

PERCEIVED PARENTAL NURTURANCE AND SELF-  
ESTEEM ACROSS AMERICAN AND JAPANESE  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

By

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview of the Study**

A prevailing interest for counselors and psychologists is the development of self-esteem in the individual. One of the factors that has been studied in prior research in relation to self-esteem in white, middle-class American children is parental care (acceptance, approval, and support). It is important in the field of psychology to better understand the interaction and relationship of these variables in a broader multicultural context by conducting studies on more diverse samples. Results of these studies will have theoretical and practical implications on social, developmental, and multicultural counseling psychology.

### **Background of the Problem**

The evaluation of the self is better known as self-esteem, which a person makes and generally maintains towards him or herself and usually expresses a range of feelings from acceptance to disapproval (Rosenberg, 1965). It is the primary evaluative part of the self, and it mirrors the extent to which an individual believes he or she merits respect and is worthwhile (Coopersmith, 1967). Self-esteem begins its development in infancy and evolves throughout our lifetimes as we construct images of ourselves through our specific experiences with people and activities and perceptions about those experiences. Experiences in early and middle childhood have

a particularly large role in forming our self-esteem. During these years, our experiences with successes, as well as set backs contribute to the formation of our self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

The topic of self-esteem is often confused with self-concept. Both are closely related but have individual distinctions. Self-concepts can be seen as “self-identities” focusing on the meaning composing the self. Self-esteem deals with the evaluation of those self-concepts (Gecas, 1982). Both work together, as self-concept distinguishes one’s perceived roles and attributes, whereas self-esteem puts value or worth on those roles and attributes.

Self-esteem has often been theorized as composing two distinct parts, worth and competence (Gecas, 1982; Gecas & Schwalbe 1983). The worth portion (worth-based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which a person believes that he or she is a person of value. This tends to be intrinsic and is a feeling of who you are, not so much what you can do. At a young age the individual relies on the messages of others about his or her own worth and as the individual matures he or she develops a self-reflective evaluative process. The competence portion (efficacy-based self-esteem) refers to degree to which a person believes he or she is capable and efficacious (Cast & Burke, 2002). It is the effect one feels he has on the environment, his own power to make change or achieve success.

Self-esteem is of particular interest to those in the mental health field, as low self-esteem can have negative consequences on the healthy functioning of individuals. A direct link has been established between low self-esteem and depression (Rosenberg, 1989; Cheng & Furnham, 2002). Other studies have found a



relationship between self-esteem and loneliness (Cheng & Furham, 2002), as well as self-esteem and suicidal behavior (Groholt et al., 2000; Harter, 1999; and Kienhorst et al., 1990).

In addition to the primary effects of having low self-esteem, often the negative consequences of this orientation reinforce the negative self-thoughts making a person spiral downward with increasingly unhealthy thoughts and self-destructive behaviors (Davila, Hammen, Burge, Paley, and Daley, 1995). It may become a self-fulfilling prophecy, continuously proving the negative images correct. Davila, Hammen, Burge, Paley, and Daley (1995) also view self-esteem and depression as a vicious cycle, where unsuccessful attempts by a person to relate to others in social situations may lead to low self-esteem, which causes depressed feelings. The depressed feelings then lead to further unsuccessful social situations, which, then again leads to a lowered self-esteem.

### **The Problem**

The parent/child relationship has been shown to be one of the strongest factors in developing healthy self-esteem in children (Parsons, 1964). Specifically, parental nurturance has been believed to play a large role in building self-esteem (Buri, Kirchner, & Walsh 2001), although additional study needs to be completed to establish a causal relationship. However, little has been done to examine the relationship of self-esteem and parental nurturance in populations in non-white, non-middle-class populations.

Some evidence exists that it is not always appropriate to generalize results of self-esteem studies from Western samples to non-Western populations. Bush,

Peterson, Cobas, and Supple (2002) found that a mainland Chinese sample contrasted with what is commonly found in Western cultures, not finding as significant a relationship between parental behaviors and children's self-esteem. These cross-cultural studies are few in numbers and need to be conducted to increase the understanding of family influence in the development of personality in individuals from areas other than the United States, Canada, England, and Australia.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Collectivism:** "...pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups. Which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 1991, p.51)

**Ethnic Group:** is a human population whose members identify with each other, usually on the basis of a presumed common genealogy or ancestry. Ethnic groups are also usually united by common cultural, behavioural, linguistic, or religious practices (Smith 1986).

**Father:** in this research study was used for both the biological or adoptive father and father and paternal are used interchangeably.

**Individualism:** "...pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him or herself and his or her immediate family" (Hofstede, 1991, p.51)

**International Student:** in this research study was used for any student who is enrolled in a higher education institution in the United States who is a resident of a country other than the United States.

**Mother:** in this research study was used for both the biological or adoptive mother and mother and maternal are used interchangeably.

**Nurturance (Parental):** is parents' approval, acceptance, and affirmation (Buri, 1989). Father Nurturance is the father's role of extending approval, acceptance, and affirmation to his children and Mother Nurturance is the mother's role of extending approval, acceptance, and affirmation to her children (Buri, 1989). For the purpose of this study, parental nurturance was measured by the Parental Nurturance Scale. Parental nurturance scores were attained by averaging both the parents' scores if the subject is from a two-parent home and by either the mother's or father's score if the subject is from a single parent home.

**Object Relations:** are set of theories which postulates that relationships, beginning with the mother-infant dyad, are primary, and that intrapsychic, interpersonal, and group experiences lay the foundation for the development of individual identity. The individual's interpretation of these relationships, both conscious and unconscious, becomes the basis for later relations with others, in friendship, marriage, and raising a family (Glickauf-Hughes & Wells, 1997).

**Parental Acceptance:** "is used most often to describe a parent's willingness to see a child's strengths and weaknesses, or to be aware of each child in terms of his or her potentials and limitations. This kind of acceptance is warm, in that it is balanced. By seeing both dimensions of a child in a particular situation, a parent can encourage him or her to explore the world in

a way that is appropriate, based upon the child's age, preferences, fears, interests, and so forth" (Mruk, 1999).

**Perceived Parental Nurturance:** is the subjective report of research participants in regard to their perception of their parents' love, affectionate care, and attention (Buri, 1989).

**Self-esteem:** is the evaluation of the self, which a person makes and generally maintains towards him or herself and usually expresses a range of feelings from acceptance to disapproval (Rosenberg, 1965). It is the primary evaluative part of the self, and it mirrors the extent to which an individual believes he or she merits respect and is worthwhile (Coopersmith, 1967). For the purpose of this study self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

**Social Desirability:** is the tendency for an individual to answer questions or give information in ways that are socially acceptable, rather than in ways that are true (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960). For the purpose of this study social desirability was measured by the Social Desirability Scale, originally developed by Crowne and Marlowe (1960).

### **Research Question**

This study is an attempt to answer the following specific research question:

- 1. What is the relationship of perceived parental nurturance and cultural identification to self-esteem, controlling for social desirability?*

### **Scope and Limitations**

The scope of this study was limited to undergraduate students at a large Public State University. Age constraints exist for the participants, as only those between the ages of 18 and 30 were included. Therefore, results of the study should not be generalized beyond the populations from whom the samples were taken.

There were conditions beyond the researcher's control. Participation was voluntary, which means that there is a possibility that those who declined to participate may differ in attitude from those who elected to participate in the study. Additionally, all measures used in this study were self-report and therefore subject to sociably desirable responses.

Evidence has shown that different cultural groups tend to answer questionnaires in different ways based on social desirability (Keillor, Owens, and Pettijohn, 2001; Middleton and Jones, 2000; Nyaw and Ng, 1994). In a comparative analysis of samples of four countries Nya and Ng (1994) found that the cultural origin of the respondent had a significant effect on that individual's reactions to particular questions and that controlling for this social desirability bias was empirically necessary for their findings. In a similar study conducted by Middleton and Jones (2000) of socially desirable response sets, it was concluded that there was a significant difference in response bias between Western and non-Western participants that could be attributed to the cultural dimensions of the respondent's country of origin.

In an effort to minimize the effects of social desirability bias of the participants, the Social Desirability Scale, originally developed by Crowne and

Marlowe (1960) was used to control for items that were answered in ways that are socially acceptable for their respective cultures, rather than in ways that were true. In addition, each envelope of assessment responses and demographic information was solely identified by an envelope number to ensure confidentiality and encourage honest responses.

Another limitation of this study is that participants were asked questions that necessitated memory retrieval of what might be emotionally charged and subjective material. Perceived parental nurturance, for example, was based on the perceptions of one family member (child) and is subject to the participant's subjective viewpoint. That viewpoint might have been altered by any number of factors, such as subject's marital status or becoming a parent him or herself.

Finally, it is acknowledged that societal influences affect parental nurturance and self-esteem. Income level, beliefs about parenting, religion, parent's educational level, employment status, family dynamics, and numerous other factors have an important impact on the family and individual. While these factors are worthy of study, they were beyond the scope of this investigation.

### **Assumptions**

The Following is a list of assumptions related to this study.

1. Participants will not feel coerced into participation in this research project.
2. Participants understand and feel confident that no other parties, with the exception of the researcher, will have access to their confidential research information.
3. Parents have a strong influence in children's self-esteem.

4. Mothers and fathers are capable of being nurturing.
5. Young adults are capable of evaluating their mothers' and fathers' nurturance.
6. Young adults are capable of evaluating their own feelings about themselves.
7. Participants will answer questions related to self-esteem, perceived parental nurturance, and selected demographic information in an honest and self-reflective manner in a way that is meaningful, reliable, and valid.
8. High self-esteem is beneficial. Those individuals with high self-esteem are happier and more confident in themselves.
9. Participants have at least an 8<sup>th</sup> grade English reading level and can understand the study surveys.
10. Self-esteem has the same cultural significance and is expressed similarly in both American and Japanese cultures.

### **A Rationale for the Present Study**

This study examined the relationship between perceived parental nurturance and self-esteem between two culturally different samples to examine within and between culture differences. The literature reveals an abundance of self-esteem studies in Western societies such as the United States, Canada, England, and Australia, but these samples may give an incomplete picture of self-esteem development in other societies. Western societies, for example, are often generalized as focusing on individual values, such as self-efficacy, free will, independence, and assertiveness. Eastern societies, such as Japan, Korea, or China, are often conceptualized as societies that place a higher value on group orientation, where

interdependence and connections with others are culturally emphasized (Bush et al., 2002).

Bush, Peterson, Cobas, and Supple (2002) studied children's perceptions of parental behaviors as predictors of child self-esteem in mainland China. This research was done because previous self-esteem research had only focused on Western societies and Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong, which is a very Westernized city. The researchers hypothesized that findings would be different in mainland China as compared to Hong Kong, as it is a more collectivistic culture (Bush et al., 2002).

Results indicated that socialization patterns between adolescents and their parents in mainland China were similar to those found in Western cultures. Reasoning, monitoring, and autonomy-granting behaviors by Chinese parents were positive predictors of Chinese children's self-esteem, whereas punitiveness was a negative predictor of self-esteem. The researchers also found that parental support was not a predictor of Chinese adolescents' self-esteem, which contradicts what is commonly found in Western cultures (Bush et al., 2002).

The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between perceived parental nurturance and self-esteem between two culturally diverse populations, to determine how the trends we find in Western societies, such as the United States, relate to those found in Eastern societies, such as Japan. Results of this study may contribute to the broader understanding of self-esteem development and have practical and theoretical implications on social, developmental, and multicultural counseling psychology.



## **Object Relations Theory**

The current study seeks to better understand the relationship of perceived parental nurturance and cultural identification to self-esteem. Object relations theory provides a very good theoretical framework to address the parent child relationship in terms of self-esteem development. Object relations theory is a contemporary adaptation of psychoanalytic theory that places less importance on instinctual drives (aggression and sexuality) and more emphasis on relationships as the prime motivational force for humans. Object relations theorists suggest that people are relationship seeking, as opposed to pleasure seeking as Freud argued (Hinshelwood, 1991). Object relations theorists argue that there is no “self” without “the other” and that the self cannot be separated from the complex interpersonal relationships from which the person derives his meaning (Sullivan, 1940).

Sigmund Freud first used the term “object” to denote the thing or person that is the focus of one’s desires or drives (St. Clair, 2004). Since Freud, many object relations theorists, such as Melanie Klein, Ronald Fairbairn, Donald Winnicott, Margaret Mahler, Otto Kernberg, and Heinz Kohut have moved toward a relational model of the mind in which an “object” is the target of relational needs (Gomez, 1997). Within current object relations theory, an object can be a human being (mother, father, teacher, sister) or a thing (blanket, teddy bear, or other things with which we form attachments).

The developing child’s relationships with these “objects” are integrated into him or herself, and become the foundation for the child’s personality and sense of self. Although a child enters the world with some genetic predispositions towards

temperament, it is that child's interactions with significant others that shape how those predispositions will be expressed (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). Early in life, when we have little sense of self, it is through our interactions with others that we slowly build a sense of ourselves. Object relations theorists believe that the "self-structure" blueprint that is formed in early life through our experiences with objects is relatively stable later in life and that individuals tend to seek out others who will reaffirm these early self-object relationships (Kohut, 1979).

Object relations theory is an appropriate theoretical frame for the current study because of its emphasis on early childhood interactions, such as the parent-child relationship. Object relations theorists view the parents as the primary and most influential provider of experiences that develop their child's self-image and personality. Winnicott (1960) theorized that a child develops a stronger sense of self through the parent's attention to the child's needs and the non-impedance with the child when he or she is contented and Kohut (1971) furthered this idea by arguing that the child builds a more positive sense of self when parents and significant others communicate that he or she is heard, seen, understood, and valued. The current study will examine these theories through survey and statistical analysis of the relationship between self-esteem and parental nurturance in US and Japanese participants.

