

Self Actualisation: For Individualistic Cultures Only?

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Abstract: Maslow's concept of *Self Actualisation* refers to the greatest "need" in his motivational theory; the need to realize and fulfill one's potential. Research has continually highlighted the differences between cultures using the individualistic-collectivistic dimension, but these differences have not been extended to the characteristics that define self actualisation.

The current study aims to test the cultural validity of Self Actualisation by using the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) questionnaire as a comprehensive measure of the self actualising characteristics originally highlighted by Maslow. The POI questionnaire was tested on 100 British participants as representing individuals from an individualistic culture, and 100 Indian participants as representing individuals from a collectivistic culture. The POI measured responses on 12 scales, each representing key characteristics of the Self Actualising individual. In support of the hypothesis, the results showed British participants scored significantly higher than the Indian participants on 10 out of the 12 scales. Thus, contrary to the belief that the basic concept of Self Actualisation applies to any human being in any culture, the current findings suggest that the characteristics of Self Actualisation, as defined by Maslow and the POI, cannot be effectively applied to collectivistic cultures in the same way they can in individualistic cultures. Implications include important impact on the workplace, as this concept of Self Actualisation has been integrated into management techniques used by human resources

teams, motivating employees and encouraging them to develop self actualising values.

Keywords: Self-Actualisation, cultural differences, Abraham Malow.

Introduction

Self Actualisation is the term given to the modern psychological concept first coined by Kurt Goldstein (1934) and then developed by Maslow (1943, 1954, 1968) in his work on motivational theories. Sitting at the top of Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" (1943), self actualisation can be described as persons realizing their potential, "fulfilling themselves" and "doing the best they are capable of doing" (Maslow, 1954, p.150). According to Maslow, this stage in the hierarchy can only be achieved when needs lower down in the hierarchy are satisfied.

Maslow's hierarchy begins, at the bottom, with physiological needs and progresses to safety needs; love needs; self esteem needs and finally the need for self actualisation. The implication of the fulfillment of these lower needs suggests that the self actualising person no longer has the "need" for these motivational drives. Such an individual would subsequently possess particular characteristics which were observed and studied by Maslow (1968). Such characteristics include more accurate judgment and perception than non-self actualising individuals, more self acceptance, absence of unnecessary defence and anxiety, spontaneity, and in particular synergy or the resolution of dichotomies such as right-wrong. With regard to the self actualised individual and his/her relation with others, Maslow (1943, 1954) describes key facets to be detachment from societal influences, autonomy and independence; an individual who is not bound by the expectations and opinions of others, but rather acts upon his/her own will. The self actualised also approaches life with an attitude of "newness or appreciation of old experiences as if they were new" (Wilson, 1969).

Thus, we have a description of the “self actualising individual”, but the path to achieving this stage in Maslow’s hierarchy is not fully explained. Wilson (1997) notes that Maslow does not specify what kind of society, culture or environment is ideal to harvest self actualisation in people. Although no social theory on self actualisation has emerged, many theorists suggest that modern culture plays a significant role in facilitating self actualisation by providing a source of various challenges, such as encouraging autonomy by creating a cultural competence of self-sufficiency (Hewitt, 1989; Giddens, 1991; Marks, 1979; Wilson, 1997). Such observations on the influence of “modern culture” on self actualisation have mainly focused on the culture and society of the United States and the United Kingdom. This research, coupled with Maslow’s original observations also done only in the United States, posits a crucial question: is the concept of self actualisation a culturally valid concept? With little research into differences in self actualisation across cultures, one could potentially propose an ethnocentric criticism of the concept; is it possible that self actualisation is only applicable to the “modern culture” observed in Western, “individualistic” cultures? In other words, if self actualisation was conceived by Western theorists and rooted in a Western, individualistic culture, can it be applied to non-Western, collectivistic cultures? To understand this criticism and attempt to answer this question, we will look at the characteristics of the self actualising individual in greater detail and the differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures in that context.

The characteristics of the self actualising individual can be best understood by referring to the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) questionnaire (Shostrom 1962, 1964, 1974). The POI gives a quantitative measure of the otherwise ambiguously measured concept of self actualisation by incorporating scores and ratios of various relevant characteristics based on the original description of characteristics by Maslow (1943, 1954). It is a valid, reliable and comprehensive tool used to measure self actualisation (Knapp, 1990). The questionnaire contains 150 items about various values and behaviors. Each item consists of two statements between which the participant must choose, and these choices are then used to obtain scores for individuals on 12 different scales, each measuring a characteristic of the self actualising individual.

The two most important characteristics in the POI are the *Time Ratio* and *Support Ratio*. The time ratio is a ratio score which refers to an individual's tendency to be either time competent (living in the present, and for the here-and-now) or time incompetent (living in the past and/or in the future); the self actualising individual is deemed to be time competent (*TC*). The *support ratio* is also a ratio score referring to an individual's tendency to be either other orientated (over sensitive to feelings and approval of others) or inner orientated (aware of ones own feelings and approval). In this ratio, the self actualising individual is characterized as being inner orientated (*I*).

