Congruence and Functions of Personal and Cultural Values: Do My Values Reflect My Culture’s Values?

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Abstract

Two studies are described examining the correlation between self- and culture-referenced values at a culture level (study 1) and correlation between self- and culture-referenced values and self-reported behaviour at an individual level (study 2). It is found that values related to individual – group relationships (embeddedness) and expression and experience of affective feelings and emotions (affective autonomy) are significantly correlated at a culture level. In study 2, culture-referenced values are shown to correlate with behaviours attached to social norms, whereas self-rated values are found to correlate with behaviours that are not norm-governed. Implications for measurement of cultural values and cultural and cross-cultural research designs are discussed.

Keywords: cross-cultural comparison, values, culture, referent effects, individualism-collectivism, level of analysis
The measurement of cultural characteristics has been one of the central interests to psychologists for a considerable time. Starting with Hofstede’s (1980) seminal work, researchers have devoted much energy uncovering cultural variations in behaviour. This is commonly done by asking individuals about the importance of particular concepts of interest (such as values, identities, personality, beliefs, etc.) in their personal lives, which are then compared across cultural samples. Mean scores based on self-ratings are routinely compared across cultural boundaries and it is implicitly assumed that the central tendency of those self-ratings reflects cultural characteristics (Hofstede, 2001; Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994; Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeir, 2002; Schwartz, 1994, Smith & Schwartz, 1997). Self-reports have emerged as the dominant method for cross-cultural comparisons, as exemplified by large scale studies on social axioms (Leung, et al., 2003, Leung & Bond, 2004), personality (McCrae, 2001), individualism-collectivism (see Oyserman et al., 2002), self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994) and subjective well-being (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995), to name just a few.

An alternative to these self-reports is to change the referent. It is possible to ask individuals to report on the average characteristics within their group, e.g., the behaviour of most people within their culture, what most people like or value or think (Glick, 1985; James, Joyce, & Slocum, 1988). By doing so individuals are reporting on descriptive norms (Cialdini & Trost, 1998) within a specific population (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). Within the organizational literature, these reports are used to measure properties of the larger system or unit such as the work group or the larger
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However, an interesting question that has not been addressed is (a) to what extent self- and culture referenced measurements correlate at a cultural level and (b) how self- and group referenced constructs relate to self-reported behaviour at the individual level. Therefore, the present paper reports two studies that address these two questions, using the best validated and established measure of values at both an individual (Schwartz, 1992) and cultural (Schwartz, 1994) level. Addressing these questions is of great importance. Various authors have noted problems when measuring and comparing self-ratings as indicators of culture (e.g., Bond, 2001; Bierbrauer, Meyer & Wolfradt, 1994; Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002; Peng, Nisbett & Wong, 1997; Oyserman, et al., 2002). For example, Peng et al. (1997) found little overlap between expert-ratings and self-ratings for cultural values. Heine et al. (2002) showed that social-comparison processes at the individual level make cross-cultural comparisons of self-ratings ambiguous. Culture-referenced ratings have the potential to emerge as an important and useful alternative to these self-ratings (e.g., Glick, 1988). Therefore, the current paper examines the congruence between these two types of ratings and their psychological functions in more detail.

Self- versus Group Referenced Ratings

The common method for measuring psychological constructs is to ask individuals to provide self-reports on their attitudes, values, or behaviours. When averaging these reports we will get an estimate of the average level of that particular psychological construct within the chosen group (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004; Fischer, forthcoming). In contrast, it is possible to ask participants to report on the typical or characteristic behaviour of most members of the group. Some organizational
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psychologists (Glick, 1985; James et al., 1988) argue that such questions tap shared collective perceptions and experiences. Cialdini and Trost (1998) use the concept of descriptive norms to describe behaviour that is seen by individuals as typical or characteristic for their group members within specific situations. Therefore, asking people to report on the characteristics of most group members will be reflective of descriptive norms of the group (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). Whereas self-referenced ratings tap individual preferences and differences, group-referenced ratings are likely to reflect shared collective norms within a group.

Relationship between self and group referenced ratings

Two recent large-scale studies suggest that self and group referenced ratings do not overlap and may even show contrasting findings. First, a study initiated by Robert J. House (see House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) asked managers from 61 countries to first rate particular practices within their culture and to then rate them in relation to their personal values (e.g., which practices should be used). Across the nine dimensions measured, the average correlation was negative \( r = -.26 \), indicating that specific value ratings by individuals do not coincide with cultural practices as reported by the same individuals. It may be that contrast effects may have contributed to these findings (practices were always presented first), nevertheless this sizeable negative correlation should be of concern.

Terracciano et al. (2005) compared personality self-ratings as well as observer ratings of other individuals in 49 countries with ratings of the average individual within a country (called national character rating). Despite shown reliability and validity of self, observer and national character ratings, the median correlation between national character and self/observer ratings was not significant and virtually zero \( r = .04 \). The results were not due to sample or framing effects since different
samples were used and in cases where multiple samples from each culture were available, an identical result was found. Furthermore, the authors demonstrated validity and reliability of all instruments, making methodological explanations less likely. Therefore, these two studies using different populations and methods suggest that across all these constructs there is at best a weak relationship between self-referenced ratings and ratings focusing on the group or typical members of the group.

