

Measuring a Relationship between Cultural Ideals of Individualism and Collectivism with Students' Reasons for Attending College and Future Goals.

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Introduction

Are students' reasons for attending college and future goals associated with the cultural ideals of individualism and collectivism?

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential relationship between individualism and collectivism and college students' reasons for attending college and future goals.

Cultural psychologists describe individualism as a worldview holding the *self* as the core unit in which societies exist to promote individual prosperity. In turn, collectivism is known as a worldview holding *others* as members of a group they much fit into (Oyserman & Lee, 2008).

The four patterns that emerge from the individualism/collectivism binary are horizontal collectivism (HC), horizontal individualism (HI), vertical collectivism (VC), and vertical individualism (VI). Horizontal orientation refers to a view of others as essentially equal in opportunity and capability whereas individual orientation drives a perception of disparate opportunity and capability among members of a group (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). For example, someone high in VI would perceive his or her self as, by nature, more or less capable than others in a self-oriented society. Inversely, someone high in HC would view others as members of a set group all equal in opportunity and capability.

We hypothesized that students indicating other-oriented reasons for attending college and future goals would be high in vertical collectivism. We also hypothesized that students indicating athletic-oriented reasons for attending college and future goals would be high in vertical individualism.

METHOD

Participants

N = 211 undergraduate students from multiple introductory psychology courses

Measures

➤ Horizontal and Vertical Individualism/Collectivism Scale (Singelis et al., 1995). Participants rated their feelings of agreement statements regarding values (e.g., "What happens to me is my own doing", "Some people emphasize winning. I'm not one of them"). Ratings ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

METHOD cont.

Survey

➤ Participants were asked to describe their reasons for attending college as well as their goals associated with receiving a college degree.

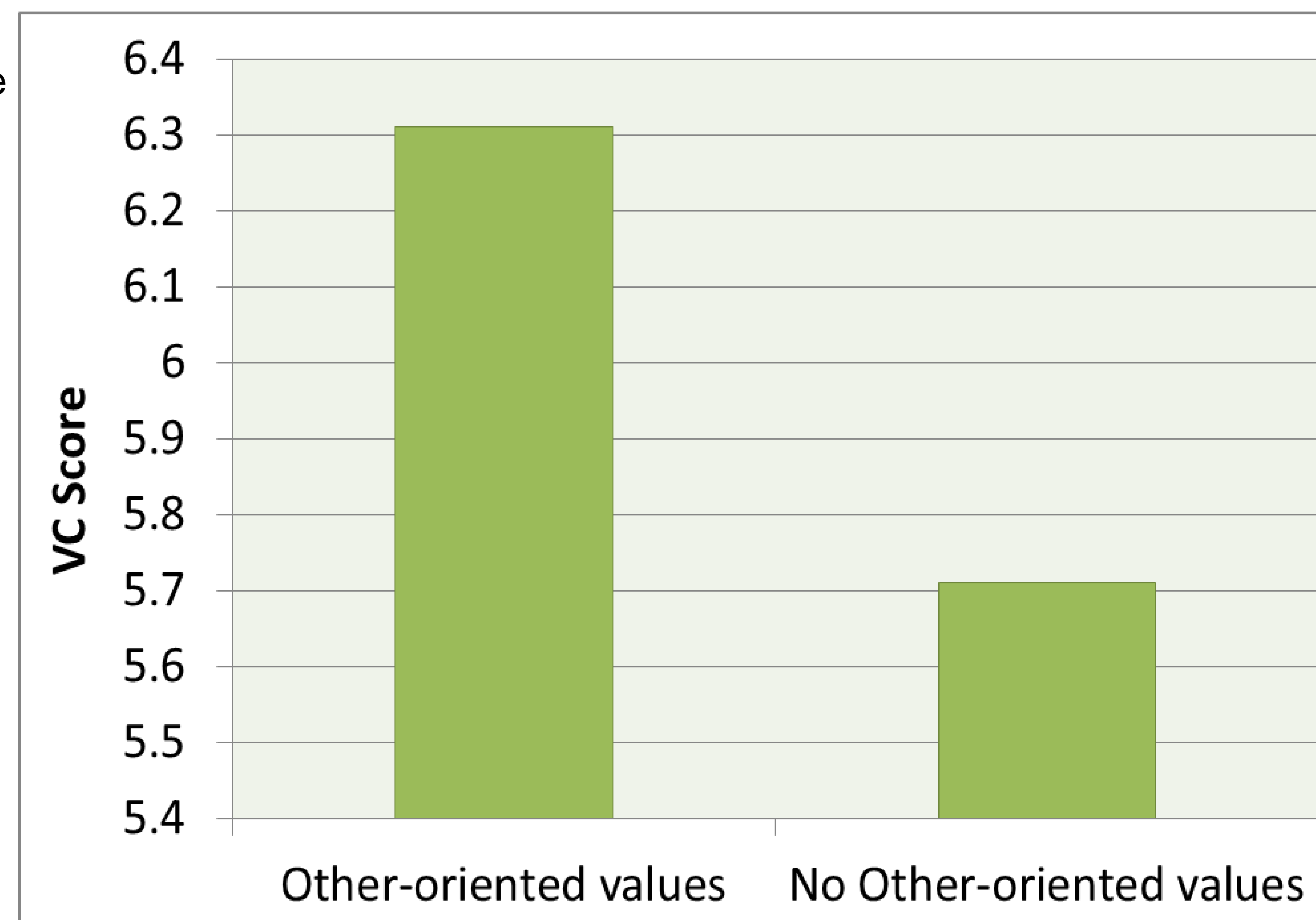
Coding Procedure

➤ The researchers coded responses to both questions for other-oriented and self-oriented features. Each response was given a other-oriented and self-oriented score corresponding to the frequency of these qualities exhibited.

