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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE CONSTRUCT OF SELF WITHIN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT: A CRITICAL
ANALYSIS

A clinical dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Psychology

by

Amy Kim, M.A.

August, 2014

Shelly Harrell, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This clinical dissertation, written by

Amy Kim, M.A.

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

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VITA

EDUCATION

- Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology (APA-Accredited). Los Angeles, CA.**
Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology (Psy.D.) August 2014
- Doctoral Dissertation: “The Construct of Self Within a Multicultural Context: A Critical Analysis”
(Chairperson: Shelly P. Harrell, Ph.D.) June 2014
- Clinical Competence Exam – Passed with Distinction June 2012
- Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology. Los Angeles, CA.**
Master of Arts in Psychology June 2010
- Columbia University. New York, NY.**
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and History May 2002
- Study Abroad Program at University of San Salvador. Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- London School of Economics. London, England.**
• Summer Program in Entrepreneurship June 2004 - August 2004

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

High Proficiency in Korean
Conversational in Spanish

CLINICALLY-RELATED EXPERIENCE

- University of California, Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz, CA.** August 2013 – August 2014
Doctoral Psychology Intern
Supervisors: Susan Gulbe-Walsh, Ph.D., & Patrice A. Monsour, Ph.D.
- Provided brief individual therapy to culturally diverse undergraduate and graduate students to address a range of mental health concerns including adjustment, anxiety, depression, social isolation, and interpersonal relationships.
 - Conducted three weekly intakes, gather presenting problems and relevant background information, and recommend brief therapy or provide referrals for open-ended therapy in the community.
 - Co-facilitated weekly psychotherapy groups including a mindfulness skills group and an undergraduate women’s group.
 - Provided crisis on-call services in weekly designated crisis shifts to triage for immediate risk and create safety plan or hospitalize as necessary.
 - Designed and implement several outreach programs for primary prevention and to address specific issues as requested by the campus community such as suicide prevention, depression screenings, and mindfulness skills.
 - Conducted brief phone assessments for students requesting therapy to assess for risk and determine appropriateness for brief individual therapy.
 - Attended conferences on topics relevant to the college population such as eating disorders and multiculturalism to enhance clinical knowledge and skills.
 - Contributed to monthly diversity dialogues held by CAPS that provide a forum to critically think about and openly discuss cultural issues, in addition to attending multiple diversity seminars.
 - Participated in the training committee to offer perspectives from an applicant’s point of view to facilitate selection of incoming interns.
 - Attended clinical case conference with other staff to consult with a multidisciplinary team to improve treatment planning and interventions.

- Offered weekly intakes for ADHD assessment and screening to rule out co-morbidities, review ADHD testing reports, and then decide whether to refer for medication evaluation at CAPS.
- Received three hours of individual supervision from primary and secondary supervisors to discuss clinical issues such as interventions in a brief model, risk, ethical dilemmas, and transference and countertransference.
- Received weekly group supervision to discuss cases and gather supplemental knowledge to provide optimal treatment.
- Provided consultation to other health providers, faculty, and staff as necessary for enhanced treatment.
- Received weekly didactic and experiential training to supplement clinical work through crisis, outreach, behavioral health, and special topics seminars that address topics such as law and ethics, assessment, motivational interviewing, and grief and loss.

University of California, Los Angeles, Aftercare Research Program. Los Angeles, CA.

Psychology Extern

August 2012 – July 2013

Supervisors: Denise Gretchen-Doorly, Psy.D. and Kenneth Subotnik, Ph.D.

- Co-facilitate exercise, psychosocial skills, and process groups for a study at UCLA Aftercare Research Program that develops cutting-edge interventions for first-episode schizophrenia
- Co-lead cognitive remediation groups for recent onset schizophrenia patients (ages 20 to 30) to improve memory, attention, speed of processing, problem-solving and flexibility
- Administer and score neuropsychological test batteries to recent-onset and chronic schizophrenia patients to measure key cognitive deficits and performance in five domains of daily functioning
- Contribute to program development by working with a multidisciplinary team of program directors, case managers, and other therapists to continually find ways to improve interventions with respect to efficacy and patient motivation
- Participate in weekly group supervision and case conference to discuss clinical issues, identify high-risk patients, and develop comprehensive treatment plans
- Attend psychiatry grand rounds at UCLA Semel Institute to learn about the newest research and treatments in schizophrenia and other mental illness to enhance knowledge and treatment of patients

Wiseburn School District. Hawthorne, CA.

Doctoral-Level Therapist

October 2012 – June 2013

Supervisor: Meridith Merchant, Ph.D.

- Provide individual psychotherapy to adolescents with mild to moderate emotional and behavioral difficulties in a middle-school setting
- Collaborate with school psychologists, principals, and teachers to coordinate care and counseling for children struggling with issues at home and/or school
- Conduct clinical interviews with parents and monthly family sessions to address systemic issues affecting the client and to ensure that parents stay informed about the treatment progress
- Observe classroom behaviors to increase understanding of students' presenting problems and to identify behaviors to address in treatment
- Provide psychoeducation to parents and teachers about the child's target behaviors and psychosocial needs
- Offer informational presentations in classrooms to address problems such as bullying and teach coping skills
- Triage and assess crisis issues regarding child abuse and make reports per supervisor's recommendations
- Participate in weekly group supervision to identify high-risk clients, collaborate on treatment planning, and address legal and ethical concerns

Pepperdine University Psychological and Educational Clinic. Los Angeles, CA.

Doctoral-Level Therapist

September 2010 – June 2013

Supervisors: Edward Shafranske, Ph.D., ABPP and Aaron Aviera, Ph.D.

- Conduct diagnostic interviews and risk assessment of adults and adolescents presenting with a variety of clinical symptoms and presentations such as mood disorders and personality disorders

- Provide individual therapy and develop short and long-term treatment plans to help clients develop more adaptive coping skills and gain insight into current concerns
- Participate in weekly case conference with colleagues, peer supervisors, and supervisors to develop treatment plans and discuss legal and ethical issues
- Utilize feedback gained from weekly dyadic, group, and peer supervision to learn to conceptualize cases from various orientations
- Provide 24-hour on-call coverage by carrying the emergency pager for client emergencies and implement crisis intervention as necessary
- Administer and interpret clinical measures such as the Outcome Questionnaire (OQ-45) to assess current levels of functioning and monitor progress
- Complete necessary documentation to comply with legal and ethical requirements

USC Student Counseling Services. Los Angeles, CA.

Doctoral-Level Therapist

August 2011 – May 2012

Supervisor: Robert Briones, Psy.D.

- Conducted clinical interviews to gather relevant history and wrote intake reports, including mental status exam and DSM-IV-TR 5-axis diagnosis, to inform treatment planning
- Provided short-term dynamic and cognitive-behavioral therapy to undergraduate and graduate students to address various presenting problems such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and adjustment issues
- Performed crisis triaging for students who sought immediate attention by assessing risk factors as well as the urgency of their presenting problem to determine if short-term therapy, referrals for open-ended psychotherapy in the community and/or psychiatric evaluation, or hospitalization was appropriate
- Process-observed an eating disorder group (“Peace with Food”) by describing group process dynamics to increase insight into group members’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Co-facilitated a mindfulness meditation group (“Living Zen and Wellness”) to teach students mindfulness skills to increase overall quality of life and alleviate symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental health-related challenges
- Consulted with staff psychiatrists for adjunctive treatment planning when the use of medication appeared to be warranted and scheduled psychiatric evaluations as necessary
- Performed outreach on campus to promote awareness of mental health issues, including suicide prevalence and risk factors, and services offered at the agency
- Participated in weekly didactic meetings where a broad range of topics were discussed, such as crisis intervention, legal and ethical issues, theoretical orientations, personality disorders, and relaxation skills
- Attended weekly individual supervision with a staff psychologist and an intern supervisor and group supervision to review session videos and learn psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioral theories and techniques

USC-Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program. Los Angeles, CA.

Leadership Trainee

September 2009 - May 2010

Program Director: Patrice Yasuda, Ph.D.

- Participated in didactic lectures covering health policy, systems of care, and mental health disorders
- Communicated with interdisciplinary teams about developmental, learning, and neurological disabilities including cerebral palsy and autism spectrum disorders to understand the unique and complex challenges that these conditions present
- Collaborated with colleagues from various disciplines to formulate comprehensive hypothetical treatment plans and methods of receiving treatment

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

USC School of Social Work. Los Angeles, CA.

Research Assistant

September – December 2003

Lead Researcher: Maura O’Keefe, Ph.D.

- Led team of three researchers to investigate the prevalence of physical abuse, alcoholism, and mental illness as well as the lack of psychiatric resources within Korean-American community of Los Angeles

- Interviewed 30 influential persons including politicians and leaders of various organizations to gather information about problems within the community
- Compiled report with data gathered from interviews and surveys to present to lead researcher

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Kim, A., & Harrell, S.P. (2012, August). *Self, Collectivism, Culture, and Community: True to self or true to community?* Poster presented at conference of American Psychological Association, Orlando, FL.

UC Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz, CA.

November 2013

Presenter

- Designed and presented a mindfulness skills workshop for students to address anxiety, stress, and overall well-being
- Marketed the event by designing flyers, posting announcements on CAPS website, facebook, and blog, coordinating with residential advisors help publicize the event, and announcing the workshop to staff so they could recommend it to their students
- Provided psychoeducation about mindfulness, including its usefulness and benefits
- Led guided breathing, body scan, and mindful eating exercises
- Created and distributed a packet of additional exercises, readings, and resources to help students develop their mindfulness practices.

USC Neuropsychology. Los Angeles, CA.

Presenter

November 2011

- Presented a lecture to neuropsychology doctoral students about common mental health issues among college students such as adjustment issues, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse
- Led a discussion about the challenges that graduate students face and their current methods of coping
- Offered additional and more adaptive ways of coping with stressors by introducing self-care methods and elaborating on services offered at Student Counseling Services

U.S. Vets. Long Beach, CA.

Guest Lecturer

May 2011

“Female Veterans, PTSD, and Military Trauma: Implications for the Veteran and Family in Transition”

- Presented lecture on PTSD with an emphasis on women’s issues in the military at US Vets, the nation’s largest nonprofit serving homeless and at-risk veterans
- Lectured to a program coordinator, case managers, social workers, and the supportive housing manager to increase their awareness of issues that veterans face upon returning home
- Responded to questions and provided referrals and sources of additional members to audience members

ASSESSMENT TRAINING

Cognitive Assessment – Administration, Interpretation, Report Writing

Mini Mental Status Exam, Beery Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration – 5th Edition, Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – 4th Edition, Wide Range of Achievement Test – 4th Edition, Controlled Oral Word Association Test, Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Test, Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt Test – 2nd Edition, Trail Making Test, Parts A & B
Administration and Scoring - MATRICS Consensus Cognitive Battery, UCSD Performance-Based Skills Assessment

Personality and Emotional Assessment – Administration, Interpretation, Report Writing

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory – 2, Thematic Apperception Test, House-Tree-Person, Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank, Rorschach

ABSTRACT

This critical analysis of the literature explores the construct of *self* from indigenous perspectives to increase cultural responsiveness in psychological theory, research, and practice. Mainstream psychology addresses various aspects of *self*, including self-esteem, authentic *self*, self-actualization, and true *self* (Elliott & Coker, 2008; Kernis, 2003; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Maslow, 1964; Rogers, 1961), without defining *self* or what it means to be a human being. Theories of *self* are essentially theories of what it means to be a human being (Logan, 1986). Despite the breadth of interest, research, and theory in *self*, there is a pervasive omission of clear and specific definitions. This lack of clarification and consensus has resulted in gaps and confusion in the *self* literature (Spiro, 1993). Further complicating matters is the issue of how *self* is construed cross-culturally. Psychological science has attempted to understand how various aspects of *self* and culture intersect, but conclusions have been tentative at best because of insufficient understandings of *self* in culturally-diverse contexts. *Self* is construed differently within mainstream psychological science and within cultures. This dissertation aims to explore indigenous models of *self* to enhance and expand on current understandings of *self* in the cultural psychology literature. In light of alternate models of *self*, this dissertation questions the relevance and adequacy of mainstream psychological theories and practices when applied to people of non-western cultures. Recommendations are offered on how to be more culturally responsive to people who may not share mainstream views of *self*. In doing so, biases and assumptions in psychology will be highlighted to raise awareness about how pervasively the western cultural worldview has been privileged in the development of psychological theory and practice.

Chapter I: Introduction

The word psychology stems from the root *psyche*, which means soul or the human spirit. As such, it is peculiar that western psychology largely disregards the human spirit or deep concerns about it means to be a human being (Nobles, 1986). Instead, mainstream psychology addresses artificially circumscribed aspects of *self*, including behaviors, cognitions, emotions, and the ways these elements interact. In understanding these processes, psychology tries to pinpoint factors that contribute to or impede psychological health and/or well-being. Embedded in mainstream theories are ideas and assumptions about *self*. As mainstream psychological theory has evolved from western-European ideals, psychology is necessarily biased towards these European values and worldviews.

The field of psychology was developed as a reflection of the values of the culture at that time and has continued to reflect worldviews of those who hold societal and global power. Worldviews are culturally-created ways in which people define reality and are used as guidelines for organizing and making sense of life (Clark, 2002). Worldviews are working models of the universe that selectively process information based on cultural values and customs (Clark, 2002). There is a dominant orientation of *self* within different cultures at different times, and the orientation towards *self* and culture are mutually-constituted (Logan, 1986).

In the west, the focus on *self* emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries during the Enlightenment period, which emphasized reason and science and assumed that the individual was the sole source of meaning and truth (King, 2013). The focus on *self* can be traced back to this era in which the focus was on the competent individual and the ways in which a person could affect change in the world (Logan, 1986). As science and rationality came to be prized over all else, elements of mystery and the myth that had been pervasive among many cultures

diminished in importance and value (Theobald & Wood, 2009). This was a result of western imperialism across the world, which usurped indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. The west's emphasis has been on man as the master of the environment, which can be manipulated and controlled for his own interests (Clark, 2002; Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000). This is the milieu in which the field of psychology emerged and this ethos is reflected in psychological science and its attempts to define human nature by separately investigating the drives, egos, traits, and behaviors that make up an individual.

There are several reasons why mainstream psychology has largely ignored cultural factors and been unwilling to address the inherent western biases in the field. One is that human beings have been seen as separate from the environment and thus, culture has been seen as something outside of a person (Christopher & Bickard, 2007; Clark, 2002). Culture has been treated as an independent variable rather than a core aspect of a person's identity, worldview, and experience (Christopher & Bickard, 2007). Secondly, psychology emerged out of Europe and North America and reflected Eurocentric philosophies and worldviews that were largely based on individualism (Hwang, 2012). Since knowledge is generated by people who are products of historical and cultural influences, research tends to be reflective of self-interested ideologies and philosophies (Molefi, 1988). Academic research is subject to political forces, and knowledge and practice are often determined by people with particular interests and agendas that hold power and dominate a field (Marsella & Yamada, 2007). Based on different levels of power, hierarchies of knowledge systems are formed (Dei et al., 2000). Science, then, can never be entirely objective because there are cultural and political forces that guide research. Questions that arise when considering information are, *What counts as knowledge?*, *Who determines what counts as knowledge?*, and *Who counts as expert?* (Dei et al., 2000). These are questions that are crucial to

knowledge systems and to understanding why indigenous knowledge systems have been silenced by the colonization of the west.

Fortunately, research on cultural factors in psychology finally began to be addressed with the emergence of social psychology in the 1970s, although not without complicating factors and biases. Social psychology too was founded by European, Canadian, and European American researchers with assumptions that *self* is autonomous, independent of outside influences, circumscribed, and precedes society and social relationships (Cross, Hardin, Gercek-Swing, 2011). Still, as psychological science has evolved to critically consider the impact of culture on psychology, there has been widespread agreement that the psychological, including the mind or the psyche, emerges from and is embedded in the sociocultural context (Markus & Hamedani, 2007). In other words, *self* or person cannot be understood apart from culture, as culture plays a critical role in shaping the human being. Finally, psychology has accepted and even embraced the fact that research, theory, and practice cannot be conducted without considering how culture affects cognition, behavior, emotions, and self (Christopher & Bickard, 2007).

Clark (2002) conceptualizes the western worldview as a billiard ball gestalt, in which all entities in the universe are isolated and discrete objects that operate according to laws of cause and effect. As such, *self* in psychology has been studied as isolated entities with distinct boundaries. *Self* has been seen as portable, or able to move from one place to another, with no ties to its sociocultural environment (Wallach & Wallach, 1983). These are some of the reasons why culture has been neglected in psychological science—the worldview that man is a discrete entity separate from environmental influence as well as the belief that human nature could be fully understood by applying scientific principles to psychological processes.

Western science sees the universe (and its inhabitants) as a mechanical system in which resources are finite, measureable, and manipulatable, and in which a competitive struggle for existence is inevitable (Dei et al., 2000). In this worldview, science is treated as more sacred than nature, life, and community (Dei et al., 2000). This hubris has led to a worldview of modern selfhood in which pursuing one's own unique interests at the expense of everything else, including relationships to nature and spirituality, is encouraged (Theobald & Wood, 2009). This emphasis on the individual is apparent in mainstream psychological research, theory, and practice.

