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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Reconsidering Culture and Self

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Abstract The interplay of culture and self has been one of the most active areas of research in self and identity. It has provided a number of theoretical concepts and research methodologies that have advanced the psychological understanding about self processes. This paper provides a concise review of the field's underlying assumptions, and points to its contemporary issues and future directions. In particular, we begin by reviewing the work of Triandis Psychological Review, 96, 506–520, (1989) and Markus and Kitayama Psychological Review, 98, 224–253, (1991), point to questions about the content and process surrounding culture and self, and end with a description of a new research program that expands on the current culture and self literature by posing a broader question of the cultural conception of what it means to be *human* and the interplay between humanness conception and self conception.

Keywords Culture · Cultural dynamics · Collectivism · Individualism · Self · Self-construal

The interplay of culture and self has been one of the most active areas of research in self and identity over the past two decades. Kicked off by the publication of two seminal papers in *Psychological Review*, Triandis (1989) and Markus and Kitayama (1991), the field has seen an explosive growth. At the 20 year anniversary of these publications, however, it is a time to take stock, celebrate the field's achievement, reflect on its shortcomings, and point to future directions in this vibrant and critical research area.

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Looking Back

Between the two papers, Triandis (1989) and Markus and Kitayama (1991) mapped out a standard theory of culture and self. On the one hand, Triandis primarily focused on the cultural antecedents of self. Macro-level cultural characteristics such as individualism and collectivism, cultural complexity, and cultural tightness influence the *prevalence* of different types of self—private, public, and collective selves. Private selves are self representations about the internal qualities of the individuals; public selves are concerned with the appearance of oneself to others; and collective selves are those aspects of oneself that are connected to one's ingroups. When we say prevalence, it is a combination of the extent to which a large number of self-related cultural representations are constructed in a society (availability) and the extent to which instances of cultural representations are acquired by individuals and come to their mind easily (accessibility). In particular, cultural individualism has a profound effect: individualism increases the prevalence of private selves, but decreases those of public and collective selves. Obviously, other cultural dimensions affect the prevalence of self-representations, but it was individualism that left the strongest mark in the field. Although Triandis suggested that the kind of self accessed at a given time in a specific context determines

the type of behaviour that is likely performed—what he called *sampling*—he did not spell out psychological consequences of accessed self-representations.

It was Markus and Kitayama (1991) who described the details of the psychological consequences of accessing a self-representation, which they called a self-construal. Unlike Triandis's tripartite division of self, they suggested that there are two fundamental types of self-representations, independent and interdependent. Independent self-construal is concerned with the stable, internal attributes of a person, whose primary motivation is to be unique, express oneself, realize one's internal attributes, promote one's own goals, and say what is on one's mind. In contrast, interdependent self-construal is about the person in context, whose primary motivations are to belong and fit in, occupy one's proper place, engage in appropriate action, promote others' goals, and to read others' minds. The fundamental difference between the two is separation or connectedness of the self with others—the extent to which one's self is construed as a socially separate isolate or a being embedded in the social context. Depending on which kind of self is accessed at the time, different cognitive, emotional, and motivational consequences will ensue.

The literature spawned by these papers is extensive, and it has been reviewed elsewhere (e.g., Kitayama et al. 2007; Oyserman et al. 2002). Although it often highlights comparisons between North America and East Asia, it includes a number of investigations of Indian conceptions of the self and other. For instance, Miller (1984) investigated in her seminal work the developmental trends in dispositional and situational attributions among Indians and Americans. Dispositional attribution—focus on the individual actor—increased with age among Americans but situational attribution increased with age among Indians. Examining spontaneous self-descriptions, Dhawan et al. (1995) used the Twenty Statements Test (TST; Kuhn and McPartland 1954), and found American students were more self-evaluative, but Indian students mentioned social identities more often. Lalljee and Angelova (1995) found Indian students' descriptions of the self and others to be as abstract and decontextualized as those of British but less so compared to those of Bulgarians. Contrary to the view that Indian selves would be highly collectivistic, Verma and Sinha (1993) found Indian college students' self-descriptions to include their individualist self more often than the collective self. In a similar vein, Misra and Giri (1995) reported that Indian graduate students did not show clearly interdependent or independent mode of self-construal.