RESULTS

Other-oriented VC relationship:

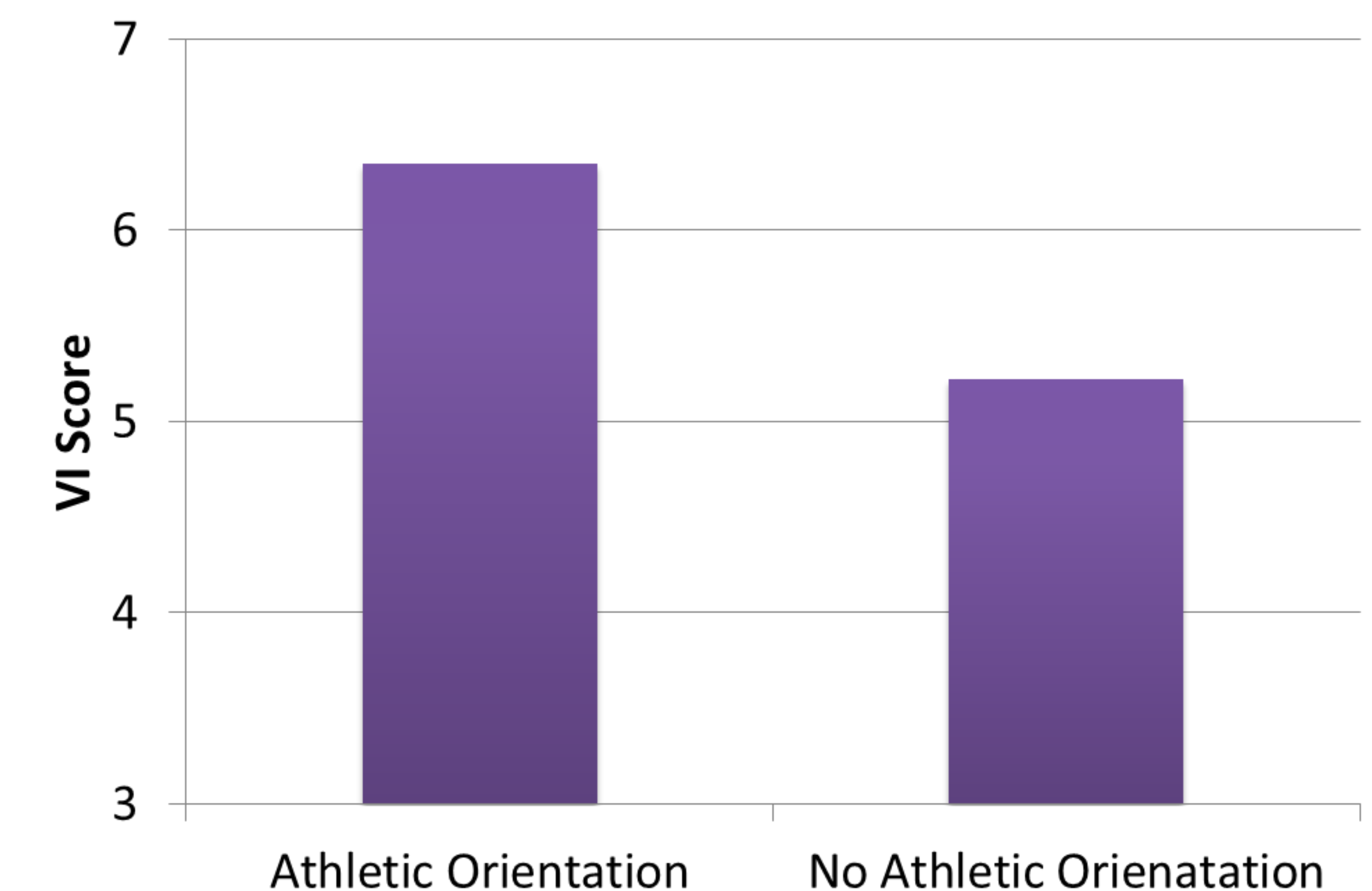
There was a significant difference between students whose responses contained other-oriented values ($M = 6.31, SD = 1.18$) and those whose did not ($M = 5.71, SD = 1.45$) with vertical collectivism, $t(208) = -2.739, p = .007$.



RESULTS cont.

Athletics VI relationship:

➤ Our findings also suggest a significant difference between responses indicating athletic-influenced reasoning and goals ($M = 6.35, SD = 1.73$) and those that did not ($M = 5.22, SD = 1.94$) with vertical individualism, $t(209) = -2.449, p = .015$.



DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that people who regard others in the context of their plans and future goals score highly on vertical collectivism. As other-oriented concerns for others often entails care for those with disparate abilities and duties (e.g. children, elderly parents), this is a reasonable fit with vertical collectivism.

Conversely, our results indicate a strong relationship between athletic-oriented individuals and vertical individualism. As athletic performance often requires a mindset of individual achievement and competitive prowess, a vertical understanding of competitive achievement is understandably applicable to individualism.

References

Oyserman, D. & Lee, S.W. (2008). Does culture influence what and how we think? Effects of priming individualism and collectivism. *Psychological Bulletin*. 134(2), 313-342.

Singelis, T.M., Triandis, H.C., Bhawuk, D.P., & Gelfand, M.J. (1995). Horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism: A theoretical and measurement refinement. *Cross-Cultural Research*. 29(3), 240-275.