

Spring 2009

Exploring the Link Between Self-Construal and Distress Among African American and Asian American College Students

Michael S. Christopher
Pacific University

Gemma D. Skillman
The University of South Dakota

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.pacificu.edu/sppfac>

 Part of the [Mental and Social Health Commons](#), [Psychiatry and Psychology Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Christopher, M. S., & Skillman, G. D. (2009). Exploring the link between self-construal and distress among african american and asian american college students. *Journal of College Counseling*, 12(1), 44-56.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Professional Psychology at CommonKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Scholarship (SPP) by an authorized administrator of CommonKnowledge. For more information, please contact CommonKnowledge@pacificu.edu.

Exploring the Link Between Self-Construal and Distress Among African American and Asian American College Students

Description

The authors investigated ethnicity, self-construal, and distress among African American and Asian American college students. African American students expressed more salient independent self-construals, whereas Asian American students expressed more salient interdependent self-construals. As hypothesized, among African American participants, distress was positively related to interdependent self-construal and negatively associated with independent self-construal. Contrary to prediction, the same pattern was found for Asian American participants. Multicultural clinical practice implications are presented.

Disciplines

Mental and Social Health | Psychiatry and Psychology | Psychology

Comments

Reprinted from *Journal of College Counseling* 12(1), 44-56. © 2009 The American Counseling Association. Reprinted with permission. No further reproduction authorized without written permission from the American Counseling Association.

Rights

[Terms of use for work posted in CommonKnowledge.](#)

Exploring the Link Between Self-Constraint and Distress Among African American and Asian American College Students

Michael S. Christopher and Gemma D. Skillman

The authors investigated ethnicity, self-construal, and distress among African American and Asian American college students. African American students expressed more salient independent self-construals, whereas Asian American students expressed more salient interdependent self-construals. As hypothesized, among African American participants, distress was positively related to interdependent self-construal and negatively associated with independent self-construal. Contrary to prediction, the same pattern was found for Asian American participants. Multicultural clinical practice implications are presented.

The combination of academic, social, financial, and other adjustment demands that typically are associated with the college transition, occurring at a time when individuals often are developmentally predisposed to the onset of various psychological disorders, can increase a student's vulnerability to distress (Voelker, 2004). For example, national surveys have indicated that symptoms of depression are most prevalent among people who are 18 to 29 years old (Schieman, Van Gundy, & Taylor, 2001) and that nearly 75% of individuals with diagnosable anxiety disorders experienced their first symptoms before they were 21 years old (Kessler et al., 2005). Similarly, Furr, Westefeld, McConnell, and Jenkins (2001) reported that 53% of students had experienced some form of depression when in college, 9% had contemplated committing suicide, and 1% had engaged in at least one suicide attempt. In the American College Health Association's (2007) National College Health Assessment, 93% of students reported feeling overwhelmed during the previous year and 44% reported that they "felt so depressed it was difficult to function" (p. 205).

Ethnicity and College Student Distress

Researchers have suggested that ethnic minority students, in comparison with their ethnic majority peers, may be even more likely to experience distress and express apprehension about the rigors of college (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). Moreover, generally speaking, ethnic minority students tend to encounter unique challenges not experienced by majority students (Marcus et al., 2003). Ethnic minority students may experience heightened distress as a result of experiences with racial discrimination, difficulty adapting to a predominantly White college culture, and community disengagement (Gloria, Hird, & Navarro, 2001). Although extant research has indicated that these types of additional stressors affect various ethnic groups on campus (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001), we focused only on African American and Asian American college students in the present study.

Michael S. Christopher, Counseling Psychology Program, Pacific University; Gemma D. Skillman, Psychology Department, The University of South Dakota. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Michael S. Christopher, Counseling Psychology Program, Pacific University, 511 SW 10th Avenue, Suite 400, Portland, OR 97205 (e-mail: mchristopher@pacificu.edu).

© 2009 by the American Counseling Association. All rights reserved.

African American students seem more likely than do their White American peers to report unfair treatment on college and university campuses (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Walden, 1994). African American students also have reported experiencing greater social isolation and more difficulties with interpersonal interactions with faculty and peers (Sedlacek, 1987; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). Furthermore, according to Landrine and Klonoff (1996), 98% of African Americans experienced racial discrimination during the past year, and 100% reported experiencing racial discrimination at some point during their lifetime. In turn, experiences of discrimination and racism are key factors leading to distress and other mental health concerns among racial and ethnic minority students, and among African American learners in particular (R. Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999).

