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Collectivism and Individualism in Jordanian Young Adults and Older Adults

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Abstract

The focus of this study is to explore how Jordanians experience and conceptualize collectivism and individualism and how there are generational differences in identification with said constructs. There were 8 interviews conducted, 4 with young adults ages 21 to 24, and 4 interviews conducted with adults above the age of 50. Questionnaires were administered at the University of Jordan, and sixteen completed questionnaires were collected from bachelors students. All interviews were conducted in-person. Comparative analysis was utilized for questionnaire data. Questionnaire results indicate participants most strongly align with horizontal individualism. Thematic analysis of interviews indicate that Jordanians do think younger generations are becoming more and more individualistic, and will continue to do so.

Key words: Social Sciences, Social Psychology, Regional Studies: Middle East.

Introduction

Collectivism and individualism are terms in social science that have been ever-amorphous and challenging to operationalize. As the decades have passed and study into them has progressed, it has been discovered that the constructs have an incredible degree of complexity, with different aspects and characteristics to be found in differing contexts and cultures. As we study cultures, their struggles and conflicts, and the mental health and well-being of the people within them, we must contemplate if too much individualism or collectivism may contribute to some of the societal challenges we encounter. We are typically not aware of the assumptions we hold because of them. Studying other cultures makes us aware of how culturally contextual our values and beliefs about society are.

One of the possible initial uses of the word "individualist" was during the time following the French Revolution, when thinkers were attempting to express their fears and concerns surrounding individual rights overtaking the "well-being of the commonwealth." (Oyserman et al., 2002) According to Zaharna (2013), individualism can philosophically be traced back to Britain and the theories of Enlightenment philosopher and economist Adam Smith and Utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Benthem. Nonetheless, it is also notably American in its origins; the term "individualism" only being coined by Alexis de Tocqueville upon his visit to the United States in 1831. Sociologist Florence Kluckhohn described the nuclear family as individualistic in 1953, but today we observe the concept of individualism as an attempt to become individuated from one's immediate family itself. The term "individualism" has changed much since its inception, and social scientists continue attempting to understand its meaning in an ever-changing world.

The research topic for this study is collectivism and individualism in Jordanian youth and adults, aiming to investigate the differences between these two demographics' identification rates

with collectivistic and individualistic values. The researcher has conducted past research in collectivism and individualism as part of a lab course and is interested in the subject. The significance of exploring the topic stems from its ability to help inform our knowledge of changing trends as globalization and modernization proceed. This study was conducted in West Amman, a region of Jordan that is becoming more progressive, providing an exciting pool of participants in surveying collectivists and individualists. Additionally, there is a high refugee population in Jordan. Although it was fundamentally the host population surveyed, it still provides insight into a society hosting many refugees.

The researcher will seek to answer the following questions by administering a questionnaire and conducting interviews:

1. How do Jordanians experience collectivism and individualism?

2. Is there a generational difference among Jordanians in how collectivistic and individualistic they are?

The theoretical framework for this study will be Triandis' theory of collectivism and individualism, which resembles Fiske's theory of sociality. However, Fiske's theory of sociality does not refer to collectivism and individualism by name. The two theories share two dimensions besides collectivism and individualism: verticality and horizontality. Collectivism pertains to how interconnected and group-oriented society and individuals are. Individualism relates to how independent and motivated by self-interest a society and individuals are. Verticality has to do with how hierarchical and unequal a society is, whereas horizontality has to do the opposite. With these constructs, Triandis established the constructs of vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, vertical collectivism, and horizontal individualism.

Rokeach established a typology surrounding political systems, which have been associated with Triandis' four dimensions. Horizontal collectivism is linked with social democracy, like in Sweden, and vertical individualism is linked with free-market democracy, like that found during Reagan-era America. On the other hand, horizontal collectivism is linked with communism and vertical collectivism is linked with fascism, like that found in Nazism. Triandis did exchange the link with fascism for communalism to allude to village or tribal societies where there is a collective of elders rather than a cult of personality. Triandis, Fiske, and Rokeach's theories were utilized in this study to form inclusive definitions of collectivism and individualism to be explained to participants during data collection. (Triandis, 1995).

Literature Review

Defining & Describing Collectivism and Individualism

Collectivism may be initially defined as a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as part of one or more collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, nation); are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives. A preliminary definition or individualism is a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others; and emphasize rational analyses of the advantages and disadvantages to associating with others. (Triandis, 1995, p. 24-25)

Within collectivism, the basic unit of society is the group, which individuals must all find a way to fit into (Oyserman et al., 2008). Individualists tend to view the self as stable and the environment as changeable, whereas collectivistic individuals view it the other way around. Conscientiousness represents collectivism as a personality trait, meaning collectivistic/conscientious individuals feel a higher sense of responsibility to their respective communities.

Oyserman et al. (2008) consider that there are different presentations of collectivism. For example, collectivism in the Middle East may differ from the East in that the former may have more honor-based elements, and the latter may have more modesty-based features. Triandis' vertical and horizontal specifications of collectivism help account for cross-cultural differences. Fiske's four kinds of sociality are communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing. According to Triandis, vertical collectivism is akin to a combination of communal sharing and authority ranking; vertical individualism is a combination of market pricing and authority ranking; horizontal collectivism is a combination of communal sharing and equality matching; and horizontal individualism is a combination of market pricing and equality matching.

On the other hand, Rokeach developed a typology of values and political systems that align with Triandis' four dimensions. He identified four groups: those who value freedom and equality; those who devalue both; those who value freedom and devalue equality; and those who value equality and devalue freedom. (Triandis, 1995)

LeFebvre & Franke (2013) found that participants who were higher in individualism were more frequently rational with their decision-making compared to participants who were higher in collectivism, who were more dependent in decision-making and avoidant of betraying in-group interests. Dependent decision-making is based on guidance from others. Study participants were

asked to take the Auckland Individualism Collectivism Scale (AICS) and another instrument to determine their decision-making style. According to AICS, individualists exhibit uniqueness, responsibility, and competitiveness, whereas collectivists seek harmony. In addition to the AICS, the study employed a quasi-experimental design where participants were presented with scenarios and two options to decide what they would do. Collectivists tend to make decisions involving more insight from others, whereas individualists tend to make decisions more based on research. Members of collectivistic societies tend to resolve group issues by cooperating with further in-group members, making them less receptive to external intervention.

