

Where Is the Evidence for Pancultural Self-Enhancement? A Reply to Sedikides, Gaertner, and Toguchi (2003)

Steven J. Heine
University of British Columbia

C. Sedikides, L. Gaertner, and Y. Toguchi (2003) maintained that the self-enhancement motivation (as defined by tendencies to view oneself in overly positive terms) is universal. The present article challenges their claim. A review of the literature revealed that many studies contradict their findings regarding the domain-specific nature of East Asian self-enhancement. It is argued that Sedikides et al. did not replicate past research because they did not measure self-enhancement in their studies. The present article provides a theoretical basis for understanding cross-cultural differences in self-enhancement and considers the question of universality by exploring 2 different conceptualizations of positive self-regard.

Sedikides, Gaertner, and Toguchi (2003) argued that self-enhancement does not vary across cultures but is universal. This is contrary to what has been argued elsewhere (e.g., Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). In their engaging and well-written article, Sedikides et al. maintained that people from all cultures self-enhance on dimensions that they consider to be personally important. Below I evaluate their case.

Universality and Levels of Analysis

When discussing the question of whether a psychological process is universal, it is critical to be clear about the level of specificity that one is considering. Evidence for universality might be clear at one level of abstraction but not at another. For example, beliefs in an individual's continued existence after death are found in nearly all cultures (Kluckhohn, 1962), although beliefs in reincarnation are not. Discussions of the universality of afterlife beliefs, then, need to be clear about whether it refers to general kinds of beliefs (such as beliefs that the individual continues to exist after death) or specific kinds of beliefs (such as reincarnation). In general, evidence for human universals is more consistent when considering phenomena at higher levels of abstraction; however, at these higher levels, the substance of the phenomena becomes more tenuous and difficult to operationalize (Geertz, 1973).

Preparation of this article was supported by National Institute of Mental Health Grant R01 MH060155-01A2 and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Grant 410-2001-0097. I am grateful to Julie Foster, Takeshi Hamamura, Darrin Lehman, Beth Morling, Ara Norenzayan, and Andrew Ryder for comments on an earlier version.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Steven J. Heine, Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia, 2136 West Mall, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6T 1Z4 Canada. E-mail: heine@psych.ubc.ca

Considerations of the universality of a need for positive self-regard also need to be specific about the level of abstraction. The article that Sedikides et al. were critiquing (Heine et al., 1999) distinguished between two levels at which this motivation can be considered. On one level, positive self-regard can be considered in terms of striving to be the kind of person viewed as appropriate, good, and significant in one's culture (e.g., Baumeister, 1991; Crocker & Park, 2002; Heine, Harihara, & Niiya, 2002; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997). Throughout this article, I refer to this first definition with the expression *being a good self*. On a second level, we can conceive of positive self-regard as it is operationalized in most empirical studies: That is, tendencies to dwell on and elaborate positive information about the self relative to information about one's weaknesses (e.g., Sedikides & Strube, 1997; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Throughout this article, I refer to this second definition with the term *self-enhancement*. It is my contention that these two are distinct levels, although they tend to be conflated in Western considerations of self-enhancement. Specifically, my colleagues and I have argued that being a good self is the outcome that tends to be achieved by self-enhancing in North America, whereas being a good self is the outcome often achieved by self-improving and maintaining face in East Asia (Heine, 2003a, 2005; Heine et al., 1999, 2002; Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, et al., 2001). That is, the self-enhancement motive is not an end in and of itself. In Western cultures, however, it is an important means to the end of being a culturally validated person.

I believe Sedikides et al. and I agree that the more abstract level of a need for positive self-regard can be described as universal. It would seem that success in any culture would be aided by pursuing strategies that enhance individuals' status within that environment and allow them to engage with their social relations in an active and uninhibited way (cf. Baumeister & Leary, 1995). My colleagues and I have argued elsewhere (e.g., Heine, 2003a; Heine et al., 1999) that this desire to be a good self is universal. There does not appear to be any controversy in this claim of universality.