Asian American students also tend to report more experiences of depression and social anxiety than do their majority student peers (Okazaki, 1997, 2000; Okazaki & Kallivayalil, 2002; Sue, Ino, & Sue, 1983). Lee, Lei, and Sue (2001) suggested that Asian American students tend to experience considerable stress and anxiety as a result of perceived parental pressures to achieve academically.

Naturally, when comparing experiences among ethnocultural groups, caution must be used to avoid defining the majority group's experiences, or another single group's experiences, as normative. Furthermore, because heterogeneity occurs within racial and ethnic groups and important differences exist between these groups, research is needed to guide counseling practice that takes into account a variety of cultural variables when predicting and describing experiences of distress (La Roche & Christopher, 2008). One such variable may be *self-construal*, which is a personal-level variable that corresponds to individualism and collectivism at the general cultural level.

Self-Construal as a Cultural Variable

Independent Versus Interdependent Self-Construal

Analogous to individualism, the essential aspect of *independent self-construal* is a concept of oneself as an autonomous, independent person, separate and detached from collectives (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Characteristics indicative of independent self-construal include an emphasis on (a) internal abilities, feelings, and thoughts; (b) uniqueness and expression of the self; (c) realizing internal attributes and promoting one's own goals; and (d) direct communication (Singelis, 1994). Individuals with strong independent traits enhance their self-esteem primarily through expressing the self and validating their internal attributes. They also tend to value competition, hedonism, and self-reliance (Triandis, 2001).

Alternatively, *interdependent self-construal*, akin to collectivism at the group level, is defined by relationships in which individuals tend to focus on their connectedness with important others and strive to meet or create duties, obligations, and social responsibilities (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Consequently, interdependent self-construal is exemplified by (a) external, public features such as status, roles, and relationships; (b) belonging and fitting in; (c) occupying one's proper place and engaging in appropriate action; and (d) indirect communication (Singelis, 1994).

For those who construe the self more interdependently, self-esteem is enhanced through harmonious interpersonal relationships and the ability to adjust to various situations to please important others (Triandis & Trafimow, 2001).

Self-Construal and Ethnicity

A traditional assumption underlying much of the self-construal research that has been conducted in the United States is that members of the three largest ethnic minority groups—African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/a Americans—tend to endorse greater collectivism and lower individualism than do White Americans (Gaines et al., 1997; Rhee, Uleman, & Lee, 1996). However, Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of previous findings that indicated a more complex picture. They found that Asian American and Latino/a Americans tended to endorse a more salient interdependent self-construal than did White Americans, whereas African Americans and White Americans were similar on the basis of interdependent self-construal. Oyserman et al. also found that African Americans tended to endorse more salient independent self-construals than did White Americans and Asian Americans and that Latino/a Americans did not differ significantly from the other groups in independent self-construal. The implications of these complex findings regarding our current study are twofold. First, the traditional assumption of a self-construal distinction between White Americans and non-White Americans may be unwarranted. Second, perhaps the largest actual group difference in self-construal may exist between African Americans and Asian Americans, with greater independence among African Americans and greater interdependence among Asian Americans. We believe that gaining a better understanding of between-group characteristics may assist in formulating more effective counseling experiences for diverse clientele.

Self-Construal and Distress

Beck's (1983, 1987) research on sociotropy and autonomy—cognitive-personality constructs hypothesized to predispose the onset of depression—has provided a relevant theoretical basis for the relationship of self-construal and distress. Sociotropy refers to goals and attitudes in which a high value is placed on close interpersonal relations, whereas autonomy refers to goals and attitudes in which an investment is made in personal independence, achievement, and freedom of choice (Beck, 1983). Consequently, the cognitive diathesis-stress model (Beck, 1983, 1987) proposes that highly sociotropic individuals are more likely to develop depression in response to an event perceived as involving threatened or actual loss of social acceptance or relationship, whereas autonomous individuals are more likely to develop depression in response to an event perceived as involving a loss or limitation of independence, control, or accomplishment. Several studies examining sociotropy and autonomy in nonclinical samples of primarily White American college students have revealed that a sociotropic worldview is positively related to depression and that no such relationship exists between an autonomous worldview and depression (Bieling, Beck, & Brown, 2004; D. A. Clark, Beck, & Brown, 1992; Robins, Hayes, Block, Kramer, & Villena, 1995). Therefore, White American college students who value close interpersonal relations over personal

independence may be more likely to experience depressive symptoms. Moreover, several studies have identified strong positive relationships between sociotropy and interdependent self-construal and between autonomy and independent self-construal among college students (Gorski & Young, 2002; Sato & McCann, 1998). Among college students, interdependent self-construal may be directly linked to distress, whereas independent self-construal may be inversely related to distress. However, given that the studies were primarily composed of White American college samples, researchers must realize the importance of examining the link between self-construals and distress in different ethnic groups instead of broadly generalizing previous results.

