



## Individualist and collectivist values: evidence of compatibility in Iran and the United States

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### Abstract

This study examined claims that a collectivistic allocentrism is incommensurate with an individualistic idiocentrism and that the Western psychological promotion of individualism necessarily occurs at the expense of communal commitments. Individualist and Collectivist Values Scales were administered to Iranian and American university students along with a Commitment Scale. Commitment recorded one aspect of a healthy personality as described within the largely individualistic perspectives of Maddi's (1998) existential personality theory. Empathy, attributional complexity, identity, perceived stress, anxiety, and depression scales were presented as well. In both samples, Collectivist and Individualist Values correlated positively. Both values also predicted a form of adjustment that included greater Commitment in Iran. In the United States, Collectivistic but not Individualistic Values correlated positively with Commitment. Partial correlations demonstrated that Collectivist Values explained many associations of Individualist Values with adjusted personality functioning, but not vice versa. Collectivist Values fully mediated the relationships of Individualist Values with Commitment and depression in both samples. Idiocentrism, therefore, was compatible with allocentrism, even in a society as different from the United States as Iran, and the individualism of Western psychological theory did not preclude a sensitivity to the positive potentials of allocentrism.

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## 1. Introduction

Cross-cultural psychologists have focused on a contrast between individualism and collectivism (Hui & Triandis, 1986; Triandis, 1989). As a cultural product of the West, individualism reflects a commitment to reason, with social relations organized in terms of principles, rules, and laws. Individualist values include autonomy, freedom, self-fulfillment, assertiveness, and a sense of personal uniqueness. Collectivism is deemed to be more typical of non-Western societies and centers on interpersonal relationships that promote group harmony through appropriate functioning of roles, duties, and obligations. Collectivist values include nurturance, compliance, inhibited hedonism, and interdependency (Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994). This distinction initially applied to entire societies and defined polar opposites along a single continuum (Hofstede, 1980). The assumption was *not* that a unidimensional model would hold true for personal functioning, however, as individuals might score high or low on both value systems (Hofstede, 1994, p. xi). Indeed, researchers formally distinguished between the personal and cultural levels of analysis by referring to the individualism and collectivism of persons as *idiocentrism* and *allocentrism*, respectively (Triandis, 1994).

Efforts to clarify the individual-level association between these two value systems have yielded conflicting results. Chan (1994) administered Individualist and Collectivist Values Scales to a combined sample of male Hong Kong and American university students. Individualist values included pleasure, creativity, a varied life, being daring, freedom, independence, and an exciting life. Collectivist values included honor of parents and elders, social order, national security, self-discipline, politeness, and obedience. These two scales correlated at  $-0.56$ , supporting a bipolar, unidimensional model of *idiocentric* and *allocentric* values. In samples composed only of Americans, however, a positive correlation of  $+0.48$  was observed (Watson, Sherbak, & Morris, 1998), and this outcome was equally evident in males and females (Watson & Morris, *in press*). Overall, these relationships conformed with previous demonstrations of the multidimensional complexity of *idiocentrism* and *allocentrism* (e.g. Hui, 1988; Sinha & Tripathi, 1994; Triandis, 1994; Watson & Morris, 1994).

Empirical linkages between these two value systems address important contemporary concerns. Numerous commentators have indicted Western society in general and contemporary psychological theory and therapy in particular for emphasizing an individualistic self at the expense of community (e.g. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Lasch, 1979). Such critiques operate from the usually implicit assumption that a bipolar, unidimensional model best describes the *idiocentrism*–*allocentrism* relationship. Any therapeutic promotion of the individualistic self, in other words, supposedly must move personal functioning away from deeper communal involvements. Sampson (1988), for example, asserted, “One is not dealing with two opposing tendencies that can balance each other, but two incommensurate systems of belief and understanding” (p. 21). He essentially urged psychologists to promote *allocentrism* in order to overcome a presumed Western tendency toward a socially corrosive individualism.

At the most general level, this study sought to further challenge the bipolar, unidimensional model of the Individualist and Collectivist Values Scales. One goal was to demonstrate that *allocentrism* could at least sometimes account for associations of *idiocentrism* with positive mental health. Such an outcome would argue against the idea that the two value systems are “incommensurate.” According to Taylor (1989, pp. 25–52), any notion that individualism can

exist independent of the communal creation of identity is an “illusion” that is “peculiarly powerful in America” (p. 39). Belief in individualism as a transcendence of collectivism is a historical invention of early Enlightenment thinkers like Hobbes and Locke. Taylor contends instead that “continuity” necessarily exists “between the later, higher, more independent stance and the earlier, more ‘primitive’ form of immersion in community” (Taylor, 1989, p. 38). This is true because the latter is ontogenetically prior to the former and, more importantly, because the social construction of “individualists” is unavoidably embedded in the linguistic and social practices of specific communities. Indeed, the social construction of individualism across generations must occur within a more basic collectivistic commitment to social orders that socially construct individualists. Without that commitment, “individualistic” societies could not survive.

