Do Collectivist Cultures Have Fewer Anxiety Problems Than Individualist Cultures?

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**Methodology**

In order to find what causes and prevents anxiety in various ethnic groups, a series of surveys will be given to individuals who identify collectively or individually. Minority groups who identify with collectivist cultures should prove to have lower anxiety rates.

**Literature Review**

The reason for the increasing number of anxiety disorders in the United States has yet to be fully understood. Examining minority groups who rank on the extreme ends of the risk scale for anxiety disorders as well as those who have a high risk. By looking at the relationship of the immediate cultural interactions and the broad societal interactions, we may be able to better understand why anxiety has become such a problem and what steps can be taken to reduce these numbers.

A representative sample of collectivist and individualist communities will need to be chosen and participants will be classified as collectivist or individualist using a personality test. Additional survey questions will need to be created to collect demographic information, cultural and community involvement, and to gauge anxiety levels.

Researchers have focused primarily on identifying levels of anxiety and mental illness in particular ethnic groups. Now that those levels have been identified and ranked, it is time to explore why some ethnic groups are at high risk for anxiety illness and other groups have lower risks.

The number of cases of anxiety disorders in the United States has continued to climb at a rapid pace. It has become common for anxiety disorders to begin during young adulthood rather than later in life with the addition of stress factors such as career and family life, which typically come with age. Severe anxiety, considered a mental illness, can be influenced by a number of factors including genetics and environment.

Compared to the 1950’s, divorce rates have doubled while teen suicide rates have tripled in the United States (Luther, 2003, p. 1584). One measurable change between the 1950’s and modern times is that wealth accumulation has grown greatly. Luther (2003) studied the relationship between economic conditions in youth from high and low income families and anxiety issues. The information gathered revealed that affluent youth experienced higher levels of anxiety than children of low-income families. This information led some to place the blame for anxiety disorders solely on money and the need for success relative to the upper class. There were other factors besides wealth accumulation, however, which were not explored in detail by researchers. The study made clear the majority of the affluent population polled was Caucasian, while a large percentage of the low-income respondents were minorities, which leaves the issue of ethnicity open to further investigation.

Edlund and Larson (2005, p. 784) suggest that Mexican-Americans, Hispanic-Latinos, and Asians have lower rates of mental illness than Caucasians, while Native Americans and multi-racial respondents have the highest rates of mental illness. Why these racial groups have low and high rates of mental illness is unclear. Some researchers have turned to the evolution of humans for an explanation. Thousands of years ago, human beings formed close-knit living communities, depended heavily on others for survival, and had no touch with their ancestral roots and, in some cases, their culture.

Minority groups with a strong sense of collectivistic culture may have lower rates of anxiety because they create a community support system. Problems that cause anxiety, such as racism and poverty, are faced as a community. People belonging to collectivist cultures, allocentrics, will experience increased risk of mental illness in general when placed in an individualist culture (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçegi, 2006, p. 335). The same effect occurs when those from individualist cultures, idiocentrics, are found in collectivist cultures. America as a whole is known for being an individualistic culture with diverse subcultures. The cultural clash could explain the rise in anxiety disorders over recent years. Ethnic traditions, cultural roots, and the successful adaptations of subcultures into an overall individualistic society may provide further insight into the growing problem of anxiety.

**Future Readings**

The topic of anxiety in minorities is broad, with many different speculations and conclusions regarding specific racial groups. However, the subject of anxiety and mental illness in general concerning those who are multicultural has much more room for growth and development. I plan to focus further reading on the subject of mental illness in multicultural people. It has been found they, along with American Indians, have the highest rates of mental illness.

**Bibliography**


**Images**


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**Inheritance by Collective Cultures**

**Ten Differences Between Collectivist and Individualist Societies**

**Individualsex**

- People become part of a group and are expected to work together toward the group’s goals.
- "I" is the important dimension.
- Self-esteem is dependent on the group’s evaluation.
- Group identity is primary.
- Loyalty to the group is more important than personal interest.
- People often work together to achieve a common goal.
- People are more likely to conform to group norms.
- People tend to be more dependent on others.
- People are more likely to cooperate with others.
- People are more likely to follow group decisions.

**Collectivism**

- People are not tied to a particular group and are more likely to work independently toward their own goals.
- "They" is the important dimension.
- Self-esteem is dependent on individual achievement.
- Individual identity is primary.
- Loyalty to the group is more important than personal interest.
- People are more likely to conform to individual needs.
- People tend to be more independent of others.
- People are more likely to compete with others.
- People tend to be more focused on personal interests.
- People are more likely to follow individual decisions.

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<th>Group's voice</th>
<th>Function of group</th>
<th>Function of individual</th>
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