

Running Head: CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN SELF-ENHANCEMENT

Cultural Differences in Self-Enhancement on a Personality Questionnaire
in a South African Assessment Situation

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to investigate cultural differences in self-enhancement on a personality questionnaire in the South African assessment situation and to add to the debate on cross-cultural self-enhancement. The research brought together the literature on socially desirable responding and cross-cultural self-enhancement. Personality questionnaire data of a collectivistic (N=190) and an individualistic (N=162) sample was gathered at a South African assessment centre. Higher socially desirable responding scores for applicants of collectivistic culture, compared to lower scores of individualistic culture, were examined. The personality questionnaire scales of socially desirable response were regarded as moralistic self-enhancement. An unexpected interaction effect between culture and age emerged. Young collectivists moralistically self-enhance more than young individualists. This difference decreases and disappears with age.

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The empirically confirmed relationship between personality and job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), and the wide acceptance of the Five Factor Model of personality (FFM a.k.a. the Big Five; which consists of Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism) have renewed the interest in using personality measures in selection situations (Barrick & Mount, 1996). The possibility that some people use a self-enhancement strategy when asked to describe themselves, is an area of concern for researchers who rely on self-report methods like questionnaires (Paulhus, Harms, Bruce and Lysy, 2003). Self-enhancement is defined as the tendency to view oneself in overly positive terms (Heine & Lehman, 1997; Heine, 2005). In the assessment situation, psychologists would like to identify and maybe even eliminate sources of variance like self-enhancement, that are not relevant to the measured attributes (Paulhus, 2003). Measures of socially desirable responding, like Social Desirability or Lie scales, have turned out to be one of the most common used methods to identify individuals who self-enhance in questionnaires (Paulhus et al., 2003; Barrick & Mount, 1996).

Is self-enhancement universal or does it only exist in some cultures? This subject has been a recent topic of debate. Self-enhancement has been found to be positively related to self-esteem in Eastern cultures as well as Western cultures, which points to benefits of self-enhancement across cultures (Kurman, 2003; Kobayashi & Brown, 2003). Nevertheless, self-enhancement is not found (as much) in Eastern cultures, as opposed to Western cultures (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Heine, 2005). One explanation is that in Eastern cultures there is less need for self-esteem and therefore the self-enhancement motive does not occur in Eastern cultures and is not universal (Heine et al., 1999). An alternative explanation

of this difference is that the self-enhancement motive is universal, but the amount of expression is influenced by cultural norms like modesty (Kurman, 2003; Brown, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005).

In the Western culture, the self is described as independent and autonomous (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). On the other hand, in the Eastern culture, the self is described as interdependent and mutually connected (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kitayama et al, 1997). A valuable distinction between cultures is the individualism versus collectivism dimension (Sedikides et al., 2003). Eastern cultures are regarded as interdependent and collectivistic and Western cultures as independent and individualistic (Sedikides et al., 2003).

This research had two main purposes. Firstly, the aim was to indicate whether there are differences in self-enhancement on personality questionnaires, in the assessment situation, between respondents of the individualistic and the collectivistic culture in South Africa. In the Republic of South Africa, Eaton and Louw (2000) empirically confirmed that the cross-cultural differences in individualism and collectivism also exists between South African students. Students of European ethnicity with English as their mother language were found to be individualistic and South African students of African ethnicity with an African language (Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, Swazi, Ndebele, Shona and Venda) as their mother language were found to be collectivistic.

The second purpose was to add to the recent discussion whether self-enhancement is a cultural or a universal phenomenon. The African continent has been neglected when it comes to research on self-concept and culture (Eaton & Louw, 2000). In South Africa lies a great opportunity to add to the debate of self-enhancement as a cultural or universal phenomenon in a country where the collectivistic and individualistic culture exist side by side.

The literature has proven that socially desirable responding is a complicated subject and the theory has undergone some recent changes. In 2003, a special issue of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* has been dedicated to the subject of cross-cultural self-enhancement. The socially desirable responding literature and the cross-cultural self-enhancement literature will be reviewed before these two lines of research will be brought together.

Socially Desirable Responding

Socially desirable responding is usually defined as the tendency to give positive self descriptions (Paulhus, 2002). Paulhus (2002) rephrased this definition as the tendency to give overly positive self descriptions. Will people in the assessment situation distort their responses or not? Barrick and Mount (1996) stated that applicants are more susceptible to socially desirable responding than non-applicants. When people respond to personality questionnaires in an assessment situation, where they are considered for a higher level job, they are more motivated to present a favourable image than people in situations with less consequences (Christiansen, Goffin, Johnson & Rothstein, 1994).

In their research, Barrick and Mount (1996) focused on the personality constructs conscientiousness and emotional stability, because these were thought to have the strongest relationship with job-performance and voluntary turnover. No effect was found in search for the influence of response distortion on the predictive validity of the personality measures. Some of the most widely used personality questionnaires in occupational psychology are very susceptible to deliberate faking and therefore a Lie scale or Social Desirability measure needs to be included, in order to recognise individuals who distort their responses (Furnham, 1990).

However, research on a collection of socially desirable responding measures discovered that these scales do not measure one construct, but two different factors, namely

Self Deception and Impression Management (Paulhus, 1984; Paulhus & Reid, 1991). Self Deception refers to an unrealistically favourable held self-image which leads to positive responses and it has two components, Self Deceptive Enhancement, which exists of agreeing to the possession of a positive attribute and Self Deceptive Denial, which exists of denying the possession of a negative attribute. It was thought that with Impression Management, a more deliberate attempt is made to exaggerate positive qualities (Paulhus, 1984; Paulhus & Reid, 1991; Paulhus et al., 2003). Self Deceptive Denial has been found to relate more to Impression Management, which left Self Deceptive Enhancement as a separate factor.

The Lie Scale of Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck 1975, as in Francis, Brown and Pearson, 1991) has also been found to consist of two components (Francis, Brown & Pearson, 1991). Francis and Brown (1991) found a component A, that because of its significant negative correlation with Extraversion is thought to measure socially conforming behaviour and a component B, which has no relationship with Extraversion, and is therefore thought to be a more pure measure of lying or faking good.

Public disclosure, as opposed to anonymous testing conditions, leads to more Impression Management where it has no effect on the amount of Self Deceptive Enhancement (Paulhus, 1984). Impression management can be regarded as more deliberate than Self Deceptive Enhancement, or at least as more sensitive to situational demands (Paulhus & Reid, 1991). However, recent developments question whether the degree of deliberateness in response distortion, is the difference between Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Impression Management (Paulhus, 2002; Pauls & Crost, 2004).

A study by Pauls and Crost (2004), divided students into three instruction groups, fake good (present yourself as favourable as possible), communion (present yourself as agreeable and conscientious as possible) and agency (present yourself as self-confident and competent as possible). Figure 1 shows that Self Deceptive Enhancement scores were highest in the

agency condition and Impression Management scores in the communion condition. Under the general faking good instruction, both Self Deceptive Enhancement and Impression Management were elevated, with Impression Management being the highest. This leads to the conclusion that both Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Impression Management are susceptible to deliberate response distortion.