### *1.1. Commitment and collectivist values*

Tests of this general hypothesis occurred within the context of three more specific concerns. First, the criticism that contemporary psychological theory necessarily overemphasizes individualism was questioned by analyzing one aspect of Maddi’s (1997, 1998) existential conceptualization of personality. Maddi’s theory centers on the personal creation of meaning. Through symbolization, imagination, and judgment, the healthy personality projects the self into a freely chosen future that encourages risk-taking, cognitive complexity, and dynamic growth. A life of true risk can result in anxiety, but the answer to that problem is courage or what Maddi calls “hardiness.”

Maddi articulates his theory by drawing a contrast between “individualism” and “conformism.” The healthy personality displays “a trend toward transcendence of the herd mentality inherent in the most simplistic, static, and unchanging aspects of cultural values and societal norms” (Maddi, 1998, p. 6). Conformists are “nothing more than players of social roles and embodiments of biological needs.” They see “society and biological needs as givens” and only value permanence and stability (Maddi, 1998, p. 14). “Whereas individualists have hardiness-based resources sufficient to weather the storms of major existential stressors, conformists do not have these resources” (Maddi, 1998, p. 15). Collectivism predicts conformity (Bond & Smith, 1996); and critics of the Western emphasis on the self might fault Maddi’s theory for promoting idiocentrism at the expense of community. His arguments also might suggest that associations of collectivism with a healthy personality must be mediated by a more developmentally mature individualism.

At the same time, however, Maddi follows existentialists like Binswanger and Heidegger in emphasizing the importance of a “being in the world” that includes the social world or “mitwelt” (Maddi, 1998; Maddi & Kobasa, 1984). Indeed, Maddi identifies commitment as one aspect of hardiness. Commitment reflects a belief in the truth, value, and importance of what one is doing and is made obvious in the individual’s engagement in interesting, purposeful, and meaningful activities (e.g. Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982; Kobasa, Maddi, & Puccetti, 1982; Wiebe & Williams, 1992). Allocentric elements within commitment in fact seem evident in at least some statements from the Hardiness Commitment Scale (Kobasa, 1979; Maddi & Khoshaba, 1994). One reverse-scored item asserts, for instance, “I find it hard to believe people who tell me that the work they do is of value for society.”

The prediction of this study was that Commitment would correlate positively with Individualist Values because of Maddi's emphasis on individualism and with Collectivist Values because his theory and this scale also allow for the importance of allocentrism. In line with Taylor's claim that communities cause individualists, a further hypothesis was that Collectivist Values would mediate the relationship of Individualist Values with the adjustment of Commitment. Taylor's arguments in no way require that Individualist Values be reducible to Collectivist Values. His position nevertheless suggests that at least some features of individualism should be mediated by collectivism. The apparent allocentrism of Commitment made this measure an obvious candidate for testing the possibility.

### *1.2. Cross-cultural analysis*

In this study, Iranian university students were sampled along with those from the United States. Detractors sometimes accuse Iran of exemplifying a reactionary resistance to the progressive West. Fukuyama (1992) illustrates the argument in his Hegelian analysis of history. He claims that the master-slave dialectic finds its ultimate resolution in the cultural promotion of what essentially is a form of individualism. Through work, the slave mentality theoretically reaches an "end of history" in the establishment of a democratic middleclass that affords each individual the nonviolent means to achieve the respect worthy of a "master." Such a society satisfies the deep human desire to be desired by others, and a harmony between personal and cultural purposes results in an economic progress and political stability that is humanly impossible to surpass. Fukuyama further contends that "Islamic fundamentalism" in general and the Iranian Revolution in particular express "resentment" against the West and represent "the nostalgic re-assertion of an older, purer set of values, said to have existed in the distant past" (p. 236).

A comparison between American and Iranian samples, therefore, was of interest as a contrast between those living within a supposedly individualistic society and those living within a society that putatively resists individualism. Fukuyama's (1992) speculation seemed to imply that the two value systems should correlate negatively, at least in Iran. On the other hand, positive correlations in both cultures would suggest the potential compatibility of these two value systems even within cultures as different from each other as Iran and the United States.

### *1.3. Additional variables*

Finally, Commitment and the two values scales were clarified by examining their relationships with other variables. The mental health implications of these and all other variables were defined with measures of perceived stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) and anxiety and depression (Costello & Comrey, 1967).

Three indices of empathy from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983b) were administered to test hypotheses about allocentric values. The Empathic Concern Scale operationalizes a caring emotional responsiveness to the needs of others, whereas Perspective-Taking records a cognitive ability to see things from another person's point of view. The nature of allocentrism suggested that positive correlations would appear between Collectivist Values and these two aspects of empathy. At the same time, interpersonal sensitivity can lead to emotional upsets in

response to the unfortunate circumstances of others. The Personal Distress Scale measures such adverse reactions and also was expected to correlate directly with Collectivist Values.

The Attributional Complexity Scale monitors individual differences in the motivation and ability to analyze human behavior in terms of complex causal schemas (Fletcher, Danilovics, Fernandez, Peterson, & Reeder, 1986). Individualistic cultures theoretically organize social life in terms of reason rather than tradition (Kim et al., 1994). A more rational, attributional attempt to understand self and others, therefore, was hypothesized to predict higher levels of Individualist Values.