In an effort to be more culturally responsive, alternate worldviews about *self* must be considered. One example of an alternate worldview is the Buddhist symbol of Indra's net which illustrates the interconnectedness of all elements of the universe (Clark, 2002). Not only are all elements related and dependent on one another, each element contains and reflects all other elements. This reflects a deeply interdependent worldview of *self* and one that goes beyond collectivism that has been addressed in psychological literature. This worldview is in stark contrast to the billiard ball gestalt worldview that is representative of the west. The implications of how *self* is viewed in light of different worldviews are vast and worthy of being investigated in order to more accurately understand and serve people of non-western cultures.

Author's Note

The author deemed a critical exploration of the construct of *self* important and necessary because she noticed that in the vast psychology and non-psychology literature, *self* was often referred to but rarely defined. When *self* is defined in indigenous and spiritual texts, it is conceptualized in ways that are very dissimilar from the way in which mainstream psychology has referred to *self*. Because psychology is a discipline that directly addresses self-processes for

the purpose of facilitating psychological health and well-being, delving into the complexities and variegated understandings of *self* was deemed worthy of critical examination. Moreover, with the increasing need for culturally-responsive research, theory, and practice, the author believed that highlighting views of *self* from culturally-diverse worldviews would serve to increase cultural awareness and competence.

While exploring alternate conceptions of *self*, such as in Buddhist literature, a frequently seen phrase is that of *nonsel*, or a dissolving of *self*, which will be elaborated on in later chapters. This struck the author as incongruent to the psychology literature, which focuses on building up one's sense of *self*, or one's ego and identity. This raised the question of whether the ultimate goal of psychology is a state of optimal psychological functioning, which in western psychology involves a strong ego, a consistent and stable identity, and healthy adjustment, or whether the goal can be something else. Identifying goals is further complicated by the fact that ideas about well-being and healthy psychological functioning differ across cultures. Each culture has its ideas about life goals, including meaning-making and finding purpose. Carl Jung (1933/1955) stated that it is important to find what lies beyond being a normally adapted social being. If one subscribes to this belief that a person has a greater purpose than to be socially adapted, then it implies that psychology may be limited in terms of what it can help a person achieve. Western psychology appears to be limited in its assumptions about human nature and ways in which to help people grapple with larger human concerns (Dalal & Misra, 2010).

Victor Frankl (1959/1984) spoke about suffering resulting from failing to find meaning and a sense of responsibility in life, a state that he called a noogenic neurosis. He believed that this meaning could only be found in one's spiritual being, which he referred to as one's inner *self*. However, spirituality and the acknowledgement of forces that are not conducive to western

scientific methods are not well-incorporated into the psychological literature, largely due to the worship of rationality and science (Kim & Berry, 1993). Commonly, people turn to religious or spiritual pursuits in order to address these matters of meaning or purpose. However, for those for whom spirituality is an integral part of meaning-making and well-being, psychology falls short in addressing these core issues. In certain cultures, spirituality cannot be separated from one's life (or *self*) pursuits. This further highlighted the need to examine how different cultures conceptualize *self* as well as how western ideas of *self* may not be relevant to members of other cultures. Part of being more culturally-responsive is critically questioning fundamental psychological concepts that are taken as true and valid. This framework is guiding the study of a more expansive and culturally-diverse understandings of *self*.

Specific Aims and Objectives

The aim of this dissertation is to add to the body of cultural and *self* psychology literature by conducting a critical analysis of indigenous and interdisciplinary literature, including spiritual and cultural texts. Diverse views of *self* will be considered in light of the existing literature on *self* in western psychological science, and recommendations for culturally-responsive practice will be offered.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are listed below.

1. To conduct an integrated and interdisciplinary review of literature to enhance the understanding of *self* in a culturally diverse context.
 - a. To provide an overview of African models of *self*
 - b. To provide an overview of Indian models of *self*
 - c. To provide an overview of Chinese models of *self*

2. To critique mainstream psychodynamic, developmental, humanistic, existential, and cognitive-behavioral theories about *self* and psychological functioning in light of culture-centered *self* literature.
3. To examine the applicability or appropriateness of mainstream theory and practice in light of indigenous models of *self*.
4. To offer implications for clinical practice in light of divergent views of *self*.
5. To develop recommendations for future research directions.

Note on Terminology

Much of the psychology literature examining culture often categorizes differences using the terms *western* and *nonwestern*. The author recognizes that to refer to cultures using *non* privileges the dominant western culture. These terms are problematic not only because it privileges North America and Europe, but also because they are rife with ambiguities, issues which are beyond the scope of this dissertation. For the purpose of this dissertation, *western* will refer generally to North America and Europe, and *nonwestern* will refer to the collectivistic regions that will be a focus of study, including Africa, India, and China.

Definition of Terms: *Self*, Culture, and Indigenous Knowledge

The oft-used but rarely defined term *self* is the crux of this dissertation. The complexities of defining and understanding this term will be addressed throughout the critical analysis of literature. Furthermore, different cultures have their own understandings about *self* or human nature. *Self* is a pervasive concept in psychology, cultural, and spiritual literature, and various aspects of *self* are continue to be areas of interest in research.

Self has been challenging to define because the term is often conflated with other terms, such as human being, identity, self-concept, and self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991;

Oyserman, 2004; Santrock, 2009). Even as various aspects of *self* are studied, actual definitions of *self* are omitted. This dissertation introduces alternate conceptualizations of *self*, including culturally diverse views on the essence of a human being. This *self* is more aligned with what Carl Rogers (1961) refers to when he speaks of the true *self*, something that perhaps cannot be measured and can only be experienced. This may reflect the western scientific bias of giving attention only to that which can be measured. As multiple aspects of *self* are studied, the author will point to domains of *self* that deserve further attention or clarification.

Self-concept, identity, and self-construal, on the other hand, have been studied extensively (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman, 2004; Santrock, 2009). Self-concept can be defined as evaluations of *self* that are domain-specific (Santrock, 2009). These terms refer to one's ideas about oneself and they are comprised of multiple components, including one's beliefs, desires, aspirations, achievements, abilities, relationships, culture, ethnicity, interests, personality, and physical attributes (Santrock, 2009). They also represent one's conscious understanding of who one believes oneself to be. Finally, they are socially dependent self-images that emerge out of one's sociocultural context (Clark, 2002).

Further complicating any studies of self-concept and identity is the fact that people have varying levels of agency and knowing, or consciousness (Christopher & Bickard, 2007). People have both explicit and implicit values, or values that they are aware of and those that they are less conscious of, and levels of knowing vary in salience (Christopher & Bickard, 2007). On self-report measures, people may varyingly endorse explicit and implicit values (Christopher & Bickard, 2007). Therefore, there are methodological complications in study in studying self, and even moreso when studying how culture affects *self*. Results will depend on a person's level of

conscious or unconscious knowing and engagement of different and changing aspects of themselves.

Culture is also a pervasive term that does not have a uniform definition. One challenge in defining culture is the need to capture the dynamic complexity of cultural experience including external aspects (e.g. artifacts, roles, and institutions) and internal or psychological aspects that guide values, beliefs, and behavior (Marsella & Yamada, 2007). For the purpose of this dissertation, culture will be used to refer to a set of meanings, beliefs, and practices that guide members, institutions, and constructs (Triandis, 1996). Meaning systems include beliefs about human nature, such as valued attributes and goals, that emerge within particular cultural contexts (Cross & Gore, 2012).

Indigenous knowledge can be defined as a body of knowledge that is associated with a longstanding occupation of a particular place (Dei et al., 2000). Indigenous knowledge reflects traditions, values, and mental constructs that inform and organize ways of living and making sense of the world. Indigenous knowledge reflects the politics, identity and the history of people and their land (Dei et al., 2000). Indigenous knowledge has commonly contained worldviews in which man is seen as part of nature, along with a focus on the spirit and community (Bhawuk, 2011). Indigenous psychology can be understood as a study of the mind that is grounded in a specific ecological, philosophical, cultural, political, and historical context (Kim & Berry, 1993).

Chapter II: Review and Analysis Method

This dissertation explores indigenous models of *self* with a larger goal of contributing to more culturally-congruent psychological research, theory, and practice. In exploring diverse cultural understandings of *self*, this dissertation hopes to add to the body of literature that is attempting to better understanding culture, psychology, and human nature.

Purpose and Scope of the Review and Analysis

This dissertation includes an integrated and interdisciplinary review of cultural, psychological, and spiritual literature about *self* to expand upon current understandings of *self* in mainstream psychology. Understandings of *self* are cross-culturally variable and therefore, conceptions outside of the western notions of *self* will be considered (Spiro, 1993). With the continued rise and persistence of globalization and ever-increasing diversity of cultures in the west, there is an increasing need to understand other cultures (Bhawuk, 2011). People from different cultures along with their worldviews about *self* and human nature are increasingly coming into contact with one another (Bhawuk, 2011). Therefore, it behooves mainstream psychology to deeply consider indigenous models of *self*.

The author carefully considered which cultures would be selected for study and decided on India, China, and Africa for a few reasons. While the combined population of North American and Europe is approximately 1 billion, the population of Africa alone is over 1 billion and the combined population of all Asian nations is 4.3 billion people (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). Not only are India, China, and Africa some of the most populous geographic areas in the world, but these populations have also been neglected in mainstream psychological research. This became apparent when a search using the words *Indian*, *Chinese*, and *African* in mainstream psychological databases yielded few results. One reason for the dearth of results is

the fact that psychology as a discipline is a western construction. Thus far, when other countries have introduced mainstream psychological practices, they have largely done so by implementing psychology as a transplant of the west (Hwang, 2012). Even more problematic, however, is that the paucity of search results also points to the lack of research being conducted that focuses on these cultural groups. To neglect cultural considerations of some of the most populous regions in the world would confer a major gap in psychology's knowledge of the human condition. Finally, in performing a cursory review of the literature, it became apparent that these cultural groups emphasize interconnectedness and interdependence in ways that have not been sufficiently acknowledged in mainstream psychological literature. As a result, Indian, Chinese, and African conceptualizations of *self* seemed appropriate for this dissertation. This exploration of *self* will be followed by an overview of mainstream psychological theories to determine their appropriateness and applicability to people with different views of *self*. Directions for development of culturally-responsive research and practice will then be offered. The objective of this critical analysis is to increase awareness of culturally-diverse worldviews of *self* in the psychological literature in order to increase cultural responsiveness.

Examining indigenous models of *self* is essential because of the multitude of implications based on a person's worldview of human nature, including goals, aspirations, and meaning-making. On a broader scale, the conceptualization of *self* informs society and is reflected in laws, policies, institutions, and customs (Gergen, 1973). As such, a more expansive understanding of *self* could affect the field of psychology by facilitating positive social change. Arguments for a more communal and collective understanding of a person have been encouraged (Gergen, 1973; Theobald & Wood, 2009), out of the belief that overemphasis on the individual has led to widespread alienation and a desperate search for meaning and connection among people. Rather

than focusing solely on an individual, perhaps people would be better served by being understood in relational terms, as *self* develops in a larger sociocultural context (Gergen, 1973).

Finally, this research is being conducted because psychological interventions must be rooted in research and evidence-based practices in order to provide the best care. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for Evidence-Based Practices for Psychologists (EBPP), treatment must be based upon the best available research while also considering patient characteristics, preference, and culture (APA, 2006). Cultural sensitivity and responsiveness in psychology research, education, and practice is another guideline per The Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change (APA, 2002b). Every aspect of psychology must now pay attention to potential biases that negatively affect people of different cultures. Unfortunately, as mentioned previously, psychology is a western construction and was therefore founded on western ideals. Incorporating cultural considerations into a foundation that is biased has posed many problems for cross-cultural and cultural psychologists who have attempted to better understand diversity. This dissertation is an attempt to illuminate different cultural worldviews regarding *self* in order to guide more accurate research and practice in serving members of non-western cultures.

Rationale for Use of Critical Analysis Inquiry Strategy

In examining *self*, there are philosophical, theoretical, methodological, and spiritual factors to consider. As a result, it appeared to be appropriate to review interdisciplinary and cultural literature to enhance understanding of *self*. To enhance cultural responsiveness, a critical analysis of mainstream psychology literature seemed appropriate in order to highlight biases or assumptions that would make their application to members of non-western cultures inappropriate, irrelevant, or limited.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria for the Literature Review

Topic areas. The general topic areas researched in this comprehensive, interdisciplinary literature review include cultural psychology, *self*, and indigenous knowledge.

Databases and keywords. Literature was drawn from the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, and spirituality/religion. Relevant literature was located through the PsychINFO electronic database, Academic Search Elite, and WorldCat. Keywords used in literature searches included combinations of the following words: *self*, identity, self-concept, self-construal, individualism, collectivism, cultural psychology, indigenous psychology, Indian psychology, African psychology, Chinese psychology, spirituality, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Afrocentricity/Africentricity, and mainstream psychological theories such as psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, existential, humanistic, and developmental.

Dates of publication, types of documents, and methodological criteria. The literature review will not exclude any documents based on their date of publication, format, or methodology. *Self* literature can be found among a broad range of sources, including academic and spiritual literature, and as the purpose of this dissertation is to expand on current understandings of *self* in mainstream psychology, any literature that can enhance understandings of *self* was deemed appropriate for use. With regard to mainstream psychology research, emphasis will be placed on documents published since 1970, as cultural issues in psychology began to be studied more extensively at this time.

Types of documents. Sources will mainly be derived from cultural and psychology theory and research about *self*. It is anticipated that the sources will primarily be theoretical and conceptual writings. Available and relevant empirical articles will be included. However, there are limited empirical studies that examine self-related variables in diverse cultures.

Critical Analysis Methods

This dissertation analyzes alternate models of *self* in African, Indian, and Chinese cultures to highlight aspects of *self* or personhood that may not be sufficiently addressed in current cultural psychology research. The analysis includes discerning unique and common elements of conceptualizations of *self* within and across the three cultural contexts. The analysis also includes an overview and critique of mainstream psychology models of *self* highlighting ways in which they stand in contrast to the cultural conceptualizations. Hypotheses that emerge from the critical analysis will be articulated. Finally, the analysis will include an exploration of implications for intervention and future research on *self*.

Chapter III: Review of the Literature

The primary task of the literature review in this chapter is to present indigenous knowledge and worldviews that demonstrate more expanded meanings and expressions of being a human being than are considered in mainstream psychological theory and constructs about *self*. Current attempts to develop indigenous models of psychology are not without obstacles and complications (Hwang, 2012), but by critically examining indigenous models of *self*, this dissertation hopes to guide and supplement indigenous psychology research and development as well as clarify discrepancies in the current cultural psychology literature on *self*. This chapter includes an integrated review of interdisciplinary literature related to *self* from cultural and indigenous psychology, including indigenous models of *self* from African, Indian, and Chinese perspectives.

Culture in Mainstream Psychology

Considerations of culture entered mainstream psychology only a few decades ago. There are many reasons for the resistance to incorporate culture into psychology and for the continued struggles to understand the impact of culture on *self*. The basic principles defining the western worldview are individualism and asserting control over one's environment and surroundings (Clark, 2002). Themes that are prevalent are *survival of the fittest* and *control over nature*. Additionally, there has been a widespread belief that humans can be understood as separate from their environment and from other people, or in an insular manner (Akbar, 1984). Progress in understanding cultures has been stunted because of still-ingrained western tendencies to view culture and psychology as separate and treat culture as an independent variable (Christopher & Bickard, 2007). Another impediment to cultural understandings and cultural-responsiveness is the treatment of culture as a concept that represents superficial stylistic differences among people

(Nobles, 2006). Any focus on culture has typically focused on the manifestations or expressions of culture, as western bias values only that which can be measured or observed. Finally, another reason that culture has been difficult to see or examine is that people are like fish in water, in that people exist in culture (Cole, 1996).

It was not until 1994 that the APA inserted new sections in the DSM-IV, under the sections *glossary of culture-bound syndromes* and *outline for the cultural formulation of case*, that cultural considerations were formally incorporated into assessment and diagnosis in western psychology. This was a result of pressure from ethnic minority groups and international psychiatry professors, and their efforts marked a distinct change in psychology (Marsella & Yamada, 2007). Finally, cultural factors would be given due attention in the understanding of the etiology, expression, assessment, diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology (Marsella & Yamada, 2007). These changes reflect an increase in awareness of multiple and dynamic influences on psychopathology, including biological, psychological, cultural, sociological, spiritual, and environmental (Marsella & Yamada, 2007). They are also an acknowledgement that cultural factors are critical in shaping the onset, expression, course, and outcome of psychopathology (Marsella & Yamada, 2007).

