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Relationship of differentiation of self to adult clients' perceptions of the alliance in brief family therapy

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The authors examined differentiation of self, a multidimensional construct in Murray Bowen's (1976, 1978) family systems theory, as a predictor of clients' perceptions of the therapeutic alliance. Adult clients (N 38) in brief family therapy completed the Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised (Skowron & Schmitt, 2003) during prescreening and the self-report version of the System for Observing Family Therapy Alliances (Friedlander & Escudero, 2002) after Session 3. More differentiated adults reported significantly more positive overall alliances. In a canonical correlation analysis, four roots were extracted that together accounted for 56% of the shared variance. Interpretation of the single significant canonical root suggested that clients reporting less emotional reactivity were more likely to have strong feelings of safety in the family therapy context.