutral category was so rare that it did not warrant further analysis.

We also identified social and temporal comparisons and coded their direction. Direction was determined by assessing the position of the comparison target, relative to current self, along the focal dimension (see Wilson & Ross, 2000, for a detailed coding procedure). For exam-

ple, if a man commented that he was superior to other people on a particular dimension ("I was rather more intelligent than the people in my class"), the social comparison was coded as downward; if he commented that he was similar to other people, the social comparison was coded as the same level ("At 16, I was typically like most other 16-year-olds"); and if he stated that he was inferior to other people, the social comparison was coded as upward ("I often feel very immature compared to others like my friends"). Temporal comparisons involved a comparison of the present self to past selves along a focal dimension. For example, the statement "I feel that I am becoming less and less mature" was coded as an upward temporal comparison (the person compares her present self to superior past selves on the dimension of maturity).

The self-descriptions were coded in a random order by four assistants, two bilingual Japanese and two Canadians. Two assistants coded 180 self-descriptions, and the remaining two coded 80. Self-descriptions were randomly assigned to coders. To establish the reliability of the coding, we had 40 random self-descriptions (10 age-16 and 10 current self-descriptions from Japanese participants and the same number from Canadian participants) coded by all four assistants. Reliability is based on the total number of entries in each coding category in each self-description. We obtained a measure of interrater reliability for each coding category across the four assistants. Cronbach's alphas are reported along with the data analysis. We report alphas instead of Cohen's kappas, because we had four raters rather than two to accommodate raters of Canadian and Japanese background.

RESULTS

Canadian and Japanese participants wrote about the same number of words per self-description ($M_s = 85.09$ and 84.47 , respectively, $F < 1$) and wrote more words in their current self-descriptions ($M = 88.95$, $SD = 2.15$) than in their age-16 self-descriptions ($M = 80.61$, $SD = 2.22$), $F(1, 298) = 22.40$, $p < .0001$. As well, women wrote more words ($M = 90.72$, $SD = 2.26$) than did men ($M = 78.85$, $SD = 3.31$), $F(1, 298) = 8.79$, $p = .003$. To control for individual differences in the length of descriptions, we divided the raw frequencies for all measures by the number of words in a person's self-description (number of words at each age) and multiplied by 100.

A preliminary analysis revealed few effects for gender. Unless otherwise noted, the effects reported are unqualified by gender differences, and the results reported are collapsed across men and women. Most analyses included age (self-description for age 16 vs. current age)

and valence (favorable vs. unfavorable) as repeated-measures factors; the order of self-description (age-16 self-description written before vs. after current self-description) and the participants' country (Japan vs. Canada) were between-subjects factors. The analysis of reflected appraisals included neutral as well as favorable and unfavorable evaluations in the valence factor.

Total Self-Appraisals

The interrater agreement was high for unfavorable and favorable self-appraisals ($\alpha_s = .97$ and $.94$, respectively). A significant main effect for valence, $F(1, 307) = 37.65$, $p < .0001$, was qualified by a significant Valence \times Country interaction, $F(1, 307) = 58.35$, $p < .0001$ (see Table 1 for means on the various appraisal measures). Canadian participants reported a higher number of favorable than unfavorable self-appraisals, $F(1, 123) = 78.55$, $p < .0001$; in contrast, Japanese participants reported nonsignificantly more negative than positive self-appraisals, $F(1, 184) = 1.42$. Canadian participants reported a higher number of favorable, $F(1, 307) = 39.02$, $p < .0001$, and fewer unfavorable, $F(1, 307) = 25.90$, $p < .0001$, self-evaluations than did their Japanese counterparts.

Analyses of self-appraisals also revealed a significant Age \times Valence interaction, $F(1, 307) = 6.87$, $p = .01$. Participants reported a higher number of favorable evaluations in their current self-appraisals than in their retrospective age-16 self-appraisals ($M_s = 4.69$ and 4.11 , $SD_s = 0.22$ and 0.21 , respectively), $F(1, 307) = 4.98$, $p = .03$. Participants also reported fewer unfavorable evaluations in their current self-appraisals than in their age-16 self-appraisals ($M_s = 2.60$ and 3.11 , $SD_s = 0.18$ and 0.22), $F(1, 307) = 5.12$, $p = .02$. The triple interaction involving age, valence, and country approached significance, $F(1, 307) = 2.75$, $p = .10$.

We conducted additional analyses separately within the Japanese and Canadian samples. Within the Canadian sample, a significant Age \times Valence interaction, $F(1, 123) = 7.59$, $p < .01$, replicated the Wilson and Ross (2001a) finding that favorable evaluations were more common in current than in retrospective self-descriptions ($M_s = 5.96$ vs. 5.00 , $SD_s = 0.36$ vs. 0.40), $F(1, 123) = 4.98$, $p = .03$, and unfavorable evaluations were less common in current descriptions ($M_s = 1.60$ vs. 2.43 , $SD_s = 0.30$ vs. 0.19), $F(1, 123) = 6.04$, $p = .02$. Within the Japanese sample, the Age \times Valence interaction did not approach significance, $F(1, 184) < 1$. Japanese participants reported nonsignificantly more favorable evaluations for the current ($M = 3.42$) than for the past ($M = 3.21$) self, as well as nonsignificantly fewer negative evaluations for the current self (M current self = 3.59 and M past self = 3.79), $F_s < 1$.

