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What is This?

Abstract Adopting a constructivist approach, individual constructions of the concept of human nature were investigated by using an 'adulthood interview' and culturally adapted dilemma stories. Subjects were young adults with higher education, including university students and individuals already in work from the US, Indonesia, Japan and Korea. The central hypothesis that subjects from different cultures conceptualize similar structures of understanding human nature at different levels of complexity was clearly confirmed. A second complementary hypothesis assumed that subjects from eastern cultures emphasize a more collective and interdependent identity compared with US subjects. Content analysis revealed that all subjects from eastern cultures elaborated characteristics of interdependency that were viewed as crucial for human nature, while US subjects emphasized aspects of individuality and independence. However, without exception, eastern subjects also simultaneously stressed autonomous identity. Conflict resolutions resulting from contradictions between independent and interdependent identity are described by examples from Indonesia (parent–child conflict) and Japan (self–other conflict). Finally, a combination of universal structural levels and of a culturally shaped conception of identity is suggested, assuming that the interdependent self, more pronounced in eastern cultures, and independent identities, more elaborated in western cultures, are conceived at different structural levels of increasing complexity that show universal characteristics.

Key Words concept of human nature, constructivism, ethnotheory, independent vs interdependent identity, universals vs culture specificity

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The Concept of Human Nature in East Asia: Etic and Emic Characteristics

Introduction

Cross-cultural and developmental psychology have extensively inves-
tigated concepts of naïve understanding of education, development,

personality, human action, etc. (LeVine, 1991; Sigel, 1994). These concepts are often referred to as ethnotheories or folk theories. If one takes a cultural perspective, such theories indicate that the individual's conception reflects cultural knowledge accumulated and transferred to the individual via the process of enculturation.

Ethnotheories studied thus far can be viewed as components of a more compound knowledge about human beings and their relations towards the world. Closest to this view is the investigation of the self in different cultures. Triandis (1989), for example, distinguishes between the collective, public and private self. Markus and Kitayama (1991) use the terms 'interdependent' self, being related to collectivistic cultures, and 'independent' self, being connected to individualistic cultures.

Within the framework of our approach, self-descriptions are, like ethnotheories, part of a more general knowledge of human nature that is conceptualized by the individual during a process of enculturation. This assumption becomes more plausible if one takes into consideration that as early as during the establishment of attachment, an initial conception of human nature is constructed, the well-known internal working model (Ainsworth, 1977; Bowlby, 1982). Studies about naïve personality theories and about theories of mind show that children acquire a cumulative knowledge about human beings (e.g. Eder, 1989; Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Montemayor & Eisen, 1977; Wellman, 1985).

In the framework to be presented here, concepts such as 'ethno-theory', 'person perception', 'self' and 'other' are viewed as being embedded in a general knowledge structure about human nature. On the one hand, experience during individual development contributes to components of this general knowledge; on the other hand, the knowledge structure of human nature as a whole shapes the knowledge of the specific components. For example, knowledge about the self (self-concept) may have an impact on the knowledge of human nature in general. But knowledge and opinions about human nature also have an impact on the self-concept. Thus, knowledge about how human beings should behave certainly influences the construction of one's self. Knowledge about human nature is ordered into a structure that is more or less elaborated, more or less logically consistent and more or less available for the individual as 'declarative knowledge' (Anderson, 1983). In the following, the knowledge structure about human nature is labelled simply the 'concept of human nature'.

A Constructivist Approach

As a theoretical basis for the concept of human nature, we choose a constructivist approach using the ideas of constructivism *sensu* von Glasersfeld and von Foerster, but focusing on social constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Clancey, 1993; Gergen, 1985; Rogoff, 1990). Hence, individual knowledge (including values, attitudes and opinions) as well as culture itself are the result of constructive activity. Herskovits (1948) was the first to present a short and convincing definition of culture: it is 'the man-made part of the environment' (p. 17). Culture shapes the typical human ecosystem. It is something that is positioned between the human being and the natural environment (Carneiro, 1970). In opposition to most definitions presented more recently (e.g. Camilleri, 1985; Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1990), culture is here explicitly conceived of as the typical human environment produced by human reifying activity. From this perspective, culture comprises parts of the physical world such as tools, machines, buildings and the traffic system, as well as values, rules, accumulated knowledge and the arts. As a result of human construction, culture is transferred to the individual via co-constructive activity (Clancey, 1993; Greeno, 1992; Lave, 1991; Valsiner, 1989), and, with further development, also via the individual's solitary constructive activity. The processes of transition of cultural constructions to the individual can be summarized as 'enculturation'.

From this background, the following postulates are formulated:

1. Human constructive activity is based on biological roots as well as on some basic human experience common to all individuals. Therefore, universal features of the concept of human nature must exist.
2. In each culture, in addition to universal characteristics, there exist conceptualizations of human nature that comprise culture-specific components. These components stem from the cultural knowledge that is acquired by the individual through the process of enculturation.
3. Each form of construction, though not being a copy of reality, must be functionally appropriate in order to save human communities and ensure human survival. Inappropriate constructions will be changed and adapted until they function sufficiently.

From the perspective of these postulates, we are looking for universals and culture-specific components of the concept of human nature in different cultures. This search also takes an ecological perspective into consideration (postulate 3), in which we are aware that the culture provides a construction of human nature and that the individual attempts to reconstruct this picture during his or her development.

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Methodological Considerations

Taking together a constructivist approach and the goal of investigations in different cultures, it seems inappropriate to use questionnaires with prefixed items. Instead, methods have to be chosen that stimulate the subject's constructive activity. Furthermore, culturally shaped tendencies in answering questions have to be taken into consideration. If, for example, cultural norms prescribe that responses towards questions have to be in accordance with rules of convention or politeness rather than with personal opinions, subjects' statements in that culture have a different meaning than in western cultures. Finally, the kind of interaction between investigator and subject should not be completely unfamiliar in a given culture.

Two methods were mainly used in order to fulfil the theoretical condition of the subject's constructive activity and culture-specific differences in processing responses: the 'adulthood interview' and dilemma stories. With both methods to be described below, the interviewer tries to elicit not only answers to questions but also arguments and reasoning about a given problem.

Hypotheses

From previous studies (Oerter, 1990, 1994), we expect to find different structural levels with increasing complexity about the concept of human nature. These structural levels can be explained as an outcome of development whereby individuals of about the same age might show different developmental levels dependent on the outcome of their experience and constructive activity. The distinct (developmental) levels of complexity are assumed to be similar across cultures with regard to some essential characteristics. Results concerning this topic will be presented first. The existence of different levels of complexity in all cultures under investigation implies that culture-specific characteristics of the individual's concept of human nature are expected to be found at distinct levels of complexity. The distinction between a collective, public and individual self (Triandis, 1989) and that of an independent vs interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) do not present any answer to the question of whether different people develop differently complex levels of knowledge about the self. Hence, these approaches are insensitive with regard to the developmental perspective. Therefore, the main issue of our approach is to combine 'horizontal' (i.e. cross-cultural) and 'vertical' (i.e. developmental) aspects of a person's conceptualizations. In order to accomplish this goal, culture specificity is described and explained along the distinction of independent and interdependent identity, a distinction that was

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introduced by Markus and Kitayama (1991), who ascribed the independent self primarily to western societies and the interdependent self to eastern societies. A more detailed description of this approach will be presented at the beginning of the paragraph dealing with culture specificity. Finally, we expect that the constructivist approach and the methodology employed will show more or less sophisticated knowledge and arguments within each cultural sample, resulting in a broad variety of conceptualizations among individuals.

Method

Instruments
Two procedures were mainly used for measuring the concept of human being: the 'adulthood interview' and dilemma stories.

The Adulthood Interview
The semi-structured interview is divided into four main parts. In the first part, general questions about adulthood are asked, for example, 'What should an adult look like?', 'What is appropriate for adulthood?' The second part deals with the three main roles of adulthood: family role, occupational role and political role. The third part draws attention to the interviewee's past, asking about developmental changes that have occurred during the last two or three years. The final part of the interview deals with the interviewee's near future, asking about his or her goals in life and his or her further development.

Dilemma Stories
The subject is presented with dilemmas in which a contradiction is embedded. Thus far, two stories have been used. One story tells the dilemma of a protagonist whose company shuts down and moves to another city. The protagonist can either commute, thus losing time that could be spent with his or her family, or stay and lose his or her job and risk unemployment. Furthermore, the person has bought a house and must pay a high mortgage (family–job dilemma). This dilemma was adapted to the cultural context (e.g. with regard to the husband's or wife's job and to the name of the cities).

The second story deals with two old school-buddies who meet after a long time and tell each other about their way of life. One of them has become a banker, working hard all day long and even dedicating his or her free time to his or her career. The other has taken over his or her parents' dog-breeding business (the United States) and is happy and satisfied with what he or she is doing. Both friends defend their own

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life-style but soon question whether their choice is the best (career dilemma). For Indonesia, Japan and Korea culturally adapted professions were chosen. For females the choices were university lecturer vs housewife with activities outside the home (Japan); university lecturer vs housewife running a small artisan business (Korea); banking business vs teacher in a village (Indonesia). For males the choices were manager in a company vs owner of a flower farm (Japan); manager in a company vs artisan (Korea); banking business vs teacher in a village (Indonesia).

The family–job dilemma presents an intrapersonal conflict, the career dilemma an interpersonal conflict.

