

# Women's Acculturation Experiences of Self and Spiritual Self: Are They Connected or Separate?

Araxi Hovhannessian

## *Introduction and Overview of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to explore women's acculturation experience in defining self and spiritual self as connected or separate in United States. Feminists explain that women form their connectedness through their relationships with others. From a cultural perspective, most Eastern and African cultures identify themselves as connected and Western and European cultures define themselves as separate, independent, and individual. A woman may face challenges when she immigrates from a culture that identifies as connected to an independent culture/country or from an independent culture to a similar culture, or a variation of both cultures. The impact of migration to another country and the process of change for an individual are traumatic. In the course of settling down, the individual attempts to adjust and adapt to new ways of life. Most importantly, the acculturation process for the individual may involve a shift in cultural identity, such as personality changes of an individual's experiences in defining self and spiritual self.

## *Research Questions*

This study will explore and address women's acculturation experiences in defining self and spiritual self as connected or separate. Primary research question: Are women's acculturation experiences associated with defining the self and the spiritual self as connected or separate? Secondary research questions: Does migration influence how individuals define self and spiritual self? Does acculturation influence an individual's experience of self but not spiritual self? Does acculturation influence an individual's experience of spiritual self but not self?

## *Research Method and Design*

In this study, a mixed methods approach will be used to address several variables. Research participants will be solicited through e-mail notices from various departments at Arizona State University. Prior to testing participants for the study, a pilot test will be conducted with 25 women participants. Similar steps will be utilized for the actual solicitation for 150 research participants for the formal study. Participants will complete four assessment instruments: *The Vancouver Index of Acculturation* (VIA; Ryder, et al., 2000), for measuring if a person's experiences and values are maintained with their heritage culture and/or have shifted to the American culture; *The Self-Construal Scale* (SCS; Singelis, 1994), for measuring the independent and interdependent self-construals; *Spirituality Assessment Scale* (SAS; Howden, 1992), to assess the meaning and purpose in life, innerness, unify interconnectedness, and transcendence experiences; *Self-Expansiveness Level Form* (SELF; Friedman, 1983), to discern personal, middle, and transpersonal levels of awareness. Concurrent with this data collection, qualitative interviews of phenomenological inquiry will be conducted to explore the acculturation experience of self and spiritual self in relation to connectedness or separateness for women in the United States. In the qualitative methods, a minimum of 12 participants will be interviewed and tape-recorded. The interviews will be transcribed and the data will be analyzed using Thematic Content Analysis (Anderson, 2007) where major themes will be highlighted and labeled and the findings will be reported.

The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data is to bring together the strengths of both forms of research to corroborate results. The author has intentionally left out feminist research methods because this study is attempting to address the female-centered biases in findings, methods, and scientific philosophy. Particularly, this study will focus on separateness instead of relational and Western cultural influences – individuality of human experiences.

### *Planned Data Treatment*

The data will be analyzed using binary logistic regression to measure acculturation, independent, and interdependent against the subscales to identify connected or separate self-schemas. I will also use Pearson correlations to determine how each scale and subscale relates to all other scales and subscales. The results will be interpreted and discussed in the final report.

### *Contribution to the field*

This study will bring in new information and perspective in the field of transpersonal psychology. It will integrate and expand current concepts of women's experiences of self and spiritual self from a feminist, cultural, social, and transpersonal view. Additionally, from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology's global vision document (Anderson & Braud, 2006), the research will address spiritual experiences and qualities that will serve the global community and transform the evidentiary procedures of science through complementary and multicultural research methods.

### *References*

- Anderson, R. (2007). *Thematic content analysis (TCA): Descriptive presentation of qualitative data using Microsoft Word*. (Unpublished manuscript, available at [www.wellknowingconsulting.org/publications/articles.html](http://www.wellknowingconsulting.org/publications/articles.html))
- Anderson, R., & Braud, W. (2006). *A global research vision*. Paper presented at Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.
- Friedman, Harris L. (1983). The self-expansiveness level form: A conceptualization and measurement of a transpersonal construct. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 15(1), 37-50.
- Howden, J. W. (1992). Development and psychometric characteristics of the spirituality assessment scale. (Ph.D., Texas Woman's University).
- Ryder, A. G., Alden, L. E., & Paulhus, D. L. (2000). Is acculturation unidimensional or bidimensional? A head-to-head comparison in the prediction of personality, self-identity, and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(1), 49-65.
- Singelis, T. M. (1994). The measurement of independent and interdependent self-construals. *The Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, 20(5), 580-591.