There has been increasing understanding that psychology emerges from and is grounded in the sociocultural, and that the sociocultural emerges from and is rooted in the psychological (Markus & Hamedani, 2007). In other words, a person cannot be asocial or acultural. As such, psychology has come to accept that research, theory, and practice cannot be conducted without considering how culture affects cognition, behaviors, emotions, and *self* (Christopher & Bickard, 2007). Christopher and Bickard (2007) argue that the relationship between culture and people is process-oriented and not dualistic, as was previously assumed; therefore, a person's sense of *self*

emerges out of the cultural context in which he or she develops. This process is illustrated by the theory of interactivism, which purports that people constitute an emergent ontological level that develops out of a biological context (Christopher & Bickard, 2007).

There have been three major movements in mainstream psychology towards incorporating cultural factors into psychological science, and they are the modernization movement in the 1960s, the individualism-collectivism movement, and currently, the indigenization movement (Hwang, 2012). The modernization movement was a distinctly western-based push to modernize people, including their personalities and characteristics to best serve the interests of the nation (Hwang, 2012). In this sense, it was a movement that served the interests of the U.S. in establishing economic and political superiority. Implicit in this movement was the idea that Americans were the most advanced nation and people (Hwang, 2012). After much criticism, this movement gave way to increased attention to other cultures, particularly East Asian nations, as a reflection of the rise of Asian economic powers in the 1980s, particularly Japan (Hwang, 2012). As such, Hofstede (1980) was one of several psychologists who conducted research on individualism and collectivism, and western psychologists such as Triandis (1989), Markus, and Kitayama (1991) expanded on his research. This movement unofficially marked the beginning of the cultural psychology movement, which was guided by attempts to understand how culture affects the mind, whether culture is an overlay on a universal mind, and how to establish ways in which to better understand the complex mutual constitutionality of mind and culture (Kitayama & Park, 2010). Shweder (1991) posed the possibility of *one mind, many mentalities*, meaning that there is one universal mind that is common to all cultures, and many mentalities, or psychological processes, that differ based on culture.

These three movements coincided with cultural methodological and theoretical movements in psychological science and they are cross-cultural psychology, cultural psychology, and indigenous psychology. The cross-cultural approach tries to establish universals across cultures by comparing them based on western constructs (e.g. personality traits based on western samples; Church, 2010). This approach has been criticized for treating culture as *outside* of the individual because it limits the consideration of indigenous constructs by presupposing that the same constructs are relevant across cultures (Church, 2010). Shweder (1991) argued that the cross-cultural approach to bringing culture into psychology is misguided and called for a cultural psychology in which culture is the basis of study rather than incorporated into existing parameters with flawed methodology. Cross-cultural theories treat culture and personality or identity as distinct constructs, while cultural psychologists acknowledge the mutual constitutionality of identity and culture (Church, 2010).

Individualism and Collectivism in Cultural Psychology

Much of the cultural psychology movement is reflected in the themes of individualistic and collectivistic cultures and the implications on people's behavior (Markus & Kityama, 1991). Individualism and collectivism are terms that were introduced by English political philosophers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Triandis, 1995) to describe cultures and value systems that affect the ways of life within these cultures. Individualism was used to define a western mode of being while collectivism was used to define and categorize others (Fiske, 2002). Individualism and collectivism are purported to be reflected in perception, identity, cognition, motivation, attitudes, behavior, and communication styles, among other domains (Triandis, 1995). This individualistic-collectivistic movement has been criticized for taking a western frame

of reference and applying it to other cultures, which is inherently a biased approach (Hwang, 2012).

Self-construal is an important construct in research on individualism and collectivism. It can be defined as how people define and make meaning of *self* as well as how people view themselves in relation to others (Cross et al., 2011). Self-construal is similar to identity or self-concept in that it represents how one views oneself in relation to others (Cross, et al., 2011). Markus and Kitayama (1991) introduced the ideas of independent and interdependent self-construals to understand how culture affects behavior, cognitions, and emotions. Independent self-construal is more common in individualistic cultures and interdependent self-construal is more common in collectivistic cultures (Cross et al., 2011).

By independent self-construal, Markus and Kitayama (1991) proposed that western Europeans and their descendants in the United States tend to view *self* as primarily individual and separate from others, and that identity is defined by internal traits that are stable across contexts. Maintaining a consistent identity across contexts is considered to be a sign of maturity and a mark of authenticity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). With independent self-construal, there is an emphasis on the individual's uniqueness, and standing apart from others is a basis of self-esteem and feeling good about oneself (Cross et al., 2011). *Self* is seen as separate from the social context, bounded, unitary, and stable. The goals of someone with independent self-construal are to be unique, express oneself, realize one's internal attributes, promote individual goals, and communicate directly (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The degree to which one is able to achieve these tasks is the basis for *self-esteem*, which can also be argued to be a distinctly western construct and goal.

In contrast, those who can be defined as having interdependent self-construals, as Markus and Kitayama saw among a Japanese sample, answered the question of, *Who am I?* by referencing important relationships, group memberships, and social roles; in essence, they defined themselves by how well they could fit into groups and fulfill group roles as a basis for self-esteem. By extension, changing oneself and being malleable to adjust to group contexts for the sake of group harmony was considered a mark of maturity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Interdependent self-construals are inextricably linked with the social context and are flexible and variable according to the situation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Goals of members of collectivistic cultures are assumed to belong, act appropriately according to the situation, and promote the goals of others. Relationships with others are central to one's sense of *self*, and the basis of *self-esteem* is the ability to adjust and maintain social harmony across contexts (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Although these results are simplified and incomplete depictions of cultural differences, Markus and Kitayama's (1991) findings illustrate how fundamentally different social values and a person's goals for oneself can be depending on one's culture; in one culture, maintaining oneself as distinct and consistent is a basis for positive self-image while in another culture, altering oneself to fit in well is presumed to be a factor related to positive self-image. Furthermore, interdependent self-construal implies that the well-being of the group is more valued than the well-being of the individual. How one views oneself and others is important in that it affects various psychological processes including, cognition, emotion, and motivation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, this framework only addresses aspects of identity that influence behavior and ideas about oneself. The larger question of what is *self* remains unanswered.

Indigenous Psychologies

Currently, there is a growing movement towards establishing indigenous models of psychology (Bhawuk, 2011; Hwang, 2012). Both indigenous and cultural psychologists see culture as a dynamic and integral force in shaping psychology. While both argue for culturally relativistic perspectives, indigenous psychology focuses more on the need to develop constructs, theories, and methodologies that reflect indigenous contexts and worldviews (Church, 2010). Cultural psychologists focus on how culture influences mind and behavior with less of a demand to develop a new paradigm. Currently, both cultural and indigenous psychologists continue to embrace and elucidate nuances in psychological processes across and within cultures (Cohen & Kitayama, 2007). Rather than attempting to understand all people in comparison to western European descended persons, indigenous values are being explored independently and efforts are being made to understand them in their own right (Cohen & Kitayama, 2007). Comparative methods imply a hierarchy and a tendency to privilege one group over another. The prevailing tendency is still to try to use Eurocentric theories and constructs to explain the behavior of non-Eurocentric people (Kershaw, 1998). Rather than trying to fit people into existing mainstream psychological models, or tweaking mainstream models to better fit diverse cultures, indigenous psychological models can be developed.

There is a continued need to challenge the commonly accepted mainstream knowledge in psychology by critically examining indigenous cultures and bringing this knowledge to the forefront. To do this, the unique worldviews of indigenous cultures, including their views of *self*, must be understood. Indigenous people have been subjected to a fragmentation of their traditional values and beliefs through the forces of globalization. Another consequence of globalization has been a proliferation of claims to knowledge in which the most powerful have

used their position to privilege certain content as factual (Dei et al., 2000). To comprehensively explore indigenous cultures, it is important to understand the history of people and their lands over time (Dei et al., 2000). To provide a history of each of the broad cultural groups selected for this dissertation is beyond its scope, but it is nevertheless important to understand a cultural group's history in shaping its worldview.

Self in Cultural Psychology

Theories of *self* are essentially theories of what it means to be human, and every culture has its own theories about the ontology of *self*, including birth, death, aging, as well as the relationship between *self* and the physical and social environment (Hwang, 2012). These fundamental ideas about what it means to be a human being are shaped by one's culture. Not only is the concept of *self* unique to each culture, but within cultures, *self* is often used to mean different things. To really understand theories about *self*, the various conceptualizations of *self* must be clearly defined (Paranjpe, 2010). Harris (1989) attempted to clarify the differences between the individual, person, and *self*, by defining an individual as a biological entity or creature that is similar to other animals in the world. A person is a sociological being that is an agent of action, thoughts, and behaviors (Harris, 1989). Finally, *self* is a psychological concept that refers to a person as a locus of experience, including aspects that contribute to one's ideas about oneself (Harris, 1989).

Ironically, *self* is rarely defined in most of the psychological literature and research that addresses aspects of *self*. There is a lot of research to support the value and benefits of being one's authentic *self*, but it is unclear to what one is aspiring to be authentic. One western definition of authentic *self* is unimpeded functioning of *self* in daily life (Kernis, 2003). However, *self* is still an abstract and ambiguous concept that is challenging to define, thereby

rendering the matter of being one's authentic *self* a particularly complex undertaking (Oyserman, 2004). Aspects of *self* such as identity, self-concept, behavior, traits, and goals are studied without addressing the ontological aspects of personhood, or what it means to be a human being (Christopher & Bickard, 2007; Spiro, 1993).

Mainstream psychological models would suggest that constructs such as self-concept and identity guide one's quest to answer questions such as, *Who am I?* and *Where do I fit in?* (Oyserman, 2004). The importance of knowing oneself is hypothesized to be meaningful because it affects to what extent one lives and acts according to one's values, goals, and beliefs. One's identity is comprised of multiple components, including beliefs, desires, aspirations, achievements, abilities, relationships, culture, ethnicity, interests, personality, and physical attributes (Santrock, 2009). A person's identity can be thought of as perceptions of who one was, who one is, and who one will be (Ross & Buehler, 2004). In this sense, there are memory, cognitive, and anticipatory components that play a role in self-concepts. However, in trying to discover one's true nature, it is essential to define whether true *self* is a constructed identity or self-concept, whether true *self* is something that extends beyond identity, or whether there is a true *self* at all. Some have suggested that identity is a subjective and psychological construct while true *self* is something that underlies and is distinct from identity, per Roger's theory of the self (Vignoles, Gollidge, Regalia, Manzi, & Scanbini, 2006). Epstein (1973) proposed that self-concept is a theory about oneself that organizes experience, motivates behaviors, and influences how new information is perceived. He posited that the self-concept is a multifaceted set of schemas related to *self* that motivates action and informs future behaviors and goals. Identity and *self* are fictitious constructs that are created by the ego.

Self has often been conflated with concepts such as the person, the individual, personality, identity, or self-representation (Spiro, 1993). *Self*, individual, and person are often used interchangeably, even though these terms refer to distinct constructs (Harris, 1989). The term *self* is pervasive in the literature yet often used to connote very different meanings (Paranjpe, 2011; Schlicht et al., 2007). *Self* is used varyingly to refer to the following: (a) the person, including the biological, psychological, and sociocultural characteristics; (b) the cultural conception of the person; (c) the cultural conception of a psychic structure within the person, such as the ego; (d) the person's construal as a locus of initiative, sensations, perceptions, and emotions; (e) the personality as shaped by cognitions, motivations, and perceptions; (f) the sense that one has of oneself as separate and different from others; (g) and the mental representations that are conscious or unconscious to a person (Spiro, 1993). When the word *self* is used, it can refer to any one of these ideas or a combination of ideas. Because it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what is being referred to, attempts to better understand how culture interacts with *self* is a complex task.

The multiple possible referents of *self* as stated above contribute to the complexities of defining *self* or arriving at a consensus. Further complicating understandings of *self* is the fact that mainstream psychology's approach of examining *self* is as *self-as-object*, or the features of oneself that are observable, such as speech and behavior (Paranjpe, 2010). *Self-as-object* includes the physical body, the social roles that one occupies, as well as objects of thought (Paranjpe, 2010). This *self-as-object* is synonymous with identity or self-concept, which is a large area of study in mainstream research. *Self-as-subject*, or the conscious observing aspect of self, is largely neglected in psychological research. *Self-as-subject* is not an aspect of *self* that

can be observed and can only be experienced (Paranjpe, 2010), which makes empirical research more challenging.

Christopher and Bickard (2007) argue that *self* is a complex and misunderstood construct because there are multiple levels of knowing and agency. Therefore, in all studies regarding *self*, it is recommended that it be explicitly stated which level of knowing oneself is being addressed. A study of cultural factors should address how conscious the subjects are about the ways that cultural factors affect them. Cultural psychology demonstrates a lack in addressing cultural ontologies of *self* that would clarify research and theories about *self*. Rather, aspects of *self* have been studied without identifying the particular cultural understandings of what it means to be a human being.

The concept of being true to oneself or authentic spans across disciplines and is an important aspect of many psychological theories (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawthorne, & Ilardi, 1997). Authenticity implies the ability to self-reflect, know oneself, and differentiate *self* from all aspects that are not *self* (Scharf & Mayseless, 2010). Authenticity can also refer to a sense that a person's behavior is a true reflection of *self* (Sheldon et al., 1997). Kernis and Goldman (2006) have proposed that authenticity is comprised of the following four elements: (a) awareness of one's internal preferences, values, needs, and thoughts, (b) unbiased or objective processing of one's positive and negative traits, (c) free expression or behavior of one's internal attributes and preferences, and (d) an openness and honesty in relating to others. In psychological science, subjective feelings of authenticity have been shown to be an integral part of psychological well-being (Kernis, 2003; Rogers, 1961; Sheldon et al., 1997). In order to be authentic, one must possess self-awareness (Rogers, 1961).

Knowing oneself and being true to oneself are goals that many eastern and western philosophies, spiritual traditions, and psychological theories promote. However, to be authentic or true, it must first be determined what a person is being true to; in other words, *self* must be defined or more deeply understood. Mukaka (2013) argues that psychology should serve humanity, but to serve humanity, the psychological, cultural, and historical realities of a person must be understood. Cultural variations in the idea of *self* and authenticity must be examined in order for specific cultural groups to be properly served.

Indigenous Models of Self

The following sections will present overviews of African, Indian, and Chinese conceptualizations of *self*. These indigenous models of *self* were selected because of their shared emphasis on interdependence. Most explorations of *self* in mainstream psychological science examine the construct based on assumptions of an individualistic worldview. Differing notions of *self* have implications towards a person's goals, including whether being authentic to oneself is even relevant. Without a more comprehensive understanding of how people of these cultures experience and view *self*, culturally-responsive treatment will be limited. These indigenous understandings of *self* will illuminate alternate ways in which people aim to achieve an optimal existence.

“I am because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am.”

– John Mbiti (translation of African concept of *Ubuntu*)

Towards an African understanding of *self*. Western psychology has failed to provide an accurate and sufficient understanding of the Black experience (Nobles, 1986). Centuries of oppression, colonization, and exploitation of African peoples have fueled grossly inaccurate ideas about people of African ancestry so much that they have been seen as less than human and

unworthy of being understood (Nobles & Cooper, 2013). These assumptions conveniently served as a justification for continued subjugation and exploitation of African peoples and nations.

When psychology is not applied appropriately, it can wreak devastation, as it did in South Africa when psychology was used as a tool to reinforce apartheid policies and defend the continued exploitation of Black labor (Benjamin-Bullock & Seabi, 2013). Colonialism continues to oppress people by delegitimizing indigenous cultural views of healing and mental health and invalidating the traditions and values of African people (Benjamin-Bullock & Seabi, 2013).

Historically, psychology has addressed the unique experience of African Americans in the course of three movements: (a) the Traditionalist of Resistance School, which opposed the possibility that traditional psychology could be applied to African American behavior; (b) the Reformist School, which challenged existing theories in light of African American experience; and (c) the Radicalist School, which goes even deeper in that it challenges the assumptions on which theories attempting to explain the psychology of African ancestry are based (Rowe, 2013). This last and most recent phase, also called Emerging African Psychology, upends the very attempts to apply and theorize African and African-American behavior, noting that the research and theories have been inherently biased (Rowe, 2013). All of these phases represent a challenge to and rejection of psychological dogma based on individualism, rationality, and supremacy, and the assumption that these values are universal (King, 2013). There is a breadth of literature that exemplifies the “bankruptcy of western psychology and its use as a tool for various forms of incarceration and negation of the African mind” (King, 2013, p. 223). There is widespread agreement among Black psychologists that fundamental changes are imperative if people of African ancestry are to be accurately understood. King (2013) calls for a Pan-African psychology

that is based on viewing a person holistically and within context, or what he otherwise refers to as an authentic human psychology.

African-American is a term that denotes an interaction of both African and American cultures, or a variation of African culture that has been affected by one's living in America (Kershaw, 1998). African-Americans are people of African descent who have been distanced from their natural environment and have been "incarcerated in European-American conceptions of reality" (Nobles, 2006, p. 61). Both cultures (African and African-American) need to be more accurately understood and one way to redress this void in knowledge is by assuming an attitude of Afrocentricity, which promotes analysis based in the historical and current realities of Black people (Kershaw, 1998). Afrocentricity is a paradigm for Black studies that empowers people of African descent to describe their experiences for the purpose of bringing about positive social change (Kershaw, 1998). This stance places African values and ideals at the forefront of understanding the Black experience (Hamlet, 1998). The creation of a paradigm that considers an Afrocentered approach as a theory and a philosophy in order to understand the African experience is relatively new, and only gained force in the 1980s (Smith, 1998).

