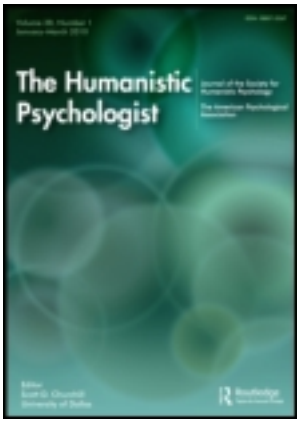

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Wellbeing through Self-Fulfilment: Examining Developmental Aspects of Self-Actualization

Itai Ivtzan [a], Hannah E. Gardner [a], Izra Bernard [a], Mandeep Sekhon [a] & Rona Hart [a]
[a] Department of Psychology, University East London

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Wellbeing through Self-Fulfilment

Examining Developmental Aspects of Self-Actualization

Itai Ivtzan, Hannah E. Gardner, Izra Bernard, Mandeep Sekhon, and Rona Hart

Department of Psychology, University East London

Self-actualization is described as an individual's expression of their full potential and a desire for self-fulfilment. It is the leading need in Maslow's hierarchical motivation theory (Maslow, 1943) which does not specify an age range for each level, believing that individuals progress through the hierarchy at different rates. However, he recognises older adults are more likely than young adults to be concerned with higher motivation (Maslow, 1970). Previous work has revealed that people over the age of 36 have a tendency to be concerned with higher motives and people under this age with lower motives (Reiss & Havercamp, 2005). This study looks at the influence of age on the level of self-actualization and discovered that on 8 out of the 12 Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) scales, participants over the age of 36 showed higher levels of self-actualization than participants under the age of 36. These results indicate the relevance of developmental issues in this matter and back up the hypothesis that there is a relationship between one's age and levels of self-actualization. However, results also showed a degree of overlap of self-actualization scores across age groups, suggesting further research may find other important factors, beyond age, which have a relationship with self-actualization.

What allows people to progress toward advanced stages of self-fulfilment? In a society where an individual's growth is championed and cultivated, this question is increasingly attracting the interest of both employers and psychologists.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, psychologists have been developing the idea that human need can be classified into different categories (Johnmarshall, 2008; Langer, 1937; Schaffer, 1953), Maslow's (1943, 1970) hierarchy of needs is based on the idea that there is distinction between higher and lower motives and that there are "real psychological and operational differences between those needs called 'higher' and those called 'lower'" (Maslow, 1970, p. 97). Compared to lower, more physiological motives (such as hunger and sex), higher motives (such as altruism and morality) emerge at an older age, are less relevant to survival, and are closer to self-actualization.

Maslow's work on self-actualization stems from that of Carl Jung (1928), who describes the process toward achieving self-realization. This is a state at which our unconscious and conscious

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Correspondence should be addressed to Itai Ivtzan, Department of Psychology, University East London, Stratford Campus, London E15 4LZ, United Kingdom. E-mail: itaiivtzan@awarenessisfreedom.com

combine, to form an integrated personality, a whole "self," which comes from within, although can be stifled by lack of experience or education.

Like Jung, Maslow argues that human behaviour is driven by needs and goals, and that the pinnacle of self-actualization is qualitatively different to other needs (Maslow, 1962). Self-actualization can be defined as an individual's quest to be creative, to grow, to acquire knowledge, and to develop one's abilities. Self-actualization is enjoyed in its own right and offers intrinsic rewards; it is not pursued for relief as are other needs in the hierarchy. Maslow suggests that even if all other needs are satisfied, there is a fundamental individual quest that "what humans can be, they must be. They must be true to their own nature" (Maslow, 1970, p. 22). Although the form of these needs varies between individuals, it fundamentally rests on prior satisfaction of other needs, on the cognitive capacities for curiosity, and the search for knowledge and truth. Maslow (1962) further states that self-actualization often requires a person to abandon familiar comforts and explore new possibilities. This requires courage, commitment, creativity and the ability to take risks. He observed (1954, 1962) that, as a by-product of their quest, self-actualizers have deeper and healthier interpersonal relationships than other adults; they respect the autonomy and individuality of others and are able to express genuine empathy. Maslow referred to *Gemeinschaftsgefuhl*, a word invented by Adler that means an older-brotherly attitude for mankind expressed by self-actualized individuals (Huber, Edwards, & Fleming-Boyton, 2000). Thus, self-actualization not only gives its own reward, but facilitates functional behaviour toward satisfying other needs, such as interpersonal relationships (Heylighen, 1990).