Private Versus Relational Self-Appraisals

The interrater agreement was high for both favorable ($\alpha = .95$) and unfavorable private self-appraisals ($\alpha = .96$). Interrater agreement was satisfactory for favorable relational appraisals ($\alpha = .75$) but more modest for unfavorable relational appraisals ($\alpha = .54$), possibly due to their infrequency. The type of statement (private vs. relational) was entered as a repeated-measures factor. Participants reported more private ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.11$) than relational ($M = 0.52$, $SD = 0.04$) self-statements, $F(1, 302) = 256.66$, $p < .0001$. A main effect for valence and a significant Valence \times Country interaction were qualified by a significant Valence \times Country \times Statement Type interaction, $F(1, 302) = 30.62$, $p < .0001$ (see Table 1 for means). The Valence \times Country interaction was significant for both private, $F(1, 302) = 49.09$, $p < .0001$, and relational self-appraisals, $F(1, 302) = 11.58$, $p = .001$. For private self-appraisals, Canadian participants reported more favorable than unfavorable appraisals, $F(1, 123) = 50.06$, $p < .0001$, whereas Japanese participants reported more unfavorable than favorable appraisals, $F(1, 179) = 4.85$, $p = .03$. Canadian participants also reported more favorable and fewer unfavorable private self-appraisals than did their Japanese counterparts, $F(1, 302) = 28.17$, $p < .0001$, and $F(1, 302) = 17.72$, $p < .0001$, respectively. For relational self-appraisals both Canadian and Japanese participants reported more favorable than unfavorable appraisals, $F(1, 123) = 24.02$, $p < .0001$, and $F(1, 179) = 14.21$, $p < .0001$, respectively. Canadian participants reported a greater number of favorable relational self-appraisals, $F(1, 302) = 12.26$, $p = .001$, than did Japanese participants and about the same number of unfavorable relational self-appraisals, $F < 1$.

The analyses also revealed significant effects involving age, which were qualified by an Age \times Valence \times Country \times Statement Type interaction, $F(1, 302) = 4.98$, $p < .0001$ (see Table 2 for means). Canadian participants reported more favorable private self-appraisals for the current ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.34$) than for the past ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.24$) self, $F(1, 123) = 18.27$, $p < .0001$, and fewer unfavorable private self-appraisals for the present ($M = 1.06$, $SD = 0.25$) than for the earlier ($M = 1.69$, $SD = 0.33$) self, $F(1, 123) = 6.74$, $p = .01$. Canadian participants did not report systematic improvement in relational self-appraisals. Instead, the number of relational self-appraisals (favorable and unfavorable) simply declined with age, $F(1, 123) = 7.96$, $p = .006$. Japanese participants did not report significantly different appraisals of past and present selves on either private or relational dimensions, $ps > .20$. Like Canadian participants, Japanese reported fewer relational appraisals for the current than for the past self, $F(1, 179) = 19.00$, $p < .0001$.

Reflected Appraisals

The interrater agreement was moderate for unfavorable, neutral, and favorable reflected appraisals ($\alpha s = .62$, $.70$, and $.67$, respectively). Relative to Canadian participants ($M = 0.08$, $SD = 0.02$), Japanese participants ($M = 0.14$, $SD = 0.02$) reported a higher number of reflected appraisals, $F(1, 307) = 5.92$, $p = .02$. The Valence \times Country interaction was also significant, $F(2, 306) = 3.00$, $p = .05$. Canadian and Japanese participants reported the same number of favorable reflected appraisals ($M s = 0.10$ and 0.10 , $SD s = 0.03$ and 0.03), but Japanese participants provided a higher number of neutral ($M s = 0.07$ and 0.18 , $SD s = 0.03$ and 0.03), $F(1, 307) = 6.90$, $p = 0.01$, and negative ($M s = 0.06$ and 0.16 , $SD s = 0.03$ and 0.02), $F(1, 307) = 6.27$, $p = .01$, reflected appraisals. The reflected appraisal findings support the hypothesis that Japanese are more concerned than their Canadian counterparts with identifying aspects of themselves that might thwart social acceptance.

Appraisals of Other People

The interrater agreement was high for unfavorable and favorable appraisals of other people ($\alpha s = .90$ and $.91$). As with self-appraisals, the Valence \times Country interaction was significant, $F(1, 307) = 10.55$, $p = .001$, but Canadian participants showed quite a different pattern of responding than they did for self-appraisals. When spontaneously evaluating others, Canadian participants were more likely to report negative than favorable appraisals, $F(1, 123) = 9.10$, $p = .003$ —a reversal of the pattern for self-appraisals. Japanese participants were more evenhanded, reporting equivalent numbers of favorable and unfavorable appraisals, $F < 1$. Comparing across countries, only the frequency of unfavorable appraisals differed. Canadian participants were more likely to report disparaging evaluations of other people than were Japanese participants, $F(1, 307) = 18.62$, $p < .0001$. Significant main effects for valence, $F(1, 307) = 6.58$, $p = .01$, and country, $F(1, 307) = 13.79$, $p < .0001$, were qualified by the Valence \times Country interaction.