Table 1

Summary of Cross-Cultural Studies of Self-Enhancement Biases from Heine and Hamamura's (2004) Meta-Analysis

Study	Cross-cultural comparison in self-enhancement between Asians and Westerners	Asians significantly enhancing or critical	Westerners significantly enhancing or critical
Better than average effect studies			
Brown & Kobayashi, 2002, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Crystal, 1999	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Endo, Heine, & Lehman, 2000, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Heine & Lehman, 1999	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Kobayashi & Brown, 2003	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Kurman, 2001, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Kurman, 2001, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Kurman, 2003, Study 1a	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Kurman, 2003, Study 1b	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Kurman, 2003, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Kurman & Sriram, 2002	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
False uniqueness effects			
Heine, Kitayama, & Lehman, 2001	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Heine & Lehman, 1997, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Markus & Kitayama, 1991	Asians sig. < Westerners	Null	Enhancing
Relative likelihood optimism bias for positive events			
Chang, Asakawa, & Sanna, 2001, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Null
Chang, Asakawa, & Sanna, 2001, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Null
Chang & Asakawa, 2003, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Null	Enhancing
Chang & Asakawa, 2003, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Null	Enhancing
Heine & Lehman, 1995, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Null	Enhancing
Relative likelihood optimism bias for negative events			
Chang, Asakawa, & Sanna, 2001, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Chang, Asakawa, & Sanna, 2001, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Chang & Asakawa, 2003, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Chang & Asakawa, 2003, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Heine & Lehman, 1995, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Heine & Lehman, 1995, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Absolute likelihood optimism bias for positive events			
Heine & Lehman, 1995, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Null	Enhancing
Absolute likelihood optimism bias for negative events			
Heine & Lehman, 1995, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Null	Enhancing
Heine & Lehman, 1995, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Internal (ability) attributions for successes and failures			
Anderson, 1999	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Endo & Meijer, in press, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Null	Enhancing
Influence of success and failure on self-esteem			
Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Kurman, 2003, Study 3	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Kurman, Yoshihara-Tanaka, & Elkoshi, 2003	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Academic self-enhancement			
Kurman, 2001, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Null
Kurman, 2001, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Kurman, 2003, Study 1a	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Kurman, 2003, Study 1b	Asians sig. < Westerners	Enhancing	Enhancing
Kurman, 2003, Study 1c	Asians sig. < Westerners	Null	Enhancing

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Cross-cultural comparison in self-enhancement between Asians and Westerners	Asians significantly enhancing or critical	Westerners significantly enhancing or critical
Persistence following success or failure			
Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, et al., 2001, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, et al., 2001, Study 2	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Self-peer evaluations			
Heine & Renshaw, 2002	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Amount of information necessary to evaluate performance			
Heine, Takata, & Lehman, 2000	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Enhancing
Memories for successes and failures			
Endo & Meijer, in press, Study 1	Asians sig. < Westerners	Null	Enhancing
Compensatory self-enhancement			
Heine, Kitayama, & Lehman, 2001	Asians sig. < Westerners	Critical	Null

Note. sig. < = significantly less than ($p < .05$).

Where Sedikides et al. and I disagree is with respect to a consideration of the universality of the first level—the level of the self-enhancement motive. Are tendencies to elaborate on positive compared with negative information about the self universal? Sedikides et al. maintained that they are, whereas I maintain that they are not. Our disagreement is based on the evidence for self-enhancing motivations among East Asians.

Evaluating Whether East Asians Self-Enhance

There are two sources of evidence for East Asian self-enhancement to which Sedikides et al. called attention. First is the extent to which East Asians show evidence of self-enhancement, in general, compared with Westerners. Sedikides et al. addressed this question by considering the past literature. Although they acknowledged that there is some evidence that East Asians self-enhance less than Westerners, they questioned the consistency of the database regarding the cultural differences, noting that “when evidence is taken into account, . . . the picture becomes considerably murkier” (p. 72). On this point I disagree: Heine and Hamamura (2004) conducted a meta-analysis that included every published cross-cultural study that compared self-enhancing tendencies between East Asians in East Asia and European-origin samples in the West. The meta-analysis found 45 published studies that utilized 14 different methodologies of self-enhancement biases, which are summarized in Table 1 (the meta-analysis also explored studies that compared measures of self-esteem, which are not summarized here). Every one of the self-enhancement bias studies found that the Western sample self-enhanced significantly more than the East Asian one. These cultural differences were not trivial in magnitude: The weighted average effect size was $d = .83$.

An examination of the magnitude of the self-enhancing bias within each culture of Heine and Hamamura’s (2004) meta-analysis is also revealing. The Western sample showed a signifi-

cant self-enhancing bias in 41 out of the 45 studies and did not show significant self-criticism in any of the studies. The weighted average effect size for the Westerners was $d = .86$, indicating a highly pronounced bias. In contrast, the East Asians showed a significant self-enhancing bias in 16 out of the 45 studies and a significant self-critical bias in 20 of the 45 studies, and these effects varied a great deal according to methodology (for an in-depth discussion on this point, see Heine & Hamamura, 2004). The weighted average effect size across all studies for East Asians was $d = -.02$. These findings contradict Sedikides et al.’s claim that “the weight of evidence, then, across the three indicators points to a substantial degree of self-enhancement among Easterners” (p. 73). There are few effects in social psychology that are as pronounced and as consistently found as the evidence for cultural variability in self-enhancement.

