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# Communication Styles as Dimensions of National Culture

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## Abstract

Evidence is presented that national cultures may be distinguished in terms of prevalent styles of communication, as exemplified by survey response styles. A distinction is made between the average communication style within a given nation and the nation-level dispersion of communication styles. Secondary analyses of published values, beliefs, and personality data are used to test hypotheses concerning the attributes of nations that differ in terms of their citizens' tendencies to agree and to disagree, and in terms of frequency of response extremity versus moderation. The tendency of individuals in different nations to agree or disagree is most concisely explained by measures derived from the concept of individualism-collectivism. The nation-level frequencies of agreement plus disagreement are best explained by Minkov's dimension of monumentalism-flexibility. The benefits of controlling these response tendencies for extracting valid measures of cultural variation and for defining a fuller range of cultural dimensions are discussed.

## Keywords

Communication, Acquiescence, Response Style, National Culture, World Values Survey

Progress over the past several decades in understanding cultural differences has been much influenced by the identification of dimensions of variation in national cultures. For the most part, these dimensions have been identified on the basis of surveys of individual values and beliefs. Following the lead of Hofstede (1980), individual-level data have been aggregated to the nation level, permitting dimensions of national variation to be identified through nation-level factor analysis or other equivalent procedures (Bond et al., 2004; Hofstede, 2001; Inglehart, 1997; Schwartz, 2004; Smith, Peterson et al., 2002).

While the value dimensions thus derived have had a major impact on the design and interpretation of cross-cultural studies (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006; Matsumoto & Yoo, 2006; Smith, Bond, & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2006), many aspects of this approach remain under debate. In particular, it is desirable to establish more fully the ways in which values are associated with cultural variations in behaviors. While values are expressed in context-free terms, individuals' behaviors are likely to be a function of both their own values and the prevailing context. This article focuses on one particular class of behaviors: the response styles of individuals who contribute to cross-national surveys. In an earlier article, Smith (2004) argued that variations in informants' survey response style should be treated not as a source of measurement error but as a sample of their

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habitual ways of communicating with others. He identified strong consistencies in nation-level estimates of acquiescent response style derived from seven earlier multinational surveys and found that nations high in acquiescence have a distinctive profile, characterized by values favoring institutional collectivism and uncertainty avoidance and practices reflecting in-group collectivism.

The present study further develops this perspective in two ways. First, it incorporates consideration of two additional response styles, disagreement and extremity-moderation. Second, it attends more directly to the levels-of-analysis problem. Responses to other persons, or to survey items with which one is presented, are individual-level expressions of acquiescence, disagreement, extremity, or moderation. Scores of this type can be used as a behavioral index of individuals' response styles, particularly where a series of scores have been shown to factor together at the individual level. If such an index is averaged across a sample derived from a given nation, one achieves what Leung and Bond (2004) have labeled as a citizen mean for that nation. A citizen mean denotes the average strength of an individual-level attribute within a population. However, a citizen mean does not give any indication of the intercorrelation of different attributes across a sample of nations.

A nation-level measure is one that does reflect the interrelatedness of attributes defining a concept across a range of nations. In order to do so, it needs to be based on more than one nation-level score per attribute. Hofstede (2001), Schwartz (2004), Bond et al. (2004), and others have produced such measures by using aggregated indicators of individual values and beliefs and then determining their structure at the nation level. Each of their dimensions is based on three to four separate scores per nation as determined through procedures such as factor analysis.

The present article creates nation-level measures in a slightly different way, by using aggregated indicators of style of response to each of a broad range of different questions. The co-occurrence of agreements and disagreements in a population is not a property of individuals, because the agreements and the disagreements are not necessarily expressed by the same persons. However, a national culture can be defined in terms of the co-occurrence of agreements and disagreements. Table 1 defines four possible types of national culture in terms of the frequency of persons responding with agreement and with disagreement to a range of statements. For instance, an extremity culture is defined as one in which both agreements and disagreements are frequent. A citizen mean would average these effects and show such a culture as moderate, whereas a nation-level mean more adequately reflects the existence of conflicting viewpoints within a given nation. A moderate culture is more usefully defined as one in which neither agreements nor disagreements are salient.

Nation-level means thus enable one to explore the cultural contexts in which varying amounts of agreement and disagreement are found. An extremity culture as defined in Table 1 would be most likely be one in which strong loyalties to favored viewpoints are expressed within subcultural groups and strong antipathies are expressed toward other groups that are either within one's nation or outside it. In contrast, a consensus culture would be characterized by expressions of harmony and uniformity of opinions. A dissent culture would most likely be one in which expression of individual opinions is more strongly valued than elsewhere, whereas a moderate culture would be one in which there is a prevailing caution about expressing one's opinions.

By defining types of nations simply in terms of prevailing frequencies of agreement and disagreement, it becomes quickly apparent that contrasts in other aspects of communication can also be foreseen. For instance, in extremity cultures communication would be more focused on in-group members than in dissent cultures. In moderate cultures, communication would likely be more indirect than in consensus cultures. In both extremity cultures and moderate cultures, communication could be expected to vary between targets more than in consensus and dissent cultures. Such issues can be explored empirically once the value of a nation-level characterization of response style has been established.

**Table 1.** Four Types of Nation-Level Culture Defined by Response Style

	Agreement Low	Agreement High
Disagreement Low	Moderate Culture	Consensus Culture
Disagreement High	Dissent Culture	Extremity Culture

The response style indices used by Smith (2004) were all citizen means. Smith and Fischer (2008) used multilevel analyses to extend this type of investigation. They identified interactions between individual-level values, nation-level values, and citizen means for both acquiescence and extremity. For instance, acquiescence was shown to be strongest among collectivist respondents within collectivistic national cultures, whereas extremity was strongest among individualist respondents in national cultures low in institutional collectivism. The present study extends these earlier ones by including also separate measures of disagreement and moderation and by comparing the utility of characterizing response styles within nations in terms of citizen means and in terms of nation-level means.

