Cross-Cultural
Differences
in Perspectives
on the Self

Models of Agency: Sociocultural Diversity in the Construction of Action

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Consider two small cultural artifacts. One is the wall of a crowded subway station in Japan. A poster shows orderly lines of bright yellow fish schooling in a blue sea. The red text reads, "When the train comes, get in line like the fish." Compare this sentiment with that expressed in a *Time* magazine advertisement for a global investment company. There, in black and white, a bald, unsmiling European American businessman stares straight out from the page, warning readers, "Only dead fish swim with the current."

And consider a moment at an American middle school graduation ceremony. A European American 14-year-old goes to the podium to receive an academic achievement award. He raises his hand and exclaims, "I made it. I did it. Yes!" He is followed by another eighth grader, a first-generation Taiwanese American. This 14-year-old says, "Thank you. Our family dream has come true."

Agency: The Self in Action

What impels individual action? Is "individual" action fully individual? Where does motivation come from? What is, and what should be, the role of others in an individual's actions? As psychology expands

and diversifies its scope, it is increasingly evident that there are multiple answers to such questions. The European American examples above reflect an implicit cultural model of agency—normatively good actions originate in an *independent*, autonomous self, and the actions of this self are disjoint, that is, in some ways separate or distinct from the actions of others. By contrast the Asian and Asian American examples reflect another implicit cultural model of agency—normatively good actions originate in an *interdependent* self, and the actions of this self are conjoint, that is, in some ways impelled by others, in relationship and interaction with others. It is likely that most Americans, depending on the situation, can and do enact both types of models, hybrids of these models, as well as still other models, and the same is true for East Asians and Asian Americans, yet their relevant sociocultural contexts are likely to differ in the prevalence and instantiation of these models.

Next consider a description of the British fast-food sandwich chain Pret a Manger, trying to break into the midtown Manhattan lunch market (Parker, 2002). The British chain makes fresh sandwiches daily, but the customer must buy them as made and "may not ask for extra cheese" (p. 71). American investors were skeptical, claiming that at the very least Americans need a condiment station to allow them to individualize their sandwiches. The British sandwich shop managers demurred, arguing that even though "People think, I know the right way to make my sandwich, . . . actually, they don't. We do. That's what we do. We make sandwiches" (p. 72). American managers countered, asserting the importance of lunchtime choice. "Americans want to go their deli and have their sandwich made their way. . . . A customer's control over his sandwich is a link to a powerful childhood satisfaction" (pp. 71–72).

Finally consider two public statements, both taken from American contexts. One is a letter from a UC–Berkeley college invitation package that reads, "There is truly no place like Berkeley. Anywhere. And you've earned a place here. We think you can take this excitement and make it your own. Take the world's ideas and forge new ones. Learn. Imagine. Experiment. Create. Change the world. You can do it and you can do it here. We know you can. Choose Berkeley."

Another is from the radio humorist Garrison Keillor, who in characterizing the rural fictional small town of Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, contends. "True happiness comes from just having to adjust

to what you have, not from choosing. Like ice fishing in Minnesota, you have cold weather, so you make the best of it. Choice can make you miserable."

These latter examples reveal that even within mainstream European and American contexts there are divergent views on the source of action. The American sandwich maker and the American university examples capture and project the view that normatively good actions emanate from an independent self whose actions are disjoint from others or the world and should take the form of choosing and controlling the world and thereby expressing the self. The British sandwich maker and the Minnesota ice fisherman examples take issue with the idea that normatively good outcomes naturally follow from choosing and changing, and suggest instead the wisdom and virtue of adjusting one's self to the actions of expert others or to the world.

Within mainstream psychology, only one particular type of answer to the question "What impels actions?" has been given much theoretical or empirical attention. Since the rejection of behaviorism, when asked "Why did she or he do that?" many psychologists have found the answer in internal states, motives, and dispositions inside disjoint individuals. Yet if the "she" or "he" under scrutiny is not well described as an independent autonomous self who seeks to express one's self through one's action but is better characterized in a given situation as an interdependent self who requires a relationship or a position in a social setting in order to "be," then the answer to the question of motivation will take new forms. The answer will involve a nuanced new look at other people and social situations—factors that have been largely regarded as "external" and therefore less legitimate, authentic, or powerful than internal factors. The focus of this chapter then is on some of the contrasting answers to questions about the sources of action that are found within different sociocultural contexts. Specifically, we will compare European American contexts with those of East Asian contexts, and European American college-educated contexts with European American high school–educated contexts. We suggest that the general model of agency that underlies most social science theorizing and research (as well as most theorizing and research in law, business, education, and medicine) is a *particular* model of agency that has been taken as *general* and *basic*. We then outline one other general theoretical alternative.

This chapter expands on our previous theorizing on the construction of selves and selfways (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Kitayama, 1998; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997). We suggest here that there is important and systematic variability in the ways in which agency or being-in-action is constructed in different socio-cultural contexts, and propose that agency is not separate from these contexts or opposed to it, but instead patterned on the ideas and practices of these contexts. Although the recognition of individuality and of purposeful agency appears to be universal, this recognition does not require a commitment to the European and American ideology of individualism and its particular normative models of human nature and how to be a self. Our current focus builds on and extends the distinction between independent and interdependent modes of constructing the self. In citing this previous work, some have interpreted "selves" to mean explicit concepts that can be assessed through attitude or value scales. In fact, independent or interdependent selves were meant to index broad modes of being or styles of action (i.e., what Markus et al., 1997 referred to as "selving"). In this chapter we emphasize differences in the "self in action" and connect our research with areas of research such as control and choice that implicate and have consequences for the self. That is why we have chosen to use the term *agency*. Following Bruner (1990), action is defined as culturally situated, intentionally based behavior.

VARIATION IN MOTIVATIONAL DYNAMICS

European American parents living in multicultural communities frequently observe that children in many non–European American families, particularly in Asian and West Indian families, appear "inordinately" responsive to the expectations of insistent and demanding parents. Yet, surprisingly, at least from the same European American perspective, these children don't appear to suffer any obvious negative consequences of the enormous "pressure" that is placed on them to achieve and live up to family expectations. In fact, most seem to flourish. Why? Flourishing, according to most well-established social science theories and lay theories of motivation, requires autonomy, self-determination, control, "free choice," and "free will" (e.g.,

DeCharms, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 1995, 1997). From the perspectives of these European American theories, doing what others are doing or what others want you to do seldom tops the list of how to perform well, how to achieve, and how to be a success. Obediently marching to the drumbeat of those next to you in line, even if those others are friends, family, or teachers, can connote conformity, passivity, dependence, or weak ego boundaries.

Drawing on recent theorizing in both cultural psychology and psychological anthropology (Cross & Markus, 1999; Dissanayake, 1996; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; J. G. Miller, 1994b, 1999; Miller & Bersoff, 1992), we suggest that the phenomenon of "pushy" parents who have contented, high-achieving children is not particularly anomalous in many contexts. Further, we propose that the best-known and most highly theorized model of agency in psychology, the model we will call disjoint agency, is not a general model of motivation but is instead a model afforded and promoted mainly by the meanings and practices of life in mainstream middle-class European American contexts. In different social contexts, both within the United States and in other parts of the world, this particular model holds much less sway over the public and private construction of action. Increasingly, research that incorporates a sociocultural perspective reveals differences in the motivational dynamics that emerge in different contexts.

Accounts from Western history and literature as well as psychology suggest that people everywhere, in all types of situations, can regard themselves as agentic. That is, most people seem to have a subjective sense of the self as intentionally acting within the world, at least some of the time. In English, one might say that people commonly have a sense of an "I" who is doing something. Yet what people are doing and how they experience agency can vary dramatically. Being a person, behaving, and acting are not simply automatically reactions to stimuli. One cannot just "be" in a general, unspecified way. In fact, a defining feature of our species is that we enter into worlds that have been constructed by our predecessors' ideas and particular ways of doing things (Bruner, 1990; Dewey, 1938; Holland et al., 1998; Tomasello, 1999; Wertsch, del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995). As a consequence, most of human behavior, whether eating, walking, talking, caring, parenting, relating to others, thinking, feeling, wanting, knowing, or trying, is realized through culture-specific language.

schemas, practices, and tools and thus unfolds in culture-specific ways. This includes how people experience themselves, but even more broadly how they map the boundaries of individual action—where does it originate and where does it end? Being a person and acting in the world are anything but natural acts; they are culturally saturated processes that entail engagement with culture-specific sets of meanings and practices, what we will call models of agency. These models of agency simultaneously reflect the structuring of the social world and the meanings that animate these arrangements. Models of agency reflect patterning of ideas and practices within particular contexts, not properties or dispositions of people. As we will outline here, it is increasingly evident that there are marked variations in sociocultural models of "how to be" an actor in the world and in their distribution in various contexts. This typically invisible diversity can be systematically linked to sociocultural variation in behavior.

CULTURE AND PSYCHE MAKE EACH OTHER UP

A central objective of our research is to further elaborate and specify the theoretical perspective of the mutual constitution of culture and psyche (Fiske et al., 1998; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). From this cultural psychological perspective, cultural practices and meanings structure psychological processes, which in turn generate, perpetuate, and transform these cultural practices and meanings. Once we assume that psychological processes and cultural content are continually reconstituting one another and that both are in flux, we should expect that where there is variation in sociocultural context, there will also exist corresponding psychological differences.

Models of Agency

We propose that agency can be understood and experienced in diverse ways and that delineating various prototypical models of agency (i.e., ideas and practices of agency) can aid further theoretical analysis of the process of agency and help illuminate what might otherwise appear as anomalous patterns of action. As indicated in Table 1, models of agency are defined as implicit frameworks of ideas and practices about how to be that construct the actions of the self, of others, and the relationships among those actions. They are typically invisible to those that engage or enact them.

Table 1. *Models of agency*

Implicit frameworks of ideas and practices about how to be that construct the actions of the self, of others, and the relationships among those actions.

