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# Intersectional Examination of Individuation and Emotional Intelligence: Longitudinal Associations with Positive Psychology and Multicultural Psychology

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INTERSECTIONAL EXAMINATION OF INDIVIDUATION AND EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE: LONGITUDINAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY  
AND MULTICULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

by

LAURA E. MILLER

(Under the Direction of Jeff Klibert)

ABSTRACT

Emerging adulthood is a unique transitional period that has only recently been introduced into the literature (Arnett & Taber, 1994). Gaps exist in explicating underlying concepts of positive development in this developmental period. Individuation and emotional intelligence have been identified as crucial developmental tasks for emerging adults (Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Fernandez, Salamonson, & Griffiths, 2012). Positive psychology and multicultural psychology theories provide insights into how these components may be promoted over time. The purpose of the study was to identify promotional factors to healthy development outcomes in sample of ethnically diverse emerging adults. Participants in the study included 293 undergraduate students who completed a series of online surveys. Results indicated that cultural congruity was related to emotional intelligence and separation individuation cross-sectionally and longitudinally for European and African American students. However, results revealed some unique correlational patterns when examining the relationships between positive psychological factors and positive developmental outcomes. Positive psychological factors were significantly related to emotional intelligence and separation individuation longitudinally for European American students but not for African American students. Theoretical and practical implications for these findings are discussed in detail.

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Emerging adulthood has been classified as a distinct developmental period between the ages of 18 and 25 years. Changing trends reflected in pursuing higher education and delaying marriage and occupational careers have compelled theorists to examine unique developmental processes specific to this age range (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Taber, 1994). Accordingly, Arnett (2000) has solidified a framework that helps researchers and practitioners better understand the unique changes and challenges within this developmental period. Of particular note, Arnett and Taber (1994) consider the creation and maintenance of individuality as a hallmark feature of emerging adulthood. Specifically, they define individuality as “residential and financial independence as well as the attainment of cognitive self-sufficiency, emotional self-reliance, and behavioral self-control” (Arnett & Taber, 1994, p. 517). Opportunities to create and maintain individuality arise in light of difficult transitions including moving out of the childhood home, cultivating advanced social skills, acquiring a steady income, and modifying one’s personal, cultural, and occupational identities. Given the novelty of emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental period, there is a great need for researchers to advance an understanding of salient processes and underlying components (e.g., individuation and emotional intelligence) of cultivating and maintaining a healthy sense of individuality.

Discussions about emerging adulthood often include developmental growth of college students. In 2010, 41% of adults aged 18 to 24 years old were enrolled in college and over 60% of college undergraduates fall within this age category (Hussar & Bailey, 2011). Within this emerging adult population, many find college to be emotionally, cognitively, and socially taxing (Ross, Niebling, & Heckert, 1999). Successful adaptation to the college climate may require students to alter their goals, values, and interpersonal style. If students are unprepared or are

unable to cope with complex demands, they may have a difficult time establishing a meaningful sense of individuality as evidenced by low individuation and emotional intelligence. Instead, students may begin to perceive college as an overwhelming set of stressful obstacles (Conley, Travers, & Bryant, 2013). Consequently, transitional discomfort related to homesickness, the inability to make adequate social connections on campus, difficulties adjusting to the college classroom, and relational difficulties with roommates often precipitate deficits in behavioral regulation. Academic impairment, attrition, substance abuse, risky sexual practices, and suicidal behaviors are just some of the consequences commonly experienced by students who have difficulty navigating the college environment (Burnett et al., 2013; Clark & Cundiff, 2011; Keyes et al., 2012).

Individuation and emotional intelligence are two constructs that buffer against the experience of distress and behavioral dysregulation and often engender a greater sense of individuality. Most notably, these concepts provide coping resources that help students navigate through and overcome challenging and/or adverse circumstances (Gaher, Hofman, Simons, & Hunsaker, 2013). Further examination of these constructs in the context of emerging adulthood is offered in the following sections.

*Individuation.* Individuation is a developmental process that is presumed to adaptively influence the growth of emerging adults. This process has been differentially conceived in evolving object relation perspectives (Blos, 1979; Josselson, 1988) and family systems theory (Allison & Sabatelli, 1988; Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1990). The press toward individuation requires emerging adults to shed parental dependencies, yet not at the expense of close family ties. Rather, the goal of individuation is relational autonomy, where independence and self-governance are affirmed within the context of continuous, mutually validating relationships

(Josselson, 1988). Accordingly, the key developmental task within the process of individuation is cultivating flexibility in managing the interchange between separation and connectedness (Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). Deficits in the individuation process have been linked to anxiety, depression, loneliness, increased alcohol use, sensitivity to rejection, and feelings of guilt, whereas healthy individuation is correlated with secure attachment, social connectedness, and successful academic and social adjustment to college (Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004).

*Emotional Intelligence.* Emotional intelligence refers to the extent to which an individual attends to, processes, and utilizes information relating to emotional affect (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). This information can be in reference to intrapersonal (e.g., managing one's own emotions) or interpersonal (e.g., responding to others' expression of emotions) processes. Broadly, emotional intelligence is one's awareness of and skills to navigate emotionally laden circumstances in a healthy manner. Those who have higher emotional intelligence are better able to correctly recognize nonverbal expressions of emotion in others, have higher capacities for empathy, can readily identify their own emotions, and are better able to regulate the expression of emotions (Cherniss, 2010; Petrides & Furnham, 2006). Deficits in the development of emotional intelligence have been linked to anxiety, impulsivity, delinquency, low life satisfaction, decreased social support, and degree non-completion (Keefer, Parker, & Wood, 2012; Kong, Zhao, & You, 2012; Lizeretti & Extremera, 2011; Peter et al., 2013). Alternatively, higher levels of emotional intelligence have been correlated with higher levels of life satisfaction, increased reports of social support, resiliency, higher levels of self-esteem, and better academic performance (Fernandez, Salamonson, & Griffiths, 2012; Keshavarzi & Yousefi, 2012).

### **Cultural differences in emerging adulthood**

When studying individuals, environmental factors must be considered; therefore ethnic and cultural factors in developmental growth must be examined independently. At first glance, research suggests that transitions to adulthood among ethnic minority groups are similar to the conceptions held by the majority culture (i.e., European American culture). Specifically, 70% of a sample of African American, European American, Latino, and Asian American emerging adults agreed that independence and responsibility are innate components of being an adult (Arnett, 2003). However, there are some ethnic differences in the criteria for achieving adult status. Specifically, ethnic minority adults more than European American adults endorsed items that promoted ideas of traditional gender roles within the family structure as being indicative of achieving adult status. Ethnic minority emerging adults were also more likely to endorse norm compliance, such as adhering to speed limits and avoiding being drunk in public as part of their transformation into adulthood. Additionally, role transitions such as obtaining a job, becoming married, and being a parent were endorsed more often by ethnic minorities than European Americans as being significant milestones in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2003). When examining self-reports of individuation in ethnic groups, African American and Latino emerging adults are more likely to report that their parents are more involved in their life compared to European American emerging adults. Also, African American emerging adults report difficulties in allocating resources to support their development through emerging adulthood (Arnett & Schwab, 2012).

Another cultural factor to be considered in the context of emerging adulthood is rurality. Emerging adults in rural areas express less satisfaction with their educational attainment and believe they have fewer opportunities for education and careers than emerging adults from urban

areas (Looker & Naylor, 2009). Also, stigma associated with rurality seems to follow emerging adults through their psychosocial development. Namely, emerging adults who did not move out of their rural home community are often labeled by other emerging adults as “not having much ambition,” “being content with limited opportunities,” and “not having money to get out” (Looker & Naylor, 2009, p.58). Additionally, many emerging adults in rural communities anticipate an accelerated transition into adult roles, which may alter opportunities for growth in key areas such as individuation and emotional intelligence (Crockett, Shanahan, & Jackson-Newsom, 2000). In addition, many emerging adults reared in rural areas indicate that they give more importance to their parents’ wishes in making career and other life-path decisions (Basak & Ghosh, 2008). Incidentally, many express a desire to stay close to family (Basak & Ghosh, 2008; Looker & Naylor, 2009). Considering these findings, it is important that researchers consider the salient developmental processes independently across ethnicity and rural status.

*Proposed Models that Promote Development.* As previously discussed, individuation and emotional intelligence are crucial processes imbedded within an emerging adult’s development. To date, most investigations concerning individuation and emotional intelligence evaluate factors that detract or interfere with healthy development, but do not address factors that promote healthy development in the context of individuation and emotional intelligence (Copestake, Gray, & Snowden, 2013; Kins, Beyers, & Soenens, 2013). Moreover, there are no empirical investigations considering factors that promote positive development in these areas across cultural groups (e.g., African Americans and rural residents). The current study seeks to identify factors that uniquely promote individuation and emotional intelligence across ethnic and rural groups. The current study examined increases in individuation and emotional intelligence through self-report of cultural congruity, self-control, and coping self-efficacy.

**Purpose**

Empirical evidence is needed to identify factors that promote, as well as, inhibit the development of individuation and emotional intelligence in a sample of college-aged adults. In response to this need, the current study aims to investigate a unique set of questions. First, this study sought to determine if there were significant interaction and main effects in self-reports of individuation and emotional intelligence for ethnic (European vs. African American) and rural (rural vs. non-rural) groups. Second, the study examined whether cultural congruity, self-control, and coping self-efficacy are positively related to self-reports of individuation and emotional intelligence cross-sectionally and across time. These relationships were also evaluated independently by ethnic group status. Third, the study investigated the extent to which the linear combination of psychological resources (cultural congruity, self-control, coping self-efficacy) can predict a significant amount of variance in African American and European American self-reports of individuation and emotional intelligence across time.