Inclusion of an identity scale was of interest in exploring issues similar to those associated with Commitment. Erikson's "identity" parallels Maddi's "commitment" in that both imply compatibility between idiocentrism and allocentrism. Erikson (1968) in fact argues that in identity development "we deal with a process 'located' *in the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture*, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of those two identities" (p. 22, his emphasis). Yet, commentators sometimes wonder if Erikson's analysis reflects a peculiarly American concern. Cross and Markus ask (1999, p. 381), for instance, "But to what extent is this process [of identity formation] predicated on a particularly American phenomenon of late adolescence and the existence of opportunities for varied roles and identities?" A tentative answer to that question was obtained by examining correlations of the Ochse and Plug (1986) Identity Scale with Individualist and Collectivist Values in Iran as well as in America.

#### 1.4. Summary

In summary, Individualist and Collectivist Values Scales were administered to Iranians and Americans in an attempt to demonstrate the potential compatibility between these two value systems. In conformity with Taylor's (1989) arguments, one hypothesis was that Collectivist Values would mediate the relationship of Individualist Values with the adjustment of Commitment. Evidence against a bipolar, unidimensional model of the two value systems also would appear if constructs theoretically linked with idiocentrism included allocentric elements as well. The expectation, in other words, was that Commitment (and Identity too) would correlate positively with allocentric values. A principal concern was whether Iranians would display a positive correlation between the two values scales, thereby confirming that such relationships were not limited to Americans. Finally, the multidimensional complexity of idiocentric and allocentric values would be substantiated if the two value scales correlated positively in both cultures while also predicting some of the same psychological strengths and weaknesses. The idea that allocentric values might mediate at least some positive features of idiocentrism in fact required such an outcome.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Students from the University of Tehran in Iran and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in the United States served as the research participants. Of the Iranians, 127 were females,

and 90 were males, with one individual failing to indicate gender. The average age of the Iranian sample was 22.38 (S.D. = 3.01). The American sample included 128 females and 85 males. Their average age was 20.57 (S.D. = 3.68). Iranians were slightly older because many Iranian males enter the university after two years of compulsory military service and because several years of taking highly competitive entrance examinations are common before admission into an Iranian university. Both samples displayed a broad array of majors. All participants were volunteers.

## 2.2. Measures

Scales were presented in a questionnaire booklet that was as identical as possible across the two samples. The booklet contained the Individualist and Collectivist Values Scales, followed by the three measures from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, the Identity Scale, the Attributional Complexity Scale, Anxiety and Depression Scales, the Perceived Stress Scale, and the Commitment Scale. Measures were translated into Persian, and the adequacy of all translations was confirmed by having Persian versions of questionnaire items translated back into English by someone unfamiliar with the study. The internal reliability of each scale also was examined as a further check on measurement adequacy. Any item without a positive item-to-total correlation in either sample was eliminated from both. Except for Commitment, responses to all questionnaire statements occurred across a five-point scale ranging from 0 to 4. For Commitment, a 0 to 3 four-point scale was used instead.

Six and seven items made up the Collectivist and Individualist Values Scales, respectively (Chan, 1994). Each item presented a relevant value plus a parenthetical clarification. “Honor of parents and elders (showing respect)” was an illustrative collectivist value whereas “Creativity (uniqueness, imagination)” exemplified individualist values. Individuals responded in terms of their personal commitment to each value, and possible reactions included “not important,” “somewhat important,” “important,” “highly important,” and “of supreme importance.” Evidence for the validity of both scales has appeared previously (Chan, 1994; Watson et al., 1998; Watson & Morris, in press).

Empathic Concern (e.g. “when I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them”), Perspective-Taking (e.g. “I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision”), and Empathic Distress (“when I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces”) Scales contained seven statements each (Davis, 1983b). Responses ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The validity of these three measures has been well established (e.g. Davis, 1983a, 1983b).

The same “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” format was employed with the Identity Scale (Ochse & Plug, 1986). Twelve reverse-scored items (e.g. “I change my ideas about what I want from life”) were combined with seven positively worded statements (e.g. “I feel my way of life suits me”) to operationalize Erikson’s concept of identity. The validity of this instrument has been documented (e.g. Watson, Morris, & Hood, 1992).

The Attributional Complexity Scale included 28 statements describing tendencies to use complex schemata to understand the self and others (Fletcher et al., 1986). One item stated, for example, “I believe it is important to analyze and understand our own thinking processes.” Another asserted, “I really enjoy analyzing the reasons or causes for people’s behavior.” Three

statements were eliminated in both cultures because they failed to display positive item-to-total correlations, leaving a total of 25 items. A “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” format was employed. Numerous findings have attested to the validity of this measure (e.g. Flett, Pliner, & Blankstein, 1989).

Dispositional anxiety and depression were assessed with the Costello and Comrey (1967) scales. Responses to the 9-item Anxiety (e.g. “I am a very nervous person”) and the 14-item Depression (e.g. “I wish I were never born”) Scales ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Ample validity evidence has been obtained for both instruments (e.g. Watson & Biderman, 1993). The Perceived Stress Scale of Cohen et al. (1983) was administered according to standard instructions. One item with a negative item-to-total correlation in both samples was dropped in order to improve internal consistency. This scale asked a series of questions that referred to recent experiences with stressful events. For example, one asked, “In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?” Responses ranged from “never” to “very often.” This measure has been used in numerous previous investigations (e.g. Chang, 1998).