The subject is asked to describe the situation and to find a solution. The interviewer asks questions and tries to reach the highest possible level the subject can achieve. The interviewers are trained in understanding and assessing the actual level of the individual in order to ask questions at the level proximal to the individual's point of view. For the purposes of illustration, the Korean version of the instruments, including the guidelines for the questions following the dilemma stories, is added in the Appendix.

Samples

Subjects were young adults aged between 18 to 25 from the United States, Indonesia, Japan and Korea. Other studies which are not described here have been conducted in Germany, China, Slovenia and Croatia.

Each cultural sample consisted of subjects with at least secondary education. The genders were counter-balanced. Table 1 shows the composition of the four cultural samples (see p. 24). In the United States five universities were selected that, it can be assumed, present a broad range of regional variety: Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ; University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC; University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Brigham Young University, Provo, UT; University of California, Berkeley.

The Indonesian sample was composed of four different cultural groups: 18 Sundanese, 19 Javanese, 17 Minang and 15 Batak subjects. Only subjects were included who had lived at least the first 15 years of their lives in their home country. The Sundanese live in an area which was formerly divided into three kingdoms. They speak their own language (Sundanese) which is similar to Bahasa Indonesia. They are strongly influenced by the religion of Islam (Kartodirdjo, 1988). The Javanese live in an area which also was formerly divided into several kingdoms. They are followers of the Islamic religion, which, however,

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became remarkably influenced by the older religions of Hinduism and Buddhism (H. Geertz, 1967; Mulder, 1992). Javanese people show more religious tolerance than the Sundanese. The Javanese language differs from that of Bahasa Indonesia and is still influential in moral thinking and everyday life (Magnis-Suseno, 1981; Mulder, 1992). The Javanese culture is the dominant culture in the whole of Indonesia, and the five principles of the Indonesian government (Pancasila) are mainly derived from Javanese philosophy (Kartodirdjo, 1988). The Minang are also Muslims but have a matrilinear order where the authority lies with the wife's brother (Tsuyoshi, 1982). The Minang live in the middle part of Sumatra. The Batak are Christians with a patrilinear order and a strong paternal authority. They live north of the Minang round the Toba-Lake and in the adjacent area as far as Medan.

The Korean sample consisted of two subgroups: students from the National University living in metropolitan Seoul; and students from the university of Mok-Po, a smaller provincial city. The sample also included fairly highly educated subjects already working in both cities.

The Japanese sample included students and higher educated working subjects who had not attended university.

Subjects with lower education from the United States and from Indonesia were not included because they could not be compared with the corresponding groups in Korea and Japan, where a very high percentage of this age group finishes secondary education. Therefore, the subjects included in this study were comparable with regard to educational level.

Procedure

Subjects were tested individually by trained interviewers who were native speakers and usually staff members of the cooperating university. The training consisted of an introduction to the five structural levels of the concept of human nature (see below) and to the technique of questioning, which comprised the eliciting of arguments by introducing counter-arguments, asking for details when only global statements were given, and establishing sensitivity towards the understanding of higher-order statements. (For the sequence of questions following the presentation of the dilemma stories, see Appendix.)

All of the subjects' statements were taped and transcribed. Only then were the verbal data categorized according to a content analysis which took into account both the general structural levels (etic categories) and the culture-specific patterns (emic categories). Rater reliability of the structural levels gained by two judges, usually one stemming from

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the culture under consideration, was satisfying (agreement higher than 80%).

Results I: Universal Levels of Conceptualization

Following the previously developed system of analysis, subjects' descriptions and arguments can be ordered according to five structural levels of differing complexity. Each level can be described separately for the domains 'personality theory', 'social/environmental theory', 'action theory' and 'level of thought'. The five levels can be briefly characterized by the following labels:

I.   Human beings as actors.
II. Human beings as owners of psychological traits and competences.
IIIa: Human beings as autonomous identities.
IIIb: Human beings as mutual identities.
IV. Human beings as societal identities.

The enumeration is chosen in a way that corresponds roughly to Kohlberg's stages of moral judgement (e.g. Kohlberg, 1969).

At the first level, human beings are described as actors who carry out a range of actions, and as possessors of objects and/or persons (e.g. owning a house, a wife, etc.). At the second level, human beings are understood as owners of psychological traits, skills, competences and values which explain the person's behaviour and performance. Since all subjects involved in the present study produced statements at least at level IIIa, the first two levels are not described further.

Level IIIa: Autonomous Identity

Personality Theory
At this level individuals describe the personality as an organizing entity of traits and action. There is a conscious core of activity which can be labelled as identity. The subjects emphasize self-recognition as an important characteristic of adults. Autonomy of identity is characterized with regard to at least four aspects: economic and/or psychological independence, self-control and/or environmental control, self-realization in different forms (e.g. more individualistic or more collectivistic orientation) and value orientation as successful adjustment to norms and/or as a result of individualization.

Some examples may illustrate the personality theory at this level:

> *Career dilemma:* I mean … it's just you have to find, you have to know yourself, what you like, what you want to do, what you believe in, and how you want to live. That's the only way you are ever going to solve this

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problem, to believe in what you do and in yourself. (Female, 19, university, Chapel Hill, USA)

Adulthood interview: Being mentally independent. . . . Not dependent on others. Ability to assess things, having knowledge. Self-assertion and self-control. Following the general rules of the society. . . . Soft-minded, better fitted to the society. An adult has a clear way of life. (Different subjects, males and females, university and college, Japan)

Social Theory

At level IIIa others are seen as equal with regard to the structure of human nature, that is, as having an autonomous identity, and different with regard to contents, for example values, interests, social roles and status. Main attitudes towards others are respect and tolerance. Since others are autonomous identities like oneself, they should decide and act independently. Assistance and intervention should only occur when they are demanded by others or when the other person cannot solve his or her problem by him- or herself. Examples include the following.

Career dilemma: Nobody can accept the other's good points . . .
[Is there a sincere discussion?] I don't think they can have a sincere discussion. I cannot find any common thing. . . . When they were satisfied to find that their lives were good . . . it is nonsense to talk about this matter. (Male, 23, university, Japan)

Career dilemma: They have to accept each other as they are. You can't change someone to live your life-style. (Male, 23, university, Provo, USA)

Action Theory

An action is differentiated into goal–means–end–consequences. Responsibility is conceptualized as bearing the consequences of one's own action. This concept holds also for wrong decisions that lead to undesirable consequences. For example, the individual's decision to follow a certain way of life is in his or her own responsibility and consequences must be accepted. Examples include the following:

Adulthood interview: Maybe someone who can take responsibility for his behaviour. Take all responsibility for what you have done. (Male, 21, university, Japan)

Career dilemma: He [Mr Smith] still has to deal with the consequences and what is going on. If he decides to work and go commute 90 miles away, he is losing something of his family, and if he does the other thing, then he has to deal with the financial consequences of trying to support his family and find another job. (Male, 20, university, Berkeley, USA)

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Level of Thought: Relativistic Thinking

Subjects at level IIIa state that different people have different thoughts, life-styles, life-goals and values. All of these positions have to be accepted. The basis of relativistic thinking is the epistemological position that there is not only one truth. Empirical studies about relativistic thinking have been presented by among others, Perry (1970) and Kramer and Woodruff (1986). Relativistic thought is seen as precondition for the conceptualization of autonomous identity, since the logic of autonomy demands a relativistic position. If autonomy is attributed to everybody, different and even incompatible values held by different persons are the consequences and must be accepted. Examples include the following:

> *Career dilemma:* Both of them have logical reasons for their careers. (Female, 19, university, Chapel Hill, USA)

> *Career dilemma:* If one tried to live the other one's life, they wouldn't be true to themselves. (Male, 24, university, Provo, USA)

> *Career dilemma:* One cannot say that the one or the other decision is right or wrong. Each has chosen his job according to his ideas of how he wants to live his life. That is to say, one chooses a job that is best for reaching one's life-goals. (Male, 25, university, Korea)

If one tries to describe the implicit logical structure of level IIIa in an idealized form, the core concept of this structure is autonomy. Autonomy determines each of the four domains described above. Personality theory focuses on self-determination and self-formation. Social theory follows from the autonomy perspective, attributing to the other the same kind of self-determination as for oneself. Action theory emphasizes the consequences of one's own action which follows also from autonomy, since the principle of autonomy is violated if responsibility is externally attributed. Finally, relativistic thinking is a basis for autonomy, since self-determination demands the recognition that one's own view is different from others', but not necessarily wrong. Similarly, the acceptances of the other's standpoint becomes possible because of the epistemological perspective of relativistic thinking.

