

Religion and Communication
A Study of Hinduism, Buddhism and
Christianity

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Abstract

The tenets of three religions – Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity – are examined for explicit or implicit evidence of individualist/collectivist value orientations. In the Asian culture, with Hinduism and Buddhism as representative religions, there is evidence of far more pronounced religion/culture congruence than in the United States where Christianity is used as a representative religion. The influence of cultural factors, such as scientific knowledge, the media, and theological discourse, are proposed as key considerations in a deeper understanding of the dynamic culture/religion interface. Future researchers are urged to explore fully the effect of religiosity on acceptance and expression of individualist/collectivist values.

Introduction

Research on cultural values often focuses on individualist/collectivist value orientations and how people from different cultures reflect and enact values from these different orientations (Triandis, 1990; 1993; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Far too little attention has been given to the major determinants of the values that characterize a given culture. We contend that an examination of specific religions provides insights into religion as one potentially powerful source of values that become manifest in values espoused by members of the culture, in values judged desirable in a given culture, and in cultural attributions of value preferences. Ours is an exploratory analysis which can provide what Bowers (1963) calls a pre-scientific function insofar as the conclusions we draw can shape hypotheses for future empirical investigations of the religion/cultural values linkage.

Communication, verbal and nonverbal, is a primary means for individuals in any culture interact with one another as well as with members of other cultures. Guiding one's communication is one or more belief systems which influence behavioral choices. From the first recognition of human cognition to the present, the world has been challenged to appreciate the impact and control, both negative and positive, religion maintains over people's lives (Bradley, 1963). Negative actions associated with religious beliefs can be found in the media all over the world: Three young boys killed in their home in Belfast, Ireland, all because of religious conflict. Countries have been divided. Newly formed countries have been established, such as in 1947, when a new country, Pakistan, was formed as a result of religious war. Even the United States was settled by a group of individuals from England so they freely could practice their chosen religion.

However, cultures have the potential to influence religious interpretations, values, and understanding at the same time. Too often, religion and culture have been studied in isolation thus ignoring an interplay that promises to enrich both empirical study and theoretical inquiry.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the tenets of three different religions address, either explicitly or implicitly, individualist/collectivist value orientations. To this end we will briefly explain individualist, collectivist, and mixed-value orientations; discuss the main features of three religions—Buddhism and Hinduism which are traditionally associated with eastern cultures and Christianity which is traditionally associated with western cultures; and explore the relationship of religion and cultural values as evidenced in these three major world religions.

At the core of major religions is the expression of values to guide human action. Smith (1978, pp.16-20) summarizes focal points for several world religions: (1) Christianity: "Do unto others..."; (2) Judaism: "What the Lord doth require of these: Only to do justly and to love mercy, and to work humbly with thy God"; (3) Islam: Man gives his substance "to kinsmen and orphans, the needy, the traveler, beggars..."; (4) Buddhism: boundless heart toward all beings; (5) Hinduism: ... "judge pleasure or pain everywhere by 'looking on his neighbor as himself'"; (6) Confucianism: "Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you." The collectivist values expressed in these religious principles are striking. Some cultures (e.g., United States) do not develop a primarily collectivist orientation reflective of these religious mandates while others do (India and Japan). When cultural value orientation is factored into the equation along with religious beliefs, and specifically the intensity of those beliefs, the congruence between cultural values and religion can be assessed. Research on cultural value preferences is steadily progressing beyond the focus on conceptual distinctions to a fuller consideration of the genesis of values in cultures (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1992).

Individualism-Collectivism

In developing the theory of individualism-collectivism, Triandis (1990) contends that individualism and collectivism shape cultural behavior across world cultures more than other behavioral dimensions. Indeed, this theoretical perspective has spawned a line of research that lends some credence to the claim. However, the sharp demarcation has created a dichotomy that does not necessarily accurately mirror the value preferences of a given culture. In fact, there is increasing evidence that a complex and perhaps a subtle interplay of individualism and collectivism better represent value preferences.

Recently, Triandis (1993) concluded "individualism and collectivism can co-exist and simply emphasize a culture depending upon the situation" (p. 162). Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) noted:

[The dichotomy first] Leads us to overlook the values that inherently were both individual and collectivist interests. Second, the dichotomy ignores values that foster the goals of collectivist other than the in-group (e.g., pro-social values). Third, the dichotomy promotes the mistaken assumption that individualist and collectivist values each form coherent syndromes that are opposed to one another. It fails to recognize that the subtypes of individualist-collectivist values sometimes do not vary together and are sometimes not opposed (p.151).

