

## Relationship of Vertical versus Horizontal Individualism and Collectivism with Self-differentiation among Korean College Students<sup>†</sup>

*This study investigates the relationship of self-differentiation with individualism and collectivism among college students. Special focus was on whether distinctions between vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism were more useful in examining the relationship with self-differentiation. The results reveal that different aspects of individualism and collectivism were differently related to self-differentiation, indicating that self-differentiation was negatively associated with all aspects of collectivism and with vertical individualism, but positively with horizontal individualism. This study proved that four distinct constructs were more useful in explaining the effects on self-differentiation. The implications of the findings are discussed for clinicians and future research.*

The Bowen family systems model (1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1978) may be considered as one of the most popular framework to guide research and therapy in Korea. However, his model was initially formulated from the experiences of white American families in the United States. These family patterns tend to reflect the cultural values of individualism (Gushue & Constantine, 2003; Lee, 1998; Shin, 2002). The

norm of an individualistic culture is to become independent from others by differentiating oneself from others and achieving autonomy. This individualistic cultural norm is very different from that of a collectivistic culture, which emphasizes maintaining connectedness among individuals by fulfilling obligations and fitting into various interpersonal relationships (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). In addition, the processes of psychological individuation may be different for those raised in Confucian-based collectivistic cultures, such as Korea, China, or Japan. Because the primary emphases are on family ties, interdependence, and conformity, the normal family in collectivistic culture do not necessarily encourage children to achieve psychological separation and independence from parents or family (Tang, 1992).

Collectivistic culture is seemingly contrary to the construct of self-differentiation by Bowen. It is assumed that if people value collectivism over individuality, then the differentiation level may be lower than one with opposite values. For this reason, some theorists (Dien, 1992; Essandoh, 1995; Lee, 1998; Shin, 2002; Tamura & Lau, 1992) have argued that the concept of separation-individuation, or self-differentiation tends to overemphasize individualist western values of independence and may be relevant only for individualistic cultures, but not be applicable to collectivist cultures. Others have disagreed (e.g., Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; Skowron, 2004),

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maintaining that the concept of self-differentiation embodies both togetherness/connection and independence/autonomy and is defined as the ability to balance achieving an autonomous sense of self and maintaining close relationships with significant others. As Skowron (2004) pointed out, some characteristics of self-differentiation (e.g., taking an I-position) tend to support individualist values, while some of them (e.g., fusion with others) may reflect collectivist values.

Cross-cultural research (Chung & Gale, 2006; Tuason & Friedlander, 2000) have noted the variation regarding the relative balance of individuality and relatedness across different cultures. A greater self-differentiation was associated with greater psychological adjustment in Korean (Chung & Gale, 2006) and in Philippine samples (Tuason & Friedlander, 2000) as is in the United States samples (Chung & Gale, 2006; Miller, Anderson, & Keala, 2004; Peleg-Popko, 2002; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron *et al.*, 2003). However, the levels of self-differentiation indices were lower in Korean and Philippine samples than in the United States counterparts.

Controversy still exists as to whether the concept of self-differentiation is relevant across different cultures. Although some research (Chung & Gale, 2006; Tuason & Friedlander, 2000) focused on examining the cross-cultural validity of self-differentiation, they have a weakness for the disregard for individual differences within societies. There may be a range of value orientations representing both individualistic and collectivistic values within a society (Grimm, Church, Katigbak, & Reyes, 1999).

While individualism and collectivism are regarded as a single bipolar dimension that presupposes the development of one cultural value to the exclusion of the other (Choi, 2002), other studies have demonstrated that these two cultural values coexist in a given self-concept. Furthermore, Triandis (1995) argued that individualism and collectivism are multidimensional constructs and may be vertical (emphasizing hierarchy and inequality in social relations) or horizontal (emphasizing equality). Depending on the relative emphasis on hierarchy, four distinct value orientations such as horizontal

individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism can be produced (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Therefore, individuals as well as cultures may exhibit different kinds of individualism and of collectivism. Examining the relationship of self-differentiation with different aspects of individualism and collectivism, an empirical study (Gushue & Constantine, 2003) revealed that different aspects of individualism and collectivism were differentially related to self-differentiation.

