

Cultural Differences in Attitudes Toward Action and Inaction: The Role of Dialecticism

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Abstract

The current research examined whether nations differ in their attitudes toward action and inaction. It was anticipated that members of dialectical East Asian societies would show a positive association in their attitudes toward action/inaction. However, members of non-dialectical European-American societies were expected to show a negative association in their attitudes toward action/inaction. Young adults in 19 nations completed measures of dialectical thinking and attitudes toward action/inaction. Results from multi-level modeling showed, as predicted, that people from high dialecticism nations reported a more positive association in their attitudes toward action and inaction than people from low dialecticism nations. Furthermore, these findings remained after controlling for cultural differences in individualism-collectivism, neuroticism, gross-domestic product, and response style. Discussion highlights the implications of these findings for action/inaction goals, dialecticism, and culture.

Keywords

action research, attitudes, attitudinal ambivalence, culture and cognition, culture/ethnicity

For centuries, people have been fascinated by differences between cultures and societies (Herodotus, 1998). Cultures differ in a variety of obvious ways, such as language, diet, and dress. Yet there are also more subtle differences between cultures that have been identified through systematic research (Heine, 2010). For example, European American societies stress independence and autonomy of the self, while some East Asian and Latin American societies stress interdependence and harmonization of the self with others (Triandis, 1989). Furthermore, members of European American societies tend to see the world as fixed and unchanging, whereas members of East Asian societies see the world as full of contradiction and change (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Finally, cultures vary in their rates of active and inactive behavior. That is, some nations are more active than others as measured by walking and postal speed (Levine & Norenzayan, 1999), frequency of naps (Masa et al., 2006), and frequency of communications, voting, and stimulant use, among other behaviors (Noguchi, Handley, & Albarracín, 2011). The current research asks whether nations differ in their attitudes toward action (ATA) and inaction (ATI), including how useful they think action and inaction are for daily life (McCulloch, Li, Hong, & Albarracín, 2012). We

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Table 1. Sample Characteristics of the 19 Nations.

Nation	Data Collection Site	Language of Survey	Number of Participants	Mean Age (SD)	Percentage Female
Argentina	Buenos Aires	Spanish	89	23.3 (6.7)	84.3
Bolivia	Santa Cruz	Spanish	237	19.7 (3.1)	75.1
China	Guangzhou	Chinese	288	20.2 (0.8)	54.5
Colombia	Barranquilla	Spanish	196	19.9 (3.4)	82.2
England	Cardiff	English	40	19.8 (1.8)	90.0
Guatemala	Guatemala City	Spanish	179	20.1 (3.0)	36.9
Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Chinese	155	20.0 (1.3)	38.1
Israel	Ra'anana	Hebrew	241	27.3 (5.9)	81.7
Italy	Rome	Italian	189	22.5 (3.6)	58.0
Japan	Tokyo	Japanese	172	19.5 (1.1)	36.6
Mexico	Mexico City	Spanish	198	22.7 (4.2)	61.6
Norway	Oslo	Norwegian	53	27.7 (6.9)	77.4
Philippines	Manila	English	150	17.0 (0.8)	82.0
Portugal	Lisbon	Portuguese	204	29.2 (11.1)	80.1
Singapore	Singapore	English	306	21.3 (1.7)	52.1
Spain	Madrid	Spanish	179	21.2 (5.1)	82.9
Switzerland	Lausanne	French	302	20.8 (4.0)	79.9
Turkey	Istanbul	Turkish	382	22.8 (4.0)	79.9
USA	Gainesville	English	237	19.2 (1.2)	66.5

conceptualize action and inaction as two endpoints along a continuum of activity with frequent and/or intense output (e.g., running) occupying the action end, and infrequent and/or reduced output (e.g., sleeping) occupying the inaction end (see Albarracín, Hepler, & Tannenbaum, 2011).

