

# **Culture and Identity: Linking Iranian Identity Components and Cultural Dimensions**

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## **Abstract**

Iranian identity cannot be conceived of as a uniform monolithic concept. But, thanks to certain upheavals in the history of the country, it has turned into the triple concept of national/Islamic/modern. Hofstede's (2001) cultural framework represents a well-validated operationalization of culture based on six cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, short-term/long-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint) and this study explores the association between these dimensions and the three components of Iranian identity. To this end, the Cultural Dimensions Scale (CDS) along with the Cultural Attachment Scale (CAS) were administered to a sample of Iranian university students. Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis were employed for data analysis. The results revealed a significant relationship between cultural dimensions and the identity components. It was also found that indulgence is the sole predictor of National Identity, whereas Religious Identity has four predictors, namely, power distance, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and short-term orientation. And, Western Identity is predicted by power distance and individualism. Finally, the results were discussed and implications for soothing Iranian identity crisis through cultural interventions were provided.

**Keywords:** identity components, cultural dimensions, Hofstede, identity crisis

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## INTRODUCTION

Culture is a tangible term which lends itself to diverse definitions from different perspectives and with varying scopes, each seeming sensible in its own right. This is evident in the abundance of its definitions found in the relevant literature. Olie (1995), for instance, discusses over 164 definitions for culture. What most definitions have in common is that culture is shared by a group of people, is adaptive, and is transmitted across time and generations (Triandis, 2007). A thorough study of culture would not be possible without figuring out how to quantify and compare the context's distribution of behavior patterns, norms, and personality variables (Triandis, 1989). Accordingly, it is essential to discover a comprehensive empirical framework for the measurement of culture.

A breakthrough in the empirical study of national cultures was Hofstede's 1980 book, *Culture's Consequences*. This book introduced a new paradigm for the operationalization of cultures, namely, the dimensions paradigm, which has acquired normal science status (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). This paradigm conceptualizes culture as a multidimensional structure which can be evaluated along a set of particular dimensions. Hofstede's original model included four dimensions, namely, power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. He later expanded it into a six-dimensional model by adding two more dimensions of long-term vs. short-term orientation and indulgence vs. restraint.

It was in the same era (the late 20<sup>th</sup> century) that the concept of cultural identity was introduced. Cultural identity was defined as the perceived acceptance into and identification with a group that has a shared collection of ideas, practices, and norms of conduct (Collier & Thomas, 1988). It provides a link between the definition of self and the structure of cultural groups within which the self is defined (Hong, Wan, No, & Chiu, 2007). Identities, then, correspond to particular cultures and it is through the processes of defining and maintaining the boundaries of these groups that cultural identities are constructed. Interestingly,

identification with a certain culture affects the person's behavior and the stronger the identification, the more closely the person follows its norms (Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002).

In the Iranian context, three types of cultural identity possess particular salience (Karimifard, 2012). The first one is National Identity originating from the Pre-Islamic Iranian civilization. The second one is Islamic Identity relating to the Post-Islamic Iran. And the third one is the Modern Identity resulting from the entry of modernity into Iran. These cultural identities constitute the main components of the Iranian identity. The heterogeneity of these components, however, has resulted in many social and political conflicts in the country, giving rise to the so-called Iranian identity crisis (Zahed, 2004).

Important and controversial as they are, these cultural identities have apparently not received proper attention in the realm of empirical investigation, being restricted for the most part to the theoretical domain. What seems to be missing, in particular, is perhaps an examination of these identity components from a cultural point of view, with an eye toward the important role of culture in shaping personality (Triandis & Suh, 2002). In order to fill this gap, the present study investigated the association between the cultural dimensions and these cultural identities and also examined whether any of these dimensions can predict the three cultural identities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Hofstede's Cultural Model**

Hofstede's (1980) cultural approach is based on empirical research and at the level of national cultures. A cultural model in this approach groups together the societal features which were empirically found to occur in combination along a dimension. By dimension he means "an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures" (1980, p.7). A score is then attributed to each country on each dimension and this way the differences among national cultures are measured.

His framework was developed using a large database collected by a multinational corporation (IBM) between 1967 and 1969 and again between 1971 and 1973 (Hofstede, 1980). Based on a country level factor analysis, he classified the original 40 countries along four dimensions of national cultures.

