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# The Association of Cultural Orientation with Identity Development and Psychological Adjustment

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# THE ASSOCIATION OF CULTURAL ORIENTATION WITH IDENTITY

# DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

by MADISON COOPER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Psychology
in the College of Sciences
and in The Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term, 2021
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Abstract

The current study aimed to examine possible relationships between cultural orientation and identity formation. Late adolescent college students ($N = 480$) completed an anonymous survey online. Measures included the Cultural Orientation Scale, the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire, and the Identity Distress Survey. Identity commitment was significantly correlated with both individualism and collectivism. Identity exploration and identity distress, however, were not significantly correlated with either individualism nor collectivism. Those in the Achieved and Foreclosed identity status groups scored significantly higher on collectivism than the two low commitment groups, Moratorium and Diffusion. Contrary to suggestions in the literature, those with a collectivistic orientation did not report less identity exploration, nor more identity distress than those with an individualistic orientation. And although both collectivism and individualism were positively correlated with identity commitment, collectivists scored significantly higher in commitment than individualists. These results suggest that researchers might need to rethink what it means to hold collectivistic values in an individualistic culture.

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# INTRODUCTION

The most researched dimension of culture is individualism and collectivism, these dimensions are focused on the relationship between the individual and the group (Triandis & Gelfand, 2012). In collectivist cultures, behaviors are structured around norms, obligations and duties whereas in individualist cultures behaviors revolve around attitudes, personal needs, individual rights, and what the individual establishes as important (Davidson et al.,1976). The goals of the group have priority over individuals' goals in a collectivist culture, and vice versa for individualist culture. If there is conflict in individualist culture between individual goals and group goals, the individual goals have priority (Triandis 1995). Although it is often thought that individualism and collectivism fall on opposite ends of a single continuum, research suggests that each is its own continuum (Jhingon, 2012). In other words, it is not just one or the other; individualism and collectivism are not extremes of a single continuum, but rather, they are two separate and orthogonal continuums (Capozza, et al., 2000; Gelfand et al., 1996). This means that they are statistically independent and that both can be present, for example, a person can be high in individualism and collectivism at the same time. For example, one can hold individualistic values with regard to their career, while having more collectivistic values in regard to family, politics, and religion.

While some authors define both cultural and personal tendencies with the words individualistic or collectivistic, Matsumoto and Kupperbusch (2001) draw a distinction between the level of culture, where they use the common term individualistic and collectivistic versus the

individual level, where individualistic tendencies are referred to as idiocentrism and collectivistic tendencies are referred to as allocentrism. In this thesis, the words will be used somewhat interchangeably. When describing the research of others, their choice of nomenclature will be maintained. In describing the research conducted for this thesis, individualism and collectivism will be used to describe both cultural and personal tendencies.

**Gender Differences**

Research has been contradictory in regard to sex differences. In his work, Erikson (1968) suggested that there was a difference between genders in the identity formation process, but he did not delve into the differences. Jhingon, (2012) found in her study that females reported being more collectivistic (allocentric) and males reported being more individualistic (idiocentric), but the researcher also stated more male participants were needed to confirm and generalize her findings. Berman and colleagues (2014) found that women scored higher in collectivism whereas men scored higher in individualism. However, Triandis and colleagues (1985) found only minor differences on a measure of idiocentric/allocentric tendencies, and Lalonde and colleagues (2017) found no significant differences between genders. Lewis (2003) suggested that the lack of difference between genders in the ideological domain of identity that she found in her study could be due to college aged women assimilating to the norms of individualistic culture. Hogsdon and Fischer (1979) found that women tended to define themselves in relation to others, while men defined themselves in relation to competence dilemmas. Going along with this, they state that males seemed to focus on intrapersonal aspects of identity, whereas women focus on interpersonal aspects. It was clear to them that there are gender differences when it comes to

identity formation. Clearly, gender differences in individualism and collectivism need to be studied more before any definitive conclusions can be made.

