

# Personality

What makes us who we are?

## **Lecture 25: Personality and Culture**

# Personality and Culture in everyday contexts: Personal Ads

## San Francisco Chronicle

- 28, SWM, 6' 1", 160 lbs. handsome, artistic, ambitious, seeks attractive WF, 24–29, for friendship, romance, and permanent partnership.
- Very attractive, independent SWF, 29, 5' 6", 110 lbs., loves fine dining, the theater, gardening, and quiet evenings at home. In search of handsome SWM 28–34 with similar interests.
- Where shall I kiss thee? Across Sierra shoulder, skiing. Between acts of Aida, sharing? Fortright, funny, fiery, fit, seeking perceptive, profound permanent partner.

## India Tribune (NorCal)

- Gujarati Vaishnav parents invite correspondence from never married Gujarati well settled, preferably green card holder from respectable family for green card holder daughter 29 years, 5' 4", good looking, doing CPA.
- Gujarati Brahmin family invites correspondence from a well-cultured, beautiful Gujarati girl for 29 years, 5' 8", 145 lbs. handsome looking, well-settled boy.
- Patel parents invite professional for their U.S.-raised daughter 26 (computer science) and son 24 (civil engineer), family owns construction firm.

# Research on Cross-Cultural Differences in Personality

- (1) LEXICAL APPROACH

Natural language as a window to study cultural universals/differences in personality

## FUNDAMENTAL LEXICAL HYPOTHESIS:

Those psychological constructs that are the most salient and socially relevant in people's lives will eventually become encoded into their language; the more important a construct is, (1) the more likely it is to be expressed as a single word and be over-represented in the language; and (2) **the more languages and cultures will have a word for it.**

(Goldberg, 1982)

- **Do the Big Five Traits replicate across cultures?**
- **Yes, in Spain – using translated American measures**
- **But, what is the limitation of this study?**

### **NEED FOR ANOTHER STUDY THAT:**

- (1) Identifies the basic indigenous dimensions of personality description in Spanish
- (2) Assesses the overlap between these indigenous Spanish dimensions and the American Big 5

# COMBINED ETIC/EMIC APPROACH

EMIC APPROACH: indigenous measures

--> self-reports on 299 indigenous Spanish personality adjectives from the dictionary

PLUS

ETIC APPROACH: imported measures

--> self-reports on Spanish-translated Big Five questionnaires

Sample

**N = 894** college students from Spain who completed both emic and etic measures

# 7 INDIGENOUS SPANISH PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS

**Emic Results (from Indigenous Spanish Personality descriptors, factor analysis)**

## **POSITIVE VALENCE**

Amazing	62
Superior	58
Formidable	56
Resplendent	56
Not special	-35
Mediocre	-40

## **NEGATIVE VALENCE**

Sickening	43
Terrifying	41
Filthy	41
Greasy	39
Cruel	39
Wicked	38

## **CONSCIENTIOUSNESS**

Well-balanced	64
Moderate	54
Reasonable	53
Hasty	-42
Reckless	-43
Crazy	

## **AGREEABLENESS**

Easy-going	54
Good-natured	49
Docile	46
Stormy	-45
Unreconciling	-47

# Spanish Big 7

## OPENNESS

Bohemian	38
Mystical	40
Quaint	42
Gossiping	-36
Disclosing	-34
Nosy	-30

## PLEASANTNESS

- Happy 54
- Energetic 53
- Relaxed 48
- Stressed -53
- Depressed -54
- Unhappy -56
- 

