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# Identity & Self-Esteem through Re-culturalization: “We are sometimes not who we think we are”

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**Identity & Self-Esteem through Re-culturalization:  
“We are sometimes not who we think we are”**



Image by illustrator, [Anna Hegarty](#)

**Fall 2016**

**Senior Capstone Project**

**Professor Qun Wang**

**Aki Kurosawa**

**Human Communication Major**

**Women's Studies Concentration**

## Acknowledgements

I appreciate every single person who has helped me finish my undergraduate degree. I never thought I would be able to come this far. I could have never been where I am right now without supports from my parents, grandparents, and all my family members and friends. Studying abroad had been my dream since the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. My first year in the U.S., I was not even speaking English well. Writing a four page paper, giving a three minute speech, and reading a small easy text book, everything could not be done without tears and frustration. Every single obstacle I faced has become my strength. I will soon accomplish the dream. But, it is not the end. My journey starts when I graduate from CSUMB. I have the courage and strength to make this world a better place and continue to pursue my goals. I am proud to be the daughter of my parents. I am proud of everything I have accomplished.

Thank you.

Aki

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## Senior Project Proposal

### 1. Name and Area of Concentration:

Aki Kurosawa  
Women's Studies

### 2. Essay Title:

Moving One Step Forward - We Are Worth More Than What We Think

### 3. Topic:

My project will look at issues around self-esteem, self-confidence, self-doubts, self-denial, and self-worth across cultures and gender. I will compare three countries/cultures: the United States, Japan, and Costa Rica. I will collect data and statistics on what they think of their self-esteem, confidence, value, etc and examine their level of self-esteem, confidence, value, and security. If their level is low, I will observe what causes such low or high self-esteem, confidence, value and then compare and contrast the men and women within the culture. In addition, I will explore how people can learn and develop high self-esteem, confidence, value and eliminate self-doubts and denial either moving to another culture or build a community in where they live to support each other and develop their self-esteem. This project will include research, statistics, data, and interviews. For example, Japanese education doesn't teach the concept of "identity" and lacks opportunities that students learn what it is and develop their sense of identity. In addition, people in Japan are known for low self-esteem and unhappy. Why and how does it affect self-identity? On the other hand, according to study, Costa Rica is ranked high on levels of self-esteem and happiness among people. What are the differences between these two countries?

### 4. Research Questions:

- What is the relationship between self-identity and self-esteem/confidence/value?
- How do people in Japan, America, Costa Rica look at Self-esteem?
- What is the education on self-esteem?
- Why do people in certain culture have higher self-esteem than other?
- What causes low and high self-esteem?
  - How is the way of communication different if the person has low or high self-esteem ?
  - How do people behave and communicate around the person with low/high

esteem?

- What are people's approach to low self-esteem?
  - Are there any support groups?
- Would the person's level of self-esteem change if he/she was in the environment where people are high self-esteem and have support system for people with low self-esteem?
- How media affect self-esteem?
- Gender, race, age, or ethnicity

### **5: Alignment with Common Theme (Self-identity)**

Self-esteem, confidence, and value make up a lot of who we are, our identity. I personally have suffered from such low self-esteem and confidence and tend to refuse who I really am. In order for us to establish and develop a strong sense of identity, we have to be confident in our race, ethnicity, gender, appearance, and value ourselves. Self-identity and self-esteem relate closely; what we think of us and feel about ourselves reflect on our identity. Having strong identity and high self-esteem is important for our health. It also affects how we behave and communicate with others. People in different cultures have different way to look at and develop self-identity and self-esteem, so it is significant for us to understand why some people have certain way of expressing themselves and learn from each other.

### **6. Sources**

Primary Sources:

Interviews, oral history

Government studies and researches

Secondary Sources:

Statistics on level of self-esteem and confidence

Surveys and their results

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3263756/pdf/nihms-334612.pdf> -

Adolescent Self-Esteem: Differences by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age

<http://gosling.psy.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PsychAgingselifespan.pdf> -

Global Self-Esteem Across the Life Span

[http://sucra.saitama-u.ac.jp/modules/xoonips/download.php/BKS0000043.pdf?file\\_id=16367](http://sucra.saitama-u.ac.jp/modules/xoonips/download.php/BKS0000043.pdf?file_id=16367) - The Paradox of Japanese Self-Esteem

### **7. Next Steps**

- Collect more sources - research and study (statistics and data)

- Research research and more research
- Brainstorm how I want to layout my essay
- Plan personal interviews for my research
  - How many people would I want to interview?
  - How would I gather participants?
  - Would I want the same number of male and female students?
  - How would I find participants from Japan and Costa Rica?
  - Would I want to mix races?
  - Would it be one to one interview or group interview?
  - When would I want to conduct the interview(s)?
- Outline the essay
  - Introduction
  - Research 1 - Japan
  - Research 2 - Costa Rica
  - Research 3 - United States
  - Conclusion
- Brainstorm a poster
  - What do I want on it?
  - Select important parts from the essay