Sedikides et al.’s article primarily focused on a second source of evidence for East Asian self-enhancement. That is, they raised the hypothesis that East Asians self-enhance in different domains than Westerners. The question, then, is not whether the magnitude of self-enhancing motivations varies across cultures but whether the motivation is directed toward a different collection of attributes. The cultural difference, they proposed, is one in terms of content, not process. They conducted two studies relevant to this. First, they found that a Japanese sample showed self-enhancement in a “better than average” paradigm for collectivistic traits but not for individualistic ones, whereas an American sample self-enhanced on a set of individualistic traits but not on a set of collectivistic ones. In a second study, they found that Americans who scored higher on a trait measure of independence rated themselves as having more individualistic traits and engaging in more individualistic behaviors compared with most others, whereas those who scored high on a trait measure of interdependence rated themselves as being higher than others

on trait and behavioral measures of collectivism. These findings are consistent with their argument.

Past Research on Self-Enhancement in Independent and Interdependent Domains

One issue that I take with the Sedikides et al. article is their consideration of the past literature. The question of whether East Asians self-enhance in domains that are of particular importance to them is not new. Rather, the very first study that investigated cultural differences in self-enhancement of self-assessments explored just this. As did Sedikides et al., Markus and Kitayama (1991) considered whether Japanese and Americans view themselves in unrealistically positive terms for independent and interdependent traits. In contrast to the findings of Sedikides et al., Markus and Kitayama found that people from both cultures showed more self-enhancement for interdependent than independent traits. In addition, they found that Japanese showed very little evidence of a bias for either kind of trait, whereas Americans were highly self-enhancing for both kinds. Heine and Lehman (1997) also explored the false-uniqueness effect among Japanese and Canadians with a different set of independent and interdependent traits and identified the same pattern as Markus and Kitayama. Kurman (2001) found that the better than average effect was more pronounced among Singaporeans for three communal traits than it was for three agentic ones across two studies, whereas Israeli Jews showed no difference across trait types (although there was a marginal reversal in one of the studies). Heine and Lehman (1995) explored independent and interdependent future life events in an unrealistic optimism design and found that whereas Japanese showed less optimism for interdependent than independent events, Canadians showed a mixed pattern depending on the optimism measure. In sum, the investigation of independent and interdependent domains of self-enhancement is not new, and the results from previous studies are in conflict with those of Sedikides et al.'s Study 1. In particular, it is the Western results from these past studies that are inconsistent with Sedikides et al.'s findings.

Of this past research on self-enhancement for independent and interdependent domains, Sedikides et al. only referred to the findings of Kurman (2001; which incidentally, is cited incorrectly as showing that Israeli Jews self-enhanced more for agentic than communal traits) and the study by Heine and Lehman (1997). Sedikides et al. raised the speculation that the contradictory evidence of Heine and Lehman (1997) might be due to a lack of pretesting of the traits under question in that study to ensure that the traits reflect concerns of independence and interdependence. It is true that my colleague and I did not use the pretesting that Sedikides et al. did when we selected the items in that study or in Heine and Lehman (1995), and neither did Markus and Kitayama (1991) in their study. However, I am uncertain about what the pretesting of Sedikides et al. accomplished. They asked students to evaluate whether statements seemed to match descriptions based on Markus and Kitayama's accounts of independent and interdependent selves. In contrast, Markus and Kitayama themselves evaluated whether the statements in their experiment matched their own description of independent and interdependent selves. I am inclined to trust the researchers' interpretations of independent and interdependent selves at least as much as those of the students learning about them.

Past Research on Self-Enhancement and Trait Importance

The question of whether East Asians self-enhance in domains that are of particular importance to them can be broadened beyond the simple dichotomy of independent and interdependent traits. A number of studies have investigated whether East Asians self-enhance more for traits that they view to be especially important. Some evidence suggests that they do. Brown and Kobayashi (2002) found greater evidence among Japanese for a better than average effect for traits that they viewed to be more important (this effect has been successfully replicated by Heine & Hamamura, 2004, and Kobayashi & Brown, 2003). Similarly, Ito (1999) found that Japanese showed a self-enhancing better than average effect for more important traits and a self-critical bias for less important traits. These studies conducted with the better than average paradigm are consistent with Sedikides et al.'s argument.

