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American = Independent?

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Abstract
U.S. American cultures and psyches reflect and promote independence. Devos and Banaji (2005) asked, does American equal White? This article asks, does American equal independent? The answer is that when compared to people in East Asian or South Asian contexts, people in American contexts tend to show an independent psychological signature—a sense of self as individual, separate, influencing others and the world, free from influence, and equal to, if not better than, others (Markus & Conner, 2013). Independence is a reasonable description of the selves of people in the White, middle-class American mainstream. Yet it is a less good characterization of the selves of the majority of Americans who are working-class and/or people of color. A cultural psychological approach reveals that much of North American psychology is still grounded in an independent model of the self and, as such, neglects social contexts and the psychologies of a majority of Americans. Given the prominence of independence in American ideas and institutions, the interdependent tendencies that arise from intersections of national culture with social class, race, and ethnicity go unrecognized and are often misunderstood and stigmatized. This unseen clash of independence and interdependence is a significant factor in many challenges, including those of education, employment, health, immigration, criminal justice, and political polarization.

Keywords
culture, diversity, American, independence, interdependence

Ideas and practices of independence saturate U.S. American culture. The United States began with a Declaration of Independence and is grounded in the idea of freedom from those who would assert undue influence, in claims of equality, and in a list of inalienable individual rights. The powerful resonance of independence lends an aura of strength and overall goodness to any policy, program, or product that carries the label. One example reads "56 men signed the Declaration of Independence. One man put it in a bottle. Jack Daniels" (Stengel, 2011, p. 105).

Many American psyches also reflect and promote independence. Acting autonomously, expressing one's self, feeling in control, and determining one's own outcomes free from others' influence is the promoted, valued, and psychologically beneficial style of behavior in European American sociocultural contexts (Brim, Ryff, & Kessler, 2004; Hamedani, Markus, & Fu, 2013; Kitayama, Duffy, & Uchida, 2007; Triandis, 1989). Yet as cultural psychologists turn their attention to other forms of American culture besides nation of origin, and include, for example, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, region of the country, or profession, and examine how these forms of culture intersect with national culture, many new and fascinating questions arise (Cohen & Varnum, 2016; Markus & Conner, 2013). Given that everyone is a multicultural mix, a node in an intersecting set of cultures, who are the Americans with the most independent selves? What circumstances and contexts afford an independent self? Who are the Americans with more interdependent selves? What are the consequences of a lack of fit between independent mainstream cultural contexts and a relatively interdependent way of being?

The title of this article, "American = Independent?," was inspired by an article titled "American = White?" by Devos and Banaji (2005). They suggest that the robust implicit association between American and White fostered by the sociocultural realities of American society can foster exclusion and inequality. I suggest here that while independence indeed pervades the psychologies of Americans who are a good fit with the national cultural mainstream, that is, White,

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middle-class Americans, and particularly upper middle class, it is *interdependence* that is evident in the psychologies of many other Americans. As a consequence of the emphasis of independence in mainstream American life, the more interdependent ways of being that can arise from intersections of race, ethnicity, and social class with national culture can go unrecognized and are often misunderstood and stigmatized. This unseen clash of independence and interdependence is a significant factor in many American challenges, including those of education, employment, health, immigration, criminal justice, and political polarization.

A cultural psychological approach reveals that there is more than one right answer to what is good, true, beautiful, and efficient (Shweder, 2003). Examining the many cultures within the American national culture demonstrates that many psychological tendencies understood as basic, neutral, natural, reasonable, or optimal are, in fact, tendencies that are afforded by specific and typically unmarked contexts and circumstances. An independent way of being (in which people are construed as operating under their own steam based on personal preferences) is not *the way* of being but *a way* of being afforded by a cultural system set up to scaffold and promote this way of being. A cultural psychological approach reveals that most psychological theorizing and measurement is still grounded in an independent model of self, a model that reflects the behavior of White, middle-class Westerners. Yet this model is not an equally good fit for the behavior of the majority of Americans with less status and power, including many women, people of color, poor and working-class Americans, and people under threat. A full consideration of this claim is beyond the scope of this article, but to illustrate it, I consider the intersection of national culture and social class and the intersection of national culture and race and ethnicity.

