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# The Impact of Culture on Adaptive Versus Maladaptive Self-Reflection

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## Abstract

Although recent findings indicate that people can reflect either adaptively or maladaptively over negative experiences, extant research has not examined how culture influences this process. We compared the self-reflective practices of Russians (members of an interdependent culture characterized by a tendency to brood) and Americans (members of an independent culture in which self-reflection has been studied extensively). We predicted that self-reflection would be associated with less-detrimental outcomes among Russians because they self-distance more when analyzing their feelings than Americans do. Findings from two studies supported these predictions. In Study 1, self-reflection was associated with fewer depressive symptoms among Russians than among Americans. In Study 2, Russians displayed less distress and a more adaptive pattern of construals than Americans after reflecting over a recent negative event. In addition, they self-distanced more than Americans while analyzing their feelings, and self-distancing mediated the cultural differences in self-reflection. These findings demonstrate how culture shapes the way people reflect over negative experiences.

## Keywords

culture, psychological distance, rumination, emotion regulation

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That dark Russian spirit, brooding and complicated. . . . Religion, society and morality are all tied up in the distrust of any amount of happiness. Even the children are worried all the time. (Wagman, 2008)

Russians are often characterized as brooders, a group of people who immerse themselves in negative feelings in ways that perpetuate distress (Berdyayev, 1946/1947; Mead, 1951). One needs look no further than the local Russian newspaper or library to find evidence supporting this belief—brooding and emotional suffering are common themes in Russian discourse (Cote, 1998; Ries, 1997). These observations, coupled with ethnographic evidence indicating that Russians focus more on unpleasant memories and feelings than Westerners do (Inkeles & Bauer, 1959), have led some researchers to go so far as to describe Russia as a “clinically masochistic” culture (Rancour-Laferrere, 1995).

Despite the prevalence of these beliefs about Russian culture, to our knowledge no psychological research has examined whether they are true. This is noteworthy because some anthropologists and psycholinguists have suggested that focusing on negative feelings may have different implications for Russians than for Westerners. For example, Russians

ascribe more positive value to focusing on negative feelings than Westerners do (Pavlenko, 2002; Wierzbicka, 2003). In a similar vein, Russian clinicians have suggested that analyzing negative feelings facilitates adaptive coping among Russians (Cote, 1998).

Putting these findings together raises the following question: Do attempts to reflect over and understand negative feelings lead to the same types of emotional outcomes in Russians as in Westerners? The main goal of the research reported in this article was to address this issue. Motivated by recent findings indicating that it is possible for people to reflect on negative feelings either adaptively or maladaptively (e.g., Kross, Ayduk, & Mischel, 2005; Segerstrom, Stanton, Alden, & Shortridge, 2003; Trapnell & Campbell, 1999; Treynor, Gonzalez, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003), we examined the extent to which Russians and Westerners differ in the type of self-reflection

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they chronically engage in (Study 1), the psychological mechanisms mediating these differences (Study 2), and the implications of these differences for emotional well-being (Studies 1 and 2).

### The Role of Self-Distancing in Distinguishing Adaptive Versus Maladaptive Self-Reflection

Over the past two decades, a large body of research has examined the mental and physical health implications of individuals' attempts to understand negative feelings. The findings from this literature indicate that focusing on negative feelings facilitates coping under a variety of circumstances (e.g., Austenfeld & Stanton, 2004; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999). For example, Pennebaker and his colleagues have shown that expressive writing after distressing events has beneficial health consequences. An equally compelling body of research also indicates, however, that attempts to understand negative feelings often backfire, leading people to brood over their feelings in ways that exacerbate distress (for reviews, see Mor & Winquist, 2002; Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008).