## ENGAGEMENT

Ardent	43
Seething	36
Intense	35
Cold	-34
Idle	-30
Unemotional	-37

# PLEASANTNESS & ENGAGEMENT: new Spanish factors

*Gran placer y poco duelo es el deseo de todo hombre.*

**Much pleasure and little pain is every man's desire**

**--Spanish proverb**

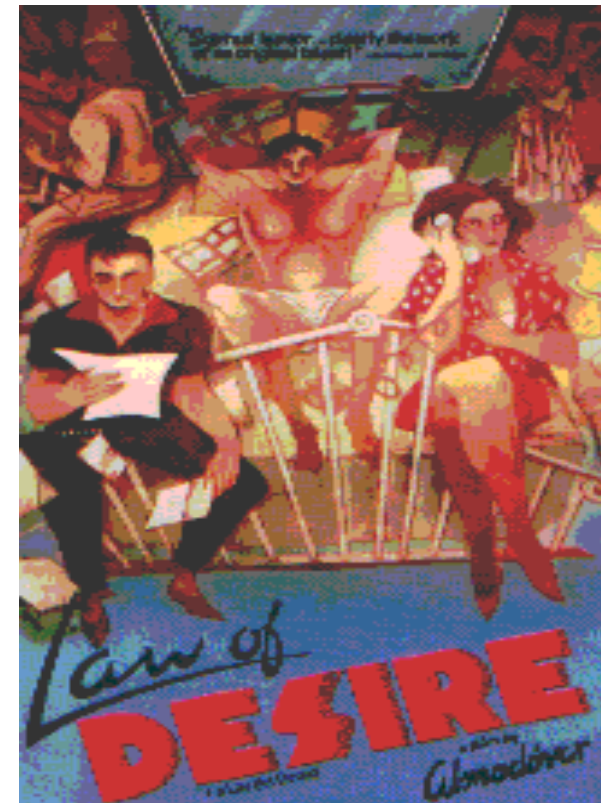
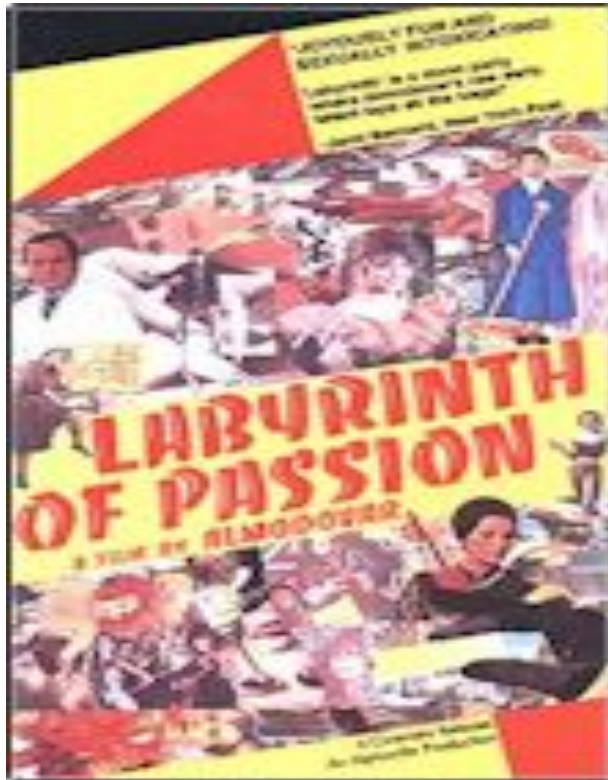


*Spaniards ..... passion is the seed that brings them forth, and passion is the flower they bear.*

**--George Orwell (Homage to Catalonia)**



# ALMODOVAR'S FILMS: A celebration of pleasure/pain and passion



# OVERLAP BETWEEN THE INDIGENOUS (EMIC) SPANISH PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS AND IMPORTED (ETIC) BIG 7 INVENTORY

## INDIGENOUS SPANISH BIG 7

<b>IMPORTED BIG 7</b>	Positive Valence	Negative Valence	Agreeable- ness	Conscien- tiousness	Openness	Pleasant- ness	Engage- ment
Pos. Valence	<b>.79</b>						
Neg. Valence		<b>.47</b>					
Agreeableness			<b>.71</b>				
Conscientious.				<b>.60</b>			
Openness					<b>.22</b>		
Extraversion						<b>.75</b>	<b>.45</b>
Neuroticism						<b>-.43</b>	<b>.40</b>