Sixteen statements made up the Commitment Scale (Maddi & Khoshaba, 1994). Responses to each were made along a four-point scale ranging from “not at all true” to “completely true.” Illustrating this form of commitment were self-reports that “I often wake up eager to take up my life where it left off the day before” and that “I really look forward to my work.” The validity of this scale has been established in a number of studies (e.g. Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982; Kobasa, Maddi, & Puccetti, 1982; Wiebe & Williams, 1992), including an investigation conducted in Iran (Ghorbani, Watson, & Morris, 2000).

### 2.3. Procedure

All research participants were given a copy of the questionnaire booklet along with general explanations about how to use it. Participants then took the booklet with them and completed the questionnaire on their own time before returning it to the researcher. In the United States, participants entered responses to all items on standardized answer sheets. These answer sheets were read automatically by optical scanning equipment into a computer data file. In Iran, subjects noted their responses on regular sheets of paper with these data subsequently entered into a computer data file by hand. To avoid possible mistakes with this manual procedure, computer listings of all answer sheets were double-checked.

Following creation of the data files, alphas were computed for all instruments to ensure that internal reliabilities were maximized. Data analysis began with an examination of correlations among scales within each sample. These findings were clarified through use of partial correlations, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and measurement invariance procedures.

## 3. Results

Adequate internal reliabilities were observed for the Individualist (Iran,  $\alpha=0.67$ ,  $M$  response per item = 2.73;  $S.D.=0.67$ ; United States,  $\alpha=0.79$ ,  $M=2.49$ ,  $S.D.=0.66$ ) and Collectivist (Iran,  $\alpha=0.79$ ,  $M=3.01$ ,  $S.D.=0.71$ ; United States,  $\alpha=0.79$ ,  $M=2.74$ ,

Table 1

Correlations among variables for iranians (above diagonal) and americans (below diagonal) and scale alphas, means (M) and standard deviations for each sample

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Commitment Scale	–	0.27***	0.33***	–0.23**	0.49***	0.28***	–0.51***	–0.41***	–0.61***
2. Empathic Concern	0.39***	–	0.17*	0.34***	0.02	0.23***	–0.10	0.14*	–0.17*
3. Perspective Taking	0.31***	0.50***	–	–0.23**	0.23**	0.33***	–0.30***	–0.21**	–0.31***
4. Empathic Distress	–0.26***	–0.07	–0.16*	–	–0.38***	–0.05	0.44***	0.45***	0.28***
5. Identity Scale	0.55***	0.26***	0.26***	–0.36***	–	0.06	–0.54***	–0.52***	–0.60***
6. Attributional Complexity	0.46***	0.43***	0.49***	–0.17*	0.29***	–	–0.20**	–0.07	–0.19**
7. Perceived Stress	–0.47***	–0.19**	–0.27***	0.51***	–0.57***	–0.34***	–	0.50***	0.65***
8. Anxiety Scale	–0.41***	–0.09	–0.18**	0.52***	–0.45***	–0.18**	0.52***	–	0.52***
9. Depression Scale	–0.76***	–0.43***	–0.33***	0.24***	–0.61***	–0.44***	0.54***	0.44***	–
<i>Iran</i>									
Alpha	0.83	0.66	0.54	0.70	0.75	0.73	0.83	0.73	0.87
M	2.02	2.79	2.42	2.07	2.06	2.33	1.78	1.85	1.54
S.D.	0.51	0.66	0.62	0.73	0.54	0.43	0.61	0.67	0.73
<i>USA</i>									
Alpha	0.86	0.74	0.68	0.63	0.85	0.87	0.82	0.77	0.93
M	2.15	2.86	2.53	1.68	2.61	2.45	1.72	1.50	0.89
S.D.	0.50	0.62	0.63	0.59	0.58	0.53	0.57	0.68	0.78

For American sample N=213. For Iranian sample N=218.

\* P<0.05.

\*\* P<0.01.

\*\*\* P<0.001.

S.D.=0.66) Values Scales. In both societies, Individualist and Collectivist Values displayed the same 0.43 (P<0.001) correlation. Table 1 reviews the relationships among and the scale statistics for all other variables. With Iranians but not the Americans, Attributional Complexity failed to correlate positively with Identity, and it also predicted lower levels of Empathic Distress and Anxiety. Empathic Concern in the Iranian sample was unrelated to Identity and to Perceived Stress, but was associated with higher Anxiety and Empathic Distress. In contrast, with the Americans, Empathic Concern was not associated with either Empathic Distress or Anxiety while correlating positively with Identity and negatively with Perceived Stress. All other relationships in the two samples were statistically significant and in the same direction. Overall, Commitment, Empathic Concern, Perspective-Taking, and Identity reflected more adjusted personality functioning, whereas Empathic Distress, Perceived Stress, Anxiety, and Depression served as indicators of maladjustment. In short, the two samples displayed largely similar patterns of correlations.

