Abstract Psychology has long struggled with defining constructs while preserving their meaning within a cultural context. Autonomy and relatedness have been construed as a dichotomy, which does not contribute to the understanding of how humans can act autonomously while being attached to one another. It is more fruitful to discuss the constructs in the context of an inclusive relationship in which autonomy and relatedness are proposed to be compatible as they are located on different dimensions: agency and interpersonal distance, respectively. The nuances of the constructs and the dialogical process, which includes the middle ground between the two extremes, are crucial for a complete understanding. The presence of autonomy does not imply or negate the presence of relatedness. Autonomy and relatedness not only can but do synthesize in a variety of forms.

Key Words autonomy, collectivism, individualism, relatedness, unity of opposites

Margaret Luciano
Clark University, USA

Autonomy and Relatedness Reconsidered: Learning from the Inuit

Psychology needs to have a clear understanding of how humans can act autonomously while being attached to one another. McShane and her colleagues' article (McShane, Hastings, Smylie, Prince, & Tungasuvvingat Inuit Family Resource Center, 2009) represents an important contribution to the understanding of the constructs of autonomy and relatedness in the urban Inuit setting. By discussing their findings in light of the autonomy–relatedness framework, it opens the door to a more systemic view of the constructs, while high-lighting the need to ground them in a specific context, reflective of societal values.

The constructs of autonomy and relatedness usually are, but clearly do not need to be, construed as a dichotomy, located at opposite ends of the range of societal parenting dynamics. On one side there would be 'Westernized' societies, which are presented as if they embody individualism, autonomy, and independence; on the other side would be

'Eastern' societies, which would encompass collectivism, relatedness, and interdependence. The idea of conflict between the two constructs (Guisinger & Blatt, 1994) occurs when they are viewed as polar opposites. The proposed mutually exclusive relationship between autonomy and relatedness becomes problematic when they are both posited as being basic needs. Kagitcibasi (2005) proposes an inclusive relationship on a model in which autonomy and relatedness are proposed to be compatible, as they are located on different dimensions: agency and interpersonal distance:

> The two dimensions [autonomy and relatedness] are constructs that are seen to underlie self, self–other relations and social behaviors, and in turn to reflect basic human needs of relatedness and autonomy. One's standing on the inter-personal distance dimension may or may not affect one's standing on the agency dimension ... If these two dimensions are distinct, then it is quite possible to have the different poles each coexist. (Kagitcibasi, 2005, p. 404)

The agency construct ranges from autonomy to heteronomy, with the space between representing the individual's degree of autonomous functioning. Autonomy encompasses volitional choice and psychological independence, whereas heteronomy refers to choices being imposed by others. Interpersonal distance ranges from separation to relatedness, with the space between representing the degree of connection with others in terms of the extent to which self-boundaries are present. Separatedness encompasses indifference, apathy, and neglect, whereas relatedness encompasses attachment, love, and loyalty. Interpersonal distance goes beyond physical proximity to reflect the boundaries one constructs in one's mind to regulate one's interactions with others on the emotional level. Self-boundaries are manifested in the form of restricting behaviors or restricting personal expressions— in a sense restricting access to one's inner domain and thereby limiting the extent to which one can feel connected. Having autonomy and relatedness on different dimensions allows for individuals, as well as societies, to vary on both dimensions.

McShane et al. (2009) highlight the need for further exploration of the notions of autonomy and relatedness. They note that the Inuit communities have been categorized as collectivist yet they display the concepts of both autonomy and relatedness. The coexistence of these elements of the individualism/collectivism and autonomy/relatedness dichotomies within a culture has been noted by several other researchers. Sinha and Tripathi (1994) refute the commonly held view of the Indian culture as collectivist, and point out that both individualist and collectivist orientations may coexist within individuals and cultures. Several other societies that have been historically categorized

as collectivist (e.g., Japanese, Chinese, Polish) have been highlighted as including individualistic tendencies that are becoming increasingly prevalent (Tripathi, 2003). The relative nature and instability of the orientations challenge the notion of a dichotomous nature of the categories.