1A. Disjoint models	1B. Conjoint models
Definition of good actions	
Self-focused	Relationship-focused
Take account of the perspective of the self—"inside-out" perspective is dominant	Take account of the perspective of the other—"outside-in" perspective is relevant
Independent from others; follow from expression of individual's preferences, intentions, goals	*interdependent* with others, arise in interaction with other, responsive to others
Consequences of actions	
Express and affirm the *independent* self	Affirm the *interdependent* self and one's social position
Agentic feelings may include esteem, efficacy, power	Agentic feelings may include relatedness, connectedness, solidarity, sympathy
Actions are diagnostic of the self, and individuals are responsible for the consequences of their actions	Actions are diagnostic of the nature of relationships, and consequences for actions are shared among those in the relationships
Style of action	
Actively controlling, influencing others, the world; fosters a proactive stance	Actively referencing, adjusting to others, the world; fosters a receptive stance
Sources of action	
Actions are "freely" chosen contingent on one's own preferences, goals, intentions, motives	Actions are responsive to obligations and expectations of others, roles, situations; preferences, goals, intentions are interpersonally anchored
Outcomes of actions are largely personally controllable	Outcomes are largely jointly determined and controlled

DISJOINT AGENCY

According to a dominant American middle-class model, normatively "good" actions should be primarily the results of the individual's own desires, goals, intentions, or choices; the independent self is foregrounded as the source of action while others are fixed in the background (see Table 1A). Agency is constructed as personal and bounded within the individual. Drawing on a distinction made by Hamaguchi (1985) in describing differences between selves in Eu-

ropean American contexts and selves in Japanese contexts, agency is organized from the perspective of the self, an "inside-out" as opposed to the "outside-in" perspective of conjoint agency. A primary consequence of agency is the definition, expression, and affirmation of the self as independent.

This model of agency as disjoint, or as disconnected from others and rooted solely in the individual, is widely distributed and inscribed in mainstream American society; it is expressed by social scientists, reflected in the media, and echoed by individuals talking about themselves. Such disjoint agency is a social product and a social process, and it arises in a field of ongoing interactions with others. The disjoint model is socially constructed and practiced. Yet the social nature and source of disjoint agency is not obvious, and it is often cast as an asocial model of motivation. For example, an anthropologist in dramatizing the prototypical American action tendency writes, "The American cultural nightmare is that the individual throb of growth will be sucked dry in slavish social conformity. All life long our central struggle is to defend the individual from the collective" (Plath, 1980, p. 216). American advertisements and commercials commonly implicate this disjoint model of agency. An advertisement for Suretrade.com, an online stock trading company, boasts, "We don't rely on the government; we don't rely on the company; we don't rely on the neighbors—we bet only on ourselves." The Nike Corporation uses two mantralike phrases to promote their wares: "I can" and "Just do it." Both messages inscribe the idea of agency as disjoint and suggest that action begins with and depends primarily on the individual. Similarly, when European American university students are asked to describe themselves, they commonly offer statements that feature the self as the source of action: "I have a lot of positive energy. I'm in control" or "I do the things I like, and in general I believe I make my own destiny" (Markus et al., 1997).

Disjoint models of agency are very common, especially in some parts of middle-class America. In these contexts, American psychologists have been good at illuminating this type of controlling, influencing self-contained agency and showing that it is a key to a happy, healthy, productive life (Bandura, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 1987, 1995, 1997; Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999; Lachman, 1986; Langer, 1975; Morling & Fiske, 1994; Rodin, 1986; Taylor, 1989). From this highly individualist perspective of European American psychology,

most "others" stand apart from and in a particular relationship to the self; they are necessary for relations and communities, but they are often experienced as extrinsic—a part of the environment to be controlled, influenced, or persuaded. In fact, throughout Western philosophical, political, social, and behavioral science, social relationships and individuality are often conceptualized as antagonistic. With the exception of freely chosen friends and partners, many forms of social relationships are regularly conceptualized in terms of duty and unwanted pressure, or as force that is applied to the independent self (Adams, Garcia, & Markus, 2002; Kitayama & Markus, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1994). And when the influence of social pressure is acknowledged in an individual's action, the action is often seen as tainted and thus as less revealing of the "true" or "real" or "authentic" self. Motives that appear as altruistic or that require a focus on the needs or intentions of others are often recast as essentially self-interested or self-serving—for example, she helped him today because she planned to ask him for a favor next week (D. T. Miller, 1999).

The assumptions and practices of self-interest and self-expression are at the core of Western individualism. They provide an anchor for the predominantly Western mode of constructing and motivating the self (Baumeister, 1987; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994; Hsu, 1985; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996; Sampson, 1985; Schooler, 1990a; Taylor, 1989). From the perspective of a disjoint model, agency becomes an individual essence, obscuring the role of others in its realization. At the same time, a growing volume of studies suggests (Adams, 2001; Argyle, 1999; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stivey, & Surrey, 1991; Lamont, 2000; Markus, Ryff, Conner, Pudberry, & Barnett, 2001; Markus, Ryff, Curhan, & Palmerscheim, in press; Miller, 1994a, Rossi, 2001; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984) that in other differently configured, social worlds, both within European American contexts and outside of them, there are other forms of agency, forms that are not as explicitly individualized or disjoint, but are instead conjoint.

CONJOINT AGENCY

A particularly distinctive feature of the family of models we label as conjoint is that actions do not come securely attached to individual agents; instead, socially important others and institutions, and rela-

tions with those others and institutions, are focal and are necessary for authentic or good action (see Table 1B). From this perspective, individuals experience themselves as interdependent selves—as in-relation-to-others, as belonging to social groups, or as significantly and reciprocally enmeshed in families, communities, or work groups. There is agency and there are agents, but these agents do not experience themselves as "free" from others. Actions thus require the consideration and anticipation of the perspective of others and are a consequence of the fulfillment of reciprocal obligations or expectations. Actions involve interdependent selves referencing each other, adjusting to each other, and of improving the fit between what one is doing and what is expected. A primary consequence of conjoint agency is the definition, expression, and affirmation of the self as interdependent.

Models of agency as conjoint are reflected and fostered by experts, by institutional policies and practices, and by the public representations broadcast by the media and find, like disjoint models, expression in private self-representations. In characterizing the Japanese self, the anthropologist Ohnuki-Tierney (1996) writes, "The social self does not exist without the social other, and the social self is always dialogically defined in terms of the social other in a given social context. A lone individual who must pour his own sake is on the verge of becoming nonself" (p. 157). Public and shared meanings also reflect these ideas. For example, an advertisement for a Korean supermarket reads, "With effort, you can prepare pork for dinner that is almost as good as your mother-in-law's." "Authentic" or preferred action is often depicted as meeting expectations, being part of a group, or resulting from some process of mutual accommodation among people in a socially significant group. As these values and practices of conjoint agency are incorporated into society, they become part of individual selves. Thus, it is common among Japanese students to find statements such as "I behave in order for people to feel peaceful." Or "I work hard to be like others" (Markus et al., 1997). Agency or acting upon one's world requires an overt consideration and referencing of others.

From many non-Western ontological perspectives, social relations are construed to be primary and to exist prior to the emergence and definition of each individual self. Accordingly the assumption is that humans are designed not to be selfish but instead to be part

of relations, to be joiners, and to feel accepted (Fukuyama, 1999; Hsu, 1985; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). In contexts where such notions are pervasive, arrangements of everyday social life encourage an interdependent mode of construction in which the self is assumed to be a socially connected entity that is defined in reference to others. When human activity is parsed in terms of human relations and situations, rather than in terms of individuals and their actions, obligations to others and the expectations of others can be seen as inducing and scaffolding motivation, rather than as force or pressure. This is not less agency; it is a different style of personal agency. In fact, according to this mode of being a person, meaningful social engagement is a necessary requirement for the personal self to be defined, elaborated, and held in place. Individuality is often thought to be derived from a social relationship and serves as an important index of involvement in the relationship.

· Notions of agency as conjoint or relational can also be found in the theories of European American psychology, but they have not been emphasized in the empirical work. Social psychologists are well aware that the construction of the self and agency is socially mediated and occurs in conjunction with the construction of social relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cooley, 1902; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Hoyle, Kernis, Leary, & Baldwin, 1999; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Mead, 1934). For example, it is the fundamental insight of G. H. Mead that the meaning of an act (and thus eventually one's self and being) is complete only in the act (or the gesture, in his terminology) as answered by others' acts (Bourdieu, 1972; Bruner, 1990; Giddens, 1984; Goffman, 1959). As a consequence, the intention of the first person is often undetermined until or unless it is placed in a proper interpersonal context. In this process of meaning-making, cultural models of agency are essential for organizing and understanding action.

Agency as an Individual Property of "Agents"

The notion of agency is most identified with Western philosophy, particularly with Descartes' ideas of the disengaged subject whose moral strength comes from inside him, not from outside sources (Taylor, 1989). From these Western perspectives, action cannot occur by itself; actions in the world require and imply agents who cause

the action (Heider, 1958). An agent is often defined as a source of planful action (Morris, Menon, & Ames, 2001). In many such theories of action, actions are a function of motives and intentions that in turn reflect the personal beliefs and desires of agents (Wellman, 1990). Accordingly, agency is the exclusive property of individuals and resides within individuals.

The idea of agency as an individual property and as "free" is a foundational notion for many areas of American psychology. Many of the field's significant concepts—choice, control, autonomy, conformity, obedience, compliance, reactance, self-determination, intrinsic motivation, overjustification, the person/situation dichotomy, deindividuation, and dissonance—are rooted in the defining tension: Can the individual act on his or her own preferences, values, beliefs, or motives, or is the individual "constrained," hindered, or overwhelmed by the expectations and requirements of others? The self-interested actor, the conceptual product of economic theory, the rational man of the law, and the authentic self of clinical and counseling psychology also share this atomistic view of agency and a commitment to the idea that most actions result from one's own desires, goals, and intentions. This model is also the basis for assigning responsibility for consequences of actions. Because individuals are cast as under their own steam, as self-directed, they are also seen as morally responsible for their own actions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Miller, 1994b; Schooler, 1990a).

Psychology's view that individuals should choose and control their actions unconstrained by others' expectations is anchored in the philosophical legacy of Hobbes in the 17th century, Bentham in the 19th century, and Dawkins in the late 20th century (Schwartz, 1986). Moreover, this model of the person has been objectified and made real through a manifold of everyday practices and institutions that have been structured according to these understandings and that serve to further foster these understandings. Currently whether the approach is biological, social, cognitive, psychoanalytic, or evolutionary, most psychological research implicates and incorporates only one model of agency. For the most part, other models of agency have not been considered. Psychologists may be prematurely settling on a psychology that incorporates only a parochial view of the "basic" psychological states and processes and their nature and function. While sound and appropriate for particular contexts, this psychology may be a

culture-specific psychology, one rooted in a largely unexamined set of assumptions about what it means to be an actor, agent, or person and about what counts as a unit of meaningful action.

More than One Way to Be an Agent?

