

# CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON IDENTITY AND THE ISSUES OF THE SELF

## Universal or Culturally Specific?



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Virtually all Euro-American research on the self, which is to say 99 percent of all research on the self and identity, has been done on one particular population—contemporary, secularized, Western, urban, white middle-class people—and it has been assumed in this research that the self takes on a particular form.”  
Kitayama and Markus (1995)

## Folk Psychology: “People are alike.”

Individual is a self-contained entity who:

- (a) comprises a unique configuration of internal attributes
- (b) who behave primarily as a consequence of these internal attributes.

Kitayama and Markus (1995)

“It is evident that a consideration of self and self-processes must reflect the cultural framework or what it means to be a self. The construction and maintenance of the self as well as all the hypothesized self-processes (self-evaluation, self-esteem, self-presentation, self-consciousness, self-effacement) are all conditioned by the meaning or significance that is attached to the self.”

Markus and Kitayama

## Single Culture versus Multi-culture Approach

### **THE ISSUE OF SELF-ESTEEM**

Self esteem = being different in a positive sense, unique.  
Believing that oneself is special produces a good feeling

False uniqueness effect

# **INDEPENDENCE CULTURES VERSUS INTERDEPENDENCE CULTURES**

Independence Culture: North America, Australia, Part of Europe especially British Isles.

Success is attributed to ability

Failures to external or situational variables. (Bad luck, unfair call, “I had a cold” etc.)

Interdependence Cultures: Japanese and other Asian countries

Success explained in terms of being in shape, ease of task, and luck

Failure to lack of abilities or talent.

## **Self-Effacement**

Praise versus criticism

Standing Out In the Crowd

## **Group Identity**

### Independence Cultures

Groups made up of separate individuals

“We-ness” based on awareness of commonality or similarity.

### Interdependence Cultures

“We-ness” rooted in affective, emotional force, not shared interests.

## The Issue of Apologizing

Conformity

Stereotypes

Independence Culture: Negative—treat people as members of a group not as individuals

Interdependence Culture: Positive and normal—regarding oneself as a member of a group and other groups