Self-Construal, Ethnicity, and Distress

In our review of the literature, we found only three studies that directly examined the relationship between self-construal, ethnicity, and distress among American college students. All three studies examined the relationship between self-construal and distress among Asian American and White American students, and collectively, these studies suggested that distress is negatively related to independent self-construal and positively related to interdependent self-construal (Norasakkunkit & Kalick, 2002; Okazaki, 1997, 2000). However, in two of the studies (Norasakkunkit & Kalick, 2002; Okazaki, 2000), the interactions between self-construal and ethnicity were not tested; therefore, whether the positive relationship between distress and interdependent self-construal and the negative relationship between distress and independent self-construal existed for both ethnic groups that were investigated is unclear. We believe that these relationships may hold only for White American students. Furthermore, among African American students, the relationship between self-construal and distress has yet to be assessed.

Previous research has indicated that, in general, people in the African American population may experience a more individualistic tendency and people in the Asian American population may experience a more collectivistic tendency (Oyserman et al., 2002); therefore, the way in which self-construal relates to distress may differ between members of these two groups. Caldwell-Harris and Ayçiçeği (2006) characterized this difference as the personality-cultural clash hypothesis and suggested that distress will be most prevalent among those who construe a primarily independent view of self in a collectivistic ethnic group and among those who construe a primarily interdependent view of self in an individualistic ethnic group. We agree that a mismatch between personal- and group-level cultural orientations can generate distress; however, we believe that this mismatch among Asian American students still needs to be more thoroughly examined. Furthermore, as noted, this hypothesis has yet to be assessed among African American students.

For the current study, we hypothesized that African American students would report stronger independent self-construals than would Asian American students, whereas Asian American students would report stronger interdependent self-construals than would African American students. Additionally, in accordance with the personality-cultural clash hypothesis, we hypothesized that among Asian Americans, distress would be positively related to independent self-construal and negatively related to interdependent self-construal and that among African

Americans, distress would be positively related to interdependent self-construal and negatively related to independent self-construal.

Method

Participants

The African American participants consisted of 50 college students (39 women and 11 men), of whom 43 were undergraduate students and 7 were graduate students, with a mean age of 23.04 years ($SD = 5.70$), residing throughout the United States (4 Northeast, 14 Southeast, 11 Midwest, 16 Southwest, 5 Northwest). The Asian American participants consisted of 41 college students (28 women, 13 men), of whom 29 were undergraduate students and 12 were graduate students, with a mean age of 22.76 years ($SD = 4.47$), residing throughout the United States (2 Northeast, 10 Southeast, 15 Midwest, 9 Southwest, 5 Northwest). No significant differences existed between the two groups for gender ($\chi^2 = 1.21, p = .27$), student status (i.e., undergraduate vs. graduate: $\chi^2 = 2.46, p = .12$), or age ($t = .26, p = .80$). Participants completed all measures via the Internet.

Instruments

Self-construal. Singelis's (1994) Self-Construal Scale (SCS) was used to measure independent and interdependent self-construal. Each of the scales consists of 12 items (independence, $\alpha = .70$; interdependence, $\alpha = .74$). Although originally normed on Asian American and White American college students, the SCS has shown similar reliability estimates and a stable two-factor structure (i.e., independence and interdependence) with African Americans (Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2001). The alpha coefficient for the present sample was .81 for the independent scale (.81 for both African American and Asian American students) and .69 for the interdependent scale (.61 for African American students and .74 for Asian American students).

Distress. The Hopkins Symptom Checklist-21 (HSCL-21; Green, Walkey, McCormick, & Taylor, 1988) is an abbreviated form of the Hopkins Symptom Checklist (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974). The HSCL-21 is a self-report inventory with 21 items rated using a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*extremely*). In providing support for the predictive validity of the HSCL-21, Deane, Leathem, and Spicer (1992) reported that a sample of psychotherapy clients reported a score on the HSCL-21 that was statistically significantly higher than the score reported by a control sample of registered nurses. Moreover, Cepeda-Benito and Gleaves (2000) asserted that the discriminant validity of the HSCL-21 "makes this instrument especially useful for researchers interested in comparative research across ethnically diverse college students" (p. 304). The HSCL-21 has a corrected split-half reliability of .91 and an alpha of .90 (Green et al., 1988). The alpha coefficient for the present sample was .86 (.86 for both African American and Asian American students).