**Significance**

Given that emerging adulthood is a unique transitional period, as outlined by Arnett (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Taber, 1994), there is a need for advancement in the understanding of relevant processes embedded within it. It is imperative that gaps in the emerging adulthood literature are filled so that more holistic theories can be devised. This study aims to provide a more specific theory on how certain factors promote individuation and emotional intelligence. In addition, because these questions are considered across different cultural groups, theorists may be able to generate culturally sensitive hypotheses about the development of individuation and emotional intelligence.

Additionally, examining these questions may contribute to the development of more appropriate assessments and evidence-based clinical practices for individuals working with emerging adults. Individuals with deficits in individuation and emotional intelligence may be exposed to a higher risk for developmental delays in emerging adulthood and subsequent developmental periods. It is important to determine who is at risk for these delays so that preventative measures can be taken. The current study also hopes to inform treatment with unique empirical findings for developmentally derived perspectives to promote and enhance our understanding of the consequences associated with low levels of individuation and emotional intelligence. Evidence-based and developmentally appropriate treatment strategies may potentially aid in establishing means to generate protective measures against the deficits in individuation and emotional intelligence.

### **Definitions**

The following section provides of list of variables to be examined within the present study.

*Individuation.* Individuation has been conceptualized differently in various theories such as object relation theories (Blos, 1979; Josselson, 1988) and family systems theory (Allison & Sabatelli, 1988; Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1990). Lapsley and Edgerton described individuation as a “normative developmental task that is thought to have significant adaptive consequences for adolescents and emerging adults” (2002, p. 484). One hallmark feature of this period is shedding parental dependencies, but not at the expense of familial relations (Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). Moreover, relational autonomy, independence, and self-governance are attained in a healthy individuation process (Josselson, 1988). In the current study, individuation was an outcome variable.

*Emotional Intelligence.* According to Petrides and Furnham (2006), emotional intelligence is the extent to which a person can attend to, process, and use information relating to one's own and other's emotional affect. The presence of emotional intelligence traits have been shown to increase awareness of affect related information in the environment and promote effective emotional navigation skills. In the current study, emotional intelligence was an outcome variable.

*Self-Control.* Self-control is the extent to which an individual can monitor and regulate emotions and behaviors within themselves (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Freud suggested that the ability to evoke self-control was the hallmark of civilized life (Freud, 1930). Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder saw self-control as a means to alter oneself to better adapt to the environment (1982). In the current study, self-control served as a predictor variable.

*Coping Self-Efficacy.* Coping self-efficacy has been defined as an individual's adaptability and confidence in healthy coping behavior (Chesney, Neilands, Chambers, Taylor, & Folkman, 2006). This concept was derived from Bandura's theories of self-efficacy, in which an individual appraises a situation to determine to what extent they can control it (Bandura, 1997). In the current study, coping self-efficacy served as a predictor variable.

*Cultural Congruity.* Cultural congruity may be thought of as the degree of fit between an individual's culture, beliefs, and expectations and the environment in which one operates (Bhugra, & Arya, 2005). High levels of cultural congruence engender high levels of belongingness and help-seeking attitudes (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996). In the current study, cultural congruity served as a predictor variable.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Given that emerging adulthood has been defined as a unique developmental period, it is pertinent to explore theories regarding late adolescence, young and emerging adulthood, and student development. A number of theorists have outlined psychosocial models, cognitive-structural models, and learning style theories of emerging adulthood that facilitate an enhanced understanding of individuation and emotional intelligence as positive benchmarks for healthy development. The following literature review provides a cursory summary of major theories pertaining to these benchmarks.

### **Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory**

Erik Erikson was one of the first to develop a psychosocial developmental model that covered the entire lifespan, which included 8 stages. Each stage has a “crisis” or turning point that must be resolved in order for developmental change and progression to occur (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Stages 5 (Identity vs. Identity Confusion) and 6 (Intimacy vs. Isolation) of Erikson's psychosocial development theory are of particular relevance in the examination of individuation and emotional intelligence.

*Identity Formation.* Stage 5 is labeled identity versus identity diffusion or confusion (Erikson, 1968) and is marked by the development of a core sense of self, values, beliefs, and goals. In general, this stage is the catalyst for an adolescent's transition into adulthood. Individuals in this stage may struggle with role confusion when trying to determine who they are versus who others perceive them to be. Unresolved struggles with developing a core sense of self may result in confusion and insecurities associated with the self and relationships with others (Evans et al., 2010). Unsuccessful navigation of this developmental task would result in identity diffusion where there is a lack of a clear sense of direction and purpose (Erikson, 1968; Evans et

al., 2010). Having no clear understanding of one's role in life may cause over-identification with others and an attitude of intolerance to those with different viewpoints (Erikson, 1968), both of which serve as obstacles in obtaining high levels of individuation and emotional intelligence.

James Marcia extended stage 5 of Erikson's model to elucidate how young adults experience and resolve crises in identity (Evans et al., 2010; Marcia, 2002). Two critical variables in Marcia's model are exploration and commitment. Exploration includes questioning values and goals as defined by parents and evaluating identity alternatives and their consequences, whereas commitment is defined by attaching ownership to pronounced choices, values, and goals. When commitments are being made, individuals take action toward realizing their goals (Evans et al., 2010).

Marcia's model includes four identity statuses, or ways of balancing exploration and commitment (Marcia, 2002). It is meaningful to note that these identity statuses are not necessarily progressive, linear, or permanent, nor will all individuals experience all four statuses (Evans et al., 2010). One of Marcia's identity statuses, identity achievement, includes exploration and commitment (Marcia, 2002). Achievement is attained after an extensive crisis period where individuals sort through alternatives and make choices that lead to strong commitments. These individuals are usually confident and can clearly articulate their choices. Young adults with an identity achievement status experience more exploration because their identity is secure enough for risk taking which allows them to investigate alternatives (Evans et al., 2010; Marcia, 2002). According to Marcia, these individuals are seen as the most psychologically healthy and are said to have successfully navigated stage 5 of Erikson's identity development model (Marcia, 2002). Students identified as attaining identity achievement ego

status typically have a more positive individuation experience and are able to better regulate interpersonal ties amongst parents and peers (Wang, Song, & Tong, 2011).

Another identity status that Marcia describes is identity diffusion where there is no exploration and no commitment (Marcia, 2002). These individuals are unable to commit or refuse to commit to a particular identity. These young adults have not experienced a significant exploration process in their identity formation and lack concern regarding commitments (Evans et al., 2010; Marcia, 2002). Generally, there is no account of positive or negative consequences. Experiences in this status may include conformity to external sources of identity, difficulty with intimacy, and a lack of cognitive complexity (Evans et al., 2010). Conflict in families of students and poor individuation experiences have been associated with lower emotional autonomy and identity diffusion (Sandhu & Tung, 2006). Identity diffusion has also been correlated with fewer reports of successful individuation processes and career indecision (Downing & Nauta, 2010), possibly indicating that identity formation may be crucial in a successful individuation process and development of appropriate emotional intelligence skills.

*Interpersonal Development.* The sixth stage of Erikson's model builds upon the fifth in that having a clear sense of identity facilitates healthy relationships with others. This stage is referred to as intimacy versus isolation and was the first stage Erikson considered to be a part of adulthood (Erikson, 1968). Specifically in this stage, young adults decide whether or not to fuse identity with another to create a meaningful union. Most often this refers to romantic relationships but it also includes other intimate relationships such as establishing committed bonds with friends and members of the community (Erikson, 1968; Evans et al., 2010). Movement into this stage of development increases a greater cultivation of emotional

intelligence skills as focus has moved from inward (e.g., individual identity development) to outward (i.e., formation of intimate relationships).

Erikson described “distantiation” in this stage as the “readiness to repudiate and isolate those forces and people whose essence seem dangerous to one’s own” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 51). Emotionally sensitive skills are crucial in determining how to handle distantiation in a productive manner that progresses development. Consequently, unresolved crises in previous psychosocial stages may lead to detriments in the formation of appropriate emotional intelligence skills. Adults who lack a strong sense of identity in the intimacy versus isolation stage may have difficulty building and maintaining relationships which can lead to emotional stress and isolation (Evans et al., 2010). Additionally, emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with intimacy (Seaton & Beaumont, 2011), thus, failures in intimacy can be conceptualized as an inability to regulate interpersonal affect (Kelly, 1993).

### **Arnett’s Theory of Emerging Adulthood**

The term “emerging adulthood” was coined by Jeffrey J. Arnett (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is a phase of the life span between adolescence and full-fledged adulthood, encompassing late adolescence and early adulthood. It primarily applies to young adults in developed countries who do not have children, do not live in their own home, or do not have sufficient income to become fully independent in their early to late 20s (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). Arnett argues that emerging adulthood is relevant and unique in that it includes novel challenges that late adolescents and young adults have to grapple (Arnett, 2000). Specific challenges include forming a personally meaningful identity and building stable interpersonal connections, which require successful individuation and advanced emotional intelligence skills.

*Features of Emerging Adulthood.* Arnett outlines five main features that make emerging adulthood a distinct developmental period. First, Arnett identifies emerging adulthood as “the age of identity exploration.” Previously, identity formation was largely conceptualized as a life task for adolescents (Erikson, 1968), however, even Erikson commented on “prolonged adolescence” seen in industrialized societies. Some have even argued that more identity exploration occurs in emerging adulthood (ages 18 to 25) than in adolescence (ages 10 to 18; Arnett & Tanner, 2006). Emerging adulthood can be seen as an age where individuals have more freedom to explore possibilities especially in intimate relationships and career decisions. Fewer stable commitments and independence from parents allows emerging adulthood to be a fertile ground for self-exploration in multiple areas of life (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Tanner, 2006).

Instability also categorizes emerging adulthood. Residential changes peak during this phase of life (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). Many young adults first move out of their parental home around age 18 or 19 and begin living in dormitories or apartments with roommates. Poor transitions from the home have been associated with problematic individuation processes (Kins, Soenens, & Beyers, 2012). Higher levels of emotional intelligence have also been related to positive roommate compatibility in college students (Case, 2008).