The present study was designed to examine how cultural values held by Korean college students relate to experiences in the levels of self-differentiation and posed the following specific hypotheses.

1. There will be any differences in the level of self-differentiation and individualism/collectivism between genders. It was assumed that the level of self-differentiation and individualism of male students would be higher than that of female students. This is because males are encouraged more to develop independence or autonomy and to maintain a sense of self in important relationships, all of which seem to be related to differentiation and individualistic value systems (Ault-Riehe, 1986; Knudson-Martin, 1994).
2. Self-differentiation will be differently correlated with individualism and collectivism differently. It was predicted that self-differentiation would be positively related with individualism but negatively with collectivism. Also explored was whether verticality and horizontalism in collectivism and individualism differently function as separate variables in the relationships with self-differentiation.
3. Individualism and collectivism focusing on verticality and horizontalism will have different effect on the experiences of college students in the levels of self-differentiation.

This study suggests some theoretical level of implications for the debate concerning the applicability of the construct of self-differentiation to

collectivistic Korean culture. The current study is expected to provide some useful implications for clinicians working with people who have diverse value orientations in a rapidly changing and multiculturalizing Korean society.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Self-differentiation*

Self-differentiation is the central concept of the Bowen model (1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988) and includes both an intrapsychic and an interpersonal dimension. Intrapsychic aspect of differentiation refers to an ability to distinguish feeling processes from intellectual process, while interpersonal aspect indicates the ability to balance autonomy and intimacy in relationship to others. On an intrapsychic dimension, more differentiated individuals seem to be better capable of reflecting on emotions and are less emotionally reactive than less differentiated counterparts. Such individuals are better able to take I-positions in the relationships with significant others or in the midst of uncertain circumstances, to maintain a solid sense of self, and to adhere to personal opinions and beliefs. Likewise, more differentiated persons are judged as more comfortable with the strong anxiety of another, to resist being overwhelmed by or reactant to the anxiety of others, to remain relatively calm in intimate relationships, and to be better able to adapt to life stressors.

On an interpersonal level, more differentiated persons are expected to experience comfort with both intimacy and autonomy in important relationships, to establish greater autonomy in the relationship without experiencing debilitating fears of abandonment, and to achieve emotional intimacy in the same relationship without fear of feeling smothered (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). At the same time, more differentiated individuals are thought to be capable of supporting the best interests of significant others at times without feeling a loss of self-direction (Skowron, 2000). Conversely, less differentiated persons tend to become anxious in response to emotional closeness with important others, to generally experience separation anxiety

prompted by independent actions taken by significant others, and to remain preoccupied with acceptance and rejection in important relationships (Skowron, Holmes, & Sabatelli, 2003).

Based on the Bowen theory (1976, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988), Skowron and her colleagues (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron & Schmitt, 2003) delineated four central construct of self-differentiation such as emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others. Bowen (1978) suggested that his theory was universal and gender differences were unlikely to have an impact on one's level of differentiation. However, some researchers criticized that the Bowen model overemphasized a stereotyped masculinity (Knudson-Martin, 1994) and ignored the process of defining a woman's self-identity (Ault-Riehe, 1986). Furthermore, empirical research on the Bowen theory (which compared men's and women's levels of differentiation) has revealed inconsistent results (Miller, Anderson, & Keala, 2004). For example, empirical research (Kosek, 1998; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron & Schmit, 2003) indicated that men and women differ in the ways that differentiation difficulties are expressed, with men reporting more problems with an emotional cutoff and women indicating difficulties with emotional reactivity. There were mixed results on the fusion with others subscale, with one study finding gender differences (Kosek, 1998) and another study reporting no differences (Skowron & Schmitt, 2003). Likewise, other research (Garbarino, Gaa, Swank, McPherson, & Gratch, 1995) suggests that (at least among young adults) women may have greater difficulty than men in developing individuation in their families of origin.