Independence and Interdependence

All cultures and all people require and foster both independence and interdependence. Yet how these foundational human needs and universal cultural imperatives are realized and the relative balance between the two can vary dramatically depending on a wide range of factors including, for example, ecology, historical period, economic systems, philosophical and religious orientations, and rates of social change. An independent model of the self is more prominent and normatively sanctioned in the West, whereas an interdependent model of the self is more prominent and sanctioned in the non-Western national cultures that characterize the majority of the world (Gelfand & Kashima, 2016; Henrich, Norenzayan, & Heine, 2010; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 2010). Several decades of research highlight powerful East/West differences in the cultural attention and elaboration accorded to the *internal attributes of the self*, versus that accorded *to relations with others and others' expectations* as the source of meaningful action.

East/West comparisons also demonstrate that people are most likely to think, feel, and act in ways that are normatively appropriate in their cultural communities. The psychological tendencies that allow people to fit within and navigate their particular environments are likely to be the most frequent, familiar, and practiced (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Mesquita, 2003). Support for this point comes from many intriguing studies employing different methods and samples. A quick sampling of recent studies: When Taiwanese and American participants consider the situation of their house on fire with only time to rescue one person—their spouse or their mother—the Americans on average choose their spouse. The spouse reflects one's personal preferences and decisions about one's own life. The Taiwanese on average say their mother. One can always get another spouse, and filial piety demands attention to the most important other in one's life—the one who gave you life, your mother (Wu, Cross, Wu, Cho, & Tey, 2016, Salter & Adams, 2012).

Comparing the Facebook habits of thousands of participants reveals differences in the ratio of likes to status updates. Eastern participants on average give more likes (reflecting an observation of another person) and fewer status updates (reflecting an observation of themselves) than do Westerners (Hong & Na, 2017). When making career decisions, Chinese students are more likely to seek the advice of others than American students (Guan et al., 2015). With respect to healthy eating in the United States, independence is strongly related to a high intake of fruits, vegetables, and nonmeat protein (Levine et al., 2016). In Japan, it is interdependence that is associated with healthy eating.

Summarizing across many such studies leads to the high-level generalization that in contexts that foster a focus on the attributes, goals, and preferences of the self, a person's s*ubjective state* will have particular salience and relevance for behavior. In contexts that foster a focus on relationships, *obligations*, *expectations and norms,* will have particular salience and relevance for behavior (e.g., Riemer, Shavitt, Koo, & Markus, 2014). More specifically, Markus and Conner (2013) suggest that across cultural contexts—for example, hemisphere, gender, class, race, ethnicity, region, religion, workplace—when the focus is on what's inside the person, people tend to construe themselves as independent—as individual, unique, influencing others, free, and equal to, if not better than, others. In

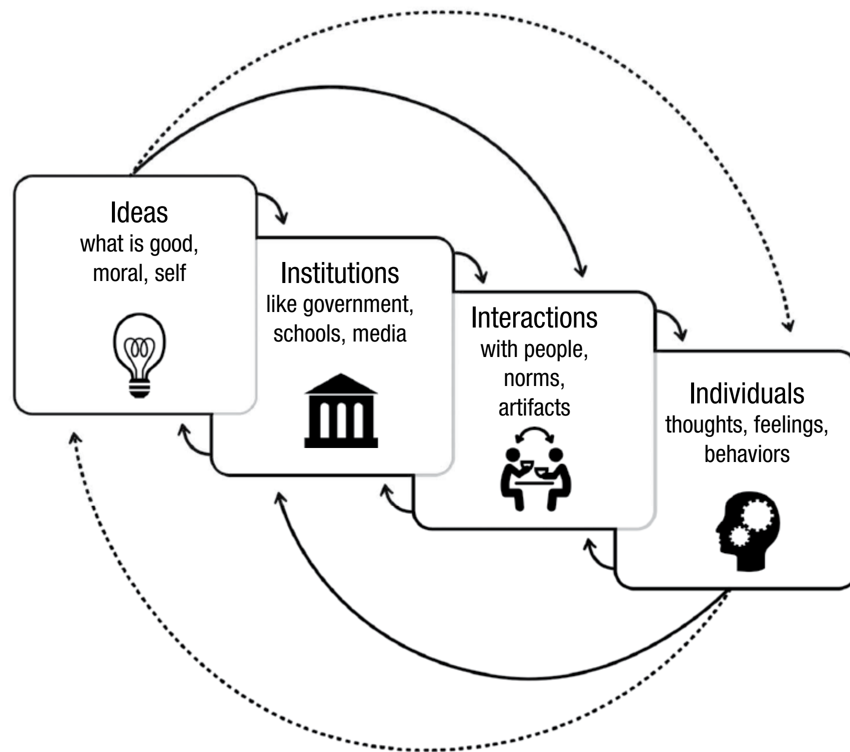

Fig. 1. The 4-I culture cycle. Source: Adapted from Markus and Conner (2013), and Markus and Kitayama (2010).

contrast, when the focus is on relationships with specific or generalized others, people tend to construe themselves as interdependent—relational, similar, adjusting to others, rooted in time, place, and tradition, and aware of one's rank or place in social hierarchy.

