

A Suggested Social Model Focusing on the Siblings of Persons with Disabilities – Studies in Japan

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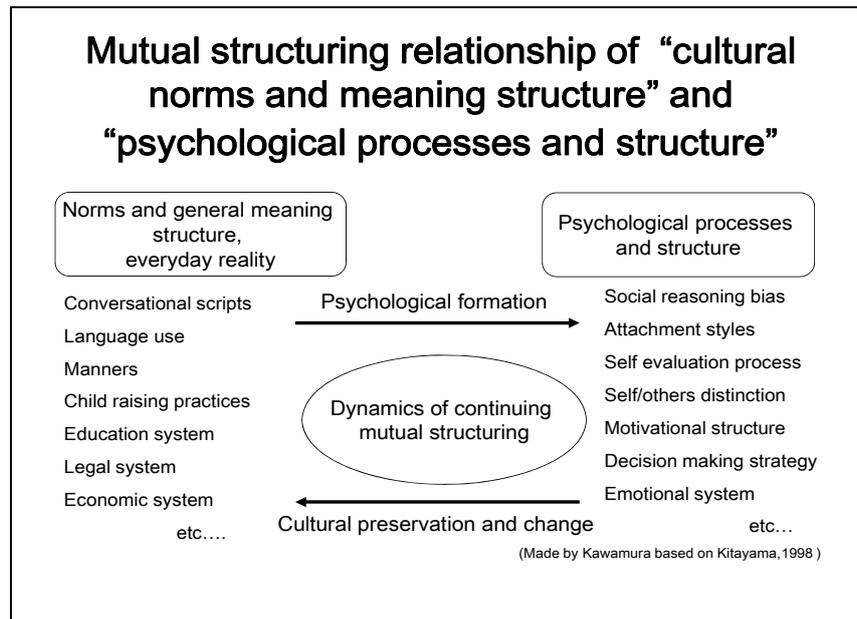
Abstract

In order for a social model to be put into action, the integration of the individual model and the social model is necessary. Although theoretical integration of the individual and social model is impossible, this study, which focuses on the siblings of PWD, looks for ways where such integration is possible in day-to-day life. These siblings of PWD grow and mature alongside their brothers and sisters. Indeed, they basically interact with each other their entire lives. Through the culturalization process of the siblings, they align themselves with society. However, during this alignment, the siblings gain invaluable insights and opinions that go unseen. This situation must be remedied. By changing the perspective to these siblings who become culturalized along with the PWD, we can change the value standards when dealing with disability issues.

Culture and disability are not unrelated. While I examine disability from the perspective of culture, I will introduce the theory of cultural psychology that tries to explain differences in psychological processes between cultures, such as ways of life and ways of viewing things, as well as individual differences within a particular culture.

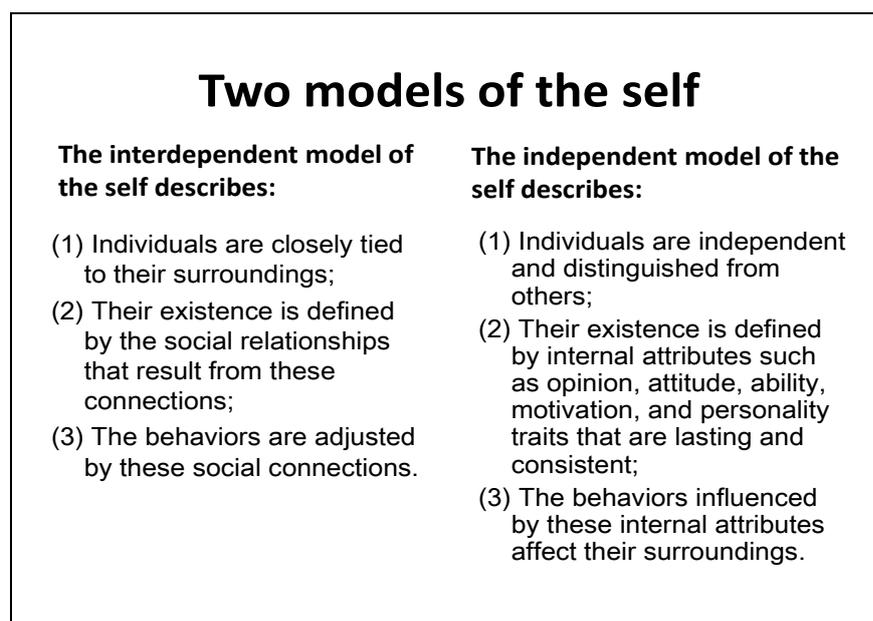
The theory of cultural psychology sets forth the concept of “cultural construals of the self” for the systematic analysis of the nature of culturally shared self views (Markus and Kitayama 1991). In other words, it is the shared view of an individual human in a particular culture. It serves as the presupposition of the self, and is the nexus for the mutual interactive process occurring between culture and psychology.