### *Individualism and Collectivism*

Since Hofstede (1980) identified individualism and collectivism as a value dimension that distinguishes world cultures, these constructs have been the focus of extensive research that includes beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, values, and behaviors in different cultures. The concept of individualism and collectivism are related to the four defining attributes

such as the definition of the self, personal goals, the emphasis on exchange rather than communal relationships, and the importance of attitudes and norms as determinants of social behaviors (Triandis, 1995). The attributes associated with collectivism include self-definition in terms of one's ingroups; giving the goals and fate of the ingroup priority over one's own; maintaining harmony, interdependence, cooperation, and avoiding open conflict within the ingroup; and reciprocity among ingroup members that form a network of interlocking responsibilities and obligations. Features associated with individualism include defining the self independently of one's ingroups; giving personal goals priority over ingroup's goals and having greater concern with personal than ingroup fate; maintaining independence and emotional from one's personal ingroups; and accepting confrontations within ingroups (Rhee, Uleman, & Lee, 1996).

Although individualism and collectivism are often considered as two different cultural patterns providing a concise, integrated, and empirically testable dimension of cultural variation (Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994), it was suggested that there are many kinds of individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 1995). Triandis and Gelfand (1998) contended that the most important attributes that distinguish different kinds of individualism and collectivism are the relative emphases on horizontal (emphasizing equality) and vertical (emphasizing hierarchy) social relationships. Horizontal patterns assume that one self is more or less like every other self. By contrast, vertical patterns consist of hierarchies, and one self is different from other selves. The ways in which these relative emphases combine with individualism and collectivism produce four distinct patterns: horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998).

In horizontal individualism (HI), people want to be unique and distinct from groups, are likely to say, "I want to do my own thing" and are highly self-reliant. HI includes the postulation of an autonomous self and emphasis on equality in status with others (Singelis, Triandis, Phawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). However, they are not especially interested in

becoming distinguished or in having a high status (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). In vertical individualism (VI), people often want to become distinguished and acquire status. They do this in individual competitions with others and are likely to say, "I want to be the best" (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). As such, VI includes the postulation of autonomous individuals seeing each other as different and acceptance of inequality and competition (Singelis et al., 1995).

In horizontal collectivism (HC), people see themselves as being similar to others and as a part of the collective in-group. They also emphasize common goals with others, interdependence, and sociability, but they do not submit easily to authority and equality is stressed (Singelis et al., 1995; Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). In vertical collectivism (VC), people emphasize the integrity of the in-group, are willing to sacrifice personal goals for the sake of in-group goals, and support competition of the in-groups with out-groups. If in-group authorities want them to act in ways that benefit the in-group but are distasteful to personal benefit, they submit to the will of these authorities (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). VC includes perceiving the self as a part (or an aspect) of a collective, accepting inequalities within the collective (Singelis et al., 1995), and not seeing each other as the same.

The measurement of these four constructs seems to be preferable theoretically and empirically to either of the more general constructs of individualism and collectivism. As a result, numerous social and psychological phenomena have been hypothesized to have links with these constructs (Singelis et al., 1995). These four constructs were found in Korea (which has long been regarded as a collectivist culture) as well as in a highly individualistic American culture (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998).

#### *Relationship of Individualism and Collectivism with Self-differentiation*

Since the Bowen model was based on his experiences working with white families in a predominantly individualistic American culture, the cross-cultural validity of his model and the concept of self-differentiation have been questioned and

controversy still exists as to whether the concept of self-differentiation is relevant across different cultures. Reviewing research on the Bowen model, Miller and his colleagues (2004) indicated that very little research has examined the Bowen theory from a cross-cultural perspective in terms of the construct of self-differentiation. Tuason and Friedlander (2000) examined self-differentiation in a Filipino sample, where family patterns are based on a collectivistic culture. They found a positive relationship between overall self-differentiation and mental health for the Filipino sample as similar to the white U. S. sample. However, they noted that the subscales contributing to that relationship differed significantly from the U. S. They concluded that although the general construct of differentiation may be appropriate across cultures, there may be considerable cultural variation in what constitutes an optimal pattern of differentiation and consequently, mental health. While Tuason and Friedlander (2000) sampled only Filipino samples, another empirical study compared the levels of self-differentiation between Korean and European American college students (Chung & Gale, 2006). They found that differentiation levels of Koreans were significantly lower than U. S. counterparts, while differentiation did have a significant effect on a psychological well-being in Korea as well as in the U. S. This result indicated that self-differentiation was equally important for individual psychological functioning in both countries, even though the two countries were different in the degree of differentiation that is necessary for optimal psychological well-being. Skowron (2004), in her study on cultural differences of differentiation within the United States, reported that ethnicity did not have significant effects on levels of differentiation.