Cultural differences in communication have been discussed for many years (Hall, 1966), but no investigations have been reported that contrast communication styles in more than a small number of nations. A much broader sample of data can be derived from secondary analyses of cross-national surveys conducted for other purposes. Collecting data in this way has the advantage that it provides information that is tacit and indirect. Respondents are unlikely to reflect on the ways in which they distribute their responses across a series of response scales when they are replying to a series of substantive questions and may unwittingly indicate their actual style when they respond to questionnaires designed to measure other concepts of interest to social scientists, like values, beliefs, or attitudes.

Cross-national surveys have typically requested agreement or disagreement with positively worded items, rather than using counterbalanced sets of items. Perhaps for this reason, particular attention has been given to acquiescence as a communication style. Most authors of such surveys have considered response style a source of artifactual error and have found ways to partial its effects out from their data through various forms of standardization (Gelfand, 2006; Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Schwartz, 2004; Smith, Peterson et al., 2002). However, other authors have noted the statistical problems inherent in ipsatization procedures (Cheung & Rensvold, 2000; Fischer, 2004), and some researchers have preferred to define their dimensions using unstandardized data (Bond et al., 2004; Inglehart, 1997; Minkov, 2007). This poses risks of spurious correlation between dimensions derived from these studies and characterizations of nations that are based on response style. Analyses using these dimensions in the present study include a control for acquiescence.

## Communication and Culture

Hall (1966) advanced the proposition that a distinction can be made between high context and low context communication. High context communication is more indirect and elaborate and assumes the listener's substantial familiarity with the issues at stake. Low context communication is more direct and succinct. Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Chua (1988) noted the parallel between this distinction and the contrast between collectivism and individualism that has proved so popular among cross-cultural researchers. If in-group harmony is a major value of members of collectivist cultures, we may expect them to favor more indirect modes of communication, at least within their in-groups. If they are in the habit of frequently agreeing with those around them, then they may also respond to survey questions in a more acquiescent manner. If they typically

**Table 2.** Principal Predictors

Source	Scales	Measurement Type
Bond et al. (2004)	Dynamic Externality, Societal Cynicism	Nation level
Gelfand (2006)	Tight vs. Loose cultures	Nation level
Hofstede (2001)	Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity	Nation level
House et al. (2004)	Nine dimensions	Nation-level
Inglehart (1997)	Survival vs. Self-Expression, Tradition vs. Secularism	Citizen scores
Leung & Bond (2004)	Social Cynicism, Social Complexity, Reward for Application, Religiosity, Fate Control	Citizen scores
McCrae et al. (2005)	Big Five personality dimensions	Nation level
Minkov (2007)	Exclusion vs. Inclusion, Indulgence vs. Restraint, Monumentalism vs. Flexumility	Citizen scores
Schwartz (2004)	Mastery vs. Harmony, Hierarchy vs. Egalitarianism, Embeddedness vs. Autonomy	Nation level

express themselves in moderate ways, then they may also disproportionately favor the midpoints of Likert-type scales. However, it is by no means certain how closely survey response styles link with other aspects of communication. Respondents are most likely to think of a survey researcher as an out-group member. It is better to treat what is already known of cultural variations in response styles as the principal basis for further exploratory investigation.

Existing measures of acquiescence are not satisfactory for a full exploration of response styles. Acquiescence is typically defined as a unidimensional scale, summarizing the distribution of a respondent's ratings along Likert-type scales ranging, for instance, from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Rather than favoring the *strongly agree* end of such scales, respondents who seek to maximize harmony may eschew both extremes and select more moderate scale points. Consequently, in the next section separate predictions are discussed in relation to extent of agreement versus disagreement, and extent of moderate responding versus its opposite, extreme responding.

## Development of Hypotheses

Hypotheses are next formulated as to the descriptors of national cultures in terms of the values, beliefs, and personalities that can be expected to co-occur with differing response styles. Eight of the largest scale surveys of cross-national differences are employed as the principal predictors (Bond et al., 2004; Gelfand, 2006; Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2004; Inglehart, 1997; Leung & Bond, 2004; McCrae et al., 2005; Minkov, 2007; Schwartz, 2004). Table 2 indicates the range of cultural dimensions identified by these researchers and the type of measurement that they employed. The majority of these studies are well known, but Minkov's value dimensions are less familiar. The first two are defined by the same World Values Survey items with which Inglehart defined his dimension of survival versus self-expression. Minkov's "exclusion versus inclusion" dimension refers to in-group loyalty. His dimension of "indulgence versus restraint" refers to happiness, leisure, and control over one's life. Minkov's third dimension, "monumentalism versus flexumility," contrasts pride in one's nation and self-enhancement versus modesty in self-presentation. The survey by House et al (2004) yielded an unwieldy 18 dimensions of cultural variation, many of which correlate with one another. In particular, many of their value dimensions correlate negatively with their equivalent practices dimension. For present purposes, the nine practices dimensions are preferred, on the basis that it is more useful to focus on how respondents

perceive their society to be than on how they feel it should be.<sup>1</sup> In stating the hypotheses that follow, the phrase “collectivism indicators” is used to characterize the attributes found by Hofstede (2001), Schwartz (2004), and House et al. (2004) to cluster together, namely collectivism, embeddedness, power distance, hierarchy, and low wealth.

### *Predicting Citizen Scores for Agreement Versus Disagreement*

Nation-level dimensional correlates of citizen scores for acquiescence were explored in the earlier studies by Smith (2004) and Smith and Fischer (2008). Collectivism indicators were found to be positively linked with acquiescence.<sup>2</sup> This relationship is reexamined here for four reasons. First, these earlier studies did not include separate measures for agreement and disagreement. Second, the new analysis provides results directly comparable to those to be reported using nation-level indicators. Third, four additional predictors can now be included. Fourth, in the preceding studies no theoretical rationale for the associations found with collectivism indicators was proposed.