## **8. Timeline**

- Collect majority of sources by October 16
  - Collect more sources as needed throughout October and November
- Plan interviews
  - Find participants by the end of October
  - Outline interview questions by the end of October
  - Schedule interviews with participants by November 11
  - Plan and reserve location(s) by November 11
  - Actual interviews throughout November
- Online research until the end of November
- Draft by December 5
- Revise and complete by December 9
- Poster design brainstorm second week of December
- Complete poster by December 9

## Introduction

In one culture, discovering and developing identity is an important part of lives. In another culture, its importance is not emphasized as much as the other culture. Identity in this research refers to the different aspects that define an individual rather the one that is shared by a country. As an international student from Japan, I have seen and experienced similarities and differences between these two cultures. One of the biggest differences is the concept of “self-identity.” In addition, a person’s sense of identity influences the person’s level of “self-esteem.” In this research, I will be examining people’s awareness of, their struggle with, and their search of their identity as well as how their sense of identity affects their level of self-esteem in relation to gender, age, and race in both Japan and the United States.

### Defining “Identity” Though Japanese and American Lenses

It is interesting that the concept of “identity” did not originally exist in Japan. Even today, there is not direct translation of the word in Japanese. Through the lenses of history, Japan has stood on the collectivistic culture, which emphasizes group harmony rather than individualism. After the United States defeated Japan at World War II in 1945, the concept of identity was brought and implemented in Japan. Takie Sugiyama Lebra (1994), who is an author of *Self in Japanese Culture*, explains that there are two types of “self” to describe identity in Japanese culture. One is *the interactional self*, which refers to one’s awareness of who they are through social interaction. Self or identity in this category is “socially formed” (106). The other one is the *representational self*, which refers to self or identity that people see on the “surface”. This self is formed what she described as “the object of attention, inspection, appraisal by others around” (106).



Although globalization continues to grow and Japan adopts more Western culture, the concept of identity does not yet take root in Japanese culture. Japanese scholar, Sugimura (2012) explains in her work, *Personal Identity in Japan*, that tradition, conformity, and replication are valued by the people in the Japanese society that has a long history of collectivism which emphasizes interdependence (130). According to Phinney and Baldelomar (2011), identity development occurs in the cultural community that offers different options of identity (165). This means that it is very hard for people to develop their individual identity where cultural uniformity is emphasized. This makes sense in the Japanese culture where race/ethnicity is not as diverse as the United States. Japanese people have the narrow range of identity options.

On the other hand, identity seems to be a clear concept to everyone in the United States. In the *Handbook of Self and Identity*, Daphna Oyserman, Kristen Elmore, and George Smith (2012) define identity as “*the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is*” (95). The concept of identity is rooted in the national conscience of the United States for a long, long time and has been accentuated throughout history. A research conducted by Barna Group (2015), which is a polling firm stationed in California, shows that “family” is the number one factor that influences Americans’ identity. Young children learn and develop their identity first based on what they learn from their parents. Race has also played a critical role in people’s struggle of finding their true identity: from Native Americans to African Americans slavery and Civil Rights Movement to Japanese American relocation camps to current Chicano movement. In the United States, people are more conscious of their race and ethnicity in the American “melting pot” of diverse population due to immigration. In addition, schools tend to teach and empower their students’ search for identity. For example, teachers often assign

students to complete a worksheet or organize activities so that they can seriously think about how to find their true identity.

### **Link Between Identity and Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem means how people value themselves or self-worth. A series of researches have shown that many ways in which our feelings and attitudes toward ourselves depend on who we think we are. Self-esteem makes up a lot of people's identity. Developing self-esteem leads to developing identity. Having a strong sense of identity and high self-esteem is important for people's health, both mental and physical. People with uncertain identity and low self-esteem may lack confidence, be easily influenced by others, and/or have a trouble with decision making. It also affects how people behave and communicate with others. People with high self-esteem and the strong sense of identity are more likely to communicate effectively and show the best of them. People who are proud of who they are tend to have higher self-esteem. Identity and self-esteem are interconnected and influence one another.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

The close relationship between identity and self-esteem can be drawn by theoretical perspectives. Importantly, self-esteem can be understood better in the context of Identity Theory (Stets & Burke). According to Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke (2014), the verification of different bases of identities is linked to different self-esteem outcomes (410). They present an equation of self-esteem developed by William James (1890), which is formed as: one's self-esteem equals to the relationship between one's successes and pretensions.

$$\text{Self – Esteem} = \frac{\text{Success}}{\text{pretensions}}$$

For example, if a person has greater successes than pretensions, his or her self-esteem would be higher; whereas, if this person has greater pretensions, his or her self-esteem would be lower. This relationship between successes and pretensions can be applied in identity. “‘Successes’ correspond to their perception as to how they think others see them in the situation ‘Pretensions’ correspond to identity standard” explains Stets and Burke (412). Therefore, identity and self-esteem are related to each other, and self-esteem is the outcome of identity performance.