Most cross-cultural studies on self-differentiation assumed that various cultures and/or ethnicities are different on a value dimension of individualism and collectivism. However, they did not assume that individuals within one culture or ethnicity might exhibit individualism or collectivism along with further vertical and horizontal domains. One empirical study in the United States (Gushue & Constantine, 2003) explored the relationship

between horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism, and self-differentiation constructs in African American college women. Results revealed that aspects of individualism and collectivism were differentially related to self-differentiation. This study indicated that horizontal individualism was significantly positively associated with I-position scores, while vertical individualism was negatively related to both emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff scores. These findings emphasized horizontal dimensions (i.e., equality) were important to higher self-differentiation. This research also found that horizontal collectivism was found to be significantly negatively related to both emotional reactivity and fusion with others scores. This means that African American college women who see themselves as part of a group and are willing to put group goals over their own individual ones are less inclined to respond with behaviors such as emotional flooding and hypersensitivity in relationships with others.

## METHODS

### *Subjects and Procedure*

The participants of this study were undergraduate students who enrolled in nine different universities located in five different regions (such as Seoul metropolitan, Kyunggi, Kyungsang, Jeolla, and Choongchung areas). To collect the data, the researcher first contacted the professors and/or the lecturers, explained the purposes of the study and asked them to distribute the questionnaire to students who had decided to voluntarily participate in the survey. The students were asked to fill out a self-administered questionnaire and then to return it to the faculty office on a designated date. One thousand questionnaires were distributed and 854 questionnaires were used for the final analyses.

The mean age of the participants was 21.03 years old ( $SD = 2.14$ ), and 31.3% ( $n = 268$ ) were males and 68.7% ( $n = 587$ ) were females in the samples. Three hundred sixty eight students (43.6%) majored in natural sciences, 432 students (51.1%) studied humanities or social sciences, and 45 (5.3%) majored in art, music, or physical education. The marital

status of the parents of the students showed that the ratio of intact marriages was 88.0% (n = 750), while 6.8% (n = 58) of parents were divorced, remarried, or separated, and 5.2% (n = 44) were widowed or others. Current living situation of the participants indicated that two-thirds of samples (70.5%, n = 602) still resided with their parents, while the others lived alone or with roommates.

### Measures

The major instruments were originally developed in the U. S. and were translated into Korean by the researcher (with special attention paid to the wording and the cultural appropriateness of each item) and by referring to the previous Korean research that used these instruments.

Self-differentiation was measured by Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised (DSI-R, Skowron & Schmitt, 2003). This instrument included four central constructs of self-differentiation including both intrapsychic and interpersonal components: Emotional Reactivity (ER) and I- Position (IP) subscales were designed to assess the intrapsychic dimension, whereas Emotional Cutoff (EC) and Fusion with Others (FO) subscales were for assessing interpersonal dimension of differentiation. ER items (e.g., "people have remarked that I'm overly emotional") reflect the degree to which a person responds to environmental stimuli with emotional flooding, emotional lability, or hypersensitivity. IP items (e.g., "I tend to remain pretty calm even under stress") assess a clearly defined sense of self and the ability to adhere thoughtfully to personal convictions when pressured to do otherwise. EC (e.g., "I have difficulty expressing my feelings to people I care for") consists of items reflecting feeling threatened by intimacy, excessive vulnerability in personal relations with others, and fears of behavioral defenses like overfunctioning, distancing, or denial. Finally, FO items (e.g., "when my close friend criticizes me, it bothers me for days") reflect emotional over-involvement with others, including triangulation and over-identification with parents. DSI-R is a self-report instrument consisting of 46 items on a 6 points Likert-type scale with responses ranging from "not at all true of me (1)" to "very true

of me (6)."