Self-actualization is a natural and dynamic life-long process of growth and potential in a full, clear, selfless experience, with full concentration and absorption (Maslow, 1954). Given this, it is no surprise that self-actualization has been found to relate positively to measures of psychological adjustment and negatively to measures of psychopathology (Bauer, McAdams, & Pals, 2006; Ivtzan & Conneely, 2009; Ivtzan, Chan, Gardner, & Prashkar, 2011; Knapp & Comrey, 1973; Shostrom & Knapp, 1966; Wilkins, Hjelle & Thompson, 1977).

Maslow proposes a simple and intuitively appealing theory of human motivation (Heylighen, 1992), which initially lacked rigorous scientific measurement, and thus scientific interest (Reiss & Havercamp, 2005). However, a number of measurements of self-actualization have developed (see Cillers, Koortzen, & de Beer, 2004, p. 36). By far the most popular has been the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI; Shostrom, 1974a, 1974b), which was endorsed by Maslow (Olczack & Goldman, 1975). The POI measures the values and behaviour related to positive mental health and growth process of psychological optimisation, shown in the self-actualizating person. The POI comprises of 150 two-choice comparative value and behaviour judgements, giving a clearly delineated choice (Knapp, 1976). The items are scored twice, first for two basic scales of personal orientation, inner-directed (I) support and time competence (Tc); and secondly for ten subscales. The items, when combined, are considered to be a manifestation of self-actualization. The POI importantly shows good reliability (Illardi & May, 1968; Klavetter & Mogar, 1967) and validity (Klavetter & Mogar, 1967; Knapp, 1976; Shostrom, 1974a, 1974b), leading Maslow to state that self-actualization as a concept was tantamount to intelligence, in that "self-actualization is what the test tests" (Maslow, 1971, p. 28). Therefore, this test will be used in our study to assess self-actualization.

An interesting talking point is the extent to which self-actualization is linked to age. Maslow (1970) hypothesises that, although there are large individual differences in age of progression

through the hierarchy of needs, the peaks of actualization cannot be reached until full maturity is attained:

> I am confirming the concept [of self-actualization] very definitely to older people. By the criteria I used, self-actualization does not occur in young people … [they] have not achieved identity, or autonomy, nor have they had enough time to experience an enduring, loyal, post-romantic love relationship, nor have they generally found their calling. (p. 39)

Human development occurs over time and is strongly influenced by life exposure (Carstensen, 2006; Eysenck, 1975). It seems logical that the relative ambiguity of adolescence, and consequent transitions (e.g., to different residential and social environments), inspire and cultivate increased awareness, a broadening knowledge base of the world and greater creativity in the individual (e.g., Vaughan, 2010).

This idea of age being used to denote the term "development" immediately raises the idea of "change." A common metaphor used to describe development is "movement"—from one state to another (transition) which implies growth and progression through different stages (Newman & Newman, 2008). It is also frequently linked to a voyage to the fixed point of maturity (individuation, inner-unity). People are seen as making continual progression in a certain order through a series of phases. One popular way of expressing this is expressed by Levinson (1978) whose life stage theory is as follows: Childhood and adolescence (birth–20); Early adulthood (17–45); Adulthood (45–65); and Late adulthood (60+). In his model, each phase has a unique/distinctive and unifying character of learning and is an attempt to build/modify one's life structure (e.g., around changes in intelligence and the ability to reason). For example, people in the Childhood and Adolescence phase are typically trying to modify and terminate existing relationships with their family, and to appraise and modify the self accordingly (identity formation), whereas people in the latter phases (Late adulthood) are characteristically trying to find an inner balance between the needs of the self and society (mid-life crisis and reassessment).