Table 2 demonstrates that the relationships of Individualist and Collectivist Values with all other measures also were similar across the two samples. The hypothesized linkage of Commitment with Collectivist Values appeared in both societies, but the expected association with Individualist Values was evident only in Iran. In addition, both scales predicted allocentric and idiocentric characteristics, as shown, for instance, in their connections with greater Empathic Concern, Perspective-Taking, and Attributional Complexity. Positive associations between the



Table 2

Zero-order and partial correlations of individualist and collectivist variables with other measures in Iranian ( $N=218$ ) and American ( $N=213$ ) samples

Measures	Iran				United States			
	Individualist values		Collectivist values		Individualist values		Collectivist values	
	Zero-order	Partial	Zero-order	Partial	Zero-order	Partial	Zero-order	Partial
Commitment Scale	0.18**	0.07	0.29***	0.24***	0.08	-0.06	0.31***	0.30***
Empathic Concern	0.17*	-0.01	0.41***	0.38***	0.17*	0.02	0.36***	0.33***
Perspective Taking	0.20**	0.10	0.28***	0.22**	0.26***	0.14*	0.33***	0.25***
Empathic Distress	-0.12	-0.14*	-0.01	0.06	-0.09	-0.06	-0.11	0.07
Identity Scale	0.01	-0.06	0.15*	0.16*	-0.02	-0.14*	0.24***	0.28***
Attributional Complexity	0.30***	0.19**	0.32***	0.22**	0.24***	0.16*	0.23**	0.14*
Perceived Stress	-0.03	0.04	-0.17*	-0.17*	-0.05	0.04	-0.20**	-0.20**
Anxiety Scale	-0.01	0.03	-0.10	-0.10	-0.01	0.03	-0.09	-0.09
Depression Scale	-0.15*	-0.07	-0.21**	-0.17*	-0.13	0.00	-0.31***	-0.28***

Partial correlations involve an examination of individualist values controlling for collectivist values and vice versa.

\*  $P < 0.05$ .

\*\*  $P < 0.01$ .

\*\*\*  $P < 0.001$ .

two values scales meant that Individualist Values could have accounted for the tie of Collectivist Values with a personality trait and vice versa. Partial correlations investigated this possibility by reexamining relationships of each value after controlling for the other. These data are presented in Table 2 as well. Collectivist Values explained in whole or in part almost all associations of Individualist Values with the personality variables.

### 3.1. Mediation analyses

Partial correlations offered suggestive evidence that Collectivist Values mediated connections of Individualist Values with the adjustment of Commitment. A more formal test of this possibility rested upon the use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques. In combination with Commitment, Depression rather than some other measure of adjustment (i.e. Anxiety or Perceived Stress) was employed in these procedures because the Depression Scale in both samples displayed the highest internal reliability and the strongest correlation with Commitment. SEM allowed for significance tests to compare full versus partial mediation while also enabling a simultaneous examination of multiple dependent variables (Bing, Davison, LeBreton, & LeBreton, 2002). Multi-group SEM procedures also made it possible to test model fit across samples to determine whether culture functioned as a moderator of hypothesized relationships. In addition, CFA procedures established whether the manifest indicators functioned identically across cultures, via analyses of measurement invariance (MI) and partial measurement invariance (PMI: Byrne, Shavelson, & Muthén, 1989; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000).

Prior to these procedures, male and female covariance matrices were compared in each sample separately. No significant differences were evident in Iran [Box's  $M=14.05$ , approximate  $F(10, 172444)=1.38$ ,  $P=0.184$ ] or in the United States [Box's  $M=13.11$ , approximate  $F(10,$

151702) = 1.28,  $P = 0.234$ ]. Correlational patterns among these variables, therefore, were not influenced by gender in either sample.

Items from each of the four scales were aggregated into testlets for the purposes of the SEM analyses. Testlets combined several items into miniature scale scores in order to create the requisite, though otherwise unavailable, multiple manifest indicators of a latent variable (e.g. Schmidt & Ryan, 1993). Two two-item (IV1 and IV2) and one three-item (IV3) testlets were used with the Individualist Values Scale. Three two-item (CV1–3) and four four-item (CS1–4) testlets defined the Collectivist Values and Commitment Scales, respectively. Two four-item (DP1 and DP2) and one six-item (DP3) testlets described the Depression Scale.

The first step in the CFA/SEM analyses was to evaluate whether Collectivist Values completely or partially mediated the influence of Individualist Values on Commitment and Depression in each sample. In the partial mediation model, structural paths from Individualist Values to both Commitment and Depression were added to the full mediation model. Table 3 summarizes the goodness-of-fit tests for the full (Model 1) and partial (Model 2) mediation models with data for the United States at the top and for Iran at the bottom. Also presented is the direct comparison between these competing models in the form of a chi-square difference test. The full and partial mediation models were not significantly different in both samples. The full mediation model, therefore, was accepted as the preferred model on the basis of *parsimony* because the chi-square did not decrease by a significant amount when direct paths from Individualist Values to the two outcomes were included (Model 2).