It is increasingly evident that individualism-collectivism as a solitary construct is inadequate in explaining cultural differences in social behavior across the diverse cultures of the world. One way to improve the effectiveness of this construct in evaluating culture differences may be the inclusion of a variety of social and culture factors, which contribute to the individualist or collectivist interests. For example, one study has concluded heavy television viewing contributed to a preference of individualist values (Kang, Kapoor, & Wolfe, 1995). In addition to television viewing, several other social and cultural structures, including religion, can be investigated as contributing to individualist-collectivist tendencies in a specific culture.

Hinduism and Buddhism

India and China, both rated as underdeveloped and collectivist countries by Triandis (1990, 1993), have several unique cultural patterns which may have originated as a result of the Hindu and Buddhist religions which predominate in those cultures respectively. Making transparent some of the important features of Hinduism and Buddhism may prove them to be powerful influences on at least some of the collectivist values and behavior in a given culture.

A discussion of the historical development of Hinduism and Buddhism provides the backdrop for understanding the two religions and for proposing how

each contributes to value preference. The national form of Indian religion is Hinduism. The Aryan race developed religious Scriptures such as "The Vedas" and "The Upanishads" (Chen, 1968). The Vedic seers were convinced that beneath the obvious form of existence - - the logic of "is" and "is not" - - lies an undivided wholeness which is the ultimate ground of the being and energy of life (Koller, 1982). The Upanishads' discovery of the inner self of a person is identical with the ultimate ground of existence (Koller, 1982).

Believers of the Hindu religion hold strong religious beliefs. The following statement exhibits the strong connection between the relationship of individualism and collectivism and religious support. In Mahabharata it is noted, "For the sake of family, one may abandon an individual. For the sake of village one may abandon a family. For the country's sake one may abandon a village. For the sake of the soul one may abandon the world" (Mahadevan, 1975, p. 202).

However, Hinduism is not a monolithic entity; instead it is a family of religions with the main philosophy centering around Brahman (supreme power), Jeeva (living being), Maya (ignorance). The soul is believed to be a living being and is a part of the Great soul of Supreme power. The aim of the individual is to merge the soul in Supreme power, thereby assisting the individual in overcoming their ego. Only after the extinction of the ego can an individual be selfless and care for other living beings. This collectivist oriented mindset allows the individual to exhibit less individualist behaviors and portray collectivist ideals (Mahadevan, 1975).

In theory, Hinduism is very simple, perhaps being the simplest of all the religions. Hindus believe in merging the 'self' with the Supreme power known as Brahma. The sages or religious pundits have arrived at one central concept: The physical world is temporal; and, all peoples' worldly desires are doomed to frustration, which is the cause of all human sufferings. Mahadevan (1975, p.190) noted, "The mind is said to be of two kinds, the pure and the impure: the impure (mind) is associated with desire, and the pure is devoid of desire. The mind alone is the cause of the bondage and release of men; as attached to objects it leads to bondage and as free from objects it leads to release. A second underlying belief is real peace can be achieved by controlling one's desires and by focusing the mind on one enduring ultimate reality, God. The sublime objective of Hinduism is to achieve union with God, the eternal spirit that Hindus call Brahma, which should not be confused with Brahm the (god) or Brahmin the (priest). Mahadevan (1975, p. 190) stated, "Just as the bee which drinks the honey does not desire the scent, the mind which is ever absorbed in the Nada (sound OM) does not desire the objects." Individuals can transcend their limitations. "This self is like honey to all creatures. All creatures are like honey to the self. And that person in this self, who consists of immortality, that indeed is he who is that self. This is the immortal. This is Brahma. This is the All" (Mahadevan, p. 148). The ultimate union between a

mortal and God is achieved not only through ritual, but also through the common ideals of Hindu ethics: purity, self-control, detachment, truth, non-violence, charity, and deep compassion towards all living creatures. Hindus believe one who loses desire, attains Brahman “when all the desires which abide in his heart are cast away, then the mortal becomes immortal. Here he attains Brahman” (Mahadevan, 1975, p. 72).