In an attempt to clarify these divergent findings, Kross, Ayduk, and Mischel (2005) proposed that a critical factor determining whether attempts to adaptively reflect over negative experiences succeed or fail is the *type of self-perspective* people adopt when analyzing their negative feelings. Drawing from research on mood and memory (Nigro & Neisser, 1983; Robinson & Swanson, 1993) and on the role of psychological distance in self-control (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989; Trope & Liberman, 2003), Kross et al. hypothesized that people's attempts to analyze negative experiences often fail because people focus on their feelings from a self-immersed perspective (visualizing past experiences through their own eyes) rather than a self-distanced perspective (visualizing past experiences from an observer's perspective). A series of studies testing this hypothesis demonstrated that cuing people to analyze negative experiences from a self-distanced perspective (rather than a self-immersed perspective) led them to focus less on *recounting* the emotionally arousing details of their experiences and more on *reconstructing* them in ways that promote insight and closure. This shift in the content of people's thoughts—less recounting and more reconstructing—in turn led them to display less negative affect in the short term (Ayduk & Kross, 2008; Kross & Ayduk, 2008; Kross et al., 2005; also see Gruber, Harvey, & Johnson, 2009). Over time, self-distancing has been shown to buffer individuals against recurring negative thoughts, future negative affect, and delayed cardiovascular reactivity (Ayduk & Kross, 2008; Kross & Ayduk, 2008). Recent findings indicate that people who self-distance spontaneously while analyzing negative feelings display the same profile of adaptive short-term and long-term responses as people who are induced to adopt a

self-distancing perspective through an experimental manipulation (Ayduk & Kross, 2010).

### Cultural Differences in Perspective Taking on the Self

Coexisting with these findings is a large body of research concerning how culture influences people's tendency to adopt different types of self-perspectives when thinking about autobiographical experiences (e.g., Cohen, Hoshino-Browne, & Leung, 2007). A number of studies indicate that members of socially interdependent cultural groups (e.g., East Asians and Asian Americans) have a greater tendency to self-distance, or to adopt an "outsider" perspective, when thinking about interpersonal experiences compared with members of socially independent cultures (e.g., European Americans), who have a tendency to self-immure, or to adopt an "insider" perspective<sup>1</sup> (e.g., Cohen et al., 2007; Wu & Keysar, 2008). Theoretically, members of interdependent cultures have a higher propensity to adopt a self-distanced perspective because it enhances their sensitivity to contextual information, helping them fulfill their superordinate goal of maintaining interpersonal harmony. Members of independent cultures are more likely to adopt a self-immersed perspective because it fosters individualism and personal agency, which are more important in these cultures (Cohen et al., 2007).

Although no research has examined the tendency of Russians to self-distance, a number of studies indicate that Russians are more interdependent than Westerners: They hold less individualistic values, identify themselves more in terms of relational self-descriptions, and are characterized by more interdependent self-construals (e.g., Realo & Allik, 1999; for a review, see Varnum, Grossmann, Kitayama, & Nisbett, 2010). These findings suggest that Russians may be more likely than Westerners to self-distance when reflecting over negative experiences. Thus, although it may be the case that Russians reflect over their negative feelings more than Westerners do, the type of self-reflection they engage in and its implications for well-being may be fundamentally different.

### Overview of the Current Research

Integrating research on self-distancing and emotional analysis among Westerners with cultural research on perspective taking, we examined whether the self-reflective practices of Russians and Westerners are differentially associated with distress (Studies 1 and 2) and what the psychological mechanisms mediating these cultural differences might be (Study 2). We hypothesized that Russians would indicate a greater tendency to reflect over negative feelings than Westerners would, but that the emotional consequences of this behavior would be different for the two cultures. Specifically, we predicted that reflecting over negative feelings would be associated with less-detrimental outcomes in

Russians than in Westerners because Russians self-distance more when analyzing their feelings.

## Study 1

In Study 1, we investigated whether Russians and Americans differ in their tendency to reflect over negative experiences and how self-reflection relates to depressive symptoms in these cultures. We examined cultural differences in self-reflection using two methods. In order to replicate previous research indicating that people's chronic tendencies to reflect over negative feelings correlate positively with depressive symptoms among Westerners (e.g., Mor & Winquist, 2002; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008), we administered two frequently used trait measures of self-reflection that have consistently demonstrated this relationship in prior research. However, because no research that we are aware of has validated these measures in Russia, we were concerned that Russians and Americans might be differentially susceptible to various biases when completing them (e.g., extreme responses vs. acquiescence bias—Cohen, 2007; consistency between self-reported attitudes and corresponding behavior—Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997). Cultural and social psychological research indicates that including context-based information in questionnaires reduces these biases (Peng et al., 1997; Tesser & Shaffer, 1990). Therefore, we also administered a novel vignette task that required participants to choose which among a series of context-based descriptions of individuals engaging in self-reflective versus non-self-reflective behavior resembled them best.