Conceivably, Japanese and Canadian participants offered contrasting appraisals of other individuals because they included different types of people in their descriptions. To assess this possibility, we examined the self-descriptions of 19 random Canadian participants and 18 random Japanese participants. Chi-square analyses revealed no significant differences in the types of people reported across the two samples. The three most common categories mentioned by individuals in both cultures were general others such as classmates or university students (28 participants), specific peers or acquaintances (27 participants), and friends (18 participants). A few additional individuals included family (7

TABLE 1: Mean (SD) Number of Appraisals by Country and Statement Valence

Measure	Canada		Japan	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
Total self-appraisals	5.48 (0.27)	2.05 (0.26)	3.28 (0.22)	3.69 (0.21)
Private self-appraisals	3.72 (0.24)	1.38 (0.24)	2.13 (0.19)	2.69 (0.19)
Relational self-appraisals	1.09 (0.13)	0.23 (0.05)	0.53 (0.10)	0.25 (0.04)
Evaluations of other people	0.64 (0.07)	1.10 (0.10)	0.58 (0.06)	0.53 (0.08)
Evaluations of events and objects	0.86 (0.09)	0.29 (0.05)	0.40 (0.07)	0.31 (0.04)

TABLE 2: Mean (SD) Number of Private and Relational Self-Appraisals by Country, Age, and Statement Valence

Measure	Canada		Japan	
	Age 16	Now	Age 16	Now
Favorable private	2.99 (0.24)	4.44 (0.34)	1.92 (0.19)	2.34 (0.27)
Unfavorable private	1.69 (0.33)	1.06 (0.25)	2.80 (0.26)	2.58 (0.20)
Favorable relational	1.37 (0.19)	0.82 (0.17)	0.70 (0.15)	0.36 (0.09)
Unfavorable relational	0.29 (0.08)	0.17 (0.05)	0.36 (0.09)	0.16 (0.04)

participants) and romantic partners (5 participants) in their self-descriptions.

Comparisons

The interrater agreement was high for social comparisons (upward: $\alpha = .94$; same-level: $\alpha = .86$; downward: $\alpha = .91$) as well as temporal comparisons (upward: $\alpha = .76$; same-level: $\alpha = .82$; downward: $\alpha = .88$). The means for social comparisons are presented in Table 3 and those for temporal comparisons in Table 4. In the analyses of social and temporal comparisons, the direction of comparison was a repeated-measures factor.

Canadian participants reported more social comparisons than did their Japanese counterparts ($M_s = 0.89$ vs. 0.49 , $SD_s = 0.07$ vs. 0.06), $F(1, 298) = 19.65$, $p < .0001$. A main effect for direction of comparison, $F(2, 297) = 29.19$, $p < .0001$, was qualified by a Direction \times Country interaction, $F(2, 297) = 11.31$, $p < .0001$. For Canadian participants, the frequency of downward and same-level comparisons did not differ significantly, $F(1, 121) = 1.89$, and both of these types of comparisons were more common than upward comparisons, $F(1, 121) = 22.81$, $p < .0001$ (downward vs. upward comparison), and $F(1, 121) = 27.63$, $p < .0001$ (same-level vs. upward comparison). For Japanese participants, the frequency of same-level comparisons exceeded both downward comparisons, $F(1, 177) = 7.71$, $p = .006$, and upward comparisons, $F(1, 177) = 10.23$, $p = .002$, which did not differ significantly from each other, $F < 1$. Relative to Japanese participants, Canadian participants reported more same-level, $F(1, 298) = 4.82$, $p = .03$, and downward comparisons, $F(1, 298) = 27.79$, $p < .0001$, but about the same number of upward comparisons, $F < 1$.

TABLE 3: Mean (SD) Number of Social Comparisons by Country and Direction of Comparison

Direction of Comparison	Canada	Japan
Down	1.02 (0.10)	0.36 (0.08)
Same level	1.34 (0.19)	0.81 (0.15)
Up	0.33 (0.06)	0.30 (0.04)

TABLE 4: Mean (SD) Number of Temporal Comparisons by Country and Direction of Comparison

Direction of Comparison	Canada	Japan
Down	0.74 (0.11)	0.13 (0.08)
Same level	0.72 (0.08)	0.42 (0.07)
Up	0.38 (0.09)	0.08 (0.07)

Canadian participants also reported more temporal comparisons than did Japanese participants, $F(1, 298) = 17.80$, $p < .0001$. A significant main effect for direction of comparison, $F(2, 297) = 19.82$, $p < .0001$, was qualified by a Country \times Direction interaction, $F(2, 297) = 6.82$, $p = .001$. The findings are strikingly similar to those obtained for social comparisons. Canadian participants reported similar numbers of downward and same-level temporal comparisons, $F < 1$, and more downward, $F(1, 121) = 15.94$, $p < .0001$, and same-level temporal comparisons, $F(1, 121) = 6.98$, $p = .01$, than upward temporal comparisons. Japanese participants reported more same-level than downward, $F(1, 177) = 18.24$, $p < .0001$, and upward comparisons, $F(1, 177) = 27.73$, $p < .0001$, which did not differ significantly in frequency from each other, $F(1, 177) = 1.11$.