Nobles (1973) argued that the development of Black self-concepts in non-African epistemologies must be discarded because they do not hold validity. The Black self-concept was not created by people of African descent but by dominant and oppressive forces and therefore, is not an accurate reflection of their experience (Scott, 1997). Nobles (1973), in defining a more representative Black self-concept, expanded on Mead's multiple aspects of *self* by stating that *self* is a social process that is comprised of not two but three aspects: the *I* which is the perceiver of oneself in relation to others, the *me* which is *self* as the internalized perceptions of others, and the *we*, or *self* as one's relationship to the group. Nobles saw the need to add the third *we* aspect

because the community is an integral part of the African *self*. Nobles' concept of *self* comprises different levels and dimensions of *self*—the conscious observing *self*, identity, and communal *self*. This self-concept encompasses both spiritual and sociocultural aspects of *self*. This section will elaborate on African worldviews of the collective and interdependent *self*. To understand the African ontology of *self*, it is important to address indigenous African philosophies and worldviews.

It is believed that African peoples of ancient Egypt were the first Black philosophers and psychologists, and that ancient Greek philosophers were influenced by ancient African knowledge systems that originated in Egypt (Nobles, 1986). Socrates is most famous for his words, *Know thyself*, yet inscriptions of, *Man know thyself* were found on the temples of ancient Africa, predating Greek philosophy (Nobles, 1986). What followed then was a colonization of African wisdom traditions or what is known as scientific colonialism. Scientific colonialism is a systematic process by which colonizers falsify and eliminate indigenous information and ideas (Nobles, 1986). To truly understand the African experience, it is important to understand African culture that existed prior to colonialism, slavery, apartheid, and continued racial oppression and discrimination (Nobles & Cooper, 2013). Monteiro-Ferreira (2005) argues that a deeper understanding of ancient Africa is essential.

Ancient African tradition is grounded in Kemetic philosophy, which contains concepts about the origins of the world and the nature of human beings (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2005). This philosophy and its principles of harmony, ethics or *Ma'at*, and ancestor worship are the basis of all other African ontologies and identities (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2005). *Ma'at* is a philosophical and spiritual knowledge system that reflects traditional African values and is derived from Kemetic principles (Graham, 2005). *Ma'at* represents values such as truth, balance, harmony,

propriety, reciprocity, and order (Graham, 2005). *Ma 'at* provides guidance towards helping people cultivate wisdom within themselves and about themselves, as well as helping people connect to community and nature (Graham, 2005).

Indigenous African worldviews are concerned with the essence of being, or the essential aspects of being a human being (Nobles, 1986). The human being is viewed in a holistic manner and is believed to be spiritual, interconnected, and a union of mind, body, and spirit (Graham, 2005). Spirituality is at the core of a human being and the creative life force that connects all beings (Graham, 2005). Because the spirit of a person is the most essential aspect of a human being, people are motivated to connect to their essence, spirit, or authentic *self*.

Another guiding philosophy in indigenous African culture is that of *Ubuntu*, which represents human authenticity in the African psyche (Mukuka, 2013). *Ubuntu* is a Zulu word that reflects the ethos in sub-Saharan Africa, including a sense of community, responsibility toward others, and relationship to nature and the cosmos (Brooke, 2008). *Ubuntu* emphasizes collectiveness and relationship, and sees a human being as an interdependent and inseparable whole (Van Dyk & Mataone, 2010). A human being cannot be defined as a separate and isolated entity. *Ubuntu* represents an inner state of complete humanization in which *umuntu* or the human being is a representative of God and part of the divine. *Umuntu* is a human being that is composed of the following elements: (a) *umzimba*, or body and form; (b) *umoya*, or breath and air; (c) *umphefomulo*, or spirit and soul, (d) *amandla*, or vitality and energy; (e) *inhliziyo*, or heart at the seat of emotions; (f) *umgrondo*, or brain or intellect; (g) *ubvime*, or language and speech; and (h) *Ubuntu*, or the inner state of complete humanness (Mnyaka & Motlhabi, 2005). These elements of *self* reflect core values of African cultures which include respect for all human beings, respect for human dignity and life, and collective sharedness, solidarity, caring, and

communalism (Van Dyk & Nefale, 2005). *Self*, or *umuntu*, is both a creation and reflection of God and therefore, God is an integral aspect of *self* (Van Dyk & Mataone, 2010).

Self can also be understood as being comprised of seven parts or divisions, including the Ka, Ba, Khaba, Akhu, Seb, Putah, and the Atmu, and these elements represent the body, breath, emotions, wisdom, soul, and the divine, respectively (Nobles, 1986). In this model of *self*, it is also apparent that the divine, or God, is an essential dimension of *self*. This is further exemplified by the fact that many indigenous African languages do not have a word for religion, as God was such a central aspect of the experience of a person and god and *self* were thought to be inseparable (Nobles, 2006).

African worldviews posit that the nature of reality is both spiritual and material (Myers, 1993). These worldviews emphasize God and spirit as a fundamental aspect of one's life. Spirit can be defined as an essence that is known, albeit not through western scientific methods. It is something that pervades everything and is known in an extrasensory fashion as consciousness and God (Myers, 1993). As such, *self* is not limited to purely physical aspects of existence and instead, extends to metaphysical aspects (Myers, 1993). These metaphysical aspects are experienced as a permeating essence that is known through intuition and understanding rather than as outward manifestations that are observable and measurable (Myers, 1993). In addition to metaphysical and spiritual experiences, the extended *self* embodies one's ancestors, progeny, nature, and community (Myers, 1993).

Living according to *Ubuntu* represent authentic existence and is considered the most important goal of *self*. *Ubuntu* does not only define a person but also represents the goal of self-realization (Brooke, 2008). This goal of self-realization is considered to be a spiritual task, but one that involves psychological processes. Meaning in life can only be found in relation to

others, including the divine, community, and nature (Edwards, Makunga, Ngcobo, & Dhlomo, 2012). The process of achieving psychological and spiritual health involves other people as much as it does the individual person (Edwards et al., 2012). Self-realization involves learning and implementing *Ubuntu* values, such as respect for elders, generosity, compassion for all beings, and truthfulness (Mukuka, 2013). Psychological health for an African *self* is one that maintains a relational and collectivistic existence through the practice of *Ubuntu* values (Mukuka, 2013). This is the way in which a person can be true to one's spirit or *self*. *Ubuntu* is the essence of the *umuntu* or *self* and has served as a source of healing and meaning for African people (Van Dyk & Nefale, 2005).

The traditional African view of *self* is one of an extended identity or an extended *self* (Nobles, 1973). *Self* is not distinct and separate because it emerges from and is embedded in a group (Nobles, 1973). Moreover, a person becomes a person through other people; in this way, the community is essential (Brooke, 2008). Nobles (1973) argued that the African *self* is more than interdependent or interrelated; rather, *self* and community are one and the same. Therefore, when focusing on *self*, it is more accurate to think about a person as *we* rather than *I* (Nobles, 1973). He argued that African-American people have suffered because they have been forced to mold themselves to an individualistic culture, when their natural consciousness is one that is interdependent, harmonious, and spiritual (Nobles, 1976). This is tantamount to "black people living in a white insanity," Nobles observed (1973, p. 26). An accurate conceptualization of an Afrocentric *self* requires a deep understanding of the African ontology of *self*, including beliefs about relationships to others and the environment (Nobles, 2006).

*When his mind has become serene
By the practice of meditation,
He sees the Self through the self
And rests in the Self, rejoicing*

-translation from *Bhagavad Gita*

Towards an Indian understanding of *self*. For the last one hundred years, psychology in India has suffered from being a western transplant and research has mostly replicated what has been done in the west (Rao, 2012). Psychology in India has hitherto been based on western models which have ignored 3000 years of Indian knowledge systems, including philosophical and psychological principles (Paranjpe, 2011). Fortunately, there is now a push among Indian psychologists to develop an indigenous psychology that better reflects Indian understandings of the human condition (Rao, 2012). An indigenous Indian psychology needs to be a psychology of Indian origin that is derived from ancient Indian wisdom traditions that have existed for at least 2,500 years as a holistic human science (Dalal & Misra, 2010). In this way, a true Indian psychology could be more comprehensive than the Euro-American academic psychology and serve to enhance western psychology (Dalal & Misra, 2010). Indian psychology is being founded on insights and values of Indian tradition and culture, in which metaphysical phenomena are valued (Bhawuk, 2011; Paranjpe, 2011). Spirituality has and continues to be a central aspect of Indian culture (Bhawuk, 2011).

Indian culture stems from many knowledge systems and spiritual traditions including, but not limited to, Hinduism and Buddhism (Dalal & Misra, 2010). Paranjpe (2011) believes that a true Indian psychology would emphasize the nature and existence of *self*, consciousness, mind-control, and self-realization, and complement understandings of *self* in western psychology. While western psychology is a science of human behavior, Indian psychology has the potential to be a discipline of human possibility and progress (Menon, 2005). Indian psychology would be

informed by a system of philosophy that is rooted in classical Indian texts, such as the Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu philosophical text that is based on a discourse between the Lord Krishna and Arjuna at the start of the Kurukshetra war (Bhatia, Madabushi, Kolli, Bhatia, & Madaan, 2013; Menon, 2005; Rao, 2012). The Bhagavad Gita contains many psychotherapeutic principles that could serve as a basis for Indian psychology (Bhatia et al., 2005). Indian psychology cannot be separated from spirituality, in that ideas and practices of self-transformation are inseparable from spiritual understandings and experiences (Menon, 2005). Thus Indian psychology cannot be developed without philosophical and spiritual considerations.

The main focus of Indian psychology is on the essential nature of a human being and the paths in which to realize one's true *self* (Dalal & Misra, 2010). A true Indian psychology would be both practical and transcendental in nature, because psychology cannot be separated from the metaphysical, according to indigenous Indian worldviews (Dalal; & Misra, 2010; Menon, 2005). The goals of Indian psychology are different from those in mainstream psychology, in that it would facilitate truth-seeking for the purpose of attaining enlightenment and inner peace (Paranjpe, 2010). Indian psychology would involve helping people pursue individual paths of self-realization by following a person's unique dharma or duty (Dalal & Misra, 2010). The difference in goals for an Indian psychology from mainstream psychology highlights the importance of first understanding the Indian worldview of *self*.

Self in the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit has very different connotations than it does in English in the west, and therefore, it is critical to examine what *self* actually means (Paranjpe, 2010). Furthermore, in India, there are two prominent models of *self*; in the Hindu tradition, *self* is affirmed and in the Buddhist tradition, *self* is denied (Paranjpe, 2010). Both Hindu and

Buddhist traditions involve the study of the person, or *jiva*, and the person is conceptualized as a composite of consciousness, mind, and body (Rao, 2012).

The Hindu concept of *self* includes the metaphysical true *self*, the psychological *self*, the physical *self*, and the social *self* (Bhawuk, 2011). The true *self* is consciousness, which is the unchanging permanent basis of all knowledge, awareness, and being (Rao, 2012). Bhawuk (2011) developed a Hindu worldview of *self* which is a dramatic departure from western theories of self-construal and identity. This worldview has true *self* at the center, which is surrounded by *mAya*, or the material and socially-constructed worlds (Bhawuk, 2011). *mAya* also contains the psychological forces of the mind and ego that are transient and deceptive (Bhawuk, 2011). Attachment to or identifying with *mAya* is the source of suffering, and what impedes a person from being authentic to one's real metaphysical *self*. Attachment in this context refers to mind attitudes that become fixated on objects or senses (Aronson, 2004). Attachment is a pervasive aspect of mental process where the mind exaggerates the quality of an object and moves toward that object (Tsering, 2006). Nonattachment implies knowing the actual nature of the object and therefore, not moving towards and clinging to it (Tsering, 2006). While clinging and grasping cause suffering, nonattachment represents an internal freedom from suffering (Aronson, 2004). The goal is transcendence or self-realization, which entails de-identifying with the ego so that one can become enlightened and merge with the infinite brahman, or Supreme Being (Dalal & Misra, 2010).

Brahman represents the infinite or God (Bhawuk, 2011). The true *self* is consciousness, or the unchanging permanent basis of all knowledge, awareness, and being (Rao, 2012). *Self* is metaphysical and it is embodied in a biological *self* (Bhawuk, 2011). In contrast, ever-changing aspects of *self*, such as thoughts, images, emotions, and other mind processes stemming from the

ego are not the true *self*. The mind is synonymous with the ego, and they are characterized by attachment and desire. Unlike consciousness or *self*, identity and ego are impermanent, constantly changing, and the root of desire and suffering (Rao, 2012). Identity, or any attachments of *self*, such as the physical form, possessions, roles, abilities, or beliefs, are all subject to change and thus, are not representative of the true or real *self* (Paranjpe, 2010). These are observable self-as-object aspects of personhood . In contrast, self-as-subject, or the true *self*, is the center of the universe of consciousness that can only be directly experienced (Paranjpe, 2010).

In Hindu tradition, in which the *self* (Atman) is affirmed, cultivating one's true *self* can occur by directly observing and contemplating *self* (Paranjpe, 2010). There are several methods through which to achieve transcendence and deconstruct the ego, such as yoga and meditation. Yoga is a method to control one's body and mind (Paranjpe, 2011). Karma marga (work), bhakti marga (worship), and jnana marga (wisdom) are yogic ways of deconstructing the ego or mind.. The work method involves selfless action and service, the worship method involves surrendering to a higher power, and the wisdom method involves intensive study of the ways in which ego obstructs access to true *self*. All three methods serve to diminish the influence of the ego, along with the compulsions and attachments to the ego (Rao, 2012). They represent different channels through which the mind can be transcended and one's true nature can be experienced.

Meditation is another way in which to know the true nature of the mind and be able to control the mind so that one's consciousness is not clouded (Rao, 2012). Two major types of meditation are Vipasana and Patanjali. Vipasana is a concentration method in which attention is focused on the breath so as to exclude other influences. This concentration meditation facilitates the ability to control one's stream of thoughts (Paranjpe, 2011). The passive method of Patanjali

is one where attention is not singularly focused; rather, attention is paid to noticing the activities of the mind without judging or interpreting them. This meditation provides a way to study one's mental activities (Epstein, 1998). Both methods serve to increase awareness and understanding of the true nature of the psychological *self* and cultivate nonattachment to mind and ego processes.

The ontology of *self* begins with a metaphysical *self* or consciousness that becomes biologically embodied at birth and then acquires and develops a social *self* (Bhawuk, 2011). The social *self* is characterized by physical and psychological traits (Bhawuk, 2011). The psychological traits are called manas, which include cognitions, emotions, and behavior (Bhawuk, 2011). The mind is the meeting point between the physical *self* and consciousness (Rao, 2012). As a person develops, his/her consciousness becomes clouded by the sociocultural environment (*mAyA*) and the manas. Being attached to *mAyA* and manas is the root of suffering. Through self-realization processes, one transcends attachment or identification with the psychological and physical selves in order to achieve a merging with the infinite. This model of *self* is interdependent with everything that exists in the world, including the divine. This process of self-realization leads to a disappearance of illusory divisions between the I/me and others, because all are experienced and known as one (Dalal & Misra, 2010). The real *self* is the one consciousness that is the same consciousness of the universe.

There are many similarities between Hindu and Buddhist traditions in that Buddhism also focuses on diminishing attachment to ego and identity. While in the Hindu tradition, one is aiming for the transcendent or real *self*, in Buddhism, the goal is framed as achieving a state of *nonself*. The ultimate goal is nirvana or enlightenment, which necessitates the shedding of ego and identity attachments and seeing that one's true nature is not the psychosocial identity

(Paranjpe, 2010). This is referred to as a state of emptiness or Sunyata, where there is a knowing that people do not have an inherent identity (Epstein, 1998). Both traditions emphasize going beyond the ego, mind, and other social and material aspects of *mAyA* (Paranjpe, 2010).

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, who was born in India around 566 B.C. Buddhism is a 2500-year-old tradition that now exists in various branches, including Zen, Chinese, Tibetan, and Theraveda, and has informed the worldviews of many Asian cultures outside of India, including those of Japan, Korea, and China (Liang, 2012). Buddha discovered through direct experience and observation the following Four Noble Truths about the human condition: that suffering is inevitable; that the cause of suffering is desire, attachment, or delusion; that suffering can be overcome; and finally, the way in which to overcome suffering, which he called the Eightfold Path (Kelly, 2008). The Eightfold Path is based on the principles of wisdom, moral virtue, and meditation and includes right view, resolve, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration (Kelly, 2008). The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path contain comprehensive methods by which a person can achieve a state of *nonself* and the end of suffering. Buddha also spoke of the importance of cultivating awareness in the four fundamental aspects of life that he called the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, and they are awareness of body and senses, heart and feelings, mind and thoughts, and the principles that govern life (Kornfield, 1993).

