ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CULTURES IN GREATER PORTLAND REGION

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ABSTRACT. *This study explored the cultural behavior for seven demographic cultures within the Greater Portland region in order to assess differences across cultures in a.) sources of guidance, b.) values ranking, c.) propensity to tell the truth, and d.) propensity to behave honestly. The study further explored how these particulars would be impacted when the outcome of the situation was very favorable, very unfavorable, and neither favorable or unfavorable. The study concluded that while sources of guidance differed across cultures, the overall preferred source of guidance was opinions based on own experiences and training except when the situation was unfavorable, in which case formal company rules and procedures were preferred. The study also concluded that the majority of the cultures would be less truthful and act dishonestly when the situation had an unfavorable outcome. The degree of truthfulness and honesty was found to be different across cultures.*

Introduction

Honesty is the best policy. While this popular phrase is quoted by many well-known people and used in everyday instances, our individual experiences can attest that dishonest behavior continues to be pervasive. A more accurate phrasing would follow with *"except when...."* highlighting the variability of personal and situational factors.

In this study we intend to compare kinds of events and types of social situational factors to look for predictable patterns within a culture and predictable differences across cultures in a) Sources of Guidance, b) Values Ranking, c.) Propensity to tell the truth, and d.) Propensity to behave honestly.

We have learned a lot about how cultures differ by comparing behavior across cultures during similar events. There has not yet been examination of how various important sub-contextual particulars impact cultural tendencies. For example, how do the sources of guidance pursued change when a task or decision is headed toward an outcome that would rather be avoided because it is seen as very unfavorable? Would culture members seek different guidance than if they are pursuing a favorable or neutral outcome? Would other cultures share the same sources of guidance?

Attitudes and behaviors related to favorableness pursuit and unfavorableness avoidance are at least in part culturally defined. We therefore predict that people will act differently when they are engaged in an event they see as potentially (or actually) favorable or as potentially (or actually) unfavorable. Furthermore, members of a culture may be more or less honest and truthful, and may seek different sources of guidance when the event situation is perceived as and possibly very favorable or possibly very unfavorable, or of neutral benefit.

The study will focus on the demographic subcultures of the Portland metropolitan region (Greater Portland), an area in Northwest Oregon centered around the urban city of Portland, Oregon known for community connectedness, distinctiveness, sustainability, and a relaxed environment. The city's unofficial motto is "Keep Portland Weird" suggesting that the region may not be representative of espoused homogeneous U.S. cultural values or propensity for truthfulness and honesty with the rest of the U.S.

Review of Theory/Literature Review

Prior studies have tested whether national cultural values can predict the typical sources of guidance on which managers rely in handling a series of work events (Smith et al. 2002 and Smith et al. 2011).These studies have been done with data from many nations and analyzed the linkage between values, sources of guidance, and behaviors. The studies have shown that national cultural values can indeed predict substantial variance in usages of sources of guidance and that cultural value dimensions have less predictive validity. A more recent study acknowledges that while the observation of national culture effects on sources of guidance is strong, there is substantial individual values variability within the nations tested (Smith et al. 2011) suggesting that reliance of applicability to all members of a nation should be cautioned. While these studies have included the U.S., the U.S. is lumped in with other countries with similar cultural dimensions. Therefore it is not easy to assess the U.S. results individually, much less compare different regional regions in the U.S.

The factor that most determines the acceptability of deception behavior is motive (Seiter et al. 2002). Research in the study done by Seiter et al. showed that deceptive behavior is more acceptable if the motivation is less focused on self and more selfless. However, it is less acceptable when the motivation is self-serving and malicious. While this study examined different typologies, the example scenarios used to analyze benefiting other and benefiting self were not used in context of work situations therefore it is difficult to ascertain if the same result were to be achieved in a situation with work implications. Furthermore, this study completely disregarded analyzing acceptability when the motivation is of neutral benefit.

