Models of the Self: Self-Construals and Gender

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The authors first describe individual differences in the structure of the self. In the independent self-construal, representations of others are separate from the self. In the interdependent self-construal, others are considered part of the self (H. Markus & S. Kitayama, 1991). In general, men in the United States are thought to construct and maintain an independent self-construal, whereas women are thought to construct and maintain an interdependent self-construal. The authors review the psychological literature to demonstrate that many gender differences in cognition, motivation, emotion, and social behavior may be explained in terms of men's and women's different self-construals. Recognition of the interdependent self-construal as a possible alternative conception of the self may stimulate new investigations into the ways the self influences a person's thinking, feeling, and behaving.

Many international travelers acquire new and different perspectives on their home country as a result of their journeys. Likewise, cross-cultural comparisons can shed new light on prevailing psychological theories, assumptions, beliefs, and practices in a particular society. For example, cross-cultural comparisons show that the nature and structure of the self is more variable than assumed in contemporary U.S. psychological research. Several investigators (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Triandis, 1989) have argued that individuals in other societies, particularly East Asian societies, construct a self that is much more interdependent or relational than the self constructed by members of individualistic societies, such as in the United States. In East Asian cultures, self-definition is to a large degree based on one's relationships and group memberships and on the importance of one's pursuit of harmony with others; this has been termed the interdependent self-construal by Markus and Kitayama. In contrast, in many Western societies, self-definition is based on one's unique abilities or attributes and on the importance of one distinguishing himself or herself from others; Markus and Kitayama labeled this model of the self the independent self-construal. A growing body of research attests to the value of this expanded view of the self for investigators seeking to understand a wide range of cross-cultural differences in cognition, emotion, and motivation (e.g., Cross, 1995; Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988).

An expanded view of the self may also help explain a wide range of psychological phenomena within U.S. society. The United States is a very diverse society, with representatives from a multitude of cultures. Consequently, the view of the self in psychological theory that is based on Western European perspectives of the person—as individualistic, autonomous, and independent of others and social influences—may not adequately describe the self-views of many individuals whose origins lie in non-Western cultures. In addition, this individualistic view of the self may be more descriptive of men in U.S. society than of women in U.S. society (Gilligan, 1982; Jordan & Surrey, 1986). The social, institutional, and cultural environment of the United States promotes development of independence and autonomy in men and interdependence and relatedness in women (Bakan, 1966; Maccoby, 1990; Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, in press; Markus & Oyserman, 1989). As cross-cultural research suggests, these life experiences may result in an emphasis on the independent self-construal by most men and an emphasis on the interdependent self-construal by most women.

Although the nature of the self-system and gender differences in psychological processes and behavior have individually received considerable attention by researchers and theorists, only in the past decade have psychologists begun to seriously explore the relation between the two. In an eloquent argument for this task, Carolyn Sherif (1982) proposed that the concept of the self-system is needed to interpret gender differences in personality, development, and behavior and to understand the interaction between individuals and their social world. When the self-system is ignored, she maintained, many findings of gender differences in behavior "go into a ragbag where the individual is fragmented into an assortment of interpersonal attitudes, motives, and attributions" (p. 382).¹ In this article, we seek to demonstrate the

¹ New theoretical developments since the publication of Sherif's statements much reduce the size of the "ragbag" (e.g., social role theory; Eagly, 1987). We address social role theory and other explanations of gender differences in Other Explanations of Gender-Related Behaviors.
value of these new theoretical developments concerning the self and to heed Sherif's suggestion by using them to integrate a variety of gender differences from the psychological literature.

In the following sections, we briefly review the role of the self in behavior and describe these divergent self-construals. We then summarize the evidence for gender differences in the structure of the self-construal. In the remainder of this article, we show how these divergent models of the self may explain many gender differences in cognition, motivation, emotion, and social relationships.

Why Consider the Self?

In the last 2 decades, progress in psychological theory and methodology has resulted in an increased recognition of the self as a powerful regulator of many aspects of human behavior. The self directs perception, memory, and inference concerning both oneself and others. When an ability or characteristic is especially important or central to an individual's self-definition, the person is likely to pay close attention to information relevant to the domain, to remember the information better than non-self-relevant information, and to resist or ignore inconsistent feedback regarding the ability or characteristic (for reviews, see S. T. Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1984; and Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994). In addition, individuals perceive others through the lens of their self-views (Carpenter, 1988; Dunning & Hayes, 1996; Markus, Smith, & Moreland, 1985).

In addition to directing information processing, individuals' self-views are also inextricably woven together with the individual's emotional experiences. For example, the clarity, complexity, and organization of the self-system affect emotions and affective responses to situations (J. D. Campbell, 1990; Linville, 1985, 1987; Pelham, 1991; Showers, 1992). People may enhance self-esteem by viewing their strengths and abilities as rare and unique, while viewing their faults and weaknesses as commonly shared by others (J. D. Campbell, 1986; Goethals, Messick, & Allison, 1991; Marks, 1984). Individuals' possible selves, defined as hopes or fears for oneself in the future, shape emotional responses to current life events (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Similarly, discrepancies between persons' beliefs about themselves currently and their beliefs about what they should be or would like to be often result in depression or anxiety (Higgins, 1987).

The self is also the source of human agency and volition. Indeed, self-control, responsibility, and intentionality presuppose a self (see Baumeister, in press, for a review). Persons often think or act to enhance their self-evaluations (Greenwald, 1980; Steele, 1988; Tesser, 1988). For example, students may compare their adjustment to college with peers who are worse off to feel better about themselves (Gibbons & McCoy, 1991). At other times, verification or confirmation of important self-views motivates individuals' interpretations of events or their behavioral strategies (Lecky, 1945; Swann, 1983, 1990; Swann, Stein-Scrouss, & Giessler, 1992). Behaviors such as helping other people, selecting a vocation, running for public office, and a whole host of other social behaviors are motivated by the desire to verify or enhance oneself, to achieve a sense of control, or to accomplish a particular desired self. When the role of the self as agent or regulator is impaired, individuals may engage in self-defeating behaviors, such as substance abuse or medical noncompliance (Baumeister, in press). In contrast, active self-regulation is necessary for a person's completion of plans and goals, such as finishing a degree, losing weight, or changing an old habit.

In summary, the self organizes and directs a wide variety of psychological and social phenomena; the self regulates intentional behavior and permits the person to function effectively in his or her social world (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Baumeister, in press; Markus & Wurf, 1987). However, the self is not only an important influence on social behavior but also largely a social product. The self continually and dynamically takes form through one's interactions with close others and the social world (Cooley, 1902; Damon & Hart, 1988; Mead, 1934; M. Rosenberg, 1981). In homes, schools, marketplaces, and other social environments, individuals are told who they are, who they should be, and how to create an identity. Individuals actively construct a self as they participate in their social environments; the self, in turn, facilitates engagement in and adaptation to these environments. In short, the self negotiates the interaction between the person and society. However, viewpoints about the nature of the self vary substantially around the world, resulting in very different models of the self. To understand potential variations in the self-system and their consequences, psychologists have turned their attention to the indigenous psychologies of the self in non-Western societies.

Variation in the Self-System

The self is a dynamic cultural creation; individuals' self-views, emotions, and motivations take shape and form within a framework provided by cultural values, ideals, structures, and practices. In some African cultures, selfhood is defined by one's standing in the family or clan hierarchy (Markus et al., in press). In many East Asian cultures, the self is framed in terms of one's important roles and responsibilities to others. In much of the United States, an individual is seen as separate from and prior to society. These variations in views of the self result in important differences in psychological phenomena that are mediated or organized by the self (Cousins, 1989; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Triandis, 1989).

Independent and Interdependent Self-Construals

Among psychologists, there is a growing concern that much of the research in the United States on the self has been guided by Western, individualistic assumptions of personhood and identity. In much of Western culture, the individual is seen as 'an independent, self-contained autonomous entity who (a) comprises a unique configuration of internal attributes (e.g., traits, abilities, morals, and values), and (b) behaves primarily as a consequence of these internal attributes' (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 224). This cultural ideology results in the development of an independent self-construal, in which representations of the self are bounded and distinguished from representations of others or social contexts (Geertz, 1973).

In this construal, the central principle directing the development of the self is self as "separated from others." The primary...
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components of this self-construal are one's internal traits, skills, and attributes; group memberships, roles, and relationships are less important for self-definition (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). The principal goals for individuals with an independent self-construal are to maintain a sense of autonomy and to "be true to one's own internal structures of preferences, rights, convictions, and goals" (Markus & Kitayama, 1994, p. 569). Fulfilling these goals, in turn, enhances self-esteem. Consequently, thoughts and actions that highlight one's uniqueness or specialness, behaviors that cause one to stand out from others, and the development of skills or attributes that few others share serve as means to enhance self-esteem and self-evaluation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). Because one's attributes, beliefs, and wishes are highly accessible in information processing, the person develops sensitivity to stimuli relevant to these characteristics and finely tuned strategies for their expression (Markus, 1977).

Although individuals with an independent self-construal certainly desire relationships, their relationships often reflect individualistic goals. Relationships with others may serve as mirrors for the individual's comparison of the self with others, as backdrops for the self-enhancing display of abilities or attributes, or as a means to demonstrate uniqueness by an assertion of dominance over others (Maccoby, 1990; Markus & Cross, 1990; Teeter, 1988; Wills, 1981). For these persons, individual rights, goals, and wishes are the primary basis for moral choices. The goals and needs of society, family members, or others are secondary or subordinate to the individual's (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; J. G. Miller, 1984; Shweder & Bourne, 1984).

Many cultures, however, emphasize the interconnectedness of the person and society; relationships and social groups pattern one's identity. In these cultures, self-representations are woven together with representations of "close others" (e.g., one's spouse or best friend) and social contexts, resulting in an independent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The central principle that guides the development of this construal is self as "connected to others." Consequently, the boundaries between the self and others are open, porous, or flexible; representations of significant relationships and social contexts constitute a significant portion of the self space. The principal goals of individuals with an independent self-construal are to develop self-defining relationships and to maintain connectedness with close others. Therefore, self-esteem or self-enhancement derive from thoughts and feelings that emphasize one's connectedness to others, from behaviors or skills that help the person fit in or harmonize with close others, and from vicarious participation in the joys and successes of self-defining others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; J. B. Miller, 1986). Because the independent self-construal includes representations of close others, these representations are highly accessible in the act of thinking and in social interaction. Consequently, the individual develops an ability to take the perspective of close others and to fit his or her behaviors to serve the needs of important relationship partners (Jordan & Surrey, 1986).

For the person with an interdependent self-construal, relationships are viewed as integral parts of the person's very being. Indeed, one's thoughts, feelings, and wishes may be interpreted and understood in light of the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of close others, in contrast to the wariness of another's influence which is characteristic of the independent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). For individuals with an interdependent self-construal, obligations to others and responsiveness to the needs of others shape moral decisions and social interactions (Jordan, 1991; Lyons, 1983; Surrey, 1991). The goals and needs of family and close others are often as important as one's own goals and needs. The depiction of the individual as "a single thread in a richly textured fabric of relationships" (Kondo, 1990, p. 33) succinctly captures the relation between self and other for individuals with an interdependent self-construal.

Origins of Variation in Self-Construals

Although Western cultures, particularly the United States', tend to emphasize individualism and the priority of personal freedom over social obligations, U.S. society is far from monolithic in this view of the relation of self and others. The individualist ideal is not shared by many members of nondominant minority groups, who tend to take a collectivist or interdependent stance toward the relation between the person and society (e.g., Hispanics, Asian Americans, and African Americans; R. L. Allen, Dawson, & Brown, 1989; Marin & Triandis, 1985; McCombs, 1985; see also Lykes, 1985). In addition, there is a long history of collective religious groups in the United States that value cooperation, sharing, and responsibility for others (Oved, 1988). In one of the few documented studies of a communal religious group, Kaplan and Plant (1956, cited in Oved, 1988) related that the Hutterites of South Dakota are less competitive, envious, and violent than are members of the general population. Members of these communal groups are likely to value an interdependent view of the person and to construct social norms, roles, and self-views that reflect this relational perspective.

Similarly, others have argued that the independent self-construal describes the self-views of men in U.S. culture better than that of many U.S. women (Gilligan, 1982; Jordan & Surrey, 1986; Sampson, 1988; Stewart & Lykes, 1985). Multiple social influences promote independent ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving for men and relational ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving for women. For example, parents discuss emotion more with their preschool daughters than with their preschool sons, so they may differentially emphasize the importance of sensitivity to the feelings of others to their daughters and sons (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987; Fivush, 1992). From about Age 3, boys and girls interact in increasingly gender-segregated groups. These groups take on distinctive norms and characteristics: Boys' groups are characterized by competitiveness, rough-and-tumble play, and demonstrations of dominance; girls' groups are characterized by intimate friendships, cooperation, and efforts to maintain social relationships (Maccoby, 1990). In later childhood, parents' beliefs about gender roles influence their choice of household tasks for their children: Girls are more often assigned to child care than are boys, whereas boys are

As Maccoby has argued, the behavior patterns learned in these early peer groups may form the basis of adult behavior. We hypothesize that these early experiences will exert long-lasting influences because they guide the early development of the self.
more often assigned to tasks that take them out of the house and allow them more freedom and independence (for reviews, see Goodnow, 1988; L. W. Hoffman, 1991; and Huston, 1983).

After childhood, women and men continue to participate in culture in very different ways; gendered social roles, experiences, and occupations continue to reinforce the different skills and abilities developed by women and men. For example, women in U.S. society are more likely to be responsible for raising children and more often found in caregiving positions than are men. Women, therefore, tend to develop nurturance and relatedness to a greater degree than do men (Chodorow, 1978; Eagly, 1987). Women provide more social support to others than do men and are more often viewed as responsible for maintaining relationships (Wellman, 1992; Wethington, McLeod, & Kessler, 1987). In other words, men and women live within contexts of independence or interdependence, respectively. Consequently, their goals, activities, plans, interactions, values, and self-systems are continually shaped by these contexts. Our goal is not to thoroughly review the gendered development of men and women nor to take a stand on a particular developmental theory but to draw attention to the many social factors that may channel the creation and maintenance of divergent self-construals by men and women. Although there is certainly great variation within the genders in the degree to which self-construals reflect gender stereotypes and gendered social roles, we assume that women are more likely than men to develop an interdependent self-construal, whereas men are more likely than women to develop an independent self-construal. (For additional reviews of the literature on gender-typed socialization of men and women and the social construction of the self, see Block, 1979, 1984; Damon & Hart, 1988; Eagly, 1987; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, 1987; Markus & Oyserman, 1989; and Oyserman & Packer, 1996.)