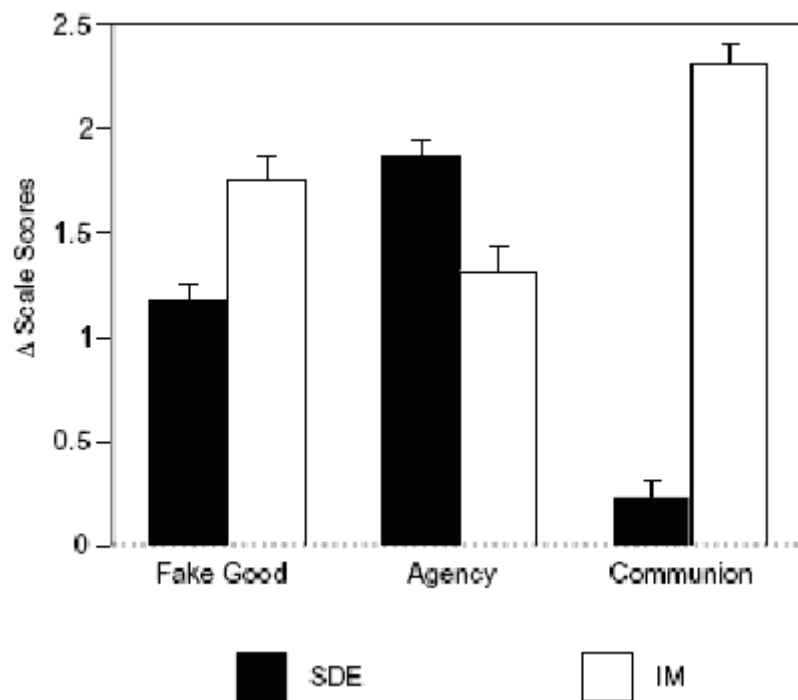


Figure 1. Mean increases from the standard instruction condition to the faking conditions. SDE = Self Deceptive Enhancement, IM = Impression Management, Agency = Agency instruction condition, Communion is communion instruction condition (Pauls & Crost, 2004, p.1144).

These results contradict that the level of deliberateness differentiates between the two components of socially desirable responding and a new taxonomy was developed by Paulhus (2002). Socially desirable responding can be divided in an Egoistic bias (agency) and a Moralistic bias (communion), both biases have a not deliberate Self-Deceptive component and a deliberate Management component (Paulhus, 2002), Figure 2 shows a model of this taxonomy.

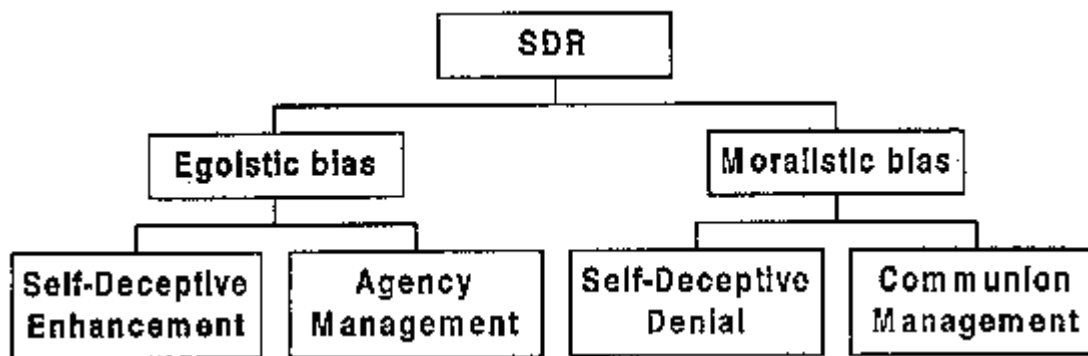


Figure 2. The proposed new taxonomy of socially desirable responding (SDR) (Paulhus, 2002, p.64).

The measures of Self-Deceptive Enhancement capture personality content of agentic traits like dominance, fearlessness, emotional stability, intellect and creativity, the Egoistic bias (Paulhus, 2002; Sullivan & Scandell, 2003). Measures of Impression Management and Self-Deceptive Denial capture content of communal traits like agreeableness, dutifulness and restraint, the Moralistic bias (Paulhus, 2002; Sullivan & Scandell, 2003). People with an Egoistic bias present themselves as being a superhero, showing a high need for power, people with a Moralistic bias present themselves as being like a saint and show a high need for approval (Paulhus, 2002; Sullivan & Scandell, 2003).

The method of measuring self-enhancement through socially desirable responding scales, like Social Desirability or Lie scales, has received a lot of criticism (Paulhus et al., 2003), mainly because of the difficulty to discriminate valid personality information from presented invalid desirable personality information (Paulhus et al., 2003). Socially desirable responding scales were originally designed to help Industrial psychologists interpret the personality questionnaire results on an individual level, recognizing profiles that are distorted to a level where they are not a good enough reflection of the truth (Christiansen et al. 1994). However, it was suggested (Krug, 1978) that when only distorted data was available, a socially desirable responding scale called Faking Good, designed to identify people who

present a favourable image, could be used to adjust personality trait scores, increasing tension and guilt, and decreasing emotional stability and self-control. A large amount of evidence is showing that compensation for response distortion does not improve the predictive validity (Barrick & Mount, 1996) or the criterion-related validity (Christiansen et al., 1994) and therefore it remains difficult to justify this compensation. To distort responses in a desirable way, an individual must have a good understanding of what is desirable. The ability to estimate what is desirable, could also be a source of information which has predictive value (Furnham, 1990). Scores on the Faking Good scale of the 16 Personality Factor (16PF) questionnaire, which is a socially desirable responding scale, actually correlate positively with performance prediction (Christiansen et al., 1994).

Cross-cultural Self-enhancement

In cross-cultural research on the subject of self-enhancement, the Eastern samples where usually taken from Asian cultures, an exception was the Israeli Jewish culture. Western samples where usually taken from (European) North-American cultures, exceptions were the Western European and Australian cultures (Sedikides et al., 2005). North America, Western Europe and Australia are regarded as individualistic cultures whereas Asia, Africa, South America, East and Southern Europe are regarded as collectivistic cultures. (Sedikides et al., 2003).

Overall, East Asians do not self-enhance, is a strong version of the statement made by Heine (2003) who believes that self-enhancement is not universal. One of the characteristics of the Western, individualistic culture is that it is independent. One of the tasks for the independent self is to be unique (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Kitayama et al. (1997) found empirical evidence that this task leads Americans, as an example of an individualistic culture, to finding, confirming and expressing positive attributes of the self and that there is a cultural

force leading them to self-enhancement. On the other hand, a characteristic of the East-Asian, collectivistic culture is that it is interdependent. Belonging and fitting in are tasks of the interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This was found to lead Japanese, as an example of a collectivistic culture, to the cultural task of fitting into social relationships. In order to fit into social relationships, one must be aware of and conform to the social standards. This results in a cultural force leading Japanese to self-criticism in order to identify any shortcomings in meeting those standards (Kitayama et al., 1997).

However, Sedikides et al. (2003) found empirically confirming evidence that self-enhancement exists in both the individualistic and the collectivistic culture. In their research Sedikides et al. (2003) conclude that Americans, as an example of the individualistic culture, self-enhance on individualistic attributes like being independent, unique and self-reliant, because these were of more importance to them, and that Japanese, as an example of a collectivistic culture, self-enhance on collectivistic attributes like being cooperative, compromising and loyal because these attributes were of more importance to them (Sedikides et al., 2003).

In a special issue of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* on cross-cultural self-enhancement, Brown concludes that self-enhancement also occurs in collectivistic cultures, but that the expression is influenced by the norms of the culture (Brown, 2003; Brown & Kobayashi, 2003). Collectivistic groups showed higher levels of modesty than individualistic groups and this modesty was found to mediate differences in shown self-enhancement (Kurman, 2003). Cultural differences were found between explicit and implicit self-enhancement (Kobayashi & Greenwald, 2003). When evaluating the self, a best friend and fellow students implicitly, Americans enhanced their best friend. Although the effect was very small, Japanese showed the same tendency. Japanese showed even stronger best friend enhancement in explicit self-report measures where Americans now showed self-

enhancement. These differences can be explained through a self-presentational theory where people explicitly respond in a socially acceptable way, while they implicitly feel otherwise (Kobayashi & Greenwald, 2003). When self-presentational concerns were limited through assuring anonymity and confidentiality, Japanese students showed the self-serving attribution bias, taking less credit for failure than for success, just like Westerners in previous research (Kudo & Numazaki, 2003).