Design and Procedure

To recruit participants for this research, we posted a message outlining this study on several electronic mailing lists: American Psychological Association (Division

2: Teaching of Psychology and Division 45: Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minority Issues) and American Psychological Society (Psychological Research on the Internet). Faculty members were requested to present the study Web address to their students. This procedure is commonly used in Internet-mediated data collection (e.g., Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004).

Participants first read a consent form (study home page) and completed it with their name, date of birth, and e-mail address indicating their consent. Participants were informed that the consent form with identifying information and the data pages (i.e., their responses) could not be matched. They were also informed of the voluntary, confidential, and anonymous nature of the study. The measures (SCS and HSCL-21) took participants 15 to 30 minutes to complete. Participants' consent was entered into a database and a copy of the consent form automatically e-mailed to them. A separate database contained the data (i.e., responses), and only this information (and not the identifying information) was linked across data pages via a unique ID code that was generated for each participant.

Results

Self-Construal Comparisons

As predicted, African American students ($M = 5.35$, $SD = .73$) reported greater independent self-construals than did Asian American students ($M = 4.99$, $SD = .84$), $t(90) = 2.25$, $p = .027$, $d = .43$, whereas Asian American students ($M = 5.20$, $SD = .86$) reported greater interdependent self-construals than did African American students ($M = 4.79$, $SD = .98$), $t(90) = 1.99$, $p = .037$, $d = .42$.

Predictors of Distress

To examine whether self-construal contributes differentially to reports of distress for the two groups, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to predict HSCL-21 scores from ethnicity, independent self-construal, interdependent self-construal, and the Ethnicity \times Independent Self-Construal and Ethnicity \times Interdependent Self-Construal interaction terms. In the regression, ethnicity was entered as Step 1, independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal were entered as Step 2, and the Ethnicity \times Independent Self-Construal and Ethnicity \times Interdependent Self-Construal interaction terms were entered as Step 3. Results are presented on the basis of the values at Step 3. The ethnicity variable was dummy coded (African American = -1, Asian American = 1), and each of the continuous predictors (independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal) was centered for the analyses and before computation of the interaction terms (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

As shown in Table 1, ethnicity was not a significant predictor, indicating no significant difference in distress between African American and Asian American students. Results revealed significant main effects for independent self-construal ($\beta = -.25$, $p = .017$) and interdependent self-construal ($\beta = .30$, $p = .007$). The effect size for the independent and interdependent self-construal terms was $f^2 = .14$, indicating a small to medium effect (Cohen, 1988). However, neither the Ethnicity \times Independent Self-Construal ($\beta = -.15$, $p = .150$) nor the Ethnicity \times Interdependent

TABLE 1

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Psychological Distress From Ethnicity, Independent Self-Construal, and Interdependent Self-Construal

Variable	β	ΔR^2	ΔF	p
Step 1		.03	2.30	.130
Ethnicity	.03			
Step 2		.12	6.36	.003
Independent Self-Construal	-.25*			
Interdependent Self-Construal	.30**			
Step 3		.03	1.44	.240
Ethnicity \times Independent Self-Construal	-.15			
Ethnicity \times Interdependent Self-Construal	-.06			

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

Self-Construal ($\beta = -.06, p = .598$) interactions were statistically significant, indicating that the relationships between self-construal (independent and interdependent) and distress did not significantly differ between the two groups.

Recently, Liu and Goto (2007) identified a significant interaction between independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal in the prediction of distress among Asian American adolescents. More specifically, they found that distress increases with greater levels of interdependence, more so for adolescents scoring low on independence than those scoring high on independence. In fact, for adolescents scoring high on independence, the positive relationship between interdependence and mental distress became nonsignificant. Therefore, we also tested the Independent Self-Construal \times Interdependent Self-Construal interaction in the prediction of distress in a post hoc model among the overall sample ($N = 91$). The results were nonsignificant ($\beta = -.09, p = .35$).