Additionally, Identity-Verification Theory (Swann, 1983) illustrates that people desire to be defined by others as they define themselves. Cast and Burke (2002) describes that “self-verification occurs when meanings in the social situation match or confirm meanings in an identity” (1041). Identity-verification increases one’s self-worth and competency, and this produces one’s self-esteem. Therefore, an individual’s level of self-esteem relies heavily on the evaluation by others: whether others see the individual how he or she wants others to see him/her. Cast and Burke also suggest that when people are not able to verify their identities, self-esteem can function as a defense mechanism (1042).

Lastly, self-esteem is less likely to show numerous changes in its levels over time. However, it can shift as a result of major life events and significant life transitions. It applies to both of Japanese and American culture (Orth, Trzesniewski, & Robins, 2011). For instance, the level of self-esteem drops dramatically when young adults experience periods of puberty and adolescence. They experience maturational changes, romantic relationships, conflicts with their peers, and self-discovery. These components affect a change in their

self-esteem.

### **Self-Esteem: Japan and the United States**

When we discuss self-esteem (SE) in this research, high self-esteem (High SE) refers to “an inherent human need that cannot be sidestepped or abandoned” (Brown, 2008). Low self-esteem (Low SE) refers to a feeling of unworthy, incapable, and unconfident. The result of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), which is the most commonly used method to measure people’s value, acceptance, and respect toward themselves, taken by Japanese people in the Brown’s study indicates that they overall have Low SE. As high SE is considered necessary for human’s well-being, various studies show that Japanese people fail to demonstrate high SE through the lenses of Western scholars.

Brown (2008) explains that Japanese long rooted history of concept of “modesty” and “self-criticalness” play a significant role in Japanese low SE. Self-criticalness refers to a desired characteristic to become a better member of a certain culture so that the member receives approval, appreciation, and acceptance from other members in that culture (654). Modesty and self-criticalness are essential skills for Japanese people to have. People learn these concepts from young age; they are part of education in elementary schools and evaluated as they age. Brown claims that

*Proponents of both modesty and self-criticalness accounts assume that Japanese are concerned with the impressions they make on others and that strongly stating one’s virtues or positive self-feelings elicits negative reactions.*

People with high self-esteem, self-enhance, self-aggrandize, and immodesty tend to lead to negative impressions on others (654). Japanese with all ages did express in the research that they had negative impression on people with high SE. Indeed, all behaviors of those

who with high SE are not necessarily the implication of immodesty or lack of criticalness; however, high SE produce the senses of arrogance and selfishness to Japanese (660).

Contrarily, the general idea and measurement of the level of self-esteem among Americans is more complicated than Japanese because the population in the United States consists of rich diversity of race and ethnicity. Race such as European Americans, African Americans, Native Americans Hispanics, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and so forth demonstrate slightly different levels of self-esteem. It makes it difficult to obtain the general idea of self-esteem among Americans. Whereas, according to *Japanese Ministry of International Affairs and Communications*, Statistics Bureau (2014), race and ethnicity other than Japanese make up only 1.9% of the population in Japan. Hence, the general idea of SE of Japanese is more attainable than American.

### **Age Differences and Gender Differences in Self-Esteem**

I am combining age and gender difference in one category because there is a close relationship between age and gender in self-esteem. A study (Bleidorn et al. 2015) targeted toward Americans shows that the level of SE in both males and females are high in their childhood, but a huge gap then emerges from adolescence throughout young adulthood. During this period, males tend to score higher SE than females (397). Japan conducted a similar research to examine if the result would be the same in Japan (Oshio et al. ). The findings illustrated that Japanese people in different ages had the similar tendencies of increase and decrease of SE over their life time comparable to the Americans. The gender difference in SE demonstrated slightly different results between Japanese and Americans, though. The level of SE increases as both males and females age in the United States. On the other hand, male SE decreases and female SE increases with their age in Japan.

Zeigler-Hill (2013) poses three important factors that affect American female adolescents and young adults' low SE. One is that they tend to value themselves based on their physical appearance, especially body images. Another factor is sexism that could occur in classroom; for instance, a teacher treats male and female students differently. Adolescents and young adults spend most of their time in school; a lot of influence provokes there. The last one is the characteristic of modesty among women. The gender norms in the society expect women to be modesty (3).