The study done by Seiter et al. also looked at cross-cultural differences in behavior between U.S. and China. Although in general China participants found lying to be more acceptable, the study concluded that culture does not determine the acceptability of deception but rather serves to alter the type of deceptive behavior that would be more or less acceptable. This finding contradicts the finding in a separate study done between the U.S. and America Samoa where cultural dimensions did play a factor in deception motivations (Aune and Waters 1994). Compared to U.S. participants, Samoan participants would be more inclined to engage in deceptive behavior in situations that were focused on specific relationships and issues, as well as when it was beneficial to family or group situations. U.S. participants, on the other hand, were more inclined to engage in deceptive behavior when they were concerned the truth would have a negative impact on the other person. National culture also played a factor in a different study where dishonesty in the academic and business settings was examined between U.S. and Eastern Europe nations (Grimes 2004). In it, U.S. students applied a higher standard of honesty in both the academic and business settings.

The U.S. is often the subject in research on cross-cultures and honesty. The results for U.S. behavior differs based on the other nations being compared against and the underlying circumstances tested. Consequently, it is difficult to assess what a standard basis of U.S. honest or dishonest behavior in different sub contextual work situations. Without this standard to measure against, it will be difficult to assess deviations in U.S. regional cultures.

National cultures are not homogeneous and therefore findings from national cultures are not always representative of culture in all regions of that nation, particularly in complex nations such as the U.S (MacNab et al. 2010). MacNab et al. focused on two U.S. states (Hawaii and Florida) and concluded that regional detail differences on ethics management was significant. The finding supports that regional cultures can demonstrate a departure from the assumption of cultural homogeneity. This study placed emphasis on the disparities in ethnicity, particularly of Asian-Americans, between the two states. This would suggest that only ethnicity can drive the departure from national culture. Further research needs to be done if other demographic traits (i.e. age, gender) can also create departures.

Research has also been conducted on the economical impacts honesty and truthfulness have on entities and nations. In the automotive industry, trust led to greater information sharing which in turn resulted in reduced transaction costs in supplier-buyer relationships (Dyer and Chu 2003). It is hard to conceptualize that trust alone was the driving factor in the reduced costs. Other factors such as social distance and social and institutional factors also influenced reduced costs as well as drove output and growth in principal-agent relationships (Zak and Knack 2001). Both of these studies are based on research in industries where interpersonal relationships are important. It cannot be generalized to be true in all industries. If a link between the economic performance of a country wants to be linked to trust, other factors such as political history must also be considered.

Research Questions

1. Within a geographic region, are there significant differences in preferred or trusted sources of guidance across demographic subcultures?

2. Within a geographic region, are there significant differences in the ranking of values across demographic subcultures?

3. Within a geographic region, are there significant differences in the propensity for truthfulness across demographic subcultures?

4. Within a geographic region, are there significant differences in the propensity for honesty across demographic subcultures?

Methodology

We will conduct analyses of cultures and demographic cultures. We control for situational circumstances of event impact to help explain why members of different culture groups behave the way that they do. We use the event as our basic unit of observation and control for particular kinds of event: making an important decision at work. We will discern differences in social actor behavior in different situations for the same kind of event. In this study the participants reported their past behavior for particular situations when similar kinds of events occurred.

In order to answer our research questions, we collected data via interview questions and a questionnaire survey to help us understand cultural differences in values and other aspects of socio-cultural behavior that impact working, the workplace, leadership and economic behavior in people currently residing in the Greater Portland region.

The interviews were semi-structured interviews. Participants were not provided questions in advance and all participants were asked the same questions about their subculture. Interviewers took notes and asked for clarification when necessary, and directed the participants to discuss their subculture and not themselves. Interviews were scheduled for a maximum of thirty minutes in duration.

We followed up the interviews with a two-part questionnaire to try and capture participant's attitudes on numeric scales. Part One of the questionnaire used Schwartz's scales for ranking cultural values (Smith et al. 2002) and Part Two captured participant's espousal about likely cultural behavior and decision-making across kinds of events and specific types of situations. We used Smith and Peterson's scales for sources of guidance (Smith et al. 2002; Smith & Peterson, 2005). For each event situation-type we measured the sources of guidance used, how truthful cultural members were likely to be, and how honest cultural members were likely to behave. Below we include the measures needed to compare what would happen to sources of guidance, in a particular kind of situation.

> When your group is responsible for a task:
> a. And you think the outcome could be very favorable for your group, what sources do you utilize
> b. And you think the outcome could be very unfavorable for your group, what sources do you utilize
> c. And you think the outcome will be neither favorable nor unfavorable for your group, what sources do you utilize?