Men ($M = 0.55$, $SD = 0.08$) reported more temporal comparisons than did women ($M = 0.27$, $SD = 0.05$), $F(1, 298) = 8.70$, $p = .003$. However, the Country \times Gender interaction was also significant, $F(1, 298) = 5.22$, $p = .02$. The gender difference was greater among Canadian participants (men: $M = 0.86$, $SD = 0.13$; women: $M = 0.36$, $SD = 0.08$) than among their Japanese counterparts (men: $M = 0.24$, $SD = 0.09$; women: $M = 0.18$, $SD = 0.07$). Finally, an Age \times Country interaction, $F(1, 298) = 7.06$, $p = .008$, revealed that although participants in both countries reported more temporal comparisons in their current self-description (Japanese: $M = 0.26$, $SD = 0.07$; Canadian: $M = 0.78$, $SD = 0.09$) than in their age-16 self-description (Japanese: $M = 0.17$, $SD = 0.06$; Canadian: $M = 0.44$, $SD = 0.07$), the increase was more dramatic among Canadian participants.

In sum, Canadian participants tended to avoid upward comparisons; in contrast, Japanese participants were particularly inclined to report same-level comparisons. This pattern was observed for both social and temporal comparisons.

Appraisals of Events and Objects

The interrater agreement was moderate for unfavorable and favorable appraisals of objects and events ($\alpha = .64$ and $.79$, respectively). The means appear in Table 1. A significant Valence \times Country interaction, $F(1, 307) = 29.42$, $p < .0001$, revealed that Canadian participants were more likely to report positive than negative evaluations of events and objects, $F(1, 123) = 23.87$, $p < .0001$; in contrast, Japanese participants reported comparable numbers of positive and negative evaluations, $F(1, 184) = 2.15$. Japanese and Canadian descriptions differed only in the number of favorable appraisals: Canadian participants reported more favorable appraisals of objects and events than did their Japanese counterparts, $F(1, 307) = 15.76$, $p < .0001$. A main effect for valence, $F(1, 307) = 29.42$, $p < .0001$, was qualified by the Valence \times Country interaction. In sum, Canadians were more enthusiastic than were Japanese about the events and objects that they reported in their self-descriptions.

DISCUSSION

Canadian participants consistently provided flattering depictions of themselves that contained more favorable than unfavorable self-appraisals. The findings from Japanese participants are more complex. When we examined their total self-appraisals, Japanese participants appeared evenhanded: Their self-descriptions contained as many unfavorable as favorable self-evaluations. When we investigated subcategories of self-appraisals, we found that the apparent Japanese impartiality masked two countervailing trends. Japanese participants were quite self-critical on assessments of private

dimensions of self (traits and states); they reported a greater number of unfavorable than favorable self-appraisals. In contrast, they provided more flattering self-assessments when evaluating relational aspects of self by reporting more favorable than unfavorable self-appraisals. This pattern is consistent with the Kurman (2001) and Sedikides et al. (2003) findings that Japanese participants were more likely to self-enhance on culturally valued dimensions. As Heine and Lehman (1995) observed, however, Japanese participants were still more self-effacing than were Canadian participants even when appraising the relational self. Canadian participants reported, on average, more than twice as many favorable relational self-appraisals as did their Japanese counterparts.

In addition, Wilson and Ross's (2001a) finding that individuals evaluate their present selves more favorably than their earlier selves was replicated among Canadian but not Japanese participants on the measure of total self-appraisals. This result is consistent with Wilson and Ross's claim that retrospective self-criticism is motivated primarily by concerns for (current) self-enhancement. Among those with a weaker self-enhancing orientation, such as those with low self-esteem (Wilson & Ross, 2001b) or those from East Asian backgrounds (Heine & Hamamura, 2004), past and present selves are evaluated in the same way. When we examined subcategories of self-appraisals, we found that Japanese participants failed to perceive systematic improvement on any dimension of self. We found that Canadian participants' appraisals indicated improvement only on the private aspects of self; they did not report more favorable relational or reflected appraisals of their current selves. The latter forms of appraisal were considerably less common than evaluations of private aspects of self and are perhaps less culturally important to Western participants. Wilson and Ross found that reports of self-improvement were limited to important traits.

We also observed that the cultures differed in the content of their social and temporal comparisons. Canadian participants made comparisons that could serve both enhancement and accuracy goals: They were as likely to engage in flattering downward comparisons as in the possibly more enlightening same-level comparisons. Japanese participants were not overly self-critical; they did not emphasize unflattering upward comparisons. Rather, their comparisons seem to reflect a concern with accurate self-appraisal, as they reported a predominance of same-level comparisons and relatively few upward or downward comparisons. Interestingly, the pattern is identical for social and temporal comparisons within each cultural group thereby supporting Albert's (1977) contention that the two types of comparison serve similar functions.