Although we have chosen to use the terms for these two self-representations that are used in cross-cultural research (mostly not to clutter the literature with new terms), our point is not to suggest that U.S. women are like Asian people (Kashima et al., 1995). Rather, we seek to build on the work of cross-cultural psychologists who question the assumption that all people construct an independent self-construal. Like them, we focus on the importance of others in the self-construals of many people, particularly women. However, culture delimits the expression of this other-oriented self-construal. For U.S. adults, individualism and dualism frame views of the person and society. Consequently, a sense of relatedness to others may be volitional and based on personal choice (albeit one that is socially encouraged and rewarded for women). In contrast, in East Asian cultures, collectivism and monism (or a holistc worldview) frame views of the person and society. In these cultures, interpersonal responsiveness is often obligatory, and care for others is based on a moral code rather than personal discretion (e.g., among the Hindu Indians, as described by J. G. Miller, 1994).

Triandis (1989) has also argued that group memberships are relatively unimportant to U.S. adults as compared with members of East Asian cultures, who tend to define themselves in terms of important in-groups. Consequently, for U.S. adults, a self-construal based on affiliations with others may be more likely to focus on individual relationships (e.g., with one’s spouse, close friends, siblings) than on group memberships or social roles. These relationships are also chosen from a universe of possibilities; no single relationship is inherently self-defining. In short, the interdependent self-construal found among U.S. adults is given its unique form by the individualistic environment in which it develops.

In summary, individuals may differ markedly in the degree to which others are incorporated into their self-system. Given that the self influences cognition, motivation, emotion, and behavior (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Baumeister, in press; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Markus & Wurf, 1987), this recognition of variation in self-construals provides an argument for the reconsideration of many psychological concepts, theories, and assumptions. Unfortunately, relatively few investigators have attempted to operationalize these different self-construals and to examine the consequences of them. As a result, we turned to the literature on gender differences in behavior as a source of data for testing our hypotheses on the ways these divergent self-construals may influence psychological phenomena. Our goal in the following sections is to demonstrate that many of the observed differences in women’s and men’s behavior may be explained by individual differences in the self-construal (Markus & Oyserman, 1989; Surrey, 1991). Furthermore, we draw on these hypothesized differences to predict how and when men and women may differ with respect to other, unexplored behaviors. Our purpose in this analysis is not to exhaustively review the literature on gender differences but rather to demonstrate the usefulness of the interdependent and independent models of the self to explain a broad range of human behavior in U.S. society.

Consequences of Gendered Self-Construals

Cognition

Cognition and the self are inseparably linked, and these linkages take two primary forms. First, the content of the self-concept includes representations of an individual’s thoughts and beliefs about himself or herself as an object (James, 1890/1983; M. Rosenberg, 1965). Second, the self actively influences information processing (Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1984; Markus, 1983; Markus & Wurf, 1987). In the following, we explore ways that variation in the self-construal may be revealed in both the content of self-representations and cognitive processes related to the self, such as attention and memory.

Self-Representations

Long before an individual comes to label himself or herself with specific attributes or characteristics (e.g., “I’m outgoing” or “I am good with people”), his or her self-construal has been shaped and formed through gendered social interactions, gender-typed social roles, and gender-related expectations (Damon & Hart, 1988; Eagly, 1987; M. Rosenberg, 1981). Consequently, specific self-representations reflect the core principles that underlie the self-construal (i.e., autonomy from or relatedness to others). Specific self-representations may include attributes that correspond to the behavioral consequences of the self-construal, such as “caring” for the interdependent self-construal and “individualistic” for the independent self-construal. In addition,
for individuals with an interdependent self-construal, other elements of the self-concept may represent specific relationships or roles, such as "my relationship with my mother" or "my relationship with my partner." Certainly the person with an independent self-construal values relationships, but these roles and relationships are likely to be partitioned from independence-oriented self-representations.

Given our assumptions about the gendered patterning of the self-construal, do men and women differ in the extent to which interdependence versus independence-related attributes are included in their self-representations? More than 2-decades worth of research suggests that the answer is "yes." In 1974, MacCoby and Jacklin reported that social characteristics are more important aspects of self-definition for women than men, and little evidence acquired since then challenges this conclusion. For example, McGuire and McGuire (1982), who used an open-ended format with schoolchildren Ages 7-17, reported that girls' self-conceptions were more social than boys' self-conceptions. Girls freely described themselves in terms of other people 50% more often than did boys. In addition, girls' spontaneous self-descriptions included more references than boys' to significant others, whereas boys' spontaneous self-descriptions included more references than girls' to people in general. In a study that used the autophotographic method, men and women compiled a set of pictures that described themselves (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993). Women included more pictures of themselves with others and more pictures of family members than did men. Men, however, included more pictures of themselves alone than did women.

Women are also more likely to describe themselves in terms of connectedness to others, whereas men are more likely to describe themselves in terms of separateness from others (Lyons, 1983; see also Mackie, 1983; Pratt, Francer, Hunsberger, & Manchester, 1990; and Stern, 1990). Similarly, women are more likely than men to include relationships in their descriptions of their ideal self and their undesired self (Boggiano & Barrett, 1991; Bybee, Glick, & Zigler, 1990; Ogilvie & Clark, 1992). When asked to rate themselves on experimenter-selected attributes, men are more likely to evaluate themselves positively on dimensions related to independence (e.g., power and self-sufficiency), whereas women are more likely to evaluate themselves positively on dimensions related to interdependence (e.g., likability or sociability; Cate & Sugawara, 1986; Marsh, Parker, & Barnes, 1985; F. R. Rosenberg & Simmons, 1975; Simmons & Rosenberg, 1975; Stake, 1992; Zuckerman, 1985; for reviews see MacCoby & Jacklin, 1974; Simmons, 1987; and Wylie, 1974). Self-representations differ not only in their content or the degree to which they are evaluated as self-descriptive but also in their importance or centrality. Very important or central self-representations are more likely to influence information processing and behavior than are less central or less important self-views (Markus, 1977; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Pelham & Swann, 1989). Given differences in self-construals, we expect that men and women will rate the importance of interdependent or independent self-views differently. For example, Morris Rosenberg (1989), in his extensive study of adolescents' self-concepts, reported that girls rated "self-values" related to interpersonal harmony and sensitivity as more important than did boys. In contrast, boys rated characteristics and behaviors related to social dominance and toughness as more important than did girls (see also Eccles et al., 1989). In a study of the importance of adult roles to identity, Thoits (1992) found that women ranked relationship-oriented aspects of their identity (e.g., spouse, friend, son or daughter) as more important to them than did men.

In summary, there is substantial evidence that U.S. women are more likely than U.S. men to describe themselves in terms of relatedness to others, whereas men are more likely than women to describe themselves in terms of independence from others. The question remains, however, as to the source of these differences. Although the evidence is mute as to the origins of gender differences in self-representations, we suggest that gendered social roles, expectations, and other experiences result in different self-construals. These divergent self-construals, in turn, give rise to dissimilar self-representations among women and men.

**Information Processing**

Variation in the core structure of the self not only influences self-representations but also has a pervasive and systematic effect on how stimuli are perceived and processed. Important self-representations function as "lenses" for the perception and interpretation of social information and social interactions (Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1984; Markus & Wurf, 1987). As a result, individuals with an independent self-construal are expected to attend closely to information that highlights their uniqueness or individuality; to encode and organize information with regard to their interests, skills, and attributes; and to have superior memory for information relevant to themselves. In contrast, individuals with an interdependent self-construal are expected to attend closely to information concerning relationships, to encode and organize information in terms of relationships, and to have superior memory for information relevant to self-defining relationships. In the following, we illustrate these hypothesized consequences of the self-construal by reviewing evidence of gender differences in attention and memory.

**Attention.** Although gender differences in attention-related processes have received very little attention, research by Ickes, Robertson, Tooke, and Teng (1986) shows that women paid more attention to partners in an interaction than did men. In this study, pairs of unacquainted participants (both same-gender and opposite-gender pairs) were left alone in a small room, arranged with a couch, a coffee table, and bookshelves. For 5 min, their interactions were surreptitiously taped. After the 5-min interaction, participants were asked to watch the tape and record their thoughts and feelings. These were coded into several categories, including thoughts and feelings about the self and the partner and metaperspectives (thoughts about what the partner was thinking or feeling). Trained observers also coded the tapes for behaviors that indicated attention to the partner and engagement in the interaction, such as verbalizations, gazes, positive affect, body orientation, and interpersonal distance. Women in this study reported a greater number of direct thoughts about their partner and more positive thoughts and feelings about their partner than did men. Women's behaviors also corresponded with their self-reports: They were more likely than men to verbally reinforce their partner,
to gaze at their partner, and to direct their body toward and to sit close to their partner.

Not only may individuals with an interdependent self-construal pay close attention to others in their social world, but they may also be more likely to consider their partner's perspective in the interaction. This perspective taking allows the individual to anticipate the needs or reactions of the partner and to adapt his or her behavior to the partner to ensure a smooth and harmonious interaction. In studies that used self-report data, women in fact reported a greater inclination to take the perspective of another person than did men (M. H. Davis, 1980; M. H. Davis & Franzoi, 1991). In addition, women in the Ickes et al. (1986) study were more likely than men to report metaperspectives. In a later study, Ickes, Tooke, Stinson, Baker, and Bissonnette (1988) found that, in a similar dyadic interaction, women's reports of their own thoughts about their partner's thoughts and feelings converged with their partner's actual feelings and thoughts to a greater extent than did men's reports. From the perspective of the interdependent self-construal, this suggests that women were actively working to "read the mind" of their partner to adjust their own behavior accordingly.

Memory. Individuals typically have better memory for information about themselves than for information about others, as demonstrated in studies of self-referential memory (Greenwald & Banaji, 1989; Klein & Kihlstrom, 1986; Kuiper & Rogers, 1979; Rogers, 1981; Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977). In these studies, participants were presented with a list of words and were asked to judge each word on one of several dimensions. For example, participants were asked to evaluate a semantic dimension of the word (e.g., "How specific is the word?") or the word's application to the self or a stranger. This task was followed by an unexpected free-recall test. These studies show that participants had better memory for information encoded with respect to the self than for information encoded in the other conditions (see Higgins & Bargh, 1987; Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994; and Klein, Loftus, & Burton, 1989, for reviews). Researchers have argued that these results are a consequence of deeper processing for self-relevant information (Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Rogers, 1981) and of the highly organized and interconnected linkages in self-representations (Kihlstrom et al., 1988; Klein & Kihlstrom, 1986; Klein & Loftus, 1988).

However, the process of self-referential encoding may differ for individuals with an interdependent self-construal. If representations of close others are central components of the self, then the encoding of information with respect to close others should also enhance memory. In a test of this hypothesis, Josephs, Markus, and Tafarodi (1992) first assumed that self-esteem and self-construals are related. They argued that esteem derives from "succeeding at what is valued in a given social-cultural niche" (p. 392; see also Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). Therefore, given gender norms in U.S. society, men's high self-esteem could be associated with an independent self-construal, whereas women's high self-esteem could be associated with an interdependent self-construal. They predicted an interaction between gender and self-esteem in the likelihood of a person remembering information encoded with respect to the self or a close other.

Indeed, Josephs et al. (1992, Study 2) found that women with high self-esteem recalled significantly more words that had been evaluated for relevance to a close friend than did other participants. The usual self-reference effect (i.e., better memory for words encoded with respect to the self than for words encoded with respect to others) was demonstrated by men with high self-esteem. Josephs et al. argued that women [with high self-esteem] have highly elaborated structures of knowledge about important others and . . . the information encoded with respect to these others can be used to produce a rich, highly memorable encoding of the stimulus words in these conditions.

In short, one consequence of the interdependent self-construal is the development of well-articulated representations of close others, which facilitate information processing.

The consequences of social interaction are also potentially more self-relevant for individuals with an interdependent self-construal than for those with an independent self-construal. Therefore, their memory for people and relational events should be more accurate than the memory of individuals with an independent self-construal. For example, a meta-analytic review shows that women had better memory for faces than did men (d = -.34; Hall, 1984; see also Clifford & Bull, 1978; and Shapiro & Penrod, 1986, for reviews). This gender difference in memory for faces can be found in children as young as 4 years old (Feldstein, 1976). Similarly, women remember more details about another person briefly encountered on the street than do men (Yarmey, 1993) and remember more of their high school classmates' names and faces, even after many years (Bahrnick, Bahrick, & Wittlinger, 1975). Wives reported more vivid and detailed memory for relationship events (e.g., a vacation, argument, or first date) than did husbands, as indicated by both self-ratings and observer ratings (M. Ross & Holmberg, 1992). In addition, female counselors remember more facts about a client than do male counselors (Buczek, 1981). In contrast, individuals with an independent self-construal are more likely to remember information that is removed from a social or relational context, such as dates of historical events. Consistent with this hypothesis, a study of men and women shows that men remembered historical events more accurately than did women (Storandt, Grant, & Gordon, 1978).

Predictions of encoding and organization of information. Other aspects of information processing, such as encoding and organization, are also tied to the self (Markus et al., 1985). Individuals with an interdependent self-construal should be more likely than those with an independent self-construal to encode relational or contextual data along with abstract information for a target person. In a study of person perception, Sedikides, Olsen, and Reis (1993) found that individuals spontaneously encoded and organized information about target persons in terms of marital relationships. They concluded that relationships serve as natural categories for the organization of information about others (see also A. Fiske, 1992). Although neither the Sedikides et al. study nor any other relevant studies of encoding and organization that we could locate tested for gender differences, we anticipate that women will be more likely than men to encode and organize information in terms of relationships. In addition, there are indications that men are more sensitive to information regarding social dominance or hierarchy (e.g., Maccoby, 1990;
Sidanius Pratto, & Bobo, 1994), which suggests that these may be the dimensions used by individuals with an independent self-construal to encode and organize information.

In summary, as we predicted based on independent and interdependent models of the self, women tend to describe themselves in more relational terms than do men. They also think more about others, pay closer attention to others and to relationships, and remember more about close others than do men. We also predicted that divergent self-construals may produce significant individual variation in other cognitive processes, such as encoding and organization of information. When well-elaborated schemas for oneself and close others are knit together, both the content and the processes of thinking about the self and others may reflect the interdependent nature of the self-construal.

