Cross-Cultural Specific of Self-differentiation at Russian and Vietnamese Young People

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M.Bowen’s concept of self-differentiation describes the capacity of a person to achieve emotional maturity and to create a reliable connection with others. The fact that it was developed on the basis of the values of individualism and independence, let us suppose that collectivistic cultures may have some specific mechanisms of reliable attachment providing. Very little empirical research has examined it from a cross-cultural perspective. The comparative analyses of self-differentiation and its intercorrelations with interpersonal dependency at Russian and Vietnamese young persons were performed.

Participants:

- 30 Vietnamese (15 men, 15 women) and 42 Russians (21 men and 21 women);
- age: 20 - 28 years old (M = 23,7);
- all respondents were in a romantic relationship from 0.5 to 5 years, not married.

Materials and Methods

- The Differentiation of Self Inventory (E. Skowron & M. Friedlander, adapted by E. Chebotareva);
- Interpersonal Dependency Inventory” (R. Hirschfeld et al., adapted by O.Makushina);
- Relationships Profile Test (R. Bornstein & S. Huprich, adapted by O.Makushina).

Results

1. Self-differentiation of Russian and Vietnam young people.

Russian young people, more than Vietnamese tend to adhere to their own convictions, rely on themselves. However, it is much more difficult for them than for the Vietnamese to distinguish their own thoughts and emotions, not to give in to in stressful situations. If difficulty arises in close relationships, Russians, to a greater extent than the Vietnamese, are prone to either emotional cutoffs, or to emotional fusion with others (see Table 1).

Table 1. Differences in the levels of self-differentiation of Russian and Vietnamese.

Variables of self - differentiation*	American** M (SD)	Russian M (SD)	Vietnamese M (SD)	Rank Sum (R)	Rank Sum (A)	U	p
Emotional reactivity	3.37 (.94)	3,06 (.70)	3,89 (.70)	1198,50	1502,50	252,5	0,00001
I Position	4.08 (.85)	3,77 (0.87)	3,24 (.66)	1846,50	854,50	389,5	0,00425
Emotional cutoff	4.53 (.79)	4,03 (.78)	4,54 (.68)	1350,00	1351,00	404,0	0,00701
Fusion with others	2.92 (.85)	2,92 (.65)	3,76 (.64)	1170,00	1531,00	224,0	0,00000
Total self-differentiation	3.74 (.60)	3,45 (.29)	3,86 (.67)	1254,00	1447,00	308,0	0,00016

2. Emotional dependency of Russians and Vietnamese.

While the overall level of differentiation and most of its indicators are higher among Vietnamese, Russians show a higher ability to recognize their needs in interpersonal relationships (see Table 2).

Table 2. Differences in the emotional dependency of Russians and Vietnamese

Variables of dependency	Russian M (SD)	Vietnamese M (SD)	Rank Sum (R)	Rank Sum (V)	U	p
Emotional reliance on another (E)	48,79 (8.5)	36,40 (5.9)	2077,00	624,00	159,00	0,000000
Lack of social self confidence (C)	35,88 (6.0)	31,47 (4.2)	1870,50	830,50	365,50	0,001759
Assertion of Autonomy (A)	29,33 (6.1)	26,87 (4.3)	1770,00	931,00	466,00	0,044358
Dependency Total (D) (D= E+C-A)	55,35 (17.1)	41,00 (4.8)	1971,00	730,00	265,00	0,000021
Destructive overdependent	30,60 (8.4)	23,57 (6.3)	1912,50	788,50	323,50	0,000319
Dysfunctional detachment	32,00 (5.5)	27,40 (5.6)	1851,00	850,00	385,00	0,003620
Healthy dependency	34,26 (5.8)	29,43 (7.2)	1827,50	873,50	408,50	0,008145

3. Interrelations between self-differentiation and dependency among young Russians and Vietnamese.

Vietnamese self-differentiation is built on emotional restraint and positive attitude to interpersonal dependence. For Russians, the central element of self-differentiation is destructive over-dependence in combination with the I-position weakness and the desire for autonomy, combined with a tendency to an emotional cut-off (see Table 3).

Table 3. Factor analysis of variables of self-differentiation and emotional dependency of Russians and Vietnamese

Variables: Sels-differentiation & dependency	Russian			Vietnamese		
	F1	F2	F3	F1	F2	F3
Emotional reliance on another	0,313	0,075	-0,849	0,862	-0,260	0,045
Lack of social self confidence	0,744	0,153	-0,285	0,831	-0,047	-0,070
Assertion of autonomy	-0,280	0,811	0,126	0,851	0,198	-0,351
Destructive overdependency	0,827	-0,066	-0,333	0,915	0,205	-0,182
Dysfunctional detachment	0,051	0,817	0,148	0,454	0,275	-0,661
Healthy dependency	-0,825	-0,104	-0,066	-0,414	-0,202	0,644
Emotional reactivity	-0,319	-0,065	0,777	-0,946	0,089	0,016
I Position	-0,852	0,245	0,115	-0,094	-0,929	0,173
Emotional cutoff	-0,198	-0,813	0,292	-0,589	0,684	0,198
Fusion with others	0,097	0,185	0,810	0,327	0,199	0,873
Cumulative	37,472	58,749	74,173	49,934	68,839	82,197

Discussion

The results of the study show, firstly, that besides the general, culturally universal patterns of self-differentiation functioning, there are some **cultural differences**:

- the level of self-differentiation is determined not so much by the orientation of culture towards individualistic or collectivist values, as by a complex system of cultural values and traditions. Namely, the traditions of *emotional regulation* and the patterns of *close emotional relationships* in the culture ;
- the important role of the *I-position* in the structure of Russian differentiation can be explained by the tradition of reflection, the desire to adhere to one’s own position; the traditional commitment to power and low tolerance of uncertainty, apparently, create a high general background of *anxiety*, a keen experience of the traditional existential internal conflict between the desire to belong to a social group and the desire for autonomy, the importance of preserving your own self;
- the Vietnamese is characterized by the high level of self-differentiation in youth, which is achieved mainly through good *emotional self-regulation* and development *constructive interaction skills*.

Practical implications

It is necessary to take into account not only the level of self-differentiation but also the cultural characteristics of its interrelations with the patterns in intimate relationships:

- for Russian young people distancing in close relationships may be socially desirable, confirming the ability to autonomy. Coping with stressful situations in a relationship for them is more associated with reflection and a rational assessment of the situation;
- for Vietnamese young people, overcoming difficulties in intimate relationships is mainly associated with the ability for emotional self-regulation and the development of communication culture.