Intuitively, some societies seem to value action and inaction to different degrees than others. For example, many European American societies promote a Protestant Work Ethic, which strongly values extended periods of laborious activity, and consider extended periods of inactivity as indicative of laziness (Weber, 1930). Conversely, some East Asian societies promote the benefits of occasional periods of inactivity, as evidenced by the prominent role of silent meditative practices in Buddhism (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006), and principle of inaction (Wu Wei) expressed as a core tenant of Daoism (Graham, 2001). Other societies show greater appreciation of inaction by mandating elevated levels of vacation time for employees, and by practicing daily *siestas*, which interrupt work-related activity for occasional periods of rest and recovery. However, despite these observations, and the fact that individual and regional variations in action goals predict important outcomes including eating, exercise, problem solving, learning, and voting (Albarracín et al., 2008; Gendolla & Silvestrini, 2010; Laran, 2010; Noguchi et al., 2011), it remains unknown whether nations differ in their ATA and ATI, and why such differences might arise. The current research addresses these gaps by first, measuring ATA and ATI across 19 diverse societies. In addition, this research tests whether dialecticism, a prominent cultural variable that promotes seeing the world as full of contradiction and change (Peng & Nisbett, 1999), is associated with regional variations in action/inaction attitudes.

There is a good reason to assume that cultural differences in dialecticism would predict ATA and ATI. According to a growing body of research, dialectical thinking, which is the

tendency to report and embrace contradictory beliefs, mediates cultural differences in self-evaluation, emotional complexity, and in-group favoritism (Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2010). Specifically, although nondialectical Euro Americans tend to rate themselves and their groups positively, dialectical East Asians more often report contradictory evaluations of themselves and their groups, where they readily admit both positive and negative aspects as simultaneously existing within these targets (Ma-Kellams, Spencer-Rodgers, & Peng, 2011; Spencer-Rodgers, Boucher, Mori, Wang, & Peng, 2009). Moreover, cultural differences are also observed in the evaluations of emotion, such that nondialectical Euro Americans tend to rate their present mood as positive or negative, but rarely both, whereas dialectical East Asians often report experiencing mixed positive and negative emotions at the same moment (Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener, 2002; Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, & Wang, 2010). Because action and inaction are by definition oppositional constructs (Albarracín et al., 2008, 2011), it could be argued that members of dialectical East Asian societies would simultaneously perceive positive and negative aspects in both constructs and therefore report similar ATA and ATI. Conversely, members of nondialectical societies may show a strong preference for action, given their intolerance for contradiction, and thus rate action more positively than inaction.

Beyond dialecticism, there are other reasons to assume that members of European American societies should show a stronger preference for action over inaction than members of East Asian societies. First, social ethics in Western Industrialist societies tend to promote work and industriousness more than idleness (Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002). Second, in an American sample, endorsement of Christian religious beliefs was positively correlated with preference for action over inaction (McCulloch et al., 2012). Therefore, converging evidence suggests that religious and societal values in Western

Table 2. Alphas and Means for Key Constructs Across 19 Nations.

Nation	Alpha Dialect.	Alpha ATA	Alpha ATI	Mean Dialect.	Mean ATA	Mean ATI	Corr. ATA–ATI
Argentina	.80	.38	.70	3.63	5.39	3.96	–.28
Bolivia	.69	.64	.58	3.60	5.70	3.25	–.25
China	.68	.68	.73	4.11	5.41	5.58	.61
Colombia	.75	.60	.69	3.52	5.74	3.61	–.23
England	.82	.60	.82	3.92	5.83	5.54	.14
Guatemala	.79	.66	.75	3.31	5.89	3.96	–.19
Hong Kong	.73	.64	.61	4.20	5.49	5.36	.56
Israel	.79	.75	.80	3.59	5.76	3.81	–.05
Italy	.80	.67	.74	3.48	5.64	3.44	–.28
Japan	.77	.55	.53	4.19	5.48	5.48	.50
Mexico	.76	.59	.67	3.56	5.42	3.72	–.10
Norway	.81	.70	.83	3.84	5.72	4.95	.33
Philippines	.71	.46	.76	3.80	5.85	3.98	–.10
Portugal	.65	.71	.80	3.52	5.83	3.43	–.18
Singapore	.80	.64	.68	3.93	5.44	4.30	.13
Spain	.83	.60	.74	3.61	5.39	4.00	.03
Switzerland	.78	.72	.73	3.73	5.59	4.57	.22
Turkey	.79	.75	.71	3.43	5.71	3.19	–.31
USA	.84	.77	.71	3.54	5.65	4.61	.16