In order to determine whether or not the same latent factors were measured in the two samples, and to subsequently determine whether or not culture moderated the structural relations between these latent factors, both full and partial measurement equivalence procedures were performed (Byrne et al., 1989; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). A case of full measurement invariance was not obtained, but this was due almost entirely to variance in the factor loadings and error terms for the latent Individualist Values factor across the cultures. This suggested that Individualist Values

Table 3

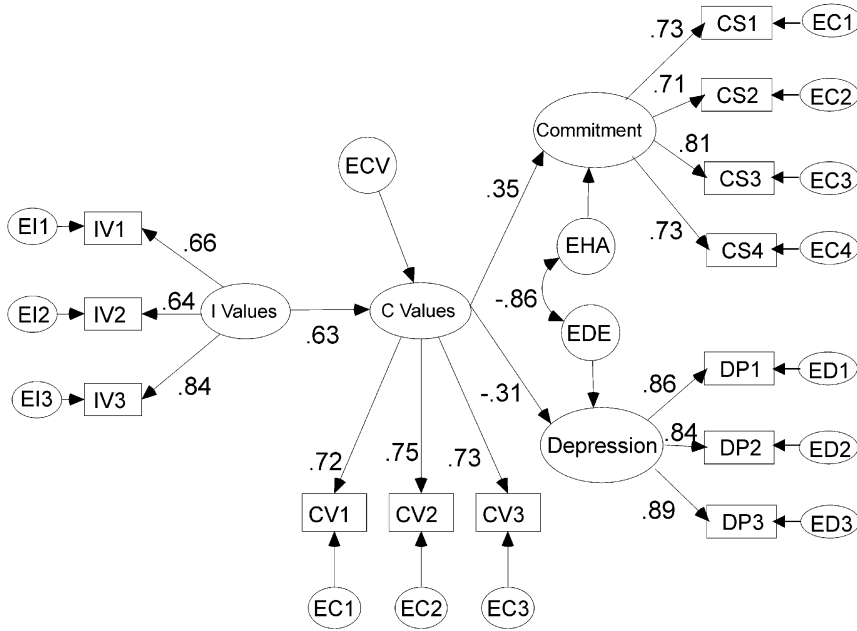
Tests of competing mediation models in the prediction of commitment and depression in the United States and Iran

Competing models	$\chi^2$	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	CFI	TLI
<i>United States</i>						
0. Null model	1437.001*	78	–	–	–	–
1. Full Mediation: IV→CV→Outcomes	116.899*	61	–	–	0.959	0.947
1 versus 2	–	–	2.692	2	–	–
2. Partial Mediation: IV→CV→Outcomes	114.207*	59	–	–	0.959	0.946
<i>Iran</i>						
0. Null model	1109.740*	78	–	–	–	–
1. Full Mediation: IV→CV→Outcomes	80.620*	61	–	–	0.981	0.976
1 versus 2	–	–	2.529	2	–	–
2. Partial Mediation: IV→CV→Outcomes	78.091*	59	–	–	0.981	0.976

For American sample,  $N = 213$ . For Iranian sample,  $N = 218$ . CV = collectivist values; IV = individualist values; Outcomes = commitment and depression; → = a structural path. CFI = comparative fit index (Bentler, 1990); TLI = Tucker and Lewis (1973) nonnormed fit index. Dashes indicate not applicable.

\*  $P < 0.05$ .

United States



Iran

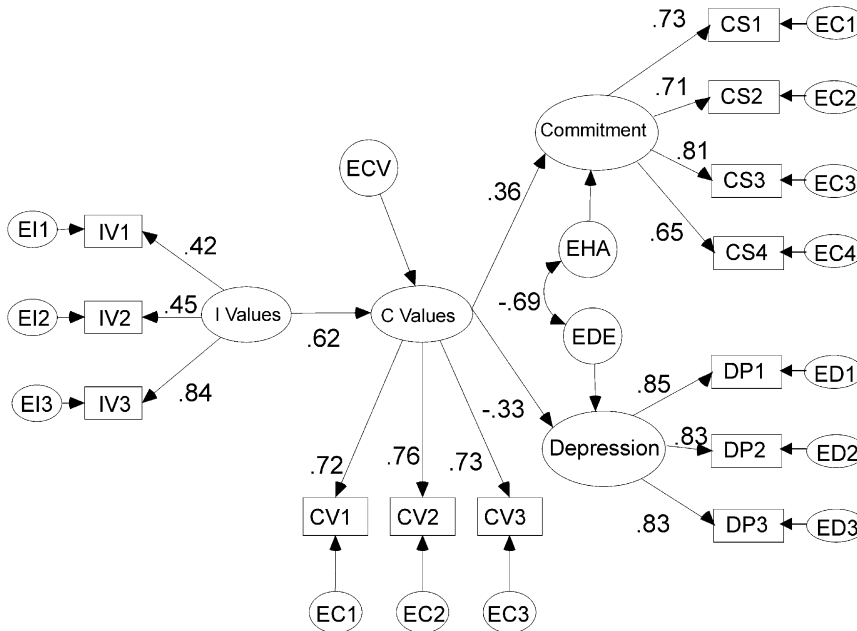


Fig. 1. The full mediation of individualist values by collectivist values in the prediction of commitment and depression in both the United States (at top) and Iran (at bottom). Manifest indicators (testlets) are indicated for the Individualist Values (I Values) Scale, IV1–IV3; the Collectivist Values (C Values) Scale, CV1–CV3; the Commitment Scale (Commitment), CS1–CS4; and the Depression Scale, DP1–DP3. Error terms for manifest indicators are indicated by the use of the prefix “E” with the abbreviation of the indicator.

