

INDEPENDENCE FROM WHOM?  
INTERDEPENDENCE WITH WHOM?  
CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON INGROUPS VERSUS OUTGROUPS

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to be nobody but yourself-in a world which is doing its best,  
night and day, to  
make you everybody else, means to fight the hardest battle that  
any human being  
can fight, and never stop fighting.

-e. e. Cummings

Western social theorists have long pondered the relationship between self-perception and social perception, that is, the relationship between the ways we interpret and evaluate our own actions, feelings, and personal characteristics and the ways we interpret and evaluate those of other social actors. Within social psychology, in particular, some theorists have stressed connections or parallels between these two processes (Bem 1967, 1972; Cooley 1902; Mead 1934; Nisbett and Wilson 1977; Schachter 1964), while others have emphasized divergences or differences (Jones 1990; Jones and Nisbett 1971; Storms 1973; Taylor and Fiske 1978). What theorists in both camps have shared, however, is a willingness to speak of an abstract, decontextualized self, and perhaps even more remarkably, of an abstract, undifferentiated other.

The recent flowering of cultural psychology in general (Fiske et al. 1997; Shweder 1991; Stigler, Shweder, and Herdt 1990; Triandis 1995), and the increasing attention to different cultural constructions of the self in particular (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Nisbett and Cohen 1996; Shweder and Bourne 1982; Triandis 1989), makes it appropriate to reexamine some of the classic theories and generalizations that Western researchers have offered regarding self and other. In doing so, however, we want to introduce into cultural discussions a distinction regarding "others" that seems notably absent in the discussions of self-perception versus social perception introduced in our opening paragraph—namely, the familiar distinction between "ingroup" and "outgroup" members.

The distinction itself, of course, is hardly new. Western investigators have long recognized that social perceivers may stereotype, assume homogeneity in, and show hostility toward outgroup members (Allport 1954; Jones, Wood, and Quattrone 1981; Jones 1972/1997; Sherif 1966; Sherif and Sherif 1953) while displaying favoritism toward ingroup members (Gaertner and Dovidio 1986; Gaertner et al., this volume; McConahay 1986; Moscovici 1984; Tajfel 1970, 1981). Other investigators, notably those working in the social-comparison tradition (Festinger 1954; Taylor 1983; Tesser 1980, 1988) and the reference-group tradition (Crosby 1976; Newcomb 1943; Newcomb et al. 1967), have continually emphasized that self-assessments hinge not only on comparisons with other people in general but also on comparisons of one's attitudes, abilities, wealth, or well-being with those of socially relevant members of one's group.

Nevertheless, deep within the theoretical bedrock of contemporary Western social psychology, one finds seemingly straightforward claims about how individuals respond to the actions of "others," or to the attempts of "others" to influence them, without qualification

concerning the identity of these "others" or the relevant relationship between the parties. In fact, the methodologies adopted by our field in its search for presumably universal laws and generalizations that are somehow independent of social context have led some to describe the heart of experimental social psychology, in the United States at least, as the study of "strangers in strange situations" (Aron and Aron 1986).<sup>1</sup>

Two such general claims regarding self-contained selves versus generalized others provide the empirical and theoretical focus of this chapter. The first claim postulates a "divergence" in attributions and inferences regarding self and other, or "actor" and "observer" (Jones and Nisbett 1971; Nisbett et al. 1973). The second claim proposes that there are differences between the affective and motivational consequences of choices made by the self and those of choices suggested to, or imposed on, the self by others (Cordova and Lepper 1996; deCharms 1968; Deci 1981; Lepper and Greene 1978; Zuckerman et al. 1978). Recently, we have examined the cultural standing of both of these claims in research that deals explicitly with the ingroup-outgroup distinction and utilizes both Western and non-Western research participants. Before we turn to the details of these research efforts, however, it may be useful to consider, at least briefly, the current status of "culture" in American social psychology more generally.

## CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Culture, Situationism, and Subjectivism

One of the great lessons of social psychology has been to heighten our appreciation of the impact of social situations. As a discipline, we pride ourselves on our refusal to make hasty or overly broad inferences about the traits or other personal dispositions of social actors, and we eschew explanations for undesirable human behavior that seem to "blame the victim" who responds undesirably to the pressures and constraints of difficult situations. In turn, the goal of understanding the situational determinants of social actions and outcomes has historically obliged us to look beyond the obvious "objective" features of social situations and to focus instead on the subjective representations or construals of the actors involved (Ross and Ward 1996). Indeed, these two lessons have been seen as among the most general and fundamental conclusions from the last half-century of research in social psychology (Ross and Nisbett 1991).

Consequently, it seems more than a little ironic that American social psychologists have, until quite recently, paid so little attention to the topic of culture. Surely there are few factors that can rival the power of cultural differences in determining both the objective situations in which people most often find themselves and the subjective interpretations they are likely to share about the meaning of those situations. As Ross and Nisbett (1991) have suggested:

Ethnic, racial, religious, regional, and even economic subcultures are in an important sense the distillates of historical situations, as well as powerful contemporary determinants of individuals' behavior. They are, at the same time, important sources of the particular subjective meanings and construals we place upon the social events we observe. (170)

Nonetheless, our collective search for seemingly context-free generalizations, based on "objective" study of interchangeable individual "subjects" who are divorced from their everyday social contexts and networks, seems, with few notable exceptions (McClelland et al. 1953), to have precluded serious attention to culture. Fortunately, within the last few years this situation has begun to change and the study of cultural influences on social behavior has begun to enter the mainstream of social psychology.