Level IIIb: Mutual Identity

Personality Theory

Human beings are conceived as persons who face internal conflicts and contradictions with regard to incompatible life-styles, values and action affordances. Internal contradictions can be conceived as genuine anthropological themes such as future-oriented vs presence-oriented

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life, ideal vs real self and independence vs interdependence. At level IIIb, autonomy has to deal not only with external demands that are incompatible with personal goals and desires, but also with conflicting internal goals and ideas. Examples include the following:

> *Family–job dilemma:* Any way she decides, she will have a problem. . . . Well, if she continues her job as a designer, this problem [conflict between job and family] continues forever. . . . And when her work becomes bad, she might think she should have quit the job and should have stayed at home. If she decides to be a housewife and quits the job, in a few years she might think that she has become middle-aged. (Female, 21, college, Japan)

> *Career dilemma:* I think people always want to be a Jane and a Carol [the two old school-buddies with contrasting life-styles] at the same time. (Female, 19, university, Berkeley, USA)

Social Theory

Identities are no longer separate independent entities but are mutually defined through each other and the relations between them. The involved persons are not exchangeable, they are significant others for the individual. Not only does social exchange have an instrumental function (e.g. mutual assistance), but it also becomes a basic criterion for human beings. Examples include the following:

> *Career dilemma:* So, they both [Jane and Carol as protagonists] have different ideas of what they want their lives to be like—and so they can compare . . . they both are fulfilling themselves at least at that point—but that they begin to question whether their path is right shows that they are not completely satisfied and maybe they ruled out another perspective that they never thought of—this at least is giving them the chance to see another life and maybe change their own to compensate for that. (Female, 20, university, Chapel Hill, USA)

> *Adulthood interview:* Yes, we have to think of others because we don't live alone. We need a social life. Someone who has become mature [*dewasa* = adult, mature] should be mutually related to other persons. (Male, 20, university, Indonesia)

Action Theory

The consequences of an action are mutually considered for the person and the other. Responsibility is mutually directed, which also means that social responsibility for one's own action is conceived. Furthermore, consequences of a decision form a chain with often unpredictable outcomes. There is also an understanding of small systems (family, company, school) and the systemic functioning of persons' actions. Examples include the following:

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Family–job dilemma: I would think, she has to consider the husband also and her husband's job ... she has to take into consideration that the children wouldn't be happy, that they wouldn't like to change to a different school and lose their friends. (Female, 24, university, Berkeley, USA)

Family–job dilemma: That's all a chain. I think there is a lot of combinations and ... some unexpected things you can't really predict. (Male, 19, university, Knoxville, USA)

Level of Thought: Subjective Dialectical Thinking

Conflicts and contradictions cannot be solved by logical thinking alone: they demand dialectical thinking, that is, the recognition, processing and synthesis of incompatible aspects existing within and between persons. At level IIIb, dialectical thinking is labelled 'subjective' because recognition and solution of contradictions are treated as intra- and interpersonal problems. Examples include the following:

Family–job dilemma: First, when I started, I thought there is a solution ... she should go for a career, that's what I thought—but now I think about that thing, it's very hard ... there is no way out. (Female, 20, Berkeley, USA)

Career dilemma: The problem comes from the person himself. He is the one who creates something from which we shall suffer the consequences. . . . Let us assume we have settled down, then we create problems by wanting to reach higher things for our own progress and advantage. This means that we decrease our attention for the community. Community [society] will not let it happen; there the problem arises. . . . We should also be prepared for future problems beyond the here and now. Future problems might be caused by the way we solve present problems. (Male, 20, university, Indonesia)

If one looks for the internal logic of level IIIb, mutuality between 'ego' and 'alter' is the core concept. The autonomous identity of level IIIa is transformed into the interaction of two or more autonomous identities who exchange their views and goals, negotiate their positions and find solutions for themselves and their partners which comprise the contradicting components. Personality theory is therefore shaped by the view of conflicting tendencies within one and the same person, social theory conceives the mutuality of identities, and action theory deals with mutual consequences for oneself and others. Dialectical thinking becomes a crucial part of cognitive processes to deal with this conception.

Level IV: Societal Identity

Personality Theory

At this level human beings are seen as determined by society and

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culture. There is always a tension between the individual and the society. Personal goals are in contrast to societal demands and adaptation is necessary. Furthermore, balance and imbalance within the big system (society, economy) is related to individual development and outcomes. The person is determined by sociohistorical conditions. Examples include the following:

> *Family–job dilemma:* [Where does the problem come from?] As I already mentioned, this comes from the bad working conditions for women living under Confucian ideology. Of course, we also find problems with women in Europe, but in Korea they are much more severe. Mass media also play an important role. For example, in advertisements women are described as looking for happiness only in their small domain [of home and family]. Female sexuality is treated as a consumer item. . . . [What would you do to change things, if you had the opportunity?] Personally you should have a clear value orientation. Women should be self-sufficient as human beings. . . . On the societal level we could exert some pressure through a boycott of consumer goods. We should control advertisements. (Female, 23, university, Korea)

> *Career dilemma:* [Have people a problem by wanting two life-styles?] Yes, because the life-style we have chosen might be different from what is expected by society. So if we want to choose a life-style which fits our personality but not society, problems might arise. . . . The problem comes from the person him/herself. Often we want to do something while we also have to obey societal rules. . . . or sometimes we want to do it the way we would like to do it. (Female, 19, university, Indonesia)

The statements express the determination of individual development through the macrosystem of culture and society and show how the system can be influenced by shared activity.

Social theory

Human beings are described as exchangeable elements of a big system which determines the individual. The system is understood as a sort of living organism, sometimes including nature. Persons described as autonomous or mutual identities—level IIIa and b—run into conflict with the pure functioning demanded of them as elements of the system. Examples include the following:

> *Family–job dilemma:* [Women] still have the responsibility of home but now they also have the responsibilities of work. That's really a problem of transition. They let women go out to the workforce but they haven't really said: OK, you don't need to work at home. The women have two jobs or three jobs compared to the men's one. [Where does the problem come from?] Well, I'd say it's definitely society, a society-created thing, where women have been designated by the more male-dominated society and you're

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supposed to stay in the home and deal with the children, and some people relate it to the industrial revolution and things like that occurred. . . . I'd say that it became a more economic necessity for women to be working as well. That, for women, it became a kind of self-esteem or psychologically it became a necessity. My mom, when I was growing up, she went to college . . . and then looking back right now it seemed to be a necessity for herself to maintain sanity . . . and if she hadn't done that she would really would have gone to some kind of almost loony, just sitting in her home dealing with the kids and be with the kids all the time. . . . I guess that's where I get it from. (Female, 22, university, Berkeley, USA)

Action Theory

This includes understanding of the functioning of big systems. Action can no longer be described as a simple chain of cause and effect but works in a systemic way and is not predictable in its effect upon the system. Responsibility is extended to the whole system (society, world community); it is morally demanded, even though the outcome of an action remains uncertain. Examples include the following:

Family–job dilemma: I believe there is a system . . . but it's not well defined . . . I am sure, an economist could make up this, how it works. . . . There are so many different variables to take into consideration that this system is not all that well defined. There are so many strains hanging on this system that can happen, so many tensions, and so on and so forth. (Male, 20, university, New Brunswick, USA)

Career dilemma: It is impossible that a single person can give the flow of society another direction. In a river a single stone can hardly influence the flow of the river. But some hundred stones together can change the direction of a small stream. Therefore, I believe that it is important that like-minded people act together. (Female, 25, university, Korea)

Level of Thought: Objective Dialectical Thinking

Conflicts and contradictions exist in the view of subjects independent of the specific person. They are culturally and/or societally produced and result from the historical development of a society. Examples include the following:

Family–job dilemma: When people started telling women that you can have it all. You can have this career and of course you could be a mother because you're a wife and women started doing it and men started saying: Yeah, that's great, I love all these powerful women and those intelligent women and we can have kids . . . it's great . . . people stopped to think . . . they only thought about the positives . . . but no one stopped to consider the emotional side of it, what you are giving up by doing that, the decisions that are going to be made they aren't so easy. . . . I think we are living in a big contradiction . . . what's really expected underneath the people, men and women, and

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what everybody is telling them what they can do is possible, you know in the media. When it comes right down to it, a lot of that is just not possible. I think we are still living in the framework of an older type society. (Female, 24, university, Berkeley, USA)

Career dilemma: The life of every individual has a specific problem, especially with regard to the environment. Sometimes a way of life does not fit society or is even in contrast to the will of society, which means that society is ignored by the individual. . . . It is a typical human problem because every individual has his/her own desires, it brings up conflicts with others. . . . [Does the problem come from society?] Yes, it does, because sometimes what the individual wants does not fit what is requested by society. [Can you imagine a society without those conflicts?] It is not possible because everybody has his/her own desires. (Male, 24, university, Indonesia)

While the first subject focuses on a contradiction within the society and its impact on individual development, the second subject picks out the contradiction between individual and society as an essential point.

In conclusion, the idealized logic of level IV can be derived from the relation between individual and society/culture as a big system. Personality theory considers the contradiction between individual goals and societal demands, social theory explains the functioning of individuals in a big system, and action theory emphasizes the systemic role of action and the working of the system as a whole. Relations between persons become 'universal' (Parsons, 1949).

Statistical Overview

The examples given above are, with few exceptions, composed of statements of one subject from western culture and one subject from an eastern culture. Although remarkable differences between both groups exist, the general structure of each level can be recognized.

Table 1 presents the distribution of the three highest levels in the United States, Indonesia, Japan and Korea, demonstrating that the levels are shared between subjects of each of the four cultures. While Indonesian subjects all surpass level IIIa but reach only the transitional

Table 1. Distribution of levels of conceptualization of human nature in four different countries (family–job dilemma).

Country	Level			
	IIa, IIIa–b	IIIb	IIIb–IV, IV	Total
USA	16	56	36	108
Korea	22	44	47	113
Japan	21	18	11	50
Indonesia	29	25	17	71

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level of IIIb–IV, subjects from the United States and from Korea show a broad range of levels ranging from IIIa to IV. The Korean sample shows a remarkably high percentage of level IV constructions. Females in Japan and Korea scored higher than males ($p < .05$).

