RESEARCH

Examining Individualism, Collectivism, and Self-Differentiation in African American College Women

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This study examined aspects of individualism, collectivism, and self-differentiation in 123 African American women attending a predominantly White university. Specifically, the study explored the relationship between Triandis's (1995) model of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism, and four self-differentiation constructs (i.e., emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cut-off, and fusion with others) proposed by Skowron and Friedlander (1998). Results revealed that aspects of individualism and collectivism were differentially related to self-differentiation in African American college women. Implications of the findings are discussed.

Mental health counselors work to promote optimal psychological health across the lifespan (e.g., Pistole & Roberts, 2002). In this capacity, counselors work together with their clients to anticipate and successfully negotiate the ordinary developmental challenges of psychological maturation. The college years represent a crucial time of transition to early adulthood. For many students, these years include a move away from their families, increased autonomy, and the press to develop their identities in the adult world. It would seem that Bowen's (1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988) family systems model might be of particular help to mental health counselors in conceptualizing some of the psychological issues faced by young adults during these years. Bowen seeks to illuminate the dynamics by which an individual attempts to define a distinct nonreactive identity that can be at the same time separate from, yet intimately related to, one's family of origin and significant others. The two foundational emphases in Bowen's paradigm of mental health are: (a) differentiation of self (the task of defining an internally derived sense of self vis-à-

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vis one's family) and (b) lessening of chronic anxiety (decreased reactivity and increased thoughtfulness in one's responses to significant others). However, only a very few studies to date (e.g., Tuason & Friedlander, 2000) have investigated how Bowen's model may or may not apply to the experiences of people of color.

Recently, researchers (Allen, 1992; Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1992; Kenny & Perez, 1996) have called attention to racial-cultural differences in college student adjustment. For instance, Allen noted that Black students in a predominantly White university face challenges that confront White students in general, in addition to unique challenges due to their racial group membership (e.g., establishment of their own social and cultural support networks to cope with institutional racism). In a sample of African American, Asian American, and Latino American college students, Kenny and Perez found that secure attachments to members of immediate or extended family were positively correlated with mental health. These researchers suggested that such findings might well be expected in students whose cultural values stress the importance of collectivism, family, and interdependence. They call for further studies to explicate the relationship between family attachment and psychological well-being for students belonging to specific racial/ethnic groups. Although Bowen's construct of differentiation of self was initially formulated from the experiences of White families, this study examines how cultural issues may be manifested via differences in self-differentiation scores for African American college women. White family patterns in the United States are believed largely to reflect White cultural values of individualism and independence (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). If this is the case, might the emphasis on an internally derived (individual) self and the primacy accorded thought processes over feeling processes in Bowen's paradigm simply be reflections of White cultural values? In contrast, African American families are primarily thought to embody cultural values of collectivism and interdependence (e.g., Utsey, Adams, & Bolden, 2000). What difference might this make for differentiation of self in the African American community? Alternatively, might there be a range of orientations representing both individualistic and collectivistic values within both White American and African American cultural groups?

Recently, Triandis (1995) has proposed a new paradigm for considering individualism and collectivism. He argues that individualism and collectivism are multidimensional constructs. Triandis (1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) suggests that both individualism and collectivism may be, in turn, vertical (emphasizing hierarchy in social relations) or horizontal (emphasizing equality in social relations). This important distinction helps to further delineate cultural differences in individualism and collectivism respectively (i.e., differing cultures may exhibit different kinds of individualism and different kinds

of collectivism). In this study, we examine the degree to which the cultural values of individualism and collectivism relate to levels of differentiation of self in African American college women using Triandis's (1995) model of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. The following two sections describe the constructs of differentiation of self and individualism and collectivism in greater detail.

DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF

In recent years, numerous authors have noted the heuristic value of Murray Bowen's (Bowen, 1978; Kerr, 1988; Kerr & Bowen, 1988) construct of differentiation of self for understanding issues of autonomy, interpersonal relatedness, and mental health (e.g., Bohlander, 1995; Gushue & Sicalides, 1997; Johnson & Buboltz, 2000; Kosek, 1998; Skowron, 2000; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Tuason & Friedlander, 2000). According to Bowen, it is precisely through the process of defining a self that human beings achieve optimal mental health. Bowen asserted that humans are born into the undifferentiated ego mass of a family and face the fundamental developmental challenge of achieving some degree of psychological autonomy while remaining emotionally connected to the family.