### Individualism Versus Collectivism

Perhaps the first major step toward the integration of cultural concerns into Western social psychology derived from pioneering studies by Triandis (1989, 1990, 1995) and others, especially Hofstede (1980, 1991). These authors sought to characterize systematic variations in broad societal goals and values across different cultures, using methods that avoided the simplistic and one-sided comparisons of the ways in which "other" cultures differ from "our own" that so plagued most earlier cross-cultural research efforts.

The most notable contribution of these researchers was the characterization of cultures along a dimension of individualism-collectivism (Hofstede 1980, 1991; Smith and Bond 1993; Triandis 1989, 1990, 1995). However, the theoretical importance of this work lay not only in a general claim that one could observe and measure large and relatively stable cultural differences along this dimension, but also in a contention that Americans (and their close cultural kin, the British, Canadians, and Australians) displayed a level of individualism far above that characteristic of the rest of the world. This finding, in turn, prompted a concern that broad conclusions based solely on research with American subjects might prove far more limited in their relevance to other societies than we had recognized.

### Independent Versus Interdependent Selves

Despite its potential significance, for many years the impact of work on individualism versus collectivism remained relatively limited, and the relevant studies made little effective contact with more mainstream social psychological research of the time. What eventually brought this work to the forefront of social psychology was the effort by Markus and Kitayama (1991) to analyze psychological mechanisms whereby this cultural variable might influence not only the abstract beliefs and presuppositions but also the basic goals and self-concepts of persons growing up in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures. By focusing on the centrality of the self and by tying their analysis explicitly to current paradigms in experimental social psychology, Markus and Kitayama's paper paved the way for a resurgence of interest in issues of culture.

Their basic argument was straightforward: Whereas the distinction between the individual and the group is critical to highly individualistic Americans, the relationship between individuals and their groups may be more fused or more diffuse in collectivist cultures. In America, self-identity emphasizes the distinction between the "independent-self" and others—with heroic individuals endeavoring to stand, as e. e. cummings suggests, as bounded, unique, and autonomous entities, largely uninfluenced by group and environmental pressures (Geertz 1975; Johnson 1985; Sampson 1985, 1988, 1989; Waterman 1981). In Markus and Kitayama's (1991) terms, "the independent-self is a construal of the self in which behavior is organized and

made meaningful by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and actions, rather than by reference to those of others" (226). For such persons, preservation of individual integrity is essential to the self.

By contrast, people in more collectivist cultures may have self-systems in which the distinction between the individual and the group is considerably more vague, because within these cultures the relationship between the individual and the social group involves much greater interconnectedness (Kondo 1982). Markus and Kitayama (1991) characterize such individuals as "interdependent-selves" who perceive themselves "as part of an encompassing social relationship" and recognize that their own actions are "determined, contingent on, and to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship" (227). For such actors, conformity with the group may be seen as personally rewarding as well as socially sanctioned.

In short, the distinction that Markus and Kitayama (1991) draw between individualists and collectivists highlights the relationship between the individual and the group, and the resultant differences in selfconcepts or construals. These different types of cultures, they suggest, also differ in the ideals for conduct that they present and the culturally mandated goals for group members implied by these ideals. Whereas members of individualistic cultures may be expected to promote their own goals, to express their own opinions, and to perceive themselves as unique, members of collectivistic cultures may be expected to promote others' goals, to express opinions appropriate to their group and position, and to strive to fit in and belong.

In support of their analysis, Markus and Kitayama (1991) report a number of empirical findings. They suggest, for example, that Americans store more knowledge about themselves than they do about others, and that the Japanese store more knowledge about others than they do about themselves. Other findings suggest that Asians are less likely than Americans to perceive the behaviors of others as stemming from personality traits, implying that they may not perceive others as separate entities to the same degree that Americans do (Bond 1983; Dalal, Sharma, and Bisht 1983; Miller 1984; Shweder and Bourne 1982). Finally, the pervasive individualistic tendency to bolster esteem through self-enhancement (Greenwald 1980) may actually disappear in cultures that promote more interdependent views of the self. Indeed, individuals from collectivist Asian cultures seem, in many social contexts, more inclined to deprecate their own abilities and contributions than to exaggerate them (Kitayama et al. 1997; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Takata 1987).

Subsequent efforts by others have added provocative details to this general picture. In one particularly elegant research program, for example, Morris and Peng (1994) studied the explanations offered by participants from individualistic and collectivistic cultures when they observed animated "interactions" between individuals and groups—for example, when the distance between an individual and a group widened or narrowed. Individualists, they reported, interpreted these abstract representations of interaction patterns in terms of the motives of the individual actor (for example, he or she "caught up with" or "ran away from" the group). Collectivists, by contrast, interpreted these abstract interactions in terms of the motives of the group (he or she was "taken into" or "expelled from" the group).