There was one exception to the finding that Canadian participants provided more flattering evaluations than did Japanese participants. Canadian participants were more likely to evaluate other people unfavorably thus suggesting that Canadians' views of their social world are not entirely Panglossian. This result does not replicate some earlier research (Endo et al., 2000; Heine & Renshaw, 2002) in which Japanese evaluated both themselves and other people more unfavorably than did Canadians. The present study differs from earlier research in several important ways, however. Endo et al. (2000) and Heine and Renshaw (2002) asked participants to evaluate specific people on a series of close-ended scales. In our study, participants could choose which other people (if any) they wished to include in their self-descriptions as well as whether to evaluate them. In writing their self-descriptions, Canadian participants might have focused on individuals who made them look better, at least in their own eyes. By contrast, Japanese participants showed no similar self-serving tendency.

The observed difference between the appraisals of objects or events and the appraisals of other people is intriguing. The general pattern of more favorable evaluations by Canadian participants was present in evaluations of objects and events. This result likely indicates that the objects and the events in one's life serve a self-expressive function and are therefore appraised in a manner similar to other aspects of self (Prentice, 1987). As well, to praise the belongings and events in one's life probably has no negative implications for self-appraisal and may even have positive connotations thereby suggesting perhaps that one is clever or lucky. By comparison, emphasizing the virtues of other people might highlight one's own inadequacies.

STUDY 2

Conceivably, the results of Study 1 partly reflect different norms of self-description (Kurman, 2003; Wang & Ross, in press). During socialization in a culture, individuals might learn a model of what a self-description should be like (e.g., more or less modesty). An East Asian model of self-description might create a type of response bias that conceals an underlying self-enhancing motivation among Japanese.

In the second study, we used a different indirect measure of self-enhancement to examine cultural differences. We obtained participants' estimates of the subjective temporal distance of past events that caused them to feel either proud or embarrassed. Following Ross and Wilson (2002), we expected Canadian participants to report feeling more temporally distant from embarrassing than from proud events. According to Ross and Wilson, such differences in judgments of subjective time

reflect the motivation to maintain favorable self-regard. If Japanese participants are less concerned with self-enhancement, they should be less likely to exhibit this temporal bias.

We also examined participants' reports of the ease with which they could recall the embarrassing and proud events. Ross and Wilson (2002) found that participants' judgments of ease of recall mirrored their estimates of subjective distance: Participants reported that embarrassing events were harder to recall and felt farther away than equally distant proud events. Ross and Wilson suggested that their Canadian participants tended to think more often about their self-enhancing achievements than about their self-deflating embarrassments and as a result of this differential rehearsal reported better recall of proud than of embarrassing events (Betz & Skowronski, 1997; Schacter, 1996; Thompson, 1982; Thompson, Skowronski, Larsen, & Betz, 1996). Ross and Wilson also found that subjective distance and ease of recall were only moderately correlated (hard-to-recall events felt more distant than more memorable events) and that the temporal bias in subjective distance remained when ease of recall was statistically controlled in the analysis. They concluded that the two biases are complementary indications of people's efforts to enhance and maintain their self-esteem. We expected the judgments of Canadian participants in the current study to replicate the Ross and Wilson finding of better recall of proud events. If Japanese participants are less concerned with self-enhancement and more inclined to focus or ruminate on their negative features, then, if anything, they might report superior recall of the embarrassing incidents.

METHOD

Participants

The Canadian sample consisted of 195 students (139 females, 54 males, and 2 who did not report their gender) enrolled in a social psychology course at the University of British Columbia. The average age of the sample was 21.0 years old. The Japanese sample consisted of 87 students (59 females and 28 males) enrolled in an introductory psychology course at Tokyo University. The Japanese participants were, on average, 20.2 years old. The samples did not differ in their gender proportions, $\chi^2(1, N = 280) = 0.51, ns$, but the Canadian participants were older, on average, than the Japanese, $F(1, 278) = 4.32, p < .04$.

Materials

Participants completed a brief survey that asked them to consider an event that had happened to them in the past. Half of the participants were instructed to recall an event that made them feel particularly proud, and the

other half were asked to recall an event that made them feel especially embarrassed. For example, participants in the proud condition were asked, "Think of an occasion since the end of high school when you did something that made you feel quite proud (e.g., a special achievement or kind act). Briefly describe the event." Participants in the embarrassing condition were asked to briefly describe an embarrassing event that occurred during the same time period.

Participants then rated how proud or embarrassed the event made them feel on an 11-point scale (1 = *slightly*, 11 = *very much*) and how close or distant they felt from the event. The temporal distance question was posed as follows:

Past experiences may feel quite close or far away regardless of how long ago they actually occurred. Think about the incident you described above. Place a mark through the lines below at the points that best indicates how far away the incident feels to you.