However, a number of articles have also investigated this same question with different paradigms that have found the exact opposite pattern of results. Heine and Renshaw (2002) measured self-enhancement by comparing self-assessments versus assessments by peers, and they also measured desirability and importance ratings for each of the traits. Japanese were significantly more self-critical for the desirable and important traits than they were for the relatively undesirable and unimportant ones. Americans, on the other hand, were more self-enhancing for the desirable traits (the relation with importance was not significant). Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, et al. (2001) manipulated success and failure on a task and subsequently asked participants to rate how important that task was for succeeding in life. Whereas Westerners viewed the task as more important if they had succeeded than if they had failed, Japanese viewed the task to be more important if they had failed than if they had succeeded. Kitayama et al. (1997) had participants indicate whether situations were seen to be more likely to cause participants' self-esteem to increase or decrease. They found that the situations that were most relevant to Japanese were more likely to cause their self-esteem to decrease than were the situations less relevant to them. In contrast, the situations most relevant for Americans were seen to cause their self-esteem to increase more than the other situations. Heine and Lehman (1999) measured actual-ideal discrepancies as well as participants' importance ratings. Whereas Canadians showed significantly smaller actual-ideal discrepancies (i.e., they were more satisfied with themselves) for traits that they viewed to be important compared with those they viewed as unimportant, Japanese showed marginally larger actual-ideal discrepancies (i.e., they were less satisfied with themselves) for the important traits compared with the less important ones. These studies all find evidence that East Asians self-enhance less in domains of particular importance to them. These findings are highly problematic for Sedikides et al.'s argument, but nowhere are they discussed. Furthermore, the astute reader will notice that, because of the particular way they chose to define their inclusion criteria, these analyses do not appear in the two meta-analyses in their reply (Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005) to this article either.

How can one evaluate whether there is a positive relation between importance and self-enhancement among East Asians? Such a relation has only been found using the better than average

paradigm, whereas the opposite relation is found in studies using other methodologies. I suggest that the better than average effect (which was also used by Sedikides et al.) reveals its unique pattern because it is not a pure measure of self-enhancement. Much research on the better than average effect has found that people view not only themselves as better than average; they also view any randomly chosen individual to be better than average (Klar & Giladi, 1997, 1999; Sears, 1983). Indeed, people have even evaluated a randomly chosen fragrance to be better than average (Giladi & Klar, 2002)! Viewing a random other or a fragrance to be better than average has nothing to do with self-enhancing motivations but rather with the different ways that people process singular versus distributional information (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1973; Klar & Giladi, 1997). This cognitive bias is not implicated in the other studies that have investigated the relation between self-enhancement and importance, because the other paradigms do not involve distributional targets. To the extent that people view specific others as better than average because of these cognitive biases, it follows that they should rate specific others as better than average especially for those traits that are most positive. Positive evaluations of people and objects are most afforded by traits that are especially valenced, and this suggests an alternative explanation to the correlations between self-enhancement and importance that have been found in studies of the better than average effect. In support of this reasoning, Heine and Hamamura (2004) controlled for the cognitive component of the better than average effect (i.e., the “everybody is better than their group’s average” effect; Klar & Giladi, 1997) by contrasting people’s self-evaluations with their evaluations of a specific, anonymous individual. They found that the positive correlation between self-enhancement and trait importance among Japanese disappeared, whereas it remained for Canadians.

Why Did Sedikides et al. Fail to Replicate Past Research?

Sedikides et al. investigated a question that has been explored many times before and failed to replicate these past studies in two important ways. First, unlike past cross-cultural studies of self-enhancement, Sedikides et al. did not find a cultural difference in the overall amount of self-enhancement. Second, Sedikides et al.’s Study 1 was the only study to find that East Asians self-enhance for collectivistic traits but not individualistic ones, whereas Westerners self-enhance for individualistic traits but not collectivistic ones.

The reason that Sedikides et al.’s studies yielded results that diverge from past findings can be traced to two aspects of their experimental design. First, they conducted a weak test of the question of whether self-enhancement is pancultural by exploring samples that were more likely to self-enhance than those that had been used in past studies. Study 1 investigated Japanese who were studying in America who completed the questionnaire in English. Much past research has revealed that East Asians who are living in the West or who complete questionnaires in English are more likely to self-enhance than their domestic compatriots completing the study in their own language (e.g., Heine & Hamamura, 2004; Heine & Lehman, 1997, 2004; Kitayama et al., 1997; Ross, Xun, & Wilson, 2002). Hence, Study 1 contrasted two groups that the cultural literature has shown do not differ to a great degree. Furthermore, Sedikides et al.’s Study 2 only included American

participants. Much research has already demonstrated that Americans self-enhance more in domains that are of particular importance to them (e.g., Dunning, 1995; Heine & Lehman, 1999). This does not provide evidence that self-enhancement is pancultural. To make a compelling case for universality, it is necessary to find similarities among cultural groups that are contested to be maximally divergent on the issue at hand. It is this reasoning that led Paul Ekman to set up his laboratory in the interior of Papua, New Guinea to test for the universality of facial expressions (Ekman, Sorenson, & Friesen, 1969); his arguments would have been far less convincing if he had only considered international students in San Francisco.