Other research programs have examined related cultural differences between Anglo-Americans and East Asians by exploring the generalizability or "transportability" of classic Western social psychological phenomena. Many of these studies, thoughtfully reviewed by Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett (this volume) and by Kitayama and Masuda (1997), have focused particularly on the conditions and contexts in which dispositionalist personality theories, the

correspondence bias, and the failure to utilize base-rate information effectively that characterize our culture seem to apply, or fail to apply, in different societies and/or different cultural subgroups within the larger American society.

Despite their success in illustrating predicted cultural differences, most studies in this tradition retain a degree of ethnocentrism. Almost invariably, it is noteworthy that these studies introduce a classic and well-studied Western experimental paradigm into other cultures, to see whether the same principles or processes will apply there.<sup>2</sup> As a result, "our" paradigms and phenomena retain a position of inherent privilege, making it difficult for us to see the ways in which those paradigms, and the questions they give rise to, reflect basic assumptions of our own cultural heritage. Consequently, we frequently fail to incorporate, even in explicitly cultural research, the sorts of conceptual distinctions, manipulations, measures, and other features of research design that, although generally irrelevant in our own society, might nevertheless be of critical significance in other cultures or in particular subgroups within our own culture.

## NEW RESEARCH: THE INGROUP-OUTGROUP DISTINCTION IN CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

In our own studies, to which we now turn, we have sought to introduce an important distinction relevant to Markus and Kitayama's (1991) analysis of independent versus interdependent cultures. This distinction, which we believe may be of particular significance to individuals raised in collectivistic or interdependent cultures, centers on the dichotomy between *ingroup* and *outgroup* members.

### Attributions for Self Versus Others

A first instance of experimental ethnocentrism that is of special relevance to our own research efforts is evident in the continuing discussion of actor-observer differences in attribution, and of the perceptual, cognitive, linguistic, and motivational factors underlying such differences (Bem 1972; Jones and Nisbett 1971; Nisbett and Wilson 1977; Ross 1977).

Accounts of cultures less individualistic than our own not only suggest a more interdependent, less autonomous view of the self but also suggest that as the self-other boundary becomes less distinct, the distinction between ingroup and outgroup members assumes greater significance. That is, in linking the self intimately to others with whom one is interdependent (family, friends, and other ingroup members), the self and relevant ingroup members may become psychological entities prone to relatively similar inferential, judgmental, attributional, motivational, and perceptual biases. By the same token, assimilating ingroup members to self may lead individuals to contrast ingroup and outgroup members more sharply, making them relatively more susceptible to different cognitive, perceptual, and motivational biases.

We pursued the implications of this analysis in two attribution theory paradigms, both used initially to explore actor-observer differences (Jones and Nisbett 1971). The first paradigm involved simple trait ascriptions, and the reported tendency for individuals to ascribe traits or dispositions more readily to others than to themselves. The second paradigm concerned the choice of situational versus dispositional explanations for particular actions or outcomes, and the reported tendency for individuals to favor dispositional causes or explanations for others' behaviors but situational causes or explanations for their own.

In both paradigms, we gave research participants of differing cultural backgrounds an opportunity to distinguish, in their attributions, between ingroup and outgroup members. In both paradigms, our working hypothesis was that participants from collectivist backgrounds would make a sharper distinction between ingroup and outgroup. In particular, we hypothesized that participants with Asian and/or Asian American backgrounds would ascribe fewer traits to ingroup members (but not to outgroup members) than would Caucasian Americans. And we predicted that Asian Americans would offer more "charitable" attributions, that is, more situational ones, in explaining actions that could reflect negatively on ingroup members (but not those that could reflect negatively on outgroup members) than would Caucasian Americans.

*Trait Ascriptions for Ingroup Versus Outgroup Members* In a first study, Iyengar and Ross (1996) examined the trait ascription phenomenon first demonstrated by Nisbett, Caputo, Legant, and Maracek (1973). In the context of a larger investigation of the divergent perceptions of actors and observers (Jones and Nisbett 1971), Nisbett and his colleagues (1973) had simply asked people to indicate whether one or the other of various pairs of personality trait descriptors ("kind-unkind," "bold-timid," "extroverted-introverted," and so on) were descriptive of themselves and of various other actors, or whether they "couldn't say" because individual's behavior in that behavioral domain "depends on the situation." With American college students as research participants, the results of this investigation were clear. Whereas the students readily ascribed trait descriptors to family members, friends, and even to public figures like the newscaster Walter Cronkite, they proved relatively reluctant to apply such descriptors to themselves, choosing instead to indicate that their own behavior in the relevant domains "depends on the situation."

Iyengar and Ross (1996) adapted this procedure for the study of potential cultural differences. In particular, three types of respondents—one group of American Stanford University students of Caucasian descent ( $n = 92$ ), a second group of Stanford students of Asian descent ( $n = 97$ ), and a third group of Japanese students at Kyoto University ( $n = 57$ )—all responded to a version of the trait assessment instrument employed by Nisbett and his colleagues (1973). The instrument, which used English for the Stanford respondents and a Japanese translation for the Kyoto students, included thirteen traits—some clearly positive ("kind," "friendly"), some clearly negative ("disagreeable," "overbearing"), and some more ambiguous or even likely to carry different valences in different cultures ("shy," "assertive"). Each respondent was asked to consider each trait with respect to three separate scales—one pertaining to *self*, one pertaining to his or her *best friend*, and one pertaining to some specific *enemy* of his or her own designation. For each trait, they were simply asked to indicate "yes," "no," or "depends on the situation" with respect to each assessment target.