We used the international personality item project's (ipip.org) scales for truthfulness and honesty. Michael Ashton and Kiebom Lee (2000) first developed and tested these measures for an honest importance and propensity factor to supplement the Big Five personality facets.

Facet descriptions, validated scaled items and psychometrics for these scales are published and also publically available through ipip.ori.org and their website (Goldberg et al., 2006). Appendix 1 includes the 40 items used to measure the Honesty-Humility Facet in the full HEXACO-PI. Following this table is the HEXICO-60PI, a shorter validated version of the full hexaco-PI. Highlighted in bold face on the HEXICO-60 are the 10 items used to measure the Honesty facet.

> When your group is responsible for a task:
>   a. And you think the outcome could be very favorable for your group, to what extent are the actions taken by your group affected by each of the following?
>   b. And you think the outcome could be very unfavorable for your group, to what extent are the actions taken by your group affected by each of the following?
>   c. And you think the outcome will be neither favorable nor unfavorable for your group, to what extent are the actions taken by your group affected by each of the following?

These questions are followed by the items and scales from the HEXACO Honesty/Sincerity Facet to measure cultural propensity for truthfulness, and the Fairness facets to measure cultural propensity for honest and fair dealing.

Our sample consisted of the following distinct seven participants:
1. A person from the majority population and main working generation within the region who is from the city (NWUSA Urban)
2. A person from the majority population and main working generation within the region who is from a rural town/area.(NWUSA Rural)
3. A person from a minority population in the region. (NWUSA Minority)
4. A person from the majority population and main working generation within the region who is male. (NWUSA Male)
5. A person from the majority population and main working generation within the region who is female.(NWUSA Female)
6. A person from the majority population and the youngest working generation in your region. (NWUSA GenMe)
7. A person of the majority population and the oldest working generation in the region. (NWUSA Early Boomer)

We defined the significant descriptive terms of the subcultures as follows:
● **Majority population** - white population (U.S. Census 2010)
● **Minority population** - non-white
● **Main working generation** - between the ages of twenty through 60
● **"From the city"** - lived in or grew up within major city limits
● **"From a rural town/area"** - lived in or grew up in area outside city and suburban limits

Sample participants were selected based on authors' personal and professional networks and voluntarily agreed to participate. Participants agreed they self-identified themselves with the demographic subculture they were representing. In order to not create unintended interactions, participants from the urban and rural subculture were of the same gender. Similarly, participants from the oldest and youngest working generation were of the same gender. Age range for the sample was 23-53 years.

The multiple methods used, qualitative interview and quantitative questionnaire survey, will be beneficial in our study. The questionnaires come from reputable sources and have been used previously in multiple studies. Nevertheless, our sample size for each demographic subculture is n=1 therefore may create limitations in our study. If we had a larger sample, we could compare varying breadth of perspectives and participants with no connection to the authors.

Results

Table 1

NWUSA	Preferred sources of guidance when the situation outcome is:		
	Very Favorable	Very Unfavorable	Neither Favorable or Unfavorable
GenMe	Own experience and training	Own experience and training	Own experience and training
Early Boomer	Own experience and training	Formal company rules	Own experience and training
Female	Unwritten rules Superior Own experience and training	Unwritten rules Superior	Unwritten rules Superior Own experience and training
Male	Specialists	Formal company rules Specialists Superior	Specialists Superior Widespread beliefs
Minority	Specialists Peers Religious beliefs Family Friends outside this organization	Subordinates Specialists	Superior
Urban	Own experience and training	Formal company rules	Own experience and training Formal company rules
Rural	Formal company rules Specialists Peers Own experience and training Widespread beliefs Religious beliefs Family Friends outside this organization	Formal company rules Specialists Peers Own experience and training Religious beliefs Family Friends outside organization	Formal company rules Specialists Peers Own experience and training Family Friends outside organization
Total Region	Own experience and training	Formal company rules Own experience and training	Own experience and training

Table 1-1

Interview Responses to Sources of Guidance Question	
GenMe	"I think the most trusted and useful guidance is internet research".
Early Boomer	"The most trusted and valued source of guidance is co-worker, because of commonality and friendship."
Minority	"Family is trusted more first. If family cannot help, would first go to someone who has relevant experience."
Female	"Female workers look to many sources of guidance when making important decisions at work. First one is looking at facts and options. Second one is listening to what other people say, especially colleagues/peers of the same level or above and mentors."
Male	"What sources of guidance are most trusted and valued depends on the situation although try to be consistent as it is quicker decision-making."
Urban	"There are a lot of sources of guidance to look when making important decisions at work. Authoritative guidance, individual research, co-workers and managers or mentors are the great sources of guidance."
Rural	"Many sources of guidance when making important decisions at work."