Second, and more problematic, is that Sedikides et al. do not appear to have measured self-enhancement in their studies. As the authors noted in their article, self-enhancement is evident “by positively differentiating the self from other group members” (p. 63). However, Sedikides et al. operationalized self-enhancement in their studies as tendencies for individuals to claim that they engaged in a set of behaviors or possessed a set of traits more than most other people. This would be evidence for self-enhancement if the behaviors and traits in question were all highly desirable. Although some of the behaviors and traits appear to be quite positive, many of them do not. Some examples of behaviors that were used in the study are “engage in open conflict with your group,” “scream at your group when you believe your decision is right and the group’s decision is definitely wrong,” “avoid conflict with your group at any cost,” and “engage in socially undesirable behavior that will ultimately benefit your group.” The list of traits included attributes such as “separate,” “unconstrained,” “compromising,” and “self-sacrificing.” With this operationalization, an individual who claims that they are more likely than others to engage in open conflict with their group would be scored as self-enhancing. Such a claim might indicate a pathological excess of individualism, and it would indicate a bias to the extent that the overall average of the sample was significantly different from zero, but it is hard to see how this would indicate a self-enhancing bias. Although the list of individualistic behaviors and traits seems to be more characteristic of individualists, and the list of collectivist behaviors and traits appears to be more characteristic of collectivists, this does not mean that they are desirable. Indeed, nowhere did the authors show that all of these traits were viewed as desirable.

In sum, the findings from Sedikides et al.’s two studies can be summarized as follows: Study 1 found that relative to others, Americans rate individualistic behaviors and traits to be more characteristic of themselves than collectivistic ones, and Japanese find collectivistic behaviors and traits to be more characteristic of themselves than individualistic ones. Study 2 revealed the rather tautological findings that Americans who on one measure endorsed items regarding their independence (but not their interdependence) were the same people who on another measure viewed individualistic behaviors and traits to be more characteristic of themselves relative to others and, more important, than collectivistic behaviors and traits. The studies provide evidence of the validity of the independence–interdependence construct and cultural differences in this construct, but I do not see any evidence of self-enhancement.

Questions of Origins and Levels of Analysis

The question of whether psychological processes are universal is an important one, and I applaud Sedikides et al. for calling attention to this particular case. To the extent that the evidence for a psychological process appears to be pancultural, an evolutionary account would be favored for explaining the existence of that process. Sedikides et al. were arguing for the universality of the self-enhancement motive, and they offered two interesting speculations about how this motive may have been selected for in humans' ancestral past. They suggested that self-esteem might serve to indicate status within an interpersonal network (e.g., Barkow, 1989), or it might function as a social barometer of belongingness with others (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). The great cultural variability in self-enhancement motivations suggests that at the level of positive self-regard operationalized as self-enhancement, such evolutionary accounts are problematic. To the extent that self-enhancement serves the function of maintaining status and belongingness, it follows that in cultures such as East Asia, where concerns with status and belongingness are arguably stronger than they are in the West (e.g., Heine, 2001), we should find more evidence of self-enhancement. An account of the origins of the self-enhancement motivation must be able to address why the motivation appears so much stronger in Western cultures than in East Asia.

I propose that a more fruitful search of the universal origins of human motivations would be directed at a level of abstraction in which the evidence for universality is more readily apparent. Returning to an earlier example, an evolutionary account for the origins of beliefs in reincarnation would not be very persuasive, given that such beliefs are not common in many, if not most, cultures. In contrast, an evolutionary account for the origins of beliefs in an afterlife, given that these beliefs are near universals, would be on much firmer ground (e.g., Atran & Norenzayan, in press; Pyszczynski et al., 1997). The reason for this is that there is far greater cultural variability in the specific instantiations of a belief in an afterlife (e.g., beliefs in karma, heaven, ghosts, ancestral spirits, etc.) than there is at the more abstract level of afterlife beliefs. However tempting it might be to endeavor to understand the motivation of afterlife beliefs by considering the more readily available specific instantiations of them, one does so at the risk of conflating the particular with the universal or, in anthropological jargon, the emic with the etic. Unless one considers how well one's reasoning generalizes to other specific instantiations of the motivation, one is unable to determine whether one's reasoning is limited to the concrete, particular level (i.e., beliefs in reincarnation) or can address the abstract, universal level (i.e., afterlife beliefs).