#### D.W. Winnicott

D.W. Winnicott was a pediatrician, psychoanalyst, and theorist who wrote several books and articles on object relations theory from 1931 to 1971. Winnicott stressed the importance of the conditions of the environment, whether favorable or not, in the shaping of a child's development. This perspective shifts away from the

instinctual development of the child as stressed by Freud and other early psychodynamic theorists. Winnicott understood the development of the child almost solely in terms of the child's social environment. He argued that the crucial factor in the environment is parental care and that the child will develop and thrive in the maturational process if there is a facilitating process (Winnicott, 1965).

Winnicott coined the term "good-enough mother" to illustrate the parental contribution of providing adequately for the child to get a positive developmental start in life (Winnicott, 1963). The good-enough mother sufficiently gives what the child needs at a particular developmental phase and adjusts and changes according to the changing needs of the child. The child eventually goes from absolute dependence on mother, through relative dependence, to independence. Initially the infant is totally dependent on the provisions of the environment, and the environment (in the form of parents) who adapt to the child's changing needs as the child grows (Winnicott, 1963). In the current study parental nurturance is associated with Winnicott's concept of the "good enough mother", providing for the child's emotional needs at a particular developmental phase and adjusting according to the changing needs of the child.

There is no way to separate the development of the child and the relationship that child has with his parents, because the child is not an isolated individual but a part of a family group (Winnicott, 1960). Without the parent-child relationship, there is no infant and therefore the development of the infant is inextricably linked to parental care (Winnicott, 1960). In the current study, Winnicott's concept that parental care is a crucial factor in the child's development will be examined. If

Winnicott's theories are accurate then we would expect to see a positive correlation between parental nurturance and self-esteem. Winnicott's ideas about the importance of parent-child relationship (such as parental nurturance) and the child's personality development (such as self-esteem) form the theoretical framework that will guide the current study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The present study will examine the relationship between parental nurturance and the development of self-esteem across cultures. The first section of the review of literature examines difference in American and Japanese culture and explains the concept of collectivist and individualistic societies. The next section discusses the self and self-esteem as constructs in psychology. Subsequently, related articles on parental nurturance as it relates to self-esteem are reviewed and then research efforts that focus on parental nurturance and self-esteem in different cultural contexts will be examined. A rationale for the present study including strengths and limitations of the current research area are discussed and gaps are identified which the current study will attempt to address.

#### **Collectivism and Individualism**

Japan's cultural, religious, and historical tradition differs markedly from those of the United States, Canada, England, and most other Western cultures (Rindfuss, Choe, Bumpass, & Tsuya, 2004). The Confucian influence is particularly significant on family behavior and values as it was based on patrilineal descent, patriarchal authority, and patrilocal residence (Fukutake, 1989). Japan is relatively homogeneous in religion, language, and ethnicity and religion does not have as strong

an influence on family values (Rindfuss et al., 2004) as is does in Western societies. Religion in Japan tends to have far less competition between various religious groups (Rindfuss et al., 2004).

After World War II, Japan saw mass urbanization of its society, including updated transportation systems and communication networks (Rindfuss, et al., 2004). Housing costs rival that of the West and the demand for consumer products is also very high. An effect of postwar change in Japan was the increased educational attainment and paid employment of women (Raymo, 2003). The percentage of women (25-29) with college educations increased from 10 % in 1970 to 51 % in 2000, which is similar to men in the same age range (Rindfuss, et al., 2004). Although Japanese women are becoming more highly educated and entering the labor force in larger numbers, mothers continue to be the primary care providers and many mothers reduce their work hours or discontinue working to care for their children (Choe, Bumpass, Tsuya, 2004).

In Japan, it is much more common for intergenerational co-residence or couples living with parent(s) than it is in Western societies (Rindfuss et al., 2004). This means that in Japan grandparents are also more likely to contribute to the development of children as they often live with, and take a large role in nurturing and caring for, their grandchildren.

Many of the differences between Western and Japanese cultures are summarized by describing the model of “collectivistic” and “individualistic” societies (Trandis, 1989). Individualism pertains to societies in which bonds between individuals are loose and expectations are for everyone to look after him or herself

and his or her immediate family. These societies stress an “I” consciousness, independence, self-reliance, emotional autonomy, right to privacy, personal initiative, and self-gratification (Hofstede, 1991). The major emphasis in these societies is self-expression, personal accomplishment, and distinction from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

The individualistic orientation, which is reflected in US culture is rooted in the emphasis on the expression of the “natural self” and the focus on rational thought, both of which had their origins in Europe during the Enlightenment (Morris, 1991; Taylor, 1989).

Collectivism pertains to societies where it’s members are integrated into strong, cohesive groups from birth throughout people’s lifetimes. These societies emphasize a “we” consciousness, collectivist identity, group dependence, group solidarity, obligations to the group, and collective decision making (Hofstede, 1991). The major emphasis in these societies is the maintenance of the group and group relationships (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999), to occupy one’s proper position, and to engage in activities that promote common goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

The collectivist orientation can be seen in contemporary Japanese culture, which has it’s interdependent origins in both the Confucian belief of role obligation and the Buddhist ideal of compassion (Ames, Dissanayake, & Kasulis, 1994). The Japanese cultural orientation has a strong emphasis in maintaining and affirming significant relationships and in promoting the embeddedness of the individual in the group (Azume, 1994; Kitayama & Karasawa, 1995).

This collectivist point of view is evidenced in Japanese child-rearing and childhood education practices that encourage a strong orientation with the group and a sense of common commitment and responsibility among group members (Rindfuss et al., 2004). For example, school children in Japan spend more time working in groups with other children than students do in Western cultures. These Japanese students are expected to adjust their learning styles to the group and teachers tend to interact with these students in a group setting.

In Western classrooms, teachers tend to interact more on an individual basis with students and assign individual work which is consistent with the West's individualistic focus (Darling, N., Hamilton, S., Toyokawa, T., and Matsuda, S., 2002). Japan's collectivistic orientation toward harmony and conformity with the greater group is reflected in its emphasis on respect for elders and its support of strong peer group relationships. This Western view of strong peer bonds is often seen as a negative force (such as peer pressure), undermining parental and institutional authority and jeopardizing the individual and collective good (Darling, N., Hamilton, S., Toyokawa, T., and Matsuda, S., 2002). Therefore, Japanese parents tend to socialize children to conform and put the benefits of the group first, whereas Western parents tend to socialize children into thinking about their own needs, while resisting the pressures of the group.

The sociological differences in collectivistic cultures, such as Japan and individualistic cultures, such as the United States may affect how children in their respective cultures may relate to parents and develop self-image and esteem.



## **Self-Esteem**

The idea of “self” has been the focus of writers, theologians, and philosophers for centuries, but has its Western psychological roots at the beginning of the twentieth century with Charles Horton Cooley (1902). Cooley developed the theory of “The Looking Glass-Self”, in which he argued that we develop a “self” through: 1) our perceptions of how others view us, 2) our perception of how others judge us and, 3) our response to how we think we are being judged. The self-reflection that a person engages in implies that he or she is acting as the auditor of his or her own actions; much like an outside person. This means that one takes the role, as well as attitude, of another when engaged in self-talk (Miller, 1982). Jean Piaget (1936) conceptualized “self” as enduring schemas or mental structures and Jacobson (1964) maintained that these self-representations take a long period of time to develop.

The evaluation of the self is better known as self-esteem, which a person makes and generally maintains towards him or herself: it usually expresses a range of feelings from acceptance to disapproval (Rosenberg, 1965). It is the primary evaluative part of the self, and it mirrors the extent to which an individual believes he or she merits respect and is worthwhile (Coopersmith, 1967). As object relations theorists would argue, self-esteem begins development in infancy and evolves throughout our lifetimes as we construct an image of ourselves through our specific experiences with people and activities and perceptions about those experiences. Experiences in early and middle childhood have a particularly large role in forming our self-esteem. During these years, our experiences with successes, as well as setbacks contribute to the formation of our self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

Self-esteem theory began in 1890 with William James who studied self-esteem based on introspection. Self-esteem was not a major issue for James, however, and his writings were limited to only a few pages. He argued that self-esteem is an affective phenomenon, limited to feeling or emotion. James saw self-esteem as dynamic, open to enhancement, and connected to successes and competence (James, 1890).

Theory on self-esteem had more contributions from Robert White in 1963, who introduced a psychoanalytic/psychodynamic approach. Like James, he saw self-esteem as a developmental phenomenon in that it develops in response to experiences and behaviors. He theorized that self-esteem has two primary sources; one's own accomplishments (internal source) and affirmations from others (external source) which cannot be experimentally tested (Mruk, 1999).

Morris Rosenberg (1965) introduced a sociocultural approach to self-esteem theory and defined self-esteem as an attitude (either positive or negative) that we have about ourselves. This is the first theory to see self-esteem as a product of culture, society, family, and interpersonal relationships and the amount of self-esteem an individual has is proportional to the degree to which that individual measures up to a core set of self-values. Rosenberg was the first to link self-esteem to anxiety and depression based upon his analysis of a large sample of 5,000 students. Feelings and beliefs about one's worthiness are central to his approach (Rosenberg, 1965).

Stanley Coopersmith, in 1967, introduced self-esteem as a behavioral perspective. Like Rosenberg, he saw self-esteem as an attitude and expression of worthiness and also linked to depression and anxiety. He but focused more on one's

self-efficacy (rather than self-worth) as a measure of self-esteem. Coopersmith introduced the construct that self-esteem is an acquired trait initially learned from parents. Much of his research was done with observational techniques in controlled situations, case studies, and interviews. One major criticism is that his research was solely based on samples from white middle-class populations (Coopersmith, 1967).

A humanistic theory of self-esteem was proposed by Nathaniel Braden in 1969. He viewed self-esteem in terms of both worthiness and competence and argued that self-esteem is a basic human need. Without it an individual would have serious negative consequences, such as substance abuse, suicide, anxiety, and depression. He believed that self-esteem is dynamic and is related to our ability to live in such a way to honor our view of ourselves. Unfortunately, one of the limitations of Braden's work is that it was primarily based on philosophy rather than empirical data (Braden, 1969).

In 1985, Seymour Epstein developed a cognitive-experimental view where worthiness motivates us consciously and unconsciously. Self-esteem is seen as a consequence of an individual's understanding of the world and others and who we are in relation to them. We strive to maintain an equilibrium of self. He developed the concept of different levels of self esteem; global self-esteem (general, overall self-esteem), intermediate self-esteem, which is specific to certain domains (competence, likeability, personal power), and situational self-esteem, which are the everyday manifestations of self-esteem (Mruk, 1999).

The topic of self-esteem is often confused with self-concept. Both are closely related but have individual distinctions. Self-concepts can be seen as "self-identities"

focusing on the meaning composing the self. Self-esteem deals with the evaluation of those self-concepts (Gecas, 1982). Both work together, as self-concept distinguishes one's perceived roles and attributes, whereas self-esteem puts value or worth on those roles and attributes.

Self-esteem has often been theorized as composing two distinct parts; worth and competence (Gecas, 1982; Gecas & Schwalbe 1983). The worth portion (worth-based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which a person believes that he or she is a person of value. This tends to be intrinsic and is a feeling of who you are, not so much what you can do. At a young age the individual relies on the messages of others about his or her own worth and as the individual matures he or she develop a self-reflective evaluative process.

The competence portion (efficacy-based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which a person believes he or she is capable and efficacious (Cast & Burke, 2002). It is the effect one feels she has on the environment, her own power to make change or achieve success.

### **Self-Esteem in Social Context**

Self-esteem is considered an individual psychological attribute, however, most in the social sciences recognize that self-esteem is developed and constantly shaped by an individual's social contact. For example, a girl with highly developed social skills will be more likely to form positive relationships with peers, thus building higher global self-esteem (Yabiku, Axinn, & Thorton, 1999). According to Rosenberg (1988), the self-esteem is the definitive junction between the society and the individual. He maintains that the capacity to follow social rules and engage in social

roles depends on “self-objectification,” the ability to look at the self as a separate object to itself (Rosenberg 1988, p.549).

Rosenberg illustrated the importance of relationships on one’s self-esteem in 1967, when 5,000 high school juniors and seniors from New York State were surveyed to test sociological influences on self-judgments (Owens et al., 2001). He found that social groupings such as family, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, impose on a young person a standard style of life, set of norms and values, and belief systems that powerfully provide the foundation for self-analysis. This concept seems elementary to us now, but it was ground breaking at the time to find that one’s self-image was so strongly influenced by those in one’s social and cultural network.

### **Dominant Discourses in Self-Esteem Theory and Research**

There are many difficulties inherent to the study of self-esteem. One of the difficulties with doing research in the self-esteem field is determining the differences between self-esteem and other self-related topics, such as self-confidence, self-worth, self-efficacy, self-image, and self-acceptance. Self-esteem is a very impure phenomenon that can overlap many other self-related constructs making it very difficult to study (Coopersmith, 1967; Jackson, 1984; Ross, 1992; Luszczynska, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005).

Another discourse of the field of self-esteem theory and research revolves around whether the idea of self is an actual object or a construct. One position is that the self is real, existent, and possessing the character of an object (Mruk, 2006). Social scientists who see the self in this way often refer to the self as something that emerges over time or is developmental. Other social scientists see the self in abstract

terms as more of a construct or hypothetical concept (Wells & Marwell, 1976). One advantage of this point of view is that it frees researchers from having to prove its existence. If there is no real “self” than the researcher can simply define how the construct is being used operationally (Wells & Marwell, 1976). Ross (1992) concedes that at this time in the Self-Esteem field there is not one final solution to whether self-esteem is real or constructed.