Table 2

Value List 1: Most Important

	Of Supreme Importance	Most opposed
NWUSA GenMe	An exciting life Meaning in Life Self-Discipline	Spiritual life Respect for Tradition Unity With Nature
NWUSA Early Boomer	Inner Harmony Family Security Happiness Wisdom	N/A
NWUSA Female	An exciting life Meaning in Life Self-Respect	Social Power
NWUSA Male	Meaning in Life Self-respect	Social Power
NWUSA Minority	Family Security	Self-Discipline
NWUSA Urban	Family Security Social Justice	Detached
NWUSA Rural	Meaning in Life Spiritual life	Social Power Reciprocation of Favors Authority
Total Region	Meaning in Life Family Security	Social Power

Table 3

Value List 2: Most Important as a Guiding Principle in YOUR life

	Of Supreme Importance	**Most opposed**
NWUSA GenMe	Choosing Own Goals Honest Forgiving	Honoring Of Parents and Elders Accepting My Portion In Life Devout Obedience
NWUSA Early Boomer	Successful	Honoring Of Parents and Elders
NWUSA Urban	Healthy Loving	Accepting My Portion In Life
NWUSA Rural	Devout Responsible	Accepting My Portion In Life
NWUSA Female	Protecting The Environment Choosing Own Goals Curious	Devout Clean
NWUSA Male	Honest Responsible	Devout
NWUSA Minority	Enjoy Life	Protecting The Environment
Total Region	Loving	Accepting My Portion In Life

Table 4

Differences in the propensity for truthfulness when the situation outcome is:			
NWUSA	Very Favorable	Very Unfavorable	Neither Favorable or Unfavorable
GenMe	4.0	3.7	4.2
Early Boomer	2.8	2.5	2.5
Female	2.9	3.1	3.4
Male	4.2	4.4	4.5
Minority	4.9	2.5	4.7
Urban	3.5	3.0	3.9
Rural	4.6	4.6	4.9
Total Region	3.8	3.4	4.0

(5.0 = Most Truthful, 1.0 = Least Truthful)

Table 5

Differences in the propensity for honesty when the situation outcome is:			
NWUSA	Very Favorable	Very Unfavorable	Neither Favorable or Unfavorable
GenMe	3.4	3.0	2.7
Early Boomer	3.8	3.3	3.7
Female	4.3	4.4	4.6
Male	4.3	4.0	4.0
Minority	3.6	2.7	3.6
Urban	4.6	4.4	5.0
Rural	5.0	5.0	5.0
Total Region	4.1	3.8	4.1

(5.0 = Most Honest, 1.0 = Least Honest)

Table 5-1

Interview Responses to Truthfulness and Honesty	
GenMe	"Will tend to be little more likely to be more open minded, more honest, and less likely to be dishonest."
Early Boomer	"It is acceptable to be less than completely truthful. Would lie for co-worker who has strong relationship with me if co-worker is in trouble."
Female	Circumstances acceptable to be less than truthful or completely honest: "When building rapport" "For a peer evaluation, I think 'is this going to have a negative impact to me if I am honest on the evaluation', then I evaluate peers average or medium level, not too critical, saying 'all of my group members met the expectation.' Try to minimize the negative and not create drama. " "Also acceptable when "kissing up to the boss""
Male	"How does this decision affect me? If it does affect me, will tend to be less than completely truthful. If it does not, will tend to be more honest."
Minority	Circumstances acceptable to be less than truthful or completely honest: "If a superior tells you to do something less than truthful and it isn't going to have a negative impact on you." "When it is attached to a positive monetary reward" "When covering for a friend or family"
Urban	"Believe in karma and be honest."
Rural	"When making decisions, about being honest I think, What would Jesus do? What would my grandparents do? And can I look them in the eye?"