## **CONCLUSIONS FROM STUDIES:**

**(1) There is considerable overlap between the Spanish *Siete Grandes* and the American Big 7**

**(1b) Exceptions: Pleasantness and Engagement**

**Instead of Extraversion and Neuroticism**

**Also, Openness not quite the same**

**(2) Positive and Negative Valence seem fairly robust across these two cultures.**

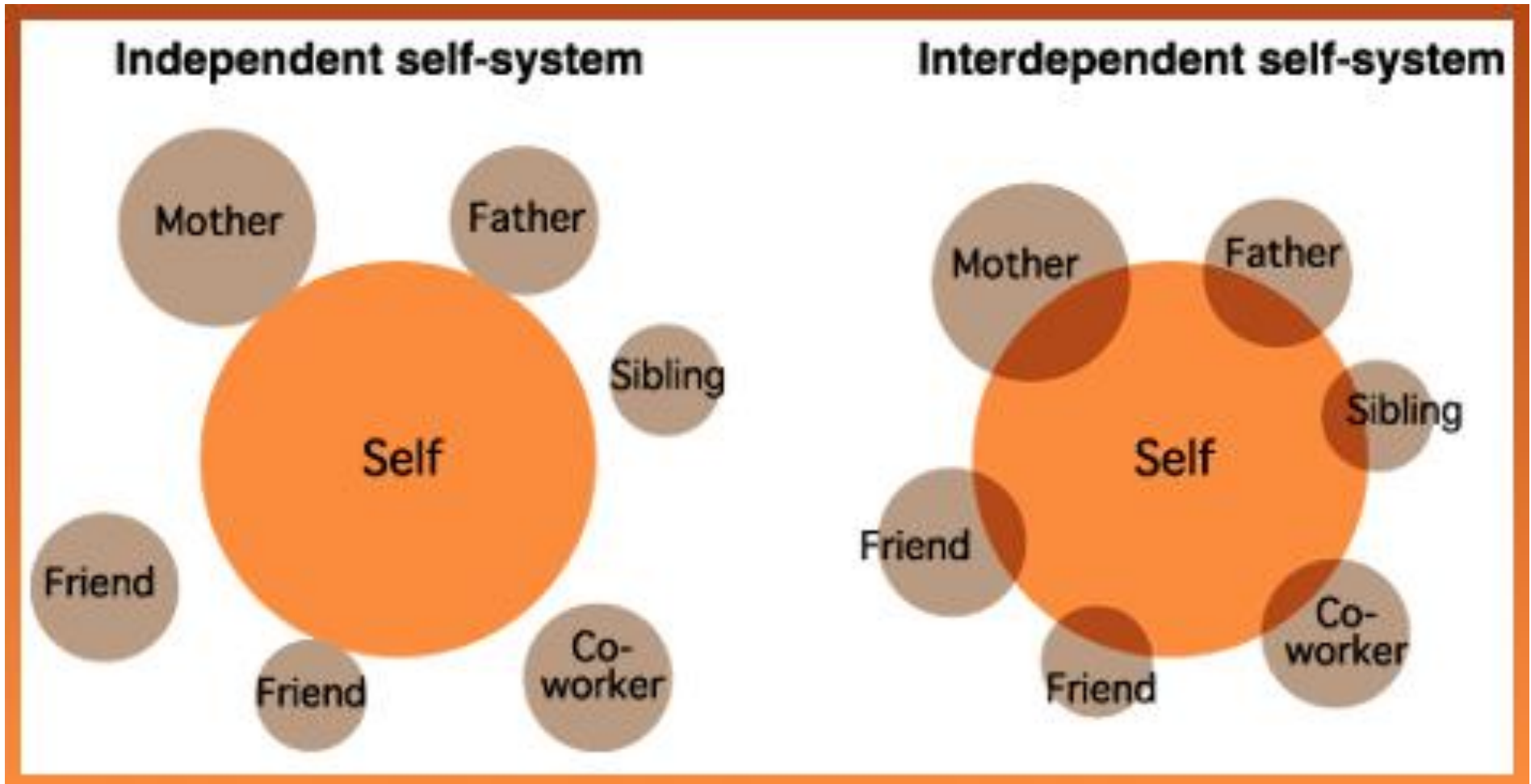
# Cultural Differences in Personality: Individualism vs. Collectivism