The POI also includes 10 complementary subscales measuring different characteristics of the self actualised individual (Shostrom, 1974, p. 5):

- *Self Actualising Values (SAV)* - measuring affirmation of primary values characterized by self actualising individuals;
- *Existentiality (Ex)* - measures ability to react to each situation without rigid adherence to principles;
- *Feeling Reactivity (FR)* - measures sensitivity of responsiveness to one's needs and feelings;
- *Spontaneity (S)* - measures freedom to act and be oneself;
- *Self Regard (SR)* - measures affirmation of self worth and strengths;
- *Self Acceptance (SA)* - measures acceptance of oneself in spite of weaknesses;
- *Nature of Man (Na)* - measures extent of constructive view of the nature of man;
- *Synergy (Sy)* - measures ability to resolve dichotomies;
- *Acceptance of Aggression (A)* - measures ability to accept one's aggression as natural;
- *Capacity for Intimate Contact (C)* - measures ability to develop intimate relations with others, unencumbered by expectation and obligation.

These scales measuring values that characterize the self actualising individual must be understood in the context of the individualistic-collectivistic distinction.

Hofstede (1980) explains that although human beings are collective creatures with gregarious natures, “human societies show gregariousness to different degrees” (p. 209); highlighting the dimensions of individualism and collectivism in culture and society (Triandis, 1971, 1995). Individualism can be described as focusing on the self and individual, personal goals. Individualistic societies see the individual as the first or basic and most important unit, and these societies, more often than not, are developed, Western societies. Collectivism, on the other hand, is more concerned with social groups and collective goals. In such collectivistic societies social groups are seen as the basic and most important unit and these societies are often developing, non-Western societies (Triandis, 1971, 1995; Erez & Earley, 1993; Hofstede, 1980, 2003; Hsu, 1971).

For example, Gudykunst, Yang & Nishida (1987) asked individuals to score how true various statements were for themselves and found that American participants scored highest for statements on self-consciousness and lowest for statements on other-directedness, while Japanese participants showed the opposite trend. Similarly, Bochner (1994) tested for cultural differences in self concepts by completing sentences beginning with “I am”. These sentences were categorized as “idiocentric” or “group” where the former are sentences that do not imply other people and the latter sentences that imply group or category membership. Results showed that participants from an individualistic culture used idiocentric sentences the most and group sentences the least, while the opposite was found true of participants from a collectivistic culture.

This distinction is crucial in understanding the validity of a concept such as self actualisation, as the culture or environment one grows up in, be it individualistic or collectivistic, can influence ones thoughts and behavior, and subsequently ones “need” for self actualisation and other motivations. For example, Markus & Kitayama (1991) conducted a meta-analysis of cross cultural research and concluded that cognition, emotion and motivation vary in relation to whether an individual’s culture has provided them with an independent or interdependent “self construal”. The distinction between independent and interdependent can be likened to that of individualism and collectivism and many agree that one’s cognition and

motivation are affected by the social system in which they are raised (Bandura, 1995, 2002; Fromm, 1955; Nisbett, 2003; Nisbett, Peng, Choi & Norenzayan, 2001). Furthermore, with differences in the view of the self between cultures, as an independent individual in individualistic cultures or as an interdependent member of social groups in collectivistic cultures, it is also plausible to question whether Maslow's (1943) concept of fulfilling one's potential is expressed differently in these cultures. If so, this would render the self actualisation concept as described by Maslow, with its specific characteristics, as meaningless in a cultural setting outside of Western individualism.

This brings us back to the ethnocentric criticism of self actualisation. Given that societies such as those of the United States and Great Britain have high individualistic qualities (Hofstede, 1980, 1983) and self actualisation is believed to be induced by such environments (Hewitt, 1989; Wilson, 1997), it may be inferred that living in highly individualistic societies makes one more prone to developing Maslow's self actualising characteristics and the "need" for such self actualisation. Thus, perhaps in societies which have more collectivistic values, individuals are more likely to exhibit needs and characteristics different from those specified by Maslow.

This is not to say that certain cultures are more susceptible to becoming self-actualised than others. The essence of self actualisation, becoming all that one can be while fulfilling our greatest potential, is a universal theme. It is a theme which moves well beyond any human separation: beyond culture, gender, race and religion, it is rooted within us as a powerful motivation. The separation begins as we try to classify the *characteristics* of this self-fulfillment; how we specifically define Self Actualisation. This paper proposes that the characteristics Maslow described (1943, 1954) and the POI quantifies (Shostrom, 1962) are based upon an individualistic cultural perspective and therefore discriminate against any individual from a collectivist culture.