Note. ATA = attitudes toward action; ATI = attitudes toward inaction.

Industrialist societies predict increased valuation of action over inaction. In combination with prior work on dialecticism, therefore, these perspectives suggest that members of nondialectical cultures should show a strong preference for action over inaction, but that members of dialectical cultures should report a more balanced assessment of action and inaction. For example, East Asians may perceive action and inaction as similarly beneficial to society, whereas European Americans may perceive action as more beneficial than inaction.

The primary aim of the current research was to explore whether cultures differ in their ATA and ATI, and whether cultural differences in dialecticism could be used to predict these attitudes. In this effort, data were collected from 19 diverse societies across the globe, including four East Asian societies (China, Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore). Multilevel modeling was used to assess whether cultural (i.e., national) differences in dialecticism predict the structure of people's ATA and ATI.¹ It was anticipated that people from high dialecticism nations would report a more positive association in their action/inaction attitudes than people from low dialecticism nations. Further, it was anticipated that the relation between country-level dialecticism and ATA/ATI would remain after controlling for other cultural differences (i.e., individualism–collectivism, neuroticism, and response style) as well as the gross domestic product (GDP) of the nations respectively.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were obtained in a cross-cultural study of young adults in 19 nations (see Table 1 for sample characteristics). The study was conducted between the years 2006 and 2008. The sample included 3,797 college students (2,479 female). All study

measures were constructed in English, translated, and then back-translated into the local languages by independent researchers. The use of college students helps ensure some degree of comparability in the samples in terms of age and level of education. All respondents completed questionnaires voluntarily and were awarded course credit for their participation. The current research examined four key measures out of several measures given during the original survey.

Measures

Action/inaction attitudes. ATA and ATI were measured using separate 5-item scales (McCulloch et al., 2012). Participants rated their agreement with items measuring ATA (*action is important in people's lives, action is essential for life, actions contribute to society, being active makes people happy, and action is good*) as well as items measuring ATI (*inaction is important in people's lives, being inactive is unpleasant, inaction is good, inaction is necessary in one's life, and inaction offers many benefits*) on 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scales. Previous research found that these scales have adequate convergent and discriminant validity in a sample of American college students (McCulloch et al., 2012). Reliability coefficients (α s) for the ATA and ATI scales by country are reported in Table 2. Intraclass correlations for the ATA scale ranged from .11 to .40 across countries. Intraclass correlations for the ATI scale ranged from .19 to .50 across countries. Results of a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (MLCFA) on the ATA and ATI items showed that a correlated two-factor solution had good fit, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .036, comparative fit index (CFI) = .95, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR)_{within} = .035, SRMR_{between} = .096. A one-factor solution with 10 items

loading on a single action/inaction factor was also tested, yielding unsatisfactory fit ($RMSEA > .10$), further demonstrating that ATA and ATI are two separate factors instead of a single, bipolar factor. Finally, a multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (multigroup CFA) showed that the action–inaction scale with a two-factor structure had adequate measurement equivalence across nations, $RMSEA = .072$, $CFI = .93$, $SRMR = .061$.