The same problem of conflating levels holds for the study of positive self-regard. As noted above, one way of conceptualizing the motivations for positive self-regard is in terms of how they are operationalized in most Western studies: namely, tendencies to focus on and exaggerate positive aspects of the self relative to negative aspects (i.e., self-enhancement; Sedikides & Strube, 1997; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Whereas there is pronounced and widespread evidence for self-enhancing motivations among Westerners, such evidence is scant among East Asians (Heine & Hamamura, 2004). Coming to understand the question of why people are universally motivated to have positive self-regard by

only considering the specific instantiation of this motivation as it appears in Western contexts is problematic.

Humans everywhere share the same biological foundation of their psychology, and this foundation emerged from various adaptations to a shared ancestral environment. However, although at one level people have many common underlying motivations (see Kenrick, Li, & Butner, 2003), pursuits of these are acted out on stages that are draped in particular cultural meaning systems. Different cultural environments provide different contingencies for specific thoughts and behaviors and, as such, render different kinds of thoughts and behaviors as functional for fulfilling similar underlying motivations (Heine, 2003b). As my colleagues and I have argued (Heine et al., 1999, 2002; Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, et al., 2001), the motivation to be a good self, by all accounts, appears to be universal, and people go about being good selves in ways that are prescribed by their cultures. My colleagues and I have proposed elsewhere that this motivation is instantiated by the highly divergent psychological processes associated with self-enhancement in the West and face maintenance in the East (e.g., Heine, 2003a, 2005; Heine et al., 1999). A compelling evolutionary account for the origins of a need for positive self-regard, then, would need to consider the adaptive value of such motivations at the level of being a good self. Given the difficulty of coming up with a common way of operationalizing the different ways to become a good self, such an evolutionary account would prove challenging but not impossible (as evidenced by the great progress terror management theory has made in this regard; e.g., Pyszczynski et al., 1997).

Sedikides et al. disagreed with our position of cultural variability in self-enhancement because they conflated the universal desire to be a good self with the tendency in Western cultures to overly elaborate on positive aspects of one's self (i.e., to self-enhance). It is these kinds of confluations that have given rise to the field of cultural psychology (Shweder, 1990). One goal of cultural psychology is to disentangle the concrete level of psychological processes that emerge from the well-researched Western mind from the abstract level of processes that are common to all. The challenge of this endeavor is that researchers never encounter the processes at the abstract, universal level (Geertz, 1973). They always appear in culturally packaged forms, even when the processes have emerged to solve universal human problems. In some instances, the packaging is transparent enough that the universals are visible (e.g., preferences for sweet and fatty foods [Rozin, 1976]; sex differences in violence [Daly & Wilson, 1988]). In others, however, the packaging is all that is seen. It is challenging, for example, for Western psychologists to think of reasoning without equating it to analytic reasoning (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001); self-concepts without conjuring up thoughts of independent, autonomous selves (Markus & Kitayama, 1991); or good selves without assuming that they are sustained by high self-esteem. It is only by considering cultural diversity in psychology that these confluations of the universal and the particular become apparent.

References

- Anderson, C. A. (1999). Attributional style, depression, and loneliness: A cross-cultural comparison of American and Chinese students. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25, 482-499.