One reason it is so difficult to examine self-esteem is that there can be divergent ways of hypothesizing how it works. Kitano (1989) presented the dilemma by pointing out that self-esteem (from a socio-cultural perspective) can be used as a dependent variable, in that a person’s self-esteem is formed through a person’s ethnic, social class, or gender group experience. Another way of hypothesizing self-esteem is as an independent variable, in which self-esteem can cause behavior. For example, we may examine how having differing levels of self-esteem can effect teenagers choice in drug usage. The issue is that “self-esteem” can be seen by various researchers as occupying a different place on the process-product continuum (Mruk, 2006). Those that see self-esteem as a product see it develop through experiences in childhood and become relatively stable as one matures. Others see self-esteem as process, developing throughout one’s lifetime. Most research on self-esteem tends to focus on the product end of the continuum because it is more stable, while most clinicians tend to focus on the process end of the continuum to help their clients change their existing self-esteem (Mruk, 2006).

Research is weighed down by another duality; to treat “self-esteem” as a global or a situational phenomenon. One way to look at self-esteem is globally,

meaning that a person has a general or average level of self-esteem that can be measured and is relatively constant. This conceptualization is evident when one says, “Mike has a high self-esteem”. On the other hand, it is also accurate to say that different situations affect self-esteem in different ways for different people. Some people may have a higher self-esteem related to speaking in public or when operating in an academic setting, so in this way, self-esteem is not constant and is malleable. Self-esteem tests have difficulty differentiating whether or not they are getting a true picture of the respondents’ global or situational self-esteem (Braden, 1994).

Some researchers argue that self-esteem can be seen as a need, in that it protects the integrity of one’s identity. In this way self-esteem acts as a shield or defense as it buffers the individual against negative experiences that commonly occur in everyday life. It also helps one endure the significant blows of major losses, failures, and other psychological injuries (Coopersmith, 1967; Newman & Newman, 1987). Other humanistic theorists, such as Epstein (1980) and Branden (1994) have broadened the motivation of self-esteem, conceptualizing it as a growth tendency toward mastery. In an existential sense, an individual seeks better self-esteem not just for the protection it offers but to “be all that one can be” and to maximize one’s growth and health.

Self-esteem research methods are often very different based upon the differing views of self-esteem as a personal or interpersonal phenomenon.

Psychologically oriented research tends to focus on the individual’s personal aspirations and achievements when assessing self-esteem. They often pay greater attention to competence, and because an individual’s actions can be observed, rely

more on observation and experimentation (Branden, 1994; Mruk, 2006).

Sociologically oriented research tends to look at interpersonal factors such as role of the family, social class, or gender. This makes the focal point for self-esteem research on worthiness, which incorporates attitudes and values rather than behaviors. Values and attitudes are best understood through survey instruments, which are relied upon in sociology and social-psychology.

### **Family and Self-Esteem Theory**

During early and middle childhood, which are the formative years for self-esteem development, the family is often the strongest social influence on a child (Rosenberg, 1965; Coopersmith 1967; Owens et al., 2001). Mother, Father and siblings give a child messages about him or herself that are internalized and give an early self-concept. Many theories have proposed and attempted to illustrate the strong effect that the family unit has on the development of a child's self-esteem (Yabiku et al., 1999).

One theory called the "Structure of Personality", conceptualized by Parsons (1964), separates the self into a hierarchy of social relationships. The very first relationships in the model are the mother-child and father-child relationships, which are the simplest and most naturally forming for the child. With success at these relationships the child practices valuable social skills that will be used in his or her next, more complex set of relationships. The child can only take on more complex social tasks after he or she has learned the simpler tasks.

The family relationships, consequently, are the primary starting point for a healthy and well-adjusted social self. If the child experiences a lack of integration



with family members, it can affect future relationships and even lead to disorganization or pathology for the child in later years (Parsons, 1964). Object relations theorist Winnicott (1960) proposed that a child develops a separate sense of self through the mother's attention to the child's needs and her non-impedance with the child when he or she is contented.

Rosenberg (1988) further distinguished between three forms of mattering; attention (one feels that his or her actions are noticed by others), importance (others are invested in one's welfare), and dependence (the sense that one is needed by others). Rosenberg theorized that mattering to others in the family is an important factor in the development of one's self-esteem (Owens et al., 2001).

There are an unlimited number of factors influencing the development of self-esteem, but family structure has remained one of the most studied variables. However, in most of these studies, family structure is usually conceptualized as the absence or presence of key members of the household (Yabiku et al., 1999). In order to look at the family effects on self-esteem it is important to look at the family in terms of supportive characteristics, rather than only looking at the family's demographics.

Coleman (1990) writes that when parents are integrated into the family, there are positive externalities for their children's healthy development. He argues that these positive externalities are less prevalent when the parent's activities primarily take place away from the child. This indicates that the more mom and dad are spending time at the office or other places, the less likely the children are excelling in dance, art, reading, or other childhood tasks.

Yabiku et al.(1999) hypothesized that a mother's and father's activities in the home are the best way to lead to family integration that is likely to positively affect the child. These activities include family games, reading, eating and anything else that brings children and parents together, such as doing crafts, helping with homework, and chores. These activities are likely to stimulate the children cognitively as well as give a sense of self-worth and accomplishment, both factors that contribute to healthy self- esteem.

Nurturing, as opposed to intrusive, involvement in a child's life may be the strongest parental attribute affecting the self-esteem in children. For example, parents who are described by children as indifferent, or frequently absent tend to have lower levels of self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965). Quality of time spent seems to be crucial as well, as parental warmth or acceptance seems to also contribute to the development of self-esteem (Bednar, Wells, & Peterson, 1989; Coopersmith, 1967).

Factors such as parental nurturance should be understood as being “predisposing and interactive rather than causal or deterministic” (Mruk, 1999, p. 72). It is among those factors that only increase or decrease the likelihood of healthy self-esteem. After all, there are some children with very nurturing parents who develop low self-esteem, as well as children with emotionally distant parents who develop strong self-esteem who are emotionally healthy (Mruk, 1999).

### **Parents and Self-Esteem Research**

Family membership is the primary social role of a child and is the starting point for a healthy and well-adjusted social self (Yakibu et al., 1999). Integration into

the family is likely crucial to one's development of self (Yakibu et al., 1999). If a child experiences a lack of integration with family members, it can affect future relationships and even lead to disorganization or pathology for the child in later years (Parsons, 1964).

In a longitudinal study over 23 years, Yakibu et al. (1999) studied the effect of mother's integration on her child's self-esteem. The subjects were originally selected using a systematic probability sample from 1961 Detroit Metro Area birth records. The research included equal numbers of Caucasian women who had given birth to their first, second, and forth child. The mothers were interviewed seven times; winter of 1962, fall of 1962, 1963, 1966, 1977, 1980, and 1985. The children were all born in 1961 and were interviewed at age 18 (1980) and at age 23 (1985). The total number of children and mother sets were 913 who were interviewed through 1985.

Self-esteem for the young adults was measured using a modified version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and measures for parent family integration were broken up into three dimensions; 1) home production, 2) family social networks, and 3) family support networks. The measures allowed for the long-term evaluation of the children's self-esteem and how it has been affected by family integration. (Yakibu et al., 1999). The researchers then treated the ordinal self-esteem scale as an interval-level variable and used ordinary least squares regression to estimate the multivariate models of young adults' self-esteem.

Yakibu et al. (1999)'s results indicated children's early adult self-esteem benefited from parental integration. Family production, family social networks, family support networks all had a significant positive effect on children's self-esteem.

The focus on only Caucasian, American women, however, does not permit this study to generalize to other non-white and/or non-American populations. It is possible that the process of family integration and children's self-esteem varies among other ethnicities and cultures.

There have also been studies that looked directly at the effect of one parent on his child's self-esteem. In a 1999 study, Scheffler and Naus found that there was also a positive relationship between young females' self-esteem and their perceived fatherly affirmation. This study looked at 57 female students from three undergraduate psychology courses at a southwestern Canadian university. Three quarters of the females were between 20 and 24, single (87%) representing a wide range of majors, though the majority were art students.

The study focused on the relationship between females' perceived fatherly affirmation and self-esteem, fear of intimacy, as well as other factors such as comfort with womanhood and comfort with sexuality. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire containing five scales: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, Barrett-Lennard's Relationship Inventory (with five questions added in order to ascertain a woman's perceptions about her father's feelings and treatment of her mother), and scales for Construction of Sexuality, Comfort with Womanhood, and Fear of Intimacy. Product-moment correlations were calculated between perceived fatherly affirmation and scores for self-esteem and found significant positive correlations. The study also found significant negative correlations between perceived fatherly affirmation and fear of intimacy (Scheffler and Naus, 1999).

This study by Scheffler and Naus (1999) did not go into much detail about their sampling procedures. They mentioned that all but three of the participants were from Canada, but did not mention the racial/ethnic make-up of the group. This leaves one guessing about the generalizability of the sample.

In current self-esteem literature there seem to be numerous studies that test the impact of parental factors on self-esteem. Buri, Kirchner, and Walsh (2001) also investigated the relationship between parental nurturance and children's self-esteem. 64 students from a northern midwest liberal arts college participated in the study. The 33 males (19.2 years - mean age) and 31 females (19 years – mean age) were Caucasian, predominately Catholic, and generally from middle-class backgrounds. All participants were from intact families with parents still married and living at home.

The participants were asked to come to a specified classroom on campus where they completed four measures in randomized order, two questionnaires and one demographic information sheet. The parents were sent two questionnaires via mail and asked that they be completed by both the father and mother. Parental nurturance was assessed by a 24-item questionnaire devised by the researchers to allow the participant to appraise the perceived nurturance from his or her father and mother. The questionnaire was a 5-point Likert scale and had a test-retest reliability of .94 for father's nurturance and .92 for mother's nurturance over a two-week period. To assess self-esteem the researchers used the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, with a test-retest reliability of  $r = .92$ . Both the parents and the college-aged participants were asked to complete this questionnaire.

The two variables in this study that were found to be significantly related to self-esteem were fathers' nurturance ( $r = .482, p < .001$ ) and mothers' nurturance ( $r = .486, p < .001$ ). These variables were then put into regression equations which found that the amount of variance in the students' self-esteem that was associated with fathers' nurturance was 22% and the amount associated with mothers' nurturance was also 22%. When both mothers' and fathers' nurturance scores were regressed on self-esteem, it was found that they accounted for 33% of the variance (Buri et al., 2001).

Buri et al. (2001) contended that it is not unexpected to find that parental nurturance was significantly related to self-esteem, because previous research has consistently reported this relationship. The results of the study further demonstrate the hypothesis that approval, support, and acceptance by parents is important in the development of American children's self-esteem, through young adulthood (Buri et al., 2001).

Previously reviewed studies looked at the relationship of self-esteem and parental nurturance at one point in time. In a study of the stability of the parental nurturance and self-esteem relationship over time, Buri, Murphy, Richtsmeier, and Komar (1992) investigated parental nurturance as a stable predictor of self-esteem across chronological age. Seven distinct adolescent and young-adulthood age groups were tested; undergraduate freshmen no longer residing at home with parents, undergraduate freshmen residing at home with parents, 12<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> graders. All participants (784) were from a large metropolitan area in the northern midwest, from predominantly middle-class, upper-middle-class backgrounds, and were white.

All participants with only one parent present; either through divorce, separation, or death were excluded; leaving only participants from two parent intact families.

The participants were given three questionnaires and one demographic information sheet. Self-esteem was measured using the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, which is a Likert Scale instrument consisting of 100 self-descriptive statements. The scale is argued to be a valid measure of global self-esteem with a test-retest reliability of .92 and an internal consistency estimate .92. Parental Nurturance Scale was used to measure parental nurturance from the point of view of a participant evaluating the nurturance received from a parent. There are two forms of the PNS, one for evaluating the mother and one for the father; participants were given both versions. The test-retest reliability was .92 for the Mother's Nurturance Scale and .94 for the Father's Nurturance Scale. In addition to completing the Father's Nurturance Scale, the Mother's Nurturance Scale, and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale subjects were asked questions concerning their year in school, age, gender, and family status.

Bivariate correlations for both Mother's Nurturance and Father's Nurturance and Self-Esteem were very strong in each of the seven groups of participants. Additionally,  $R^2$  values when regressing self-esteem on mother's and father's nurturance were between 34% and 39% for the high-school and college groups and over 50% for the middle-school groups. Buri et al. (1992) claim that their findings indicate that a strong relationship exists between parental nurturance and the self-esteem of individuals in each of the seven age groups studied. They go on to argue that the present study supports previous research which asserts "parental nurturance,

acceptance, affection, support, and attention have been positively related to children's self esteem" (Buri et al., 1992).

### **Multicultural Family and Self-Esteem Research**

A study which focused on family relations and self-esteem across cultures was "Children's Personality as a Function of Family Relations Within and Between Cultures" by Scott, Scott, Boehnke, Cheng, Leung, and Sasaki (1991). The researchers in this study argued that parental influence had shown a positive correlation with self-esteem of children in numerous studies in the United States and other Western cultures, but had not been carefully examined in other non-Western cultures.

The study was conducted with 1,686 adolescent respondents in grades 7 through 12 who were together with responding parents and teachers. The samples came from seven different communities (Hong Kong, China; Taipei, Taiwan; Osaka, Japan; Berlin, Germany; Winnipeg, Canada; Phoenix, United States; and Canberra, Australia). All questionnaires were given in the local language (Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, German, or English). Researchers were not very clear in the study about what items were asked in the questionnaires sent out to these groups. They did report, however, that the items were combined into scales, which were strengthened within each sample by retaining those items that correlated highly with other items on the scale (Scott et al., 1991).

According to Scott et al.(1991), the general hypothesis was that within- and between-cultural relationships exist between parental nurturance and self-esteem, meaning the relationship between parental nurturance and self-esteem would exist in



individual countries as it would across all of the countries. Specifically, a child's perceived emotional well-being and self-esteem was dependent upon the child's level of family satisfaction both within and between cultures. The parents' perception of the child's self-esteem relied on parent-reported nurturance both within and between cultures. The teachers' view of the child's self-esteem depended upon the children's report of parental nurturance both within and between cultures (Scott et al., 1991).

Two years after the Scott et al. (1991) study, the relationship between parental behaviors and children's self-esteem was examined through a secondary analysis of a two country data set (Wilson, 1993). The sample consisted of 393 middle-school students from two different schools in the United States and Brazil. The author reports that the sample was split between the schools and by gender.