The results of this simple exercise were revealing. Figure 9.1 displays the data. First, the Caucasian Stanford students chose "depends on the situation" significantly more often with respect to self than with respect to others, thereby replicating the basic finding of Nisbett and his colleagues (1973). In addition, these students proved almost as willing to apply simple trait descriptors to their close friend as to their enemy. Japanese students at Kyoto University, however, responded very differently in rating these two types of others. In rating friends, as in rating self, they were relatively more inclined to choose "depends on the situation"—indeed, they selected it significantly more often, in both cases, than did the Caucasian American students (a result consistent with the suggestion offered elsewhere in this volume that people from collectivistic cultures may be particularly sensitive to situational or social constraints). In rating

an outgroup member (an enemy), however, they rarely chose "depends on the situation" rather than assigning a trait—in fact, they did so significantly less often than the Caucasian students. In short, the contrast between assessments of friends and of enemies was more dramatic than the contrast between assessments of friends and self—a markedly different pattern of results than that obtained for the Caucasian students.

Interestingly, our sample of Asian Americans and Asian foreign students attending Stanford showed an intermediate pattern of results. Like the Kyoto students, they chose "depends on the situation" more often than the Caucasian students when characterizing themselves, and like the Kyoto sample, they made a clear distinction between friends and enemies in this regard. But unlike the Kyoto students (and like the Caucasian American students), the distinction made between self and friends by these students exposed to both Asian and American views was also quite marked.

Viewed in isolation, the findings for our Caucasian American sample (like the original Nisbett et al. [1973] results) suggest a strong and simple self-other distinction. By contrast, as hypothesized, the findings from the other two samples, featuring students with more collectivistic and less individualistic cultural backgrounds, remind us of the importance, even the centrality, of the ingroup-outgroup distinction in other societies.

*Attributional Charity Regarding Ingroup Versus Outgroup Members* In a second study, Iyengar and Ross (1996) turned their attention to the phenomenon of attributional "charity," that is, the willingness of individuals to take into account situational pressures and constraints, especially in accounting for seemingly negative or antisocial actions (Griffin and Ross 1991). In Western research, of course, the topic of biased attributional assessment, or "attributional charity," has typically focused on the self-serving biases or "ego defensiveness" shown by actors in explaining their own success or failures (see Nisbett and Ross 1980). In this tradition, self-other comparisons are generally introduced to use attributions made by, or about, disinterested others as a relatively "objective" baseline against which to assess the potentially biased attributions that actors make about their own actions and outcomes.

Once again, the unique feature of our present research design was the inclusion of the ingroup-versus-outgroup variable, allowing us to compare the attributional charity afforded to members of these two groups. In particular, students in this study were asked to consider possible explanations for hypothetical negative actions or misdeeds by a resident of their dormitory. Two groups of respondents were employed—one group of Caucasian Americans ( $n = 104$ ) and one group of first-generation Americans of Asian descent ( $n = 60$ )—all of whom lived in mixed-ethnicity dormitories in which roughly half of the students were of Caucasian ancestry and one-quarter were of Asian ancestry. All students read four vignettes. Two featured negative actions (for example, failure to stop and help a fellow student who had crashed his or her bicycle) by an actor stipulated to be a "friend," and two featured similarly negative actions by an unspecified stranger (that is, someone in the dorm whom the student had not yet met). For each action, students were given a small set of charitable (that is, exculpatory, situational) explanations (for example, the individual failing to render aid was in a hurry and didn't notice the accident) and a small set of dispositional explanations involving negative traits (for example, the individual failing to render aid was an uncaring person). Students were also invited to add explanations of their own if they wished. The aptness or likelihood of each stipulated explanation was assessed using simple seven-point rating scales.

Figure 9.2 shows the results of this study, which once again revealed a clear difference in the two groups' assessments. The Caucasian students showed virtually no tendency to make more charitable attributions for specified friends than for unspecified strangers, displaying in both cases a moderate preference for dispositional explanations over situational ones. By contrast, the Asian Americans showed a clear tendency to make more charitable, less censorious attributions about friends than about strangers; that is, they moderately preferred situational explanations over dispositional ones for friends, but strongly preferred dispositional explanations over situational ones for strangers. In fact, the Asian Americans opted for dispositional explanations in making attributions about strangers more often than did the Caucasian Americans.

Thus, if viewed in isolation, the findings from the Caucasian American sample would lead one to discount the existence of ingroup favoritism in the attribution process—at least for the particular actions and the particular ingroups and outgroups identified in our vignettes. By contrast, if viewed in isolation, the results from the Asian American sample would suggest a strong tendency toward such ingroup favoritism. It is unfortunate that the design of this second Iyengar and Ross (1996) study did not allow us to examine charitableness toward self in the attribution process, and equally unfortunate that the study did not include a sample of Asian respondents in their own land.<sup>3</sup> But the data we do have suffice once again to illustrate that generalizations about how individuals make attributions about "others" can become problematic—once we leave the confines of our own culture—unless we make some effort to identify the precise relationship of that "other" to the individual.