Dialecticism. Dialecticism was measured using the 32-item Dialectical Self-Scale (DSS; Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2010). Participants rated their agreement with statements such as *I sometimes believe two things that contradict each other* and *If there are two opposing sides to an argument, they cannot both be right* (reverse scored) on 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scales. Previous research suggests that the DSS shows adequate convergent and predictive validity (Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, Wang, & Hou, 2004), such that scores on the DSS negatively correlate with need for closure, and predict more contradictory (i.e., ambivalent) self-attitudes. Additionally, previous research demonstrated that the DSS has adequate measurement equivalence across diverse samples including Caucasian Americans, Asian Americans, and Mainland Chinese (e.g., Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2009). Reliability coefficients for the DSS by country ranged from .65 to .84 (see Table 2), and intraclass correlations ranged from .06 to .14. These results suggest that the DSS has sufficient reliability within nations to justify aggregation of the items into nation-level scores. In addition, results of an MLCFA, taking into account within and between-country variation, showed that a one-factor solution had excellent fit, $RMSEA < .001$, $CFI = 1.00$, $SRMR_{within} < .001$, $SRMR_{between} < .001$, indicating that the 32 scale items tap a single latent construct representing dialecticism. Finally, a multigroup CFA showed that the dialecticism scale with a one-factor structure had excellent measurement equivalence across nations, $RMSEA = .023$, $CFI = 1.00$, and $SRMR = .009$.

Individualism–collectivism. Individualism–collectivism was measured to explore whether a prominent cultural factor, which has been shown to vary from East Asian to European American societies (Triandis, 1989), can account for regional variation in action/inaction attitudes. If ATA and ATI vary from East Asian to European American societies, as anticipated, then it is possible that this cultural variation is better captured by individualism–collectivism than by dialecticism. To explore this possibility, individualism–collectivism was measured using the Horizontal/Vertical Individualism–Collectivism scale (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). Participants rated their agreement with items such as *I often do my own thing* (individualism) and *I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group* (collectivism) on 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scales. According to prior research, the Horizontal/Vertical Individualism–Collectivism scale has adequate discriminant and cross-cultural validity (Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener, 2005; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Alphas for the individualism and collectivism subscales ranged from .58 to .83 across nations, and intraclass correlations ranged from .08 to

.23. Results of an MLCFA showed that the Individualism–Collectivism scale had good fit, $RMSEA = .053$, $CFI = .98$, $SRMR_{within} = .023$, $SRMR_{between} = .041$. Finally, a multigroup CFA showed that the Individualism–Collectivism scale with a one-factor structure had adequate measurement equivalence across nations, $RMSEA = .078$, $CFI = .95$, and $SRMR = .055$.

Neuroticism. According to prior work, East Asians score higher in neuroticism than European Americans (e.g., Wong, Lee, Ang, Oei, & Ng, 2009). Further, the experience of emotional lability (i.e., neuroticism) is correlated with emotional complexity, that is, the experience of positive and negative emotions simultaneously (Goetz, Spencer-Rodgers, & Peng, 2008). Thus, neuroticism may lead to complex and contradictory ATA/ATI similar to those predicted for dialecticism. To address this possibility, we administered a measure of neuroticism from the Big Five inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999). Participants rated their agreement with items such as *I see myself as someone who can be moody* and *I see myself as someone who is emotionally stable, not easily upset* on 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scales. Alphas ranged from .52 to .81 across nations, and intraclass correlations ranged from .12 to .35. Results of an MLCFA showed that a one-factor solution had good fit, $RMSEA = .037$, $CFI = .99$, $SRMR_{within} = .015$, and $SRMR_{between} = .039$. Further, a multigroup CFA showed that the Neuroticism scale had strong measurement equivalence across nations, $RMSEA = .052$, $CFI = .99$, and $SRMR = .026$.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics for dialecticism and ATA/ATI are provided in Table 2. Based on the prevalence of East Asian philosophical traditions such as Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, four nations in this sample could be categorized as dialectical in nature: China, Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Consistent with this categorization, the four East Asian societies had the highest mean responses on the Dialectical Self-Scale. Further, people in dialectical nations such as China, Japan, and Hong Kong (but not Singapore) reported a more positive correlation in their action/inaction attitudes than people from nondialectical nations.