We predicted that Russians would score higher than Americans on the trait measures of maladaptive self-reflection and would also identify more with self-reflective prototypes (compared with non-self-reflective prototypes). However, whereas we expected to observe a strong positive association between self-reflection and depressive symptoms among Americans, we expected the strength of this relationship to be attenuated among Russians.

## Method

**Participants.** Eighty-five students from the University of Michigan (45 females and 40 males; mean age = 18.8 years,  $SD = 0.86$  years; 98% Caucasians, 2% other ethnicities) and 83 Moscow State Regional University students (56 females and 27 males; mean age = 18.0 years,  $SD = 1.66$  years; 95% Russian, 5% other ethnicities) participated for course credit.

**Procedure and materials.** A team of American and Russian psychologists at the University of Michigan and the Moscow State University developed English and Russian versions of the behavioral vignettes. All other materials were back-translated from English into Russian (Brislin, 1980). Participants completed the study on their own, guided by written instructions, which informed them that the study they were

about to participate in was an investigation of personality differences in person perception and emotional experience.

Participants read through four vignettes, each of which described a protagonist who either does or does not analyze her feelings when she is upset (see Appendix S1 in the Supplemental Material available online). Two of these vignettes described a person who engages in these behaviors in social contexts, and the other two referred to analyzing feelings in nonsocial contexts. The order of the vignettes was counterbalanced across participants. We included both social and nonsocial versions of these vignettes because prior research indicates that social context differentially influences the tendencies of members of independent versus interdependent cultures to engage in emotion regulation (e.g., Matsumoto, Takeuchi, Andayani, Kouznetsova, & Krupp, 1998). After reading the vignettes, participants were asked to choose the profile that most closely resembled their own coping tendencies.

Participants next completed the Brooding subscale of the Ruminative Response Scale (Treynor et al., 2003; Russians:  $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ,  $\alpha = .61$ ; Americans:  $M = 2.19$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ,  $\alpha = .66$ ) and the Rumination subscale of the Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999; Russians:  $M = 4.69$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ,  $\alpha = .80$ ; Americans:  $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ,  $\alpha = .89$ ). Scores on these scales were significantly correlated (Russians:  $r = .40$ ; Americans:  $r = .43$ ), so we collapsed them into a single self-reflection index after scores on each scale were standardized. Although these scales are conceptualized as measuring maladaptive forms of self-reflection among Westerners, we refer to them here simply as *trait self-reflection scales* under the premise that high scores on these measures may not similarly reflect negative outcomes among non-Westerners.

Finally, participants completed the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, Steer, Ball, & Ranieri, 1996) or the Russian version of the same instrument (Bobak et al., 2006), our measure of current levels of depressive symptoms. Scores on this scale were summed to form a single index of depressive symptoms (Russians:  $M = 7.42$ ,  $SD = 4.88$ ,  $\alpha = .83$ ; Americans:  $M = 10.71$ ,  $SD = 5.97$ ,  $\alpha = .82$ ).

## Results

The two cultural groups were matched on gender,  $\chi^2(1, N = 168) = 0.95$ , n.s. Preliminary analyses indicated that the Americans were slightly older than the Russians,  $t(122) = 3.91$ ,  $p < .001$ . In addition, females were marginally more likely to identify themselves with one of the self-reflective prototypes (vs. the non-self-reflective prototypes) than were males,  $\chi^2(1, N = 168) = 2.66$ ,  $p \leq .1$ , and scored significantly higher on the trait self-reflection index than males,  $F(1, 165) = 4.54$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . However, neither age nor gender interacted with any of the predictor variables ( $F_s < 1$ ), and controlling for age and gender did not influence any of the results. Thus, these two variables are not discussed further.

