Individual and Collective Processes in the Construction of the Self: Self-Enhancement in the United States and Self-Criticism in Japan

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A collective constructionist theory of the self proposes that many psychological processes, including enhancement of the self (pervasive in the United States) and criticism and subsequent improvement of the self (widespread in Japan), result from and support the very ways in which social acts and situations are collectively defined and subjectively experienced in the respective cultural contexts. In support of the theory, 2 studies showed, first, that American situations are relatively conducive to self-enhancement and American people are relatively likely to engage in self-enhancement and, second, that Japanese situations are relatively conducive to self-criticism and Japanese people are relatively likely to engage in self-criticism. Implications are discussed for the collective construction of psychological processes implicated in the self and, more generally, for the mutual constitution of culture and the self.

Leo, an American undergraduate studying in Japan, once told us that many seemingly identical events "felt" very different in Japan. It seemed to him that an event that was fairly common in both cultures, such as playing volleyball with a group of friends, was often simply not the same event in the two cultures. In the United States, playing volleyball with classmates was usually fun: people cheered, were loud, apparently relaxed, and most of all, appeared to *enjoy* the activity. But in Japan, volleyball seemed to be a more serious matter: It was often organized as a win or lose situation. People seemed sober and competitive and, most of all, they "*ganbaru*" (effortfully persevered and hung in) until the end. Leo also claimed that when he joined his Japanese peers, he often ended up behaving like them although doing so did not always feel "right" and he did not feel like himself. In telling this anecdote, Leo astutely observed that an apparently identical social situation (e.g., playing volleyball) can carry dramatically different meanings and attendant "atmospheres" and that anyone who participates in the situation cannot help but be influenced by these situational atmospheres.

This episode illustrates that the ways in which a given social event is collectively defined, maintained, and held in place can vary considerably across cultures. The situation thus constructed may be experienced as natural, familiar, and ordinary only to the extent that the participant's habitual mode of thinking, feeling, and acting fits reasonably well with the atmosphere of the situation; if not, the situation may well be perceived as unnatural, strange, and even oppressive. Indeed, the culture shock, or the disorientation that many people experience when they live in a society other than their own, results from a mismatch between what feels natural to do and the perceived demand of the situation. We suggest that people in any given cultural context gradually develop through socialization a set of cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes that enable them to function well—naturally, flexibly, and adaptively—in the types of situations that are fairly common and recurrent in the cultural context. In this sense, psychological tendencies do not just unfold

within the person through maturation. Rather, they are constituent elements of a given cultural system and cannot be separated from it. An individual's psychological systems must be attuned to and coordinated with the cultural system in which she or he is participating. Without this attunement, people will feel unnatural and out of place.

In the present article, we apply this general idea to the self and argue, with initial experimental evidence, that psychological tendencies involving the self, such as self-enhancement (common in the United States) and self-criticism (widespread in Japan), and an array of psychological processes underlying such tendencies are importantly afforded and sustained by the ways in which the attendant social realities are collectively constructed in each cultural context. Once developed, these psychological tendencies enable a person to act, live, and function naturally and adaptively in the respective cultural context. In so doing, they support and reproduce the very cultural system from which they are derived. In this view, psychological process and cultural content are being constantly reconstituted by one another, and therefore the distinction between process and content, common in much of the contemporary social psychological theorizing, may impede a comprehensive understanding of processes such as self-enhancement and self-criticism. Indeed, we argue that this metatheoretical commitment to the Cartesian-like split between culture and the psyche may have made it very difficult for social psychologists to see the very sociocultural nature and origins of many social psychological processes. With this general thesis in mind, we begin with a brief review of past evidence regarding self-enhancement in the United States and self-criticism in Japan.

Self-Enhancement in the United States and Self-Criticism in Japan

Numerous studies conducted in North America in recent decades have demonstrated a robust and pervasive tendency to maintain and enhance an overall evaluation of the self—self-esteem (for reviews, see Gilovich, 1983; Greenwald, 1980; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991; S. E. Taylor & Brown, 1988; Tesser, 1986). In causal attribution, for example, individuals from this cultural group tend to explain their own success in terms of their own internal and relatively stable attributes, such as ability or talent, while discounting their failure by attributing it to some external causes (e.g., blaming others) or internal but relatively unstable factors (e.g., lack of effort; D. Miller & Ross, 1975). Consider, as an alternative, a false uniqueness effect whereby individuals overestimate the uniqueness of their own positive attributes of the self. For instance, in one survey, Myers (1987) found that over 50% of a representative sample of American college undergraduates reported that they were in the top 10% in "interpersonal sensitivity." These effects are not limited to college undergraduates. Taylor and colleagues, in an analysis of adult populations, demonstrated a very similar bias (e.g., S. E. Taylor & Brown, 1988). They found that, when assessing their health or their chances for various life outcomes, people often compare themselves to others who are less fortunate and that this contrast enables them to maintain their sense of positive uniqueness and thus self-esteem. In fact, the opera-

tion of self-enhancing motivations is used to explain findings in a wide variety of areas such as friendship choice (Tesser, 1986), cognitive dissonance (Steele, 1988), and self-referential judgment (Lewicki, 1984). Together, findings from a number of social psychological domains suggest that European Americans show a general sensitivity to positive self-relevant information, which we refer to as self-enhancement. Markus and Kitayama (1991b) have argued that the tendency toward self-enhancement has positive social and psychological consequences within a cultural system that is organized to foster and promote the independence and the uniqueness of the self.

In sharp contrast, however, there is a growing body of studies that indicate that such a self-enhancing effect is greatly attenuated and, in some cases, completely reversed in non-Western, especially Asian, groups (e.g., Heine & Lehman, 1995; Kitayama & Markus, 1995; Kitayama, Markus, & Matsumoto, 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991a, 1991b). To begin with, the causal attribution of success and failure does not show any obviously self-serving tendency among Asians. Kitayama, Takagi, and Matsumoto (1995) reviewed 23 studies conducted in Japan on this topic and failed to find virtually any evidence for the self-serving pattern of attribution. Instead, the predominant pattern in many cases was to explain one's success in terms of effort or luck and one's own failure in terms of a lack of abilities or talents—a finding corroborated in studies of two other Asian countries (Taiwan and the People's Republic of China) by Stevenson and Stigler (e.g., 1992). Further, in self-related judgment, the tendency to overemphasize the uniqueness of one's own positive attribute (the false uniqueness effect) could not be replicated in Japan, Korea, and Thailand (Markus & Kitayama, 1991a; see also Heine & Lehman, 1995). Finally, Japanese have been found to accept their failures more readily than their successes in social comparison (Takata, 1987). It is important that Heine and Lehman (1997) have recently found an analogous cross-cultural difference even in comparisons between an in-group and an out-group.

The tendency to be more sensitive to negative self-relevant information, which is diametrically opposite to the tendency pervasive in middle-class American contexts, could be seen as self-depreciation or self-effacement. In the present article, however, we argue that within a Japanese cultural system that is rooted in the importance of maintaining, affirming, and becoming part of significant social relationships, this sensitivity to negative self-relevant information is not an indication of low self-esteem or something to be avoided or overcome; rather, it has positive social and psychological consequences. Information about where one has fallen short or failed to meet the standards of excellence shared in a given social unit (e.g., a classroom, family, or work group) is used to improve or perfect one's actions and thus serves to affirm one's belongingness to the unit. We thus refer to this sensitivity to negative self-relevant information as self-criticism. Such information is necessary and important within a cultural system that is organized to foster and promote the relationality and embeddedness of the self within encompassing social units (Azuma, 1994; Kitayama & Karasawa, 1995; Lewis, 1995; White & LeVine, 1986). Individualizing information about one's uniqueness would not be particularly useful in this relational self-improvement process.

Cultural Views of Self: Independence and Interdependence

We suggest that the psychological processes of self-enhancement and self-criticism both participate in the making of the self; however, because the self is constructed very differently across cultures, the participating psychological processes may also take correspondingly divergent forms. This analysis is consistent with a theoretical framework proposed by Markus and Kitayama (e.g., 1991b). In an attempt to integrate cross-cultural differences in many domains such as cognition, emotion, and motivation, Markus and Kitayama (1991b) distinguished between two broad, culturally shared views of self (for similar analyses see, Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Triandis, 1989; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Western, especially European American middle-class cultures are organized according to meanings and practices that promote the independence and autonomy of a self that is separate from other similar selves and from social context. The self is made meaningful primarily in reference to a set of attributes that are internal to the bounded, separate self. Those in Western cultures may then be motivated to discover and identify positively valued internal attributes of the self, express them in public, and confirm them in private, and may develop a variety of social psychological processes that enable them to maintain and increase their self-esteem. As a consequence, these individuals may be especially attuned to positive characteristics of the self.

In contrast, many Asian cultures do not highlight the explicit separation of each individual. These cultures are organized according to meanings and practices that promote the fundamental connectedness among individuals within a significant relationship (e.g., family, workplace, and classroom). The self is made meaningful primarily in reference to those social relations of which the self is a participating part (Ames, Dissanayake, & Kasulis, 1994; Kondo, 1990; Lebra, 1976). Those in Asian cultures may then be motivated to adjust and fit themselves into meaningful social relationships. Maintaining, let alone increasing, the positive overall evaluation of a self that is separate from the social context, then, may not be the primary concern of these individuals. In fact, as we argue later, holding a self-critical attitude vis-à-vis socially shared standards of excellence may be a symbolic act of affirming one's belongingness to the social unit.

In short, the Markus and Kitayama (1991b) analysis suggests that the tendency to maintain and bolster one's self-esteem may develop in individuals socialized in a cultural group in which an independent view of self is elaborated and sanctioned, but this same tendency may often reverse itself (self-criticism) in those socialized in a cultural group in which an interdependent view is elaborated and sanctioned. Thus far, however, the literature contains no detailed analysis of how the cultural views of self are transformed into psychological tendencies and processes.

Collective Construction of the Self: A Theory

In this article we advance a collective constructionist theory of the process whereby cultural views (such as independence and interdependence) are transformed into psychological tend-

encies (such as self-enhancement and self-criticism; Kitayama & Karasawa, 1995; Kitayama, Markus, & Lieberman, 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1994a). This theory implies that many psychological tendencies and processes simultaneously result from and support a collective process through which the views of the self are inscribed and embodied in the very ways in which social acts and situations are defined and experienced in each cultural context. More specific, it assumes, first, that the cultural views of the self as independent and interdependent are represented in each culture's philosophical and ontological assumptions and, as a consequence, are also reflected in attendant patterns of social situations, social acts, practices, and public meanings that are associated with such ontological assumptions of the culture. Second, it assumes that as individuals become meaningful, well-functioning participants in a given cultural system, they gradually develop a particular set of psychological processes that are attuned to and therefore support and reproduce the prevalent patterns of this cultural system. The main thrust of the theory, then, is that psychological processes and a cultural system are mutually constitutive.

The current analysis regards independence and interdependence primarily as historically constructed and collectively distributed views or models of the self that are elaborated in historical texts and daily discourses and that are thus inscribed into everyday practices and public meanings of the respective cultural contexts. It is important that these views of the self need not be represented in each and every person's cognitive system for them to have significant influences on his or her psychological functionings.

More specific, the independent view of self, which, for example, is common in the European American cultural context is rooted in the emphasis on rational thought and the value put on the expression of "natural self," both of which are legacies of the Enlightenment (B. Morris, 1991; C. Taylor, 1989). Likewise, the interdependent view as reflected in the contemporary Japanese culture can be traced back to both the Buddhist ideal of compassion and the Confucian teaching of role obligation (Ames et al., 1994; Kitayama & Karasawa, 1995; Lebra, 1976; Markus & Kitayama, 1991b; R. C. Smith, 1985). These historically constructed and socially distributed ideas give rise gradually, over generations and through the history of the respective cultures, to a divergent pattern of social situations, practices, and public meanings that are recurrent therein (for reviews of divergent philosophical and ontological assumptions underlying selfhood, see B. Morris 1991, 1994; Sampson, 1988; C. Taylor, 1989).