In recent years, some researches have emphasized that adolescents and young adults have scores lower and lower SE than ever before in Japan; while, American adults and young adults have scored higher SE. This can be explained by the recent research on body Image and Westernization Trends among Japanese Adolescents (Nielson et al. 2013). Through globalization, the beauty standards of Western culture have influenced the body image among Japanese, especially female adolescents and young adults. What Japanese females think of the ideal beauty is associated with thin and tall body and lighter skin and hair. Japanese females dye their hair, use cosmetic products that make their skin look lighter, wear colored contact lenses, and sometimes have plastic facial surgery to achieve the Western look (4). The influence is not just on females. Males have been exposed to fashion magazines and media which enforce them to desire male ideal beauty. They strive to have certain hair style, fashion, facial feature, and muscular body that are shown in the magazines and media. Both Japanese males and females indicate the great body dissatisfaction that can lead to their low SE.

### **Racial Differences in Self-Esteem**

The number of immigrants in Japan has increased over the years. They are mostly

from countries in East Asia such as China, South and North Korea, Philippines, Brazil, Peru, and so forth. Immigrants from China and North and South Korea consist of the majority of immigrants in Japan. There are not many studies, explicitly on self-esteem among immigrants in Japan or, in this case, different races other than Japanese. Some researches, however, indicate that the system of immigration is not effective and Japanese people often have negative and racist attitudes toward immigrants. In recent years, the number of immigrants has increased and so does the number of hate-protests. These can imply that new immigrants or people of different races other than Japanese are most likely to have low SE.

Race plays a significant role in the United States. There is difference in the level of ES in race/ethnicity. A large scale of research conducted by Bachman, O'Malley, Freedman-Doan, Trzesniewski, and Donnellan shows that African Americans have the highest SE. European Americans followed the next highest and scored slightly higher than Hispanics. Asians demonstrated the lowest SE among all of race. African Americans are often the target of prejudice and stigma so they tend to view themselves negatively, and it should cause low SE. However, this study shows just the opposite. Zeigler-Hill, Wallace, Myers (2012) calls this phenomenon the *Black self-esteem advantage*. This has led many to believe that people in the stigmatized racial group do not necessarily have low SE; instead, they would rather protect and enhance "self-esteem to the extent that it allows individuals to attribute their negative experiences to prejudice rather than their own characteristics or behavior" (785). One of the possible reasons why whites score lower SE is that they determine their self-worth based more on how others evaluate them than African Americans (788, Zeigler-Hill).

Hispanic and Asian Americans have been racially discriminated against as well.

Porter and Washington (1993) describes that “This racial discrimination accounts in part for their retention of an ethnic identity despite their long years of settlement in the United States and loss of ethnic language by some members of the group” (141). They face a conflict that they want to blend in American culture but also want to preserve culture of their origin. Hispanic and Asian American students at Cal State University, Monterey Bay described their struggle that they are not fully Hispanic/Asian or American. They have denied their origin to assimilate in the American culture in school. This struggle can lead to low SE. Moreover, low SE among Asian Americans is likely to be linked with their cultural traditions. Similar to Japan, a lot of Asian countries practice collectivism, which tends to have lower SE because the characteristics of high SE often disrupt the traits of collectivism such as group harmony and connectedness (Brown 3). Interestingly, one race has the positive ethnic identity than another within the Asian American subgroup, and the one with strong ethnic identity is more likely to have higher SE (Porter & Washington 150)

### **Other Possible Factors of Esteem**

The major reasons for individuals' low SE mentioned previously are cultural traditional characteristics of modesty and self-criticalness, the change in life stages, physical appearance, sexism that exists in school, and the status of minority. Are there any other possible factors? Another study (Vogel et al. 2014) examines the influence of Social Network Service (SNS), specifically Facebook, scrutinizing the concept of social comparison. *Upward social comparison* occurs when one is comparing oneself with those who are superior; upward social comparison tends to have negative effects such as feelings of incompetence and poor self-evaluation (207). *Downward social comparison* occurs when comparing with those who are inferior; it tends to have positive impact on people such as



better self-evaluation (207). SNS allows people to post pictures and videos on users pages; upward and downward comparison happen when people view those posts that show personal characteristics, for example, achievements and personalities (207). As a result, the more frequent people use Facebook, the lower SE they have. Upward social comparison has close link with people's low SE.

