



# Individual differences within the psychological atlas of the world



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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings based on 8883 participants from 33 countries. It employs mixture modeling (latent profile analysis) to classify individuals into latent classes/groups. The analyses are based on 12 factor scores from the domains of social attitudes (3 factors), social axioms (5 factors) and social norms (4 factors). Five latent classes were identified and most countries tend to have individual members from each class. The three largest groups consisting of 75% of the total number of participants differed in terms of the mean levels on factor scores. Group 1, labeled Liberal, had low mean factor scores on 11 out of 12 measures. Group 2, labeled Moderate, had average factor scores and Conservative Group 3 had high scores. Participants from each group were more common in some and less common in other countries. European countries plus Australia and Canada had the largest number of individuals belonging to Liberal Group 1. Conservative Group 3 had large number of individuals from South Asia and South-East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. All other countries in our sample, including the USA, Russia and China had the largest number of people from the Moderate Group 2.

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## 1. Dimensions of cross-cultural differences vs taxonomy of individuals (and countries)

A common approach in contemporary multivariate cross-cultural studies is dimensional in nature. It employs either individuals or countries as units of analysis, carries out factor analyses to establish the main dimensions along which these units differ, establishes factorial invariance and compares the overall standing of different cultural units on these dimensions. Such an approach has been used in studies of personality (Poortinga, van de Vijver, & van Hemert, 2002), social attitudes (Stankov & Lee, under review), values (Bilsky, Janik, & Schwartz, 2011), social axioms (Bou Malham & Saucier, 2014; Stankov & Saucier, 2015) and social norms (Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), among others. The aims of dimensional analysis have been to find out a) on which psychological dimensions (factors) there exist large country-level differences (see Saucier et al., 2015; Stankov, 2011a, 2011b; Stankov & Lee, 2008, 2009, under review; Stankov, under review) establish the ranking of particular cultural units (e.g., countries or world regions) on these dimensions (see Stankov, 2007; Stankov & Saucier, 2015; Stankov, Lee, & van de Vijver, 2014).

The present study is typological in nature. Its emphasis is on the identification of groups of participants that are similar in terms of their response patterns on a set of psychological measures. It sought to identify how many distinct groups/clusters/classes/types there are in a particular sample of participants and what are the patterns of means of each group on the measures employed. Thus, some groups of individuals could be relatively high on a particular measure, such as

Extraversion, and low on measures of, say, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness, while other groups may show the opposite trend. This approach is probabilistic in the sense that it provides estimates of probabilities that a given unit (e.g., individual) belongs to a particular group. Also, it allows for the possibility that most, if not all, societies have members belonging to each identified group but some societies may have a larger number of representatives of a particular type. How much evidence, if any, is there that a large number of Southern Europeans are Extroverted and a large proportion of Northern Europeans are, say, Conscientious? Such evidence may open the possibility of drawing a psychological atlas to describe the distribution of human populations in the world today.

These two approaches are complementary and neither is completely new. As is well known, the origin of factor analysis that is at the core of dimensional approach is in the early work of Spearman (1904). Although Cattell (1943) was among the first to employ Tryon's (1939) cluster analysis in the study of personality, recent work on the development of typologies is usually linked to the publication of Lazarsfeld and Henry's (1968) book on latent structure analysis and to the work on latent variables mixture modeling (see Muthén, 2001; Lubke & Muthén, 2005). These latter procedures have become available in the Mplus package (see Muthén & Muthén, 2014) and are employed in the present paper.

## 2. Substantive issues: cross-cultural differences on non-cognitive constructs

Although cross-cultural research has been concerned with performance on tests of intelligence and achievement, much of the work in recent years has been on non-cognitive constructs. In this paper, we focus

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on the following three domains: a) Social Attitudes; b) Social Axioms; and c) Social Norms. All these have been covered in our previous work, which employed factor analysis to examine the dimensional aspects of non-cognitive measures, and we rely on these previous results to go a step further. The main outcomes of these previous analyses can be summarized as follows:

- a) Social attitudes (and values): morality, nastiness and religiosity. Social attitudes refer to states of mind and feelings towards a specific object or social interaction. They are captured by statements that can elicit expressions of belief about what is true, real, or good in social situations. The three dimensions of Social Attitudes to be used in the present paper are derived from 20 different scales measuring morality, values and both pro- and anti-social attitudes from different sources (Stankov, Saucier and Knezevic, 2011; Stankov & Lee, *under review*). Factor analyses of the 20 scales converged on three factors: i) Morality. The factor represents something 'positive' in the sense that the measures which load on it emphasize principles that encourage members of a given society to accept acculturated values and morals that in turn lead to a minimization of friction with other members of the group — they are pro-social; ii) Nastiness. Substantively, this factor captures a class of anti-social attitudes characterized by the acceptance of violence to resolve social problems and the use of dubious means to achieve selfish and materialistic goals which, in turn, are viewed as being the most important. Life is seen as unjust and unfair and revenge is accepted as a means of getting even. iii) Religiosity. Two scales had high loadings on this factor. One of these two is Duke Religiosity Index, which captures both religious behavior and personal feelings. The second is the Alphaism (or Traditional Religiousness) scale of Saucier (2000) that capture one's beliefs and attitudes towards the role of religion in society.
- b) Social axioms. Social axioms are beliefs about the world and may be regarded as worldviews, that is, beliefs about people, social institutions or phenomena from within the physical, spiritual or social world. The work of Bond and Leung (see Leung et al., 2012) has identified the following five main dimensions of social axioms: i) Social complexity. This is a belief that people's behavior may vary across situations and that problems have multiple solutions. ii) Religiosity. Religiosity beliefs refer to the acceptance of the existence of a supernatural being and to the beneficial functions of religious practice. iii) Reward for application. This is a belief that people's use of effort, knowledge, careful planning, and other resources will lead to positive outcomes. iv) Social cynicism. This axiom involves the individual's assessment of whether engagement with the social world leads to beneficial or harmful outcomes to the actors involved. Can other people and the system itself be trusted to provide beneficial outcomes for those concerned? v) Fate control. This refers to a belief that life events are pre-determined by fatalistic forces, but that people may be able to predict and alter the degree of fate by various means. Stankov and Saucier (2015) and Bou Malham and Saucier (2014) provide further details about the structure of Social Axioms for the data employed in the present study.
- c) Social norms: four GLOBE dimensions. Social norms represent a set of beliefs (or perceptions) about the expected standards of behavior that are sanctioned and enforced, sometimes implicitly, by the society. The focus of this paper is on a GLOBE 'as is' (i.e., current practices) survey that uses statements that begin with 'In this society...' (see House et al., 2004). The answers are assumed to provide information about individual's perception of their culture, not about their personal feelings or beliefs. House et al. (2004) identified nine GLOBE dimensions of cross-cultural differences. Stankov (2015) was able to replicate the following four factors: i) Humane orientation. People's perception that their societies encourage and reward individuals for being friendly, soft-hearted, generous and sensitive towards others. ii) Uncertainty avoidance/future orientation. This dimension is defined by statements that cover two factors in the House et al. (2004) study. The majority of

these statements indicate people's perception that members of their society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on established social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices. However, three statements also refer to the perception that individuals in their society tend to engage in future-oriented behaviors, such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification. iii.) Power distance. The majority of statements that define this dimension indicate participants' perception that people in their society expect and agree that power should be stratified and concentrated at higher levels of an organization or government. iv) Gender (non) egalitarianism. House et al. (2004) label this dimension Gender Egalitarianism, implying participants' perception that their society minimizes gender role differences while promoting gender equality. However, five out of six statements used in Stankov's (2015) study are formulated in such a way that a higher score indicates agreement with a non-egalitarian position — e.g., 'In this society, boys are encouraged more than girls to attain a higher education.' — and '(Non)' was added to the title to acknowledge this directionality of scoring in our work.

It is important to keep in mind that the analyses reported in this paper follow from the detailed dimensional studies of each of the three domains listed above. We use three factor scores from the analyses of Social Attitudes (Stankov & Lee, *under review*), five factor scores of Social Axioms (Stankov & Saucier, 2015) and four factor scores from Social Norms (Stankov, 2015). The twelve factor scores provide an opportunity to look at the 'big picture' — i.e., the dimensions that underlie three non-cognitive domains. These factor scores are used in the latent profile analyses (LPA) in this paper.

### 3. Cultural regions in the world today

In psychological cross-cultural surveys, comparisons are frequently made between people from the existing administrative units, such as countries. There have also been attempts to classify countries into world regions. Since the findings to be reported here address issues related to groups of countries, we briefly mention some of the typical country classifications that have been carried out in terms of geography and climate, common history, linguistics, economics, politics and religion. We are interested in finding out whether the groupings of countries that will emerge from this study correspond to the classifications proposed by other investigators using different criteria.

A classification of societies that is relevant for us here was carried out by Inglehart and Baker (2000); they used data from the World Values Surveys to plot 65 countries into a two-dimensional space based on principal components analyses. The first dimension was the Traditional/Secular-rational authority, the second was Survival/Self-expression. Within this two-dimensional space they identified the following clusters of countries: Protestant Europe, Anglo, Africa, South Asia, Catholic Europe and Orthodox Europe. Stankov et al. (2014) reported another two-dimensional array of countries based on measures similar to those used in the present study. The dimensions were labeled Conservatism/Liberalism and Harshness/Softness.

Another frequently cited classification based on analyses of aggregate data has been described by Hofstede (2001) and Minkov (2013). These authors were critical of Gupta and Hanges (2004) work that employed discriminant analysis with GLOBE 'as is' and 'should be' measures to classify 62 societies. In GLOBE work, the following 10 societal clusters (groupings of countries into world regions) were obtained: Anglo, Latin Europe, Nordic Europe, Germanic Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, Southern Asia, and Confucian Asia. This classification proved useful in dimensional studies based on factor analysis that were reported by Stankov and Lee (2008; 2009).

A recent study Ronen and Shenkar (2013) employed clustering procedures to analyze the data from 10 studies, including those mentioned above, and involving 70 countries altogether. They reported the

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