

## A Pilot Study of Self-Actualization Activity Measurement

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According to Maslow, self-actualization is a vital, evolutionary process through which an individual aims to realize true potential after satisfying basic needs. Self-actualized individuals tend to be fulfilled with their lives and spend significant amounts of time with altruistic activities. Self-actualization measurement inventories have traditionally measured self-actualization values and beliefs. This article outlines the development of an inventory for measurement of self-actualization activity to determine whether self-actualizing values materialize into self-actualized actions. A pilot study was conducted and the results indicate that while an individual may claim to hold self-actualizing beliefs and feelings, internal principles do not necessarily manifest self-actualizing behavior in everyday life.

**Keywords:** Self-actualization Measurement, Spirituality Index, Inventory

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) is one of the preeminent motivational need theories. Originally, Maslow classified human needs into five categories: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Later modifications sub-divided self-actualization into four disparate categories: cognitive, aesthetic, self-actualization and self-transcendence (Maslow, 1967; Maslow, 1969; Maslow, 1970; Huitt, 2007). Physiological, safety, love and belonging, and esteem needs were denoted as deficiency needs or "D-needs". Cognitive, aesthetic, self-actualization and self-transcendence needs were denoted as being needs or "B-needs". Self-actualized individuals have lower order D-needs generally satisfied, striving to satisfy higher order B-needs (Maslow, 1969). Self-actualization manifests characteristics like spontaneity, autonomy, comfort with solitude, non-hostile sense of humor, fellowship with humanity, and the ability to have peak experiences (Maslow, 1967). Self-actualized individuals tend to be spiritual, happy, and fulfilled, and concentrate on altruistic tasks that benefit society (Maslow, 1969).

Well-known self-actualization inventories include the personal orientation inventory (POI) (Shostrom, 1964), the short-form measure of self-actualization (Bonjean & Vance, 1968), the need satisfaction questionnaire (NSQ)

(by Payne, 1970), the self-concept scale (by Fitts, 1971), the consumer self-actualization instrument (by Brooker, 1975), the personal orientation dimensions (POD) (by Shostrom, Knapp, & Knapp, 1976), the seeking of noetic goals test (SONG) (by Crumbaugh, 1977), the short index of self-actualization (SISA) (by Jones & Crandall, 1986), the brief index of self-actualization (by Sumerlin, & Bundrick, 1996), the self-report measure of self-actualization (by Lefrançois, Leclerc, Dubé, Hébert & Gaulin, 1997), and the measurement of actualization of potential (MAP) (by Leclerc, Lefrancois, Dube, Hebert & Gaulin, 1999). These inventories are typically self-report questionnaires that record self-actualization values by asking participants to rate their beliefs based on statements like "I fear failure", "I feel I must do what others expect me to do", and "I am loved because I give love" (Jones & Crandall, 1986).

These inventories have been validated or critiqued by (Robert & Robert, 1967; Damm, 1969; McClain, 1970; Knapp, 1971; Knapp & Comrey, 1973; Tosi, & Lindamood, 1975; Crandall & Jones, 1991; Ebersole & Humphreys, 1991; Flett, Blankstein & Hewitt, 1991; Richard & Jex, 1991; Lefrançois, Leclerc, Dubé, Herbert & Gaulin, 1998; Cilliers, Koortzen & De Beer, 2004). The critics question the consistency, complexity, validity and reliability of previous value-based

self-actualization inventories. However, there has been no attempt to determine if self-actualized beliefs materialize into self-actualized behaviors. This article outlines the development of an inventory called Self-Actualization Activity Inventory (SAAI) that measures self-actualized actions and determines if it correlates to self-actualizing values and beliefs.

### Method

#### Materials and Procedure

When taking the SAAI, the participants were presented with literature, which defines and explains D-needs and B-needs as shown in Tables 1 and 2. The SAAI has 16 questions that are derived directly from the higher four B-needs outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The four B-needs are cognitive needs, aesthetic needs,

self-actualization needs and self-transcendence needs. The questions in the inventory directly ask the subject how much time they spend in a week on activities to satisfy each of these four needs with four varying levels of intent (100%, 75%, 50% and 25%). Measuring the intent behind an activity is crucial when evaluating any self-actualization activity in order to get a true measure of self-actualization since some self-actualized activity could be performed due to work or other obligations. In some cases, an activity could be performed with the full intent of satisfying only one need. In other cases, B-Need Activity Hours (BNAH) is calculated on the basis of percentage of B-need intent inherent in the individual's activity.