The lifespan approach to personality argues that life-tasks are culturally determined and dependent on the age groups that devote time and energy to them during a particular life period. These tasks are shared within a given subculture, and represent the issues that are considered "normative" for individuals to address in a given life stage (e.g., Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987; Ivtzan, 2008). It may be safe to say therefore, that there are typical behaviours or preoccupations found at particular age milestones, some of which are unique to that age group (Fletcher, 1998). Of course, this approach will not be suitable for every individual within a certain group, and it may be that those who self-actualize have an atypical background, being particularly gifted in moral reasoning, for example (Ruf, 2009). Nonetheless, analysis of typical behaviour shown across ages may be fruitful in analysing why the vast majority of studies into self-actualization assess adults.

It may be that the preoccupations of younger people is not conducive to self-actualization. Eron, Huesmann, Bruce, Fischer, and Mermelstein (1983) posit that young people frequently observe stereotypical behaviour. For example, teenagers may be rebellious against authority, aggressive or conformist (Marple, 1933) in order to fit in and be accepted by the "in-group" (Niedzviecki, 2008). This can sometimes be at the expense of their personal beliefs and convictions. Individuals who fail to adhere to these norms may find themselves subjected to victimisation and bullying (Mathiesen, Cash & Hudson, 2004); pressures that are repressive to self-actualizing. Younger people are also characterised by their concern over physical appearance (Purvis, Robinson & Merry, 2006).

Failure to resolve identity issues may be reflected by less than intimate friendship formations—friendships based on self-identity, power and self-esteem. Such relationships lack emotional closeness, a sense of personal liberty and "communion," characterized by mutual disclosure, social support and harmony (Budgeon, 2006; Erikson, 1950). Buhrmester and Prager (1995) argue that adolescents will only pursue friendships with a focus on intimacy once they have reached pubertal maturation.

Perhaps most pronounced in the teenage psyche is the notion of immediate gratification and extrinsic reward (Leone & Dalton, 1988; i.e., that "X" behaviour is contingent with passing exams or status). This lack of internal drive or motivation is at odds with self-actualizing pursuits.

Young people's preoccupations may be better understood through Leontiev's (2007) "Worldview" concept, a system of subjective generalizations about reality, which may place younger individuals at a disadvantage compared to their older counterparts. This system of beliefs contains the knowledge, cultural stereotypes and ideals of the desirable or perfect human being, society and world. By this definition a teenager has insufficient worldly knowledge to know what to strive for, and therefore he/she does not possess the necessary tools to become self-actualized. To compensate for this impoverished knowledge base, information may be obtained from the media, which may act to inform normative roles and behaviour (Hammer & Budge, 1994). The fact that the pre-adult age group are at the early stages of self-discovery makes the possibility of self-actualization very remote. Even though most young adults (university students) may have a better worldview than adolescents, it is not yet adequate. Their concerns revolve around academic success, making new friends and gaining independence from their family (Cantor et al., 1991). Also, students are usually undecided about the career path they will embark upon, and this uncertainty can translate into not knowing what latent capacities need to take surface and be realised.

By contrast, as one gets older, wishes and fears decrease and are replaced by realistic steps to achieving future goals (Lang & Carstensen, 2002). Thus, the preoccupations of the mature population may be more congruent with self-actualizing endeavours. Adulthood may, in a sense, encourage "out of the box thinking," mediated by life changing social conditions such as marriage, divorce, retirement or the death of a spouse (Jarvis, 2006).

Middle age, a phase of adulthood, is a time of reflection and re-assessment (Huyck, 1993; Lachman, 2004; Shek, 1996). It involves a journey to find the balance between the needs of the self and the needs of society, which may be facilitated by more leisure time and less imposing dictates on daily life. The ability of an individual to integrate into society without losing a sense of who they are can be viewed as a sign of maturity and is a crucial aspect of self-actualization. This period of one's life may involve a "mid-life crisis" (onset ranging from 35 to 50 years old) which manifests itself as a period of intense self-questioning brought on by the realisation that one might not have accomplished what was once anticipated by this stage in life (Steger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009). Individuals experiencing a mid-life crisis are often reported to exhibit some of the following feelings: a search for an unattained dream or goal; a deep sense of remorse for goals not accomplished; an openness to critical feedback (which is strongly at odds with the pre-adult age group); and a need to spend more time alone.