Individuals necessarily enter a culture at a particular historical point prepared with a set of capacities to be engaged in relevant social units. Becoming a self (i.e., a meaningful cultural participant) will require a tuning and coordinating of one's responses with the prevalent pattern of public meanings and situations—or cultural practices (Corsaro & Miller, 1992; Gaskins, Miller, & Corsaro, 1992; Rogoff, 1995). For example, contemporary North American culture, in contrast with the contemporary Japanese culture, involves a wide variety of practices, and attendant construals of social acts and situations, that highlight the importance and necessity of making personal choices, forming judgments, and having opinions (cf. Wierzbicka, 1994). Becoming a well-functioning member of this cultural context requires that

one possess a set of psychological processes that generate and keep accessible in memory a wide array of personal preferences and attitudes that can be used to guide further thought, feeling, and action. Once developed, the psychological processes of each participating individual become an integral part of the cultural systems.[1] In this view, a variety of cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral processes are shaped through each person's engagement in a cultural world, and once developed, they further facilitate the attunement or coordination of the person with that world, thereby enabling the person to live naturally, flexibly, and adaptively therein. One important implication of this analysis is that the acquisition and maintenance of many psychological processes, including a self-enhancing tendency in the United States and a self-criticizing tendency in Japan, is mediated by a collective process whereby social acts and situations are socially defined, constructed, held in place, and experienced within each culture (e.g., Bourdieu, 1972; Geertz, 1973; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Giddens, 1984; Goffman, 1959, 1967; Moscovici, 1984; Schutz & Luckmann, 1974).

Interpersonal communications play a pivotal role in the construction of social situations. Thus, in any given social setting (e.g., home, school, and work), a situational definition is first produced by some member(s) of a group and communicated to others, often covertly by means of actions premised on that definition (Wegner & Vallacher, 1986). The others in turn comprehend and interpret the communicated definition, thereby confirming, modifying, or challenging it. Through this process, a shared definition of the situation emerges that serves as a common frame of reference or a generic script in the situation (Schank & Abelson, 1977; see also Cantor, Mischel, & Schwartz, 1982; Forgas, 1979). Each person's communicative acts (whether verbal or nonverbal, deliberate or spontaneous) will take place within this common frame and, together, will afford and constrain the future actions of all the people involved. These acts of meaning (Bruner, 1990), then, define the social reality. From this perspective, how a situation is defined and construed is not a matter of an interpretive frame applied after the situation occurs but an active and critical element of the situation itself (P. J. Miller & Goodnow, 1995). Therefore, definitions or construals of a situation may be taken as a reasonable proxy for the situation itself, although the latter obviously involves much more (such as nonverbal behaviors, interpersonal communications, and subtle styles of language use in conversation) than the former.[2]

In linking the foregoing analysis of the construction of social situations specifically to psychological tendencies implicated in the self, it is important to note that situational definitions (and, therefore, actual situations) can vary considerably in their potential to increase or decrease one's evaluation of the self. For example, any common act in social life, such as buying a chair, can be construed in a variety of different ways. Some definitions of the act (e.g., "Buying this old-fashioned chair to brighten up my living room.") may be inherently more self-enhancing than some others (e.g., "Buying this old chair because it is the only one I could afford."). A given social event (e.g., a loss of one's own team in a sports tournament) may also be framed so that the event is either somewhat self-enhancing (e.g., "Our team lost the game despite the effort and contribution I made.") or quite self-criticizing (e.g., "Our team lost perhaps because

of the silly remark I had made to others on the team before the game.").

In accordance with this, we propose that situational definitions that compose the American middle-class cultural context are relatively more conducive to self-enhancement. Likewise, situational definitions that compose the Japanese cultural context may be relatively more conducive to self-criticism. Such differential distribution of situational definitions may be seen as a consequence of a historical process whereby certain definitions that are congruous with the dominant cultural view of the self as either independent (in the United States) or interdependent (in Japan) are retained and integrated, over generations, into the culture and, simultaneously, those that are incongruous are gradually "weeded out."

From the foregoing analysis, it follows that the tendency for self-enhancement among American people has resulted in part from the prevalence of social situations that are conducive to self-enhancement in this cultural context. Further, in the process of participating in the culture, individuals develop a set of psychological processes that enable them to respond naturally, effortlessly, and flexibly to the culture's constituent situations. Thus the self-enhancing bias inherent in the situational definitions may be transformed into a psychological process with a corresponding bias. Likewise, the Japanese tendency for self-criticism is a psychological process that is in tune with biases inherent in the prevalent social situations.

Situation Sampling

The collective constructionist theory draws on both a historical process by which situational definitions are created, selected, and accumulated in a given culture and a developmental process of each person adapting in the cultural environment thus historically and socially constructed. Although these historical and developmental processes are inherently difficult to test directly,

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[1] For example, lively discussions are quite commonplace in seminars at any American university. Yet, if it is to exist, this cultural practice requires a particular set of psychological tendencies in the participants, including such tendencies as generating and describing one's own unique ideas and making arguments for them, getting involved in the discussion, and being articulate and friendly, yet adversarial. These tendencies, in turn, are nurtured and kept alive by the surrounding pattern of the European American middle-class cultural system in which many of the participants (i.e., European American students) are embedded and have been socialized. Although this attunement between culture and the psyche is typically tacit, left unnoticed, its significance becomes apparent when it is disturbed. Thus, more often than not, for many foreign students, especially those from Asian cultures, it takes a considerable period of effortful adjustment—a period filled with embarrassing episodes that are due to cultural ineptness—to begin feeling comfortable in participating in such an American style of discussion.

[2] The generative and constitutive role of language in the construction of social realities has been underscored by a number of theorists (Bruner, 1990; Corsaro & Miller, 1992; P. Miller, Fung, & Mintz, 1996; Ochs, 1988). Corsaro and Miller (1992), for example, noted that "[language] is both the primary tool by which human beings negotiate divergent points of view and construct shared realities and the primary tool by which children enter into the interpretive frameworks of their culture" (p. 13).

the theory has some testable implications. More specific, because it assumes that a bias inherent in situational definitions is transformed into the corresponding bias in each person's psychological tendency, which in turn is instrumental in reproducing similar situational definitions in future occasions, one may predict a close correspondence between the characteristics of social situations of each culture and those of psychological processes of each individual in the culture.

The present article reports two studies that were designed to examine systematically the predicted correspondence between psychological processes and social situations. Thus, we first randomly sampled from both Japanese and American culture situational definitions that were relevant to self-evaluation. We then examined the responses of Japanese and American people to situational definitions sampled from both Japan and America. According to our analysis, American situational definitions should be relatively conducive to self-enhancement, and American people should be relatively likely to engage in self-enhancement. Likewise, Japanese situational definitions should be relatively conducive to self-criticism, and Japanese people should be relatively likely to engage in self-criticism.

The primary purpose of Study 1 was to test the foregoing implications of the collective constructionist theory on the self. In addition, however, because processes of self-making may be different for men and women within a given cultural context (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Josephs, Markus, & Tafarodi, 1992), we also focused on gender differences in self-enhancement and self-criticism. It has been suggested that women tend to be more interdependent, or less independent, than men. This gender difference is evident in the United States and several Asian cultures, including Japan (Kashima et al., 1995; Singelis, 1994; Takata, 1995). As one may predict on the basis of this evidence, we have found, by using false uniqueness as a measure of self-enhancement, that in the United States, self-enhancement is weaker for women than for men and, further, that in Japan self-enhancement nearly vanishes for men and tends to be reversed for women (Markus & Kitayama, 1991a). The present work, then, sought to obtain further evidence for such gender differences in self-enhancement tendencies.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Procedure

Two hundred and fifty-three respondents participated in the study. Among these respondents, 63 were Japanese college undergraduates at Kyoto University (47 men and 16 women) who volunteered when participation was solicited in their introductory psychology class and received 500 yen (approximately $5 US) in return. Eighty-eight were Japanese college undergraduates who were temporarily studying at the University of Oregon (35 men and 53 women) and who were recruited for a "psychology experiment" at a meeting of the Japanese Student Association of the university. On participation, they received $5 US. The remaining 102 participants were White American undergraduates at the University of Oregon (43 men and 59 women) who were recruited from an introductory psychology participant pool. They participated to fulfill course requirements.

The 63 Japanese undergraduates at Kyoto University received a questionnaire booklet when they agreed to participate in the study. They took the packet home, filled it out, and returned it 1 week later. The remaining respondents, all undergraduates at the University of Oregon, were tested in small groups of 3 to 8 individuals. On arrival, they were given a questionnaire booklet and filled it out. In carrying out this investigation, we used the Japanese concept of *jison-shin* (literally meaning the feeling of self-respect) as equivalent to the English concept of self-esteem. Both the Japanese concept and its English equivalent refer to an overall sense of self-respect and self-worth. This working assumption, however, should not be taken to imply that they are perfectly isomorphic in social and psychological function—a point we return to in the General Discussion section.

Material

In a recent study (Kitayama, Matsumoto, Takagi, & Markus, 1992), we asked both Japanese (41 men and 49 women) and American undergraduates, (28 men and 37 women) to freely describe either (a) as many situations as possible in which their own self-esteem (*jison-shin* in Japanese) increased (success instruction) or (b) as many situations as possible in which their own self-esteem decreased (failure instruction). The Japanese respondents generated a total of 913 situations. Among them, 182 and 288 situations were generated by men and women, respectively, in the success instruction condition, and 184 and 259 situations were generated by men and women, respectively, in the failure instruction condition. The American respondents generated a total of 1,584 situations. Among them, 402 and 507 situations were generated by men and women, respectively, in the success instruction condition, and 249 and 426 situations were generated by men and women, respectively, in the failure instruction condition. From each of the eight sets of situations thus generated (Culture × Gender × Instruction), 50 situations were randomly sampled, yielding a total of 400 situations.[3]

Each of the 400 situations were first edited so that (a) each contained only one episode, (b) event pronouns that are quite specific to the respective culture (e.g., GMAT) were changed to somewhat more general terms that were understandable to those in the other culture (e.g., a general qualifying exam for graduate school), and (c) any words or phrases that imply enhancement or reduction of self-esteem (e.g., "I feel elated when" or "My self-esteem decreased when") were deleted. Other than these three changes, original situational descriptions were kept intact. The 200 Japanese situations were translated into English, and the 200 American situations were translated into Japanese. One of three Japanese-English bilinguals, who had lived in both cultures for substantial periods of time (at least 3 years), performed the translation first. The translated sentences were back-translated by one of the other two bilinguals to assure semantic equivalence. Because nearly all descriptions referred to very concrete social situations, the translation was almost always literal and thus relatively straightforward. Some examples of the situations used in the present study are given in the Appendix.[4] What is noteworthy about the situations sampled here is that many of them seem valid and meaningful both in Japan and in the United States. Yet according to the collective constructionist analysis, the situational definitions, when taken as a whole, should exhibit a bias toward self-enhancement or self-criticism depending on their cultural origins.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire began with several demographic questions, including age, gender, year in school, and nationality or ethnicity. In the body

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[3] In this set of 400 situations, there were some that were similar both in the United States and in Japan. However, no attempt was made to reduce any potential redundancies. This method was considered as the best means to assure the representativeness of the situations sampled here.

