

*Title:* **SELF-REGARD IN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE U.S.**

**AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE RESEARCH.**

---

*Author:* Antonie Dvorakova

*Department and affiliation:* Center for Indigenous Nations Studies at the University of Kansas

*Mailing addresses, e-mails, phone and fax numbers:*

**Work Address:**

Center for Indigenous Nations Studies

1410 Jayhawk Blvd., 105 Lippincott Hall

University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045

Phone: (785) 864 2660

Fax: (785) 864 0370

E-mail: [advorak@ku.edu](mailto:advorak@ku.edu)

**Home Address:**

1320 Kentucky St. #3

Lawrence, KS 66044

Phone: (785) 856 1351

Fax: (775) 239 8693

E-mail: [antoniedvorak@fulbrihtweb.org](mailto:antoniedvorak@fulbrihtweb.org)

# Abstract

---

This research compares the cultural meanings that shape the construction and experience of self-regard in Indigenous Peoples of the U.S., with those that prevail in mainstream psychological science. An exploratory qualitative study suggests that, for Indigenous college students, the concept of self is made meaningful primarily in reference to relationships with others and in duties to these others. This emphasis contrasts with the emphasis on independent self striving for self-enhancement typically reported among students in mainstream American cultural settings. Associated with this difference in conception of self are differences in conception of self-regard. The Indigenous conception that emerges from this study treats self-regard as general feelings of self-worthiness as opposed to the concept of self-esteem that needs to be high and thus self-enhanced. Adequate self-regard is not a goal to be reached because of its power to bring health, happiness, or even better society with itself. Instead it is a by-product of being a good member of one's culture, of living a good life according to one's ways. In the process of one's self-regard formation, the individual reflects the evaluations that their community expresses about their deeds instead of using techniques for self-esteem enhancement or experiencing praise regardless of how well they do. A second study compares Indigenous conceptions of self-regard as revealed in qualitative questionnaire data with the results of a standard instrument for measuring state self-esteem (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). Results of the study suggest that standardized methods may be inadequate for capturing Indigenous conceptions of self-regard. Discussion of results focuses on implications for culturally responsive research with Indigenous Peoples and for the relationship between general psychological theory and cultural diversity in psychological functioning.