In the present study I would like to suggest that self- and group-referenced reports show modest overlap but that the extent will depend on the particular content of the construct being measured. Using values as an example, values are expressions of different human needs and requirements (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). We may expect to find overlap between individual preferences and perceived descriptive norms for some values, but not others. Consequently, there may be only a weak relationship across all values, but for subsets of values we may find a meaningful and significant correlation. In the following section, I will first introduce the structure of human values at a cultural level as proposed by Schwartz (1994, 2004) before discussing which values might show some overlap between self-reports and culture-reports.

Values at the Cultural Level

Values at a culture or nation level are thought to reflect characteristics of the larger system and give expression to conflicts around three basic issues that every society needs to face (Schwartz, 1994; in press). First, the boundary between individuals and the larger group has to be regulated, are individuals independent and autonomous from their group or are they embedded in their group? The cultural dimension of Autonomy versus Embeddedness expresses this dilemma. Autonomy entails a view of people as autonomous, bounded entities. Individuals are expected to
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cultivate and express their own preferences, feelings, ideas, and abilities. Schwartz (1994) distinguishes two types of autonomy: Intellectual autonomy encourages individuals to pursue their own ideas and intellectual directions independently. Affective autonomy entails a pursuit of affectively positive experience by individuals for themselves. In cultures with an emphasis on embeddedness, people are viewed as entities embedded in the larger group. Meaning in life is provided largely through social relationships, group identification, participation in the group’s shared way of life, and striving toward shared goals of the group.

Second, how can the social order be maintained and preserved? People must consider the welfare of others, need to coordinate with them, and thereby manage their unavoidable interdependencies. On one hand, individuals may see each other as moral equals and individuals are expected to take responsibility for one another, which reflects Egalitarianism. In contrast, society might be perceived as a hierarchical system of ascribed roles that has the function of insuring responsible behaviour. Individuals are expected to accept the hierarchical distribution of roles and to comply with the obligations and rules attached to their individual roles (hierarchy).

Finally, societies need to regulate how members manage their relations to other members and to the environment. In societies that are characterised by Harmony, people emphasise fitting in, show an understanding and appreciation of things rather than a desire to change, direct or exploit. In contrast, societies characterised by Mastery show the opposite pattern. There, active self-assertion is encouraged, mastering and changing the natural and social environment to attain personal or group goals is valued.

Therefore, there are three societal conflicts (Schwartz, 1994; in press) that need to be managed by any society, namely the conflict between autonomy versus
embeddedness of individuals in social groups, the preservation of social order and the relationship to the social and natural environment. However, there may be differences in the extent to which these values are internalized by individuals. As discussed above, there is little congruence between self- and culture-referenced ratings across a number of psychological dimensions. The challenge is to investigate for what value dimensions self and culture ratings do show some empirical overlap. There is little current research that could shed some light on this issue. Therefore, I will propose some tentative hypotheses based on the limited research available.

Relationship Between Culture and Self-Rated Value Dimensions

Concerning the first of the three dimensions, the bond between mother and child is essential for developing interpersonal skills for relating to other individuals (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). The ability to form successful and secure relationships is being developed within the first year of one’s life. During this important period, we might also expect that the relationship with primary attachment figures shapes how people will perceive themselves later on, e.g., whether they perceive themselves to be rather independent and autonomous of larger social groups or whether they feel attached and socially connected to important social groups. Having a strong bond to ones parents and growing up in a large family is likely to result in more relational selves rather than independent and autonomous selves (Kağitçibasi, 1997). Parents are important socialization figures that are concerned with the adaptation and fitting in of their children into the larger social and cultural context. Hence, we could expect that cultural norms about the appropriate relationship between the individual and the social group are passed on very early in one’s life and become strongly internalized. Therefore, I would propose that there is a positive and strong correlation between embeddedness self- and culture ratings.
Research on family value transmission among immigrant families shows some indirect support for this proposed relationship. For example, in a study on value transmission from Turkish fathers to sons in Turkey and Germany, Schönpflug (2001) found that values related to embeddedness at an individual level (security, traditionalism) showed the strongest transmission rate. Schönpflug (2001) argued that collectivistic (compared with individualistic) values are more readily passed on because they are shaped by group selection, are functional for group maintenance and lead to greater cooperation among group members. Similarly, Phalet and Schönpflug (2001) found transmission of collectivistic (embeddedness-related) values among same-sex parent-child dyads from Turkish immigrant families in Germany and The Netherlands. Finally, Boehnke (2001) in a study of 98 East German student-parent dyads found that there was great congruence between the values of parents and their children for values related to Embeddedness (tradition).

Hypothesis 1: Embeddedness values using self- and culture-referent ratings correlate strongly and positively at the cultural level.

