

Johnson Center First-Generation College Students

Lisa M. Brown & Karla McCain

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First Gen Students & Cultural Mismatch

- As Ian and I discussed last year, 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.

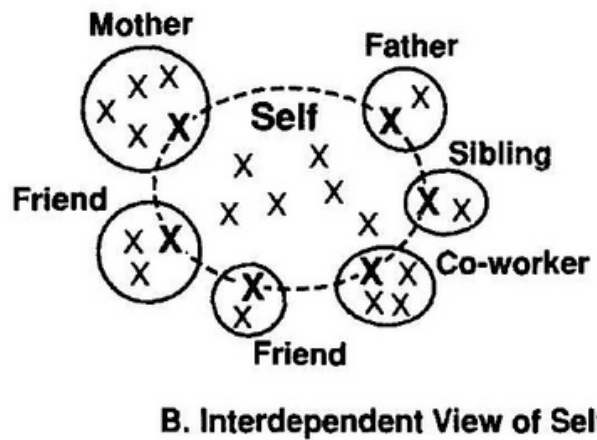
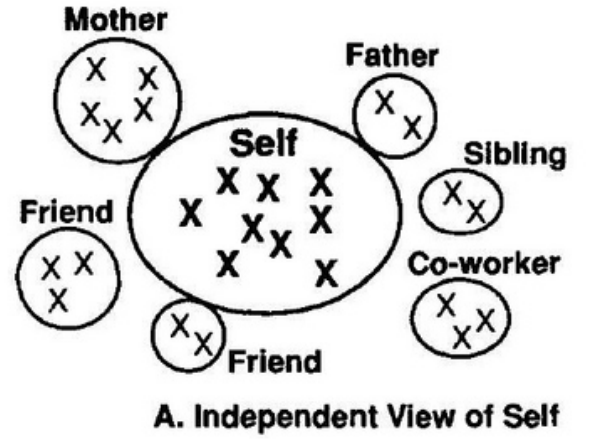


Figure 1. Conceptual representations of the self. (A: Independent construal. B: Interdependent construal.)

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

First Gen Students & Cultural Mismatch

- “Students from American middle-class contexts, for example, are typically exposed to and required to enact norms of independence, such as a focus on individual development, personal choice, and self-expression prior to college” (p. 1180).
- “Students from American working-class contexts, on the other hand, are typically exposed to and required to enact norms of interdependence prior to college, such as adjusting to and responding to others’ needs and connecting to others. The material and social conditions common in working-class contexts tend to require and ultimately promote this model (Grossmann & Varnum, 2011; Stephens et al., 2011; Stephens et al., 2007)” (p. 1180).

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.