The fact that actions are not universally given but instead take form and meaning through models that reflect and foster contextually prevalent assumptions about the nature of action has typically gone unmarked. For most of its history, psychology has been carried out by middle-class Americans and Europeans who have engaged people very like themselves as respondents or subjects (Cartwright, 1978). As social scientists are examining human action in detail and in contexts with differing structure, commitments, and foundational ontological and philosophical assumptions, agency is emerging as a complex and culturally variable process. For example, the goal of developing a culturally grounded psychology—a goal of increasing urgency (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992; Bond, 1988; Cole, 1991; Kim & Berry, 1993; Maehr & Nicholls, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Miller, 1994b; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Shweder, 1990; Triandis, 1990, 1995)—has produced a body of results and findings that cannot be easily explained with well-known psychological principles.

THE EMPIRICAL CONTEXT

From the perspective of psychology, three fairly recent experimental studies are especially significant in signaling the need for an expanded understanding of agency. These studies represent substantial challenges to the well-documented generalizations in the existing literature. Iyengar and Lepper (1999) compared Anglo American and Asian American children for their performance on an anagram task. They found that motivation was enhanced when the European Americans chose for themselves which categories of anagrams to complete, and performance was impaired when another person (the respondent's mother or their peers) chose for them. In marked contrast, Asian American children showed better performance when they worked on anagrams selected by their mothers or by their peers.

Similarly, Ji, Peng, and Nisbett (2000) presented respondents with a split computer screen. On the left side they flashed one of two arbitrary figures; then on the right they flashed another of two

arbitrary figures. For some of the trials, there was no association between what came up on the right and what came up on the left; for others there was an association between the two figures. Participants were asked to judge how strong the association was on each set of trials and how confident they were of their answer. Ji et al. found that giving European American students the opportunity to make choices that were incidental to a covariation task (such as which object would be presented on the left side of the computer screen or how much time would elapse between the appearance of the first and second figure) improved their performance on the task and their confidence in their judgments. Giving Chinese students the opportunity to make the same incidental choices (Ji et al. called this control) had no effect on their performance or on their confidence ratings.

Heine and Lehman (1997) invoked the classic "free choice" dissonance paradigm. From the perspective of this paradigm, actions based on the individual's own preferences are assumed to be preferred. Accordingly they found that after choosing one CD from a set of CDs a typical spread of alternatives was observed for North American respondents, such that liking for the chosen CD increased while liking for the unchosen CD decreased. The comparable spread was not found, however, among the Japanese respondents, that is, the CD they chose based on their own preferences was not preferred. Together these three studies suggest a need to reevaluate the general assumption that good or preferred actions will necessarily follow from the expression of one's own preferences and intentions.

Moreover, even within European American contexts, survey and interview descriptions of people in working-class contexts reveal a style of agency in which people are less likely to be intentionally acting upon the world by expressing their own preferences or intentions than by maintaining connections, "conforming" to relational norms, and meeting obligations (Argyle, 1999; Kohn, Naoi, Schoenbach, & Schooler, 1990; Kohn & Schooler, 1983; Kusserow, 1999a, 1999b; Lamont, 2000; Schooler, 1990a). These more relational, more social styles of agency have received sparse attention and theoretical analysis, but they support the hypothesis that the currently dominant model of agency is not a universal human model. Schooler (1990a) suggests that being an autonomous, self-directed, efficacious individual who freely chooses beliefs and actions unhindered by official constraints "has been the goal of only a small portion of mankind" (p. 19). Dif-

ferences in the distribution of this goal are particularly likely within societies that are not homogenous socially or culturally (Inkeles & Smith, 1974; Redfield, 1956). Meyer (1988) argues, in fact, that societies with elaborated notions of autonomy and self-directedness are so rare that it is important to detail the types of institutional arrangements that afford such a view.

This intriguing variability in the sources and nature of motivation or agency suggests that much more explicitly comparative work could be very useful. Such comparisons might involve the type of cross-national comparisons that have made up the first wave of cross-national psychology, but also comparisons based on many socially significant categories including race, ethnicity, social class, religion, gender, age, and immigrant status. Further, it suggests that the understanding and experience of agency are much more custom-crafted and context-specific than previously imagined. Agency may not require autonomy or self-directedness; it can be manifest in other forms.

THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

As researchers have begun to observe variability in motivational patterns and to question whether the individual is always understood as the source of action, there have been two types of responses. One has been to observe that in some contexts it is the group and not the individual that is a common source of action. Morris, Menon, and Ames (2001), for example, have drawn attention to the ways in which culture shapes agency, noting that until quite recently, most psychologists following Piaget have assumed that understandings of agency are universal and develop primarily on the basis of the child's own sense experience with the world. To illuminate the role of culture in the understandings and practices of agency, Morris and colleagues contrasted the conceptions of agency salient in American and Chinese cultures. They suggested that in American contexts, agency is conceptualized primarily as a property of individual persons, whereas in Chinese contexts, agency is primarily conceptualized in terms of collectives such as groups. Bandura (1986) has also formulated a concept of group-based agency. Collective efficacy is a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to reproduce given levels of attainments. Similarly,

in the jurisprudence literature there is also a growing concern with what Bratman (1999) calls shared agency.

Another set of theorists has focused not on families, groups, or organizations as the sources of action but instead on agency that derives from being in relationships. From this perspective, the source of the agency is interpersonal, but it is individually experienced as intentionally acting on the world. J. G. Miller (1984, 1988, 1994b) was among the first to draw attention to the sociocultural grounding of motivation and to its interpersonal nature. In American contexts, doing one's duty or sacrificing one's self for others is giving up agency and is often constructed as being a dead fish. Yet Miller argued that one could be motivated to do one's duty and experience agency in the course of doing one's duty. She quotes O'Flaherty, who in describing India writes, "Traditional India regards duty as emanating from one's nature, one can't help doing it, while the Western idea of duty requires a struggle against oneself, and the idea of 'glad concurrence' (of one's desires with others) is far less prominent in Western attitudes to duty than is the image of bitter medicine" (p. x). From many East Asian perspectives, for example, close others (the others of one's in-group) "naturally" scaffold a person, and relations with others are necessary for selfhood. In fact, to function appropriately requires the engagement of others; others are a necessary source of energy and a fundamental element of individual action. Miller and Bersoff (1992) contend that in Hindu Indian contexts, for example, interpersonal responsibilities—doing what relevant others oblige you to do—are mandatory and have a moral force.

A related perspective is being forged in a rapidly expanding literature on the cultural form of Japanese selves and agency (Bachnik, 1994; Kondo, 1990; Lebra, 1993; Lewis, 1995; Rosenberger, 1992). These studies suggest that, in the Japanese context, agency arises from the fundamental relationship of individuals to each other and that relationship, rather than the individual, may be a functional unit of the self. This is not the same as saying that agency is located in the group or in the collective or that Japanese selves lack individuality or independence or are typically experienced in terms of roles. It does imply, however, that agency or acting in the world is experienced as "being in relation." Agency derives from being "part of it," and multiple ties and social entailments are the basis of being a person. Indeed, individuals are most strongly impelled or motivated to engage in an

intrinsically appealing action when they perceive the action to have been requested or expected of them by significant others. Such an expectation highlights one's embeddedness in a social relationship, providing a frame in which to locate, anchor, and derive the meaning of one's action. Similarly, following studies of human agency in Sinhalese Buddhist villages in Sri Lanka, Dissanayake (1996) writes, "I find the ideas of networks of communication, webs of affiliation, and intimately shared cultural spaces are central to the operation of agency. Rather than conceiving of human agency as solely individual-based and person-centered, the villagers in Sri Lanka who I studied made me realize that agency can and does manifest itself in and through networks of interactions" (p. xiv).

The reformulation of agency and the identification of its necessary elements are rapidly becoming controversial within psychology. For example, Deci and Ryan (1987) concur that others can be significant in motivation but insist on the universal importance of autonomy, which they define as volition or the self-endorsement of one's actions or expressed beliefs. They argue that this requirement does not imply individualism, independence, or separateness and note that people can act autonomously in accord with the communal good.

A MORE GENERAL DEFINITION

In search of a definition of agency with relatively few culture-specific philosophical commitments, we use one developed by Inden and identified by Holland (Holland et al., 1998; Inden, 1990). Agency is "the realized capacity of people to act upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex relationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable, though not necessarily from the same point of view" (p. 23).

Inden's definition is useful for our purposes because it does not insist that the sources of all agentic actions are individual intentions or individual internal states, such as motives or preferences. Further, it is consistent with the idea that there are likely to be different understandings of the source and nature of action. In some sociocultural

contexts, purposeful or motivated behavior need not originate with the individual's own intentions or states to be described and experienced as agentic. People, Inden (1990) argues, have the realized capacity to "act as 'instruments' of other agents, to be 'patients,' and to be the recipients of the acts of others" (p. 23), though these aspects of agency are usually ignored in analyses. In the opening examples, for example, students presumably experienced themselves as agentic and as acting upon their world as they completed their course requirements and performed well in middle school, even though the sources of their motivation differed. If self is defined in relation to various significant others, agency can legitimately arise from efforts to maintain one's position in this relational web, and the source of agency may be experienced as residing in others or in the relationship.

Why "Models" of Agency?

Models of agency are at one and the same time forms of knowledge and social practices. Cultural models of agency help individuals to interpret, experience, and create meaning in their social worlds. An emphasis on models of agency implicates one of the central, most powerful, yet still only partially utilized ideas in social psychology. Humans do not just observe and interact with objective worlds that exist "out there." Instead, they act within worlds patterned by the structure of meanings and practices of those who inhabit these worlds. As they participate in these worlds, they themselves become co-constructors of their socially shared realities (Bartlett, 1932; Bruner, 1957; Hastorf & Cantril, 1954; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). Models of agency, then, are not sources of bias or of selection that are applied after behavior has occurred. Agentic experience is not encountered or observed; rather, it is fashioned (Schaffer, 1992) with the aid of cultural models that give form and substance to the experience. Typically, there is no phenomenological awareness of one's role in this construction or of any discretion in selecting the appropriate model of agency from the cultural tool-kit. Nor is there any awareness of one's actions being constructed by others and by situations.