### Intrinsic Motivation and the Restriction of Choice by Ingroup Versus Outgroup Members

The second research domain in which the significance of these cultural variables has been explored involves the determinants of intrinsic motivation—in particular, the role that individual choice and personal control may play in motivating individuals from highly individualistic cultures, compared to those from more socially interdependent cultures. Let us turn, then, to this last line of investigation.

Choice is good. What, a typical American might ask, could be more self-evident? Liberty, after all, is enshrined as subordinate only to life itself in our country's Declaration of Independence. Having a choice, obviously, gives individuals the opportunity to select the options that most closely match their personal needs and preferences. In addition, as Markus and Kitayama's (1991) analysis would suggest, choice permits people to express their individuality and display their autonomy.

In fact, the value of personal choice has long seemed obvious to American theorists studying the nature of intrinsic motivation. Indeed, the single most widespread and influential definition of intrinsic motivation, put forward by Deci and his colleagues (Deci 1981; Deci and Ryan 1985), virtually equates the experience of intrinsic motivation with a sense of "self-determination" or personal choice. People want to feel themselves, as another prominent American theorist put it (deCharms 1968), to be "origins" of their own actions, rather than "pawns" of external forces.

In fact, one line of intrinsic motivation research has focused quite directly on the effects of the presence or absence of personal choice. For example, in a prototypic study, Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, and Deci (1978) presented undergraduates with a set of interesting manipulative puzzles. In the choice condition, students were told they could choose which

puzzles to work with and how long to spend with each; in the no-choice condition, the *experimenter* told students which puzzles to work on and when, yoking the actions of these students to those of the students in the choice condition. At the end of this test period, intrinsic motivation was measured by the amount of unmonitored free-play time that students subsequently chose to spend with the puzzles and by their self-reports of willingness to participate in further tests with such puzzles. The results provided a clear demonstration that students who had been given a choice showed significantly more intrinsic motivation, on both behavioral and self-report measures, than no-choice subjects.<sup>4</sup>

In two related studies, Iyengar and Lepper (1999) added to this basic paradigm of choice versus no-choice one further condition suggested by our theoretical analysis of the potential importance of the identity of the other. In these additional groups, students were assigned particular activities, not by an unfamiliar experimenter, as in traditional no-choice conditions, but by someone who would be expected to be included in the more extended, interdependent concept of self manifested by children of Asian backgrounds. In a first study, this key "ingroup" member making choices for the child was the child's own mother, and the "outgroup" member making such choices remained the experimenter (with whom the child had not previously been acquainted). In a second study, choices in the "ingroup-choice" condition were made by the students' own classmates; choices in the "outgroup-choice" condition were made by children in a lower grade at a rival school across town. To test our hypotheses about the differential relevance of this group membership manipulation for children from individualistic versus collectivistic cultures, these experimental procedures were employed with samples of children from theoretically contrasting cultural backgrounds.

In the first study, third-grade children were asked to do an anagrams task for a specified period of time. In the "personal-choice" condition these children were asked which of six categories of anagrams (including animals, family, foods) they would like to undertake. In the two imposed-choice conditions, children were assigned categories that had been yoked to those selected by students in the choice condition. Thus, in the outgroup-choice condition, as in previous research, the experimenter simply displayed the choices and asserted that he or she wanted the child to work with the category specified. In the novel ingroup-no-choice condition, by contrast, the experimenter looked through a large set of consent forms and then told the child that his or her own mother had suggested the anagram category. In each of these conditions, of course, half of the children were from Anglo-American backgrounds, and the other half were from Asian American backgrounds.

Two main measures were obtained: initial task performance, as assessed by the number of anagrams children actually completed correctly during the experimental period, and subsequent intrinsic motivation, as assessed by the children's further play with the anagrams after the purported end of the experiment, a time when the children believed themselves to be entirely on their own.

Figures 9.3 and 9.4 display the results, which were highly significant and comparable for both measures. For the Anglo-American children, level of performance and intrinsic motivation were clearly highest in the personal-choice condition and were equally low in the two imposed-choice conditions, regardless of whether a stranger experimenter or their own mother had "usurped" their choices. For the Asian American children, by contrast, performance and motivation were both highest in the ingroup-choice condition (in which their mothers had selected the category of anagrams for them), next highest in the personal-choice condition, and lowest in the outgroup-choice condition.<sup>5</sup>

The second study, examining ingroup versus outgroup choices, involved a rather different context and manipulation. It employed an educational computer activity designed to teach students about arithmetic equations via an instructional game that had been developed in previous research by Cordova and Lepper (1996). Built into this game were half a dozen instructionally irrelevant choices, such as which of four icons would represent one's own "ship" during the game and which icon would represent one's opponent. In this prior study, Cordova and Lepper had shown that the provision of even such apparently trivial choices could produce large educational benefits with Caucasian American pupils. Students who had been given these choices showed significantly enhanced performance at the game, increased liking of the game, higher levels of perceived self-efficacy, and greater subsequent learning from the game than children not given such choice. These effects were apparent not only as the children played the game during the initial experimental session but also in follow-up measures taken outside the computer game context a week later.