Across the entire sample ($N = 3,797$), dialecticism was significantly correlated with neuroticism, $r = .36$, $p = .001$, but was not significantly correlated with individualism–collectivism, $r = .01$, $p = .50$. As anticipated, dialecticism was negatively correlated with ATA, $r = -.19$, $p < .001$, and positively correlated with ATI, $r = .31$, $p < .001$. Neuroticism showed similar, but weaker relations with ATA, $r = -.06$, $p < .001$, and ATI, $r = .15$, $p < .001$. Individualism–collectivism showed relatively weak associations with ATA, $r = -.04$, $p = .02$, and ATI, $r = .12$, $p < .001$. The relation between dialecticism and ATA remained largely unchanged after simultaneously controlling for neuroticism and individualism–collectivism, $r = -.17$, $p < .001$. Similarly, the relation

between dialecticism and ATI remained largely unchanged after simultaneously controlling for neuroticism and individualism–collectivism, $r = .27, p < .001$. Across nations, therefore, dialecticism was associated with ATA and ATI, and these associations remained after controlling for both individualism–collectivism and neuroticism.

Multilevel Modeling

We conducted multilevel modeling to test our hypotheses about the relation between nation-level dialecticism and ATA/ATI. In all models, we arbitrarily used ATI as the outcome variable, and ATA as the predictor variable (see Schimmack et al., 2002 for a similar analytic approach). Because ATA and ATI were standardized across nations, the intercept was fixed to zero. For each model, we report standardized path coefficients (β).

Base models. We first tested the relation between ATA and ATI in a world sample of young adults, and whether this relation differs significantly across nations. For the total sample of young adults across the world, the relation between ATA and ATI was nonsignificant, $\beta = .007, p = .80$, indicating that ATA and ATI are relatively independent from each other. However, the relation between ATA and ATI did significantly vary across countries, variance of slope = .04, $p < .001$. Then, we added standardized dialecticism scores as a Level 2 (nation-level) variable in the model. Dialecticism explained a significant amount of variability between countries, $\beta = .175, p < .001$, such that people in high dialecticism countries had a more positive correlation in their action/inaction attitudes than people in low dialecticism countries, as anticipated.²

Models with control variables. Country-level neuroticism was also a significant predictor of the relation between ATA and ATI, such that people in high neuroticism nations showed a more positive correlation in their action/inaction attitudes than people in low neuroticism nations, $\beta = .081, p = .044$. However, the effect of neuroticism was much smaller than the effect of dialecticism (β of .175 vs. .081). Moreover, when neuroticism and dialecticism were simultaneously entered, dialecticism remained a significant predictor ($\beta = .212, p < .001$); yet, neuroticism was no longer a significant predictor in the model ($\beta = .054, p = .131$). Country-level individualism–collectivism was not a significant predictor of the relation between ATA and ATI within countries, $\beta = .040, p = .282$.

Next, we ran a new model examining whether the GDP and sample size of the nations accounted for the relation between dialecticism and ATA/ATI. GDP was positively associated with the relation between ATA and ATI, such that people in countries with a high GDP reported a more positive association in their action/inaction attitudes than people in countries with a low GDP, $\beta = .061, p < .001$, but this effect was very small. Country-level sample size was not a significant predictor of the relation between ATA and ATI, $\beta = .001, p = .952$. Further, the effect of dialecticism remained significant after controlling for GDP and country-level sample size, $\beta = .165, p < .001$.

With GDP and dialecticism in the model, all variance in the action/inaction correlation was accounted for.

