

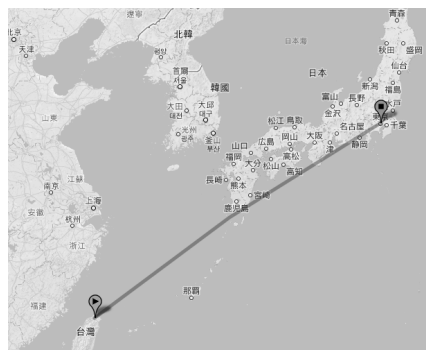
Difference or Differentiation?  
Some Thoughts on the Cross-Cultural Studies

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## How far is Japan from Taiwan?

- Geographical distance
  - Metrics
    - 2100 Kilometers
    - 2.5 flight hours
    - .....
- Social distance
  - Metric?
- Cultural distance
  - Metric?



## About myself

- Micro-sociologist
  - Social psychologist
- Experimental sociologist
  - Interested in
    - Pro-social behavior
      - Cooperation
      - Fairness
      - ...
- A common question I encounter:
  - *Why don't you conduct a cross-cultural comparison?*

## Main Message in the Talk

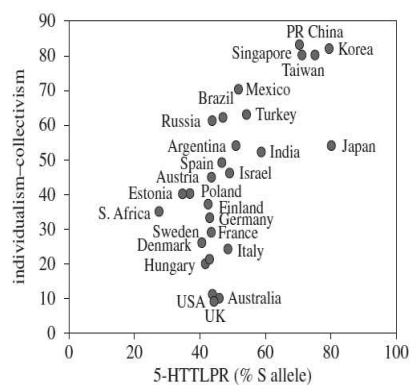
- Cross-cultural behavioral studies
  - Common framework
  - Some representative examples
  - Some reflections

## How to make a cross-societal comparison?

- Focus on the ***difference***
  - Example:
    - Anthropology
    - The meaning of “connection” in social network research
      - friendship
      - 關係
      - ....
- Focus on the ***commonality***
  - Example
    - Economics
- Alternative approach
  - Start with a neutral, universal framework and foundation
  - Differences can then be observed and ***measured***

## Example I

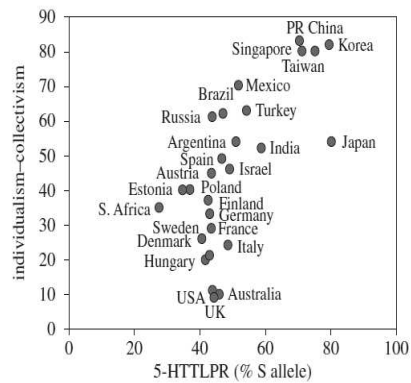
- Individualism vs. Collectivism
  - Hofstede (1980, 1983)



Source: Chiao and Blizinsky 2010

## Example I

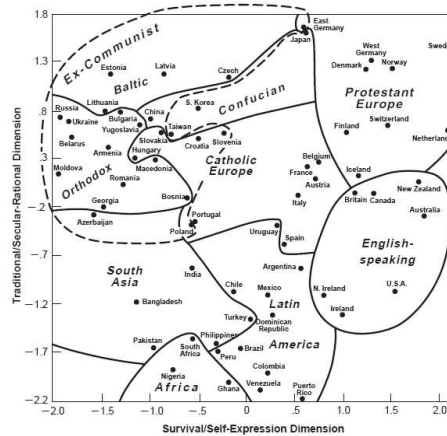
- **Individualism**  
 “a society in which the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after himself/herself or his/her immediate family”  
 (Voronov and Singer 2002, p. 462)
- **Collectivism**  
 “a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty”  
 (Voronov and Singer 2002, p. 462)



Source: Chiao and Blizinsky 2010

## Example II

- **Traditional vs. Secular Societies**
  - Inglehart and Baker (2000)
  - World Values Survey
    - Tradition
      - Focus on religion, national pride, authority, etc
    - Survival
      - Emphasize survival security, economic development, etc.
  - Similarity among countries are detected by the factor loadings of a set of survey questions



## Example III

- Game experiments
  - Trust game
- *Are Japanese more trusting than Americans?*
  - *No, Americans have higher generalized trust*
- Trust game
  - Two players *A* and *B*
  - *A* is given an endowment and decides whether to give to *B* or not
  - Any amount given to *B* will be tripled
  - Later, *B* decides how much to share with *A*
  - *A* chooses whether to trust *B* to reciprocate

## Example IV

- Game experiments
  - Fairness game
- *How do people worldwide perceive “fairness”?*
- *Do people in capitalist societies behave less fairly?*
- Fairness game
  - Two players *A* and *B*
  - *A* is given an endowment and decides to how to split it with *B*
  - *B* decides whether to accept *A*'s proposal
    - *If rejected, both get nothing*