In full-scale and subscale, higher scores indicated a greater level of self-differentiation. The higher the score of each subscale, the lower levels of emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others, but greater level of I-position and total differentiation. In this study the internal consistency reliabilities of the four subscales were adequate to strong such as Cronbach's alphas of ER = .76, EC = .68, IP = .68, FO = .65, and full self-differentiation scale = .85.

Individualism and collectivism (INDCOL) were measured by Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism scale developed by Singelis and his colleagues (1995). Individualism items reflect perceiving the self as an autonomous individual, while collectivism items assess the degree to which a person perceives the self as a part of an ingroup. This scale distinguishes vertical and horizontal individualism along with collectivism at both theoretical and measurement levels. Vertical collectivism (VC) items (e.g., "I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group") assess the degree of perceiving the self as a part of a collective and accepting inequalities within the collective, while horizontal collectivism (HC) items (e.g., "The well-being of my friends is important to me") reflect the degree to which a person perceives the self as a part of the ingroup, but see all members of the ingroup as the same and stress equality. Vertical individualism (VI) assesses the conception of an autonomous individual and acceptance of inequality (e.g., "It annoys me when other people perform better than I do"), while horizontal individualism (HI) items includes the conception of an autonomous individual and emphasis on equality (e.g., "One should live one's own life independently of others"). In this instrument, each of four subdimensions of INDCOL consists of eight items and is a 32-item, 4-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency coefficients of individualism and collectivism, using Cronbach's alphas, were .76 and .72. In addition, Cronbach's alphas coefficients for HI, VI, HC, and VC were .56, .73, .69, and .60. Although the reliability of HI showed the alpha lower than .60, this research decided to use four

Table 1. Results of Gender Differences on Self-differentiation

Self-Differentiation	Male	Female	t-value
Emotional Reactivity	2.90 (.62)	2.72 (.61)	4.42***
I-Position	3.80 (.57)	3.55 (.56)	5.83***
Emotional Cutoff	3.83 (.61)	3.87 (.57)	-.79
Fusion with Others	2.91 (.52)	2.72 (.51)	5.15***
Total Score	3.37 (.43)	3.22 (.41)	4.80***

\*\*\* p &lt; .001

Table 2. Results of Correlation Analyses among Variables

Self-Differentiation	Individualism			Collectivism		
	TI	HI	VI	TC	HC	VC
ER	-.17***	-.05	-.23***	-.21**	-.10**	-.27***
IP	.21***	.32***	.06	.01	.09**	-.08*
EC	-.11***	.01	-.18***	.03	.10	-.07
FO	.02	.13***	-.08*	-.34***	-.19***	-.39***
DSI	-.03	.13***	-.15***	-.17***	-.03	-.27***
M (SD)	2.75(.31)	2.84(.27)	2.67(.39)	2.91(.27)	3.01(.33)	2.81(.31)

(Note: DSI = Total Self-differentiation Score; TI = Total Individualism score; HI = Horizontal Individualism; VI = Vertical Individualism; TC = Total Collectivism score; HC = Horizontal Collectivism; VC = Vertical Collectivism)

construct subscales for the final analyses, rather than using two constructs of INDCOL. This was because this research is the first attempt to compare the relationship of self-differentiation with four distinct constructs of individualism and collectivism for Koreans.

## RESULTS

### Results of Gender Differences

Independent sample t-tests were conducted on self-differentiation and cultural value orientations by gender. As shown in Table 1, gender differences were found on most self-differentiation dimensions, indicating that male and female students did differ significantly in the mean levels of three subdimensions and total score of self-differentiation. Males showed higher levels of overall differentiation and I-position scores but lower degrees of emotional reactivity and fusion with the scores of others than female students did. Males and females did not differ in the levels of two or four constructs of individualism and collectivism.