Conceptually opposed to embeddedness are affective and intellectual autonomy. Affective autonomy deals with the pursuit, experiences, intensity and the expression of affective states, activities and emotions. Cultures differ in the extent to which emotions are expressed to different members within the culture (Matsumoto, 1990; Matsumoto, Takeuchi, Andayani, Kouznetsova, & Krupp, 1998). The early socialization experiences between parents and child should be quite formative in this respect. Parents will socialize their children to internalize culturally appropriate emotional display rules. Since this socialization process is likely to occur early in one’s life it could be expected that values related to culturally appropriate emotional experiences and expressions are well internalized. Therefore, we could expect that
self- and culture-ratings of emotional autonomy values show a positive correlation. The aforementioned study by Boehnke (2001) found that there was moderately strong congruence for affective autonomy related values (hedonism, stimulation).

_Hypothesis 2: Affective autonomy values using self- and culture-referent ratings correlate strongly and positively at a culture level._

In contrast, intellectual autonomy deals with the freedom of thought, the extent to which individuals enjoy and cherish intellectual stimulation and creativity. Although parents may encourage their children to pursue such activities, these values might be strongly influenced by other factors than cultural norms, such as social standing of the family, personality (e.g., openness to change; McCrae & Costa, 1997) or intellectual capacities (Sternberg, 1999). The aforementioned study by Schönpflug (2001) found that autonomy-related values did overall show little transmission within families (but note that there was a correlation for self-direction which is similar to intellectual autonomy). Other value transmission studies (Phalet & Schönpflug, 2001; Boehnke, 2001) found little transmission of intellectual autonomy-related values. Therefore, I would predict that intellectual autonomy is less well internalized and self- and culture-ratings do not show a strong correlation.

_Hypothesis 3: There is only a weak correlation between self- and culture-referent ratings of intellectual autonomy values at a culture level._

The second value dimension is related to preserving the social order. Individuals need to know social requirements and norms about hierarchy. For example, it has been shown that individuals accepting hierarchy are less likely to pay attention to information about their relationship with authorities (e.g., Farh, Earley & Lin, 1997; Fischer & Smith, 2005). Having internalized values about social order such relationship information becomes less relevant. It could be expected that individuals
internalize such information for the simple reason that a constant evaluation of one’s standing (in excess or over and above what is expected and usual within a certain culture) would take up more cognitive resources and therefore would lead to a cognitive overload. If an individual is less concerned with hierarchy in a culture that is very hierarchical, he or she would soon run into problems. On the other hand, if individuals pay too much attention to these issues in a culture that does not value hierarchy, valuable time and resources are wasted by the individual. Therefore, it would advantageous for the individual to internalize these values to a certain extent in order to function optimally. There is some support that hierarchy values are transmitted within families (Boehnke, 2001), consequently, hierarchy values might be important during the socialization process.

However, contrary evidence is reported by research in the self-determination theory tradition (Ryan & Deci, 2001, 2003). It has been found that horizontal, egalitarian practices were more likely to be internalized in Canadian and Brazilian samples (Chirkov, Ryan & Willness, 2005) and Russian, South Korean, Turkish and US samples (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim & Kaplan, 2003). Chirkov et al. (2001, 2003) argued that hierarchical practices related to deference to authority, unquestioned following of tradition and competition are less well internalized because these values and practices pose conflicts for the fulfilment of basic human needs. In contrast, horizontal values and practices are more likely to support basic psychological needs and therefore are more readily internalized. Therefore, these findings somewhat contradict the results reported above in that collectivistic and hierarchical values were more likely to be passed from parents to children, whereas this line of research suggested that it is mainly egalitarian and individualistic practices and values that are
internalized, but not collectivistic and hierarchical. Therefore, it is unclear to what extent hierarchy and egalitarianism self- and culture-ratings are correlated.

Research question 1: To what extent are hierarchy values using self- and culture-referent ratings correlated at a culture level?

Research question 2: To what extent are egalitarianism values using self- and culture-referent ratings correlated at a culture level?

Finally, mastery versus harmony deals with the conflict between achievement and domination versus a fitting in and accepting of others and the environment. Especially in relation to mastery, it could be expected that individuals internalize culturally dominant values to some degree. If there is little congruence between cultural norms and individual values, individuals are either exploited (if they do not value mastery in a highly mastery-oriented environment) or are seen as egoistic and dominating (if they value mastery in an environment that is less mastery-oriented) and hence might be socially excluded. There is some evidence that harmony values are passed from Turkish fathers to sons in both Turkey and Germany (Schönpflug, 2001).

Achievement values (similar to mastery) were passed on among Turkish parent-child dyads in Germany, but not among Turkish dyads in The Netherlands (Phalet & Schönpflug, 2001). Therefore, we might expect a moderately strong correlation between self- and culture-referenced ratings for both mastery and harmony.

Hypothesis 4: There is a moderately positive correlation between self- and culture-referent ratings of mastery values at a culture level.

Hypothesis 5: There is a moderately positive correlation between self- and culture-referent ratings of harmony values at a culture level.