Findings

Table 1 shows that there are differences in preferred sources of guidance across the demographic subcultures in the region. Even though there are differences, opinions based on own experiences and training was the most relied across all subcultures. Formal company rules and procedures are preferred in unfavorable outcome situations versus the other situations.

A noteworthy difference is how the rural subculture relies on many sources of guidance regardless of the situation whereas the other cultures limit their guidance to one to three sources. Also noteworthy is how the GenMe subculture, despite less experience and training than the early boomer subculture, prefers to use their own experience and training regardless of situation. In fact, both GenMe and early boomer subcultures prefer their own experience and training when the situation outcome is favorable and neither favorable nor unfavorable. However, when it comes to very unfavorable situation, GenMe subculture still relies on own experience and training whereas the early boomer subculture turns to formal rules and procedures.

When not given a prescribed listing of sources during the interview (see Table 1-1), different sources of guidance were mentioned that were not on the survey. GenMe subculture identified the internet as the most trusted source and both urban and female subcultures identified mentors. Further quantitative research should consider inclusion of both as an option for source of guidance. The interviews highlighted sources of guidance that did not always match up one-for-one against the questionnaire survey suggesting that the sources of guidance are generally dependent on specific situations.

Table 2 lists the values of importance for the subcultures. Even though the instructions clearly stated to pick "the one value", most sample participants felt compelled to rate multiple values of equal supreme importance. The results suggest that there are not many differences in values as only six of the seventeen values of supreme importance are distinct, with the remaining nine representing similarities among subcultures. While rural, female, and male subcultures rank social power as the most opposed to their values, the other four subcultures also scored it as not important, creating agreement in the region that it is the value of least importance. The most notable differences in the values of supreme importance are between GenMe and early boomer subcultures. Interestingly, the early boomer subculture did not feel strongly opposed to any of the listed values, the lowest score given was a 3 (important). This could be interpreted as early boomers are more well-rounded given life experiences or simply failing to understand the instructions. It is not surprising to see the urban subculture value social justice as an important value in a study of the Greater Portland region.

In terms of values of supreme importance used as a guiding principle, Table 3 shows that there are differences among the subcultures as only three of the fourteen repeat. All subcultures agree that accepting my portion in life is either opposed to or not important to their values. GenMe and early boomer subcultures once again differ on guiding principles but agree on a value they most oppose, honoring of parents and elders. For the region overall, loving was the value of most importance as a guiding principle however only one subculture (urban) identified with it as the one of supreme importance.

The degree of truthfulness in the region varies among subcultures. In general, all subcultures are more prone to be the most truthful when the outcome of the situation will be neither favorable nor unfavorable (see Table 4). The exceptions are early boomer and minority subculture, which tend to be more truthful when outcome is very favorable. While collectively the subcultures would be the least truthful when the outcome would be very unfavorable, not all individual subcultures agree. Both female and male subcultures would be more truthful with an unfavorable outcome than with a favorable outcome. In all situations, male subculture is more likely to be more truthful than female subculture. Overall, the urban subculture is the most truthful while the early boomer subculture is the least truthful. Except for the early boomer subculture, the vast majority of the cultures consider themselves more than moderately truthful.

Overall, the results in measures for honesty from the quantitative questionnaire survey were higher than the measures for truthfulness (Table 5). Still there were varying degrees of honesty amongst the subcultures. The rural subculture is unconditionally honest and the urban subculture not far behind as the next most honest subculture. The least honest was GenMe subculture even though the input from the interview (Table 5-1) suggested more honesty and despite Honest being one of the guiding principle values of supreme importance in Table 3. The male subculture also regarded Honest as a guidance principle value of supreme importance however resulted in quite average propensity for honesty compared to the other subcultures.

Similar to the findings in Table 4, the vast majority of the subcultures will less honest when it relates to a situation with a very unfavorable outcome. The vast majority will also be prone to be equally or more honest in a very favorable situation versus a neither favorable or unfavorable situation. The interview responses confirm that honesty and truthfulness are situationaly dependent and also what impact the deception or dishonesty will have to oneself.