In their second study, Iyengar and Lepper (1999) employed the same instructional computer game, but with the modifications necessary to create two contrasting imposed-choice conditions in addition to the standard choice condition, fifth-grade students were told that the relevant choices had already been made based on a ballot previously distributed in their own classrooms. In the outgroup-choice condition, on the other hand, the fifth-graders were told that these same choices had already been made based on a vote by a group of younger outgroup members—that is, third-graders at a rival school. Once again, of course, half of the students were of Anglo-American heritage, and the other half were from Asian American families.

The results from this study were again relatively dramatic. Figures 9.5 and 9.6 display the findings from representative measures of intrinsic motivation and subsequent learning. Once again, for Anglo-American students, the personal-choice condition produced far higher levels of motivation and learning than the imposed-choice conditions, regardless of whether the instructional choices in these latter groups were said to have been based on the preferences of their own classmates or on those of younger children from a rival school. For Asian American students, by contrast, it was the ingroup versus outgroup distinction that proved critical. Motivation and learning were clearly highest in the ingroup-choice condition, where the choices were purportedly those of one's own classmates, intermediate in the personal-choice condition, and lowest in the outgroup-choice condition.<sup>6</sup>

In short, in both of these studies the only crucial distinction for the Anglo-American students seems to have been that between the self and others. For the Asian American students, by contrast, the more important distinction was that between ingroup (including the self) and outgroup. Taken in combination with our prior studies of trait ascriptions and attributional charity, these findings provide substantial support for our analysis of the crucial significance of the ingroup-outgroup distinction in studies of individualistic and independent versus collectivistic and interdependent cultural groups.

## IMPLICATIONS

It is no accident that interest in the topic of culture, especially interest in cultural differences between ourselves and others from the highly collectivistic cultures of East Asia, has surged in the past decade or so. Not only have we seen unprecedented East-West traffic in trade, tourism, immigration, and cultural exchange, but with the end of the cold war and our bilateral rivalry with the Soviet Union, China and Japan have increasingly occupied our attention and have

become the target of our doubts and fears, especially as they increasingly assert themselves on the world stage.

Exposure to other cultures, and increasingly to the scholarship of social scientists who live and work in other cultures, offers us a window not only on the limitations of our own "local" psychology but also on the nature of our highly individualistic culture and our way of looking at ourselves and our interpersonal relations. As every seasoned traveler can attest, the time we spend in other lands (and to a lesser extent, the contact we have with travelers from other lands) gives us a sharper, more nuanced appreciation of what we share with other cultures and what is distinctive about our own. Although we may misinterpret what we see in other cultures, travel helps us, if we may modify Shweder's (1991) apropos phrase, to "see" culture rather than simply "see through" it. And when we return, although we may feel relief or comfort at being "home," we often feel somewhat alien in that home for a period, experiencing real nostalgia for the different ways of feeling, seeing, relating, or being that we left behind.

### Naive Realism, Conflict, and Misunderstanding

Elsewhere, one of the present authors (Griffin and Ross 1991; Ross and Ward 1996) has discussed the concept of "naive realism." Central to this everyday epistemological stance is the conviction, generally implicit rather than explicit, that our own perceptions and feelings, and our own social and ethical priorities and judgments, are somehow "normal" or "natural" responses to the objective, unmediated reality of events (or to the objective merits of relevant claims and arguments). In turn, these beliefs lead to the further conviction that, to the extent that, the perceptions, feelings, or priorities of other individuals or groups *differ* from our own, such responses are not normal or natural but must rather be "mediated" by distorting ideology or self-interest. The general relevance of this egocentric stance, coupled with the findings reported in this chapter, is worth exploring with respect to intercultural misunderstanding and conflict.

Consider the practice of nepotism (or similar instances of ingroup favoritism). As individualistic, independent Westerners, we see this practice as corrupt, unfair, and exclusionary, and we see our attempts to regulate such bias as a natural, enlightened, progressive attempt to give individuals the "impartial" and individual consideration to which they justly are entitled. We have similar reactions to the attempts of foreign corporations to maintain exclusive, closed, cooperative links between manufacturers, suppliers, and local markets. That is, we see these traditional practices as an unfair, unwise failure to let the "invisible hand" of the market operate so that individual greed can maximize individual and collective welfare alike.

One strongly suspects that collectivist observers, holding more interdependent views of self, would regard as "natural" attempts to reward loyalty and constancy and to distinguish kinsmen, friends, or others to whom we have ingroup, ties from mere acquaintances or even strangers who are interested only in advancing their own immediate economic interests. Collectivists would feel no particular need to explain or justify their cultural practices; instead, they might well feel compelled to search for the peculiar biases that underlie *our* practices and institutions, to explain our seeming fickleness or the almost pathological pursuit of wealth and power "for its own sake" that seems embodied in our "Protestant ethic" (McClelland et al. 1953; Weber 1905/1984). Indeed, they might be particularly hard-pressed to explain the respect we give to driven men and women who seem content, even overjoyed, to run things as disinterested stewards, rather than advancing and protecting the interests of those tied to them by blood or lifelong relationships.