Study 1
Method

Participants

Social science and psychology students from Argentina (N = 189), Brazil (N = 890), Germany (N = 100), India (N = 150), New Zealand (N = 317), People’s Republic of China (PRC) (N = 36), Peru (N = 133), Taiwan (N = 312), United Kingdom (N = 42) and United States (N = 183) contributed culture-referent ratings. All students participated as part of an in-class exercise or to receive course credits in fulfilment of course requirements. All students but PRC students were born and raised in their country and were currently studying and living in their home-country. PRC students were born and raised in mainland China, but were currently studying as international students in New Zealand. The mean age was 23.73 years (standard deviation 6.64). There were significant differences in terms of age: F (9, 2325) = 36.31, p < .001. Students from New Zealand, Taiwan, Peru, the US, India were between 20 and 22 years, UK students were on average 23 years and students from Brazil, PRC, Argentina and Germany were between 25 and 27 years. These age groups approximately correspond to student profiles of students (based on structural and educational requirements in each country) as well as the status (e.g., international students). Females made up the majority of samples, varying between 55% to 75%.

The self-referent samples were provided by Schwartz (1994, personal communication). Only the student means for these ten countries were used. Descriptive statistics and sampling strategies are reported in Schwartz (1992, 1994).

Measures

Schwartz Value Survey: Self-referenced. Schwartz (1992) reported the development of a 56 (later 57) item value measure. Of these 56 individuals values, 44 were found to cluster consistently in at least 75% of the samples (Schwartz, 1992;
Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). These 44 values were then aggregated at a culture level and cluster in the seven culture level value dimensions. More information on the scale can be found in Schwartz (1992; 1994). The sample means for the current study were obtained from Schwartz (personal communication).

Schwartz Value Survey: Culture-referenced. The 44 item version of the Schwartz value survey (Schwartz, 1992) was administered to students. The relevant native language was used except for Indian and PRC students, which answered the survey in English. Responses were coded on an eight point scale from ‘not at all important’ to ‘of supreme importance’. The instructions were changed so that respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of value for most people in their country of birth.

An important question that needs to be addressed before aggregating individual level data to the nation-level is the level of agreement or sharedness (Fischer, Ferreira, Assmar, Redford & Harb, 2005; Fischer, forthcoming), since culture is commonly defined as shared meaning systems within a specific population (Rohner, 1984). Intra-class correlations (ICC) (James, 1982; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979) can be used to estimate agreement. ICC(1) is used here, which is essentially based on a random one-way analysis of variance and provides an estimate of the proportion of the total variance of a measure that is explained by unit membership (Bliese, 2000). A second interpretation of ICC(1) is as an estimate of the extent to which any one rater may represent all the raters within a group, the question of whether raters are interchangeable (James, 1982). The advantage of ICC(1) over other estimates such as eta-squared is that it is independent of group size (Bliese, 2000). Therefore, I used it here to evaluate whether there was sufficient between culture variation to justify aggregation to the culture level. Values larger than .05 are commonly seen as justified
for aggregation (van de Vijver & Poortinga, 2002). The average value across all seven value dimensions was .12, ranging between .05 (mastery) and .20 (hierarchy), justifying aggregation of the values to a cultural level. Table 1 exhibits the nation-level means per dimension.

| Insert Table 1 about here |

**Results**

To examine the convergence of the self- and culture-referenced ratings, Spearman rank-order correlations between the corresponding value dimensions were conducted. Across all seven value types, the average correlation was .28. This value is higher and positive, compared with the results in the GLOBE (House et al., 2004) and personality profiles (Terraciano et al., 2005) studies. There seems to be a small, but positive relationship in the ratings of values across the two methods. Looking at the individual correlations, the individual correlations between the dimensions varied widely.

Hypothesis 2 stated that there is a strong and positive correlation between self- and culture-referenced embeddedness ratings. The rank-order correlation was .71, p < .05, supporting the hypothesis. Hypothesis 2 was also supported, because there was a strong and positive correlation between self- and culture-referenced ratings of affective autonomy: rho = .88, p < .01. Hypothesis 3 concerning intellectual autonomy was supported because no significant correlation was found between self- and culture-referenced ratings: rho = .04, p > .20. Hypothesis 4 predicted a moderately strong and positive relationship between self- and culture-referenced mastery values. The rank order correlation was .26, but was not significant (p > .20), therefore, rejecting hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 5 predicted a positive, moderately strong correlation between harmony ratings. Rejecting hypothesis 5, the correlation was -.33 (p > .20).
Research question 1 was about the relationship between self- and culture-referenced ratings for hierarchy. The correlation was .48, p = .16. Research question 2 concerned the correlation between self- and culture-ratings of egalitarianism. The relationship was negative (-.03) and not significant (p > .20).

**Discussion**

Self- and culture-referenced ratings share only about 7.84 percent of their variance. This indicates that, in line with other previous research (House et al., 2004; Terraciano et al., 2005), self ratings do not show a great overlap with culture ratings or ratings of typical members of one’s culture. However, the present study goes beyond previous research by examining the pattern of intercorrelations. We found strong and positive correlations for both embeddedness and affective autonomy. This suggests that collectivistic values about the preferred relationship between the individual and the group are well internalized by members of a culture. The individual versus group conflict needs to be resolved and values related to group dominance are presumably readily passed on because they are functional and important for group maintenance and cooperation within groups (Schönpflug, 2001). Second, the positive correlation for affective autonomy suggest that individualistic values are also passed on, but only those values related to affective expressions and experiences. Emotions and their expression are highly culturally charged and individuals need to internalize and accept culturally appropriate norms. Affective autonomy is also relatively egalitarian, which might help in the transmission and internalization of values (e.g., Chirkov et al., 2003, 2005).