For example, if an individual attends a classical music concert with the full intent of

**Table 1. Explanation and Examples of B-needs**

B-Need	Explanation	Activity Examples
Cognitive	Need for knowledge about the universe, truth, morality, meaning, etc.	Reading a non-fiction book, watching a documentary film, conducting research, etc.
Aesthetic	Need to appreciate beauty, art, form, symmetry, universal phenomenon, creativity, etc.	Appreciating a waterfall, enjoying a piece of music, admiring a work of art, honing inner talents, etc.
Self-actualization	Need to seek one's true passion, potential and purpose in life.	Self-reflection, self-exploration, self-awareness.
Self-transcendence	Need to further a cause beyond the self and to experience a communion beyond the boundaries of the self through peak experiences.	Involvement in political activism, joining a charitable organization, volunteering in a soup kitchen, deep meditation, giving up desires, performing austerities, etc.

**Table 2. Explanation and Examples of D-needs**

D-Need	Explanation	Activity Examples
Physiological	Need for basic survival	Consuming food, wearing clothes, living in a house, sleeping, taking a shower, etc.
Safety	Need to secure employment, safety, good health, etc.	Going to work, investing in savings, residing in a safe environment, etc.
Love	Need to have friends, colleagues, family, romantic relationships, etc.	Spending time with family, going to a party or social event, having sexual intercourse, etc.
Esteem	Need to feel appreciated, validated, respected, etc.	Getting a promotion, acquiring wealth, seeking power in society, seeking appreciation from another person, wearing flashy clothing, etc.

**Table 3. Self-Actualization Activity Inventory (SAAI)**

Question	Hours
How many hours per week do you spend on cognitive needs with 100% intent?	C1
How many hours per week do you spend on cognitive needs with 75% intent?	C2
How many hours per week do you spend on cognitive needs with 50% intent?	C3
How many hours per week do you spend on cognitive needs with 25% intent?	C4
How many hours per week do you spend on aesthetic needs with 100% intent?	A1
How many hours per week do you spend on aesthetic needs with 75% intent?	A2
How many hours per week do you spend on aesthetic needs with 50% intent?	A3
How many hours per week do you spend on aesthetic needs with 25% intent?	A4
How many hours per week do you spend on self-actualization needs with 100% intent?	S1
How many hours per week do you spend on self-actualization needs with 75% intent?	S2
How many hours per week do you spend on self-actualization needs with 50% intent?	S3
How many hours per week do you spend on self-actualization needs with 25% intent?	S4
How many hours per week do you spend on self-transcendence needs with 100% intent?	T1
How many hours per week do you spend on self-transcendence needs with 75% intent?	T2
How many hours per week do you spend on self-transcendence needs with 50% intent?	T3
How many hours per week do you spend on self-transcendence needs with 25% intent?	T4

fulfilling only aesthetic B-needs, with no coupled intent of D-need satisfaction, that activity would count towards BNAH with 100% intent. On the other hand, if an individual attends a concert as part of a romantic date the aesthetic B-need intent could be at 50% and the romantic D-need intent could be 50%. In cases where there might not be a clear estimate of the B-need vs. D-need intent, individual judgment and honesty must be exercised. All questions on the inventory are framed to query the individual on the number of hours a week spent on a B-need with four varying levels of intent as shown in Table 3. The inventory calculates the total number of BNAH spent per week by an individual, coupling activity and intent. Individual self-actualization activity level is then determined using the BNAH score based on the formula shown below.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{BNAH} = & 1.00 \cdot C1 + 0.75 \cdot C2 + 0.50 \cdot C3 + 0.25 \cdot C4 \\ & + 1.00 \cdot A1 + 0.75 \cdot A2 + 0.50 \cdot A3 + 0.25 \cdot A4 \\ & + 1.00 \cdot S1 + 0.75 \cdot S2 + 0.50 \cdot S3 + 0.25 \cdot S4 \\ & + 1.00 \cdot T1 + 0.75 \cdot T2 + 0.50 \cdot T3 + 0.25 \cdot T4 \end{aligned}$$

C1 represents the hours spent on cognitive needs with 100% intent. C2 represents hours spent on cognitive needs with 75% and so on. A, S and T stand for aesthetic, self-actualization

and self-transcendence needs respectively. Self-actualization activity levels can then be determined from the BNAH score. A score of 0-50 indicates low self-actualization activity. A score of 50-70 indicates moderate self-actualization activity. A score of 70-90 indicates high self-actualization activity. A score of 90-105 indicates very high self-actualization activity. These levels are formulated assuming that most individuals have approximately 105 activity hours in a week after satisfying their basic physiological needs including sleeping, nutrition, exercise and grooming.