Omayya et al. (2020) found that Jordanian mothers emphasized both values when raising children. The study was conducted through a semi-structured interview, and a thematic analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts. The study sample consisted of mothers between the ages of 25 and 45, outside the age ranges for the current study, which are college and graduate students under the age of 25 and adults above 50. Jordan scored 30 on Hofstede's individualism scale and is therefore considered a collectivist society. (Hofstede, n.d.) Nonetheless, Jordan still has individualistic characteristics, such as self-maximization, valuing working hard in school, dignity, and self-esteem. The dominant religion of Islam also has implications for the values that mothers attempt to instill in their children, as Islam is a religion that embodies both collectivistic and individualistic values. Younger generations in Jordan are becoming less interested in collectivism, and more parents focus on their children's future and welfare.

Variables Relating to Collectivism & Individualism

Ayyash-Abdo (2001) found that participants who spoke Arabic were more collectivistic than those who spoke English or French. Empirically speaking, people can simultaneously be high or low in both collectivism and individualism. Individualists focus on rational reasoning when

determining if they should make contact with others. Collectivists focus on social norms and obligations and will make personal sacrifices for the sake of the collective.

Ayyash-Abdo (2001) administered questionnaires at multiple universities in Lebanon with different primary languages, shifting between Arabic, English, and French. The questionnaires were administered in all three of the previously mentioned languages, and participants could choose which version of the questionnaire they would be given. Of the participants who scored as being more collectivistic, 48% preferred to use Arabic, whereas, of the participants who scored as being more individualistic, 89.6% preferred to use English or French. Ayyash-Abdo (2001) theorized that having a second language (English or French) permitted individuals to have more private self-cognitions. Additionally, countries, where the dominant language is one where pronouns can be dropped ("I" does not have to be used) tend to have lower levels of individualism.

Triandis (2001) theorized that people could think individualistically or collectivistically, depending on the situation. In collectivist cultures, it is considered moral to comply with the expectation of others, and if one deviates from this, there is a "loss of face." Lying is generally more acceptable in collectivist cultures if it prevents this loss of face or is considered helpful to the group. Many theorized dimensions regarding collectivism and individualism are yet to be operationalized, and different cultures have nuances regarding what collectivism and individualism look like for them.

Neoliberalism & Psychology

Adams et al. (2019) discuss the psychology of neoliberalism and the impact neoliberalism has had on psychology. *Neoliberalism* is an economic and political movement that grew in popularity in the 1970s and is potentially the economic and political system of the modern West. It promotes the dysregulation of markets and increasing economic freedom, particularly

emphasizing globalization. Immersion in neoliberalism is theorized to result in some particular psychological developments. The first is abstracting the self from social contexts by emphasizing freedom and removing barriers to attain more capital. This removal of barriers can be observed in the phenomena of globalization. Due to the increased mobility through this removal of barriers, people can prioritize seeking more satisfying connections at the expense of collective solidarity, hence abstracting themselves from social contexts.

Another impact of neoliberalism on psychology is the view of the self as an ongoing project, which Adams et al. (2019) aptly name "the entrepreneurial self." An example of how the entrepreneurial self manifests in psychology is the idea of the growth imperative, viewing the self as a consistent project, as found in the idea of the "growth mindset." Women's empowerment is impacted by neoliberally influenced psychology to be oriented more towards neoliberal individualism (and androcentrism) by emphasizing self-reliance, freedom from social constraints, and liberty. Longitudinal analyses of American literature show that in the past four decades, words related to the entrepreneurial self, such as "right" or "entitlement," have increased in usage. Additionally, both vertical and horizontal forms of individualism are found in neoliberalism. Vertical individualism is associated with utilitarianism and emphasizes economic freedom, such as the right to own property. In contrast, horizontal individualism is associated with self-expression and postmodernism, emphasizing social freedom and welfare.

Triandis (2001) explains that cultures with higher tightness tend to be more collectivistic. Tightness is about how tight social norms are. Cultures higher in tightness and collectivism tend to be more homogenous and have less cultural exchange, making them less open to different cultural norms. The terms "idiocentric" and "allocentric" have been proposed to describe collectivism and individualism at the personality level. The culture in which one resides impacts

how cooperative the individual is, regardless of how idiocentric or allocentric the individual is. This is understood from a study in which idiocentric and allocentric individuals were placed into stimulated individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Both groups were not cooperative in individualistic cultures, whereas idiocentric individuals were less cooperative than allocentric individuals in collectivistic cultures.

Oyserman et al. (2008) explain that idiocentric individuals think of the self as stable and the environment as changeable, which is interesting when contrasted against what Adams et al. (2019) theorize, that neoliberalism fuels the concept of the fluid and growing entrepreneurial self, where the self is viewed as constantly changing and as a project. Triandis (2001) also states that self-actualization is considered a central individualistic concept that is inherently related to growth and goals.

Apart from neoliberalism's impacts on human psychology, Adams et al. (2019) also theorize that neoliberalism impacts the field of psychology itself. One such impact is radical abstraction in the field of psychology itself in the forms of methodological abstraction and ontological individualism. Methodological abstraction is the focus on individual psychological or neurological processes rather than social contexts to explain phenomena. The latter view sociocultural phenomena as merely the accumulation of individual actions. Socio-psychological research on collectivism and individualism risks falling into methodological abstraction. For example, Ayyash-Abdo (2001) theorizes that individuals who prefer using English or French do so because it allows access to private self-cognitions, focusing on the psychology of the individual. However, it could also be theorized that English-speaking or French cultures influence people who speak English and French. They may have ties to these cultures and engage with more media from

them or other socially contextual explanations. These are essential considerations to keep in mind when proceeding with this study.