Third, no significant correlation for intellectual autonomy was found. In fact, the correlation was close to zero. This suggests that not all egalitarian values are well internalized (contradicting Chirkov et al., 2003, 2005) and that especially those related
to freedom of thought and intellectual challenges and stimulation do not need to be shared among group members.

None of the other correlations reach traditionally significant levels. First, we only had 10 countries in our data set. However, these countries are sufficiently diverse and span all inhabited continents but Africa. Therefore, we had sufficient variation (see also the considerable ICC’s for the culture-referenced ratings), but the smaller number of countries means that some of the correlations were not reaching significance. These results should not be overinterpreted and clearly more research is needed. However, at least one moderately large correlation should be discussed, namely the hierarchy correlation. In contrast to previous research (Chirkov et al., 2003, 2005), hierarchy values showed more congruence than would be expected based on self-determination theory. Further research with more samples is needed to examine this contradiction. I would predict that hierarchy values show some convergence because people have to accept and internalize values about order within a culture. Rejecting such values personally but then conforming to these values on a daily basis is not functional and over the long run people are likely to bring their behaviour and attitudes, including value systems into congruence (Bem, 1972).

It also noteworthy that egalitarianism did not show a positive sign and the correlation was close to zero. Proponents of self-determination theory (e.g., Chirkov et al., 2003, 2005) have proposed that egalitarian values are more readily internalized than hierarchical values. The current data set does not allow for a sophisticated examination of self-determination theory, especially since one data set was archival (Schwartz, 1994, personal communication). However, the pattern is opposite to what would be expected. The only explanation at this stage is that probably hierarchy values are more pervasive (Payne, 2001) in that people need to subordinate to
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hierarchical norms and come to internalize them during early socialization. In contrast, norms about egalitarianism might be less demanding on individuals and they can therefore personally endorse their own values without being reprimanded or forced to conform by the larger group. Developmental and longitudinal work (e.g., Boehnke, 2001) would be necessary to shed light on this issue.

What are implications for measurement of cultural values using individual-level measures? The results suggest that overall there is only weak correspondence between self- and culture-referenced ratings, although the findings are not as severe as suggested by previous studies (House et al., 2004; Terraciano et al., 2005). In particular, if researchers are interested in self-group relationships (e.g., for individualism-collectivism or for self-construal related research) or values related to emotional and affective experiences aggregated self-reports are very closely related to reports about cultural norms. The mean of self-report based ratings can be used to infer cultural norms about self-group relationships and affective experiences. In contrast, ratings for other cultural dimensions and societal problems may yield different pictures and it is unclear at this stage what the meaning of self versus culture-referenced ratings may be. As reported by Schwartz (1994, 2005), self-reports of these other dimensions show meaningful relationships with nation-level indicators. Ehrhart and Naumann (2004) argued that aggregated scores of self-reports show the average level of that psychological construct within a particular group. Therefore, in more industrialized countries, we would expect that the average personal endorsement of intellectual autonomy is higher and that in more democratic cultures, people tend to endorse egalitarian values (Schwartz, 2004). But such scores are not likely to give us an indication of the descriptive norms of the cultural group related to these values and
therefore do not provide information about the larger social system (as suggested by Schwartz, 1994).

Asking people to report on the value preferences of most people in one’s culture or asking about typical members of one’s culture is more likely to capture these descriptive norms (Cialdini & Trost, 1998) of the larger system (Glick, 1988). We need more research that focuses on these normative aspects of culture and investigates how perceptions of these norms correlate with other country level indicators. A related question is the meaning or importance of personal values compared with perceptions of social norms for the behaviour of individuals. Typically, research has typically focused on self-reports, with only little research examining perceptions of norms (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). The present study also showed that overall there is only a weak congruence between self ratings and perceptions of cultural norms at a culture level. Therefore, it would be important to examine to what extent both sets of values are related to self-reported behaviour. The next study is addressing this question.

Study 2

Self-referenced value ratings tap individual level personal desires and wishes, we therefore may expect that self-ratings relate to attitudes and behaviours at the individual level, especially if such attitudes and behaviours are related to personal well-being, provide positive and pleasant experiences and are not strongly regulated by social norms. If a particular behaviour is subject to social norms, personal values should not be strongly related to this particular behaviour. For example, if most other members of a group behave in a particular way, individual are likely to engage in the same behaviour even if they do not particularly value it. Failure to conform to these
general descriptive norms might result in social exclusion or marginally group status. Bardi and Schwartz (2003) found that personal values relate strongest to behaviours for which there are no strong social norms. They used the relative frequency of behaviours as a proxy of social norms and found that value-behaviour correlations were weaker for more frequent (more normative) behaviours. Bardi and Schwartz (2003) did not include ratings of social norms, but we could expect that culture-referenced ratings as expressions of social norms relates more strongly to behaviours for which social norms exist.