- Individualism
  - Focus on what YOU want
  - Minimize role of others in self's behaviors
  - “The squeaky wheel gets the grease”
  - Use self-descriptive traits to describe self (e.g., “dependable”)
- Collectivism
  - Emphasis on interconnectedness of group
  - Goal: to fit in, promote group harmony
  - “The nail that stands out gets pounded down”
  - Use interpersonal roles to describe self (e.g., “daughter”)

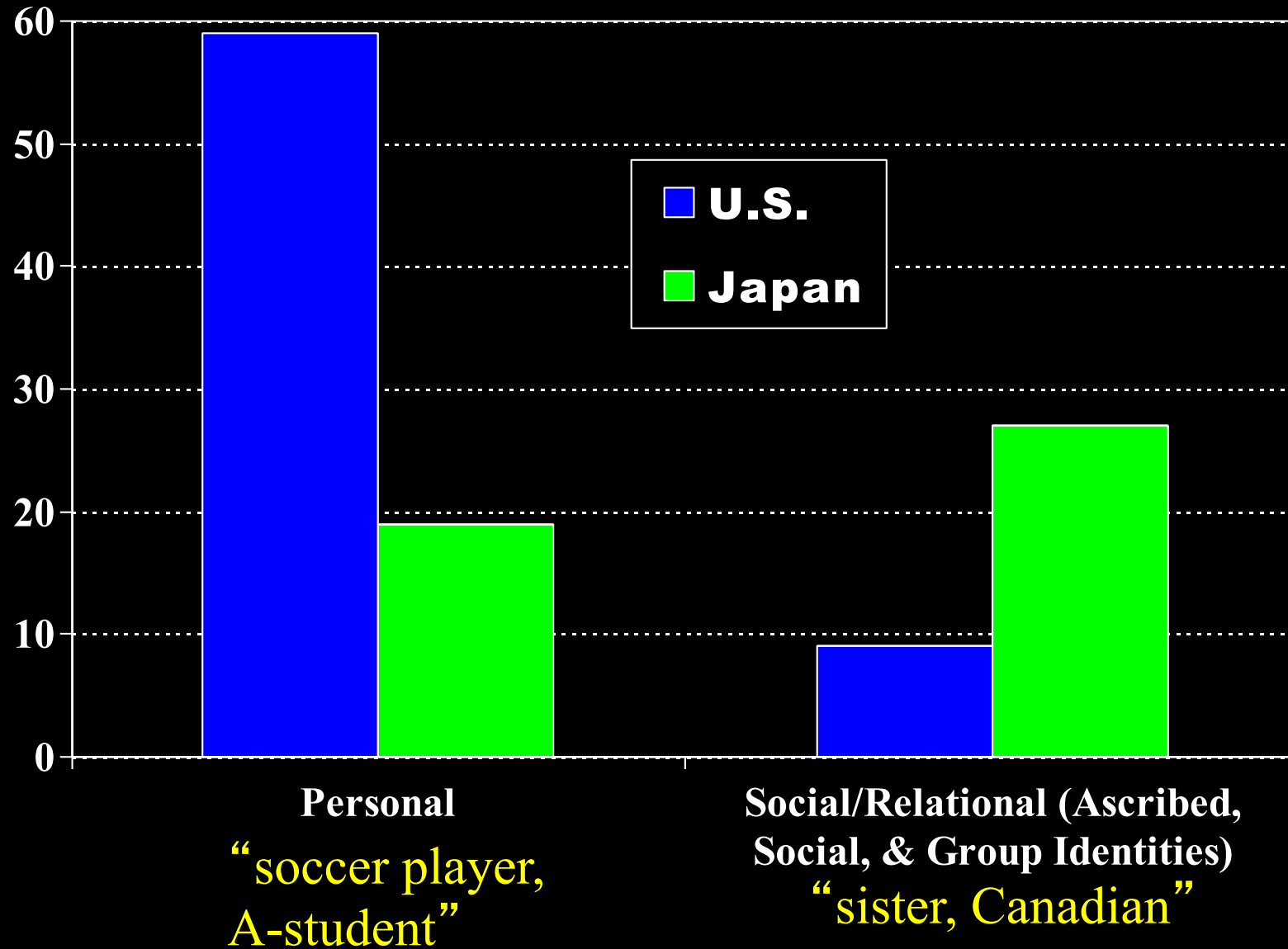
# Culture shapes self-representations

**Individualistic (Western) Cultures**

**Collectivistic Eastern/  
Asian Cultures**



# Cultural Differences in Self-Descriptions



# Criticisms of Collectivist/ Individualist Approach

- What countries are we talking about?
  - Almost all evidence of differences comes from studies comparing US and Japan
- Overgeneralization
  - People within each culture may be independent or interdependent
  - May vary by context
    - at work vs. the dinner table