Self-focused independent tendencies can also include a relatively analytic way of perceiving the world, a tendency to abstract the object or the person from the background (Masuda et al., 2008; Nisbett, 2003; Talhelm et al., 2014), a focus on the pursuit of positive feelings (Curhan et al., 2014; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999), and a tendency to positive high arousal (Tsai, 2017; Tsai & Clobert, in press). Other-focused interdependent tendencies can include a tendency to perceive the world more holistically, to understand emotions as doings in the social world rather than as personal bodily states (Mesquita, Boiger, & De Leersnyder, 2016), and a focus on emotional ideals that emphasize lower arousal or calm states (Tsai, 2007).

Not all of these relatively independent or interdependent tendencies will travel together in all contexts and circumstances, but together they highlight differences in patterns of agency, different selves, in Geertz's (1973) words—differences in "what the devil people think they are up to (p. 29)." Identifying these patterns matters because experiencing the world in culturally normative ways, that is, being in the way that meets the demands of sociocultural environment, is beneficial for physical and mental health, well-being, relationship satisfaction and engagement, motivation and performance at school and work, and acculturation (Consedine, Chentsova-Dutton, & Krivoshekova, 2014; De Leersnyder, Mesquita, & Kim, 2011; Sims, Tsai, Koopmann-Holm, Thomas, & Goldstein, 2014).

The Culture Cycle

A cultural approach to psychology assumes that people are participants in their cultural systems and not separate from them. People's actions feed back into their cultures to reinforce, resist, or change them. One approach analyzes cultures as four mutually constituting layers that work together in a dynamic called the culture cycle (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Markus & Conner, 2013). As depicted in Figure 1, these layers include ideas, institutions, interactions, and individuals. Notably, in this view cultural ideas and institutions require each other and are part of the same dynamic. Moreover, all people are multicultural in that they are made up of the confluence of the influences of multiple intersecting culture cycles.

At the Intersection of U.S. National and Social Class Cultures

For many decades most Americans thought themselves to be middle-class, and social class was not a topic for psychologists (Fiske & Markus, 2012). Now many people across domains talk about social class much of the time. Social class divides Americans and creates multiple diverging culture cycles. Because a college education has become crucial for so many life outcomes, one significant social class divide is between the 68% of Americans who do not have a college degree (often called the working class) and the 32% that do (often called the middle class).

The U.S. has a national culture that more than many is grounded in ideas and narratives (Bellah, 2007). The most powerful and influential are those that privilege the individual and provide a foundation for the idea that it is the internal attributes of the independent individual that count and do the work. These ideas remain influential and intact even as U.S. national culture intersects with social class. Americans across classes show a strong psychological essentialism. They take for granted that what is good and what counts is the independent individual and the stuff inside this individual—thoughts, feelings, motives, talent, traits, merit, intelligence, genes, neurons, and so on. The virtue accorded the separate individual has many deep and intertwined sources. Long before the Declaration of Independence came the Greek idea that objects in the world, including people, were made up of particles that demonstrated their qualities. Other big ideas include democracy and the belief that individuals can govern themselves, the idea of a God who can care about each and every person, the Enlightenment view that thinking is the defining feature of a person (e.g., "I think therefore I am"), and the claim that individuals come first and societies emerge to protect these individuals (Nisbett, 2003; Markus & Conner, 2013).

Other ideas prominent in the American national culture cycle include the Protestant work ethic, which holds that God gives each person the unique skills to fulfill a calling and that hard work is a sign of salvation. Being an independent, hardworking American is widely valued across social classes and is a powerful identity even for those who have yet to realize their own American dreams. J. D. Vance (2016), in his best-selling book on the White working-class *Hillbilly Elegy*, reports that his own poor family had two Gods—Jesus Christ and the United States of America.