The four dimensions were: Power Distance (PD), Individualism vs. Collectivism (IC), Masculinity vs. Femininity (MF), and Uncertainty Avoidance (UA). In the 1980s, a fifth dimension 'Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation' (LSO) was added to the four, on the basis of research by Canadian psychologist Michael Harris Bond centered in the Far East (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). And, in the 2000s research by Bulgarian scholar Michael Minkov (2007) using data from the World Values Survey resulted in the addition of a sixth dimension, i.e. Indulgence vs. Restraint (IR). These dimensions are shortly explained (Hofstede, 2011):

1. PD is related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality. Although power and inequality are inevitable facts of any society, some are still more unequal than others. Accordingly, one way of distinguishing between nations can be based on how they tend to deal with these inequalities.
2. IC is related to the integration of individuals into primary groups. In individualistic cultures, everyone is expected to look after himself and his immediate family. In collectivist societies, however, people are integrated into cohesive in-groups, often extended families that continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.
3. MF concerns the division of emotional roles between women and men. It opposes *tough* masculine to *tender* feminine societies. In masculine societies, men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, caring, and concerned with the quality of life. In feminine societies, both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender.
4. UA involves the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future. It deals with a society's tolerance for ambiguity and is not the same as risk avoidance; Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize

the possibility of unstructured situations by strict behavioral codes, laws and rules, disapproval of deviant opinions.

5. LSO is related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past. Long-term oriented cultures show a pragmatic future-oriented perspective and underscore the values of thrift, perseverance, and adaptiveness. In short-term oriented cultures, on the other hand, a conventional historical short-term point of view prevails and immediate need gratification and respect for traditions are encouraged.
6. IR corresponds to the gratification versus control of basic human desires related to enjoying life. Its main correlates were found to be happiness, life control, and importance of leisure. The indulgence pole is characterized by a perception that one can act as one pleases and indulge in fun-related activities. At the restraint pole there is a perception that one's actions are restrained by social prohibitions and a feeling that enjoyment of leisurely activities are somewhat wrong and need to be regulated by strict social norms.

Since its introduction in 1980, a number of studies have applied this taxonomy of cultural dimensions for the prediction of various issues and have investigated its correlation with other measures. A noteworthy example is Hofstede and McCrae's (2004) work exploring the relationship between personality dimension scores and national culture dimension scores for thirty-three countries. This joint study revealed significant positive and negative correlations between each dimension and each trait. For example, 55% of country differences on Neuroticism can be explained by a combination of UA and MF. Hence, it was concluded that there exists a link between culture and personality.

### **Culture and Personality**

Ideas on personality and culture were first discussed in the 1920s (LeVine, 2001). A pioneer in highlighting the link between personality and culture was Sigmund Freud (Subba, 2007) whose 'critical-period hypothesis' associated early childrearing practices with adult personality.

What is today known as Psychoanalytic Anthropology stemmed from this Freudian hypothesis.

Early studies of the relationship between culture and personality mostly challenged the supposedly universal psychological statements and their main achievement was showing the influence of culture on these basic processes (Segall, Campbell, & Herskovits, 1966). Malinowski (1927), for instance, challenged the universality of Freud's Oedipus complex and argued, instead, for the existence of a "matrilineal complex" in some cultures in which boys show a repressed hatred for their mother's brother.

During and after World War II, this relationship was studied through the notion of 'national character' (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004). Back then, American anthropologists, including Alfred Kroeber, were asked by the government to help understand the psyche of the enemy nations, including Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union. An anthropological definition of *national character* was "Relatively enduring personality characteristics and patterns that are modal among the adult members of the society" (Inkeles & Levinson, 1969, p. 17).

One of the most significant contributions to the field of personality and culture came from Ruth Benedict (Subba, 2007). She viewed cultures as integrated wholes, or consistent patterns of thought and action, and shed light on the determining role of the personality of a culture in defining the individuals within it as successes, misfits, or outcasts. Her celebrated book *Patterns of Culture* (1934), which was based on fieldwork among native American tribes, indicated that any one culture incorporates but a tiny portion of the possible range of human behavior. In her introduction to the 1959 edition of *Patterns of Culture*, Mead described Benedict's view of human cultures as "personality writ large."

The other anthropologist who contributed immensely to this field was Margaret Mead (Subba, 2007). The essential idea proposed in her studies of Samoa and New Guinea was that childhood upbringing influences formation of adult personality. She also argued that much that

is regarded as biologically determined is in fact culturally determined (Mead, 1935).

Within psychology, Wilhelm Wundt, the father of experimental psychology, was a pioneer in highlighting the effect of culture on cognition (Keith, 2011). Proposing folk psychology in 1916, he argued that higher cognitive functions were affected by cultural practices, and that distinct cultures led to distinct cognitive processes (Norenzayan, Choi, & Peng, 2007). This prominent idea, that culture shapes mind, has been since supported by numerous scholars with the common explanation that culture provides a rather unchanging cognitive framework for the interpretation of stimuli and this framework is acquired during socialization (Soldner, 2013).