Discussion

If one compares the verbal descriptions and arguments of the subjects described here with subjects of low education, for example with subjects from a tea plantation in Java, the latter more frequently use concrete descriptions and fail to present more abstract concepts and to portray a more general picture of human being. It is more difficult to classify them according to the construction levels described here. Nevertheless, we also found examples of level IIIa with each subject and of IIIb with a substantial proportion of subjects. Since the universal levels of construction suggested here are more clearly found in subjects of higher education, education might be an important homogenizing factor in quite different cultural groups. This assumption is supported by many cross-cultural studies on cognitive development (Luria, 1976; Olson, 1986; Scribner & Cole, 1973; Sharp, Cole, & Lave, 1979). All authors agree that school education provides a qualitatively new level of information processing, especially formal logical thinking (Dasen, 1977; Scribner, 1979; Tulviste, 1979) and the usage of abstract concepts. School education also shapes a new type of memory, the semantic memory (Tulving, 1972). In this kind of memory material is ordered according to decontextualized logical and/or scientific principles. Therefore school education provides a substantial body of tools for the construction of the concept of human nature at levels with increasing complexity and deep structure. However, school does not provide the concepts of human nature itself. It is the individual who constructs his or her conception according to his or her specific experience and to his or her level of reflexivity. Thus, individuals learn in school how to use abstract concepts and reflexive thought in a logical and decontextualized manner. They also may acquire some knowledge about the position of people in society, but school never determines the whole structural level as it is hypothetically proposed in this theoretical framework. Individual differences in the level of construction demonstrate that individuals with similar and equal education do not reach the same final level.

From a very general point of view, higher levels of construction can be gained through the experience of conflicts and contradictions (Piaget, 1977a; Riegel, 1980). Contradictions provide disequilibrium and tension. If cultural environment in general and specific individuals

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mediate contradiction and simultaneously provide the opportunity to reflect about those discrepancies, the construction of higher-order levels is stimulated. This assumption would explain, among other things, the superiority of female students in Japan and Korea, who score significantly higher than Japanese and Korean male students and US female students. Japanese and Korean females experience more than their male colleagues the discrepancy between modern and traditional life, between traditional female roles and the opportunities of highly educated women with regard to occupation and social status. As one subject states: 'Nowadays women are generally encouraged to take a job. But inside the family it is not simple to balance household responsibilities and a job. Women nowadays are overworked.'

Results II: Culture as Shaping Force upon the Structural Levels: Collectivism vs Individualism

An Integrative Approach

Triandis (1989) distinguishes three dimensions of culture from which we take the distinction between individualistic and collectivistic culture which is most commonly used in literature. In individualistic cultures priority is given to personal goals over the goals of collectives. In collectivistic cultures there is either no distinction between personal and collective goals or personal goals are subordinated to collective goals. In collectivistic cultures individuals are concerned about the result of their actions on members of their ingroup, tend to share resources with ingroup members, feel interdependent with ingroup members, and feel involved in the lives of ingroup members (p. 509).

According to Triandis (1989), identity is strongly determined by the type of culture. Individualistic cultures emphasize 'elements of identity that reflect possessions—what do I own, what experiences have I had, what are my accomplishments' (p. 515). In collectivistic cultures identity is defined instead through relations such as the member of a specific family, the resident of a specific place, and the brother of person X. Triandis discerns between three forms of self: the collective, the public and the private. The first two forms are more pronounced in collectivistic cultures, the latter one is emphasized in individualistic cultures.

Markus and Kitayama (1991), also pursuing the idea of a fundamental relationship between culture and identity, prefer the distinction of independent and interdependent self as construals of the self and of others. In western cultures, there is predominantly a view of the

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self as an independent, separate and distinct person. Geertz's (1975) well-known definition of this construal views the person as 'a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgement, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against social and natural background' (p. 48). The interdependent self is a prevailing construal in non-western cultures. This construal is characterized by a fundamental connectedness of persons to each other. The interdependent self is viewed not as separated from the social context but as more connected and less differentiated from others than the independent self.

There are two theoretical aspects that are not considered in the approaches of Triandis and Markus and Kitayama as well as of other authors. The first concerns the universal component of the self. It is only briefly mentioned in Markus and Kitayama's (1991) article and in Triandis's approach. The latter author tries to solve this problem by attributing different weights to the collective, public and private self (e.g. Triandis, 1989, p. 517). However, a different mixture in the composition of self components is not sufficient for universal constituents in culturally different construals of the self. A second missing aspect, which has already been addressed in the introduction, is the developmental perspective. Different construals are to be found in different cultures, but no assumptions are made about the variety or the complexity of the structures produced, even less so about the genesis of those construals.

One can combine the theoretical line of different universal constructive levels—which are developmental in nature—and the theoretical view of two different selves (or identities) dependent on collectivistic vs individualistic cultures to produce a theoretically more satisfying system. Figure 1 presents this integrative view. In both individualistic and collectivistic cultures there is a development of levels of conceptualization of human nature with increasing complexity and depth of structures, ranging from the simple construction of human beings as actors to the construal of human beings as a societal identity (comprising all lower forms of identity). This development is assumed to be universal because of cognitive processes and of basic experiences common to the human species (vertical line). At the same time, culture shapes the individual's constructions from the very beginning. In collectivistic cultures we expect to find concepts of human nature that are oriented more towards an interdependent self, in individualistic cultures we expect concepts of human nature that describe human beings predominantly as independent selves.
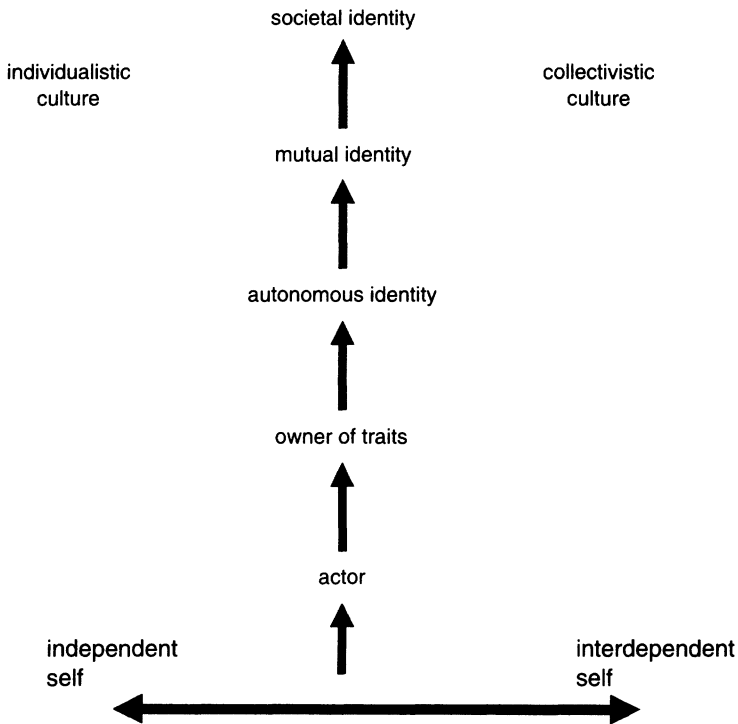
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Figure 1. An integrative model of universal stages and culture-specific patterns.

In the following, some of the most important distinctive features of the cultures under consideration are presented and related to this integrative approach.

Autonomous Identity in Collectivistic Cultures

Autonomy
From the description of collective self (Triandis, 1989) and interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) one would expect autonomy to play a minor role in the conception of human being amongst members of eastern cultures. Identity or self is defined through the relationship to others, the awareness of oneself as determined by obligations and duties towards others and/or towards society as a whole. However, all subjects investigated in Indonesia, Korea and Japan described human beings ('adults') as autonomous. Autonomy was verbally expressed as being independent, having one's own opinion, deciding independently and having economic independence.

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In the career dilemma, subjects insisted on the autonomous decision of the protagonists, ascribing to them the right of independent determination of their life-style. The overwhelming emphasis on autonomy confirms the existence of level IIIa in all eastern cultures under investigation. However, autonomy is not primarily a goal of self-realization as in western cultures, but rather a goal of taking responsibility and maintaining collective life. Every subject tested used the term 'responsibility' to characterize the autonomous personality. While American subjects used responsibility mainly with regard to the consequences of one's own action for oneself, subjects of Asian cultures understood responsibility also as the duty to care for others. Examples include the following:

> *Adulthood interview:* An adult must know/understand himself and his environment. He can compare between good things and bad things. He must be competent and more capable of establishing social relations than immature people [*dewasa* = adult, mature). (Male, 21, university, Indonesia)

> *Adulthood interview:* The ideal self should always be positive, happy, useful to others. (Female, 24, college, Japan)

> *Adulthood interview:* To think of others, consider, respect others, be considerate, behave according to others' needs—not to hurt others, to respect others' opinion, not to burden one's children with one's sorrows—to think of others first and treat one's own wishes as secondary, not to give trouble to others—being accepted by people, able to enter relationships—through relationship with others you learn what is acceptable—think of others' feelings, if I do what I want it will give trouble to others—express myself, but not too much: there is a limit when the other feels bad—to give rise to unpleasant feelings in others is childish—think from the other person's viewpoint . . . think about the other person's situation. (Different female subjects, college, Japan)

While these statements fit very well the assumption of psychologists and anthropologists about Japanese identity, our Japanese subjects also produced statements about autonomous identity that contradict Japanese tradition. Examples include the following:

> I want to be a person who can express my opinion frankly—be myself—to have one's own belief . . . express one's own opinion—emphasizing my own opinion—goal: to become extrovert, to speak to various people frankly—to present my own ideas—I want to assert myself—adults should decide many things by themselves. (Different female subjects, college, Japan)

Subjects seem to mirror the conflicting values of western and Japanese culture. On the whole, autonomy as a precondition for self-realization and autonomy as a basis for maintaining social life were not

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mutually exclusive. Rather, they gained different weights in different cultures. Content analysis of the data revealed the following rank order:

