Self as Cultural Product: An Examination of East Asian and North American Selves

Steven J. Heine
University of British Columbia

ABSTRACT In the past decade a wealth of research has been conducted on the cultural foundation of the self-concept, particularly with respect to East Asian and North American selves. The present paper discusses how the self differs across these two cultural contexts, particularly with respect to an emphasis on consistency versus flexibility, an intraindividual versus an extraindividual focus, the malleability of the self versus world, the relation of self to others, and self-enhancing versus self-critical motivations. These differences reveal the manifold ways that culture shapes the self.

The study of the self has been an irresistible preoccupation of personality and social psychologists. Questions such as "How do people view themselves?" "How do people evaluate themselves?" and "How do people explain their behavior?" have traditionally been significant concerns. About a decade ago, when Triandis (1989) and Markus and Kitayama (1991) called the attention of personality and social psychologists to the cultural variation between East Asian and North American views of self, renewed interest emerged for the concern: "How does the self come to be?" A growing body of theory and research, particularly with respect to comparisons of East Asians and North Americans, has

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lent support to the idea that in many respects the self is a cultural construction. This paper seeks to further articulate the nature of East Asian and North American varieties of self by sampling the fruits of a decade of research on this topic.

Self at the Intersection of Individual and Culture

Cultural psychology shares and challenges some implicit assumptions regarding the person embraced by more mainstream personality psychology. Similar to mainstream personality psychology, cultural psychology views the person as containing a set of biological potentials interacting within particular situational contexts that constrain and afford the expression of various constellations of traits and patterns of behavior. Unlike much of personality psychology, however, cultural psychology focuses on the constraints and affordances inherent in the cultural environment that give shape to those biological potentials.

Cultural psychologists focus on one aspect of humans that is unique among all species: the extent of our dependence on culture. Relative to other species, the requisite base of instinctual knowledge that humans possess is a small proportion of our repertoire of actions and behaviors. Geertz (1973) argues that we are born into an "information gap" —the large discrepancy between the amount of information that is hardwired into us at birth and the amount that we need to survive. We have evolved to be dependent on cultural systems of meaning to fill this gap. As we develop, we are highly receptive to seizing and accommodating to the cultural meanings that envelop us (Shweder, 1990). Importantly, these are not generic sets of cultural meanings that we respond to, but highly specific forms of them. The *universal mind* that is made up of our common biological ancestry emerges in *multiple mentalities* in its particular cultural manifestations (Shweder et al., 1998).

Cultural psychology is the study of the process by which biological entities become meaningful ones (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). Its key assumption is that the self is not so inflexibly hardwired into the cortex that it appears in invariant forms across cultural contexts. Rather, the self is seen to arise from biological potentials becoming attuned to the particular cultural meaning system within which the individual develops. Likewise, cultures come to be through the processes by which humans interact with and seize meanings and resources from them. In this way, culture and self can be said to be mutually constituted (Shweder, 1990).

This view of the mutual constitution of self and culture is not shared by all disciplines that study culture and psychology. For example, "cross-cultural psychology" carries the assumption that culture exists as largely separate from the individual, and is likened to an independent variable impacting on the dependent variable of personality (e.g., Church & Lonner, 1998; Greenfield, 1997). A frequent goal of cross-cultural psychology is to reveal the "universal psychology" that is believed to exist beneath our motley cultural dressings (e.g., Lonner, 1980; Triandis, 1996). Culture is seen as a force separate from the individual that influences and distorts the universal personality lying below.

A number of research paradigms of cross-cultural psychology owe much of their intellectual heritage to personality psychology. This ancestry is especially evident in some of the methodologies that have become de rigueur in the field. Culture at the national level is typically treated in similar ways as personality is at the individual level. A prototypical approach of cross-cultural psychology is to employ data reduction techniques in an analysis of survey data that has been collected across a broad range of different countries—Hofstede's (1980) study of IBM employees being the most well known example. The paramount goal of this approach is to explain and predict cultural variation by creating a taxonomy of the key cultural syndromes (Triandis, 1996), revealing something akin to the "Big 5" of culture.

Cultural psychology, in contrast, is not in search of a universal human nature, and indeed embraces the assumption that much less of psychology is universal than is typically thought. That human nature is seen as emerging from participation in cultural worlds, and of adapting oneself to the imperatives of cultural directives, means that our nature is ultimately that of a cultural being. Our common evolutionary ancestry certainly dictates that as a species we share some important concerns; however, this does not mean that their development and expression as psychological structures and processes are not affected by culture. Moreover, it seems that some of these concerns, such as reasoning styles (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001) or feelings of positive self-regard (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999), are more amenable to cultural influences than others, such as preferences for symmetry (Langlois & Roggman, 1990), or fears of parental uncertainty (Buss, 1996). In particular, the self-concept is excellent terrain to explore the artifacts of culture.