Self-reflection may come later on in one's lifetime. Feil (1985) proposes that very old people enter a new life stage with a "new life task." She writes: "They must justify having lived. They must make peace … they express bottled up feelings at last … accept without judging" (Feil, 1985, p. 92). As with middle-aged individuals, life tasks in old age may also prime a person for the quest of self-actualization.

Empirical data based on the administration of the POI supports the idea that the preoccupations of the young are less conducive to self-actualization than the old. High-school samples have been the focus of several investigations utilizing the POI. Mean scores in adult samples tend to be higher; advanced college-student scores are higher than entering college students; and scores from both of these populations are higher than from high-school students (Penelope, 2006; Shostrom, 1974a).

Although Maslow's (1970) observations of self-actualized people have been regarded as insightful, his studies on motivation theory yielded mixed results. Somewhat contrary to his claim of a positive correlation between age and self-actualization, Mitchell (1984) reported findings that suggest many of the younger generation are "inner-directed". By contrast, their parents and grand-parents were reportedly higher on the "outer-directed" scale. Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, and Jarvis (1996) suggest that cognitive motivation may be a necessary facet of self-actualization and not age as originally held by Maslow. Cognitive motivation is defined by the authors as, "an individual's tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive endeavours" (p. 192).

This has led some authors (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1980; Rutter & Rutter, 1992) to denounce theories concentrating on stages and thereby age-typical behaviours. Such theories imply: "a mechanical predictability that is out of keeping with the dynamics of change, the extent of flux over time and the degree of individual variability that seems to be the case" (Rutter & Rutter, 1992, p. 24). Some individuals experience crises similar to that of mid-life, as early as in their 20s. Some stages in development are missed out and the consequences of this may be that personal growth may occur at different points in life (Baltes, Reese, & Lipsitt, 1980).

Maslow (1970) described how as we develop, self-actualization naturally becomes our most prominent need. This is because after long gratification, basic needs become more independent from their source. For example, an adult who has been love-satisfied is better equipped for independence, and able to deal with loss of love and popularity (Maslow, 1970). This necessarily involves an age of progression, as it requires the basic needs to be met and maintained over a period of time, before focus can be made on self-actualizing behaviours. Reisss and Havercamp (2005) demonstrate clear support for Maslow's (1954, 1971) findings and claims. They evaluated data from 1,712 participants which were tested with the "Reiss Profile of Fundamental Goals" (Reiss & Havercamp, 1998), a standardized assessment of Maslow's (1970) catalogue of trait strivings, over the whole of Maslow's hierarchy to create a list of high and low motives based on the criteria set by Maslow (1970). Motives such as eating, romance (sex), physical exercise and vengeance were combined to form a measure called "lower motivation." Motives of honour, family and idealism were combined to form a measure called "higher motivation." Participant data was derived from four age groups: 16–20, 21–35, 36–55 and 56+, as the authors maintained that this method ensured a variety of ages were represented within each group; e.g., that there was not too much clustering of ages toward the young or old section of the age continuum. However, the data analysis conducted on the four age groups collapsed to form two groups: those under the age of 36 and those over. Reiss and Havercamp (2005) rationalized that although Maslow (1970) failed to give a specific age for the attainment of self-actualization, 36 years old was deemed a reasonable estimate for testing his idea. They reasoned that, as required by Maslow (1963), an adult should be sufficiently mature to have gained a significant degree of self-actualization by the age of 36. This is similar to the 35 year old cut off described as the "high noon of life" by Shostrom, Knapp, and Knapp (1976, p. 196). Reiss and Havercamp (2005) maintained that the vast majority of adults under 36 should still be too young and un-established in life to have

significantly addressed their optimal needs. The results provided strong support for Maslow's (1954, 1962, 1970) general notion of human growth (motivations change as adults mature): the lower motives (such as eating and exercise) were found to be prepotent for younger (<36 years old) versus older adults (>36 years old). Conversely, the higher motives (such as honour and idealism) were found to be prepotent for older adults versus younger adults.