Arnett also describes emerging adulthood as the self-focused age. A clear distinction to be made here is that self-focused does not refer to self-centeredness, but instead refers to an age of decreased obligations, such as parenthood and marriage, which allows for greater autonomy (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). During this time, emerging adults have the freedom to make decisions about their lives independently from a parent, partner, or child. Self-focusing has a purpose in this developmental period. Self-sufficiency and confidence is attained while making decisions on how to spend the rest of life. Arnett proposes that self-sufficiency is a major goal in the road to

seeing oneself as an adult (Arnett, 2000). Poor individuation processes have been correlated with deficits in self-efficacy and emotional autonomy (Frank, Avery, & Laman, 1988). As a result, emotional intelligence and positive individuation processes may help equip emerging adults to develop autonomy and self-sufficiency in this time of self-focused activity.

Many emerging adults describe themselves as not “feeling like an adult yet” or “feeling in-between.” In fact, over 60% of adults aged 18 to 25 say that in some ways they are an adult but in some ways they are not (Arnett, 2001). Arnett theorizes that emerging adulthood is an age of feeling in-between. An explanation for this phenomenon is that society may deem certain life events as criteria for being an adult such as attaining higher education, marriage, parenthood, owning a home, et cetera. Other criteria considered to be important for becoming an adult are: “accepting responsibility for yourself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent,” (Arnett & Tanner, 2006, p. 12). Problems in identity formation, possibly from unsuccessful individuation and poor emotional intelligence, may extend this feeling of in-between for some individuals.

Lastly, Arnett describes emerging adulthood as an age of possibility. Emerging adults often endorse positive optimism when considering possibilities of choices for the future and life plans. Also, adults moving away from home for the first time may decide to make choices that reflect substantial differences from the way that they were raised. Individuals raised in homes of difficult conditions may remain optimistic in their early adult years that they can make choices to change these circumstances for themselves (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). In fact, well-being and life satisfaction have been shown to increase during the emerging adulthood years (Schulenberg, O’Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 2005). An increase in risky behaviors has been associated with

little hope for future plans or a lack of future plans (Hill, Duggan, & Lapsley, 2012), which could be related to detriments in the individuation process.

### **Theory on Promotional Factors**

While theory suggests that milestones such as achieving individuation and increasing emotional intelligence are crucial developmental tasks for emerging adults, the literature lacks evidence on factors that may promote healthy development of these processes. Identifying key components associated with successful development of individuation and emotional intelligence may benefit counselors, professors, parents, and institutional administrators who commonly interact with emerging adults to find ways to promote higher levels of life satisfaction.

Research needs to investigate potential factors that, over time, may promote successful individuation and enhanced emotional intelligence skills for emerging adults. Researchers have acknowledged that in recent years there has been a growing interest and evidence for identity exploration and development in emerging adulthood, however, specific developmental milestones underlying emerging adulthood are still unexplored (Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005). Two fields in particular that may offer insight into promotional factors to important development processes are positive psychology and multicultural psychology.

*Positive Psychology.* Positive psychology is a novel field founded by Martin Seligman. It has roots from humanistic psychology and primarily developed as a way to shift psychology's attention on deviance in human functioning, such as mental illness, to the positive, adaptive, creative, and emotionally fulfilling aspects of human behavior (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Flourishing is a term often used in positive psychology to refer to individuals with healthy development and active well-being. Flourishing refers to optimal human functioning and is comprised of four parts: goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience. Individuals

encompassing these four facets of flourishing report higher levels of life satisfaction, contentment, social support, and meaning attribution (Keyes, 2002; Siang-Yang, 2006).

Theory of well-being also falls within the domain of positive psychology. Seligman (2011) defines well-being as being comprised of 5 elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment; these elements are also known as “P.E.R.M.A.”. According to this theory, healthy development and well-being are maintained when an individual is able to access positive affect, such as life satisfaction and happiness. These individuals are also able to engage in tasks in the present moment. This is often called “flow.” Relationships are also important for those seeking well-being. Individuals must foster interdependence with others that allows for reciprocal and supportive rapport. Positive psychology also accounts for how individuals are able to attribute meaningful purpose to events in their lives which helps them make sense of their existence. Accomplishment also fosters well-being, perpetuating life satisfaction, engagement, and meaning making through successful completion of life tasks (Seligman, 2011). Considering that individuation and emotional intelligence have been consistently found to have positive relationships with dynamics underlying flourishing and well-being, it may be fruitful to examine these constructs from a positive psychological perspective.

*Multicultural psychology.* Multicultural psychology is the systematic study of human behavior as it occurs in settings where people of different cultural backgrounds interact (Thomas & Schwarzbaum, 2011). Multiculturalism has been considered a “fourth force” in the field of psychology, supplementing behaviorism, psychodynamic theories, and humanistic psychology (Thomas & Schwarzbaum, 2011). Multicultural psychology is a vast and growing field that encompasses the study of differences in worldviews, acculturation processes, stereotyping,

prejudice, discrimination, cultural identity development, and multicultural competence (Jun, 2010).

While there is not an overarching theory of multicultural psychology, aspects of the field can be examined to better appreciate unique differences in how emerging adults develop. For example, cultural identity development is said to expand in adolescence and emerging adulthood (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). Many models of cultural identity exist for various ethnic, racial, and cultural groups such as African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, Caucasians, et cetera (Sue, 2001). Cultural identity starts in early childhood through identification of concrete terms, such as clothing and skin color, and later becomes more sophisticated through the awareness of social implications of ethnicity, such as prejudice. Research has shown adolescence and early adulthood to be crucial periods for ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1989). During adolescence, ethnic minorities explore their culture and customs through various avenues to lay the foundation for a secure ethnic identity. This exploration is assumed to eventually lead to a resolution in the form of a secure and stable sense of self as an ethnic group member (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). Phinney (1989) posited that many students complete cultural identity development later in college once they are exposed to more individuals from different backgrounds. Furthermore, an aspect of ethnic identity formation involves coming to understand others' perceptions of one's ethnicity without allowing oneself to be defined by them. An inability to develop confidence in one's ethnic identity contributes to a negative sense of self and exposes oneself to the hardships of prejudice (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997). Considering the importance of cultural identity development and its accompanying features on positive developmental outcomes, cultural factors need to be considered when identifying healthy development in all emerging adults.

## **Identification of Promotional Factors**

The current study aims to identify factors that promote individuation and emotional intelligence for emerging adults in efforts to further promote healthy growth and development. From literature in positive psychology, self-control and coping self-efficacy have been identified as potential promotional factors to individuation and emotional intelligence. Cultural congruity has been derived from multicultural psychology and may be important in conceptualizing how individuation and emotional intelligence develop.

*Self-Control.* Positive psychology theory suggests that self-control is an integral component for healthy and adaptive living. Specifically, self-control is a resource that allows individuals to maintain emotional stability, attain goals, and accept difficult-to-change circumstances (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004; Thompson, 2009). Another definition of self-control asserts that it is the ability to change and adapt to produce better and more optimal fit between the self and the world (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982). Literature confirms that increases in self-control promote an individual's adaptive abilities in his/her environment (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011). Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice (1994) identified four major domains of self-control: controlling thoughts, emotions, impulses, and performance. Most individuals at some point report struggles with self-control in at least one domain of their life, and research suggests that there may be individual differences in one's ability to manage life tasks, hold tempers, keep to diets, fulfill promises, curtail drinking, save financial resources, persevere at work, keep secrets, et cetera (Tangney et al., 2004).

Central to the idea of self-control is one's ability to override or change one's inner responses, as well as to interrupt undesired behavioral tendencies (Baumeister et al., 1994). Specifically, the concept of self-control grew out of self-regulation theory by Carver and Scheier

(Tangney et al., 2004). Self-control, similar to self-regulation, operates on a feedback loop that guides behaviors toward desired goals and standards. A strong ability to implement this feedback loop is associated with greater capacities for self-awareness. Consequently, greater self-awareness allows individuals a greater margin of space for self-control in which they can regulate their stream of thoughts, alter moods and emotions, restrain undesirable impulses, and achieve optimal performance in tasks (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975).

Researchers have been successful in identifying various benefits for self-control capacities. Self-control seems to have a bidirectional relationship with one's ability to get along with others such as family and friends. Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone (2004) found that participants who reported a positive family environment had higher self-control compared to individuals reporting poor or dysfunctional relationships with family members. Attachment style in relationships was also correlated with self-control. Secure attachment styles in college students were positively associated with higher capacities for self-control, whereas anxious-ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles were negatively correlated with self-control (Tangney et al., 2004).

Although literature scarcely recognizes a relationship between self-control and individuation, attachment styles might be an indirect link that suggests a potential relationship between these two factors. Specifically, secure attachment styles in adulthood are associated with successful individuation processes, whereas avoidant and anxious-ambivalent attachment styles are associated with a poor individuation process (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Interestingly, literature suggests that self-control begins developing in childhood and is affected by parental attachment (Meldrum, Young, Hay, & Flexon, 2012). Orbach (1997) found indirect links between self-control and individuation in that imbalances in attachment and individuation along

with deficits in self-control created a recipe for social isolation. Based on this indirect evidence shared between individuation and self-control, it is expected that these components would be positively related to one another in a college student sample.