At the institutional level, many formal practices and policies, the social machinery of the economy, the government, the legal system, and the media are similar (or purport to be) regardless of one's position in social class hierarchy. They promote ideas of independence and many correlated notions of free choice, control, and personal responsibility for one's actions (which includes using one's bootstraps). Many national institutions emphasize the fair treatment of equal individuals as an ideal. Yet how people work with these American ideas in their own lives and how people engage institutions and how, in turn, these institutions respond to them can differ quite dramatically by social class. People in working-class contexts can have a difficult time maintaining their independence and their American birthright to be free and equal to others. They are reminded of their social rank and suffer from what Joan Williams (2017) calls "class affronts" from those in the middle class, especially from professionals, every day: "the doctor who unthinkingly patronizes the medical technician, the harried office worker who treats the security guard as invisible, the overbooked business traveler who snaps at the TSA agent" (p. 26).

In contrast, middle-class culture cycles provide more support for ideas of independence. At the interactions level, parents, teachers, and employers emphasize the development and deployment of one's special skills and talents, the significance of self-expression and of having one's own ideas and opinions, the importance of choice based on one's own preferences, and of exerting influence or making a difference in the world (Fiske & Markus, 2012; Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012; Stephens, Markus, & Phillips, 2014; Savani, Markus, Naidu, Kumar, & Berlia, 2010). As their daily interactions scaffold their independence, people in middle-class contexts come to construe themselves as independent bundles of *personal* attributes—needs, preferences, and goals—and to construe themselves as distinct and separate from others, and as creative, flexible, curious, in-control choice makers who plan for the future and are optimistic about their lives. The work or the careers of people with college educations usually allow them to pay their bills—to be financially independent—and afford them the dignity of a job. Moreover, unlike jobs of many working-class Americans, their work often fulfills the need for a calling and provides a basis for identity and status. A middle-class respondent quoted by Markus and Conner (2013) says, "I am a sales rep. I'm smart, maybe not brilliant, but well-organized, a good sport. I plan for the future and I make the choices about what I want, feel, and want to be" (p. 95).

The interactions common in working-class culture cycles are less likely to provide these same opportunities to enact independence. With less money, less formal education, lower rank and status, limited resources, and more uncertainty and threat, these contexts are often more constraining and require and foster an *interdependence* among individuals. This is not an interdependence that is fostered at the ideas level (as in

Buddhist ideas of the self as interdependent with their contexts), but shares with these East Asian interdependent contexts the reality of lives replete with relationships to others and the need for social responsiveness. Adults in working-class contexts often live very near the places they grew up, staying in close proximity to their extended families and living in "tight networks of sociability" (Lamont, 2000, p. 11). Selves that develop in contexts of relative risk and increased reliance on others tend to emphasize an awareness of in-group others, a sensitivity to hierarchy, and a concern with morality. A working-class respondent quoted in Markus and Conner (2013) says, "I know what is right and wrong. I'm kind to people. I never talk down to anyone and I never talk behind their backs" (p. 95).

With interdependence can come a strong sense of connection and loyalty to in-group others (usually not others in general). Relationships are not construed as a matter of choice or preference (Anderson, Adams, & Plaut, 2008; Adams & Plaut, 2003). Sticking by one's family and friends matters. Carey and Markus (2017) posed a series of interpersonal dilemmas to working-class and middle-class respondents. One read, "Steven has an uncle who has become increasingly hot-headed at recent family events. He tends to drink too much and has clashed with Steven on several occasions. As Steven's wedding day approaches closer, he is unsure that he wants his uncle to come to the event. What should he do?" The answers were starkly different by social class. Working-class respondents focused on maintaining relationships. For example, one respondent replied, "Family is . . . family . . . unfortunately he has to invite his uncle. . . . Steven certainly doesn't want his uncle ruining the event; but if he doesn't invite him there could be bad blood." In contrast, middle-class respondents were more likely to suggest breaking off relationships and making new ones. For example, one respondent answered, "He should not invite his uncle. People aren't important just because they're family. Move on." Although working-class and middle-class respondents are equally likely to endorse American ideals of fairness and the equality of individuals as moral goods, people in the working class are more likely than those in the middle class to also endorse in-group loyalty as a moral good (Carey & Markus, 2016).

When others matter more, people have to attend to and adjust to them. One's own subjectivity, one's own take on the world, and the expression of one's preferences and opinions are of less value and carry less weight. In a middle-class context, a child who contends that Santa Claus comes at Easter may be asked, "Really, does he? How does that work?" Being original and pushing boundaries is important. A parent in a working-class context is perhaps more likely to say, "No, he doesn't. Don't be stupid." The child's experiences and versions of reality are less important. In many working-class contexts, expressing individuality and showcasing one's own unique ideas are unnecessary (Miller, Cho, & Bracey, 2005). In describing the White working class, Williams (2017) quotes a respondent talking about her working-class family: "In my family, a conversation about one's work typically consumed only six words. 'How was your day?' 'Oh, fine.' Speaking otherwise, in detail or with enthusiasm, was to risk display of dreaded swelled head" (p. 29).