One widely accepted scale for measuring self-actualization is the short 15-item SISA index (Jones & Crandall, 1986). The SISA was developed from the longer personal orientation inventory (POI) index (Shostrom, 1964) and designed to provide a shorter, simpler scale correlated highly to the POI. SISA was chosen for this research because it is both highly correlated with POI and has been repeatedly validated (Richard & Jex, 1991; Flett, Blankstein & Hewitt, 1991; Ebersole & Humphreys, 1991). The 15-items included in the SISA are listed in Table 4. The SISA scale includes 15 statements that relate to an individual's beliefs, attitudes,

**Table 4. The Short Index of Self Actualization Inventory**

Item	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
1) I do not feel ashamed of any of my emotions				
2) I feel I must do what others expect me to do				
3) I believe that people are essentially good and can be trusted				
4) I feel free to be angry at those I love				
5) It is always necessary that others approve of what I do				
6) I don't accept my own weaknesses				
7) I can like people without having to approve of them				
8) I fear failure				
9) I avoid attempts to analyze and simplify complex domains				
10) It is better to be yourself than to be popular				
11) I have no mission in life to which I feel especially dedicated				
12) I can express my feelings even when they may result in undesirable consequences				
13) I do not feel responsible to help anybody				
14) I am bothered by fears of being inadequate				
15) I am loved because I give love				

feelings, and emotions. Agreement with items 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 12 and 15 is considered to manifest self-actualization. Similarly, disagreement with the remaining items (2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 14) is considered to manifest self-actualization. A self-actualizing response from the four options equates to four points, decreasing to one point for the non-self-actualizing response. For example, four points would be scored if the subject marked "agree" for item 1 and one point would be scored if "disagree" was marked. The maximum possible score for the SISA inventory is 60. An individual scoring higher than 50 on the SISA is said to manifest self-actualization.

### **Participants**

Sixty five students of DeVry College of New York were randomly selected for this pilot study. The participant pool consisted of both males and females from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The participants' age ranged

from 18 to 50 years. Demographic information was not cataloged in the study and it was conducted anonymously. Both the inventories were administered twice with a 14-day interval for the sake of reliability testing. Of the 65 participants, 22 participated in a single take and 43 participated in both takes.

### **Results**

For the single take the mean and standard deviation scores for SAAI were:  $M=43.73$ ,  $SD=27.27$ . For the double take the mean and standard deviation scores in the first take were:  $M=29.98$ ,  $SD=18.26$ ; and in the second take the scores were:  $M=32.65$ ,  $SD=22.21$ . Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliabilities for SAAI were as follows: cognitive 0.76, aesthetic 0.64, self-actualization 0.73, self-transcendence 0.64, total 0.77. Pearson's correlation scores between the two SAAI takes were:  $r(42)=0.65$ ,  $p<0.01$ .

For the single take the mean and standard deviation scores for SISA were:  $M=41.23$ ,  $SD=5.48$ . For the double take the mean and standard deviation scores in the first take were:  $M=42.44$ ,  $SD=4.22$  and in the second take the scores were:  $M=41.74$ ,  $SD=3.85$ . Pearson's correlation scores between the two SISA takes were:  $r(42)=0.599$ ,  $p<0.01$ .

Pearson's correlation scores between the two inventories for the single take were:  $r(21)=0.242$ ,  $p=0.29$  and for the double take were:  $r(42)=-0.280$ ,  $p<0.1$ ;  $r(42)=0.005$ ,  $p=0.97$ .

### Conclusion

This article provides an inventory for measuring self-actualization activity and correlates it with self-actualizing beliefs. The proposed inventory has content validity since the questions are directly related to the B-needs from Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The results of the pilot study conducted suggest that the proposed inventory is also consistent and reliable. However, the SAAI inventory correlates poorly with the belief-based SISA inventory indicating that while individuals avow self-actualizing values and beliefs, their beliefs may not transfer into actions. Future work can be carried out on further validation of the proposed inventory, correlating the inventory to other subjective well-being inventories, and investigating the reason for the poor correlation between self-actualizing values and behavior.

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