Additionally, links between self-control and emotional intelligence can be conceptualized. Higher scores on measures of self-control are positively correlated with one's ability to take another's perspective (Tangney et al., 2004). Research on perspective taking has shown that the ability to take another person's viewpoint significantly mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and the quality of one's relationships (Schröder-Abé & Schütz, 2011). Part of the definition of emotional intelligence is one's capacity to engage in emotional regulation strategies, such as controlling anger (Cherniss, 2010; Petrides & Furnham, 2006). Incidentally, ability for self-control and training in self-control techniques have consistently shown strong correlations with one's ability to control anger and aggressive impulses (Brookings, DeRoo, & Grimone, 2008; Denson, Capper, Oaten, Friese, & Schofield, 2011; Páez, Martínez-Sánchez, Mendiburo, Bobowik, & Sevillano, 2013; Tangney et al., 2004). While there is little direct research linking emotional intelligence to self-control, many studies consider self-control to be an emotional competence skill, which is a known correlate of emotional intelligence (Abraham, 2004; Hallam, et al., 2013; Hystad, Eid, Tapia, Hansen, & Matthews, 2010; Tangney et al., 2004). Also, emotional regulation is thought to be an integral skill in emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 2010). Research has found that undergraduate students who score higher on measures of emotional regulation also score higher on measures of self-control (Shah & Thingujam, 2008). Despite the limited research linking emotional intelligence and self-control, indirect evidence suggests that a link between these two variables warrants future investigation.

*Coping Self-Efficacy.* Positive psychology theory also suggests that coping self-efficacy is an important aspect of healthy functioning. Coping self-efficacy is an individual's confidence in their ability to cope with challenging situations (Chesney et al., 2006). Bandura (1997) created self-efficacy theory to encompass processes that occur when an individual appraises a situation as adaptable or unchangeable. Coping is broadly defined as behavioral and cognitive efforts to manage situations that are appraised as stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). After primary appraisal where an individual decides coping resources need to be activated, a choice in coping strategy based on appraisal of resources, whether emotional, behavioral, cognitive, is made. This is referred to as secondary appraisal. A key part of secondary appraisal is the individual's judgment about whether or not he/she can control or change the outcome of the situation. Coping self-efficacy contributes to this judgment which in turn influences coping effectiveness (Park & Folkman, 1997). Essentially, beliefs about one's ability to perform specific coping behaviors influence the ability to effectively cope with situations (Chesney et al., 2006).

The connection between coping self-efficacy and individuation has yet to be explored; however, there is some indirect evidence that suggests these two concepts are correlated. Interestingly, individuation and adaptive coping processes have been shown to be predictors of college student retention (Ward Osterhout, 2005). Those with reports of higher coping self-efficacy have been found to produce more adaptive coping mechanisms (Park & Folkman, 1997), suggesting that coping self-efficacy may have a role in successful functioning and, by proxy, individuation as a college student. In romantic relationships, research has shown that poor individuation processes predict difficulties in juggling relatedness versus autonomy, leading to relationship dissatisfaction (Saraiva & Matos, 2012). Interestingly, Lemay and Neal (2013) found that perceptions of support from one's romantic partner and satisfaction with the romantic

relationship predicted personal well-being and coping self-efficacy in young couples. Taking these findings together, individuation in a relational context may be affected by one's level of coping self-efficacy. Additionally, coping self-efficacy and individuation have been linked to anxiety in adolescents and young adults (Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Thomasson & Psouni, 2010; Zupančič, Komidar, & Levpušček, 2012), possibly indicating that decrements in one or both may impede emotional functioning. Considering the shared correlates among individuation and coping self-efficacy, it was expected that the two constructs would be related in emerging adult samples.

Similarly, literature on coping self-efficacy and emotional intelligence is scarce; however, there are some studies that suggest an indirect link between the two. For instance, decrements in coping self-efficacy have been associated with poor emotional regulation (Luberto, Cotton, McLeish, Mingione, & O'Bryan, 2013; Zambianchi & Ricci, 2013). As previously mentioned, emotional regulation is thought to be an integral skill in emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 2010), possibly indicating that poor coping self-efficacy could be related to fewer emotional intelligence skills. Moreover, Zambianchi and Ricci (2013) found that adaptive coping responses and increased self-efficacy in emotional regulation were positive predictors of emerging adults' social well-being. Coping self-efficacy may additionally be unique to emerging adults as coping styles and coping processes have been found to be predictive of successful navigation, exploration, and commitment in emerging adults' resolution of crisis in identity development (Gerstacker, 2010), which is a known correlate to emotional intelligence (Seaton & Beaumont, 2008). Further, Ou (2012) found that emotional intelligence and type of coping strategies employed predicted adjustment problems in adolescents. More specifically, coping strategies mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and

adjustment problems (Ou, 2012). Literature has also found a clear positive relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy (Behjat & Chowdhury, 2012; Chan, 2004). In combination, these findings suggest that there may be an association between emotional intelligence and coping self-efficacy. However, due to the relative dearth of literature on the nature of the relationship between coping self-efficacy and emotional intelligence, empirical evidence is needed to connect these variables directly.

*Cultural Congruity.* Another field of study with possible implications for variation in reports of individuation and emotional intelligence is multicultural psychology. Multicultural psychology suggests that cultural congruity is the degree of fit between one's culture and his/her environment (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996). Moreover, cultural congruity affects one's sense of belongingness and help-seeking attitudes (Bhugra & Arya, 2005; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996). Lower reports of cultural congruity have been associated with lower resiliency, lower life satisfaction, less satisfaction with social support, lower collective self-esteem, and diagnoses of mental health conditions (Bhugra & Arya, 2005; Constantine, Robinson, Wilton, & Caldwell, 2002; Constantine & Watt, 2002; Orozco, 2008). All of these factors are thought to influence positive development in terms of individuation and emotional intelligence.

Cultural incongruity can result when students feel that the culture(s) they belong to and the university they attend differ in values, expectations, and beliefs (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996). This cultural incongruence fosters student stress and has been associated with poor academic success and attrition (Arellano & Padilla, 1996). Cultural congruence is fostered when students are able to maintain connections with the university environment and their culture. Another important issue when considering cultural congruence is cultural identity and with what culture a student chooses to identify most. Students from ethnically diverse backgrounds are a

part of their ethnic/racial culture and are expected to simultaneously be a part of the mainstream culture. Consequently, this can cause stress and cultural conflict for the student (Torres, 2006). Continuing to be involved in both cultures may help students foster a sense of cultural congruity and develop a personal cultural identity that allows them to be at home in both cultures.

Direct evidence of a relationship between cultural congruity and individuation is non-existent. However, variation in factors that underlie cultural congruity have been integral in assessing estimates of individuation in emerging adults. For example, research has shown that individuals with successful individuation processes are more likely to exhibit positive help-seeking attitudes (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). Knowing that cultural congruity fosters help-seeking attitudes (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996), one might hypothesize that cultural congruity and individuation are also interrelated. Additionally, while individuation is a balancing of feelings of separateness and belongingness, those who have undergone a poor individuation process often report low feelings of belongingness (Kalsner & Pistole, 2003). Increased reports of cultural congruity are associated with increased perceptions of belongingness as well (Bhugra & Arya, 2005).

To further evaluate the potential relationship between cultural congruity and individuation, it is also important to consider stress, perceptions of stress, and adverse life events. Research has shown that lower reports of cultural congruity correspond to greater perceptions of stress and reports of stress (Revollo, Qureshi, Collazos, Valero, & Casas, 2011). It is noteworthy that cultural stressors, such as acculturation, oppressive experiences, and microaggressions, develop from a mismatch between personal cultural values and cultural values of the environment in which they operate (Hsieh, 2000). These types of stressors can interrupt the individuation process (Smart, Tsong, Mejía, Hayashino, & Braaten, 2011). Based on these

findings, it is likely that core factors underlying cultural congruity are related to individuation for emerging adults. As a result, it was predicted that higher reports of cultural congruity would correlate with successful individuation processes.

There is no literature evidencing a direct relationship between cultural congruity and emotional intelligence; however, underlying factors of cultural congruity have shown to have an impact on emotional intelligence. Incidentally, research on cultural congruity has suggested that cultural adjustment and cultural intelligence are important components in identifying a congruent link between one's cultural values and the environment in which one operates (Lin, Chen, & Song, 2012; Zhang, 2013). Interestingly, cultural adjustment and cultural intelligence have been strongly linked to increases in emotional intelligence. Cultural adjustment is the ease with which one is able to adjust to a culture that is different from one's identified culture of origin (Gabel, Dolan, & Cerdin, 2005). Emotional intelligence has been shown to be a significant predictor of positive cultural adjustment (Jazaeri & Kumar, 2008). In addition, cultural intelligence can be understood as the ability to recognize and understand the beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors of a group of people, including one's own cultural group (Zhang, 2013). Research indicates that emotional intelligence fosters cultural intelligence (Şahin, Gürbüz, Köksal, & Ercan, 2013). Further, in a study conducted by Lin, Chen, and Song (2012), emotional intelligence positively moderated the relationship between cultural intelligence and cultural adjustment. This suggests that underlying factors offer a unique pathway by which cultural congruity is linked to emotional intelligence; however, further research is warranted to determine how cultural congruity may influence emotional intelligence in emerging adulthood.

## **Current Study**

Emerging adulthood is a unique transitional period, thus there is a need to assess positive development through an intersectional lens. Specifically, developmental, positive psychology, and multicultural factors should be examined in the context of ethnicity and rurality in order to develop more culturally sensitive perspectives on development in emerging adulthood.

There seems to be a paradoxical phenomenon for African Americans in that they face greater stressors, such as discrimination, low socioeconomic status, and social exclusion, yet report higher levels of protective factors than European Americans (Gibbs, 1997). For instance, research has indicated that African American college students endorse more protective factors such as religiosity, hope, and higher levels of family involvement compared to European American students (Davidson & Wingate, 2011). One explanation for this pattern of findings may be racial socialization. Specifically, racial socialization is believed to help with the formation of racial and cultural pride and proactive coping mechanisms that are commonly associated with resilience (Brown & Taylka, 2011). These practices are often taught to African Americans by their parents and other close relatives before enrolling in college. Considering that racial socialization practices are correlated with the development of intrapersonal resources, it is possible that African American students are more adept at navigating the transitions associated with entering college life. Considering these findings it was expected that African American students would report more positive psychology factors in the current study.