According to Bowen (1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988), a person with a poorly defined self will have very little emotional separation from others in his or her family and will be highly reactive to significant others. Such a person makes every effort to anticipate others' responses and adopts a pseudo-self in accord to their expectations and feedback. Kerr (1988) notes that a person with a poorly defined self tends to be governed by his or her own and others' feelings, and to respond to situations almost exclusively on the basis of feelings. Less differentiated people will show less adaptiveness and begin to exhibit psychological symptoms more readily under stress. An undifferentiated person is less able to tolerate chronic anxiety in important relationship systems and will seek to bind that anxiety either by fusing with others emotionally or by cutting off from relationships.

On the other hand, a well differentiated person can think, feel, and act for him or her self. According to Bowen (Kerr & Bowen, 1988), a differentiated person interacts with others from the position of a solid self (vs. pseudo-self) of measured convictions that have been gradually acquired and that do not change in response to shifting external circumstances or external pressure. Thus, a more differentiated person can achieve intimacy with another without losing his or her self in the process. A differentiated person has the capacity to both distinguish between emotional processes and intellectual processes and to use whichever set of processes is situationally appropriate. Thus, a differentiated person can be flexible in his or her response to a range of inter-

personal events. For instance, a differentiated person is capable of experiencing strong emotion, yet can respond rationally when called for. A more highly differentiated person shows greater flexibility when confronted by stressful situations and is slower to develop psychological symptoms. Such a person demonstrates a greater ability to tolerate chronic anxiety without being driven to seek an immediate resolution. Even in a potentially stressful situation, he or she is able to be a "non-anxious presence" (Freedman, 1988).

People may be described as having both basic and functional levels of differentiation. Basic differentiation denotes a person's overall level of differentiation. However, the level of differentiation with which a person functions in the here and now may vary according to circumstances. A particular situation or relationship may cause an individual to function at a somewhat higher or lower level of differentiation than his or her basic level. For instance, it is common to hear people report that they seem to "regress," take on old—now rejected—roles, or engage in almost predictable struggles when they visit their families for the holidays. Thus, even as people forge more differentiated selves, they continue to experience variations in response to particular sets of circumstances.

Recently, Skowron and Friedlander (1998) delineated four central constructs in Bowen's (1978) approach. They described three aspects of a low differentiation of self: emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others. Emotional reactivity refers to the state in which an undifferentiated person feels overwhelmed by and impinged upon by external factors, especially the emotional states of other family members or significant others. Emotional cutoff and fusion with others represent two maladaptive attempts to resolve this state of over-stimulation. In the first case (i.e., emotional cutoff), a person completely withdraws from the situation or relationship. He or she sacrifices the relationship to preserve a self. In the second scenario (i.e., fusion with others), a person becomes completely absorbed in the relationship. In this case, a person preserves the relationship at the cost of an autonomous self. Finally, Skowron and Friedlander describe the I-position, which refers to an individual's capacity for a solid self. This construct represents the capacity of a highly differentiated, internally defined person to achieve intimacy without fusion, to have autonomy without cutting off, and to experience emotion without becoming automatically reactive. Research has confirmed a positive relationship between differentiation of self and (a) mental health (Skowron & Friedlander; Tuason & Friedlander, 2000) and (b) marital satisfaction (Skowron, 2000).

Tuason and Friedlander (2000) explored the cross-cultural configuration of Bowen's paradigm. Bowen's original formulation was based on his experiences working with White families in the United States, that is, within a predominantly individualistic culture. Tuason and Friedlander examined differ-

entiation of self in a Filipino sample, where family patterns are based in a collectivistic culture. They reported a positive relationship between overall self-differentiation and mental health for their Filipino sample, as is similar to predominantly White United States samples. However, they noted that the subscales contributing to that relationship differed significantly from the United States sample reported in an earlier study. Tuason and Friedlander concluded that although the general construct of differentiation may be appropriate across cultures, there may be considerable cultural variation in what constitutes an optimal pattern of differentiation and, consequently, mental health.

INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM

Triandis and his colleagues (e.g., Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) have suggested a model to represent cultural differences in individuals' understandings of their relationships with others. Although individualism and collectivism are often conceptualized as dichotomous constructs, Triandis and Gelfand proposed a more complex model featuring differing types of individualism and collectivism. According to these researchers, both individualism and collectivism can be characterized as either vertical or horizontal. The horizontal pattern emphasizes equality and assumes that a person is more or less like other people in the system. The vertical pattern emphasizes hierarchy and is based on the assumption that each person in the system is distinct. Thus, according to Triandis and Gelfand (1998), horizontal individualism represents a cultural perspective that values the uniqueness of each person, but not social hierarchy. They suggest that a societal representation of this value might be a social democracy, where individual freedom is prized, but not at the expense of the common good. Alternatively, vertical individualism suggests a worldview in which people value both uniqueness and social status acquired through competition. Here, there is more of a "winner-takes-all" quality to the value accorded to individual freedom. Triandis and Gelfand suggested that a capitalist society, such as the United States, might represent the social expression of this worldview.

Horizontal collectivism represents a cultural stance that views people as more alike than not. This viewpoint emphasizes common goals and interdependence, but resists authority. In this model, the group's primacy does not easily delegate or authorize individuals in a leadership capacity. Decisions are taken by and for the group as a whole. Triandis and Gelfand (1998) propose that an Israeli kibbutz may be seen as a social expression of this value. Vertical collectivism also describes a worldview that places similar emphasis on interdependence and willingness to sacrifice one's own goals for the sake of the common good. However, unlike those with a horizontal collectivistic stance, people with a worldview of vertical collectivism accept hierarchy and

are willing to submit to authority. A society based on this perspective is characterized by a strong leader who emphasizes the good of society. One societal expression of this value may be noted in authoritarian populist rulers like some of the caudillos of the 20th century in Latin America (e.g., Perón) or in autocratic socialist leaders (e.g., Tito).

RATIONALE FOR THE CURRENT STUDY

Numerous authors have emphasized the crucial role that a person's relationship to family plays in mental health, for instance, during late adolescence and the traditional college years. Although some authors have called attention to potential cultural differences in "optimal" relationships with family, especially at this critical juncture, to date there is little empirical research on the influence of race and culture (Kenny & Perez, 1996). Specifically, few previous investigations have explored the degree to which cultural values held by African American late adolescents or adults may be associated with their family-of-origin relationships. Thus, this study examines how cultural values of individualism and collectivism, as defined by Triandis (1995), relate to African American women's experiences in the four domains of Bowen's (1978, Kerr & Bowen, 1988) differentiation of self construct as described by Skowron and Friedlander (1998): I-position, emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Participants were 123 African American college women who volunteered for the study. These students were recruited from a large, predominantly White state university in the Midwestern United States. These participants were enrolled in introductory psychology courses and were given course credit for completing the survey packet. The respondents were asked to participate in an anonymous study examining their general attitudes and perceptions about their college experiences by completing a questionnaire packet consisting of the Individualism-Collectivism Scale (INDCOL; Hui, 1988; Triandis, 1994), the Differentiation of Self Scale (DSI; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998), and a brief demographic questionnaire. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 22 years ($M = 19.30, SD = 1.21$). With regard to their educational level, 43 (35.0%) of the participants were first-year students, 40 (32.5%) were sophomores, 25 (20.3%) were juniors, and 15 (12.2%) were seniors.

Instruments

INDCOL (Hui, 1988; Triandis, 1994). The INDCOL is a 32-item, 7-point

Likert-type (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) scale that assesses components of individualism and collectivism. The INDCOL consists of four 8-item subscales: horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism. Individuals characterized as being high in horizontal individualism often see themselves as unique, but not necessarily better than others. A sample item from the horizontal individualism subscale is, "Being a unique individual is important to me." Vertical individualists, on the other hand, are generally competitive and are interested in becoming distinguished and acquiring status (e.g., "It annoys me when other people perform better than I do."). Persons who are high in horizontal collectivism tend to see themselves as being similar to others and emphasize common goals with others, but they do not submit easily to others. An example of an item that taps horizontal collectivism is, "The well-being of my co-workers is important to me." Finally, individuals who are high in vertical collectivism typically view group goals as having priority over individual goals, and they may support competitions of their own groups with other groups (e.g., "Children should be taught to place duty before pleasure.").

In a validation study (i.e., Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995), the INDCOL was shown to have good construct validity, and Cronbach alphas of .67, .74, .74, and .68 were found for the horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism subscales, respectively. In the present investigation, Cronbach's alphas of .77, .61, .68, and .64 were computed for the horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism subscales, respectively.