Methodology

Ethics & Positionality

The researcher is a South Asian Muslim, born and raised in the United States. There was a concern about interviewees altering their responses to fit the normative standard of collectivism belonging to Jordanian, South Asian, and general Muslim cultures. The researcher's Muslim identity will be evident to interviewees, as she wears a headscarf. There was concern that interviewees may give more religious responses due to this characteristic, although it may help some interviewees feel more comfortable doing so. Additionally, the researcher is concerned that she will give biased explanations of individualism and collectivism due to her background. To address the above mentioned concern, the definitions used to explain collectivism and individualism have been informed through a literature review, touching on multiple theories as mentioned earlier.

Some questions may lead the interviewee towards more personal anecdotes. For example, question 3 inquires about a situation where the interviewee was forced to be individualistic or collectivistic. Suppose the interviewee imagines serious and personal circumstances where they had to make a forced choice. In that case, they may feel obligated to share this with the interviewer, even if uncomfortable. To mitigate this, the interviewer will explain at the beginning of the interview the nature of use for the data collected, that it will be anonymized, and that the interviewee is not obligated to give answers they are not comfortable giving. When encountering questions that may stir intense memories, the interviewer will make clear that it can be a mundane choice, that it does not have to be a dire circumstance unless they genuinely want to share it, and

that any answer that is true to the interviewee will be able to be utilized. The interviewer will also clarify that if the interviewee wants confidentiality within the study, they may inform the interviewer.

Procedure

To answer the research questions for this study, the researcher distributes a questionnaire to survey a small classroom at the University of Jordan, with a maximum of twenty students permitted. In addition, the questionnaires invited the students to share their email if they were willing to engage in an interview regarding the subject. The researcher had selected a questionnaire as a data collection method as it may provide a greater wealth of quantitative data and assist in contacting potential interviewees. Additionally, the researcher had selected interviews as her second and more significant data collection method because interviewing allows for more depth in data through follow-up questions and elaborations. Interview questions can be found in Appendix A on page 37. Demographics questions for the questionnaire may be found in Appendix B on page 39. The researcher formulated a shortened questionnaire taking full questions from Triandis' individualism and collectivism scale, tweaked questions from the scale, and formulating original questions inspired by the scale. The full questionnaire used for this study can be found in Appendix C on page 41.

Participants

The researcher sought to interview two college students, including one graduate student below the age of 25 and three adults above the age of fifty. The graduate student was intended to be determined and contacted using the knowledge of the research advisor. Of the three adults, one was intended to be an academic in the social sciences, and the other two were non-academic individuals. The three older adults were intended to be determined and contacted using SIT

resources and recommendations from the advisor. A total of eight interviews were conducted. Two adult interviews were with male academics, one specializing in sociology and the other in geopolitics. The other two adult interviews were with female homemakers. Of the two young adult male interviews, both were employed. The two young adult female interviewees were both students, one a bachelor's student and the other unknown, possibly a graduate student. The academic specializing in sociology and one of the young adult interviewees were recommended by the advisor for this study, Dr. Rawashdeh. The academic specializing in geopolitics was contacted using SIT resources. Apart from the individual recommended by Dr. Rawashdeh, all young adult interviewees were contacted through word of mouth. In addition, all participants were interviewed face-to-face and in person. Follow-up questions were asked throughout the interview. Of the eight interviews, five were conducted in English. The remaining three, two adults and one young adult, were conducted in Arabic. An informal translator in the form of a Jordanian student or family member of the interviewee accompanied them.

Eighteen questionnaires were administered at the University of Jordan. Two were incomplete. Two participants were of Middle Eastern descent, not included under Jordanian or Palestinian. Triandis' scale was heavily referenced in the formulation of the questionnaire as it is a commonly-used scale in this area of research. The questionnaire was based on Triandis' vertical and horizontal collectivism and individualism scale. The Pew Research Center's research informed demographic questions surrounding religiosity.

Challenges

The data from the questionnaire at the University of Jordan was attained more than halfway through the independent study project (ISP) period. The ISP began in Ramadan, followed by Eid, and then the exam and final thesis periods in universities, making it incredibly challenging for the

researcher to find individuals to interview. By then, most interviews had already been completed. All of the individuals who filled out the questionnaire and were contacted for an interview did not respond. Additionally, the researcher needed to be more fluent in Arabic, and finding a translator for interviews with individuals not fluent in English was challenging.

Two adult interviews were conducted back-to-back; the previous interviewee was friends with the second. The first interviewee sat in on the interview, starting up small conversations with the second interviewee for the second half of their interview, very likely influencing the interviewee's responses with their presence. Additionally, some interviews were shorter than desired due to scheduling conflicts. Finally, one interviewee who had been connected to the researcher was deeply concerned with whether their mutual connection would be happy with their responses, which may have influenced their responses as well.

Initially, the researcher intended to collect observational data as well during interviews. However, upon conducting the first interview, it was discovered that observing interviewees while writing detailed notes was challenging. Therefore, the observational aspect of the data collection design needed to be revised and removed.

Limitations

This research was conducted by one researcher in a 5 week period. Only two individualist-identified participants were interviewed, providing a tiny qualitative sample for individualism analysis. Additionally, the ratio of individualist young adult participants to collectivistic young adult participants does not align with the questionnaire results. However, keeping to eight interviews while increasing individualist young adult interviewees would reduce the number of collectivist young adult interviewees. Incorporating a research team and more time to conduct more interviews could have provided a more well-rounded data source for analysis.

The number of participants for the questionnaire was limited to a maximum of twenty, attaining only eighteen questionnaires, of which only sixteen were completed. A small sample size increases the likelihood of demographic variances impacting results. In addition, some interviews had to be kept to half an hour due to time constraints between the interviewee and researcher, potentially diminishing the quality and depth of the data. Additionally, the researcher did not speak sufficient Arabic to conduct interviews in the language. In addition, translators were not trained professionals, introducing potential contamination to the interview process.