It was also predicted that European American students would endorse higher levels of cultural congruity over African American students. African Americans are confronted with discrimination on a regular basis from the majority culture in the United States. Specifically, they face a disproportionate amount of barriers in monocultural institutions (O'Hara, Gibbons, Weng,

Gerrard, & Simons, 2012). As a result, they are less likely to report a strong cultural fit with their environment, especially when compared to European American students (Constantine & Watt, 2002).

In reference to rurality, there is no literature currently to suggest that there would be rural differences in the reporting of psychological resources (self-control, coping self-efficacy, and cultural congruity). This may be due to the limited theory connecting rurality to positive development in emerging adulthood. As a result, examining the current study's variables in context of rurality is an exploratory endeavor.

Based on multicultural psychology, positive psychology theory, and accompanying empirical evidence, it was expected that self-control, coping self-efficacy, and cultural congruity would be positively related to reports of individuation and emotional intelligence over time. In addition, it was expected that a linear combination of these psychological resources would predict a significant amount of variance in African American and European American self-reports of individuation and emotional intelligence over time.

## CHAPTER 3: METHOD

### Participants

Participants included 293 college students. Participants were asked to complete two surveys over a five week period of time. The attrition rate between administrations was 44.4% with 163 students participating in both surveys. The age of the sample (N = 163) ranged from 18 to 53 with a mean of 20.7 years. One hundred twenty-three participants (75.5%) identified as college women and 38 (23.3%) identified as college men. Students were also asked to report the ethnic group to which they felt they most belonged. Ethnicity here refers to the participants' self-identified ethnicity group. Forty-five participants (27.6%) self-identified as African American, 97 (59.5%) as European American, 3 (1.8%) as Asian/Asian American, 5 (3.1%) as Hispanic, and 13 (8.0%) as "Other." Ninety-six participants (58.9%) reported that they currently live in a metropolitan area, whereas 66 (40.5%) reported currently living in a rural community. One hundred eighteen participants (72.4%) reported growing up in a metropolitan area, and 45 (27.6%) reported growing up in a rural community.

Overall, the demographics of the sample was similar to the demographics of the university as a whole. Enrollment statistics for the university where students were enrolled showed similar percentages. During the spring semester of 2014, the total student population of Georgia Southern University was 19,173 students. Of these, 82 (0.4%) identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 375 (2.0%) as Asian, 5,130 (26.8%) as African American, 11,920 (62.2%) as Caucasian, 879 (4.6%) as Hispanic, 22 (0.1%) as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 360 (1.9%) as two or more ethnicities, and 405 (2.1%) as unknown.

## **Design**

This study included two outcome variables (separation individuation and emotional intelligence) and three predictor variables (cultural congruity, self-control, and coping self-efficacy) to be observed in the student participants over the course of six weeks. This longitudinal design allowed researchers to examine the effects of predictor variables on outcome variables over the course of time. Considering the purpose behind the current study, it was important to take a more powerful approach to detect factors that promote individuation and emotional intelligence. Longitudinal designs, even short-term longitudinal designs, engender more accurate and valid results concerning the ability of an identified factor to predict fluctuations in longstanding outcomes (Ingram, Miranda, & Segal, 1998).

## **Procedure**

Participants were recruited via the SONA system, an interactive website that provides a list of available studies being conducted in the Department of Psychology. This system allows potential student participants the opportunity to choose which research studies they would like to participate in to obtain research credit. This study was one of the SONA research sign-up options for potential participants. Interested students who chose to sign up for this study were provided a link to SurveyMonkey.com, an approved data collection site. Participants were able to electronically complete the informed consent and the self-report measures via SurveyMonkey.com. Data were collected from the participants in two phases.

During the first phase, 293 participants were recruited to complete the initial survey. The primary researcher informed introductory and upper level psychology students of the opportunity to participate in this study. Interested students were asked to sign up for the study via the SONA system. The SONA system directed them to SurveyMonkey.com where they were first presented

with the informed consent webpage. The consent webpage informed participants of possible risks and benefits, confidentiality, resource availability, and discontinuation policies associated with participation. Students who voluntarily chose to participate were asked to read the informed consent webpage and to electronically consent by clicking on an “agree” button. Before responding to the survey questions, the participants devised a discrete code number that connected participant responses across time. The code number was a six digit/letter sequence. The first character in the code was the first letter of the participant’s first name. The second and third characters consisted of the two digit month the participant was born. The fourth and fifth characters represented the two digit year in which the participant was born. Finally, in the sixth position, students entered the first letter of their last name. This code number was discrete and easy enough for participants to remember if they chose to participate in the second administration of the study. After the creation of a discrete code, participants were presented with a series of surveys to be completed. Completion of the surveys took approximately 40 minutes. Once responses were submitted, participants were directed to an invitation page. The invitation page offered participants the opportunity to participate in the second phase of the study. After the participants were made aware of the possibility of completing the second portion of the study, they were debriefed. The debriefing webpage describes the purpose of the study and free to low cost health care services that are accessible on campus or through a hotline phone number. Finally, participants were asked to send an e-mail to the primary researcher, verifying that they have completed the study. In this way data collection remained anonymous, yet participants were able to receive class research credit. In total, students had a one week window to complete phase one of the data collection process.

For the second phase of data collection, the same participants from phase one were invited to complete the second series of surveys; 163 participants returned. SONA provided the primary researcher with the e-mail address of each participant in phase one. The primary researcher e-mailed participants six weeks after completing the first phase, inviting them to participate in the second phase. Participants were asked to sign-up for the second survey via SONA. Similar to the procedures in the first phase of the study, participants were asked to electronically sign an informed consent page, enter their discrete code, and respond to a series of questionnaires. Completion time for the second survey was approximately 40 minutes. After completing the surveys, participants were debriefed and asked to e-mail the researcher verifying their participation in the second survey. Students were given independent credit for participating in phase two. Overall, students who participated in both portions of the study received two credits, whereas individuals who only participated in one study received one credit. In total, participants from phase one had a one week window to participate in phase two.

All data was initially stored on SurveyMonkey.com. Once data collection ended, the researcher retrieved the data from SurveyMonkey.com. Data was converted to an SPSS file that is password protected on an external hard drive for five years. Once the data was retrieved from SurveyMonkey.com, they were deleted.

## **Measures**

*Separation Individuation Inventory (SII; Christenson & Wilson, 1985)*. The SII is a 39-item self-report measure designed to assess adult manifestations of disturbance in the individuation process. Disturbances include difficulties with merging relationships, intolerance of loneliness, coercion of others, and defects in object constancy. Each item on the SII is measured on a 10-point Likert scale (from 1 = *Not Characteristic* to 10 = *Very Characteristic*)

with total scores ranging from 39-390. Lower scores indicate severe deficits and dysfunction in the individuation process. The SII has been found to have good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .89$ ; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002) with a college student sample. The SII has also demonstrated excellent construct validity as evidenced by high correlations with adult attachment styles (Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). In the current study, the SII had an alpha of .84 and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .73.

*Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire—Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides & Furnham, 2006).* The TEIQue-SF is a self-report measure of self-perceptions of emotional intelligence. The TEIQue-SF is composed of 30 items. All items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = *Completely Disagree* to 7 = *Completely Agree*) with total scores ranging from 30-210. Higher scores indicate greater abilities to regulate one's own emotions and appropriately recognize emotions in others (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). The TEIQue-SF has been found to have good internal consistency for college men ( $\alpha = .89$ ) and women ( $\alpha = .88$ ; Cooper & Petrides, 2010). The TEIQue-SF has also demonstrated excellent construct validity as evidenced by high correlations with measures of happiness (Furnham & Christoforou, 2007). In the current study, the TEIQue-SF had an alpha of .89 and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .80.

*Cultural Congruity Scale (CCS; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996).* The CCS is a self-report measure of cultural orientation and fit, perceived sense of belonging, and help-seeking attitudes fostered by one's environment. It is composed of 13 items. Items on the CCS are measured on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = *Not at all* to 7 = *A great deal*) with total scores ranging from 13-91. Lower scores indicate poor congruence of cultural values and feelings of belongingness with the environment (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996). The CCS has been

found to have adequate to good internal consistency with college students ( $\alpha = .71-.89$ ; Constantine et al., 2002; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996). The CCS has also demonstrated excellent construct validity as evidenced by high correlations with measures of social support, coping, university environment, and resiliency (Orozco, 2008). In the current study, the CCS had an alpha of .80 and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .67.

*Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS; Tangney et al., 2004).* The BSCS is a self-report measure of emotional and behavioral self-control and self-regulation composed of 13 items. Items on the BSCS are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *Very much*) with total scores ranging from 13-65. Higher scores indicate a greater ability to exercise self-control. The BSCS has been found to have good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .85$ ; Tangney et al., 2004) with a college student sample. The BSCS has also demonstrated excellent construct validity with measures of impulsivity and restraint (Maloney, Grawitch, & Barber, 2012). In the current study, the BSCS had an alpha of .91 and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .84.

*Coping Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES; Chesney et al., 2006).* The CSES is a 26-item self-report measure of adaptability and coping behavior. Items on the CSES are measured on an 11-point Likert scale (from 0 = *Cannot do at all* to 10 = *Certain can do*) with total scores ranging from 0-260. Higher scores indicate more adaptability and better coping behaviors in response to stress. The CSES has been found to have excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha = .95$ ; Chesney et al., 2006) and construct validity with measures of coping (Colodro, Godoy-Izquierdo, & Godoy, 2010). In the current study, the CSES had an alpha of .83 and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .71.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Mean Differences

Means, standard deviations, and minimum/maximum scores for coping self-efficacy, cultural congruity, self-control, emotional intelligence, and separation individuation are displayed in Table 1. These scores were calculated for African American and European Americans separately. Mean differences among ethnic groups (African American and European American) were examined. A MANOVA indicated a non-significant overall effect for ethnicity (Wilks' Lambda, (1, 253) = .77,  $p < .58$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ). Follow-up ANOVAs revealed no significant ethnicity differences in coping self-efficacy,  $F(1, 253) = .86$ ,  $p = .36$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , cultural congruity,  $F(1, 253) = .33$ ,  $p = .56$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , self-control,  $F(1, 253) = .00$ ,  $p = .98$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , emotional intelligence,  $F(1, 253) = .24$ ,  $p = .62$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , and separation individuation,  $F(1, 253) = .98$ ,  $p = .32$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ . Considering these results, African American and European American students appear to self-report similar estimates of coping self-efficacy, cultural congruity, self-control, emotional intelligence, and separation individuation.