Moreover, models of agency are not just inside the head, a matter of individual attitudes, beliefs, and values; they are also materialized and objectified. Prevalent ideas about agency are built into the

world such that sociocultural contexts come prefabricated, reflecting the blueprint of a particular model of agency. To emphasize this aspect, we use the word *model* rather than the term *theory of* this aspect (cf., Morris et al., 2001) or the term *schema of agency*. Drawing on work on cultural models in anthropology and psychology (D'Andrade, 1981, 1984; Fryberg & Markus, 2002; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Mesquita, in press; Plaut, 2002; Shore, 1996, 2000; Sperber, 1985) and on work in social representations (Moscovici, 1981, 1998), we suggest that models of agency refer both to conceptual representations of agency and to material representations. Thus sociocultural models of agency are reflected in and fostered by individual interpretive frameworks, knowledge structures, themes, or schemas—ways of feeling, thinking, and acting—and also in publicly available forms such as policies, practices, symbols, and social institutions and situations.

In many American contexts, for example, being a culturally appropriate person requires the sense that the self is the operational unit in action and is both the source and the locus of control for action. But this sense of agency is not solely a function of positive self-relevant attitudes; it requires a North American social world practiced in particular ways. Disjoint agency is created and maintained by dense networks of informal and formal practices, such as explaining achievement by imputing strong achievement motives or "motivation" to people and by explaining failure as a lack of those qualities; by the frequent distribution of awards, honors, and praise for people who maintain high levels of motivation, by situations like job interviews which require people to explain their lives in terms of their needs or motives for achievement, and by self-help books and motivational seminars that promote the idea that more and better motives can be acquired through practice.

The process of successfully engaging with others in contexts structured according to disjoint models of agency shapes action and the actor accordingly. Those models of agency that are prevalent and broadly distributed in the social worlds in which the person participates constitute and maintain the nature of a person's sense of agency. Take, for example, common explanations of motivation, success, and failure in the Olympic Games. A close analysis reveals that the athletes, the media reporting the Olympics, the television viewers, and the newspaper readers publicly co-construct a cultur-

ally resonant understanding that incorporates a number of shared assumptions about the nature of the agency implicated in these events (Markus, Omoregie, Uchida, Ito, & Kitayama, 2002).

In the American coverage of the Olympics, athletes who are expected to do well are asked to describe themselves and their behavior. In Japan, such profiles are likely to involve many more interviews with significant others: teachers, coworkers, parents who know the athletes. After an event, American cameras zoom in on the athlete, and American reporters directly focus attention on the athletes' internal states and traits as the springs of action. They individualize and personalize behavior by asking, "Are you happy with yourself?" or "Were you always confident you could do it?" American athletes customarily respond with answers that fit these questions. When asked about his winning performance, gold medallist Gary Hall said, "I don't want to sound selfish and say I am swimming for myself, you know? There's a lot of influences and motivating factors. But when I stand up there on the blocks, it has to be coming from me" (NBC, September 2000)

In contrast, Japanese cameras often show the athlete in the context of coaches and other team members, and reporters ask questions that promote a less individualized portrayal of the sources of actions. They ask, "Who encouraged you or who helped you to overcome your previous weaknesses in this event?" Accordingly, Japanese athletes respond with answers that reflect a conjoint model of agency. Thus Naoko Takahashi, the women's marathon gold medallist, accounted for her win by saying, "Here is the best coach in the world, the best manager in the world, and all the people who support me—all of these things were getting together and became a gold medal. So I think I didn't get it alone, not only by myself" (NBC, September 2000). Cultural models are clearly vital and active elements of experience and of everyday practice; they are the frameworks that hold intended worlds together, providing the glue for perception and the scaffolding for action. Among the American Olympic athletes, there are also those who repeatedly acknowledge the support of family members, especially in the Winter 2002 Olympics. There were many who acknowledged their pride in competing for their country, but this acknowledgment occurred less often, was less extensive, and was done in different ways than those that characterized the Japanese athletes. Similarly, although some Japanese athletes expressed a desire to be the best in

the world in their sport, all medallists mentioned the role of others in their win.

In the sections to follow, we will first report the results of a number of studies comparing respondents engaged in European American contexts with those engaged in Japanese contexts, and then a number of studies comparing those engaged in college-educated American contexts with those engaged in high school–educated contexts. Together these two sets of comparisons allow us to examine the hypothesis that disjoint agency arises most commonly in educated or middle-class European American contexts, and that it is a particular model of agency that has been cast within much of the social sciences as the universal model.

Exploring Agency in European American and East Asian Contexts

CHOICE

In mainstream American contexts, choice is critically important (Friedman, 1990). Within this consumer-oriented society, environments seemingly come prepackaged in terms of an array of choices to be made. These choices appear as self-evident aspects of reality, requiring and affording "choosers." Conveniently, choosing (as in shopping, for example) is considered a highly desirable action, perhaps the primary action, in many American settings. For example, in a recent article about Coca-Cola and marketing, Stevenson (2002) asserted that the world's consumers "want endless choices, in dozens of categories" (p. 10). The notion that the world is configured in terms of choices and choosers is in fact so pervasive in middle-class American contexts that it can only be seen through explicit contrast with cultural contexts rooted in other assumptions. Understanding the world as replete with choices to be made by the individual is linked to the idea that the individual (the key unit of social reality) has a constellation of preferences and goals to be used in exercising these choices. The understanding that choices are vehicles for expressing preferences, values, goals, and thereby manifesting selves further fuels the notion that choices are important. In cultural contexts like those of mainstream middle-class America that foster the belief that people should be known primarily through their actions and achieve-

ments, rather than through their social locations or social roles, one is what one does.

In contexts where agency is understood as disjoint, choices become critical actions; they are saturated with meaning and taken very seriously. Through choice one can express and display one's individuality, uniqueness, autonomy, convictions, traits, attributes, or in short, one's self. From the nation's foundational documents, in which Thomas Jefferson declares that "without choice, a man is not a man, but an instrument, a thing," to contemporary advertising campaigns which offer a variety of shape, styles, colors, flavors, and options and which stress the importance of "being in the driver's seat," "choosing for one's self," or "having it your way," choice is a mainstay of American cultural contexts, carrying with it everything "good"—freedom, individuality, control.

Moreover, from a European American perspective, it is common to use the discourse of choice even when other framings might be equally viable. As a result, choices appear as ubiquitous, inevitable, seeming to occur in virtually every conceivable context. Thus, people routinely select blue shirts rather than white shirts, ask for tea rather than soft drinks, ride the bus instead of taking the car, work until seven rather than leaving at five, go to the party instead of staying at home. While such actions may not in fact be a result of "choice," because of the prevalence of disjoint models of agency, they are often constructed as such by actors and observers alike.

In contexts where agency is understood as conjoint, choice (or what may appear as "choice" to a European American observer) may be a different activity; it may have a different role, a different significance in the stream of behavior. If the key unit of social reality is the individual-in-specific-and-dynamic-social-relations-and-social-situations, then choice is necessarily linked to personal bonds, to obligations, and to maintaining status or position. Choices then are activities that necessarily implicate others and involve referencing or adjusting to the particular others that are salient in a specific situation. When an interdependent self "makes" a "choice," it is less in the service of expressing one's preferences, goals, or convictions and more in the service of reflecting and improving one's position in a particular social situation or structure. The nature of this choice, its consequences, and how it will be experienced thus depends on the nature of the other or on the anticipated nature of the interaction with

the other. When a relatively conjoint model of agency prevails, the focus is not just a representation of the person's own interests, goals, and preferences, but instead a holistic representation of the relational context in which the person's own behavior *and* that of *others* are reciprocally interdependent. By contrast, choice for an independent self is tied to expression of the self's internal and reasonably stable attributes and is therefore less likely to vary with the nature of the social situation.

The sources of conjoint agency are multiple as are the sources of disjoint agency. Among the many ancient roots of the idea of the relational individual within East Asian contexts are Confucianism, which highlights a social hierarchy supported by loyalty, duty, devotion, and filial piety, and Zen Buddhism, which emphasizes compassion, other-reliance, and self-transcendence. From these non-Western philosophical perspectives, the conjoint construction of behavior is both normal and normative. Ideas consistent with these perspectives are reflected and promoted in many everyday practices (e.g., self-criticism) that require explicit attention to and consideration of the expectations of others. In contexts such as working-class American contexts where a focus on others is not clearly fostered in institutionalized practices and widespread ideology, an attention and attunement to others may be promoted by the nature of the social ecology and by the interpersonal conditions of everyday life that require people to depend on one another and that bring them into close and ongoing contact with one another.

To gain some evidence for the notion that European American and East Asian cultural contexts differ in the prevalence of particular models of agency, Kim and Markus (1999) focused on the media, conducting a study of advertising in popular magazines in Korea and in the United States. Some recent studies suggest that the average adult is exposed to hundreds of advertisements every day (Kakutani, 1997), and that these ads directly reflect what is valued and emphasized in a given cultural context (Caillatan & Mueller, 1996; Gregory & Munch, 1997; Han & Shavitt, 1994). These ads not only mirror what is of value and what is good in a given context; they also serve to foster and project these ideas. Kim and Markus compared the widely circulated magazines in each cultural context and included magazines from a variety of categories: news, home, fashion, youth, business. An analysis of all full-page ads in multiple

issues of each of the magazines revealed that while the American ads relied most heavily on themes of uniqueness, freedom, choice, and rebelling against norms, the Korean ads most commonly invoked themes of respect for group values, following a trend, and harmony with the group. While some examples of all themes could be found in both sets of ads, the Korean and the American diverged sharply from one another in terms of the prevalence of particular themes. American ads reflected and projected particular ideas about the "right" way to be; they claim that good actions are disjoint actions, that is, actions that are organized from the perspective of the actor. Whether the product is perfume, soap, cars, computers, or software, the message is clear and insistent—be free, declare your independence, think differently, ditch the Joneses, find your own road, be a driver, not a passenger, be an original, you can do it. Korean ads also reflect and project particular ideas about the "right" way to be; they suggest, however, that good and appropriate actions are organized from the perspective of others. The message is be like us, follow this trend, try to do it in the traditional way, be a good role member (a good teacher, student, employee), here is the way to be. These types of public representations of appropriate action are pervasive and can be found throughout society; they are reflected and projected in educational, legal, and political policies, practices, and institutions. Unless other cultural models of agency become salient, individuals behave according to these implicit blueprints for action and in so doing further perpetuate the dominant models.

The results of some simple studies manipulating choice and the conditions of choice also support the idea that sociocultural contexts can be distinguished by their prevalent models of agency. A set of studies carried out by Kim and Markus (1999) is directly relevant to the hypothesis that choices serve different cultural purposes and carry different meanings. The participants in the study were adults at an international airport. As a gift for completing the survey, participants were presented with five pens and asked to choose the pen they liked. The pens were always presented in groups of five and among the five there was at least one pen with a different color from the rest.