Results

Interview Results

Half of the interviewees, all who identified as collectivists, alluded to or stated a relationship between individualism and selfishness, or self-interest. This is possibly because of the definition of individualism offered to interviewees by the researcher. One of two interviewees who mentioned selfishness by name clarified that individualism does not necessarily have to do with selfishness but that the association came to mind because the terms individualism and collectivism originated in the West. However, the other collectivistic interviewee who mentioned selfishness by name clearly stated that individualism is not selfishness but merely looking out for one's interests. Other interviewees described individualists as not helping or caring about others. On one occasion, individualists were described as not giving or receiving help from others.

Most interviewees mentioned collectivism in association with consultation or discussion, all collectivists, except for one. Consultation and discussion may be engaged regarding more uncomplicated matters, like deciding what to cook for dinner, or more serious matters, such as what to study or what career to pursue. One interviewee stated that there are no individual decisions and that they are made collectively. Another shared how they encourage their children to consult

when making decisions. Two interviewees (one young adult and one older adult) expressed that they think collective decisions are more sound due to being made after consulting multiple individuals instead of based on one individual's reasoning. The one individualistic interviewee who touched on consultation said they used to go back to their family regarding anything. However, as they have gotten older, they have realized that not everything others think has to be right for them due to everyone having different experiences.

Both individualist-identified interviewees explained how they try to have their own opinions and thoughts not influenced by the opinions of others. One interviewee explained how they are trying to be more individualistic, "I'm trying to not be under effect by the other decisions." They explained that they are trying to be financially independent and working to have their own thoughts and perspectives. When inquired as to why they are trying to be more individualistic, they explained that they have been collectivistic enough, and that at their age they want to start having their own life. They want to become independent from their family first, and then society. Additionally, they expressed that they have had many issues because of their parent's separation.

In response to question 5, both individualist-identified interviewees brought up self-expression. The interviewee who self-identified (to question 6) as a vertical individualist brought self-expression up surrounding future generations trending towards individualism, reasoning that it was because parents would be becoming less strict and permitting more self-expression. The second interviewee, who identified as a horizontal individualist, explained that future generations might grow up to become more individualistic because social media grants access to an individualistic way of being through enabling self-expression and networking with people akin to oneself. However, the second interviewee did express concern surrounding children having unmonitored access technology, explaining that children do not know what they want and that they

would think things are okay or right just because they see people on the internet emulating them. Earlier in the interview, when discussing the increasing frequency of juvenile gender transitioning, the interviewee expressed that children should be free to explore their identities, without engaging in permanent or medical interventions.

Most interviewees touched upon school and education when responding to question 3, regarding if they could recall a situation where they had been forced to be collectivistic or individualistic. Two interviewees (one young adult and one older adult) mentioned discussions with their families surrounding their educational trajectories. Both identifying as collectivistic, took their family discussions into account, and selected their educational paths accordingly. However, when the young adult interviewee was asked if they had ever been forced to be individualistic, they expressed that the length and path of their education was their own individualistic decision, specifically the decision to continue education, despite identifying as collectivistic. Another interviewee who identified as individualistic proceeded with their initially desired career trajectory despite being asked by family why they were going into their career field. Another interviewee expressed that they had been forced to be collectivistic, in that their marriage had been a collective decision, but that they were still individualistic in some circumstances, with the example of them making a choice surrounding their educational trajectory.

The two young adult individualist-identified interviewees expressed being forced to be collectivistic in school from the perspectives of group mentality and bullying. When explaining what collectivism meant to her, the first interviewee specifically mentioned that women came to mind in the context of women being under the rule of her community. She explained how she had not been pressured to wear a headscarf but realized she had merely started wearing it because the other girls at her school wore it. The second interviewee was bullied in school for appearing more feminine than other boys and was eventually asked by his school counselor to attempt to behave

masculinely like his peers. Eventually, his school discovered he was gay, and attempts were made to convince him that it was unnatural and that he had a choice. Both of these interviewees associated collectivism with being under the rule of someone else.

There was only one interviewee who clearly expressed that they were forced to be individualistic, and that is because of them having to live alone and away from family in Amman for work. On the subject of being forced to be individualistic, most interviewees who responded to this query brought up how they had to make individual or independent decisions regarding their education or employment. However, it was unclear if they genuinely felt forced to make their own choice or that, instead, it was a space where they were guaranteed their independence.

The interviews overall demonstrate that Jordanian collectivists conceptualized individualism as having to do with selfishness, whereas Jordanian individualists conceptualized collectivism as having to do with being ruled. The interviews also suggest that there tends to be a collective (or at least familial) discussion surrounding individuals' educational and career choices in Jordanian society. Collectivists act on the insight of their collectives more often than individualists. Collectivistic interviewees tended to associate collectivism with the practice of consultation, with a tendency to consider decisions made upon consulting others more sound than those made upon one's sole judgment. On the other hand, individualistic interviewees emphasized making independent decisions using their individual reasoning.

Interviewees were categorized as individualists and collectivists based on their responses to question 2 and question 6. All older adults identified as collectivists. One older adult participant responded to question 2 by saying they are more individualistic than collectivistic. However, when given questions 6a and 6b, they responded with horizontal collectivism and individualism, and when asked to choose; horizontal collectivism—conversely, half of the young adults identified as

collectivists. One responded to question 2 by saying that they have to be individualistic because they live alone and away from family but implied that they would prefer to be with family. As the interview continued, they expressed the feeling that it was scary and sad that young adults are moving towards individualism. Two young adults were identified as collectivists, and two as individualists. Both individualists claimed that college youth were more collectivistic than not but did acknowledge that there are large pockets that are more individualistic or that they have individualistic aspects. All collectivists claimed that college youth are more individualistic than not, except for one young adult interview, who selected to withhold their response to question 5. Both individualists stated that young adults today in Jordan are more collectivistic than individualistic. One young adult interviewee identified as a horizontal individualist, another as a horizontal collectivist, and one older adult interviewee identified as a horizontal collectivist. The second of the two individualist-identified interviewees expressed an alignment with vertical individualism, despite most of her interview focusing on women's rights and independence. The reasoning behind their alignment was because justice does not mean equality, every person has their own needs and rights.