The aim of this study is to investigate whether Reiss and Havercamp's (2005) results, older people's tendency to be concerned with higher motives and younger people's tendency to be preoccupied with lower motives, can be extended whilst retaining their viability. It makes a "thinking leap," given Reiss and Havercamp's (2005) findings, hypothesising that older people will be more self-actualized than younger people because self-actualization is the beacon of higher motives.

The affect of age on self-actualization will be investigated and the belief that specific scores on the subscales will significantly correlate with age will be explored. More specifically, older participants (>36 years of age) are expected to score significantly higher on the main scales of the POI than younger participants (<36 years of age).

METHODS

Participants

Two hundred and forty participants volunteered for this study of which 132 were male and 108 females. Their ages ranged between 18 and 60, with a mean age of 38.4. Diversity was infused in the study by means of pooling participants from a meaningful range of geographical areas (London, York, Peterborough, Durham, and Newcastle) so that the results might have as much generality as possible. Participants were recruited from a wide variety of sources, e.g., secondary schools, universities, local and national companies, and community centres. No inducements were used to encourage participation. The racial composition of the group was 38.4% White British, 16.8% White (Other), 18.8% Asian, 21.3% Black African, 4.7% other or not indicated. Mean years of education was 11.6 (SD = 3.0) with a range of 7 to 19 years. The social class of each participant was derived from their occupation by using the Classification of Occupation (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 2001). The social class distribution in the present sample was compared with that of the adult population of the United Kingdom, according to the 2001 Census, to determine whether it is broadly representative of the adult population in the United Kingdom. A chi-square test indicated that the class distribution in the present sample did not differ significantly from the population distribution (^2(4) = 5.76, n.s.). The participants were assigned to one of four groups based on their age: *Group 1* (N = 60) aged 16–20 (mean age = 18.2); *group 2* (N = 60) 21–35 (mean age = 26.9); *group 3* (N=60) 36–55 (mean age = 46.4); *group 4* (N = 60) 55–80 (mean age = 64.3).

Materials—Measures of Self-actualization: The Personal Orientation Inventory (POI)

The POI (see Table 1) was created by Shostrom (1974a; Everett & Shostrom, 1976) specifically to evaluate self-actualization and is therefore well suited to this purpose. Former tests

TABLE 1
Description of Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) Subscales

POI subscale	*What it measures*
Self-actualising values (SAV)	Affirmation of primary values
Existentiality (Ex)	Ability to situationally or existentially react without rigid adherence to principles
Feeling reactivity (FR)	Sensitivity of responsiveness to one's own needs and feelings
Spontaneity (S)	Freedom to react spontaneously or to be oneself
Self-regard (SR)	Affirmation of worth or strength
Self-acceptance (SA)	Affirmation or acceptance of self in spite of weakness or deficiencies
Nature of man (Na)	Degree of the constructive view of the nature of man, masculinity, femininity
Synergy (Sy)	Ability to transcend dichotomies
Acceptance of aggression (A)	Ability to accept ones natural aggressiveness as opposed to repression, defensiveness, denial
Capacity for intimate contact (C)	Ability to develop intimate relationships with other human beings, unencumbered by expectation and obligation

prove that the POI questionnaire is reliable and valid (Foulds & Warehime, 1971; Ilardi & May, 1968).

The POI consists of 150 two-choice comparative value-judgement items reflecting values and behaviour that are regarded important in the development of the self-actualizing individual (Ivtzan et al., 2011). The scales comprise of items that are grouped into two major scales: *Time Ratio* and *Support ratio*, and ten subscales.

The global rating of a person's level of self-actualization, as provided by the *time* and the *support ratio scores*, provides an insight into one's personal development. The *support scale* is intended to quantify whether an individual's style of reaction is typically "self" oriented or "other" oriented. "Inner or self, directed" individuals are guided principally by internalized beliefs and motivations and conversely, "other directed" persons are largely swayed by external agents and influences. The timescale quantifies the degree to which the individual lives in the present as opposed to the past or future. The time competent person lives largely in the present with full awareness, intimacy and empathy to their own need and the needs of those around them. The time incompetent person lives in the past, is blighted by corrosive feelings of guilt, regret, and resentment; and/or in the future, with fear or lofty goals and expectations.