In summary, cultural values would be expected to correlate with behaviours that are more strongly regulated by social norms such as complying with societal norms about obedience, expectations about achievement as well as demonstrating and exerting power in socially acceptable ways. Behaviours that are at the discretion of individuals and that do not entail strong normative judgments should be more strongly related to endorsement of personal values. Consequently, I predict that personal values relate to behaviours that are under the control of individuals and are not associated with particularly strong social norms.

*Values at an Individual Level*

It is important to note that the structure of values is slightly different at the individual level. Ten motivationally distinct types were derived by Schwartz (1992) that are thought to capture the core values at the individual level. Power (PO) values refer to social status and prestige as well as control or dominance over people and resources. Achievement (AC) values refer to showing success by demonstrating competence according to social standards. Hedonism (HE) values capture pleasure, enjoying life and a sensuous gratification for oneself. Stimulation (ST) refers to seeking excitement novelty and challenges in life. Self-Direction (SD) is focused on
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independent thoughts and action, including creativity, curiosity and exploration of new areas. Universalism (UN) is the understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection of the welfare of all people irrespective of origin or standing and a strong concern for nature and the environment. In contrast, Benevolence (BE) refers to the preservation and enhancement of the well-being of those people close to oneself and with whom one is in frequent contact. Tradition (TR) values capture showing respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas of traditional society and one’s religion. Conformity (CO) taps a restraint of actions or impulses that are likely to upset others or violate social expectations and norms. This includes norms such as politeness, being obedient and honouring parents and elders. Finally, Security (SE) values are focusing on safety, harmony and stability in society and personal relationships as well as for oneself.

In the following study I will use two different sets of behaviours and relate them to self and culture-referenced ratings. In particular, there are strong norms about fitting into a society, conformity, obeying rules and regulations. These conservation-oriented (Schwartz, 1992) behaviours should be stronger related to culture-referenced ratings. In contrast, voluntary behaviour like using environmentally friendly products or trying to understand the viewpoints of other people are behaviours that are more strongly governed by personal preferences and norms. The former set of behaviours is closely related to tradition, security and obedience values, whereas the latter is closely related to universalism values (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). Following previous research on value-behaviour links (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Schwartz, 1996), I would first of all predict that conservation related behaviours correlate strongly and positively with conformity, security and tradition, and strongly and negatively with hedonism, stimulation and self-direction. Correlations with power, achievement as well as
universalism and benevolence are proposed to be of smaller magnitude and either weakly positive (power, achievement) or weakly negative (especially universalism). This follows the circumplex structure of values proposed by Schwartz (1996; see also Sagiv & Schwartz, 1995). I predict that this pattern is stronger and more pronounced for the culture-referenced ratings.

*Hypothesis 6: The circumplex correlation pattern between culture-referenced values and conservation related behaviours is stronger than for self-referenced value ratings.*

In contrast, universalism related behaviours are predicted to correlate most strongly with universalism values, followed by benevolence values. The strongest negative correlations are predicted for power, followed by achievement. Correlations with other values are proposed to be of lesser magnitude (following a circumplex pattern, e.g., there should be a negative correlation with security, but smaller than that with power values; there should be a positive, but weaker correlation with self-direction, compared with universalism). I predict that this pattern is stronger and more pronounced using self-ratings compared with culture-referenced ratings.

*Hypothesis 7: The circumplex correlation pattern between self-referenced values and universalism values is stronger than for culture-referenced values.*

**Method**

**Participants**

One hundred and seventeen social psychology students took part in this study as part of an in-class exercise. The mean age was 21.3 years. The majority was born in New Zealand (75 percent), with the remainder coming from the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong or Singapore (7.8 percent), the USA (6.8 percent) or some other European and/or
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English-speaking country (10.6 percent). For confidentiality reasons, no information on gender was collected, but the majority in class was female.

Measures

Schwartz Value Survey. The 44 item version of the Schwartz value survey (Schwartz, 1992) was administered to undergraduate students. Half the students (N=62) were asked to rate the importance of each value in their personal life (standard self-referent instruction), the other half of the students (N=55) had to rate the importance of each value for people in their country of birth (culture-referent instruction). Responses were coded on an eight point scale from ‘not at all important’ to ‘of supreme importance’. The reliabilities in both groups were .71 on average. The reliabilities were better in the culture-referenced group except for achievement (.75 vs. .67); hedonism (.73 vs. .62); stimulation (.71 vs. .68) and power (.66 vs. .63). Using another type of interrater agreement (ICC[k], McGraw & Wong, 1996), I estimated the degree of absolute agreement among students for the average of the values within each value type. There was higher agreement for culture referenced value ratings (average .66) compared with the self ratings (average .62). This suggests that there is greater agreement among people about what is important for most people in one’s country than for what is important for individuals personally. Unfortunately, no statistical tests to test the significance of this difference are available. However, it is line with other studies comparing self- and culture-referenced ratings (Fischer, in preparation).

