

ABSTRACT

The general framework of social-psychological process for Chinese life satisfaction proposed by this investigation predicted that individual and collective self-esteems would directly influence on life satisfaction; these two self-esteems would come from self-construal, which reflected people's social or individual orientation; in turn, self-construal would come from Chinese traditionality and modernity. To test the above predictions, 1347 Mainland Chinese across three generations were invited to participate in the present investigation. Eight questionnaires were used to collect information on life satisfaction, self-esteem, self-construal, and Chinese traditionality/modernity. Hierarchical regression, dominance analysis and structural equation modeling were conducted to test the proposed framework step by step.

The results indicated that collective self-esteem contributed to predict life satisfaction beyond the demographic predictors, social support, personality traits and individual self-esteem. Among two self-esteems and the Big Five personality traits, collective self-esteem was the second most powerful predictor of life satisfaction, suggesting that it might be important in helping people cope with threat, reduce uncertainty and achieve high level of subjective well-being.

The results also indicated that social orientation represented by interdependent self-construal influenced life satisfaction through mediation of collective self-esteem whereas individual orientation represented by independent self-construal influenced life satisfaction through mediation of individual self-esteem.

The results further showed that Chinese traditionality as a whole did not

effectively predict social orientation represented by interdependent self, and Chinese modernity as a whole did not effectively predict individual orientation represented by independent self. Only some Chinese traditionality dimensions such as submission to authority/ancestral worship, filial piety and conservation/endurance seemed to predict social orientation and some Chinese modernity dimensions such as egalitarianism/open-mindedness, social isolation/self-reliance and optimism/assertiveness seemed to predict individual orientation in an expected way. Both people with stronger social orientation and people with stronger individual orientation endorsed some Chinese modernity values such as sex equality.

The interrelationship among Chinese traditionality/modernity, self-construal, self-esteem and life satisfaction only got partial support from the results. Directions for future research on the interrelationship were discussed.