Discussion

The goals of this study were to examine the traditional assumption that American ethnic minority groups construe a primarily interdependent self and to assess the relationship between self-construal and distress among African American and Asian American college students. For African American students, we hypothesized that students would report stronger independent self-construals and that their distress would be positively related to interdependent self-construal and negatively related to independent self-construal. For Asian American students, we hypothesized that students would report stronger interdependent self-construals and that their distress would be positively related to independent self-construal and negatively related to interdependent self-construal.

Self-Construal and Ethnicity Findings

Regarding ethnicity and self-construal, despite support found in earlier studies for the homogenization of non-White Americans into a collective interdependent

category (Gaines et al., 1997), our research indicates that this grouping may be inaccurate. As predicted, when comparing the two groups, results reveal that African American students tended to endorse a more salient independent self-construal, whereas Asian American students tended to construe the self more interdependently. Our findings support the results of Coon and colleagues (Coon & Kimmelmeier, 2001; Oyserman et al., 2002) and highlight the need for more accurate assessment of—and less tendency to make assumptions about—self-construal among diverse groups.

Self-Construal and Distress Findings

The need for accurate assessment of self-construal across diverse populations is highlighted by our finding that the two types of self-construal, namely independent and interdependent, have different relationships to distress. We predicted that for African American students, distress would be positively related to interdependent self-construal and negatively related to independent self-construal. We predicted the inverse for Asian American students, that is, that distress would be negatively related to interdependent self-construal and positively related to independent self-construal. Our hypothesis regarding distress and self-construal was confirmed for African American students. However, contrary to our hypothesis, we found no significant differences between African American and Asian American students in the interactions of Ethnicity \times Self-Construal (independent and interdependent) when predicting distress.

These results indicate that, despite ethnic group self-construal differences, the relationship between self-construal and distress is parallel across African American and Asian American students. In other words, irrespective of ethnicity, those who were more concerned with asserting their own judgment and emphasizing autonomy from others were less likely to report distress symptoms, whereas those tending to focus on their connectedness with relevant others and striving to meet or create duties, obligations, and social responsibilities were more likely to report distress symptoms. These results are consistent with Okazaki's (1997) research in which no significant interaction existed between ethnicity and self-construal in predicting distress among Asian American and White American participants. These results are also consistent with Beck's (1983, 1987) research on sociotropy and autonomy. More specifically, given the link between sociotropy and interdependent self-construal and between autonomy and independent self-construal (Gorski & Young, 2002; Sato & McCann, 1998), our results suggest that, among Asian American and African American students, a sociotropic worldview may be predictive of distress. Similar results have been found among primarily White American students (Bieling et al., 2004; D. A. Clark et al., 1992; Robins et al., 1995). Our findings are also consistent with the broader American ethos in which autonomy and self-reliance are generally viewed as desirable traits, and passivity and reliance on others are viewed as signs of weakness (Huntington, 1996). In American society, messages reinforcing these mainstream cultural values abound (Markus, 2007), and despite group-level differences in self-construals, perhaps the internalization of these values across groups may partially account for the positive

relationship between interdependence and distress evidenced across various ethnic groups in the United States.

Self-Construal, Ethnicity, and Distress Findings

Although Asian American students reported interdependent self-construals that were stronger than those reported by African American students and interdependent self-construal was a significant positive predictor of distress across groups, ethnicity (entered as Step 1 in the regression) was not predictive of distress. One potential explanation for this result is the small sample size and subsequent lack of power. Replication with larger sample sizes would be beneficial to further assess this important relationship among these ethnic groups. Another potential explanation comes from Norasakkunkit and Kalik's (2002) work, in which they demonstrated that commonly used measures of depression and social anxiety can inadvertently pathologize groups that are traditionally more collectivistic and less individualistic. This bias does not seem to be likely in our study, given that ethnicity was not a significant predictor of psychological distress, despite lower independence and higher interdependence among Asian American students in comparison with African American students. These results, in conjunction with Cepeda-Benito and Gleaves's (2000) finding that the HSCL-21 exhibited measurement invariance between African American, Latino American, and White American college students, suggest that this measure may actually help reduce artificial distress inflation among various ethnic groups. Nonetheless, the relationship between independent and interdependent self-construal and distress (as well as relevant mediators and moderators) needs to be further examined using various approaches.