Environment can also impact people's SE, their level of SE can change in different environment (Kamakura et al. 2001). Americans' high SE could shift if they lived in Japan, and so could Japanese. A research (1994) to measure SE difference between Japanese adolescents and young adults who studied abroad and never left Japan conducted by Keiko Nishi shows the change in their level of SE before and after studying abroad in the United States (8). These youths moved to a new environment and experienced *acculturation*, which is the process of adjustment from Japanese culture to the new culture in the U.S. Acculturation consists of five stages: honeymoon, depression, integration and confusion, gaining self-control, and individuation (9). When one goes through each stage, the level of one's SE alters. For instance, during the honeymoon stage, youths had high SE; they were motivated to interact in the new environment. However, it decreased steeply at the depression stage; they experienced the feeling of loss in the environment. The level of SE rises and falls at each stage. Overall, this study concludes that those had studied abroad in the United States, including both male and female adolescents and young adults, scored higher on SE than those never left Japan. Those with the study abroad experience gained higher SE through challenges and achievements during acculturation in the new environment.

## **Survey and Data from Japanese and American College Students**

In order to support my research topic about the correlation between people's awareness of self-esteem and sense of identity, I distributed Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) to international students from Japan and American students at California State University, Monterey Bay.

### Subjects and Their General Characteristics:

Total 11 Japanese students age between 18 and 24, including males and females, took the survey. Half of them have been in the U.S. for three and half month and the other half have been for approximately four and five years. The total 11 American students made up of European American, Hispanic, and Asian American, age between age 18 and 23 took the exact same survey. The majority of them happened to be females. They don't have a study abroad experience.

### Survey Method:

The following ten questions were asked to the subjects. Questions 1,2,4,6,7 are scored: Strongly Agree=3, Agree=2, Disagree=1, and Strongly Disagree=0. On the other hand, questions 3, 5, 8,9,10 with asterisks are scored reversely: Strongly Agree=0, Agree=1, Disagree=2, and Strongly Disagree=3. The scale ranges from 0 to 30. The highest score that one can obtain is 30, and the lowest score is 0.

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.\*\*
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.\*\*
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.\*\*

9. I certainly feel useless at times.\*\*

10. At times I think I am no good at all.\*\*

Results:

Table 1. Japanese Students

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	8.1%	75%	8.3%	8.3%
2	36.4%	45.5%	9.1%	9.1%
3**	-	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%
4	9.1%	72.7%	18.2%	9.1%
5**	18.2%	27.3%	36.4%	18.2%
6	9.1%	81.8%	9.1%	-
7	9.1%	36.4%	54.5%	-
8**	9.1%	63.6%	27.3%	-
9**	-	45.5%	54.5%	-
10**	-	36.4%	45.5%	18.2%

Table 2. American Students

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	27.3%	72.7%	-	-
2	27.3%	72.7%	-	-
3**	-	18.2%	54.5%	27.3%
4	27.3%	72.7%	-	-

5**	-	9.1%	45.5%	45.5%
6	36.4%	45.5%	18.2%	-
7	18.2%	54.5%	18.2%	9.1%
8**	18.2%	45.5%	18.2%	18.2%
9**	9.1%	45.5%	18.2%	27.3%
10**	18.2%	27.3%	27.3%	27.3%

Analysis:

The result shows that Japanese students are less likely to score “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” compared to American students. It seems that they are aware of how they feel about themselves for each question, but they were not too certain. Overall, the average score for Japanese students was 17.3, and the American students’ average was 20.2. There is not huge gap between Japanese and American students. None of the Japanese students scored 30, and only one American student scored 30. The lowest score from the Japanese students was 11 and 12 from American students. These two groups share similar characteristics except for the living environment.

Moreover, the five Japanese students who have studied in the U.S. for four and five years were required to answer two additional questions: 1). *Do you think your level of self-esteem has increased through your study abroad experience?* 2). *Can you explain why you think so?* 83.3% of them answered *Yes* and 16.7% answered *No* to the first question. Some expressed their answers to the second question as follows:

*My study abroad experience has challenged me in many ways and I made a lot of mistakes. But I learned most from my mistakes and frustration here in America. It's an irreplaceable experience and I gained my confidence by believing myself. To be separated*

*from home is not an easy choice but it put me to grow my ability, confidence and experience.*

*Because I feel like everyone in the U.S. has self-esteem and being proud of themselves. Everyone is different, we don't need to be the same or compared with people. "Be yourself" was what I learned, and since then I could proud of myself and accept who I am.*

*When people complement anything about yourself, in my country we suppose to reject the opinions as being polite. But in America, when people compliment, we suppose to agree with that opinions. Otherwise it's rude. So I just get used to the culture, and getting used to the culture my level of self-esteem getting increase!*

*Because I think Americans especially girls are more likely to judge others than Japanese people and that makes me feel I'm not perfect. I still respect myself though*

What these Japanese students have in common is that they at first faced the different practices of self-esteem in the U.S. and learned and adjusted to that culture. Facing challenges and overcoming them seem to be the key to increase their SE. On the other hand, some indicated that American females were more judgmental than Japanese, and it made them feel more self-conscious. Although a couple students indicated that they didn't think their study abroad experience helped them increase the level of SE, the majority of them had positive attitudes toward themselves compared to the ones who had been in the U.S. for a short period of time.