When the pens were presented in a set of four of one color and one of another color, 78% of European Americans picked the unique pen. In contrast, 31% of East Asians (respondents returning

home to Taiwan, Japan, and Korea) chose the unique pen. Similar results were obtained when the pens were presented in a set of three of one color and two of another—72% of Europeans Americans chose the relatively unique pen, whereas 15% of East Asians chose it. From the disjoint agency perspective, choosing the unique pen or the pen in the minority may affirm a culturally encouraged and valued preference for expressing uniqueness, while from the conjoint agency perspective, choosing the common or majority pen may affirm a culturally valued and encouraged importance of being like others in the situation and fitting in with these others. The meaning of the pen choice appears to depend on knowing which models of agency are prevalent in a given cultural setting. Respondents in both settings may be actively engaged in acting upon their worlds as they choose their pens, but given the different implicit models that scaffold their actions, their actions may well diverge from one another.

To more directly assess the powerful influence of context-specific models of agency, Kim (2001) repeated the choice of pen study with Korean American college students who were visiting Korea as part of a summer international exchange program. The program lasted for two months. Potential participants were approached and asked to fill out a questionnaire in exchange for a pen. The questionnaire included a scale of independence/interdependence (Singelis, 1994) and questions assessing ethnic identity (e.g., "How important is your ethnicity to you?"). Once the participants completed the questionnaires, they were asked to choose a pen following the procedure described above. The study was conducted at two points in time—one group of Korean Americans was tested after being in the summer program for one week. A second group was tested after being in the summer program for five weeks.

Notably, there was no difference in the participants' responses on the explicit measures as a function of the length of time spent in Korea in the summer program. Respondents did not endorse more interdependent items or claim that their Korean ethnicity was of greater relative importance, suggesting their explicit ideas were relatively stable over the five-week period. However, the pattern of choices reveals that after one week in the summer program, 45% of the respondents chose the unique pen. After five weeks, only 17% did so.

Many cultural institutions reflect and foster the idea that fitting

in with others is good and appropriate. It is further reinforced by a wide array of social and interpersonal practices such that the different pen quite quickly becomes not the desirable "different" pen but instead the weird "deviant" pen. These results suggest that five weeks spent engaging in everyday life patterned according to Korean ideas and practices was sufficient to change the net of meanings and associations surrounding a given action and increase the appeal of blending in with others. As people begin to engage the conjoint model of agency, their actions on the world involve evaluating their actions for their sensitivity to the particular social relations and role commitments of a given situation. The appropriate models of agency are reflected and communicated in everyday social interaction, and as people become competent members in a given context, their actions are likely to increasingly reflect and reproduce these commitments.

DISSONANCE

Choices are prevalent in all societies and cultures. From a disjoint perspective, preferences, choices, and the independent self are linked such that they constitute a basic circuit of individual action. Choices imply preferences, preferences are stable over time, preferences implicate the identity of the self, and good choosers makes good choices whose outcomes are satisfying. The foregoing discussion suggests, however, that choices may not always express preferences and that choices can also carry a far wider range of meanings. In particular, in many social contexts, choices may express not preferences and the nature of the independent, bounded self but the nature of one's relationship with others. For example, one may make a choice for someone else. In this case, choice may signify one's care and concerns over the other person. One may also make a choice under close scrutiny by someone else and, therefore, feel constrained by social expectations. In these circumstances, the choice may signify one's need for approval from others—his or her concern over accountability. These and other interpersonal connotations can make the choice psychologically very different from the one made in the absence of any relational contexts and taken to be a "pure" expression of one's preferences.

Traditionally, social psychologists have focused almost exclusively on choices that are made in the absence of any relational

concerns and, therefore, that are self-expressive. We now know that in these circumstances, when (North American) individuals make a choice, they often feel concerned over the potential inadequacy of the choice. They worry that they might not have made good choices and therefore may not be revealed as "intelligent," "smart," or "rational" choosers. This existential anxiety is at the core of cognitive dissonance (Aronson, 1992; Cooper & Fazio, 1989; Festinger, 1957; Steele, 1988). The dissonance, in turn, motivates the individuals to justify the choice they have made, causing their preferences to be better aligned with the choice. Thus one's preference for a chosen item typically increases, and one's preference for an unchosen item typically decreases.

Since the original experiment by Brehm (1956), numerous studies have demonstrated that Americans change preferences in accordance with their choices. From the present theoretical analysis, this effect may be uniquely associated with cultural groups where agency is collectively constructed as disjoint. In these cultures, stable preferences of the self are centrally implicated in defining the self. The cognitive dissonance then may be anticipated to have the greatest impact if the choice is construed to be expressive of one's preferences. When a choice does not express preferences, however, individuals with disjoint agency may not be motivated to justify it because it is irrelevant in defining the self and agency.

A similar worry over the inadequacy of a choice one has made is likely to happen for those with conjoint agency. A phenomenon that might be described as cognitive dissonance, then, is likely to be quite prevalent across cultures. Yet we may expect that in a society where agency is constructed as conjoint, the dissonance may be much more distinctly interpersonal in flavor. More specifically, when choices "merely" express preferences, they may not have as much psychological impact on those engaging conjoint models of agency as it does on those engaging disjoint models of agency. Those with conjoint agency may find such choices merely as routine actions of daily life that have almost no bearing on a self constructed in relation to others. In fact, preferences may not arise until others position and define the self and give rise to some sense of agency.

As pointed out above, however, when made in more socially constrained circumstances, choices often evoke a variety of social concerns and interpersonal meanings such as a need for social approval, a desire to clarify one's social position or status vis-à-vis

others' positions or status, and a concern with the accountability of one's own action. When a choice evokes these interpersonal concerns, those with conjoint agency may feel concerned over the potential inadequacy of the choice. They may worry that they might not have made a good choice in the eyes of the others and, therefore, they might not be "respected" and "appreciated" or they might be deprived of honor and popularity. This anxiety over social position and social status, in turn, should motivate the individuals to justify the choice they have made, causing their preferences to be better aligned with the choice. The worry over one's choice—the dissonance—is common across cultures; furthermore, the dissonance is likely to cause a similar motivation for self-justification. However, some aspects of the subjectivity associated with dissonance are likely to vary across cultures. Thus, for those likely to be engaging models of disjoint agency, dissonance is anchored in the self's personal merit and adequacy, but for those engaging models of conjoint agency, it is anchored in the self's interpersonal position and status.

In short, cognitive dissonance should occur under different circumstances depending on the style of agency. For those with a sense of agency as disjoint, it should occur when the choice is expressive of preferences, but not when it is expressive of any social connectedness. For those with an understanding of agency as conjoint, it should occur when choice is expressive or the self's social connectedness (when it evokes a variety of social concerns), but not when it is expressive of one's preferences.

The significance of this line of analysis was underscored by the dissonance study carried out by Heine and Lehman (1997). As described earlier, this study sought to replicate Brehm's original experiment among both Caucasian Canadians and Japanese. They successfully did so for Caucasian Canadians. Furthermore, they also found that for these individuals the dissonance effect was magnified when they were reminded of the inadequacy of the self. This magnified a similar worry, namely, the one over the inadequacy of the self as a good chooser (Steele, 1988). In contrast, they did not find any dissonance effect among Japanese. This was the case, moreover, whether or not the Japanese participants were reminded of the inadequacy of themselves.

Although the Heine and Lehman finding is consistent with our present analysis, it is not fully convincing, because the study used

the standard procedure devised by Brehm, which evokes little or no social concerns. More recent studies have examined conditions in which choices may be expected to evoke different social concerns and, therefore, they become expressive of the connectedness of the self rather than of its preferences. Under these conditions, the dissonance effect may be clearly found for those with conjoint agency. Hoshino-Brown, Zanna, Spencer, and Zanna (2002) invited both Caucasian Canadians and Asian Canadians to make a choice either for themselves or for their best friend. Specifically, the participants came to the lab with their best friend and performed a cognitive task. They were offered a coupon for a Chinese dish in a campus cafeteria as a reward. In the self condition, the participants are asked to indicate their own preferences for several Chinese dishes, to choose one from among them for themselves, and then later to indicate their own preferences again for all the dishes. In this condition, which is a close replication of many cognitive dissonance studies, Hoshino-Brown and colleagues found a strong dissonance effect among Caucasian Canadians. That is, these individuals boosted their preferences for the dish they chose, but depressed their preferences for the dishes they rejected. Replicating the Heine and Lehman finding, however, this type of dissonance effect was not evident among Asian Canadians.

In contrast, in the best friend condition, the participants were asked to estimate the preferences of their best friend for the Chinese dishes and then to choose one for the friend. Later they were asked to estimate the friend's preferences again for all the dishes. Notice that in this condition, choice is made, but choice is not expressive of one's own preferences. It instead is grounded in one's understanding about a close other and, as such, it is likely to evoke a variety of social concerns, such as a need for social approval and accountability. These worries are centrally relevant to those with conjoint agency, but not to those with disjoint agency. They may therefore be expected to motivate those with conjoint agency to justify their choice. The results conformed to this prediction. Thus, under this condition, the dissonance effect was significantly stronger for Asian Canadians than for Caucasian Canadians. Indeed, for the latter group, the effect was negligible, suggesting that those with a sense of disjoint agency are relatively free of interpersonal worry or dissonance or that such worry is hardly self-relevant for them.

It is important to keep in mind that in the best friend condition of

the Hoshino-Brown et al. study, participants were asked to estimate the best friend's preferences rather than their own preferences. In effect, then, their Asian participants sought to reduce the dissonance and to establish the self as a "respectable," "appropriate," "popular," or "honorable" chooser by saying to themselves that the choices they made must have been quite consistent with the real preferences of the friend. An important question that is left unexplored in this study, then, is whether a similar dissonance effect might be obtained for Asians even when they make a choice for themselves and they report on their own preferences. Our analysis suggest that they should as long as the choice they make for themselves evokes social concerns such as the need for approval and accountability.