**Table 1.** Frequency (*N*) of Self-Identification With the Self-Reflective and Non-Self-Reflective Behavioral Vignettes in Study 1

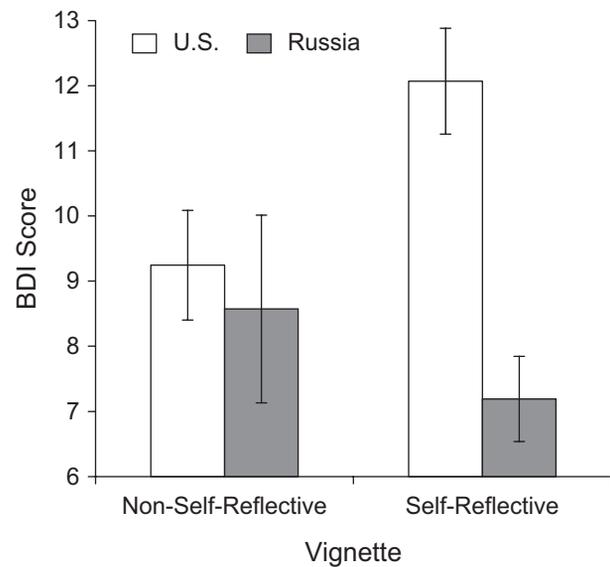
Vignette type	Russia	United States
Self-reflective	68	44
Non-self-reflective	15	41

The results of a log-linear analysis examining the influence of culture (Russia vs. the United States) and context (social vs. nonsocial) on vignette choice (self-reflective vs. non-self-reflective) revealed a significant effect of culture,  $\chi^2(1, N = 168) = 6.75, p = .01$ , but no effect of context,  $\chi^2(1, N = 168) = 0.21, n.s.$ , and no Culture  $\times$  Context interaction,  $\chi^2(1, N = 168) = 2.05, n.s.$  As Table 1 illustrates, the Russians were significantly more likely to identify themselves with one of the self-reflective prototypes (vs. the non-self-reflective prototypes) than were the Americans. Similarly, the results of a general linear model indicated that Russians scored significantly higher on trait self-reflection ( $M = 0.14, SD = 0.78$ ) than Americans did<sup>2</sup> ( $M = -0.13, SD = 0.89$ ),  $F(1, 166) = 4.35, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .03$ .

We next examined how participants' scores on each self-reflection measure covaried with depressive symptomatology. A 2 (vignette choice: self-reflective vs. non-self-reflective)  $\times$  2 (context: social vs. nonsocial)  $\times$  2 (culture: Russia vs. the United States) general linear model with BDI scores as the dependent variable revealed a significant Vignette Choice  $\times$  Culture interaction,  $F(1, 162) = 4.79, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , but no other significant interactions (all  $F_s < 1$ ). As Figure 1 illustrates, whereas Russians and Americans who identified themselves as non-self-reflective did not display significantly different levels of depressive symptoms,  $F(1, 53) = 0.16, n.s.$ , Russians who identified themselves as self-reflective displayed significantly lower levels of depressive symptoms compared with Americans who identified themselves as self-reflective,  $F(1, 110) = 22.31, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$ . Similarly, we observed a marginally significant Culture  $\times$  Trait Self-Reflection interaction,  $F(1, 163) = 2.76, p = .09, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ; the strength of the positive relationship between trait self-reflection and depressive symptoms was stronger among Americans ( $r = .49, p < .001$ ) than among Russians ( $r = .27, p < .05$ ).

## Study 2

The findings from Study 1 provide initial evidence supporting the hypothesis that culture moderates the association between self-reflection and distress. However, Study 1 relied on trait measures to establish these relationships. Consequently, one question that emerges from these results is whether Russians experience less distress than Americans when they engage in the process of reflecting over their negative feelings. The first goal of Study 2 was to answer this question.

**Fig. 1.** Mean Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) score as a function of culture and vignette choice in Study 1. Error bars represent  $\pm 1$  SEM.

Another question raised by the findings of Study 1 concerns the psychological mechanisms that mediate cultural differences in the relationship between self-reflection and distress. Our integration of research on the processes distinguishing adaptive and maladaptive self-reflection among Westerners with cultural research on perspective taking suggests that Russians should be more likely than Americans to adopt a self-distanced perspective when analyzing negative experiences. This should lead Russians to construe their past experience more adaptively (i.e., to recount the specifics of what happened during an event less, reconstrue the experience more, and attribute blame less) and to display lower levels of negative affect. The second goal of this study was to test this hypothesis.