This criticism can be put into a clearer and more meaningful context by applying the individualism-collectivism distinction to the scales used in the POI. Firstly, with regards to the Time Competent scale, one is defined as

time competent when one lives primarily for the present (present-orientated) and sees the past, present and future in meaningful continuity. This continuity refers to the past as used for reflective thought and the future as aspirations to present goals, but not that the past, present or future are determinants of one another (Shostrom, 1974, p. 13). Anthropologist Dundes (1969) acknowledges a difference in how Western countries regard this continuity; being more concerned with “what the present will become” (p. 67), unlike non-Western countries who are concerned with “what has caused the present” (p. 67). This “past orientation” of the non-Western, collectivistic cultures suggests that individuals from such a culture are less likely to be time competent than individuals from Western, individualistic cultures (Dundes, 1969; Triandis, 1971). This can be supported by the premise that individuals from collectivistic cultures live by values that are based on societal expectations (Hofstede, 1980), and these expectations are, more often than not, rooted in the past through tradition and/or provide obligations for the future. Such values include, for example, maintaining and living in extended families, which studies have shown to be more important to young individuals from collectivistic cultures (Hastings & Hastings, 1981). In relation to time competence, Dundes (1969) compares the individualist, who moves on from the past to live in the present, with the collectivist, who does not and “continues to live with [his] past” (p. 67).

With regards to the Inner Orientated scale, one is defined as inner orientated if one’s behavior is directed by inner motivations rather than external forces. Referring back to the distinction between collectivistic and individualistic cultures, there is a key difference in the importance of others and society in directing behavior. Collectivistic cultures are more “other orientated” with strong emphasis on approval, acceptance and adherence to social groups (Erez & Earley, 1993; Gelfand et al, 2000; Gudykunst et al, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, Riesman et al, 1953; Triandis, 1995). This suggests that individuals from a collectivistic culture are less likely to be inner orientated than individuals from individualistic cultures. In support of this, Tanaka (1978) tested individualistic and collectivistic differences in agreeable responses to various behavioral statements. For example, in response to the statement “To do something good for society”, participants

from Indonesia, Pakistan and India scored the highest and those from Australia and New Zealand the lowest. However, in response to the statement “To achieve personal happiness”, the pattern of results was reversed. Similarly, Riesman *et al.* (1953) describe that the other-directed person “hardly thinks of himself as an individual” (p. 33) further suggesting that collectivists who define themselves in such an “other-directed” way are less likely to be inner orientated than individualists.

The first two subscales of the POI: self actualising values and existentiality can be described as “valuing” scales. The former measures the extent to which an individual holds and lives by characteristics and values of a self actualising person (e.g., autonomy and independence, self sufficiency and self efficacy), and the latter measures the degree of flexibility in applying these values to the individual’s life. If individualistic and collectivistic cultures are distinctly different in how they view the self in relation to society (Hofstede, 1980, 2003; Triandis, 1971, 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), it is plausible that the perspectives of these cultures will also differ on self concepts such as self actualisation. Autonomy and independence for example will be more supported and encouraged in individualistic cultures in comparison with collectivistic ones. From the premise that the self actualising characteristics and values, rooted in a Western, individualistic perspective, are not applicable to non-Western, collectivistic cultures, it can be suggested that individuals from collectivistic cultures are likely to score lower on these “valuing” scales than individuals from individualistic cultures.

Similar assertions can likewise be made about other scales of the POI, such as the “feeling” subscales and the “self perception” subscales: the scales of *feeling reactivity* and *spontaneity*. The former measures one’s sensitivity to her/his own needs and feelings, while the latter measures one’s ability to express such feelings freely in behavior. Riesman *et al.* (1953) describe the “inner-directed” person as one who uses a “psychological gyroscope” to direct behavior, based on one’s own needs and feelings. This gyroscope, although developed from a young age, is continually adapted with new schemas and provides an inner lens into oneself, enabling individuals to assess how they feel. As explained above, individuals from

individualistic cultures are more inner-directed or orientated because of the emphasis of the individual (Ma & Schoeneman, 1997), and are therefore more likely to use a gyroscope or inner lens to reflect on their own feelings than are individuals from a collectivistic culture who are more other-directed or orientated. Also, an individual who is “inner directed” might carry less demands from his/her social environment, thereby allowing spontaneous behavior to be expressed more freely in comparison with an individual who needs to consider the cultural implications of her/his choices. This suggests that individuals from an individualistic culture are more likely to score higher on the “feeling” scales than individuals from a collectivistic culture.