Participants placed marks through two 180 mm lines. The first line had endpoints labeled *feels very close* and *feels very distant*; the second line had endpoints labeled *feels very near* and *feels very far away*. Participants then reported on 11-point scales how easy or hard it was for them to remember the incident (1 = *very easy*, 11 = *very hard*), how personally important the event was to them when it originally occurred, and how personally important the event was to them at the time of the study (1 = *not at all important*, 11 = *very important*). Finally, participants indicated when they graduated from high school, estimated when the event actually occurred, and reported their age and gender.

RESULTS

Unless noted otherwise, the data were submitted to a Country (Japan vs. Canada) \times Condition (proud vs. embarrassing event) \times Gender of Participant ANOVA. Because the Canadian participants were older than the Japanese, we entered the age of participants as a covariate in the analyses. The sample sizes vary somewhat across the different measures, as some participants failed to complete all of the measures. Participants were excluded from the analyses only for measures they did not complete.

A preliminary analysis on participants' reports of the actual date of the events revealed only a significant main effect for country. Canadian participants reported events that were farther away ($M = 16.96$ months, $SD = 1.09$) than the events reported by Japanese participants ($M = 11.41$ months, $SD = 1.51$), $F(1, 253) = 8.88$, $p = .003$. We included participants' reports of the number of months since the events occurred as a covariate in the

analyses reported below. We thus controlled for participants' reports of the actual time of the events in all of the analyses.

Subjective Temporal Distance

Participants' responses to the two subjective distance questions were averaged prior to the analyses.² The correlation between responses to the two questions was .92 for Canadian participants and .76 for Japanese participants. As in previous studies (Ross & Wilson, 2002), there was a relatively small but significant relation between subjective and actual temporal distance of past events: in the Canadian sample, $r(158) = .24$, $p = .002$; in the Japanese sample, $r(83) = .21$, $p = .06$. The ANOVA on the subjective distance estimates revealed a significant main effect for country, $F(1, 229) = 28.57$, $p < .0001$, and a Country \times Condition interaction, $F(1, 229) = 3.87$, $p = .05$. The adjusted means for the analyses are shown in Table 5. In general, the events felt closer to Japanese ($M = 58.80$, $SD = 4.00$) than to Canadian participants ($M = 85.91$, $SD = 3.01$). More important, the Country \times Condition interaction revealed that Canadian participants felt closer to proud events than to embarrassing events, $F(1, 150) = 17.07$, $p < .0001$, but that Japanese participants felt equidistant from their proud and embarrassing events, $F < 1$.

We also examined the types of events reported by Japanese and Canadian participants. In general, the individual events reported were similar in the two samples with proud events including excelling at school and athletics and embarrassing events including falling down, vomiting, and telling a joke that no one else found funny. At a more general level, we examined whether the events tended to be self-focused, other-focused, or both. A fluently bilingual Japanese Canadian research assistant classified each event into one of these three categories. To assess the reliability of the classification, we had a second coder classify the events reported by Canadian participants. Percent agreement between the two coders was 78% with most of the disagreements in the *both* category. The first coder's classifications were used for the analyses. Almost all of the embarrassing events (90%) were coded as other-focused. Embarrassing events are other-focused in the sense that the presence of an audience is the major source of the embarrassment. Because of the lack of variability for embarrassing events, they were not analyzed further. There was more variability regarding proud events. Proud events were sometimes self-focused in that they reflected individual achievements (e.g., "When I got into university"; "Finishing a puzzle by myself"); proud events were sometimes other-focused in the sense that participants' major source of pride came from doing something for other people (e.g., "I helped an elderly customer home when she fell

TABLE 5: Mean (SD) Quality of Recall and Evaluation of Events by Country and Condition

Measure	Canada		Japan	
	Proud	Embarrassing	Proud	Embarrassing
Degree of pride or embarrassment	8.62 (0.22)	6.85 (0.31)	7.47 (0.31)	7.34 (0.43)
Subjective temporal distance	72.67 (4.15)	99.15 (4.32)	55.31 (5.43)	62.29 (5.82)
Recall difficulty	2.80 (0.31)	5.24 (0.34)	4.55 (0.42)	4.78 (0.46)
Importance then	9.09 (0.28)	6.42 (0.29)	8.38 (0.37)	5.77 (0.41)
Importance now	7.49 (0.29)	2.82 (0.30)	7.53 (0.38)	3.41 (0.43)

NOTE: The means are adjusted for the actual time of the event and the age of participants. Higher means indicate greater pride or embarrassment, greater subjective temporal distance, more difficult recall, and greater importance.

in front of the restaurant”; “When I connected with a child and helped her open up”). In a small number of cases, the event seemed to fall into both categories (e.g., “I led my team to victory”). In the Canadian sample, 72% of the proud events were coded as self-focused, 18% as other-focused, and 10% as both. The results were quite different for the Japanese sample: 46% of the events were coded as self-focused, 48% were other-focused, and 6% were assigned to the both category. Considering just the two major categories, self- and other-focused, the distribution of responses in Japanese and Canadian participants was significantly different, $\chi^2(1, N=250) = 4.93, p < .03$ (corrected for continuity).

Next, we reanalyzed the subjective distance data in the proud condition including the nature of the event, self- versus other-focused, as a factor (the data from the few participants reporting both were eliminated from this analysis). The effect for the nature of the event did not approach significance in either sample and does not qualify the results reported above.