Kim (1994) developed a typology of what she called conversational constraints. She reasoned that the prevailing values of East Asian cultures would constrain speakers not to hurt one another's feelings and not to impose themselves on one another. In Western nations, she proposed that individualist values would constrain speakers to speak in ways that ensure clarity. In a further study, Kim et al. (1996) showed that preferences for these various constraints were associated in predictable ways with self-construal measures of independence and interdependence. If these constraints are applied to how one might complete a set of rating scales, the East Asian constraints might be expected to yield either agreement or moderate responding, whereas the Western constraint could yield rather more disagreement and extreme responding. Qualitative accounts of communication in collectivist cultures outside of East Asia also suggest a preference for agreement over disagreement. For instance, the positive value attached to the concept of *simpatía* in Latin cultures has been noted (Triandis, Lisansky, Marin, & Betancourt, 1984).

A broader basis for prediction of response styles is provided by the survey of self-esteem in 53 nations reported by Schmitt and Allik (2005). These authors used the Rosenberg (1965) measure, which has equal numbers of positively worded and negatively worded items. They computed an index of acquiescence based on the proportion of agreements to disagreements. This index was found to correlate at .64 with Hofstede's power distance dimension. McCrae et al. (2005) has also identified differences in the mean prevalence of persons perceived as scoring high on Big Five personality factors across 51 national cultures. We may expect nations with higher means for agreeableness to show more frequent agreement. The preceding paragraphs provide the basis for the first hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1:* (a) Citizen scores for agreement will be predicted by high collectivism indicators and high perceived agreeableness; (b) citizen scores for disagreement will be predicted by low perceived agreeableness and low collectivism indicators.

### *Predicting Citizen Scores for Extremity Versus Moderation*

Smith & Fischer (2008) found citizen scores for extremity to be most strongly predicted by low scores on House et al.'s measure of institutional collectivism practices. As with Hypothesis 1, links with predictors are tested here with a broader range of predictors and with fuller attention given to a rationale for the links proposed.

Lee and Green (1991) noted moderate responding among their Korean respondents, whereas Marin, Gamba, and Marin (1992) reported more extreme responding among Hispanics. Hamamura,

Heine, and Paulhus (2008) predicted moderate scale means from East Asian respondents. They reasoned and found that the East Asian propensity for dialectical thinking would lead Japanese and ethnic Chinese to be more likely to provide “ambivalent” item responses, which Westerners would see as logically incompatible with one another. When responses are averaged across items, the resulting scores would be confounded with true moderate responding. Within Canadian samples, they found that a measure of dialectical thinking mediated ethnic differences in ambivalence and moderation.

Schmitt and Allik’s (2005) 53-nation survey of self-esteem also yielded an index that approximates extremity (aggregated individual-level standard deviations of responses), which correlated at  $-.50$  with power distance. This index provides the beginnings of a basis for prediction, but it does not ensure that persons whose responses to positively worded items were extreme are the same persons as those whose responses to negatively worded items were extreme. A more defensible citizen score for extremity is provided by Schmitt and Allik’s means for self-esteem, since these give equal weight to the extremity of respondents’ agreements with positively worded items and of their disagreements with negatively worded items.

Extraverted persons are more likely than introverts to feel confident in taking up extreme positions. In terms of McCrae et al.’s (2005) mean scores on perceived Big Five personality factors, we can therefore expect that nations with higher than average representation of extraverts will exhibit greater extremity. Gelfand, Nishii, and Raver (2006) have presented a model of tight versus loose national cultures. Loose cultures are those in which there is greater choice as to how one may behave within a given type of social setting. We can expect that nations where the average respondent describes the culture as loose will be those in which there will be more scope for expression of divergent viewpoints. Finally, as noted already, Smith and Fischer (2008) found that House et al.’s (2004) measure of low institutional collectivism predicted extremity. While House et al.’s measure of in-group collectivism proved strongly associated with Hofstede’s measure of collectivism, their measure of institutional collectivism did not. The items defining institutional collectivism concern respondents’ perceptions that their society as a whole favors cohesion, loyalty, and the collective interest. Conceptually, these items are closer to Gelfand et al.’s concept of a tight culture than they are to the GLOBE measure of in-group loyalty. In-group loyalty requires in-group agreement but leaves open how to relate to out-group persons. Institutional collectivism requires a broader view of one’s relations with and obligations to others. It is plausible to predict that persons located within nations high on institutional collectivism will favor moderate ways of expressing themselves. Consistent with this view, Gelfand et al. (2006) hypothesized that there will be lower variability across individuals in tight cultures:

*Hypothesis 2:* Citizen scores for extremity will be predicted by high self-esteem, high perceived extraversion, cultural tightness, and low institutional collectivism.

### *Nation-Level Hypotheses*

The remaining hypotheses are formulated at the nation level. Citizen scores can indicate the most frequently occurring instances of a given behavior in a culture, but they say nothing about the interrelatedness of the component elements of a culture. The best available data source that can provide evidence of this kind derives from the results of the series of World Values Surveys conducted over the past two decades (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004). Since these surveys cover representative samples within each included nation, the variability that is found in their data should indicate the extent of intracultural variability. In terms of communication styles, a key element in understanding a culture is whether individuals within that culture will communicate in ways that are similar to one’s own style or different from it. Do culture members who

habitually agree with others act within settings where others around them do likewise? Do those who are more prone to disagree find that others do the same?