The body of research illustrating the significant effect of culture on very basic cognitive routines is not scarce (Soldner, 2013). Factors attributed to differences in cultural traditions have been observed in research areas as diverse as visual perception (e.g., Ishii, Tsukasaki, & Kitayama, 2009), cognition (e.g. Nisbett, 2003), emotions (e.g., Wierzbicka, 1994), self-construals (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1998), value structures (e.g., Fontaine, Poortinga, Delbeke, & Schwartz, 2008; Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997), and personality (e.g. De Raad et al., 2010).

### **Cultural Identity**

The study of the close connection between culture and personality shed light on the concepts illustrating this link. One of these concepts is 'cultural identity' (Hong et al., 2007). It can, in fact, be conceived of as a conceptual bridge between the psychology of the individual and the culture with which he/she identifies. Cultural identity refers to self-definition with reference to the groups such as family, religious community, and nation, to which individuals belong (Berry, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Phinney, 1990; Triandis, 1995). Constructs discussed under the umbrella of cultural identity include acculturation styles (Berry, 1980), individualism and collectivism (Triandis, 1995),

independent and interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990). Despite originating from research on immigrants and their descendents, this type of identity was proved to be applicable to non-immigrants as well (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Weisskirch, & Wang, 2010).

Being exposed to and acquiring different cultural traditions can lead to constructing multiple cultural identities (Hong et al., 2007). Depending on the changing needs of the moment and through dynamic processes, multicultural individuals choose between different cultural lenses to construct the reality. It should be minded, however, that learning a certain knowledge tradition does not necessarily entail identification with it. There is, therefore, a distinction between cultural knowledge and cultural identification or, in other words, the multicultural mind and the multicultural self. The example of short-term cultural travelers can clarify this point (Chiu & Chen, 2004). It is possible for tourists, international students, or expatriate workers to acquire the cultural knowledge in a foreign society and make use of the new knowledge traditions to manage their practices in that society, without identifying with these knowledge traditions.

Cultural identification has great impact both on people's perceptions and on their actions. When identification with a culture is strong, or when cultural identity is made salient, perceptions of the social world are filtered through the lens of culture (Hogg, 2001, 2003). That is, the person's perceptual focus shifts from the idiosyncratic characteristics of the self to the prototypical features of the culture. Furthermore, people who identify strongly with a culture are more likely to follow cultural norms (Jetten et al., 2002) and these norms have a more significant influence on their behavioral intentions than do personal attitudes (Terry & Hogg, 1996; Terry, Hogg, & White, 1999). For example, North Americans who strongly identify with North American culture are more individualist than are the weak identifiers (Jetten et al., 2002). Similarly, Indonesians who strongly identify with Indonesian culture are more collectivist than individuals who weakly identify with the culture (Hong et al., 2007).



### **Iranian Identity Components**

Three types of cultural identity, namely, national, religious, and western identities, are of particular significance in the Iranian context as they form the Iranian identity components (Karimifard, 2012). These constituent factors of Iranian identity emerge from three main cultural spheres: Persian, Islamic, and Western (Haghighat, 2012; Shahramnia & Tadayon, 2012; Zahed, 2004). National Identity, the first component of Iranian identity, has its roots in ancient Iran. The Samanid dynasty, as the first fully native dynasty to rule Iran, as well as the ancient Persian Empire, dating back to 2500 years ago, are regarded as the primary formers of Iranian national identity. The second component can be traced back to the Muslim conquest in the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century. Since the advent of the Safavid era, which offered Shiite Islam as the formal religion of the country, Islamic (Religious) Identity became one of the main constituents of Iranian identity. And the third is Modern (Western) Identity resulting from the encounter with the West and modernity. The Constitutional movement at the turn of the twentieth century was a turning point for Iranians to become familiar with modernity. The new cultural codes, resulting from the collision with the western culture, were mostly in contrast with the traditional culture of the country and hence the source of many political and social conflicts.

For the last two hundred years, the pendulum of the Iranian identity has swung between Persian, Islamic, and modern cultural aspects (Zahed, 2004). Such triple concept of national/Islamic/modern has provoked much controversy among modern Iranian intellectuals. More importantly, the relative weight to be given to each of these, somehow divergent, components of the Iranian identity has given rise to what is today referred to as the Iranian identity crisis (Ashraf, 1993; Haghighat, 2012; Mozaffari, 2014; Saleh, 2012).

This crisis can be discussed at two levels. One concerns the conflict-ridden juxtaposition of nationalism and Islamism which appeared with

the advent of Islam into Iran (Haghighat, 2012; Sarkouhi, 2007). At one pole of this duality are those who underscore a superior Iranian identity taking pride in being the heir of one of the largest empires and one of the brightest civilizations of the ancient world. By contrast, those gravitating towards the Islamic pole of their identity maintain that it was only during the post-Islamic age that Iran achieved its true glory and favor Iran's complete Islamization and elimination of its pre-Islamic traditions.