Most interviewees mentioned technology was regarding future generations becoming more individualistic. Concern was expressed surrounding children accessing technology and being influenced by it and college-aged individuals' mentalities being impacted by technology. An interviewee mentioned a concern that children (those under eighteen) would believe that they should do anything others on the internet do, regardless of morality, and that this mentality is a form of individualism. Another interviewee considered that teenagers are prone to engaging in whatever is easier for them, so they use tablet devices at home instead of socializing in the physical world due to convenience. Of the interviewees who mentioned technology, about half specifically

mentioned social media, all mentioning social media assisting individuals in more independent decision-making, disconnecting them from the collective. A third of the interviewees generally alluded to technology and media, one focusing on online gaming keeping youth from spending time with their families and the other mentioning media's general influence. Finally, one mentioned technology in passing as a reason for young adults today being more individualistic.

Questionnaire Results

Due to the small sample size, comparing means across genders, origins, religiosity, and parental education was not feasible. In addition, the sample size was too small for at least one of two comparative groups. For example, only 5 out of 16 participants were male. As a result, data was analyzed and compared between one group and the general participant pool. For example, data for only female participants were analyzed and compared to the data of the overall participants. When data for Jordanian participants was analyzed, both Jordanian and Jordanian-Palestinian individuals were included. Excluded groups were those who identified as solely Palestinian or other Middle Eastern origin.

A questionnaire based on Triandis' individualism and collectivism scale was used, which measured participants' identification with horizontal individualism, horizontal collectivism, vertical individualism, and vertical collectivism. Overall, participants scored highest on horizontal individualism and lowest on vertical individualism, with a 1.03 difference between their means. In addition, when the data of female participants were analyzed, scores in all dimensions went down. In contrast, when the data of Jordanian participants were analyzed, scores in all dimensions went up. These results could be explained by the fact that all the male participants were Jordanian. Therefore, it is possible that the proportional increase of male participants in the Jordanian sample led to this presentation in the data.

For all participants, the mean for HI was 5.10. However, table 1 shows that the mean for female participants was marginally lower, at 5.06. All other analyzed groups scored higher than the general participant group. Participants with parents who completed high school or less scored higher for horizontal individualism, with a mean of 5.27.

For all participants, the mean for vertical individualism was 4.07. Female participants scored lower, at 3.88. All other analyzed groups scored higher than the general participant group. Participants who identified as very religious scored highest for vertical individualism out of any other analyzed group, with a mean of 4.33.

For all participants, the mean for horizontal collectivism was 4.71. All comparative groups except for the Jordanian group scored lower than the general participant group—participants with parents who completed high school or less scored lowest with a mean of 4.6. Participants identified as Jordanian or Jordanian-Palestinian scored the highest, with a mean of 4.81.

For all participants, the mean for vertical collectivism was 4.33. Female participants scored lower than the general participant group, with a mean of 4.03. All other comparative groups scored higher than the general participant group, with Jordanian participants scoring the highest with a mean of 4.56.

Table 1

Means and standard deviations for horizontal individualism (HI), vertical individualism (VI), horizontal collectivism (HC), and vertical individualism (VI) in relation to differing participant groups in the survey.

	All Participants (n=16)	Female Participant (n=11)	Jordanian Participants (n=12)	Very Religious (n=10)	Parent Completed High School or Less (n=10)

HI	5.10	5.06	5.19	5.15	5.27
VI	4.07	3.88	4.25	4.33	4.27
HC	4.71	4.61	4.81	4.70	4.6
VC	4.33	4.03	4.56	4.52	4.6

There were three questions in the questionnaire measuring vertical individualism. The means for the fifth and sixth items were notably higher among very religious participants when compared to the remainder of the group. The means for the questions were 4.25 (SD=1.24) and 3.25 (SD=1.29) for the general group. For the very religious group, the means were 4.67 (SD=1.26) and 3.67 (SD=1.43), respectively. The questions were "Competition is the law of nature." and "I often introduce myself according to my own achievements."

Figure 1

Means for all participant groups in all questions measuring horizontal collectivism.