Many of the items used by the World Values Survey researchers have response scales ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The databank provides percentages of respondents who use each of the scale points on such scales. By sampling across a range of items, one can thus identify the nations in which there is the highest proportion of respondents who strongly agree and those in which there is the highest proportion of those who strongly disagree. The structure of agreement and disagreement across items can be established, yielding nation-level scores. Classifying nations in this way will not necessarily accord with the profile of nations arrayed in terms of their citizen scores, because a moderate citizen score for a nation could occur either where all citizens communicate in a moderate manner or where there is a range of some culture members who favor agreement and others who favor disagreement. As noted earlier and illustrated in Table 1, four ideal types of culture can be identified and named, on the basis of the frequency of strong agreements and of strong disagreements.

Given the measures available, it is preferable to evaluate this model in terms of dimensions rather than ideal types. Nations vary in terms of their magnitude, geographic dispersion, ethnic and occupational diversity, and many other factors. Variation between nations in consensus on values has been documented even when compared within specific samples such as teachers and students (Schwartz & Sagie, 1996). Within populations as a whole, diversity is likely to vary much more substantially.

At the nation level, subcultural variation could lead the frequency of agreements to be orthogonal to the frequency of disagreements. Likewise, extremity may coexist with moderation. Separate predictions are therefore required relating to each pole of the two dimensions that have been differentiated. However, the basis for such hypotheses is tenuous at best. The collectivism indicators may prove most valid in predicting communication within in-group settings. Across nations as a whole, prevailing communicative styles may also reflect communication toward out-groups. In nations characterized by consensus and in those characterized by dissent, communicators will predominantly encounter persons whose communicative style resembles their own. We may therefore expect that the predictions formulated as Hypothesis 1 would also be supported at the nation level:

*Hypothesis 3:* (a) Consensus nations will be characterized by high collectivism indicators and perceived agreeableness; (b) dissent nations will be characterized by low collectivism indicators and low perceived agreeableness.

In contrast, communicators in extremity nations may more often encounter persons whose communicative style differs from their own. Whether or not they do so would depend upon the ways in which subgroups within such cultures are composed. There is no clear basis for predicting how response styles in extremity cultures will differ from those in moderation cultures. Nominal predictions are entered that mirror those in Hypothesis 2:

*Hypothesis 4:* (a) Extremity cultures will be characterized by high self-esteem, high perceived extraversion, low institutional collectivism, and cultural looseness; (b) moderate cultures will be characterized by low self-esteem, low perceived extraversion, high institutional collectivism, and cultural tightness

While these hypotheses have been formulated on the basis of relevant existing conceptualizations, this research is exploratory and associations are therefore also examined between the dependent measures and other available nation-level indices concerning wealth, social axioms,

and the dimensions of cultural variation derived from the World Values Survey by Inglehart (1997) and by Minkov (2007).

## Method

Except as indicated below, all analyses were conducted through use of published data sources. Scores for nations were derived from Hofstede (2001), McCrae et al. (2005), Schwartz (2004), the societal practices measures of House et al. (2004), Inglehart's analyses of the World Values Survey ([www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)), and Minkov's (2007) analysis from the same source. Minkov constructs his dimensions through the same procedure as Inglehart, namely through factor analyzing the percentages of respondents in each nation who take an extreme position on items with Likert-type response scales and the percentage of those who agree where there are binary response scales. Five items define Exclusionism-Universalism, five items define Indulgence versus Restraint, and four items define Monumentalism-Flexumility. Indices of national wealth in 2003 were taken from United Nations Development Program (2004). Data for additional nations were kindly provided by Shalom Schwartz, who also provided Schwartz Value Survey overall sample means, which were used as independent controls for acquiescence in analyses involving scores where acquiescence had not been discounted. Citizen scores and nation-level means for social axioms were taken from Bond et al. (2004) and Leung and Bond (2004), respectively. Unpublished national scores for tight-loose norms and for situational tightness-looseness were kindly provided by Michele Gelfand.

Citizen scores for agreement, disagreement, and extremity were computed from the survey of business managers reported by Smith et al. (2002), with data included from additional nations. Smith et al.'s survey contained 64 5-point Likert-type scales, keyed from *to a very great extent* to *not at all*. The agreement score was (twice the number of scale point "5" responses, plus the number of scale point "4" responses)/total number of responses. The disagreement score was (twice the number of scale point "1" responses, plus the number of scale point "2" responses)/total number of responses. The differential weighting of scale points 1 and 5 over 2 and 4 was intended to emphasize the extreme points but not lose the information provided by points 2 and 4. A conceptually similar differential weighting procedure was used by McCrae et al. (2005). The extremity score was the sum of the agreement and disagreement scores. Agreement and disagreement correlate with one another at  $-.61$  ( $n = 63$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Extremity correlates with agreement at  $.33$  ( $p < .01$ ) and with disagreement at  $.52$  ( $p < .001$ ).

The consensus index reflects the proportion of respondents who endorsed the *strongly agree* category. It was based on responses to 20 World Values Survey items (A4, B2, B4, C37, C38, C39, C40, D55, D57, D60, E77, E78, E81, E83, E85, E88, E115, E121, F102, F103). These items were selected because they referred to a wide variety of unrelated issues and had response categories that included strong agreement or an equivalent category such as "very true." However, some had 5-point response scales and others had 4, so only the extreme points could be used in constructing these indices. Percentages were standardized within each item separately. Since not all of these questions were asked in the surveys conducted in all 84 nations, it was not possible to factor analyze the resulting item scores. However, mean item-total correlation was  $.63$ . Split half reliability was  $.82$  ( $n = 84$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

The dissent index, representing the percentage of *strongly disagree* responses, was computed from the same 20 items in a similar way. Mean item-total correlation was  $.46$ . Split-half reliability was  $.59$  ( $n = 84$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Although reliability may have been enhanced by dropping some items, it was preferable to retain all items, since selectively dropping some would be likely to reduce the randomness of the items retained and increase the probability that the index reflected item-topic similarity rather than a generalized indication of the prevalence of dissent. Consensus

and dissent correlate at  $.29$  ( $p < .01$ ), thus confirming that these nation-level indices are much less strongly associated than are the citizen scores for agreement and disagreement.

