

October 1

I will examine some dimensions of cultural variation and examine their probable influence on the acquiescence (ACQ) and extreme response checking style (ERS) .

In Triandis, H. C. (2004). Dimensions of culture beyond Hofstede. In H. Vinken, J. Soeters, & P. Ester (Eds). *Comparing cultures: Dimensions of culture in a comparative perspective.*(pp.5-27). Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill..

I have reviewed 25 dimensions of cultural variation mentioned in the literature, and argued that the most important are cultural complexity,

tightness, collectivism-individualism, and power distance. The remaining 20 dimensions are derived from these primary dimensions. So here I will discuss only the primary dimensions.

Simple-Complex Cultures

Hunters-gatherers/ nomadic/
agricultural/ industrial/ information
societies.

Major contrast village-cosmopolitan
city.

Cognitive simplicity ought to be
positively related to extreme response
checking style.

Tightness: many rules, norms;
imposed tightly.

Tightness occurs in cultures that are more homogeneous, isolated, where people have much opportunity of surveillance of the behavior of others, and where their interdependence of jobs.

Tightness ought to be related to conformity, hence to acquiescence response sets.

Simple cultures are tighter than complex cultures. But the correlation is not very high.

Collectivism-individualism.

Collectivism is extremely high in cultures that are simple and tight. In such cultures there ought to be more acquiescence and more extreme response styles.

Individualism is high in cultures that complex and loose. A prototype of collectivist cultures can be found in theocratic societies, such as in monasteries. A prototype of an individualist culture is Hollywood.

A number of demographic and life style factors change the probability

that a person will be collectivist or individualist:

Affluence

Contact with other cultures

Migration, social mobility

Age

Religious upbringing

Exposure to the mass media

An exception to the general pattern occurs in East Asia where people tend to think dialectically. That is, they see both good and bad attributes in most objects. This would tend to make them use the middle of scales, hence

they would not show an extreme checking style.

Collectivism--->

dialectical thinking->

Use of the middle part of the scale.

Power Distance is correlated with collectivism. Therefore there should be a tendency for use of both ACQ and ERS in high power distance cultures.

Empirical findings

Johnson, Kulesa, Cho, & Shavitt found that Power distance and masculinity are related to extreme

checking style, and collectivism is related to acquiescence. Those findings agree with my argument.

On the other hand they also found uncertainty avoidance, power distance and masculinity related to low acquiescence. Those findings are not in agreement with my argument.

Souif, M. I. (1958). Extreme response sets as a measure of intolerance for ambiguity. *British Journal of Psychology*, 49, 329-333 presented data that tightness is related to ERS.

Carr (1971) reported more ACQ among Southern blacks. These samples tend to be collectivist. Ross and Mirowski (1984) found more ACQ in samples that are less powerful (i.e. collectivist). Smith (2004) examined several data sets and found high ACQ in high collectivist and power distance cultures. Also, he found relationships between uncertainty avoidance (i.e. tightness) and these response styles. Van Herk, Poortinga and Verhallen (2004) found more ACQ and ERS in

Greece and generally the Mediterranean countries than in middle Europe.

Hamilton (1968) found correlations between F-Scale, Dogmatism and ACQ.

This supports the simple cognitive style---ACQ link.

Hui & Triandis (1989) found more ERS among Spanish than English speaking Latinos. Latin cultures tend to be high in collectivism.

Chen, Shin-ying & Stevenson (1995), as well as Sening & Everett (1984) found that Chinese and Japanese samples use the middle of scales.

Thus, the total picture tends to support my argument. There are a few findings that are discrepant and we need to test their replicability first, and if they do replicate we need to examine why they occur.