Finally, the scales of *Self regard* and *Self acceptance* can be described as scales of “self perception”. The former measures an individual’s perception of self worth in relation to his/her strengths and the latter is an individual’s acceptance of him/herself in spite of weaknesses or deficiencies. Markus & Kitayama (1991) describe the concepts of an independent and interdependent self construal as representing individualistic and collectivistic cultures, respectively. Research suggests individuals with an independent self construal are “self enhancing”, and able to maintain a positive view of the self, while individuals with an interdependent self construal are “self critical” and cannot “fit in” with others’ needs and expectations (Kitayama et al, 1997; Kitayama & Duffy, 2004). This suggests two implications for scores on the self perception scales between individualistic and collectivistic individuals; firstly that individualists will score higher on the self regard scale because of “self enhancing” of one’s worth and strengths, and secondly that collectivists will score lower on the self acceptance scale because of “self criticism” of one’s weaknesses rather than acceptance of oneself.

A test of these proposed differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures in responses to the POI self actualising scales is essential, as the importance of the cultural validity of such concepts clearly lies, not simply within the domain of psychology, but extends to organizational, teaching, social, and business environments (Choy & Moneta, 2002; Delaney & Delaney, 1971; Coble, 1972; Coble & Hounshell,

1972). Since the concept “self actualisation” is used as a theoretical basis for employers to motivate employees in human resource management (e.g., The Royal Bank of Scotland Group, 2007), it is crucial to understand any cultural differences that are apparent in employees’ needs and/or motivations. This is especially so in the recent changes in labor markets through globalization with increasingly multi-cultural and multi-ethnic workforces (Boone, Meng & van der Velden, 2004). With individualists and collectivists working side by side in the same company, it is important to distinguish whether the former is more driven by the Western self actualisation needs and characteristics than the latter. If this is the case, it has profound repercussions for personnel management methods and motivational techniques as well as the validity of literature on self actualisation.

To date there have been no direct comparisons between collectivistic and individualistic societies using the POI. A number of studies have been conducted to evaluate the resistance of the POI to intentional attempts to fake a high self actualisation score in countries around the world, such as the Netherlands (Steilberg, 1976) and Nicaragua (Knapp, Kardenas & Michael, 1978); but these countries are not collectivistic (Hofstede, 2004; Ekern, 1998). Furthermore, these studies (both rather old now) were not concerned with a comparison of data from collectivistic and individualistic cultures.

Thus, in order to answer such questions and pave the way for research on cultural differences in self actualisation, the current investigation will compare responses of individuals from a predominantly individualistic, Western culture (United Kingdom) and individuals from a predominantly collectivistic, non-Western culture (India). The cultures of these countries have been used to represent individualism and collectivism, respectively, based on the scores of each on Hofstede’s Individualism Index (IDV); United Kingdom score 89/100 and India 48/100 (Hofstede, 2004).

Based on the premises explored above, the proposed hypotheses for the predicted differences in responses of individualistic and collectivistic individuals to the POI scales are as follows:

Experimental Hypotheses

H1: Individuals from an individualistic culture will score higher on the Time Competence (Tc) scale than individuals from a collectivistic culture.

H2: Individuals from an individualistic culture will score higher on the Inner Orientated (I) scale than individuals from a collectivistic culture.

H3: Individual from an individualistic culture will score higher on the “valuing” scales; Self Actualising Values (SAV) and Existentiality (Ex), than individuals from a collectivistic culture.

H4: Individuals from an individualistic culture will score higher on the “feeling” scales: Feeling Reactivity (FR) and Spontaneity (S), than individuals from a collectivistic culture.

H5: Individuals from an individualistic culture will score higher on the “self perception” scales; Self Regard (SR) and Self Acceptance (SA), than individuals from a collectivistic culture.

Method and Participants

An opportunity sample of 200 participants (male $n = 96$; female $n = 104$) was recruited for this investigation. Of this sample, 100 participants were of British nationality; born and living in the U.K. and 100 participants were of Indian nationality; born and living in India. Further inclusion criteria for this study required that participants had never lived outside their country of birth for longer than 12 months. The age range across all participants for both sample groups was 18-25 (Indian sample: mean = 21.2, SD = 2.327; British sample: mean = 20.86, SD = 2.40).

The participants recruited from India were selected on the basis of having good proficiency of the English language in order to understand the questionnaire and instructions. This was measured by participants having achieved a minimum of level 6 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) which is the level English required by most Universities for new students (IELTS, 2006).

Design

The investigation used an independent group's design, whereby individualistic (British) and collectivistic (Indian) cultures were compared on their responses to the POI questionnaire.

Materials

Personal Orientation Inventory (POI);

The key material used in the investigation was the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) questionnaire (Shostrom, 1962, 1964, 1974). The questionnaire consists of 150 items; each taking the form of two contrasting statements addressing the same issue, from which the subject must pick the one that applies to him or her best. These items are then providing the score for the twelve POI scales. The current investigation slightly adapted the answer-sheet by including demographic questions regarding the participant's nationality, place of birth and longest absence from their country of origin, in order to maintain cultural validity within each sample.