[4] The full set of situations, in both Japanese and English, are available upon request from Shinobu Kitayama.

of the questionnaire, the 400 situations were presented in random order. There were two versions of the questionnaire that varied in the order in which the 400 situations were presented; the ordering of situations did not have any effect on the results. Respondents were asked to read each situation carefully and to visualize that they were in the situation. They were then asked to think about whether their self-esteem (*jison-shin* in Japanese) would be affected in the situation. If they felt their own self-esteem would not be affected, they were to proceed to the next situation. If they felt their own self-esteem would be affected, they were to indicate whether their own self-esteem would increase or decrease and to what extent by choosing one number from a scale ranging from 1 (*slightly*) to 4 (*very much*). When all the 400 situations were finished, the respondents filled out Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale.

Results

We used a two-step procedure in data analysis. First, we examined the proportion of situations in which one's self-esteem was predicted to be affected. Second, we analyzed the extent of self-esteem change estimated for each of the situations that were found to be relevant to one's self-esteem. We also examined effects of gender in each step.

Proportion of Situations Selected as Relevant to One's Own Self-Esteem

Each respondent indicated whether his or her self-esteem would be affected in each of the 400 situations that varied in (a) the culture (Japanese vs. U.S.; called *situation culture*), (b) the gender (male vs. female; *situation gender*) of those who originally generated them, and (c) the instruction under which they were originally generated (success vs. failure; *situation valence*). The proportion of the situations chosen as relevant to one's self-esteem was analyzed as a function of these three between-situation (and within-subject) variables and two between-subject (and within-situation) variables, that is, the culture (Japanese vs. U.S.; *respondent culture*) and gender (male vs. female; *respondent gender*) of the respondents. First, we computed these proportions for each respondent separately for each of the conditions defined by the three between-situation (and within-subject) variables. These were arcsine transformed and submitted to a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with respondent as a random variable. Significant Fs and ts (denoted as F_1 and t_1) indicate the generalizability of the effects across respondents. Second, we computed these proportions for each situation separately for each of the conditions defined by the two between-subject (and within-situation) variables. After arcsine transformation, they were submitted to a repeated measures MANOVA with situation as a random variable. Significant Fs and ts (denoted as F_2 and t_2) indicate the generalizability of the effects across situation. Unless otherwise noted, only those effects that attained statistical significance in both analyses are reported below. To facilitate comprehensibility, original proportions are presented in the text and the pertinent tables to follow.

Culture effects. The means relevant to the predicted effects of culture are given in Table 1. The MANOVA revealed a significant main effect for respondent culture, $F_1(2, 247) = 10.71$, $p < .0001$; $F_2(2, 784) = 151.53$, $p < .0001$, indicating that American respondents chose a significantly greater number of

both success and failure situations as relevant to their self-esteem than did the two groups of Japanese respondents. This main effect, however, was qualified by an interaction with situation culture, $F_1(2, 247) = 150.98$, $p < .0001$; $F_2(2, 784) = 51.88$, $p < .0001$, demonstrating a strong matching effect between respondents and situations. Whereas American respondents chose a significantly greater proportion of American-made situations ($M = .85$) than Japanese-made situations as relevant to their self-esteem ($M = .77$), $t_1(247) = 16.54$ and $t_2(392) = 4.84$, ps $< .01$, Japanese respondents were more likely to choose Japanese-made situations than American-made situations as relevant to their self-esteem. This effect was highly significant for both Japanese respondents in Japan ($M = .81$ vs. .74), $t_1(247) = 10.44$ and $t_2(392) = 3.89$, ps $< .01$, and the Japanese respondents in the United States ($M = .76$ vs. .71), $t_1(247) = 7.64$ and $t_2(392) = 2.51$, ps $< .01$. The sense of self is meshed more closely with familiar social settings than with relatively unfamiliar ones, thus providing support to the idea that the self is, in part, shaped and maintained by the social surrounding.

More important, the respondent culture main effect was also qualified by another interaction with situation valence, $F_1(2, 247) = 56.38$, $p < .0001$; $F_2(2, 784) = 105.45$, $p < .0001$. Japanese respondents in Japan were more likely to perceive failure situations than success situations as relevant to their self-esteem ($M = .82$ vs. .74), $t_1(247) = 6.96$ and $t_2(392) = 4.60$ (ps $< .01$). This was also the case for Japanese respondents in the United States ($M = .75$ vs. .72), $t_1(247) = 2.73$, $p < .01$; $t_2(392) = 1.59$, ns. However, American respondents were more likely to choose success situations than failure situations as relevant ($M = .86$ vs. .79), $t_1(247) = 8.44$ and $t_2(392) = 7.59$ (ps $< .01$).

Out of the same set of situations, individuals with different cultural backgrounds appear to have created more opportunities to either decrease or increase their self-esteem. The American pattern suggests that those socialized in the independent culture may be capable of finding more opportunities to increase self-esteem. In other words, they seem to be especially sensitive to their accomplishments, that is, things that make them feel good about themselves or more generally positive features associated with self. By contrast, the Japanese pattern indicates that these individuals may be especially sensitive to potential drawbacks, problems, or, more generally, negative features associated with self.

Gender effects. We found a significant main effect for respondent gender, $F_1(1, 247) = 6.20$, $p < .01$; $F_2(1, 392) = 280.13$, $p < .0001$, with female respondents choosing a greater proportion of situations as relevant to their self-esteem than did male respondents. This effect was qualified, however, by two interactions. Relevant means are summarized in Table 2. First, an interaction between respondent gender and situation valence proved significant, $F_1(1, 247) = 10.01$, $p < .005$; $F_2(1, 392) = 48.72$, $p < .0001$, which suggests that women chose more failure situations ($M = .82$) than success situations ($M = .78$) as relevant to their self-esteem, $t_1(247) = 5.33$ and $t_2(392) = 2.63$ (ps $< .01$), but there was no such difference for men (ts < 1), which suggests that women may be more self-critical or less self-enhancing than men. Another interaction that turned out significant is that between respondent gender and situation gender, $F_1(1, 247) = 11.92$, $p < .001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 7.78$, p

Table 1

The Proportion of Success and Failure Situations Perceived by Japanese and American Individuals as Relevant to Their Self-Esteem

	Japanese respondent in Japan				Japanese respondent in U.S.				American respondent in U.S.			
	Japanese situation		U.S. situation		Japanese situation		U.S. situation		Japanese situation		U.S. situation	
Situation valence	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Success	.78	.19	.69	.25	.74	.20	.69	.23	.84	.19	.88	.13
Failure	.84	.15	.79	.19	.77	.16	.73	.18	.76	.17	.82	.15

Note. Standard deviations represent the variation across different situations within each condition. In other words, they are based on the proportions computed over the relevant group of respondents for the pertinent set of situations.

$< .01$. Female respondents showed a somewhat greater preference for female-made situations over male-made ones ($M = .81$ vs. .79), $t_1(247) = 5.56, p < .05$, and $t_2(392) = 1.24$, *ns*, but the male respondents did not show any significant preference for either ($ts < 1$).

Extent of Self-Esteem Change

For those situations each respondent reported to be relevant to his or her self-esteem, the respondent was asked to indicate whether his or her self-esteem would increase or decrease and to what extent it would do so. The latter judgment was made by choosing one number from a 4-point rating scale that ranged from 1 (*slightly*) to 4 (*very much*). On the basis of these data, we computed the extent to which each respondent's self-esteem was predicted to increase for success conditions and decrease for failure conditions (varying between 1 and 4). The predicted changes in the opposite directions (i.e., a decrease of self-esteem in success situations and an increase in failure situations) were given the corresponding numbers with a negative sign (varying between −1 and −4). The extent of self-esteem change was then submitted to a MANOVA. One male Japanese respondent in the United States judged all the American-male-made success

Table 2

The Proportion of Success and Failure Situations Perceived by Male and Female Respondents as Relevant to Their Self-Esteem

	Male respondent				Female respondent			
	Male situation		Female situation		Male situation		Female situation	
Situation valence	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Success	.76	.21	.75	.22	.77	.21	.79	.21
Failure	.75	.16	.76	.19	.81	.16	.83	.17

Note. Standard deviations represent the variation across different situations within each condition. In other words, they are based on the proportions computed over the relevant group of respondents for the pertinent set of situations.

situations to be irrelevant to his self-esteem. The data from this respondent were excluded from the following analysis.

Culture effects. The means relevant to our primary predictions on culture are summarized in Table 3. In support of the prediction that American respondents would be relatively more self-enhancing and Japanese respondents, relatively more self-criticizing, a Respondent Culture × Situation Valence interaction proved to be highly significant, $F_1(2, 246) = 44.73, p < .0001; F_2(2, 784) = 94.33, p < .0001$. American respondents judged that their self-esteem would increase more in the success situations than it would decrease in the failure situations ($M = 2.43$ vs. 2.08), $t_1(246) = 25.68$ and $t_2(392) = 4.83$ (*p*s < .01). By contrast, for Japanese respondents in Japan, this American pattern was completely reversed. They judged that their self-esteem would decrease more in the failure situations than it would increase in the success situations ($M = 2.33$ vs. 2.01), $t_1(246) = 18.19$ and $t_2(392) = 4.36$ (*p*s < .01). Finally, the result for Japanese respondents in the United States was similar to the pattern for Japanese respondents in Japan although it was somewhat attenuated ($M = 2.39$ vs. 2.28), $t_1(246) = 7.05, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 1.49$, *ns*.

We also predicted that American situations would be relatively more self-enhancing and Japanese situations, relatively more self-criticizing. As predicted, a Situation Culture × Situation Valence interaction proved significant, $F_1(2, 246) = 171.70, p < .0001; F_2(2, 392) = 8.54, p < .005$, as did a main effect for situation culture, $F_1(2, 246) = 81.31, p < .0001; F_2(2, 392) = 3.83, p = .05$. First, the American-made success situations were judged to have more influence on their self-esteem than were the failure situations ($M = 2.40$ vs. 2.23), $t_1(246) = 13.09$ and $t_2(392) = 2.52$, *p*s < .01. Because these situations were sampled from American undergraduates on a completely random basis, this result lends support to the hypothesis that self-esteem-relevant situational definitions common in U.S. culture are bound to be more self-enhancing. By contrast, the pattern was completely reversed for Japanese situations, with failure situations perceived to have more influence on self-esteem ($M = 2.30$) than success situations ($M = 2.08$), $t_1(246) = 16.94$ and $t_2(392) = 3.26$, *p*s < .01. Hence, self-esteem-relevant situations in Japan seem to promote self-criticism.

Finally, a significant interaction between respondent culture

Table 3

The Extremity of Self-Esteem Change Reported by Japanese and American Individuals in Success and Failure Situations That Differed in Their Cultural Origin

| | Japanese respondents in Japan | | | | Japanese respondents in U.S. | | | | Americans in U.S. | | | |
| | Japanese situation | | U.S. situation | | Japanese situation | | U.S. situation | | Japanese situation | | U.S. situation | |
Situation valence	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Success	1.92	1.01	2.10	0.61	2.12	1.08	2.44	0.49	2.19	1.09	2.67	0.52
Failure	2.42	0.51	2.24	0.75	2.47	0.52	2.31	0.82	2.00	0.62	2.15	0.89

Note. Standard deviations represent the variation across different situations within each condition. In other words, they are based on the extremity scores computed over the relevant group of respondents for the pertinent set of situations.

and situation culture, $F_1(2, 246) = 64.13$, $p < .0001$; $F_2(2, 784) = 21.95$, $p < .0001$, indicated that whereas American respondents judged the American-made situations to have more influence on their self-esteem than the Japanese-made situations ($M = 2.41$ vs. 2.09), $t_1(246) = 20.32$, $p < .01$ and $t_2(392) = 4.29$, $p < .01$, the corresponding difference was weaker for the Japanese in the United States ($M = 2.38$ vs. 2.30), $t_1(246) = 4.57$, $p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 1.09$, $p > .20$, and completely vanished for the Japanese in Japan ($M = 2.17$ vs. 2.17, ns).