- Atran, S., & Norenzayan, A. (in press). Religion's evolutionary landscape: Cognition, commitment, compassion. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.
- Barkow, J. H. (1989). *Darwin, sex, and status: Biosocial approaches to mind and culture*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Meanings of life*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*, 497–529.
- Brown, J. D., & Kobayashi, C. (2002). Self-enhancement in Japan and America. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *5*, 145–168.
- Chang, E. C., & Asakawa, K. (2003). Cultural variations on optimistic and pessimistic bias for self versus a sibling: Is there evidence for self-enhancement in the West and for self-criticism in the East when the referent group is specified? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*, 569–581.
- Chang, E. C., Asakawa, K., & Sanna, L. J. (2001). Cultural variations in optimistic and pessimistic bias: Do Easterners really expect the worst and Westerners really expect the best when predicting future life events? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *81*, 476–491.
- Crocker, J., & Park, L. E. (2002). *The costly pursuit of self-esteem*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Michigan.
- Crystal, D. S. (1999). Attributions of deviance to self and peers by Japanese and U.S. students. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *139*, 596–610.
- Daly, M., & Wilson, M. (1988). *Homicide*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Dunning, D. (1995). Trait importance and modifiability as factors influencing self-assessment and self-enhancement motives. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *21*, 1297–1306.
- Ekman, P., Sorenson, E. R., & Friesen, W. (1969). Pancultural elements in facial displays of emotion. *Science*, *164*, 86–88.
- Endo, Y., Heine, S. J., & Lehman, D. R. (2000). Culture and positive illusions in relationships: How my relationships are better than yours. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *26*, 1571–1586.
- Endo, Y., & Meijer, Z. (in press). Autobiographical memory of success and failure experiences. In Y. Kashima, Y. Endo, E. Kashima, C. Leung, & J. McClure (Eds.), *Progress in Asian social psychology* (Vol. 4). Seoul, Korea: Kyoyook-kwahak-sa.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giladi, E. E., & Klar, Y. (2002). When standards are wide of the mark: Nonselective superiority and bias in comparative judgments of objects and concepts. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *131*, 538–551.
- Heine, S. J. (2001). Self as cultural product: An examination of East Asian and North American selves. *Journal of Personality*, *69*, 881–906.
- Heine, S. J. (2003a). An exploration of cultural variation in self-enhancing and self-improving motivations. In V. Murphy-Berman & J. J. Berman (Eds.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation: Vol. 49. Cross-cultural differences in perspectives on the self* (pp. 101–128). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Heine, S. J. (2003b). Optimal is as optimal does. *Psychological Inquiry*, *14*, 41–43.
- Heine, S. J. (2005). Constructing good selves in Japan and North America. In *Culture and Social Behavior: The 10th Ontario Symposium* (pp. 115–143). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Heine, S. J., & Hamamura, T. (2004). *In search of East Asian self-enhancement*. Manuscript under review, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.
- Heine, S. J., Harihara, M., & Niiya, Y. (2002). Terror management in Japan. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *5*, 187–196.
- Heine, S. J., Kitayama, S., & Lehman, D. R. (2001). Cultural differences in self-evaluation: Japanese readily accept negative self-relevant information. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *32*, 434–443.
- Heine, S. J., Kitayama, S., Lehman, D. R., Takata, T., Ide, E., Leung, C., & Matsumoto, H. (2001). Divergent consequences of success and failure in Japan and North America: An investigation of self-improving motivations and malleable selves. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *81*, 599–615.
- Heine, S. J., & Lehman, D. R. (1995). Cultural variation in unrealistic optimism: Does the West feel more invulnerable than the East? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *68*, 595–607.
- Heine, S. J., & Lehman, D. R. (1997). The cultural construction of self-enhancement: An examination of group-serving biases. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *72*, 1268–1283.
- Heine, S. J., & Lehman, D. R. (1999). Culture, self-discrepancies, and self-satisfaction. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *25*, 915–925.
- Heine, S. J., & Lehman, D. R. (2004). Move the body, change the self: Acculturative effects on the self-concept. In M. Schaller & C. Crandall (Eds.), *Psychological foundations of culture* (pp. 305–331). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Heine, S. J., Lehman, D. R., Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1999). Is there a universal need for positive self-regard? *Psychological Review*, *106*, 766–794.
- Heine, S. J., & Renshaw, K. (2002). Interjudge agreement, self-enhancement, and liking: Cross-cultural divergences. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *28*, 442–451.
- Heine, S. J., Takata, T., & Lehman, D. R. (2000). Beyond self-presentation: Evidence for self-criticism among Japanese. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *26*, 71–78.
- Ito, T. (1999). Self-enhancement tendency and other evaluations: An examination of "better-than-average effect." *Japanese Journal of Psychology*, *70*, 367–374.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1973). On the psychology of prediction. *Psychological Review*, *80*, 237–251.
- Kenrick, D. T., Li, N. P., & Butner, J. (2003). Dynamical evolutionary psychology: Individual decision-rules and emergent social norms. *Psychological Review*, *1*, 3–28.
- Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., Matsumoto, H., & Norasakkunkit, V. (1997). Individual and collective processes in the construction of the self: Self-enhancement in the United States and self-criticism in Japan. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *72*, 1245–1267.
- Klar, Y., & Giladi, E. E. (1997). "No one in my group can be below the group's average": A robust positivity bias in favor of anonymous peers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *73*, 885–901.
- Klar, Y., & Giladi, E. E. (1999). Are most people happier than their peers, or are they just happy? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *25*, 585–594.
- Kluckhohn, C. (1962). *Culture and behavior*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Kobayashi, C., & Brown, J. D. (2003). Self-esteem and self-enhancement in Japan and America. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *34*, 567–580.
- Kurman, J. (2001). Self-enhancement: Is it restricted to individualistic cultures? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *12*, 1705–1716.
- Kurman, J. (2003). Why is self-enhancement low in certain collectivist cultures? An investigation of two competing explanations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *34*, 496–510.
- Kurman, J., & Sriram, N. (2002). Interrelationships among vertical and horizontal collectivism, modesty, and self-enhancement. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *33*, 71–86.
- Kurman, J., Yoshihara-Tanaka, C., & Elkoshi, T. (2003). Is self-enhancement negatively related to constructive self-criticism? Self-enhancement in Israel and in Japan. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *34*, 24–37.
- Leary, M. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. In M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in exper-*