DSI. (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). The DSI is a 43-item, Likert-type (1 = not at all true of me, 6 = very true of me) instrument that assesses respondents' perceptions of their ability to experience intimacy with and independence from significant others, including their family of origin. The DSI consists of four subscales. The first subscale, emotional reactivity (11 items), measures the extent to which individuals respond to environmental stimuli with hypersensitivity, emotional flooding, or emotional lability (e.g., "At times I feel as if I'm riding an emotional roller-coaster"). The I-position subscale (11 items) assesses the extent to which individuals are able to clearly define themselves and to stand by their own convictions (e.g., "No matter what happens in my life, I know that I'll never lose my sense of who I am"). The emotional cutoff subscale consists of 12 items that reflect feeling threatened by intimacy, fears of engulfment, and cutting off thoughts from feelings (e.g., "I have difficulty expressing my feelings to people I care for"). Finally, the fusion with others subscale (9 items) assesses emotional over-involvement and over-identification with others, particularly parents (e.g., "I try to live up to my parents' expectations"). Higher scores on each of the subscales are associated with greater degrees of self-differentiation.

In the validation study (i.e., Skowron & Friedlander, 1998), internal consistency reliabilities for the DSI subscales were .84 (emotional reactivity), .83 (I-position), .82 (emotional cutoff), and .74 (fusion with others). Moreover, the DSI was shown to demonstrate good construct validity. In the current investigation, Cronbach's alphas of .66, .65, .69, and .45 were noted for the emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others subscales, respectively.

Demographic questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate their race, ethnicity, sex, age, and current educational level.

RESULTS

The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the variables under investigation are provided (see Table). Because the primary purpose of our study was to explore the relationships between aspects of individualism and collectivism and dimensions of self-differentiation, we conducted a multivariate multiple regression analysis to examine our data. This specific procedure was chosen for several reasons. First, a multivariate multiple regression analysis is able to control for the possible intercorrelations among the predictor and criterion variables (Haase & Ellis, 1987; Lunneborg & Abbot, 1983; Stevens, 1986). Thus, for both predictor and criterion variables that are moderately to highly intercorrelated, this analytic procedure is a vital way to account for multicollinearity among the variables. Second, a multivariate multiple regression analysis can accommodate multiple predictor and multiple criterion variables, all of which are continuously distributed, from which follow-up tests can determine the unique contribution of each predictor variable on each criterion variable (Lutz & Eckert, 1994). In our study, the predictor variables were the four subscales of the INDCOL, and the criterion variables were the four DSI subscales.

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of the Study's Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Horizontal Individualism	5.88	.74	--	.10	.32***	.30***	-.05	.41***	.04	-.08
2. Vertical Individualism	3.99	.89		--	.06	.12	-.18*	.07	-.35***	-.03
3. Horizontal Collectivism	5.38	.76			--	.50***	-.18*	.17	.16	-.30***
4. Vertical Collectivism	5.09	.77				--	-.04	.15	.06	-.28**
5. Emotional Reactivity	3.26	.72					--	.32***	.07	.40***
6. I-Position	4.27	.65						--	.11	-.00
7. Emotional Cutoff	4.14	.74							--	-.19*
8. Fusion with Others	2.71	.61								--

Note. The means correspond to the Likert-type scale for each measure. Higher scores correspond to greater levels of the given variable. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Results revealed that the overall proportion of variance in the four DSI subscales accounted for by the 4 INDCOL subscales was statistically significant, Pillai's Trace = .52, $F(16, 472) = 4.42, p < .001, \eta^2_m = .13$, where η^2_m is the multivariate effect size. Because multivariate significance was reached at the .05 level, follow-up univariate analyses were conducted. Results of these analyses revealed that the four INDCOL subscales accounted for significant variance in the emotional cutoff subscale, $F(4, 118) = 5.40, p < .001, \eta^2 = .15$, the fusion with others subscale, $F(4, 118) = 3.67, p < .01$, h2 = .11, and the I-position subscale, $F(4, 118) = 6.03, p < .001, \eta^2 = .17$, where η^2 is the univariate effect size.

Additional follow-up analyses were conducted to examine the unique contribution of each of the predictor variables on the criterion variables. Results of these analyses indicated that horizontal individualism was significantly positively associated with I-position scores, $F(1, 118) = 18.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$. Furthermore, vertical individualism was significantly negatively related to both emotional reactivity scores, $F(1, 118) = 4.10, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$, and emotional cutoff scores, $F(1, 118) = 17.73, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$. In addition, horizontal collectivism was found to be significantly negatively related to both emotional reactivity scores, $F(1, 118) = 4.11, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$, and fusion with others scores, $F(1, 118) = 4.59, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$.