## Method

**Participants.** Eighty-six University of Michigan and Columbia University students (46 female and 40 male; mean age = 20.63 years,  $SD = 3.97$  years; 68.6% Caucasians, 12.8% African Americans, 18.6% other ethnicities) participated in the study for credit (University of Michigan) or in return for \$10 (Columbia University). Seventy-six Tver State University and Russian State University of Humanities students (46 females and 30 males; mean age = 19.64 years,  $SD = 2.44$  years; 98.7% Russians, 1.3% Azeris) participated in the study for credit.

**Procedure and materials.** All materials were back-translated from English into Russian. Participants completed the study on their own, guided by written instructions, which informed them that this study was an investigation of social and emotional factors influencing people's lives. They were then asked

to recall and analyze their “deepest thoughts and feelings” surrounding a recent anger-related interpersonal experience (Kross et al., 2005).

Following prior research methods (Ayduk & Kross, 2010), we asked participants to indicate the extent to which they adopted a self-immersed perspective (1 = *saw the event replay through your own eyes as if you were right there*) versus a self-distanced perspective (7 = *watched the event unfold as an observer, in which you could see yourself from afar*) while they analyzed their feelings during the study. Subsequently, participants indicated the extent to which (a) they currently felt upset (e.g., rejected, angry, hurt, sad), (b) they relived the emotions they originally felt during the conflict when they were asked to think about it, and (c) their emotions and physical reactions to the conflict were still intense as they thought about the event (on a scale from 1, *strongly disagree*, to 7, *strongly agree*). These ratings were averaged to create a distress index (Russians:  $\alpha = .85$ , Americans:  $\alpha = .85$ ).

The tendency to recount the emotionally arousing details of past experiences has been linked with maladaptive styles of self-reflection in previous research, whereas the tendency to reconstrue events in ways that promote insight and closure has been linked with adaptive self-reflection (Ayduk & Kross, 2010; Kross & Ayduk, 2008; Kross et al., 2005). We examined participants' levels on both of these dimensions to further examine whether and how culture influences self-reflection. As in Ayduk and Kross (2010), we assessed recounting by examining participants' agreement (on a scale from 1, *strongly disagree*, to 7, *strongly agree*) with the statement “My thoughts focused on the specific chain of events—sequence of events, what happened, what was said and done—as I thought about the experience in this study.” Reconstruing was assessed with the following three items, which used the same rating scale: “As I thought about my experience during the study, I had a realization that caused me to think differently about the experience,” “As I thought about my experience during the study, I had a realization that led me to experience a sense of closure,” and “Thinking about my experience during the experiment led me to have a clearer and more coherent understanding of this experience” (Russians:  $\alpha = .72$ ; Americans:  $\alpha = .75$ ).

Appraisal theories of emotion indicate that other-blame is a proximal predictor of anger (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). We therefore asked participants to indicate their agreement with

**Table 2.** Means for the Variables in Study 2

Variable	Russians	Americans
Self-distancing	3.73 (1.86)	2.97 (1.84)
Emotional distress	3.68 (1.74)	4.53 (1.45)
Recounting	4.12 (1.95)	4.72 (1.71)
Reconstruing	3.22 (1.45)	2.71 (1.20)
Blame	3.38 (2.16)	4.65 (1.63)

Note: For each variable, higher numbers reflect higher levels. Standard deviations are provided in parentheses.

the following statement: “As I think about the event now, I see the other person as being primarily at fault” (on a scale from 1, *not at all*, to 7, *very much*).

## Results

Preliminary analyses indicated that the two cultural groups were matched on gender,  $\chi^2(1, N = 162) = 0.81$ , n.s., and age,  $t(160) = 1.88$ , n.s. In addition, gender was significantly related to distress,  $F(1, 161) = 21.71$ ,  $p \leq .005$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ , and recounting,  $F(1, 161) = 27.60$ ,  $p < .005$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ , with females displaying higher scores on these variables than males. However, gender did not interact with any of the predictor variables ( $F_s < 1$ ) and controlling for gender did not influence the results. Therefore, we do not discuss gender or age further.