Cultural psychology does not view culture as a superficial wrapping of the self, or as a framework within which selves interact, but as something that is intrinsic to the self. It assumes that without culture there is no self, only a biological entity deprived of its potential (Geertz, 1973). Individual selves are inextricably grounded in a configuration of consensual understandings and behavioral customs particular to a given cultural and historical context. Hence, understanding the self requires an understanding of the culture that sustains it. Cultural psychologists are thus more likely to prefer methodologies that examine the self in situ and tend to interpret their findings within the context of the culture under study (e.g., Greenfield, 1997).

Features of North American and East Asian Selves

This paper reviews literature conducted in two broad cultural contexts, those from largely European middle-class backgrounds of Canada and the United States, and those with a significant Confucian heritage (specifically, China, Japan, and Korea). For the purpose of brevity, I will refer to these two cultural groups as "North American" and "East Asian" throughout this paper. Clearly, there is much variability among the different cultures encompassed by these labels, and even more variability among individuals living in those cultures. Moreover, the psychological processes, which I describe in this review, certainly exist within all individuals, varying in degree and depending on context. Throughout this paper, I refer to dichotomies of culture and psychological phenomena in order to highlight broad patterns by which we can identify the influence of culture on self.

These two cultural groups have been selected as they are most represented in the literature comparing the self-concept cross-culturally over the past decade, and a number of authors have described them as theoretically distinct (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). There is much evidence to suggest that American culture represents a rather extreme case of individualism. The United States was founded on an ideology that emphasizes the importance of self-determination and individual rights. Lipset (1996) documents the variety of ways that U.S. culture is a clear outlier in terms of cultural and social markers of individualism: for example, his cross-national comparisons reveal that the United States is the only industrialized nation never to have a viable

socialist movement; it has the world's highest productivity per capita, the highest divorce rate, the highest crime rate among industrialized nations, the greatest number of offices that are open for election and the greatest frequency with which these elections are held, the highest rates of litigiousness, and among the highest rates of volunteerism and individual philanthropy. It seems reasonable to conclude that at present individualism exists in no purer form than it does in the United States. The extreme nature of American individualism suggests that a psychology based on late 20th century American research not only stands the risk of developing models that are particular to that culture, but also of developing an understanding of the self that is peculiar in the context of the world's cultures (Geertz, 1975). Canada appears considerably less individualistic than the United States along these dimensions, although a reasonable argument could be made that Canada more closely resembles the United States culturally and psychologically than any other nation.

China, Japan, and Korea, although each culturally distinct from one another in many ways, share a number of cultural elements that provide a theoretically meaningful contrast with North American independent selves. The East Asian self is typically described as being collectivistic or interdependent, reflecting the significant role of relationships with ingroup members in the construction of the self (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). In particular, this interdependence is shaped by their common Confucian heritage. Central among Confucianism is the value placed on the maintenance of interpersonal harmony within one's five cardinal relationships: father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger, emperor-subject, and friend-friend (Su et al., 1999). The roles associated with these relationships each bear specific obligations, and the roles themselves are relatively fixed within each relationship. For harmony to be achieved within any hierarchical unit, it is essential for individuals' actions to correspond with their roles. It requires individuals to know their place and to act accordingly.

Cultural psychology maintains that the process of becoming a self is contingent on individuals interacting with and seizing meanings from the cultural environment. Thus, the resultant self-concept that will emerge from participating in highly individualized North American culture will differ importantly from the self-concept that results from the participation in the Confucian interdependence of East Asian culture. Below I discuss some psychological dimensions by which these two cultural groups diverge.

Consistency Versus Flexibility

In contrast to East Asian interdependent selves, the North American independent self can be seen as a relatively bounded and autonomous entity, complete in and of itself, existing separately from others and the surrounding social context (Geertz, 1975; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individual selves are perceived of as similar to objects in that they are viewed as whole, unified, integrated, stable, and inviolate entities (Shweder et al., 1998). Such a view assumes that, although situations may activate different aspects of the working self-concept (Markus & Kunda, 1986), core representations of the self remain largely uninfluenced by the presence of others. The self is experienced as relatively unchanging and constant across situations.

This view of an inviolate self existing largely independent of its context has spawned a number of theories regarding the consistency of the self (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958; M. Ross, 1989; Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992). These various research paradigms tend to reveal that North Americans are willing to make rather costly sacrifices in order to preserve a semblance of self-consistency. Moreover, the premium placed on a consistent self is further evident in some Western theorists' discussions of psychological health (for a review see Suh, 2001). Common among many Western theories is the view that psychological health is associated with a consistent and integrated knowledge of oneself (Jourard, 1965; Maslow, 1954).