were conceptualized in a slightly different manner across the two samples, and measured with slightly more error in the Iranians. However, Collectivist Values, Commitment, and Depression were measured equivalently. Thus, partial measurement invariance (PMI) procedures were pursued to control for the variance in the latent Individualist Values factor across the cultures, prior to determining whether or not culture moderated the relations among the latent factors. Structural invariance was obtained under these PMI procedures, indicating that Collectivist Values operated in the same fashion across Iran and the United States to fully mediate the relationship of Individualist Values to Commitment and Depression. Fig. 1 presents the resulting final model for the Americans (at top) and the Iranians (at bottom). The full results of these analyses are available from the authors upon request.

#### **4. Discussion**

In recent years, some critics of Western individualism have at least implicitly assumed that idiocentrism and allocentrism must operate as polar opposites along a single continuum (e.g. Sampson, 1988). The present data supplemented previous findings (Triandis, 1994) in contradicting that argument. As with two previous American samples (Watson et al., 1998; Watson & Morris, in press), the Individualist and Collectivist Values Scales correlated directly, and this outcome occurred for Iranians as well. These observations once again indicated that personal commitment to the self was compatible with allocentric sensitivity to others. The Iranian results were especially noteworthy because Iranian social life appears to be organized formally in terms of more collectivistic assumptions (Fukuyama, 1992; also see Tamadonfar, 2001). Societies as different from each other as contemporary America and Iran, therefore, yielded data indicating that idiocentric values like freedom and creativity could be harmonized with allocentric values like social order and obedience.

Critics also complain that psychological theory and therapy overemphasize the needs of an individualistic self at the expense of meaningful relationships and a sense of community (e.g. Bellah et al., 1985; Lasch, 1979). Maddi's (1997, 1998) existential personality theory, nevertheless, illustrates a Western psychological promotion of individualism that seems to remain open to the healthy potentials of allocentrism by stressing the importance of commitment. Indeed, the Commitment Scale correlated positively with Collectivist Values in both samples and with Individualist Values only in Iran. Commitment also emerged as a consistent and robust correlate of adjustment in both societies. A clearly individualistic theoretical perspective therefore can make room for strengths that may be available in allocentrism.

Partial correlations revealed that Collectivist Values accounted in whole or in part for relationships of Individualist Values with adjustment, but the opposite was not true. CFA/SEM procedures also supplemented multiple regressions in documenting that Collectivist Values in both cultures fully mediated the relationships of Individualist Values with Commitment and Depression. The observation of PMI meant that this full mediation occurred while examining measures and constructs that operated very similarly to identically across the two cultures. This result conformed with Taylor's (1989) arguments that the social construction of individualism has essential foundations in community. Other research similarly has suggested that Maddi's conceptualization of personality predicts allocentrism. Sansone, Wiebe, and Morgan (1999), for

instance, found that individuals high in hardiness persisted longer in a boring task if told that their cooperation would assist in the creation of good jobs for other people. A concern for the employment opportunities of others obviously pointed toward allocentrism. Hence, a hardy personality apparently rests upon an adaptive amalgamation of both idiocentrism and allocentrism.

Numerous other findings revealed the positive mental health implications of allocentrism. In Iranians and Americans, Collectivist Values predicted higher Empathic Concern, Perspective-Taking, Identity, and Attributional Complexity along with lower Perceived Stress and Depression. Collectivist Values also failed to correlate positively with an Empathic Distress Scale that operationalized a hypothesized vulnerability of allocentrism. Empathic Concern and Perspective-Taking presumably are central to maintaining an adaptive allocentric sensitivity to others, and more often than not, these two scales did indeed correlate with adjustment. The Attributional Complexity data may have been especially noteworthy because attributional processes reflect a reliance upon reason that supposedly typifies idiocentrism (Kim et al., 1994). Individualist Values did display slightly stronger positive linkages with Attributional Complexity than did Collectivist Values. Partialing out Individualist Values, nevertheless, failed to eliminate the direct Collectivist Values relationship with Attributional Complexity. The Collectivist Values Scale, therefore, was broadly indicative of a form of adjustment that included presumed strengths of both idiocentrism and allocentrism.

Perhaps surprising were some of the striking cross-cultural similarities in the correlations. The Identity Scale, for instance, was a correlate of psychologically healthier functioning in both societies. While positive relationships with Empathic Concern and Attributional Complexity appeared for the Identity Scale in the American but not the Iranian sample, these slight contrasts occurred within the context of an obviously larger number of cross-cultural parallels. Associations of the Identity Scale with Iranian adjustment clearly demonstrated that concerns about identity were not limited to American society (Cross & Markus, 1999).