According to Buddhism, ego and mind are impermanent and illusory and therefore, they represent a false *self*. This sense of *self* or identity is the result of a process in which consciousness, or the true unchanging nature of a person, responds to senses and clings to the body, thoughts, feelings, images, roles, or desires (Epstein, 1998). Grasping at false identities leads people to maintain, protect, and defend them, fueling greater suffering (Epstein, 1998).

This individuated and separate *self* or identity is the basis of suffering (Epstein, 1998). Suffering arises from clinging to a constantly changing false *self* because desires are unfulfilled or new desires or attachments inevitably emerge (Paranjpe, 2010). The Buddhist conceptualization of *self* is that *self* does not exist. One of the aims of Buddhism is to see into one's true nature by realizing the illusory nature of *self*, ego, and identity, as well as any perceived separations between *self* and others (Suzuki, 1949).

For actual self-realization, a person must undergo deep meditation, involving critically examining each *self* definition or identity that one has of oneself, or all aspects of one's psychosocial identity, in order to realize what one is not (Paranjpe, 2010). Because all aspects of identity are constantly changing and impermanent, *self* cannot be real; rather the true nature of a being is the self-as-subject center of awareness that does not change. *Nonsel*f can be directly known and experienced by paying close attention to how subjective experiences arise in the present moment (Segall, 2003). This practice of meditation and mindfulness will cause a person to directly experience the transient, impermanent, and self-constructed nature of phenomena, including *self*. Awareness and direct observation will lead a person to realize that *self* or a separate identity is illusory. The true essence of a being is one of basic goodness, also known as the Buddha nature, and can be accessed when one is completely present, without seeking or striving (Kornfield, 1993). When one is able to achieve *nonsel*f, one is able to experience life as an empty vessel that is open to life's mysteries (Kornfield, 1993). The true essence of a person, according to Buddhism, is one with no form and no substance (Suzuki, 1949).

*Without the concept of an other,
There is not separate I.
Without the sense of an I,
Nothing can be seen as other.
There is some power that determines thing,
But I don't know what it is.
It has not form or substance,
Acts without doing,
Keeps the whole universe in order,
And seems to get along
Perfectly well without me.*

-Chuang-Tzu (translation from the *Inner Chapters*)

Towards a Chinese understanding of *self*. Chinese culture has been greatly influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism (Hwang, 2012). The three traditions share beliefs about the interdependent nature of *self*. Confucianism and Taoism believe that self-cultivation involves a process of being in harmony with the way of nature and the cosmos. The two opposing forces of yin and yang should be maintained in a harmonious state at the levels of universe, nature, society, and individual (Hwang, 2012). Xiu-yang means self-cultivation and it translates to rectifying one's mind and nurturing one's character according to an art or philosophy (Hwang & Chang, 2009). Confucianism and Taoism have different emphases for self-cultivation, as Confucianism promotes achieving a relational *self* and Taoism promotes achieving a metaphysical authentic *self* (Hwang & Chang, 2009).

Taoism is a philosophical and spiritual tradition that originated in China at least 2,500 years ago (Craig, 2007). The spiritual aspects are attributed to Lao Tzu, whose teachings are found in the *Tao Te Ching*, and the philosophical aspects are attributed to Chuang Tzu, whose main writings are called *The Inner Chapters* (Craig, 2007). These ancient texts outline the cosmology of the universe and principles about the nature of reality. They illustrate that every element in the universe is comprised of opposing elements, represented by yin and yang, and

thus, it is necessary for all elements to achieve balance and unity (Hwang & Chang, 2009). Furthermore, every element of the universe corresponds to the Five Transformative Phases, which are metal, wood, water, fire, and earth (Hwang & Chang, 2009). As such, the goal of Taoism is to follow nature and the principles of reality.

The Tao is called the Way, or the middle road between opposites (Rosen & Crouse, 2002). Tao represents the natural order of the universe and the context from which everything emerges and returns; this implies that a *self* emerges from and returns to the Tao in death (Hwang, 1999). It is believed that a person comes into the world, loses one's way due to the ethical bounds of the world, and returns to a state of authentic *self* by aligning oneself with the Way (Rosen & Crouse, 2002). In western terms, this process can be described as one in which a person is born into the universe and develops an ego and false *self*. The process of individuation, per Jung, is one of letting go of the false *self*, transcending ego and dualities, and realizing one's true *self* (Rosen & Crouse, 2002). The true *self* is considered to be more essential than a personal being, or ego identity (Rosen & Crouse, 2002).

Self-cultivation is a process through which one can achieve wholeness and integrity by following the Tao. A person is expected to practice virtue in everyday affairs (Craig, 2007). This involves not meddling or interfering with the ways of the world and allowing oneself and others to be in accord with nature (Craig, 2007). Methods to cultivate *self* include meditation and qigong, an ancient physical practice that helps to control body and mind (Hwang & Chang, 2009). Practicing virtue, meditation, and qigong help a person become more aligned with the natural and balanced rhythm of the universe (Hwang & Chang, 2009). This state of letting things be is called wu wei, which translates to "being in a relational flow with the universe" (Craig, 2007, p. 118). This state represents authentic and metaphysical existence.

Tao also refers to the supportive force behind everything, including self-cultivation (Hwang, 1999). Every element of the universe has a natural and dynamic unfolding process (Craig, 2007). The Tao model of *self* is one in which *self* moves towards seeking balance and harmony within oneself, between *self* and nature, and between *self* and society (Hwang, 2009). The Tao model of *self* is one that is both metaphysical and relational.

Confucianism is another ancient wisdom tradition that was founded by Confucius, a Chinese philosopher, around 500 B.C. The classical Confucian text called the Analects contains Confucius's beliefs about purpose, will, and intentions, as well as ways in which people should cultivate themselves for the sake of community (Wen & Wang, 2013). Confucianism, like Taoism, promotes seeking balance and harmony between *self* and nature, *self* and society, and *self* and ego (Hwang, 2012).

Confucianism focuses on the harmonious and interdependent nature of *self* (Hwang, 2012). Confucianism is based on the cosmology of the universe and the belief that human intentions, consciousness, and behaviors are continuous and affect everything else (Wen & Wang, 2013). Therefore, Confucianism promotes ethical values, moral virtues, as well as rules of proper conduct. The primary virtue of Confucianism is that of benevolence or *ren*, and this is practiced in one's relationships with others. Self-cultivation through one's relationships is a way to become aligned with the Way of Humanity (Hwang, 2001). Confucians believe that the Way of Humanity corresponds to a spiritual and cosmological Way of Heaven. Through achieving a relational *self*, one is aligning oneself with the Way of Heaven.

The relational *self* in Confucianism is one that is embedded in one's social relationships. A core virtue is that of filial piety because of the belief that *self* is a continuation of one's parents and one's descendants are a continuation of *self* (Hwang & Chang, 2009). Not only is *self*

defined by one's lineage, but the definition of *self* is "great self" or da wo, which includes one's family (Hwang, 2012). Because *self* is inseparable from family, a person is expected to behave in ways that protect the family unit, or the greater self (Hwang, 2012). People are expected to fulfill role obligations in ways that do not bring shame to the family (Hwang & Chang, 2009). Because *self* is interdependent with others, it is important that one practices interpersonal sensitivity and responsiveness. In this way, one is always aware of one's context and able to adapt to changing contexts. *Self* is not fixed and static; rather, *self* is fluid, mobile, and dynamic. Self-cultivation involves becoming aware that *self* is continuous with all other beings (Wen & Wang, 2013).

Self-cultivation occurs by following the Confucian ethical system based on benevolence (ren) righteousness (yi), and propriety (li; Hwang, 2012). People are born with innate desires, but in order to regulate these desires for the sake of community, one is to conduct themselves according to ren-yi-li (Hwang, 2012). First, one assesses the nature of the relationship with whom one is interacting along the dimensions of intimacy/distance and superiority/inferiority. If the relationship is one that is intimate, one's behaviors are guided by benevolence. If the nature of the interaction is hierarchical, one acts according to righteousness. And in all social situations, one conducts oneself with propriety. Through ethical conduct in relationships, a person achieves harmony and balance with the Way of Humanity and this state represents the optimal relational *self* according to Confucianism.

Integrative Summary

All cultures have dominant beliefs about the ontology of *self*, which include ideas about valued goals and relationships between *self* and others (Hwang, 2012). African, Indian, and Chinese indigenous worldviews include conceptualizations of *self* that are much more expansive than western individualistic notions of *self*. These indigenous models do not view *self* as a

separate and isolated being; rather, they view *self* in a holistic manner in which *self* is comprised of relationships, spirit, and the universe. As such, authentic *self* represents a state of being in harmony with several dimensions of experience and is not limited to authentic expression of one's unique traits and preferences. According to these models, an optimal *self* is one in which a separate ego and individual identity are transcended. In light of these interdependent construals of *self*, it is necessary to examine mainstream psychological theories to determine whether they capture the experiences of members of collectivistic cultures.

Chapter IV: Analysis

The focus of this chapter is to more closely analyze the ways that the culturally-diverse models of *self* presented are distinct from *self* as conceptualized in mainstream psychology rooted in western European culture and the United States. Culture affects the ways in which people understand *self* as well as the goals that are valued in one's life. Indigenous models of *self* include ideas about the authentic *self* or true *self* which are represented by terms such as extended *self*, transcendent *self*, relational *self*, and non*self* (Epstein, 1998; Hwang, 2012; Nobles, 1973). Every conception of authentic *self* contains a sociohistorical idea of what a *self* should strive to be and therefore, different forms of authenticity imply different conceptions of *self* (Rae, 2010). Western psychology similarly emphasizes the importance of being one's true *self*, and authenticity is believed to correlate to meaning in life and well-being (Kernis, 2003; Wood, et al., 2008). However, western psychology's understanding of authentic *self*, whether it is to one's identity or to one's essence, fails to capture some of the dimensions of *self* that are integral to indigenous models of *self*, such as spirituality, interdependence, and community (Bhawuk, 2011; Hwang, 2012).

Self, as conceptualized in the mainstream psychologies of western Europe and the United States, has varying uses and understandings but is most dominantly considered to be the sum of a person's individual tendencies, traits, motives, values, behaviors, thoughts, and feelings (Leary & Tangney, 2003). As such, western psychology focuses on helping people to develop an authentic *self* through modification of these aspects of the individual. In focusing primarily on the individual, mainstream psychology treats *self* as a separate being largely free of sociocultural influences (Roland, 1988). Indigenous models of *self*, in contrast, do not similarly emphasize the development of a unique *self* or identity (Epstein, 1998; Nobles, 1973) nor understand *self* as

independent of others or one's environment (Nobles, 1986). Mainstream psychology has tended to take a microcosmic and narrow approach to understanding psychological processes by focusing on compartmentalized aspects of a person, rather than viewing a person in a holistic manner with equal attention to one's context (Singha, 1986). In trying to understand the authentic *self*, mainstream psychology has focused on motivations such as developing ego strength, a cohesive and stable identity, autonomy, and independence (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Erikson, 1968/1994). These are goals that may not be similarly valued among other cultures.

The major theories that have informed current psychological research and practice, such as psychodynamic, humanistic, existential, and cognitive-behavioral, illustrate the preponderant focus on the individual in mainstream psychology. Therefore, these theories and the practices that they inform may be insufficient or inappropriate when applied to people who have collectivistic, interdependent, and spiritual worldviews of *self*. This chapter will attempt to highlight gaps between mainstream psychological theory and indigenous models of *self*, as well as identify any points of convergence. Whether a particular conceptualization of *self* emphasizes uniqueness, autonomy, community, or spirituality, it is important to ensure that goals of treatment are culturally-congruent with those being served (Sollod, Wilson, & Monte, 2009).

Mainstream Psychological Theories of Self

Psychodynamic theories. Psychodynamic therapy aims to alleviate symptoms, unlock developmental impasses, increase self-esteem, modify the ego structure, consolidate identity, and improve one's coping and defensive styles (Thompson & Cotlove, 2005). These are highly individualized goals that neglect aspects of *self* such as community and spirit that were previously outlined in indigenous models of *self*. Furthermore, psychodynamic goals also largely omit sociocultural aspects of *self*. Psychoanalytic theories originated with Freud during a time in

which white supremacy and the ideology of race were emerging as cultural values in western Europe and North America (Smedley, 2007). In order to assert dominance over others, Europeans during the Enlightenment period artificially created racial categories to establish a hierarchy of peoples (Smedley, 2007). This served as a justification to colonize, enslave, and exploit people of lesser *races*. These cultural attitudes were embodied in psychoanalytic theories in which investigation of white persons was deemed sufficient to capture psychological realities, as others were not considered to be worthy of study. Another salient cultural issue that was reflected in psychoanalytic theories was women's oppression, which reinforced the belief and the practice of treating the white male as superior and representative of optimal human functioning (Jackson, 2000). Therefore, they are inherently biased in their views of *self* and cannot be assumed to be universal without critical examination. Psychodynamic theory is assumed to apply universally to all people but does not take into account how the intrapsychic *self* varies based on the sociocultural patterns of cultures (Roland, 1988). Rather, psychodynamic theory views intrapsychic conflicts as stemming from early childhood relationships and mostly between parent and child (Thompson & Cotlove, 2005). Freud's attempts to understand the human psyche neglected to see people in context or in an integrated manner (Roland, 1988). Instead, his theories focused on the unconscious hidden impulses and intrapsychic conflicts residing within an individual and how an unintegrated ego contributes to psychopathology (Sollod et al., 2009). The following are some examples of psychodynamic theories that focus on the individual, with insufficient attention paid to sociocultural contexts and aspects of *self* that are integral to indigenous models of *self*.

Freud's original theory was based on psychosexual stages of development, and how satisfied or frustrated impulses shaped *self* or ego (Freud, 1923/1961). Later, he modified his

theory by developing his structural theory, in which the ego and its function as a mediator between the id and the superego were viewed as the central aspects of a person (Freud, 1933/1964). Freud evolved from seeing conflicts and anxiety stemming from frustrated sexual instincts residing in the id to stemming generally from attempts to respond to potential threats or dangers (Sollod et al., 2009). Psychodynamic theory purports that through free association, a person can become conscious of unconscious processes and begin to adapt healthier defense mechanisms to cope with previously unacceptable impulses (Thompson & Cotlove, 2005). An unintegrated ego is considered to be one of the hallmarks of maladjustment (Thompson & Cotlove, 2005).

Freud's understanding of the unconscious captures a fraction of the Buddhist conceptualization of the unconscious (Hahn, 2006). Buddhist psychology refers to the entirety of the unconscious as the store unconscious, and this contains the manas or ego, the superego, as well as the collective unconscious, which is an aspect of *self* that Jung later discovered and incorporated into his conception of *self* (Hahn, 2006). In viewing people as a composite of drives and defense mechanisms, Freud's theories were limited in scope and did not fully capture all aspects of the psyche. He neglected to see a person in a holistic manner that is influenced by sociocultural factors, community, and relationships. For instance, he did not account for the fact that he developed his theories based on examining oppressed women, whose experiences he described as neurotic without considering the social factors that might cause them to be so (Jackson, 2000). Freud outlined a theory of *normal* development using male development as the model of health (Jackson, 2000). Freud's focus on the pathological individual largely ignored the historical, cultural, and social factors that affect a person's experience (Roland, 1988). His focus on problems at the individual level may not be sufficient for those whose experiences are

strongly affected by contextual factors such as interdependence with community or spirituality, as is the case in indigenous models of *self* (Nobles, 1973; Paranjpe, 2010).

Jung understood that *self* is shaped by culture (Brooke, 2008). He strayed from Freud with his analytic psychology and his emphasis on the existence of a collective unconscious, in addition to the personal unconscious (Sollod et al., 2009). The collective unconscious is part of the psyche that is universal to all beings (Jung, 1959/1990). This means that the collective unconscious is a collective inheritance and not an individual aspect of *self* (Jung, 1959/1990). The collective unconscious is comprised of archetypes, or mythological forms in the psyche that are ever present (Jung, 1959/1990). In order to prove that archetypes and the collective unconscious exist, Jung focused his work on analyzing dreams and fantasies (Jung, 1959/1990). Jung believed that *self* emerges from the collective unconscious or that which is universal, and then develops an ego, which leaves *self* split between ego and consciousness. *Self* is driven to integrate these “incongruent halves” and become whole again (Jung, 1959/1990. p. 287).

He defined *self* as a totality composed of all contents of the psyche, including ego, consciousness, the personal and collective unconscious, and spirituality (Jung, 1959/1990). Ego was just one aspect of *self* but the true *self*, according to Jung, encompasses both consciousness and unconsciousness (Jung, 1959/1990). In order to overcome the split between consciousness and ego, a person needed to achieve individuation, or a process of self-realization that leads to a balanced, unified, and whole being (Jung, 1959/1990). Because the collective unconscious represents a mystical and transcendent experience, individuation necessitated an acknowledgement of spirituality (Jung, 1959/1990). Individuation was a process of development in which a person’s conscious *self* and ego become integrated with the personal and collective unconscious. Jung presented a more comprehensive model of *self* that incorporated dimensions

of *self* that are integral to indigenous models of *self*, such shared experiences with others, a more expansive collective unconscious, and acknowledgement of ancestors. Jung's process of individuation could be understood in the context of African-based *Ubuntu* psychology (Brooke, 2008). Individuation involves a process of self-realization within the context of relationship with others and the collective ancestral unconscious. *Ubuntu* believes that *self* emerges from one's relationship with others, community, and transcendent dimensions of existence (Forster, 2010).