As can be seen in this South Asian literature, researchers may quibble as to whether the glass is half full or half empty—whether the standard theory of culture and self is supported or not. Overall, though, there appear to be reliable cultural differences in the ways people conceptualize themselves across different regions of the world—especially between North America and East Asia—when reliable measures of self-representations are used (e.g., Kashima et al. 1995; Rhee et al. 1996). However, it is fair to say the findings are not always consistent, and a number of methodological issues remain.

Remaining Issues

The Content of Self

There is a question about the *content of self*. That is, how do we best conceptualize the content of one's self-representations?

Three-Part or Two-Part Model of Self Triandis (1989) was a tripartite model of private, public, and collective selves, whereas Markus and Kitayama's (1991) was a dichotomous model of independent and interdependent self-construal. How should we understand this difference and what sorts of questions are emerging on the research horizon? This question became salient with the publication of Brewer and Chen's (2007) recent paper in *Psychological Review*, which revisisted the conceptualization of collectivism; however, it has been an on-going issue for more than a decade (e.g., Brewer and Gardner 1996; Kashima et al. 1995; Kashima and Hardie 2000).

In fact, there does not seem to have been any issue about how to conceptualize what may be generally termed *individual self* (private self or independent self-construal). This is that aspect of oneself that has to do with one's body, as well as one's internal and psychological aspects such as personality, temperament, wants, beliefs, emotions, etc. that are not directly observable. If there is any issue pertaining to the individual aspect of self, it has to do with cultural variability in self-regard. Heine et al. (1999, 2007) argued that people in individualist cultures such as North America tend to have a strong need for positive self-regard, and therefore to self-enhance, whereas people in collectivist cultures such as Japan tend to have a weaker need to self-enhance, but a stronger tendency to self-improve. The apparent claim that there is cultural variability in the self-enhancement motive has triggered debate about its validity. Sedikides et al. (2003) argued that self-enhancement motive is universal, but that people exhibit self-enhancement in different areas as a function of their cultural backgrounds. North Americans may show self-enhancement in the domain of independence, but Japanese may do so in the domain of interdependence. Their debate is still on-going (Heine et al. 2007; Sedikides et al. 2005, Sedikides et al. 2007). Nonetheless, there seems to be an agreement that even Japanese have a need for positive self-regard at an

implicit level (Kitayama and Uchida 2003; Yamaguchi et al. 2007).

A more critical issue is how to understand the rest of the self content, that is, the aspects other than the individual self. One way is to regard it as that which is captured by increasingly broader construal of oneself. It was James (1890) who began his investigation about the self by first narrowly focusing on the bodily self, but eventually broadening the focus to include other material possessions, social reputations, and spiritual experiences. In so doing, he was able to include a large swag of things as part of the self as an object of construal. If one starts with the momentary sense of the self—here and now—then it can be broadened along the temporal dimension to include one's memory of oneself in the past and one's imaginations, wishes, and fears about oneself in the future. Then, it is also possible to broaden the focus along the social dimension to include other individuals, groups, and institutions. Finally, the focus can be further expanded to encompass one's self beyond the realms of material and social worlds to include a spiritual self. It is the social dimension that has been investigated in the literature on culture and self—people from some cultural backgrounds, rather than others, seem to expand the circle of relevance to include not only the individual self, but other beings as part of oneself as well. Notably, the spiritual dimension of the self has attracted much less attention in the cross-cultural literature; however, it is an aspect that requires an intensive scrutiny as the role of religion as a cultural element is recognized (e.g., Cohen 2009).

The discussion in the literature about the two- vs. three-part models of self presupposes the psychological significance of the distinction between the self-in-relationships with other individuals (*relational self*) and the self-in-relationships with groups (*collective self*). Indeed, Y. Kashima and his colleagues' work suggest that relational self is critical in distinguishing women from men with women more relational than men, largely regardless of their cultural backgrounds (Kashima et al. 1995, Kashima et al. 2004; also see Gabriel and Gardner 1999, on relational and collective interdependent self-construal for women and men, respectively); however, collective self is associated with the extent of urbanization or the movement of oneself away from one's community (Kashima et al. 2004), again largely independently of culture.