Similar to Sinha and Tripathi (1994), I would like to posit that autonomy and relatedness can also coexist within individuals and cultures. It is the issue of how these orientations interact and the conditions under which they surface in the same culture that would provide us with new, greater insights into how culture operates within minds. Autonomy and relatedness can go beyond mere coexistence and feed into each other in such a way that synthesis occurs. An individual is a part of a culture, which provides cultural support at some level, yet as the individual progresses through life the specific tasks are autonomous. The integration of cultural values with individual striving to fulfill one's need for both autonomy and relatedness creates the individual's values and dictates his or her behaviors.

Degrees of Difference: Dialogical Process and Intra-Personal Differences

Rasmussen (2009) suggests that autonomy and relatedness 'should not be designated in polar opposites, but rather as tendencies with "third", more nuanced alternatives, or in terms of an internal range for each"' (p. 438). The internal range allows the constructs to be aligned more closely with the cultural formations, while allowing for inter-individual differences. The importance of the internal range is highlighted in the dialogical process, which includes the middle ground between the two extremes. It is the middle ground, not the dichotomies, that is significant for functioning (Sinha & Tripathi, 1994, p. 127). People experience this middle ground in the form of ambiguity of their own world (Abbey, 2006, p. 33). People may experience ambivalence, as within them exist positive and negative feelings towards the contents of the situation, pulling them in different directions. Ambivalence does not reflect the relationship between the two parts of a dichotomy, but includes all aspects and is a part of the development of all meaning. There exists a tension between what is and what could be, through which meaning can be derived (Abbey, 2006, p. 33). In considering what could be, the uncertainty of the future contributes to the ambivalence in the process of development (Valsiner, 2006, p. 119). The process of development entails the tension of what is/what is not yet/what should be/what must not be. This leads to the

perpetual indeterminacy of meaning, thereby affording individuals freedom of interpretation. The lack of well-defined meaning can be troublesome to some in various contexts, which leads to the acceptance or avoidance of ambiguity (Abbey, 2006, p. 37).

In order to derive meaning, it is important to consider where actions or responses fall in the middle ground. It is interesting to note that in Table 3, 'Frequency and percentages of themes indicating autonomy and relatedness', the majority of the responses were not categorized as being about autonomy or relatedness (McShane et al., 2009, p. 423) but fell into the 'Other' category. The majority of those responses were coded as being about child characteristics and parenting behaviors. Without full transcripts, I hesitate to remark about the majority of the responses; however, I would like to posit that it would be quite interesting for future research—particularly that which uses Kagitcibasi's (2005) model—to consider coding responses with respect to the dimensions of agency and interpersonal distance. Most likely the instances in which a theme is not present can be just as revealing— if not more so—than when the theme is present. Analyzing the instances in which the themes indicate separation/relatedness and heteronomy/autonomy could be very fruitful for understanding the cultural context, given the importance of the middle range of the constructs.

In some of the research on autonomy there seems to be an underly- ing assumption that if you are not heteronymous, you are autonomous, and that everyone functions autonomously—it is simply a matter of to what degree. This assumption is not fitting given the phenomena. It is possible to construe the absence of autonomy not as heteronomy but as something else. In future research, the middle range of the constructs needs to be more defined, particularly the center points of the range. It will be important to determine for the dimension of agency: Is the center point being subject equally to your own rule and to others' rule, partially internalizing the rule of others? Or is it being subject to no one's rule? Or does no one become by default your own rule? Additionally, it should be considered whether the range is symmetrical or asymmetrical. Similar to the way in which autonomy has varying definitions given the cultural context, the middle range must also be considered in terms of the local culture and the larger socio-economic framework.