Limitations

The results of this study must be interpreted with caution because of several additional limitations. First, all of this study's measures were self-report questionnaires used to assess distress and self-construal among a nonclinical sample of college students. Although all measures had at least acceptable reliability and validity, they were nonetheless vulnerable to possible distortions and response biases. As a typical precaution, follow-up research with mixed quantitative and qualitative methods may lend additional confidence to our findings. Second, given our relatively small sample size, our results should be generalized only tentatively. Third, the use of the Internet as a data collection tool raises the possibility of a self-selection bias. At the same time, Azar (2000) noted that Internet samples are often more representative of the general population than the convenience samples would be when used in the average psychological study. Moreover, the majority of Internet-mediated research has demonstrated that this medium addresses the same psychological phenomena and produces the same patterns of results as its traditional counterparts (Gosling et al., 2004). Fourth, the effect size of self-construals on distress was in the small to medium range ($f^2 = .14$), which indicates that the majority of variance in distress is explained by other factors not assessed in this study. Therefore, although self-construal seems to be a useful variable in need of further examination, exploration of additional variables that can help identify those who are more likely to experience distress in various ethnic groups

is needed. Additionally, in studies such as the current one, in which comparisons are made between different ethnic populations, interpretations of the findings should avoid characterizing the experiences of any one group as normative.

Implications for Practice

Keeping the study's limitations in mind, we believe our preliminary findings may have potentially important implications for counselors. Although to infer from just this study that interdependent self-construal is causally related to psychopathology is premature, our research suggests that self-construals may play a role in the experience of distress for African American and Asian American college students. In turn, we encourage counselors to include a brief measure of self-construals (e.g., SCS) at intake to help guide treatment decisions in consideration of the various cultural dynamics and levels of self-construal among clients. For example, Rosselló and Bernal (1999) found that, although cognitive behavioral and interpersonal therapy resulted in similar decreases in depression symptoms among interdependent Puerto Rican adolescents, only interpersonal therapy (which focuses on resolving interpersonal issues) produced improvements in self-concept and social adaptation. Similarly, La Roche, D'Angelo, Gualdron, and Leavell (2006) developed an allocentric guided imagery treatment for anxiety on the basis of the Latino/a cultural value of interdependence, and they found that interdependent self-construal was directly related to treatment adherence and positive outcome.

Recently, several culturally influenced counseling models that accommodate interdependent worldviews have also been developed to address the needs of Asian American clients (Hinton, Saffren, Pollack, & Tran, 2006; Leong & Lee, 2006). These collectivistic-oriented treatments share several common elements that counselors can incorporate into their work with students who have a primarily interdependent worldview. First, counselors should work with clients to normalize and eventually empower an interdependent worldview that has been essentially pathologized by mainstream America. To facilitate this, counselors should accommodate for the need of an integration-with-others process rather than a differentiation-from-others process (Leong & Lee, 2006). This is of particular importance in a university setting in which, from a developmental perspective, many students with an interdependent worldview may struggle with the processes of integration and differentiation when away from family for the first time. Here again, counselors relying solely on Eurocentric developmental models in which separation and individuation are viewed as the healthy or mature outcome may be mismatched with the needs of collectivistic-oriented students. Second, counselors should emphasize the positive effects of counseling on family and extended social networks. Eurocentric models of treatment tend to focus exclusively on individual change and improvement, which may be of minimal importance to clients who view themselves as inherently interconnected with others. Evaluating and incorporating contextual issues (e.g., family difficulties) into treatment can enhance the relevance of treatment for collectivistic-oriented clients and result in better treatment compliance and outcome (La Roche & Christopher, 2008). Third, counselors should consider incorporating creative and complementary methods in therapy that may be especially engaging for college students and

emerging adults. As an example, family and cultural stories that have been shared intergenerationally can shed light on the significance of relational coping and the managing of distress, particularly for collectivistic college students. This narrative approach to counseling and therapy can assist the student in using resources that are culturally rooted and interpersonally/familially significant, simultaneously offering college students ways to support the values of interdependence while helping to strengthen relational autonomy during emerging adulthood. Overall, research has suggested that using a client's self-construal to help direct treatment planning may enhance treatment adherence and overall outcome.

Self-construals may also have important implications for the marketing of counseling services on higher educational campuses. For instance, Christopher, Skillman, Kirkhart, and D'Souza (2006) found that a marketing message emphasizing social acceptance of counseling increased help-seeking intention more than a message outlining the personal benefits of seeking counseling did in a collectivistic society (Thailand) and that the message outlining personal benefits of counseling was more effective in increasing help-seeking intention among primarily White students in a more individualistic society (United States). This suggested that help-seeking on college campuses might be enhanced by including both individualistic and collectivistic language in the counseling center's literature. Descriptions of counseling and psychotherapeutic approaches that emphasize the positive effects on family and social networks, and additional language to empower students with a collectivistic worldview, can be included.