At first glance, the Individualist and Collectivist Values data may seem to argue against Fukuyama's (1992) critique of Iran as a regressive society with minimal opportunities for the self-recognition that supposedly promotes social stability. The two value systems did, after all, correlate directly, suggesting that the allocentrism of Iran was compatible with a growth of idiocentrism. At an individual psychological level, therefore, these data challenged Fukuyama's criticisms. However, Fukuyama's most important presumptions about Iran operate at a cultural level. Central to his conceptual framework is the belief that conflicts between cultural and personal purposes produce an "internal contradiction" that threatens the long-term survival of a society. The more a culture evolves institutionally along exclusively collectivistic lines, the more that culture would frustrate idiocentric aspirations. That frustration would build and weaken the internal stability of a society. An "internal contradiction" would exist because the "successful" development of an excessively collectivistic culture would create the aggression of a thwarted idiocentrism that eventually would produce its demise. Still, the apparent ability of idiocentrism to flourish alongside allocentrism may mean that the presumed dominance of an excessive collectivism in Iran is an open question that requires additional empirical investigation.

But this argument can move in the opposite direction as well. Fukuyama (1995) admits that individualistic social structures must rest upon a foundation of interpersonal trust. Without the "social capital" of mutually supportive and reliable relationships, a society could not foster idiocentric forms of development. As Taylor's (1989) arguments in fact imply, the maturation of

“hardy” individualists presumably must rest upon the nurturing collectivistic care provided by familial, educational, and other communal institutions. Critics of American individualism (e.g. Bellah et al., 1985; Sampson, 1988) frequently complain that an exclusive Western emphasis on individualism threatens communal potentials that are necessary for its survival. Once again, an internal contradiction would exist. The “successful” development of an excessively individualistic culture would weaken its foundations in essential communal practices, thereby producing its eventual demise. Data and arguments that challenge Iranian social life, therefore, can challenge American society as well. Still, the apparent ability of allocentrism to flourish alongside idiocentrism may mean that the presumed dominance of an excessive individualism in America is an open question that requires additional empirical investigation.

Interpretation of the present results must, of course, be framed within an awareness of numerous caveats and limitations. Commitment was chosen for analysis as only one dimension of Maddi’s conceptualization of hardiness because it had the most obvious allocentric elements. However, the goal of this study was not to argue that allocentrism is always more important than idiocentrism, nor to claim that idiocentrism never develops beyond its foundations in community. An examination of the other hardiness dimensions could have documented that idiocentrism can be a more important mediator of at least some aspects of adjustment. Moreover, the “conformism” criticized by Maddi undoubtedly exists as a potential danger. The idiocentrism–allocentrism contrast parallels Bakan’s (1966) differentiation between agency as a focus on the self and communion as a sensitivity to others. Communion unmitigated by an appropriate concern for the self is in fact associated with demonstrable liabilities (e.g. Helgeson & Fritz, 1999). Such findings suggest that an allocentrism unmitigated by idiocentrism might indeed promote a psychosocially disturbed “conformism,” just as Maddi warns.

Other interpretative cautions also seem necessary. First, the possibility of an allocentrism unmitigated by idiocentrism implies that at least some aspects of idiocentrism and allocentrism should in fact correlate inversely. Second, Individualist and Collectivist Values correlated positively in Iranians as well as in Americans, but these two cultures undoubtedly shared many similarities not always evident in cross-cultural comparisons, including, for example, historical origins in monotheistic religion. The same linkage, therefore, might not occur in all societies (cf. Chan, 1994). Third, higher social class has been identified as a stronger determinant of idiocentrism than nationality (Marshall, 1997); so, different results might have appeared using samples from lower social classes. Finally, the two values scales only contained items that directly expressed idiocentrism and allocentrism, and both value systems may be socially desirable. Acquiescence and social desirability response sets, therefore, may have contributed to the positive correlations. A previous negative relationship between these two scales (Chan, 1994), nevertheless, suggested that such response sets are not always a problem.

Finally, these data once again implied that an ideal social life would encourage both agency/idiocentrism and community/allocentrism. This idea seems very consistent with the thinking of the 19th Century French social theorist who coined the term “individualism,” Alexis de Tocqueville (Watson & Morris, in press). Disturbed by the instability of early French democracy, Tocqueville worried that the emerging middleclass lifestyle encouraged an individualism that atomized society into increasingly isolated citizens who selfishly pursued only their own interests (Siedentop, 1994). A collapse of individualism into selfishness seemed destined to promote an anarchy that justified totalitarian controls. However, Tocqueville’s study of American democracy

helped him to reject such a pessimistic conclusion (Tocqueville, 1945/1840). He found, for example, that Americans practiced a morality of “self-interest rightly understood.” In other words, they “content themselves with inquiring whether the personal advantage of each member of the community does not consist in working for the good of all . . . and it is held that man serves himself in serving his fellow creatures and that his private interest is to do good” (Tocqueville, 1945/1840, p. 121). “Self-interest rightly understood” clearly presupposes an amalgamation of idiocentrism and allocentrism, and positive correlations between Individualist and Collectivist Values in the present study revealed that this potential was apparent in Iranians as well as in Americans.

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