In contrast, the functional value of consistency is less clear for East Asian selves. The East Asian self is described as largely a relational phenomenon (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001), where an individual's relationships and roles take precedence over abstracted and internalized attributes, such as attitudes, traits, and abilities. Hence, changing situations will find the East Asian self in new roles bearing different obligations. It is important for the East Asian self to be able to determine what the role requirements are for a given situation and to adjust itself accordingly. The ability to distinguish between the demands across situations (*kejime* in Japanese) is viewed as integral to an individual's maturity (Bachnik, 1992), and is a major pedagogical focus of Japanese schools (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989).

Much empirical research supports this cultural distinction regarding the prevalence of consistent self-views. Bond and Cheung (1983) found that Japanese respondents tended not to describe themselves by

abstracting features across situations, in contrast to American tendencies to view themselves more in terms of pure psychological attributes. Other research has found that East Asians are more likely than Americans to describe themselves with reference to social roles or memberships, aspects of identity that are fluid with respect to the situation that one is in (Cousins, 1989; Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995).

The cross-situational fluidity of the East Asian self has been demonstrated in a variety of different paradigms. Kanagawa et al. (2001) found that Japanese (but not American) self-descriptions varied significantly depending on who was in the room with them when they completed their questionnaires. For example, participants became significantly more self-critical in front of a professor than when they were alone. Similarly, Suh (2001) asked Koreans and Americans to evaluate themselves on a number of traits in a number of hypothetical situations. The Americans showed relatively little change in their self-descriptions across situations, whereas Koreans viewed themselves in highly variable terms.

The view that consistency is associated with psychological well-being is less evident in East Asia. Suh (2001) found that, whereas consistency across situations was associated with greater degrees of well-being for Americans, this relation was far weaker for Koreans. Similarly, Campbell et al. (1996) found a weaker correlation between Japanese participants' self-concept clarity (a construct that captures the consistency of the self across situations and time) and self-esteem than was found for Canadians. Well-being and positive feelings about the self do not seem to be as tethered to a consistent identity for East Asians as they do for North Americans.

A relatively attenuated motivation for consistency among East Asians is also evident in their weaker beliefs in attitude-behavior consistency (Kashima, Siegal, Tanaka, & Kashima, 1992). Moreover, social psychology's favorite consistency theory, cognitive dissonance, finds little evidence to support it in East Asia (Heine & Lehman, 1997b). The drive for consistency that underlies dissonance may be weak enough among East Asians that attempts to rationalize their behaviors are not a common part of their everyday experience.

Cultural differences in a preference for consistency are not limited to individuals' understanding of themselves. Research on cognition shows that Westerners will go to great lengths to avoid contradictions in their reasoning (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). When presented with arguments that appear to be contradictory, Americans eliminate the contradiction by

selecting the better argument and become even more convinced that it is correct than they do when they are not presented with the challenging statement. This drive for consistency bears the cost that potentially useful information may be downplayed or ignored. Chinese, in stark contrast, appear to accept contradiction as a natural part of life. When presented with two contradictory arguments they tend to accept both and make no effort to resolve the inconsistency. In fact, Chinese demonstrate a peculiar strategy whereby they are more likely to prefer a weak argument if it is paired with a contradictory stronger argument than when it is encountered alone (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). The world is viewed in different terms when it is not forced to fit into a consistent and noncontradictory narrative.

Intraindividual Versus Extraindividual Focus

To the extent that East Asians are more likely to view their selves as changing across different situations, their ability to understand and predict the behavior of others (and themselves) would seem to hinge on different sources of information than that relied on by relatively invariant North American selves. Situational information should be of greater utility for East Asians as it is more highly correlated with an individual's behavior, and they should thus be more likely to attend to it. Likewise, although dispositions appear to be meaningful ways of conceptualizing aspects of individuals universally (Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; Church, 2000), dispositional information should be more predictive of an individual's behavior among North Americans than East Asians and should receive greater elaboration there. Indeed, to the extent that information exists either within or outside an individual, the more attention people devote to the situation, the less they will attend to dispositions.

Evidence for an exaggerated preference for dispositional information among North Americans can be seen in studies of the "fundamental attribution error" (Ross, 1977). These studies have found that people (usually North Americans) are reluctant to consider information external to the individual in explaining the behavior of others. North Americans hold the lay theory that behavior is largely a product of the personalities of the people engaged in it.