A study by Takata (2003) pointed out that Japanese tend to display self-criticism when they are in a situation with people they know and where there is no competition. However, in a competitive situation with people with whom they have no relation they showed just as much self-enhancement as North Americans. This indicates that under some conditions Eastern cultures self-enhance as well.

Could it be that Eastern culture subjects and Western culture subjects are equally self-enhancing privately, but that Eastern candidates do not express it because the cultural norm is modesty (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kitayama et al., 1997; Heine et al., 1999)? Taking into account that in most cross-cultural research anonymity was guaranteed this explanation seems unlikely because there was no need to be modest (Markus et al., 1997; Heine et al., 1999). It is also unlikely that pretending to be less self-enhancing only occurs in Eastern cultures (Kitayama et al., 1997). It was found among Japanese that the tendency to be critical not only occurs when evaluating the self, but also when evaluating peers (Kitayama et al., 1997).

Heine (2003) looked at the same research and saw evidence for the argument that East Asians overall do not self-enhance, by emphasizing the results that confirmed this view. European American students showed an intergroup bias, rating their own university and football teams higher than others, even when they were not. Japanese did not show this intergroup bias and rated their university and football team in line with the larger social consensus. The studies that contradicted his argument were invalidated by mentioning

previous studies that refute their results. He does mention that the explanation of the found differences in the amount of self-enhancement between cultures, through a cultural reluctance to present self-enhancing statements, provides the biggest challenge for his argument (Heine, 2003).

In recent meta-analyses (Heine, 2005; Sedikides et al., 2005), the analyzed cross-cultural self-enhancement research was done by taking samples from Eastern and Western cultures by nationality or race, preferably in the environment of a corresponding Eastern or Western culture, and then subjecting the participants to a measure of self-enhancement. Some commonly used measures of self-enhancement are self-other comparisons, rating the self and others independently or relative to each other, on a certain trait (Sedikides et al., 2005), the better than average effect, a distribution task estimating which percentage of the population would perform worse on a certain attribute (Sedikides et al., 2005) and optimism biases, judging the relative or absolute likelihood for positive or negative events (Heine, 2005).

Heine stated (2005), on the basis of his meta-analysis, that the motivation to be a good self seems to be universal. He also stated that self-enhancement differs across cultures, followed by critiques on the measurement of self-enhancement through a better-than-average paradigm in studies done by Sedikides et al. (2003). In reply, Sedikides et al. (2005) argued that a better-than-average effect is a valid measurement of self-enhancement and found proof through a meta-analysis of their own that Westerners self-enhanced on individualistic attributes and that Easterners self-enhanced on collectivistic attributes, which is evidence to say that the self-enhancement motive on it's own is universal. The debate remains unresolved.

Self-enhancement, Socially Desirable Responding and Culture

Self-enhancement as a trait has been measured through self-report questionnaires, for instance through Self Deceptive Enhancement and Impression Management scales (Paulhus,

1998; Paulhus & Reid, 1991). The difference between the definition of self-enhancement and socially desirable responding lies in the formulation that the first refers to overly positive self views and the latter to overly positive self descriptions. Questionnaire responses are not self-reports but self-presentations (Hogan & Nicholson, 1988).

Self Deceptive Enhancement scales, Impression Management scales, Motivational Distortion scales, Faking Good scales and Social desirability scales are all measurements of, different aspects of, socially desirable responding. The Self-Deceptive Enhancement scale is a measurement of the Egoistic bias, the Impression Management scale is a measurement of the Moralistic bias (Paulhus, 2002; Sullivan & Scandall, 2003). Both the Egoistic and the Moralistic bias are a tendency to present oneself in an overly positive way. In an anonymous study among Canadian and Japanese students, no differences between cultures in socially desirable responding were found, neither for Self Deceptive Enhancement nor for Impression Management (Heine & Lehman, 1995). Heine et al. (1997) assumed that if modesty is an effort to get approval from others, then it could be measured through a Social Desirability scale (Heine et al., 1997). However, with the recent developments on socially desirable responding, gaining approval of others can be regarded as the Moralistic bias, or a way of describing oneself overly positive in a communal manner.

The Motivational Distortion scale is a socially desirable responding scale that was developed under faking good, faking bad and normal conditions (Winder, O'dell & Karlson, 1975). The Motivational Distortion scale of the 16PF questionnaire Fifth Edition (Russel & Karrol, 1993), consists of the components Faking Good and Faking Bad and is reported to correlate with Self Deceptive Enhancement ($r = 0.54$) and Impression Management ($r = 0.49$). In the manual of the South African version of the 16PF, the 16PF SA92 (Prinsloo, 1992) slightly higher scores on the Motivational Distortion scale were reported for African language speaking professionals as opposed to non-African language speaking professionals.

In a study by Middleton and Jones (2000) Eastern culture students scored significantly higher on socially desirable response bias than Western culture subjects. This was thought to be caused through culture differences like collectivism versus individualism where collectivists show loyalty to their group members by giving social desirable answers. In this study, the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1967, as in Jones & Middleton, 2000) was used and is reported to load highly on both Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Impression Management (Paulhus & Reid, 1991) and thus both the Egoistic and the Moralistic bias.

In order to create some structure I have grouped the main distinctions from the socially desirable responding literature and the cross-cultural self-enhancement literature, that were discussed before, which is illustrated in Figure 3.

Socially Desirable Response		
Bias:	Moralistic	Egoistic
Need for:	Approval	Power
Fake:	Communion	Agency
Culture:	Collectivistic	Individualistic
Self:	Interdependent	Independent
Task:	Fitting in	Being unique
Scale:	Impression Management	Self Deceptive Enhancement

Figure 3. Grouping of the main socially desirable responding and cultural terms.

As noted previously, in the new taxonomy for socially desirable responding, the Impression Management scale taps from the Moralistic bias and people with a high need for approval score high (Paulhus, 2002). The Impression Management scale is more susceptible to the “Fake communion” condition than the “Fake agency” condition (Pauls & Crost, 2004). The Self-Deceptive Enhancement Scale taps from the Egoistic bias and people with a high need for power score high (Paulhus, 2002). The Self Deceptive Enhancement Scale is more susceptible to the “Fake Agency” condition than the “Fake Communion” condition (Pauls &

Crost, 2004). The Moralistic bias reacts to the communion condition and the Egoistic bias reacts to the agency condition. Under general “Fake Good” instructions, the Impression Management scale is influenced more than the Self Deceptive Enhancement scale (Pauls & Crost, 2004).

The distinction between the Moralistic and the Egoistic bias has a lot in common with the distinction between the collectivistic and the individualistic culture. The interdependent self of the collectivistic culture seeks to fit in with the group, and thus has a high need for approval. The independent self of the individualistic culture strives to be unique, displaying a high need for power.

Moralistic Self-enhancement

The Motivational Distortion scale is incorporated into the 16PF questionnaire Fifth Edition (Russel & Karrol, 1993). The original version of the 15FQ, was designed as an alternative for the 16PF. (Psychometrics Limited, 2002; Tyler, 2003). The completely revised 15FQ+ includes a Social Desirability and a Faking Good scale (Psychometrics Limited, 2002). The Social Desirability scale was developed by an experienced panel of psychologists (Psychometrics Limited, 2002) and is based on the work of Crowne and Marlowe which links Social Desirability to a high need for social approval (L. Paltiel, personal communication, May 24, 2006). This scale measures the desire of a person to present an unrealistically positive image of themselves to others with high scorers denying the presence of very common minor failings. (Psychometrics Limited, 2002).