### **Conclusion – Findings, Limitation, Future Research**

This research has focused on self-esteem, which plays a significant role in people's identity. Identity is associated with age, gender, race, and so forth. The level of SE is played out accordingly. The main reasons why many Japanese have lower level of SE than Americans is because concepts of "modesty" and "self-criticalness" are deeply rooted in

their history and culture; characteristics of high SE seem to distract and scare them. This can apply to why Asian Americans generally have the lowest SE among all races as well.

Japan and the United States show many similarities in the levels of SE in terms of how age and gender affect them. SE is higher during childhood and decreases during adolescent through adulthood, and then increases as people age. One important factor that significantly impacts people's sense of SE among both Japanese and American youths is the body image. However, the difference lies in that Japanese men SE get lower and lower as they age. There are no clear explanations of why the level of SE among Japanese men decreases as they get older during the periods of midlife and mature adulthood. This is an important question to be explored.

Further, there is a difference in the levels of SE among races in the United States. On the other hand, Japan lacks researches and studies about self-esteem among its immigrants. There are a number of studies done to examine Japanese self-esteem. However, the data on immigrants in Japan is deficient and needs more work. There are not many studies and researches specifically conducted on this topic; hence, it has limited my research to compare the differences in the levels of SE among the immigrants and different races in Japan with those in the United States.

The use of Social Network Service such as Facebook also plays a critical role in affecting people's sense of self-esteem. People who use SNS frequently compare themselves to what they see on SNS shifting the levels of SE. The level of SE doesn't change in a short period of time but it can change with gradual transformation such as when moving to a new environment. Japanese students who have studied abroad in the United States have showed a shift in their level of SE, going through five stages of acculturation in the new environment.

Targeting Japanese and American college students, my survey concludes that there is not that much difference in the two groups' level of SE. It was a surprising finding: coming from Japanese culture to the new environment of the U.S., my assumption was that that Americans would have more positive attitudes toward themselves and much more confident than Japanese. However, the survey would have to be taken by a larger number of students to quantify and validate the result and justify data. Besides, the result might have been slightly different if the Japanese students who took the survey had lived at the same place.

Identity and self-esteem have been the focus of researchers and scholars for ages because these are what make people human. Identity is what makes who we are and what we want to be. Self-esteem is an integral part of identity. My intention of this research was to bring the awareness of the importance of self-esteem to the reader's attention as well as the cultural differences between Japan and the United States. This is the first step toward a meaningful cross-cultural communication.

## Annotated Bibliography

Bachman, JeraldG, PatrickM O'Malley, Peter Freedman-Doan, KaliH Trzesniewski, and M. Brent Donnellan. "Adolescent Self-esteem: Differences by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age." *Self and Identity*, 10.4 (2011): 445-473.

This gives an overview of difference in self-esteem among adolescents in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and age. It helps me understand the fundamental difference in self-esteem of difference race, gender, and age. It contributed to the section of "Age and Gender Difference in Self-esteem."

Bleidorn, Wiebke, Ruben Arslan, Jaap J Denissen, Peter Rentfrow, Jochen Gebauer, Jeff Potter, and Samuel Gosling. "Age and Gender Differences in Self-Esteem—A Cross-Cultural Window." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, (2015): .

In addition to the previous journal, this looks at the level of self-esteem in terms of age and gender cross-culturally. It shows a research targeted toward not only Americans but also other countries. I gives data for both American and Japanese self-esteem I was able to get a sense of what the difference in the levels of self-esteem is among both of the races and cultures.

Brown, R.A. "Censure Avoidance and Self-Esteem in Japan." *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 148.6 (2008): 653-666.

This scholar conducts researches on Japanese culture, especially identity and self-esteem. This research for my capstone project is helpful because it explains why Japanese have low self-esteem as a whole. Brown claims that modesty and self-criticalness rooted in Japanese culture play an important role.

Cast, A.D. and Burke, P.J. (2002) 'A theory of self-esteem', *Social Forces*, 80(3), pp. 1041–1068. doi: 10.1353/sof.2002.0003.



This article introduces theories that help explain the concept of self-esteem. One explains identity theory, which shows the important relationship between identity and self-esteem. In the section of "Theoretical Perspective", this research turned out to be very useful since it focuses on the theories around self-esteem and identity. I could connect these concepts and apply it to my section.