The second level of this identity crisis involves the clash between Western Identity (as a new inevitable identity component brought by the entrance of western modernity to Iran) with the combination of National and Islamic Identities (Hunter, 2014). Since the revolution and particularly in the recent decade, the state has tried to define Iranian identity as the reconciliation of the national and Islamic components and in contrast with the western component. The promotion of an Iranian/Islamic identity has been evident in the authoritative discourse, to use Bakhtin's (1981) term, of the state in recent years mostly along with taking an anti-western approach against the cultural hegemony and imperialism of the west.

A review of the empirical literature on Iranian identity reveals certain themes. One, constituting a big share of research in this field, is an investigation of ethnic identities (e.g. Goodarzi, 2004; Youssefi, 2001) and sometimes in relation to the national identity (e.g. Mirmohammadi, 1995; Moghaddasjafari et al., 2008). A second theme which includes a considerable body of research is exploring the impact of such factors as globalization (e.g. Adibi, YazdKasti, B, & Farahmand, 2008; Gholipour, 2005), media (e.g. Bahonar & Jafari, 2010; Shalchi, 2005), and cyberspace (e.g. Davran, 2002; Khalili, 2005) on Iranian identity or its components. Still, another theme involves the investigation of identity crisis (e.g. Arshad Fardi, 2002; Babaeifard, 2003; Moridi & Taghizadegan, 2007). Furthermore, an examination of the components or sources of Iranian identity in isolation – National Identity (e.g. Jahangiri & Mohini, 2010), Religious Identity (e.g. Kolahi, 2005), and Modern Identity (e.g. Mohammadi, 2000) – or altogether (e.g. Razazifar, 2000;

Sedigh & Hajyani, 2008) can be considered as another theme in this area of research.

Nevertheless, scant attention has been given to the investigation of Iranian identity components from a cultural point of view and, to our best knowledge, no study has explored the role of cultural factors in strengthening or weakening these identity components. Addressing this niche, the present study employed Hofstede's (2001) cultural framework for an examination of the components of Iranian identity.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The present study investigates the relationship between cultural dimensions and Iranian identity components and also examines whether any of these dimensions can predict the three identity components. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian identity components and the cultural dimensions?
2. Do the Iranian identity components predict the cultural dimensions?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The present study was conducted on 362 students studying at different universities in Mashhad, a city in northeastern Iran. The participants consisted of 134 male and 228 female undergraduate students aged between 18 and 39 years old (Mean = 22). They studied different majors including hard sciences (n = 210) and social sciences (n = 152). The participants were not chosen randomly but were selected based on accessibility and their willingness to cooperate.

### **Instrumentation**

To collect the required information, two instruments were administered to the sample: Cultural Dimensions Scale (CDS) (Saboori, Pishghadam,

Ghonsooli, & Hosseini, 2015) and Cultural Attachment Scale (CAS) (Pishghadam & Kamyabi, 2009).

### ***Cultural Dimensions Scale***

In order to measure the six cultural dimensions for the participants, CDS (Saboori et al., 2015) was utilized. Certain features of CDS prompted the researchers to choose it over Hofstede's Value Survey Module (VSM) for the purpose of this study. Firstly, it was designed to be used at the individual-level of analysis whereas VSM, according to Hofstede (2001), can only be used at the national-level. Secondly, CDS is an emic scale particularly designed and appropriate for the Iranian context. Thirdly, VSM was developed, in the first place, to be answered by International Business Machines (IBM) employees; hence, it mostly contains work-related questions and, unlike CDS, is not quite suitable for general use purpose.

CDS consisted of 26 four-point Likert scale items, ranging from (1) 'strongly agree' to (4) 'strongly disagree', with the reliability reported by the developers to be 0.79. The scoring of some of the items needed to be reversed as the items included statements on both poles of each dimension. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient estimated for this study was equal to .85.

### ***Cultural Attachment Scale***

The cultural identities of the participants were assessed through the application of the CAS. This scale was designed by Pishghadam and Kamyabi (2009) in order to measure an individual's attachment to their home culture. They validated the scale employing Rasch measurement and found it to be uni-dimensional. CAS has been employed successfully in several studies (e.g. Pishghadam & Sadeghi, 2011a, 2011b; Shahi, 2012).

This questionnaire consists of 36 items with a reported reliability of 0.85. It is a four-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (4) "strongly agree". The scoring of some of the items ought to be reversed due to having both positive and negative statements. The overall

reliability for the instrument estimated by means of Cronbach alpha using the data in this study is .84 (see Appendix 2).