Data Analysis

Before running the analyses, each marked sheet was screened. A horizontal line was drawn through the columns of any items where age was not specified, the respondent failed to answer in either column (no answer) or where both columns had been marked (multiple answers). Cross-marked items were counted and reported on line 0 of the answer sheet. Inventories containing more than 15 items cross-marked were deemed to be invalid and were removed from the data.

This study will use the means of the four age groups and the data analysis will comprise of a series of *t* tests between two groups: participants younger than 36 and those 36 and older.

RESULTS

Table 2 compares levels of self-actualization in the two groups.

Eight out of the 12 POI scales were significant in stating that older participants (over the age of 36) showed higher levels of self-actualization than younger participants (participants below the age of 36).

These included the two ratio scales; time competence $t(118) = -2.1836$, $p < 0.05$ and inner orientation $t(118) = -1.937$, $p < 0.05$ and 6 out of the 10 subscales; existentiality $t(118) = -3.451$, $p < 0.05$, feeling reactivity $t(118) = 1.718$, self-regard $t(118) = -1.685$, $p = 0.05$, self-acceptance $t(118) = -3.503$, $p < 0.05$, capacity for intimate contact $t(118) = -1.658$, $p < 0.05$ and synergy $t(118) = -3.818$, $p < 0.05$.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to see whether Reiss and Havercamp's (2005) finding that older people's tendency to be concerned with higher motives and younger people with lower motives, could be extended to the idea of self-actualization, as measured by the POI (Shostrom, 1974a).

Reiss and Havercamp's (2005) study investigated the dynamics of age on self-actualization and explored the idea that some specific scores may be significantly correlated. A relationship between self-actualization and age was expected; more specifically that older subjects (>36 years of age) would score higher on the main scales of the POI (time competence, Tc, and inner orientedness, I) than younger subjects (<36 years of age).The results of the investigation provide support for the experimental hypothesis that participants over the age of 36 are more self-actualised than participants below the age of 36 on 8 out of the 12 POI scales used. Importantly, the two

TABLE 2
Means, Standard Deviations and *t*-Values for Personal Orientation Inventory Scales: <36 Versus >36 Years of Age

	Participants <36 (N = 120)		*Participants >36 (N = 120)*		*Statistics*		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t-Value*	*DF*	*Sig*
Time competence (Tc)	13.12	2.78	14.33	2.18	–2.666	118	0.0045*
Inner orientated (I)	71.57	8.42	74.83	8.06	–1.937	118	0.0275*
Self-actualizing value (Sa)	17.60	3.09	17.80	3.46	–3.334	118	0.3695
Existentiality (Ex)	15.78	4.25	18.37	3.73	–3.541	118	0.005*
Feeling reactivity (Fr)	13.17	2.83	12.13	3.80	1.718	118	0.044*
Spontaneity (S)	11.12	2.60	11.86	3.13	1.460	118	0.0735
Self-regard (Sr)	11.23	2.64	12.02	2.53	–1.658	118	0.05*
Self-acceptance (Sa)	12.28	2.63	13.80	2.08	–3.503	118	0.005*
Nature of man (Nc)	11.08	1.99	11.22	2.44	–.329	118	0.3715
Synergy (Sy)	6.43	1.52	7.733	2.15	–3.818	118	0.0001*
Acceptance of aggression (A)	13.82	2.80	12.98	3.44	1.456	118	0.074
Capacity for intimate contact (c)	16.8	3.65	15.65	3.69	–1.658	118	0.05

[a]*t*-tests were conducted between groups of participants aged 36+ (>36 group) versus those aged 14–35 (<36 group).
[b]All significant *t*-tests are significant one-tailed at .05.