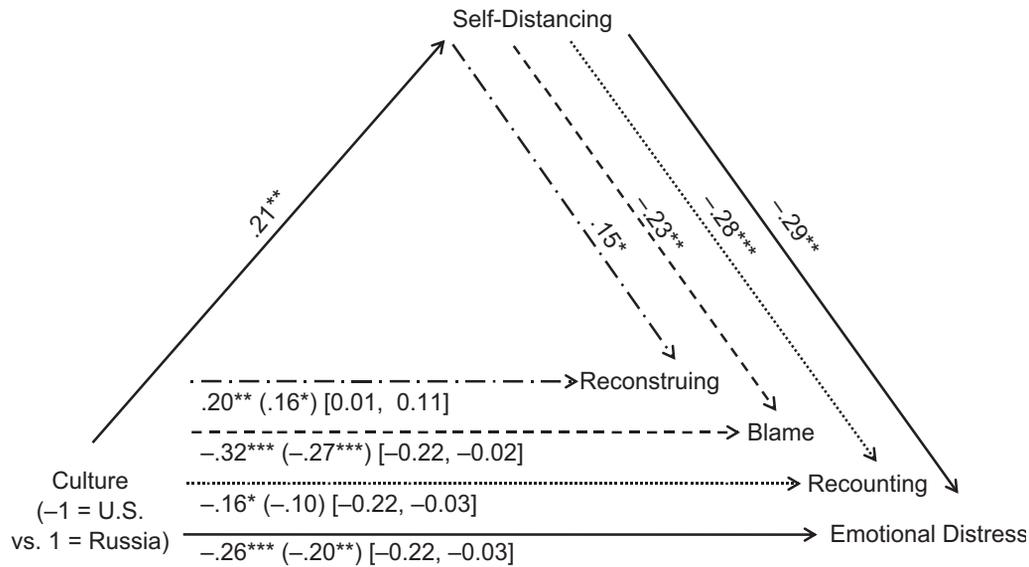
We first examined the relationships among culture, self-distancing, blame, and distress (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics, Table 3 for zero-order correlations, and Table S1 in the Supplemental Material for additional analyses). The relationships among these variables were all significant and in the predicted direction (all  $|r|s > .16$ ,  $ps < .05$ ). As Table 3 indicates, Russians reported self-distancing while analyzing their feelings significantly more than Americans did ( $r = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ). They also blamed the other person involved in their recalled experience less ( $r = -.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and reported feeling less distress after analyzing their feelings ( $r = -.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Culture did not interact with self-distancing to moderate these associations ( $ps > .66$ ).

We next examined whether culture and self-distancing were significantly associated with participants' tendencies to recount versus reconstrue their experiences (see Tables 2 and

**Table 3.** Zero-Order Correlations in Study 2

Variable	Culture	Self-distancing	Distress	Recounting	Reconstruing	Blame
Culture (−1 = United States; 1 = Russia)	—	.20**	−.26***	−.16*	.19*	−.32***
Self-distancing		—	−.33***	−.29***	.19*	−.29***
Emotional distress			—	.37***	.03	.48***
Recounting				—	.05	.33***
Reconstruing					—	−.03
Blame						—

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .



**Fig. 2.** Results of a path analysis examining the role of self-distancing in mediating the effect of culture on reconstructing, blame, recounting, and emotional distress in Study 2. Standardized coefficients (betas) are shown. The values in parentheses show the relationship between culture and the dependent variables after controlling for self-distancing. Statistical significance is indicated by asterisks (\* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ). The values in square brackets are 95% confidence intervals from a bootstrap test; the mediation is significant if the confidence interval does not include zero.

3 for descriptive statistics and correlations). As in previous research, self-distancing was negatively associated with recounting ( $r = -.29, p < .001$ ) and positively associated with reconstructing ( $r = .19, p < .05$ ). In addition, culture was significantly associated with these thought-content variables: Russians engaged in less recounting ( $r = -.16, p < .05$ ) and more reconstructing ( $r = .19, p < .05$ ) than Americans did. Again, culture did not interact with self-distancing to moderate these associations ( $ps > .62$ ).

We subsequently examined whether self-distancing mediates the relationship between culture and each of the outcome variables assessed in this study by performing a series of multiple regression analyses. As Figure 2 illustrates, in each case, the conditions for establishing mediation, according to Shrout and Bolger (2002), were met. Specifically, culture was related to self-distancing, and both of these variables were related to each outcome variable (i.e., blame, recounting, reconstructing, and distress). The results of a bootstrapping test, the technique of choice for assessing mediation in small samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002), indicated that controlling for self-distancing significantly attenuated the relationship between culture and the outcome variables<sup>3</sup> (see Fig. 2 for 95% confidence intervals generated by the bootstrapping test for each mediation analysis). These findings demonstrate that self-distancing partially mediated the association between culture and the outcome variables.