- High value of autonomy as a means for self-realization: USA
- Balanced weight of self-realization and social   Japan and
  responsibility: Korea
- High value of autonomy mainly as a means for social
  responsibility: Indonesia

Control

A second important criterion of autonomous identity is control. Control is conceived in theories of western psychology as perceived contingency between action and outcome (e.g. Rotter, 1966; Seligman, 1975). Rothbaum, Weisz and Snyder (1982) criticized the control concept as one-sided and introduced the distinction between primary and secondary control conceiving both forms of control as a two-process model:

> The first process involves attempts to change the world so that it fits the self's needs. When this process is salient, we use the expression *primary control*. . . . A second process attempts to fit in with the world and to 'flow with the current'. We refer to this process as secondary, and when it is salient, we employ the expression *secondary control*. (p. 8)

In primary control, individuals enhance their rewards by influencing existing realities such as other people, situations or objects. In secondary control, persons enhance their rewards by adaptation to existing realities. Rothbaum et al. (1982) list four types of control, predictive, illusory, vicarious and interpretative, and give examples of each type for primary and secondary processes. Weisz, Rothbaum and Blackburn (1984) applied this approach to processes of control in the United States and Japan, claiming that secondary control is much more prevalent in Japan and in other eastern cultures than in the United States, where primary control is emphasized. Commenting on this paper by Weisz et al., Azuma (1984) and Kojima (1984) question the distinction as a western view and give examples which show that what is called secondary control covers a rather broad variety of strategies and values in Japanese society. In the following, we maintain the distinction between primary and secondary control but describe forms of secondary control without using Rothbaum et al.'s four-part division, because an additional subordering under a specific form of control may obscure the meaning of the subjects' statements.

Content analysis of our results revealed beliefs of primary control in all cultures under investigation, but a clear predominance of this form

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of control with American subjects. Two examples may illustrate the typical American view.

> I am a firm believer that as a person you can do anything you want, if you have the motivation, confidence and desire ... people can change things for themselves. (Male, 19, university , Knoxville, USA)

> It's your own decision how far you'll go ... you can control your own destiny. (Male, 23, university, Berkeley, USA)

This understanding of control is not taken for granted in eastern cultures. There we often found a form of secondary control. Secondary control is connected to interdependent rather than to independent identity. The view of human being as embedded in a social context and as related to other persons demands a different type of control. First, control of one's emotion and motivation is necessary in order to avoid harming others. Second, collectivistic cultures demand adaptation and interdependence where individual goals cannot be directly realized. Therefore, enhancement of personal rewards by accommodation becomes an important means of maintaining control for the interdependent identity. The first point, emotional and motivational self-control, is emphasized by Markus and Kitayama (1991); the second point, accommodation to reality as it is, is elaborated by Rothbaum et al. (1982).

Among Japanese subjects, emotional and motivational self-control were expressed among others by four terms: *teineina, gaman, nintai* and *tatemae*. *Teineina* means polite behaviour, keeping interpersonal relations in harmony; *gaman* and *nintai* mean being patient; and *tatemae* is a typical virtue of traditional Japan—it means not showing one's feelings, but behaving in the expected manner. While Japanese subjects accept and favour *teineina* and *nintai*, higher-educated individuals often criticize *tatemae*, and even if they practise it, they reject this behaviour as wrong.

In Korea subjects used the term *núgút hada*, which means calmness and refers to a state of a person which can be reached through emotional control but also through avoiding a one-sided life-style. In Java, Indonesia, a desirable state of a person is *rasa tenteram* (smooth and balanced emotions). Thus, self-control and self-monitoring is not an end in itself, it serves two main goals: (a) harmony of social relations; and (b) personal stability and happiness. Subjects' description of control is obviously shaped by cultural knowledge. However, individual constructions are never mere cultural stereotypes but show adaptive constructive activity in order to cope with the new demands of modern life. If one attempts to rank the three eastern societies

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included in our study according to the salience of emotional control and self-control, Indonesian subjects describe this form of control most frequently (*c.* 80%), followed by Japanese (*c.* 50%) and Korean subjects (*c.* 30%).

Some examples may illustrate the issue of emotional and motivational self-control:

> . . . do not become emotional, talk logically—do not express one's bad feelings, because it has a bad influence over others—trying to be positive—become positive—ideal self: always positive, happy, useful to others—to suppress one's own wishes—control one's feelings, will, selfishness—do not go staight ahead. (Male and female university students, Japan)

> Even if something makes him angry, he should perform that task controlling his anger. (Male, 20, university, Japan)

> . . . to be able to control oneself in a good way. (Female, 23, university, Indonesia)

> . . . to control one's own emotions. (Male, 22, university, Indonesia)

In Indonesia, we found a combination of primary and secondary control which seems to stem from traditional Javanese culture. The subjects suggest that one should strive for one's own goals as hard as possible (primary control), but when one fails to reach one's goals, one should 'give in'. For this form of adaptation the word *pasrah* is used. *Pasrah* is a Javanese virtue; it offers a way out of a failure (Mulder, 1992). When a person fails, he/she can comfort him/herself by surrendering to his/her destiny. *Pasrah* may provide a protection against learned helplessness *sensu* Seligman (1975). For example:

> Yes, we try to be what we want to be. We keep trying. But when the result is not what we expect to be, then we must give in [*pasrah*]. (Male, 22, university, Indonesia)

Another Javanese form of secondary control within this context is *narimo*. It means knowing one's place, trusting in one's fate and being grateful to God. In some situations, *narimo* becomes a mechanism that can reduce frustration and anxiety (Mulder, 1992).

In Indonesia, religion in general seems to be very influential as a kind of secondary control. In the adulthood interview for Indonesians a conflict between child and parents was introduced where the parents demand another occupation for the child than he/she has chosen. The following statements demonstrate the utilizing of secondary control:

> Maybe the parents' choice is better, because they have more experience. In the end I agree with that, although there is a little bit of contradiction. As a Muslim I will pray to seek guidance from God, then I make my decision. If

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> there is no other way, that means that God gives the frustration as a test. (Male, 19, university, Indonesia)

An unavoidable event is religiously interpreted as God's will and as a test. Religion also has another, more general impact on the understanding of control in Indonesia. It guides the individual and supports self-control, especially the accomplishment of morally demanded goals. Examples include the following:

> The most important thing is that religion can control us. In controlling ourselves a religion has greater influence than law. (Male, 24, university, Indonesia)

> We have to live in accordance with what the religion tells us to do. So we really reflect our religion in our daily life. (Female, 20, university, Indonesia)

Religion as a necessary kind of external control was expressed by 56 per cent of the Indonesian subjects. On the one hand, religion controls the individual from outside through religious norms; on the other hand, religion has become a system of internal control because the mature adult is described as having internalized religious values. Therefore, this form of control cannot be labelled as secondary; rather, it is a combination of internal and external control.

In accordance with results presented by Weisz et al. (1984) and Markus and Kitayama (1991), we found secondary control as emotional and motivational self-control in each of the three eastern cultures. However, secondary control as alignment to reality was explicitly described only by Indonesian subjects.

Social Theory: An Interdependent Version

As already described, we expect the construals of interdependent and independent self to be elaborated at different levels of complexity within the domain of social theory. The interdependent self seems to be closely related only to level IIIb (mutual identity). However, it will be shown that the construction of interdependency occurs at differing levels of complexity. In the following, we first present results for the construals of interdependent self at the level of autonomous identity. Afterwards, results at the level of mutual identity are described.

Interdependent Self at Level IIIa (Autonomous Identity)

As described earlier, the social theory at level IIIa (autonomous identity) emphasizes the person's right to live his/her own way of life. Persons have to find out 'who they are' and then to use their competences and efforts towards the realization of their personality

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(self-realization). Social relations at this level are based on tolerance and the avoidance of interference in the life of others. This conception seems to be incompatible with a collective perspective and an interdependent self, respectively, where every action is planned in harmony with the significant group. However, both interdependent orientation and acceptance of individual autonomy go together, as can be demonstrated by the following examples.

> *Adulthood interview:* He/she lives independently and has his/her own opinion so that he/she cannot be influenced by others and can hold his/her own way. . . . But he/she is also able to listen to others and is good in expressing him/herself to others. (Female, 20, college, Japan)

> *Adulthood interview:* An adult who . . . has his/her own belief and can express his/her own opinion and can think of others, takes care for others. (Female, 24, college, Japan)

> *Adulthood interview:* The adult person is someone who already can determine his own decision. He must know what he wants to do and can choose what is best for him . . . . As an adult person, he must learn his own potential and develop it in the environment. [In what way?] He integrates the needs of the environment and his own needs. [What do you mean by 'integrate'?] The integration of his performance and expectation of the environment. (Male, 20, university, Indonesia)

These examples emphasize both individual autonomy, which is valid for all adult subjects, and interdependent orientation (collectivistic view). At level IIIa, this orientation is always conceptualized not only as behaviour (this would be labelled as level II) but also as competence. A mature person has acquired the knowledge and social competence to be able to take the perspective of others, to cooperate and be of help. Japanese subjects, in particular, stress social competence as a crucial feature of mature adulthood. With regard to the weights accorded to the individualistic and collectivistic view, the rank order of the cultures under investigation is different. Subjects from the United States show the most individualistic view of social theory, followed by Korean subjects. Indonesian subjects clearly accentuate a more collectivistic view, but Japanese subjects express the most elaborated concept of interdependency, while still including the aspect of not interfering and of tolerating others' way of life.