The soul in a living being is a part of the great soul of the supreme power. To merge the soul with the supreme power is the goal of an individual; however, for an individual to achieve his or her goal, one must overcome his or her ego. It is believed that only after the extinction of one’s ego can the individual achieve selflessness and care for the other living beings. Hinduism has one God, yet has 330 million gods. Some Hindus regard the 330 million gods as separate deities; many philosophic Hindus merely look upon them as the infinite aspect of Brahman. In this apparent chaos there is still the sense of unity with one. The reasons for this unity have been explained by the renowned philosopher and retired President of India, the late Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1954). In his book, *The Hindu View of Life*, he writes “every man has a right to choose that form of belief and worship, which appeals to him, Hinduism is not a sect but a fellowship of all who accept the law of right and earnestly seek for the truth” (Welles, 1957, p. 11). In practice, Hinduism is so complex that on the street corners of the cities and on by-paths of the villages all over India, countless gurus or religious teachers, sit for hours each day, surrounded by disciples and profoundly interested bystanders endlessly dissecting and discussing the subtleties of the Hindu religion.

The Hindus may well be the most religious-minded people on earth (Welles, 1957). Religion not only determines the Hindu social structure, but is the main theme or focal point of nearly all Indian literature, and the major influence in areas of art, drama, and motion pictures. Religious rituals influence virtually every act of the orthodox Hindu’s daily life, be it getting up in the morning, bathing, eating, or making love. Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Religion is not like a house or a cloak, which can be changed at will. It is more an integral part of one’s self, than one’s body. Religion is the tie that binds one to one’s Creator and whilst the body perishes, as it has to, religion persists even after death” (Welles, 1957, p. 16). Westerners are often drawn to Hinduism and intrigued by its philosophy and its mysticism. To the Indian, Hinduism has a deeper attraction which enfolded them and solidified their participation and membership among the faithful or draws them back if they have strayed. The philosophy and mysticism can be found in the Hindu Scriptures, the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita. Within these three religious books, on which the Hindu religion is based, one discovers the deeply rooted philosophy of immortality of the soul, cycles of rebirth and the theory of Karma (in which deeds determine fate of one’s lives to come), self-control and ignorance. In summary, Hinduism instills a deep commitment by which its

followers strive to live a life which is more consistent with behaviors and values that are closely associated with collectivist ideals versus individualist ideals.

Hinduism's survival can be traced to the social structure which engulfs its believers. Its resilience results from adjusting to the changing needs of the times. The Hindu religion today rests on eternal spiritual truths (e.g. the immanence and transcendence of God and the divinity of the human soul) and draws nourishment from these truths, but allows the greatest freedom of thoughts for its members. Hinduism has never tried to confine or limit the human mind to any particular belief or dogma, nor does it persecute people who may hold radically different views. The non-followers of Hinduism have had as much freedom to propagate and practice their material creeds as the followers of Vedanta. Although Lord Buddha was known to have criticized and condemned what he deemed to be the evils of Hinduism of his day, he was still worshipped as if he were the like incarnation of God.

Buddhism has emerged from Hinduism and evolved to become one of the most followed religions of the world. It has a very strong following in India, China, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines as well as numerous other Asian countries. Buddhism began as a branch of Hinduism in the sixth century BC with many of its ideals being shared with Hindus. However, it is not just another form of Hinduism, but rather maintains its own unique identity. Buddhism advocates a system of human conduct based primarily on rationality and relying very little on the supernatural which is in contrast to Hinduism.

Buddhism as a religion was founded by a man who was born the son of a king in a small North Indian State named Nepal. As a young prince, Gautama was provided with every pleasure in life. Yet, all these worldly pleasures provided him with complete not satisfactory answers to his questions; questions which concerned such items as what were the causes of all the disease, death, and sufferings of the world. In the hope of finding answers to his many unanswered questions, at the age of 29, the young prince left the safety of his home and for the next six years lived an ascetic lifestyle. After he achieved "enlightenment," Budha spent the next forty-five years traveling all over Northern India, sharing his knowledge while at the same time adding converts to the Buddhist religion.

Comparing and contrasting Hinduism and Buddhism brings to the foreground issues that are likely to mediate the influence of individualism-collectivism on value preferences. We propose a brief lexicon of terms to illustrate how Hinduism and Buddhism, though clearly linked, are distinct.