Later, Pishghadam, Hashemi, and Bazri (2013) revalidated CAS and extracted its underlying factors via Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). They found five underlying factors: Religious attachment, Western attachment, Iranian attachment, Cultural attachment, and Artistic attachment. With regard to the aforementioned components of Iranian identity, only the first three of them are of concern for the purpose of this study.

National attachment was made up of items which measured appreciation of the historical and literary heritage of Iran and the tendency towards Iranian customs and national traditions (Pishghadam et al, 2013). Items associating with common perceptions of being religious, taking part in religious ceremonies and holding religious rites constituted religious attachment. And, western attachment included items measuring participants' orientation towards different aspects of the western culture (such as western music, food, language, clothing, and names) as well as believing in the superiority of the western culture.

### **Data Collection**

A number of 362 university students filled out the CDS and CAS. The questionnaires were given to them in two sheets of paper and it took, on average, 20 minutes for them to complete the two scales. It took approximately 8 months to collect the necessary data.

### **Data Analysis**

The responses were then entered into and analyzed with SPSS (version 18). The dependent variables were made up of National Identity (NI), Religious Identity (RI), and Western Identity (WI) and the independent variables were Power Distance (PD), Individualism vs. Collectivism (IC), Masculinity vs. Femininity (MF), Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation (LSO), and Indulgence vs. Restraint (IR). To investigate the relationship between the dependent and

independent variables, multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) was conducted. MCA may also be referred to as homogeneity analysis or principal component analysis for nominal data. Since MCA is an explanatory data technique for the analysis of categorical data (Benzecri, 1992), it was necessary to re-codify the CDS and CAS scoring. Thus, low scores (up to percentile 33), medium scores (from percentiles 33 up to 66), and high scores (percentiles 66 and higher) were achieved. Thereafter, multiple regression analysis (MRA) was conducted to find out which of the cultural dimensions best predict cultural identities.

## RESULTS

### Cultural Identities and Cultural Dimensions

In order to answer the first research question, namely, investigate the relationship between cultural dimensions and cultural identities, MCA was conducted. Further, to answer the second research question, i.e. to find out which cultural dimensions can be considered as predictors of cultural identity, MRA was performed. To start with, Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the factors related to the two administered instruments: CDS and CAS.

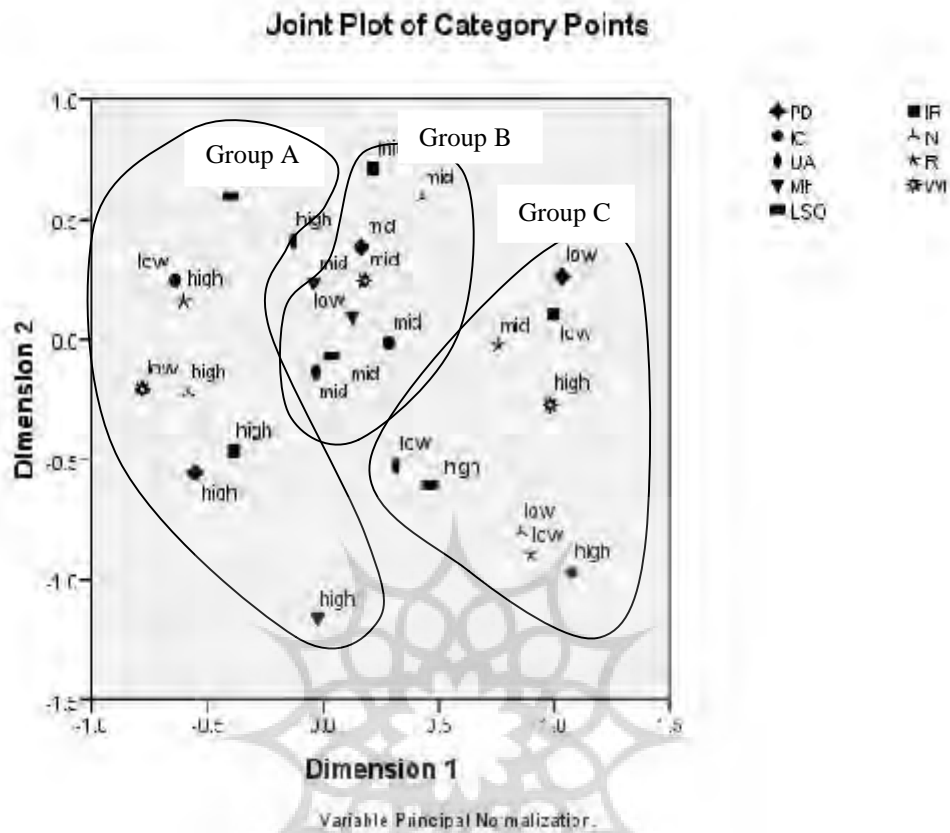
**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics for CDS and CAS