**Individualism/Collectivism and Identity**

Erikson's (1959) Psychosocial Theory of Development has 8 sequential stages, each one focusing on major psychosocial crises during points of life. The stages are as follows: trust versus mistrust (infancy), autonomy versus shame/doubt (toddlerhood), initiative versus guilt (pre-school), industry versus inferiority (elementary school), identity versus role confusion (adolescence), intimacy versus isolation (young adulthood), generativity versus stagnation (middle adulthood), ego integrity versus despair (late adulthood). The 5th stage, identity versus role confusion, will be the focus in this paper. This stage typically occurs around the time of adolescence according to Erikson, although it often continues into early adulthood especially among college students, and it is integral to finding a sense of self. Marcia's (1996) paradigm of identity status is based on operationalizing some of Erikson's ideas on identity formation. As opposed to being sequential like Erikson's stage theory, Marcia's (1996) status model is in no set order, one can move from each status to another. One's identity status is determined by where one is developmentally on two continuums: identity exploration (exploring various possible roles, goals, values, and beliefs that might give one a sense of direction and purpose) and identity commitment (adopting specific roles, goals, values, and beliefs to define one's life). The four statuses of identity proposed by Marcia are as follows: diffused, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved. Developmentally, everyone begins in the diffusion status, which is categorized by a lack of exploration and lack of commitment. One can stagnate in that status or begin to explore

and/or commit. If one commits before adequate and thorough exploration, this is referred to as the status of foreclosure. This typically happens when a person adopts without critical examination the roles, goals, values, and beliefs that others (most often parents) indoctrinate. For those who do not prematurely commit, they may instead begin to explore their possible paths and choices in order to establish their identity. This period of exploration before commitment is referred to as the moratorium status. Finally, if one moves on from moratorium to make firm identity commitments after critically examining their options, they would be said to be in the status of identity achievement.

Identity distress is defined as, "severe subjective distress regarding [the] inability to reconcile aspects of the self into a relatively coherent and acceptable sense of self" (American Psychiatric Association 1980, p. 65). As mentioned, forming an identity requires exploration, such as testing different values, beliefs, and opinions (Berman & Montgomery, 2014). Berman and colleagues (2010) found that exploring identity and moving through statuses of identity can lead to identity distress. They found a positive correlation between identity distress and identity exploration, and a negative correlation between identity distress and identity commitment. Thus, those in moratorium tend to be highest in distress, followed by those in diffusion, with those in foreclosure and achievement usually reporting the lowest levels of distress.

An individualistic or collectivistic cultural orientation could potentially make a difference in how young people construct their identity (Jhingon, 2012). Jhingon found that one can have a collectivist orientation and still have a strong sense of identity when compared to those with an individualist orientation. Thus, a strong identity can be formed in a culture that focuses on the whole rather than the individual self. In Berman and colleagues' (2014) study concerning

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identity distress and globalization, an American sample showed less identity distress compared to Chinese and Indian samples. On the other hand, in Berman and colleague's (2010) study, the Asian group scored lower than the American group on identity commitment and identity distress. In both previously mentioned studies, the American group was viewed as having an individualistic culture, and the Asian group was viewed as having a collectivistic culture. In their 2010 study, they found that Asians scored lower on commitment and identity distress than Americans. The contradictory findings between these two studies might be due to historical effects in that with globalization, some eastern cultures are becoming more westernized and young people in these contexts might be experiencing a clash in traditional individualistic and collectivistic values. Also, the extent to which identity development is structured across cultural contexts is not completely known, so western concepts may not be relevant to study identity development in other cultures. More research is necessary to study identity distress across cultures.

**Individualism/Collectivism and Mental Health**

The association between levels of collectivism and individualism on the one hand, and mental health on the other, are not clear nor consistently documented. In one case, levels of individualism have been found to be associated with high levels of mental illness (Triandis et al., 1985). Yet, Capozza and colleagues (2000) found that those in individualistic cultures showed higher levels of self-esteem as well as higher positive self-evaluations. In contrast, Matsumoto and Kupperbusch (2001) found no differences between those who were idiocentric and those who were allocentric in their ratings of emotional experiences. Those who were idiocentric and

those who were allocentric reported the same intensity of emotions while watching a video despite expressing emotions differently, this could create potential for intercultural misunderstanding. This suggests that others might not be distressed about identity when someone from another culture assumes they are (Matsumoto & Kupperbusch, 2001). This being said, studying across cultures should take both cultures and their norms into account. When studying mental health and identity distress, culture should be considered to determine the parameters of that stress.

**Ethnicity, Individualism/Collectivism, and Mental Health**

It has been commonly believed in the psychology literature that racial and ethnic minority groups tend to be higher in collectivism, although the research supporting this idea has been inconsistent and contradictory (Smith et al., 2019; Vargas & Kemmelmeier, 2013; Wong et al., 2018), which may have to do with the various ways that collectivism and individualism have been defined and measured within various contexts. Lalonde and colleagues (2017) concluded that ethnic identity exploration is beneficial if it leads to people feeling more proud of their ethnic group. This suggests that ethnic identity exploration can benefit overall mental health. They also found that ethnic identity exploration acts as a buffer between vertical collectivism; (collectivism in hierarchical relationships) and psychological well-being. In other words, when participants were actively exploring their identity, vertical collectivism was not significantly related to psychological well-being.

