

## **ABSTRACT**

### **In Search of the Interdependent Self: Explorations Among Baptist Church Members in Jamaica and the United States**

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Building on previous theory and research on construal of self in collectivist and individualist cultures (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis et al. 1995), this research examines the role of the Baptist church in Jamaica and the United States in promoting an 'interdependent' view of self, focused on intimacy and social connectedness. The study seeks to examine, across two different cultural contexts, the heuristic utility of the interdependence construct for understanding the role of the Baptist church in reestablishing an 'African collectivist' view of self. Profiles are constructed of the salient features held both in common, and differentially, among the Jamaican and African American Baptist church members. Results of this study highlight some of the limitations of the interdependence/independence model. Drawing on Oyserman et al. (2002) and Jones (2003), the findings are interpreted as reflecting the importance of situation to subjective construal. Viewing culture as an available toolbox upon which individuals draw in constructing their self-construals, it is argued that within any given cultural context individuals will find combinations of both interdependent- and independent-focused strategies to be adaptive. The results of this study suggest that persons embedded within social situations and cultural contexts tend to adjust dynamically, thinking in both ways, rather than merely choosing one self-construal over the other, as previous individualism-collectivism literatures have often implied.

**Keywords:** Rosemary Ann Frey; African ; American: Jamaican; Baptist; church; collectivism; culture; interdependent; self.