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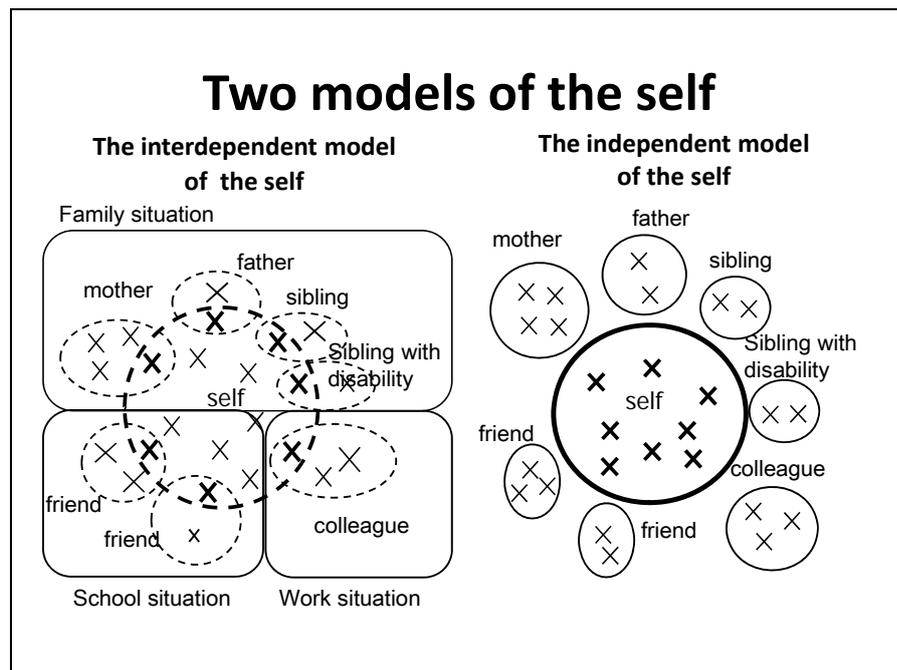


Markus and Kitayama (1991) and Kitayama (1998) present two models of the self, namely, the “independent model of the self” and the “interdependent model of the self.”

In contrast to the independent self, which stresses its uniqueness and independence from others, the interdependent self is defined within the differing nature of situations and other individuals, centering self-attributes deemed meaningful within its relationships.



The independent model of the self is most prevalent in American and European cultures, and is the cultural view of the self, observed most often among people in western societies. On the other hand, the interdependent model of the self is the dominant cultural view of the self found in Japan and other Asian people.



Data comparing siblings that have brothers or sisters with Intellectual and developmental Disability(IDD), and those that do not reveal there is a significant difference found between the two groups on the influence it has on their acculturation process.