First Gen Students & Cultural Mismatch

- Cultural Mismatch Theory

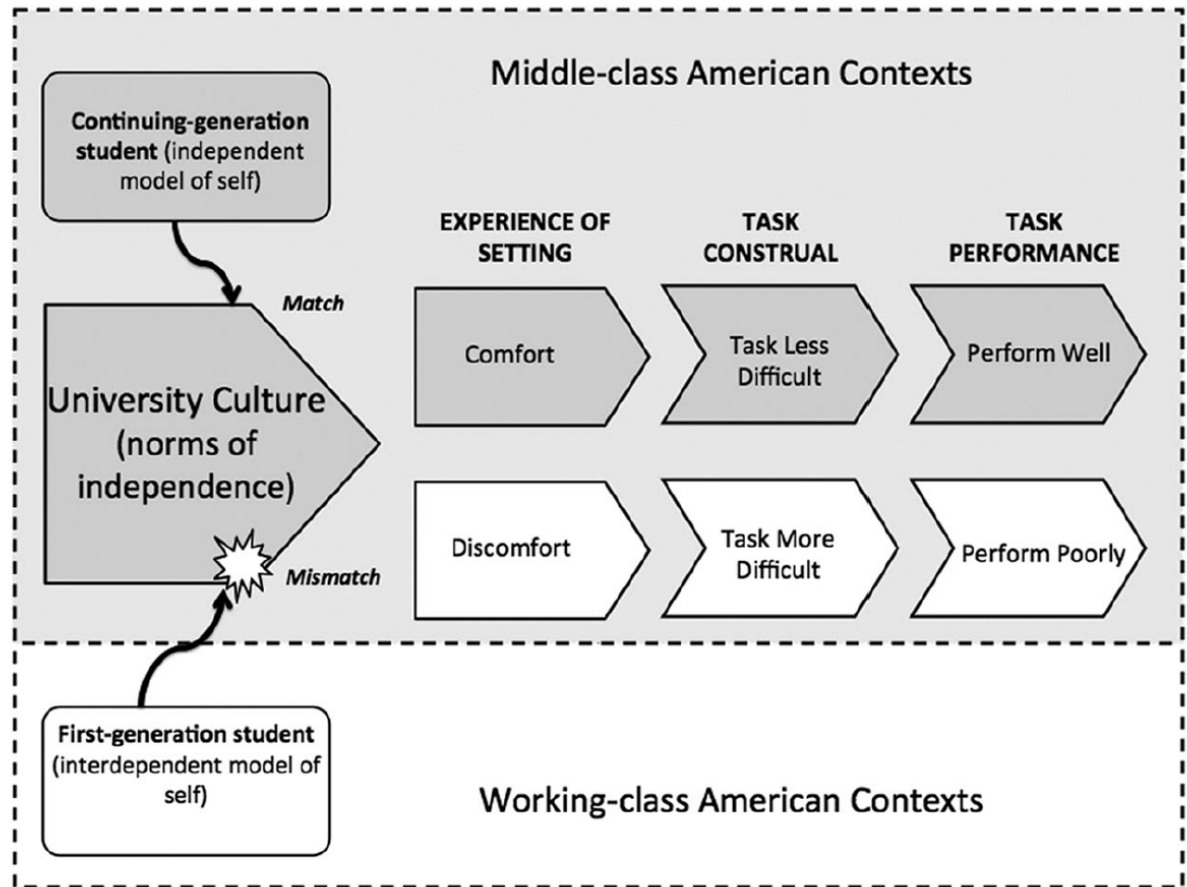


Figure 1. Cultural mismatch theory. Model of the divergent pathways through which a match or mismatch between institutional cultural norms and students' norms can bolster or undermine academic performance.

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Table 1

Percentage of Independent and Interdependent Items Selected by University Administrators

Survey items	% Items selected
Independent	
Learn to express oneself	74
Learn to be a leader	68
Learn to solve problems on one's own	60
Learn to do independent research	55
Learn to work independently	46
Learn to influence others	17
Interdependent	
Learn to work together with others	58
Learn to do collaborative research	46
Learn to listen to others	36
Learn to be a team player	25
Learn to ask others for help	12
Learn to adjust to others' expectations	2

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- What do higher education administrators think is the culture of higher education?

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Table 3

Mean Percentage of Interdependent and Independent Items Endorsed by Student Social Class

Survey items	First-generation students	Continuing-generation students
Interdependent items		
Overall scale mean	59	33
Help my family out after I'm done with college	69	31
Be a role model for people in my community	53	38
Bring honor to my family	49	27
Show that people with my background can do well	58	20
Give back to my community	61	43
Provide a better life for my own children	64	42
Independent items**		
Overall scale mean	69	78
Expand my knowledge of the world	78	87
Become an independent thinker**	62	71
Explore new interests**	71	80
Explore my potential in many domains*	60	67
Learn more about my interests	65	77
Expand my understanding of the world**	78	86

Note. All chi-square tests, χ^2 (1, $N = 1424$), comparing first-generation and continuing-generation students are significant at the $p < .001$ level unless otherwise noted.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

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- What culture do college students endorse?

First Gen Students & Cultural Mismatch

- Do the different cultural messages affect student performance?