- imental social psychology* (Vol. 32, pp. 1–62). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Cultural variation in the self-concept. In G. R. Goethals & J. Strauss (Eds.), *Multidisciplinary perspectives on the self* (pp. 18–48). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Nisbett, R. E., Peng, K., Choi, I., & Norenzayan, A. (2001). Culture and systems of thought: Holistic versus analytic cognition. *Psychological Review*, *108*, 291–310.
- Pyszczynski, T., Greenberg, J., & Solomon, S. (1997). Why do we need what we need? A terror management perspective on the roots of human social motivation. *Psychological Inquiry*, *8*, 1–20.
- Ross, M., Xun, W. Q. E., & Wilson, A. E. (2002). Language and the bicultural self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *28*, 1040–1050.
- Rozin, P. (1976). Psychological and cultural determinants of food choice. In T. Silverstone (Ed.), *Appetite and food intake* (pp. 286–312). Berlin, Germany: Dahlem Konferenzen.
- Sears, D. O. (1983). The person-positivity bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *44*, 233–250.
- Sedikides, C., Gaertner, L., & Toguchi, Y. (2003). Pancultural self-enhancement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*, 60–79.
- Sedikides, C., Gaertner, L., & Vevea, J. L. (2005). Pancultural self-enhancement reloaded: A meta-analytic reply to Heine (2005). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *89*, 539–551.
- Sedikides, C., & Strube, M. J. (1997). Self-evaluation: To thine own self be good, to thine own self be sure, to thine own self be true, and to thine own self be better. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 29, pp. 209–269). New York: Academic Press.
- Shweder, R. A. (1990). Cultural psychology: What is it? In J. W. Stigler, R. A. Shweder, & G. Herdt (Eds.), *Cultural psychology: Essays on comparative human development* (pp. 1–43). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, S. E., & Brown, J. D. (1988). Illusion and well-being: A social psychological perspective on mental health. *Psychological Bulletin*, *103*, 193–210.

Received August 25, 2003

Revision received January 6, 2004

Accepted February 4, 2004 ■

New Editors Appointed, 2007–2012

The Publications and Communications (P&C) Board of the American Psychological Association announces the appointment of three new editors for 6-year terms beginning in 2007. As of January 1, 2006, manuscripts should be directed as follows:

- *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* (www.apa.org/journals/xlm.html), **Randi C. Martin, PhD**, Department of Psychology, MS-25, Rice University, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, TX 77251.
- *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* (www.apa.org/journals/pro.html), **Michael C. Roberts, PhD**, 2009 Dole Human Development Center, Clinical Child Psychology Program, Department of Applied Behavioral Science, Department of Psychology, 1000 Sunnyside Avenue, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045.
- *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* (www.apa.org/journals/law.html), **Steven Penrod, PhD**, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 445 West 59th Street N2131, New York, NY 10019-1199.

Electronic manuscript submission. As of January 1, 2006, manuscripts should be submitted electronically through the journal's Manuscript Submission Portal (see the Web site listed above with each journal title).

Manuscript submission patterns make the precise date of completion of the 2006 volumes uncertain. Current editors, Michael E. J. Masson, PhD, Mary Beth Kenkel, PhD, and Jane Goodman-Delahunty, PhD, JD, respectively, will receive and consider manuscripts through December 31, 2005. Should 2006 volumes be completed before that date, manuscripts will be redirected to the new editors for consideration in 2007 volumes.

In addition, the P&C Board announces the appointment of **Thomas E. Joiner, PhD** (Department of Psychology, Florida State University, One University Way, Tallahassee, FL 32306-1270), as editor of the *Clinician's Research Digest* newsletter for 2007–2012.