Differences on typical measures of identity (e.g., exploration, commitment, status, distress) by ethnic groups have not been particularly researched. There is an extensive literature on ethnic identity development, but it is typically conceived in terms of ethnic awareness, exploration, and affirmation. Identification with and affirmation of one's racial/ethnic minority group has been consistently found to correlate with less psychological distress and greater well-being (c.f., Brittian et al., 2015; Willis & Neblett, 2019). Possibly the only study that specifically looked at identity distress and ethnicity, found ethno-cultural identity conflict (intrapsychic struggling over one's ethnic identity) was positively correlated with identity distress (Ward et al., 2011).

In other words, identity distress can be a byproduct of certain aspects of identity development, and it may be the identity distress, rather than identity development itself that might be causing the specific mental health issues. More definitive research is needed to analyze identity distress across cultures and how that can affect mental health.

**Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Ethnicity**

A positive correlation has been found between individualism and wealth. Holfstede (1980) found that industrialized wealthy countries scored higher on individualism than developing countries. Going along with this, Triandis (1994) stated that as people have greater wealth, they have more independence financially as well as socially allowing them freedom to make more choices. Ensminger and colleagues (2009) found that those with higher socioeconomic status were more likely to report better physical and emotional health. And, as

previously stated, Lalonde and colleagues (2017) found that ethnic identity exploration can benefit mental health. These studies led to speculations questioning whether higher SES, and concurrently increased identity exploration due to more possible outlets, could be associated with increased psychological well-being. Results in studies regarding SES and mental health, as well as SES and identity, have been limited, thus the need for more research in this area is indicated.

**Rationale**

Although previous studies have looked at cultural orientation and identity, some of these studies used country as a proxy for cultural orientation without directly measuring the degree to which participants in a particular country actually adhered to the cultural stereotype (e.g., Berman et al., 2010; Berman et al. 2014), and one study that did include a measure of cultural orientation (Jhingon, 2012) used a measure of identity development that did not classify identity status. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine possible relationships between cultural orientation variables (individualism, collectivism) and identity variables (exploration, commitment, diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, achievement, and distress). It is theorized that forming an identity from an individualistic orientation might be more stressful on average in that it involves a sole pursuit, which might evoke feelings of alienation, being lost, and identity distress. An individualistic orientation favors identity exploration in order to find one's unique identity. Forming an identity from a collectivistic orientation being more of a group pursuit, might evoke more feelings of belonging and esprit de corps, hence less identity distress. A collectivistic orientation favors commitment over exploration and acceptance of group values over individual pursuits. Identity comes from membership in the group rather than constructing a separate and unique identity. However, while extreme individualistic tendencies may lead to feelings of

isolation and alienation, extreme collectivistic tendencies may lead to a lost sense of self. Thus, people exhibiting either extreme may have higher rates of identity distress. Following this theoretical line of reasoning, it is hypothesized that:

1. Individualism will be positively correlated with identity exploration and identity distress.

2. Collectivism will be positively correlated with identity commitment, but negatively correlated with identity distress.

3. Those in moratorium and achievement will score higher in individualism than those in foreclosure and diffusion.

4. Those in foreclosure and achievement will score higher in collectivism than those in moratorium and diffusion.

5. High levels of individualism and/or high levels of collectivism will score higher in levels of identity distress and psychopathology than those in the average and lower.

6. SES will be positively correlated with individualism and identity exploration, but negatively correlated with collectivism and identity distress.

7. Members of ethnic minority groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Native-Americans) will score higher on collectivism and lower on individualism than Whites.

8. Collectivism and individualism will be a better predictor of identity distress than ethnicity alone.

## METHOD

### Participants

This study included 480 participants of which 67.3% were female, 32.1% were male, 0.2% were transgender ($n = 1$), and 0.4% were other ($n = 2$). Grade distribution included 62.1% freshmen, 14.8% sophomores, 13.1% juniors, 6.7% seniors, 0.8% non-degree seeking students, 0.4% graduate students, and 2.1% other. The ethnic/racial distribution was 41.9% White, non-Hispanic; 26.5% Hispanic or Latinx; 11.7% Black, non-Hispanic; 10.2% Asian or Pacific Islander; and 9.8% identified as mixed or other. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 63 years with a mean of 19.79 and standard deviation of 4.43.

### Measures

*Demographic questionnaire* asking sex, age, education, and ethnicity.