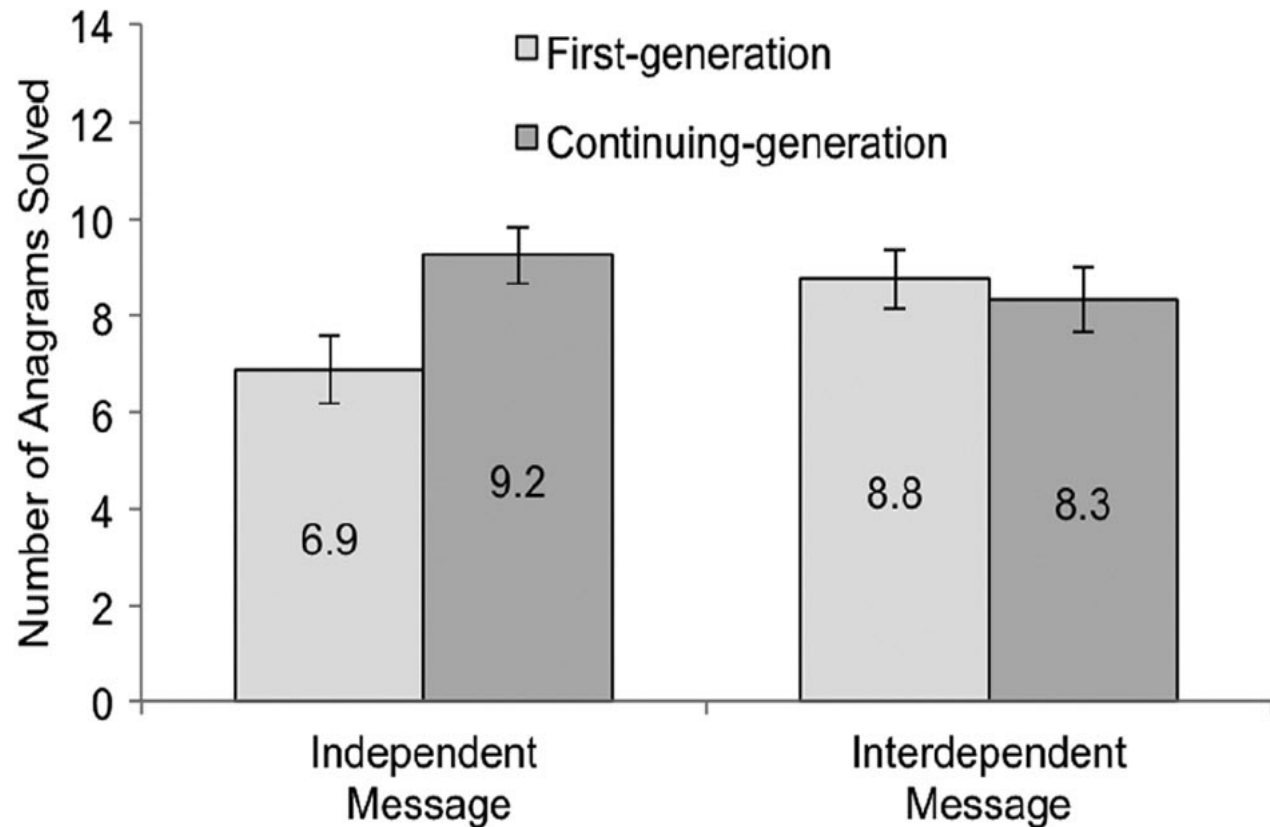


Figure 2. Mean number of anagrams solved by student social class and condition in Study 3. Error bars represent standard errors.

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- Suggestions for Colleges and Universities
 - Have college materials stress both interdependent and independent messages
 - Change framing and description of things to incorporate the interdependence they already involve (e.g., independent study)
- Exposure to interdependent ideas could help prepare all students for collaborative work environments after college

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Mentoring and Social Capital

- Social capital – social resources that represent the quantity and quality of information, knowledge, and skills that are shared among individuals in relationships/social networks
- Mentoring at-risk students provides a way to increase students' social capital **because mentors help them to connect to people on campus and in mentors' larger professional network who can help them.**

Mentoring and Institutional Cultural Capital

- Institutional cultural capital – cultural capital that refers to the quantity and quality of information and knowledge individuals have about the culture of their institution
- Mentoring at-risk students provides a way to increase students' institutional cultural capital **because mentors make explicit the unwritten rules of the institution and their professional fields.**