Mean differences between individuals who reported growing up in a metropolitan area versus a rural community were examined as well. A MANOVA revealed a non-significant overall effect for reared rurality status (Wilks' Lambda, (1, 289) = 1.61,  $p < .16$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ). Follow-up ANOVAs revealed non-significant effects for reared rurality status on coping self-efficacy,  $F(1, 289) = .00$ ,  $p = .98$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , cultural congruity,  $F(1, 289) = .49$ ,  $p = .48$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , self-control,  $F(1, 289) = 1.32$ ,  $p = .25$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ , emotional intelligence,  $F(1, 289) = .14$ ,  $p = .71$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , and separation individuation,  $F(1, 289) = 3.48$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Considering these results, students who grew up in a metropolitan area versus a rural community appear to report

similar estimates of coping self-efficacy, cultural congruity, self-control, emotional intelligence, and separation individuation.

Mean differences between individuals who reported currently living in a metropolitan area versus a rural community were examined. A MANOVA revealed a non-significant overall effect for current rurality status (Wilks' Lambda,  $(1, 287) = 1.86, p < .10, \eta^2 = .03$ ). Follow-up ANOVAs revealed non-significant effects for current rurality status on coping self-efficacy,  $F(1, 287) = 1.39, p = .24, \eta^2 = .01$ , cultural congruity,  $F(1, 287) = .98, p = .32, \eta^2 = .00$ , self-control,  $F(1, 287) = .13, p = .72, \eta^2 = .00$ , emotional intelligence,  $F(1, 287) = .43, p = .51, \eta^2 = .00$ , and separation individuation,  $F(1, 287) = 2.39, p = .12, \eta^2 = .01$ . Considering these results, students who currently live in a metropolitan area versus a rural community appear to report similar estimates of coping self-efficacy, cultural congruity, self-control, emotional intelligence, and separation individuation.

### **Pearson Product Correlations**

Due to the longitudinal nature of this project, a unique set of correlational findings can be offered. For instance, most cross-sectional studies can only offer one correlation coefficient for each relationship examined. Alternatively, longitudinal designs allow researchers to examine a set of cross-sectional correlation coefficients and at least one longitudinal correlation coefficient. The ability to obtain multiple markers of significance can strengthen the field's understanding of the existence and magnitude of a specific relationship. In the current study, three coefficient estimates for each interested relationship were furnished. Specifically, we are able to provide two cross-sectional coefficients and one longitudinal coefficient that describe the strength of the relationships between two interested constructs. In the subsequent section, cross-sectional coefficients for a specific relationship will be presented as a range (e.g.,  $r = .42 - .49, p < .00$ ),

whereas longitudinal relationships will be presented through a singular correlation coefficient (e.g.,  $r = .37, p < .00$ ). With regard to the cross-sectional findings, the first coefficient will examine the relationship between two interested constructs using the first survey sample ( $N = 293$ ), whereas the second coefficient will examine the relationship between two interested constructs using the second survey sample ( $N = 163$ ). All cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships can be found in Tables 2 and 3. These relationships among variables were examined separately by ethnic group.

*African American students.* In terms of cross-sectional findings for African American students, emotional intelligence was significantly positively correlated with coping self-efficacy ( $r = .67 -.70, p < .01$ ), cultural congruity ( $r = .53 -.57, p < .01$ ), and self-control ( $r = .33 -.39, p < .01$ ). Alternatively, separation individuation was significantly negatively correlated with coping self-efficacy ( $r = -.38 - -.49, p < .01$ ) and cultural congruity ( $r = -.43 - -.52, p < .01$ ).

Interestingly, the relationship between separation individuation and self-control varied based on the two phases. Specifically, these two constructs were significantly related to one another in a cross-sectional analyses of the first phase ( $r = -.47, p < .01$ ). However, results revealed a non-significant association between these two constructs for Africans Americans who participated in the second survey administration. Such differences are likely due to issues with power as the sample size of the first administration of the survey was considerable greater than the sample size in the second administration of the survey.

Longitudinally, reports of emotional intelligence in the second administration of the survey were significantly and positively correlated with reports of coping self-efficacy ( $r = .53, p < .01$ ) and cultural congruity ( $r = .34, p < .05$ ) in the first administration of the survey. However, there was a non-significant longitudinal relationship between emotional intelligence and self-

control. These findings partially suggest that positive and multicultural psychology factors are related to the development of emotional intelligence in African American college students across time.

Longitudinally, separation individuation in the second administration of the survey was significantly negatively correlated with self-reports of cultural congruity ( $r = -.30, p < .05$ ) in the first administration of the survey. However, the separation individuation was not significantly related to estimates of coping self-efficacy and self-control across time. These findings partially confirm expectations and suggest that multicultural factors are related to African American college students' individuation across time.

*European American students.* In terms of cross-sectional findings for European American students, emotional intelligence was significantly positively correlated with coping self-efficacy ( $r = .66 - .74, p < .01$ ), cultural congruity ( $r = .45 - .54, p < .01$ ), and self-control ( $r = .48 - .57, p < .01$ ). Alternatively, separation individuation was significantly negatively correlated with coping self-efficacy ( $r = -.38 - -.59, p < .01$ ), cultural congruity ( $r = -.37 - -.57, p < .01$ ), and self-control ( $r = -.41 - -.52, p < .01$ ).

Longitudinally, estimates of emotional intelligence were significantly positively correlated with self-reports of coping self-efficacy ( $r = .68, p < .01$ ), cultural congruity ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ), and self-control ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ) across time. These findings suggest that both positive and multicultural psychology factors are related to the development of emotional intelligence in European American college students across time. In addition, estimates of separation individuation were significantly, negatively correlated with coping self-efficacy ( $r = -.49, p < .01$ ), cultural congruity ( $r = -.24, p < .05$ ), and self-control ( $r = -.42, p < .01$ ) at a longitudinal

level. Results confirmed expectations and suggest that positive psychology and multicultural factors are related to individuation of European American college students across time.

### **Regression Models**

All multivariate relationships can be found in Tables 4 and 5. The sample size for African American students who returned for the second administration was too small to examine independent regression models for African American and European American. Green's (1991) formula for adequate power guides the number of participants to be collected for regression models. According to Green, one should only run regression models if a minimum sample size of  $104 + k$  (where  $k$  is equal to the number of predictors in the model) is available. Considering the number of predictor variables included in our models, we estimated that 110 participants were needed for each regression model analyzed. However, only 45 African American students participated in both surveys, negating the possibility of running independent regression models by ethnic group. As a result, two regression models were examined in the current study. Within each of these models, ethnicity was entered into the regression equation as a binary variable.

*Separation Individuation.* For the entire sample, a block regression was conducted with separation individuation as the outcome variable. Ethnicity was entered in the first block and ethnicity, coping self-efficacy, cultural congruity, and self-control were entered into the second block of the regression model. Ethnicity alone was not a significant predictor in the first block,  $R^2 = .00$ ,  $F(1, 138) = .61$ ,  $p = .44$ . Variables in the second block significantly predicted 31% of the variance in separation individuation,  $R^2_{change} = .31$ ,  $F_{change}(4, 135) = 20.66$ ,  $p = .00$ . Coping self-efficacy ( $b = -.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ), self-control ( $b = -.20$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and cultural congruity ( $b = -.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were retained as significant individual predictors in the final model. The results suggest that ethnic differences do not appear to be an important predictor in separation individuation.

However, results indicate that positive psychology and multicultural factors are important in promoting higher levels of separation individuation over time.

*Emotional Intelligence.* For the entire sample, a block regression was conducted with emotional intelligence as the outcome variable. Ethnicity was entered in the first block and ethnicity, coping self-efficacy, cultural congruity, and self-control were entered into the second block of the regression model. Ethnicity alone was not a significant predictor in the first block,  $R^2 = .00$ ,  $F(1, 139) = .21$ ,  $p = .65$ . Variables in the second block significantly predicted 41% of the variance in emotional intelligence,  $R^2_{change} = .41$ ,  $F_{change}(4, 136) = 31.92$ ,  $p = .00$ . Coping self-efficacy ( $b = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ), self-control ( $b = .19$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and cultural congruity ( $b = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were retained as significant individual predictors in the final model. The results suggest that ethnicity does not appear to be an important predictor in emotional intelligence. However, results indicate that positive psychology and multicultural factors are important in promoting higher levels of emotional intelligence over time.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to examine positive developmental outcomes for emerging adults through multicultural and positive psychology contexts. To this effect, a set of unique research questions guided the implementation of the current study. First, this study sought to determine if there were significant interaction and main effects in self-reports of individuation and emotional intelligence for ethnic (European vs. African American) and rural (rural vs. non-rural) groups. Second, this study examined whether cultural congruity, self-control, and coping self-efficacy were positively related to self-reports of individuation and emotional intelligence cross-sectionally and across time. Third, the study investigated the extent to which the linear combination of psychological resources (cultural congruity, self-control, coping self-efficacy) could predict a significant amount of variance in African American and European American self-reports of individuation and emotional intelligence across time.

### **Ethnic Differences**

The findings suggest non-significant ethnic differences among self-reports of psychological resources (coping self-efficacy, self-control, and cultural congruity), individuation, and emotional intelligence. Overall, these results are inconsistent with previous theoretical and empirical evidence (Deams, 2009; Gibbons et al., 2012; Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton, & Willson, 1999; Gnoulati, & Heine, 2001; Prelow, Weaver, & Swenson, 2006). Most notably, two non-significant main effects are worth highlighting.