A similar clash of cultures involving issues of impartiality versus favoritism may play itself out in disputes about affirmative action, although here the issue is complicated by the particular historical experiences of America's immigrant groups. On the one hand, the notion of group-based entitlements or sharing of resources and power may be more congenial to Asians, who may also be less offended than Americans of Western European backgrounds by such policies' seeming violation of individualistic notions of fairness or meritocratic "open" competition. On the other hand, Asians, like many historical immigrant groups, may be particularly loath (especially in the realm of education) to see the individualist competition (featuring seemingly objective test scores, grade point averages, and other "color-blind" criteria) given less weight when it is precisely that competition that has enabled them to win entrance in the face of hegemonic groups' indifference or even hostility to their aspirations. Certainly, such issues are apt to add new complexities as our increasingly culturally diverse society struggles with historic issues of group inequality.

Situations involving the display of independence or the exercise of choice raise similar possibilities for misunderstanding and even conflict. Relatively independent Westerners may attribute personal reticence, the unwillingness to criticize peers or express strong opinions in group settings (especially settings in which they, as outgroup members, are present), or the reluctance to champion one's own proposals to a lack of confidence, a lack of courage, or even a lack of leadership potential. More interdependent non-Westerners, by contrast, may see displays of Western assertiveness as inappropriately self-serving, overbearing, or lacking in respect for others. Moreover, the members of both cultures are apt to see their own assessments of the others' responses as natural, culture-free, objective, and accurate. And they are apt to see the others' assessments of them as the result of the peculiar cultural lenses that those on "the other side" bring to the task of social perception.

Anecdotal instances of cultural differences in practice, and interpretation, with regard to the exercise of personal choice should similarly be familiar to every traveler. The Western visitor to Japan who finds that her host at a fine restaurant has ordered the same meal for everyone is apt to interpret such behavior as an exercise of social control and a restriction of her own freedom to experiment or to cater to her own idiosyncratic tastes. The same diner, however, may not see anything odd about her own considerable reluctance to order exactly the same combination of appetizer and entree as the friend ordering before her (much less to choose the same dress or exactly the same landscaping scheme as her neighbor) lest she be seen as a mere "copycat."

In similar fashion, parental involvement with children's schoolwork is likely, in this country, to be rejected by children themselves as oppressive and intrusive interference in their affairs and may often be proscribed by their teachers as ethically inappropriate. In collectivistic societies, in contrast, such involvement may be welcomed by children and teachers alike and is likely to be viewed as a sign of mutual dependence and support (Stevenson and Chen 1989). In addition, individualist and collectivist cultures are likely to display correspondingly divergent beliefs about the empirical consequences of such parental practices for children's eventual learning.

Even the current emphasis in applied psychology on the benefits of self-efficacy and personal responsibility-taking may reflect these same cultural blinders. In America, we herald impressive findings on the educational and health benefits of feeling in control, taking responsibility, or having a positive attributional style wherein failures are attributed to controllable personal factors (Bandura 1997; Seligman 1992). We read books and magazine

articles about the need to take charge of our own breast cancer, AIDS, or heart disease, rather than leave it to the sole care of medical professionals. Conversely, we are shocked to discover that in many Asian societies it is considered an affront to one's physician to ask why a particular treatment is being undertaken or exactly how it works. And we are horrified to learn that precise diagnoses and prognoses are generally withheld from terminally ill Asian patients (only their relatives are given the relevant information), because we are convinced that *we* would want to know all and can cite chapter and verse about the benefits to patients of accurate knowledge and an active role in dealing with the management of pain and other symptoms.

In short, we are likely to read relevant experimental and popular literatures with a sense that existential truths, not peculiarities of local culture, are being revealed. And once again, even when we come to appreciate cultural differences and learn to avoid making such overly broad generalizations or characterological assumptions, we may still retain the belief that our preferences and experiences are "natural" and essential, while those of other cultures are to be understood in terms of the specific, distinctive, features of collectivist or Confucian or Asian cultures.

### Concerns and Caveats

While it is important to recognize cultural differences and to shed the egocentrism and ethnocentrism that mar or at least limit much of our work, there are some dangers to be avoided. In emphasizing differences, or even in chiding our colleagues for their unwarranted universalism, we can fall prey to excesses of our own. Recent research in our laboratory shows that pro-choice and pro-life factions, affirmative action opponents and proponents, and even men and women typically *overestimate* their differences both in factual assumptions and in construals of relevant information (Robinson et al. 1995). We suspect that so-called individualists and collectivists may similarly overestimate rather than underestimate their differences and may, as a result, despair unnecessarily about the prospects for finding common ground.

A related danger is that of overestimating the homogeneity, or underestimating the variability, to be found within cultures (especially the "other" culture). Closer examination is likely to reveal that "our" individualism may be more domain-specific (and more restricted to particular subcultures) than we recognize, and closer examination will surely reveal that the labels "collectivist" and "interdependent" are far too broad and indiscriminating to capture the diversity, or fully alert us to the basis, of intercultural differences. We would all be well served, for example, by separating collectivist norms from Confucianist ones (see Dien 1997), and we would do well to recognize that Hindus, Moslems, Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese (to say nothing of the different subcultures within each of these larger groups) are likely to be substantially less impressed than us by their similarities and more attuned than us to their differences.