Nielson, Hailey E., et al. "Body Image and Westernization Trends among Japanese Adolescents." *Health Educator*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2013, p. 4. Academic OneFile,

My research suggests that low self-esteem among Japanese females is due to the dissatisfaction of their body image. It leads to the assumption that westernization of Japanese beauty is a factor of the dissatisfaction. Western features such as whiteness, light hair, colored eyes, and thinness have affected how Japanese female think of beauty. They constantly attempt to reach to the new beauty standard.

Nishi, Keiko. "The Effects of Acculturation on the Self-esteem and the Self-validation of Japanese Adolescents Who Have Returned from Abroad and Who Have Never Left Japan." , (1994): .Rosenberger, Nancy Ross. *Japanese Sense of Self*. Comp. Takie Sugiyama Lebra. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. "Self in Japanese Culture" pg.105-120.

This is a Ph.D. dissertation on self-esteem among Japanese who have never left Japan and who have studies abroad. There is an important difference in the level of self-esteem among these two groups of Japanese. It supports my claim that the levels of self-esteem can alter in different environments.

Oyserman, Daphna, and George Smith. "Self, Self-Concept, and Identity." *Handbook of Self and Identity*. Ed. Kristen Elmore. 2nd ed. New York: Guilford, 2012. 69-104. Print.

It gives significant basic knowledge of identity and self-esteem. It gives clear definitions of identity and self-esteem which help me to introduce these concepts in the

introduction of my research. It then goes in depth of the concepts and explains why they are important and what type of roles they play.

Phinney, J. S., & Baldelomar, O. A. (2011). "Identity development in multiple cultural contexts." In L. A. Jensen (Ed.), *Bridging cultural and developmental approaches to psychology: New syntheses in theory, research and policy* (pp. 161–186). New York: Oxford University Press.

This work suggests how people shape their identity. The authors explain that social aspects contribute to one's identity development. This research helps me make a claim that Japanese do not develop identity based on diverse races and ethnicities because these are not much diversity in Japan. This reflects the formation of Japanese identity,

Porter, J. and Washington, R.E. (1993) "Minority identity and self-esteem", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19(1), pp. 139–161. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.19.1.139.

This research focuses on identity and self-esteem among the minority groups including Hispanic, Asian, and African Americans in the United States. It demonstrates possible reasons why Hispanics have lower self-esteem than whites and Asians have the lowest self-esteem. It is a significant support for and developed the section of Racial Difference in Self-Esteem."

Sugimura, Kazumi, and Shinichi Mizokami. "Personal Identity in Japan." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 138 (2012): 123-143.

This research examines the relationship between the concept of identity and Japanese culture. Japan did not have the concept in the past. However, it was brought from the Western culture. This article describes why it has been a challenge for Japan to implement "identity" and deepen the meaning among citizens. They explain the Japanese culture of collectivism and other aspect do not relate to "identity."

Stets, Jan E, and Peter J Burke. "Self-Esteem and Identities." *Sociological Perspectives*, 57.4 (2014): 409-433.

It presents an important theory "Self-verification theory," which draws highlights on the relationship between identity and self-esteem. This is crucial information to understand the relationship as well as concepts. It also introduces a equation to explain how self-esteem is produced.

What Most Influences the Self-Identity of Americans? - *Barna group*. (2015). Available at: <https://www.barna.com/research/what-most-influences-the-self-identity-of-americans/> (Accessed: 10 December 2016).

This shows the research targeted toward American on factors that shape their identity. The result is that family is the number one factor that affects one's identity. Family is the first people for children to interact. Therefore, their fundamental values and belief which make up children identity are developed within family.

Vogel, Erin, Jason Rose, Lindsay Roberts, Katheryn Eckles, James C. (editor) Kaufman, and Joanne (editor) Broder Sumerson. "Social Comparison, Social Media, and Self-Esteem." *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 3.4 (2014): 206-222.

This study examines and analyzes how Social Network Service affects people's self-esteem. It pays specific attention to the use of Facebook. The results show that people who use Facebook more often tend to have lower self-esteem with regard to their hypothesis that people compare themselves to people they see on Facebook. It is another important factor that influences self-esteem in my research.

Zeigler-Hill, V. (2013). "The importance of self-esteem". In V. Zeigler-Hill (Ed.), *Self-esteem*. New York: Psychology Press. pp. 1-20.

This scholar/researcher has a lot of contribution to the concepts of identity and self-esteem. This chapter of the book depicts why adolescents, especially females, have

lower self-esteem than males and gives three factors to it. This study and book helps me make my point that the age and gender difference in self-esteem between Japanese and American is similar.

Zeigler-Hill, Virgil, Marion Wallace, and Erin Myers. "Racial Differences in Self-esteem Revisited: The Role of Impression Management in the Black Self-esteem Advantage." *Personality and Individual Differences*, 53.6 (2012): 785-789.