East Asians also attend to dispositions of individuals (Choi et al., 1999); however, there is evidence that they do so less than North Americans. East Asians are less likely than North Americans to describe themselves in

abstract trait terms (Bond & Cheung, 1983; Cousins, 1989; Rhee et al., 1995), although they are equally able to think abstractly. Traits are clearly useful ways to describe personality in all cultures (Church, 2000), although some research finds that people in Western culture are more likely to spontaneously generate trait descriptions for other's behaviors (Miller, 1984; Morris & Peng, 1994).

Much evidence suggests that East Asians are less likely than North Americans to make attributions on the basis of dispositional information (e.g., Morris & Peng, 1994; Van Boven, Kamada, & Gilovitch, 1999). For example, although correspondent bias studies show that East Asians, like North Americans, tend to disregard key situational information (Krull et al., 1999), they are more malleable in this regard. When the situation is made highly salient, East Asians will take this information into account, unlike North Americans (Choi & Nisbett, 1998; Kitayama & Masuda, 1997). Useful as dispositions are for East Asians in making sense of others' behaviors, they can be trumped by the situation, something that has not been found with North Americans.

This heightened attention to the surrounding field is also evident in the ways that East Asians attend to their environment. East Asians demonstrate more field dependence than North Americans (being less able to distinguish an object from the surrounding environment), and they are better able to detect covariation between events (Ji, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000). When looking at a scene of fish, Japanese are more likely than Americans to notice elements from the background, and to have their recall of the fish affected by changes in the background (Masuda, 1999). In sum, East Asians are less likely than North Americans to distinguish figure from ground.

Cultural differences in tendencies to habitually focus outside of the individual suggest differences in emotional experience across cultures. The locus of emotions, too, can be seen as located either largely inside or outside the individual. Kitayama, Markus, and Kurokawa (2000) found that Japanese were more likely than Americans to experience interpersonally engaged emotions (emotions that emphasize one's connection with others, e.g., respect, shame) relative to their experience of interpersonally disengaged emotions (emotions emphasizing one's distance from others, e.g., anger, pride). That is, American emotional experience is more likely than Japanese to be viewed as an event isolated within the individual.

Moreover, to the extent that emotions, in general, tend to be a source of intraindividual information relevant to behavior, in contrast to the various sources of extraindividual information that individuals receive from the situation, East Asians might be less likely to attend to, or even notice, their emotions. Mesquita and Karasawa (in press) found that in time samplings of Japanese and Americans, Japanese were over three times as likely as Americans to report that they were not feeling *any* emotion at the time. Similarly, other research has found that Japanese report feeling emotions less intensely and for shorter durations than do Americans (Matsumoto, Kudoh, Scherer, & Walbott, 1988). It would seem that North Americans, with their dispositional theory of behavior, would develop heightened sensitivities to detect any changes in their inner state, whereas East Asians would have a greater proportion of their attentional resources devoted to others and the surrounding environment. However, it is important to note that there is perhaps no field of research where the debate over evidence for cross-cultural variation is more heated than in research on emotions (e.g., Church & Lonner, 1998; Levenson, Ekman, Heider, & Friesen, 1992; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Shweder, 1994).

Malleability of Self Versus Malleability of the World

Becoming a self involves identifying the boundary between the self and the surrounding environment. This paper has thus far focused exclusively on how culture affects our understanding of the self, but implicit in the construction of self is the construction of what is not self: specifically, the social world within which the self performs. We possess lay theories regarding the nature of both the self and the world. One aspect of these theories is that they emphasize the relative fluidity and malleability of these two opposing forces. To the extent that different cultures perceive the relative malleability of selves and social worlds in divergent ways, they will possess different theories about how individuals can, should, and do act.

Westerners tend to stress the malleability of the world relative to the self (Su et al., 1999). God told Adam that he would have dominion over all the earth; the world was there for humans to change and use to their liking. This belief persists in the West, and is manifest in the view that the individual has potential control of shaping the world to fit his or her

own desires. In contrast, the Western self, as discussed above, is relatively immutable and consistent. This view that the self is an immutable entity, working within the context of a mutable world, highlights a particular perception of individual agency.

The East Asian scale of malleability, in contrast, weighs more heavily on the self end. As discussed above, the individual self occupies various roles with respect to the relationships that they have with others, and needs to be fluid enough to be able to adapt to different role expectations and situational demands. In contrast to the fluidity of the self, however, these roles are relatively immutable (Su et al., 1999). The social world is viewed as enduring and permanent, influenced by forces beyond the individual (cf. Chiu, Dweck, Tong, & Fu, 1997, Study 5). When the balance of malleability shifts away from the social world and towards the self, perceptions of control and agency will be muted. The social world is not at the individual's disposal to alter to fit his or her needs. Rather, the flexible individual must accommodate to the inflexible social world and must learn what aspects of themselves need to be changed in order to fit in (Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, in press).