The index for extremity was created by adding the indices for consensus and dissent to one another. Extremity is thus not measured independently of these indices. It correlates with consensus at  $.87$  ( $p < .001$ ) and with dissent at  $.73$  ( $p < .001$ ). It did not prove possible to construct a separate index of moderation, since most WVS items had no midpoint. An independent index identified as “neutrality” was constructed from the percentage of respondents in each nation who selected the “neither agree nor disagree” response category on those WVS items where this option was offered (C37, C38, C39, C40, F102, F103). Cronbach alpha for this scale was  $0.87$ . The neutrality index correlates with extremity at  $-.29$  ( $p < .05$ ), with consensus at  $-.44$  ( $p < .001$ ), and with dissent at  $.04$  (*ns*).

## Results

The hypotheses are first tested through the use of correlations. Regressions are then conducted to determine the extent to which predictors derived from different sources are explaining variance that is similar or distinctive. Tests of Hypothesis 1 are shown in Table 3. The three columns show separate sets of correlations, with citizen means for agreement, disagreement, and extremity as dependent variables. As predicted, mean agreement level is associated with collectivism predictors, namely in-group collectivism, Hofstede’s power distance, GLOBE power distance, hierarchy, embeddedness, and low wealth. The predicted linkage with perceived agreeableness is significantly reversed and there are additional nonpredicted associations with low uncertainty avoidance practices and low perceived openness to change.

The predicted linkage between mean disagreement level and low collectivism indicators is partially supported. There are links with the Hofstede and Schwartz measures, but wealth and the GLOBE measures do not reach significance. The link with cultural looseness is supported, but the predicted link with low perceived personal agreeableness is significantly reversed. There are additional nonpredicted associations with low belief in reward for application, low belief in fate control, secularity, and perceived extraversion.

Finally, the links predicted in Hypothesis 2 between mean extremity and low institutional collectivism, high cultural tightness, and high self-esteem are all supported, but the link with perceived extraversion is not. There are also nonpredicted links with low belief in reward for application, low fate control, and low religiosity.

In interpreting the results for citizen response styles, it is important to bear in mind that (as noted earlier) disagreement correlates significantly negatively with agreement but positively with extremity. Consequently, where significant effects are found in Table 3 for both agreement and disagreement, these are best interpreted in terms of the contrast between collectivist nations in which agreement is a more typical style and individualist nations in which there is more disagreement. Where significant effects are found for *both* disagreement and extremity, these effects are better interpreted as aspects of extremity.

It is evident from these results that the personality predictors fared poorly. Perceived extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to change all appear more characteristic of the individualistic nations in which disagreement is more frequent. The nonpredicted effects for beliefs show belief in reward for application, religiosity, and fate control to be lower in nations high on extremity.

To evaluate these effects, it is necessary to clarify the extent to which the overall pattern of results may have been affected by multicollinearity between predictors. Stepwise regressions are used for this purpose. Although this procedure may give greater salience to indices that have been more reliably measured, it is the best available option given continuing uncertainty as to which nation-level indices have the greatest validity (Hofstede, 2006; Javidan, House, Dorfman, Hanges, &

**Table 3.** Correlations of Dimensions of National Culture With Citizen Response Styles

	Agree	Disagree	Extremity
H: Collectivism	.41**	-.39**	-.02
H: Power Distance	.56***	-.42**	.11
H: Uncertainty Avoidance	.06	.04	.11
H: Masculinity	-.05	.22	.22
Wealth	-.41***	.24	-.16
GL: In-Group Collectivism	.47***	-.29	.14
GL: Power Distance	.33*	-.11	.19
GL: Uncertainty Avoidance	-.33*	.06	-.25
GL: Future Orientation	-.09	-.09	-.18
GL: Performance Orientation	-.05	-.19	-.25
GL: Assertiveness	-.05	.14	.10
GL: Gender Egalitarianism	.00	.23	.26
GL: Humane Orientation	.26	-.25	-.02
GL: Institutional Collectivism	-.09	-.29	-.40**
S: Mastery vs. Harmony	.23	-.19	.02
S: Hierarchy vs. Egalitarianism	.43**	-.41**	-.04
S: Embeddedness vs. Autonomy	.52***	-.42**	.05
A: Social Cynicism	.15	-.16	-.06
A: Social Complexity	.05	-.01	-.04
A: Reward for Application	.14	-.47**	-.34*
A: Religiosity	-.26	-.23	-.40*
A: Fate Control	.06	-.46**	-.45**
I: Tradition vs. Secularity	-.17	.34*	.23
I: Security vs. Self-Expression	-.02	.16	.16
M: Exclusion vs. Inclusion	.14	-.25	-.06
M: Indulgence vs. Restraint	-.05	.13	.15
M: Monumentalism vs. Flexumility	.20	.05	.22
G: Tight-Loose (Norms)	.05	-.46**	-.47**
G: Tight-Loose (Situational)	-.31	.57***	.37
SE: Self-Esteem	.13	.21	.35*
NEO: Neuroticism	-.16	.20	.07
NEO: Extraversion	-.19	.34*	.21
NEO: Openness	-.39*	.31	-.06
NEO: Agreeableness	-.41*	.35*	-.04
NEO: Conscientiousness	.10	.01	.14

Note: H = Hofstede ( $n = 50$ ); GL = GLOBE ( $n = 44$ ); S = Schwartz ( $n = 48$ ); A = Axioms ( $n = 33$ ); I = Inglehart ( $n = 47$ ); M = Minkov ( $n = 32$  to  $40$ ); G = Gelfand ( $n = 29$ ); NEO = McCrae ( $n = 35$ ); SE = Schmitt ( $n = 35$ ). Directionality of signs refers to first-named end of bipolar dimensions. Correlations with Inglehart, Minkov, and Axioms are with nation-level mean acquiescence partialled out.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Sully de Luque, 2006; Smith, 2006). Since the nations for which data are available varies somewhat between predictors, a series of separate stepwise regressions were run (not shown) to determine whether variance additional to that explained by the hypothesized predictor in each column of Table 3 is contributed by any of the other indices shown as significant in the table.<sup>3</sup> With agreement as the dependent variable, no significant effects are identified additional to that explained by collectivism indicators. With disagreement as the dependent variable, low belief in fate control does explain variance additional to that explained by Hofstede's power distance ( $R^2$  change = .19,