Self-Related Motivations

In much contemporary psychology, the self is viewed as the motivator of many aspects of behavior. For example, 3-decades worth of research in Western cultures shows that the motive to enhance or promote oneself underlies much of human activity. William James (1890/1983) first described these motives as "self-seeking" or "self-love"; almost 100 years later, Greenwald (1980) coined the term "beneffectance" to refer to the tendencies to view oneself and one's actions in a positive light and to seek after positive, self-enhancing feedback. In these and most other formulations developed in Western cultures, the basis of self-enhancement, self-esteem, or self-evaluation is the demonstration of one's uniqueness and individuality. To stand out, be better than most others on self-defining dimensions, and maintain a positive successes to aspirations ratio (James, 1890/1983) are in general seen as means to reinforce a positive view of the self and to bolster self-esteem (Blaine & Crocker, 1993; Harter, 1993; Tesser, 1988).

This emphasis on individual uniqueness and autonomy as the basis of self-esteem is founded on the assumption of an independent self-construal. For the person with an interdependent self-construal, however, self-enhancement may be approached very differently. For these persons, positive feelings about the self should in some part derive from the development and maintenance of close relationships and from participation in the well-being of close others. Assuming, again, that men and women in U.S. culture fashion different self-construals in response to different cultural norms and values, we expect that the sources of self-esteem will vary between the genders. Consequently, we hypothesize that men and women use different strategies to maintain and enhance self-esteem or self-evaluation.

Sources of Self-Esteem

Although the bases or origins of self-esteem have only more recently been explored, some researchers have reported gender differences in the factors that predict a sense of worth. In one study of the predictors of self-esteem, a measure similar to interdependence predicts self-esteem 2 years later for women but not men (Stein, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1992). In contrast, a measure similar to independence predicts later self-esteem for men but not women. Feather (1991) also found positive relationships between self-esteem and prosocial and affiliation motives for women but not men. In an experience-sampling study in which adolescents recorded their interactions and feelings at random intervals during the day, girls who valued affiliation (and presumably had an interdependent self-construal) reported that they felt better about themselves when they were with others than did boys or girls who did not value affiliation (Wong & Csikszentmihalyi, 1991).

Threats to self-esteem or self-evaluation should also depend on the nature of the self-construal. For individuals with an independent self-construal, the loss of a sense of autonomy or inability to express one's inner characteristics and attributes could threaten self-esteem. In contrast, for individuals with an interdependent self-construal, conflict in or damage to significant relationships and roles could threaten self-esteem. For example, low self-esteem is related to stress in relationships for girls and women (Moran & Eckenrode, 1991; Zuckerman, 1989). Women also reported that their not being forgiven by a friend they had hurt would have a greater effect on their self-esteem than did men (Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996). Josephs et al. (1992, Study 3) found that women with high self-esteem (who were thought to have constructed an interdependent self-construal) engaged in compensatory bolstering (i.e., self-enhancement after a threat) when they received negative feedback about their interpersonal abilities and sensitivity to others but not when they received negative feedback about independence-related attributes and abilities. In contrast, men with high self-esteem (who were thought to have constructed an independent self-construal) engaged in compensatory bolstering in the opposite condition—when they received negative feedback about independence-related attributes and abilities. Josephs et al. concluded that women's self-esteem, at least in part, derives from their ability to maintain relationships with others, whereas men's self-esteem, in part, derives from the ability to maintain independence from others. When negative feedback threatens these central views of the self, individuals engage in compensatory bolstering to enhance self-esteem.

In addition, women's feelings about themselves appear to be quite responsive to the feedback of others (Schwalbe & Staples, 1991). In several laboratory studies, Roberts and Nolen-Hoeksema (1989, 1994) found that women felt better about themselves when they received positive feedback from an evaluator and worse when they received negative feedback. Men's self-evaluations, however, showed little influence of others' evaluations. In fact, men tended to self-enhance even in the face of negative feedback, which may have been a defensive means to protect important self-defining abilities from threat.

In summary, self-esteem may have different origins, depending on one's self-construal. However, this hypothesis is challenged by Leary, Tambor, Tashiro, and Downs (1995) who posited that self-esteem reflects a person's perception of social inclusion or exclusion, regardless of gender or other individual differences. Their research shows that college students' self-esteem dropped when they were excluded (or believed they would be excluded) from groups.3 We do not question that

3 In fact, Leary et al.'s Study 3 reveals a stronger effect for women than men.
there is a basic human need to belong that transcends individual differences in the self (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). However, the role of belongingness in self-esteem may differ, depending on one's self-construal. With regard to the interdependent self-construal, the role of social inclusion in self-esteem maintenance is fairly straightforward: To be a part of close relationships and belong to social groups enhances one's sense of relatedness and connectedness, which in turn enhances self-esteem. But how does social inclusion or exclusion influence self-esteem for the person with an independent self-construal? Perhaps relationships and group memberships serve a different function for the person with an independent self-construal. For example, individuals with an independent self-construal may use relationships and membership in social groups as a source of social comparison information. One's unique attributes and distinguishing characteristics become apparent in the presence of others. In addition, some self-defining characteristics or attributes may best be demonstrated in social groups (e.g., leadership or a sense of humor). In other words, for the individual with an independent self-construal, membership in social groups can facilitate the expression and enhancement of individuating characteristics, promoting a sense of uniqueness and individuality.

**Strategies for Self-Enhancement**

If the sources of self-esteem differ for individuals with independent or interdependent self-construals, we expect that the strategies or processes used to maintain or enhance self-esteem will also differ. Individuals with an independent self-construal may maintain a positive view of themselves by attending to and displaying those attributes that they believe are especially self-defining and by viewing themselves as generally superior to others on these attributes. In contrast, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may maintain a positive view of themselves by attending to the ways that they are similar to close others and by protecting the feelings of close others.

One way to enhance the self for individuals with an independent self-construal is to exaggerate one's abilities or strengths so that one appears superior to others. In fact, boys are more likely to boast about their abilities than are girls (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). In a classroom setting, Frey and Ruble (1987) found that girls made fewer spontaneous self-congratulatory comments than boys. Interviews with these students also show that, although self-congratulatory comments were positively associated with good performance among boys, there was no relation between performance and positive statements about the self among girls. Instead, girls were more likely than boys to make positive comments about other children's performance.

This gender difference in the tendency to exaggerate one's abilities is also well documented in adults. For example, men are more likely than women to overestimate the degree to which their own characteristics or abilities are unique or unshared by others, a phenomenon termed the "false uniqueness bias" (Goethals et al., 1991; Josephs et al., 1992; see also Felson, 1981; Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994; Marks, 1984; and McFarland & Miller, 1990). Other studies show that men tend to overestimate their abilities relative to objective performances, whereas women's estimates of their abilities tend to be more realistic or modest (e.g., Beyer, 1990; Gitelson, Peterson, & Tobin-Richards, 1982; Ilardi & Bridges, 1988; Stipek & Gralinski, 1991; see Lenney, 1977; and Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, for reviews).

These gender differences in self-promoting behaviors may be a consequence of differences in esteem-related motivations, which arise from different self-construals. If women tend to create an interdependent self-construal, then they may tend to present their abilities and accomplishments modestly when the possibility of hurting another's feelings exists. Indeed, Heatherton et al. (1993) found that women college students were more modest than men college students in a situation in which they revealed their expected grade point average (GPA) to a low-performing student. In anonymous or public situations without explicit comparison with others, there were no gender differences in self-reported GPA. The motivational origins of this gender difference in modesty or self-aggrandizement are aptly summarized by Goethals et al. (1991) in their description of gender differences in the false uniqueness bias. They suggested that women who perform well and perceive their peers as doing likewise feel good about themselves. In contrast, . . . the key to men's self-esteem is their perception that few of their peers perform desirable behaviors. The less positively men view their peers, the higher their self-esteem. (pp. 170–171)

We propose that these gender differences in esteem-related motivations and behaviors originate in divergent self-construals. Individuals may also enhance the self by comparing themselves with worse-off others (Festinger, 1954; Gibbons & Gerrard, 1991; Wills, 1981; J.B. Wood & Taylor, 1991). Most theories of social comparison assume that to perform better than others has unmitigated positive consequences for individuals. However, this effect may be moderated by the self-construal. For individuals with an independent self-construal, to perform better than others highlights their uniqueness and superiority to others, resulting in enhanced self-appraisal and positive affect. For individuals with an interdependent self-construal, to perform better than others particular close others, may be a double-edged sword. If the better performing individual is attuned to the thoughts and feelings of others, then he or she may recognize that this comparison can create feelings of envy, anger, or shame in those who have not performed as well (Brickman & Bulman, 1977). Consequently, the person with an interdependent self-construal may attempt to minimize or reduce comparisons on dimensions that may prove upsetting or threatening to the self-esteem of a close other. Similarly, when a close other performs well, the person with an interdependent self-construal can participate in the friend's feelings of success and pleasure. For these individuals, positive self-evaluations and positive affect may be influenced by both their reactions to their own performance and an empathic experience of the reactions of close others.

In light of these divergent self-construals, self-related motivational theories require re-examination. For example, Tesser's (1988) theory of self-evaluation maintenance (SEM) hinges on the assumption that to perform better than others results in positive affect and self-evaluation, especially if the target of the comparison is a close other and the domain of the comparison is self-defining to the person engaged in the comparison. However, when a close other outperforms the individual in a self-defining
domain, SEM theory predicts that the person will compare his or her less than stellar performance to the other’s success and will feel threatened as a result. Based on this model, positive self-evaluation may be protected by the distancing of oneself from others who are more capable in self-defining domains or by a reduction in the importance of the domain. However, the former strategy—the distancing of oneself from others—may not be effective for individuals with an interdependent self-construal. Rather than reducing the threat caused by a person being outperformed by a close other, this strategy may only compound the sense of threat and lowered self-evaluation by jeopardizing a close relationship.

Given our assumptions about gender and self-construals, we expect SEM effects to be stronger with men than women. Indeed, several gender differences in these studies support this hypothesis (Tesser, 1988; Tesser & Paulhus, 1983). For example, boys are more likely than girls to become friends with children who perform more poorly than themselves on important tasks (Tesser, Campbell, & Smith, 1984). Similarly, boys are more likely than girls to distance themselves from siblings who perform better than themselves in school, athletics, or other activities (Tesser, 1980). Concern for others’ feelings is also evident in college-aged women’s predictions regarding the performance of close others. Contrary to the SEM prediction that one should denigrate the performance of close others to enhance the self, women estimate that friends will perform better than themselves on tasks (Tesser, Pilkington, & McIntosh, 1989). In fact, in research on the consequences of variation in the self-construal, individuals with an interdependent self-construal were less likely to denigrate a partner after a threat to their own self-esteem than were individuals with an independent self-construal (Bacon, 1996).

In addition, the SEM effect is at times moderated by self-esteem in ways consistent with expected gender differences in self-construals. Assuming that self-esteem is positively related to independence in men and interdependence in women (Josephs et al., 1992), we expect to find that downward comparisons are more likely to enhance self-evaluation and affect in men with high self-esteem than women or men with low self-esteem. In fact, Tesser and Moore (1990) found that the SEM effect was evidenced only among men with high self-esteem and was reversed among men with low self-esteem (women were not included in this study). Conversely, we expect that women with high self-esteem will be less likely than women with low self-esteem to experience enhanced feelings of self-worth or self-evaluation when comparing themselves to a worse-off friend. Indeed, SEM effects were weaker in women with high self-esteem as compared with women with low self-esteem in studies reported by Tesser and Campbell (1982) and Tesser, Millar, and Moore (1988, Study 3).4

Further evidence of gender differences in the effects of social comparisons comes from research on equity in relationships. Married or cohabiting men who perceived themselves as better off than their peers in their relationship with their partner reported higher levels of relational satisfaction than did men who saw themselves as similar to their peers (Buunk & VanYperen, 1989; see also Rachlin, 1987). In contrast, married or cohabiting women who perceived themselves as better off than their friends experienced similar or lower levels of satisfaction than women who perceived their investments and outcomes in their relationship to be similar to their friends’. Buunk and VanYperen speculated that women discuss relationship issues more often than men and that, as a result, women who see themselves as advantaged relative to their friends feel guilty. From the perspective of independent versus interdependent self-construals, women feel better when social comparisons highlight their similarity to close others. In this case, similarity may be a basis for the maintenance of close relationships and for the forging of strong, self-enhancing bonds of community with close others. Men may be more likely to look for contrasts between themselves and similar others in social comparisons. As a result, men may feel better when these comparisons highlight their uniqueness or superiority on a dimension. (For discussion of gender differences in equity and reward distributions, see Kahn & Gaeckelt, 1985; Major & Adams, 1983; and Watts, Meese, & Vallacher, 1982.)

In summary, the sources of self-esteem and the strategies and processes used to enhance self-esteem or self-evaluation may differ for individuals with different self-construals. If one defines oneself in terms of uniqueness, autonomy, and differentiation from others (as in the independent self-construal), then experiences that demonstrate one’s superiority or “specialness” relative to others may be self-enhancing. For these individuals, contrasts with others that make the individuals look good are the basis for positive self-evaluation and self-esteem. However, these contrasts may threaten close relationships for individuals with an interdependent self-construal and may be avoided. Instead, these individuals may seek to maintain harmony in close relationships or to verify their beliefs that they are caring, nurturing, or relational to enhance their self-esteem.

Affect

Differences in emotional experiences are implicit in our description of the role of the self-construal in motivation. Affirmation of one’s distinctiveness and separateness may result in positive emotions for individuals with an independent self-construal, whereas affirmation of one’s self-defining relationships may result in positive emotions for the person with an interdependent self-construal. In other words, the self-construal mediates the emotional consequences of an individual’s experiences.

However, the self potentially plays a much more pervasive role in emotion-related processes than merely to frame the person’s interpretations of situations. The self-construal also frames one’s understanding of the implications of emotion. Emotions are not solely responses to situations; their display may channel social interactions, reveal one’s thoughts and reactions, and produce harmony or discord in relationships. Consequently, the expression of emotion may differ for individuals with different self-construals as they pursue divergent goals in social situations.