*Measure of Socioeconomic* Status (MSES) adapted from Ensminger and colleagues (2000), this measure consists of 8 multiple choice questions about their parents' marital, employment, educational, and government assistance status. While many students do not know their family income, these questions have been found to be more easily answered with greater

accuracy. Ensminger and colleagues reported a strong correlation between MSES scores and mother's income ($r = .65$, $p < .001$). The internal consistency (Cronbach's coefficient alpha) in this study was found to be .53.

*Identity Distress Scale* (IDS; Berman, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2004). This survey is a 10-item Likert scale measure that is used to determine overall identity discomfort. Discomfort is measured in terms of the time frame experienced, severity, and interference in daily functioning in regards to seven identity domains: Religion, sexual orientation, goals, career choices, values, group affiliation, and friendships. Participants are asked to rank their discomfort on a 5 point scale (1 = not at all, 2 = mild, 3 = moderate, 4 = severe, 5 = very severely) on the mentioned domains. The internal consistency was found to be .84 and test-retest reliability of .82, with demonstrated convergent validity to other measures of identity development (Berman et al., 2004). In this study the internal consistency reliability was found to be .80.

*The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire* (EIPQ; Balistreti Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995) is used to classify identity status. There are 32 statements on the scale that participants rate on a scale of 1 through 6 (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree). The two sub-scales in this questionnaire are identity exploration and identity commitment. These scales were based on Marcia's (1996) identity statuses: diffused, foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved. Low scores on exploration and commitment are classified as diffused, low in exploration and high in commitment are classified as foreclosed, high in exploration and low in commitment are moratorium, and high in exploration and high in commitment are achieved. Balistreti and colleagues (1995) reported that the exploration subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .86 and a test-retest reliability of .76. The

commitment subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .80 with a test-retest reliability of .90. In this study the internal consistency reliability was found to be .70 for exploration and .68 for commitment.

*Brief Symptom Index-18* (BSI-18; Derogotis, 2000). The BSI-18 is a self-report measure that includes 18 items that assess psychological symptoms. The 3 primary symptom dimensions that are measured are: depression, anxiety, and somatization. Participants rate symptoms on a 5 point scale (1 = not at all, 2 = a little bit, 3 = moderately, 4 = quite a bit, 5 = extremely) to describe how a symptom has distressed them in the past 7 days. Cronbach's alpha was reported to be .89 (Derogotis, 2000). In this study Cronbach's alpha was found to be .93.

*The Cultural Orientation Scale* (COS; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) is a 27 item 5-point Likert-type scale that measures beliefs and attitudes that exhibit individualistic and collectivistic tendencies. The Cronbach's alpha were .77 for individualism and .80 for collectivism. The results place participants into 1 out of 4 categories: low in collectivism and individualism, high in both collectivism and individualism, low in collectivism and high in individualism, or high in collectivism and low in individualism. In this study Cronbach's alpha was found to be .78 for individualism and .79 for collectivism.

**Procedure**

Students in large enrollment psychology courses at a metropolitan university in Florida were recruited through SONA, an online research participation platform. They had the choice of many different ongoing studies in the department of psychology from which to choose for course credit. Those who did not wish to participate in research were given alternative assignments instead. Those who selected this study were presented with a link to complete the survey battery

in Qualtrics. Participants were first presented with the Explanation of Research, which informed them of the purpose of the study and their rights, after which they were directed to the survey. The survey was anonymous, not requesting any identifying information.  The scales were administered in the following order: a demographic questionnaire, MSES, COS, EIPQ, IDS, and BSI-18.

# RESULTS

## Preliminary and Descriptive Analyses

Preliminary and descriptive statistical analyses of all study variables were conducted including a reporting of the range, means, and standard deviations for all measures (see Table 1). Next, a correlation matrix for all measures with participant age was constructed (see Table 2). Age was significantly correlated with identity exploration ($r = .13$, $p = .005$). Individualism was correlated to collectivism ($r = .13$, $p = .004$) and identity commitment ($r = .12$, $p = .007$). Identity commitment was also correlated to collectivism ($r = .30$, $p < .001$). Finally, identity commitment was negatively correlated to identity exploration ($r = -.38$, $p < .001$) and identity distress ($r = -.36$, $p < .001$). Gender differences were found across two of the four identity statuses ($X^2_{(3, 477)} = 14.85$, $p = .002$), with a higher percentage of females in the achieved status as compared to males and a higher percentage of males in the diffused status than females. A 2 (*Gender*) x 6 (*Ethnicity*) Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the continuous scores on all the measures as the dependent variables. Gender differences were found with males scoring higher than females on the measures of socioeconomic status ($F_{(1, 465)} = 7.37$, $p = .045$), and with females scoring higher than males on identity commitment ($F_{(1, 465)} = 4.36$, $p = .037$), identity distress ($F_{(1, 465)} = 8.10$, $p = .005$), and internalizing symptoms ($F_{(1, 465)} = 13.83$, $p < .001$). Ethnicity differences were found on socioeconomic status ($F_{(4, 465)} = 3.28$, $p = .012$) and on identity exploration ($F_{(4, 465)} = 3.31$, $p = .011$). A Tukey's Post Hoc analysis showed that on the measure of identity exploration, participants who identified as Hispanic or Latinx scored higher than participants who identified as White. Additionally, participants who identified as White