HC Responses

Legend: Item 7, Item 8, Item 9

General Group: 5.25, 3.81, 5.06
Female Group: 5.45, 3.36, 5
Jordanian Group: 5.17, 4.25, 5
Very Religious Group: 5.33, 3.55, 5.22
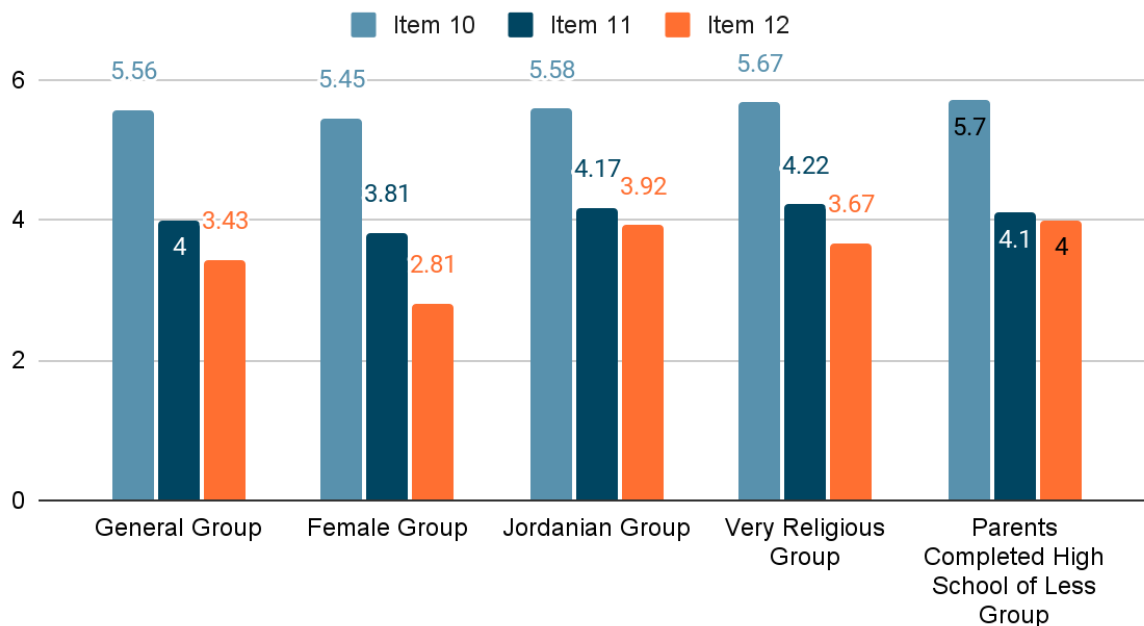Parent Completed High School or Less Group: 5.1, 3.8, 4.9
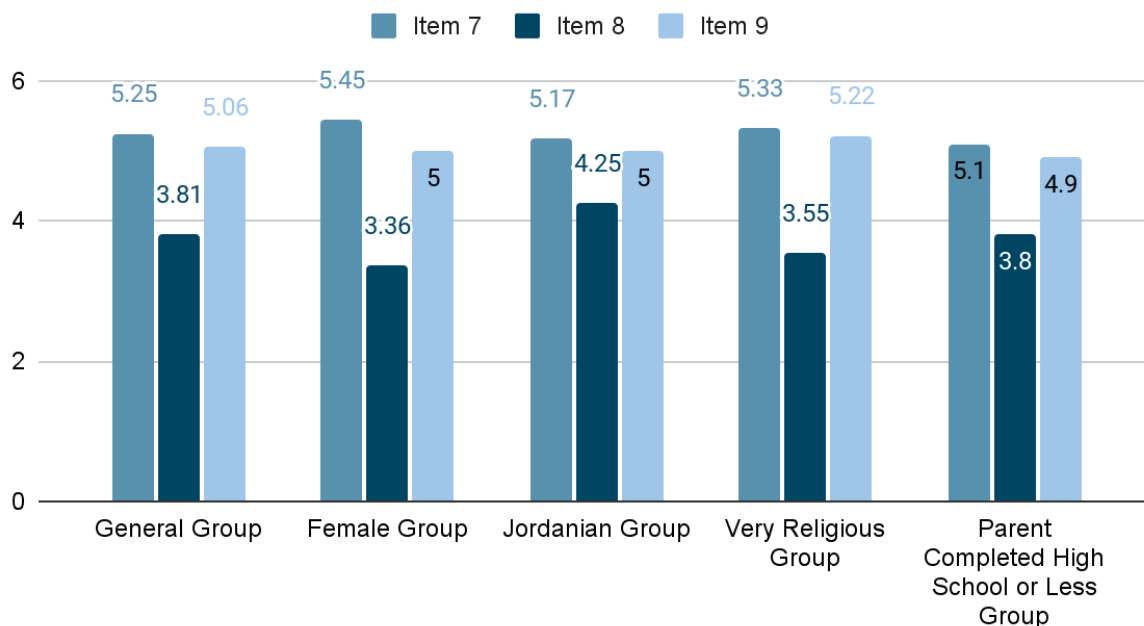
There were three questions in the questionnaire measuring horizontal collectivism. The means for items 7 and 9 were relatively stable across participant groups. The mean for item 8 was 3.81 (SD=1.52) for the general group, 3.36 (SD=1.57) for the female group, 4.25 (SD=1.14) for the Jordanian group, 3.56 (SD=1.70) for the very religious group and 3.8 (SD=1.55) for the group with parents who completed high school or less. Item 8 was, "It is important to me that everyone in my clan has a say in group decisions and discussions."

Figure 2

Means for all participant groups in all questions measuring vertical collectivism.

There were three questions in the questionnaire measuring vertical collectivism. The means for items 10 and 11 were relatively stable. The mean for item 12 was 3.44 (SD=1.67) among the general group, 2.82 (SD=1.33) for the female group, 3.92 (SD=1.51) for the Jordanian group, 3.67 (SD=1.51) for the very religious group and 4 (SD=1.63) for the group with parents who completed

high school or less. Item 12 was, "It is important to me that I respect the decisions of the clan I belong to."

Discussion

The interviews demonstrate that Jordanians (especially older adults) tend to be collectivistic, in alignment with Jordan's score of 30 on Hofstede's individualism scale. Questionnaire results are in dissonance with Hofstede's scoring of Jordan. The first research question for this study was, "How do Jordanians experience collectivism and individualism?" Collectivistic Jordanians tended to conceptualize individualism as having to do with selfishness. The interview sample for individualists was small, but from the two interviews that were conducted, it appeared that individualistic Jordanians conceptualized collectivism as having to do with being under the rule of someone else. Most interviewees associated collectivism with discussion or consultation, and individualistic interviewees emphasized independent decision-making.

One interviewee distinguished selfishness from self-interest, stating that individualists engage in the latter rather than the former. Self-interest pertains to addressing one's needs before those of others, whereas selfishness pertains to addressing one's needs at the expense of others. (Lazarus, 2018) Something to be contended with is how accessible it is to pursue one's self-interest without it being at the expense of others in collectivistic societies. Because communities and families are more interdependent and interconnected, seemingly independent decisions can impact those around the individual. As Triandis (2001) explains, in collectivistic cultures, deviating from the expectations one has places upon them can result in a loss of face. For example, suppose a young adult chooses to engage in a controversial form of self-expression, such as cutting or dying their hair in an alternative fashion, which is a form of subverting expectations. One of the

individualistic interviewees explained that Jordanian society has a lot of judgment, and whoever goes outside the circle of rules is considered strange. In the case of the example, it may reflect poorly on their family and make them susceptible to judgment by those around them. Furthermore, as the interviews suggest, collectivistic Jordanians already value consultation and the opinions of others, so that that judgment will be taken seriously. Particular individual decisions will be at the expense of the respect that family, community, and clan members have worked to foster. This also confirms the assertion of Triandis (2001) that collectivistic cultures tend to have more tightness, meaning stricter rules and norms. Although it is also asserted that these tend to be more homogenous cultures, Jordan is actually quite heterogeneous.