DISCUSSION

We found that horizontal individualism was significantly positively predictive of I-position scores in African American college women. Thus, it appears that African American women who value individual uniqueness, yet view themselves as having more or less equal status to others, possess a more differentiated sense of self. That is, they are able to stand up for their beliefs while remaining connected to significant others in their lives (Schnarch, 1997; Skowron, 2000). Although African Americans tend to be more collectivistic in orientation (Utsey et al., 2000), most African Americans are bicultural to some degree as a result of living in the United States (Toldson & Toldson, 2001). Hence, their bicultural status may enable them to express both individualistic and collectivistic patterns, depending on the context. Perhaps the horizontal individualism worldview represents a blending of these cultural perspectives.

Moreover, despite previous assertions that there are not major distinctions between African Americans' self-identity and group identity (e.g., Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Kambon, 1992), the aforementioned finding may suggest that African American women may have both personal (individual) and group (collective) identities that allow them to maintain a sense of individual self while, simultaneously, remaining connected to important others. This finding

warrants additional research to further elucidate the complex ways in which African American women adaptively manage the developmental tasks of differentiation, for instance, in predominantly White academic climates.

Results also revealed that vertical individualism was significantly negatively correlated with emotional reactivity. That is to say, higher levels of a worldview that emphasizes individuality and self-reliance as well as social status were related to less chronic anxiety. To the extent that their fundamental values include individuality and self-reliance, some African American women might be said to have an internally defined sense of self that does not rely excessively on others for approval. It would make sense then that such women might have the capacity to remain calm and thoughtful, even in the presence of the emotional responses of others. As noted earlier, according to Bowen (Kerr & Bowen, 1988), a greater capacity to act from one's "solid self" (i.e., greater self-differentiation) is associated with less emotional reactivity. Vertical individualism was also found to be significantly negatively related to emotional cutoff. Thus, having a cultural worldview that valued individual freedom, uniqueness, and social hierarchy was associated with less of a tendency to relieve anxiety by emotional distancing. Perhaps as African American college women adjust to campus environments that they may experience as somewhat incongruent with their cultural values (or perhaps even at times toxic), they seek ways to anchor themselves, to define a social space, and to protect their autonomy. It could be that, in predominantly White colleges and universities, African American women who value competition and hierarchy may achieve these goals by competing and establishing a place for themselves. One reason these women may remain emotionally connected is in order to compete. They may be able to protect their uniqueness and self-reliance through social hierarchy and status. Inequalities that they may encounter on campus may present challenges to overcome, but not threats to their worldview.

One commonality in the worldviews discussed so far has been the embracing of individualism (either horizontal and vertical) as a core value. As was just noted, higher levels of a worldview that includes individualism were related to variables representing higher self-differentiation (i.e., higher I-position, lower emotional reactivity, and lower emotional cutoff). These data may suggest that a cultural worldview that values uniqueness, autonomy, and self-reliance may help some African American college women to feel less vulnerable to environmental changes, pressures, and stresses. This finding may indicate that counselors working with African American women on predominantly White campuses should perhaps be willing to consider that clients' beliefs in their own uniqueness may serve as buffers from some of the emotional stresses of college adjustment. These beliefs should not necessarily be construed in these contexts as selfish or narcissistic, but as adaptive in help-

ing African American women to cope in college environments that may offer them diminished support.

We further found that horizontal collectivism was significantly negatively related to both emotional reactivity and fusion-with-others scores in these African American college women. With regard to emotional reactivity, it appears that African American women who see themselves as part of a group and are willing to put group goals ahead of their own are less inclined to respond with behaviors such as emotional flooding, emotional lability, and hypersensitivity (Skowron, 2000; Tuason & Friedlander, 2000) in the context of close relationships. The emotional security that may be afforded by close and meaningful connections with significant others may help these women to feel more emotionally stable and grounded. Regarding the latter result, it appears that some African American college women may emphasize group harmony, interconnectedness, and emotional intimacy with others without fearing losing their identity in relationships, being abandoned, or being smothered. The ability to be able to maintain connections with important others without feeling overly involved or "fused" with them may allow these women to maintain well-defined and healthy selves.