First, the lack of ethnic differences on cultural congruity was surprising. Based on previous research, it was expected that European American students would report significantly higher levels of cultural congruity when compared to African American students. This expectation was supported by the predominant literature which clearly indicates that African

American students encounter more unwelcoming, hostile, and discriminatory practices on predominantly white college campuses (Gibbs, 1997). Therefore, the position supported by the current study, African Americans and European Americans report similar levels of cultural fit at predominantly white institutions, is quite surprising. However, two mechanisms may help explain the non-significant effects. First, African American students may have unique cultural resources that help them transition into predominantly white institutions. For example, racial socialization practices could help African American students identify and utilize resources to promote greater levels of racial and cultural identity development and other culturally effective coping mechanisms even in monocultural settings (Brown & Taylka, 2011). Racial socialization is a lifelong process of disseminating cultural norms, customs, and ideologies within a specific racial group. This process is thought to provide an individual with the skills necessary for participating within their own racial group and within the context of the larger society. Moreover, these skills are thought to be instrumental in helping individuals of color cope with discrimination and build resiliency in the face of adversity (Priest, Walton, White, Kowal, Baker, & Paradies, 2014). Future research is needed to determine if and how racial socialization practices increase positive cultural identity growth as a means to proactively establish more culturally congruent resources for African American student enrolled in predominantly white institutions.

In addition, the lack of differences in cultural congruity between European and African American students could be due to a misperception of a homogeneous cultural identity for European Americans. European Americans have unique cultural components that are often not accounted for by ethnicity alone. It is possible that European Americans experience unwelcoming sentiments and hostility with regard to other aspects of their culture (e.g., religion,

sexual identities, age). Additionally, it should be noted that data collection occurred at an institution in the South where many students identify as holding traditional southern, cultural values. It could be that students who identify with the southern culture may also utilize other coping resources such as religiosity and higher family involvement to deal with the transition to college. It is important that future researchers obtain a more in-depth understanding of how European American students experience dissonance within the cultural climate of secondary education institutions. Furthermore, future research may want to determine coping resources specific to certain geographic regions.

Second, the lack of ethnic differences on reports of positive psychological factors is of interest. Research suggests that many African American college students report more protective factors to well-being such as religiosity, hope, and higher family involvement than European American students (Davidson & Wingate, 2011). These findings were not supported in the current study as African American and European Americans reported similar levels of self-control and coping self-efficacy. While there is no clear reason to explain the inconsistency of our findings with those of the predominant literature, the nature of the positive psychology variables measured in the context of oppression may be theoretically important in clarifying our results. For instance, it is possible that the positive psychological factors in this study are harder to marshal in the face of oppression. The experience of oppression may limit African Americans' perceptions of self-control in setting and pursuing academic, social, and career goals at primary white institutions. Similarly, African Americans may have trouble garnering greater levels of coping self-efficacy because of the likelihood of encountering discrimination in an unpredictable manner. For African American students, oppression may take numerous forms (microaggressions, discrimination, stereotypes), which may require them to constantly establish

new and dynamic approaches to coping. Essentially, experiencing oppression through different mediums may tax coping resources, which in turn may facilitate lower levels of coping self-efficacy (than what might be originally expected). Future research should try to disentangle which positive psychological factors are more salient for helping African American college students thrive.

### **Rural Differences**

Few studies to date have examined rural differences in reports of positive psychology and positive developmental outcomes. Given the scarcity of studies, no firm predictions could be made on whether or not rural versus non-rural students would vary on reports of self-control, coping self-efficacy, individualization, and emotional intelligence. Theory has speculated that residing in rural areas may limit access to resources which could serve to deplete psychological health (Rost, Fortney, Fischer, & Smith, 2002; Wagenfeld, Murraray, Mohatt, & DeBruyn, 1994). However, current results are inconsistent with this position.

Overall, these results suggest that students from rural versus non-rural areas report similar scores on positive psychology and positive developmental outcomes. However, it should be noted that our measures of rural versus non-rural status may not be reflective of true rural versus urban dynamics. Given that study participants reside in and around the university, it may be that available resources within the university's geographic domain are not reflective of other, more sparsely resourced, rural areas. As such, rural dynamics may be diminished and more difficult to assess on college campuses. Future research may need to replicate these findings using samples that better distinguish individuals from rural versus non-rural areas.

### **Patterns of Univariate Relationships**

For European American students, indices of positive development (i.e., separation-individuation, emotional intelligence) were cross-sectionally and longitudinally correlated to positive psychology and multicultural factors in the expected directions. These results are consistent with previous literature which indicates that positive psychology and multicultural factors promote healthy development in the form of individuation and emotional intelligence.

Reports of self-control, however, were not significantly related to either dimension of positive development longitudinally for African American students. This finding is somewhat unexpected given the psychological benefits (e.g., higher levels of satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, resiliency, frustration tolerance, and increased self-awareness; Abraham, 2004; Hallam, et al., 2013; Hystad, Eid, Tapia, Hansen, & Matthews, 2010; Tangney et al., 2004) often attributed to high levels of self-control. It is possible that self-control may only have temporary benefits with regard to positive psychological development for African Americans students. For example, self-control may help African Americans manage situational-based or episodic stressors; however, it may not hold as much long-term benefit compared to other psychological factors. In the coping literature, adopting a higher sense of control over uncontrollable circumstances may lead to worse outcomes (Kiecolt, Hughes, & Keith, 2009; Majer et al., 2003). African Americans may experience prejudice in a way that is unpredictable or uncontrollable, and thus higher levels of self-control may be counterintuitive to higher levels of positive development. Future research should disentangle the effects high levels of self-control in promoting increments in positive developmental outcomes for African American students, especially in the face of oppressive and hostile environments.

## Regression Models

*Multicultural Factors and Positive Developmental Outcomes.* Overall, ethnicity did not predict a significant amount of variance in emotional intelligence or individuation scores. However, cultural congruity did predict a significant amount of variance in both emotional intelligence and individuation over time, which suggests high levels of stability in these relationships. These results are important as they extend the literature in unique ways. Most studies to date examine correlates of emotional intelligence and individuation through cross-sectional lens, which limits the identification of factors that may be integral in the promotion of positive developmental outcomes (Butt, 2014; Costa, Ripoll, Sánchez, & Carvalho, 2013; Delhaye, Kempenaers, Linkowski, Stroobants, & Goossens, 2012; Kenyon & Koerner, 2009; Mattanah, Hancock, & Brand, 2004; Naeem et al., 2014). Our study was one of the first to examine the multivariate relationships between multicultural factors and positive developmental outcomes longitudinally. Because of the longitudinal design, our results provide preliminary evidence suggesting that cultural congruity, the degree of fit between one's cultural identity and environment, may promote higher levels of emotional intelligence and individuation in diverse samples of African American and European American college students.

With these findings in hand, it is important that future research elaborate on processes outlining how cultural congruity may promote higher levels of positive developmental outcomes. In terms of emotional intelligence, high levels of cultural congruity may promote perspective taking. If culturally diverse students report higher levels of cultural congruity, they may feel it is safe to explore their own cultural identity and how their cultural identity interacts with unique cultural dimensions of different institutions and people. In this way, high levels of cultural congruity may give rise to an environment of acceptance and appreciation that may breed more

opportunities to gain perspectives from others who are culturally diverse. This, in turn, may help people develop unique ways of finding awareness, controlling, and expressing emotions in a way that contributes to healthy interpersonal functioning. Future research should explore if and how cultural congruity influences certain perspective-taking skills as a means to develop emotional intelligence skills.

Similarly, cultural congruity may influence how individuals develop a sense of autonomy, which is a key component of individuation (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). Specifically, the higher the degree of fit between one's cultural identity and environment (i.e., cultural congruity), the more likely the individual will report feelings of acceptance and belonging. Feeling as though one belongs in his/her environment may allow the student to move more freely and autonomously in their environment. In this way, resources previously allocated to understanding the environment and how one's cultural identity belongs to that environment may then be rerouted to allow the individual to connect with others and cultivate larger and more diverse support systems, leaving students less dependent on family and close friends at home. Future research should endeavor to explore if there is a relationship between cultural congruity and autonomy and how cultural congruity may affect certain aspects of autonomy development.

*Positive Psychology Factors.* Unfortunately, the sample size for African American students ( $N = 45$ ) was too low to run an independent regression model for each ethnic group separately (Green, 1991). As such, regression models were analyzed using the entire sample to ensure adequate power. Overall, the regression models revealed that both self-control and coping self-efficacy were significant individual predictors to the dimensions of positive developmental growth measured in the current study.

These results need to be interpreted with caution, especially with regard to ethnic group status. Univariate results indicate that positive psychological variables were not significantly associated with positive dimensions of development growth across time for African American students. This univariate pattern of relationships stands in contrast to the position that the overall regression findings should generalize to African American students. Instead, these findings appear specific to European American students only.

Considering the longitudinal nature of these findings, our results suggest that self-control and coping self-efficacy may promote higher levels of emotional intelligence and individuation for European American students. Self-control and coping self-efficacy often activate higher levels of creative problem solving as a means to manage complex social, academic, and career-related dilemmas (Bielaczyc, Pirolli, & Brown, 1995; Elliott, Herrick, MacNair, & Harkins, 1994; Shi & Zhao, 2014; Stepleman, Darcy, & Tracey, 2005). For instance, college students with higher levels of self-control and coping self-efficacy often report more positive emotions when encountering challenging circumstances. According to the broaden-and-build theory of positive psychology (Tugade, Devlin, & Fredrickson, 2014), individuals who can generate more positive emotions in the face of adverse circumstances are more likely to access and develop a greater range of creative approaches to overcome and grow from adversity (Hoffmann, 2013). In turn, creative problem solving can increase opportunities to enhance interpersonal networks even in the face of conflict. Interpersonal growth, in this light, is often reflected in underlying processes associated with individuation and emotional intelligence (Naeem et al., 2014; Saraiva & Matos, 2012). Future research is needed to examine how higher levels of self-control and coping self-efficacy contribute to positive emotions and creative problem solving in terms of predicting positive developmental growth.