This present reasons why African American score highest on Self-esteem amongst races in the United States. One key point that this work emphasizes is *the black self-esteem advantage*. They have the long history of discrimination, and parents attempt to teach children to have confidence and self-esteem of their identity as African American. I tied this theory in with the research by Bachman et al.

## Final Synthesis Essay

In the course of HCOM475, the class has assessed what affects our identity as humans and the importance of having the strong sense of identity. In class, we investigated identity through movies; for instance, *Color Purple* and *Come to the Paradise*. *Color Purple* addresses African American female's racial identity during the period when women were not valued and respected. I was inspired moved by this movie and its theme because my research focuses on self-esteem and its link with identity. The movie shows a woman who is low self-esteem and lacks self-confidence. She does not embrace her identity as an African American woman because she is constantly told that she is ugly and not treated with respect. I realized by evaluating this movie that accepting and embracing identity would create positive attitudes and become more confident of who they are.

In addition, I was also able to relate to the theme of the movie, *Come to the Paradise*. It is about a Japanese American woman who struggles living in two cultures: Japanese and American. Although I am not a Japanese American, I am Japanese who lives in America and experience both of the culture. I researched history of Japanese Americans and concentration camps during World War II. Therefore, I could understand the character's struggles. The character's identity as Japanese and American causes her struggles and makes it difficult for her to make decisions. I can also relate to her relationship with her white American male. It an internal conflict that a Japanese woman is not good enough for a superior while man.

These two movies and class discussions about identity helped me decide the topic on my research. Moreover, one of the most important things that influenced my decision on my topic is that I had always been low self-esteem and uncertain about my identity. Japan is not built by immigrants and lacks history of immigrants. There is not a variety of race or

ethnicity. Racial identity, indeed, is less likely to be developed. More importantly, schools don't educate students about their identity. The topic of identity is not brought up in family conversations. My family or schools never taught me about identity; I never thought about it. After I came to the United States, I found that "identity" is in a lot of conversations, lectures, and class discussions. I was not familiar with the word at the time so looked it up on the dictionary. The translation in Japanese was vague and never made sense to me. I started understanding the concept as I learned and practiced it. Other Japanese students who study in the United States have or had the similar experience as me. In addition, I realized Japanese students including myself tend to have such low self-esteem. They tend to compare themselves with Americans and disvalue themselves. I then became curious why and possible reasons. The theme of the capstone class is search for identity, so I thought it would be my perfect opportunity to research answers to these questions.

Having a professor who originally from China and myself being an international student, Professor Wang gave us many opportunities to discuss variety of concepts and topics related to multi and cross-culturalism. Since I was the only international student and only the Asian female in class, I shared different perspectives about topics. For example, the class theme is search for identity, I pointed out that unlike the United States, people do not really talk about identity in Japan. I shared my view of identity as a Japanese international student.

Discussions in class were mostly done as a whole class. Therefore, sometimes students talked over others, and many students talked all at once. It led to a mass discussion. We could not often hear what everyone was saying. I demonstrated that if I wanted to say or ask something, I would raise my hand and wait until a person was finished talking. In addition, as a capstone representative, I was responsible for leading a discussion

on Capstone Festival and other class discussions with another representative. I usually tend to be shy and remain silent; however, I was able to speak up in front of the class to keep the discussion going. I worked with another representative to lead the discussion and contributed to the meetings.

In terms of my capstone project, I paid attention to identity and self-esteem performed among Japanese and Americans. I'm privileged to study and experience culture in the U.S. for four and half years. I have looked at identity and self-esteem from both sides. Identity is what shapes who we are. I may sound simple. However, it is a very complicated concept for Japanese. Through this project I demonstrated how the concept of identity is understood in both culture. In class, we discovered identity across races in the U.S. However, we did not cover how it is perceived in different countries/cultures. Therefore, I was able to deepen and expand the knowledge of identity.

My research was conducted at the college level; all of my sources are primary and credible scholarly article, journals, and books to support my argument. I carefully cited all of sources I used in my research including in-texts and in the annotated bibliography. In addition, I created a survey and had students complete for my research to examine the topic on my own instead of collecting all of data from someone else's researches. At first, I intended to analyze three countries: Japan, America, and one from South America or Europe. It would have been a broad topic for capstone and not strong. I think choosing my home country and country where I have studied was a good idea because I physically experienced both culture so was able to relate to both cultures and have more specific focus.

Overall, I was passionate about self-esteem and always wanted to do a research on it. I am glad that the class theme was identity so was able to conduct this research as my

last project at CSUMB. The capstone class not only prepared me to write an undergraduate thesis but also added more knowledge to me.