|            |                              | N   | Mean   | Standard deviation |
|------------|------------------------------|-----|--------|--------------------|
| <b>CDS</b> | Power Distance               | 362 | 3.0269 | .40057             |
|            | Individualism/Collectivism   | 362 | 2.1829 | .42659             |
|            | Masculinity/Femininity       | 362 | 2.5657 | .37533             |
|            | Uncertainty Avoidance        | 362 | 2.7341 | .44844             |
|            | Long /Short-term orientation | 362 | 2.4365 | .41580             |
|            | Indulgence/Restraint         | 362 | 3.1471 | .48411             |
| <b>CAS</b> | National Identity            | 362 | 3.3669 | .48160             |
|            | Religious Identity           | 362 | 2.1113 | .44621             |
|            | Western Identity             | 362 | 3.0734 | .66253             |

### Multiple Correspondence Analysis

Figure 1 displays the results of the MCA for the CDS and CAS inventories. The plot demonstrates the relationships between the variables. The analysis presented a 75% level of adjustment, which manifests the accuracy rate of categorization, thus highlighting three groupings. The row and column points which seem to be close together share identical profiles; whereas the ones which are placed far from each other hold different profiles (Doey & Kurta, 2011). In accordance, close variable points are circled and labeled from Group A to Group C in order to simplify the interpretation (Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2005).





**Figure 1.** Joint description of CDS and CAS

Figure 1 demonstrates that Group A includes people with high scores in Religious Identity, National Identity, PD, MF, UA, and IR, in association with low scores in Western Identity, IC, and LSO. Group B represents people with medium scores in National Identity, Western Identity, PD, IC, MF, UA, LSO and IR in relation to low scores in MF. Finally, Group C stands for people with high scores in Western Identity, IC, and LSO, along with low scores in Religious Identity, National Identity, PD, UA, IR.

### Multiple Regression Analysis



This section presents the results obtained from MRA using cultural dimensions as predictors of cultural identities. Prior to conducting MRA, correlations between the dependent and independent variables were checked. Table 2 shows the results.

**Table 2:** Correlations between dependent and independent variables

|    | PD          | IC          | MF        | UA         | LSO         | IR         |
|----|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|
| NI | .163<br>**  | -<br>.156** | .05<br>4  | .071       | -.094       | .257<br>** |
| RI | .261<br>**  | -<br>.307** | -<br>.048 | .176<br>** | -<br>.248** | .192<br>** |
| WI | -<br>.257** | .211<br>**  | -<br>.020 | -.043      | .077        | -.071      |

As can be seen in the table, significant relationships were found between cultural dimensions and cultural identities. First, National Identity was found to have a significant and negative correlation with IC as well as significant and positive correlations with PD and IR (ranging from .15 to .25). Moreover, Religious Identity turned out to have significant correlations with 5 out of the 6 cultural dimensions (ranging from .17 to .30). It had significant and positive correlations with PD, UA, and IR and significant negative correlations with IC and LSO. Finally, Western Identity had a significant and negative correlation with PD and also a significant and positive correlation with IC (.25 and .21). It is noteworthy that the highest and lowest correlations were those with IC; the highest was between IC and Religious Identity (.30) whereas the lowest was between this cultural dimension and National Identity (.15).

#### **Prediction of National Identity**

As evident in Table 3, there is just one significant model ( $F = 6.2$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with IR as the sole predictor. It also shows that  $R^2$  equals .09 indicating that, in this regression model, the scores of IR account for 9% of the variance in National Identity.

**Table 3:** Coefficients: Dependent variable: National identity

**Table 3:** Coefficients: Dependent variable: National identity

| Model | Predictors | R   | R <sup>2</sup> | Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> | F    | Std. Error of the Est. | P    | B    |
|-------|------------|-----|----------------|-------------------------|------|------------------------|------|------|
| 1     | IR         | .30 | .095           | .080                    | 6.20 | .46203                 | .000 | .219 |

The standard error of estimate is .46 which shows the high accuracy of the prediction. Moreover, Beta coefficients reveal that there is a significant positive correlation between National Identity and IR ( $B = .21, p < .01$ ). Hence, having a high score in IR is the best predictor of this component of Iranian identity, which means people with dominant National Identity tend to be relatively indulgent in their lives.