Varimax rotated factor analysis was conducted on 75 parental attributes selected from three instruments, and 21 items measuring self-esteem. The dependent variables in the study were four dimensions of self-esteem; social worth, self-derogation, positive self-esteem, and self-esteem power. The independent variables were seven dimensions of parental attributes; general support, companionship, physical affection, induction, coercion, love withdraw, and inconsistent control.

The author's hypothesis of a relationship between induction, coercion, physical affection, and companionship and the children's self-derogation and social worth were not supported. However, the relationship between general support of parents and adolescent self-derogation and social worth were supported for mothers and fathers both in the US and for only fathers in Brazil. Between-culture differences only existed for mothers. Wilson (1993) concluded that, overall, there were more

similarities in the relationship of parental attributes and adolescent self-esteem between the US and Brazilian samples than differences between the two cultures.

In a similar study with different results, Bush, Peterson, Cobas, and Supple (2002) studied children's perceptions of parental behaviors as predictors of child self-esteem in mainland China. This research was done because previous self-esteem research had only focused on western societies and Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong, which is a very westernized city. The researchers hypothesized that findings would be different in mainland China as compared to Hong Kong, as it is a more collectivistic culture (Bush et al., 2002).

As previously stated, Western societies, such as Europe and the United States, are often generalized as having individualistic values, such as self-efficacy, free will, independence, and assertiveness. China is conceptualized as a society that values a collectivist orientation, where interdependence and connections with others are culturally emphasized (Hofstede, 1991).

The study participants consisted of 480 adolescents 12 to 19 years of age (mean – 15.42 years of age) from six high schools in Beijing, the capital of China. The gender was evenly distributed, with 238 males and 242 female respondents. The researchers report that sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, socioeconomic status) of the sample were representative of Beijing's larger population.

The measurement for this study included the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, of which 8 of the 10 items were used based upon having the highest factor analysis loadings. Parental behaviors were assessed by using the Parent Behavior Measure (PBM), a 34-item self-report measure used in similar studies to assess parental

support, reasoning, monitoring, punitiveness, and love withdraw. Sociodemographic information was also gathered from the adolescents, including age, birth order, gender, parental education, and parental occupation. The questionnaire used in this research had also been given to samples of adolescents in Chile, India, Russia, the United States, and Mexico. Translation for the Chinese survey used the technique of Back Translation, in which the questionnaire was first translated from English to Chinese by one interpreter and then from Chinese back to English by another interpreter and then checked for content validity. “Back Translation” was used to make certain that both versions of the questionnaire conveyed item meanings that were valid (Bush et al., 2002).

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the relationship and direction of parenting behaviors (independent variables) and self-esteem (dependent variable). Sociodemographic variables were included as control variables in the analysis. Results indicated that socialization patterns between adolescents and their parents in mainland China were similar to those found in Western cultures. Reasoning, monitoring, and autonomy-granting behaviors by Chinese parents were positive predictors of Chinese children’s self esteem, whereas punitiveness was a negative predictor of self-esteem. The researchers also found that parental support was not a predictor of Chinese adolescents’ self-esteem which contrasts with what is commonly found in Western cultures (Bush et al., 2002).

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Research Area**

Self-esteem research has its roots in a study conducted by Morris Rosenberg in 1967 (Owens et al., 2001). Rosenberg examined 5,000 high school juniors and

seniors from New York State to examine sociological influences on self-judgments. He found that social groupings such as family, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, impose on a young person a standard style of life, set of norms and values, and belief systems that powerfully provide the foundation for self-analysis. This study showed in an empirical manner, that one's self-esteem is strongly influenced by those in one's social network.

Other studies, such as, Yakibu, Axinn, and Thortons's 23-year panel study (1999) furthered self-esteem research by looking at family relationships. These researchers examined the effect of mothers' integration on their children's self-esteem. The results indicated children's early adult self-esteem benefited from their parents' interaction. Family production, family social networks, family support networks all had a significant positive effect on children's self-esteem. The influence of the family, particularly parents, on a child's positive self-esteem has consistently been found through research studies (Buri, Kirchner, and Walsh, 2001, Buri, Murphy, Richtsmeier, and Komar, 1992, Scaffler and Naus, 1999, Yakibu et al., 1999).

The major limitation with this research on parental influence on children's self-esteem is the generalizability of the research findings. Most the studies done in this area use samples from middle-class, western societies, such as, the United States, Britain, or Australia. Only two studies were found that used Asian samples and only one sample that used samples from Japan. It is not safe to assume that because we find relationships between parental attributes and children's self-esteem in samples composed of Americans that this is a phenomenon that applies to all human beings on earth. More studies need to be conducted that examine parental attributes and self-

esteem, both within and between various cultural contexts. Under the object relations framework, it would be important to understand the effects of internalizing messages from primary caregivers in both individualistic and collectivist societies.

### **Social Desirability Bias**

Most individuals have the desire to seem more socially oriented and altruistic than they really are, and “social desirability” is the tendency of people to admit socially desirable thoughts and behaviors and to deny socially undesirable ones (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). Social desirability bias is the inclination of people to overestimate the likelihood that they would perform a desirable action and the tendency for people to underestimate the likelihood that they would perform an undesirable action (Chung & Monroe, 2003). For example, when job seekers are asked how important salary is to their job search, most respondents report that it is only moderately important (Jurgensen, 1978), but also report that the salary is the most important factor for other applicants. This is because seeking a job based solely on salary is not thought to be socially acceptable in most Western cultures (Chung & Monroe, 2003).

The propensity of individuals to provide socially desirable answers on surveys is the most studied form of response bias in social research (Paulhus, 1991). Social desirability bias has been shown to confound (attenuate, inflate, or moderate) the measurement self-report behaviors (Mensch & Kandel, 1988), attitudes (Fisher, 1993), and personality variables (Mick, 1996). For this reason social desirability research can be found in marketing (Steele, 1964), organizational behavior (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987), economics (Kilpatrick, 1957), education (Peltier & Walsh, 1990),

sociology (Simon & Simon, 1975), psychology (Maher, 1978; Paulhus, 1984; Robinette, 1991; Wagner, Hilsenroth, & Sivec, 1990) and many other areas of research that utilizes surveys (Fisher and Katz, 2000).

Social desirability bias can be separated into two factors; self-deceptive positivity and impression management (Paulhus, 1991). Self-deceptive positivity is a sincere, but overly favorable, self-presentation which may be connected to an individual's optimism or exaggerated self-esteem, whereas impression management is reflected in an individual's desire to present oneself in a socially conservative way (Paulhus, 1991). Respondents who have higher levels of the impression-management factor tend to align their responses with perceived social norms.

The social desirability measure that has gained the most widespread acceptance and use throughout psychology and the social sciences is the Social Desirability Scale (King & Bruner, 2000). The scale was developed by Crowne and Marlowe (1960) to assess the degree to which a person answers questions that tend to be socially desirable but infrequent, or socially undesirable but frequent in the general population (Stober, 2001). The SDS is the most commonly used measure for controlling whether respondents' questionnaires are skewed due to desirable responding. This is usually done by showing that the measure in question does not correlate with the Social Desirability Scale for the given sample (Stober, 2001).

## **Conclusion**

The literature reviewed in the current chapter represents a wide array of theory and empiricism across several fields of study over many years. Collectivist and individualistic society theory is reviewed comparing differences in both Japanese and

US cultures, including a discussion on historical origins, implications for child rearing practices, and societal views of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

The construct of self-esteem is reviewed including theoretical contributions from William James, Robert White, Morris Rosenberg, Stanley Coopersmith, Nathaniel Braden, and Seymour Epstein. Self-esteem is differentiated from self-concept and the components of self-esteem (worth and competence) are examined. Self-esteem is then discussed in a social context and current dominant discourses in self-esteem theory and research are reviewed.

The literature review in this chapter also looked at family and self-esteem theory and studies conducted on family and self-esteem. Reviewed is a longitudinal study (over 23 years), conducted by Yakibu et al. (1999), which studied the effect of mothers' integration on their children's self-esteem; a study by Scheffler and Naus (1999) which focused on young females' self-esteem and their perceived fatherly affirmation; a study by Buri et al. (2001) which investigated the relationship between parental nurturance and children's self-esteem; and a study conducted by Buri et al. (1992) which examined the relationship of mothers' and fathers' nurturance and self-esteem with children aged 12 to 18. This literature seems to be consistent in that it points out the repeated connection with parental factors, such as nurturance and self-esteem.

In searching for literature on self-esteem and parental nurturance, studies that had been conducted with non-Western populations were few in number. Reviewed was a study by Scott et al. (1991) which looked at the parental nurturance and self-esteem relationship using samples from Hong Kong, China; Taipei, Taiwan; Osaka,

Japan; Berlin, Germany; Winnipeg, Canada; Phoenix, United States; and Canberra, Australia which found a positive relationship between parental nurturance and self esteem across all cultures. Similarly, a study conducted by Wilson (1993) which found a positive relationship between parental nurturance and self esteem across both an American and Brazilian sample was reviewed.

Next a study by Bush et al. (2002) that studied self-esteem and parental nurturance with a mainland Chinese sample was discussed. This study found that parental nurturance was not a predictor of Chinese adolescents' self-esteem which contrasts with what is commonly found in Western cultures (Bush et al., 2002). These three studies (Scott et al., 1991; Wilson, 1993; and Bush et al., 2002) were the only studies found that examined parental nurturance and self-esteem in non-Western cultures. Their findings seemed to be inconsistent as two of the studies found a relationship with parental nurturance and self-esteem and one did not.

Strengths and limitations of the research area are discussed in this chapter. Strengths include the amount of theory written over the past century about self-esteem and the volume of empirical studies that have established the positive relationship between parental nurturance and self-esteem in Western cultures. The limitations of the generalizability of the research findings are discussed. Most of the studies done in this area use samples from middle-class, Western societies, such as the United States, Britain, or Australia. Only two studies were found that used Asian samples and only one sample that used samples from Japan and an argument is made that more research needs to be conducted to examine parental attributes and self-esteem, both within and between various cultural contexts.



Finally, social desirability bias (the inclination of people to overestimate the likelihood that they would perform a desirable action and the tendency for people to underestimate the likelihood that they would perform an undesirable action) is discussed. The propensity of individuals to provide socially desirable answers on surveys is the most studied form of response bias in social research and it has been shown to confound (attenuate, inflate, or moderate) the measurement of self-report behaviors. A rationale for using the Social Desirability Scale is presented to control social desirability bias effects.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS AND PROCEDURE**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodological steps utilized in this study. A description of the participants, the instrumentation, and procedures for data collection are presented. In addition, the independent and dependent variables are discussed along with hypotheses and statistical methods to analyze the data. The chapter concludes with a methodological summary for the investigation.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived parental nurturance and self-esteem between two samples of undergraduate students from different multicultural contexts. The two samples of undergraduates are (a) US born students and (b) Japanese international students.

#### **Description of the Sample**

Participants were 121 students from a large Midwestern university; 70 (58.7%) were undergraduate students from US born population and 51 (41.3%) were international undergraduate students from a Japanese born population. Five American respondents and 6 Japanese respondents turned in incomplete survey packets and were not included in the study or the participant total (N =121).

There were 75 males and 46 females who participated in the study (see Table 1). The males ranged in age 18 to 30 and the females ranged in age 18 to 25. The

**Table 1**

Demographic Information Regarding Gender, Academic Classification, Ethnic Identification, Parent's Marital Status, and Primary Caregiver by Country of Primary Residence

		US		Japan		Total	
		N	% (of US)	N	%(of Jap)	N	%
Gender	Male	45	64.3%	30	58.8%	75	62%
	Female	25	35.7%	21	41.2%	46	38%
Academic Classification	Freshman	25	35.7%	18	35.5%	43	35.5%
	Sophomore	17	24.3%	7	13.7%	24	19.8%
	Junior	15	21.4%	12	23.5%	27	22.3%
	Senior	13	18.6%	14	27.5%	27	22.3%
Ethnic Identification	Afro-Am	11	15.7%			11	9%
	Caucasian-Am	53	75.7%			53	43.8%
	Native-Am	6	8.6%			6	5%
	Japanese			51	100%	51	42.1%
Parent's Marital Status	Single	5	7.1%	9	17.6%	14	11.6%
	Married	49	70%	37	72.5%	86	71.15%
	Partnered			1	2%	1	<1%
	Divorced /Separated	13	18.6%	2	3.9%	15	12.4%
	Widow(er)	3	4.3%	1	2%	4	3.3%
	Unsure			1	2%	1	<1%
Primary Caregiver	Mother and Father	56	80%	46	90.2%	102	84.3%
	Mother	14	20%	4	7.8%	18	14.9%
	Grandparents			1	2%	1	<1%

mean age for all of the respondents was 20.13 with a standard deviation of 2.029.

The mean for all males is 20.19 with a standard deviation of 2.078 and for females the mean is 20.04 with a standard deviation of 1.966. All students were undergraduate and identified themselves in terms of academic classification. There were 43 freshman (25 males/18 females), 24 sophomores (16 male/8 female), 27 juniors (18 males/ 9 females), and 27 seniors (16 males/ 11 females) (Table 1).

The majority of US born participants were obtained through several “World of Work” course sections (an undergraduate vocational discovery class to help students choose career directions and develop employment skills). Instructors were informed of the project’s purpose and set aside 30 minutes of class time for this research. Five US participants were surveyed through Experimetrix, a subject pool made up of undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology courses. The Japanese born participants were obtained through the Japanese Student Association (an on-campus International Student Organization of about 200 international Japanese students). The officers of the Japanese Student Organization set aside 30 minutes of meeting time for this research.

### **Description of Instruments**

Measures used for this study included the Demographic Data Questionnaire, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), Parental Nurturance Scale (PNS), and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (SDS).