The environment is also important. The environment of a residential facility for people with IDD, by definition, allows the committed individuals to spend the major part of their time within the facility, with lesser time at home during weekend and monthly visits. Depending on the location of the facility or a family's situation, a return-home visit may only be a few days a year. This being the case, the amount of time to carry on mutual interaction for siblings who live on a day-to-day basis with their

siblings with IDD, and with those whose family member with IDD is committed to a facility is significantly different. It was found that mutual exchange was indispensable in the transmission of cultural systems of meaning, and an individual's internalization of cultural meaning related to interpersonal relationships took place between around the ages of nine and fifteen (Minoura , 2003).

For this reason a study was initiated to observe children between nine and fifteen who live with their brother or sister with IDD at home, and those from the same age group that do not, and analyze any differences in the formative factors of cultural construals of the self, for both independent self and interdependent self models. It was found that the environment factor that favored the formation of the interdependent construals of the self of siblings in this age group that lived at home with their siblings with IDD was the invaluable experience gained from interaction with their siblings (Kawamura 2005).

The life style of PWD and the period of cultural schema acquirement by the siblings.

Standard partial regression coefficient of various factors in multiple regression analysis of PWD life styles expressed as dependent variables.
(Siblings: independent construal of the self)

Factor	Home (N=75)	Institution (N=83)
Family	.18	.33 **
High school and college life	.07	.14
Present membership in organization	.15	.32 *
Cross-cultural experiences	.19	-.12
Disability-related problems and worries	.26 *	.01
Invaluable experience through mutual interaction with the disabled	.37 **	.16
(R2)	.27 ***	.31 ***

*; p<.05, **, p<.01, ***, p<.001

(Kawamura, 2005)

What can be understood from these results is that individuals do not exist independently of external properties, but rather that external

properties themselves define the conditions for establishing the existence, or are the elements that provide the composition of that existence.

Here let us return to the discussion of the relationship between culture and the self. The independent model of the self is independent from others, and is an existence defined by internal attributes, such as opinions, attitudes, and motives that have permanence and consistency. Following these internal attributes, the behavior is that of a model of a person who influences his/her surroundings. By gaining “invaluable experience through mutual interaction with PWD,” the siblings assimilate an independent model of the self that allow opinions to form from what they learn through interacting with family members with IDD and the good experiences they have doing so, and this opens possibilities to influence their surroundings. In other words, “because they have ambivalent experiences with PWD, siblings of PWD are able to notice and think about things not noticed by those without a sibling with IDD, and may be an existence able to see things differently” (Tachibana and Shimada 1999:78). But whether this possibility is put into action or not, also depends on external properties. In Japan, where the interdependent self is the cultural presupposition, the assumed model of the individual is of one that actively adjusts to social relationships. Therefore, a sibling’s opinions and attitudes formed through the invaluable experience of interaction with a sibling with IDD may be suppressed by the general social demands to align with the accepted view of PWD.

Attention should be directed to society. From the viewpoint of cultural psychological theory, institutions and systems result from the activity of the people living in a particular culture and are in a complementary relationship. If then, one considers whether the way of looking at things and thinking about them by the siblings considered here, have in anyway been assimilated to be utilized, reflected or profit by society, the answer is negative. In the background of policy making, the situation indicates that there is little in the way of taking in the opinions of these siblings, or that sufficient consideration is given to the situation these

siblings find themselves. Rather to the contrary, they have been locked into the most prominent supporting role among those on the peripheries of people with IDD.

To actively incorporate in society the way these siblings see and think, and allow these to be expressed and contribute to the common benefit. In the acculturation process of the siblings and their alignment with society, there is the danger that what they learn and the invaluable experience they gain through interaction with the people with IDD will not be allowed to surface. If the perspective is shifted towards the siblings of people with IDD who are acculturating, the criteria of values found in the problems related to PWD will start to change. By taking advantage of these shifts in perspective, members of society at large can interact with siblings and develop ways to learn from these siblings and have an opportunity to readdress their notions of “disability.” With this it is possible for siblings to gain a confidence in their views of the “disabled,” and based on their experiences of living together with family members having IDD. A way to influence and change society and contribute to the nurturing of human resources can be found.

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