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scored higher on socioeconomic status than those who identified as Hispanic or Latinx and those who identified as Black. There were no statistically significant gender by ethnicity interactions.

**Main Analyses**

Hypothesis 1 & 2

Hypotheses 1 (Individualism will be positively correlated with identity exploration and identity distress) was tested using a Pearson correlation. Neither correlation was significant (see Table 2), thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 (Collectivism will be positively correlated with identity commitment, but negatively correlated with identity distress) was tested using a Pearson correlation. It was partially supported (see Table 2). Collectivism was positively correlated with identity commitment ($r = .30$, $p < .001$), but was not significantly correlated with identity distress.

Hypothesis 3 & 4

Hypothesis 3 (Those in moratorium and achievement will score higher in individualism than those in foreclosure and diffusion) and 4 (Those in foreclosure and achievement will score higher in collectivism than those in moratorium and diffusion) was tested with a ONEWAY analysis of variance (ANOVA) using the four identity status as the independent variable and individualism and collectivism as the dependent variables. Hypothesis 3 was not supported but hypothesis 4 was supported. Significant differences were found for collectivism across identity statuses ($F_{(3, 475)} = 10.55$, $p < .001$). An LSD Post Hoc analysis revealed that participants in

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foreclosure and achievement scored significantly higher in collectivism than those in moratorium and diffusion.

Hypothesis 5

To test hypothesis 5 (High levels of individualism and/or high levels of collectivism will score higher in levels of identity distress and psychopathology than those in the average and lower), participants were assigned to one of three groups (high, medium. low) for individualism and for collectivism, based on distance from the mean. Cut off points were determined by the frequency distribution. Subsequently, a ONEWAY ANOVA was conducted with group membership as the independent variable and with identity distress and psychopathology as the dependent variables. There were no significant differences between groups, thus hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Hypothesis 6

To test hypothesis 6 (SES will be positively correlated with individualism and identity exploration, but negatively correlated with collectivism and identity distress) a Pearson r bivariate correlation was run. Hypothesis 6 was partially supported. Socioeconomic status was negatively correlated with identity distress ($r = -.11$, $p = .018$). However, socioeconomic status was not significantly correlated with individualism, exploration, or collectivism.

Hypothesis 7

To test hypothesis 7 (Members of ethnic minority groups will score higher on collectivism and lower on individualism than Whites) two groups were formed (Whites and Non-Whites) and an independent samples t-test was conducted to analyze the group differences between means on collectivism and individualism scores. Hypothesis 7 was not supported as members of ethnic minority groups did not score significantly different from Whites on collectivism or individualism.

Hypothesis 8

The eighth and final hypothesis (Collectivism and individualism will be a better predictor of identity distress than ethnicity alone) was tested with a stepwise linear multiple regression analysis. Age and gender were entered on step 1, ethnic group membership (White or Non-White) were entered on step 2, collectivism and individualism scores were be entered on step 3, and identity distress was the dependent variable.

Hypothesis 8 was not supported, as individualism and collectivism were not a better predictor than ethnicity. However, ethnicity was a significant predictor of identity distress. The resulting equation for ethnicity was significant ($F_{(3, 471)} = 4.19$; $R^2 = .03$; Adjusted $R^2 = .02$; $p = .006$) with standardized coefficient betas reaching significance for gender ($\beta = .13$; $t = 2.74$; $p = .006$) and ethnicity ($\beta = .10$; $t = 2.29$; $p = .023$), but not for individualism and collectivism.

# DISCUSSION

Age was correlated to identity exploration, meaning that with an increase in age there is an increase in identity exploration. Usually it is the opposite, you explore identity in your youth and commit or stagnate with age. However, Erikson (1968) proposed that college could extend the stage of identity versus role confusion that typically occurs during adolescence. The sample was all college students, with the majority being approximately 20 years old, but there were outliers. Both of those factors could be contributors.