Behaviours. Six behavioural items behaviours from Bardi and Schwartz (2003) were selected. Participants were asked to rate how frequently they engaged in each behaviour during the past six months relative to their opportunities to do so. For example, there are more opportunities to perform the behaviour "say hello to my
neighbours” than the behaviour ‘go hiking’. Answers were recorded on five scales ranging from ‘never’ to ‘all the time’. The three universalism items were: ‘use environmentally friendly products’, ‘take time to understand other people’s world views’, and ‘show my objection to prejudice’. The conservation behaviours were ‘Avoid arguments so that others won’t be angry with me’, ‘hold back from telling others what I know unless they ask me explicitly’ and ‘avoid spending more money than I can really afford’. The reliabilities were .64 and .49, which is comparable to reliabilities reported by Bardi and Schwartz (2003) and which is reasonable given the number of items (Cortina, 1993).

**Results**

Hypothesis 6 predicts that culture-referenced ratings are stronger related to conservation behaviours (because they are influenced by social norms), whereas hypothesis 7 predicts that self-ratings are stronger related to universalism related behaviours (because these behaviours are less strongly influenced by social norms).

I used correlation to test the hypothesis. Since the importance is on the relative standing of values in the value hierarchy of individuals (Schwartz, 1992), I centred the value types around each individual’s value mean (see Fischer, 2004). Table 2 shows the correlations. Focusing on hypothesis 6 first, in line with predictions, a significant and positive correlation with conformity was observed for culture-referenced ratings. As expected, the adjacent value dimensions of tradition and security also showed positive correlations (both approaching significance). For self-referenced values, the correlations were not significant (and weakly negative). Second, the correlations with self-direction and hedonism were significant and negative, the correlation with stimulation was negative as predicted, but did not reach statistical significance. This pattern was only observed for culture-referenced ratings. For self-ratings, the correlations were not significant (the correlations for self-direction and hedonism were...
negative as predicted). Finally, a positive and significant correlation was observed with power culture-referenced values and a negative and significant correlation with universalism culture-referenced values. This was not predicted, but since these values are adjacent to security as well as well self-direction values, the pattern is not surprising. Overall, the magnitude of correlations was stronger for culture-referenced than for self-referenced ratings. A test of the significance of the mean absolute correlation showed that (after r-to-z transformation) the mean absolute correlation for culture-referenced values was .28, $Z = 2.10$, $p < .05$; whereas the mean absolute correlation for self-referenced values was smaller and not significant: $r_{mean} = .07$, $Z = .05$, n.s. A final test would be a correlation of the observed correlations with some contrast weights (see Rosenthal, Rosnow & Rubin, 2000) derived from our hypothesis 6. Assuming the strongest positive correlations for TR, CO and SE a contrast weight of +3 was assigned, whereas a contrast weight of -3 was assigned for HE, ST and SD. Positive, but smaller contrast weights (+1) were assigned to PO and BE on either side of the conservation values, whereas negative, but weaker contrast weights (-1) were assigned to AC and UN on either side of the openness values. The rankorder correlation between these weights and the culture-referenced values was strong and positive ($\rho = .77$, $p < .01$), but negative and not significant for the self-referenced values ($\rho = -.36$, n.s.). This strongly supports hypothesis 6.

Next, turning to universalism behaviours, the strongest correlation for self-referenced values was between universalism behaviours and universalism values, as predicted. There was also a strong and negative correlation with power values, as predicted. The correlation with achievement was also negative, but did not reach significance. There was also a negative and significant correlation with security values, which was not predicted, but since security is adjacent to power values in the value structure, this correlation could be expected. The other correlations increase and
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decrease in magnitude for self-referenced values as could be expected (Schwartz, 1996). Furthermore, the pattern is more distinguished and stronger for the self-referenced values compared to the culture-referenced values, as predicted by hypothesis 7. Testing the significance of the mean absolute correlations (after $r$-to-$z$ transformation), the average correlation for individual-referenced values was $.28$, $Z = 1.99$, $p < .05$; but only $.13$, $Z = .99$, n.s. for culture-referenced values. Finally, using a similar contrast analysis as reported above (with contrast weights being -3, -1, 0, 0, 1, 3, 1, 0, 0, -1 for PO, AC, HE, ST, SD, UN, BE, TR, CO, SE, respectively) showed a near perfect correlation with self-referenced values ($\rho = .94$, $p < .001$). The correlation with culture-referenced values was positive, but weaker ($\rho = .62$, $p = .06$). The difference between these two correlations was significant ($t(7) = 4.10$, $p < .05$). Therefore, both hypothesis 6 and 7 were strongly supported.

Discussion Study 2

The present study has shown that both self- and culture-referenced ratings relate to self-rated behaviour individuals engaged in over the last six months, but the relationship depends on whether these behaviours are regulated by social norms. Conformity related behaviour is associated only with culture-referenced ratings, but not with self-referenced ratings. In contrast, environmentally and prosocial-oriented universalistic behaviour is strongly associated with self-referenced ratings, but significantly less with culture-referenced ratings. Although there might be norms about taking other people’s viewpoints or protecting the environment, these norms are not particularly salient and do not entail wider social punishment or disapproval if people do not conform with these norms. Therefore, these two examples show that culture-referenced ratings are tapping more into social norms and values shared within one’s
culture, whereas individual ratings tap more into personal preferences and personal values.