Weisz, Rothbaum, and Blackburn (1984) propose that there are two ways of exerting control that are exercised depending on the relative malleability of the self versus the world. When the world is more mutable than the self, people demonstrate agency via "primary control," by striving to make the world fit their individual desires. In contrast, when the world is more fixed than the self, people demonstrate agency via "secondary control" and strive to adjust themselves to fit in with the situational demands.

The North American self largely rests on a foundation of a distinctive set of qualities and processes, and this configuration of inner attributes is seen to largely determine or cause behavior. Participation in North American culture encourages a sense of self as "in control," and individuals strive to shape the world to accommodate their inner desires through practices such as expressing preferences and making choices (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999), or trying to change other's behavior to improve their lives (Morling et al., in press). In contrast, the East Asian interdependent self is suspended in a web of social relationships and roles. With this view of self, the individual must be responsive to the needs of others and the obligations associated with their roles. Participation in East Asian culture encourages one to harmonize with others and to adjust oneself to the social environment (Morling et al., in press).

Much cross-cultural research has identified differences in control consistent with this view. Comparisons of locus of control scales consistently reveal that East Asians exhibit less of an internal locus of control than do North Americans (e.g. Bond & Tornatzky, 1973). Canadians perceive threatening future life events to be more under their control than do Japanese (Heine & Lehman, 1995). Iyengar and Lepper (1999) found that East Asian children were more willing to surrender their individual choices to their mothers than were Euro-American children. Morling et al. (in press) demonstrated that adjusting situations are more common in Japan, and controlling situations are more common in the United States, and that Japanese-made situations enhance respondents' feelings of relatedness, whereas American-made situations afforded a greater sense of efficacy.

The malleability of the self over the world is also an issue for achievement motivation. The relatively inviolate selves of North Americans suggests they should subscribe more than East Asians to entity theories of self (Heine et al., in press; cf. Dweck & Leggett, 1988). With an entity view of self, achievement is assumed to be anchored in rather innate and fixed abilities and is believed to be resistant to change. With such a view, encounters with failure signal permanent inadequacies of the self and should be particularly distressing, leading to self-protective strategies or attempts to avoid future situations where one might fail again. Clearly, the converse lay theory, an incremental theory of self, where achievement is viewed as hinging on efforts, is by no means rare or discouraged in North America. American culture also lauds the importance of effort and reveres cultural icons of hard work such as Horatio Alger. Indeed, it would appear to be dysfunctional within any culture to eschew the belief that hard work will be rewarded.

However, the fluid selves of East Asians suggests that they should more strongly endorse incremental theories of self than North Americans (Heine et al., in press). Cross-cultural comparisons of incremental theories contrasting means on subjective Likert scales (a methodology that is problematic due to reference-group effects; Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2001; Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997) yield mixed evidence for cultural differences (Chiu et al., 1997; Norenzayan, Choi, & Nisbett, 2000); however, methodologies that do not involve comparisons of Likert scale responses yield pronounced cultural differences (Heine et al., in press). That Confucianism emphasizes the importance of fulfilling obligations associated with one's roles suggests that indi-

viduals must have the potential to master the requisite skills of those roles. The roles determine the standards of performance, and it is incumbent upon individuals to adjust themselves accordingly. Cultural tasks of fitting in and achieving interdependence lead to a belief in the improvability of the self in cultures which emphasize hierarchy and mastery of one's roles. When one has obligations to live up to consensual standards associated with one's role, failure indicates that one is not doing enough. Failures serve to signify insufficient effort and highlight where individuals need to work harder. Hence, rather than distancing oneself from an achievement situation when one fails, East Asians should meet failure with increased efforts (Heine et al., in press).

A series of cross-cultural experiments support this hypothesis (Heine et al., in press). North American participants were found to persist longer on a task after initially succeeding on it, whereas Japanese persisted longer after they had failed. Moreover, these cultural differences in persistence after failure appeared to importantly hinge on the lay theories regarding the role of effort in success. These results support the notion that East Asians are more likely than North Americans to view abilities as malleable.