Swelled heads and swelled selves are sometimes a desired product of middle-class and especially professional and elite class contexts. They are necessary for navigating worlds that require expressing oneself and influencing others with one's ideas and that offer up choices among good alternatives. The opportunity to present oneself and practice choice develops a taste for it. For example, when shoppers were recruited for a marketing study, middle-class participants who chose a pen liked it more on average than middle-class respondents who were simply given a pen to evaluate. But working-class participants liked their pen equally well no matter who had chosen it. They were generally happy to get a free pen (Snibbe & Markus, 2005). Vance (2016) writes that in the context of his working-class youth, the choices you make often produce no difference on your life outcomes. He reports that when people ask him what he would like to change about the white working class, he says, "The feeling that our choices don't matter" (p. 177).

In the past decade, social psychologists have joined with sociologists and anthropologists to paint a more detailed empirical picture of psychological tendencies that are relatively more common when people participate in situations with relatively less power, status, education, or material resources. Table 1 synthesizes many of these findings from a variety of methods and presents a set of tendencies hypothesized to manifest in U.S. American contexts that afford and require independence and those that require interdependence. Notably, some of these behavioral effects can be produced in the laboratory when respondents are required to imagine themselves in situations with or without control, or when people are assigned to conditions with many or few resources. These findings are important because they support the view that social class differences are not inherent, but instead the product of ideas and practices of culture cycles that foster independent or interdependent agency. And as many social class migrants can attest, moving culture cycles changes behavior.

In short, people in working-class contexts tend to have strong commitments to American independence but at the same time to demonstrate some psychological tendencies crafted in worlds that require and foster

Table 1. Hypothesized Psychological Tendencies of Selves in U.S. Contexts that Foster Independence and Interdependence

Independence	Interdependence
Individual Consequences	
- Express self, attitudes, opinions - Are more analytic, go for the gist, make abstractions - Emphasize choice, achievement, accomplishment, success, influence on others, the world - Take control; pursue and implement goals - Take more risks; negotiate better deals - Report greater self-esteem, optimism, creativity, growth, potential - Demonstrate more uniqueness, future time orientation, possible selves	- Take less control - Perceive less choice - Are more holistic, influenced by context/situation-focused - Emphasize integrity, consistency, stability of self - Emphasize resilience, discipline, strength, making do, getting by, self-reliance
Interpersonal Consequences	
- Judge others' transgressions more harshly than own - Are less influenced by norms/violate norms more - Lie more; cheat more - Show less empathy - View relationships as choices	- Attend more to others - Show more empathy, solidarity, concern for others - Emphasize respect, discipline, vigilance, upholding the moral order - Adjust to others, conform more - More oriented toward in-group good - View relationships as binding - More sensitive to threats

Source: Anderson, Adams, & Plaut, 2008; Brim, Ryff, & Kessler, 2004; Guinote, 2007; Kraus & Chen, 2014; Kraus, Côte, & Keltner, 2010; Kraus & Park, 2014; Kraus, Piff, Mendoza-Denton, Rheinschmidt, & Keltner, 2012; Kusserow, 1999; Lamont, 2000; Lareau, 2011; Magee, Galinsky, & Gruenfeld, 2007; Markus, 2017; Markus & Conner, 2013; Markus, Ryff, Curhan, & Palmersheim, 2004; Markus & Stephens, 2017; Piff, 2014; Savani, Stephens, & Markus, 2011; Smith, Jostmann, Galinsky, & Van Dijk, 2008; Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012; Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Stephens, Markus, & Phillips, 2014; Stephens, Markus, & Townsend, 2007; Stephens, Townsend, Markus, & Phillips, 2012.

interdependence and that constrain independence. In this sense they are bicultural with respect to independence and interdependence (see Fig. 2).

A Clash at the Intersection

What are the consequences of living at the intersection of a national culture cycle that fosters independence and a social class cycle that fosters interdependence? Multiple ways of being could mean an increase in psychological resources and in the ability to navigate many types of circumstances. Or it could mean a greater risk for the type of stereotypic perceptions and construals that impair performance. The intersectionality literature in psychology has focused on the multiple consequences of navigating intersections among race, gender, and class, and reveals many downsides for individual psychological experience, as well as for interpersonal perception and treatment (Cole, 2009; Settles & Buchanan, 2014; Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999).