The Faking Good scale is a criterion-referenced scale based on the 16PF 4th Edition Motivational Distortion scale (Psychometrics Limited, 2002). This scale assesses the respondents’ tendency to present themselves in a favorable light, not admitting problem behaviors or difficulties that apply to the majority of people (Psychometrics Limited, 2002).

The Faking Good scale can be used to predict deliberate applicant response styles (L.Paltiel, personal communication, May 24, 2006).

Scales like these are incorporated into commonly used personality questionnaires like the 16PF and the 15FQ+. These scales are both considered socially desirable responding scales, but they were thought to differ in the level of deliberateness. In light of the recent developments in socially desirable responding, the deliberateness distinction must be revised. Currently there is no information available on the moralistic or egoistic nature of the scales. An examination of the items revealed that both scales have an element of denial. The items show mainly saint like features and need for approval and no super hero qualities or need for power. For the purpose of this research both scales will be considered to measure, different aspects of, the Moralistic bias and therefore moralistic self-enhancement on personality questionnaires.

Although both scales are thought to measure moralistic self-enhancement, they are separate scales with separate content. The previously mentioned definitions of the scales are very alike, the only difference being the denial of minor failings for the Social Desirability scale and that of problem behaviours or difficulties for the Faking Good scale. A confirmative factor analysis, with a direct Oblimin rotation, indicates that there are indeed two factors that differentiate the scales. The items of the Social Desirability scale load moderately high on a factor which is characterised by denying negative cognitions concerning other people and low on a factor which is characterised by denying negative emotional qualities. For the Faking Good scale this pattern is reversed. The Social Desirability scale measures a cognitive component of moralistic self-enhancement and the Faking Good scale an affective component.

Hypotheses

Referring to question 1.a, it is expected that people of the collectivistic culture will show more Social Desirability than people of the individualistic culture. In an ANCOVA analysis with Social Desirability as dependent variable, culture as independent variable and gender, age and education as covariates, a significant main effect for culture is expected. The assessment situation, where the candidates have no connection with each other, can be regarded as a competitive situation with little necessity for being modest, as individuals would aim to make a good impression. To summarize, under anonymous conditions, no differences in socially desirable responding have been found (Heine & Lehman, 1995), neither for the Moralistic nor for the Egoistic bias. However, in research by Middleton and Jones (2000), where no information about anonymity of the participants was given, the collectivistic culture group responded more socially desirable than the individualistic culture group. For the Motivational Distortion scale, higher scores have been reported for the collectivistic group (Prinsloo, 1992). The collectivistic culture is interdependent, and people of this culture are expected to answer in a more moralistically self-enhancing way than people of the independent, individualistic culture.

Referring to question 1.b, it is expected that people of the collectivistic culture will show more Faking Good than people of the individualistic culture. In an ANCOVA analysis with Faking Good as dependent variable, culture as independent variable and gender, age and education as covariates, a significant main effect for culture is expected. Higher scores for the collectivistic culture group are again expected for the same reason as they are expected for question 1.a.

Referring to the main research question, it is expected that people of collectivistic cultures are moralistically more self-enhancing than people of individualistic cultures. In a MANCOVA analysis with Social Desirability and Faking Good as dependent variables,

culture as independent variable and gender, age and education as covariates, a significant main effect for culture is expected. This might seem contradict with the general conclusion in the cross-cultural self-enhancement literature that overall the self-enhancement motive is believed to be stronger in individualistic cultures. The difference is that the focus of this research is specifically on moralistic self-enhancement in the assessment situation.

The assessment situation will motivate people, more than anonymous conditions, to present an overly favorable picture of themselves. People of individualistic culture would be expected to do this mainly through the Egoistic bias and people of collectivistic culture would be expected to do this mainly through the Moralistic bias. Under general pressure of self-presentation, the Impression Management scale increases more than the Self Deceptive Enhancement scale (Pauls & Crost, 2004). This means that the Moralistic bias is expected to be elevated in the assessment situation, irrespective of culture. However, for people of the collectivist culture this would be a more natural response, because it is also found under anonymous conditions. Furthermore, their interdependent character and the need to fit in would make them better at answering in a moralistically enhancing way.

Method

Participants

Three hundred and fifty two South African assessment center candidates were selected for analysis. One hundred and ninety candidates were of African ethnicity and had an African language (Zulu, Xhosa, Sepedi, Setswana, Sesotho, Xitsonga, Swati, Ndebele or Tshivenda) as their mother language, together they formed the collectivistic group. One hundred and sixty two candidates were of European ethnicity and had English as their mother language, together they formed the individualistic group. The collectivistic versus individualistic dimension has

not been empirically tested for people of European ethnicity with Afrikaans as their mother language. This group was not considered in this research.

The collectivistic group consisted of 54 females (28.4%) and 136 males (71.6%). The individualistic group consisted of 43 females (26.5%) and 119 (73.5%) males. The mean age of the total sample is 35.9 years ($SD=8,6$). For the collectivistic group the mean age is 34.0 ($SD=8,6$), with a minimum age of 21 and a maximum age of 57. For the individualistic group the mean age is 38.1 ($SD=8,1$), with a minimum age of 20 and a maximum age of 62. The candidates were sent for assessment by their (future) employer in order to assess whether they were suitable to fulfill a fairly high-level job like a managerial and a general managerial position or high level specialist positions. The companies involved were quite, being located in different industries like the, energy, information technology, cosmetics, tobacco, automotive and marine industry.

Measures

The candidates went through different batteries of tests and exercises, however, the 15FQ+ Form A personality questionnaire (Psychometrics Limited, 2002) was administered to everyone, irrespective of the battery. The 15FQ+ is a full revision of the 15FQ, for which a completely new set of items was developed (Tyler, 2003).

The 15FQ+ and a revised South African version of the 15FQ+ were used in South African research (Meiring, Van de Vijver, Rothmann, & Barrick, 2005; Meiring, Van de Vijver & Rothmann, 2006). For the original version, some problems with the structural equivalence of the constructs across language groups were reported and a third of the items were mildly culturally biased, but the main cause for concern was the low internal reliability of some scales, mainly for the African groups (Meiring et al., 2005). For the adjusted version, items were changed to make them easier to understand and more appropriate for a culturally

diverse population (Meiring, Van de Vijver & Rothmann, 2006). The revised version performed only slightly better than the original version and the low internal reliability for the African groups, remained a problem.

It can be argued that the internal reliabilities can be regarded as good, when the small number of items per scale is taken into account (Psychometrics Limited, 2002; Meiring, Van de Vijver & Rothmann, 2006). Both versions of the 15FQ+ were considered unsuitable to use for selection purposes in the South African organizational context (Meiring et al., 2005; Meiring, Van de Vijver & Rothmann, 2006).). The 15FQ+ can overall be regarded as a reliable personality questionnaire in South Africa ($\alpha = 0.75$), even though the reliability is lower than on a U.K. sample. The 15FQ+ compares favorably to other available personality questionnaires in South Africa (Tyler, 2003). There is evidence available on the reliability and validity (construct, concurrent and predictive) of the 15FQ+ (Psychometrics Limited, 2002) and it is approved by the Health Professional Council of South Africa (HPCSA, 2003). The HPCSA is an independent statutory body, founded to protect the public and for the guidance of professionals (HPCSA, 2006). The use of the unsuitable test in the assessment situation is justified by only using the test together with other personality measures in order to confirm the results.