In the context of a culturally sustained incremental theory of self, hard work and diligence come to take on greater moral significance. This is evident in the remarkably positive connotations that the word "effort" entails in East Asia. For example, surveys in Japan of "what is your favorite word?" have revealed that the most popular favorite in Japan is effort, *doryoku,* closely followed by perseverence, *gambaru* (Shapiro & Hiatt, 1989). In many ways, East Asian societies are structured such that effort will be met with greater rewards. The civil service exams of China, which extend back for centuries and have greatly influenced the structure of modern-day university entrance exams throughout East Asia, reflect this attitude. Unlike SATs and GREs, which were originally designed as aptitude tests to provide a view into the individual's abilities that grades missed, entrance exams in East Asia make no pretense of being about abilities. Successful performance on these exams requires the mastery of countless facts, innumerable hours of study, and years spent at the country's ubiquitous cram schools (Rohlen, 1983). Admittance to a good school in Japan requires a significant amount of effort.

Cross-cultural studies of attributions for performance similarly corroborate these differences. North Americans tend to view their successful performances as due to their own inner abilities (although they will

acknowledge effort more for their failures; for a review see Zuckerman, 1979). In contrast, Japanese rarely make ability attributions, and instead tend to see successes as due to their hard work and failures as due to insufficient efforts (e.g., Kashima & Triandis, 1986). East Asian mothers (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992) and teachers (Tobin et al., 1989) are less likely than their North American counterparts to view differences among children as being due to their natural abilities, and schools do not tend to track students or promote them on the basis of merit (Lewis, 1995). When asked directly, Americans estimate that 36% of intelligence is due to effort, whereas Japanese estimate that effort accounts for about 55% of intelligence (Heine et al., in press). East Asian and North American cultures differ importantly in their beliefs in the malleability of achievement.

Relation of Self to Others

The East Asian interdependent self, as discussed above, is importantly defined and sustained with respect to significant relationships within the ingroup. Relationships do not just serve to allow the East Asian self to pursue individual desires; rather, they determine the individual's roles which influence how the individual comes to behave and identify him or herself. In this way, East Asian selves' important relationships are self-defining, and might best be viewed as ends in and of themselves. In contrast, as the North American individualistic self is viewed as complete in itself, relationships play a lesser role in self-identity. Relationships with others are important for the North American self, to be sure, but their importance derives largely from what they provide for the individual. Relationships allow the individual to secure resources which serve both physical needs (e.g., money, food, protection) and psychological needs (e.g., love, belongingness, favorable social comparisons, verification of oneself), which are necessary for the individual self to function. In this regard, relationships serve as means for attaining individual selves' goals rather than as ends by themselves (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

The notion that relationships are so integral to the East Asian self suggests that an individual's self-defining relationships represent a unique class of relationships within the universe of potential relationships that the individual might have. To put it succinctly, the interdependent self cannot be interdependent with everyone. Gaining admission into the sacrosanct ingroup is a substantial accomplishment, and these relation-

ships should hold a privileged position for East Asian selves. That relationship harmony is maintained when individuals fulfill obligations to others with respect to their roles dictates that one needs to distinguish between those to whom they have obligations and those to whom they do not. To the extent that a goal of selfhood is to confirm one's existence by distinguishing what is and what is not self suggests that interdependent East Asian selves will contrast their ingroups against the surrounding environment. This would suggest that the boundary distinguishing ingroups from outgroups would be particularly salient for East Asian selves.

In contrast, for those with a more autonomous self, the self-nonself boundary is located distinctly between the individual and the other: *any* other. That North American selves tend to perceive themselves as existing and functioning separately from the social environment suggests that the composition of the individuals in that environment are relatively tangential to one's identity (although individuals certainly have different kinds of relationships with others). The boundary distinguishing ingroups from outgroups is relatively inconsequential to self-construction, and it should hence be experienced as rather fluid and permeable.

Evidence of the heightened distinction between ingroups and outgroups among East Asians is available from a variety of sources. First, ethnographic research on Japanese richly describes this pronounced difference in behavior between contexts involving ingroups (*uchi*) versus outgroups (*soto*; e.g., Bachnik, 1992). Language, customs, and obligations vary considerably depending on whether the other is an ingroup or outgroup member. Empirical evidence from several different paradigms corroborates this cultural difference in the placement of the boundary between self and non-self. Iyengar, Lepper, and Ross (1999) report the results of a number of studies contrasting ingroups and outgroups between East Asians and North Americans. They found that Euro-Americans did not seem to distinguish between friends, strangers, or enemies in their application of trait descriptors or tendencies to make dispositional attributions. In contrast, for East Asian participants, there was little difference in their willingness to assign traits to themselves or to their friends. However, a pronounced difference emerged in their willingness to distinguish between either strangers or their enemies and their friends. Iyengar et al. (1999) also found that whereas Euro-Americans reacted negatively when choices were made for them by someone else, regardless of whether the choicemaker was their mother