In addition to considering the differing individual manifestations of the constructs within a society, it is important to consider the differ- ences within the individuals themselves. Individuals strive to obtain and to maintain a balance of independence and interdependence

congruent to their socio-cultural context (Keller, Demuth, & Yovsi, 2008, p. 117). The McShane et al. (2009) study provides important insight into a sub-group of the Inuit culture: those living in the southern urban context. Participants included a wide range of demographics including various ages, males and females, as well as parents and grandparents; however, little attention was given to the differences between them. Perhaps in future research, the inter-individual differences could be further explored, as too often those differences are reduced to simply a matter of degree and not of real quality (Keller et al., 2008, p. 118). It is critical to the development of cultural psychology to move beyond comparing homogeneous groups and to analyze more deeply than making a passing mention of oddities, as though outliers in an otherwise-perfect dataset. Ignoring the quality of inter-individual differences is untenable, as it is the new quality that emerges from individuals that generates the inter-individual variability.

Cultural Context: Societal Values and Frame of Reference

The cultural context provides the framework in which meaning is constructed; thus, meaning becomes culture-specific. The definitions of autonomy and relatedness are very difficult to formulate in culturally universal terms. McShane et al. (2009), in their discussion of the evidence of relatedness in the urban Inuit, suggest that there may be two sub-types of relatedness—a more 'Western' form of relatedness (based on trust in shared personal relationships), and a more 'Eastern' form (based on assurance in loyalty and reciprocity; p. 425). Rasmussen (2009) raises the issue of sub-types of autonomy—different at different levels: 'What kind of autonomy is this ... cultural autonomy in the relations between indigenous peoples and colonial and post-colonial states needs to be distinguished from personal autonomy of children, as encouraged or discouraged in relations between children and parents' (p. 445). Rasmussen goes on to suggest that researchers more completely contextualize the tendencies both in terms of the practices surrounding them and local language terminology.

Societal values play a critical role in the emphasis given to autonomy and relatedness. In cultures in which harmony is valued, relatedness may be promoted and autonomy played down, so that individual conflict will not occur:

> Autonomy and interpersonal relatedness are conceived as having varying hues. They are not only valued differently by the two groups but also

> conceived of differently; that is, the *meaning* of these cultural values varies depending on the specific context in which socialization takes place. (Keller et al., 2008, p. 134)

Cultural variations have been mainly attributed to level of education and social class (Keller, 2008). Social class, in terms of economic interdependence of families, brings an important distinction to the discussion of relatedness, as to whether the relatedness is economic or emotional (Kagitcibasi, 1996).

The existence of societies in which economic interdependence dominates leads to an interesting debate over the usage of the word 'autonomy'. Autonomy in terms of personal hygiene and exploratory behavior appears to be generally held as positive, whereas personal choice may be considered acceptable only later in life. Rabinovich (2008) suggests that the independence that children are afforded in order to perform chores or for personal hygiene does not fit under the umbrella term 'autonomy'. In order to ensure good health and survival, parents emphasize independence of children's appropriate action, which need not be autonomy (Rabinovich, 2008, p. 148) In general, when economic circumstances require greater interdependence for survival, the types of behaviors that fulfill the individual's need for autonomy may be different than in a more independent context.

Even if the issue of a culture-neutral definition could be solved, or if the definition was modified to be appropriate given the cultural context, the issues inherent to cultural comparison would still arise. Tripathi (2003, p. 83) raises the issue of frame of reference when individuals are categorizing their culture as either individualist or collectivist. He notes that Estonians likely categorize themselves as individualist in comparison to the collectivist Russians, but ponders whether they would do the same in comparison to the Belgians, Germans, or Swedes. A similar problem is likely to occur when determining the level of autonomy and relatedness present in a culture. If constructs are defined as basic human needs, we have the further complication of whether to discuss the culture on the basis of the amount of the needs or the extent to which the needs are fulfilled.

Functioning on Common Ground: The Synthesis of Autonomy and Relatedness

After having established that the constructs of autonomy and relatedness are not a dichotomy, but basic human needs which function on various degrees of agency and interpersonal distance, it is important

to consider how the two constructs can go beyond coexistence to achieve a degree of synthesis. A form of synthesis of the constructs was introduced by Kagitcibasi: 'The simultaneous process of differentiation (from others) and integration (with others) towards a synthesis of these opposing needs points to the possible emergence of the "autonomous relational self"' (1996, p. 182). The presence of autonomy does not imply or negate the presence of relatedness. The purpose of this discussion is to illustrate that autonomy and relatedness not only can, but do, synthesize.