The POI questionnaire was chosen as the measure of self actualisation because of its popularity as a valid and comprehensive tool for assessing levels of self actualisation (Knapp, 1990). In particular, the POI has high resistance to faking a positive impression of self actualisation (Braun & LaFaro, 1969), it is validated on test-retest reliability (Klavetter & Morgan, 1967), shown to be relatively stable over time (Knapp, 1990), and uninfluenced by social desirability (Shostrom, 1974; Warehime & Foulds, 1973).

Procedure

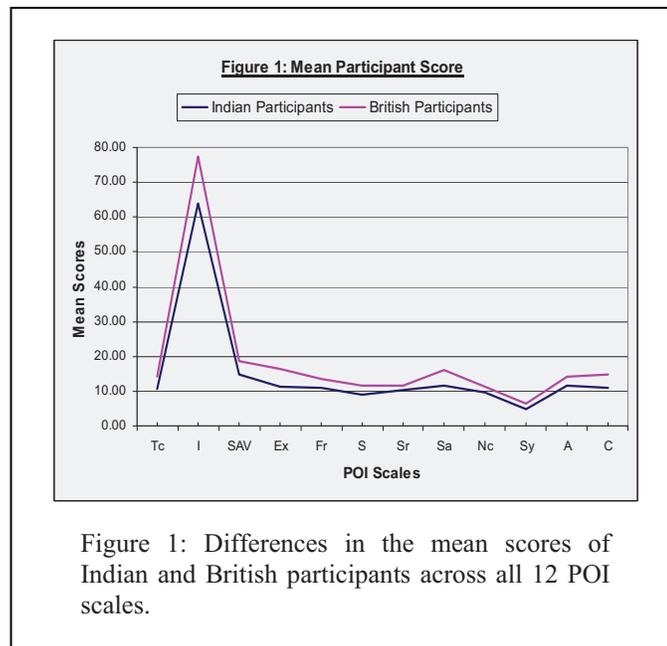
British participants were recruited in university and college campuses (in and around Greater London). Participants were then selected on the basis of meeting the nationality criteria. Indian participants were recruited from a variety of colleges and universities. The universities and colleges from which participants were selected were located in the State of Punjab, North India. All institutions were mixed (male and female students) and offered a variety of disciplines (students ranged from arts to sciences).

All participants completed the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) questionnaire and additional screening / demographic questions. Any participants not meeting the residency inclusion criteria were excluded from the study. All participants received a copy of the same questionnaire and answer sheet as well as an identical set of instructions and consent form.

Prior to participation participants were informed that the purpose of the investigation was to find out about young people's beliefs and values and were told that they could withdraw from the study at any time. After completion of the study all participants were fully debriefed.

Results

Mean scores for the 12 POI scales were collated for both groups (British and Indian) and the differences between these means can be seen in figure 1. The graph shows that the British participant scores are consistently higher than the Indian participant scores. This trend follows across all 12 scales, with the greatest differences on scales I (inner orientated), Ex (existentiality) and SA (self acceptance).



The statistical analyses of these mean differences are displayed in Table 1. These show that the difference in mean scores between the British and Indian groups were statistically significant for 10 of the 12 POI scales, with the British (Individualistic) group scoring consistently higher than the Indian (Collectivistic) group.

Table 1: Independent Samples t-test results comparing mean scores of Indian and British participants on all 12 POI scales.

Scale	Mean Participant Scores (SD)		<i>t</i> – value (df)	Sig. (<i>p</i> - value)
	Indian	British		
Time Competent	10.52 (2.48)	14.03 (1.86)	11.30 (198)	< 0.001
Inner Orientated	63.89 (7.09)	77.38 (4.63)	15.92 (198)	< 0.001
Self Actualising Values	14.81 (1.71)	15.35 (1.74)	2.20 (198)	0.028
Existentiality	11.39 (2.83)	16.54 (3.74)	10.95 (198)	< 0.001
Feeling Reactivity	10.91 (2.23)	11.83 (2.55)	2.71 (198)	0.007
Spontaneity	9.00 (1.85)	9.88 (2.04)	3.19 (198)	0.002
Self Regard	10.35 (1.70)	11.02 (1.97)	2.56 (198)	0.011
Self Acceptance	11.53 (2.41)	16.02 (2.06)	14.13 (198)	< 0.001
Nature of Man	9.65 (1.64)	10.41 (1.93)	2.99 (198)	0.003
Synergy	4.84 (1.13)	5.28 (1.11)	2.76 (198)	0.006
Acceptance of Aggression	11.64 (2.30)	11.89 (2.10)	0.80 (198)	0.424
Capacity for Intimate Contact	10.80 (2.80)	11.34 (2.55)	1.42 (198)	0.156

These results support all the experimental hypotheses. In line with hypotheses 1 and 2 British participants scored significantly higher than Indian participants on the Time Competent and Inner Oriented scales. With the Inner oriented scale producing the greatest difference overall ($t = -15.92$). Furthermore, in support of the remaining hypotheses the British participants scored significantly higher than the Indian participants on the “Valuing” scales (Self Actualising Value and Existentiality), “Feeling” scales (Feeling Reactivity and Spontaneity) and “Self Perception” scales (Self Regard and Self Acceptance).