Taken together, our results support the need for further investigation of self-construal as a stand-alone variable and in the ethnocultural context to enhance the effective practice of culturally competent assessment and counseling on college and university campuses.

References

- American College Health Association. (2007). American College Health Association National College Health Assessment spring 2006 reference group data report. *Journal of American College Health, 55*, 195-206.
- Azar, B. (2000). A Web of research. *Monitor on Psychology, 31*, 42-47.
- Beck, A. T. (1983). Cognitive therapy of depression: New perspectives. In P. J. Clayton & J. E. Barrett (Eds.), *Treatment of depression: Old controversies and new approaches* (pp. 265-290). New York: Raven Press.
- Beck, A. T. (1987). Cognitive models of depression. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy, 1*, 5-37.
- Bieling, P. J., Beck, A. T., & Brown, G. K. (2004). Stability and change of sociotropy and autonomy subscales in cognitive therapy of depression. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy, 18*, 135-148.
- Caldwell-Harris, C. L., & Ayciçegi, A. (2006). When personality and culture clash: The psychological distress of allocentrics in an individualist culture and idiocentrics in a collectivist culture. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 43*, 331-361.
- Cepeda-Benito, A., & Gleaves, D. H. (2000). Cross-ethnic equivalence of the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-21 in European American, African American, and Latino college students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 6*, 297-308.
- Christopher, M. S., Skillman, G. D., Kirkhart, M. W., & D'Souza, J. B. (2006). The effect of normative and behavioral persuasion on help seeking in Thai and American college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 34*, 80-93.
- Clark, D. A., Beck, A. T., & Brown, G. K. (1992). Sociotropy, autonomy, and life event perceptions in dysphoric and nondysphoric individuals. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 16*, 635-652.

- Clark, R., Anderson, N. B., Clark, V. R., & Williams, D. R. (1999). Racism as a stressor for African Americans: A biopsychosocial model. *American Psychologist, 54*, 805–816.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences* (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Coon, H. M., & Kimmelmeier, M. (2001). Cultural orientations in the United States: (Re)examining differences among ethnic groups. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 32*, 348–364.
- Deane, F. P., Leatham, J., & Spicer, J. (1992). Clinical norms, reliability and validity for the Hopkins Symptom Checklist–21. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 44*, 21–25.
- Derogatis, L. R., Lipman, R. S., Rickels, K., Uhlenhuth, E. H., & Covi, L. (1974). The Hopkins Symptom Checklist (HSCL): A self-report symptom inventory. *Behavioral Science, 19*, 1–15.
- Fries-Britt, S. L., & Turner, B. (2001). Facing stereotypes: A case study of Black students on a White campus. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*, 420–429.
- Furr, S. R., Westefeld, J. S., McConnell, G. N., & Jenkins, J. M. (2001). Suicide and depression among college students: A decade later. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 32*, 97–100.
- Gaines, S. O., Jr., Marelich, W. D., Bledsoe, K. L., Steers, W. N., Henderson, M. C., Granrose, C. S., et al. (1997). Links between race/ethnicity and cultural values as mediated by racial/ethnicity identity and moderated by gender. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72*, 1460–1476.
- Gloria, A. M., Hird, J. S., & Navarro, R. L. (2001). Relationship of cultural congruity and perceptions of the university environment to help-seeking attitudes by sociorace and gender. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*, 545–562.
- Gorski, J., & Young, M. A. (2002). Sociotropy/autonomy, self-construal, response style, and gender in adolescents. *Personality and Individual Differences, 32*, 463–478.
- Gosling, S. D., Vazire, S., Srivastava, S., & John, O. P. (2004). Should we trust Web-based studies? A comparative analysis of six preconceptions about Internet questionnaires. *American Psychologist, 59*, 93–104.
- Green, D. E., Walkey, F. H., McCormick, I. A., & Taylor, A. J. (1988). Development and evaluation of a 21-item version of the Hopkins Symptom Checklist with New Zealand and United States respondents. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 40*, 61–70.
- Hinton, D. E., Safren, S. A., Pollack, M. H., & Tran, M. (2006). Cognitive-behavior therapy for Vietnamese refugees with PTSD and comorbid panic attacks. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 13*, 271–281.
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Jones, L., Castellanos, J., & Cole, D. (2002). Examining the ethnic minority student experience at predominantly White institutions: A case study. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 1*, 19–39.
- Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 62*, 593–602.
- Landrine, H., & Klonoff, E. A. (1996). The schedule of racist events: A measure of racial discrimination and a study of its negative physical and mental health consequences. *Journal of Black Psychology, 22*, 144–168.
- La Roche, M. J., & Christopher, M. S. (2008). Culture and empirically supported treatments: On the road to a collision? *Culture & Psychology, 14*, 333–356.
- La Roche, M. J., D'Angelo, E., Gualdrón, L., & Leavell, J. (2006). Culturally sensitive guided imagery for allocentric Latinos: A pilot study. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 43*, 555–560.
- Lee, J., Lei, A., & Sue, S. (2001). The current state of mental health research on Asian Americans. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 3*, 159–178.
- Leong, F. T., & Lee, S.-H. (2006). A cultural accommodation model for cross-cultural psychotherapy: Illustrated with the case of Asian Americans. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 43*, 410–423.
- Liu, F. F., & Goto, S. G. (2007). Self-construal, mental distress, and family relations: A mediated moderation analysis with Asian American adolescents. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 13*, 134–142.
- Marcus, A., Mullins, L. C., Brackett, K. P., Tang, Z., Allen, A. M., & Pruett, D. W. (2003). Perceptions of racism on campus. *College Student Journal, 37*, 611–626.
- Markus, H. R. (2007, August). *Address given by Hazel R. Markus*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco.

- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224–253.
- Norasakkunkit, V., & Kalick, S. M. (2002). Culture, ethnicity, and emotional distress measures: The role of self-construal and self-enhancement. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33, 56–70.
- Okazaki, S. (1997). Sources of ethnic differences between Asian American and White American college students on measures of depression and social anxiety. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 106, 52–60.
- Okazaki, S. (2000). Asian American and White American differences on affective distress symptoms: Do symptom reports differ across reporting methods? *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 31, 603–625.
- Okazaki, S., & Kallivayalil, D. (2002). Cultural norms and subjective disability as predictors of symptom reports among Asian Americans and White Americans. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33, 482–491.
- Oyserman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 3–72.
- Rhee, E., Uleman, J. S., & Lee, H. K. (1996). Variations in collectivism and individualism by ingroup and culture: Confirmatory factor analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 1037–1054.
- Robins, C. J., Hayes, A. M., Block, P., Kramer, R. J., & Villena, M. (1995). Interpersonal and achievement concerns and the depressive vulnerability and symptom specificity hypotheses: A prospective study. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 19, 1–20.
- Rosselló, J., & Bernal, G. (1999). The efficacy of cognitive-behavioral and interpersonal treatments for depression in Puerto Rican adolescents. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 67, 734–745.
- Sato, T., & McCann, D. (1998). Individual differences in relatedness and individuality: An exploration of two constructs. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 24, 847–859.
- Schieman, S., Van Gundy, K., & Taylor, J. (2001). Status, role, and resource explanations for age patterns in psychological distress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 42, 80–96.
- Sedlacek, W. E. (1987). Black students on White campuses: 20 years of research. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 28, 484–495.
- Singelis, T. M. (1994). The measurement of independent and interdependent self-construals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 580–591.
- Sue, D., Ino, S., & Sue, D. M. (1983). Nonassertiveness of Asian Americans: An inaccurate assumption? *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 30, 581–588.
- Swim, J. K., Hyers, L. L., Cohen, L. L., Fitzgerald, D. C., & Bylsma, W. H. (2003). African American college students' experiences with everyday racism: Characteristics of and responses to these incidents. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 29, 38–67.
- Triandis, H. C. (2001). Individualism and collectivism: Past, present, and future. In D. Matsumoto (Ed.), *The handbook of culture and psychology* (pp. 35–50). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Triandis, H. C., & Trafimow, D. (2001). Cross-national prevalence of collectivism. In C. Sedikides & M. B. Brewer (Eds.), *Individual self, relational self, collective self* (pp. 259–276). New York: Psychology Press.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). *Mental health: Culture, race, and ethnicity: A supplement to mental health: A report of the surgeon general*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services.
- Voelker, R. (2004). Stress, sleep loss, and substance abuse create potent recipe for college depression. *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association*, 291, 2177–2179.
- Walden, C. (1994). The health status of African American college students: A literature review. *Journal of American College Health*, 42, 199–205.