Because the self-construal influences the information that is understood to be self-relevant or important, individuals with different self-construals may also attend to different emotional

4 However, other studies by Tesser and colleagues show no moderating effect of self-esteem on SEM processes.
cues. In particular, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may be especially sensitive to the social environment and to the responses and experiences of self-defining others. In contrast, individuals with an independent self-construal may be especially tuned to their internal states, attitudes, and wishes. For these individuals, personal experiences rather than the experiences or wishes of others may serve as the referent for emotion.

In this section, we examine the impact of the self-construal on the vicarious experience of negative and positive affect, the experience of “interpersonal” emotions, and the expression of emotion in general. We also explore the relation between the self-construal and the perception of emotion cues. We begin by examining the relation between the interdependent self-construal and sensitivity to emotion.

**Sensitivity to Emotion and Self-Construal Development**

Although we discussed the role of gendered experiences, expectations, and interactions in the development of the self-construal earlier, we return to this topic briefly to review evidence specific to the socialization of emotion. We argue that an interdependent self-construal and early socialization in sensitivity to emotion go hand in hand. Children whose parents frequently discuss a range of emotions with them, particularly within the context of social interaction, may learn that recognition, management, and expression of emotions are important in the development and maintenance of close, harmonious relationships with others. For example, the unbridled expression of anger may threaten an important relationship, whereas the skillful expression of guilt or remorse may help mend a fractured friendship. Furthermore, children's expertise with their emotions may increase after they begin to develop an interdependent self-construal as emotional skills may be vital to the goals dictated by this self-structure.

Indeed, a growing body of research suggests girls are socialized to be more attuned to emotions than are boys. For example, parents discuss emotions more with their daughters than with their sons (with the important exception of anger) and refer to and label emotions more often with their daughters than with their sons (Dunn et al., 1987). Parents also tend to display a wider array of emotions to their daughters than to their sons (e.g., Kuebli & Fivush, 1992; Malatesta, Culver, Tesman, & Shepard, 1989). Over time, children's emotional talk appears to match this pattern. Kuebli, Butler, and Fivush (1995) conducted a longitudinal study with mothers and their preschool children Ages 40, 58, and 70 months. As in previous research, mothers tended to talk about emotions more and in greater variety with their daughters than with their sons. More interesting, although no gender differences were apparent at the beginning of the study, by the end of the study girls talked about emotions more and in greater variety than did boys (Kuebli et al., 1995).

We argue that this change occurs as girls internalize the emotional awareness their parents have emphasized, learning to value the role of emotions in relationships (e.g., Shields, 1995). In agreement with this reasoning, Shields argued that the interpersonal nature of emotions appears more salient to girls (e.g., Belle, Burr, & Cooney, 1987; Trepapier-Street & Romatowski, 1986) and women (e.g., Brabec & Weisgerber, 1988; O'Leary & Smith, 1988) than to boys and men. Furthermore, when girls and boys discuss their beliefs about the bases of emotions, girls mention more interpersonal causes of emotions than do boys (Strayer, 1986). This understanding, when joined with the social forces discussed earlier that encourage girls to be relational, facilitates girls' development of an interdependent self-construal. Having constructed an interdependent self-construal, girls and women continue to develop skills and sensitivities that enable them to foster and maintain close relationships with others. Of course, the degree to which sensitivity to emotions is linked to an interdependent self-construal is an empirical question, but the framing of gender differences, such as these, in terms of the self can help generate testable hypotheses about the relation between these complementary processes.

**Emotions and Relationship Events**

This awareness of others' emotions may also influence the emotions individuals with interdependent self-construals experience for themselves. In particular, persons with an interdependent self-construal may vicariously experience the distress of close others in response to negative events. For example, negative life events experienced by others within one's social network (e.g., family, friends, and neighbors) have a greater impact on women than on men (Kessler & McLeod, 1984). Girls' interpersonal orientation and involvement in problems of significant others also accounts for a significant proportion of the gender difference in distress among adolescents (Gore, Aseltine, & Colten, 1993).

This sensitivity to relationship events may be one factor that contributes to women's greater likelihood to experience unipolar depression (Kenny, Moilanen, Lomax, & Brabeck, 1993; Moran & Eckenrode, 1991; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987; see also Allgood-Merten, Lewinsohn, & Hops, 1990), particularly because an individual has little or no control over network events. Research on learned helplessness shows a lack of control over life events can lead to depression (e.g., Radloff, 1975, 1980; Radloff & Monroe, 1978; Seligman, 1975). In addition, women tend to report experiencing negative affect more intensely than do men (Fujita, Diener, & Sandvik, 1991), such as sadness (Brody, 1993; Stapley & Haviland, 1989), fear, and nervousness (Brody, Hay, & Vandewater, 1990), perhaps because they vicariously experience the negative life events of close others and internalize the distress associated with relationship conflict (e.g., Kessler & McLeod, 1984; Robbins & Tanck, 1991).

Although women's sensitivity to the emotions of close others may increase their vulnerability to depression, we want to stress that a person with an interdependent self-construal may experience greater negative and positive affect. Individuals with an interdependent self-construal may vicariously experience both positive and negative network events. In contrast, the razor-sharp boundaries between the self and relationships with others for people with an independent self-construal may keep them comparatively insulated from the effects of these network events. As we would expect, women tend to experience both positive

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5 There are, of course, multiple theories that address gender differences in depression. We do not suggest that women's vicarious experiences of others' emotions is the best or only valid explanation of this phenomenon.
and negative affect more intensely (J. G. Allen & Haccoun, 1976; Diener, Sandvik, & Larsen, 1985; Fujita et al., 1991; Turner, 1994; see also Brody, 1993; and W. Wood, Rhodes, & Whelan, 1989) and perceive affiliation as more emotionally salient than do men (Stapley & Haviland, 1989).

Furthermore, because they strive to maintain harmonious, intimate connections with others, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may experience greater distress in relationship conflict than would individuals with an independent self-construal. For example, women experience greater psychological distress than men as a result of negative changes in their marital relationship (Barnett, Raudenbush, Brennan, Pleck, & Marshall, 1995) and are more likely to talk about their relationships in an interview than are men (Acitelli, 1992). Women are also more likely to mention interpersonal dilemmas, such as family-related issues, when asked to describe personal problems (Pratt, Golding, Hunter, & Sampson, 1988; Walker, de Vries, & Trevethan, 1987) and are more likely to mention interpersonal problems as the cause of depressive feelings than are men (Robbins & Tanck, 1991). Consistent with these attributions, social stress is correlated with higher depression and lower self-esteem for women but not men (Moran & Eckenrode, 1991).

Guilt may be one component of the distress caused by relationship conflict because of its role in the development and maintenance of close relationships. Specifically, it has been suggested that guilt may promote affiliation (Brody & Hall, 1993), prevent individuals from engaging in actions that might jeopardize their relationships, and motivate people to minimize the interpersonal consequences of injurious behavior (Baumeister, Reis, & DeLepsaul, 1995). Guilt may also be implicated in the maintenance of equity in relationships (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). For example, the most common causes of self-reported guilt experiences involve the neglect of a partner in a close relationship or the failure to live up to one's obligations to others (Baumeister, Reis, et al., 1995; Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1995).

Guilt appears to reinforce the communal norm of attention to others' needs (Baumeister, Stillwell, et al., 1995). Because the fulfilling of relationship responsibilities and attention to others' needs are normative tasks for individuals with an interdependent self-construal, we expect them to be more prone to experience guilt than individuals with an independent self-construal. In fact, research indicates that women are more prone to experience guilt than are men (Stapley & Haviland, 1989; Tangney, 1990; see Baumeister et al., 1994, for a review) and that women are more likely than men to experience guilt as a result of violating norms of compassion and interpersonal trust (C. Williams & Bybee, 1994). For example, women are more likely than men to mention that lying results in guilt feelings (Tangney, 1992). Similarly, women who tended to experience guilt reported an intense concern for others' opinions of them, which, in turn, influenced their own feelings of self-worth (Ferguson & Crowley, 1993). In contrast, men who were prone to experience guilt focused on their own feelings, attitudes, and beliefs rather than on how others viewed their behavior (Ferguson & Crowley, 1993).

Because of their emphasis on the well-being of others, individuals with an interdependent self-construal are expected to have a greater affective response to inadvertently hurting or inconveniencing others. For example, when students were led to believe they had committed a gaffe (i.e., spilled soda into another student's backpack), women were more likely than men to apologize repeatedly for their clumsiness (Gonzales, Pederson, Manning, & Wetter, 1990). Women were also more likely to use statements of chagrin or regret (e.g., "I feel just terrible about this!"), presumably because they experienced higher levels of guilt.

In summary, gender differences in the structure of the self-construal may lead to gender differences in emotional experience. Because individuals with an interdependent self-construal are sensitive to the life events of others, they may experience both the unpleasant impact of others' negative life events and the pleasure and satisfaction of sharing in the positive emotions and outcomes of others. The quality and health of their relationships with others may also influence the emotional experiences of individuals with an interdependent self-construal more than those of individuals with an independent self-construal. Individuals with an interdependent self-construal may be especially likely to experience guilt when they do not live up to their own standards of interpersonal sensitivity and concern for close others.

**Emotional Expression**

The expression of emotions is a key element of self-presentation in social situations. Because individuals with an independent self-construal base their self-esteem on their feelings of separateness and autonomy, they may be reluctant to express emotions that indicate interdependence or that threaten their sense of self-reliance and autonomy from others (e.g., negative emotions such as sadness, fear, and helplessness). In fact, men are less willing to disclose negative emotions, such as depression, anxiety, and fear, than are women (Snell, Miller, Belk, Garcia-Falconi, & Hernandez-Sanchez, 1989). Boys also reported that they would be unlikely to disclose their sadness to others (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Zeman & Garber, 1996). Furthermore, men are less willing than women to express feelings about a same-gender friend or relationship (Hayes, 1984; Rands & Levinger, 1979) and tend to score lower than women on measures of interpersonal trust (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982).

In contrast, women may not hesitate to disclose their emotions because to share one's feelings, particularly one's negative emotions, is a particularly effective means to foster intimacy in relationships (with the exception of anger, which is discussed in detail below; Clark & Reis, 1988; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Compared with men, women reported greater confidence in expressing fear and sadness (Blier & Blier-Wilson, 1989) and tended to share their emotions in general with a broader range of people (Rime, Mesquita, Phillipot, & Bocca, 1992). Women are particularly expressive nonverbally. In fact, women tend to be more accurate senders of nonverbal emotions than are men; receivers can decode women's emotions more accurately than men's (Ambady, Hallahan, & Rosenthal, 1995; Buck, Baron, & Barrette, 1982; Buck, Baron, Goodman, & Shapiro, 1980; Hall, 1984, 1987; Wagner, Buck, & Winterbotham, 1993).

Others have noted that many reported gender differences in emotionality are consistent with prescriptive gender stereotypes,
which dictate the conditions under which it is acceptable and unacceptable for men to appear emotional (LaFrance & Banaji, 1992). This is not surprising, however, given that these stereotypes are often based on observed behavioral differences (McCaulcy, 1995; Swim, 1994). We argue that the “kernel of truth” within the stereotypes (i.e., observed gender differences in the expression of emotions) is a function of individual differences in the structure of the self-construal. Thus, men may be more hesitant than women to express their emotions in certain situations, not simply because cultural stereotypes declare it inappropriate but primarily because sharing their feelings may jeopardize their sense of separateness and autonomy that is central to an independent self-construal.

Important exceptions to women’s greater experience and expression of emotions are anger and similar emotions, such as contempt and disgust. In these cases, the gender differences apparent with respect to other emotions are eliminated or reversed in the favor of men (e.g., Janisse, Edgucer, & Dyek, 1986). For example, several researchers found no gender differences in either the frequency or intensity of anger reported by college students or adults (e.g., D. M. Allen & Haccoun, 1976; Averill, 1983; Burrowes & Halberstadt, 1987; Stoner & Spencer, 1987). With respect to contempt, some researchers found that men reported experiencing more contempt than did women (e.g., Stapley & Haviland, 1989), whereas other researchers found no evidence for gender differences in the intensity of contempt experiences (e.g., Brody, 1993). More interesting, Shields (1995) concluded that, when men are found to have greater nonverbal decoding or encoding skill than women, it is generally specific to anger displays (e.g., Rotter & Rotter, 1988; Wagner, MacDonald, & Manstead, 1986).

Again, this pattern appears to begin in early interactions with parents. Although fathers use more emotion words to tell stories to their daughters than to their sons, they carefully avoid the word disgust with their daughters. Similarly, mothers avoid using the term angry when telling a story to their daughters (Greif, Alvarez, & Ulman, 1981, cited in Brody & Hall, 1993). An interesting pattern emerges in parents’ behavior regarding their sons’ and daughters’ experiences with anger and sadness. In recalling shared memories with their preschool-aged children, mothers did not speak about anger with their daughters but spoke more about sadness with their daughters than with their sons (Fivush, 1989). Conversely, mothers spoke about anger more with their sons than with their daughters (Fivush, 1991). Just as parents and college students tended to be more accepting of boys’ anger than girls’ anger (Birnbaum & Croll, 1984; see also Fivush, 1991), school-aged girls expected their mothers to respond more positively to their expressions of sadness than to their expressions of anger, whereas school-aged boys expected their parents not to respond positively to their expressions of sadness (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988). Mothers of preschool children encouraged their daughters to resolve their anger toward close others by re-establishing the damaged relationship more than they encouraged their sons (Fivush, 1991).

When individuals with an interdependent self-construal become angry, they may be more hesitant to display their anger than individuals with an independent self-construal because anger has the power to destroy relationships. Indeed, girls reported masking facial expressions of anger more than did boys, although girls reported feeling just as angry (Underwood, Coie, & Herbsman, 1992). Women asked to evaluate an angry incident judged the angry display as having greater relationship and personal cost than did men, regardless of the degree of prior provocation or the gender of the target (M. A. Davis, LaRosa, & FoShée, 1992). Women also tend to experience greater conflict regarding anger than do men, acknowledging that anger can be effective but noting that it can also be distressing and harmful to relationships (Egerton, 1988; Malatesta-Magai, Jonas, Sheppard, & Culver, 1992). In contrast, men tend to view anger as independent of a social context, describing it as externally caused and uncontrollable (Egerton, 1988).

Different situations may provoke anger for individuals with an interdependent self-construal than for individuals with an independent self-construal. For example, C. A. Smith and Lazarus (1993) argued that anger is the hostility felt toward others when they do not attend to one’s needs, goals, desires, or abilities. Because persons with an interdependent self-construal are vigilant with respect to their obligations to others, they may expect close others to reciprocate this level of care and concern, becoming frustrated and angry when others do not live up to their expectations. In contrast, we expect individuals with an independent self-construal to be provoked by behaviors that encroach on their autonomy, competence, and freedom.