The interviews demonstrated that collectivistic participants favor consulting their in-group before making decisions, confirming the findings of LeFebvre & Franke (2013), in which it was found that collectivistic participants engaged in more dependent decision-making, where they sought guidance from others. Additionally, the study found that individualistic participants were more frequently rational in decision-making. The measure LeFebvre & Franke (2013) used conceptualized rational decision-making as having a more logical and structured approach. In contrast, dependent decision-making relied more on direction and support from others. They also theorized that, as individualism's core traits are independence and uniqueness, a desire for uniqueness would motivate more rational decision-making.

According to Oyserman et al. (2008), collectivists are represented by conscientiousness, which indicates a higher sense of responsibility to one's community. Collectivistic interviewees affirmed this by conceptualizing individualism as a self-interested mode of being. Burton et al. (2021) conducted a study evaluating Americans and Italians with a scale measuring individualism and collectivism, as well as the Five Factor Inventory of Personality. According to Hofstede's

index, the United States is considered an individualistic country, and Italy is considered a collectivistic nation. The survey results affirmed this. In both nations, individuals who scored as being more collectivistic also scored high in extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Past literature potentially affirms collectivists' perception of individualists as being more focused on their own needs.

The interviews demonstrated that collectivistic participants favor consulting their in-group before making decisions, confirming the findings of LeFebvre & Franke (2013), in which it was found that collectivistic participants engaged in more dependent decision-making, where they sought guidance from others. Additionally, the study found that individualistic participants were more frequently rational in decision-making. The measure LeFebvre & Franke (2013) used conceptualized rational decision-making as having a more logical and structured approach. In contrast, dependent decision-making relied more on direction and support from others. They also theorized that, as individualism's core traits are independence and uniqueness, a desire for uniqueness would motivate more rational decision-making.

Adams et al. (2019) described that horizontal individualism is associated with self-expression and social freedom, supported by our two individualistic interviews associating individualism with self-expression. Kim & Sherman (2007) studied East Asian Americans and European Americans in a comparative study on self-expression. European Americans are typically more individualistic than Asian American. European Americans were also found to place greater emphasis on self-expression when compared to Asian Americans. The interviews confirm previously existing research in collectivism and individualism.

The second research question for this study was, "Is there a generational difference among Jordanians in how collectivistic and individualistic they are?" There is a generational difference—

all older adults interviewed identified as collectivists, and two young adults identified as individualists. The questionnaire results indicated that young Jordanian adults most strongly identify as horizontal individualists. Santos et al. (2017) analyzed data from 78 countries over the past 51 years, finding that individualism has increased in prevalence. This increasing prevalence was linked to socioeconomic development.

Conclusion

Most interviewees associated collectivism with consultation or discussion. Most collectivistic interviewees associated individualism with self-interest, likely at least in part due to the definition of individualism offered to them at the beginning of the interview. Individualistic interviewees associated individualism with self-expression. Additionally, they expressed being forced to be collectivistic in school, be it through bullying or pressure from school administration or being affected by the decisions of those around them. One interviewee clearly expressed that they were forced to be individualistic due to living alone and away from their family due to work. When interviewees were asked if they felt they had ever felt forced to be individualistic, most brought up circumstances in which they had to make an individual or independent decision regarding employment or education, such as deciding if one should leave a job or not.

All adult interviewees identified as collectivistic, as well as two young adult interviewees. One collectivistic interviewee identified as a horizontal collectivist. Of the non-collectivists, one identified as a horizontal individualist, and the other a vertical individualist. However, the vertical individualist rationalized identifying as a vertical individualist under the pretense that justice is not equality because different people have different needs. It is possible this interviewee could be identified as a horizontal individualist. Regarding the questionnaire, participants most strongly identified as horizontal individualists.

Technology was mentioned by most interviewees when discussing future generations trending towards individualism, with about half mentioning social media in particular. Some mentioned social media as a form of assisted decision-making. Regardless of identification with individualism or collectivism, multiple interviewees expressed concern about children's use of and access to technology—concerns surrounding the disconnect from human interaction in the physical world to moral influences from social media.

The results of this research study demonstrate how Jordanians conceptualize collectivism and individualism and elucidate potential generational differences in identification with said constructs. Nonetheless, there are an incredible amount of confounding variables, and many challenges were encountered when conducting interviews. It is to be remarked upon that the most collectivistic participants were all Arabic speakers, so it should be contended with if the generational difference we observe is due to increased English proficiency associated with cross-cultural exchange.

Future Directions

Future surveys of collectivism and individualism would benefit from being issued to a more significant number of participants of increasingly diverse backgrounds to represent the Jordanian population better. All interviewees were mainly residing in West Amman, providing a non-representative sample. With a larger nationwide sample, it would be easier to analyze how different characteristics correlate with different alignments, such as if being female relates to being less horizontally individualistic than men. Additionally, it would be interesting to study if having different origins impacts how individualistic or collectivistic people are. An international study would be fruitful.

The questionnaire used in this study needs to be validated. The original measure created by Triandis has 16 items and has some language that may be deemed too scientific for general audiences, regardless of linguistic background. Questions were tweaked and added to both be more accessible for laypeople and also to be culturally sensitive and relevant to the Jordanian context. Hence, the new measure would benefit from undergoing a validation process before being administered to study larger population samples.

Oseryman et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of studies on individualism and collectivism internationally and within the United States. European Americans were found to be more individualistic and less collectivistic generally. However, they were found not to be more individualistic than African Americans and Latinos or not less collectivistic than Japanese and Koreans. Within Asians, only Chinese individuals showed being significantly less individualistic and collectivistic. Oyserman et al. (2002) theorized that these discrepancies might be because different studies use different methods and measures to assess or ascribe identification with individualism or collectivism. It is unclear if the different research methods produce different results, and if they do, why. So, a future study may benefit from utilizing multiple research methods because individualism and collectivism will be measured or assessed in multiple ways giving way to a potentially more accurate reading, but also studying the methods to see how they may or may not give different results and what implications there are for research into collectivism and individualism.