To examine these ideas about the conjoint nature of dissonance, Kitayama, Snibbe, Suzuki, and Markus (2002) conducted a series of studies that compared European Americans and Japanese. There were two primary conditions. In one condition, the standard procedure was used in which no others were implicated and thus choices were most likely to be construed to be expressive of preferences. Participants were first asked to report their own preferences for 10 popular CDs they didn't own. Next they were offered a choice between their fifth and the sixth ranked CDs. Later on they were asked to report their own preferences again for all 10 CDs. In this condition, as in the earlier studies reviewed above, the dissonance effect was observed for Americans. However, there was no such effect for Japanese. In a second condition, participants were induced to think about the presence and involvement of others. Specifically, participants were asked to estimate the preferences of the average student of their own university before making a choice between two CDs for themselves. In this condition, Japanese respondents showed a markedly strong dissonance effect. This effect occurred only when the others the participants thought about before their choice were relevant to them. Thus, the effect was observed when the preferences of either the "average student" of one's own university or "somebody the participants like" were considered, but it virtually vanished when the preferences of "somebody they dislike" were considered. Americans showed a reliable dissonance effect even in the other reference conditions. Perhaps Americans did not worry about what others might think of their choices or what their choice might imply regarding their social position or social status.

INFLUENCE AND ADJUSTMENT

Both models of disjoint agency and conjoint agency are socially enabled and maintained. As mentioned earlier, ads and other media sources in a given cultural context often emphasize and encourage one type of agency much more than the other. These types of cultural affordances for one or the other type of agency are quite pervasive and may often be inscribed in everyday social activities in the classroom, in the workplace, and in conversational patterns. For example, in mainstream American contexts, there are many culturally shared scripts and routines that encourage individuals to be in control and in charge of their own behaviors. Practices that foster persuasion and influence in the course of social interaction are also widespread (Weisz et al., 1984). These patterns of social behaviors, often called primary control, may afford disjoint agency. In contrast, in many Asian cultural contexts, there are relatively more culturally shared scripts and culturally prescribed behavioral routines that encourage individuals to fit in and adjust themselves to surrounding social situations. Conformity, for example, is often construed as an admirable effort toward adjustment and, as such, may be an important element in creating and sustaining the sense of the self as conjointly agentic. These patterns of social behaviors that involve adjustment are often called secondary control because, from the European American perspective, they are considered to be the last resort when primary control fails or is impossible (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995). However, from the perspective of conjoint agency, these actions of adjustment may in fact be the primary means by which to construct one's own agency (Gould, 1999). Yet in the absence of cultural affordances for adjustment—conducive arrangements of the situation and of social interaction—it may be difficult to achieve conjoint agency.

A recent study by Morling, Kitayama, and Miyamoto (in press) was designed to address the central role of cultural affordances in the construction of the self as either disjoint or conjoint. They first asked Americans and Japanese to describe actual social situations in which "you have influenced or changed the surrounding people, events, or objects according to your own wishes" or in which "you have adjusted yourself to surrounding people, objects, and events." These situations represent culturally common ways in which influence and adjustment are scripted. Examples of influence situations included:

"I talked my sister out of dating a guy who I knew was a jerk" (from the United States) and "I have a lot of hair and it is difficult to wash. So I cut it short so it is easy to wash now" (from Japan). Examples of adjustment situations included "When I am out shopping with my friend, and she says something is cute, even when I don't think it is, I agree with her" (from Japan) and "I had to adjust last school year when one of my roommates' boyfriends moved into our house (from the United States).

To test the hypothesis that the situations involving influence and those involving adjustment are differentially available in the two cultural contexts, the participants were also asked to report how many days had passed since each situation. The median latency of the most recent influencing situations was two days in the United States, but it was five days in Japan, whereas the median latency of the most recent adjusting situations was one day in Japan but seven days in the United States. This is a clear indication that respondents regard influencing situations as more common in the United States but adjusting situations as more common in Japan.

Morling et al. went on to test the notion that the disjoint and conjoint agencies are afforded by the influencing and adjusting social situations, respectively. That is to say, features of the self as disjoint should be observed more dramatically when Americans are placed in situations that involve influence, whereas features of the self as conjoint should emerge most clearly when Japanese are placed in situations that involve adjustment. From the entire pool of situations, 80 situations each were randomly sampled for each of four types defined by the behavioral type (influence vs. adjustment) and the cultural origin (American-made vs. Japanese-made). The total of 320 situations (80x4) were prepared in both English and Japanese and presented to new groups of American and Japanese participants. They were instructed to read each situation carefully while imagining that they were in the situation. Next they were to indicate their experience in the situation on two dimensions that are assumed to be central in defining either disjoint or conjoint agency. The first dimension concerned the degree to which they would feel themselves to be efficacious and powerful. Disjoint agency is defined primarily in terms of internal attributes, and when it is realized, it is likely to be characterized by an enhanced sense of efficacy and esteem. The second dimension concerned the degree to which respondents

would feel connected with people who are present in the situation, whether in actuality or in imagination. Conjoint agency is defined primarily in terms of a sense of social interdependence and when it is realized, it is likely to be accompanied by an enhanced sense of social connectedness.

Results revealed the central role of cultural affordances for both types of agency. To begin with, replicating numerous earlier studies, Americans reported themselves to be much more efficacious than did Japanese. However, in support of the hypothesis that the disjoint agency commonly observed in American mainstream contexts is afforded significantly by cultural scripts and practices involving influence and not by some set of internal traits, this cross-cultural difference in the perceived self-efficacy was observed only when the participants were responding to situations that involved influence. Likewise, consistent with the general characterization of patterns of behavior as conjoint and interdependent, Japanese reported themselves to be substantially more connected than did Americans. However, in support of the hypothesis that the conjoint agency commonly observed in Japanese culture is afforded significantly by cultural scripts and practices involving adjustment and is not a matter of particular dispositions or values, this cross-cultural difference in the perceived social connectedness of self was observed only when the participants were responding to the situations involving adjustment.

Along with another recent study that shows how efficacy and self-esteem are afforded by culturally prevalent scripts and practices (Kitayama et al., 1997), these findings suggest that forms of agency are not best understood as individual, internal psychological products. Instead, they are psychological processes and structures that are fostered, encouraged, and constantly maintained by affordances that are inscribed in each culture's public meanings and mundane daily practices. Thus, only when imagining themselves engaged in the types of social situations and events that are commonly available in one's own culture (either influencing or adjusting practices and meanings) did both Americans and Japanese begin to show their characteristic psychological tendencies toward either efficacy (a significant feature of disjoint agency) or connectedness (a significant feature of conjoint agency). Such results strongly suggest the fundamental necessity of culture in shaping and maintaining particular psychological processes and structures.

Agency in American Cultural Settings

The results from our own studies comparing European Americans with East Asians suggest differences in the dynamics of agency that are sociocultural in origin; they depend on the model of agency fostered in a given setting. Drawing on these results and a variety of findings in the sociological literature (e.g., Argyle, 1994; Kusserow, 1999a, 1999b; Schooler, 1990b), we reasoned that cultural models of disjoint agency and the "desire" or "need" for control, efficacy, and choice may not be uniformly distributed in American settings. Despite the fact that Americans appear to live within a common ideological, political, legal, and media framework (Plaut, Markus, & Lachman, in press), level of education creates a powerful division between high school–educated and college-educated respondents. The ways of life typically associated with completing a college education in America (and with being in a position to go to college in the first place) are likely to be associated with a self that reflects the American model of agency—an autonomous, in-control, positive self free from undue influence by others. The experience of disjoint agency is most likely to accompany those middle-class contexts that are arranged and practiced so as to repeatedly promote choice and the expression of preferences. Working-class contexts in which the majority of people are high school–educated will be arranged differently and will be less likely to be associated with a sense of disjoint agency.

Sociologists have long been interested in how sociocultural positioning conditions agency and in difference between working-class and middle-class values and practices. Durkheim, for example, provided one explanation of why choice and control should be related to socioeconomic standing. He wrote, "Wealth, . . . by the power it bestows, deceives us into believing that we depend on ourselves only. Reducing the resistance we encounter from objects, it suggests the possibility of unlimited success against them. The less limited one feels, the more intolerable all limitation appears" (1951, p. 254). In an empirical study of class differences and the nature of agency, Kohn (1969) found that middle-class parents were likely to promote self-direction while working-class parents were likely to emphasize conformity to standards. And Kohn and Schooler (1983) later documented that a construct they called occupational self-direction had widespread psychological effects. Specifically they reported that the opportunity to use initiative, thought, and independent judgment in

one's work and to direct one's occupational activities, opportunities that are much more likely in the jobs and careers associated with middle-class standing, are associated with positive psychological outcomes. Sennett & Cobb (1972) found that lower income, poorer education, and poorer work conditions were associated with a greater sense of inefficacy, and they referred to this as one of the "hidden injuries" of social class. More recently, based on in-depth interviews, Lamont (2000) gives a more positive framing to the patterns of agency that are prevalent in working-class contexts. She notes that both French and American working-class respondents, in contrast to middle-class respondents, were more likely to signal some awareness of their interdependence with others in the social world. Further, they were relatively more likely to stress the importance of hard work, responsibility, and upholding the moral order.

Although control and efficacy have been a major focus of interest for psychologists (e.g., Bandura, 1986), relatively little direct attention has been given to sociostructural variation in self and agency or to how agency is fostered and maintained by public meanings, practices, and institutions. Many types of findings from a wide range of domains are clearly relevant, however. For example, with education, both individualism and the complexity of the self increase (e.g., Franks, Herzog, Holmberg, & Markus, 1999; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1987; Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985). Lykes (1985) contends that in contrast to upper classes, people from lower classes are more likely to reveal what is called "social individuality." Similarly, Sampson (1988) distinguishes between self-contained individualism and an ensembled individualism or an individualism that references and takes account of others. In studies of locus of control (Rotter, 1966, 1975), a construct closely conceptually related to agency, Gurin and colleagues (Gurin, Gurin, Lao, & Beattie, 1969; Gurin, Gurin, & Morrison, 1978) found differences between black and white Americans. They argued that unresponsive social, political, and economic structures fostered a realistic sense of external locus of control in blacks, but that the same structures were more responsive to whites and thus fostered an internal locus of control. Rodin and colleagues (Rodin, 1989, Rodin and Langer, 1980) also suggested that environments differ in the affordances they provide for control. In a comparison of children in working-class and middle-class communities, Wiley, Rose, Burger, and Miller (1998) reported that different versions of self and autonomy are fostered by these differing contexts. Commonly in middle-

class communities, significant others scaffold the presentation and expression of self so that children acquire a sense of themselves as authoring their own experience—a sense of disjoint agency. In contrast, in working-class communities, Wiley et al. observed that parents often challenge children's reports of their experience; the child's version of reality is much less readily fostered and accepted than in middle-class settings. They note, for example, that when a middle-class child claims that Santa Claus comes at Easter, a parent is likely to look puzzled or to tactfully suggest an alternative; the working-class parent is more likely to directly challenge the idea and require an accurate statement, such as "No, Santa Claus doesn't come at Easter." An earlier study comparing working-class and middle-class Anglo mothers (Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995) described the importance that middle-class mothers placed on self-maximization, which included the qualities of independence, self-confidence, and the development of one's full potential. While working-class mothers also endorsed this ideal, they did so less frequently and worried that it might be problematic for their children.