In line with this distinction, Yamagishi and his colleagues' work (e.g., Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994) suggest that there may be important variations in principles or rules of social organization. Individuals are organized by their large-scale social category membership in the United States, in particular, a large-scale civil society. People in this collective typically do not know each other, but they have a generalized trust with each other. That is, to the extent that they belong to the same civil society, they trust each other *unless there is a good reason not to*. This default level of trust is rather high in the US. On the other hand, individuals are socially organized in Japan in terms of their particular relationships with each other, in which people know each other and their relationships with one another. Instead of extending generalized trust to others in a broad society, they trust others to the extent that they can ensure promises are carried out by direct interpersonal sanction. This is what Yamagishi calls *assurance*, rather than trust. Yuki (2003) conceptually linked relational self with the network-based organization, but collective self with the category-based social organization, suggesting that these self-conceptions may reflect the type of social organization.

Whereas this contrast between trusting Americans and assuring Japanese may be significant in the contemporary literature on culture and self dominated by cross-cultural comparisons between North America and East Asia, especially Japan, it is possible that there are more than two types of social organizations. As we broaden the scope of our investigation to examine human variation around the globe, a more general theoretical structure may be necessary. If indeed social organizations structure individuals' relationships with other social beings, and if their self-conceptions are shaped by these social organizations, there is a distinct possibility that there are more than two types of principles of social organization and more than two types of non-individual selves. It seems a theoretically more productive endeavor is to examine principles by which people organize their society (e.g., civil society, social networks, caste, and others) and then investigate the implications of such principles of social organizations for people's conceptualizations of themselves.

Cultural Variation Supposing that people's self-contents are strongly tied up with the kind of social organization in which people participate, a critical question becomes on which self-aspect cultural differences are located and why. Let us elaborate on this a little. As we noted earlier, people participate in different types of social organizations—for instance, in urbanized global metropolises people's lives are often not so strongly tied up with tightly organized small social groups like families and close friends, whereas in regional cities the traditional communities are still well and alive. People living there have not uprooted themselves and moved elsewhere. This means that one would expect the social organization prevalent in regional cities is more likely to make collective selves salient than that in metropolises (see Kashima et al. 2004, for evidence). Indeed, Oishi and his colleagues' work (Oishi et al. 2009; Oishi et al. 2009; Oishi et al. 2007) on residential mobility suggests that people who have changed their residences tend not to emphasize their collective selves (for a

similar notion, see Yuki's work on relational mobility; Schug et al. 2009).

Does this mean social organization in a traditional community emphasizes relational self? Kashima et al.'s data suggest not necessarily. The urban-regional contrast did not affect relational self. Rather, what affected relational self was gender. Women were more relational than men, but most clearly women were not necessarily more collective than men (for similar findings, see Kashima et al. 1995). One way to interpret this is to say women are embedded in a kind of social organization in which interpersonal relations with particular individuals matter a great deal, whereas men are not. It is interesting to see whether this has to do with gender roles or some other factors. Nonetheless, the main point here is that social organization—more precisely what rules and principles people follow in organizing their social relations—varies a great deal, and they are not simply individualist (independent) vs. collectivist (interdependent) as researchers often assume. There are different kinds of social organization at play; they seem to generate differential emphases on different self-aspects. However, we do not know the details of these connections.

Now we know that different social organizations—as indexed by residence and gender, for instance—affect collective and relational selves, does this mean that social organization automatically covaries with emphasis on individual self? The answer so far is that it does not. Indeed, neither urban-regional contrast nor gender produced any difference in individual self in Kashima et al. (2004); also see Kashima et al. 1995). In their data, it was the cultural contrast between Australia and Japan that produced a difference in individual self. Schimmack et al. (2005) investigation also showed that it was individualism—akin to individual self—that showed clear, systematic, and expected variations across cultures.

So, here lies the question. Why do North Americans and Australians show a strong emphasis on individual self, whereas Western Europeans seem to show a lesser degree of emphasis, and East Asians seem to show a still lower level of emphasis in individual self (e.g., Kashima et al. 1995; Kitayama et al. 2009; Oyserman et al. 2002)? If it is not social organization, what is it? Kitayama and his colleagues' answer (Kitayama et al. 2007, 2009) is voluntary settlement, namely, a tendency to move forward to a "frontier." When some Europeans voluntarily migrated to a new world (e.g., North America), they were the individuals who had a strong urge to move forward to a "frontier" in search of a better life. They would uproot themselves from their familiar environments and social milieus, risk everything, move forward, and settle in an unfamiliar territory. These self-selected individuals on the average would have had a greater emphasis on individual self; when they move to a new place and generate their culture, it would emphasize and even celebrate the individual self. Consistent with this reasoning, Kitayama et al. (2009) showed that North Americans showed stronger emphasis on individual self than their English and German counterparts. As well, Kitayama et al. (2007) showed a similar difference existed in Japan between those living in its mainland Honshu and those from Hokkaido, its northern frontier where voluntary settlements approximately 150 years ago started its current culture. Thus, voluntary settlement can explain not only international variation in individual self, but also intranational variation within Japan.