The interview responses (Table 5-1) demonstrate that it is acceptable to be less truthful or honest even in situations that may be self-serving contradicting other studies (Seiter et al. 2002). Dishonesty and lack of truthfulness as it relates to interpersonal relationships in the workplace was mentioned multiple times in the interviews, from used to build rapport to maintain working relationships. Further research should be to assess the perceived and actual outcomes of dishonesty and lack of truthfulness as it relates to interpersonal relationships specifically in the workplace.

Conclusions

In this study we were looking for predictable patterns and differences across cultures in a) Sources of Guidance, b) Values Ranking, c.) Propensity to tell truth, and d.) Propensity to behave honestly. Furthermore we tested how the aforementioned would change when the same situation had a favorable, unfavorable, or neutral outcome. Our study concluded that demographic subcultural differences exist in differing situational circumstances. We found the most significant differences in the GenMe and early boomer subcultures except regarding sources of guidance where each preferred own experiences and training. The values of the rural culture were consistently reflected in their responses for sources of guidance, truthfulness, and honesty. Of all the cultures, the rural culture was the most universal. The urban culture demonstrated unique Portland cultural characteristic with values such as social justice and acting with honest behavior,

with karmic tendencies. The most significant difference between male and female culture was that female culture was less truthful than male culture.

As predicted the outcome of an event did play a key factor into how honest and truthful members of a culture were. With the least honesty and truthfulness generally being when the outcome is expected to be very unfavorable. In unfavorable outcomes, formal company rules and procedures were preferred more than in other situations.

While sample size is not large, our findings provide a solid starting point for further research in this topic.

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Appendix 1

The Items in the Preliminary IPIP Scales Measuring Constructs Similar to Those Included in Lee and Ashton's HEXACO Personality Inventory	
Honesty-Humility (H) Facets	
Sincerity (H:Sinc) [Alpha = .81]	
+ keyed	Don't pretend to be more than I am.
- keyed	Use flattery to get ahead.
	Tell other people what they want to hear so that they will do what I want them to do.
	Put on a show to impress people.
	Switch my loyalties when I feel like it.
	Play a role in order to impress people.
	Pretend to be concerned for others.
	Act like different people in different situations.
	Find it necessary to please the people who have power.
	Let people push me around to help them feel important.
Fairness (H:Fair) [Alpha = .77]	
	Would never take things that aren't mine. (We revised to: "**Take things that could help us even if they aren't ours**")
+ keyed	Would never cheat on my taxes. (we revised to: "**Would never cheat on financial reports**"
	Return extra change when a cashier makes a mistake. (we revised to: "**Return extra money if we got more than we were supposed to**")
	Would feel very badly for a long time if I were to steal from someone. (We revised to: "**Would feel badly for a long time if we were to deceive someone**")

	Try to follow the rules. (we removed)
	Admire a really clever scam.
- keyed	(We added: **"Disregard rules we don't like"**)
	Cheat to get ahead. (we revised to: "**Cheat on the facts to get ahead"**)
	(We added: **"Spin or twist the truth"**)
	Steal things. (we removed)
	Cheat on people who have trusted me. (we revised to: **Cheat others who trust us who we don't really know")**
	Would not regret my behavior if I were to take advantage of someone impulsively. (we removed)
From(Ashton et al., 2000; Goldberg et al., 2006)	

Appendix 2

Questionnaire Survey (blank)

MDQ-Honesty-FINAL
[1].pdf

Appendix 3

Questionnaire Survey results

Cross cultural
managementcvsmdq-

Appendix 4

Interview Questions

- Do you think [name their demographic] culture is different in some ways from other demographic cultures like [name a few]? Does it impact work behavior?
- What sources of guidance do [demographic culture name] look to when making important decisions at work? What sources of guidance are most trusted and valued? Does it depend upon the situation?
- Do you think [your culture (name demographic culture) holds some thing very valuable that doesn't really get rewarded at work, or that even get penalized at work, but that you want or do anyway? Do you think that your culture is a bit different others on this particular point?
- What are some circumstances when members of your [demographic] culture find it acceptable to be less than completely truthful, or completely honest?
- Do you think that the [demographic culture name] is more likely or less likely to be slightly dishonest sometimes, or slightly overly opportunistic than other demographic cultures like (name a couple of others).

Appendix 5

Interview Notes

Interview Summary
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