Kusserow (1999a), an anthropologist who has carried out a series of ethnographic studies focusing on class, also suggests that individualism takes different forms in different American contexts. She suggests that in working-class contexts, Americans are most appropriately described as "hard" individualists; the individualism that is their American birthright is earned and comes from defending the self and resisting incursion or constraint by those others with whom one is inevitably interdependent. This hard individualism contrasts with the soft, expressive, and proactive individualism of most middle-class settings.

Survey research findings confirm that those with different levels of education live within very different local worlds (Markus et al., in press; Ryff & Marshall, in press). College-educated respondents score higher on virtually all measures of mastery, control, self-acceptance, autonomy, and purpose (Lachman & Weaver, 1998; Markus et al., in press; Ryff & Singer, 1995). Environments constructed, maintained, and inhabited primarily by college-educated respondents may thus be replete with discourse and situations offering and requiring the expression of preference and choice. As a consequence, individuals who participate in these contexts may be particularly likely to show disjoint agency and to project this style of agency as they act on the world and on others.

In contrast, environments constructed, maintained, and inhabited primarily by working-class respondents or respondents with a high school education are likely to be configured by practices and situations that do not require or afford choice. In these contexts, the opportunity for choice and control may not carry the same positive associations afforded by the college-educated contexts, and an individual's own preferences and attributes may not be seen as the primary sources of action or motivation. Instead, agency may be constructed as conjoint in the sense that people in high school–educated settings are likely to be relatively more tuned to the requirements of others and demands of the situation, as suggested in Table 1, and may be less likely to construct themselves as freely choosing or controlling their actions.

CHOICE

Finding that Japanese respondents in Japanese settings contexts do not favor unique choices or retrospective alignment of their preferences to their choices, Snibbe and Markus (2002) sought to extend these findings and elucidate the role of the sociocultural context on preference and choice within American cultural settings. Participants were approached at several shopping malls and asked if they would participate in a brief marketing study of new pens. The participants were assigned to either a choice or an usurped choice condition. In the usurped choice condition, participants were shown the display and asked to choose a pen. Before they could begin evaluating their pens, however, participants in this condition were interrupted by the experimenter, who took away their chosen pens and explained, "I'm sorry. You can't have that pen. It's the last one of its kind that I have. Here, take this one." Participants then received replacement pens that were different than their chosen ones. Next participants in both conditions were asked to use the pen they had chosen or been given to fill out a brief questionnaire which included ratings of how much they liked the pen and some background demographic information. Results indicated that the college-educated participants in the usurped condition evaluated their pens significantly less favorably than did the college-educated participants in the free choice condition. The high school–educated evaluated their pens equally favorably, regardless of condition.

In a second study, the manipulation was more subtle. Choice

was not usurped; it was merely preempted. In the choice condition, participants picked the pen they preferred. In the preempted choice condition, participants were shown the display and told by the experimenter, "I have chosen this pen for you." Next, participants in both conditions were asked to use the pen they had chosen or been given to fill out a brief questionnaire which included ratings of how much they liked the pen, some background demographic information, and a question about the number of choices they had made since getting up in the morning. Results indicated a significant influence of the condition, choice or no choice, on college-educated participants. These participants liked the pen they chose themselves better than the pen that was chosen for them, and this was particularly evident for college-educated men, who exhibited the most dramatic decrease in pen preference when denied personal choice. In contrast, among high school–educated respondents, the opportunity for choice of the pen made no difference in their ratings; the pens were liked equally well. In addition, college-educated respondents reported having made significantly more choices during the course of their day.

A third study used the standard free choice dissonance paradigm described earlier. High school–educated and college-educated participants ranked CDs according to their preferences. Next they were given a choice between their fifth and sixth ranked CDs. Later they were asked to report their own preferences again for all CDs. Only the college-educated participants replicated the standard dissonance effect and changed their preference in accordance with their choices. The college-educated participants evaluated a CD more favorably after choosing it than before, while the high school–educated participants' evaluations of a chosen CD did not change as a result of choosing it. These results suggest that psychological theories of choice and control have incorporated the meanings and practices of middle-class European American contexts and have not yet been extended to capture the experience of agency in other contexts.

SELF, ACTION, AND WELL-BEING

To further investigate the question of the links between features of the sociocultural context and how agency is experienced and understood, we used data from a large nationally representative survey. We compared the responses of midlife adults with a high school education

with those of midlife adults with a college education to determine whether their home, work, and community contexts differed in their configurations of meanings and practices. Using a large (N=3032) nationally representative study of well-being in adulthood completed by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Successful Midlife Development, we conducted and analyzed in-depth, open-ended interviews with a subset of this sample focusing on well-being (Markus et al., 2001, in press). We hypothesized that college-educated respondents, when compared with high school–educated respondents, would most clearly manifest the style of agency engaged by European Americans in the previously described cross-national studies, and thus show the strongest links between well-being and a sense of themselves as independent, successful, in control, efficacious, goal-oriented, and influencing others. In other words, college-educated respondents would be most likely to engage disjoint models of agency.

Initial comparisons using first the large dataset and then the representative subsample confirmed that there were large and significant differences in the social worlds according to level of education (Markus, Curhan, Ryff, & Palmerscheim, 2002). Those with a high school education had a lower household income, more children, and were more likely to be divorced, to smoke, and report a large variety of health problems and chronic symptoms. We then examined the respondents' answers to a series of questions about what makes a life go well. Although almost all respondents mentioned relations with others as most important for a good life, the two groups differed in their descriptions of those relations. College-educated respondents, more frequently than high school–educated respondents, described their relationships with others in terms of respecting and advising each other. To explain why others are important in their lives, they offered, "because we can develop and improve each other," "because we influence each other," or "because others respect and support you." As suggested by the previously reported study of Morling and colleagues (in press), actions for the college-educated respondents, even the actions of connecting with others or forming relations, appear to be experienced as influencing or controlling others. Such findings also underscore the notion that that disjoint agency is not asocial or only characteristic of individual action but rather a style of being that is manifest in many domains of behavior.

In contrast, the high school–educated respondents who may well have had fewer opportunities to experience themselves as disjoint agents, influencing and being influenced by others, described their relationships in terms of loving, caring, and supporting each other emotionally. When asked why others are important in their lives, these respondents replied, "We stick together," "We are there for each other," or "Because I can help them"—responses that reflect a sense of adjusting or connecting to each other and a more conjoint sense of agency.

Beyond relations with others, both high school–educated and college-educated respondents claimed that self-development is also important for well-being. When exploring the details of these types of responses, we found that answers from the college-educated respondents emphasized that what mattered for a good life was purpose and fulfillment, accomplishment, and seeking new learning. Responses like these were given only infrequently by the high school–educated participants. In contrast, their responses in the self-development category emphasized that a good life and well-being required liking one's self and being free from the excessive influence or control of others.

When asked to reflect about the course of their lives, college-educated respondents stressed that their educational attainment, personal skills, and abilities contributed to their lives having gone well. Their narratives of life reflected a clear sense of purpose and goals, depicting themselves as acting directly on the world, and as responsible for their lives having gone well. The MIDUS data relevant to sociodemographic variables such as health, job type, and family relations provided further insight into the situations of the college-educated respondents that support and foster this style of disjoint agency. Compared with the high school–educated, the college-educated are often "freer" from others and more able to focus on themselves. Likely to have fewer demands from family members in need of immediate support, they generally have both more time and more resources to act on their own individual needs and preferences. In many cases, a college education requires an initial move away from home, which may create the beginning of an extended social network highlighting personally chosen friends and a more diverse set of expectations and requirements from others. Moreover, the tasks and requirements of both a college education and the related set of probable jobs and careers frequently involve a relatively high degree of choice, planning,

and decision making. These occupational settings are likely to foster a style of agency in which one connects with others by influencing, exercising control, and taking charge.

College-educated respondents were significantly more likely to explain what makes their lives go well, with descriptions of themselves as proactive agents acting directly on the world. They influence, create, manage, rearrange, change, initiate, stick to agendas, plan actions in advance, set long-term goals, and prevent themselves from being negative. In fact, across a variety of questions, they made significantly more proactive attributions for successful events, had more proactive hopes, and used more proactive language than the high school–educated respondents. A college-educated woman's answer to why her life has gone well highlights this sense of disjoint agency: "All the good things in my life? Yeah, I think I made them myself. I mean, I think I created the situations and made the choices, and I think everybody has that ability. Whatever happened, you know, it was a result of whatever I did or said, or good or bad, or otherwise."

High school–educated respondents, in contrast, are more likely to be engaged in worlds with a high incidence of serious illnesses, unemployment, and complex financial and family problems that impact many of the people in their network. Moreover, these respondents have fewer resources of every type with which to confront these difficulties. The high school–educated respondents are aware of their life challenges and their relative positioning in society. In the MIDUS survey, the high school–educated are significantly more likely than the college-educated to report not having had as many work opportunities as others, not being able to live in nice homes or neighborhoods, and that growing up "they were worse off financially than the average family." Still, they were particularly likely to characterize themselves as good people, as moral or as upstanding, perhaps reflecting the conjoint perspective that one's actions should be socially anchored in norms, obligations, and expectations.

Although high school-educated respondents did not show the same type of engagement with models of disjoint agency as did the college-educated, they did not present themselves as just "going with the flow." Their answers about what makes a life go well did not differ in length and clearly revealed a sense of effort and motivated action. Perhaps reflecting their greater relative sense of

social connection or enmeshment, high school–educated respondents showed some nominal similarities to Japanese respondents. The inevitability of continual close connections with others in these contexts may work against the development of an elaborated sense of self as an independent agent and self-expression seems decidedly less "natural." Most apparently, high school–educated participants were significantly more likely to talk about themselves in terms of adapting and actively and flexibly adjusting to what life brings. In so doing they described themselves as agentic, but the characteristic actions were different from those of the college-educated. Instead of influencing and controlling, they regulate thought, control emotions, respond to luck and opportunity, focus on the present, avoid bad circumstances, and don't allow themselves to be beaten down. As one high school–educated respondent wrote, "If things get so bad that God feels I can't handle it, then he'll help me out of it. Yeah, what matters is probably the self-confidence, endurance, not giving up, just hang in there, hang tough, things are going to come around eventually."