This is an intriguing and generative explanation. An obvious next question is whether the same argument applies to a potential difference between Spain and Spanish speaking Latin America, or a difference between Portugal and Portugese speaking Brazil. Kitayama's theory would predict a difference: those living in Latin America should show a greater emphasis on individual self than those living in their Old World counterparts, Spain and Portugal. If there are any voluntary settlements anywhere in the world, those voluntary settlers' subsequent cultures should place a greater emphasis on individual self than others. Another not so obvious question is where the individual difference tendency to move and settle voluntarily to a new place comes from. Is it genetic? There is this distinctive possibility. Chen et al. (1999) showed that there is a greater prevalence of a DRD4 allele in a population that moved farther away from their ancestral homeland. This genetic variation is said to constitute a genotype that affects dopamine level in humans, which is linked to novelty-seeking and hyperactivity.

There are other possibilities to explain national differences in individual self. One is to invoke a general theory of cultural evolution. A school of thought in cultural evolutionary theories takes a very strong Darwinian perspective, which argues that a number of cultural ideas and practices can be generated by random variation, and some of them are selectively retained due to their adaptiveness (e.g., Dawkins 1976; Boyd and Richerson 1985). According to this line of thinking, a variety of ideas and practices that imply or presuppose the individual self may have been generated by random processes, and then spread through human population due to their adaptiveness. The historically constituted social conditions of capitalist market economy, as well as globalization, industrialization, and general affluence may have produced the cultural environment in which individualist ideas and practices were highly adaptive. Obviously, genetic and cultural evolutionary explanations are not mutually exclusive, and both can be true. They need future investigations.

Culture Change? Japan as a case Study One of the intriguing questions about cultural variation in self content

is the case of Japan. As is well known, Japan has been one of the most frequently researched cultures in East Asia in contrast to North America. It is not an overstatement to say the cultural comparison between North America and Japan has been driving the culture and self research. Nonetheless, when the data that compare North America and Japan are scrutinized, a number of puzzling findings emerge. As we will discuss later, solving these empirical puzzles may provide very useful information for forecasting future trends in societies—especially societies in Asia such as India and People's Republic of China that are undergoing rapid and significant social transformations.

So what are these puzzling empirical findings? First of all, there is a clear and consistent cultural difference in individual self: North Americans emphasize individual self more than Japanese. Nevertheless, when non-individual self, either relational or collective self, is compared, the findings are often mixed or sometimes outright contradictory. Kashima et al.'s (1995) findings are a case in point. They found that Japanese are less relational than North Americans and Australians (this was replicated in their 2004 findings as well). This finding is theoretically and empirically significant because Koreans were found to be more relational than their North American, Australian and Japanese counterparts on the same measure. In other words, the Japanese low emphasis on relational self is unlikely to be a measurement error or an anomaly, but a reliable and meaningful cross-cultural difference.

One way to interpret this finding is to blame the explicit nature of the measure. It is often dismissed as a methodological artifact—claiming that the reference group effect (Heine et al. 2002) is responsible for this finding. Because Japanese respondents compare themselves with other fellow Japanese, and Americans, with fellow Americans, their responses tend to reflect within culture variations, and do not reflect a true cultural difference between Japan and North America. As a general principle, this is possible, but this cannot explain why Japan shows a low relational self, but Korea shows a high relational self. More recently, Noguchi (2007) showed that Japanese exhibit a higher level of relational self than North Americans, *using explicit measures,* depending on the scale content. Thus, the Japanese low relational self cannot be dismissed easily as a methodological artifact.

In fact, when the literature is scrutinized carefully, the following pattern emerges. There appears to be two kinds of relational self. One may be called a *cognitive relational self*. It is primarily concerned with *referential self-awareness*; a person's awareness of the fact that he or she is an object of other people's referential awareness or intentionality. It is akin to public self-consciousness—being conscious of others' perceptions, conceptions, and evaluations, but not so much about self-presentation—public presentation of oneself in the positive light—as one's awareness of other people's "eyes" or public scrutiny. The other may be called *affective relational self.* This is about *empathic connectedness*. It emphasizes the affective or non-verbal relatedness of oneself with others—I am empathetic or sympathetic to others, I can feel what others feel, and I merge with others as far as feelings go. Japanese seem to show a higher level of cognitive relational self, but a lower level of affective relational self, compared to people from Western European cultural backgrounds.