The original version of the 15FQ+ was used for this study and the questionnaire consists of the following components:

- Respondent details, open questions; family name, first name, age, title and organization.
- Respondent details, limited options; Gender (male, female), Race (Asian, African, Coloured, European, Other), First language (isiZulu, isiXhosa, Afrikaans, Sepedi, English, Setswana, Sesotho, Xitsonga, siSwati, isiNdebele, Tshivenda, Other) and

education (Grade 10 or 11, Grade 12, Vocational training, Technikon, University Diploma, Degree, Post graduate).

- The personality questionnaire consists of 200 statements that can be answered by selecting one of three options, A, B or C, where B is always the neutral answer. The 200 statements are divided into 16 personality trait scales; distant aloof/empathic, low intellectance/high intellectance, affected by feelings/emotionally stable, accommodating/dominant, sober serious/enthusiastic, expedient/conscientious, retiring/socially-bold, hard-headed/tender-minded, trusting/suspicious, concrete/abstract, direct/restrained, confident/self-doubting, conventional/radical, group orientated/self-sufficient, informal/self-disciplined and composed/tense-driven. The remaining eight items form the dedicated Social Desirability scale. Several dependent global personality factors are available, using items from the 16 primary scales; introversion/extraversion, low anxiety/high anxiety, pragmatism/openness, independence/agreeableness, low self-control/high self-control, as well as an Emotional Intelligence scale; lacking empathy/empathic, and a work attitude scale; absent-minded/persevering. Next to the independent Social Desirability scale, some dependent validity scales are included; infrequency, central tendency, faking good and faking bad.

Moralistic self-enhancement was measured through two socially desirable responding scales of the 15FQ+. The first scale is the Social Desirability scale, the second scale is the Faking Good scale. A typical item of the Social Desirability scale involves feelings or thoughts involving other people in a socially desirable or undesirable way, for example "There have been times when I have felt jealous of other people's good luck or success". The socially desirable answer would be to deny this statement. For research on group level,

reliability coefficients between 0.60 and 0.70 can be regarded as sufficient, coefficients above 0.70 are good (Ter Laak & De Goede, 2003). The reported Cronbach's alpha of the Social Desirability scale on an English professional sample is 0.70 (Psychometric Limited, 2002; Tyler, 2003). The Faking Good scale is a dependent scale that uses items from the 16 primary factors. A typical statement of the Faking Good scale involves the self and a statement about emotions, for instance: "My mood varies greatly from day to day". The Cronbach's alpha of the Faking Good scale on a professional English sample is reported at 0.73. (Psychometrics Limited, 2002). Cronbach's alpha of the Motivational Distortion scales of the South African 1992 version of the 16PF, a predecessor of the Faking Good scale, was reported at 0.72 (Prinsloo, 1992). In other South African research, a distinction was made between African and non-African respondents with Cronbach's alpha's of the 16PF Motivational Distortion scales at 0.71 and 0.72 respectively (Van Eeden & Prinsloo, 1996).

The Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman's Split-Half coefficient of the Social Desirability and Faking Good scales in this research, are reported for the whole sample as well as for culture and gender groups separately in Table 1.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman's split-half reliability coefficients for the Social Desirability and Faking Good scales, for the whole sample and culture and gender groups separately

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha		Guttman's Split-Half coefficient	
	Whole sample		Whole sample	
Social Desirability	0.67		0.71	
Faking Good	0.67		0.66	
	Culture		Culture	
	Collectivistic	Individualistic	Collectivistic	Individualistic
Social Desirability	0.68	0.63	0.74	0.65
Faking Good	0.67	0.69	0.68	0.65

	Gender		Gender	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Social Desirability	0.66	0.66	0.69	0.73
Faking Good	0.65	0.69	0.62	0.71

It is concluded that the overall reliability, as well as for the separate groups, is sufficient for the purpose of this research.

Procedure

The data has been collected over a period of more than four years, from February 2002 until May 2006. The candidates were welcomed for their assessment and the goal of the assessment was checked and clarified when necessary. The candidates received an informed consent form and either a written or verbal explanation or both. It was made clear that by signing the informed consent form, they agreed that the information that was gathered during the day was accessible by employees of the assessment center, that the information would be used to compile a report and that this report would be made available to them and to their (possible future) company. The informed consent forms were signed and no objections were recorded.

At the end of the assessment battery, generally in the afternoon, the candidates were presented a paper and pencil version of the 15FQ+ Form A. The questionnaire was administered off-site or at the assessment center, but always in a closed room at a desk, either individually or in groups with a maximum of ten people. The candidates received verbal as well as written instructions from certified psychometrists who were active in the assessment industry. In the instructions it was pointed out that there is no time limit for this test, but that they should not spend too much time considering their answers. It was also requested that they avoid the

middle, neutral answer, as much as possible. And finally they were asked to be as honest and truthful as they can, and not to give answers because it seems the right thing to say.

Analysis

Any differences between the sexes and under- or overrepresentation in one of the culture groups, will be controlled for in the analysis. Gender differences in self-enhancement have been reported (Kitayama et al., 1997) as well as in Impression Management (Heine & Lehman, 1995) where women show less Self Deceptive Enhancement than men, but more Impression Management. Females in general score lower on Motivational Distortion scales of the 16PF SA92 (Prinsloo, 1992). This suggests that women display more Moralistic bias than men and less Egoistic bias, which could be explained through the more interdependent and less independent female self (Kitayama et al., 1997).

Taking South-Africa's history of Apartheid into account, there might be a difference in educational level across the culture groups. Educational level has shown to have a positive relationship with Motivational Distortion scores (Prinsloo, 1992). In the Japanese collectivistic culture, it could be that, people who are near the top of a hierarchy, for instance in the educational system, have a higher motivation for self-enhancement (Heine et al. 1999). To account for possible differences in educational level, this will also be controlled for.

The Motivational Distortion scale scores are slightly higher for older testees (Prinsloo, 1992). In the Japanese collectivistic culture, it could be that, older individuals, have a higher motivation for self-enhancement (Heine et al. 1999). For this reason the variable age will also be taken into account while analyzing the data.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the dependent continuous variables, Social Desirability and Faking Good and the independent continuous variable age, for the whole sample and separately for the culture and gender groups.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation for the continuous dependent variables Social Desirability (SD) and Faking Good (FG) and the continuous independent variable age

	Whole sample		Collectivistic		Individualistic	
N	352		190		162	
M(Std.)	Whole sample		Collectivistic		Individualistic	
SD	11.46 (3.43)		12.05 (3.38)		10.78 (3.37)	
FG	07.64 (2.54)		07.86 (2.50)		07.38 (2.57)	
Age	35.88 (8.61)		33.99 (8.58)		38.09 (8.13)	
	Whole sample		Collectivistic		Individualistic	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
N	255	97	136	54	119	43
M(Std.)	Whole sample		Collectivistic		Individualistic	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
SD	11.71 (3.36)	10.81 (3.55)	12.36 (3.32)	11.26 (3.44)	10.97 (3.26)	10.26 (3.65)
FG	07.88 (2.46)	07.01 (2.67)	08.26 (2.30)	06.83 (2.72)	07.44 (2.56)	07.23 (2.62)
Age	36.95 (8.49)	33.05 (8.33)	35.21 (8.86)	30.93 (7.00)	38.94 (7.60)	35.72 (9.15)

Note. M = Mean, Std. = Standard Deviation, SD = Social Desirability, FG = Faking Good.