Both this finding and the first finding reported above connect worldviews that emphasize horizontal dimensions (i.e., equality) to higher self-differentiation. Specifically, higher levels of horizontal individualism were related to higher endorsement of the I-position, and higher levels of horizontal collectivism were related to lower levels of emotional reactivity and fusion. These findings may suggest that, for some African American college women, a cultural belief in the fundamental equality and similarity of human beings is positively related to efforts to define a self. It may be the case that there is something about this cultural outlook that supports and grounds the efforts of some African American women to be more autonomous and less dependent on the opinions or moods of other important figures in their lives.

Implications of the Findings

Our findings offer some insights into the psychological experiences of African American college women. The results may also have salient implications for mental health counselors who work with these women in private practice, community agency, or college settings. There is ample evidence in the literature suggesting that cultural responses are often context dependent. In particular, in the psychological and anthropological literature (e.g., Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000; Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997; Rosenberger, 1992), there is growing recognition that individuals' conceptions of themselves are intertwined with their social situations and relational domains. In fact, in certain cultures, it is a sign of interpersonal strength and maturity to be able to adapt and adjust oneself to meet various role demands

and expectations across contexts (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Hence, African American women could presumably endorse either collectivistic or individualistic orientations, depending on the situations that arise. Being able to adapt to at least two competing cultural contexts (i.e., bicultural competence) requires alternating identities to meet varying cultural requirements (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993).

As an example of the aforementioned phenomena, Gomez et al. (2001) noted that many of the Latinas they interviewed reported cultural differences in their behaviors at home and at work. Kenny and Perez (1996) also observed the potential for cultural discontinuity between home and school environments for students of color. For some African American college women, perhaps placing their own goals first or sacrificing their own goals for the greater good of their cultural group depends on the task and situation at hand. It might be the case that, at home, these women may be willing at times to subjugate their own needs to those of their families. However, amid the more competitive and individualistic culture of some predominantly White colleges and universities, it might be more adaptive for them to look out for themselves. These findings are noteworthy and call for further study insofar as they suggest that the influence of race and culture on the psychological lives of students, or adults more generally, may be both more variable and complex than has frequently been supposed.

Another potential implication of our findings for mental health counselors who work with African American college women is that they may need to be attentive to subtle shifts in their clients' worldviews or patterns of behaviors. As counselors become more aware of multicultural differences, they should not assume that African American women who present for counseling are necessarily endorsing a cultural perspective commonly attributed to their group (i.e., collectivism). Rather, some of the beliefs, attitudes, and values that may motivate these women may be specific to their presence and survival at a particular setting such as a predominantly White university. Determining which aspects of their self-definition and self-presentation are consistent with the norms of their cultural group and which aspects may be situationally consistent with the university culture may be a crucial task facing these mental health counselors.

Limitations and Future Research Directions
The study's results should be considered in the context of several potential limitations. First, generalizability of the findings is cautioned because the participants were African American female college students matriculated in a predominantly White university in the Midwestern region of the United States. Future investigations may wish to determine whether this study's findings would be replicated in African American women college students resid-

ing in other geographical areas. A second possible limitation of the research is that the results may be hampered by the sub-optimal internal consistency coefficients of some INDCOL and DSI subscales. Another potential limitation may be that the study's measures were self-report in nature. For example, it is possible that some respondents did not report their actual attitudes or behaviors because of social desirability or self-enhancement motives. Fourth, it is plausible to consider that some participants may have been cognizant of the research intent and, as a result, responded differently to some or all of the study's instruments based on their presumed knowledge about what was being measured.

There is a need for future research that examines the current study's variables in African American college men, in a wider range of college students (e.g., American Indians, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, and White Americans), and in the adult population more generally. Moreover, future investigators may wish to employ qualitative research methodologies to obtain more in-depth and descriptive information about African Americans' individualism-collectivism and self-differentiation experiences. Future research on individualism, collectivism, and self-differentiation in African Americans should also be conducted with additional samples of African Americans of diverse ages (e.g., older adults), geographic locations (e.g., the West Coast, the South), and religious and spiritual traditions (e.g., Christian, Muslim, Yoruba), as well as across different life domains (e.g., work, family, community). In summary, further research is needed to determine whether and how the within-group variations in worldview noted above might also be related to differences in self-differentiation and mental health for clients in a variety of settings and at differing points across the lifespan.

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