In fact, the limited available research does suggest that gender differences in anger-eliciting situations mirror the hypothesized differences in women’s and men’s self-constructs. For example, women reported anger and upset when their male relationship partners behaved in an inconsiderate, neglectful, emotionally restrictive, or condescending manner, whereas men reported anger and upset when their female relationship partners were possessive and dependent (D. M. Buss, 1989, 1991). In another study, women were more likely than men to perceive insensitive or condescending behavior from either gender as anger provoking (Harris, 1993; see also Van Goozen, Frijda, Kindt, & Van de Poll, 1994). In an interesting parallel to women’s experience of guilt as a result of their own dishonesty, women were more likely to perceive dishonest behavior by other women than anger provoking (Harris, 1993), presumably because they hold other women (who they may assume to have constructed relational self-constructs and to share their relationship values) to the same standards of interpersonal integrity to which they hold themselves. In contrast to men, women tend not to be angered or provoked by assaults against their intellectual competence (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Van Goozen et al., 1994) but tend to express disappointment or sadness instead.

In summary, individuals with an interdependent self-construal appear more willing to express their emotions than individuals with an independent self-construal, perhaps because sharing emotions can facilitate intimate relationships and may threaten the sense of separateness for which individuals with an independent self-construal strive. This is not the case, however, with expressions of anger. Persons with an interdependent self-
construals to behave angrily toward others, presumably because anger can hurt or destroy relationships.

**Perception of Emotion Cues**

The differences between individuals with interdependent and independent self-construals that we proposed suggest the intriguing possibility that the structure of the self-construal may mediate not only the experience and expression of emotions but also the perception of emotions. If individuals with an interdependent self-construal are more sensitive to situational cues, such as the emotions of close others, they may base their emotions on the reactions and experiences of others more than individuals with an independent self-construal.

In fact, gender differences consistent with this prediction are evident in work by Pennebaker and colleagues (e.g., see Pennebaker & Roberts, 1992, for a review). For example, when participants were asked to judge if an auditory or visual signal was beeping-flashing in synch with their own heartbeat or blood pressure in the absence of external cues, men were more accurate in detecting these physiological processes than were women. Women’s accuracy at this task, however, seemed linked to the availability of situational cues, such as the presence of others; when both physiological cues and situational cues were available, women and men were equally accurate (Pennebaker & Watson, 1988; Roberts & Pennebaker, 1995). Men’s self-reports of physiological indices also tended to covary with physiological changes to a greater degree than did women’s reports (Roberts & Pennebaker, 1995). For example, men’s reports of blood pressure-related symptoms were more consistent with their actual changes in blood pressure than were women’s (Pennebaker, Gondor-Frederick, Stewart, Elffman & Skelton, 1982). Roberts and Pennebaker concluded that women appear to rely on external, situational cues to understand their internal states, whereas men appear to rely on internal, physiological cues.

In response to these gender differences in the use of internal and external emotion cues, Pennebaker and Roberts (1992) argued that it may be necessary to have two theories, one for women and one for men, to fully describe the strategies humans use to perceive emotions. In contrast, we speculate that these gender differences may be a function of the structure of the self-construal rather than a function of gender per se. Because men tend to construct an independent self-construal, their perception of emotions may be based largely on internal, physiological cues, such as heart rate and blood pressure; because women tend to construct an interdependent self-construal, their perception of emotions may be based largely on external, situational cues, such as the thoughts and emotions of close others (Pennebaker & Roberts, 1992). Of course, this line of reasoning is purely speculative, and it is premature to draw definitive conclusions about the role of the self-construal in the perception of emotions. However, this analysis does pose a provocative, testable hypothesis and illustrates the explanatory power of self-construal theory.

To view gender differences, such as those articulated by Pennebaker and colleagues, in terms of the self-construal potentially unites many seemingly unrelated findings under one theory, thus facilitating a deeper understanding of the complexity of human behavior.

In summary, the structure of the self-construal affects an individual’s emotional experiences in a variety of ways. The interpersonal orientation of persons with an interdependent self-construal may make them particularly prone to vicariously experience the negative and positive affect of close others and to experience guilt. Similarly, an emphasis on autonomy and separateness may make individuals with an independent self-construal reluctant to disclose many of their emotions to others. Persons with different self-construals may also use different cues to identify their emotional states. In other words, the structure of the self-construal may influence the experience, expression, and perception of emotions.

**Relationships**

We have argued that differences in the nature and structure of the self-construal result in divergent premises about the self and others and the relation between the two: Individuals with an interdependent self-construal seek to maintain a sense of relatedness and connectedness with close others, whereas individuals with an independent self-construal seek to maintain a sense of autonomy, uniqueness, and individuality. As a result, differences in self-construals occasion different orientations toward relationships with others.

For example, the same behavior may have very different implications for individuals with different self-construals. Whereas individuals with an interdependent self-construal may develop skills and behaviors that facilitate the development of close relationships with others, individuals with an independent self-construal may find the intimacy created by these behaviors as a threat to their sense of autonomy. Similarly, individuals with interdependent and independent self-construals may differ in their perceptions of behaviors that jeopardize or destroy relationships with others. In the following sections, we examine the impact of divergent self-construals on several relationship-relevant behaviors and skills. Specifically, we review evidence of gender differences in self-disclosure, nonverbal communication, and aggression.

**Intimate Relationships and Self-Disclosure**

Considering the importance of intimate relationships to individuals with an interdependent self-construal, we expect women to have more intimate relationships than men. However, the data on gender differences in intimacy are actually quite mixed. Although some studies show support for the greater intimacy of women’s and men’s same-gender relationships (Claes, 1992; Clark & Reis, 1988; Dindia & Allen, 1992; Hunter & Yueniss, 1982; Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1993; Maccoby, 1990; Reis, 1986; Reis, Schuck, & Solomon, 1985; Reisman, 1990; Wheeler, Reis, & Nezlek, 1983), other studies indicate either no gender differences or greater intimacy of men’s relationships (see reviews by Clark & Reis, 1988; and Hill & Stull, 1987). In their review, Clark and Reis suggested that a moderator-variable approach is necessary to resolve these inconsistencies regarding men’s and women’s intimacy. We argue that many of these apparent contradictions can be resolved by a consideration of individual differences in the structure of women’s and men’s self-construals.
The relation between an interdependent self-construal and intimacy is relatively straightforward. For individuals with an interdependent self-construal, close friendships enrich their sense of self and are necessary for the maintenance of their self-esteem. As such, we expect women to be particularly motivated to develop and maintain intimate relationships with others. The relation between intimacy and an independent self-construal is more complex. Because interdependence is often considered an integral aspect of close relationships (i.e., where one's behavior is causally determined by the behavior of another; Kelley et al., 1983), the interdependent nature of close relationships may constitute a significant threat to the self-esteem of individuals with an independent self-construal (cf. Josephs et al., 1992).

Individuals with an independent self-construal may address this threat by avoiding behaviors that foster intimacy. Specifically, they may hesitate to share their feelings and thoughts with others. Morton (1978) referred to this type of emotional sharing as “evaluative” self-disclosure, in contrast to “descriptive” self-disclosure where one merely shares facts about oneself. Although all forms of communication play a role in the development of relationships, evaluative self-disclosure is particularly central in the development and maintenance of intimate relationships. Reis (1990) argued that when one person shares personally revealing feelings or information with another, it is the beginning of the intimacy process (see also Clark & Reis, 1988; Collins & Miller, 1994; and Reis & Shaver, 1988). Similarly, Altman and Taylor’s (1973) theory of social penetration proposes that the development of a relationship is closely tied to changes in communication, with closer, more rewarding relationships characterized by more extensive and intimate self-disclosure. Thus, avoidance of evaluative self-disclosure may be an effective means by which individuals with an independent self-construal can avert the self-esteem threat posed by close, interdependent relationships.

Indeed, a considerable body of evidence suggests that men's disclosures tend to be of a less evaluative or emotional nature than are women's disclosures, especially when there is an existing relationship between the one disclosing and the target (Dindia & Allen, 1992; see also Kraft & Vraa, 1975; Papini, Farmer, Clark, Micka, & Barnett, 1990; Rubin, Hill, Peplau, & Dunkel-Schetter, 1980; Snell, Miller, & Belk, 1988). In particular, men are relatively less willing to disclose their negative emotions, such as depression, sadness, anxiety, anger, and fear, than are women (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Rubin et al., 1980; Snell et al., 1988). Avoidance of evaluative self-disclosure may allow men to protect or enhance their sense of autonomy and separateness because “if men do not disclose personal information, other people cannot understand, predict, or control their behavior” (Derlega, Durham, Gockel, & Sholes, 1981, p. 445).

This is not to suggest that individuals with an independent self-construal do not need or desire intimate relationships. For example, both men and women reported being interested in and motivated to have intimate same-gender friendships, although—as expected, given the proposed gender differences in the self-construal—more women than men (82% vs. 73%) expressed this preference (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). Clark and Reis (1988) concluded that, whereas examinations of current and past interactions tend to reveal greater observed intimacy among women, "studies that examine intimacy motivation or interest in intimate friendship tend to show few sex differences" (p. 636).

These findings may seem to fly in the face of our assumptions about gender differences in self-construals. Should not men desire intimate relationships less than women, given the individualistic focus of the independent self-construal? Perhaps not, particularly if intimate is redefined by men to be less threatening to their pursuit of independence and autonomy. For example, they may define intimacy in terms of shared activities rather than shared emotional experiences (see also Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). These types of close relationships may then primarily involve descriptive self-disclosure relevant to the mutual activity. These relatively less emotional interactions may allow individuals with an independent self-construal to engage in meaningful discourse without threatening their sense of autonomy.

In fact, men and women differed in the types of activities they reported doing with intimate, same-gender friends (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). Whereas women are more likely to focus on talking about personal topics, such as their feelings, relationships, and problems, men are more likely to engage in or talk about shared activities or less personal topics, such as sports and politics (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Davidson & Duberman, 1982; Fox, Gibbs, & Auerbach, 1985; Johnson & Aries, 1983). Women also reported that similarity in attitudes and values is an important prerequisite to friendship, whereas men reported that similarity in interests and activity preferences is important (Hill & Stull, 1981; Wright & Crawford, 1971; see also Winstead, 1986). In other words, men reported their same-gender interactions to be more intimate than did women; but, when compared with more traditional criteria of intimacy, men's relationships appeared significantly less intimate than did women's relationships.

By viewing gender differences in terms of individual differences in the self-construal, we can also make predictions regarding situations where differences between men and women are most likely to occur. For example, we would expect men to be particularly unwilling to engage in intimate self-disclosure with others who share their emphasis on separateness and uniqueness. Men who derive their self-esteem from feeling and appearing autonomous from others may be particularly conscious of looking self-sufficient and independent in the presence of other men who are familiar with the "rules" of behavior dictated by an independent self-construal. Thus, pressures to compete and the fear of making oneself vulnerable by revealing personal information should be greater in men's same-gender interactions than in cross-gender interactions (see R. A. Lewis, 1978). Consequently, the appearance of even slight interdependence (e.g., engagement in emotional self-disclosure) may result in a loss of social status or respect among individuals with an independent self-construal.

In contrast, intimacy should be less threatening (and possibly

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7 Ironically, men's definition of intimacy may account for reports suggesting that male college students are more lonely than female college students (e.g., Schmidt & Sermat, 1983; Schultz & Moore, 1986; see Hendrick, 1988, for a review), particularly in their relationships with friends (Schmitt & Kurdek, 1985). Schmitt and Kurdek concluded that male college students may experience loneliness as an absence of meaning or closeness in their relationships.
reinforced) in the presence of others who have an interdependent self-construal. Furthermore, these individuals may also be more skilled in eliciting self-disclosure from others than are individuals with an independent self-construal. Thus, we expect persons with an independent self-construal to develop more interdependent (see also Reis, 1986). Men also engage in more intimate self-disclosure with female partners than male partners (Derlega et al., 1985), perhaps because women elicit more self-disclosure from acquaintances of either gender (Shaffer, Pegalis, & Bazzini, 1996; see also L. C. Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983, Experiment 1). In addition, men tend to derive greater intimacy and closeness from relationships with women than relationships with men (J. Fischer & Narus, 1981; Rose, 1985; D. G. Williams, 1985; see also Schmitt & Kurdek, 1985).

Men’s willingness to engage in evaluative self-disclosure with women may also serve an instrumental purpose. Derlega et al. (1985) suggested that men engage in more intimate self-disclosure than do women during initial opposite-gender encounters to initiate and pace the relationship (J. D. Davis, 1978; Stokes, Childs, & Fuehrer, 1981). Their findings suggest that men may use intimate self-disclosure as a tool to elicit intimate self-disclosure from an attractive woman (see L. C. Miller & Read, 1987, for a discussion of goal-directed self-disclosure). Consistent with this reasoning, men’s self-disclosure to a female partner was related to their liking of their partner and to perceptions of their partner’s liking of them. These dimensions were unrelated to men’s self-disclosures to male partners or women’s self-disclosures to opposite-gender partners (Derlega et al., 1985; see also Sattel, 1976).

In summary, individuals with an independent self-construal must manage their relationships very differently than do individuals with an interdependent self-construal. Although both groups want close relationships, individuals with an independent self-construal must reconcile this desire with their need to protect their sense of autonomy and separateness. They may resolve this conflict by seeking intimacy primarily with persons who have constructed an interdependent self-construal or, perhaps, by redefining intimacy as a function of descriptive self-disclosure.

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication skills also significantly contribute to the formation and maintenance of close relationships. Nonverbal expression of emotions and involvement facilitate the development of intimacy; nonverbal decoding skills enable an individual to sense the feelings and thoughts of others. Because these are two of the central goals of individuals with an interdependent self-construal, we expect these individuals to be particularly adept with respect to nonverbal communication skills, particularly the expression and decoding of nonverbal cues.