### Results of Correlation Analyses among Variables

Correlation analyses results were presented in Table 2. Special attention was on whether it was more appropriate to distinguish verticality from horizontalness when looking at individualism and collectivism. As seen in Table 2 the total differentiation score was not significantly associated with overall individualism, while it was positively associated with horizontal individualism, but negatively with vertical individualism. This means that the overall individualistic value level was not related to the self-differentiation of college students. While the higher the degree of horizontal individualism the lower the degree of vertical individualism and the higher the level of self-differentiation. The total self-differentiation score was negatively associated with overall collectivism ( $r = -.17, p < .05$ ) and only with vertical collectivism, indicating that the higher the degree of collectivistic value orientation (in particular vertical collectivism) the higher the level of differentiation. However, horizontal collectivism was not related to self-differentiation.

The emotional reactivity (ER) score of differen-

tiation was negatively associated with both individualism and collectivism. The horizontal individualism did not have any association with ER while vertical individualism ( $r = -.23, p < .01$ ) and both vertical ( $r = -.10, p < .01$ ) and horizontal collectivism ( $r = -.27, p < .001$ ) were negatively associated with ER.

I-position (IP) was positively related to overall individualism but not to overall collectivism, indicating that the higher the degree of the overall individualism score, the higher the level of IP of differentiation. In particular, while vertical individualism was not associated with IP subscale, horizontal individualism was positively related with IP ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ).

Emotional cutoff (EC) was negatively associated with overall individualism (in particular with vertical individualism) but not with horizontal individualism. In addition, collectivistic value orientations (whether it was overall score, horizontal, or vertical scores) were not associated with EC.

Fusion with others (FO) score of differentiation were negatively associated with all aspects of collectivism, indicating that regardless of the specific orientation of collectivism, the higher the level of collectivistic value orientation, the higher the fusion with others score. Furthermore, while the overall individualism score did not have any association with FO, horizontal individualism was positively associated with this construct of differentiation. Fusion is strongly positively related to collectivistic value orientation but rather negatively related to horizontal individualism.

### Results of Multivariate Multiple Regression Analysis

The correlation analyses results showed that four distinct constructs of individualism and collectivism were more appropriate in examining the relationship with self-differentiation than two distinct constructs. This study used four constructs to examine the effect on self-differentiation. For this purpose, this study performed a multivariate multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between  $m$  dependent variables (i.e.,  $Y_1, Y_2, \dots, Y_m$ ) and a single set of predictor variables (Comings et al., 2000; Johnson & Wichern, 1998). In the current study, dependent variables were four subscales of self-differentiation (i.e., ER, IP, EC, FO) and the predictor variables were four constructs of cultural value orientations (i.e., VI, HI, VC, HC).

Multivariate multiple regression analysis results showed that the overall proportion of variance in the four differentiation subscales accounted for by the four individualism/collectivism constructs was statistically significant (Pillai's Trace = .43,  $F = 25.40, p < .001$ ). Follow-up univariate analyses were conducted because the multivariate analysis was reached at the .05 significance level. The results of these analyses in Table 3, revealed that the four individualism/collectivism subscales accounted for significance variance in the emotional reactivity subscale ( $F = 29.11, p < .001, R^2 = .12$ ), the I-position ( $F = 33.04, p < .001, R^2 = .14$ ), the emotional cutoff subscale ( $F = 13.59, p < .001, R^2 = .06$ ), and the fusion with others subscale ( $F = 53.53, p < .001, R^2 = .20$ ).

Additional follow-up analyses were conducted to examine the unique contribution of each of the

Table 3. Results of Multivariate Multiple Regression Analysis

	Emotional Reactivity		I-Position		Emotional Cutoff		Fusion with Others	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
HI	.14*	.07	.61***	.06	.15*	.07	.36***	.06
VI	-.40***	.06	-.13*	.05	-.33***	.06	-.20***	.05
HC	.02	.07	.18**	.06	.25***	.07	-.09	.06
VC	-.49***	.07	-.30***	.06	-.18**	.07	-.60***	.06
F-value	29.11***		33.03***		13.59***		53.53***	
R <sup>2</sup>	.12		.14		.06		.20	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