Cycles of Rebirths: Cycles of rebirths is a belief in the Hindu religion that the soul enters into and takes on human form after approximately 8,400,000 births. Life starts from the insect and proceeds to quadrupeds. "Hindus hold a strong belief that to proceed from a selfish person and enter into a transmigratory life, the

person who becomes devoid of knowledge, with control over the mind and ever impure reached that place, whence they are not born again” (Mahadevan, 1975, p. 63).

Karma: Karma symbolizes the cosmic law of cause and effect by which virtuous conduct is rewarded and effects future reincarnations, and bad conduct can lead to retribution.

Ignorance: The Hindu religion implies that Maya (or illusion) keeps Atman (or soul) separate from Brahm, the supreme power. The real problem is not the physical world with its karmic cycles of life and death, as well as cause and effect. Obstacles are created by the subjective constructs found in the world that lead us to understand it in those terms. Therefore, the enlightened one finds freedom in meditation and conquering the individual ego through ascetic practices. The teachings of Upanishad states “remaining in the midst of ignorance, wise in themselves and considering themselves learned, fools go round and round, staggering to and fro, like blind men lead by one, who too, is blind” (Mahadevan, 1975, p. 60).

Self-control: Instead of stressing self, as within the Hindu religion, Buddhism places emphasis on self-control. Buddha believed the path of wisdom lies in conquering and controlling the appetites and passions of the flesh. “Buddha went on to declare anger, drunkenness, obstinacy, bigotry, deception, envy, self-praise, disparaging others, superciliousness and evil intentions constitute uncleanness; not verily the eating of flesh” (Stryk, 1968, p. 50). Buddha noted that for the general man “...sensuality of all kinds is enervating. The sensual man is a slave of his passions and pleasure seeking is degrading and vulgar. But to satisfy the necessities of life is not evil. To keep the body in good health is a duty, for otherwise we shall not be able to trim that lamp of wisdom, and keep our mind strong and clear” (Stryk, 1968, p. 51).

Buddha, while agreeing with Hindus on these concepts and objectives, disagreed with the methods by which the objectives were to be achieved. His experiments with violent austerity convinced him of the spectacular mortification of the body practiced by many Hindu ascetics of this time were vain and useless. Buddha preferred what he identified as the “Middle Way,” or a practice which emphasized a balance between asceticism and self indulgence. He believed the wise man avoided both these extremes in a life of calm detachment. The concept of man’s middle path journey is reinforced by Buddha when he noted, “All mortification is vain so long as self remains, so long as self continues to lust after either worldly or heavenly pleasures. But he in himself has become extinct, is free

from lust; he will desire neither worldly nor heavenly pleasures, and the satisfaction of his natural wants will not defile him.” (Stryk, 1968, p. 50).

In addition, Buddha disapproved of the Hindu caste distinction believing all men were equal in spiritual potential. In accordance with the ideals of collectivism, one’s belief as associated with the Buddhist religion, believers are equal and all possess good qualities. These strong ideals are further reinforced and as noted in Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada’s Bhagavad-Gita text when it was written, “the Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Fearlessness, purification of one’s existence, cultivation of spiritual knowledge, charity; self-control, performance of sacrifice, study of the Vedas, austerity, simplicity, non violence, truthfulness, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, aversion to faultfinding, compassion for all living entities ... these transcendental qualities, O son of Bharata, belong to godly men endowed with divine nature” (Prabhupada, 1984, p. 521). It is always believed “those who are free from false prestige, illusion and false association, who understand the eternal, who are done with material lust, who are free from the dualities of happiness and distress and who, unbewildered, know how to surrender unto the Supreme Person, attain to that eternal kingdom” (Prabhupada, 1984, p. 503).

Buddha developed his doctrine focusing around four Noble Truths which are identified as: (1) Suffering is universal. Lucien Stryk noted that Buddha taught “he who recognizes the existence of suffering, its cause its remedy, and its cessation has fathomed the four noble truths. He will walk in the right path” (1968, p. 51). (2) The cause of suffering is craving or selfish desire. (3) The extinction of all desires, resentments and selfishness caused by identification with one’s separate ego is called “Nirvana,” a liberating state of mind and (4) Dharma, the “Eight Fold Path.” A person achieves peace when “right views act as the torch to light his way. Right aims will be his guide. Right words will be his dwelling place on the road.” (Stryk, 1968, p. 51-52).