Expressiveness. Traditionally, such nonverbal behaviors as gazing, maintaining physical closeness, and touching have been viewed primarily as a measure of one’s involvement in an interaction or relationship (see Brody & Hall, 1993). Such behaviors as smiling and maintaining eye contact indicate an interest in and a concern for others that is at the heart of relatedness. Clark and Reis (1988) argued that, because nonverbal channels are prominent in emotional expression (Ekman, 1993; Ekman & Friesen, 1984; Izard, 1991), they may also be an important component of evaluative self-disclosure. Thus, nonverbal expressiveness can facilitate the development of intimacy, both in the sharing of one’s emotional experiences (Clark & Reis, 1988) and the elicitation of reciprocal intimacy and expressiveness from others (DePaulo, 1992). As such, we expect individuals with an interdependent self-construal to be more nonverbally expressive than are individuals with an independent self-construal. For example, women smile more than men, particularly when discussing happy topics (Halberstadt, Hayes, & Pike, 1988), and tend to reflect their emotional reactions in their faces more clearly than do men (Buck, 1984; Buck, Miller, & Caul, 1974). Women also gaze more, receive more gazes, display greater facial expressiveness, and use more expressive hand gestures; approach and are approached by others more closely; and display greater involvement, expressiveness, and self-consciousness in their body movements and positions than do men (Hall, 1984; Ickes et al., 1988; see also Buck et al., 1980, 1982). In reference to women’s nonverbal expressiveness, DePaulo (1992) asserted that, “if women were purposefully trying to convey the impression of being sociable, likeable, and interested in the other person, they could hardly do better than this” (p. 223).

Decoding accuracy. Nonverbal decoding skills enable individuals to sense the emotions and thoughts of others. Such cues as facial expressions, vocal inflections, and body position can often communicate another’s feelings just as well as words. In fact, nonverbal channels are often notoriously “leaky,” in that it is more difficult for a sender to control the content of nonverbal channels than of verbal channels. In other words, individuals may carefully compose the content of their speech to project a particular image, only to have their nonverbal behaviors betray their true feelings or opinions. Thus, emotions that one would like to conceal can leak through carefully monitored verbal communications in ways of nonverbal behaviors (Hall, 1984).

Given that individuals with an interdependent self-construal strive to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, it may be as important to attend to how others act and speak as to what they actually say. In addition, because persons with an interdependent self-construal appear to discern their own emotions in part by observing the emotions of others (e.g., Pennebaker & Roberts, 1992), the ability to sense the feelings of others may assist them with identifying the nature of their own emotional experiences. In short, we expect individuals with an interdependent self-construal to be more accurate in decoding nonverbal cues than are individuals with an independent self-construal.

In fact, Hall’s (1984) meta-analytic review of gender differences in nonverbal sensitivity reveals that women are clearly...
superior at accurately decoding nonverbal cues (see also Ambady et al., 1995; Hall, 1978; Rosenthal & DePaulo, 1979)—a difference which is evident in children as young as 3 years old (Boyatzis, Chazan, & Ting, 1993). Furthermore, this difference in men's and women's decoding skills is at least as large as gender differences demonstrated in other areas (see Hyde, 1990). For example, the effect size for gender differences in nonverbal decoding skill ($d = - .42$; Hall, 1984) is comparable with the effect size for gender differences obtained in metaanalytic studies of mathematics performance ($d = .20$; Hyde, Fennema, & Lamon, 1990; see also Reingold, 1988), spatial perception ($d = .44$; Linn & Petersen, 1985), and aggression ($d = .29$; Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Women may also apply their nonverbal decoding skills in their relationships more frequently than do men. Davidson and Duberman (1982) reported that 82% of the women in their sample said they often understood a friend by reading their nonverbal signals, whereas only 28% of the men did. More interesting, women are also more accurate than men in evaluating others' personalities (Ambady et al., 1995; Bernieri, Zuckerman, Koestner, & Rosenthal, 1994), presumably due to their sensitivity to affect-laden nonverbal channels.

This is not to suggest that individuals with an independent self-construal are completely oblivious to others' nonverbal behaviors. Rather, we would expect them to attend to different types of nonverbal cues than do individuals with an interdependent self-construal. For example, one function of nonverbal behaviors is the exertion of social control over others. Such behaviors as a gaze, touch, facial expression, or distance can be used to accomplish a number of interpersonal goals, including persuasive communication, deception, and the exercise of power and dominance over others (Patterson, 1988). Whereas an interdependent self-construal may motivate individuals to attend to nonverbal cues related to their relationships with others, an independent self-construal and the associated tendency to perceive the world in a competitive, hierarchical fashion (Maccoby, 1990) may motivate individuals to be sensitive to dominance–submission cues. In initial support for this hypothesis, Haviland and Malatesta (1981) found that male undergraduate students were perceptually vigilant for anger displays (presumably a cue to potential threats to their position in the social hierarchy), whereas female undergraduate students were more vigilant for expressions of distress.

Although it would be premature to conclude definitively that individual differences in the structure of the self-construal cause differential sensitivity to various types of nonverbal cues, by considering the self-construal we can ask provocative empirical questions that may help us better understand the subtleties of human behavior. For example, if women and men attend to different types of stimuli, then these findings of women’s greater sensitivity to nonverbal cues may be due, in part, to a methodological artifact. If measures of nonverbal decoding sensitivity tap cues relevant to emotional involvement in relationships (e.g., smiling, gazeing, physical proximity to others) to the exclusion of dominance-related cues, then these instruments may overlook men’s decoding ability.

Empathy and perspective taking. Historically, research on empathy involves some confusion as to the precise meaning of the term (M. H. Davis, 1994; Eisenberg, Fabes, Schaller, & Miller, 1989). Whereas some work focuses on affective reactions to the emotions of another (e.g., Batson, 1991; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; M. L. Hoffman, 1984; Stotland, 1969), other research focuses on the cognitive task of the adoption of another’s perspective (e.g., Ickes et al., 1986; Ickes, Stinson, Bissonette, & Garcia, 1990; Ickes et al., 1988). M. H. Davis argued that the distinction can be clarified in terms of process and outcome; to adopt another’s cognitive perspective is a process, whereas the emotional response of the observer is an outcome that results from this and other processes. For example, the ability to accurately decode nonverbal channels is a cognitive process that may facilitate affective responses to another’s emotions (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). Thus, we would expect individuals with an interdependent self-construal to be more empathic than individuals with an independent self-construal (for the purposes of this review, empathy is used to refer to affective responses to the emotions of others; see also Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stivey, & Surrey, 1991; and Jordan & Surrey, 1986). Although women appear superior at decoding nonverbal cues, the data regarding gender differences in affective responding are quite mixed (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; M. L. Hoffman, 1977; Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987). Specifically, large differences that favor women are evident when self-report measures of empathy are used, whereas data collected using more objective measures, such as physiological or unobtrusive observations of empathy, suggest that women and men are equally empathic (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). For example, Eisenberg et al. (1989) presented men and women with stimuli designed to elicit sympathy and personal distress. In response to these stimuli, women self-reported experiencing more sympathy and personal distress than did men and exhibited more negative facial reactions consistent with sympathy, sadness, and distress. However, Eisenberg et al. did not find physiological evidence of a gender difference in vicarious emotions.

Taken at face value, these findings suggest that gender differences in self-reported empathy may be largely due to the influence of gender stereotypes. However, the lack of gender differences may be a consequence of the examination of empathic responses between unacquainted individuals. Virtually all of the studies reviewed in Eisenberg and Lennon’s (1983) metaanalysis of studies of empathy used a picture and story format or a videotaped presentation of a target person. Very few investigators have examined the display of empathy in vivo or with a familiar target. We expect persons with an interdependent self-construal to be more empathic than persons with an independent self-construal, primarily in situations with close others. Thus, Eisenberg and Lennon’s conclusions of few gender differences in empathy may be largely a function of the methodologies used in the research.

The structure of the self-construal may also affect the way individuals use empathy-related processes, such as cognitive perspective taking, within relationships. Individuals with an interdependent self-construal may view perspective taking as a means to encourage connections with and to understand significant others. In contrast, individuals with an independent self-construal may use perspective taking to control an interaction by predicting the likely responses of others. For example, Ickes et al. (1986) concluded that women’s tendency to take the perspective of their partner was automatic and spontaneous, moti-
vated by the “satisfaction of sharing thoughts and feelings” (p. 79) with others. Men, in contrast, adopted the perspective of their partner infrequently and for primarily instrumental reasons (e.g., to achieve better expressive control). Furthermore, men reported a greater percentage of metaperspective thoughts and feelings with a physically attractive female partner than a less attractive partner (Garcia, Stinson, Ickes, Bissonnette, & Briggs, 1991), suggesting that men may use perspective taking much like they use evaluative self-disclosure—as a tool to direct and pace the development of a relationship (Derlega et al., 1985).

In summary, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may have more to gain from verbal and nonverbal communication skills than do individuals with an independent self-construal. Greater nonverbal expressiveness enriches an interdependent sense of self by facilitating the development of close relationships. In addition, nonverbal decoding skills allow individuals with an interdependent self-construal to sense and anticipate the feelings of close others. Self-disclosure, expressiveness, decoding accuracy, and perspective taking may be the “needle and thread” used to stitch together warm and supportive relationships.

Aggression

Individuals with different self-construals may differ in their evaluation or use of behaviors that threaten existing relationships. Because the loss of a relationship may be perceived by individuals with an interdependent self-construal “as something closer to a total loss of self” (J. B. Miller, 1986, p. 83), they may be less willing than individuals with an independent self-construal to engage in behaviors, such as aggression, that can jeopardize their relationships.

Traditionally, aggression has been described as either physical or verbal. In general, studies demonstrate that boys and men are more aggressive than girls and women (see the meta-analyses by Eagly & Steffen, 1986; and Hyde, 1984). Rather than interpret these findings as evidence of girls’ and women’s lack of aggressiveness, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) argued that the forms of aggression assessed in the research (e.g., physical aggression) are more salient for men than for women and girls. More recently, another distinction may better characterize the differences between male and female aggression (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988). Specifically, aggressive behavior can be characterized as direct or indirect aggression. Direct aggression is distinguished from indirect aggression by the nature of the aggressor’s harmful intentions. In indirect aggression, “the perpetrator attempts to inflict pain in such a manner that he or she makes it seem as though there has been no intention to hurt at all” (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, et al., 1992, p. 118). In contrast, the perpetrator of direct aggression does not attempt to conceal his or her overt hurtful intentions. Both direct and indirect aggression can be manifested in physical or verbal assault. For example, direct aggression can involve strikes or shouts at another person. Similarly, indirect aggression may also be either verbal (start a rumor) or physical (set fire to a neighbor’s home; A. H. Buss, 1961).

Direct aggression. We expect individuals with an interdependent self-construal to shy away from direct aggression. Indeed, girls and women tend to engage in direct aggression less than do boys and men, particularly aggressive acts that produce physical injury (see meta-analytic reviews by Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Hyde, 1984; and Knight, Fabes, & Higgins, 1996; see also Harris, 1992; and Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974).8

Individuals with an interdependent self-construal may be less likely to engage in direct physical aggression because they anticipate different consequences of the aggression than do individuals with an independent self-construal (e.g., Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Consistent with their overall level of concern for others, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may attend more to the suffering of the target of aggression and be more affected by others’ perceptions of the behavior than are individuals with an independent self-construal. For example, girls tend to be more concerned than boys about potential harm to the target of aggression, whereas boys are more concerned with controlling the target than are girls (Boldizar, Perry, & Perry, 1989; see also Perry, Perry, & Rasmussen, 1986). Boys are also more likely to be rewarded by their peers for aggressive behavior (Fagot & Hagan, 1985; Harris, 1992), whereas girls expect to experience greater peer rejection and self-censure. Similarly, women are more likely than men to perceive negative interpersonal consequences as the worst outcome of aggressive behavior (Harris, 1992).

Women also reported experiencing more anxiety or guilt as a result of (physical) aggression against another person (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; see also Boldizar et al., 1989; Frodi, Macaulay, & Thome, 1977; Harris, 1994; Perry et al., 1986; and Perry, Perry, & Weiss, 1989). More interesting, these differences in estimated harm and anticipated guilt or anxiety are significant predictors of gender differences in aggression, particularly when the experimental task did not require aggressive behavior (Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Indeed, Perry et al. (1989) noted that gender differences in aggressive behavior tend to decrease in situations where women are less likely to anticipate guilt, such as when the responsibility for aggression can be attributed to other people.

Just as individuals with interdependent and independent self-construals expect different consequences of physical aggression, they may also differ in their representations of aggression. Specifically, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may perceive direct, physical aggression as a failure to maintain control over their own emotions, needs, and desires in deference to the needs and desires of others. In contrast, individuals with an independent self-construal may perceive direct aggression as a means to re-establish their position in the social hierarchy. Indeed, preliminary evidence suggests women tend to view physical aggression as a loss of self-control and a failure to adhere to personal standards of behavior (e.g., subduing their

8 In more recent meta-analyses, researchers have noted that gender differences in aggression vary with a number of factors, including measurement technique (Hyde, 1984), type of aggression, gender of target (Eagly & Steffen, 1986), provocation, and perceived danger from retaliation (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996). However, a re-analysis of Hyde’s meta-analysis tentatively concludes gender differences in aggression appear to be stable over time and may, contrary to earlier findings (Hyde, 1984), actually increase with age (Knight et al., 1996).
own needs and desires to attend to the needs and desires of others). In contrast, men view physical aggression as a means of control over others who have challenged their self-esteem or public integrity (A. Campbell & Muncer, 1987; A. Campbell, Muncer, & Coyle, 1992). This interpretation is speculative, of course, until additional data on gender differences in the representation of physical aggression become available. However, to frame findings such as these in terms of the self can illustrate the heuristic power of self-construal theory.

**Indirect aggression.** Given that direct aggression can threaten relationships and produce guilt and anxiety, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may prefer more subtle or covert forms of aggression. Specifically, they may shy away from direct aggression in favor of indirect aggression, which can include behaviors such as backbiting, revealing another’s secrets to a third party, or excluding an individual from a desired group (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, et al., 1992; Björkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Lagerspetz et al., 1988). To induce others to feel guilty may also be an indirect means of aggression against close others (Vangelisti, Daly, & Rudnick, 1991). These indirect techniques are similar to Crick and Grotpeter’s (1995) discussion of relational aggression, where the primary goal is to harm another person’s relationships with his or her peers.