(Note: HI = Horizontal Individualism; VI = Vertical Individualism; HC = Horizontal Collectivism; VC = Vertical Collectivism)



predictor variables on each of the self-differentiation subscales. The results (see Table 3) indicated that horizontal individualism had positive effects on all differentiation subscales, indicating that the higher the degree of horizontal individualism the greater the I-position ( $B = .61, p < .001$ ), but the lower the degrees of emotional reactivity ( $B = .14, p < .05$ ), emotional cutoff ( $B = .15, p < .05$ ), and fusion with others ( $B = .36, p < .001$ ). Vertical individualism was found to influence negatively all subscales of self-differentiation, indicating that the higher the vertical individualism, the lower the self-differentiation. The vertical collectivism had negative effects on all subscales of self-differentiation, indicating that the higher the level of vertical collectivism the lower the degrees of emotional reactivity ( $B = -.49, p < .001$ ), emotional cutoff ( $B = -.18, p < .01$ ), and fusion with others ( $B = .60, p < .001$ ), but the higher the degree of I-position ( $B = -.30, p < .001$ ). Horizontal collectivism had positive effects on I-position and emotional cutoff subscales. The results also showed that vertical collectivism was the most powerful predictor to emotional reactivity and fusion with others subscales, while horizontal individualism was the most powerful predictor to I-position subscale and vertical individualism to emotional cutoff.

## CONCLUSION

### *Summary and Discussion*

This study focused on examining 1) gender differences in the levels of self-differentiation and individualism and collectivism (INDCOL), 2) the relationships of self-differentiation with INDCOL, and 3) the effect of INDCOL on self-differentiation. Special focus was on the usefulness or viability of two different kinds of INDCOL of two constructs (i.e., individualism and collectivism) versus four constructs (i.e., horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and the vertical collectivism) of INDCOL in relationship with self-differentiation. This was based on the suggestion that INDCOL are multidimensional constructs and may be vertical or horizontal, depending on the relative emphasis on hierarchy

(Singelis et al., 1995).

Some interesting results were found in this research. First, most subscale scores of self-differentiation were different according to gender, showing that males reported higher levels of most dimensions of self-differentiation than female students did. This result was different from the perspective of Bowen (1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988) insisting that his model was universal and thus assuming that there would be no gender difference in the self-differentiation level. This result was consistent with previous research (Garbarino et al., 1995; Kosek, 1998; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron & Schmit, 2003) and reflected the views of some theorists that the Bowen model overemphasized a masculine stereotype (Knudson-Martin, 1994) and ignored the process of defining women's own identity (Ault-Riehe, 1986). On the other hand, gender did not distinguish the levels of individualism and collectivism, whether they were two constructs or four constructs. This result was contrary to the assumption that individualism reflects more male values while collectivism reflects more female values.

Secondly, this study assumed that self-differentiation would be positively associated with individualism but negatively with collectivism. This assumption was based on the assertion by some theorists (Gushue & Constantine, 2003; Lee, 1998; Shin, 2002) that the construct of self-differentiation was derived from working with white American families that reflects the cultural values of individualism. The results partly supported this assumption, showing that while collectivism was negatively related to self-differentiation, individualism was not associated with differentiation. However, when paying attention to the distinction of verticality and horizontalism, some interesting and important results were found. That is, where the total self-differentiation score was not associated with individualism, but positively with horizontal individualism and negatively with vertical individualism. In addition, self-differentiation was negatively related to collectivism and vertical collectivism but not associated with horizontal collectivism. This means that the measurement of the four constructs provided viable information on domains of INDCOL in the

relationship with self-differentiation.

Similar results were also found in subscales of self-differentiation. The I-position subscale of differentiation was positively associated with individualism and horizontal individualism, but not with vertical individualism and not with collectivism. This result seems to reflect the view (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) that horizontal individualism stresses self-reliance more than vertical individualism. Fusion with others was negatively associated with all constructs of collectivism (especially with vertical collectivism) while it was not associated with individualism (especially with horizontal individualism). Higher levels of a worldview that includes verticality were related to lower level of self-differentiation, whereas higher levels of horizontalism were associated with higher self-differentiation. This means that self-differentiation have a negative relationship with a world view that accept hierarchies or inequalities as they exist, rather than with a cultural value which defines the self independently of one's ingroups (Rhee et al., 1996). According to these results (without distinguishing horizontalism from verticality) it would not be appropriate to assume that taking an I-position supports individualist values, while fusion with others supports collectivist values.