While there are virtues of living in contexts where worth is measured less by individual accomplishment and more by solidarity with others (Markus & Conner, 2013), middle-class Americans are doing better than working-class Americans on many important indices of a good life, including wealth and health. Independence is associated with higher status and the "right" self—the independent self—is a passkey for class migration and for entry into contexts that afford these better outcomes.

As people in working-class worlds meet environments that require them to individuate, to choose, control, and plan, they are likely to struggle, at least initially. An example of this type of clash comes from an analysis of American universities. They were built on European models and designed at a time when most of their students were from the upper middle class. These institutions have long operated on sets of informal rules and practices that were principally designed for—and by—people from the more advantaged social classes. As a result, when they arrive on campus, despite the strenuous effort they may have made to get there, many students from less advantaged backgrounds and especially those who are the first in their family to go to college find themselves in institutions whose practices are somewhat alien to them. In particular, they may confront modes of action incongruent with their own understandings of the self (Stephens et al., 2012; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014; Goudeau & Croizet, 2017). This clash is associated with low grades, fewer relationships, and drop-out. To the extent that universities made a practice of sharing the rules of the independent game, this might not be a major problem. But for the most part administrators and faculty are unaware that universities are schools for independence.

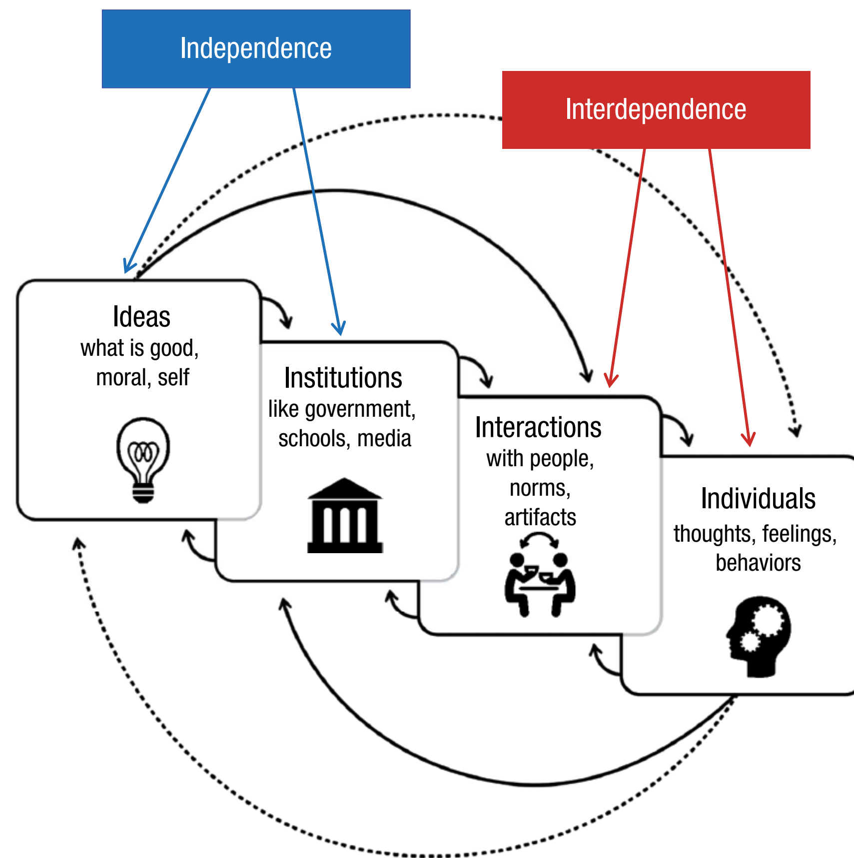

Fig. 2. The ideas and institutions levels of U.S. working class culture cycles emphasize independence; the interactions and individuals levels tend to emphasize interdependence. Source: Adapted from Markus and Conner (2013); Carey and Markus (2017).

Stephens et al. (2012) found that, even controlling for race and SAT scores, students with an independent sense of self achieved significantly better grades than those who entered college with an interdependent sense of self. Moreover, a series of studies with working-class and middle-class students that framed the university in terms of interdependence (an opportunity to be part of a community, to collaborate) or instead in terms of independence (an opportunity to chart one's own course, to be unique) revealed the significance of such a mismatch. When the university was represented as a site that includes interdependence, as opposed to only one of independence, academic tasks were construed as less difficult, students were less stressed, and performance improved.