Jung studied eastern philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism to expand his understanding of psychological processes (Liang, 2012). Similar to Taoist thought about opposites and the need to achieve balance and harmony, Jung believed that people were composed of opposing poles that needed to be integrated (Liang, 2012). In this sense, his understanding of individuation borrowed from the Taoist transcendental *self*, in which a *self* is whole at birth, loses its way, and seeks to return to its natural wholeness through the Middle Way, or the way of nature (Rosen & Crouse, 2002). This Middle Way is also similar to the Buddhist way of truth and non*self*, as well as the Confucian relational *self*, which emphasize transcending any illusions of separation (Liang, 2012). All goals point to unity of *self* through harmony and balance with the universe.

In integrating indigenous Asian thought, Jung extended the conceptualization of *self* beyond the individual and acknowledged aspects of existence such as spirituality and collectivism. He denied that ego and consciousness were entirely representative of *self* and observed that other universal aspects also comprised *self* (Jung, 1959/1990). Jung understood that the emotions and experiences of suffering and happiness that people experienced reflect the collective unconscious and experiences of ancestors (Hahn, 2006). This connection to ancestors is also more in line with Africentric models of *self*, in which a person is defined by one's ancestors as much as he is by his/her current family and community (Belgrave & Allison, 2010;

Forster, 2010). Confucian models of *self* also emphasize that *self* is a continuation of ancestors (Hwang, 2012). This continuity of experience from past to present is an aspect of *self* that is neglected in most mainstream psychological theories.

Other psychodynamic theorists continued to build on Freud's theories of ego (Sollod et al., 2009). Adler developed a theory of the individual, called individual psychology, in which he argued that the ego represented the true *self*, as it was believed to be the core of a person's identity (Adler, 1933/1956). In this way, Adler appears to have equated ego with identity. Adler viewed the ego in a more positive light and saw it as the source of creativity towards achieving one's goals, a process called functional finalism (Adler, 1933/1956).

Adler believed that people are basically good but motivated by a sense of inferiority; therefore, they are driven to feel competent and superior, which he considered to be masculine strivings (Adler 1933/1956). He accounted for feelings of inferiority, including weakness and helplessness, as stemming from biological and parental influences (Adler, 1933/1956). Adler did not consider sociohistorical factors that contributed to a person's sense of inferiority outside of biological and parent-child influences. His theory is another example of psychodynamic theories' predominant focus on the individual and individual strivings biased towards the male experience. Adler did address relational goals in that one of the most important qualities of a well-adjusted person is to develop altruism and have a sense of belongingness with others (Adler, 1933/1956). Nevertheless, his main focus was on the individual nature of a person's strivings and goals. Adler's theory, like Freud, viewed psychological problems as residing within an individual, and did little to address contextual or relational factors that contributed to suffering (Sollod et al., 2009). In this sense, his individual psychology may be incompatible with indigenous models of *self*.

Erikson perhaps did more to address sociocultural factors on a person's development than did previous psychodynamic theorists. His theory of development complemented Freud's psychosexual model by outlining eight stages of development that occur within a sociocultural context (Sollod et al., 2009). He observed that Freud's theories did not account for *self* developing in the context of others beyond parent and child (Erikson, 1959/1980). He acknowledged that the social environment influences the biological and psychosexual aspects of a person's development (Erikson, 1959/1980). He also emphasized the importance of group identity and how it shapes a person's ego identity (Erikson, 1959/1980). Further differentiating himself from Freud, Erikson disagreed that "just to be alive, or not to be sick, means to be healthy" (Erikson, 1968/1994, pp. 91). Erikson believed in a greater growth potential than merely the absence of pathology, and he outlined the possibilities in his epigenetic stages.

Ego is an analytic concept while identity is a psychosocial concept, and Erikson used the word identity to refer to multiple ideas, including a conscious sense of individual identity, an unconscious striving for continuity of personal character, ego synthesis, and inner solidarity within a sociocultural group (Erikson, 1959/1980). Erikson developed a model of psychosocial stages of development through the lifespan that outlined the developmental needs and potentials at each stage; each stage represented a developmental turning point or crisis that a person had to resolve and marked an opportunity to further develop one's ego identity (Erikson, 1959/1980). He argued for the need to develop a clear sense of who one is within one's cultural and environmental environment.

Erikson's model was novel because it not only focused on development as a result of parent-child interactions but also within a broader sociocultural context (Erikson, 1959/1980). Erikson also acknowledged that there are cultural differences within the various stages of

development and understood that considered healthy or doing well are culturally-relative ideas (Erikson, 1959/1980, 1968/1994). He believed that human potential was represented by the final stage of ego integrity, which encompasses feelings of serenity, wisdom, and communal respect, and the belief that life was meaningful. Erikson's theory represented a shift from viewing people through a pathological lens towards one of growth and identity formation within a sociocultural context. Nevertheless, Erikson's focus was predominantly on the individual ego and identity. His theory promotes western constructs of autonomy and individuality, which are values that many cultures do not share (Jackson, 2000).

Erikson addressed aspects of spirituality and consciousness but his theories focused mostly on ego identity development. He elaborated on the self-as-subject or *I* as being distinct from the multiple identities that one can have, and defined the *I* as the "center of awareness in a universe of experience in which I have a coherent identity," but stopped short of elaborating on the significance of this conscious awareness, or how to transcend ego identity (1968/1994, pp. 220). In Buddhist philosophy, the development of a person involves developing an ego and identity and then transcending the ego to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment or nirvana (Epstein, 1998). One transcends the ego by seeing the illusory nature of *self*, ego, and identity, to finally experience permanent state of *nonsel*f (Epstein, 1998). Africentric models of *self* treat transcendent aspects of *self* and the divine as integral aspects of self (Belgrave & Allison, 2010). Confucian models of *self* do not emphasize ego, identity, or *I*-ness, and instead refer to relationships to reference *self* (Hwang, 2012).

Kohut's *self* psychology was different from Freud's in that he shifted away from unconscious conflicts towards an emphasis on a person's desire to establish a cohesive *self* (Baker & Baker, 1987). Kohut developed a *self* psychology in which he believed that people

were suffering from a fragmented *self* due to empathic failures by parents during development, by not providing the important self-object functions of mirroring, twinship, and idealizing (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). Mirroring allows for a person to develop a sense of worth and positive self-regard, idealizing allows for a person to develop a efficacy and agency and security, and twinship allows for feelings of kinship with others, well-being, and wholesomeness (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). Empathy and introspection were necessary to developing a healthy sense of *self*. Parents provide self-object functions, which are objects that one experiences as part of oneself as a result of an interaction between *self* and other (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). According to Kohut, a damaged *self* results when there are “faulty interactions between child and selfobjects” (Kohut & Wolf, 1978, p. 414). Kohut defined *self* as the core of one’s personality that is comprised of selfobjects, which are aspects of experience that one experiences as oneself (Kohut & Wolf, 1978).

He defined *self* as a structure within a person that reflected his/her experience (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). As a person develops, he/she internalizes self-object functions that are then also reflected in the self-structure. Kohut (1977/2009) believed that people were motivated to develop a cohesive sense of *self* that could allow them to actualize their potentials, skills, and talents. Kohut believed that the goal of therapy for a person was to develop a healthy *self* by being receiving and internalizing the selfobject functions that they failed to receive in childhood (Kohut, 1977/2009). Only when a person develops a cohesive sense of *self* can a person begin to go beyond adaptation (Kohut, 1977/2009). Until then, people experience a fear of disintegration, or a disintegration anxiety. Kohut (1977/2009) defined mental health as:

Not only... freedom from neurotic symptoms and inhibitions that interfere with the functions of a ‘mental apparatus’ involved in loving and working, but also the capacity of a firm *self* to avail itself of the talents and skills at an individual’s disposal, enabling him to love and work successfully. (p. 284)

Kohut built on Freud's notion of a person's potential to work and love (Kohut 1977/2009). Nevertheless, Kohut's theory, like Freud's, demonstrates a view of *self* that defines *self* in a compartmentalized and individualized manner. Moreover, Kohut focused solely on the personality level of *self* and promoted strengthening and establishing a strong sense of *self* (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). In this sense, his theory remained almost exclusively on the individual. Kohut (1959) believed that a therapist, through introspection and empathic attunement, could help a person establish a cohesive sense of *self*. Kohut's model of *self* accounts for relationships between parent and child and patient and therapist but does not address other forms of interdependence or community in developing or maintaining a cohesive sense of *self*. Furthermore, Kohut did little to address sociocultural influences in development. Kohut's theory could be more culturally-responsive by accounting for relationships outside of the parent-child relationship that provide selfobject functions and contribute to a cohesive *self*. As such, his theory of *self* may not be entirely incompatible to models of *self* in which interdependence, community, and spirituality affect development of *self*. Despite his focus on the individual, his theory may contain enough flexibility that it may be appropriately applied to other cultures (Jackson, 2000).

Humanistic and existential theories. Psychodynamic theories address individual processes of ego and identity as separate from context and largely from a pathological lens. Of the mainstream theories, humanistic and existential theories focus on aspects of human potentiality and fulfillment more than do other mainstream theories. Alfred Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May developed theories about human potentialities and viewed *self* in a more holistic manner (Sollod et al., 2009). Unlike psychodynamic theorists, they did not view *self* as a

bounded composite of distinct structures such as the id, ego, and superego. Rather, they viewed people as organisms that are always in a process of becoming and who innately strive for wholeness (Sollod et al., 2009). Humanistic and existential theories addressed ontological aspects of self rather than limiting their focus to component parts of *self*. In this way, humanistic and existential theories better reflect indigenous models of *self* that emphasize aspects of being such as self-actualization, self-realization, and self-cultivation.

Rollo May defined *self* as “the organizing function within the individual and the function by which one human being can relate to another” (May, 1953/1981, pp. 63). He argued that it was essential that a person develop a strong *self*, or a strong sense of personal identity (1953/1981). In this sense, it appears that May used *self* to refer to both self-as-subject (the *I* or consciousness) and self-as-object (*Me* or identity). He did not believe that *self* was the sum of a person’s roles or identities and instead, viewed *self* as the sum of one’s identities and the capacity of awareness (May, 1953/1981). Still, May’s conception of *self* did not account for the *we* or communal aspect of *self* that is present in indigenous models of *self*, such as the African extended *self* and the Confucian great *self*. According to May (1953/1981), the most important need that one has is to achieve one’s potential. May was concerned with man’s central issues of being and death, or mortality and the goals of existential psychotherapy was to help people experience freedom and find meaning in life (1953/1981).

May (1953/1981) saw people as unique from other creatures because of the capacity for conscious awareness and creating meaning. Because of consciousness, man is an organism that is inherently driven to and capable of growing towards something (May, 1953/1981). When a person becomes stagnant and fails to find meaning, a person’s sense of *self* is threatened and anxiety results (May, 1953/1981). Anxiety, according to May, is an essential aspect of the human

condition, and results from awareness that at any moment a person can cease to be (May, 1950/1977). Anxiety represents a threat to the essential core of a person (May 1950/1977). He conceptualized suffering as not just resulting from psychopathology but also resulting from a failure to find meaning. To free oneself from anxiety and meaninglessness, a person must utilize their freedom to choose who to become (May, 1953/1981). He emphasizes the need for a person to take a proactive stance towards finding meaning and achieving one's potential. May believed that one achieves meaning by developing awareness of oneself, including the experience of one's body and feelings, in order to discovering one's selfhood (May 1953/1981). Only by being aware of one's body and feelings can a person become aware of his/her needs and desires.

May (1950/1977) developed his Existential Phenomenology within the context of his cultural milieu and was aware of the sociocultural influences on psychology. Nevertheless, his focus remained Eurocentric, as he theorized that the prevalence of anxiety was shaped by developments in modern western civilization. Anxiety and failure to find meaning were products of increasing rationalism and science dominating the minds of the western psyche which caused people to grow further from spiritual traditions, which had been previously been a prominent source of meaning (May 1950/1977). May pointed to the need to rediscover meaning in order to alleviate the pervasive human condition of anxiety.

It is unclear whether nonwestern cultures similarly suffer from a pervasive anxiety that May observed in western culture. Whether this anxiety is a product of western culture or universal to all beings is uncertain. Nevertheless, May addressed the need for people to find meaning and achieve authenticity, which is a striving that indigenous models of *self* share (Piper-Mandy & Rowe, 2010). May (1953/1981) agreed the selfhood or identity develops in the context of interpersonal contexts but argued that it is important for the ego or identity to transcend social

contexts, for fear of being trapped by convention and conformity. May emphasized the importance of freedom and nonconformism, but he did not elaborate on the potential to transcend the ego, which is the goal of Buddhist, Hindu, and Taoist models of *self*. May also did little to account for relational or interdependent dimensions of *self* as reflected in Africentric and Confucian models of *self* (Hwang, 2012; Washington, 2010). May's theory of transcending social contexts may be incompatible with models of relational and extended selves.

Abraham Maslow similarly believed that people are organisms that are motivated to achieve wholeness (Maslow, 1968). Maslow did not wish to limit his theory to outlining goals of psychological adaptation; rather, he was interested in people achieving their ultimate potentials (Maslow, 1968). Maslow illustrated human potentials with his hierarchy of needs model, a model of needs in order of basic to higher needs. The five sets of needs, in order from most primary to highest needs, are physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Primary and basic needs need to be sufficiently met in order for the other needs to emerge and be attended to (Maslow, 1943).

Maslow (1968) believed that people are capable of more than psychological health, or meeting their esteem needs. Maslow believed that most people in western society are motivated to have high self-esteem or evaluation of themselves and acknowledged that these esteem needs may not apply to people of all cultures (Maslow, 1943). He believed that people are motivated to have self-esteem through achievements and confidence in one's abilities, as well as through how others view them (Maslow, 1968). These are individualistic goals that may not apply to collectivistic cultures, in which interdependence and spirituality are valued. Maslow's description of esteem needs reflects western values and relates to individualistic theories of identity development, ego strength, and developing a cohesive sense of *self*. However, Maslow

saw that people were capable of more than psychological health (Maslow, 1943). Maslow implied that only those who achieved self-actualization could find true fulfillment.

Self-actualization lies at the top of this hierarchy and is characterized by peak experiences and altered states of consciousness. Maslow believed that these peak experiences represented the optimal state of a person (Maslow, 1968). Peak experiences are characterized by an ego-less state, having a sense of meaning, feelings of wholeness, peacefulness, relaxation, and a sense of continuity, mysticism, and transcendence (Maslow, 1968). In this way, Maslow does address self-potentialities that go beyond psychological adaptation. He believed that one's true nature is one that is transcendent and that this is his essence (Maslow, 1968). His model of *self* bears resemblance to indigenous models of *self* that point to dimensions of *self* that extend beyond ego, identity, and the individual.

Rogers, like Maslow, highlighted the need for people to achieve their highest potentials and achieve their authentic *self*. Freedom, choice, and responsibility are essential in this process of personal growth (Rogers, 1961). Rather than viewing people as individual entities that suffer from pathologies, Rogers saw people in a more expansive way in which they were capable of achieving wholeness and creativity. *Self* is an organism that strives to be integrated and whole, and the highest potential of a person is what Rogers called a fully functioning person, or one who is more fully open to experience, independent, creative, and nonconformist (Rogers, 1964).

To help a person become a fully functioning person, Roger's developed client-centered therapy, a nondirective therapy in which a therapist conveys positive and unconditional regard towards the patient (Rogers, 1951). Rogers believed that an environment of safety, warmth, genuineness, and empathic understanding would help the client's true *self* emerge within the therapeutic relationship (Rogers, 1961). He observed that people tended to move away from

accessing their true nature due to parental or cultural influences (Rogers, 1961). So while people have an innate desire towards their true essence, due to external influences, people often face impediments to discovering their authentic *self*.

Rogers (1961) believed that the therapeutic relationship could lead to a person becoming fully functional not because of the therapist's function or role but due to the deep person-to-person relating aspect of the relationship. This necessitates that a therapist achieve a degree of authenticity him/herself. Rogers highlights the importance of relationships in helping a person become one's truest *self*, as the Africentric extended *self* and Confucian relational *self* do. Both Africentric and Confucian models of *self* emphasize that *self* develops in relation to community and relationships (Hwang, 1999; Washington, 2010). Not only does one's authentic *self* emerge out of these relationships, but it cannot exist independent of these relationships (Nobles, 1973). Rogers understood that an authentic *self* could only develop in relationship to another.