or a stranger, Asian-American children only reacted negatively when the choicemaker was a stranger. When their mother had made the choice for them, they were just as willing to work on the task as when they had chosen it for themselves. Yamagishi and colleagues (e.g., Yamagishi, 1988; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994) have developed a model to explain trust and commitment among individuals in East Asia and North America. They maintain that in a society characterized by strong group ties, feelings of trust are confined to that group. The stronger bonds are among members within a group, the weaker are the ties between groups. One cannot have strong loyalties that conflict with each other. Hence, in collectivist societies such as Japan, where commitment to ingroup members is strong, there should be less of a willingness to cooperate with outgroup members. Their research finds that Americans have higher levels of general trust towards strangers than do Japanese (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Furthermore, although Japanese ingroup relationships tend to be close-knit and enduring, in studies conducted with strangers, Japanese are actually more likely than Americans to exit a group when their behavior is not actively being monitored (Yamagishi, 1988). This research demonstrates that typical research paradigms of social interaction conducted with strangers in East Asian cultures highlight the lack of relations between individuals.

An extensive review of studies using Asch's (1956) conformity paradigm reveals that East Asians' conformity appears to be more contingent on the nature of the majority group than it is for North Americans (Bond & Smith, 1996). When in a situation with strangers, Japanese conform to a comparable degree as Americans, or even show some evidence of anti-conformity (e.g., Frager, 1970). However, when in a situation with their peers, Japanese show evidence of heightened conformity (Williams & Sogon, 1984); indeed, this study found the second largest degree of conformity out of the 133 studies reviewed across 17 different countries (Bond & Smith, 1996). In contrast, the degree of conformity for Americans did not appear to be contingent on the relationships between the subjects and those of the majority group.

In general, across a wide variety of paradigms, there is converging evidence that East Asians view ingroup members as an extension of their selves while maintaining distance from outgroup members. North Americans show a tendency to view themselves as distinct from all other selves, regardless of their relationships to the individual. This research highlights the necessity of specifying the nature of the other in group interaction

studies with East Asian participants. Standard lab paradigms that bring together strangers will not reveal the self-defining interdependent connection between East Asians and may in fact reveal less connection between selves and strangers than what is typically observed with North American samples.

Self-Enhancing Versus Self-Critical Motivations

The cultural roots of the self extend deep and shape the goals to which individuals aspire. The North American self can be characterized as possessing a clear goal of viewing oneself positively (e.g., Rogers, 1951; Taylor & Brown, 1988). As discussed above, the identity of the North American self is anchored in its relatively fixed internal attributes and is viewed as the source of action and the center of control. Maintenance of this autonomous sense of agency and identity is fostered by identifying and affirming these inner attributes (Mesquita & Karasawa, in press). A habitually positive self-view confirms for the individual that they possess the requisite characteristics to fulfill the cultural tasks of being a self-sufficient and autonomous being (Heine et al., 1999).

There is much empirical evidence to support the notion that North Americans are motivated to view themselves in positive terms. The vast majority of North Americans view themselves in highly positive terms, scoring well above the theoretical midpoint of self-esteem scales (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989). A common self-view among North Americans is thus one that is unambiguously positive. When evaluating themselves, North Americans do not adopt an objective or unbiased view but rather give themselves the benefit of the doubt, being highly selective in the information that they attend to and remember (Crary, 1966), framing the information in more ambiguous (and hence easily exaggerated) terms (Dunning, Meyerowitz, & Holzberg, 1989), taking credit for their successes and explaining away their failures (Zuckerman, 1979), and, in general, rounding upwards whenever they get the chance (Taylor & Brown, 1988). These positive illusions are evident across different kinds of enhancement biases: for example, self-evaluations (Paulhus, 1998), feelings of control (Langer, 1975), and views of the future (Weinstein, 1980); different boundaries of self: for example, the individual self (Campbell, 1986), the group self (Heine & Lehman, 1997a), and the individual's relationships (Endo, Heine, & Lehman, 2000); and across different content domains, including traits (Dunning et al., 1989),

attributions (Zuckerman, 1979), and attitudes (Campbell, 1986). Indeed, a succinct summary of the self-enhancement literature would be that, unless North Americans encounter inescapably hard evidence to the contrary (e.g., Kunda, 1990), they will tend to favor self-relevant information that casts them in the most positive light.