Many workplaces also recruit and award employees who manifest an independent self confidently expressing their views, promoting themselves, and taking charge. Once hired, those selected for promotion or special opportunities are usually people with well-developed independent selves. The policies of many prestigious companies build a preference for an independent way of being—separate and better than others—into the culture. For example, at Amazon, all team members are ranked annually and those at the bottom are let go (Stephens, Dittmann, & Townsend, 2017).

At the Intersection of U.S. National Culture and Race

Race and ethnicity can also divide Americans and create multiple diverging culture cycles. The culture cycles of African Americans reveal a unique mix of independence and interdependence (Brannon, Markus, & Taylor, 2015; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Markus, 2008; Markus & Conner, 2013; Oyserman, Kemmelmeier, Fryberg, Brosh, & Hart-Johnson, 2003). Of all Americans, 13% are African Americans—22% have a college education, while 78% do not (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). Ideas of independence are particularly strong in African American culture cycles. As Americans with a long history of the denial of freedom, choice, and control, the struggle for independence is particularly salient and self-relevant. This continuing struggle is a

common feature of African American psyches, and one that would not be evident without a cultural psychological approach that includes a focus on pervasive historically-derived ideas (Markus & Moya, 2010; Steele, 2010). As James Baldwin (1985) wrote, “The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it . . . history is literally present in all that we do.”

To a much greater extent than is the case for White, working-class Americans, for African Americans, the independence and equality promised by the nation’s foundational ideas have been undermined by the policies and practices of mainstream institutions (e.g., slavery, segregation, Jim Crow Laws, red lining, banking practices). African Americans have kept their hopes for inclusion by operating outside conventional political institutions (Gurin, Hatchett, & Jackson, 1990). At the institution level of the culture cycle, a very important institution for African Americans is the church. The church can be a fount of individuation, a reminder, as the hymn goes, that “if God can keep his eye on the sparrow, you know he keeps his eye on me,” but also a force for interdependence. As President Obama explained in a speech following the massacre at the AME church in Charleston, “Over the course of centuries, black churches . . . have been and continue to be community centers, where we organize for jobs and justice, places of scholarship and network, places where children are loved and fed and kept out of harm’s way, and told that they are beautiful and smart and taught that they matter” (Editors of Essence, 2016). African Americans attend church more regularly than White Americans, and church attendance is a positive correlate of physical and mental health (Taylor, Chatters, Jayakody, & Levin, 1996; Taylor, Jackson, & Chatters, 1997).

Given that many African Americans would be classified as working class (Ryan & Bauman, 2016), some of the practices that foster interdependence in working-class culture cycles, including more interaction with and more loyalty to family, kin, and long-time friends, less social mobility, working jobs with less choice and control, teaching children entering an uncertain world to fit in, observe hierarchy, and follow tradition, are also at work in African American culture cycles. In addition, African American culture cycles have other features that perpetuate interdependence. African Americans, like all groups in the numerical minority, are distinctive against the White majority background. When people of color describe themselves, the majority will mention their race. In contrast, those in the White majority rarely mention their race or ethnicity (Oyserman, 2008). People associated with groups in the minority are highly aware that they are most often seen through the lens of the stereotypes that are held about them.

Pervasive anti-Black bias, explicit and implicit, is still a feature of much of American society. When the air is thick with assumptions of the inferiority of one’s group, and one’s daily interactions—in schools, workplaces, banks, hospitals, employment agencies, and even on the Internet (products held by Black hands bring a lower price; Ayres, Banaji, & Jolls, 2015)—foster these views, it is difficult to be an independent self and to operate only as an “I.” Stereotype threat is pervasive, and the “We” self is chronically active. People worry about how their own performance will reflect on their families and friends, and on their racial group in general, and how their group will reflect on them (Steele, 2010).

Notably, working-class African Americans show some of the tendencies of lower power or status situations shown in Table 1, but not all of them. For example, many studies find that African Americans show high levels of uniqueness, self-confidence, and self-esteem (e.g., Twenge & Crocker, 2002). In line with these findings, the African American Museum of History and Culture includes the inscription “whatever you do, do it with style” as a distinctive feature of African American ways of being, and notes that this emphasis on uniqueness may be a reaction to centuries of being denied individuality, freedom of expression, and independence.