Ease of Recall

Controlling for actual time in the analysis, ease of recall was significantly related to subjective distance in both the Canadian, $r(148) = .44, p < .0001$, and Japanese, $r(79) = .34, p = .002$, samples. Participants reported that their own hard-to-recall events felt more distant than their more memorable events. An ANOVA paralleling the analyses for subjective distance was conducted on the ease-of-recall measure. Participants’ responses to the ease-of-recall question revealed a significant main effect for condition, $F(1, 248) = 12.08, p = .001$, and a Country \times Condition interaction, $F(1, 248) = 8.31, p = .004$. The ease-of-recall findings mirror the subjective distance results. Canadian participants reported that embarrassing events were harder to recall than proud events, $F(1, 168) = 33.19, p < .0001$; Japanese participants reported no difference in the ease of recalling embarrassing and proud events, $F < 1$. A significant Country \times Gender interaction, $F(1, 248) = 3.90, p = .05$, revealed that within the Japanese sample, women judged the events to be harder to recall than men did ($M_s = 5.36$ vs. $3.96, SD_s = 0.36$ vs.

0.51), $F(1, 78) = 3.86, p = .05$; within the Canadian sample, gender was unrelated to the ease of recall, $F < 1$. Next, we reanalyzed the ease-of-recall data in the proud condition including the nature of the event (self- vs. other-focused) as a factor. The effect for the nature of the event did not approach significance in either sample and does not qualify the results reported above.

Finally, we reanalyzed the subjective distance data controlling for ease of recall. The tendency for Canadian participants to feel closer to proud than to embarrassing events remains significant when ease of recall is controlled for, $F(1, 145) = 4.87, p < .03$. Also, Japanese participants continued to show no difference in the subjective distance of proud and embarrassing events when ease of recall is controlled for, $F < 1$.

Evaluations of the Events

Participants evaluated the extent to which the events engendered pride or embarrassment as well as the importance of the episodes. Compared to their Japanese counterparts, Canadian participants reported greater pride in response to proud events, $F(1, 131) = 7.77, p = .006$, and nonsignificantly less embarrassment in response to embarrassing events, $F < 1$. The cultural difference in reactions to proud events is consistent with the earlier finding that Americans assess success situations as more pertinent to their self-esteem than do Japanese (Kitayama et al., 1997). Participants’ estimates of how important the event was to them when it occurred and how important it was to them at the time of the study were analyzed as repeated measures. A significant effect for condition, $F(1, 257) = 138.12, p < .0001$, revealed that participants judged proud events ($M = 8.12, SD = 0.20$) to be more important than embarrassing events ($M = 4.61, SD = 0.22$). The Time \times Condition interaction was also significant, $F(1, 257) = 23.95, p < .0001$. Embarrassing events were judged to be more important when they occurred ($M = 6.10, SD = 0.28$) than now ($M = 3.12, SD = 0.26$), $F(1, 123) = 117.29, p < .0001$. The same pattern of results was found for proud events, although the trend was reduced ($M_s = 8.73$ vs. $7.51, SD_s = 0.21$ vs. 0.25), $F(1, 134) = 27.44, p < .0001$. The tendency to regard proud

events as having more enduring importance replicates a finding reported by Ross and Wilson (2002) and may well reflect reality. The embarrassments reported were fairly minor, and their impact was probably relatively short lived. More important, the events reported were equally important to Canadian and Japanese participants: The main effect for country and the Country \times Condition interaction did not approach significance, $F_s < 1$. The absence of a significant interaction indicates that importance does not moderate the Country \times Condition interaction on ratings of subjective distance.

Finally, we examined whether participants' experience of pride in response to proud events varied depending on whether the events were self- or other-focused. The main effect for event focus and the Country \times Focus interaction did not approach significance, $F_s < 1$.

DISCUSSION

Replicating findings reported by Ross and Wilson (2002), Canadian participants reported that proud events felt closer in time than embarrassing events that were equally far away (actual distance was statistically controlled). By subjectively distancing themselves from embarrassing events, Canadian participants can reduce the negative implications of the earlier events for their current self-regard. By feeling subjectively close to proud events, Canadian participants can continue to claim credit for the favorable outcomes.

Canadian participants reported worse recall of embarrassing than proud events, again replicating a finding reported by Ross and Wilson (2002). The precise basis of this difference in ease of recall is uncertain. One likely possibility is that Canadian participants reminisced more frequently about their proud events, because thinking of these events is self-enhancing (Ross & Wilson, 2002). As in Ross and Wilson, subjective distance and ease of recall were only moderately correlated. Also, the temporal bias in subjective temporal distance remained when ease of recall was statistically controlled in the analysis. The biases in subjective distance and ease of recall appear to be somewhat independent indications of Canadian participants' efforts to maintain favorable self-views.

Japanese participants' assessments of subjective temporal distance and ease of recall were not significantly influenced by the valence of the recalled event. Japanese participants reported that embarrassing and proud events felt equally far away and were equally memorable. Japanese participants seem to be evenhanded, reacting to embarrassing events very much as they respond to proud events.