## Summary

Consistent with our findings in Study 1, these results demonstrate that reflecting over negative feelings is associated with less-detrimental consequences among Russians than among

Americans. The results from Study 2 extend our findings in two ways. First, they demonstrate that this pattern is evident not only when self-reflection is assessed using trait measures, but also when individuals engage in the process of analyzing their feelings. Second, they highlight that a specific psychological mechanism—self-distancing—partially mediates these cultural differences.

## Discussion

In their meta-analysis of research on self-focused attention and negative affect, Mor and Winquist (2002) found that the process of reflecting over the causes and consequences of negative mood was more strongly and consistently related to negative affect than was any other type of self-focused attention. However, these authors concluded with the following caveat: “The vast majority of the studies included in this meta-analysis were conducted in the United States. Only a handful of studies [have been performed] in non-Western societies . . . in these cultures, the process of self-focused attention may relate differently to affective experiences” (p. 655).

The two studies reported here provide direct evidence to support the latter claim. Using both trait (Study 1) and process (Study 2) approaches to examine self-reflection, we found that the relationship between self-reflection and negative outcomes was attenuated among Russians compared with Americans. In addition, our results highlighted a psychological mechanism that explains these cultural differences: Russians self-distance more when analyzing their feelings than Americans do. These findings add to a growing body of research demonstrating that it is possible for people to reflect either adaptively or maladaptively over negative experiences

(Gruber et al., 2009; Kross et al., 2005; Segerstrom et al., 2003; Trapnell & Campbell, 1999; Treynor et al., 2003). In addition, they extend previous findings cross-culturally by highlighting the role that self-distancing plays in determining which type of self-reflection—the adaptive or maladaptive one—different cultures engage in.

Our findings have implications for conceptualizing the relationship between self-reflection and depression in non-Western cultures. Extensive research with members of Western cultures has highlighted the role that self-reflection plays in triggering and maintaining distress and depression (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008). The present findings suggest that self-reflection, at least in the way that it is typically assessed, may not be indicative of similar negative outcomes among Russians and members of other non-Western cultures. In this vein, it is noteworthy that two recent cross-cultural studies also revealed an attenuated relationship between self-reflection measures and negative affect in non-Western cultures compared with Western cultures (China: Bonanno, Papa, Lalande, Zhang, & Noll, 2005; Ghana: Eshun, Chang, & Owusu, 1998). Because those studies did not examine the role that self-distancing plays in mediating these cultural effects, it is not possible to determine the extent to which this process explains how culture influences the relationship between self-reflection and negative affect in cultures beyond the ones we studied. Addressing this issue in the future will be important for establishing the generalizability of the current findings.

Several caveats are in order. First, we assessed self-distancing using a single item. Researchers should consider using multi-item measures in future studies to reduce measurement error. Second, Study 2 provides cross-sectional, correlational data, which limit causal inferences. Longitudinal and experimental research is needed to more closely examine the causal nature of the relationships suggested by the mediation analyses in Study 2. Finally, as research in this area continues, it will be important to examine how the present findings, which focus on anger experiences, generalize to other types of negative experiences (e.g., anxiety- and depression-eliciting events) and play out across different levels of analysis (e.g., behavioral, implicit, physiological). Addressing these issues in the future will be important for fully explicating how culture influences the process of reflecting over negative experiences.

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### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship or the publication of this article.

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### Supplemental Material

Additional supporting information may be found at <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/by/supplemental-data>

### Notes

1. Various terms have been used to refer to the distinction that we refer to as the distinction between a self-distanced perspective and a self-immersed perspective. These alternative terminologies include “outsider versus insider,” “third-person versus first-person,” “observer versus field,” and “I versus me.”
2. Participants who identified themselves with one of the self-reflective prototypes displayed significantly higher trait self-reflection scores ( $M = 0.21$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ) than participants who identified themselves with one of the non-self-reflective prototypes ( $M = -0.42$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ),  $F(1, 166) = 23.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .13$ .
3. See Supplemental Results and Figures S1 through S3 in the Supplemental Material for additional structural equation modeling analyses that explored the relationships among the Study 2 variables.

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