Interdependent View at Level IIIb (Mutual Identity)
As illustrated earlier, the social theory of level IIIb is not identical with a collectivistic view and an interdependent orientation, respectively. The latter can be understood and conceptualized at different levels. At the construction level of mutual identity, interdependency is under-

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stood as the exchange between autonomous identities. This can be illustrated by the following examples:

> *Adulthood interview:* If we do something good, but nobody tells us about it, we don't know whether our action is good or not. But if somebody tells us, it will motivate us, and we know what the other's expectation is, so we will do it again. That also means that friends help us to develop ourselves. (Female, 24, university, Indonesia)

> *Parent–child dilemma (see p. 37):* There must be a dialogue between parents and child, there must also be understanding from the parents that, from the child's perspective, his/her decision is the best choice. On the other hand, the child should try to understand the parents' point of view, because our eastern norm tells us this way. The best solution is: there must be an open dialogue and mutual understanding. (Female, 25, university, Indonesia)

The first example holds a view of moral judgement that is dependent upon the judgement of others. From a western point of view, this looks like a heteronomous morality (Piaget, 1977b). However, in collectivistic cultures moral judgement and moral behaviour receive their validity from the collective rather than from the individual (see, e.g., Befu, 1971; Benedict, 1946; Lebra & Lebra, 1974). On the one hand, the second case demonstrates a good example of mutuality. On the other hand, the collective bond to the parents based on strong social norms determines to a high degree the arguments of the subjects.

Both examples also demonstrate that the term 'interdependent self' fits these descriptions better than the notion of 'collective self' because the interdependence between only two or three significant persons is the basis of arguing. This is also true for the following Japanese examples.

> *Adulthood interview:* The person who can think from another person's viewpoint ... who can also think about the other person's situation ... or who knows, if he/she were the other person, how he/she would act. I think that kind of thing is most important ... and next, the person who knows the limits of his/her abilities. ... The person who can judge things calmly, or who can judge things without selfish thinking ... the person who knows the way to communicate. (Female, 24, college, Japan)

> *Family–job dilemma:* I think when I am happy, my family is happy too. And if my family is not happy, I don't think I can be happy alone. (Male, 25, university, Japan)

The first example is a more general statement about the abilities necessary for mutuality (IIIb) in combination with interdependence (judging without selfish thinking, knowing the way for communication).

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Accomplishment and Maintenance of Harmony

In eastern cultures the concept of harmony plays an important role in the regulation of social life. Harmony becomes an essential feature of interdependent self in eastern societies. One main goal of social activity is to maintain/harmonious relations. This demands empathy and the anticipation of possible conflicts. Social competences have to be effectively used in order to maintain harmony and social balance. In Indonesia (Java) this value is well known as the *rukun* principle (Magnis-Suseno, 1981). Javanese people try to achieve the situation of harmony or *rukun*, because harmony in the external world is important for the internal psychological state, especially the feeling of calmness (*rasa tenteram*) and the feeling of quiet contentment (*ayem*). There is an expression in Javanese culture that individuals should *'ngeli neng ora keli'*. *Ngeli* means going with the social flow, *ora keli* means that while drifting with the social flow, one should keep one's principles. The ultimate aim of this advice is to harmonize social demands and personal goals. '*Rukun* does not come as a gift but is the result of the active orientation toward mutual respect and adjustment to each other' (Mulder, 1992). The interview data do not reveal an explicit use of *rukun* nor of *ngeli*. Rather, subjects posit statements about competences and behaviour that should not hurt others. The following examples illustrate that the *rukun* principle is more implicit in the treatment of conflicts rather than explicitly used:

> *Career dilemma (favouring the teacher in a village against the banker in a big city):* Those who live in the village and those who live in the city are different in their principles. . . . People who live in the village are kind and modest. They do not merely think of material things. (Female, 23, lower education, Indonesia)

> *Career dilemma (favouring the teacher):* Also N [teacher] does not have much money, she has her inner satisfaction. She is satisfied because she can give something. . . . Her primary goal is to dedicate herself to her village. (Female, 21, university, Indonesia)

In Korea, harmony (*johwa*) is a central value to be found in Buddhism as well as in Confucianism. While Buddhism strives for inner harmony, a goal which can be achieved through meditation and enlightenment, Confucianism emphasizes inter-individual harmony, which can be realized through the virtues of Confucian ethics (Mooney, 1989; Yoon, 1990). Contrary to Indonesian subjects, Koreans expressed harmony explicitly as a regulating principle for conflict resolution.

> *Career dilemma:* It is true, that we have different life-styles, but this need not

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> to raise conflicts. The different life-styles should be controlled for harmony and (then) be accepted. (Male, 23, university, Korea)
>
> *Career dilemma:* For me Jung-Seong [the artist] is better. His family and his job are in harmony with each other. (Male, 23, university, Korea)
>
> *Family–job dilemma:* Those problems exist in every society. But one tries to solve those problems in harmony and to find a balance. (Female, 21, university, Korea)
>
> *Family–job dilemma:* She suppresses her own thoughts. She wants to live in harmony with her family. (Female, 25, university, Korea)

These examples also show that harmony can be conceptualized at different levels of complexity. Whereas the last example tends to mirror level IIIa or an even lower level, the penultimate example is closer to level IIIb.

The ethnotheory of the Japanese, no less influenced by Buddhism and Confucianism than that of the Koreans, should also be strongly influenced by the principle of harmony (Morrow, 1983; Seagoe & Murakami, 1961; Ueda, 1974). In practice, subjects used this principle more implicitly. The main focus of description of social relations centred on the acquisition of empathy and social competence that guarantee that others are not embarrassed or hurt through one's own behaviour (*kizuzukenei*). They also mentioned the word *hanashiai*, which means to talk with others, to avoid antagonism, not to communicate bad feelings, being flexible and empathetic. Please note that those typical traditional expressions were more frequently used by lower-educated subjects (i.e. non-university students).

It is noteworthy, with the exception of the Mormon Sample, US subjects did not show a similar tendency towards harmony, but instead either looked for a one-sided solution when presented with the dilemmas or elaborated the conflict using dialectical thinking.

Awareness and Treatment of Conflicts
The methodology of measuring the concept of human being introduced dilemmas and conflicts in the dilemma stories as well as in the whole interviews (adulthood interview, discussion following the presentation of the dilemma stories). As a result of confrontation with contradictions, the subject should be stimulated to search for arguments and to think more carefully about the issue of human nature.

As already described, a remarkable proportion of the subjects used dialectical thought. Descriptions and arguments are classified as dialectical thought if subjects (a) recognize that the opposite positions exist in their own right and cannot be reduced to one alternative only,

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(b) demonstrate the use of thinking operations to deal with those conflicts that are logically not reducible (e.g. by elaboration of the contradiction and by recognizing that a solution will produce new contradictions), and (c) present dialectical solutions which result in a compromise (lower level) or a synthesis (higher level).

Awareness of contradictions and attempts to find dialectical solutions were found not only with American but also with Asian subjects. One Japanese example has already been presented (see level IIIb, p. 21). Korean subjects are specifically sensitive towards contradictions at level IV (societal identity). Thus, causes of confusion are seen in the contradiction between traditional and modern culture:

> *Career dilemma:* It is due to the increasing complexity of modern society. In the past, we had a simple societal structure and a simple value system, so our way of thinking was also very simple. But nowadays we have come to know various social systems, for example democratic, communistic ... and various value systems and perspectives. We cannot say this or that is the absolutely right path. So we get confused when we make a decision. (Female, 22, university, Korea)

Many Korean subjects present societal reasons for the existence of contradictions:

> *Family–job dilemma:* This is a societal problem. It lays in basic contradictions, unbalanced development of educational environment, social and economic conditions in provincial areas. (Female, 24, university, Korea)

Besides these more universal treatments of contradiction as predicted from the theory of general structural levels, there exist culture-specific sensitivity towards some contradictions. Two of them are selected and described below: the parent–child conflict in Indonesia and the adulthood–childhood conflict in Japan.

Parent–Child Conflict (Indonesia)

In Indonesia, there is often a conflict between the child's occupational choice and the parents' wish for their child's occupation. This conflict is much stronger than in western societies because 'honouring the name of one's parents' and parents' authority are social norms deeply rooted in Indonesian (Javanese) culture (Magnis-Suseno, 1981; Mulder, 1992). Therefore, this conflict was posed as a dilemma within the adulthood interview for the Indonesian samples. Content analysis revealed six patterns, for each of which an example is given.

• Pattern I: Own autonomous decision—not obeying parents.

> In my opinion, studying and achieving my ideal for future life is not dedicated to my parents but is for my own sake. Part of it may be for my

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parents, but most of it is for myself, my own family and probably for my children. Therefore, I don't think that I should follow my parents' desire. (Male, 23, university, Batak, Indonesia)

• Pattern II: The child obeys but is not happy with this decision.

First, she should try as hard as she can to explain it to her parents. If it doesn't work she can ask for help from her aunt. But if the parents stick to what they want, well, since they are her parents, she has to obey. She will be disappointed because she cannot realize her potentials. (Male, 20, university, Sundanese, Indonesia)

• Pattern III: The child obeys and emphasizes the positive aspects.

Maybe he will try hard to study medicine [parents' desire], because he loves his parents very much. That's alright. ... But it depends on the personality. If the child is a follower like me, he could try it. Maybe that's why I'll study medicine even though I was angry at first. But I can think it over, and I can see the positive side in the future. Maybe it's all happening because my parents love me, and as time goes by, I can accept it. (Male, 25, university, Javanese, Indonesia)

• Pattern IV: Focus on dialogue with the parents. If the parents insist, the child should try to obey.