In addition to the hypotheses that have been supported by the results, statistically significant differences between Indian and British responses were also found on other 2 subscales; Nature of man and Synergy.

Discussion

The results supported all the experimental hypotheses and post-hoc comparisons also suggested that a further two POI subscales (Nature of man and Synergy) are also affected by cultural differences. The results indicated

that the responses or scores of the British, individualist participants were significantly higher than those of the Indian, collectivist participants for 10 out of the 12 POI scales measured. The higher the score on these scales, the closer to the self actualising ideal an individual is deemed to be (Shostrom, 1964, 1974). Thus the implication is that individuals from an individualistic culture are more likely to be closer to the self actualising ideal, *as measured by these scales*, than individuals from a collectivistic culture.

Time Competence and Inner Orientated Scales

In support of the first two hypotheses, it was found that British, individualist participants were more “time competent” and “inner orientated” than their Indian, collectivist counterparts. As discussed previously, there are many possible reasons for these differences. Regarding time competence (Tc), participants from a collectivistic culture, in this instance India, are more likely to live by values and expectations rooted in the past, which guide their present and future behavior; “Welding all together are the universal bonds of tenacious, age-long customs” (Eno, 1925, p. 240). For example, Hastings & Hastings (1981) conducted a 5-nation survey on public opinion where mothers were asked to rate their agreeableness to a given answer to this question: “In your old age, what sort of relationship would you like to have with your children”, and the answer was: “To live together and have my daily needs looked after”. Only 2% of mothers from Great Britain and France agreed with this answer, in comparison with 21% of mothers from Japan, 34% from South Korea and 74% of mothers from Thailand. Values such as living in extended families reflect the “past orientation” of non-Western, collectivistic cultures (Dundes, 1969), whereby such cultures hold a viewpoint that sees the present and future as a consequence of the past. This past orientation leads to a lack of continuity between the past, present and future in a meaningful way, whereby the most important time is the present, and not the past (Shostrom, 1974). Thus it can be inferred that if individuals from non-Western collectivistic culture are more past orientated than present orientated, they are subsequently less time competent, scoring lower on the Tc scale, than individuals from a Western, individualistic culture.

Another explanation for the difference in Indian and British participants on the Tc scale can be derived from the concept of “Karma” (Brunton, 1999) embedded in South Asian religions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism). The concept of karma refers to the actions or deeds one enacts which are the basis for a cycle of cause and effect throughout one’s life (or lifetimes in religions that incorporate reincarnation) (Karnik & Suri, 1995). This cycle reflects the intermittent relationship between one’s past actions (as a cause) with present and future actions (as an effect). Thus one is continuously concerned with the consequences of one’s actions in order to build on “good karma” or good actions which have good consequences. The possible implication for this in terms of time competence is that “what he/she is today is the result of past actions and what he/she will do now will influence what he/she becomes in the future.” (Karnik & Suri, 1995, p. 367). Hence one is living in the past, rather than the present, and living for the future, rather than for the here and now. The Indian participants in the investigation were recruited from the state of Punjab where the dominant religions are Hinduism and Sikhism, both religions advocating karma in their beliefs (Michaels, 2004). Thus it is plausible that an upbringing based on a culture that has the religious influence of karma beliefs (Indian, collectivistic) may cause an individual to be less time competent.

Regarding the inner orientated (I) scale, participants from an individualistic culture are more likely to be inner orientated because of the greater sense of self and individuality, and thus being more aware of one’s own needs and internal motivations, as opposed to the needs of others and external factors, when compared to collectivistic cultures. As discussed earlier, the inner-directed individual uses a “psychological gyroscope” to individually direct their behavior, whereas the other-directed individual uses “radar” to assess the needs and expectations of others to direct their behavior (McLaughlin, 2001). With collectivistic cultures defined as societies where “people from birth onwards are connected into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Hofstede, 1980 p.225), the notions of protection, loyalty and strong group membership imply that in

such cultures the needs of the “group” are paramount, and are prioritized above the needs of the individual. Thus it is more important for collectivists to have a “radar” that assesses the needs of others and external factors in order to direct their behavior in accordance with the group to maintain loyalty and membership. Whereas for the individualist whose ties with others are loose and “everyone is expected to look after him/herself” (Hofstede, 1980 p.225), it is more important to have a “gyroscope” to reflect on one’s own needs and internal motivations to direct behavior that promotes autonomy and self sufficiency. The finding that this difference was the greatest mean score difference between the two groups of participants across the scales reflects the essential defining difference between individualistic and collectivistic cultures with the former being inner-directed and the latter other-directed.