**General Discussion**

The present study has addressed two questions: (a) to what extent do personal and cultural values correlate at a culture level across 10 cultural samples and (b) how do such values relate to self-reported behaviour within one’s cultural context. Extending previous research reporting low or even negative correlations of self-and culture-referenced constructs (House et al., 2004; Terraciano et al., 2005), I have shown that the magnitude of these correlations depends on the particular value dimension being studied. In particular, values relating to the individual-group relationship (embeddedness) and the expression and experience of affective autonomy show significant overlap. However, intellectual autonomy did not correlate across the two types of measurement. Nevertheless, this is some good news for previous research within the individualism-collectivism research paradigm. A recent and impressive meta-analysis by Oyserman et al. (2002) showed that cultural differences using self-ratings do not always conform to expected patterns based on culture level studies or expert opinion. For example, US samples in that meta-analysis were less individualistic than samples from some South American countries that were found to be the least individualistic in Hofstede’s (1980) classical study. The individualism measures used seem to have tapped more rationale thought (intellectual autonomy) which did not show any overlap in the current study, whereas the findings for collectivism (related to embeddedness) were somewhat more consistent (with the exception of Venezuela and Costa Rica, see also the unexpected finding for Japan). Consequently, studies using self-reports on collectivism and affective autonomy – related aspects of individualism could be used to estimate cultural norms.
However, the other dimensions did only show weak and nonsignificant overlap between self-reports and perceptions of cultural norms. This indicates that (a) we have to be very cautious about interpreting aggregated self-reports in terms of cultural norms and values and (b) we clearly need more research investigating normative aspects of culture in order to improve our understanding of the functions and processes of culture. This is particularly important since the current study included only ten cultural samples, with some of these samples being relatively small (the samples sizes were nevertheless not unusual for culture level studies, see Diener & Lucas, 2004; Hofstede, 2001; Smith, Peterson, & Schwartz, 2002). We need also bear in mind that all data was collected from students. However, given the fact that the data was collected using different samples, time periods and locations within each country, the significant and large correlation for two of the 7 correlations is even more impressive.

The second study also demonstrated that self- and culture-referenced values show different relationships with individual level behaviour. Using the individual level dimensions proposed by Schwartz (1992), it was found that perceived cultural norms are related to behaviours that are more normatively regulated (conservation oriented in the present study), whereas individual values are more consistently related to behaviours that have no clear and strong norms attached (pro-environmental and universalistic behaviours).

The present study has shown that the referent of ratings makes a difference for generalizations about cultural differences. Researchers interested in examining normative aspects of cultural differences should consider asking individuals about values, behaviours, norms and characteristics within one’s culture rather than asking individuals about their personal preferences and views. This approach could be used...
similar to a manipulation check where individuals from different societies have been sampled and inferences about cultural differences are being sought (cf. Smith & Bond, 1998). This approach would be especially useful if the construct of interest is not related to individual-collective relationships. The validity of these ratings might be higher if these characteristics are observable and normative.

On the other hand, if researchers are interested in the influence of values as held by individuals on other person level variables, then self-referent ratings may be used. For example, relating conflict styles and preferences (Kozan & Ergin, 1999; Van Meeurs, 2003), readiness for out-group contact (Sagiv & Schwartz, 1995) or justice perceptions (Farh, Earley & Lin, 1997; Fischer & Smith, 2004) to values would require an assessment of value importance for individuals rather than one’s culture.

The central question researchers should address prior to data collection is the purpose of the study and the intended level of generalisation (Fischer et al., 2005; Fischer, forthcoming; Klein et al., 1994). If the purpose is to analyse the relationship between the value ratings of individuals and some other individual level characteristic, the questions should refer to importance ratings for one’s personal life. In contrast, if the aim is to make comparisons across samples (generalisations about cultural differences or similarities) or the focus is on the effect of normatively shared cultural values and norms on behaviour and attitudes of individuals, the appropriate method would be to ask individuals to rate values important within their culture. In some cases researchers might be interested in both. An innovative approach might be to ask individuals to rate their own values as well as the importance of each value in one’s culture. The advantage of this method would be that researchers can not only investigate the effect of cultural and individual level ratings but this would also allow an examination to which extent individual and culture level ratings interact. For
example, some individuals might be more individualistic than the majority and therefore react differently to an experimental manipulation. Identifying those individuals and incorporating these individual level differences along cultural dimensions vis-à-vis cultural dimensions at an aggregate level would strengthen current theories of cultural processes and shed light on processes such as acculturation, adjustment, mental and physical health (see for example, Matsumoto, Kouznetsova, Ray, Ratzlaff, Biehl, & Raroque, 1999). The down-side is that respondents might potentially experience experimental fatigue if they have to complete complex or abstract surveys more than ones. Nevertheless, the potential benefits might outweigh the costs and would allow researchers to carefully consider the relative effects of both individual and cultural variation.
Author notes

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References


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*GLOBE, cultures, leadership, and organizations: GLOBE study of 62 societies.*


Individualism and collectivism: Theory, method and applications (pp. 85-119).


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### Table 1.

<table>
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Table 2. Correlation between self and culture referenced ratings and behaviours.

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</table>

Note: PO = power; AC = achievement; HE = hedonism; ST = stimulation; SD = self-direction; UN = universalism; BE = benevolence; TR = tradition; CO = conformity; SE = security

* p < .05; ** p < .01