Gender effects. Means relevant to gender effects are displayed in Table 4. First, effects of both respondent gender and situation gender proved significant, $F_1(1, 246) = 6.41$, $p < .02$; $F_2(1, 392) = 204.77$, $p < .0001$, and $F_1(1, 246) = 141.81$, $p < .0001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 4.38$, $p < .05$, respectively. The female respondents responded more strongly than did the male respondents, and situations that had originally been generated by women were perceived by both men and women to have more influence than those originally generated by men. Second, and more important, an interaction between respondent gender and situation valence turned out to be significant, $F_1(1, 246) = 7.10$, $p < .01$; $F_2(1, 392) = 63.58$, $p < .0001$. The female respondents judged that their self-esteem would decrease more in the failure situations than in the success situations ($M = 2.42$

Table 4

The Extremity of Self-Esteem Change Reported by Male and Female Respondents in Success and Failure Situations That Differed in Their Gender Origin

| | Male respondent | | | | Female respondent | | | |
| | Male situation | | Female situation | | Male situation | | Female situation | |
Situation valence	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Success	2.11	0.97	2.27	0.71	2.19	1.01	2.37	0.75
Failure	2.07	0.70	2.17	0.73	2.35	0.69	2.48	0.67

Note. Standard deviations represent the variation across different situations within each condition. In other words, they are based on the proportions computed over the relevant group of respondents for the pertinent set of situations.

vs. 2.28), $t_1(246) = 11.3$, $p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 2.88$, $p < .01$, but this effect was slightly reversed for the male respondents ($M = 2.12$ vs. 2.19; ts < 1). This corroborates the proportion analysis reported earlier in suggesting a greater self-criticizing tendency (or a weaker self-enhancing tendency) for women than for men.

Relative Prominence of Upward and Downward Change of Self-Esteem

By self-enhancement, we mean a propensity to assign a greater estimate of influence to success situations than to failure situations. By self-criticism, we mean a propensity to assign a greater estimate of influence to the latter than to the former. To capture these tendencies in a single index, the extent of self-esteem decrease in failure situations was subtracted from the extent of self-esteem increase in success situations to yield a score for relative change in self-esteem. The relative change score would take a positive value if one judged that his or her self-esteem would be more influenced in success situations than in failure situations (i.e., self-enhancement), a value of zero if he or she judged that it would be equally influenced, and a negative value if the person judged that it would be more influenced in the failure situations than in the success situations (i.e., self-criticism). The score was computed respondent-wise for each of the four situation types defined by situation culture and situation gender and submitted to a MANOVA with two between-subjects variables (respondent culture and respondent gender) and two within-subject variables (situation culture and situation gender).

Culture effects. As may be predicted from the results reported above, the main effects for respondent culture, $F(2, 246) = 44.77$, $p < .0001$, and situation culture, $F(1, 246) = 172.42$, $p < .0001$, both proved highly significant. As shown in Figure 1, American respondents showed a clear tendency for self-enhancement, but this tendency was especially strong when they responded to the situations that were indigenous to their own culture. Likewise, Japanese respondents in Japan showed a clear tendency for self-criticism, but this tendency was especially strong when they responded to the situations that were indigenous to their own culture. The result for the Japanese respon-
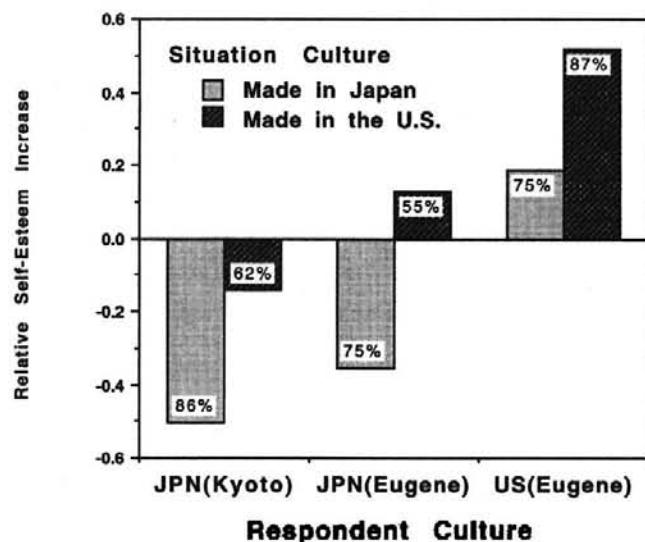
Figure 1. Relative self-esteem change as a function of the cultural origin of both respondents (respondent culture) and situations (situation culture; Study 1). JPN-Japan; US-United States.

dents in the United States was similar but somewhat attenuated in the direction of the American pattern (i.e., less criticism). Finally, respondent culture and situation culture significantly interacted with one another, $F(2, 246) = 3.76$, $p < .05$. This was due primarily to the Japanese respondents in the United States who tended to respond to the situations of the two different cultural origins in a somewhat more differentiated fashion than did the other two groups of respondents. Although weak and obviously in need of careful replication in future work, this finding may indicate that once acculturated into a foreign culture, individuals may develop alternative modes of self-making and alternate between them depending on the immediate cultural context.

In Figure 1, the percentage of respondents who showed the dominant tendency in each condition is noted within each bar. A vast majority (86%) of Japanese respondents in Japan showed a self-criticizing tendency when they responded to situations created in Japan. Conversely, an equally large portion of American respondents (87%) showed a self-enhancing tendency when they responded to situations made in the United States. This indicates, if nothing else, that the Japanese tendency to self-criticize and the American tendency to self-enhance are both quite robust and pervasive within the respective cultures.

Gender effects. Confirming the results from the earlier analysis, a significant main effect for respondent gender was found, $F(1, 246) = 7.07$, $p < .01$, which suggests that the male respondents ($M = 0.08$) showed a stronger self-enhancing tendency than did the female respondents ($M = 0.01$). Furthermore, the main effect for situation gender proved statistically significant, $F(1, 246) = 3.78$, $p = .05$), with male-made situations ($M = 0.06$) more conducive to self-enhancement than female-made situations ($M = 0.02$). Hence, some evidence was found for the correspondence between the effect of respondent gender and the effect of situation gender, as might be predicted by an application of the collective constructionist analysis to the do-

main of gender. Nevertheless, this evidence was compromised by two first-order interactions. First, the Situation Gender × Situation Culture interaction, $F(1, 246) = 69.21$, $p < .0001$, implies that the difference between the male-made and the female-made situations, described above, was evident only for situations made in the United States ($M = 0.27$ vs. 0.08), $t(246) = 7.54$, $p < .01$; this pattern was reversed for situations made in Japan ($M = -0.15$ vs. -0.03), $t(246) = 4.92$, $p < .01$.[5] Second, the Situation Gender × Respondent Culture interaction, $F(1, 246) = 4.26$, $p < .02$, suggested that the greater perceived self-enhancing propensity of male-made (rather than female-made) situations was evident for both the Japanese in Japan ($M = -0.23$ vs. -0.31), $t(246) = 2.40$, $p < .05$, and the Americans ($M = 0.42$ vs. 0.35), $t(246) = 2.40$, $p < .05$, but it was marginally reversed for the Japanese in the United States ($M = -0.16$ vs. -0.12), $t(246) = 1.40$, $p > .20$. We return to these gender effects after discussing Study 2.

Relations With Overall Self-Esteem

Overall levels of self-esteem. For each respondent, an overall score for the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale was obtained by first coding the scores such that higher scores indicated a higher self-esteem and then computing an average of all 10 items. The data of two respondents who failed to complete the scale were dropped from the analysis. A Respondent Culture × Respondent Gender ANOVA showed a significant main effect for respondent culture, $F(2, 244) = 18.38$, $p < .0001$. Replicating a number of past studies (e.g., Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994; Diener & Diener, 1995), the overall self-esteem was significantly higher for the American group ($M = 5.37$) than for the Japanese groups ($M = 4.46$ and 4.69, respectively, for Japanese in Japan and those in the United States, ps < .05, with Newman-Keuls test), which did not differ significantly from each other ($p > .10$). Both the main effect for gender and the interaction between gender and culture were trivial (Fs < 1).

Relation between overall self-esteem and self-esteem judgment in specific social situations. We have suggested that for individuals who are independent, self-esteem hinges primarily on identifying and expressing positive features of self while shunning and discounting negative features. To examine this possibility, the overall self-esteem score was regressed separately for each cultural group on (a) the proportion of success situations perceived as relevant to a respondent's self-esteem, (b) the extent of self-esteem increase in these relevant situations, (c) the proportion of failure situations perceived as relevant to a respondent's self-esteem, and (d) the extent of self-esteem decrease in these relevant situations. As summarized in Table 5, these four measures as a whole significantly predicted the overall self-esteem for the American respondents, $F(4, 96) = 7.60$, $p < .0001$ ($R^2 = .24$). As predicted, overall self-esteem was related positively to the proportion of relevant success situations and the extent of self-esteem increase of these situations

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[5] This curious reversal of the situation gender effect is largely due to the group of Japanese in America and, further, was not replicated in Study 2, in which only Japanese respondents in Japan were tested. We made no attempt to interpret it.

Table 5

Regression Coefficients Used to Predict Levels of Overall Self-Esteem as a Function of Four Measures of Respondents' Responses to Specific Success and Failure Situations

	Cultural groups of respondents			
Measure	Japanese in Japan	Japanese in U.S.	Japanese overall	Americans
Proportion of relevant success situations	.32	.06	.25	.33*
Self-esteem increase in relevant success situations	−.27	.32	−.00	.28*
Proportion of relevant failure situations	−.29	−.12	−.27	−.35*
Self-esteem decrease in relevant failure situations	.10	−.35	−.06	−.44**
R^2	.05	.07	.03	.24

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .0001$.

and negatively to the proportion of relevant failure situations and the extent of self-esteem decrease in these situations. By contrast, none of these effects attained statistical significance either for the Japanese in Japan or for the Japanese in the United States, regardless of whether they were examined separately, R^2 = .05, $F < 1$; and R^2 = .07, $F(4, 81)$ = 1.42, $p > .20$, respectively, or combined, R^2 = .03, $F(4, 144)$ = 1.20, $p > .25$. We return to this curious cross-cultural difference in the General Discussion section.

Discussion

Study 1 provides evidence for the collective constructionist theory of the self, which holds that the everyday social realities that are historically and collectively constructed in the middle-class U.S. culture and the Japanese culture give rise to, reinforce, and sustain the psychological tendencies for self-enhancement and self-criticism. To begin with, replicating past work, we found a strong self-enhancing effect for Americans; American respondents chose a greater number of success than failure situations as relevant to their self-esteem. Further, these individuals judged that their self-esteem would increase more in success situations than it would decrease in failure situations. More important, we also found a significant effect of situation culture. Thus, success situations made in the United States were judged to have more influence on self-esteem than were the failure situations. This is consistent with the notion that the meaning of social situations available in the U.S. culture is biased in the direction of self-enhancement.

By contrast, not only did Japanese respondents fail to show any evidence for self-enhancement, but they also exhibited a markedly strong tendency in the direction of self-criticism. To begin with, Japanese respondents chose a greater number of failure than success situations as relevant to their self-esteem and, further, judged that their self-esteem would be influenced more in the failure situations than in the success situations. Moreover, the self-criticizing tendency was evident when we

compared the Japanese success situations with their failure counterparts. The failure situations made in Japan were judged to have more influence on self-esteem than the success situations. This suggests that the meaning of social situations available in the Japanese culture is biased in the direction of self-criticism.