In addition to the therapeutic relationship, a person must establish autonomy and responsibility in order to be authentic. This means that one must choose one's goals and be responsible for oneself (Rogers, 1961). The process of becoming also involves a greater openness to experiences, acceptance of *self* and others, and trust (Rogers, 1961). Existential living is also a part of this process, in which a person lives more fully in each moment, or is more present, as is emphasized in Buddhist and Hindu traditions (Rogers, 1961). The process of becoming by "listening sensitively" (Rogers, 1961, p. 181) to oneself is similar to the self-realization practices in Hindu and Buddhist models of *self* that promote deeply knowing oneself through meditation and yoga. One is encouraged to pay close attention to the complexities of one's thoughts, emotions, and perceptions in order to differentiate that which is authentic and that which is false. The more that one comes to know oneself, the more one can trust oneself and

others (Rogers, 1961). With greater trust and self-knowledge comes a greater sense of freedom and creativity.

Roger's believed that the *good life* could not be defined as a fixed state of contentment, nirvana, or happiness, nor could it be defined as a state of being adjusted, fulfilled, or actualized (Rogers, 1961). Rather, he observed that the good life is a continual process that is characterized by psychological freedom, in which a person can choose at any moment what to direct one's attention to (Rogers, 1961). These observations are reflected in Buddhist ideas of impermanence and controlling one's mind (Epstein, 1998). The ability to not be controlled by one's mind and to directly experience the impermanence of everything is a mark of *nonsel*f in Buddhism. Roger's theory of the highest potential of *self* is thus, not distant from Buddhist notions of *nonsel*f.

Humanistic and existential theories view *self* as a dynamic organism that strives to become whole and is innately driven to achieve higher potentials. Maslow addressed transcendental and spiritual aspects of existence but his peak experiences described temporary states (Sollod et al., 2009). His description of self-actualization involves transient peak experience states, while in indigenous models of *self* the ultimate potential of a person, whether achieving a transcendental self or *nonsel*f suggests a more permanent state of transcending the ego (Epstein, 1998). Moreover, in the African extended *self* model, spirit and god are embodied within a person's lived experience, and not a state to be achieved (Nobles, 1986). May's theory of anxiety as a threat to selfhood and the need to cultivate freedom and choice to find meaning was developed in response to the ethos of post-World War western civilization and the increasing failure to find meaning. This anxiety is characterized by a sense of malaise, the automatization of people, and alienation from *self*, others, and nature (Suzuki, Fromm, & De Martino, 1960). Cultures that treat the individual as a separate entity may not contain the

protections against alienation and isolation that collectivistic and interdependent cultures may have. As such, this anxiety may be a cultural product that is not experienced in African, Indian, and Chinese traditional cultures in which spirituality have been integral to existence.

Nevertheless, humanistic and existential theories, with their emphases on self-cultivation and seeing people in a holistic matter, capture some aspects of aspects of indigenous model of *self*, such as authentic *self*, self-actualization, spirituality, and community.

It is important to discuss the emergence of transpersonal psychology in the 1960s, a subfield of humanistic psychology that emphasizes optimal human potential and levels of human consciousness, including transcendent experience. Transpersonal psychology integrates psychological concepts, theories, and methods with spiritual disciplines (Davis, 2010). The origins of transpersonal psychology can be traced to Abraham Maslow and Anthony Sutich, who wanted to explore human potentialities and essential dimensions of human existence that had been neglected in western psychology (Ruzek, 2007). There was a growing frustration that mainstream psychology was focused solely on pathological aspects of experience and measurable behaviors (Maslow, 1968). In contrast, transpersonal psychology acknowledges alternate states of consciousness that are beneficial (Walsh, 1994). The major themes of transpersonal psychology are nonduality, intrinsic health, self-transcendence, and inclusivity. Core practices include mindfulness, meditation, and contemplation (Davis, 2010). Eastern contemplative disciplines such as Buddhism and Hinduism have been strong influences on the development of transpersonal psychology (Walsh, 1994). Transpersonal psychology contains many overlaps with indigenous models of *self*, such as an emphasis on the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings. Unfortunately, due to the dominant western bias of individualism and its associated emphasis on positivism and quantitative scientific methods,

transpersonal psychology has maintained a marginalized status, as evidenced by the fact that transpersonal psychology is rarely mentioned in academic journals (Ruzek, 2007). It is possible that through efforts to promote cultural responsiveness, transpersonal psychology will gain increased attention.

Cognitive Behavioral Theories. While psychodynamic theories focus on the unconscious and ego and humanistic and existential theories focus on ontological aspects of *self*, cognitive and behavioral theories focus on how *self* is shaped by thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Skinner defined *self* in terms of predictable behaviors and Beck conceptualized *self* in terms of cognitions and associated mood states.

Skinner (1953) believed that *self* lacked human agency and rather, viewed *self* as a composite of stimuli and responses that could be controlled. He classified behaviors as respondent or operant, in which a person is conditioned to respond to specific stimuli or responses are reinforced by the events that follow, respectively (Skinner 1953). He believed that human behavior was highly lawful and predictable, while still acknowledging that the human being is filled with complexities (Skinner, 1953). Nevertheless, he maintained his focus on observable and measurable behaviors. In this way, he treated people as a set of predictable functions rather than as a holistic organism in a process of becoming, as humanistic and existential theories do. Skinner encouraged people to understand their predictable behaviors so that they were less susceptible to being controlled (Skinner, 1971). Skinner emphasized the impact of environmental factors on behaviors and in this sense, placed importance on the effects of context on behavior (Skinner, 1971). His theories of behavior can be applied to cultural theories of *self*, in which a person is influenced by the sociocultural context. Nevertheless, his view of *self* only captures one aspect of *self*.

While behavioral models focus on observable behaviors, cognitive models are based on how cognitions affect one's experience of oneself. Beck developed a cognitive theory based on the assumptions that cognitions are the result of both internal and external stimuli and that cognitions represent one's conceptualization of *self*, others, and the world (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979). Cognitive models see *self* as constituted by one's cognitions. In Buddhist and Hindu models of *self*, a person's cognitions, as mind and ego processes, are thought to be illusions due to their transient nature (Bhawuk, 2011; Hahn, 2006). Cognitions, therefore, are not the true *self* and simply are an aspect of experience. Beck acknowledged that eastern traditions such as Taoism and Buddhism address the relationship between cognitions and feelings and that by controlling one's thoughts, one can control one's feelings (Beck et al., 1979). Cognitive theory is even reflected in the Hindu Bhagavad Gita text, which contains dialogues about the process of identifying cognitive distortions and modifying thoughts (Bhatia et al., 2013).

Cognitive therapy, therefore, has parallels with eastern traditions of self-realization by examining thoughts and emotions. The difference lies in the fact that eastern traditions promote achieving higher states of *self* and cognitive therapy targets cognitions for the purpose of better psychological health. Cognitive theory is another example of viewing *self* as a composite of different functions. Despite not addressing *self* holistically, cognitive theory reflects the principles outlined in eastern models of *self*, in which thoughts must be studied in order to separate that which reflects one's true *self* and that which reflects the illusory *self*.

Beck developed a cognitive model of depression to conceptualize cognitive patterns that contribute to negative mood (Beck et al., 1979). This cognitive model addressed how one regards oneself, one's future, and one's experiences in such a way as to lead to a negative bias. Beck focused on the distorted ways in which people think and interpret themselves and situations

(Beck et al., 1979). While Beck's focus on the distortion of thoughts is in line with Buddhist, Taoist, and Hindu views on the nature of thoughts, his cognitive theory does not account for the impermanent nature of thoughts nor the fact that attachment to thoughts causes suffering. The concepts of impermanence, attachment, and desire as they relate to suffering or negative mood are not considered. In eastern traditions, the process of deeply knowing oneself involves also seeing clearly the impermanent aspects of experience, including the mind's processes (Kornfield, 1993). Once the impermanent aspects of *self* are seen and there is an understanding that attachment to thoughts and desires causes suffering, a person can transcend *self* and achieve an ego-less state (Epstein, 1998).

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) was built upon cognitive and behavioral theories of *self* and targets the relationships between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Wilson, 1998). In this sense, CBT treats *self* as a composite of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. Nevertheless, CBT practices of identifying distorted thoughts is aligned with Buddhist principles of seeing the true nature of erroneous perceptions and the ways in which this causes suffering (Hahn, 2006). However, CBT does not address the person as a holistic and interdependent being, and neglects relational and spiritual dimensions of *self*.

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in eastern philosophies and tradition in western psychology, as evidenced by the increase in mindfulness in psychological theory, research, and practice (Baer, 2003). Therapies that incorporate mindfulness are acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), and mindfulness-based therapies such as mindfulness-based CBT (MBCBT) and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Linehan, 1993; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002). ACT was built upon the foundations of traditional cognitive-behavioral theories

but attempted to incorporate humanistic, existential, spiritual, and human potential considerations (Hayes et al., 1999). ACT views people in a holistic manner and within a sociological and historical context (Hayes et al., 1999). ACT and other mindfulness-based therapies modify cognitions, and behaviors while incorporating eastern-based concepts of mindfulness, acceptance, letting go, nonjudgment, and nonattachment.

ACT is different from CBT in that rather than simply changing one's psychological manifestations, change is also targeted towards the contexts in which these experiences occur, which is referred to as functional contextualism (Hayes et al., 1999). ACT sees *self* across three dimensions, including the conceptualized *self*, ongoing self-awareness, and *self* as perspective (Hayes et al., 1999). The conceptualized *self* is similar to a person's identity, or one's ideas about oneself and one's place in the world. According to Buddhist and Hindu traditions, this aspect of *self* is an illusion due to their transient nature, and does not represent the true *self* (Bhawuk, 2011; Epstein, 1998). Mainstream psychology has focused inordinately on changing this aspect of *self*, while neglecting other aspects of *self* (Hayes et al., 1999). The unchanging aspect of *self* is the *self* as perspective, or what indigenous traditions call consciousness (Kornfield, 1993). ACT separates out ongoing self-awareness as an additional distinct aspect of *self* although this aspect of *self* appears to be a function of *self* as perspective.

ACT recognizes that *self* is not defined by one's mind activities and that attachment and identification contribute to suffering (Hayes et al., 1999). The specific mind activities that cause problems, according to ACT, are fusion, evaluation, avoidance, and reason, represented by the acronym FEAR. ACT also addresses experiential avoidance of thoughts and emotions and how avoidance contributes to suffering. ACT attempts to help people to de-identify from their cognitive and affective experiences with their model of acceptance, choice, and taking action.

The goals of ACT are to deemphasize attachment to the conceptualized *self* and cultivate greater awareness of self-as perspective and the observing *self* (Hayes et al., 1999). In this way, ACT derives its goals from ancient Buddhist and Hindu models of *self* that emphasize less attachment to mind and egoic identifications. ACT acknowledges that their principles are aligned with spirituality, or the transcendent qualities of human existence (Hayes et al., 1999), but does not sufficiently acknowledge the derivative nature of this psychotherapy model. ACT gives a nod to eastern traditions without sufficiently acknowledging that ACT principles stem from ancient eastern traditions.

Mindfulness-based therapies are also derived from eastern practices that are taken in a piecemeal fashion in order to address psychological problems. Kabat-Zinn, who developed MBSR, recognizes the challenges to introducing eastern concepts to western psychology. First, there are have been methodological challenges to studying mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). However, this may represent a clash of methodologies, in which mindfulness, an experiential practice that is verifiable through direct experience, does not fit neatly into the western scientific model. Kabat-Zinn (2003) appreciates the challenge of honoring and incorporating eastern traditions in a way in which their integrity is maintained. Nevertheless, eastern practices may need to be modified in a way that the language and methods are appropriate and accessible to those being served (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). This is a challenge that speaks to the greater obstacles of developing culturally-responsive practices.

Summary and Integration

While fundamental elements of indigenous psychologies are absent in western individualistic psychology, dominant theoretical perspectives in mainstream psychology appear to *borrow* some ancient and indigenous ideas about the *self*. Table 1 presents an overview of the

intersections of African, Indian, and Chinese indigenous models with current theoretical models that guide psychological intervention.

Table 1

Concepts from Mainstream Psychological Theories Consistent with African, Indian, and Chinese Models of Self

	African	Indian	Chinese
Psychodynamic	Self develops in relationships but is not limited to parent-child relationships	Self and ego are illusory and in the realm of mAyA	Self and ego identity emerge only to be transcended to become aligned with the Tao or the Way of Humanity
Humanistic-Existential	Holistic self emerges within the context of relationships with a natural consciousness of interconnectedness and spirituality	Self is an organism that is driven to achieve a metaphysical and authentic state	Self is comprised of dualities and has the potential to become an integrated whole
Cognitive-Behavioral	Cognitions and behaviors are affected by relationships and community and can to be modified to maintain an extended self	Cognitive distortions are consistent with mAyA and manas, or mind/ego processes that represent the illusory self	Cognitive distortions create illusions of a separate self that impede harmonious relationships with self, others, and the universe

Chapter V: Discussion

This dissertation offers an overview of African, Indian, and Chinese models of *self* in an effort to highlight gaps that exist in mainstream theory, research, and practice and to suggest areas for future consideration. Understanding a culture's conceptualization of *self* is important because cultural models of *self* include ontologies of being, values and goals, as well as clarifications about what it means to be authentic. There are cultural variations as to what constitutes being one's true *self* (English & Chen, 2011). In analyzing these indigenous models of *self* in the context of dominant mainstream theories, it became apparent that there are integral aspects of *self* that are neglected or inadequately addressed in the conceptual frameworks that serve as a foundation for psychological interventions. In addition, cultural psychology's attempts to understand certain non-western cultures through the constructs of individualism and collectivism and independent and interdependent self-construals do not fully capture the dimensions of *self* that exist among diverse collectivistic cultures (Christopher & Bickard, 2007; Spiro, 1993). To not address culturally-diverse aspects of *self* in mainstream psychology means that psychology is limited in providing culturally-responsive care. This chapter will provide an integration of the literature review and analysis, provide recommendations for theory, research, and practice, and discuss the limitations and contributions of this work.

The studies on independent and interdependent self-construals by Markus and Kitayama launched numerous studies that aimed to understand the differences in psychological processes among people of collectivistic cultures, and most of these studies were based on East Asian samples (English and Chen, 2007; Schlict et al., 2009). This work expands upon understandings of *self* among collectivistic cultures because the research thus far has failed to capture the cultural reality of these cultures, partly due to a bias towards western values and methodologies

(Bhawuk, 2011). One of the major criticisms of individualism and collectivism studies has been that individualism is a western construct and collectivism is a construct used to study the *other* (Hwang, 2012). This is another example of cultural hegemony, in which western models are used to categorize and understand the behavior of other cultures (Rowe, 2013). Furthermore, collectivism remains a vague construct and needs further clarification and more nuanced understanding (Hwang, 2012; Spiro, 1993). As such, this dissertation has introduced alternate models of *self* among collectivistic cultures to expand current understandings.

Cultural research on *self* has focused on the psychological aspects of *self* and suggested that self-construal affects cognitive, affective, behavioral, and memory processes (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This is problematic, however, because self-construal and identity, just as they are influenced and shaped by culture, are dynamic and subject to change. Methodologically, these results are compromised because self-representations are highly suggestible to context and priming effects (Christopher & Bickard, 2007). Self-representations are subject to different levels of awareness and what is being endorsed in a study may be only that which is explicit to that person at that time. Nevertheless, these studies have served to provide further evidence that sociocultural environments affect identity, goals, and motivations (Schlicht et al, 2009).

Indigenous and mainstream literature across disciplines are consistent in holding that being true to oneself is a valuable goal (Rogers, 1961; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Washington, 2010). Western psychology emphasizes the many psychological benefits of being true to oneself, but it rarely defines what one is being true to (Kernis, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Spiro, 1993). Western psychological research promotes being true to one's identity or self-construal and maintaining a consistent a stable identity (Kernis, 2003; English & Chen, 2011). It is presumed that a stable and global self-concept and consistent behavior across contexts is a mark of authenticity,

according to the cultural psychology literature (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These findings have been interpreted to mean that variability of self-concept indicates an unstable *self* and a lack of authenticity (Sheldon et al., 1997). East Asian samples demonstrate more flexible self-concepts and it has been assumed, then, that this implies maladaptiveness and a lack of a cohesive sense of *self* (English & Chen, 2007; Sheldon et al., 1997). These are western biases that assume that other cultures share the value of developing and maintaining one's unique identity. Western culture values building a global and consistent identity that may not similarly valued in other cultures. In fact, indigenous models of *self* appear to be less focused on the individual ego and identity and instead, value interdependence, relationship, and spirituality.

Collectivist cultures prioritize relationship maintenance over individual identity maintenance, but there lacks an accurate and comprehensive understanding as to why this is (English & Chen, 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Western research assumes that it is of value among collectivistic cultures to maintain a stable and individual identity. But research has shown that a flexible self-concept as observed in East Asian samples does not result in decreased authenticity, as it does for people of western cultures (English & Chen, 2007). This suggests that East Asian samples value being authentic to some other aspect of *self*. East Asians exhibit self-concept consistency within relationships over time, which suggests the importance of relationships, which is supported by indigenous models informed by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism (English & Chen, 2011; Hwang, 2012). Western research acknowledges that this (purported) lack of self-concept consistency represents relationship maintenance values and does not necessarily indicate negative consequences among East Asian cultures (English & Chen, 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, this understanding of an interdependent self-construal remains limited, as it still only addresses the identity level of *self*. Cultural psychology

researchers are beginning to doubt the universality of the need for a consistent self-construal and the supposed negative effects of inconsistent self-concepts (Boucher, 2011).