Obviously, this hypothesis needs to be further substantiated by research. Nonetheless, it may be generative to offer some conjectures about the reasons for the Japanese case. First of all, it is possible that Japan may have had that kind of culture all the way through. It might have been the culture of cognitive, but not affective, relational self all the way through from time immemorial. However, this is unlikely given the historical trend of cultural patterns of the past (see Kashima and Callan 1994, for a review). Around the time of the Japanese Industrial Revolution and around the time of WWII, Japan seems to have emphasized relational self just like Korea does now.

A second possibility is that the social change since WWII has produced the contemporary culture in Japan. There are two possible scenarios under this interpretation, however. One is to attribute it to the industrial and technological changes and subsequent wealth of the country. Japanese society was transformed after WWII—fueled by the social mobility from traditional agrarian villages to urban centers, especially Tokyo as a political, economic, and cultural heart of Japan—to a technologically saturated and industrially mature wealthy nation based on export manufacturing industries (e.g., Toyota, Sony). Under this scenario, Japan has undergone a culture change due to the transformation of its economic and social infrastructure. If this is the case, a similar trend may occur in other countries such as India and People's Republic of China that are currently experiencing a similar social transformation.

The other scenario is to attribute the Japanese high cognitive—low affective relational self to its history surrounding WWII. After the Meiji restoration of its imperial power in 1868, Japan adopted an expansionist imperialist foreign policy following other Western European and North American nations. Indeed, Japan has the dubious distinction of being one of the few (possibly the only) Asian nations to have colonized other nations in the 20th century. This military expansionism ended in Japan's defeat in 1945. The post WWII Japan adopted a new Constitution, which declared the sovereignty of human rights and the adoption of democratic polity, and explicitly inhibited the possession of armed forces. This institutional change was echoed by intellectual movements to denounce what was regarded as the bad old traditional Japanese

values of feudalism and authoritarianism, and to promote what was regarded as the ideal cultural outlook, exemplified at the time by the United States of America and Western European intellectual traditions. The concerted effort for social and cultural transformation may not have produced a Westernization and a strengthening of individual self as desired, but the lowering of relational self, especially, its affective aspect while leaving its cognitive aspect intact. If this is the case, the unique history of Japan may have produced the current culture of Japan as it stands, and it is unlikely that the Japanese experience will generalize to other countries.

Whatever is the driver behind the current culture of Japan, theoretical and empirical research about Japanese culture changes are likely to be fruitful for several reasons. First, Japan may provide a case study of culture change, from which other countries' future trends may be gauged. Second, it may provide an example from which to learn the process of top-down social change in a country. Whether one sees it as a positive example to be emulated, or a negative example to learn lessons from, it may provide a useful source of information for social planning at a national level. All in all, the case of Japan points to the significance of conceptualizing culture and self from a variety of theoretical angles that include economic, political, as well as historical perspectives. Locating the nexus of culture and self within a society's indigenous historical trajectory seems to us to be an urgently needed research agenda.

The Process of Self—Cultural Dynamics

There is a host of questions about the *process of self*, that is, how self-concepts represented in people's minds influence psychological processes. As Kashima (2009) noted, a critical issue is how to reconcile two prominent approaches to culture. On the one hand, there has been a voluminous literature on cultural differences in self (for reviews, see Oyserman et al. 2002), which has detected some reliable cultural differences on several dimensions that have been associated with individualism and collectivism as we observed above. On the other hand, there has been an increasing trend of culture priming research (e.g., for a review, see Oyserman and Lee 2008). In these studies, culture relevant psychological concepts such as individual-focused or family-focused conceptualizations (Trafimow et al. 1991), the Great Wall of China or the Statute of Liberty (Hong et al. 2000), or pronouns like I or We (Brewer and Gardner 1996) are made salient by giving people a task to think about these concepts, and subsequent psychological processes are examined. Both approaches have generated largely consistent results—"culture" can be primed to produce psychological effects that are parallel with those found in cultural comparative studies.