Overall the collectivist group scored higher on Social Desirability ($M=12.05$) than the individualist group ($M=10.78$; $t = -3.52$, $df = 350$, $p < 0.01$, one-tailed). The same difference is presented for Faking Good where the collectivistic group ($M=7.86$) scores higher than the individualistic group ($M=7.38$; $t = -1.75$, $df = 350$, $p < 0.05$, one-tailed). Overall males

($M=11.71$) scored higher on Social Desirability than females ($M=10.81$; $t = -2,20$, $df = 350$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed). Males ($M=7.88$) also scored higher on Faking Good than Women ($M=7.01$; $t = - 2,89$, $df = 350$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed).

The frequencies of the variables gender and education are presented in Table 3, for the whole sample and separately for the culture groups.

Table 3

The frequencies for the variables gender and education

Gender N(%)	Culture		Total
	Collectivistic	Individualistic	
Male	136 (71.6%)	119 (73.5%)	119 (73.5%)
Female	54 (28.4%)	43 (26.5%)	43 (26.5%)
Total	190 (54%)	162 (46%)	352 (100%)

Education N(%)	Culture		Total
	Collectivistic	Individualistic	
Grade 10 or 11	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)
Grade 12	26 (13.7%)	42 (25.9%)	42 (25.9%)
Vocational Training	8 (4.2%)	5 (3.1%)	5 (3.1%)
Technikon	45 (23.7%)	32 (19.8%)	32 (19.8%)
University Diploma	8 (4.2%)	7 (4.3%)	7 (4.3%)
Degree	38 (20.0%)	30 (18.5%)	30 (18.5%)
Post Graduate	63 (33.2%)	39 (24.1%)	39 (24.1%)
Total	188 (54%)	156 (46%)	344 (100%)

According to a Pearson Chi-Square test, there is no difference in the male, female ratio between the individualistic and the collectivistic culture ($\chi^2 = 0.15$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.69$). While performing a Pearson Chi-Square test between culture and education it was discovered that the expected frequency for the category “grade 10 or 11” was lower than 5 and therefore these results could not be reported (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2000). This problem was solved by

recoding the categories “grade 10 or 11” and “grade 12” to “grade 10 to 12”. Overall there was no difference between the collectivistic and the individualistic group, regarding the level of education ($\chi^2 = 10.85$, $df = 5$, $p = 0.54$).

The correlations between the dependent and independent variables are presented for the collectivistic group and for the individualistic group in Table 4. The independent variable education is not a ratio or interval scale. If one or both of the scales that are correlated are not interval or ratio scales, a nonparametric test of correlation should be used, like Spearman’s r_s (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2000). For the dichotomous variable gender and the other correlation’s the parametric test of Pearson’s r was used.

Table 4

Correlation coefficients between the dependent and independent variables for the collectivistic culture group and for the individualistic culture group

	Collectivistic				Individualistic			
	SD	FG	Gen.	Age	SD	FG	Gen.	Age
SD								
FG	.44**				.40**			
Gen.	.15*	.26**			.09	.04		
Age	-.05	-.14*	.23*		.10	.17*	.18*	
Edu.	-.07	-.05	-.18*	.17*	.14	.15	-.23**	-.07

Note. SD = Social Desirability, FG = Faking Good, Gen. = Gender; female = 1, male = 2, Edu. = Education; Grade 10 or 11 = 1, Grade 12 = 2, Vocational Training = 3, Technikon = 4, University Diploma = 5, Degree = 6 and Post Graduate = 7.

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

For the collectivistic culture group ($r = .44$, $n = 190$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed) as well as for the individualistic culture group ($r = .40$, $n = 162$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed), there is a significant positive correlation between the two dependent variables, Social Desirability and Faking Good. For the collectivistic culture group there is a positive significant correlation

between gender and Social Desirability ($r = .15$, $n = 190$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed) and between gender and Faking Good ($r = 0.26$, $n = 162$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed). The male collectivists have higher Social Desirability ($t = -2.04$, $df = 188$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed) and Faking Good ($t = -3.67$, $df = 188$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed) scores than female collectivists. There are no significant relationships between gender and the dependent variables Social Desirability ($t = -1.19$, $df = 160$, $p = 0.24$) and Faking Good ($t = -0.45$, $df = 160$, $p = 0.66$) for the individualistic culture group.

For the collectivistic ($r = -.18$, $n = 190$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed) as well as for the individualistic ($r = -.23$, $n = 162$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed) culture group, there is a negative significant correlation between gender and education. Males have higher education levels than females in both culture groups. For the collectivistic culture group there is a significant positive correlation between education and age ($r_s = .17$, $n = 188$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed). This indicates that elder collectivists have higher educational levels. There is no significant correlation between age and education for the individualistic culture group ($r_s = -.07$, $n = 156$, $p = 0.41$, two-tailed)..

For both the collectivistic ($r = .23$, $n = 190$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed) as for the individualistic ($r = .18$, $n = 162$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed) group, there is a significant positive correlation between age and gender, which indicates that the males in both samples are older than the females. In both culture groups there is a significant correlation between age and Faking Good. For the collectivistic culture group this is a significant negative correlation ($r = -.14$, $n = 190$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed), where for the individualistic group this is a significant positive correlation ($r = .17$, $n = 162$, $p < 0.05$, two-tailed). This means that as collectivists get older, their Faking Good scores decrease, and that as individualists get older, their Faking Good scores increase. The same interaction pattern emerges for Social Desirability, but for this dependent variable the correlation's are not significant.

Inferential Statistics

An initial MANCOVA analysis was executed with Social Desirability and Faking Good as dependent variables, culture as independent variable and gender, age and education as covariates. A significant main effect that appeared for culture ($F_{(2,332)} = 3.44, p < 0.05$; Wilks' Lambda = 0.98; partial eta squared = 0.02). However, in performing this analysis, homogeneity of regression slopes is assumed (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2003). This means that the effect of the covariates on the dependent variables are the same for all groups. When this assumption was checked for the current data, an unexpected interaction effect appeared which violates this assumption.

At the MANCOVA level, an interaction effect was found between the variables culture and age ($F_{(2,332)} = 5.04, p < 0.01$; Wilks' Lambda = 0.97; partial eta squared = 0.03). Looking at one dependent variable at a time, the interaction effect between culture and age is significant for Faking Good ($F_{(1,333)} = 10.11, p < 0.01$, partial eta squared = 0.03). The interaction effect between age and culture for Faking Good is graphically presented in Figure 4.

A MANCOVA analysis is a useful analysis for assessing culture group differences in the combination of the two dependent variables. The results indicates that there are cultural differences, but because of the interaction effect, the MANCOVA analysis is not an appropriate analysis for this case. The significant interaction effect in the MANCOVA analysis is that of culture*age. The MANCOVA uses adjusted means for the covariates, to compensate for any differences in representation of this covariate in the samples. The collectivistic sample was younger than the individualistic sample.