Self-Improvement: A Japanese Practice of Self-Making

Although self-criticism has been obtained only inconsistently in past work in Japan, the Markus and Kitayama analysis of the interdependent view of the self suggests an interpretation for such a tendency (e.g., Kitayama & Karasawa, 1995; Kitayama, Markus, & Lieberman, 1995). This analysis assumes that within a cultural context organized by the view of the self as interdependent, the primary life task involves fitting into and adjusting to social relationships. To achieve the task of fitting in, one may need to identify the ideal image of the self expected by others in a relationship, find what may be missing or lacking in the self in reference to this expected, ideal self, and then improve on these deficits and problems. This act of reflecting on one's past behavior in reference to socially shared standards of excellence so as to be able to improve and therefore to be part of the relevant social unit is captured by a frequently used and highly elaborated Japanese concept of *hansei*, which literally means "reflection" (Lewis, 1995). The collectively shared mode of self-making, which is anchored in the practice of hansei, may be called *self-improvement*.

For example, Japanese parents constantly encourage their child to become an *iiko*, a good (*ii*) child (*ko*; White & LeVine, 1986). Iiko is a socially shared ideal image of a child, which is composed of a fuzzy set of attributes such as diligence, docility, and spiritfulness. Further, such constant expectations from close others to fit into a socially shared image of the ideal person in a given context will continue throughout the life course, although the nature of the image itself obviously will change as one goes through various familial (good child, father, mother, or grandparents), organizational (good student, teacher, or manager), and age-graded (good young or old person) social roles and categories.

The practical impossibility of fitting perfectly into any relevant expected image of the ideal social role or category often results in a constant, endless cycle of improving oneself in every domain of life by identifying problems vis-à-vis the pertinent socially shared standards of excellence and subsequently correcting these problems. A constant struggle, perseverance, or effort toward a future state that is closer to the pertinent social ideal is considered always possible and is both encouraged and highly sanctioned in a variety of daily practices in Japan (Azuma, 1994; DeVos, 1973; Lebra, 1976; Lewis, 1995; Kondo, 1990; Whitings, 1989). For example, as described in detail by Lewis (1995), Japanese school children are required at the end of the day to reflect on (hansei) where their individual or group performance fell short of class goals. Because self-improvement is anchored in a socially shared standard of excellence, continuously engaging in hansei is to affirm both in private and public one's commitment to the social unit (e.g., family, classroom, company) from which the standard is derived. Put another way, within the Japanese cultural context, self-improvement is a sym-

bolic act of affirming the value of the relationship of which one is part, thereby fulfilling the sense of the self as a fully interdependent entity. As such, self-improvement can be seen as a collectively held mode of living that simultaneously assures both the cohesion of the community and the identity of the self as interdependent. On the basis of these considerations, we have suggested that self-improvement is as pivotal in the Japanese, interdependent mode of self-making as self-enhancement is in the American, independent mode of self-making (Kitayama & Karasawa, 1995, 1997; Kitayama, Markus, & Lieberman, 1995).[6]

Once brought up and socialized in this nexus or ethos of practices and meanings, which we have here called self-improvement, individuals may develop a functionally autonomous psychological tendency to constantly attend and elaborate on potentially negative aspects of themselves because doing so is a necessary step in constructing a culturally sanctioned, interdependent form of identity. This is in stark contrast with the American tendency, widely observed under the rubric of self-enhancement, to constantly attend and elaborate on potentially positive aspects of one's self. Further, the finding that situations made in Japan promote self-criticism indicates that the everyday social reality is historically and collectively constructed in the Japanese culture so as to encourage this individual sensitivity to one's potential deficits and shortcomings.

Japanese in the United States

One notable, although secondary, feature of Study 1 was that it examined two Japanese samples, that is, one group of Japanese students studying at a university in Japan and another studying at a university in the United States. We found that the self-criticizing tendency was somewhat weaker among the Japanese in the United States than among the Japanese in Japan. This might reflect that the former group had achieved a degree of acculturation while they lived in the United States. Equally plausible, it might have resulted from a selection bias in that Japanese students who were willing to come to the United States for study tended to be more independent, less interdependent, or both, in their definitions of themselves even before they left Japan. Nevertheless, the attenuation of self-criticism observed for the Japanese in the United States was fairly small in magnitude and should not distract from the fact that the effect was quite reliable even in this group. Indeed, this finding makes for an especially strong case for the robustness of the self-criticizing effect among Japanese, especially when they respond to situations common in Japan.

Study 2

The social psychological literature on self-esteem has, in recent decades, assumed that self-enhancement is a pan-cultural characteristic of human beings that is adaptive (Greenwald, 1980), healthy (S. E. Taylor & Brown, 1988), and implicated in the maintenance of moral integrity (Steele, 1988). Further, this line of scholarly thought seems to be both reflected in and importantly derived from a belief that is popular among those in the contemporary American middle-class, namely, that self-esteem is a natural and valid barometer of human worth and

psychological health—a belief that is unheard of in many other cultures, including Japan (cf. Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). From this notion of self-enhancement as a characteristic that is deeply ingrained in the mind of every well-functioning human being, a self-criticizing tendency, which was identified for the Japanese respondents, would seem problematic and as a consequence may be immediately reinterpreted as modulated by a culturally provided rule of public display (e.g., Ekman, 1984). Deep in their hearts, according to this interpretation, most Japanese feel just like most Americans do. However, the Japanese are more concerned with impression management than are the Americans. This impression management interpretation would enable the researcher to accommodate self-criticism in Japan into the current social psychological literature without challenging its core assumption that self-enhancement is adaptive, natural, and pancultural.

The impression management hypothesis is problematic, however. To begin with, it is theoretically anomalous to assume that impression management operates only in Japan. It is also important to note that the questionnaire we used in Study 1 was completely anonymous, and the respondents therefore did not have to pretend to be conforming to whatever display rules might exist in their cultures. Further, the impression management interpretation for self-criticism has been contradicted by several Japanese studies that have found a strong self-criticizing effect even in the complete absence of public scrutiny (Takata, 1987; see also Kitayama, Takagi, & Matsumoto, 1995, for a review). Nevertheless, because the notion of impression management can

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[6] Another possibility that has yet to be explored involves the question of how Japanese individuals could maintain, if they did at all, positive feelings toward themselves if they kept searching for problems in the self (Kitayama & Karasawa, 1997). To begin resolving this apparent paradox in the construction of Japanese selves, it may be hypothesized that Japanese individuals apply an emotional script of *sympathy* to themselves. Sympathy is an emotion rooted in a particular configuration of interpersonal relationship, involving warm feelings of love, attachment, and care directed toward someone in need. It is an emotional counterpart of the interpersonal or interdependent moral code of community (cf. Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, in press; see also A. Smith, 1759/1976). Thus, an experience of this emotion may affirm the moral integrity of the self as an interdependent agent (Kitayama, Markus, & Matsumoto, 1995). Emotions falling in this general class are elaborated in a Micronesian atoll of Ifaluk under the rubric of *fago*, which is described by Lutz (1988) as a combination of love, compassion, and sadness. They also appear central in feelings of *aloha* in indigenous Hawaiian cultures. Likewise, in Japan, the notion of *omoiyari* (extending caring, warm, and sympathetic feelings to others in distress) is much elaborated in customs and daily discourses (Kitayama & Karasawa, 1995; Lebra, 1976; Markus & Kitayama, 1991b, 1994b). Because of this cultural elaboration of an interpersonal emotional state of sympathy, individuals in these cultural contexts may often appropriate it intrapersonally as well, using the general script-like structure of sympathy in evaluating and emotionally experiencing themselves. If so, these individuals may experience warm, self-affirming feelings themselves, especially when they find themselves in need or in distress. Within such a psychocultural construction of the self, finding problems in the self may be directly associated with warm feelings for the self. This emotional dynamic may therefore be predicted to importantly supplement the relational self-improvement process in maintaining the self-critical tendencies of Japanese selves.

easily enable skeptics to discount the evidence for the cross-cultural diversity in self-implicated psychological processes, it seemed useful to pursue the issue further.

This concern motivated Study 2, which tested whether the two effects obtained in Study 1 (those of respondent culture and situation culture) could be found even when changes in self-esteem in each of the same set of social situations were estimated for a typical undergraduate rather than for the self. Both American and Japanese college students were asked to indicate whether and to what extent the self-esteem of a typical college undergraduate in their respective institutions would increase or decrease in each of the social situations that were used in Study 1. We assumed that because the respondents were asked to estimate the true feelings (i.e., changes in self-esteem) of the typical student, they would not filter their responses through any cultural rules of public display that might exist. Hence, if the effect of respondent culture could be replicated with the typical student judgment, this would constitute strong evidence against the impression management hypothesis for both Japanese self-criticism and American self-enhancement. Further, such a result would indicate that the cultural difference in self-esteem that we observed in Study 1 was mediated by some psychological process that is commonly implicated in the self-judgment (Study 1) and the judgment about others (Study 2). Hence, it may serve as an important empirical anchor in discerning the nature of underlying processes.

Finally, but no less significant, the typical student judgment used in Study 2 would also enable us to examine more critically the collective constructionist analysis, which assumes that the meanings of situations made in the United States and those made in Japan vary systematically such that situational definitions made in the United States foster self-enhancement and those definitions made in Japan promote self-criticism. To the extent that the effect of situation culture can be observed not only for the self-judgment (Study 1) but also for the judgment for a typical undergraduate (Study 2), we can be more certain that the meanings of social situations are constructed quite differently across cultures.

Method

Respondents and Procedure

A group of 267 respondents participated in the study. Among them, 143 were Japanese college undergraduates at Kyoto University, Japan (107 men and 36 women). The remaining 124 were White American undergraduates at the University of Oregon (59 men and 65 women). By participating in the study, respondents in both groups partially fulfilled their introductory psychology course requirements. They were tested in small groups of 3 to 10 individuals. On arrival in an experimental room, participants were given a questionnaire booklet and asked to fill it out.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was identical to that used in Study 1, except that respondents were first asked to imagine a typical undergraduate of the same sex at their respective institution. They were to carefully read each of the 400 situations and think about whether the typical undergraduate's self-esteem would be affected in the situation. If they felt the person's self-esteem would not be affected, they were to proceed to the next

Table 6

Proportion of Success and Failure Situations Perceived by Japanese and American Individuals as Relevant Either to Their Self-Esteem (Self-Judgment; Study 1) or That of a Typical College Student (Typical Student Judgment; Study 2)

Situation valence	Japanese respondent in Japan				American respondent in U.S.			
	Japanese situation		U.S. situation		Japanese situation		U.S. situation	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Self-judgment								
Success	.78	.19	.69	.25	.84	.19	.88	.13
Failure	.84	.15	.79	.19	.76	.17	.82	.15
Typical student judgment								
Success	.85	.16	.75	.25	.87	.17	.91	.12
Failure	.87	.11	.83	.15	.85	.13	.88	.12

Note. Standard deviations represent the variation across different situations within each condition. In other words, they are based on the proportions computed over the relevant group of respondents for the pertinent set of situations.

situation. If they felt that it would be affected, they were to indicate whether it would increase or decrease and to what extent it would do so by choosing one number from a scale ranging from 1 (*slightly*) to 4 (*very much*).[7]

Results and Discussion

The collective constructionist theory implies that both the effect of situation culture (American situations being conducive to self-enhancement and Japanese situations being conducive to self-criticism) and the effect of respondent culture (American respondents being self-enhancing and Japanese respondents being self-criticizing) would be replicated in the typical student judgment condition. The most stringent form of this prediction states these effects would not be qualified by higher order interactions with the type of judgment. To directly assess these statistical interactions, the data from the two comparable groups from Study 1 (Japanese in Kyoto and Americans in Eugene) were included in the following analyses. Caution must be exercised, of course, because the two studies were conducted separately. Nevertheless, they differed only in the type of judgment made (self vs. typical undergraduate), therefore the combining of the data from the two studies was considered not only informative but also justifiable.