main ratio scales—Tc and I—revealed significant results. This leads one to argue that the >36 age group is closer to being self-actualized than the <36 age group. Crucially, however, the scores for those <36 and those >36 were largely overlapping. Therefore, although there was a (mostly significant) trend toward higher values over all POI scales in >36 compared to <36, other factors beyond age may be vital in explaining additional variance on self-actualization. Clearly, age is not the only predictor of self-actualization, and individual differences go beyond a simple progressive hierarchy toward self-actualization. Most notably, Charlotte Buhler argues that individuals' choices are guided by genetics, culture, opportunities offered at various phases of development and emotional dynamics, which is tied with parental relations (see DeRobertis, 2006). Therefore, the self is developed through facilitatory conditions (Buhler, 1968, p. 37), and realised through self-actualization behaviour, or self-fulfilment. Crucially the type of behaviour the self chooses to orient toward (e.g., need satisfaction, adaptation, etc.) changes over time to integrate more complex personality structures. Thus, self-actualization is evident throughout life, but gradually develops through creative expression according to the environmental conditions an individual develops in (DeRobertis, 2006).

Another point of interest is that self-actualization can occur even without lower needs being met. Karen Horney (cited in Paris, 1999) states that people can have glimpses of the real self or experience episodes of optimal function even though they have psychological difficulties (see also Maslow, 1968, p. 97). Thus, self-actualization is not an all-or-nothing state. Indeed, some may argue that the highest maturity includes a childlike quality, and children "have some qualities of mature self-actualization" (Maslow, 1962, p. 197). Regardless of this, our data suggest that older participants show more self-actualization than younger participants. This suggests that age is at least one factor involved in self-actualization. Time-Competence and Inner-Direction were together taken to quantify a person's level of self-actualization. In both scales, the older participants scored significantly higher than the younger.

High time-competence scores among the older subjects makes intuitive sense, given that self-actualization is a continual process that draws heavily on life experience. As Leontiev (2007) maintains, life experience provides the construction of a worldview system (an accumulative system of beliefs and ideas that provides cues as to what are ideals and thus worth striving for). This worldview may offer a platform of insight, an advantage over the <36 age group. For example, the >36 age group may come to realise that being rooted in the present with full awareness, intimacy and empathy to one's own needs and those of others is more suited to individual happiness and fulfilment than being bound in the past, blighted by feelings of guilt, regret, and resentment; and/or in the future, with fear or lofty goals and expectations.

It is worth noting that Reiss and Havercamp (2005) discovered that people <36 of age place career enhancement as more pre-potent than the >36 age group. This may explain the findings in this study. Inherent in the ideals of career driven people are many expectations and goals. They are often characterized by a thirst to excel in the workplace, and they are likewise, very competitive individuals (Hyvonen, Feldt, Salmela-Aro, Kunnunen, & Mäkikangas, 2009). Such people may be unwittingly fanning their flames of discontent. This is exactly what the Time-Competence scale measures. Perhaps higher insight is not reached until one has sufficiently lived by the trappings of wanton goals to change this erroneous way of thinking (Huyck, 1994; Lachman, 2004; Shek, 1996).

Another explanation for the finding that the >36 had higher Time-Competence scores may be that those aged >36 are more aware of their mortality (Pffaffenberg, 2005). Enjoying the "here

and now" may become more salient for one who realises their diminishing possibilities and chances. Feil (1985) adds that one must reconcile with the past and justify having lived. Giddens (1991) embellishes this point to say that part of this process involves "letting go" of past emotional constraints. Everingham (2003) stated that "as the individual ages, the distance between the present and future shrinks" (Everingham, 2003, p. 250). His statement supports this investigation's finding that older participants are more time competent. Older participants understand how their present can fit in with their future, but are realistic and do not idealise the relationship.

The means of >36 were also significantly higher than the means of the <36 age group on the *inner-direction scale*. This may be because the >36 age group have accumulated more life experience, thus equipping them with more knowledge and understanding. This enables them to be more self-confident, and inner-oriented (Sanderson, Katie, & Sarah, 2005). Looking for answers from within may be a consequence of heightened self-insight as opposed to the younger demographic who are less comfortable with their self-concept (Diehl & Hay, 2010).

The results underline the theory that individuals become more familiar and confident with their own values, motives, principles and beliefs as they grow older and thus have a higher inner directed score (Hellevik, 2002).