A study by Hodgins et al. (1996) showed that the fulfillment of autonomous and relatedness needs were significantly connected. Being autonomous may allow for better social experience, and on the other side interpersonal experiences could enhance or diminish one's ability to behave autonomously (Hodgins, Koestner, & Duncan, 1996, p. 235). This is similar to the ideas embedded in attachment theory: by functioning autonomously one is able to more fully experience and enjoy interpersonal relationships. Attachment theory provides one scenario by which autonomy and relatedness can synthesize. When children are securely attached, they have a secure base from which to go out and explore the world on their own. Inherent in being 'securely attached' would be a feeling of relatedness, and by the strength of these bonds the child can confidently experience life autonomously. Attachment theory applies beyond the Western context: for example, children in the Ijo culture are encouraged to be self-sufficient and makes responsible choices as they have the support of the group (Keller et al., 2008, p. 117).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides another avenue by which autonomy and relatedness can integrate. SDT presents autonomy, relatedness, and competence as universal basic needs. The theory focuses on the degree to which behaviors are autonomous in the sense of being self-determined. The continuum between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation is an important tenet of SDT, as it provides a range for the extent to which the internalization of an external regulation has occurred (Gagne & Deci, 2005, p. 334). Autonomous motivation involves acting with the sense of choice, whereas controlled motivation involves acting with the sense of pressure. The internalization of choice as a means of functioning autonomously is highlighted in a study by Bao and Lam (2008) on Chinese children. They found that the effect of choice was moderated by the children's socio-emotional relatedness with the decision-makers. When the children had a good relationship with the people who made choices for them, their motivation was as strong as if they

had made their own choices (Bao & Lam, 2008, p. 280). Bao and Lam firmly present the position that the important point for autonomous functioning is not who makes the choice—the child or the parent—but the extent to which the child internalizes the choice as his or her own, either by consent or identification with the parent.

Reconsidering the Relationship: Linking Autonomy and Relatedness

The concept worthy of further consideration is not whether the individual is experiencing autonomy or relatedness, but how autonomy and relatedness function through each other. SDT categorizes social contexts as *autonomy-supportive* or controlled, to determine the impact on the individual's perceived locus of causality (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The concept of autonomy-support in parenting would involve the parent considering the child's perspective and acknowledging the child's feelings, giving him/her the relevant information as well as the opportunity to make choices in an environment with minimal pressure (Black & Deci, 2000, p. 742). Autonomy-supportive environments are important for satisfying basic needs, which in turn facilitates the internalization of regulations. SDT posits that support for autonomy will facilitate motivated behaviors being self-determined. An autonomy-supportive environment provides support for the satisfaction of competence and relatedness needs as well. Several studies (Ryan, 1982; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Deci, Ryan, & Williams, 1996) highlight the importance of context in need-satisfaction and motivation. The implication of these studies is that even interactions that tend to promote intrinsic motivation can decrease it when presented in a controlling manner, thereby emphasizing the importance of an autonomy-supportive environment.

When autonomy-supportive actions are performed in a controlling context, this can be considered ambivalent autonomy-support. An example of ambivalent autonomy-support is giving guidance or advice while emphasizing the individual's choice, the results of which the person giving the advice will be evaluating. More specifically, if a parent wants his or her child to participate in some activity, the parent can make his or her desire clear to the child while emphasizing to the child that it is the child's choice, however it is the parent who will be evaluating the 'success of the child'. This example becomes clearer in a school setting, when individual work is given to an instructor for evaluation on a specific piece alone. Under the guise of, or in an attempt to create, an autonomy-supportive environment, instructors may encourage

students to develop their own ideas and substantiate them, even if the ideas contradict those the instructor has taught during the course. If the evaluation is more critical when the ideas of the student contradict those of the instructor, the autonomy-support is administered in a controlling way, thereby creating feelings of ambivalence.