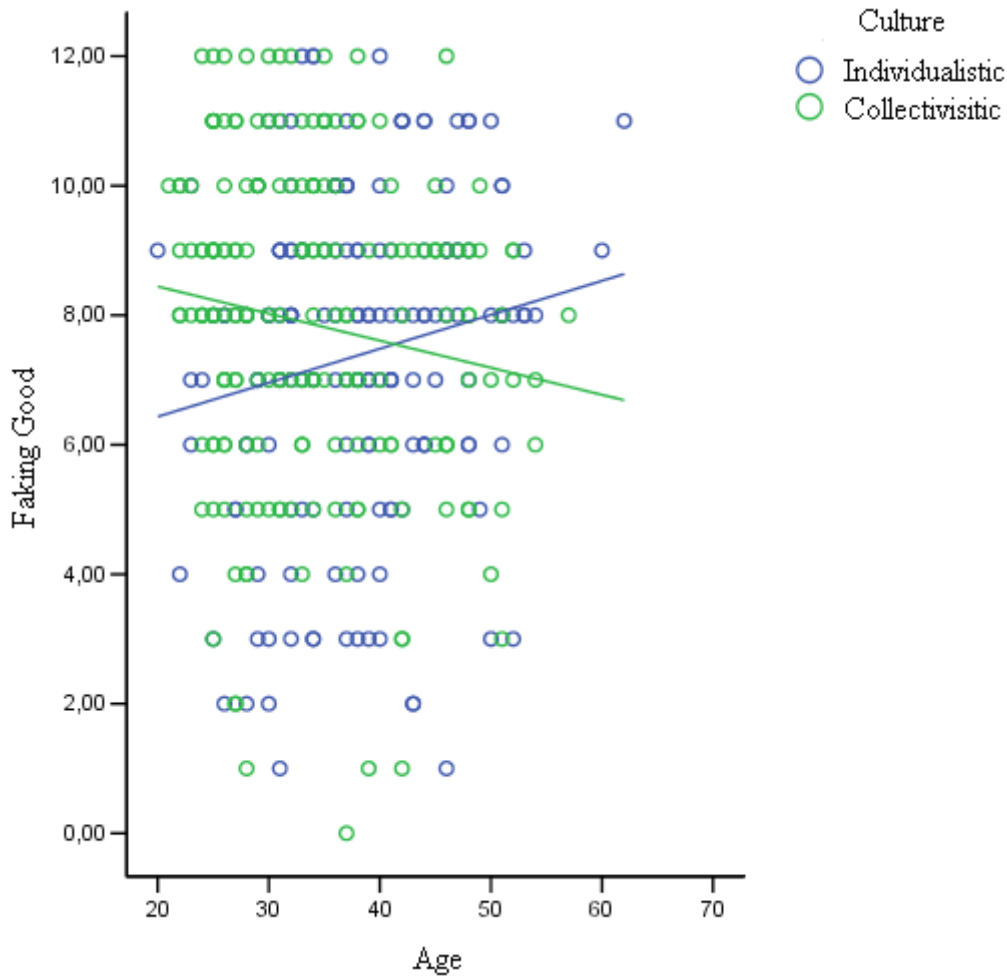


Figure 4. The interaction effect between culture and age for the dependent variable Faking Good.

If the covariate has the same effect for both culture groups, the adjusted means can compensate for differences on the covariate in the samples, and conclusions can be drawn as if the groups were equal on the covariates. Because the relation between the covariate age and the combined dependent variable moralistic self-enhancement is not equal, the adjusted means can create a wrong picture. As a result of the differences in mean age of the culture groups, with a general ANOVA the mean moralistic self-enhancement score of 34 year old collectivists would be compared to that of 38 year old individualists. Looking at Faking Good compared to age for both culture groups in Figure 5, with the adjusted mean of 35.7, the difference between the culture groups does not seem to change.

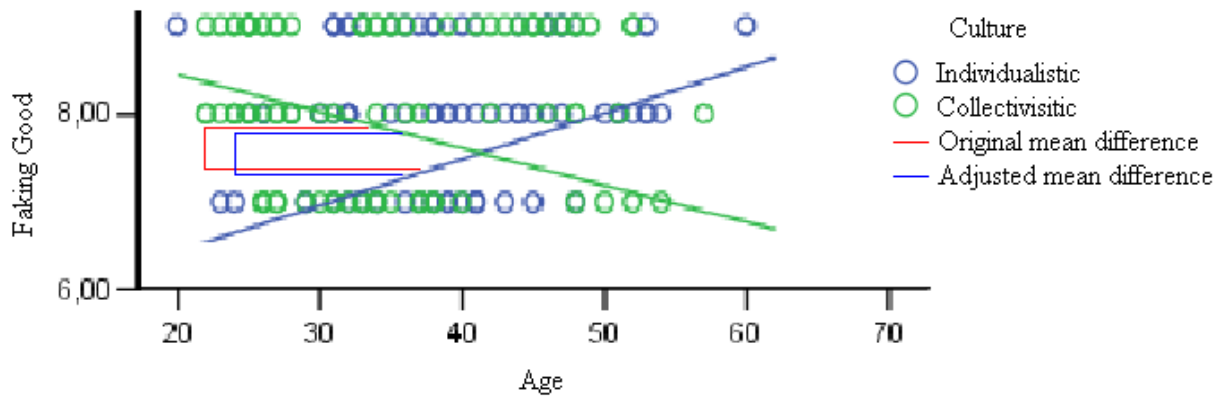


Figure 5. Mean differences between the original means and the adjusted means for age on the dependent variable Faking Good.

Social Desirability also needs to be taken into account and for this dependent variable the interaction between age and culture was not significant. Culture seems to be a significant factor, mostly for younger people where collectivists show more moralistic self-enhancement than individualists. This partly confirms the main hypothesis. People of collectivistic culture show more moralistic self-enhancement on personality questionnaires in the assessment situation with the addition that this is the case when they are young. This culture difference did not occur among elder people and for certain aspects of moralistic self-enhancement the effect might reverse with age.

No significant interaction effect was found for Social Desirability, the assumptions for executing an ANCOVA analysis for this dependent variable are met and an ANCOVA is an appropriate analysis. The ANCOVA analysis was executed with Social Desirability as the dependent variable, culture as independent variable and gender, age and education as covariates. A significant main effect appeared for culture ($F_{(1,336)} = 5.87$, $p < 0.05$; partial eta squared = 0.02) as well as for gender ($F_{(1,336)} = 6.46$, $p < 0.05$; partial eta squared = 0.02). This confirms hypothesis 1.a. that people of collectivistic culture show more Social Desirability than people of individualistic culture.

As a result of the interaction effect of culture and age, the ANCOVA method is not appropriate for the dependent variable Faking Good. The choice was made to conduct multiple regression analyses for this dependent variable, one for each culture group, with gender, age and education as predictors. Using the enter method a significant model emerged for the collectivistic group ($F_{3,152} = 2.80$, $p < 0.05$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.040$) as well as for the individualistic group ($F_{3,184} = 7.39$, $p < 0.01$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.093$). The variables for the models of the individualistic and the collectivistic culture are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Regression coefficients for the predictor variables of the models for Faking Good, for both the individualistic as well as the collectivistic culture group

Predictor Variable	Individualistic		Collectivistic	
	B	Beta	B	Beta
Gender	0.20	0.04	1.74**	0.31**
Age	0.05*	0.16*	-0.06**	-0.22**
Education	0.22*	0.17*	0.06	0.04

* $p = < 0.05$

** $p = < 0.01$

For the individualistic culture the variables age and education are significant predictors for Faking Good, while for the collectivistic culture the variables gender and age are significant predictors for Faking Good. Remarkable is that age is a significant predictor for both cultures, but the direction of the regression coefficients is different. Where Faking Good decreases with age for the collectivistic culture group, it increases with age for the individualistic culture group.

To determine whether the relationships between age and Faking Good is equal for the two culture groups a correlation analyses hypothesis test was executed. The correlations

between age and Faking Good for both the individualistic ($r = 0.17$) and the collectivistic ($r = -0.14$) culture group were translated to Z scores using Fisher's logarithmic transformations (Lindeman, Merenda & Gold, 1980). The test statistic z was calculated and because z falls in the critical region ($z = 2.88, p < 0.05$), it can be stated that the relations between age and Faking Good are different for the individualistic and the collectivistic culture respectively. This information together with the previous MANCOVA analysis partly confirm hypothesis 1.b. People of collectivistic culture show more Faking Good than people of individualistic culture, with the restriction that this is only the case at a younger age. This difference disappears with years and is reversed at a later age.