Buddhism is centered on three main principles: Moral Conduct, Mind Training and Wisdom. These three main principles are further explained as: Moral Conduct is grounded in the concept of love and compassion to achieve one’s needs. Moral Conduct is further subdivided into three main areas: First, Right Speech which addresses the issue of abstention from telling lies, back biting, slander and from talk that may bring about hatred, enmity, disunity, and disharmony among individuals (Walpola, 1959). Buddha taught “The kingdom of Truth will be preached upon earth; it will spread and righteousness, goodwill and peace will reign among mankind” (Stryk, 1968, p. 53). Next, Right Action asks the individual to engage in an action which avoids destruction of or injury of life and property. Buddha’s insistence of non-violence was illustrated in his writing, “him I call indeed a Brahmana, who without hurting any creatures, whether feeble or strong, does not kill nor cause slaughter” (Stryk, 1968, p. 64). Finally, Right Livelihood,

which asks the person to engage in a profession that is honorable, blameless and involves no harm or injury to others. Without Moral Conduct, a Buddhist feels spiritual understanding cannot be achieved. These edits clearly demonstrate the tendency to live their life in a collectivist rather than an individualist manner.

The second principal, Mind Training, is further subdivided and based on three areas: Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Right Effort is the energy and strong desire to get a job. Right Mindfulness is awareness of one's feelings, ideas and behaviors. By achieving this state, the believer remains alert and in proper control of one's actions.

The third area, "right concentration," is achieved through the practice of meditation. This is a form of mind training in which thought is persuaded to die down and a tranquil 'one pointedness' is encouraged and usually accompanied by feelings of joy and well being. Just as verses in the Bible guide Christians in their faith; those who follow Buddha's teachings are guided by verses such as, "Happy is he who has overcome all selfishness, happy is he who has attained peace, happy is he who has found the truth. Self is a fever, self is a transient vision, a dream; but truth is wholesome, truth is sublime, truth is everlasting" (Stryk, 1968, p. 52). These feelings of tranquillity are then allowed to dissipate away so all that remains is a clear transcendent awareness.

Finally, the last of the main principles found in Buddhism is Wisdom. The path of wisdom is comprised of two possible steps – the path to achieve right thought and the path to right understanding. Right Thought prepares the mind for Right Understanding. Right Thought is the acceptance of self-sacrifice, the knowledge that life, the ego, is coming to an end and is to be replaced by a selfless love and illumined love for others. Buddha felt real insight into one's fundamental nature brings about four sublime states, these being benevolence, compassion, joyous sympathy, and equanimity. Right Understanding means understanding the four Noble Truths and of Ultimate Reality. Buddha, who never recorded his teaching, traveled from place to place teaching this philosophy. It was only after his death his disciples transcribed these doctrines into "Pali" and Sanskrit" which are but two kinds of Indian language. His followers were divided into two schools, Hinyan and Mahayan, which were based on the authority of certain Scriptures, consisting of sayings and teachings of Buddha.

Hinyan and Mahayan both agree that the ego is an illusion. However, they disagree on Buddha's quietness of "self." Hinyan interprets there is no self, where as Mahayan interprets the true self emerges when fallacious ego is abandoned. Mahayan utilizes the term 'sunya' which means voidness, to refer to the self, because the self goes beyond any conceptualization of it.

During the 300 years after the death of Gautama Buddha, Buddhism spread throughout India and to Ceylon. The Southern Theravada or Hinayana school spread

throughout Ceylon, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma. The Northern Mahayan School spread to Tibet, Magnolia, China, Korea, and Japan.

Another variation of Buddhism is known as Zen Buddhism which stems from the Mahayan branch. Its teachings arose during the sixth century when Bodhidharma brought Buddhism to China and founded the Ch'an sect. The term Ch'an, in Chinese, is the same as Zen in Japanese with both words meaning meditation or a high state of consciousness in which one finds union with Ultimate Reality. This state of consciousness is found in the living of every day life other than in solitary meditation and thought. The Ch'an incorporated elements of Taoism and was identified with 'Brahm.' In the twelfth century, Zen Buddhism was enriched by its contact with Chinese philosophy and was introduced to Japan, where it flourished and became a major religious movement. In today's society Zen Buddhism is no longer considered to be dominant in Japan. However, over the past fifty years since Zen was introduced into the United States, there are behavioral signs that indicate there is a rise to a potentially significant movement of acceptance (Engler, 1991, p. 453-455).