If he doesn't like it, it will be useless. So it's better if the child has a dialogue with his parents. And if there are no bad consequences, we must choose our own will. But if the parents stick to their opinion and it means he must face bad consequences, I think it's better to obey the parents. But in the meantime he must always try to convince his parents [continuous dialogue]. (Female, 21, university, Javanese, Indonesia)

• Pattern V: Focus on dialogue with the parents on the basis of mutual understanding. Goal: to convince the parents.

In this dialogue the child should convince the parents that his own choice is the best, but he also must try to understand his parents' intention. We must express our arguments politely, and I ... am sure one of them, the father or the mother, will support us. (Male, 24, university, Sundanese, Indonesia)

• Pattern VI: Dialogue between child and parents. The outcome is not the most important issue but mutual respect and responsibility for one's own decision.

Yes, they must try to discuss it with the parents to look for the meeting point. They have to try various ways. . . . But the child must keep a good relationship with the parents. The most important thing is that the child is responsible for his/her choice and always honours the parents. (Female, 23, Javanese, Indonesia)

Pattern I neglects the strong social norm of obeying and honouring one's parents. Thus, from the background of Indonesian (Javanese)

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culture, this pattern offers a one-sided solution. Patterns II and III emphasize obedience and neglect one's own autonomy. Pattern IV accentuates the dialogue, which should continue even if the child obeys his/her parents' will. In fact, in Indonesia many students study the major their parents wanted, but after the exam they take their own choice of major, thus realizing both the parents' will and their own goal. Pattern V is already a dialectical solution since it combines personal autonomy with the social norm of obeying and honouring one's parents. Finally, pattern VI elaborates most clearly the contradiction between personal autonomy and the value of honouring one's parents. The resolution itself becomes a minor issue.

The six patterns can be classified into individualistic (independent self) and collectivistic orientation (interdependent self). Whereas only the first pattern reflects the independent self, all other patterns are oriented towards the interdependent self. In order to check whether the different cultural groups included in the study show the same distribution, the patterns were counted separately for each cultural group. Since the interdependent self and traditional relations towards parents are most pronounced in Javanese culture, patterns II to VI should be more frequently observed with subjects who have lived from birth in Java. This assumption was confirmed. Minang and Batak subjects more often produced pattern I, whereas Sundanese and Javanese subjects more frequently showed patterns II to VI ($\chi^2 = 4.88; p = .05$).

Japan: A General Conflict and a Specific Problem
In the adulthood interview all Japanese subjects described adults by means of two main criteria: autonomy and relatedness. Whereas autonomy, besides economic independence, is often characterized as having one's own opinion, relatedness was described by being able (a) to listen to and to learn from others' opinion and (b) to maintain or develop an own view and to express it to others. A total of 34 per cent of the subjects did not perceive both tendencies, independence and relatedness, as contradictory or conflicting but emphasized both traits as belonging together, one following from the other. As one subject stated:

> ... as we get old, we learn common sense [*joshiki*], we meet many difficulties such as human relationships, and we are worried by problems and solve them through the process of knowing ourselves. [Why is it important to know ourselves?] When we have relations with others, we will hurt others if we don't know ourselves.

The relation between self-recognition and relatedness was also seen by the same subject the other way around:

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When we are young [children], we do not know how others think of us, but through getting into relations with other people we will gradually get to know ourselves, such as our way of thinking and our personality. (Male, 24, university, Japan)

A total of 66 per cent of the subjects, however, expressed in one way or another conflicts between autonomy and relatedness. The more traditional view combined self-control and suppression of one's own desires as a culture-specific form of autonomy with relatedness:

So adults suppress their individual wishes and use behavioural criteria that are closer to common sense. (Female, 21, college, Japan)

Becoming adult is generally viewed as a difficult task because adulthood demands both autonomy and relatedness. To develop and express one's own opinion or goal and simultaneously accept the opinions and goals of others means to find compromises between conflicting viewpoints. Many subjects see those compromises as an expedient. Often, subjects first claim the priority of social duties and of 'common sense' (*joshiki*) and later insist on the ability to impose one's own will.

I believe adults should be ... those who can explain their opinion logically and persuade others, those who can achieve their purposes easily and fast. (Female, 20, Japan)

As already mentioned, *tatemae* is criticized, leading to a position that questions the reality of Japanese social virtues:

... children behave by giving their own feeling priority ... on the surface adults behave as if thinking of others, but in their deep feelings in fact they only think of themselves. So they give more priority to their own feelings than children, but they know how to conceal it. . . . Adults can protect themselves by using *tatemae*. In this sense they can care for themselves. Children cannot do this. (Male, 25, university, Japan)

As a consequence, some Japanese subjects seem to experience a conflict between the status of childhood and that of adulthood. Adulthood is not only perceived as a desirable goal but also characterized as the loss of childhood. Becoming an adult means to lose the positive sides of childhood. Adulthood is full of restrictions and constraints. The loss of childhood means a loss of human nature. Subjects quote Shunsuke Ashizawa's *Modern Violation of Children* and J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* as testimonies of their opinion. The following examples show this conflict in an impressive way.

It's nothing wrong to stay as a child: [there's the Peter Pan Syndrome and a book called *For People Who Want to Stay a Child Forever*]. As an adult you tend

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to take action after figuring if it would benefit you or what you would gain from it, when you do something for money not because you like to do it.

[Adulthood means] good understanding, being flexible and following the general rules set by the society. The more you grow as an adult, the smaller your own private fantasy world becomes. . . . You become softer-minded, better fitted to the society, but you also become less sensitive.

Children are innocent, that is, they don't have any responsibility for their actions. Broken innocence means to care for others [there's a book: Shunsuke Ashizawa, *Modern Violation of Children*]. Any activity, work, family, politics, that takes responsibility on your shoulders is a way of being an adult.

The same subject does not appreciate his own developmental progress:

I regret it. . . . I have learned how the world is anyway. The problem of sex is all dissolved. I mean all is broken. I now can do things against my will or things that I dislike. . . . My real self is now disappearing slowly. . . . I feel in some respects missing the most [of my original personality]. (Male, 23, university, Japan)

Other subjects did not prefer childhood to adulthood but elaborated the conflict between gains and losses on both sides. Childhood is—as demonstrated in the above examples—a status in which autonomy in the sense of realizing one's own wishes and goals can be fulfilled, while adulthood is primarily endowed with relatedness, demanding social duties and responsibilities. The issue, of the adulthood–childhood conflict was not mentioned by subjects of any other culture, while 16 per cent of the Japanese subjects discussed this issue. Therefore, it must be a contradiction predominantly existing in Japanese culture only.

General Discussion

In order to evaluate the selected results described above, we follow the main idea of an interaction between universal developmental levels of construction and the shaping influence of culture upon those constructions from the very beginning of human development. First, evidence of the existence of universal levels of the construction of human nature was provided for the last three levels (autonomous, mutual and societal identity). In analogy to Kohlberg's (1969) stages of moral judgement, we may expect that the higher levels will not be reached by every subject. Gender differences were found in Korea and Japan, with females scoring higher than males. In a more general perspective, this result confirms the assumption about the role of experiencing conflicts between incompatible events or pieces of knowledge for developmen-

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tal progress (Piaget, 1977a; Riegel, 1975). Women in both cultures are confronted with both the traditional view of females and the modern challenge of self-realization in labour and occupation.

Special attention should be drawn to educational differences. It turned out not only that higher-educated subjects produced higher levels, but that lower educated subjects, especially those with a particularly low level of education (like in Indonesia), preferred concrete descriptions over abstract ones (not reported in this article). Since the higher-order levels need the usage of abstract concepts, education might be the crucial variable mediating the results about the universal existence of structural levels. Nevertheless, the constructive activity remains with the subject. He/she reaches dependence on individual life-history and cultural background different levels.

The cultural impact on the individual's construction was analysed from the background of the distinction between the construals of an interdependent self prevailing in collectivistic cultures and of an independent self prevailing in individualistic cultures. We found not only that the interdependent self occurred more frequently in eastern cultures, but also that the construction of an interdependent self occurred at different levels. Conversely, subjects from the United States elaborated forms of an independent self at different levels of construction. Therefore, one can assume that both main conceptualizations of human understanding develop from a very early age from lower to higher levels of comprehension of human nature. These levels can be described as universal structures that follow a developmental logic and represent the constructive power of the individual who combines cultural knowledge with personal experience and universal human cognitive strategies of information processing.

The distinction between eastern and western cultures stressed in this article must be modified by two main results:

1. We also find characteristics of interdependent identity in western cultures. They are often described as 'relatedness' in recent publications (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994).
2. There is a large variation of identity conceptions within and between eastern cultures. In our results, those differences are at least as large as communalities.

Thus far, the search for universal levels of conceptualization of human nature has proved a fruitful approach if one takes the cultural variety of ethnotheories and individual life-histories into account. Universal levels might serve as a *tertium comparationis* in cross-cultural research. However, they presumably will not be found in societies with a low degree of complexity and differentiation.

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Appendix

Interview on the Conception of Adulthood (General version)

The purpose of the interview is to explore the interviewee's expectations and knowledge of adulthood. Since this knowledge widely differs between subjects of different age groups and different subcultures, a completely pre-structured interview is an inadequate method for investigation. A semi-structured interview in which provision and opportunity is made for the interviewee to express his or her thoughts on each issue is more appropriate. Thus, the technique for the interviewer consists of eliciting structured descriptions. The less the interviewer influences such descriptions, the more the interviewee's own ideas will come through.