Finally, in our haste to embrace cultural differences, we run the risk of overlooking similarities that are deep and informative. Despite our much-vaunted "individualism," it is important to recognize the deep communitarian strain that runs through our history and the American penchant for creating philanthropic and voluntary associations to coordinate the joint undertakings of communities (Bellah 1996; Etzioni 1996; de Tocqueville 1848/1969). Americans can also benefit from the nurturance and support of their peers, as suggested by research on the survival of breast cancer patients in support groups (Dunkel-Schetter et al. 1992;

Spiegel 1992; Spiegel and Bloom 1983) and the success of group study in aiding minority calculus students (Treisman 1985).

We are confident that further research will reveal domains, practices, and institutions within which collectivists manifest their own strivings for efficacy and channels of self-expression, if not individualism. (Or perhaps we Westerners simply do not understand how karioke, sumo wrestling, and martial arts are expressions of collectivist rather than individualist strivings). We are equally confident that the distinction between ingroups and outgroups will emerge as critical in at least some important attribution and choice domains within the American context. In short, we expect the future of cultural psychology to offer a more nuanced appreciation of the "other," as well as more subtle techniques for avoiding and overcoming potential sources of intercultural conflict.

## NOTES

1. The basis for this characterization seems clear. American social psychologists studying interpersonal processes have consistently excluded from their studies participants in continuing relationships. (Predictably, the main recent exception involves research on *romantic* relationships, although even there the focus is often on initial attraction rather than on the evolving or ongoing features of the relationship itself.) Even when intergroup or intragroup dynamics are the focus of investigation, it is generally previously unacquainted individuals and/or arbitrarily defined groups that are studied. And when such group dynamics are *not* the focus of attention, we invariably study responses to actions by, communications from, or even written information about, strangers—rather than friends, family members, coworkers, or others in long-term relationships. In a sense, relational and social contexts are treated as sources of noise, or even bias, to be eliminated in the search for "basic" underlying processes and functional relationships between variables.
2. The ethnocentricity of American cross-cultural research was even more blatant in previous decades. Most of the time, researchers would directly export specific experimental paradigms, such as those of Asch (1951), Milgram (1963), or Darley and Latane (1968)—even though, as this brief list suggests, many of these paradigms were designed to capture the events or problems of particular points in our social history—for study in a variety of foreign capitals determined more by happenstance or opportunity than by any theoretical analysis of the features of the relevant cultures. But even in the present, more culturally attuned era (and even in the context of challenging universalist assumptions), much research still begins by asking whether "our" self-perception, dissonance reduction, or attribution findings apply in those "other" cultures, with their different social concerns, religious beliefs, epistemologies, or ideologies. Rarely if ever do researchers start with other cultures and consider what lessons, specific phenomena, or functional relations observed within them might hold about the nature of human psychology (or rather, the range of possible human psychologies).
3. One additional difference in the methodologies of the first two studies may merit more emphasis and discussion. Whereas students in the first study offered trait attributions about *specific* others (a friend and an enemy of their own designation), students in the

second study offered causal attributions about *hypothetical* others (a "friend" and a "stranger" named, but not otherwise described, in the relevant scenario). Thus, it is not clear whether actual misdeeds by specific flesh-and-blood others would have yielded the same lack of ingroup favoritism among our Caucasian American participants, or the same pattern of differences between the Caucasian Americans and Asian Americans. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that even the generic designation of "friend" or "stranger" was sufficient to invoke ingroup favoritism among our Asian American students—a hint, perhaps, that such favoritism may be culturally scripted among out presumably interdependent collectivists but absent (or perhaps dependent on the specific knowledge and relational bonds entailed in an actual friendship) among our presumably independent individualists.

4. A similar set of processes can be seen in earlier, related Western research demonstrating the detrimental effects of superfluous extrinsic rewards on children's intrinsic motivation (Condry 1977; Deci and Ryan 1985; Lepper and Greene 1978; Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett 1973). As these studies show, in our country, inducing children to engage in activities of high initial intrinsic interest in order to obtain some extrinsic reward or to meet some extrinsic constraint typically undermines their intrinsic motivation and task performance.
5. The apparent difference between Asian and Caucasian Americans within the personal-choice conditions, in both this and the next study, proved statistically significant only for the two intrinsic motivation measures (figures 9.3 and 9.5) and not for the two performance/learning measures (figures 9.4 and 9.6), although all four comparisons were clearly in the same direction.
6. There is one comment worth adding to this seemingly straightforward account of methods and results. Both studies present an interesting problem of interpretation, particularly with respect to the Asian children's choices. That is, it is difficult to determine whether it was a matter of choice versus no choice (or freedom to express one's individuality versus restriction of that freedom) or a matter of correct choice versus potentially incorrect choice (or appropriate choice versus potentially inappropriate choice). In these studies, as in many others, it can be difficult to determine how much cultural differences are manifested in people's different responses to objectively defined situations or manipulations or in the different ways in which people subjectively construe seemingly constant stimulus situations or manipulations.

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