While interdependence with one’s racial group can be a source of stigma, if one’s racial group is framed positively, it can also be a source of many positive psychological outcomes. As an example, Brannon and colleagues (2015) hypothesized that African Americans, as a result of their histories and contemporary racial disparities, have a double consciousness that manifests as two self-schemas, one for independence and one for interdependence. Both of these schemas can guide behavior depending on the circumstances. In a series of studies, they found that priming the interdependent schema (through exposing positive representations of African American culture) within a university setting, on average, enhanced African Americans’ persistence and performance on academic tasks. They also found that engagement with African American cultural events and groups on college campuses makes an interdependent schema more salient and this, in turn, increased academic fit and identification, better grades, and more advanced degree enrollment.

American = Independent?

Does American = Independent? The answer is clear. Yes. Also no. It depends.

The United States is a deeply ideological nation rooted in the idea of the independent individual, separate from others. Yes, people are social beings who require others, yet these others are construed as separate from the person rather than making up the person. The ideas of the American culture cycle have a pervasive influence regardless of how national culture mixes with other cultural contexts. When compared with people participating in contexts outside the United States, a behavioral signature of participation with mainstream institutional American culture is a constellation of independent psychological tendencies, including a sense of self as separate—"free and equal"—a focus on one's own positive attributes as the source of one's actions, a desire to express these attributes and influence others, and better engagement, motivation, and performance when these attributes are invoked or affirmed.

Yet when Americans are compared among themselves, taking into account their multiple forms of culture and their intersections, many Americans show fewer independent tendencies and more interdependent ones. Some American culture cycles foster independence, others foster interdependence, and a person's behavior will depend on the mix of cultural influences active in a given situation. As an example, those who participate in the culture cycles that accompany being White, a man, middle-class, and living on the West Coast with a career in business, are more likely to manifest more independent psychological tendencies than those who participate in the culture cycles that accompany being Black, working-class, a woman, living in the South, and working in a nonprofit organization (for a description of these culture cycles and their intersections, see Markus & Conner, 2013).

Many of the culture cycles that foster interdependent tendencies are associated with groups that have less power, prestige or status than those that traditionally have been dominant in U.S. American culture. People whose mix of culture cycles work together to foster independence most of the time are in the numerical minority, yet they tend to be in positions of power and to be the gatekeepers for entry to many organizations and institutions, including science. One consequence of this imbalance is that psychology's understanding of actual human behavior is uncritically inflected with an independent model of behavior. Independent tendencies are the neutral and the positive, while interdependent tendencies are often cast as secondary, deficient, or even immoral (e.g., Adams & Estrada-Villalta, 2017).

American may not equal independent, but America or the United States, at least in its pervasive ideas and national institutions, does equal independent, and these cultural forces can foster disparities between individuals with relatively more independent selves and those with less. A clash between the mainstream tendencies of many American institutions and the relatively interdependent ways of many Americans can be found in multiple domains. Teachers face classrooms with students who, because of their ethnic or racial heritages or their social class, are most familiar and practiced with interdependence (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008). In this case, students with the goal of contributing to and belonging in the community will respond to different incentives than students with the goal of doing well individually (Covarrubias, Herrmann, & Fryberg, 2016). Many employers, conflating leadership with an independent focus on the self and with expression of one's own ideas, find that employees with Asian or Latinx backgrounds just do not have the "executive presence" to move to the C-suites (Hewlett, Rashid, Roster, & Ho, 2011). White working-class voters are increasingly unhappy with how some in the middle-class, and especially professionals, seem to ignore or belittle their priorities and ways of life (Williams, 2017). The clash between independence and interdependence is also likely a significant feature in interactions between doctors and patients, parole officers and prisoners, and government officials and their constituents.

In a diverse, multicultural America, the possibilities for clashes between independence and interdependence are abundant, but so are the possibilities for theoretically and empirically informed interventions. One place to start might be an exploration of *inter*dependence, American style. This would include the study of forms of behavior that receive less attention in current independence-infused psychology, for example, obligation, loyalty, solidarity, adjustment, hierarchy, respect, relationships, roles, responsibilities, other-regulation (as opposed to self-regulation), and normatively driven behavior.

Jack Daniels may have distilled American independence. Cultural psychologists are still working on it. The evidence so far suggests that the recipe is an open secret—multiple culture cycles full of independent ideas, institutions, interactions, and individual tendencies. What happens with different parts of independence and interdependence remains to be understood.

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