The POI Subscales

In support of the final three hypotheses, it was found that British and Indian participants’ responses differed significantly on 6 of the 6 predicted subscales of the POI in relation to “Valuing”, “Feeling” and “self Perception”.

The *Valuing Scales* consist of the “Self Actualising Values” (SAV) and “Existentiality” (Ex) subscales. These measure the extent to which the individual holds and lives by principles and values characteristic of the self actualising individual such as, autonomy and independence, self-sufficiency and self-efficacy, spontaneity and “newness” of experiences (Maslow, 1954, 1968), and his/her flexibility in applying these values to his/her life. The significant difference on these scales suggests that individuals from an individualistic culture hold and live by values that are in line with Maslow’s self actualising characteristics, more than individuals from a collectivistic culture. Some of the differences in these characteristics can be seen in the descriptions of the “modern” and “traditional” man by Triandis (1971). The “modern man” is described as being relatively independent of others (including parental authority), less concerned with time, open to new experiences and having greater control over self, future and nature – all characteristics reflecting individualism. The “traditional man,” on the other

hand, is dependent on others, especially on parental authority; suspicious of new experiences, has less control over self and feels influenced by nature rather than influencing it – all characteristics reflecting collectivism. Relating the “modern” and “traditional” man values to individualists and collectivists can explain why individualists are more likely to hold the values and characteristics of a self actualising person as defined by Maslow (1954).

The *Feeling Scales* refer to the subscales of “Feeling reactivity” (Fr) and “Spontaneity” (S). These scales measure the individual’s sensitivity to one’s own feelings and the expression of these feelings freely. The significant difference on these scales suggests that individuals from an individualistic culture are more sensitive to their own personal feelings and able to express these behaviorally, than are individuals from a collectivistic culture. This can be explained by referring back to the concept of the “psychological gyroscope” (McLaughlin, 2001). Individualists are more inner-directed, they use a psychological gyroscope to monitor and reflect on their own “inner” needs, feelings and motivations. Collectivists, however, as more other-directed, do not use this psychological gyroscope and subsequently are less likely to be sensitive to their inner needs and feelings; thereby scoring lower on feeling reactivity. Gudykunst *et al* (1987) found that individuals from a collectivistic culture were more likely to agree with the following statement than those from an individualistic culture: “Even if I’m not enjoying myself I often pretend I am”. This reflects the collectivists’ lack of free/spontaneous behavioral expression of their true feelings because of the concern of others and not wanting to “stand out” (Heine et al, 1999). In addition to this, Güss (2002) has identified ways in which individualistic and collectivistic cultures influence one’s decision-making. Persons from an individualistic culture are more willing to take risks, be more spontaneous in their decisions, for example using expansive-decisive business strategies, whereas individuals from collectivistic cultures are more risk avoiding, for example by using defensive-incremental business strategies (Güss, Strohschneider & Halcour, 2000). This finding that individualists are more likely to take risks than collectivists relates to the subscale of spontaneity measured in the current study, which showed that individualists scored higher for spontaneity than collectivists.

The *Self Perception Scales* of “Self regard” (Sr) and “Self acceptance” (Sa) measure an individual’s ability to like themselves because of their strengths and to accept themselves in spite of their weaknesses. The significant difference on these scales suggests that individuals from an individualistic culture are more able to regard themselves highly based on their strengths and in spite of any weaknesses than are individuals from a collectivistic culture. To explain this, the distinction between an independent and interdependent self-construal has to be debated (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Kitayama *et al.* (1997) suggested that having an independent or interdependent self-construal provides an individual with a cultural competence of either self-enhancement or self-criticism to live in an individualistic or collectivistic society, respectively. American and Japanese participants were asked to rate the extent to which their self-esteem would increase/decrease in success and failure situations. American participants showed a greater increase in self-esteem in success than decrease in failure situations; exhibiting self-enhancing. Conversely, Japanese participants showed a greater decrease in self-esteem in failure than increase in success situations; exhibiting self-criticism. Kitayama & Duffy (2004) suggest that individuals with an independent self-construal in individualistic cultures exhibit self-enhancing to “maintain a positive view of the personal self because it facilitates the ever-important cultural mandates of self-expression, choice and autonomy” (p. 60). Individuals with an interdependent self-construal in collectivistic cultures exhibit self-criticism because it “promotes the ever-important goal of fitting in” (p.60). Thus, individualists promote and self-enhance their view of themselves in light of their strengths, scoring highly on self regard, while collectivists are self-critical and so are less accepting of their weaknesses; scoring low on self acceptance.

In addition to supporting all the experimental hypotheses, the results also found the “Awareness” scales, comprising “Nature of man” and “Synergy”, to be significantly different between individuals from an individualistic compared to collectivistic culture.