**Table 4.** Correlations of Dimensions of National Culture With WVS Response Profiles

	World Values Survey			
	Consensus	Dissent	Extremity	Neutrality
H: Collectivism	.40**	-.20	.18	-.28
H: Power Distance	.42**	-.11	.25	-.23
H: Uncertainty Avoidance	.13	.23	.22	.17
H: Masculinity	.04	-.11	-.03	.27
Wealth	-.44***	.09	-.27*	.29*
GL: In-Group Collectivism	.45**	-.20	.20	-.36*
GL: Power Distance	.30*	.09	.26	-.04
GL: Uncertainty Avoidance	-.42**	-.05	-.32*	-.01
GL: Future Orientation	-.26	-.18	-.28	-.16
GL: Performance Orientation	-.19	-.34*	-.31*	-.11
GL: Assertiveness	.30*	.17	.30*	-.13
GL: Gender Egalitarianism	-.17	.15	-.04	.11
GL: Humane Orientation	.14	-.30*	-.06	-.39*
GL: Institutional Collectivism	-.25	-.50***	-.44**	-.03
S: Mastery vs. Harmony	.20	-.28*	-.02	-.21
S: Hierarchy vs. Egalitarianism	.21	-.45***	-.11	-.26
S: Embeddedness vs. Autonomy	.46***	-.29*	.16	-.29*
A: Dynamic Externality	-.14	-.13	-.17	-.56***
A: Societal Cynicism	-.10	.05	-.03	.15
I: Tradition vs. Secularity	.40**	.20	.39**	-.39*
I: Security vs. Self-Expression	-.03	-.10	-.02	-.03
M: Exclusion vs. Inclusion	.31	-.14	.15	-.14
M: Indulgence vs. Restraint	-.08	.18	.06	.06
M: Monumentalism vs. Flexumility	.56***	.73***	.73***	-.39*
G: Tight-Loose (Norms)	-.12	-.19	-.18	-.19
G: Tight-Loose (Specific)	-.24	.22	-.04	.24
SE: Self-Esteem	-.03	.23	.09	-.20
NEO: Neuroticism	.24	.20	.28	.08
NEO: Extraversion	-.27	.09	-.15	.29
NEO: Openness	-.31*	.18	-.12	.23
NEO: Agreeableness	.37*	.24	-.14	.15
NEO: Conscientiousness	-.07	-.17	-.14	.03

Note: H = Hofstede ( $n = 43$  to  $54$ ); GL = GLOBE ( $n = 38$  to  $47$ ); S = Schwartz ( $n = 51$  to  $59$ ); A = Axioms ( $n = 27$  to  $37$ ); I = Inglehart ( $n = 50$  to  $58$ ); M = Minkov ( $n = 36$  to  $47$ ); G = Gelfand ( $n = 27$  to  $31$ ); NEO = McCrae ( $n = 36$  to  $41$ ); SE = Schmitt ( $n = 39$  to  $44$ ). Correlations with Inglehart, Minkov, and Axioms scores are with nation-level mean acquiescence partialled out. Directionality of signs refers to first-named end of bipolar dimensions.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

$p < .01$ ). With extremity as the dependent variable, no predictor is identified that explains variance additional to that explained by institutional collectivism.

The tests of Hypotheses 3 and 4 concerning nation-level means are shown in Table 4, with the four characterizations of nation type as dependent measures. As predicted, consensus cultures are characterized by collectivism, power distance, in-group collectivism, GLOBE power distance, embeddedness, low wealth, and perceived agreeableness. There are also nonpredicted associations with low GLOBE uncertainty avoidance and perceived openness and high assertiveness, tradition, and monumentalism. Dissent cultures show predicted associations with egalitarianism

and autonomy, but all other significant associations are nonpredicted. These comprise high institutional collectivism, monumentalism, harmony, humane orientation, and Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance. Extremity cultures do show the predicted association with low institutional collectivism. They are also associated with high scores on monumentalism, tradition, and assertiveness, and low scores on wealth, uncertainty avoidance, and performance orientation. Finally, none of the predicted relations for moderate cultures are found to characterize nations scoring high on neutrality, but there are significant links with low scores on Bond and Leung's measure of dynamic externality in beliefs, high wealth, secularity, high autonomy, low in-group collectivism, and low humane orientation.

In interpreting these complex results, it is important to bear in mind that the indices of consensus and dissent are independent of one another, but both are strongly related to the index for extremity. Thus, predictors that correlate with all three indices are best interpreted as associated with extremity, whereas those that do not would be more indicative of either consensus or dissent. For this reason, Minkov's measure of monumentalism appears indicative of extremity cultures but not of consensus or dissent cultures.

A series of stepwise regressions parallel to those made with the citizen scores was conducted, excluding monumentalism in relation to consensus and dissent cultures. With nation-level consensus as the dependent variable, the GLOBE measures of low uncertainty avoidance and assertiveness explain more variance than the collectivism indicators ( $R^2 = .31$ ;  $p < .001$ ). No other predictor explains additional variance.<sup>4</sup> Although these effects were not predicted, they are consistent with Smith's (2004) findings linking acquiescence with low uncertainty avoidance in addition to collectivism. With nation-level dissent as the dependent variable, low institutional collectivism is the strongest predictor ( $R^2 = .26$ ;  $p < .001$ ), but low scores on Schwartz's hierarchy-egalitarianism ( $R^2$  change =  $.09$ ;  $p < .02$ ) do explain significant additional variance. The strength of effect associated with low institutional collectivism parallels the finding by Smith and Fischer (2008) linking institutional collectivism practices with extremity. With nation-level extremity as the dependent variable, monumentalism is a stronger predictor than institutional collectivism ( $R^2 = .60$ ;  $p < .001$ ), but low GLOBE performance orientation does explain additional variance ( $R^2$  change =  $.11$ ;  $p < .01$ ). With neutrality as the dependent variable, no predictor can add to the variance explained by Bond et al.'s (2004) nation-level measure of dynamic externality.