This goal for North Americans to view themselves positively is perhaps most evident in studies that manipulate the positivity of individuals' self-views. When North Americans encounter negative information that challenges their ability to be the autonomous self-sufficient agents that their culture encourages them to be, they frequently engage in some kind of maneuver designed to disarm the threat. They might rationalize their decisions (Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993), engage in self-destructive behaviors that provide them with a readily available excuse for their poor achievement (Berglas & Jones, 1978), sabotage the performance of a close friend (Tesser & Smith, 1980), search for a downward social comparison target (Wood, 1989), or discount the feedback that they have received (Heine, Takata, & Lehman, 2000). The extent of these self-evaluation maintenance tactics clearly highlights the importance of being able to maintain a positive self-view among North Americans.

In contrast, the Confucian framework underlying the East Asian self brings with it cultural goals that conflict with desires to be self-sufficient and autonomous. Individuals are connected to each other via relationships and with respect to the roles that are inherent in those relationships. These various relationships constitute a coherent hierarchy within which the individual has a place associated with a clear set of obligations and duties towards others in the group. Inadequate performance of the duties associated with one's roles indicates that one is not doing his or her part in contributing to the group's success and is thus not fulfilling important cultural obligations associated with interdependence. Individuals' commitment to others in their groups renders them obligated to live up to the standards associated with their roles—standards that are, importantly, not determined by the individuals themselves but consensually by others in the hierarchy, and, to a certain extent, by society as a whole (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). Individuals thus must be sensitive to ways that they might fall short of these standards, thereby failing to live up to the obligations that they have, and communicating to others that they are not doing their part towards the group's success. They must become vigilant to any shortcomings indicating where they need to make more effort to better fulfill their roles.

This orientation, in stark contrast to self-enhancement, is termed self-criticism.

There is much evidence of self-criticism among East Asians; for example, East Asians tend to evaluate themselves less positively than North Americans (e.g., Kanagawa et al., in press), show little evidence of self-enhancing biases (e.g., Yik, Bond, & Paulhus, 1998), and tend not to show self-evaluation maintenance tendencies (e.g., Cross, Liao, & Josephs, 1992; Heine & Lehman, 1997b). Evidence suggests that East Asians are more willing to accept information indicating their failures (Heine et al., 2000), are more likely to recall events regarding negative information (Meijer, Heine, & Yamagami, 1999), and their self-evaluations are more affected by failures than successes (Kitayama et al., 1997). These cultural differences are clear across a wide array of paradigms, including those conducted with hidden or behavioral measures, and cannot be interpreted as solely due to differences in self-presentation (see Heine et al., 1999 for a review).

Given the concerns of the East Asian self as reviewed in this paper, it would seem that motivations regarding self-evaluations would appear in different forms. The emphasis on fulfilling role obligations and having an extraindividual focus suggests that, rather than self-esteem (individual views self positively), East Asians would have a greater concern for esteem from others (others view self positively), loosely captured by the term "face." There is much discussion on the importance of maintaining face in East Asian psychological and ethnographic literatures (e.g., Chang & Holt, 1994). Face can be understood as the amount of public worth that one has associated with one's roles. When one acts in a way unbefitting one's roles, such as when a high school senior member of the tennis team is beaten by a freshman, a mother sends her child to school with an inadequately prepared lunchbox, or a student corrects a professor's error in front of the class, one loses face.

The Confucian emphasis on fulfilling role obligations suggests that losing face is potentially more threatening for East Asians. Although experiences associated with losing face are not unknown to Americans (just as experiences of losing self-esteem are not unknown to East Asians), East Asians may have a richer understanding of the concept and are more strongly motivated to protect their face. Indeed, the Oxford English Dictionary finds the term "losing face" first entering the English language as a direct translation from Chinese in the late 19th century. Although face is richly described in East Asian ethnographic literatures,

little empirical work has been conducted; at present, therefore, we know little of how these concerns affect individual's thoughts and behaviors. It may be the case that maintaining face for East Asians provides similar psychological benefits as maintaining self-esteem does for North Americans.

CONCLUSION

The present review highlights how many psychological theories of self do not export well across cultural borders. Some key lay theories of the self embraced by North Americans appear to exist in modified forms among East Asians. East Asians, in contrast to North Americans, are more likely to view selves as changing across different situations; to search for information outside of the individual to explain behavior; to view selves, but not the social world, as malleable; to incorporate ingroup members into the self and elaborate the distance of outgroup members; and to view self-criticism as an important way to motivate the individual to do his or her best. These differences are not trivial or tangential to an understanding of the self. Indeed, many of the key principles in personality and social psychology hinge on these factors: culturally derived factors.

Cultural psychology maintains that self and culture make each other up, and the past decade has provided a wealth of empirical support of this. Coming to understand the nature of the East Asian self requires a rich understanding of the culture that sustains it. A culturally informed psychology will explore the relations between cultural level factors and psychological processes. This remains a distant goal, but the past decade has provided us with a significant few steps in this direction.

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