This state of affairs poses a rather intriguing puzzle about culture's effects on psychology. Cultural comparative approaches are predicated on the view of culture as a relatively stable meaning system; however, cultural priming approaches are predicated on the view of culture as situationally variable and in constant flux. Is culture stable or unstable? If both are true—given that they are both substantiated by data, they seem empirically supported—how can they? To put it succinctly, how can highly variable situated activities (as pushed around by priming this way or that way) generate something like a relatively stable cultural syndrome (Triandis 1996)? Kashima (2000) suggested that this is an instance of a master question of social sciences, and called it a central question of *cultural dynamics*, the process of stability and change of culture over time.

This theoretical issue has presented itself in two of the critical empirical puzzles in the literature (Kashima 2009, for detailed discussion). One is the puzzle of cultural causality—as Matsumoto (1999) observed, when a psychological variable shows a cultural difference, typically it cannot be statistically explained by controlling for a measure of independent or interdependent self-construal. Although individual difference variables such as independent and interdependent self-construal are assumed to cause cultural differences in psychological processes, there is not strong evidence for this in the literature. The other is the puzzle of cultural coherence. Although there are a number of measures of individualism and collectivism (or independent and interdependent self-construal) that show systematic cultural differences, these measures correlate only weakly or not at all within each culture (e.g., Kashima et al. 1995; Kitayama et al. 2009). In other words, these measures appear to cohere with each other when examined at the cultural level, but do not form a coherent underlying psychological dimension at the individual level.

There are several possible ways to resolve these puzzles. One is Kashima's (2009) semiotic model. According to this model, broad theoretical concepts such as individualism and collectivism, and independent and interdependent self-construal, are interpretive or semiotic concepts that are useful for broadly describing cultural variations, but they do not enter into causal structure of the world under most circumstances (there are some specific conditions in which this could happen, but not frequently). More specific psychological processes such as self-enhancement and the tendency to experience socially disengaged emotions (e.g., pride, anger) may be interpreted as independent, but they are not caused by the activation of independent self-construal. Kitayama et al. (2009) provided a similar perspective called cultural task analysis, according to which specific psychological processes are understood as different ways to satisfy what they call a cultural mandate, a

requirement to be independent (or interdependent). Nonetheless, it is unclear at this stage what cultural mandates are and how to measure them. It seems to us that cultural mandates may not be very different from what Kashima (2009) called interpretive concepts.

Language, Cognition, and Self Recent developments have pointed to a number of avenues of research that point to the dynamic interplay among culture, language use, and self. First, there is a cultural difference in the prevalence of different types of linguistic practices, and they may be intimately linked to cultural differences in self-conceptions. Generally, *contextualizing* linguistic practices are the type of language use that embeds an object of construal within its background context, whereas *decontextualizing* linguistic practices abstract the object away from its context. Contextualizing linguistic practices include pronoun drop (Kashima and Kashima 1998) where pronouns are dropped (e.g., "Went to the movie last night" instead of "I went to the movie last night."), use of concrete predicates such as verbs ("like to play basket ball" instead of "I am athletic"; e.g., Kashima et al. 2006; Maass et al. 2006) and use of contextual qualifications (e.g., "talk a lot with her friends" instead of "talk a lot"; Kashima et al. 2006). Contextualizing linguistic practices are more prevalent in East Asia than in countries based on Western European cultures, and Kashima et al. (2006) showed that cultural difference in linguistic practices can explain the cultural difference in self-descriptions (e.g., Westerners tend to use personality traits to describe themselves more than Easterners).

Second, recent research showed that the priming of some aspects of language use can have a profound impact on general cognitive processes. One such linguistic aspect is closely associated with self-concepts, namely, the first person pronouns, such as "I" and "We." Kuhnen, Oyserman, and their colleagues (e.g., Kuhnen et al. 2001; Kuhnen and Oyserman 2002; Oyserman et al. 2009) have shown that when the concept of "I" is made salient, people tend to separate two kinds of cognitions, whereas when the concept of "We" is made salient, people tend to connect two cognitions. For instance, in a task where people need to remember the location of the icon of an object in a visual display, remembering the location correctly requires connecting the object to its location, whereas abstracting the object from its location is to separate. A better performance on this task shows a better execution of a more connecting than separating process. Another example is a typical Stroop task, where one is required to name the color of the ink (e.g., red) in which a word is printed, when the word represents a meaningful color concept (e.g., green). Attending to the color of the word while disregarding its meaning is to separate, whereas not separating the color and meaning of the word and representing both as a whole is to connect. A better Stroop performance implies an efficient execution of a separating process. The claim is that the "I" prime generally facilitates the separating process, whereas the "We" prime facilitates the connecting process.