Continuing to study collectivism and individualism in Jordan will bear fruitful insight. As the nation and its social landscape transform, it will be fascinating to observe how its youth identify with and conceptualize collectivism and individualism and how it relates to their other values and beliefs. Additionally, it is essential to continue to study Jordanian adults. They may be one of the

most collectivistic generations for decades to come. Researching young Jordanian adults as they grow and age will also be deeply insightful to see if their identifications and beliefs change as time proceeds.

When the questionnaire results were analyzed without male participants, scores in all dimensions went down. Studying gender differences in individualism and collectivism would be especially fruitful for future studies.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Theme #1: Collectivism and individualism in Jordanians.

Q1. What do collectivism and individualism mean to you? When you hear these terms, or they're explained to you, what do you think of them? What comes to mind? *If the interviewee is not familiar with the terms "collectivism" and "individualism," explain them with the following phrases:*

- Collectivism is when your decisions impact everyone around you, and their decisions impact you. The people in your life have a say in your choices, and you may also have a say in their choices. Resources like food, money, clothing, and other items, are distributed according to need.

- Individualism is when you are more independent. You're expected to make decisions and do things yourself. In individualism, you feel a lesser sense of responsibility for the actions of others. Resources are distributed according to how much individuals contribute.

Q2. How and where do you see collectivism and/or individualism in your life? *If the interviewee is stuck, give an example of one construct and ask if and where they see it in their lives, or if they can tell you a story from their life, and repeat this process with the next construct.* Where do you think you fit more? Why?

Q3. Have you ever faced a situation where you were forced to be collectivistic/individualistic? If so, can you tell me about it?

Theme #2: Generational differences in collectivism and individualism.

Q4. Where do you see college students leaning toward when it comes to individualism and collectivism? Why?

Q5. Do you observe a trend in the coming generations regarding collectivism and individualism? Will they still be as they are now when they become adults?

Theme #3: Horizontal and vertical identification.

If the interview identifies more with collectivism, use version 6a., if they identify more with individualism, use version 6b. If they do not make their identification clear earlier on in the interview, present both. Ask which term they identify with the most.

Q6a. In collectivism, people are viewed as a part of a larger group/community/collective. To be more specific, there is horizontal collectivism, which includes seeing all members of the collective/group/community as the same or equal, and vertical collectivism, which includes accepting inequality within the group and viewing people as different.

Q6b. In individualism, people are viewed as independent/autonomous/free. To be more specific, there is horizontal individualism, where people are viewed as the same or equal, and vertical individualism, where inequality is accepted and people are viewed as different.

Appendix B: Demographic Questions

How do you identify?

o Woman

o Man

o Other (Please specify: _____)

Which origin/origins best describes you? You may mark more than one option.

o Jordanian

o Jordanian-Palestinian

o Palestinian

o Caucasian (Circassian, Armenian, etc.)

o Other (Please specify: _____)

How important is religion in your life?

o Very

o Somewhat

o Not at all

o Don't know

o Prefer Not to Answer

Do you live with, near, or in the same building as your extended family (aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc.)?

o Yes

o Sometimes

o No

What is the highest level of education your mother has completed?

o No high school

o Some high school

o High school

o Bachelor's degree

o PhD or higher

o Trade school

o Prefer not to say

Is your mother employed?

o Yes

o No

What is the highest level of education your father has completed?

o No high school

o Some high school

o High school

o Bachelor's degree

o PhD or higher

o Trade school

o Prefer not to say

Is your father employed?

o Yes

o No

Appendix C: Questionnaire Items

Questions 1-3 measure horizontal individualism, questions 4-6 measure vertical individualism, question 7-9 measure horizontal collectivism, and question 10-12 measure vertical collectivism.

1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree.

1. I prefer to do things on my own.

2. I'd rather depend on myself than others.

3. My self-expression is important to me.

4. I like the idea of being more successful than those around me.

5. Competition is the law of nature.

6. I often introduce myself according to my own achievements.

7. I feel happy when others succeed.

8. It is important to me that everyone in my clan has a say in group decisions and discussions.

9. I feel good when I cooperate with my community.

10. It is important for family members to have unity.

11. It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.

12. It is important to me that I respect the decisions of the clan I belong to.

Appendix D: Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form

SIT Study Abroad
a program of World Learning

Study Title: Collectivism and Individualism in Jordanian Young Adults and Older Adults

Your Name/Homeschool: Zuha Zubair, St. Catherine University

School for International Training—Jordan: Psychology, Well-being, and Mental Health

1. The purpose of this study is to investigate the differences between Jordanian youth and adults regarding identification with collectivism and individualism.
2. **Rights Notice**
   If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the survey or interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.
   a. *Privacy* - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.

   b. *Anonymity* - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.

   c. *Confidentiality* - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer.
3. **Instructions:**
Please read the following statements carefully and mark your preferences where indicated. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions regarding this consent form.
I am aware that this questionnaire is being provided by an independent undergraduate researcher with the goal of producing a descriptive case study on collectivism and individualism in Jordanian youth and adults.

I am aware that the information I provide is for research purposes only. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study.

I am aware that I have the right to full anonymity upon request, and that upon request the researcher will omit all identifying information from both notes and drafts.

I am aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any question and to terminate my participation at any time, and that the researcher will answer any questions I have about the study.

I am aware of and take full responsibility for any risk, physical, psychological, legal, or social, associated with participation in this study.

I am aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for participation in this study, but a copy of the final study will be made available to me upon request.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my position in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use my organizational affiliation in the final study.

I [do / do not] give the researcher permission to use data collected in this interview in a later study.

Thank you for participating!
Questions, comments, complaints, and requests for the final written study can be directed to:
Dr. Ashraf Alqudah, SIT Jordan Academic Director
Email: ashraf.alqduah@sit.edu