Indirect or relational aggression is particularly well suited to the needs and goals of individuals with an interdependent self-construal because it can protect existing relationships from the target’s feelings of resentment, of revenge, or both. The subtlety of indirect aggression also makes it far easier than direct aggression to rationalize as legitimate behavior. Furthermore, individuals with an interdependent self-construal possess the tight social networks necessary to use circuitous aggressive techniques (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, et al., 1992; Lagerspetz et al., 1988). For example, without these intimate interconnections, strategies such as to reveal someone’s secrets to another or to exclude someone from a group would either be impossible (i.e., without intimacy, an individual would not be privy to the private details of another’s life) or ineffective (i.e., if the target is not connected to the group or a sense of connectedness is not important to the target’s self-concept, then to be excluded will not have an aversive effect on them: Baumeister, Stillwell, et al., 1995). These indirect techniques may also enhance one’s social network by fostering relationships with third parties (i.e., other backbiters).

Although very few investigators have directly tested women’s aggressive preferences, there is substantial evidence to suggest that women and girls tend to shy away from direct, physical violence and opt for more indirect types of aggression (Björkqvist, 1994; Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, et al., 1992; Björkqvist, Osterman, & Lagerspetz, 1994; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Feshbach, 1969; Lagerspetz et al., 1988; but see Frodi et al., 1977; and Towson & Zanna, 1982, for a different opinion). For example, in same-gender conflict, adolescent girls tended to use strategies of social alienation and ostracism, such as spreading rumors or excluding others from social groups, whereas these strategies were virtually nonexistent in boys’ conflicts (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, & Gariepy, 1989; see also McCabe & Lipscomb, 1988).

Girls’ use of indirect aggression increases with age (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, et al., 1992) and is undoubtedly facilitated by the nature of their relationships with others. Specifically, girls tend to form tighter social networks than do boys (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, et al., 1992; Lagerspetz et al., 1988) and are more accurate than boys at classifying others as to their friendship patterns (Lagerspetz et al., 1988). In adults, men demonstrate some tendency to use covert forms of aggression, whereas women continue to use more indirect strategies than do men (Björkqvist et al., 1994). For example, women use social manipulation strategies, such as spreading rumors and excluding others, more than do men (Björkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1992).

In summary, the structure of the self-construal determines the way in which individuals approach and manage their relationships with others. Whereas close, intimate relationships are consistent with the goals of individuals having an interdependent self-construal, this kind of connectedness may threaten the autonomy and separateness of individuals with an independent self-construal. Consequently, persons with an independent self-construal may define intimacy differently than do persons with an interdependent self-construal, such that they can have intimate relationships without jeopardizing their sense of independence and individuality. These different orientations are also evident in behaviors that affect the development and preservation of relationships. For example, individuals with an interdependent self-construal are particularly adept at abilities that facilitate the development of intimate relationships with others, such as nonverbal expressiveness and decoding. They may also prefer indirect aggression strategies over more direct types of aggression because these covert techniques allow them to release aggressive feelings with less threat to their existing relationships.

**Discussion**

We began this review with the assumptions that the self is a social product and that, until more recently, significant variation in the structure of the self has been overlooked by psychologists. We also assumed that men and women in the United States develop different self-construals. Women tend to develop an interdependent self-construal, whereas men tend to develop an independent self-construal. We then reviewed empirical evidence for these differences in self-construals, which account for the many observed gender differences in cognition, motivation, emotion, and social interaction.

Indeed, we found evidence of gender differences in cognitive processes, such as attention, memory, and perspective taking, that mirror the differences expected, given the variation in self-construals. Men and women also differ in their use of strategies to maintain or bolster self-esteem or self-evaluation. Women often enhance the self by striving to protect or enhance relationship partners, whereas men are more likely to overestimate the uniqueness of their own abilities and attributes and to sabotage or denigrate a partner to enhance themselves. In addition, we found predictable gender differences in the expression of emotion and one’s experience of certain negative emotions, such as guilt. Gender differences in behaviors related to the development and preservation of close relationships, including self-disclo-

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9 Indirect aggression among women has also been reported in non-Western cultures (Burbank, 1987; Fry, 1990, 1992; Kuschel, 1992).
sure, nonverbal sensitivity, and aggression, are also consistent with the differences between individuals with interdependent self-construals and those with independent self-construals predicted by these models of the self.

**Implications for Other Psychological Phenomena**

We have framed our argument in terms of gender and the self for two reasons: (a) to examine the possible consequences and explanatory power of individual differences in the structure of the self and their role in future theory development and elaboration and (b) as a means to integrate many disparate findings of gender differences in the social psychological literature with a simple and coherent construct. Recognition of the interdependent self-construal as a possible alternative conception of the self can stimulate new investigations into the ways the self influences thinking, feeling, and behaving.

For example, these differences in the self-construal point to potential variations in attribution processes. Traditionally, research shows that individuals tend to attribute the behavior of others to the others' dispositions (commonly known as the "fundamental attribution error"; L. D. Ross, 1977) but often attribute their own similar behavior to the situation (known as the "actor–observer difference"; E. E. Jones & Nisbett, 1972). This bent toward the assumption that others' behaviors reflect internal traits and attributes is a product of a Western cultural ideology that emphasizes internal, dispositional (rather than external, situational) aspects of the person to explain behavior. However, individuals from collectivist cultural backgrounds and others who have constructed an interdependent self-construal are less likely than those with an independent self-construal to make dispositional inferences from behavior (J. G. Miller, 1984; Morris & Peng, 1994). For the person with an interdependent self-construal, behavior is shaped and directed by responsiveness to the needs and wishes of close others and through a negotiation of the demands of important roles. As a result, these individuals have a greater sensitivity to the situational constraints or imperatives that influence their own and others' behavior. In a study of children's attributions, Latino children, who were expected to have developed an interdependent self-construal (Marin & Triandis, 1985), offered more situational explanations for others' behavior than did Anglo children (Newman, 1991). In a later study, Newman (1993) compared the responses of individuals who scored high with those who scored low on a measure of independence or individualism. He found that the very individualistic participants showed a greater tendency to categorize the behavior of others in terms of traits than did those with low scores. As we suggested in Attention, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may be more likely to spontaneously take the perspective of another person and may therefore make more situational attributions for others' behaviors than do individuals with an independent self-construal.

These variations in the attribution process point to gaps in the understanding of lay theories of causality. Given a Western bias toward the explanation of behavior in terms of dispositions, researchers have paid less attention to ways that situations may be categorized and the effects of these categorizations on attributions and subsequent behavior (Baumeister & Tice, 1985; Gilbert, 1995; Kelley, 1967; Lupfer, Clark, & Hutcherson, 1990). More recent theoretical developments may stimulate renewed interest in the psychology of situations. For example, Hofstede (1984) has identified power relations as one dimension of situations that influences behavior in many collectivist cultures. A. Fiske's (1992) analysis of the elementary forms of social relations also provides a basis for a theory of situational inference. Further investigations into lay theories of how and when situations cause behavior is necessary for a complete theory of attribution.

This conceptualization of models of the self casts a new light on other phenomena that are based on the primacy of the individual, such as behaviors that promote individual gain rather than group gain. In Western societies, research indicates that people tend to reduce individual effort in group settings. This pattern, called "social loafing," has been demonstrated with a wide range of tasks (e.g., physical tasks such as shouting, perceptual tasks such as vigilance assignments, and evaluative tasks such as rating the quality of poems) and with a wide variety of participants (see Karau & Williams, 1993, for a review). However, individuals may be more or less likely to reduce their effort in a group task, depending on the nature of their self-construals. The person with an interdependent self-construal may view his or her outcomes as inseparable from group outcomes and may maintain diligence to promote the group's goals. Based on Karau and Williams's meta-analytic review, women are less likely to reduce their effort in group settings than are men. Furthermore, the degree of social loafing in groups is much larger in Western cultures than Eastern cultures, in which individuals are more likely to have developed an interdependent self-construal. In fact, at least one study documents the opposite effect, termed "social striving," among Chinese students (Gohrenya, Wang, & Latane, 1985). In this study, Chinese ninth graders tended to work harder in groups than when alone, in contrast to U.S. ninth graders who reduced their effort in groups. In other words, if the needs and goals of close others or in-group members become personal needs or goals for the person with an interdependent self-construal, then social behavior may be based on relational or group goals rather than individual goals.

Similarly, conflicts may be addressed differently by individuals, depending on the nature of their self-construals. Individuals with an interdependent self-construal may prefer conflict resolution strategies that preserve existing relationships rather than strategies that seek to maximize personal gain at the cost of the relationship. Again, cross-cultural research shows that individuals from a collectivist culture, who are likely to have constructed an interdependent self-construal, value conciliatory resolution procedures, such as mediation or bargaining (Leung & Lind, 1986; see P. B. Smith & Bond, 1994, for a review). In contrast, members of an individualistic culture tend to prefer adversarial methods to resolve conflicts. Leung (1987) showed that these preferences are linked to the consequences of the settlement of the dispute for the relationship: Chinese participants preferred...
dispute resolution procedures that were more likely to reduce animosity between the parties. Similarly, Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, and Lin (1991) found that Taiwanese students endorsed the use of conflict resolution strategies that are described as “obliging” or “compromising” more than did U.S. students. As is consistent with our theory of gender differences in self-structure, U.S. men are more likely to endorse resolution styles that involve using pressure or dominance to get one’s way, whereas U.S. women are more likely to endorse mediation as the strategy of choice (Lind, Hin, & Tyler, 1994). For the person with an interdependent self-construal, there may be times in which the “unit” of decision making is not the self alone but rather the self and the relationship. As a result, these individuals may seek out resolution strategies that promote reconciliation and further harmony in the relationship.

At first glance, other gender differences in behavior appear to conflict with this conceptualization. For example, women were more likely than men to initiate a break-up or divorce (Albrecht, Bahr, & Goodman, 1983; Kelly, 1982; Kitson, 1992), men reported that the break-up of a romantic relationship was more traumatic than did women (Rubin, Peplau, & Hill, 1981), and men remarried more often after divorce than did women (Ihinger-Tallman & Pasley, 1987). Many factors may account for these findings; for example, women often have less power in relationships (Peplau & Campbell, 1989), carry more of the burden of housework in dual-earner families (Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Thompson & Walker, 1989), and are more often seriously injured by a partner than are men (Stets & Straus, 1990). Therefore, they may be more likely to leave an abusive or dissatisfying marriage and may be less likely than men to view remarriage as advantageous. In addition, men’s shorter life spans and their tendency to marry women younger than themselves results in a larger pool of potential mates for men than women.

However, differences in the self-construal may play some role in these findings. First, individuals with an interdependent self-construal tend to pay more attention to the health of the relationship and, therefore, are more likely to notice problems in their relationships than do individuals with an independent self-construal. Women, then, may be more aware of difficulties in a relationship and may see a break-up coming sooner than men (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Rubin et al., 1981). We also assume that people need intimate and close relationships in their lives (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). One way to meet this need is through marriage and romantic relationships. The person with an interdependent self-construal, however, may also meet these needs in part through close relationships with friends or family.

As we described earlier, individuals with an independent self-construal may be less likely to develop as many or as satisfying close relationships; in effect, they may put more of their intimacy “eggs” into the marriage “basket.” When this person’s marriage ends, other relationships may not adequately provide the needed support or intimacy and remarriage may be the most viable means to meet these needs.

Our point is not to argue that every gender difference in behavior is best explained in terms of the self-construal. As we explain below, gendered expectations, gendered situations, and social norms influence women’s and men’s behaviors in many situations. However, many previously unexplained gender differences, as well as other individual differences in behavior, may be a function of divergent constructions of the self.

Other Explanations of Gender-Related Behaviors

This conceptualization of the source of gender differences is heir to a rich legacy of provocative thinking. Bakan’s (1966) work initially frames gender differences in terms of agency and communion. He described men as agentive, which referred to self-assertion, instrumentality, and a sense of separateness from others. He described women as communal, which referred to relatedness and a desire for union with others. (We simplify Bakan’s thinking for the sake of brevity.) Later, Gilligan (1982) argued that both affiliation and independence play a central role in girls’ and women’s identities. Jordan et al. (1991) also maintained that many women develop a “self-in-relationship.”

Our views of the self-construal differ from Bakan’s (1966) in two important respects. First, Bakan depicted the concept of agency as instrumental and active and implied that persons characterized by the communal trait are relatively more passive. We argue, in contrast, that instrumentality characterizes both the independent and interdependent self-construals. A person with an interdependent self-construal expresses instrumentality as he or she actively seeks out others for relationships, pays attention to the needs and wishes of those others, and seeks to maintain and nurture relationships. Indeed, the management of one’s emotions and behaviors to maintain harmony in a relationship may be as instrumental as the direct expression of one’s wishes and desires.

Second, Bakan (1966) described agency as being self-assertive. However, he presupposed an independent self-construal in this formulation. If one entertains the idea of individual differences in self-construals, then the issue of self-assertion raises an interesting dilemma. Might self-assertion be expressed differently for the person with an interdependent self-construal than for the person with an independent self-construal? For the former, self-assertion may include assertion of the needs and wishes of others who are part of the self, in addition to the assertion of one’s own needs and wishes. Consider, for example, the person who cooperates in social dilemma-type situations to achieve the greatest good for all involved. In this situation, the person may be asserting a self that includes others rather than an individual self.

Our goal is not to contend with the conceptualizations of Bakan (1966), Gilligan (1982), or Jordan et al. (1991) but rather to specify how ideas such as communality, relatedness, or the self-in-relation function. To link these ideas to the social-cognitive research on the self permits more careful specification of the possible mechanisms through which these divergent orientations toward the self and others work. For example, women may pay more attention to others and have better memory for social information than do men because this information is closely associated with information about the self and is, therefore, privileged in cognition. This perspective may also contribute to the useful development of a theory concerning the moderators of gender differences in behavior. For example, the behavior of individuals with an interdependent self-construal may depend on the closeness of relationships more than that of individuals with an independent self-construal. Careful attention to the inter-
action of the self-construal and the contexts that are associated with self-relevant behavior may also illuminate biases in the literature that constrain the understanding of gender differences in behavior, such as the possibility that studies of attention to nonverbal cues focus on cues relevant to emotional involvement in relationships to the exclusion of dominance-related cues. In short, an emphasis on the self allows one to point to specific cognitive, affective, and motivational processes that underlie gender differences in behavior.