Thirdly, results of multivariate multiple regression analysis were similar to those of the correlation analyses. The verticality (whether it was individualism or collectivism) had negative effects on four subscales of self-differentiation, while horizontalism had positive effects on most subscales of differentiation. College students who value inequalities among people report a lower differentiated sense of self regardless of the individual or collective identities. Students who view themselves as different from others (emphasize hierarchy and inequality in social relationships, and value conformity to personal ingroups) tend to be emotionally more reactive to environmental stimuli, excessively vulnerable in relations with others, and emotionally overinvolved with others, but possess a less clearly defined sense of self and personal beliefs.

Overall, this study proved the assumption (Singelis et al., 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) that

paying attention to the vertical versus horizontal distinction of INDCOL provided new information. Among individualists, verticality is recognition that inequalities between people necessitate a certain amount of conformity in the service of the hierarchy, whereas horizontalism increases the sense that individuals should be free from the influence of others. Among collectivists faced with a similar situation, the horizontal and vertical dimensions may not be operative because of an overall pressure to conform in service of the group.

The results of this research were consistent with the findings of Gushue and Constantine (2003) showing that the different aspects of individualism and collectivism were differentially related to self-differentiation in African American college women. The research revealed that four distinct constructs of individualism and collectivism are more important and viable in examining the relationship with self-differentiation. The findings of the research imply that the debate over the cultural validity of self-differentiation to an individualistic or collectivistic cultural society should be replaced with the debate over verticality or horizontalism in the social relationship. This research proved that the optimal way to measure constructs in the individualism and collectivism domain is to make the distinction in the measurement of the horizontal and vertical aspects of the constructs. Accordingly, it may not be valid to assume that self-differentiation may be differently valued according to individual or collective identities. Rather, it may be more appropriate to assume that the ability to stand up for personal beliefs while remaining connected to significant others would be negatively associated with emphasizing hierarchy and inequality along with conformity but positively with emphasizing equality in social relationship.

### *Implications*

The findings of this research provide important implications for future research and clinicians working with people who have diverse cultural values. As Korean society has become more individualized and westernized, developing differen-

tiation from parents and/or families has been emphasized as a major developmental task for young adults in order to be a socially desirable adult. Clinicians working with college students and families should be willing to consider the relative emphasis on hierarchy in social relationship in order to improve the self-differentiation levels. It is expected that people who stress a hierarchical relationship in relationships with others tend to be less differentiated and more fused with others than those who emphasizes self-reliance, their own uniqueness, fundamental equality, and the similarity of human beings. In addition, clinicians and/or educators need to pay attention to the tendency of people to conform to ingroups in order to increase the self-differentiation level that is related to psychological well-being. As long as they want to conform to the ingroups, it would not be easy to help them increase self-differentiation levels.

Future research needs to make finer distinctions along cultural value dimensions than is possible when only individualism and collectivism are considered. As Singelis and his colleagues (1995) suggested, this study proved that these four distinctions are more useful than the two distinctions. This investigation represents an initial effort to explore the validity of the four constructs of INDCOL to the Bowen model, and caution should be exercised when generalizing these finding. The results of this study cannot be generalized to non-college-bound individuals since this research focused on college students whose developmental task is to achieve parental independence and autonomy.

Future research on this issue should develop a more reliable measurement of the four constructs of INDCOL, since the result of this study showed low reliability coefficients for some constructs. Future research should focus on the between-culture differences and similarities in order to provide useful information on the validity issue of the Bowen theory that has been widely used among Korean researchers and clinicians.

This study had a limitation in the aspect of the ratio of the gender of participants as the sampling was almost two times more female than male students. Future studies need to sample equal

sized gender groups in order to compare the gender differences in self-differentiation as well as in individualism and collectivism in focusing on verticality and horizontalness. Such research may be also needed to examine any differences between gender in the relationship among these variables.

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