## Discussion

The principal thrust of this article has been to devise separate measures related to respondents' tendency toward agreement, disagreement, and extremity, while also distinguishing between aggregated individual-level scores and nation-level scores. In interpreting the results, it is important to take account of the fact that while citizen scores for agreement and disagreement are strongly and negatively correlated, nation-level scores for consensus and dissent are less strongly linked. The citizen scores tell us that the nations in which agreement is most frequent differ from those in which disagreement is most frequent. The citizen scores for extremity are also more strongly associated with disagreement than are the citizen scores for agreement. This indicates that while some nations can best be characterized in terms of typical levels of both agreement and disagreement, others can be characterized solely by their typical level of agreement. The citizen score analyses indicate that the inclusion of additional predictors does not advance our understanding beyond that achieved in earlier analyses (Smith, 2004; Smith & Fischer, 2008). Rates of agreement and disagreement are best explained by collectivism indicators. Extremity is best explained by low institutional collectivism.

The nation-level analyses show rather different results. Effects attributable to collectivism indicators are outweighed by other GLOBE dimensions and especially by measures derived from

**Table 5.** High and Low Scoring Nations

	Agreement Low	Agreement High
Disagreement Low	Moderate Cultures China Taiwan Singapore Japan Moldova	Consensus cultures Nigeria Bangla Desh India Vietnam Puerto Rico
Disagreement High	Dissent Cultures Germany United Kingdom Sweden Greece Azerbaijan	Extremity Cultures Morocco Iraq Israel Venezuela Saudi Arabia

the work of Minkov (2007) and of Leung and Bond (2004). This could be because the indices of response style employed in the two types of analysis were derived from different sources, or because of differences in the way that the indices were constructed, or because the World Values Survey database samples more nations than that of Smith et al. (2002), or because of the conceptual distinctiveness of citizen scores versus nation-level scores.

Considering first the differing sources and bases of the indices, it is notable that citizen scores for agreement correlate with the nation-level consensus index at .53 ( $n = 51$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Although disagreement correlates with the dissent index at only .13 ( $ns$ ), it is not plausible to explain the divergence between the significant predictors for agreement and for consensus on the basis of method differences. In the case of monumentalism, a stronger possibility is that this index was devised from the same data set as the dependent measures that it was able to predict. However, this cannot explain why monumentalism does not predict neutrality, nor why dynamic externality, which is derived from a different data source, is able to do so. Neither can this argument account for the additional effects obtained with the GLOBE measures.

The alternative to possibilities of artifact is that the nonpredicted effects indicate novel ways of understanding contrasts in nation-level culture, which require further investigation. Minkov's dimension of Monumentalism-Flexumility is constructed by counting the percentage of *strongly agree* responses to four World Values Survey items. The item that best represents this dimension is G06 ("How proud are you to be [Nationality]?"), which correlates with the scale at .80. The scale has a Cronbach alpha of .91 (Minkov, 2007). On the face of it, this dimension might be considered to tap acquiescence. However, as shown in Table 4, a high score on this dimension is found not only in nations where respondents strongly agree with the 20 other WVS items used in the present analysis but also in nations that contain persons who strongly *disagree* with these items. Thus, the dimension is contrasting nations where there are both agreements and disagreements with those where there are neither. Table 5 identifies some of the nations that best approximate each ideal type in the present sample.

The nations identified as moderate in Table 5 are principally the much-studied East Asian so-called "tiger" nations, who are most frequently cited as exemplars of collectivism. Moderation may be a better label for them. We know very much less about the nations classified here as extreme. They are nations that Hofstede and others found to be more collectivistic than the East Asian nations. Whether variations in dialectical thinking are also associated with positioning of nations along an extremity-moderation dimension cannot at present be determined, since the literature on this topic has thus far been largely focused on contrasts between East Asia and North

America (Hamamura et al., 2008; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). A multinational survey using this scale would be most helpful, especially if it encompassed less frequently represented cultural groups. One indication of what such a survey might reveal has been provided by Schimmack, Oishi, and Diener (2002). These authors computed correlations from 38 nations between students' reported frequencies of positive emotions and negative emotions. Correlations within the data from East Asian nations were less negative, indicating a greater tendency for "dialectical" emotional expression in those nations. Minkov (2007) reported that Schimmack et al.'s index correlates at  $-.60$  with monumentalism.

The results for the nation-level neutrality index require separate consideration. Neutrality did not approximate to low extremity. High scoring nations included many European nations, the United States, and Japan, which explains the association with Leung and Bond's low dynamic externality. It appears that nations in which *neither agree nor disagree* responses were more frequent were those in which some respondents found questions too complex to be answered more simply.