It is possible that the relation between ATA and ATI in dialectical cultures is inflated due to a response bias in these societies (e.g., responding the same way to all items). If the effect of culture on the ATA–ATI relation were merely a response style artifact, then the effect should disappear once nation's reliabilities on the ATA and ATI scales are entered as Level 2 predictors in a multilevel analysis (see Schimmack et al., 2002). Reliability of the action scale was a significant predictor of the relation between ATA and ATI, $\beta = .099, p = .012$, but reliability of the inaction scale was not a significant predictor, $\beta = .029, p = .248$. More importantly, dialecticism remained a significant predictor of the relation between ATA and ATI even when cultural variations in response style were taken into account, $\beta = .172, p < .001$.³

Finally, we examined the effect of dialecticism while controlling for two individual-level variables, age and gender. Age was not a significant predictor of the relation between ATA and ATI, $\beta = .01, p = .83$. Gender was a significant predictor of the relation between ATA and ATI, $\beta = .086, p < .001$. That is, women showed a more positive association in their action/inaction attitudes than men. The effect of gender was not moderated by country-level dialecticism, $\beta = .009, p = .78$, thus demonstrating that the effect of gender on ATA/ATI was consistent across high dialecticism and low dialecticism nations. Furthermore, dialecticism remained a significant predictor of the relation between ATA and ATI after controlling for age and gender, $\beta = .176, p < .001$.

Separate models on action and inaction. We conducted separate models on action and inaction to test whether dialecticism could be used to predict these individual outcomes. We anticipated that dialecticism would be positively associated with ATI and negatively associated with ATA. Country-level dialecticism was positively associated with ATI, $\beta = .497, p < .001$, such that people in high dialecticism nations had more positive ATI than people in low dialecticism nations. Additionally, dialecticism was negatively associated with ATA, $\beta = -.337, p < .001$, such that people in high dialecticism nations had more negative ATA than people from low dialecticism nation. In sum, although people from high dialecticism nations reported similar and moderate evaluations of action and inaction, people from low dialecticism nations showed a strong preference for action over inaction.

Discussion

Societies vary dramatically in their rates of active and inactive behavior, and these variations predict critically important outcomes such as voting (Noguchi et al., 2011). The current research asked whether nations differ in their attitudes toward action (ATA) and inaction (ATI), and whether cultural differences in dialecticism predict the structure of these attitudes. People from dialectical cultures more often report contradictory evaluations of opposing constructs (Peng & Nisbett,

1999; Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2010), and subscribe to religious and/or philosophical beliefs that advocate periodic bouts of inactivity (Graham, 2001). On this basis, we anticipated that people from dialectical cultures would evidence greater balance in their attitudes toward the oppositional constructs of action and inaction than nondialectical cultures. Furthermore, we anticipated that nondialectical cultures would show a strong preference for action over inaction, given the prevalence of Judeo-Christian beliefs such as the Protestant work ethic in these societies (Miller et al., 2002; Weber, 1930). Data obtained from 19 diverse societies across the globe tested these predictions about the relation between cultural dialecticism and ATA/ATI. As anticipated, people from dialectical East Asian societies (i.e., China, Japan, and Hong Kong, but not Singapore) reported greater balance and moderation in their ATA and ATI than did people from other societies.

More importantly, results from multilevel modeling suggest that people from high dialecticism nations report a more positive association in their ATA and ATI than people from low dialecticism nations, even after controlling for other important cultural and individual difference variables (i.e., GDP, individualism–collectivism, and neuroticism). Thus, the current research shows that ATA and ATI vary significantly across countries and regions, and that these variations can be predicted by dialecticism. Although several recent studies have uncovered the cognitive and behavioral consequences of priming action and inaction concepts (e.g., Albarracín et al., 2008, 2011; Gendolla & Silvestrini, 2010; Laran, 2010), the current study is the first to begin exploring the foundations upon which action and inaction attitudes are derived. Our results demonstrate that the structure of people's ATA and ATI may in part stem from cultural traditions, such as the degree to which one's society embraces contradiction. Such findings highlight the role of dialecticism in action/inaction attitudes across countries and provide one piece to the puzzle as to why cultures might differ in their general orientation toward action and inaction (Noguchi et al., 2011). However, it is important to note that given the correlational nature of our design, causal inferences about the influence of dialecticism on action/inaction attitudes are not conclusive.