### *Prediction of Religious Identity*

Table 4 reveals that there is only one significant model ( $F = 15.85, p < .01$ ) with four predictors: PD, IC, UA, and LSO. It also indicated that PD ( $B = .19, p < .01$ ) and UA ( $B = .12, p < .01$ ) have significant positive correlations with Religious Identity whereas IC ( $B = -.20, p < .01$ ) and LSO ( $B = -.20, p < .01$ ) have significant negative correlations with this cultural identity.

**Table 4:** Coefficients: Dependent variable: Religious identity

| Model | Predictors | R   | R <sup>2</sup> | Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> | F     | Std. Error of the Est. | P    | B     |
|-------|------------|-----|----------------|-------------------------|-------|------------------------|------|-------|
| 1     | PD         | .46 | .21            | .19                     | 15.85 | .59                    | .000 | .197  |
|       | IC         |     |                |                         |       |                        |      | -.205 |
|       | UA         |     |                |                         |       |                        |      | .129  |
|       | LSO        |     |                |                         |       |                        |      | -.208 |

As evident in Table 4, R<sup>2</sup> of the model is .21 which means, in this regression model, 21% of the variance can be predicted from the independent variables. In other words, these four cultural dimensions can altogether predict 21% of the variance in Religious Identity. Furthermore, the standard error of estimate displays the precision of a prediction model. The smaller the standard error of estimate is, the more reliable the prediction will be. The standard error of estimate is .59 which alludes to the high accuracy of the prediction. In addition, Beta coefficients demonstrate that LSO is the strongest predictor of Religious

Identity. With small difference with LSO in the power of prediction, IC and PD occupy the next two ranks. And, UA turned out to be the last predictor. Altogether, this regression model implies that people with powerful Religious Identity are likely to be short-term oriented and rather collectivist, with a belief in a higher power distance, and with higher avoidance of uncertainty.

### *Prediction of Western Identity*

Table 5 indicates a single significant model ( $F = 6.35$ ,  $p < .01$ ) holding PD and IC as the predictors. Based on the table,  $R^2$  equals .09, which means 9% of the variance in Western Identity can be predicted by PD and IC.

**Table 5:** Coefficients: Dependent variable: Western identity

| Model | Predictors | R    | R <sup>2</sup> | Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> | F    | Std. Error of the Est. | P    | B             |
|-------|------------|------|----------------|-------------------------|------|------------------------|------|---------------|
| 1     | PD<br>IC   | .311 | .097           | .082                    | 6.35 | .42760                 | .000 | -.234<br>.163 |

Besides, the standard error of estimate is .42, which, as with the previous two analyses, confirms the high accuracy of prediction. Regarding Beta coefficients, the relationship between WI and PD is significantly negative ( $B = -.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ) while the one for IC is significantly positive ( $B = .16$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with PD appearing as a stronger predictor for this type of identity than IC. Altogether, it is implied that having low scores in PD and high scores in IC best predicts high scores in Western Identity. In other words, people with salient western identity are likely to be more individualistic with a belief in lower power distance.

## **DISCUSSION**

The present study attempted first to explore the relationship between Hofstede's (1980, 2001) six cultural dimensions and the three cultural identities that constitute the Iranian identity components. Based on the results, there exists a link between culture and identity. The joint description of CDS and CAS revealed a three-group pattern, an overall

look at which vividly illustrates the negative association between Western Identity, IC, and LSO, on the one hand, and Religious Identity, National Identity, PD, MF, UA, and IR, on the other. This implies that people with more salient Western Identity are probably more individualistic and more easily adapt to new circumstances. They tend to have weaker Religious and National Identities, are less likely to accept unequal distribution of power, emotional gender roles are probably less distinct for them, tend to be more tolerant of unorthodox situations, and lead less indulgent lives. Needless to say, the reverse is also true.

There are some lines of explanations for this finding. To reiterate, the spread of the western culture in Iran at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, brought about new cultural codes in the society which were mostly in contrast with the traditional (national and religious) culture of the country and provoked many political and social conflicts continuing to the present time (Shahramnia & Tadayon, 2012). This clearly justifies the negative association between Western Identity and National/Religious Identities. Furthermore, the fact that people who are relatively independent from in-groups (individualists) tend to be less dependent on powerful others too (Hofstede et al., 2010) can explain the negative association between IC and PD. Similarly, the negative correlation between LSO and IR confirms Hofstede et al. (2010) crossing the two dimensions among ninety countries and finding the most common pattern to be high indulgence plus short-term orientation.

The second goal of this study was to examine whether any of the cultural dimensions can predict the Iranian identity components. As for National Identity, IR was found to be its sole predictor. This implies that people who are proud of their country and have a strong feeling of nationalism are likely to lead indulgent and happy lives. This finding accords with Morrison, Tay, and Diener (2011) discovering a strong correlation between national satisfaction (satisfaction with one's country) and subjective well-being.