Other investigators have also taken an explicitly social-construal approach in investigations of the self in relation to others. For example, Aron, Aron, Tidor, and Nelson (1991) have examined the influence of particular self-with-other representations (e.g., self with spouse or self with mother) on cognition. Ashmore and Ogilvie (1992) have also investigated self-with-other representations in the self-concept. We applaud these efforts to look beyond individualistic assumptions about the person and the self and agree that virtually everyone includes specific others (perhaps their mother or spouse) in their self-representations. We propose, however, a more general individual differences approach: Some people include others in their self-concept more extensively and habitually than others, and this tendency has significant implications for a wide range of phenomena that reach beyond the particular self-defining relationship. Furthermore, inclusion of specific others in one's self-concept (e.g., one's spouse or mother) may have different implications for individuals with divergent self-construals. As we suggested in Intimate Relationships and Self-Disclosure, the close relationships of a person with an interdependent self-construal may be more intimate and affective that those of a person with an independent self-construal.

Some researchers have focused on, in contrast to the approaches described above, situational influences on gendered behavior to the exclusion of intra-individual explanations. For example, some researchers of social constructionism argued that gender is not a quality of people but rather “exists in those interactions that are socially construed as gendered” (Bohan, 1993, p. 7; see also Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Lott & Maluso, 1993; and Mednick, 1989). From this viewpoint, gender-differentiated behaviors are not a consequence of the self, dispositions, or traits, nor are these behaviors internalized in the development of the self-construal. Instead, gender-differentiated behaviors are viewed as a consequence of social norms and situational contexts that require different behaviors of men and women. Advocates of social constructionism maintained that gendered social norms, expectations, and women’s lower social status adequately explain observed gender-typed behaviors. Thus, explanations of behavioral gender differences that focus on internal constructs, such as the self, are unnecessary.

If gender is solely created in the situation and the self is not involved in social behavior, then women and men are simply puppets of situational influences, without personal agency or control. Furthermore, those investigators who argued that observed gender differences are solely consequences of differential power, lower status, or stigma ignored the mechanisms through which these social factors influence the individual. The explication of these social influences’ impact on individuals is furthered by a consideration of the self. As Wells and Stryker (1988) explained, social structures do not directly impinge on individuals, whether these social structures are in the form of social class, the organization of power in a society, or structures developed out of age-graded processes; rather, social structures affect individuals by conditioning the kinds of interactions and relationships within which individuals exist as social actors. Thus, accounting for the impact of the social structure of life courses means explicating “proximate” interaction events through which individual lives are actually lived. The concept of self provides an important component of the interaction interface between society and person. . . . Humans as biological organisms become “persons” (in the sense of competent, acting participants in the ongoing social order) by developing selves, and thus are able to engage in minded, reflective behavior, to take into account the perspectives of others, to coordinate their behaviors with others, and to participate in complex institutionalized social processes. (pp. 203–204)

To understand gender differences in behavior, then, one must recognize how the self has been created through a life time of experience with gendered social norms and expectations and how the self in turn directs responses to gendered situations. This perspective on the self-construal provides a theoretically meaningful foundation to understand the agentic, self-directed, or willful nature of human action as it is enacted on a stage set by social norms, ideologies, and values.

A similar argument can be made for expectation states theory, which asserts that men’s and women’s behaviors in task groups are a consequence of status-linked performance expectations (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977; Carli, 1990; Ridgeway, 1988). Research shows that, in task-oriented groups, men talk more, interrupt more, make more task-related comments, and are generally more influential than are women. Women, however, engage in more socioemotional behavior (e.g., showing support and agreeing) than do men. Expectation states theory explains these differences in terms of differences in status and power. In this viewpoint, higher status interactants are assumed to be more competent and to have more desirable attributes than are lower status interactants; higher status persons are then afforded more opportunities to perform well and to influence others and, therefore, are more influential than are lower status persons. Lower status individuals show that they are not trying to usurp power by communicating support for and agreement with higher status group members. In this society, men have higher status than do women, and inferences about competence and influence follow from these status differences. An expanded formulation of expectation states theory also takes into account the influence of social roles and cultural norms in gendered interaction (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992). However, as with social constructionism, person variables, such as the nature of the self-system, are eschewed as unnecessary to explain behavior in task-focused groups.

Considerable evidence supports expectation states theory regarding behavior in mixed-gender task groups. However, many interesting gender differences in behavior occur outside task-oriented groups; our goal is to provide a coherent and parsimonious account of behavior in a broad array of interpersonal situations, including close relationships, friendships, ongoing interactions, and acquaintanceships. However, there are situations in which strong social norms, expectations, or scripts for behavior leave little room for the influence of individual
differences (more on this later); many task-oriented groups may fall into this category.

In addition, expectation states theory investigators have yet to provide a simple and satisfying account of evidence that disconfirms their theory, in particular, the findings that women engage in more socioemotional behavior in all female groups than in mixed-gender groups. Expectation states theory predicts that women should be more task oriented in same-gender groups than in mixed-gender groups because they are not in a lower status position. Although Ridgeway (1988; Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992) constructed an elaborate argument to account for these unexpected findings, a much simpler argument can be made by an examination of the self-system. In brief, when individuals share goals of interpersonal harmony (as would group members with interdependent self-construals), agreement, supportive responses, and encouraging head nods and vocalizations are more likely to be reciprocated than when these goals are not shared by group members. Consequently, women in same-gender groups should engage in more socioemotional behavior than women in mixed-gender groups. In summary, these models of the self explain many more gender differences and provide a more parsimonious explanation for some situations than does expectation states theory.

In contrast to social constructionism and expectation states theory, our perspective on the self-construal and gender differences in behavior is very compatible with Eagly's (1987) social role theory. Eagly argued that gender-typed behavior is often a function of the divergent roles played by men and women. Society also has different expectations of men and women (e.g., men should be independent, and women should be relational), and individuals frequently conform to these expectations. As a consequence of different social roles and expectations, men and women develop different skills, attributes, and beliefs and may internalize gender roles into their self-concept.

Whereas social role theory attempts to explain the social origins of gender differences in behavior and personal attributes, our focus on the self emphasizes the intra-individual structures and processes that direct behavior. This view of divergent self-construals helps explain how gendered social roles and expectations are internalized and influence subsequent behavior. Combined, social role theory and theoretical conceptions of the self-construal provide a more complete understanding of the influences on men's and women's behaviors than either theory provides alone.

For example, an examination of variation in self-construals can help explain within-gender variation in response to roles and situations. Men and women vary greatly in the extent to which they have internalized gender norms and roles into their self-construal. Men raised in a collectivist environment (e.g., a Hispanic community or some religious communities) may construct an interdependent self-construal. African American parents make fewer gender distinctions in their interactions with their children and encourage independence and autonomy in their daughters more than do White parents, which may result in the forming of an independent self-construal by African American girls (Baumrind, 1972; D. K. Lewis, 1978; see McLoyd, 1993, for a review). These individual differences in the self-construal may then explain the variance in thinking, feeling, motivation, and social behavior that is left unexplained by gender or social roles.

In addition, these models of the self may help explain why men and women behave differently in the same role. Investigators of role theories of gender differences argued that the primary contributors to variation in men's and women's behaviors are the different roles and statuses occupied by the genders. They predicted that, when men and women occupy the same role (e.g., occupational roles), the demands and expectations associated with that role control behavior, and that the impact of gender roles are weakened (Eagly & Karau, 1991). However, the person who deviates from the norm in a specific role may hold a very central or important self-view that powerfully influences his or her responses to the situation. Given that men's and women's self-construals differ, their behavior in the same role or situation may differ as well. In fact, Moskowitz et al. (1994) found that women behaved more communally than did men in both supervisor and supervisee roles at work. In a meta-analysis of studies of gender differences in leadership behavior, Eagly and Johnson (1990) found that, even when roles are controlled, women used a more democratic leadership style than did men (see also Ptacek, Smith, & Dodge, 1994). Further research is needed to ascertain whether (and when) these gender differences are a consequence of individual differences in the self, of the continuing impact of gender roles, or both.

From the perspective of these models of the self, one can also anticipate the conditions under which individual differences in the structure of the self would have little effect on behavior. As social psychologists have long observed, there are strong situations that override the impact of dispositional characteristics on behavior (see Deaux & Major, 1987; Snyder, 1997; and Snyder & Ickes, 1985, for reviews). According to Snyder, the self and other personal attributes have little influence on behavior in situations that stress conformity to group norms or concern for others' evaluations. Consequently, individuals with different self-construals may tend to behave similarly in these situations. Differences in self-construals may also have little influence in novel or ambiguous situations that present a salient model of behavior (e.g., many people walk by a stranger in need when other bystanders do the same) or situations that suggest that one's attitudes or values are socially undesirable (e.g., it is ill-advised to appear too independent when one applies for a job that requires teamwork and cooperation).

We would also expect few differences in the behavior of individuals with different self-construals in situations with others who are not self-relevant. With out-group members or strangers, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may behave much like individuals with an independent self-construal. In fact, we suspect that in many cases (e.g., empathy studies), the absence of expected gender differences in behavioral measures may be a consequence of a target person who is not viewed as self-relevant or as an in-group member. For example, in studies of the SEM model (Tesser, 1988), women were less likely than men to denigrate the performance of a friend, but both men

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11 However, women may behave as though they are in a lower status position when they engage in a gender-typed task (Ridgeway, 1988).

12 Eagly (1987) was explicit that this is not one of the goals of social role theory.
and women denigrated the performance of a stranger (e.g., Tesser et al., 1989). In other words, in situations that have strong social norms for behavior or that do not implicate social bonds or attachments, individuals with independent and interdependent self-construals may behave very similarly.

However, there may also be occasions where differences between individuals with interdependent self-construals and those with independent self-construals are evident even with respect to strangers. For example, women tend to be better decoders of nonverbal cues in studies with strangers (Hall, 1984). In fact, Hall (1987) later pointed out that much of the literature on gender differences in nonverbal communication consists of studies with unacquainted college students. Much less is known about nonverbal communication between well-acquainted individuals (Hall, 1987). This is not necessarily inconsistent with our theory, however. Although we expect individuals with an interdependent self-construal to develop good nonverbal decoding skills because these abilities help foster and maintain close relationships with others, this does not preclude these individuals from applying these skills to other types of interactions or goals. Specifically, individuals with an interdependent self-construal may become chronically sensitive to others' nonverbal cues, accurately decoding the nonverbal behaviors of strangers, friends, and family alike. Persons with an interdependent self-construal may also choose to use their nonverbal skills instrumentally, as a means to anticipate the emotions and behaviors of self-relevant or more powerful others (e.g., Henley, 1977). Thus, the hypothesized differences among individuals with interdependent and independent self-construals may at times generalize to other situations, leading to gender differences that would not be directly predicted by this theory but are not inconsistent with it either.

Let us summarize briefly with a truism: One must take into account both the situation and individual differences to fully understand behavior. This truism highlights our position that theories focusing on both social roles and self-construals are useful tools to understand gender differences in behavior. Our point is not that the self-construal is the only causal mechanism necessary to understand gender differences in behavior but rather that it is a helpful and potentially important construct for researchers seeking to understand society's influences on men and women.

A Caveat

We have proposed that these two models of the self may explain a wide range of women's and men's behaviors in the United States. However, we do not intend to imply that these are the only two representations available to construct the self nor that these models are culturally universal. However, given that every individual is a part of at least one social group, every person may have to grapple with some form of the question, "To what extent am I independent of or interdependent with others?" to create a self (Markus & Cross, 1990; Shweder, 1982). As we indicated in the beginning of this article, the models of the self that we have described are shaped by the cultural values of the United States. In places with very different cultural values, the available representations of the self may be quite different (see Markus et al., in press). For example, A. Fiske (1992) has described four universal forms of social relations—community sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing. These different forms of social relationships may influence self-construals in ways that have yet to be explored.

We have framed our discussion in terms of two types of self-representations; however, we have used this framework heuristically to clearly describe the differences in the two conceptualizations. It is very likely that these construals represent two dimensions of the self and that men and women in U.S. culture are characterized by both dimensions (see also Guisinger & Blatt, 1994; and Singelis, 1994). As Trafimow, Triandis, and Goto (1991) have suggested, people from different cultural backgrounds (as well as men and women within this culture, we suspect) may have both independent and interdependent self-representations, but the number and organization of these vary. Given gendered developmental histories of men and women, men may have a majority of independent self-representations and women may have a majority of interdependent self-representations. In addition, these types of self-views may be stored separately from each other and accessed with different frequencies. Women may access interdependent self-views more often than do men, making these self-representations chronically accessible (Barth, Lombardi, & Higgins, 1988). Similarly, men may access independent self-views more often than do women, making these self-representations chronically accessible. To view these self-construals as two dimensions of the self-system raises many additional questions about when each construal directs or dominates behavior. Although a thorough analysis of this question is beyond the scope of this article, a consideration of individual differences in the priority given to each self-construal may prove fruitful to the exploration of the many mysteries of social behavior.

Final Comments

Because the self is a cultural product, the relation between gender and the independent and interdependent self-construals may narrow with time, as have other gender-related differences (e.g., some differences in verbal and reasoning abilities; Feingold, 1988; Hyde & Linn, 1988; but also see Hedegs & Nowell, 1995; and Knight et al., 1996). For example, women lately have obtained more opportunities to wield power and to be independent, competitive, or aggressive. Women have more recently been given combat roles in the military and have joined the ranks of upper management in the business world (Of-
In addition, men have become more involved in child-care activities in the family (Douthitt, 1989; Pleck, 1985, 1987). As men take on nurturing roles, they may internalize these roles as a part of their self-construal through self-perception processes. Boys who observe their fathers in nurturing roles may imitate their actions, which may promote the development of interdependence. Other research suggests that traditional views of women's and men's attributes and gender roles may be changing (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1991; Labott, Martin, Eason, & Berkey, 1991). These and other changes in the roles and opportunities for men and women have the potential to transform gender-typed social attitudes and practices, which may in turn transform men's and women's self-construals.

Ultimately, gender differences in the self may disappear as a result of these and other social changes. However, the conceptualizations of the independent and interdependent self-construals may continue to be important tools to bring into focus heretofore unexplored variation in human behavior. In the words of Sampson (1989), work such as ours that begins with an examination of gender differences should no longer be understood as developing a psychology of women but ... is better seen as developing a psychology of humanity tomorrow. The real issue, therefore, does not involve gender differences per se, as much as it speaks to an emerging theory of the person that is appropriate to the newly emerging shape of a globally linked world system. (p. 920)

This emerging theory of the person points to new and diverse strands of human experience that can be woven into the current understanding of human behavior to create a more richly textured theory of the person.

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