In conclusion, we can say Buddhism is a branch of the Hindu religion tree. It was created as a reaction to the dogmas of Hinduism. Although Buddhism accepts the doctrine of Hinduism, it denounces the caste system. Buddhism brought with it high ethical concepts of tolerance, non-violence, respect for the individual, love of animals and nature and a belief in the fundamental spiritual equality of all human beings. Distinguishing the major tenets of Hinduism and Buddhism suggest a number of potential influences of these religions on value preferences of Asian cultures where those religions are dominant. Although both Hinduism and Buddhism guide believers via their deeply embedded religious doctrines, both of these age old religions are the foundations from which modern society can provide explanations of the continuation of cultures that still hold true to collectivist values, even with the continued outside influence of individualistic type cultures. For many Asian related cultures, family traditions and membership, business dealings, education, and group membership are all centered around collectivist values and beliefs, which in turn can be traced back through the centuries to the centrality of Hinduism and Buddha's teachings in those cultures.

Christianity

The third religion under investigation is Christianity, chosen because of its historical predominance in the Western world. In *On Being a Christian*, theologian Hans Kung explores the essence of Christianity from its origins and distinguishes Christianity from other religions as well as from modern humanisms. He seeks to identify the center that holds, the unifying force in all Christian religions. He

explains that “the special feature, the most fundamental characteristic of Christianity is that it considers this Jesus as ultimately decisive, definitive, archetypal, for man’s relations with God, with his fellow man, with society ...” (p.123). Kung contends that Christians profess their faith in the name of Christ and not as independent agents of piety and action. Insights into just who Christ is can come from a variety of perspectives. Kung asks the reader to consider the many characterizations of Christ that are available: the Christ of piety, the Christ of dogma, the Christ of the enthusiasts, and the Christ of literature as a backdrop for understanding the real Christ in historical context and in faith. Ultimately, the commitment of the Christian to Christ yields “a new basic orientation...new motivations...new dispositions...new projects...a new background of meaning and a new definition of the goal in the ultimate reality...(pp. 552-553).

Kung’s discussion of the core—the common thread that runs through the many forms of Christian religions—should not lead to a conclusion that differences are insignificant. Quite the contrary, the differences remain obstacles to the unity called for by many Christian leaders. Since it is well beyond the scope of this paper to examine the range of religions depicted in Table 1, we have chosen to focus on Catholicism, the root religion of Christian denominations.

Catholicism is best understood by a foray into its major beliefs through an examination of the comprehensive information available in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This 1994 compendium provides far more extensive explications than did the Baltimore Catechism familiar to generations of Catholic children as a summary of their beliefs. The 1994 Liberia Editrice Vaticana retains the order of the older Catechism of St. Pius V by addressing four main subject areas: the Creed, the Sacred Liturgy, the Christian Way of Life, and Christian prayer. In the papal introduction, Pope John Paul II acknowledges that sensitive to cultural context, “the contents are often presented in a ‘new’ way in order to respond to the questions of our age” (p. 4). The sources of material for the catechism are: Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition, and the Catholic Church’s Magisterium.

The Profession of Faith: The creed is a profession of belief in one God, maker of heaven and earth; in one Lord, Jesus Christ; and in the Holy Spirit. The Catholic Church is defined as holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic, that is, with a mission to share the good news of the gospel with others. There is reference to the birth of Jesus, a human born of Mary, and to his resurrection from the dead. There is emphasis on the communion of saints, both in heaven and on earth. And there is expressed belief in life after death. In the brief tenets of this creed collectivist values are either expressed directly or implied. For example, collectivist values are underscored in the creed with reference to “one body,” the members of the Church united in Christ. The union is designed to produce charity or love for others. “From this it follows that if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice” (p. 209,

section 791). The concept of an apostolate calls believers to share their beliefs “to spread the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth” (p. 229, section 863). In contrast, an individualistic approach might lead an individual to rejoice in union with God, but not to be concerned about sharing the faith with anyone else.