Descriptions of each instrument are as follows:

Demographic Data Questionnaire: This questionnaire included forced choice questions regarding gender, parents’ marital status, family of origin configuration,

school status, ethnic origin, academic classification, and legal status. Fill-in-the-blank questions were asked regarding age and primary residence (see Appendix).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES): Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was created by Morris Rosenberg in 1965 (Appendix) and is a popular and widely used measure of global self-worth (Gray-Little, Williams, & Hancock, 1997; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1990; Fleming & Courtney, 1984). The scale's internal consistency reliability for the sample is  $\alpha = .90$ .

The RSES is a 10-item self-report measure with questions rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale and was designed to be a Guttman scale, which means that the items represent a continuum of self-esteem statements. The response format is: strongly agree=1, agree=2, disagree=3, and strongly disagree=4, (with selected items reversed scored: strongly agree=4, agree=3, disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1). With 10 items and 4 possible responses, the respondents' scores range from 10-40 with higher scores representing higher self-esteem.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has extensive and acceptable reliability (internal consistency and test-retest) and validity (convergent and discriminant) (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Fleming & Courtney (1984) reported .88 for internal consistency and .82 on the test-retest correlation. The items on the RSES are face valid, and the scale is short, easy, and fast to administer and score.

Gray-Little, Williams, and Hancock (1997) reported that the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has undergone the most psychometric analysis and empirical validation of all self-esteem measures. They go on to say that the RSES is a valid and reliable

measure of self-worth and is deserving of its popularity and widespread use in psychology. Internal consistencies for the present sample will be computed.

The Parental Nurturance Scale (PNS): The Parental Nurturance Scale was created by Buri, Misukanis, & Mueller (1987) and contains two separate maternal and paternal nurturance versions of the scale, differing only in gender references. The PNS is a 24-item, self-report, Likert-Scale measure, designed to assess children's perceptions of their parent's nurturance towards them. For each of the 24 items, the participant responds on a 5 point Likert-scale (5 – Strongly Agree; 4 – Agree; 3 – Neither agree nor disagree; 2 – Disagree; 1 – Strongly Disagree, with selected items reverse scored). Examples of PNS item questions include: (1) “My father enjoys spending time with me”; (2) “My mother seldom says nice things to me”; (3) “I am an important person in my mother's eyes”; (4) “My father often acts as if he doesn't care about me” (Buri, Misukanis, et al., 1987). Scoring of the PNS consists of summing up all 24 individual item responses, with 12 items (1, 3, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, and 24) reverse-scored. Total PNS scores may range from 24 to 120, with higher scores indicating higher perceived parental nurturance.

The PNS was developed by sampling subjects from a variety of psychology classes at a coeducational liberal arts college in the northern midwest. The subjects consisted of white men and women, who were predominantly middle-class, Catholic, and from intact homes. Test-retest reliabilities based upon the responses of 85 subjects over a two week interval were  $r = .94$  for fathers' nurturance and  $r = .92$  for mothers' nurturance. Cronbach's coefficient alpha values were .93 for father's and .95 for mother's nurturance. (Buri, Misukanis, et al., 1987). This reliability combined

with strong concurrent validity and regular usage indicates the soundness of the PSN as a measure of perceived parental nurturance. Internal consistencies for the present sample will be computed.

The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale: The Social Desirability Scale was developed by Crowne and Marlowe (1960) to assess the degree to which a person answers questions that tend to be socially desirable but infrequent, or socially undesirable but frequent in the general population (Stober, 2001). This biased response pattern is sometimes known as “faking good” (Loo & Thorpe, 2000). The SDS is the most commonly used measure for controlling whether respondents’ questionnaires are skewed due to desirable responding. This is usually done by showing that the measure in question does not correlate with the Social Desirability Scale for the given sample (Stober, 2001). Crowne and Malowe (1960) reported an internal consistency estimate for the Social Desirability Scale at  $r = .88$  and the test-retest value,  $r = .89$ .

### **Procedure for Data Collection**

Before review by the University Institutional Review Board, “World of Work” course instructors were contacted for permission to conduct the study during class time and the officers of the Japanese Student Association were contacted for permission to conduct the study during their meeting time. After review by the University Institutional Review Board, the majority of participants were attained through these “World of Work” classes and Japanese Student Organization which are composed of undergraduate students from a large range of disciplines. In addition, about five participants were surveyed through Experimetrix, a subject pool made up

of undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology courses, as approved by the Institutional Review Board.

Participants were advised, orally, that they were under no obligation for involvement in the study, that consent was strictly voluntary, and that participation was completely anonymous. The following script was read to prospective participants, before any written materials were given to them:

“Hello, I am Steven Jacobson, a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology in the School of Applied Health and Educational Psychology. I am doing research on family relations across various cultures and would like your valuable input in my study as a research participant. This study could, potentially, further the empirical knowledge base on psychology and family dynamics. The survey will take about 20 minutes and only involves your filling out a research survey. Your participation is totally voluntary and your information will be kept strictly confidential, as there is no way to link your name or any identifying information to your responses. You are free to terminate your consent to participate at any time, even after beginning the survey. You are encouraged to keep the last page of the survey which includes my contact information for any questions and information about on-campus resources for counseling for any reason you might feel appropriate. Thank you for your time.”

Participants who agreed to be in the study were then given a packet containing a consent form, the Demographic Data Questionnaire, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), the Parental Nurturance Scale (PNS), the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (SDS), and a written debriefing statement informing the participant of the purpose of the study, and of the tester’s identity, contact information, and



additional campus counseling resources. The instruments in the packets were counterbalanced so that variance due to order of completion was averaged across the samples.

The participants' consent forms were separated from the other documents, once signed by the participant, to ensure confidentiality. The title of the Parental Nurturance Scale was shortened to PNS and the title of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was shortened to RSES on the participants' questionnaires to decrease the likelihood of the participants responding in a socially favorable manner, as a result of reading the instruments' titles.

### **Description of Research Design**

The design in this study is a 2 (Parental Nurturance) x 2 (Cultural Identification) Analysis of Covariance with social desirability as the covariate and self-esteem as the dependent variable. Both the independent variables have two levels; Perceived Parental Nurturance has high and low levels based on the upper 1/2 and lower 1/2 of a median split of the sample and Cultural Identification has US-Born Student and Japanese international Student.

The 2 x 2 ANCOVA design allowed for us to search for the main effects of Cultural Identification on Self-Esteem and Perceived Parental Nurturance on Self-Esteem, while controlling for the effects of social desirability. It also allowed for us to search for the interaction effect of Cultural Identification and Perceived Parental Nurturance on Self-Esteem, while controlling for social desirability.

### **Statistical Analysis of Data**

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to evaluate the students' responses on the Demographic Data Questionnaire, the Parental Nurturance Scale, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Descriptive statistics such as, means, percentages, frequencies, and standard deviations are presented visually in tables and graphs.

A 2 x 2 Analysis of Covariance was used to examine the variance in Self-Esteem in relation to Perceived Parental Nurturance and Cultural Identification when controlling for social desirability (Hypothesis #1). An Analysis of Covariance was computed post hoc to determine if there were differences in the American and Japanese participants between-group effects of paternal nurturance on self-esteem controlling for social desirability. Also, an Analysis of Covariance Post Hoc was computed to determine if there were differences in the American and Japanese participants between-group effects of mother's nurturance on self-esteem controlling for social desirability. To better understand the role of the covariate (Social Desirability) in the ANCOVA model, two one-way between-groups Analysis of Variances post hoc tests were run to test the effect of both paternal and maternal nurturance on self-esteem, without controlling for social desirability.

### **Methodological Summary**

One hundred twenty one (N=121) students 18 to 30 years of age who are enrolled at a large Midwestern University completed the Demographic Data Questionnaire, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Parental Nurturance Scale, and Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. The participants were existing members

of two diverse demographic groups; US born students (n=70) and Japanese international students (n=51). This data was analyzed to determine if there is a significant positive relationship between perceived parental nurturance and self-esteem and a significant relationship between cultural identification and self-esteem, when controlling for social desirability. An Analysis of Covariance (2x2 design) was used to analyze the data.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between perceived parental nurturance and self-esteem between two culturally diverse populations, to determine how the trends we find in Western societies, such as the United States relate to those found in Eastern societies, such as Japan. Participants were 121 students from a large midwestern university; 70 were undergraduate students from US born population and 51 were international undergraduate students from a Japanese born population. The present chapter reports the results of the study. Descriptive statistics are presented and Null hypothesis1 is tested through the use of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). In addition, Correlation Matrices and Post Hoc analyses are presented with 4 ANOVA and 2 ANCOVA tests to examine variables of interest.

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

The means and standard deviations of the participants' scores on the scales of Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) and Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (SDS) are divided by Country of Primary Residence (US or Japan) and Parental Nurturance Scale (PNS) Group (High or Low) and are reported in Table 2.

For the RSES and the SDS, the higher the total score, the greater the measured

**Table 2**

Means and Standard Deviations of Self-Esteem and Social Desirability by Country of Primary Residence and Nurturance Group (High or Low)

		RSES		SDS	
		Self-Esteem		Social Desirability	
		Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev
<hr/>					
US					
	High Nurturance	32.80	5.70	16.98	4.93
	Low Nurturance	31.13	3.96	14.38	3.76
	US Total	32.23	5.20	16.09	4.71
<hr/>					
Japan					
	High Nurturance	30.29	4.98	15.57	5.36
	Low Nurturance	27.08	4.30	15.03	4.21
	Japan Total	27.96	4.67	15.18	4.51
<hr/>					
Sample Total		30.449	5.40	15.70	4.63
<hr/>					

level of self-esteem and the greater level of social desirability, respectively. Possible scores for the RSES ranged from 10 to 40 (with higher numbers indicating higher levels of self-esteem) and 0 to 33 for the SDS (with higher numbers indicating higher levels of social desirability). For participants that identified as being raised by one parent, the PNS score for that one parent was used. For participants that identified as being raised by two parents, the PNS scores for both parents were averaged to find the Parental Nurture Score. For the PNS, a median split was used for the entire sample to determine the upper 50% (the High Nurture Group) and the lower 50% (the Low Nurture Group).

Self-Esteem scores for the survey group ranged from 12 to 40, with the mean score of 30.44 for the entire sample; 32.23 for the US students and 27.69 for the Japanese students. The US participants had a mean Self-Esteem score of 32.80 and 31.13 for the High Nurture and Low Nurture Groups respectively. The Japanese participants had a mean score of 30.29 and 27.08 for the High Nurture and Low nurture Groups respectively (Table 2).

Social Desirability scores for the survey group ranged from 5 to 31, with the mean score of 15.70 for the entire sample; 16.09 for the US students and 15.18 for the Japanese students. The US participants had a mean Social Desirability score of 16.98 and 14.38 for the High Nurture and Low Nurture Groups respectively. The Japanese participants had a mean score of 15.57 and 15.03 for the High Nurture and Low nurture Groups respectively (Table 2).

For explanation of the psychometric properties of the variables, the alpha coefficients for each of the variables of interest for the entire group, for the US

**Table 3**

Internal Consistency (Chronbach's Alpha) Reliability Coefficients for the RSES, the PNS, and the SDS in the research sample.

	Alpha Coefficients (Total)	Alpha Coefficients (US)	Alpha Coefficients (Japan)
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	0.88	0.90	0.80
Parental Nurturance Scale	0.95	0.96	0.93
Father's Nurturance	0.95		
Mother's Nurturance	0.95		
Social Desirability Scale	0.67	0.71	0.62

---

sample, and for the Japanese sample are presented in Table 3. Cronbach's alpha is the most common form of internal consistency reliability coefficient. By convention, an alpha should be at least .70 or higher to retain an item in an "adequate" scale; and many researchers require a cut-off of .80 for a "good scale" (Nunnally, 1978). As shown in Table 3 all the variables are "good" in terms of internal consistency with the exception of the Social Desirability Scale which is "adequate" for the US sample and is not acceptable for the Japanese sample. In an effort to adjust the internal consistency for the Japanese sample, individual items were examined to compute Chronbach's Alpha if any combination of items were deleted from the scale, but there were no items or combination of items that significantly changed the internal consistency.

### **Research Question**

*Is there a significant relationship between perceived parental nurturance, country of primary residence, and self-esteem, controlling for social desirability?*

A 2 by 2 between groups analysis of covariance was conducted to compare the relationship between parental nurturance and self-esteem in two different groups of college students (US group and Japanese group). Parental Nurturance Scale (PNS) and Country of Primary Residence were the independent variables, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was the dependent variable or criterion variable, and Social Desirability Scale (SDS) was the control variable. For the PNS, a median split was used for the entire sample to determine the upper 50% (the High Nurturance Group) and the lower 50% (the Low Nurturance Group).



Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliability measurement of the covariate. After adjusting for the social desirability scores, there was no significant interaction effect between Country and Parental Nurturance on Self-Esteem,  $F(1, 116) = 1.42, p = .24$ , with a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = .012$ ) (Table 4). Both of the main effects were statistically significant (Country of Primary Residence:  $F(1, 116) = 11.29, p = .001$ , with a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = .089$ ); Parental Nurturance:  $F(1, 116) = 3.991, p = .048$ , with a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = .033$ ). The covariate, Social Desirability, was significant,  $F(1, 116) = 13.578, p = .000$ , with a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = .105$ ) (Table 4). Cohen (1988) hesitantly defined effect sizes as "small,  $d = .2$ ," "medium,  $d = .5$ ," and "large,  $d = .8$ ", stating that "there is a certain risk inherent in offering conventional operational definitions for those terms for use in power analysis in as diverse a field of inquiry as behavioral science" (p. 25).