Proportion of Situations Selected as Relevant to Self-Esteem

Culture effects. The relevant means are presented in Table 6. After arcsine transformation, these proportions were submit-

ted to a MANOVA. The self-enhancing or self-criticizing tendencies of the respective cultural groups were evident, as indicated by a significant interaction between respondent culture and situation valence, $F_1(1, 424) = 172.98, p < .0001$ and $F_2(1, 392) = 105.92, p < .0001$. Whereas Japanese respondents were more likely to choose the failure situations than the success situations as relevant to self-esteem ($M = .83$ vs. .77), $t_1(424) = 11.50$, $p < .01$ and $t_2(392) = 4.23, p < .01$, the American respondents were more likely to choose the success situations than the failure situations as relevant ($M = .88$ vs. .83), $t_1(424) = 9.95, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 3.50, p < .01$. Further, this interaction was qualified by judgment, $F_1(1, 424) = 11.42, p < .001$, and $F_2(1, 392) = 66.96, p < .0001$. Both the self-criticizing tendency (i.e., the tendency to choose a greater proportion of failure situations than success situations) for Japanese and the self-enhancing tendency (i.e., the tendency to choose a greater proportion of the latter than the former) for Americans were weaker in the typical student judgment than in the self-judgment, $t_1(424) = 2.00, p < .05$, and $t_2(392) = 3.26, p < .01$, for the Japanese and $t_1(424) = 3.98, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 6.47, p < .01$, for the Americans. This attenuation was more pronounced for Americans (5%) than for Japanese (3%). It is important, however, that the self-criticizing tendency for Japanese and the self-enhancing tendency for Americans were both reliable even in the typical student judgment, $t_1(424) = 9.39, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 3.51, p < .01$, for the Japanese and $t_1(424) = 5.75$, $p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 2.15, p < .05$, for the Americans.

In addition, a greater proportion of situations were chosen as relevant to self-esteem in the typical student judgment (Study 2) than in the self-judgment (Study 1), as indicated by a highly significant judgment main effect, $F_1(1, 424) = 23.20, p < .0001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 465.41, p < .0001$, indicating a generally lowered threshold for perceived relevance for a typical student than for the self. Further, the MANOVA showed a significant main effect for respondent culture, $F_1(1, 424) = 18.91, p < .0001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 77.11, p < .0001$, indicating that the American respondents chose a significantly greater number of both the success and the failure situations as relevant to self-esteem than did the Japanese respondents. This main effect, however, was qualified by an interaction with situation culture, $F_1(1, 424) = 563.94, p < .0001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 80.91, p < .0001$. Whereas the American respondents chose a significantly greater number of the situations made in the United States than of those made situations made in Japan as relevant to their self-esteem ($M = .87$ vs. .83), $t_1(424) = 14.55, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 14.79, p < .01$, the Japanese respondents were more likely to choose the situations made in Japan than those made in the United States as relevant to their self-esteem ($M = .84$ vs. .77), $t_1(424) = 20.07, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 21.36, p < .01$. The matching effect was very robust and was observed in all conditions. It is important that the overall size of the matching effect in the typical student judgment condition (Study 2; 5.3%) was no different from the overall effect size in the self-judgment condition (Study 1; 5.5%).

Gender effects. Relevant means are given in Table 7. As in Study 1, an interaction between respondent gender and situation valence proved significant, $F_1(1, 424) = 12.82, p < .0001$, and $F_2(1, 392) = 48.23, p < .0001$, which suggests that women chose more failure situations ($M = .85$) than success situations

Table 7

Proportion of Success and Failure Situations Perceived by Male and Female Respondents as Relevant Either to Their Self-Esteem (Self-Judgment; Study 1) or to That of a Typical College Student (Typical Student Judgment; Study 2)

	Male respondent				Female respondent			
	Male situation		Female situation		Male situation		Female situation	
Situation valence	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Self-judgment								
Success	.78	.21	.78	.21	.80	.20	.82	.20
Failure	.77	.16	.78	.18	.82	.15	.85	.17
Typical student judgment								
Success	.86	.18	.85	.19	.83	.19	.84	.20
Failure	.85	.13	.86	.13	.85	.13	.88	.13

Note. Standard deviations represent the variation across different situations within each condition. In other words, they are based on the proportions computed over the relevant group of respondents for the pertinent set of situations.

($M = .82$) as relevant to their self-esteem, $t_1(424) = 6.86, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 2.59, p < .01$, but there was no such difference for men ($M = .82$ vs. .82). Another interaction that turned out significant was that between respondent gender and situation gender, $F_1(1, 424) = 12.19, p < .001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 5.25, p < .05$. The female respondents chose more female-made situations ($M = .85$) than male-made situations ($M = .83$), $t_1(424) = 10.83, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 2.09, p < .05$, but this matching effect was not evident for the male respondents ($ts < 1$). None of these effects was qualified by judgment.

Extent of Self-Esteem Change

Culture effects. As in Study 1, we analyzed the extent of self-esteem increase in the success situations and its decrease in the failure situations. The relevant means are presented in Table 8. First, the main effect for respondent culture proved significant, with American respondents showing a higher self-esteem change score than did Japanese respondents, $F_1(1, 424) = 11.64, p < .001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 39.44, p < .0001$. More important, a Respondent Culture × Situation Valence interaction proved significant, $F(1, 424) = 145.71, p < .0001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 144.60, p < .0001$. Further, this interaction was not qualified by judgment ($ps > .20$). Thus, regardless of judgment, the Japanese individuals judged that self-esteem would be influenced more in the failure situations than in the success situations ($M = 2.19$ vs. 1.89), $t_1(424) = 9.01, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 4.06, p < .05$; however, the American individuals judged that it would be influenced more in the success situations than in the failure situations ($M = 2.40$ vs. 2.04), $t_1(424) = 11.29, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 4.25, p < .05$. Thus it appears that the American tendency to self-enhance and the Japanese tendency to self-criticize are mediated by certain processes that are commonly involved regardless of whether the self is explicitly implicated.

Table 8

Extremity of Self-Esteem Change Reported by Japanese and American Individuals for Either Themselves (Self-Judgment; Study 1) or a Typical College Student (Typical Student Judgment; Study 2) in Success and Failure Situations That Differed in Their Cultural Origin

| | Japanese respondent in Japan | | | | American respondent in U.S. | | | |
| | Japanese situation | | U.S. situation | | Japanese situation | | U.S. situation | |
Situation valence	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
				Self-judgment				
Success	1.92	1.01	2.10	0.61	2.19	1.09	2.67	0.52
Failure	2.42	0.51	2.24	0.75	2.00	0.62	2.15	0.89
				Typical student judgment				
Success	1.81	0.93	1.73	0.77	2.13	1.12	2.60	0.67
Failure	2.16	0.57	1.96	0.75	1.88	0.72	2.11	0.96

Note. Standard deviations represent the variation across different situations within each condition. In other words, they are based on the proportions computed over the relevant group of respondents for the pertinent set of situations.

We also predicted an effect of social situations, namely, that whereas situations made in Japan would foster self-criticism, those made in the United States would promote self-enhancement. In support of this prediction, a Situation Culture × Situation Valence interaction proved significant, $F_1(1, 424) = 228.29, p < .0001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 3.68, p = .05$. Further, this effect was not qualified by judgment ($ps > .20$). Hence, regardless of judgment, the failure situations made in Japan ($M = 2.11$) were perceived to have somewhat more influence on self-esteem than the success situations made in Japan ($M = 2.01$), $t_1(424) = 4.57, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 1.16, ns$. However, the success situations made in the United States were perceived to have more influence on self-esteem ($M = 2.27$) than were the failure situations ($M = 2.11$), $t_1(424) = 6.65, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 1.68, p < .10$. Looking the data from a different angle, the success situations made in the United States were perceived to have significantly more influence on self-esteem than the success situations made in Japan, $t_1(424) = 10.84, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 2.73, p < .01$, but no such effect of situation culture was evident for the failure situations ($ps > .20$). Although caution must be exercised because some of the simple effect tests reached statistical significance only in between-subjects analysis, the significant interaction between situation culture and situation valence provides evidence for the hypothesis that the meanings of self-esteem-relevant situations vary considerably across cultures: Whereas American situations are conducive to self-enhancement, Japanese situations are conducive to self-criticism.

In addition, as in Study 1, a reliable matching effect between respondent culture and situation culture was observed, $F_1(1, 424) = 298.53, p < .0001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 53.70, p < .0001$. Again, this effect was independent of judgment. Thus the Americans responded more strongly to situations made in the United States, ($M = 2.38$ vs. 2.05), $t_1(424) = 33.52, p < .01$, and $t_2(392) = 4.57, p < .01$, but this tendency was somewhat re-

versed for the Japanese ($M = 2.01$ vs. 2.08), $t_1(424) = 7.10, p < .01$, and $t_2 < 1$.

Gender effects. Means relevant to gender effects are displayed in Table 9. As in Study 1, female respondents judged their self-esteem to be influenced more than did male respondents, $F_1(1, 424) = 26.48, p < .0001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 404.09, p < .0001$, and female-made situations were judged to have more influence on self-esteem than male-made situations, $F_1(1, 424) = 227.91, p < .0001$; $F_2(1, 392) = 3.60, p = .05$. Furthermore, as can be seen in Table 9, the pattern obtained in the self-judgment condition (Study 1) was replicated in the typical undergraduate judgment condition (Study 2). As predicted, a self-enhancing tendency was found for men ($M = 2.07$ and 1.95 for the success and the failure conditions, respectively) and a self-criticizing tendency was observed for women ($M = 2.22$ and 2.28 for the success and the failure conditions, respectively). Nevertheless, this interaction proved significant only in the between-situations analysis, $F_1(1, 424) = 1.19, p > .25$; $F_2(1, 392) = 54.18, p < .0001$, and it therefore must be taken with caution. None of these gender effects were qualified by their interaction with judgment.

Relative Prominence of Upward and Downward Change of Self-Esteem

Culture effects. A relative self-esteem increase score was computed by subtracting the extent of self-esteem decrease in failure situations from the extent of self-esteem increase in success situations. In a replication of the results of Study 1, we found strong main effects for both respondent culture and situation culture, $F(1, 424) = 145.71, p < .0001$, and $F(1, 424) = 228.29, p < .0001$, respectively. Further, neither effect interacted with judgment ($ps > .25$). As illustrated in Figure 2, the respondent culture main effect resulted from American respondents showing strong self-enhancement and Japanese respondents

Table 9

Extremity of Self-Esteem Change Reported by Male and Female Respondents for Either Themselves (Self-Judgment; Study 1) or a Typical College Student (Typical Student Judgment; Study 2) in Success and Failure Situations

| | Male respondent | | | | Female respondent | | | |
| | Male situation | | Female situation | | Male situation | | Female situation | |
Situation valence	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	Self-judgment							
Success	2.05	0.97	2.20	0.71	2.26	1.01	2.36	0.80
Failure	1.95	0.67	2.10	0.73	2.31	0.68	2.45	0.71
	Typical student judgment							
Success	1.99	0.94	2.04	0.84	2.07	1.07	2.18	0.93
Failure	1.81	0.69	1.95	0.75	2.08	0.75	2.26	0.82

Note. Standard deviations represent the variation across different situations within each condition. In other words, they are based on the proportions computed over the relevant group of respondents for the pertinent set of situations.

showing strong self-criticism. The situation culture main effect implies that the situations made in Japan and those made in the United States lent themselves to self-criticism and self-enhancement, respectively. Whereas the American tendency for self-enhancement was most pronounced when the American respondents responded to situations made in the United States, the Japanese tendency for self-criticism was most prominent when the Japanese responded to situations made in Japan. The same conclusion is evident when one observes the percent of respondents who showed the dominant responses in the respective conditions (shown within the bar of each condition in Figure

Figure 2. Relative self-esteem change as a function of the judgment type and the cultural origin of both respondents (respondent culture) and situations (situation culture; Studies 1 and 2 combined). JPN-Japan; US-United States.

2). A glance at Figure 2 also makes it clear that there was little effect resulting from whether the judgment was made on the self or a typical college undergraduate.

