

Johnson Center New Faculty Orientation

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Monday, August 15, 2016

Culture and Self-Construals

- Students may differ in culture, i.e., collectivist versus individualist.
- These differences may relate to different views of the self, i.e., interdependent and independent respectively.

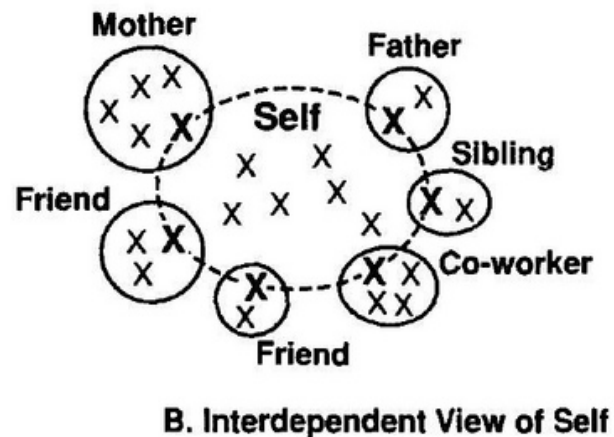
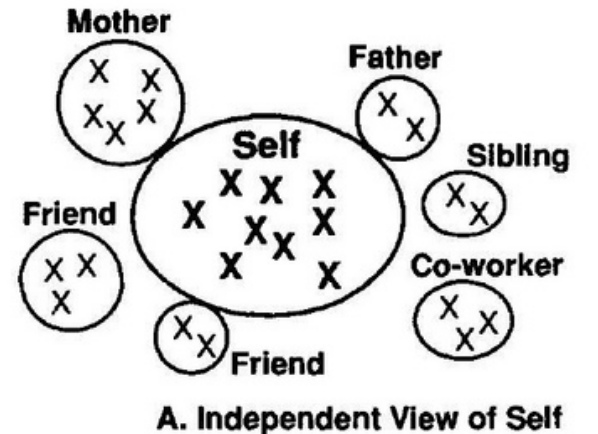


Figure 1. Conceptual representations of the self. (A: Independent construal. B: Interdependent construal.)

Markus, H., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224-253.

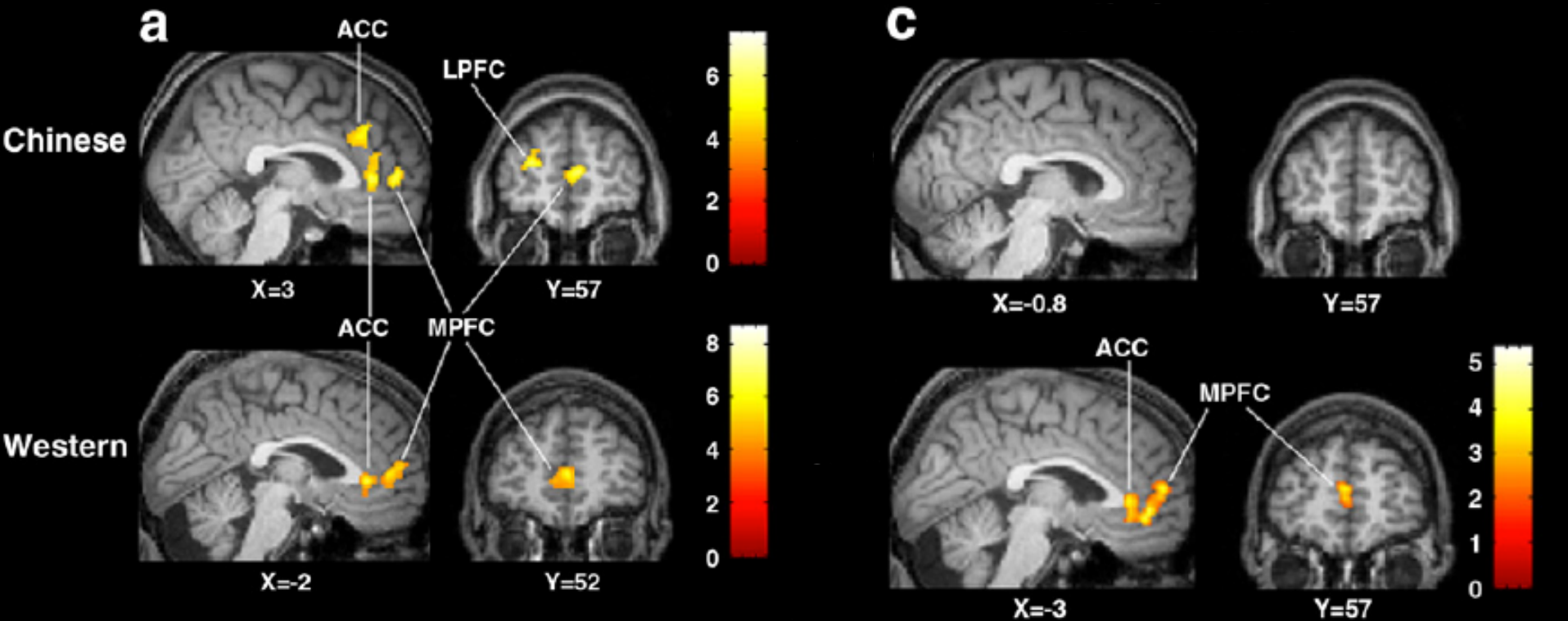
Zhu, Zhang, Fan, & Hana (2006)

- People view a target word: self, mother, other (Bill Clinton for Westerners and Rongji Zhu for Chinese)
- Then they judge whether an adjective is descriptive of that target word.
- They do this task in a scanner measuring fMRI.
- Previous research finds that heightened medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) activation is associated with judgments related to the self (Craig et al., 1999; Heatherton et al., 2006; Kelley et al., 2002; Lieberman et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2006).

Zhu, Zhang, Fan, & Hana (2006)

Self minus Other

Self minus Mother



Interdependent and Independent

- These views of self apply to more than just people from China and people from the US respectively.
- They have been applied to
 - people from working-class backgrounds and people from middle-class backgrounds respectively
 - first-generation college students and continuing-generation college students respectively since class and first-generation status often overlap

Stephens, N. M., Fryberg, S. A, Markus, H. R., Johnson, C. S., & Covarrubias, R. (2012). Unseen disadvantage: How the American universities' focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102, 1178-1197.

So now what?

- Cultural differences often are deep not just superficial
 - Basic psychological processes may vary with culture
 - Educating our students is not a matter of changing their culture
 - Many decisions, priorities, values may be affected by culture
 - Variations within groups are typically greater than variations among groups

So now what?

- What are ways we can help our students to function biculturally?
- What are ways we can make AC, as an institution, more bicultural?