There were gender differences regarding socioeconomic status. Male participants scored higher than female participants for SES which is to be expected. However, female participants scored higher for identity commitment, identity distress, and internalizing symptoms. Identity commitment can require exploration, which can lead to identity distress. However, female participants did not score higher in exploration. Due to this, it was assumed that more women would be diffused. However, significantly more female participants in this study where achieved (which involves commitment and exploration) whereas male participants were more likely to be diffused (neither committed nor exploring). There were no gender differences found in collectivism nor individualism, which is consistent with certain studies (Lalonde et al,, 2017; Triandis et al., 1985), but in contradiction to other studies that found females to be higher in

collectivism and males to be higher in individualism (Berman et al., 2014; 2012). Differences in findings could be due to the particular samples studied. Clearly more research in this area is warranted to better understand the relationship between gender and cultural orientation.

Differences in regard to ethnicity were found for SES and identity exploration. White participants had a higher SES than Hispanic and Latinx as well as black participants. This data fit US Census norms regarding SES and ethnicity. SES was not correlated to individualism nor collectivism. Wealthier countries have been declared to be more individualistic (Hofstede, 1980), perhaps due to the greater freedom to make choices that people have due to financial independence. For similar reasons, SES was predicted to correlate with identity exploration. However, this too failed to pan out in this study. Perhaps this cross-national trend may not translate within countries. Alternatively, college students tend to be predominantly within middle to upper economic statuses, so a restricted range might have been responsible for the lack of significant findings. SES was significantly correlated to identity distress with an inverse relationship such that higher levels of SES were related to lower identity distress scores. It might be that identity choices may have greater implications for those that have greater financial need, such that poorer students are feeling greater pressure to find an appropriate job and career choice, for instance, while the more affluent are more able to take their time to figure things out. No ethnic differences were found for collectivism and individualism. It is commonly believed that minority groups tend to be more collectivistic than mainstream US White people, but previous results have been mixed (Smith et al., 2019; Vargas & Kemmelmeier, 2013; Wong et al., 2018), and this study continues to call that assumption into question.

Hispanic and Latinx participants scored higher in exploration than did white participants. A number of older studies have found higher rates of foreclosure among Hispanic samples as compared to Whites (Abraham, 1986; Rotheram-Borus, 1989; Steitmatter, 1988), but more recent studies have not replicated these findings (Forbes, 2000). This could be due to changing cultural norms in the USA and around the world, e.g., globalization (Berman et al., 2014). More research into the relation between ethnicity and identity could be beneficial and give more insight into these changing trends.

Individualism was positively correlated with identity commitment, but not with identity exploration nor identity distress. In the two previous studies that looked at cultural orientation and identity distress, the findings were at odds. Berman and colleagues (2010) found that college students from Asian (presumably collectivistic) countries were lower in identity distress than US (presumably individualistic) college students, whereas in a later study, Berman and colleagues (2014) found that college students from Asian countries scored higher than US students in identity distress. However, in both of these studies, cultural orientation was presumed by proxy (country of residence). Collectivism and individualism were not directly measured, and as this study demonstrates, these orientations can vary within cultures, and certainly within nations.

Berman and colleagues (2010) also found a positive correlation between identity distress and identity exploration which was corroborated in this study. Exploration forces one to actively think about unresolved aspects of one's life (e.g., Where am I going in life? What do I want to do with my live? What can I believe in? How can I give meaning and purpose to my life?) Focusing on feelings of being lost and lacking direction and meaning can produce feelings of anxiety and even depression when answers are not rapidly forthcoming. This is probably why people in the

Moratorium Identity Status tend to show the highest rates of maladjustment (Berman & Montgomery, 2014).

Collectivism was positively correlated with identity commitment, but not identity distress. In regard to identity distress, as mentioned previously, previous studies might be interpreted as having contradictory findings (Berman et al., 2014; Berman et al., 2010), but these studies used country as a proxy for collectivism rather than measuring it directly. Jhingon (2012) found that a collectivistic value orientation among participants from India was associated with less identity distress, whereas it was associated with greater identity distress among participants from China. Clearly the relationship between cultural orientation and identity distress is a complex one that warrants greater study. The fact that identity commitment was related to both collectivism and individualism may seem paradoxical at first glance, but either cultural orientation can be seen as a part of one's identity (values) and as such, the stronger your commitment to either orientation, the firmer and more stable is your sense of identity. The fact that the correlation was considerably stronger for collectivism and identity commitment than it was for individualism and identity commitment might be due to the possibility that having an individualistic orientation within an individualistic culture requires less energy to maintain (going with the flow), whereas having a collectivistic orientation that runs counter to the individualistic dominant culture might require a deeper level of identity commitment.