Shostrom (1974a) states that time competency and the development of inner directedness of support are both central to achieving self-actualization. He argues that both scales are important as there is usually a correlation between the two. Self-actualised individuals who live in the present are more likely to rely on their own self-support than individuals who live in the past or the future. Maslow (1962) described this relationship as "a contrast between living fully and preparing to live fully, between growing up and being grown" (p. 30).

Reiss and Havercamp (2005) found higher motives such as altruism, family and honour more pre-potent among the >36 age group as compared to the <36 age group. The findings of this study support Reiss and Havercamp's (2005), but also extends them; namely, in proving that >36's preoccupation with higher motives lends to the beacon point of superior strivings and self-actualization. Credence may, therefore, be lent to Maslow's (1970) assertion that peaks of actualization cannot be reached until full maturity is attained. Increased self-actualization may be more prevalent in the older population.

There are important theoretical and applied applications to be drawn from the present findings. The retirement of the post-war baby boomers brings a pressing issue of who to replace them with (Young, 2006). In a time of recession, the most obvious solution is young, cheap employees (Van Dalen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2009), and the average age at which people leave the labour market is decreasing (Duval, 2003). Not only does this lead to financial issues, stressing the welfare state (Taylor-Gooby, 2004), it also loses the valuable contribution of older people to the workplace. This is because the results indicate that self-actualization is higher among older age groups. Individuals with higher levels of self-actualization are more successful leaders due to their intellectual flexibility, ability to work in a team, and mature outlook on situations (Pfaffenberger, 2005). Cook-Greuter (2000) and Kegan (1994) have suggested that adults at higher stages of personal development are in unique positions to make important and valuable contributions to these education and organisational structures.

Another life domain where self-actualization is strongly linked to positive influences is the family. Kornhaber (1985) states that an important relationship with a grandparent is crucial, who, according to this study, is more likely to have self-actualization. Grandchildren with a close relationship to at least one grandparent are less ageist, sexist, and fearful, but instead were "deeply

connected to their families and were highly socialized" (p. 163). Additionally, children close to the older generation tended to be more self-reliant (Rohner, 1975), and cope better in social and cognitive contexts (Werner & Smith, 1982). This suggests they have learnt some of the values associated with self-actualization.

Self-actualization, and therefore those who are self-actualized, have an important role to play in society. It has been found that those who are more self-actualized have more liberal, less traditional views of social roles (Hjelle & Butterfield, 1974). World leaders who have brought about positive social change have exhibited self-actualizing characteristics (e.g., Mikhail Gorbachev, Vaclav Havel and Nelson Mandela; Laas, 2006). It is unsurprising, given these findings, that leaders of political and social change are all of a certain age.

What remains to be established is the effect that contact with those who are self-actualized has on younger generations. It may be that mere exposure to those who are self-actualized leads to personal development, and self-actualization at a younger age. However, it is likely that there is a certain inevitability of self-actualization developing over a long period of time. The robust correlation between age and self-actualization over such a large sample seems to suggest this.

In conclusion, there is a strong correlation of self-actualization and age on nearly all POI scales. Because self-actualization plays a crucial role in work, the family and society, it is clear that our attitudes toward older people should accommodate this. Instead of the redundancies and loneliness facing many in old age, we should be looking to these individuals for their insightfulness. It may be that they can help us to bring out our own self-actualization. However, it is also true that self-actualization is not merely caused by an increase in age. The data suggest that age, whilst having a significant impact on self-actualization scores, is by no means the only factor involved in self-actualization. Further research is needed to assess what factors, beyond age, play a role in self-actualization.

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AUTHOR NOTE

Dr. Itai Ivtzan is a chartered psychologist and holds a position as a Positive Psychology lecturer in UEL (University East London) as part of the MAPP (Masters in Applied Positive Psychology) program. His main areas of research are personal meaning, eudaimonic happiness, self-actualisation, spirituality and mindfulness. Hannah E. Gardner, Izra Bernard, Mandeep Sekhon, and Rona Hart were Dr. Ivtzan's students and are all fascinated by human potential and growth.