The second major section on the Sacred Liturgy explains the call to a single liturgical celebration—the Mass. Again, the emphasis is on the community, the collective, coming together to worship. Especially with the changes following the second Vatican Council, the focus on collective elements of the Mass are brought into unmistakable focus. It was as a result of this council of the Church that Latin gave way to native languages of the culture, that the altar was turned so that the priest faces the people during the entire liturgy, and that the emphasis on community continued to grow. A simple expression of community is the exchange of a sign of peace at the Catholic Mass, a Vatican II symbol of the unity of the community present (and even absent) from God’s family. Members of the congregation are urged to share in the liturgical prayers as a part of the praying community. For many older Catholics, this change has required forgoing silent private prayers (e.g., the rosary or novena) during the celebration of the Eucharist.

Celebration of the Christian Mystery: The seven sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Reconciliation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick—are considered God’s grace made available to the believers. Each has an attendant ritual. With baptism, the Catholic becomes a member of the Church. While this sacrament is considered by some a rather private ceremony with family, the new godparents, and close friends present, often the baptism occurs during the Eucharistic celebration. In these instances the community of believers present is asked to welcome the individual to the Christian community and is challenged to set a good example for the person being baptized as they seek to live in accordance with God’s plan. Far from an isolated sacrament, baptism is considered a community event in the Catholic Church.

Confirmation calls the church member to make an adult profession of faith with a commitment to live the faith, persevering in difficulty, and to share the faith: “Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (p. 326, section 1285). The confirmant gains a sacramental power to share the faith; the change is a spiritual transformation that can sustain a lifetime of efforts to share the faith.

The Eucharist is described as “...a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity...” (p. 334, section 1323). Central to the Catholic faith is belief in transubstantiation, that is, the actual changing of the bread and wine at the consecration of the Mass into the body and blood of Christ. It is important to note that other Christian faiths do not share this belief in transubstantiation which is a cornerstone of Catholic belief and the primary reason that the Catholic faith does not allow for intercommunion with other Christian denominations. The Catechism

discusses the fruits of Holy Communion or the reception of the consecrated bread and wine. These include: strengthening our union with Christ, separating us from sin, preserving us from mortal (serious) sins in the future, creating and unifying the members of the one Body into the Church, and committing us to the poor. The relationship to collective values is embedded in the concepts of sin, oneness, and meeting the needs of the poor, among others. Typically, sins are often thought to be private acts of commission or omission. Yet, the Catholic Church teaches that when sin separates even one member of the body from God (in this case, the sinner), the collective suffers. One lost sheep is significant and worth bringing back to the fold. Perhaps the reference to serving the poor is a more obvious collective orientation. The Catholic must take into account the needs of others by sharing his corporal and spiritual possessions.

The sacrament of Reconciliation brings an alienated soul back to the family of God. While other Christian religions do not have a sacrament of Reconciliation, there is a clear recognition in religious and psychological value of a formal confessing of transgressions to a priest who serves as a representative of God. Expressing genuine sorrow is a means of grace to once again take up the call to be a fully functioning member of the Church community.

Matrimony brings a couple together to publicly state their intention to marry each other in the presence of the priest and the Catholic community. The announcement, “They are being married by Father Joe,” is a misstatement because the two people marry each other with priest and the community as witnesses. In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest makes a commitment to serve God and the community. Finally, in the Anointing of the Sick, the priest prays for the physical and spiritual healing of the sick person. But this is often done in the context of the “community,” most often the family and believers of the medical community present. The Seven Sacraments are in, for, and with community.

Life in Christ: While the Ten Commandments dictate how to live the “life in Christ,” the ten are often subsumed under two: Love God with your whole heart and soul; love your neighbor as yourself. In fact, charity is defined as “the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God” (p. 448, section 1822). Charity is considered the greatest theological virtue and is clearly directed to the collective. The individual is to care about others, to anticipate their needs, and to help them—all the while being sensitive to the commandment to love God and to care for self. The emphasis on love in living the Life in Christ has given rise to a question of reminder “WWJD” (What Would Jesus Do?) that currently appears on wristbands, stationery, lapel pins, etc. The phrase is to serve as a guide when choosing a course of action in the most mundane situations as well as those with far greater implications.

In the section on the Life in Christ, the Catechism considers “the communal character of the human vocation” (p. 459, section 1878). Sharing one’s talents and working for the common good require responsibility and participation. In addition, the first collective we experience, the family of origin, should teach love, respect, and support. Finally, issues of social justice and the needs of all humans are addressed. Clearly, living the life in Christ mandates a focus on collectivist values.