Nevertheless, the interview must have some structure to ensure that important issues are considered. The following questions should be seen as suggestions for guiding the course of the interview but may have to be adapted to the individual's level of comprehension. The first two issues concentrate on general expectations of becoming an adult (i.e. his or her roles); the last two issues are more related to the individual's private and idiosyncratic (unique) conception of adulthood (i.e. how and what he or she wants to become).

1. General questions about childhood.
(a) How should an adult behave, which abilities/capabilities should he or she have? What is your idea of an adult?
(b) How would you define real adults? How do real adults differ from ideal adults? Why are they as they are?
(c) Can the differences between the ideal and the real adult (between how an adult should behave and how an adult actually does behave) be narrowed down? How? (if the answer is 'no': Why not?)
(d) Many people consider responsibility to be an important criterion of adulthood. What does responsibility mean to you? (If responsibility was already mentioned before, please ask: You already mentioned the concept of responsibility, what do you mean by responsibility?)
(e) Striving for happiness (being happy) is often viewed as the most important goal for human beings. Do you agree? What is happiness and what is being happy in your opinion?
(f) What is the meaning of life in your opinion? Why are we alive?

2. Further explanations about the three leading roles of an adult.
(a) Conceptions about one's professional role
Questions:
What do you think you need to get a job?
Are work and a job really necessary? Are they part of being an adult or not?
(b) Conceptions about one's future family
Questions:
Should an adult have a family of his or her own?
How should he or she behave in his or her family? How far should he or she be involved in it?

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(c) Political role
This is the most difficult part of the interview because younger subjects have fuzzy conceptions about political demands and issues. The question should be directed to several levels of political issues: responsibilities in the community, orientations toward commitment to democratic rights, and interests in government activities. Thus, involvement in public affairs would be the general topic of questions.
Questions:
What about an adult's political role? Does he or she have political tasks? Should he or she engage in political activities?
Should he or she care about public affairs? Should he or she take on responsibilities for the community? Should he or she be engaged in community life? Is it essential for an adult to vote in government elections (the President, Parliament, Congress, etc.)? Should the adult get involved in activities fighting for human rights? Should he or she become active if he or she feels that the government is not doing well? Should he or she feel responsible for what the government is doing?

3. *Questions about one's previous personal development. The subjects are asked to describe the progress of their own development in the last two or three years.*
Questions:
Do you feel that you made some progress in your own development in the last two or three years? In what area did this progress occur? Did it occur without much effort of your own? Were you very concerned about yourself? What kind of personal trouble did you experience as you were trying to develop? How do you feel about your progress?
(If the subject reports that there was no progress: What do you think are the reasons? How do you feel about that?)

4. *Questions about future perspectives. Here one's own unique personality and the related developmental goals are emphasized.*
Questions:
What do you think about your own future in becoming and being an adult? What goals are the most important for you? What kind of personality would you like to develop (are you striving for)? Do you feel yourself close to this goal or far away? Do you think becoming an adult ends in the twenties or does it never end?
These questions should not be asked in every case, although the sequence of questions may vary according to the content which is presented by the interviewee. If the subject delivers information about issues not being asked so far, never use a question which would only repeat the same topic. The least number of questions necessary in order to get the whole information, the clearer becomes the picture of the individual's 'cognitive structure'.
   If the interviewee is taciturn or gives only short answers, you should try to elicit more information.
Questions:
Can you elaborate on this a bit? I didn't understand well enough, can you explain this a little bit more? (If the person says that she or he never had any

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thoughts about the question asked, you may say: Well, would you think about it now?)
Avoid suggestive questions, e.g.:
   The political role of an adult certainly is a crucial one, what do you think about it?
   Surely you want to be a mother. How important is this to you?

Family–job dilemma (Korean version for males)
Mr Han who lives with his family in Seoul is told that his company in Seoul is shutting down and moving to Busan. He is offered a new position in Busan with a higher salary and higher status. He is very interested in the new opportunity and the higher salary would help him to pay off more quickly the high mortgage of the house he has bought. On the other hand, for his family it would be better to stay in Seoul. His wife has a job and the children attend a respected school. If Mr Han moves to Busan on his own, he will only see his family at weekends.

Guidelines for the family–job dilemma
The following questions are ordered according to the sequence in which they should be asked. Note, however, that each subject presents different descriptions and arguments. Thus, the sequence must be adapted to the contents of the subject's answer. If the subject replies spontaneously, it is not necessary to ask the related questions.

1. Start with: Can you describe the problem? What should she (he) do?
2. Is there a solution? What solution would you suggest?
3. If the subject favours one side, give counter-arguments.

Favouring the 'family' side: decrease in income → putting the family at risk: father/mother is angry. Neglecting personal needs → dissatisfaction.

Favouring the 'career' side: communting puts the family at risk, mother/father becomes angry, worn out. Family life is jeopardized.
Moving → giving up established social ties, losing one's home and familiar surroundings.

4. Assuming now he has made his or her decision and chosen one alternative, is the other alternative wrong?
Corresponding question: you prefer this solution (e.g. commuting): Is the other alternative (no job, staying at home) wrong?
5. (If he opted for the career) What kind of person is he? What traits and values does he have?
(If he opted for the family) What kind of person is he? What traits and values does he have?
6. (If the subject does not mention the consequence of a decision, please ask) What are the consequences of this decision?
7. Is this a conflict/contradiction or not? ...
8. (If the subject does not describe reciprocity within the family, please ask) What are the relationships within the family?

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(If the subject lists only concrete activities or chores, please ask) Can you describe this in a more general way?

9. (If the subject does not explicitly describe the conflict within the actor, please ask) Can you imagine that he wants both, family and job, with equal strength? (If 'yes') Why does a person want two incompatible things simultaneously? What kind of person is he in this case? (traits, values etc.)

10. Assuming that he has found a solution, is the problem over now? (solved once and forever) . . .

11. Is this a more general problem or is this a problem for Mr Han? Does this problem exist independently of any single person? . . .

12. Where does the problem come from? . . .
Whose fault is it? . . . Does it actually have to be this way? . . .

13. If you had the power (opportunity), would you change things or leave them as they are? . . .

14. Should the government (society) do something to change the circumstances, or should individuals be free to decide? . . .

15. Can you imagine a society where these problems do not exist?

16. Final question: Is there anything else important that you would still like to say?

General Suggestions

Please encourage the subject as often as necessary: Can you explain this in more detail? . . . What do you mean by '. . .'?

If the subject gives no explanations, please ask 'why-questions'! Examples: Why is it the fault of Mr Han? . . . Why do you prefer this solution?

During the interview the subject will name some central psychological and moral concepts, such as: responsibility, satisfaction, happiness, self-realization, control, commitment, duty, love, etc. Please write those concepts down during the interview and ask when it seems most relevant: You mentioned the concept '. . .', can you explain it in more detail? What do you mean by '. . .'?

Career dilemma (Korean version for females)

Suk-Ja and Yong-Suk are old school friends. They had lost contact with each other for a long time and are both excited about running into each other again. Suk-Ja is a lecturer at the university and works until late evening and often at weekends. She now has a good chance of becoming a professor. Thus, she has little time for pleasure and for social contacts. She is still unmarried. Sometimes, she misses a family but the high prestige she has at work compensates for this. She is satisfied with her life.

Yong-Suk is married and has two children. Like Suk-Ja, she had the opportunity to get a job at the university. But she has decided on her present way of life and only occasionally thinks of the career ambitions she previously had. Now she spends some leisure time on her hobby and lives quite well on money her husband earns. She feels satisfied with her life.

Suk-Ja and Yong-Suk have an animated discussion in which each defends

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her own life-style. However, each of them soon begins to question whether her way is really the right one.

Who has the better arguments, Suk-Ja or Yong-Suk?

Guidelines for the career–(life-style) dilemma

The following questions are ordered according to the sequence in which they should be asked. However, note that each interviewee gives different descriptions and the questions have to be adapted to the individual's presentation. If replies are spontaneous, delete the corresponding question.

1. Start with: Who has the better arguments? What are the positive and negative aspects? ...
2. Can you describe both friends in more detail? What kind of a person is Suk-Ja. Repeat the same question for Yong-Suk.
3. If the subject favours one person, give counter-arguments.
4. Is the whole thing a conflict/contradiction? Where does the conflict/ contradiction lie in your opinion? ...
5. Can you imagine that a person carries these two life-styles within him/ herself, wants to live like both at the same time? ...
6. (In case of a positive answer to the last question) If one finds a solution, is the problem over (solved once and forever)? ...

Choosing Suk-Ja: no husband, no children, few private contacts, little contact with 'real' life, career uncertainty (she can fail to reach a higher position), little leisure time, always looking forward, no time for the present.

Choosing Yong-Suk: She renounced her career, monotony of doing household chores, little contact with the outside world, always children around and little contact with adults, much concern with family members and too little concern with herself (own development, interests), insufficiently future-oriented.

7. Both friends are very different. Do you think that they really can exchange arguments? Can they influence each other at all and thus change their beliefs? Should they do so?
8. Could they change their lives? Could they create another life-style?
9. Is there a general problem behind the differences between Suk-Ja and Yong-Suk? ...
10. If you had the power or opportunity to change things, would you change them or leave them as they are? ...
11. Can you think of a society where those differences (contradictions) do not exist? ...
12. Final question: Is anything else important to you, have we forgotten something that you would still like to say?

General Suggestions

Please see the notes for the family–job dilemma. In the career dilemma, an example of a 'why-question' could be: Why do people wish to experience both life-styles?

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Acknowledgements

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