Those in moratorium and achievement did not score higher in individualism than those in foreclosure and diffusion. They were expected to be higher due to the fact that both statuses are high in identity exploration, but as explained above, assumptions about the relationship of exploration to cultural orientation were not supported. On the other hand, as predicted, those in

foreclosure and achievement scored higher in collectivism than those in moratorium and diffusion. Both the foreclosed and achieved identity statuses are high in commitment, and in this study, collectivism was significantly correlated with identity commitment. As such, this finding was not surprising.

**Limitations of the Study and Future Research**

Limitations are a part of every study and therefore, will be discussed.

Future studies could replicate this study with a larger and more diverse group of participants from a variety of locations across the world, rather than one college in the United States. It would be interesting to compare different cultures. The study could also be given in different formats, other than online. An interview format might work better to ensure that participants were understanding the questions and answering with thought and care. The motivation and diligence of students doing an online survey for course credit can vary greatly and is difficult to assess.

Also, all the statistics are correlational, therefore, no definitive causal inferences can be made. Those that are interested in the developmental juxtaposition of these constructs might want to use a longitudinal design to better understand the causal links between identity and cultural orientation. In addition, there could be other factors at play, possible examples being, preexisting mental health issues, societal norms across cultures, or family dynamics affecting identity and cultural orientation. Future studies may want to examine many of these factors as possible contributors and confounds to the relationships under examination.

Previous literature for the topics addressed in this study were sparse and/or contradictory, and this study also has some of its own contradictions. In many ways, it raises more questions than it answers. More research is clearly needed to make more definitive conclusions. How identity development is structured across cultural contexts, association between cultural orientation and mental health, and ethnicity as is it related to identity distress are all possible future research ideas. Overall, it is hoped that this study contributed potentially valuable information to the research literature regarding cultural orientation and identity. Further studies would be beneficial to elaborate on these findings.

**APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of Study Variables*

|  | Mean | SD | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MSES | 6.34 | 1.36 | 0.00 | 8.00 |
| IDS | 2.32 | .76 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Exploration | 64.94 | 9.69 | 39.00 | 92.00 |
| Commitment | 62.66 | 9.01 | 34.00 | 86.00 |
| BSI-18 | .80 | .72 | 0.00 | 3.44 |
| Individualism | 3.38 | .51 | 2.00 | 4.85 |
| Collectivism | 3.73 | .47 | 1.93 | 4.86 |

Table 2

*Correlation Matrix for Study Variables*

|  | Individualism | Collectivism | Identity Commitment | Identity Exploration | Identity Distress |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Collectivism | .13** | - |  |  |  |
| Identity Commitment | .12** | .30*** | - |  |  |
| Identity Exploration | .02 | -.01 | -.38*** | - |  |
| Identity Distress | .01 | -.06 | -.36*** | .39*** | - |
| Age | -.01 | .02 | .08 | .13* | -.02 |

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

**APPENDIX : SURVEY**

**Demographic Information:**

**SEX:** Indicate your gender
- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Other (explain)

**AGE:** Type your age

**EDUCATION:** Indicate year in school
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Non-degree Seeking
- Graduate Student
- Other (explain)

**ETHNICITY: Select the ethnic/racial identifier that best describes you:**
- White, non-Hispanic
- Black, non-Hispanic
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Mixed ethnicity or Other (Explain/Specify):_____

SES MEASURE

1. What is the unemployment status of your mother (or mother figure)?
    a. Unemployed
    b. Employed Part-time
    c. Employed Full-time
2. What is the employment status of your father (or second parent)?
    a. None. I only have one parent
    b. Unemployed
    c. Employed Part-time
    d. Employed Full-time
3. Does your family receive AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
4. Does your family receive Food Stamps?
    a. Yes
    b. No
5. Did you or any of your siblings participate in a free or reduced-cost lunch program at school?
    a. Yes
    b. No
6. What is the level of your mother's (or mother figure) education?
    a. Less than high school graduate
    b. High school graduate, GED, vocational school, and/or some college
    c. College graduate
7. What is the level of your father's (or second parent) education?
    a. Less than high school graduate
    b. High school graduate, GED, vocational school, and/or some college
    c. College graduate
8. Which of the following best describes your parental structure?
    a. Single parent
    b. Parent and step-parent (or other adult, e.g., grandparent)
    c. Two parents

Cultural Orientation Scale (COS)

The following statements describe things you may either agree with or disagree with. In the bubble sheet provided, please mark the letter that shows how much you agree or disagree that a statement is true of you or not true of you.

| A | B | C | D | E |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never True | Rarely True | Sometimes True | Often True | Always True |