Overall, the findings of Study 1 were mostly replicated, even when an estimate of self-esteem change was made for a typical undergraduate rather than for the self. These findings provide clear evidence against the impression management hypothesis both for Japanese self-criticism and for American self-enhancement. Neither self-enhancement in the United States nor self-criticism in Japan is likely to be mediated by cultural rules of public display. Further, the effect of situation culture lends further support to the hypothesis that the meanings of self-relevant social situations in the respective cultures vary quite systematically in respect to their potential to afford either self-enhancing (in the United States) or self-critical (in Japan) meanings.

Gender effects. As in Study 1, the main effects for respondent gender and situation gender both proved significant, $F(1, 424) = 8.19$, $p < .005$, and $F(1, 424) = 18.73$, $p < .0001$, respectively. Thus male respondents showed a stronger self-enhancing tendency than did the female respondents, and male-made situations were more conducive to self-enhancement than were female-made situations. Thus, as might be predicted by the collective constructionist analysis, there was a correspondence between the effect of respondent gender and the effect of situation gender. Women were more prone to self-criticism (or less prone to self-enhancement), and female-made situations were more conducive to self-criticism (or less conducive to self-enhancement) than were male-made situations. Nevertheless, the evidence was somewhat compromised because the situation gender main effect was qualified by a Situation Culture × Situation Gender interaction, $F(1, 424) = 60.42$, $p < .0001$, as well as by a Situation Culture × Situation Gender × Judgment interaction, $F(1, 424) = 9.10$, $p < .0001$. On the one hand, situations made in the United States were more conducive to self-enhancement if they were generated by men than by women and, further, this effect of situation gender was stronger in the self-judgment
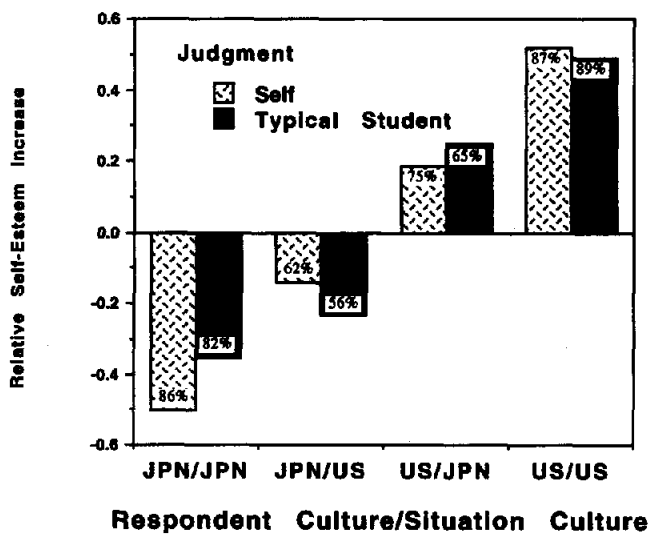
(Study 1; $M = 0.36$ vs. 0.15) than in the typical undergraduate judgment (Study 2; $M = 0.25$ vs. 0.13). For the Japan-made situations, the effect of situation gender disappeared regardless of judgment ($M = -0.01$ vs. 0.05, and $M = -0.07$ vs. -0.05, for the self-judgment and typical undergraduate judgment conditions, respectively).

According to the collective constructionist analysis developed here, one important reason why men are more likely than women to acquire the psychological tendency for self-enhancement concerns the nature of self-relevant social situations. These situations may be systematically different for men than for women such that male-made situations are more conducive to self-enhancement than female-made situations. At first glance, then, the failure to obtain a consistently reliable effect of situation gender might seem to pose a difficulty on the collective constructionist analysis. Nevertheless, the current research examined situational definitions as a proxy for actual social situations. Situational definitions are only one of many elements that, as a whole, constitute the actual social situations. Hence, if there is a difference in situational definitions, there should also exist the corresponding difference in actual situations. However, even if there is no systematic difference in situational definitions, it is still possible that actual social situations are constructed in a very different fashion. Furthermore, the nature of situational definitions will be importantly influenced by linguistic and pragmatic resources brought to bear on their production. These resources will be quite divergent between cultural groups, such as those of Japan and the United States, that are distinct both linguistically and geographically. However, such resources for the production of situational definitions may well be widely shared among people in a given cultural group regardless of their gender. Hence, there is reason to expect that the divergence in situational definitions that we found between the cultures will become attenuated or even disappear once men and women are compared within each culture. Yet systematic differences between social situations constructed by men and those constructed by women may still exist. Hence the absence of any consistently reliable effect of situation gender is congruous with, if not positively supportive of, the current analysis.

General Discussion

Collective Constructionist Theory

We have reported two studies, which, when taken together, provide initial evidence for a collective constructionist theory for the cross-cultural difference in the evaluation of the self. We have argued that American culture is organized around the view of the self as an independent and autonomous entity. Given this culturally shared and sanctioned view, the major cultural task is to find, confirm, and express positively valenced internal attributes of the self. As a consequence, there is a cultural force in the direction of self-enhancement—namely, in the direction of attending, elaborating, and emphasizing positively valenced aspects of the self. By contrast, Japanese culture is organized around the view of the self as an interdependent and mutually connected entity. Given this culturally shared and sanctioned view, the major cultural task is to create and affirm a social relationship in which the self is seen as participating by fitting

into and adjusting to such a relationship. We have further suggested that to achieve the cultural task of fitting in it is important for one to identify consensual standards of excellence shared in a relationship (or in the society in general) and to engage in the process of self-criticism by identifying those shortcomings, deficits, or problems that prevent one from meeting such standards. The result is a cultural force in the direction of self-criticism—namely, in the direction of attending, elaborating, and emphasizing negatively valenced aspects of the self (see also footnote 6).

According to the collective constructionist theory, cultural tasks such as self-enhancement and self-criticism are reflected in the composition of situational definitions available in the respective cultures; these definitions are bound to be conducive to self-enhancement in the United States, but they tend to be conducive to self-criticism in Japan. Thus by merely living and acting according to situational scripts available in the respective cultures, one is bound to be either self-enhancing or self-criticizing. In other words, to act, live, and function well in a given culture amounts to practicing the underlying cultural view of the self as independent and interdependent.[8] Eventually, everyday practices of either self-enhancement (in an independent culture) or self-criticism and subsequent improvement of the self (in an interdependent culture) will become automatized or habitualized to form a functionally autonomous psychological tendency. It is in this sense that we argue that once they have been socialized and have continued to seek an adaptation in the respective cultures, people tend to develop the corresponding psychological processes of self-enhancement in the United States and self-criticism in Japan. In short, the cultural views of self as independent (in the United States) or as interdependent (in Japan) are transformed into the divergent psychological processes of self-enhancement and self-criticism, respectively, by dint of the fact that the cultural views are reflected in the cross-culturally divergent distribution of social situations that promote either self-enhancement or self-criticism.

Overall, as predicted by the current analysis, there was a close correspondence between the bias inherent in the ways in which

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[8] The present analysis sheds some light on the recent controversy on the role of biases of social perception in social adaptation and adjustment. Whereas S. E. Taylor and Brown (1988) argued that self-enhancing perceptions promote mental health, Colvin and Block (1995) emphasized accurate, veridical perceptions as the key in psychological adjustment. According to the present analysis, however, self-enhancement is already inscribed in the American cultural context. Hence, a mode of thought and behavior that is subjectively neutral and supposedly quite veridical in this context may well have an element of self-enhancement. Perceptions that are self-enhancing, therefore, can simultaneously be accurate in this cultural context. It is obvious, however, that some people are extreme, showing an excessive degree of self-enhancement. These individuals tend to show some problems in social adaptation (e.g., John & Robins, 1994). We thus suggest that a psychological tendency for self-enhancement is adaptive and important for psychological well-being in the American cultural context as long as there is an attunement between the psyche and the cultural context so that the psychological tendency for self-enhancement matches the cultural tendency for self-enhancement. Likewise, in Japan a degree of self-criticism that is matched in strength with the same bias in the cultural context may be predicted to be adaptive.

social situations are collectively constructed in the respective cultures and the psychological bias manifested in the responses of people who live therein. To begin with, we found evidence for the effects of both situation culture and respondent culture. Thus, first, American individuals were quite self-enhancing. They chose a greater number of success than failure situations as relevant to their self-esteem and, further, they judged that their self-esteem would increase more in the success situations than it would decrease in the failure situations. By contrast, Japanese individuals showed a tendency for self-criticism. They chose a greater number of failure than success situations as relevant to their self-esteem and, further, they judged that their self-esteem would decrease more in the failure situations than it would increase in the success situations. Second, more germane to the collective constructionist analysis, we confirmed that situations made in the United States were quite self-enhancing: The success situations made in the United States were judged as having more influence on self-esteem than the failure situations. By contrast, situations made in Japan promoted self-criticism: The failure situations made in Japan were judged as having more influence on self-esteem than the success situations.

Further, the pattern of results was nearly identical whether the estimate of self-esteem change was made for the self (Study 1) or for a typical undergraduate (Study 2). It appears, then, that, at least in the task used in the present research, these psychological biases were mediated by general psychological processes commonly implicated in comprehending and elaborating situational definitions. Thus it would seem reasonable to suggest that American individuals are likely to attend, elaborate, and emphasize positively valenced aspects of social situations while discounting or deemphasizing negatively valenced aspects. Likewise, Japanese individuals may likely attend, elaborate, and emphasize negatively valenced aspects while deemphasizing positively valenced aspects.

It is curious that the effect of situation culture was not readily obvious when the situational definitions sampled from Japan and those sampled from the United States were examined individually (cf. the Appendix). Many of them appear quite valid and meaningful in both cultures. There also seems to be no single factor that can reliably distinguish between the two sets of situational definitions. Yet in aggregate, when taken as a whole, they vary dramatically in their potential for self-enhancement or self-criticism. Although puzzling at first glance, this may not be surprising after all, because there are numerous ways in which either self-enhancement or self-criticism can be made more likely. For example, some domains, actions, goals, types of scripts, or combinations thereof may turn out to be more conducive than others to either self-enhancement or self-criticism. Through history and over generations, different cultures have selected and preserved situational definitions that work well in promoting their own cultural imperatives while eliminating those that do not work (but see Durham, 1992; Sperber, 1985, for views that emphasize different aspects involved in cultural selection of ideas).

One important methodological implication is that social psychologists should focus more on social situations as they are actually constructed and experienced. Psychological processes at study may only be engaged when immersed in the very types

of situations from which they have been derived and, further, these situations, even if sharing some common elements, can diverge considerably from one culture to another. Therefore, especially in cross-cultural, cross-ethnic, or cross-gender comparisons, it may be problematic, misguided, or even hazardous to uncritically apply situations either sampled or invented in one cultural context, including experimentally contrived situations such as procedures associated with, say, cognitive dissonance studies, to another cultural context.

The Dynamic of Mutual Constitution Between Culture and the Psyche

The cultural selection process sketched above is assumed to operate over time and collectively: Only those situations that happen to be invented at some point and that end up being used by an increasingly greater number of individuals are preserved in a pool of cultural conventions, resources, or capital. The construction of social situations, therefore, takes place at two distinct levels: first, at the historical level, as a result of *collective selection* that operates over generations of those individuals; second, at the more immediate level, as a result of *on-line improvisation* of situational definitions by each of them. Every bit of individual bias toward or against self-enhancement or, more general, toward independence or interdependence, should have a cumulative effect over time such that situational definitions available in a given culture reflect the central tendency or the core idea widely shared and taken for granted in that culture. Some members of the culture may be aware, but many others may not be aware that they are participating in this collective selection process. Further, some other individuals may even feel that they deliberately resist the central cultural tendency. Thus, some Japanese may seek independence and some Americans may actively engage in communal relationships. It is ironic, however, that even such acts of overt resistance have to be necessarily defined by using the pool of cultural resources — resources that themselves have already incorporated the prevalent cultural tendency.