Despite the growing interest in dialecticism (Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2010), no research to our knowledge has administered a direct measure of dialecticism across a larger set of nations. Large numbers of countries should increase the probability that cross-country descriptions are not based on spurious differences between a limited set of nations that vary on factors other than dialecticism. Additionally, the use of large numbers of nations revealed unexpected patterns in ATA and ATI. In particular, Mediterranean societies showed among the largest preference for action, as indexed by a relatively strong negative correlation in action/inaction attitudes in some of these nations (e.g., Turkey, Italy, and Portugal). Future research is needed to further explore why Mediterranean societies show a strong preference for action over inaction. One possibility is that Mediterranean honor cultures emphasize taking action in response to perceived insults, rather than

remaining passively inactive (Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle, & Schwarz, 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2000). This might lead members of Mediterranean societies to view action as a more normative and appropriate response in many circumstances, especially those involving threats to reputation, than inaction. Undoubtedly, however, several factors may contribute to regional variations in action/inaction attitudes. The current research serves as an important starting point, by demonstrating that cultural differences in dialecticism predict regional variations in action/inaction attitudes.

The current research has several important implications that could be expanded upon in future research. Complementing prior work demonstrating regional variations in active and inactive behavior (Noguchi et al. 2011), the current study showed regional variations in ATA and ATI and that cultural differences in dialecticism accounted for this variation. Future work is needed to examine whether measurements of ATA and ATI predict active and inactive behaviors. Additionally, future studies could examine the mental health implications of cultural variations in ATA and ATI. Cultures that value action over inaction may have increased rates of mania and impulsivity, whereas cultures that value inaction over action may have increased rates of depression. Finally, future research could examine whether endorsement of specific religious/philosophical traditions (i.e., Christianity, Buddhism, and Daoism) can be used to predict ATA/ATI in addition to variations in these attitudes across societies.

In sum, data from 19 nations tested the assumption that cultural differences in dialecticism predict attitudes toward the general constructs of action and inaction. People from high dialecticism nations reported a more positive association in their ATA and ATI than people from low dialecticism nations. Such findings suggest that the country and culture in which one resides may predict attitudes toward basic constructs, such as how active or inactive one should be in their daily life. The current research, therefore, may serve as a launching point for future studies seeking to uncover the attitudinal underpinnings of regional variations in activity.

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Notes

1. Most samples corresponded to nations; however, where subnational boundaries could be identified on the basis of historical circumstances, they were treated as separate samples (i.e., Hong Kong and People's Republic of China).

2. As a supplemental analysis, we dummy coded the four East Asian countries as being dialectical, and the other countries as nondialectical, instead of using dialecticism as a continuous variable. Similar results were obtained so they are not included in the article. Further, although our primary focus was on nation-level dialecticism scores (Level 2), a supplemental analysis showed that dialecticism was also a moderator at Level 1, such that high dialecticism individuals showed a stronger association in their ATA and ATI than low dialecticism individuals, $\beta = .084, p < .001$.
3. To clarify our reasoning, response styles should have two effects in this context. First, they should lead to inflated reliability estimates of ATA and ATI. Second, they should increase positive correlations (or attenuate negative correlations) between ATA and ATI. Therefore, cultural variation in response styles would produce a positive correlation between nations' reliabilities of ATA and ATI and nations' correlation between ATA and ATI. If the effect of culture on the ATA–ATI correlation were due solely to a response style artifact, then the effect should disappear once nations' reliabilities of ATA and ATI are entered as Level 2 predictors. However, the effect of Level 2 dialecticism held after nations' reliabilities of ATA and ATI were taken into account. This suggests that the effect of dialecticism was not merely a response style artifact.

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