We also examined the degree to which the events reported were self- or other-focused. Canadian participants tended to report proud events that were individual

achievements, whereas Japanese participants reported both self-focused and other-focused events. This difference in focus, however, did not relate to the degree of pride engendered by the event in either sample or to any of the other measures.

The findings from Study 2 would seem to contradict the hypothesis that cultural norms for modest self-presentation conceal an underlying self-enhancing motivation among Japanese (e.g., Kurman, 2003). Self-presentational norms for modesty would presumably not prevent people from reporting that proud events feel closer or easier to remember than embarrassing events.

The evenhandedness of the Japanese participants might seem to imply that they base their subjective time estimates primarily on the actual timing of the event rather than on such irrelevant features as event valence. However, Japanese participants' subjective time estimates were only weakly correlated with their reports of the actual temporal distance of the events. Indeed, Japanese subjective time estimates were no more related to actual time than were the subjective time estimates of Canadian participants. Japanese reports of ease of recall were related to their subjective time estimates but, again, rather modestly. Also, the relation between ease of recall and subjective time was not stronger in the Japanese than in the Canadian sample. Our data are uninformative with respect to what additional factors might be influencing the subjective time estimates of Japanese participants.

CONCLUSIONS

Study 2 and, to a more limited extent, Study 1 represent cross-cultural extensions of earlier research by Wilson and Ross (2001a; Ross & Wilson, 2002). The implications of the current findings for the Wilson and Ross research is mixed. On one hand, the present studies indicate that the two phenomena identified by Wilson and Ross—derogation of past selves relative to present selves and biases in subjective time estimates—are not universal. At the very least, Japanese college students fail to exhibit these biases. On the other hand, we did replicate the earlier findings in the Canadian samples. Moreover, the lack of cross-cultural generalization is consistent with Wilson and Ross's theoretical analysis. They suggested that both biases are motivated by a concern for self-enhancement. If the motivation to self-enhance is greatly reduced or absent in Japanese, then Japanese participants should not exhibit the biases.

The results across the two studies provide compelling evidence that Canadians possess stronger self-enhancing motivations than do Japanese. Because structured questionnaires might be interpreted differently across cultures and languages (Kanagawa et al., 2001), we col-

lected open-ended self-descriptions in Study 1. By allowing participants to describe themselves spontaneously on whatever attributes they choose, we also address the concern that Asians might not self-enhance because they are often asked to evaluate attributes of greater value to Western society (e.g., Sedikides et al., 2003). Our data suggest that such concerns are partly justified. Japanese participants were indeed more critical of private than of relational aspects of self. In fact, Japanese participants positively appraised their relational selves. However, even on this dimension, Japanese were not nearly as effusive as their Canadian counterparts.

In Study 2, we used an indirect measure of self-enhancement to address the concern that Asians' self-presentational concerns lead them to appear more modest than they actually feel (e.g., Kurman, 2003). It is unlikely that modesty pressures would influence participants' reports of the subjective distance of past events. Although each of the current studies is vulnerable to some of the methodological critiques, taken together, the two studies complement one another by addressing different concerns and demonstrating similar findings.

The findings of the present studies do lead us to reconsider Westerners and East Asians' precise motivations. Westerners are usually depicted as self-enhancing, meaning that they tend to possess inaccurately favorable views of themselves. Although the current data cannot compellingly speak to accuracy, the findings do indicate that Western participants had broadly favorable self-views. In contrast to Westerners, East Asians are often depicted as self-critical. Self-criticism could reflect an inaccurately harsh view of one's self or simply an accurate assessment of one's flaws. If self-criticism serves the function of helping East Asians fit in with their social group, then accurate self-criticism in which individuals correctly identify shortcomings warranting improvement should be most useful. Again, the current data do not address accuracy, but the evidence suggests that East Asians are not overly self-critical. Japanese participants were self-critical of private aspects of self, but they more generally tended to focus on both their strengths and their faults. They appear to be more interested in a balanced and accurate self-appraisal than in criticism for its own sake.

Finally, the current studies illustrate the value of cross-cultural research for evaluating theories generated in a specific cultural context. Theories based on the premise that people are inclined to self-enhance, such as Ross and Wilson's (2002) theory of temporal appraisal, are likely to be more applicable to North American participants. In contrast, Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison, with its focus on accurate self-appraisal, might be equally or more applicable to Japanese participants. Generally, researchers should keep in mind the

relative importance of different self-appraisal motivations across cultures when considering the generalizability of their theories.

NOTES

1. The coding initially included an interdependent category reflecting friendship, responsiveness to others, and sensitivity to the viewpoints of others (Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991). We omitted this category because we were unable to achieve acceptable reliability, probably because such statements were rare. The sum of statements coded in the private, relational, interdependent, and reflected appraisal categories is approximately equal to the total self-appraisals category (a few additional statements were not coded into any of the subcategories).

2. A number of participants from both cultures (20) chose to answer only one of these two questions, and their responses were not included in the analyses reported. The significance of the cultural differences is not affected if we include these participants' single-question responses in the analyses.

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