In this way, the views of the self are typically forced to the background, kept tacit; however, they powerfully influence psychological processes by constituting what Bem (1972) called the zero-order beliefs of the society. The notion of cultural influence mediated by the collective and historical process is reminiscent of the age-old ideas of collective unconscious (Jung, 1964) and group mind (Le Bon, 1952; see Moscovici, 1985, for a review).[9] Although these ideas have long been dismissed

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[9] Yet, in this European literature (e.g., Moscovici, 1985), the predominant tone of argument is that the collective is one rank lower than solitary individuals, and, therefore, the collective is often accorded derogatory labels such as *crowd* and *mass*. Likewise, when groups are studied in contemporary American social psychology, they are often depicted as impositions or obstacles individuals have to face and overcome (Markus & Kitayama, 1994a). The present analysis, however, emphasizes the generative and constitutive role of the collective in constructing and maintaining individual psychological processes, subjective experience, and thus human agency itself. It is important to note that the role of the collective surrounding to constitute human agency is a key element of some major lines of Eastern thought such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. Indeed, modern philosophers in Japan have often made the same general point. For example, Nishida (1911)

in North American social psychology as epiphenomenal and even unscientific (Allport, 1927), the current data suggest that there does exist something like a collective level of reality (composed of cultural practices and public meanings) that shapes and maintains the psychological, individual level of reality (composed of psychological processes and subjective experience).[10]

Although we believe that the collective is both as real as and conceptually distinct from the psychological, it also goes without saying that the collective is constructed, realized, and reproduced through the psychological. Thus, for example, an actual social situation is composed both of the definition that participating individuals generate for it and of their actions, which are made meaningful in reference to the definition. In the case of self-esteem, individuals with self-enhancing (or self-criticizing) tendencies, which by themselves are the product of the individuals' attunement to self-enhancing (or self-critical) situations, will be more likely than those with other tendencies to construct and reproduce situations that afford self-enhancement (or self-criticism), thus perpetuating the continuous cycle of mutual constitution.

The social and the psychological, then, constitute a mutually interdependent nexus or a systemic whole of cultural adaptation rather than mutually insulated, dichotomous entities (Whiting & Child, 1953). Psychological processes of, say, independent versus interdependent selves (as indicated by the present research; see also Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, in press), intrinsic versus extrinsic motivations (J. G. Miller & Bersoff, 1994; Sethi & Lepper, 1995), analytic versus holistic ways of reasoning (Choi & Nisbett, 1996; Kitayama & Masuda, 1997; M. W. Morris & Peng, 1994; Nisbett, in press), justice-based versus interpersonal moral orientations (Azuma, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; J. G. Miller, 1994a; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1990), somatic versus emotional modes of experiencing inner sensations and feelings (Kitayama & Masuda, 1995; Kleinman, 1988; Shweder, 1994), and many others can all be seen as constituting parts of the dynamic of collective practices and meanings that corresponds to each psychological domain.[11] The psyche, then, is not a separate, autonomous set of processes; instead, it exists and functions only in close interdependence and attunement with the collective surrounding (Kimura, 1972).[12] Here lies a clear case in which culture (i.e., social situations) and the psyche (i.e., psychological tendencies including thinking, feeling, and acting) make each other up (Shweder, 1991). This dynamic of mutual constitution between culture and the psyche has begun to receive concerted research attention lately under the banner of cultural psychology (e.g., Bruner, 1990; Cole, 1990; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, in press; Greenfield, in press; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996; J. G. Miller, 1994b; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993; Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1991). The current work, then, is a stepping stone toward realizing this cultural psychological agenda in the domain of self.

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asserted that the "real" being emerges out of an integration of the subjective and the objective. Likewise, Watsuji (1935) formulated a theory of climate, in which the climatic conditions of a given region are thought to simultaneously shape and be shaped by the mode of being of people living therein.

Culture and Self-Esteem

The present work raises some important questions about the self-esteem construct. Defined as an overall sense of positive self-evaluation (Rosenberg, 1965), self-esteem (or jison-shin in Japanese) has been assumed to be integral in the making and maintenance of the self. The significance of self-esteem, however, may be much more specific to a culture than has typically been supposed in the literature. Consistent with this analysis, Study 1 found that the American tendency to self-enhance in the specific situations we used was reliably correlated with the overall level of their self-esteem. For the American individuals, finding and elaborating positive aspects of the self and dis-

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[10] Evidence indicates that individuals in some non-Western cultures better appreciate the collective level of reality than do those in European American cultures, thus raising an interesting issue for the sociology of science. Ellsworth and Peng (1997) presented both American and Chinese undergraduates with a computer image of fishes swimming in a group and asked them to describe what the group as a whole would be feeling. Whereas the Chinese respondents had no difficulty in reporting the group feelings, the American respondents were at a loss, barely able to report anything elaborate. Another piece of evidence comes from emotion research. Although emotions such as joy and anger are construed primarily as internal, hedonic experiences in European American cultures, they may be conceptualized as inherently more social and relational in at least some non-Western cultures (Kitayama & Markus, 1994b; Kitayama, Markus, & Matsumoto, 1995; Kitayama & Masuda, 1995; Lutz, 1988). Levenson, Ekman, Heider, and Friesen (1992) found that psychological arousal induced by manipulations of facial musculature (e.g., grimace) was enough to produce the corresponding subjective feelings of emotion (e.g., anger) in the United States (i.e., facial feedback effect), but was not enough, supposedly because emotion is seen as more relationally anchored, in Western Sumatra. Finally, recent cross-cultural studies of social explanation have strongly suggested that Asians prefer explanations of social behavior in terms of the collective surrounding of the actor, which is in stark contrast with the well-documented bias of European Americans to prefer dispositional attributions (Kitayama & Masuda, 1997; M. W. Morris & Peng, 1994). The relative sensitivity to the interpersonal or collective level of reality in non-Western cultures may be traced back to socialization practices of these cultures (Azuma, 1994; Fernald & Morikawa, 1993; Lewis, 1995).

[11] See Nisbett and Cohen (1996) for an illuminating analysis of this dynamic in respect to the "culture of honor" in the American South. Yet another case for the mutual constitution of the psyche and the collective can be found in the domain of stereotype and prejudice. For example, Steele and Aronson (1995) showed that African American college students' psychological tendency to resist the collective stereotype of them as academically inept and inferior distracts them from an intellectual task when they work on it and thus makes them especially vulnerable to the very stereotype they are trying to resist, thereby leading to a vicious cycle of self-fulfilling prophecy (see also Crocker & Major, 1989; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977).

[12] Our view is related to an ecological approach to perception developed by Gibson (1966) and Neisser (1976), and applied to social cognition by McArthur and Baron (1983). The current view, however, differs from the ecological approach primarily in our emphasis on mutual shaping and co-construction of both psychological processes (cognitive, emotional, motivational, and perceptual) and social realities. In the ecological approach, the emphasis is mostly on perception, which is seen as a unidirectional attunement of attention to features of the ecological environment that is largely independent of and relatively immune to any historical and cultural changes (cf. Neisser, 1993).

counting and deemphasizing negative aspects of the self importantly constitute the idea of the self as a good and well-functioning agent. For Japanese individuals, however, the self-criticizing tendency of finding and elaborating negative aspects of the self and of discounting and deemphasizing positive aspects of the self is part of a more general process of relational self-improvement (hansei) whereby the negative attributes thus identified in reference to socially shared standards of excellence are corrected and eliminated, thus affirming the sense of belongingness to the social unit (see Dweck, 1986, for a related analysis). Thus, the self-criticizing tendency constitutes the Japanese idea of the self as a good and well-functioning, interdependent agent (see footnote 6). Consistent with this analysis, for Japanese respondents, the self-critical tendency in the specific social situations was not correlated with the overall level of their self-esteem.

This analysis suggests that a general sense of satisfaction, good mood, or feeling of well-being in the Japanese cultural context may depend much less on self-esteem. Indeed, self-esteem, as assessed by, say, the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, is highly correlated with subjective well-being in the United States but not in Japan as well as many other non-Western cultures (Diener & Diener, 1995). The subjective well-being of Japanese selves may depend significantly on the appraisal of the self as actively responding to and correcting shortcomings or deficits that have been identified in light of such standards. Following this line of analysis, Kitayama and Karasawa (1995) reasoned that for Japanese, interdependent selves, the perceived absence of negative features rather than the perceived presence of positive features may be crucial in the maintenance of well-being, inasmuch as self-improvement in the Japanese cultural context entails the elimination of features of the self that are perceived to be negative and undesirable. Consistent with this analysis, Kitayama and Karasawa (1995) found that the subjective well-being and physical health of Japanese persons can be reliably predicted by their appraisal of themselves as not having various negative qualities; but there was virtually no effect of their appraisal of themselves as having various positive qualities. If nothing else, then, this suggests that in Japan, in contrast with the United States, general well-being may be more clearly separable from self-esteem as defined as the total of positive evaluations of the self.

Concluding Remarks

In the present work, we examined self-enhancement in the United States and self-criticism in Japan. Our approach can be called collective constructionist because it emphasizes the historical and collective processes by which culturally shared ideas of the self as independent or as interdependent are transformed into corresponding psychological tendencies and processes. The current evidence is consistent with the collective constructionist analysis in that these cross-culturally divergent psychological tendencies can be traced back to collective processes of constructing specific social situations that, in turn, reflect the views of the self that have been elaborated in the respective cultures. It is through each person's active engagement in the historically constructed social realities that characteristics of these realities are transformed into characteristics of

psychological processes. In this sense, psychological processes can be seen as an embodiment of this historical process or, as Bourdieu (1972) described it, "a history turned into nature" (p. 78). The present research has provided initial empirical support for this position by demonstrating a close attunement between the nature of recurrent social situations and the nature of psychological processes that are brought to bear on those situations.

In social sciences, an organization of psychological processes or the idea of the individual as an envelope for this organization has traditionally been seen as a basic unit with which to build higher order social processes of, say, interpersonal relations and cultural systems. In light of the present evidence, however, this reductionist orientation, often called *methodological individualism* (Coleman, 1990), would seem to be partial at best and as often profoundly misleading and unnecessarily limiting the scope of the current social psychological literature because it obscures the very social nature and origin of the psychological (Smelser, 1990). A sharp division between natural or precultural psychological process and cultural content, which is suggested by this view, hides from the researcher the very process of mutual constitution that happens collectively between them. We believe that additional effort toward elucidating this dynamic of mutual constitution is likely to reveal the cultural underpinnings of many phenomena other than self-enhancement or self-criticism that are significant constituents of human social behavior.

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Appendix

Examples of Situations Sampled From Japan and the United States

Success Situations

Made in Japan

When I remember a difficult job in the past that I managed to carry through.
When I am told by someone I like, "I'm glad that you were here."
When I passed other runners in a marathon race.
When I withdraw large sums of money from the bank machine.
When I feel that nobody is watching me.

Made in the United States

When I get an A+ on my paper or final.
Getting a good grade on a test when I study hard.
When people tell me that I cheer them up whenever I'm around.
When I'm dancing.
When I make myself a great breakfast just for me.

Failure Situations

Made in Japan

When I was jilted by someone I was thinking of marrying.
When I am blamed and scolded for something that someone else did.
When I was the only one who was ignored in the presence of many people.
When I have to announce something at class and nobody listens to what I have to say.
When my favorite baseball team or actress (actor) is overtly criticized.

Made in the United States

When you are with some friends and they tell you to get lost because they don't want you around.
When you realize many of the people you considered to be friends don't give a damn what happens
    to you.
When I accidentally run into someone with my car which may have caused them severe injuries.
When your employer tells you that you are not performing well on the job.
Being required to give an oral presentation to a large group of people.