These results suggest that our interaction effect is not significant. Interaction effects are the joint effects of combinations of the independent variables, different from what would be predicted from any of the independents acting alone. That is, when there is interaction, the effect of an independent on a dependent varies according to the values of another independent. If the probability of  $F$  is less than .05 for any such combination, we conclude that that interaction of the combination does have an effect on the dependent. This indicates that, when controlling for social desirability, there was no significant interaction effect between parental nurturance and country of primary residence (US born and Japanese born participants) on self-

**Table 4**

Analysis of Co-Variance Summary Table of Between-Groups Effects of Country of Primary Residence and Parental Nurturance on Self-Esteem controlling for Social Desirability

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Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem

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Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Social Desirability	294.387	1	294.387	13.578	.000	.105
Country	244.855	1	244.855	11.293	.001	.089
Parental Nurturance (Median Split)	86.523	1	86.523	3.991	.048	.033
Country * Parental Nurturance	30.709	1	30.709	1.416	.236	.012
Error	2515.091	116	21.682			
Total	115538.000	121				
Corrected Total	3495.653	120				

---

a Computed using alpha = .05

b R Squared = .281 (Adjusted R Squared = .256)

esteem. The main effect of country of primary residence, by itself, has a significant relationship with self-esteem and accounts for about 8% of the variance in scores. Participants from the US appeared to have higher self-esteem scores than Japanese participants. The main effect of parental nurturance also had a significant relationship with self-esteem and accounts for about 3% of the variance in scores. Participants in the High Parental Nurturance Group scored higher on self-esteem than those in the Low Parental Nurturance Group.

### **Post Hoc Analyses**

#### **Introduction**

When controlling for social desirability, there was no significant interaction effect between parental nurturance and country of primary residence (US born and Japanese born participants) on self-esteem, but the Pearson correlation coefficients indicate that other relationships between other variables may exist.

#### **Correlation of Variables**

Correlation matrices of all variables of interest in this study are presented in Table 5 to glean information about the relationship between variables not directly addressed in the research question. Relationships presented in Table 5 which are not specifically addressed in the research question will be further discussed in chapter 5.

The correlation matrix for the US participants describes the relationship between self-esteem, parental nurturance, fathers' nurturance, mothers' nurturance, and social desirability (Table 5). Self-esteem and parental nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .277, which is significant (.05 level/two tailed). Self-esteem

**Table 5**Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between All Variables by Country of Primary Residence

Country	Self-Esteem	Parental Nurturance	Father's Nurturance	Mother's Nurturance	Social Desirability
<b>USA</b>					
Self-Esteem	1.00				
Parental Nurturance	.277*	1.00			
Father's Nurturance	.134	.863**	1.00		
Mother's Nurturance	.250*	.909**	.509**	1.00	
Social Desirability	.326**	.386**	.312*	.336**	1.00
<b>Japan</b>					
Self-Esteem	1.00				
Parental Nurturance	.404**	1.00			
Father's Nurturance	.351*	.861**	1.00		
Mother's Nurturance	.321*	.772**	.326*	1.00	
Social Desirability	.364**	.030	-.025	.087	1.00
<b>Total</b>					
Self-Esteem	1.00				
Parental Nurturance	.330**	1.00			
Father's Nurturance	.213*	.592**	1.00		
Mother's Nurturance	.381**	.720**	.261**	1.00	
Social Desirability	.350**	.204**	.072	.258**	1.00

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

and fathers' nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .134, which is not significant. Self-esteem and mothers' nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .250, which is significant (.05 level/two tailed). Self-esteem and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .326, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed).

With the US participants, parental nurturance is highly significant with fathers' nurturance and mothers' nurturance (.863 and .909 respectively), but this is because fathers' nurturance combined with mothers' nurturance make up the parental nurturance scale. Parental nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .386, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed). Mothers' nurturance and fathers' nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .509, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed). Fathers' nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .312, which is significant (.05 level/two tailed). Mothers' nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .336, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed) (Table 5).

The correlation matrix for the Japanese participants describes the relationship between self-esteem, parental nurturance, fathers' nurturance, mothers' nurturance, and social desirability. Self-esteem and parental nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .404, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed). Self-esteem and fathers' nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .351, which is significant (.05 level/two tailed). Self-esteem and mothers' nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .321, which is significant (.05 level/two tailed). Self-esteem and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .364, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed) (Table 5).

With the Japanese participants parental nurturance is highly significant with fathers' nurturance and mothers' nurturance (.861 and .772 respectively), but this is because fathers' nurturance combined with mothers' nurturance make up the parental nurturance scale. Parental nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .030, which is not significant. Mothers' nurturance and fathers' nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .326, which is significant (.05 level/two tailed). Fathers' nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of -.025, which is not significant. Mothers' nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .087, which is not significant (.01 level/two tailed)(Table 5).

The correlation matrix for the total participants describes the relationship between self-esteem, parental nurturance, fathers' nurturance, mothers' nurturance, and social desirability for the entire sample. Self-esteem and parental nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .330, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed). Self-esteem and fathers' nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .213, which is significant (.05 level/two tailed). Self-esteem and mothers' nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .381, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed). Self-esteem and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .350, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed) (Table 5).

With the total participants parental nurturance is highly significant with fathers' nurturance and mothers' nurturance (.592 and .720 respectively), but this is because fathers' nurturance combined with mothers' nurturance make up the parental nurturance scale. Parental nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .204, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed). Mothers' nurturance

and fathers' nurturance have a correlation coefficient of .261, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed). Fathers' nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .072, which is not significant. Mothers' nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .258, which is significant (.01 level/two tailed) (Table 5).

### **Post Hoc ANOVA for Social Desirability**

The US participants' parental nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .386 (see Table 5), which is significant (.01 level/two tailed). The Japanese participants' parental nurturance and social desirability have a correlation coefficient of .030, which is not significant.

To better understand the role of the covariate (social desirability), a one-way between-groups Analysis of Variance (Table 6) was run to test the effect of parental nurturance on social desirability. The data were split between US participants and Japanese participants (for comparison of the groups).

Results of the ANOVA indicate that, for the US sample, belonging to the high parental nurturance group was associated with higher levels of social desirability;  $F(1, 68)=5.116, p=.027$ , with a small effect size (eta squared .070). For the Japanese sample, parental nurturance was not significantly associated with social desirability;  $F(1, 49)=.146, p=.704$ , with a very small effect size (eta squared .003) (Table 6)

### **Post Hoc ANOVAs for Parental Nurturance and Self-Esteem**

The Correlation Matrices (Table 5) indicate that Parental Nurturance has a significant relationship with self-esteem for the US sample, the Japanese sample, and the total

**Table 6****Analysis of Variance Summary Table of Between-Groups Effects of Parental Nurturance on Social Desirability for US and Japanese Participants**

Dependent Variable: Social Desirability

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
<b>USA</b>						
Parental Nurturance (Median Split)	106.882	1	106.882	5.116	.027	.070
Error	1420.603	68	20.891			
Total	19640.000	70				
Corrected Total	1527.486	69				
<b>Japan</b>						
Parental Nurturance (Median Split)	3.010	1	3.010	.146	.704	.003
Error	1012.402	49	20.661			
Total	12762.000	51				
Corrected Total	1015.412	50				

a Computed using alpha = .05

b R Squared = .070 (Adjusted R Squared = .056)

c R Squared = .003 (Adjusted R Squared = -.017)



sample. Three one-way between-groups analyses of variance were conducted to explore the impact of the parental nurturance median split into two parental nurturance groups (High or Low) on self-esteem for the entire sample, the US participants, and the Japanese participants (see Table 7).

For the entire sample, there was a significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in self-esteem scores for the high and low nurturance groups,  $F(1, 119) = 14.515$ ,  $p = .000$ , with a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = .109$ ) (Table 7).

There was not a significant difference in the US sample,  $F(1, 69) = 1.660$ ,  $p = .202$ , with a very small effect size ( $\eta^2 = .024$ ). There was a significant difference in the Japan sample,  $F(1, 49) = 5.175$ ,  $p = .027$ , with a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = .096$ ) (Table 7).

### **ANCOVA for Fathers' and Mothers' Nurturance**

When controlling for social desirability, there was no significant interaction effect between parental nurturance and country of primary residence (US born and Japanese born participants) on self-esteem. However, the Pearson correlation coefficients (see Table 5) between self-esteem and both fathers' and mothers' nurturance are significantly different when comparing the US participants and Japanese participants.

An Analysis of Covariance was computed to determine if there were differences in the American and Japanese participants' between-group effects of fathers' nurturance on self-esteem controlling for social desirability. Also, an Analysis of Covariance was computed to determine if there were differences in the

**Table 7**

Test of Between-Subject Effects for High Nurturance Group and Low Nurturance Group for US, Japan, and Total Participants for Self Esteem

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
<b>Total Participants</b>						
Parental Nurturance (Median Split)	380.027	1	380.027	14.515	.000	.109
Error	3115.626	119	26.182			
Total	115538.000	121				
Corrected Total	3495.653	120				
<b>US</b>						
Parental Nurturance (Median Split)	44.479	1	44.479	1.660	.202	.024
Error	1821.864	68	21.682			
Total	74574.000	70				
Corrected Total	1091.922	69				
<b>Japan</b>						
Parental Nurturance (Median Split)	104.308	1	104.308	5.175	.027	.096
Error	987.614	49	987.614			
Total	40964.000	51				
Corrected Total	1091.922	50				

a Computed using alpha = .05

b R Squared = .024 (Adjusted R Squared = .009)

c R Squared = .096 (Adjusted R Squared = .077)

American and Japanese participants' between-group effects of mothers' nurturance on self-esteem controlling for social desirability.

The data were split between US participants and Japanese participants (for comparison of the groups). A one-way between-groups analysis of covariance was conducted to compare the effects of fathers' nurturance groups on self-esteem, while controlling for social desirability. The independent variable was the fathers' nurturance group (a median split put participants in either the high fathers' nurturance group or low fathers' nurturance group). The dependent variable is self-esteem scores and participant's scores on the Social Desirability Scale were used as the covariate in this analysis.

For the US participants, after adjusting for social desirability, there was no significant difference between the two fathers' nurturance groups on self-esteem scores,  $F(1,53)=.09$ ,  $p=.77$ , eta squared $=.002$  (Table 8). There was a small effect size between social desirability and self-esteem, as indicated by an eta squared value of .085. For the Japanese participants, after adjusting for social desirability, there was a significant difference between the two fathers' nurturance groups on self-esteem scores,  $F(1,44)=5.53$ ,  $p=.023$ , eta squared $=.112$ . There was a small effect size between social desirability and self-esteem, as indicated by an eta squared value of .159 (Table 8).

A one-way between-groups analysis of covariance was conducted to compare the effects of mothers' nurturance groups on self-esteem, while controlling for social desirability. The independent variable was the mothers' nurturance group (a median split put participants in either the high mother's nurturance group or low mother's

**Table 8**

Analysis of Co-Variance Summary Table of Between-Groups Effects of Father's Nurturance on Self-Esteem controlling for Social Desirability for US and Japanese Participants

Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
<b>USA</b>						
Social Desirability	135.078	1	135.078	4.936	.031	.085
Father's Nurturance (Median Split)	2.368	1	2.368	.087	.770	.002
Error	1450.311	53	27.364			
Total	59958.000	56				
Corrected Total	1585.429	55				
<b>Japan</b>						
Social Desirability	145.340	1	145.340	8.334	.006	.159
Father's Nurturance (Median Split)	96.490	1	96.490	5.533	.023	.112
Error	767.297	44	17.439			
Total	38174.000	47				
Corrected Total	989.234	46				

a Computed using alpha = .05

b R Squared = .085 (Adjusted R Squared = .051)

c R Squared = .224 (Adjusted R Squared = .189)

nurturance group). The dependent variable is self-esteem scores and participant's scores on the Social Desirability Scale were used as the covariate in this analysis. For the US participants, after adjusting for social desirability, there was no significant difference between the two mothers' nurturance groups on self-esteem scores,  $F(1,67)=2.229$ ,  $p=.140$ ,  $\eta^2=.032$  (Table 9). There was a small effect size between social desirability and self-esteem, and indicated by an eta squared value of .080. For the Japanese participants, after adjusting for social desirability, there was a significant difference between the two mothers' nurturance groups on self-esteem scores,  $F(1,48)=4.209$ ,  $p=.046$ ,  $\eta^2=.081$ . There was a small effect size between social desirability and self-esteem, and indicated by an eta squared value of .096 (Table 9).

**Table 9**

Analysis of Co-Variance Summary Table of Between-Groups Effects of Mother's Nurturance on Self-Esteem controlling for Social Desirability for US and Japanese Participants

Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
<b>USA</b>						
Social Desirability	141.261	1	141.261	5.861	.018	.080
Mother's Nurturance (Median Split)	53.713	1	53.713	2.229	.140	.032
Error	1614.859	67	24.102			
Total	74574.000	70				
Corrected Total	1866.343	69				
<b>Japan</b>						
Social Desirability	92.155	1	92.155	5.080	.029	.096
Mother's Nurturance (Median Split)	76.367	1	76.367	4.209	.046	.081
Error	870.825	48	18.142			
Total	40964.000	51				
Corrected Total	1091.922	50				

a Computed using alpha = .05

b R Squared = .135 (Adjusted R Squared = .109)

c R Squared = .202 (Adjusted R Squared = .169)

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of the study that looked at parental nurturance and self-esteem with a sample of US and Japanese undergraduate college students. While there are numerous studies focusing on parental nurturance and self-esteem in Western samples, this study compared the variables of parental nurturance and self-esteem with participants from both a Western culture and an Eastern culture, through an object relations theory and collectivist versus individualistic culture framework.

This chapter discusses the statistical results and conclusions that were derived from responses of 121 college undergraduates to four different survey instruments. Major limitations with the study are examined, with an emphasis on internal consistency of research instruments. Implications from these results and conclusions are discussed in relation to theory and practice. Finally, recommendations are made for future research.

#### **Summary**

Object relations theorists (Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, Mahler, Kohut) argue that one's mind is made up of elements internalized from the outside, primarily from other people (Gomez, 1997). Winnicott (1965) proposed that the primary factor in a child's

development is parental care which is evident in numerous self-esteem studies (Rosenberg, 1967; Yakibu et al., 1999; Scheffler and Naus, 1999; Buri et al., 2001; Buri et al., 1992) which have found that one's self-esteem is positively correlated with parental behaviors (nurturance, acceptance, involvement). All of these studies have been done with Western samples.