It was suggested in the introduction to this article that studies of communicative behaviors could augment our understanding of the ways in which value dimensions can account for cultural differences. The principal limitation of the present analysis is that we have little direct evidence that survey response styles correspond with other aspects of how members of particular national cultures do actually communicate with one another. The analyses that have been presented confirm some predicted relations with a range of cultural indices and also identify other new ones, but these indices almost all themselves derive from the completion of surveys either on paper or through the medium of an interviewer. An alternative perspective was provided by Y. Kashima and Kashima (1998), who correlated certain aspects of the structure of languages spoken in different nations with available indices of cultural values. Among the variables studied by Kashima and Kashima were the number of first-person pronouns in a language and whether it was permissible for the speaker to drop the pronoun from a sentence. They reasoned that languages with more than one first-person pronoun would enable the speaker to accommodate their speech to the person addressed. In contrast, a single first pronoun would give more emphasis to the speaker's assertions. Presence of multiple first pronouns might therefore be expected to be associated with moderation. Within the present samples, using Kashima and Kashima's language codes, low nation-level extremity predicts the existence of multiple first pronouns at  $r = .30$  ( $n = 59$ ;  $p < .05$ ), whereas collectivism does not. Studies of what is grammatically permissible need to be supported by studies of actual speech. In a further study, E. S. Kashima and Kashima (1997) found that Australian speakers used first pronouns six times more often than Japanese speakers.

Although the primary goal of this article has been to explore the utility of characterizing nations in terms of response styles, the results also bear upon continuing discussion of how best to construct survey instruments with cross-cultural measurement validity. Ipsatisation eliminates the independence of measures (Cheung & Rensvold, 2000; Fischer, 2004) and is thought also to eliminate an aspect of cultural difference (namely ways of expressing oneself) that is of substantive interest. The present results have indicated that even where predictors are used that have been ipsatised (e.g., those of Hofstede and Schwartz), these predictors still significantly predict citizen scores for agreement and disagreement and nation-level scores for consensus and dissent. The argument for ipsatisation is therefore strengthened. Difficulties in data analysis remain, but ipsatised measures give greater confidence that differences in mean scores are substantive rather than artifactual.

## Conclusion

The delineation of national cultures in terms of response styles can add to knowledge derived from surveys of values and beliefs. For instance, it can provide measures that are less susceptible

to conscious aspects of self-presentation. However, this approach gains credibility if it can be shown to provide evidence of convergent validity between a broad range of measures of cultural attributes. If further studies can replicate the substantive nature of response style variations, we shall be better placed to determine when its effects must be partialled out of cross-cultural instrumentation and when it should not. The present results argue in favor of partialling out response style. Both Minkov's measures and Leung and Bond's social axioms measure are uncorrected for acquiescence. If an independent measure of acquiescence had not been used to partial out its effects, none of the distinctive nation-level effects obtained in this study would have been detected. In the present case, partialling did not prevent the description of the contrast between highly acquiescent nations and less acquiescent nations in terms of extremity-moderation.

The most striking aspect of the present results is the evidence for a cultural contrast that is independent of the attributes of the individualism-collectivism aggregate. Cross-cultural psychologists have long focused their attention on East Asian nations as exemplars of collectivism, even though these nations do not score at the extreme end of most scales tapping individualism. In contrast, the East Asian nations do cluster at the extreme end of the dimension defined by moderation, institutional collectivism, cultural tightness, and flexumility (which can be considered as willingness to accommodate others). We need to give more attention to the nations that define the opposite end of this dimension if we are to fully understand this aspect of cultural variation.

In particular, we need to consider what might be the reasons why nations should vary in the extremity of their prevailing communication styles. It is widely accepted that the basis for the contrast between nations that are more collectivist and those that are more individualist lies in the strength and nature of the bonds between individuals and groups. What might be the distinctive and heretofore neglected principle that drives differences in communication extremity? To answer this question we may do best to focus not on convergences between East Asian moderation and collectivism but on the communication styles that prevail in the rather more collectivistic nations scoring at the extremity pole of the present analysis. Although there is no relevant empirical data, the nations scoring high on extremity identified in Table 5 are among those often considered to be honor cultures. As we have seen, a key item used by Minkov (2007) to define monumentalism is strong pride in one's nation. It is possible that the culture of nations scoring high on extremity involves a relatively strong preoccupation with defense from out-group threats, while the culture of nations scoring high on moderation may give priority to maintenance of in-group harmony. More systematic comparisons will be required.

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### **Notes**

1. Smith (2004) reported analyses showing that the values and practices dimensions identified by House et al. (2004) that predict nation-level acquiescence differ from one another. Following subsequent debates (Hofstede, 2006; Javidan et al., 2006; Smith, 2006), this author concludes that the practices measures have stronger face validity. Ratings of how one's society should be are not necessarily equivalent to the personal values tapped by Schwartz (2004) and others. Evidence suggests that ratings of one's nation as a whole may have stronger predictive validity than aggregated self-ratings (Heine, Buchtel, & Norenzayan, 2008).

2. Smith (2004) also found that House et al.'s uncertainty avoidance values measure predicted acquiescence. There is considerable doubt as to how to interpret measures of uncertainty avoidance, given that Hofstede's measure of uncertainty avoidance values and House et al.'s measures of uncertainty avoidance practices correlate negatively with each other. No predictions are made relating to uncertainty avoidance.
3. Separate regressions were run for each group of predictors, because of nonoverlap of nations sampled. Although the hypotheses were formulated in terms of GLOBE practices, analyses were also run to determine whether values measures explained variance additional to that explained by the strongest predictor identified in each column of Table 3. The GLOBE uncertainty avoidance values measure correlates at .78 with the GLOBE in-group practices measure. GLOBE uncertainty avoidance values do explain significant additional variance in agreement to that explained by in-group collectivism practices ( $R^2$  change .10,  $p < .02$ ). It correlates at .70 with Hofstede's power distance but does not explain additional variance in disagreement. No GLOBE values measure adds to the variance in extremity that is explained by the GLOBE institutional collectivism practices measure.
4. GLOBE values favoring assertiveness and low uncertainty avoidance were stronger predictors of consensus cultures than were the equivalent practices predictors ( $R^2 = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ ). GLOBE assertive values explained variance in dissent additional to that explained by the institutional collectivism practices predictor ( $R^2$  change = .07,  $p > .04$ ). GLOBE values measures did not explain additional variance in extremity or neutrality.

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