One of the major reasons why mainstream cultural psychology has failed to capture the experiences of members of collectivistic and interdependent cultures is that indigenous models of *self* are largely omitted from the research. In addition, there is a lack of clarification about what one is being true to (Schlicht et al., 2009). Research is being conducted and interpretations are being made without understandings about cultural worldviews that produce such results. Western psychology largely neglects to define an ontology of *self* and rather, limits its focus to specific aspects and levels of *self*, such as identity. This is in contrast to indigenous models of *self*, in which ontology and psychological understandings are not artificially separated (Dalal & Misra, 2010). As a result, it has not been possible to properly contextualize different types of cultural data (Christopher & Bickard, 2007). Indigenous models of *self* reveal that there are other levels of *self* that are considered to be the true *self*.

Current cultural literature on collectivistic cultures could be enhanced by deeply understanding indigenous models of *self*. The understandings of collectivistic cultures are incomplete and even misguided at times due to mainstream psychology's omission of ontologies of *self*. Addressing ontologies of *self* could render inconsistencies in the cultural *self* literature more accurate and comprehensive, thereby resulting in more culturally-responsive theory, research, and practice. It is not enough to take western-created constructs and methodologies to understand people of different cultures.

Goals of self-actualization, self-realization, and authentic *self* are touted in the literature without sufficient consideration of what one is being true to. What is being self-realized or actualized varies across cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The overview of indigenous

models of *self* reveals that collectivistic cultures in which interdependence to others, nature, and spirituality are valued do not share the western emphasis on an individual identity. In Africentric models of *self*, an authentic *self* is a relational or extended *self* in which relationships to community, family, and fictive kin, are in harmony (Belgrave & Allison, 2010). Authenticity also implies being connected to ancestors and the divine (Washington, 2010). In Taoist models of *self*, the emphasis is being one with the nature of reality by following the Middle Way (Craig, 2007). The goal is *wu wei*, or being in a relational flow with the Tao or all that is, including oneself, others, nature, and the cosmos (Craig, 2007). Confucian models of *self* also emphasize being aligned with way of nature by maintaining harmonious relationships. Buddhist and Hindu models of *self* emphasize the interdependent nature of everything, including *self*. Because nothing exists in isolation, the goal is to transcend egoic identity in order to achieve *nonself* or the transcendental true *self*, respectively. All of these models focus on the interdependent aspects of *self* and include spirituality and relationships, unlike western models which focus primarily on the individual.

Towards a Culturally-Responsive Psychology

In order for psychology to become culturally-responsive, indigenous models of *self* need to be considered in developing theory, research, and practice. Psychology training programs need to do more than address diversity as it relates to mainstream theories and methods of practice. Training should include indigenous knowledge and practices rather than attempting to understand other cultures through a western lens, which is inherently biased. This will require continuous critical examination of mainstream psychology theory, research, and practice that have been assumed to be universally true and valid.

Mainstream psychology needs to acknowledge that indigenous knowledge systems and methodologies outside of the western scientific model are valuable and worthy of study and application. Hwang (2012) argues that developing indigenous psychologies will require philosophical reflections, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies that capture indigenous worldviews. This dissertation aimed to highlight aspects of *self* stemming from three of the most geographically populous regions in the world that share the value of interdependence that is not reflected in mainstream psychology. This section will provide recommendations for ways in which mainstream psychology could better address alternate models of *self* for the purpose of providing greater cultural responsiveness.

Currently, there is a movement towards developing indigenous psychologies that are centered in indigenous ways of being in the world (Bhawuk, 2011; Hwang, 2012; Parham, 2009; Washington, 2010). Indigenous psychology must be based on accurately capturing the experiences of the cultural group, and this may only be possible if the research stems from the very people that it is trying to represent (Belgrave & Allison, 2010; Parham 2009). Hwang (2012) argues for indigenous psychologies that reflect Shweder et al.'s (1998) principle of *one mind, many mentalities*. Indigenous theories could encompass dimensions of experience that are universal as well as culturally-specific (Hwang, 2012).

These developments cannot be limited to psychologists who have a particular interest in cultural issues. Rather, these considerations should be an integral part of training in psychology programs, in an effort to raise multicultural competence in the field. Multicultural courses should expand its curriculum to include literature on alternate models of *self*, rather than attempting to understand other cultures based on western models of *self*.

Culturally-responsive theory. In order for indigenous psychologies to be successfully developed and integrated, it is imperative that mainstream psychology expand beyond its Euro-American biases and embrace alternate knowledge systems. Only then can a deeper understanding of indigenous knowledge systems, history, values, beliefs, and practices be incorporated into mainstream psychological practice. It is only possible to understand the psychology of people by exploring the deep structures of culture that inform their experiences, orientations, and worldviews (Parham, 2009). This involves an acknowledgment that non-western cultures are equally valuable and worthy of study. Psychology still needs to be disabused of the idea that western-centric psychological ideas and constructs are universal, much less superior to nonwestern models of *self* (Washington, 2010). Western theories and research should continue to be critically examined to assess for their accuracy or appropriateness in applying to members of collectivistic and interdependent cultures.

In this work, constructs such as spirituality, community, interdependence, extended *self*, relational *self*, transcendental *self*, and *nonself* were introduced. These are examples of many psychological constructs common to other cultures which never enter mainstream psychology. This is likely due to a history of using western-based constructs to understand other cultures. However, psychology could be served by incorporating indigenous constructs.

It can be argued that western culture is suffering from alienation and anxiety due to the preponderant focus on individualism (Rae, 2010; Theobald & Wood, 2009). Focusing on developing a relational, communal, or extended *self* could perhaps represent a philosophical shift in values that could serve not only people of non-western cultures but members of western culture as well. In treating members of African, Indian, and Chinese descent, it is important to not treat the individual as isolated from his family and community relationships (Belgrave &

Allison, 2010). Communalism is a term that reflects the African ethos, and is similar to collectivism in that it emphasizes interdependence and cooperation among people (Belgrave & Allison, 2010). Communal aspects of *self* are crucial to treating people of African ancestry (Washington, 2010). This is different from the western model of treating the individual as the unit of analysis. Emphasizing more relational and communal dimensions of experience could reduce the prevalence of alienation, anxiety, and lack of meaning that exists today.

Other examples of constructs that are not sufficiently addressed but could benefit western psychology are the ideas of desire and attachment (Bhawuk, 2011). Desire is an important construct because it relates to both cognition and emotion (Bhawuk, 2011). CBT focuses on how cognitions, behaviors, and emotions lead to negative states. ACT and other mindfulness-based therapies have begun to introduce the ideas of desire and attachment and how they create suffering. Western psychology could benefit from further incorporating these constructs to complement existing therapies and guide future research, for they would provide a more comprehensive understanding about the nature of suffering. Western psychology focuses on desire to the extent that people are encouraged to follow their desires (Bhawuk, 2011). Buddhist, Hindu, and Taoist models of *self* focus on reducing desires, as they are a source of suffering.

Finally, the constructs of balance, harmony, and nature are common to the indigenous models of *self* outlined in this critical analysis (Bhawuk, 2011; Hwang, 2012; Washington, 2010). Balance and harmony within oneself, with others, and with nature or the divine are intrinsic to one's mental, physical, and spiritual well-being, but these are constructs that are rarely addressed in mainstream psychology (Belgrave & Allison, 2010; Washington, 2010). These constructs that do not have to be culturally-specific and can be applied universally.

Culturally-responsive research. Western psychology has valued the experimental method as the most legitimate form conducting research (Belgrave & Allison, 2010). May (1953/1981, p. 63) observed that “It is a defensive and dogmatic science—and therefore not true science—which uses a particular scientific method as a Procrustean bed and rejects all forms of human experience which don’t fit.” Methods to develop indigenous psychologies should be informed by indigenous cultural norms (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Acceptable methods of research should be multiparadigmatic rather than limited to the western scientific model (Bhawuk, 2011).

Examples of alternate methods include anecdotal evidence, qualitative analyses, and observational data (Bhawuk, 2011). Ancient traditions have developed empirically tested knowledge through methods such as direct experience and first-person accounts (Rao, 2012). Subjective and within-person accounts of experience are considered a valid source of knowledge (Bhawuk, 2011). Techniques such as yoga and meditation have been used to study subjective phenomena in an objective manner (Rao, 2012). Oral traditions have been a valued method of transmitting and validating knowledge (Belgrave & Allison, 2010). Intuitive and spiritual means towards arriving at knowledge can be just as valid and scientific as the experimental method (Sue, 1999). These are a few examples of culturally-congruent methods of research that emerge from the culture being studied.

The western scientific method is not the only way to validate research. In fact, it may be insufficient to capturing the experience of indigenous cultures (Bhawuk, 2011). Furthermore, the experimental method may be inaccurate or even inappropriate to arrive at an understanding of the psychology of indigenous cultures, where direct self-knowledge and intuition are as legitimate as observable data (Belgrave & Allison, 2010). Alternative methods such as

interviewing and observation may provide a more accurate understanding not just of people of nonwestern cultures. Western psychology should expand its limited understanding of what counts as legitimate methods of arriving at knowledge. Methodology should be informed by the research questions rather than manufacturing questions based on western experimental methodology (Bhawuk, 2011).

Culturally-responsive practice. Western psychology has expanded its interventions beyond psychodynamic, humanistic, existential, and cognitive-behavioral therapies to incorporate eastern traditions of mindfulness. With a deeper understanding of indigenous models of *self* and culture, mainstream psychology could be enhanced by incorporating ancient methods of self-cultivation and self-actualization. In addition to mindfulness practices, alternate behavioral interventions such as meditation and yoga could be recommended as adjunctive treatments. However, eastern practices are often implemented in a manner in which they are separated from their meanings systems, which leads to a dilution of the practices (Walsh, 1999). Therefore, it is important to educate patients about the philosophical and spiritual underpinnings of unifying mind, body, and spirit to access one's true nature. Yoga and meditation as practiced within context would not only be a culturally-responsive intervention but could also benefit people across cultures. However, this is not necessarily a call to replicate eastern practices in the west; rather, the philosophical underpinnings of meditation and yoga practices could drive the development of indigenous psychology and complement western psychology theory and practice (Aronson, 2004). Psychotherapy and eastern meditation and mindfulness practices can be integrated in a way that honors both traditions (Epstein, 1998).

Culturally-responsive practice can also be informed by investigating indigenous healing practices (Constantine, Myers, Kindaichi, & Moore, 2004). Examples of indigenous healing

practices include shamanism, or entering altered states of consciousness to restore balance, and energy-balancing practices such as chanting (Constantine et al., 2004). These practices highlight interdependent values of harmony and balance. Cult dances are an example of indigenous African group therapy in which collaboration among members is promoted for the sake of therapeutic catharsis (Awanbor, 1982). Indian cultures also promote dance as a method in which collectively people can release tension and express emotions (Pavitra & Shubrata, 2014). Dance as a psychotherapeutic modality promotes indigenous values of community and transcendence.

In developing culturally-responsive practices, it is important that indigenous practices are not implemented in a piecemeal fashion. For instance, eastern practices are often reduced to fit into western paradigms, and aspects that do not fit neatly are excluded (Brown & Leledaki, 2010). Psychology has tended to misappropriate cultural practices and use them in ways to promote efficiency, but this has led to practices being used and understood out of context and also invalidated indigenous knowledge systems (Davis, 2010). Therefore, it is essential that in developing culturally-responsive practice, equal attention is paid to the spiritual and cultural contexts from which they emerged.

Other interventions that would make western psychology more responsive to indigenous models of *self*, such as the relational *self* and the extended *self*, would be more emphasis on connection with others and cultivating relationships. People who adhere to interdependent models of *self* are affected by their relationships to family, community, and nature, or the divine. As such, interventions should include assessing the quality of the person's relationships and community (Washington, 2010). Emphasis on community can engender feelings of connectedness, sharedness, and belonging (Awanbor, 1982). Culturally-congruent interventions

cannot be limited to an individual-level assessment of symptoms and functioning. The assessment must include contextual factors, including relationships.

Limitations

This analysis has several limitations that may have affected the author's selection of literature, quality and depth of examination, critical analysis, conclusions, and emerging hypotheses. These limitations may affect the usefulness of this analysis for mental health professionals and researchers. This section will discuss the potential limitations of this critical analysis.

Generalizability. This critical analysis made broad statements regarding cultural groups that are heterogeneous across several dimensions, such as geography, region, language, traditions, belief systems, and customs, among other cultural factors. This work acknowledges that there is not only significant intergroup variability among cultures but also within group variability. This work aimed to provide an overview of indigenous models of *self* derived from the ancient traditions of Africa, India, and China, because these models influenced the development of various cultural worldviews within each culture. How much each model of *self* applies to members of each culture will vary significantly, or perhaps, not apply at all. Due to ever-increasing globalization and western influence in other cultures, these cultural models of self will vary in salience for their members (Hwang, 2012). The crux of this dissertation is to expand the narrow western understandings of *self* to promote a more culturally-responsive psychology.

Limited scope and breadth. The topic of *self* is infinitely represented in the literature and spans across several disciplines. As a result, this work is inherently limited, as only a small selection of literature could be reviewed. The conclusions and emerging hypotheses serve to

point to future considerations and research. This work included only a few of the mainstream psychological theories to analyze whether they are applicable in light of indigenous models of *self*. This review of European and American psychological theories served to caution against blanket application to people who may not share western individualistic and largely acontextual models of *self*. Psychology is a discipline that aims for ever-increasing understandings of self-related processes, and by incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and models of *self*, mainstream psychology could not only conduct more culturally-responsive research and practice, but also develop more comprehensive understandings of *self*.

Not only was the scope of the literature limited, but the depth with which each model could be examined was also limited due to the breadth of this topic. As a result, the author was only able to point to areas and topics that warrant further consideration. Due to a lack of deep investigation into indigenous models, the analysis may be subjected to misconstruals or misinterpretations of the literature that was reviewed.

Language. In addition to the limited scope and depth of the analysis, the author acknowledges that language is a cultural symbol used to communicate phenomena, whether they are mental constructs, psychological processes, or material and spiritual phenomena. It is a medium in which experiences and worldviews are understood, analyzed, and recorded (Hwang, 2012). Languages emerge from cultures and reflect meaning and knowledge systems within a culture (Hwang, 2012). Because language is a cultural product, language is used varyingly and to mean different things, as reflected in the inconsistencies and complexities of the use of the word, *self*. *Self* in the English language is used with radically different connotations, so to attempt to understand indigenous models of *self* will also inevitably result in some misunderstandings (Paranjpe, 2010). As such, the author acknowledges that the constructs used in this work may

contain nuances not described here that may have resulted in some inaccuracies. Finally, another limitation is that this dissertation is being written in English and from English-language sources, some of which have been translated, which further increases the chances that the original meaning may be distorted to some degree.

Conclusion

Self is a complex philosophical, spiritual, biological, and psychological construct that is a continuous source of fascination and study. Psychology is a discipline that aims to understand human processes, including making meaning and achieving authenticity (Piper-Mandy & Rowe, 2010). Attempts to understand complex human processes and their interactions with culture will require a deeper understanding of indigenous models of *self*. Indigenous knowledge systems will need to guide culturally-congruent research and methods. Psychology is in a state of trying to better understanding *self* in a diverse context, as evidenced by the emergence of African, Chinese, and Indian psychologies (Bhawuk, 2011; Hwang, 2012; Piper-Mandy & Rowe, 2010). In order to arrive at more accurate understandings of *self* and become more culturally-responsive, mainstream psychology must begin to validate and incorporate indigenous models of *self*.

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Appendix A
GPS IRB Approval Notice

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

August 19, 2014

Protocol #: P0814D01

Project Title: The Construct of Self within a Multicultural Context: A Critical Analysis

Re: Research Study Not Subject to IRB Review

Dear Ms. Kim:

Thank you for submitting your application, *The Construct of Self within a Multicultural Context: A Critical Analysis* to Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB). After thorough review of your documents you have submitted, the GPS IRB has determined that your research is **not** subject to review because as you stated in your application your dissertation research study is a "critical review" of the literature and does not involve interaction with human subjects. If your dissertation research study is modified and thus involves interactions with human subjects it is at that time you will be required to submit an IRB application.

Should you have additional questions, please contact the Kevin Collins Manager of Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 310-568-2305 or via email at kevin.collins@pepperdine.edu or Dr. Bryant-Davis, Faculty Chair of GPS IRB at gpsirb@pepperdine.edu. On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you continued success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,



Thema Bryant-Davis, Ph.D.
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives
Mr. Brett Leach, Compliance Attorney
Dr. Shelly Harrell, Faculty Advisor