The problem addressed in the study was that it is not always appropriate to generalize results of self-esteem studies from Western samples to non-Western populations. Many theorists (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Hofstede, 1991; Trandis, 1989; Rindfuss et al., 2004; Tafarodi, 1999) argue that there are major cultural differences between individualistic societies, such as those found in Northern Europe, US, Canada, and Australia and collectivistic societies, such as those found in Asia, Africa, Mexico, Central and South America. Bush, Peterson, Cobas, and Supple (2002) found that a mainland Chinese sample contrasted with what is commonly found in Western cultures, not finding as significant a relationship between parental behaviors and children's self-esteem. These cross-cultural studies are few in numbers and more need to be conducted to increase the understanding of family influence in the development of personality in individuals from areas other than the United States, Canada, England, and Australia.

Participants for the present study were 121 students from a large midwestern university; 70 (58.7%) undergraduate students from US born population and 51 (41.3%) international undergraduate students from a Japanese born population. The study design utilized the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Parental Nurturance Scale (PNS), which have previously been widely used in the field of self-



esteem research. Participants were given a demographic data questionnaire which included forced choice questions regarding gender, parents' marital status, family of origin configuration, school status, ethnic origin, academic classification, and citizenship status and fill-in-the-blank questions regarding age and primary residence. In addition, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale was used to control for respondents' socially desirable response patterns.

The research question for the present study was tested through the use of analysis of covariance. To better understand the role of the covariate in the ANCOVA model, a one-way between-groups ANOVA was run to test the effect social desirability on self-esteem.

An Analysis of Covariance Post Hoc was computed to determine if there were differences in the US and Japanese participants' between-group effects of fathers' nurturance on self-esteem controlling for social desirability. Also, an Analysis of Covariance Post Hoc was computed to determine if there were differences in the US and Japanese participants' between-group effects of mothers' nurturance on self-esteem controlling for social desirability. Study results were discussed in the frame of Winnicott's object relations theory.

### **Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to the generalizability of the current study, which are as follows:

1) The Social Desirability Scale had very weak internal consistency. As shown in Table 3 Chronbach's Alpha coefficients were computed on each study variable. By convention, an alpha should be at least .70 or higher to retain an item in

an "adequate" scale; and many researchers require a cut-off of .80 for a "good scale" (Nunnally, 1978). Social Desirability Scale which is "adequate" for the US sample (.71) and is not acceptable for the Japanese sample (.62) for a combined coefficient of .67, which is also not acceptable. In an effort to adjust the internal consistency for the Japanese sample, individual items were examined to compute Chronbach's Alpha if any combination of items were deleted from the scale, but there were no items or combination of items that significantly changed the internal consistency. This means that for the Japanese participants, scores on the Social Desirability Scale do not accurately report the construct it attempts to measure, social desirability.

2) The current study sample was restricted to undergraduate students at a large public state university and age was restricted for participants between 18 and 30.

3) The number of subjects that participated in the current study was small. A much larger sample with greater diversity in racial, cultural, and socio-economics would be more generalizable to the population.

4) Participation for the current study was voluntary, which means that there is a possibility that those who declined to participate may differ in attitude from those who elected to participate in the study.

5) All measures used in this study were self-report and therefore subject to the perception of the participants, which may differ from reality. Participants in the current study were asked questions that necessitated memory retrieval of what might be emotionally charged and subjective material. Perceived parental nurturance, for example, is being based on the perceptions of one family member and is subject to the

participant's personal viewpoint. That viewpoint might be altered by any number of factors, such as becoming married or being a parent oneself.

6) The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is unidimensional, meaning it only gives one score per subject. Some theorists view self esteem as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of varying components, such as self-worth and self-efficacy. A person with low self-worth and high self-efficacy may function very differently than a person with high self-worth and low self-efficacy, but in a unidimensional scale (such as the RSES) these two individuals may have the same score.

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

### **Self Esteem and Country of Origin**

Total self-esteem statistical means for all of the participants on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were 30.449 on a scale of 10 to 40. The US students had a self-esteem mean of 32.23 and the Japanese students had a self-esteem mean of 27.96 (Table 2), which is consistent with research that finds that individuals in Western cultures have higher levels of self-esteem than Eastern cultures because of their greater societal orientation toward individualism as opposed to collectivism (Tafarodi, 1999).

Collectivistic societies, such as Japan, tend to emphasize the maintenance of the groups, group relationships (Heine et al., 1999), to occupy one's proper position, and to engage in activities that promote common goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991.) Individualistic societies, such as the United States, tend to emphasize independence, self-reliance, emotional autonomy, personal initiative (Hofstede, 1991), self-expression, personal accomplishment, and distinction from others ((Markus &

Kitayama, 1991.) Under this collectivistic/individualistic framework it is anticipated that the US participants would score higher than the Japanese participants on self-esteem, which is what was found in the results.

The self-esteem means for the US high parental nurturance group and low parental nurturance group was 32.80 and 31.13 respectively, as the self-esteem means for the Japanese high parental nurturance group and low parental nurturance were 30.29 and 27.96 respectively (Table 2). Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 5) between parental nurturance and self-esteem for the US sample was .277 (which is significant at the 0.05 level) and for the Japanese sample was .404 (which is significant at the 0.01 level). This was an interesting finding as, although both the samples were significant, the Japanese sample had a greater difference between the high and low parental nurturance groups in terms of self-esteem as compared to the US groups.

The fact that both the US and Japanese samples had significant positive relationships between parental nurturance and self-esteem is consistent with the object relations theorist, Winnicott's concept of "the good enough mother", the parental contribution of providing adequately emotional care for the child to get a positive developmental start in life (Winnicott, 1963).

The finding that perceived parental nurturance had a greater effect on Japanese students' self-esteem than it did on the US students was unexpected. Could it be a myth or colloquial truism that Americans, put more emphasis into nurturing parenting, resulting in emotionally healthier children? This study indicated that the Japanese students were more affected by loving and caring parents than their

American counterparts. This is important for American teachers, researchers, and mental health practitioners as the trend may be to devalue Asian parents in terms of the contributions to their children's emotional well-being.

### **Study Research Question**

*What is the relationship of perceived parental nurturance and cultural identification to self-esteem, controlling for social desirability?*

A 2 by 2 between groups Analysis of Covariance was conducted to compare the relationship between parental nurturance and self-esteem in two different groups of college students (US group and Japanese group). After adjusting for the social desirability scores, there was no significant interaction effect between country and parental nurturance on self-esteem,  $F(1, 116) = 1.42, p = .24$ , with a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = .012$ ) (Table 7). These results suggest that when controlling for social desirability, there was no significant interaction effect between parental nurturance and country of primary residence (US and Japanese participants) on self-esteem.

This finding indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the way parents' caring and loving behaviors relate to their children's self-esteem between US and Japanese children. It seems that many of these parental factors, such as approval, acceptance, and affirmation may be universal. Winnicott, in his object relations theory, did not address differing cultures in his discussions of the parent-child relationship and childhood development but in the current study this correlation appears to span across cultures, at least in this case with both US and Japanese cultures.

## **Social Desirability**

Before addressing the social desirability covariate, the reader is reminded that the Social Desirability Scale had very weak internal consistency. The Social Desirability Scale was adequate for the US sample (.71) and is not acceptable for the Japanese sample (.62) for a combined coefficient of .67, which is also not acceptable. This means that for the Japanese participants, scores on the Social Desirability Scale does not accurately report the construct it attempts to measure, social desirability.

Although there were problems with the internal consistency for the Social Desirability Scale, to better understand the role of the covariate (Social Desirability), a one-way between-groups Analysis of Variance (Table 6) was run to test the effect of parental nurturance on social desirability. The researcher believed, prior to the study, the Japanese sample would score higher social desirability scores with self-esteem and parental nurturance when compared to the US sample. The reasoning behind this belief was literature that identified Japan as a collectivist society and the US being a more individualistic society. Japan, as a collectivistic society tends to emphasize collectivist identity and group solidarity (Hofstede, 1991) therefore the researcher reasoned that the Japanese participants' responses would be more inclined to follow a socially desirable manner.

Total social desirability scale scores for all of the participants was 15.70 on a scale of 1 to 37. The US students had a social desirability mean of 16.09 and the Japanese students had a social desirability mean of 15.18 (Table 2), which seems to go against theories that would predict participants from a collectivist society (such as Japan) would be more oriented toward "group think" and therefore answer questions

in a more socially desirable way. In fact, the US students tended to score in a pattern that was consistent with “faking good” than the Japanese students.

Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 5) between parental nurturance and social desirability for the US sample was .386 (which is significant at the 0.01 level) and for the Japanese sample was .030 (which is not significant at the 0.05 level). This was very interesting as the US students’ parental nurturance scores were highly related to their social desirability scores, meaning that for the US sample, how they rated the level of their parents’ nurturance related to how strong their pattern of answering questions in is socially acceptable or desirable way. This relationship was not seen in the Japanese students who did not have a significant relationship between how they rated the level of their parents’ nurturance and their pattern of answering questions in a socially acceptable or desirable way. These findings suggest that although the US participants scored higher levels of parental nurturance, this may have been a result of their answering in a way that is desirable in the US, inflating their scores.

Results of the ANOVA (Table 6) indicate that for the US sample, belonging to the high parental nurturance group was associated with higher levels of social desirability;  $F(1, 68)=5.116, p=.027$ , with a moderate effect size (eta squared .070). For the Japanese sample, parental nurturance was not significantly associated with social desirability;  $F(1, 49)=.146, p=.704$ , with a very small effect size (eta squared .003). This means that for the US participants, those who ranked higher levels of parental nurturance also had higher levels of answering questions in a socially

desirable pattern. This was not the case with the Japanese participants, who had no significant relationship between perceived parental nurturance and social desirability.

This finding indicates that parental nurturance is more highly valued in US society than it is in Japanese society. Therefore, US participants are more likely to answer questions about their parents' nurturance, such as "My mother expresses warmth and affection toward me", "I feel close to my father", and "My mother is very understanding and sympathetic", in a way that is desirable in American society. Those Japanese participants who had high scores on the social desirability scale did not have corresponding high scores on parental nurturance which indicates that parental nurturance is not a factor that participants are inclined to "fake good" upon.

This is not to say that Japanese students don't attempt to be socially desirable, it's to say that having nurturing parents is not a culturally desired attribute. To illustrate this, consider the following example: If you were to enter a bar in Tokyo and ask a young man if he has parents who were nurturing and loving, it may cause less shame, feelings of inadequacy, and embarrassment to say "no" than a young man in Cleveland may experience by saying "no" to the same question. In Japan saying "no" to this question may just be a matter of fact. In the US, saying "no" to this question may bring up emotional material brought about by the cultural belief that parents need to nurture their children for them to be healthy and productive members of society. Such nurturance may be seen as "coddling" or making a child overly arrogant in non-Western cultures.



## **Parental Nurturance and Self-Esteem**

Three one-way between-groups analysis of variances were conducted to explore the impact of nurturance group (High or Low) on self-esteem. An ANOVA was used for the entire sample, the US participants, and the Japanese participants (Table 7). For the entire sample, there was a significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in self-esteem scores for the high and low nurturance groups,  $F(1,119) = 14.515$ ,  $p = .000$ , with a medium effect size ( $\eta^2 = .109$ ) (Table 2.5). This means that those in the high nurturance group had a significantly higher level of self esteem than those in the low nurturance group, for the total participants.

The current study's findings are consistent with previous studies (Buri, Murphy, Richtsmeier, & Komar, 1992; Scheffler & Naus, 1999; Buri, Kirchner, & Walsh, 2001) which have found that those individuals who have a higher level of perceived parental nurturance tend to have higher levels of self-esteem. The findings also fit well with the object relations concept that 1) a child builds a healthy sense of self when parents communicate that he or she is heard, seen, understood, and valued (Kohut, 1971) and 2) parental warmth or acceptance seems to contribute to the development of self-esteem (Bednar, Wells, & Peterson, 1989; Coopersmith, 1967).

Although there was found a significant difference for the total sample, there was not a significant difference in the US sample,  $F(1,69) = 1.660$ ,  $p = .202$ , with a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = .024$ ). This means that for the US sample, those who were a part of the high nurturance group did not have a significantly higher level of self-esteem than the low nurturance group. This finding was inconsistent with previous studies (Buri, Murphy, Richtsmeier, & Komar, 1992; Scheffler & Naus,

1999; Buri, Kirchner, & Walsh, 2001) all of which were conducted with Western samples and found that those individuals with higher levels of parental nurturance have higher levels of self-esteem. This calls into question the Winnicott's view of the importance of the primary relationship (parents) and self-esteem for Americans as our study participants showed no correlation between high perceived parental nurturance and higher self-esteem scores.

There was a significant difference in the Japan sample,  $F(1, 49)=5.175$ ,  $p=.027$ , with a medium effect size ( $\eta^2=.096$ ) (Table 7). This means that for the Japanese sample, those who were a part of the high nurturance group had a significantly higher level of self-esteem than those who were in the low nurturance group. Although not much research has been done regarding parental nurturance and self-esteem for non-Western cultures, our findings run contrary to the study performed by Bush, Peterson, Cobas, & Supple (2002) which found that parental nurturance was not a predictor of Chinese adolescents' self-esteem, which contrasts with what is commonly found in Western cultures. This study's findings indicate that Japanese students do have a positive correlation between perceived parental nurturance and self-esteem.

The results from the current study's three one-way between-groups ANOVAs on parental nurturance and self-esteem seem to contradict the collectivistic/individualistic theory, which would have argued that study participants from an individualistic society, such as the US, would have a stronger relationship between parental nurturance and self-esteem than participants from a collectivist society, such as Japan.