Religious Identity was found to be predicted by the four dimensions of PD, IC, UA, and LSO. That is to say, people with strong Religious Identity tend to be acceptant of unequal distribution of power,

collectivist, intolerant of ambiguous situations, and short-term oriented. This finding is to be discussed with regard to certain features of religions which have respective correspondence with the nature of these cultural dimensions.

LSO was found to be the strongest (negative) predictor of Religious Identity. This is in line with Hofstede (2011) placing the Islamic religion (along with Judaism and Christianity) on the short-term pole of this dimension due to its claim in offering universal guidelines as well as unchangeable values and beliefs that do not depend on the circumstances. These features of emphasis on the traditionalism and unwillingness to change can explain the bond between short-term orientation and Religious Identity.

That PD turned out to be the next predictor of Religious Identity supports Taylor's (2003) finding this dimension to be the highest correlating cultural dimension with different religions. The possible justification is that, on the one hand, PD alludes to the acceptance of a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification and, on the other hand, religions by their very nature of acknowledging a supreme being and a higher power are hierarchical (Milner, Fodness, & Speece, 1993). Still, this applies to some religions (such as Catholicism and Islam) more than the others due to their more severe stratification of divine authority and the hierarchical order of obedience they adhere to (Basabe & Ros, 2005).

The third (negative) predictor of Religious Identity was IC. A simple explanation could be collectivism refers to the integration into strong in-groups and religions are one of the most important group makers in the society that, by sorting out the difference between good and bad, strive to create and delineate cohesive moral circles (Hofstede et al., 2010). In fact, due to the high level of emotioncy (Pishghadam, Adamson, & Shayesteh, 2013; Pishghadam, Shayesteh, & Jajarmi, in press) for religion in the Iranian culture which displays signs of collectivism, this association is justifiable.

UA was found to be the last predictor of this type of identity. It could be justifiable considering the role of religion as one of the main ways of alleviating uncertainty and the anxiety it creates (Hofstede et al., 2010). Religions do it through helping followers accept the inevitable uncertainties of life and sometimes offering the ultimate certainty of a life after death. Another line of explanation is the association of Islam (as opposed to Buddhism, for instance) with strong uncertainty-avoidance due to the absolute view it holds in having the only Truth and of all the others being wrong (Hofstede, 1998).

Finally, Western Identity was predicted by PD (negatively) and IC. This is quite justifiable considering the fact that strong identification with a culture results in following its cultural norms (Jetten et al., 2002). For the Iranians, the US and UK are probably the most prominent representatives of the western culture. A cursory comparison between Iran's dimensional scores and those of these western countries reveals that the biggest differences lie in IC, Iran being much more collectivist, and next in PD, the distribution of power being noticeably less equal in Iran than in the other two countries (Hofstede, 2001). Hence, those Iranians who have more salient western identity tend to be more individualistic and less acceptant of unequal distribution of power in society.

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

To conclude, the present paper addressed the relationship between cultural dimensions and Iranian identity components and added to the body of research on the effect of culture on personality. The results revealed the positive and negative associations between the cultural dimensions and identities as well as the predictive power of the cultural dimensions for each cultural identity. The findings of this study have important implications for educational policy makers with regard to the aforementioned Iranian identity crisis.

To reiterate, Iranian identity is made up of three rather divergent components and not all of them are favored in different contexts. Here is where the power of culture in influencing identity comes to the front. An indirect way of strengthening a particular identity component is through emphasizing and working on the associating or the predicting cultural dimension. A simple example can elaborate on this issue.

The authoritative discourse of the country strives to promote a national/Islamic identity and oppress the western identity component (Mohammadpur, Karimi, & Mahmoodi, 2013). As a centralized system, the educational system is accordingly set to achieve this goal and these cultural predictors can contribute to accomplishing this policy. As the results indicated, high PD and low IC turned out to be significant predictors of both high Religious and low Western Identities. Therefore, by implicitly educating and bringing up children to be collectivist and acceptant of high power distance it is possible to increase the likelihood of the salience of their Religious Identity and at the same time the fadeaway of their Western Identity. Hence, through socialization in family, educational settings, etc. it might be possible to enhance the favorable identity components and weaken the unfavorable ones from the beginning. This, in turn, would help cope with this crisis.

Results of this study should be interpreted in light of some limitations. First, the participants were all university students. Due to this restricted sampling, caution must be exercised before the results of the present study are generalized to other contexts. Future research is advised to replicate this study in other settings. Another shortcoming is that age was not considered as a variable; hence, further research can be carried out in order to see whether similar results will be obtained for different age ranges. Last but not least, to find the causal relationships between the variables of this study, further research applying SEM or Loglinear modelling (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991) is strongly suggested.

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