Discussion

The results of the current study indicate that there were differences in moralistic self-enhancement on personality questionnaires in a South African assessment situation. People of collectivistic culture showed more Social Desirability than people of individualistic culture. Young people of collectivistic culture showed more Faking Good than young people of individualistic culture, at least up to the age of 35.7. The effect seems to change with age and might even be reversed at later stages in life. Social Desirability and Faking Good together represented moralistic self-enhancement, and the interaction effect between age and culture also appeared when Social Desirability and Faking Good were combined. Young collectivists moralistically self-enhance more than young individualists, at least up to the age of 35.7, but this difference decreases and disappears with age.

The hypotheses were confirmed for young people but the interaction effect between culture and age was unexpected. How can this unexpected interaction effect be explained? A local acting psychologist suggested on the basis of his experience that in collectivistic cultures, age and experience equal authority. An older individual automatically has more

approval and the need to self-enhance decreases. This would be different for individualistic cultures, where it is considered acceptable if an individual displays socially undesirable behavior or thoughts when they are younger, but when individuals are older and more experienced, they should know better. This would increase the need to self-enhance. This indicates that moralistic self-enhancement is present in both cultures, but it is relevant in different stages of life.

In an anonymous study among students, which are probably young, no cultural difference in moralistic self-enhancement was found (Heine & Lehman, 1995). In a later study, students of collectivistic culture showed more moralistic self-enhancement than students of individualistic culture (Middleton & Jones, 2000). The results of the current study are comparable to the latter, with the difference being that the current study took place in an assessment situation where people are more motivated to present a favorable picture. The results of the current study also contradict the consensus in the cross-cultural self-enhancement literature that people of individualistic cultures self-enhance more than people of collectivistic cultures. Previous research has found empirical evidence for the fact that people of collectivistic culture self-enhance just as much as people of individualistic cultures in competitive situations where there are no familiar people (Takata, 2003). The competitiveness of the assessment situation might explain the contradiction. The fact that young people of collectivistic cultures show more moralistic self-enhancement might be because their interdependent self enables them to do this better than their individualistic, independent, counterparts.

It was suggested that Japanese people, also members of a collectivistic culture, self-enhance more as they get older, because they believe that they have acquired the necessary skills and abilities to fulfill their roles (Heine et al., 1999). For moralistic self-enhancement in the South African collectivistic culture the opposite seems to be the case. The suggested

explanation is that in collectivistic cultures the people respect the elderly to a level where it is unnecessary for them to self-enhance moralistically.

Another contradiction between previous literature and current results is that of gender. For moralistic self-enhancement there were no differences between men and women, but for Social Desirability men scored higher than women. This contradicts previous literature where women showed more moralistic self-enhancement and Motivational Distortion. Normally women would be considered to be more interdependent than men, but the women in the competitive, high level, assessment situation might be more independent than the average woman which leads to less moralistic self-enhancement.

Limitations

This study was done in the assessment situation. This situation places demands on the candidates to strive to make a good impression in order to secure the job or future promotion. The conclusions of this study can therefore only be generalised to people in equally demanding situations where presenting an (overly) favourable image has personal benefits for the future. Another result of using the assessment situation is that the level of education and job-position was high. The job level was not a variable in this study, to compensate for this weakness the diversity was fairly small, job level might be a useful variable in the future. It could be expected that collectivists in high level job-positions are more independent than collectivists with less education in lower job-positions. The candidates in this collectivistic sample may therefore have shown more self-enhancement than the average collectivist. This does not explain that the young collectivists have shown more Moralistic bias in this study, because young people of the individualistic culture, which is thought to be more independent in general, have shown less moralistic self-enhancement. It would be interesting to compare

the results of this study, to a similar study among South Africans in a less demanding situation.

The difference between collectivistic and individualistic cultures was performed among the South Africans of collectivistic and individualistic cultures. The African continent is generally categorised as collectivistic, but there is not much information on the similarities between Asian and African collectivism (Eaton & Louw, 2000). Before the conclusions can be applied in Asian or other collectivistic settings, information about differences in collectivism would be necessary. The culture groups were created on the basis of race and mother language. It might be better to include an independent measure of collectivism versus individualism to create more clear cut culture groups, but this was not possible in this study. In order to make the results more generalizable to collectivistic and individualistic cultures in general, it is suggested to create the culture groups on the basis of a clear measure of culture.

The main focus of the study was on Moralistic bias, because the available measures corresponded to the need for approval. This study cannot conclude about the egoistic part of self-enhancement. On the basis of the relation between the definitions of self-enhancement and socially desirable responding it is concluded that the Moralistic bias can be regarded as moralistic self-enhancement, presenting a saint like picture of the self. The Social Desirability and Faking Good scale are found to measure a cognitive and an affective component of moralistic self-enhancement. There might be more components of moralistic self-enhancement to be measured, possibly a behavioural component. Better measures of moralistic self-enhancement are desirable.

Among higher educated, higher positioned, younger South African collectivists, moralistic self-enhancement is higher than among higher educated, higher positioned elder South African individualists. At the same time it would help the current debate on cross-cultural self-enhancement, if the same research would be done with good measures of egoistic

self-enhancement, both in demanding situations, like the assessment situation, and in less demanding, anonymous situations.

Although the differences in moralistic self-enhancement between the culture groups are significant, the size of the effect is small to medium. For moralistic self-enhancement and the components Social Desirability and Faking Good, the main culture effect and the interaction effect between age and culture accounted for no more than 2% to 3% of the variance. Other factors, maybe personality factors, might be able to explain more of the differences in moralistic self-enhancement.

The found interaction effect between age and culture for moralistic self-enhancement and Faking Good are unexpected and new. The found interaction effects will await replication in the future and it will be interesting to see if they will hold up in other samples.

Implications

In the South African assessment situation, young people of collectivistic culture have shown more moralistic self-enhancement on both the Social Desirability and the Faking Good scale. In the manual of the 15FQ+ it is advised that in interpreting high scores on the Social Desirability and Faking Good scale, the test-user should use his knowledge of the demands of the situation (Psychometrics, 2002). The results of this study contribute to this knowledge and should be used in interpreting socially desirable response scales on an individual level.

For Social Desirability there is a difference between the individualistic culture and the collectivistic culture, where the latter scores higher. The explanation is that collectivistic people have a higher need for approval and are more inclined to the denial of very common undesirable thoughts concerning other people.

For Faking Good there is an interaction effect between culture and age. Especially in younger South African collectivistic candidates, higher Faking Good scores are expected, for

younger South African individualists, lower scores are expected. This again is explained by the need for approval, which in this scale results in not admitting undesirable emotional qualities that occur among the majority of people. This affectionate denial is higher among younger collectivists and lower among elder collectivists, where the opposite is true for individualists.

A main culture effect was found for Social Desirability, the cognitive part of moralistic self-enhancement and an interaction effect between age and culture was found for Faking Good, the affective part of moralistic self-enhancement. How can it be explained that there are different effects for these two components of moralistic self-enhancement. This difference is hard to explain theoretically as there could be differences in cognition's and their expression between the individualistic and collectivistic culture. The overall interaction effect remains when the two scales are entered as dependent variables in a MANCOVA analysis.

This study contributes to the recent topic on cross-cultural self-enhancement, through the location and the situation. There has not been much research concerning this topic, on the African continent and most previous studies included students. This research was performed among adult South African professionals in a realistic competitive situation. It is indicated that there is a cultural difference, more specifically an interaction effect in moralistic self-enhancement, between collectivistic and individualistic cultures and age. Moralistic self-enhancement is stronger among young collectivists than among young individualists, but this cultural difference disappears with age. Moralistic self-enhancement increases with age for collectivists where it decreases for individualists.

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