9. I'd rather depend on myself than others.
10. I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.
11. I often do my own thing.
12. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.
13. Being a unique individual is important to me.
14. It is important that I do my job better than others.
15. Winning is everything.
16. Competition is the law of nature.
17. When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.
18. I enjoy working in situations involving competition.
19. Some people emphasize winning; I am not one of them.
20. Without competition, it is not possible to have a good society.
21. It annoys me when other people perform better than I do.
22. If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.
23. The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.
24. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.
25. I feel good when I cooperate with others.
26. If a relative were in financial difficulty, I would help within my means.
27. It is important to me to maintain harmony in my group.
28. I like sharing little things with my neighbors.
29. My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me.
30. Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.
31. It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.
32. Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.
33. It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.
34. Children should be taught to place duty before pleasure.
35. I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group.

EGO IDENTITY PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE: **For the following 32 statements, please decide how much you agree or disagree with each, using the following scale.  Please bubble in the appropriate number on the enclosed answer sheet.**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

36. I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue.
37. I don't expect to change my political principles and ideals.
38. I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.
39. There has never been a need to question my values.
40. I am very confident about which kinds of friends are best for me.
41. My ideas about men's and women's roles have never changed as I became older.
42. I will always vote for the same political party.
43. I have firmly held views concerning my role in my family.
44. I have engaged in several discussions concerning behaviors involved in dating relationships.
45. I have considered different political views thoughtfully.
46. I have never questioned my views concerning what kind of friend is best for me.
47. My values are likely to change in the future.
48. When I talk to people about religion, I make sure to voice my opinion.
49. I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.
50. I have not felt the need to reflect on the importance I place on my family.
51. Regarding religion, my views are likely to change in the near future.
52. I have definite views regarding the ways in which men and women should behave.
53. I have tried to learn about different occupational fields to find the one best for me.
54. I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men's and women's roles.
55. I have re-examined many different values in order to find the ones which are best for me.
56. I think that what I look for in a friend could change in the future.
57. I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.
58. I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals.
59. I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure.
60. My ideas about men's and women's roles will never change.
61. I have never questioned my political beliefs.
62. I have had many experiences that led me to review the qualities that I would like my friends to have.
63. I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do.
64. I am not sure that the values I hold are right for me.
65. I have never questioned my occupational aspirations.
66. The extent to which I value my family is likely to change in the future.
67. My beliefs about dating are firmly held.

**IDENTITY DISTRESS SURVEY**: **To what degree have you recently been upset, distressed, or worried over any of the following issues in your life? (Please select the appropriate response, using the following scale).**

| None at all | Mildly | Moderately | Severely | Very Severely |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

___68. Long term goals? (e.g., finding a good job, being in a romantic relationship, etc.)

___69. Career choice? (e.g., deciding on a trade or profession, etc.)

___70. Friendships? (e.g., experiencing a loss of friends, change in friends, etc.)

___71. Sexual orientation and behavior? (e.g., feeling confused about sexual preferences, intensity of sexual needs, etc.)

___72. Religion? (e.g., stopped believing, changed your belief in God/religion, etc.)

___73. Values or beliefs? (e.g., feeling confused about what is right or wrong, etc.)

___74. Group loyalties? (e.g., belonging to a club, school group, gang, etc.)

___75. Please rate your overall level of _discomfort_ (how bad they made you feel) about all the above issues <u>as a whole</u>.

___76. Please rate how much uncertainty over these issues <u>as a whole</u> has interfered with your life (for example, stopped you from doing things you wanted to do, or being happy)

___77. How long (if at all) have you felt upset, distressed, or worried over these issues <u>as a whole</u>? (Use rating scale below)

| Never or less than a month | 1 to 3 months | 3 to 6 months | 6 to 12 months | More than 12 months |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**BSI 18 -** Below is a list of problems people sometimes have. Read each one carefully and fill in the circle that best describes **how much that problem has distressed or bothered you during the PAST 7 DAYS including today**.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| **Not at all** | **A little bit** | **Moderately** | **Quite a bit** | **Extremely** |

78. Faintness or dizziness
79. Feeling no interest in things
80. Nervousness or shakiness inside
81. Pains in heart or chest

82. Feeling lonely
83. Feeling tense or keyed up
84. Nausea or upset stomach
85. Feeling blue
86. Suddenly scared for no reason
87. Trouble getting your breath
88. Feelings of worthlessness
89. Spells of terror or panic
90. Numbness or tingling in parts of your body
91. Feeling hopeless about the future
92. Feeling so restless you couldn't sit still
93. Feeling weak in parts of your body
94. Thoughts of ending your life
95. Feeling fearful

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