## Example IV

- Fairness game

- *A neutral setting, which can be conducted across different societies*

- *Henrich et al. (2010)*

Population	Location	Enviros	Economic base	Residence	Mean MI	Mean WR	Mean CS	Com Sam (DG/UG/TPG)	N (DG/UG/TPG)
Accra City	Ghana	Urban	Wage work	Sedentary	100	97	44†	3/3/11	30/30/39
Au*	Papua New Guinea	Mountainous forest	Horticulture and foraging	Sedentary	1	100	309	3/3/1	30/30/30
Dolgan/ Ng.	Siberia	Tundra-taiga	Hunting, fishing, and wages	Semi-sedentary	63	59	612	1/1/0	30/30/0
Gusii	Kenya	Fertile high plains	Farming and wage work	Sedentary	28	100	4063	2/2/1	25/25/30
Hadza*	Tanzania	Savanna-woodlands	Foraging	Nomadic	0	0	43	4/4/3	31/31/27
Isanga village	Tanzania	Mountainous forest	Farming and wage work	Sedentary	70	99	1500	1/1/1	30/30/20
Maragoli	Kenya	Fertile plains	Farming and wage work	Sedentary	43	100	3843	2/2/1	25/25/30
Orma*	Kenya	Semi-arid savanna	Pastoralism	Semi-nomadic	72	100	125	4/0/0	26/0/0
Samburu	Kenya	Semi-arid savanna	Pastoralism	Semi-nomadic	69	66	2000	1/1/1	31/31/30
Sanquianga	Colombia	Mangrove forest	Fisheries	Sedentary	82	84	1931	1/1/2	30/30/32
Shuar	Ecuador	Tropical forest	Horticulture	Sedentary	22	76	498	2/2/1	21/21/15
Sursurunga	Papua New Guinea	Island	Horticulture	Sedentary	24	100	186	3/3/1	30/30/32
Tsimane*	Bolivia	Tropical forest	Horticulture and foraging	Semi-nomadic	7	100	314	2/2/1	38/36/27
United States*	Missouri	Prairie	Wage work	Sedentary	100	100	1813	1/1/0	15/26/0
Yasawa	Fiji	Coastal tropical pacific	Horticulture and marine foraging	Sedentary	21	100	109	2/2/2	35/34/30

## Example IV

- Game experiments

- Fairness game

- *How do people worldwide perceive “fairness”?*

- *Are people in capitalist societies more aggressive?*

- *Not at all!*

- Fairness game

- Two players *A* and *B*

- *A* is given an endowment and decides to how to split it with *B*

- *B* decides whether to accept *A*'s proposal

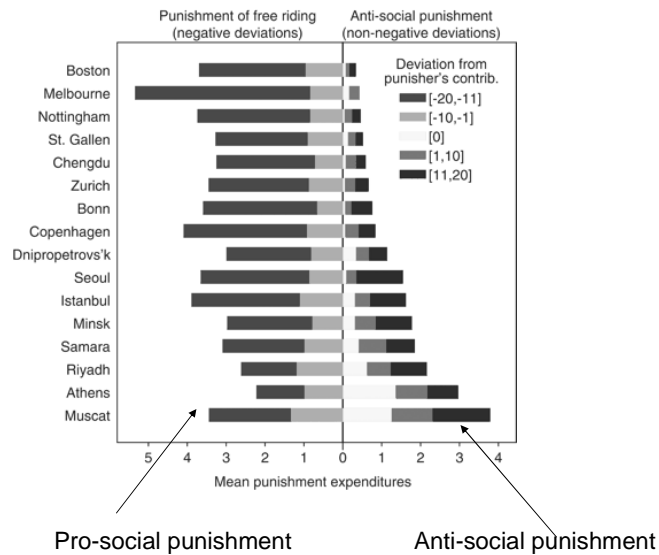
- *If rejected, both get nothing*

# Example V

- Game experiments
  - Cooperation and punishment game
- *Would good people be punished simply because they are cooperative?*
- Cooperation game
  - Each person is given an endowment
  - Decides how much to donate to the public fund
  - Donation to the public fund will be doubled and the fund is equally shared by each person
  - Seeing how much others donate, each person can “punish” persons s/he likes

# Example V

Source:  
Hermann et al (2008)



## Main Messages

- *How to conduct a cross-cultural comparison?*
  - Principles
    - Seek neutrality first and then look for differences
    - Measurable instruments
    - Be careful in translating the neutral framework to the local social context

## Reflection I

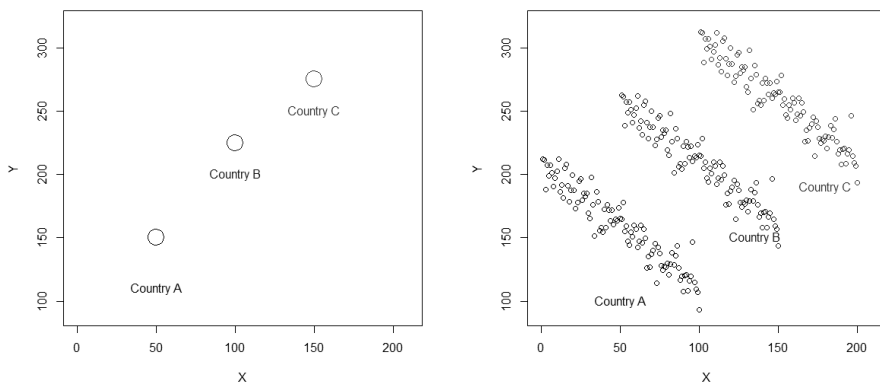
- Beyond differences!
  - Look for explanations/mechanisms
  - Example
    - Yamagishi (1995)
    - *Under what circumstances would Japanese be more trusting than Americans?*
      - *Social sanction*



## Reflection II

- Pay attention to within-society difference as well
- Doing a cross-country comparison is fun, but there is a risk (problem) of using country as the unit of analysis in statistical inferences
  - Ecological Fallacy

“Cultural differences are not always reducible to individual differences”  
*Na et al. (2010)*



## Reflection III

- Sociology (or political science) is NOT the only discipline that is interested in cross-societal differences
- Example
  - in Psychology
    - Cultural Neurosciences
- Implication
  - Cultural differences may occur at lower levels
    - Individuals?
    - Neurons?
    - Cells?

## Prospect

- A more (vertically) integrated social science that investigates “differences”
  - *When do differences start manifest?*
  - *How do differences at the lower levels (such as individuals) influence the differences at the upper levels (such as nations)?*

# The End

- Acknowledgment to
  - The University of Tokyo