There is another linguistic aspect that is known to affect culturally relevant cognition, that is, predicate use. Stapel and Semin (2007) showed that Dutch speakers' perceptual processes can be affected by predicate priming. When encouraged to use adjectives (decontextualizing predicates), they could ignore the perceptual context more than when they were encouraged to use verbs (contextualizing predicates). In other words, contextualizing vs. decontextualizing language use may cause people to perceive more or less contextually.

In combination, these recent developments suggest that culturally prevalent linguistic practices may be in part responsible for the maintenance of cultural differences in a dynamic way. As people use more contextualizing (or decontextualizing) linguistic practices in their daily lives, they may be more likely to engage in contextualizing (or decontextualizing) cognition and perception; the more contextualizing (or decontextualizing) their perception and cognition get, the more contextualizing (or decontextualizing) their language use may become. In other words, language and cognition may form a self-sustaining causal loop, in which self-processes are also profoundly implicated. This type of model can provide further insights into the general processes of cultural dynamics.

From Conceptions of the self to Conceptions of Humans

The review so far has focused on the recent developments and future areas of research in what has been traditionally regarded as the culture and self proper. However, there is a more recent development that may further expand this research area. It is the research on *humanness*, that is, how human beings are construed and how this conception of what it means to be human influences one's self-conceptions. To be sure, the past research on culture and self has interpreted cultural differences in terms of both self-concept and person-concept, and they have been treated quite interchangeably. For instance, people's tendency to characterize themselves in terms of personality traits (self-conceptions) and their tendency to characterize others in terms of personality traits (other-conceptions) have both been interpreted as an expression of individualism (e.g., Triandis 1989; Markus and Kitayama 1991). Nonetheless, if both the self and others are construed similarly, it makes more sense to speak more generally about conceptions of humanness. Thus, the emerging research area of humanness perception may shed an important light on culture and self.

Humanness is an important dimension of social perception that has received little attention in social psychology (Haslam et al. 2008). An exception to this is research on dehumanization which has traditionally been linked to intergroup conflict and violence. More recently, however, researchers have begun to examine the attribution and denial of humanness in the absence of conflict, as well as the role of humanness in social perception more generally. Taking the broadest possible view, humanness could be defined as comprising all the characteristics possessed by humans. This all-encompassing conception of humanness would refer equally to physical qualities (e.g., bipedalism, hairlessness) and psychological attributes (e.g., compassion, linguistic ability). However, for psychologists interested in understanding the role of humanness in social perception, not all human characteristics are of equal importance. Only the characteristics that feature prominently in lay conceptions of humanness are likely to be implicated in social psychological processes.

To find out which qualities were most central to lay-conceptions of humanness, Leyens and colleagues simply asked European students "to list the uniquely human characteristics" (Leyens, et al. 2001, p. 396). Their participants most frequently listed intelligence, reasoning, language and secondary emotions (Leyens et al. 2000). English-speakers do not make a natural linguistic distinction between uniquely-human secondary emotions (e.g., nostalgia, admiration, regret) and non-uniquely human primary emotions (e.g., surprise, anger, fear). However, this distinction is made in French and Spanish (the languages spoken by Leyens and colleagues' respondents), providing the researchers with a convenient and subtle index of humanness (Leyens et al. 2001). Leyens and colleagues' research on infrahumanization has repeatedly shown that people attribute more uniquely human secondary emotions to their ingroups than to outgroups, but has found no corresponding bias in the attribution of primary emotions (Leyens et al. 2007). Thus, infrahumanization researchers have defined humanness as comprising the characteristics that differentiate humans from other animals, typically operationalised as secondary emotions (Leyens et al. 2007).