Another way in which autonomy and relatedness interact is in autonomy repression, perhaps better known as the social psychology of conformity. In a sense, the individual is compromising his or her autonomy in favor of relatedness. In the Asch (1951) studies on conformity, participants gave the same incorrect answer as a group who they believed were other study participants but were actually confederates of the researcher. These studies were performed in a variety of ways, e.g., with varying numbers of confederates and varying levels of agreement among the confederate answers. In these studies, as well as in life, individuals will choose to repress their choice to conform with others, as their need for relatedness for the moment outweighs their desire for autonomy. Some individuals also choose to compromise their relatedness in favor of autonomy, in the form of autonomy tension. An example of this would be a person who is desperate to be autonomous and rejects all relationship-based ties, yet is constantly seeking approval by some other.

As opposed to compromising one need in favor of the other, the poles of autonomy and relatedness can also merge in the form of autonomy replacement, in which individuals are socialized to willingly give up their autonomy. An example of this would be the idea of patriotism, in which a government supports the development of persons who are expected—of their own autonomous will—to volunteer to join the army to fight and die 'for the country'. Yet by joining the army, the individual gives up all autonomy.

There is also guided autonomy, in the sense that the individual could choose to do certain things but must not, because an omniscient person is watching and evaluating their actions. For example, in a popular American Christmas carol, 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town', children are taught that Santa Claus 'sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake, he knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake!' The application is that one can choose to behave as one wishes, but 'Santa Claus' is watching and he will evaluate you and bring you presents accordingly. Guided autonomy could also be applied to the law of karma, 'as you sow, so shall you reap' (Sinha & Tripathi, 1994, p. 132). The idea that the individual can choose to behave how he or she wishes, and by choice regarding those actions some element of control over his or her future, gives the

individual autonomy—but autonomy guided by the ethics and value of the evaluating 'force'.

Autonomy can also function as if transient, when an individual is given control over the process but not over the results. This could be construed as ephemeral autonomy, in the sense that choices are presented to the individual, and the individual is free to choose between them, yet both choices yield the same result. An example of this would be giving a small child the choice to walk upstairs to bed, hop up the stairs 'like a bunny' to go to bed, or be carried up the stairs to bed. The child is given choice and there is no pressure towards any of the options, as they all yield the same result—the child is now up the stairs and into bed.

Conclusion

Autonomy and relatedness link together in a variety of ways. Exploring autonomy and relatedness and the various ways in which they coexist is important to a deeper understanding of human interaction. The conceptualization of constructs as located on different dimensions but functioning together frees psychologists from the tyranny of the degrees of the range and allows the general space in the model to have meaning. The presence of autonomy does not imply or negate the presence of relatedness; the view of interaction must be broadened to include the concept that each interaction includes agency and interpersonal distance in some form. Interactions in which autonomy and relatedness feed into each other, each increasing the fulfillment of the other as in attachment theory and self-determination theory, result in a higher form of functioning and creation of the autonomous relational self.

McShane et al. (2009) explore the presence of autonomy and relatedness in urban parenting among the Inuit. Their study highlights the importance of investigating the nuances of the constructs of autonomy and relatedness in both a theoretical and empirical sense, as well as defining the constructs as they exist within the specific community. Rasmussen (2009) brings the issue of child rearing to a more global perspective. By offering a comparative viewpoint, Rasmussen encourages researchers to engage more directly in the local variation, in terms of cultural setting, social context, and transformations throughout the groups' historical and political experiences. The foregoing commentary attempts to contribute to the understanding of nuances of autonomy and relatedness, in the hope that future research will emphasize the synthesis of autonomy and relatedness in various forms while

considering the full range of agency and interpersonal distance in its various intra-individual and inter-individual contexts.

Acknowledgements

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Biography

MARGARET LUCIANO is a long-term Editorial Associate of *Culture & Psychology* and is currently a graduate student in the MBA program at Clark University, having completed her undergraduate psychology studies there. Her areas of interest are leadership, motivation, and communication, as she attempts to combine the realities of the business world and the perspectives of academic psychology, with a special focus on how autonomy is dealt with in social contexts. ADDRESS: Margaret Luciano, Clark University, Psychology Department, 950 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01610, USA. [email: mluciano@clarku.edu]