The worlds constructed and inhabited by high school–educated respondents and by college-educated respondents differ not only in understandings of the nature and structure of social relations but also in the prevalent ideas and meanings of how to be well and what makes a good life. Through an analysis of magazine advertising, Markus, Curhan, Ryff, and Palmerscheim (2002) charted differences in the prevalent social representations likely to be encountered by those in high school–educated contexts and those in college-educated contexts. As a cultural practice that both reflects and projects significant ideas, advertising pairs a given context's common meanings and images of the "good" way to be with various products to be marketed. Markus et al. selected two sets of popular magazines whose subscribers differed with respect to their average level of education. They coded each magazine's advertisements for themes present in either the message or the text. Forty-eight percent of the subscribers of one set of magazines (*Reader's Digest, Good Housekeeping, Redbook, Popular Mechanics, Playboy*) had a college education. Seventy-five percent of the subscribers of a second set of magazines (*Business Week, Bon Appetite, Sports Illustrated, Glamour, Time*) had a college education. Supporting the idea that the high school–educated and the college-educated may be exposed to and engage with somewhat different ideas about what is good and what is of value for well-being,

Markus et al. (2002) found that the magazines of the college-educated subscribers favored themes of productivity, control, affluence, and attractiveness, while magazines more highly circulated among the high school–educated favored themes of family, food, comfort, enjoyment, and pain relief. The magazines of the college-educated appeared to foster a sense of a disjoint agency, most often depicting individuals outside of the home and family—in work or public settings. Ads in the magazines targeted at the high school–educated appeared to encourage a more conjoint sense of agency, depicting people in private or family settings responding to each other and enjoying themselves in the presence of others. This study suggests that contexts that afford conjoint agency are likely to be replete with images and ideas that legitimize and value conjoint agency and that may simultaneously stigmatize future-oriented, highly planned, or controlled disjoint agency.

Implications for Theorizing about Agency

Agency—"the realized capacity of people to act upon their world . . . to act purposively and reflexively" (Inden, 1990, p. 23) is probably a universal capacity. Yet what people are doing as they act upon the world and how they experience agency can vary quite dramatically depending on the prevalent structure, ideas, and practices of their contexts. Drawing on a comparison of agentic tendencies in European American and East Asian contexts, and a comparison of agentic tendencies in European American college-educated settings and high school–educated settings, we have suggested that the prevalent model of agency in psychology, as well as in sociology, political science, and economics—the model of agency as disjoint—is not a general or fundamental model even within American settings. Instead, it is a particular model, one that is afforded and promoted by the meanings and practices of life in college-educated, European American contexts.

In disjoint models of agency, agency is understood and experienced as resulting from the expression of an individual's own desires, goals, intentions—actions that indeed affirm and realize a relatively independent self. Agency is thus constructed, both conceptually and materially, as bounded, person-centered, and located within the individual. To reveal the particularity of this style of agency, as well as

its link to social contexts that are arranged and practiced in particular ways, we have compared disjoint models of agency to conjoint models of agency. In conjoint models, although the specifics are dependent on the ideas and practices of the given context, the key difference is that agency does not reside squarely within the individual. The boundary between inside and outside or internal and external is decidedly blurred or does not seem to exist. Agency results from being responsive to others, coordinating with others, and affirming one's place in a particular social order; such actions realize a relatively interdependent self. Agency is thus constructed as relational, as jointly afforded and manifest in adjusting to particular others.

These broad empirical comparisons we have made here are useful primarily because of what they imply about the specificity of disjoint agency. Together they encourage alternative explanations of disjoint agency and suggest that the choosing, deciding, goal-setting, planning, actively controlling-oneself-and-the-world style of agency and the associated sense of self as large and special requires a particularly structured and furnished social context. The necessary context is one that grants people time and place to express themselves, to focus on their unique qualities, to choose, to do, to achieve, to succeed—on their unique qualities, to choose, to do, to achieve, to succeed—around dinner tables, in classrooms, in offices, in careers—and then requires them to do so and measures their worth accordingly.

Much more analysis is needed with respect to the various ways in which agency can be constructed as conjoint. Clearly, the conjoint agency of Japanese students, which is associated with Confucian ideas of hierarchy and social order, Buddhist understandings of empathy and compassion, and school systems that foster group work, is self-evidently different than the conjoint agency of working-class American children who engage very different ideas and practices. At this point we know only that the two cultural contexts are alike in that they do not consistently support and legitimize the individual as separate from others, as self-directed and in control.

The term *agency* has become increasingly popular in the humanities and social sciences. In the discourse of some humanists, agency is synonymous with autonomy and "free will" where there is the assumption of a transhistorical, transsituational agent who is the originator of action; such agency is regarded as the essence of the human. This view is typically opposed to a structuralist view, in which the self is determined by social formations, power, and

ideology (Appadurai, 1996; Smith, 1985). Social and cultural psychologists who view human motivation and agency as situationally and contextually afforded and constrained have the potential to span this conceptual divide by characterizing the ways in which people are socioculturally constituted, yet simultaneously inventive in their organization and synthesis of the conceptual and material elements of their various settings (Adams & Markus, 2001; Root, 1998). While all agency is socioculturally constituted, cultural constitution does not equal cultural determination, and individuality and a sense of personal agency can be realized in multiple ways.

A focus on models of agency may also be useful in answering the critique of the research on culture and self by theorists who object to characterizations of East Asian selves as sociocentric, interdependent, or other-focused. This work has been cast as homogenizing East Asian cultures, denying real individual differences, and implying that East Asians lack significant agency, personal desire, intentionality, individuality, or distinct selves. These critics suggest that East Asians, as reflected both in literature and in questionnaires measuring attitudes, indeed have a strong desire to do things in their own ways and to have their own thoughts and feelings (Dissanayake, 1996; Matsumoto, 2000; Takano & Osaka, 1999). We would certainly concur that it is human to act purposefully and to desire to act upon the world. Contemporary students in many contexts throughout the world, when given an attitudes or values questionnaire, are likely to claim that they want to have their own thoughts and do things in their own ways, as well as to endorse a variety of other items that suggest an individualist leaning (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). Throughout the world, the individualist discourse is a popular and rapidly expanding one. A models approach would suggest, however, that contexts should not be judged as similar based only on the endorsement of similar attitude or ideas. Claiming that some Japanese are just as independent as some Americans, or that some Americans are no different from some Japanese with respect to interdependence, requires not just a values assessment but a simultaneous analysis of the practices, policies, and ways of life in each context that are available to support or foster these values. There are multiple ways to construct agency and multiple constructions of agency will be found in all cultural contexts. Yet as we have noted here, disjoint agency when practiced in Japan will necessarily be different from

disjoint agency as realized in many American settings. Moreover, a construction of agency as conjoint does not imply a lack of agency or individuality or a strong sense of self.

We have used the term *models of agency*, incorporating insights from social representations theory (Deaux & Philogène, 2001; Duveen, 2001; Moscovici, 2001) and from cultural models theory (D'Andrade, 1984; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Mesquita, in press; Shore, 1996) to argue that these models are both forms of knowledge and social practices; they have both conceptual and material elements. They are reflected in and fostered by individual interpretative frameworks, knowledge structures, or theories, but they are also represented in and fostered by publicly available forms such as the media, policies, institutional practices, symbols, artifacts, and social situations. They are thus both personal and impersonal, public and private.

Sociocultural contexts can be characterized and distinguished from one another by which models of agency are prevalent. As individuals participating in particular contexts try to make sense and communicate with one another, they are most likely to engage the common models. For example, in American contexts, representations of how to be agentic are pervasive. In November 2002, MSNBC cable news was promoting itself as America's best news station. The claim was that it knew what it meant to be American. What did it mean? The answer—"Choose freedom—be fiercely independent, speak your mind, voice your opinions, and don't take orders from anyone." These ideas and the practices that realize them are ubiquitous and built into middle-class American worlds. Moreover, they are not just overlaid on experience. As ideas and priorities become active in shaping the form and substance of psychological experience, they become indistinguishable from the experience itself. As a consequence, the significant role that models of agency play in constructing experience and the fact that agency could be constructed in other ways is largely invisible.

Agency then, even the going-your-own-way, not-taking-orders-from-anyone style of disjoint agency, involves engaging socioculturally sanctioned and supported models. To be sure, different models of agency give rise to significant differences in all aspects of behavior, but they can be analyzed as different manifestations of a single underlying psychological system in which agency, although highly personal and idiosyncratic, is grounded in one's relationships and one's relative positioning in a sociocultural, political, and historical context. Even extreme disjoint agency is a form of cultural participation requiring interdependence among a set of participants who communicate with a system of consensual meanings and behavioral practices.

The extent to which agency is a social process, even in contexts which represent it as a highly individual process, and the extent to which autonomy is necessarily limited because of the role of others and the social context in constituting this agency has significant theoretical and practical implications. A model of agency as disjoint is popular in the United States among lay people and behavioral scientists alike. It derives from and fuels the American dream. It focuses actors on themselves and their intentions and decidedly less on the role of others and the social arrangements and institutions that may be instrumental in these actions. The prevalence of this model may be yet another example of the fundamental attribution error at work in science. For the sake of a comprehensive understanding of human action, it is necessary for social scientists to guard against the universalistic fallacy that human agency will always take the same form (a middle-class American one) regardless of the social context.

Susceptibility to the universalistic fallacy with respect to agency has particularly powerful consequences in American society. In this context, when people succeed and gain position and means, they are described as highly motivated; when they fail or do not achieve or are poor, it is reasonable and scientifically appropriate to say that they lacked sufficient motivation or the right amount of the right motives. This makes sense because motives and motivation are constructed as the engines of behavior, they are assumed to be what puts the individual in motion or into action. In both cases—success and failure—what goes unseen is the constituting role of the social context in affording disjoint agency in one case and in constraining or undermining such agency in another. A different understanding of what explains the source and direction of behavior would give rise to different explanations of such success and failure. These different explanations would highlight connections, relationships, situational opportunities, and resources. It is important to be aware of which implicit models are being used to construct others' agency and whether such models are appropriate given the structure of their contexts and the ideas and institutional arrangements to which they have access. In

the diverse societies that are increasingly common in the world and in which people interact and communicate with others who engage in contexts that are only partially overlapping with their own, a first step in successful intergroup or intercultural contact may be a recognition of the possibility of such sociocultural diversity in the construction of agency.

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