While this definition of humanness is theoretically sound and has proven to be an important dimension along which groups are differentiated, Haslam and colleagues noted that "a definition of humanness that rests on what is unique to the species is necessarily partial" (Haslam et al. 2008, p. 57). Taking up Kagan's (2004) conceptual distinction between comparative and non-comparative definitions of objects, Haslam and colleagues outlined two distinct senses of humanness (Haslam et al. 2005). The first sense of humanness, labelled 'human uniqueness' (HU), is explicitly comparative and comprises the qualities that distinguish humans from other animals (e.g., language, intelligence, secondary emotions). This sense of humanness corresponds to the definition adopted by Leyens and colleagues: infrahumanization involves the attribution of more HU characteristics (secondary emotions) to the ingroup compared to outgroups (Leyens et al. 2000, 2001). The second kind of humanness, labelled 'human nature' (HN), consists of core human attributes (e.g., warmth, emotionality, depth, curiosity) that are considered to be fundamental, essential or typical of humans (Haslam et al. 2005, 2008). Thus, while 'uniquely human' attributes involving higher cognitive abilities, refinement and civility are understood as the products of enculturation and socialisation, 'human nature' attributes involving emotional capacities, passion, sociability and openness are understood as the innate and natural properties of humans. Haslam (2006) importantly pointed out that HN attributes, while being "typically or essentially human…may not be the same ones that distinguish us from other species" (p. 256). A trait that is often used to illustrate this point is curiosity: most people agree that it is a fundamental aspect of HN, yet also concede that it is common to other species (e.g., cats).

Lay people reliably distinguish between these two senses of humanness when given the opportunity (e.g., Haslam et al. 2004; Haslam et al. 2005). Haslam et al. (2005) distinction between the HU and HN senses of humanness has clear implications for how dehumanization should be understood. When people are denied HN, they should be seen as lacking emotionality, warmth, openness and other deep and essential human qualities. This 'mechanistic' kind of dehumanization represents people as cold, inert, rigid, passive and shallow, and they may even be likened to machines or automata. On the other hand, the denial of HU implies a lack of civility, refinement, moral sensibility, rationality and other uniquely human qualities. This 'animalistic' type of dehumanization should make others seem coarse, uncultured, brutish, amoral and hence animal-like (Haslam 2006). These conceptual predictions have been borne out in empirical research, predominantly using implicit methods (e.g., Loughnan and Haslam 2007; Loughnan et al. 2009).

Haslam et al. (2005) found that people ascribe HN traits to the self more than to others—a process they labelled 'self-humanising'. However, consistent with Cortes et al. (2005), they found no such bias in the attribution of HU traits to self versus others. The self-humanising effect was found to be mediated by ratings of 'inherence', indicating that self-humanising reflects a tendency to attribute more deep-seated and essence-like traits to the self compared to others (Haslam et al. 2005). Self-humanising has since been replicated using both explicit (Haslam and Bain 2007; Koval and Haslam 2008) and implicit (O'Connor et al. 2008) methods. Self-humanising is unrelated to

global self-esteem (Haslam et al. 2005), and is not reducible to the attribution of more positive traits to the self, indicating that it is distinct from self-enhancement (Haslam et al. 2008). A recent cross-cultural study found reliable evidence of self-humanising across six diverse nations, and corroborated the effect's independence of self-enhancement (Loughnan et al. 2010). In fact, this research found that self-humanising was more cross-culturally stable than self-enhancement effects (Loughnan et al. 2010). Taken together, these findings suggest that self-humanising is a robust and important, yet previously unknown, self-serving bias.

There remain a number of research questions concerning the relationships among culture, humanness, and self. For instance, do people's conceptions of humanness vary across cultures? Are there any cross-cultural universals in conceptions of humanness? What about self-humanizing? Although this has been examined with limited cultures, its distribution around the globe is yet to be ascertained. Is this a universal tendency? Or does its extent vary across cultures? If so, what cultural factors determine the degree of self-humanizing? These are all intriguing questions that await future exploration.

Concluding Remarks

The relationship between culture and self has become a significant area of inquiry over the past two decades. The theory and research in this area have caught the attention of researchers in other areas of self and identity, as well as other areas of social and personality psychology more generally, stimulating further research and providing impetus to those areas of inquiry. In short, the culture and self has been one of the engines that have driven the research activities of the entire field of social and personality psychology. The research so far has established the general utility of the concept of self in approaching the general question about the relationship between culture and psychology.

Nonetheless, a number of research questions still remain as this brief review has shown. At present, the most significant of these questions is about the causal role of the self in mediating the relationship between cultural and psychological processes. The standard theory of culture and self—Triandis (1989) and Markus and Kitayama (1991)—has assumed that this was the case; however, the empirical research has not provided simple and straightforward evidence for this assumption. Future research will need to deepen the theorizing about the relationship between culture and psychology, to expand the areas of inquiry outside the culture and self area to broader areas of cultural meaning, and to construct a generative research program that meets the challenges of the 21st century and beyond.

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