Prayer: In defining prayer as relationship with God, the Catechism uses the Lord’s Prayer as an exemplar. Most relevant for this analysis is the language that reflects collectivist values, such as “our Father,” “thy kingdom come,” “give us,” “our daily bread,” “forgive us...as we forgive those.” Christians pray together and for each other. The Lord’s prayer does not allow the Christian any complacency when a brother or sister does not have basic needs met. The reciprocity in the plea for forgiveness is yet another reminder of the interconnectedness of all humans. The Catholic Catechism clearly emphasizes values that are collectivist. However, not all cultures that are predominantly Catholic, or at a minimum strongly influenced by Catholicism, adhere to the collectivist values. Individualist values appear to predominate in countries like the United States despite Christian tradition and influence. The lack of congruity in this latter example raises important questions about mediating factors that affect cultural values.

Conclusion

Clearly, the three major world religions analyzed in this paper espouse collectivist values over individualist values. Individuals whose religion expresses collectivist values and who live in a culture where such values are emphasized experience a high level of congruence. In contrast, individuals whose religions express collectivist values, but live in a culture where individualist values predominate experience incongruity that requires dissonance resolution. Perhaps Western dualism allows an individual to identify with collectivist values of his/her religion, but at the same time exhibit preference for individualistic values as they apply to the workplace. In the Asian culture, with Buddhism and Hinduism as representative religions, there is evidence of a far more pronounced religion/culture congruence than in the United States where Christianity is used as a representative religion. Just why this occurs is a complex question that calls for an appreciation of the dynamic nature of religion, the dynamic nature of culture, and the complex interplay between them. What follows is designed to be a modest springboard for future investigations.

The collectivist value orientation of the major religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, are mediated by cultural forces resulting in more or less pronounced adherence to such values. We propose systematic study of three major cultural forces: science, new media and theological discourse. In reconciling religious beliefs with what he calls “the scientific age,” (Meyer, 1983) contends that

science and theology should not be viewed as antagonists. He uses Teilhard de Chardin's linking of biology and theology as an example of how an understanding of science can be used to enhance theological understanding. Meyer (p. 13) explains:

These form the fabric of Teilhard's notion of complexification, the idea that the disparate, simpler, smaller elements of the universe gradually gravitate toward a center and form larger, more complex, organized bodies. Tangential energy, or that which exhibits a more centrifugal vector, is slowly, through entropization, becoming radial or centripetal energy. The whole universe and its component parts are being drawn by an irresistible force toward a center. And that force is love, and that center is Christ. The ultimate name of the universe's game is Christogenesis, or the coming into being of the whole Christ, the mystic Christ, Christ the head uniting all creation to himself, Christ who has become all in all – that doctrine so dear to the heart of Paul.

Our purpose is not to assess the accuracy of de Chardin's position, but rather to illustrate how cultural understanding of phenomena, in this case of science, might affect religious interpretation.

The second cultural influence is new media. A brief foray through the history of communication illustrates that changes in human communication from the earliest stage of expressive language and through the origins of spoken language to the development of written language (including handwritten books, the development of printing, and the industrial revolution), and to current and rapid changes in the era of digital language have made possible the infusion of one culture's values into another culture (Fidler, 1997). For example, the introduction of television programming originated in the United States to other cultures, it has been discussed as one reason why individuals in Japan accept more individualist value orientations than would ordinarily be expected of a traditionally collectivist culture. In addition to media influence, the exchange of business practices between the United States and modern Japan, especially through new media like the World Wide Web, shrink the distance between the two countries and, perhaps concomitantly, the distance between their traditional value orientation. Overall, media research gives us a powerful example of how cultural values are inculcated apart from the family context and from religious expression.

The third cultural force proposed is theological discourse illustrated by the developing scholarly literature on feminist theology. In her acclaimed book, She Who Is, Johnson underscores the importance of interpretation of Scripture in the Catholic tradition. She explains, "In the course of history, however, theology has found other models of revelation viable, among them revelation as historical event, or as inner experience, or as dialectical presence, or as new awareness, or as symbolic mediation" (Johnson, 1992, p. 27). The interpretation of Scripture when

infused with feminist values often yields a new vision that can be incorporated in future research. In addition to these three major cultural forces, we urge future researchers to explore the effect of an individual level variable "religiosity" on acceptance and expression of individualist/collectivist values.

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Table 1. Mainstreams of Christian Faith

Excerpt from Severy, M. (ed.)(1978). *Great religions of the world*.
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