### **Fathers' and Mothers' Nurturance**

When looking at the Pearson correlation coefficients (Table 3), self-esteem had; no significant correlation with US fathers' nurturance scores, a significant correlation (at the .05 level) with US mothers' nurturance scores, a significant correlation (at the .01 level) with Japanese parental nurturance scores, and a significant correlation (at the .01 level) with Japanese mothers' nurturance scores. This was a surprising finding as all the groups of scores were significant, with the exception of US Father's Nurturance scores, which indicated that for our study, fathers in the US had less affect on self-esteem than mothers in the US and both parents in Japan. This finding is contrary to current research, such as that produced by Scheffler and Naus (1999), which found that women's self-esteem was positively associated with perceived fatherly affirmation. This is also contrary with the predominating colloquial American belief that children from single parent, mother-headed households have lower self-esteem than those from two parent, mother-father households.

Analysis of Covariate tests were utilized to better understand the US Fathers', US mothers', Japanese fathers', and Japanese mothers' nurturance scores' relationship with self-esteem by controlling for social desirability. ANCOVA results indicated that neither the US fathers' nor US mothers' scores had a significant relationship with self-esteem, which again is contrary to what was expected before the study. ANCOVA results also indicated that both the Japanese fathers' and Japanese mothers' scores were significant with self-esteem, which means that the

higher the Japanese scored both their fathers' and mothers' nurturance, the higher their corresponding self-esteem scores.

These findings again contradict Winnicott's object relations theory which may expect a significant relationship between fathers' and mothers' nurturance and self-esteem for the US sample. The findings also seem to go against the collectivist/individualism theory which may expect that the relationship between parental nurturance and self-esteem would be stronger for the US sample when compared to the Japanese sample. It has to be restated that the Social Desirability Scale had very weak internal consistency and may have not accurately worked as a covariate, which may have affected the study results.

### **Object Relations Theory**

The theoretical framework for the present study was object relations theory, specifically, some of the theoretical contributions from D.W. Willcott. As previously stated, object relations theory is a contemporary adaptation of psychoanalytic theory that places less importance on instinctual drives (aggression and sexuality) and more emphasis on relationships as the prime motivational force for humans. Object relations theorists suggest that people are relationship seeking, as opposed to pleasure seeking as Freud argued (Hinshelwood, 1991). Object relations theory is an appropriate theoretical frame for the current study because of its emphasis on early childhood interactions, such as the parent-child relationship. Object relations theorists view parents as the primary and most influential provider of experiences that influence their child's self-image and personality.

Winnicott stressed the importance of the conditions of the environment, whether favorable or not, in the shaping of a child's personality. He understood the development of the child, almost solely, in terms of the child's social environment and argued that the crucial factor in the environment is parental care (Winnicott, 1965).

Winnicott's conceptualized the "good-enough mother" as a mother who sufficiently gives what the child needs at a particular developmental phase and adjusts and changes according to the changing needs of the child. Winnocott believed that there is no way to separate the development of the child and the relationship that child has with his parents, because the child is not an isolated individual but a part of a family group (Winnicott, 1960). Without the parent child relationship, there is no infant and therefore the development of the infant is inextricably linked to parental care (Winnicott, 1960).

In the theoretical frame of Winnocott, the present study results seemed to both support and contradict the concept that parental care is positively correlated with personality development. Pearson correlation coefficients between parental nurturance and self-esteem were significant for both the Japanese and US samples and the main effect of parental nurturance had an overall positive correlation with self-esteem in the 2 by 2 between groups ANCOVA. These findings indicate that parents have a positive effect on the development of their children's self-esteem when they are perceived as more caring and nurturing by their children. This supports Winnicott's emphasis on the importance of the conditions of the family environment, whether favorable or not, in the shaping of a child's development.

Other study results seemed to challenge the concept that parental care is positively correlated with personality development. Separate ANOVAs and ANCOVAs were run on the US and Japanese samples to test the relationship between parental nurturance and self-esteem. For the US sample, those who were a part of the high nurturance group did not have a significantly higher level of self-esteem than the low nurturance group. This finding does not follow Winnicott's view of the importance of the primary relationship (parents) and self-esteem for Americans as our study participants showed no statistically significant correlation between high perceived parental nurturance and higher self-esteem scores.

### **Implications**

The findings from this study may have practical implications for theorists, educators, and mental health professionals. Overall, the study demonstrates the need for more research in multicultural dynamics, such as, parenting, self-esteem, and social desirability in non-Western individuals.

Theorists have given considerable attention to differences in Western and Eastern cultures based upon the construct of "Individualistic" versus "Collectivistic" societies, without a large number of studies to validate these theories. The results of this study suggest that, in Japanese culture, parental nurturance does not interact in a different way than theorized in Western cultures. This study seems to indicate that even though it is not as socially desirable for individuals in Japan to have nurturing parents as it is in US individuals, it is still as important in the development of their self-esteem. As this finding differs from some of the very few studies done in this area, more investigations need to be conducted to get a better consensus.

Educators of multicultural students may refer to this study when conducting educational planning. Nothing in the current study indicates that administrators and teachers should engage non-Western parents in a manner different than their Western counterparts in terms of encouraging participation in academics, homework, extra-curricular, and classroom activities with their children. This involvement in their children's activities may demonstrate interest and a greater sense of parental nurturance (Yabiku et al.,1999), which may in turn develop the child's positive self-esteem. Colloquial teaching practices of not engaging non-Western parents, because of the stereotype that they have less impact on their children's development are not supported in this study.

The implications for mental health professionals are in finding the most suitable and appropriate interventions for their multicultural clients. Counselors, Social Workers, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, and other clinicians will want to have an understanding and appreciation for cultural factors that affect their clients' self-esteem. Attention to family dynamics in the course of treatment of multicultural clients can help to reveal those areas of family patterns that could be improved, which may have a positive effect on self-concept.

Overall, this investigation points to a need to focus on family dynamics when exploring the self-esteem of multicultural individuals. Theorists, educators, and mental health professionals may refer to this study in the course of their work with multicultural individuals and their families.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions, implications, and limitations of this research it is recommended that future studies continue to examine the relationship that exists between parental nurturance and self-esteem in various cultures among various groups of people. Specific recommendations are as follows:

1) Future studies should have a more generalizable random sample of the general population. A more diverse subject pool, with geographic, socio-economic, educational, racial, and religious differences represented would yield more beneficial results for real-world applications.

2) Future studies should include participants from Japan, not necessarily Japanese international students (in a US University), for better generalizability of results to the Japanese population. International students are likely to have special cultural interest and/or influence from their host country which may strengthen cultural differences between them and fellow Japanese individuals who are not Japanese international students in the US.

3) Future studies should begin to incorporate other non-Western countries, such as China, India, Vietnam, Singapore, and Korea. It is not appropriate to generalize findings comparing Japanese and US sample to other non-Western countries.



4) Future studies should construct a sample that demonstrates greater diversity in family make-up. This modification would allow the parental nurturance and self-esteem findings to be better generalized to the changing face of the American family, such as single parent families, gay and lesbian headed families, grandparent headed families, adoptive and foster families, and other non-traditional families that are increasing in prevalence.

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APPENDIX A-1  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have been informed that this study involves research which will be conducted by Steven Jacobson, M.S., a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. I understand that this project is designed to study personal and family dynamics across various cultural groups. I have been asked to participate in this study because I fit the criteria of participants that the researcher requires (i.e., college student at least 18 years of age). I understand that my participation in this study will involve the completion of 4 questionnaires designed to measure demographic information, perceived practices of my parents, social desirability, and my general opinions about myself. I am aware that my involvement in this study will take approximately 40-50 minutes of my time.

I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw my participation from this study at any time without any penalty. I understand that my identity as a participant in this study will be kept in strict confidence and that no information that identifies me in any way will be released without my written approval. I understand that all information obtained will be destroyed within six years after the completion of the study.

I understand the slight possibility exists that in the course of completing the questionnaires some questions may make me feel uncomfortable. If so, Steven Jacobson, the principal investigator, can help me make a referral to University Counseling Services for psychological assistance. I am aware that I may not directly benefit from this study, my participation in this project will benefit in the acquisition of knowledge related to understanding family dynamic and the development of personality.

I understand that I may contact Steven Jacobson, M.S. by e-mail at [metromixers@yahoo.com](mailto:metromixers@yahoo.com), or his supervisor, Don Boswell, Ph.D. at [boswell@okstate.edu](mailto:boswell@okstate.edu) if I have any questions about this project or my participation in the study. You can also contact Dr. Sue C. Jacobs, IRB Chair for more information about your rights as a participant in human subject research in the IRB office at 415 Whitehurst Hall.

I have read this form and understand what it says. I am 18 years or older and voluntarily agree to participate in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participants Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX A-2  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM (For Japanese-Born Subjects)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have been informed that this study involves research which will be conducted by Steven Jacobson, M.S., a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. I understand that this project is designed to study personal and family dynamics across various cultural groups. I have been asked to participate in this study because I fit the criteria of participants that the researcher requires (i.e., college student at least 18 years of age). I understand that my participation in this study will involve the completion of 4 questionnaires designed to measure demographic information, perceived practices of my parents, social desirability, and my general opinions about myself. I am aware that my involvement in this study will take approximately 40-50 minutes of my time.

I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw my participation from this study at any time without any penalty. I understand that my identity as a participant in this study will be kept in strict confidence and that no information that identifies me in any way will be released without my written approval. I understand that all information obtained will be destroyed within six years after the completion of the study.

I understand the slight possibility exists that in the course of completing the questionnaires some questions may make me feel uncomfortable. If so, Steven Jacobson, the principal investigator, can help me make a referral to University Counseling Services for psychological assistance.

I am aware that I may not directly benefit from this study, my participation in this project will benefit in the acquisition of knowledge related to understanding family dynamic and the development of personality.

I understand that I may contact Steven Jacobson, M.S. by e-mail at [metromixers@yahoo.com](mailto:metromixers@yahoo.com), or his supervisor, Don Boswell, Ph.D. at [boswell@okstate.edu](mailto:boswell@okstate.edu) if I have any questions about this project or my participation in the study. You can also contact Dr. Sue C. Jacobs, IRB Chair for more information about your rights as a participant in human subject research in the IRB office at 415 Whitehurst Hall.

I have read this form and understand what it says. I am 18 years or older and voluntarily agree to participate in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participants Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B  
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Some background information is needed to know the variability in people who answered the questionnaires. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Thank-you.

What is your gender?                      ☐ Male                      ☐ Female

What is your current age?              \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently enrolled at Oklahoma State University as either an undergraduate or graduate student?

☐ Yes              ☐ No

If enrolled, what is your current classification?

☐ Freshman   ☐ Sophomore   ☐ Junior      ☐ Senior      ☐ Graduate

Are you classified as an international student?              ☐ Yes              ☐ No

In what country do you have primary residence when not in school?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your cultural identification?

☐ African-American  
☐ Caucasian-American  
☐ Japanese-American  
☐ Latino-American  
☐ Japanese  
☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

What Language is primarily spoken in your household?

☐ English  
☐ Japanese  
☐ Japanese and English  
☐ Spanish  
☐ Spanish and English  
☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you resided in the United States for any reason including school?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 to 4 years
- ☐ 5 to 10 years
- ☐ 11 to 20 years
- ☐ The majority of my lifetime
- ☐ My entire lifetime

If you are from a country outside the United States, how often do you visit your country of origin? (Do not answer if from the US.):

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Once every 6-20 years
- ☐ Once every 2-5 years
- ☐ Once every year
- ☐ Twice a year
- ☐ 3 to 4 times every year
- ☐ more often than 4 times per year

What was your parent(s') primary Marital Status throughout your childhood (birth to 18 years of age):

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Partnered
- ☐ Divorced/Separated
- ☐ Widow(er)
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Who were your primary caregivers throughout your childhood (birth to 18 years of age):

- ☐ Mother and Father
- ☐ Mother (not Father)
- ☐ Father (not Mother)
- ☐ Grandparents
- ☐ Other Family Members
- ☐ Adoptive Parents (Not biological parents)
- ☐ Foster Parents
- ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX C

### Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Wednesday, June 08, 2005  
IRB Application No ED05117  
Proposal Title: Perceived Parental Nurturance and Self-Esteem in a Multicultural Context

Reviewed and Exempt  
Processed as:

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 6/7/2006**

Principal  
Investigator(s)  
Steven Jacobson  
503 1/2 A S. Ramsey  
Stillwater, OK 74074

---

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.


☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, emct@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

# VITA

Steven Jacobson

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: PERCEIVED PARENTAL NURTURANCE AND SELF-ESTEEM  
ACROSS AMERICAN AND JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Major Field: Educational Psychology, Counseling Psychology

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Woodbridge Senior High School, Woodbridge, Virginia in June 1991; received Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology from Longwood University, Farmville, Virginia in May 1997; received Master of Science degree in Community and College Counseling from Longwood University, Farmville, Virginia in December 1998. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in Educational Psychology, Counseling Psychology in December, 2006.

Experience: Pre-Doctoral Intern Counselor (APA Accredited), Arizona State University, Counseling and Consultation, Tempe, AZ, August 2005 to August 2006; Intake Counselor, Oklahoma State University, University Counseling Services, Stillwater, OK, August 2004 to May 2005; Doctoral Practicum Counselor, Stillwater Domestic Violence Services, Stillwater, OK, August 2002 to August 2003; Counselor, Payne County Youth Services, Stillwater, OK, August 2002 to Jan 2004; Doctoral Practicum Counselor, Payne County Youth Services, Stillwater, OK, August 2001 to August 2002; Counselor/Intake Worker, Green Door Psycho-social Rehabilitation Program, NW, Washington, DC, February 1999 to August 2001; Homeless Shelter Counselor, Falls Church Winter Overflow Shelter, Falls Church, VA, October 2000 to March 2001; Master's Practicum Counselor, Learning and Behavioral Therapies, Farmville, VA, August 1998 to December 1998

Professional Memberships: American Psychological Association, Student Member.