These scales measure the good-bad dichotomy in man and one’s ability to resolve such dichotomies to live life in synergy. The significant

difference found suggests that individualists are more able to resolve dichotomies such as good-bad, right-wrong, selfish-unselfish, and so on, than are collectivists. This may be because for the collectivist, who is obliged to meet the needs and expectations of the social groups of which he/she is an integral part, it is important to have clear boundaries of what kinds of characteristics and behaviors are valued in these groups in order to maintain a “social norm”. Without these boundaries, or dichotomies, there would be a breakdown in the consensus of what is seen as good-bad, right-wrong. For example, if a member of a collective group did not see right-wrong as opposites, making the boundary of when behavior is right or wrong blurred, he/she runs the risk of going against the norms and expectations of the group. This can be likened to the tight-loose culture dimensions outlined by Triandis (1989). By definition, “tight” cultures have clear-cut group norms and expectations of members, and members who break or go against these norms are usually required to give up membership of the social group(s), since defiance is not accepted. Conversely, “loose” cultures have less clear norms and instead there are situations where breaking norms is accepted, or even expected. Non-Western, collectivistic cultures are, by Triandis’ definition, more likely to be “tight” cultures and therefore, for individuals from such a culture, having clear distinctions between dichotomies such as right-wrong are in line with the cultures norms and expectations, thus serving to promote social harmony; this would naturally lead to lower scores on the subscales of the POI.

Implications and future studies

The implications of the results are profound. Firstly, the concept of self actualisation, as defined by Maslow and the POI questionnaire, does not appear to be a cross-culturally valid concept, in that the characteristics measured are not applicable to collectivistic cultures in the same way that they are to individualistic cultures. As this study is one of the first investigations to test the application of the self actualisation concept in a collectivistic cultural setting, these results create a platform for further research into validating Maslow’s motivational concept in different cultures.

Further research is needed to establish whether the fulfillment of the individual in a non-Western, collectivistic culture is idealized in a different way. Living to our fullest potential is a universal theme, and the route towards unlocking this potential and fulfilling it might be dependent on our cultural values.

An example for an environment where different characteristics of motivation and self actualisation are being expressed might be the workplace. If self-actualisation as it is currently defined and characterised is not applicable to non-Western, collectivistic cultures, the practical implication is that its current use as a motivational technique in the workplace may only benefit individuals from a Western, individualistic culture. Thus prestigious companies such as Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS, 2007) that actively use Maslow's (1943) motivational theory and concept of self actualisation in their human resources management may be promoting individualistic values and as a result failing to effectively "reach out" and meet the motivational needs of their more collectivist employees. Furthermore, if the employees' level of motivation is being measured by the characteristics we examined throughout this paper, the employee from a collectivistic culture might show significantly lower levels of motivation which can be easily explained by flawed measurement. When explaining the differences between individualists and collectivists in the working environment Tiessen (1997, p. 367) says:

Individualists show proclivities for new venture formation and making major innovations. They tend to leverage their resources through contract-based relations [...]. In contrast, collectivists generate variety through group-based, incremental improvements and changes. Collectivists leverage their own resources by harnessing "clan like" affiliations. This description corresponds to the motivational differences described throughout this paper; it highlights the crucial importance of cultural research to be implemented in human resource management techniques in order to bridge the divide between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, allowing individualists and collectivists to work efficiently and effectively, side by side, in the same organizational environment.

Conclusion

Overall, these differences in the participants' responses can be attributed to the lack of applicability of the measurements and questions of the POI to a collectivistic culture. Since the results indicate that the participants from a collectivistic culture produced scores that were significantly lower than those participants from an individualistic culture, according to the POI, the direct implication is that collectivists are less "self actualized" than individualists. However, this paper suggests that this is not the case. The concept of self actualisation in a collectivistic culture may consist of entirely different characteristics to the ones measured by the POI. As debated in the introduction, the concept of self actualisation as fulfilling one's fullest potential might be applicable to any human being in any possible culture, but the characteristics and the actual fulfillment of this highest level of motivation might differ between cultures. We tend, as participants in the individualistic perspective, to automatically link the highest level of motivation (self actualisation) with fulfilling our private, intimate and motivational needs. Can we consider a different picture, one where people derive the fulfillment of their highest motivational satisfaction *not* from applying their private, inner perspective, but by fulfilling the needs of their environment, mainly their family and culture? The explanations given here for the differences in each of the 10 measurements of self actualisation indicate that the characteristics of each scale is far from being the "ideal" for individuals from a collectivistic culture. Therefore, with reference to the original ethnocentric criticism of self actualisation, the present results support this criticism and suggest that the concept of self actualisation and the characteristics that make up the well-adjusted individual are applicable mainly to Western, individualistic cultures.

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