Given the nature of our results, our study does not offer many unique pathways by which self-control and coping self-efficacy promote higher levels of individuation and emotional intelligence among African American students. However, these results should not inhibit future considerations of positive psychology factors in the development of individuation and emotional intelligence for African Americans. Instead, future research may want to examine wisdom as a potential promotional factor for positive developmental growth outcomes in African American students. Wisdom is often defined as the soundness of an action or decision with regard to the application of experience, knowledge, and good judgment (Bang & Zhou, 2014). Wisdom as it relates to leadership on campuses and communities has been identified as an avenue through which it may be possible to build strong social networks consistent with individuation and emotional intelligence (Cureton, 2009). With this in mind, researchers should examine if and how indices of wisdom predict variation in positive developmental growth outcomes across time for students, especially students who identify as African American.

### **Practical Implications**

*Campus Climate.* These findings may be of interest to university administrators. Results indicate the importance in creating an open and welcoming cultural climate on campuses. Some ways in which this can be facilitated is through more multicultural first year experience courses/events and inviting more diverse speakers to campus events to discuss a range of cultural topics such as cultural identity development related to ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identification, and ageism. Other activities that increase an atmosphere that celebrates and welcomes diversity might include diversity fairs that serve to connect students with multicultural support groups and clubs that generate more culturally congruent experiences for students who belong to different minority groups on campus. These activities should naturally enhance both

European and African American students' ability to increase their emotional intelligence and autonomy with regard to their personal and career-related interests.

*Positive Development.* In terms of prevention and intervention work, coping self-efficacy and self-control can increase positive outcomes for European American students. For instance, when working to increase perception of coping self-efficacy with their therapists, clients often report a shift from an external to an internal locus of control (Schmidt, Grunert, Schimmelmann, Schultze-Lutter, & Michel, 2014). Consequently, they also report less distress, less anxiety and depression, and reductions in substance abuse behaviors (Bischof, Rumpf, Meyer, Hapke, & John, 2005; Jones et al., 2010). Additionally, when therapists work with clients on issues surrounding self-control, more client-reported positive outcomes are identified such as positive self-image, less self-blaming, decreases in anxiety and depression, and reductions in interpersonal conflicts (Ryum, Vogel, Walderhaug, & Stiles, 2015; Van Orden et al., 2011). Such resources are important in helping students establish a sense of autonomy and emotional intelligence that will continue to serve them as they move toward their academic and career goals. As a result, clinicians should consider treatment plans that help European American students activate higher levels of self-control and coping self-efficacy as a means to promote positive developmental growth.

### **Limitations**

The most significant limitation of this study was the inability to infer cause. The correlational nature of this study limits discussion of how positive psychology and multicultural psychology factors lead to positive developmental outcomes. To solidify more causal insights regarding these relationships, it is important that future research use more powerful experimental and longitudinal designs. It is also recognized that the short interval between administrations

may not speak to the stability of the relationships examined in this study. While longitudinal designs are more robust than cross-sectional designs, a longitudinal design with multiple measurements over a great length of time may engender more insights into the stability of the relationships. To gain more accurate determinations of the stability of these relationships, future researchers should construct longitudinal designs with longer intervals (e.g., six months, 12 months) between administrations. Another limitation of the current study is generalizability. Specifically, the results of the current study are limited to European and African American college students. These results cannot be generalized to other populations such as other ethnic groups on campus, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) students, or international students. It is recommended for future researchers to examine these same questions with a more diverse sample of college students to increase generalizability. Finally, it is recognized that self-report studies can be saturated with demand characteristics, such as social desirability bias, which could skew data. To overcome these barriers, other methods of data collection such as behavioral observation or experimental methods may be important to more fully answer the research questions.

### **Overall Conclusions**

Overall, these results support the importance of using positive and multicultural variables as promotional factors to healthy development in emerging adulthood. For European American college-aged students, positive psychology and cultural congruity were shown to predict growth in emotional intelligence and separation individuation cross-sectionally and over time. For African American college-aged students, cultural congruity predicted increases in emotional intelligence and separation individuation across time. It will be important for researchers to continue to identify positive psychology factors that help explain African American students'

ability to adjust to and thrive in a college environment. Other positive psychology variables such as wisdom and leadership should be explored over time for African American college students. Overall, the current results highlight the importance of identifying not only what can inhibit positive development in emerging adulthood but also what can support and promote healthy development for emerging adults of various ethnic backgrounds.

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Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Minimum and Maximum Scores for Coping Self-Efficacy, Cultural Congruity, Self-Control, Emotional Intelligence, and Separation Individuation in African American and European American College Students.*

Variables (N)	Mean (SD)	Min-Max Scores
African Americans		
Coping Self-Efficacy (N = 45)	179.27 (38.81)	92.00-260.00
Cultural Congruity (N = 45)	75.07 (11.45)	51.00-91.00
Self-Control (N = 45)	42.60 (7.53)	15.00-63.00
Emotional Intelligence (N = 45)	151.89 (25.37)	104.00-206.00
Separation Individuation (N = 45)	137.09 (50.03)	39.00-227.00
European Americans		
Coping Self-Efficacy (N = 97)	181.32 (39.57)	91.00-260.00
Cultural Congruity (N = 97)	76.54 (10.26)	49.00-91.00
Self-Control (N = 97)	43.37 (8.11)	19.00-64.00
Emotional Intelligence (N = 97)	153.84 (23.62)	95.00-205.00
Separation Individuation (N = 96)	129.89 (39.57)	45.00-249.00

Table 2

*Inter-correlations among Measures of Coping Self-Efficacy, Cultural Congruity, Self-Control, Emotional Intelligence, and Separation Individuation in African American College Students.*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. CSE Time 1	---	.24*	.19	.67**	-.38**	.70**	.39**	.19	.53**	-.20
2. CC Time 1		---	.25*	.57**	-.52**	.19	.60**	-.19	.34*	-.30*
3. SC Time 1			---	.39**	-.47**	.08	.09	.75**	.11	-.11
4. EIQ Time 1				---	-.68**	.44**	.42**	.16	.71**	-.26
5. SI Time 1					---	-.52**	-.45**	-.17	.60**	.82**
6. CSE Time 2						---	.35*	.34*	.70**	-.49**
7. CC Time 2							---	-.02	.53**	-.43**
8. SC Time 2								---	.33*	-.17
9. EIQ Time 2									---	-.47**
10. SI Time 2										---

Coping Self-Efficacy (CSE), Cultural Congruity (CC), Self-Control (SC), Emotional Intelligence (EIQ), and Separation Individuation (SI). Note: \* Correlation is significant at the .05 level. \*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

Table 3

*Inter-correlations among Measures of Coping Self-Efficacy, Cultural Congruity, Self-Control, Emotional Intelligence, and Separation Individuation in European American College Students.*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. CSE Time 1	---	.27**	.30**	.66**	-.38**	.72**	.41**	.38**	.68**	-.49**
2. CC Time 1		---	.29**	.54**	-.57**	.21*	.62**	.28**	.33**	-.24*
3. SC Time 1			---	.48**	-.41**	.40**	.29**	.88**	.51**	-.42**
4. EIQ Time 1				---	-.65**	.59**	.45**	.50**	.80**	-.60**
5. SI Time 1					---	-.43**	-.35**	-.48**	-.63**	.73**
6. CSE Time 2						---	.41**	.46**	.74**	-.59**
7. CC Time 2							---	.37**	.45**	-.37**
8. SC Time 2								---	.57**	-.52**
9. EIQ Time 2									---	-.70**
10. SI Time 2										---

Coping Self-Efficacy (CSE), Cultural Congruity (CC), Self-Control (SC), Emotional Intelligence (EIQ), and Separation Individuation (SI). Note: \* Correlation is significant at the .05 level. \*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

Table 4

*Enter Method Regression on Separation Individuation for African American and European American College Students.*

Variables	Beta	$\beta$	SE $\beta$	Final Beta	Final $\beta$	Final SE $\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
Sep-Ind. Time 2							
1 <sup>st</sup> Block							.00
Race	-.07	-6.57	8.41				
2 <sup>nd</sup> Block							.32**
Race				-.07	-6.51	7.07	
CSE Time 1				-.32**	-.39	.09	
SC Time 1				-.20**	-1.23	.47	
CC Time 1				-.24**	-1.19	.37	

Coping Self-Efficacy (CSE), Cultural Congruity (CC), Self-Control (SC), Emotional Intelligence (EIQ), and Separation Individuation (SI). First administration of surveys (Time 1); second administration of surveys (Time 2). Note: \* Correlation is significant at the .05 level. \*\* Correlation is significant at the .01.

Table 5

*Enter Method Regression on Emotional Intelligence for African American and European American College Students.*

Variables	Beta	$\beta$	SE $\beta$	Final Beta	Final $\beta$	Final SE $\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
Emotion. IQ Time 2							
1 <sup>st</sup> Block							.00
Race	.04	2.02	4.38				
2 <sup>nd</sup> Block							.41**
Race				.04	2.26	3.41	
CSE Time 1				.40**	.25	.04	
SC Time 1				.19**	.61	.22	
CC Time 1				.28**	.72	.18	

Coping Self-Efficacy (CSE), Cultural Congruity (CC), Self-Control (SC), Emotional Intelligence (EIQ), and Separation Individuation (SI). First administration of surveys (Time 1); second administration of surveys (Time 2). Note: \* Correlation is significant at the .05 level. \*\* Correlation is significant at the .01.