# Big Two Cultural Syndromes

- 1. Individualism/Collectivism:** extent to which the self is defined as bound and separate (vs. fluid and interdependent on others around him/her).
- 2. Vertical/Horizontal Relationships:** emphasis on hierarchy and status versus equality; Egalitarianism



**VERTICAL**

India

USA

**COLLECTIVISTIC**

**INDIVIDUALISTIC**

Israeli Kibbutz?

Sweden

**HORIZONTAL**

# Egalitarianism and Evoked Culture

- Evoked Culture: Cultural differences that emerge as a result of different environments
  - E.g., effects of geography, climate, means of subsistence
- Egalitarianism (vertical vs. horizontal) is correlated with how variable the food supply is
  - Highly variable food supply → more horizontal culture
  - Less variable food supply → vertical culture
  - Why?

# Evoked Culture: Culture of Honor

- Nisbett (1993)
- In cultures of honor, insults must be responded to with aggression
- Depends on economics
  - In cultures based on herding economics, must build reputation (honor) to prevent thievery
  - In cultures based on agricultural (more settled), entire means of subsistence is less easily stolen

# Evidence for Culture of Honor

- USA North vs. South
  - How do people respond to insults?
    - Southerners favor violence more than Northerners
    - Southern economy historically linked to herding
    - Southern violence is specific to reputation insults
  - Supported by lab study in which people were actually insulted by confederate
    - Southerners show higher implicit associations with violent words, more aggressive responses

# Additional Cultural Syndromes

- “Big Four” Cultural Syndromes
  1. *Individualism vs. collectivism*
  2. *Power distance (similar to vertical vs. horizontal)*

*Plus...*

## 3. *Uncertainty avoidance*

- Tolerance for ambiguity and comfort in unstructured situations VERSUS strong belief in rules, codes of conduct, safety and security

## 4. *Gender socialization*

- Men as dominant and competitive and women as nurturing and caring VERSUS lower differentiation between the sexes
- “distribution of emotional roles”

# Research on Personality and Cultural Syndromes

- Broad scope: 33 nations
  - 10 from Asia, 2 from Africa, 3 from the Americas, and 18 from Europe
- Each sample filled out questionnaire assessing the Big Five
- How does personality (“national character”) correlate with the Big Four cultural syndromes?

# Cultural Syndromes Across Nations

**Individualism:** developed and Western countries

**Collectivism:** developing and Eastern countries

-Japan is mid-level

**High Power distance:** Latin, Asian, and African countries

**Low Power distance:** Germanic countries

**High Uncertainty avoidance:** Latin countries, Japan, German-speaking countries

**Low Uncertainty avoidance:** Anglo, Nordic, Chinese cultures

**High Gender socialization:** Japan, some European countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland)

**Moderate Gender socialization:** English-speaking countries

**Low Gender socialization:** Nordic countries, Netherlands, *some* Latin and Asian countries (Thailand)

# Cultural syndromes and personality

Zero-Order Correlations Between Mean NEO-PI-R Factors and Culture Scores Across 33 Countries

<i>IBM Culture Dimension Score</i>	<i>NEO-PI-R Factor</i>				
	<i>E</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>
Individualism	0.64***				
Power distance	-0.57**	0.52**	-0.39*		
Masculinity			0.40*	0.57**	-0.36*
Uncertainty avoidance				0.58**	-0.55**

NOTE: E = extraversion; C = conscientiousness; O = openness to experience; N = neuroticism; A = agreeableness.

\* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

- Personality is linked to culture

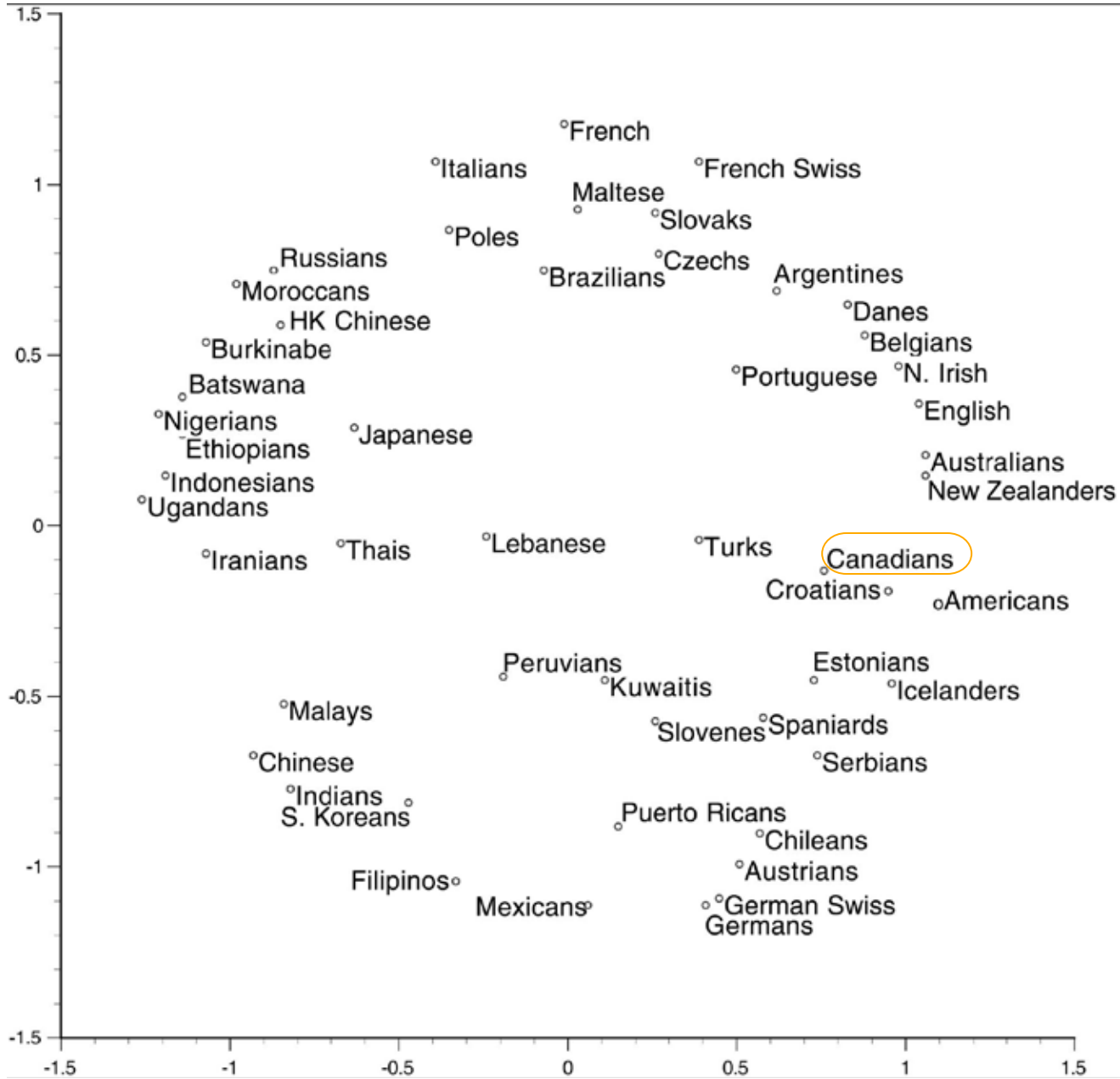


# How does personality differ across cultures?

- Personality Profiles of Cultures Project
  - University students from 51 cultures rated someone they knew well on the NEO-PI-R measure of the Big Five



NEUROTI-CISM



Extraversion



**How does culture create national personality differences?**

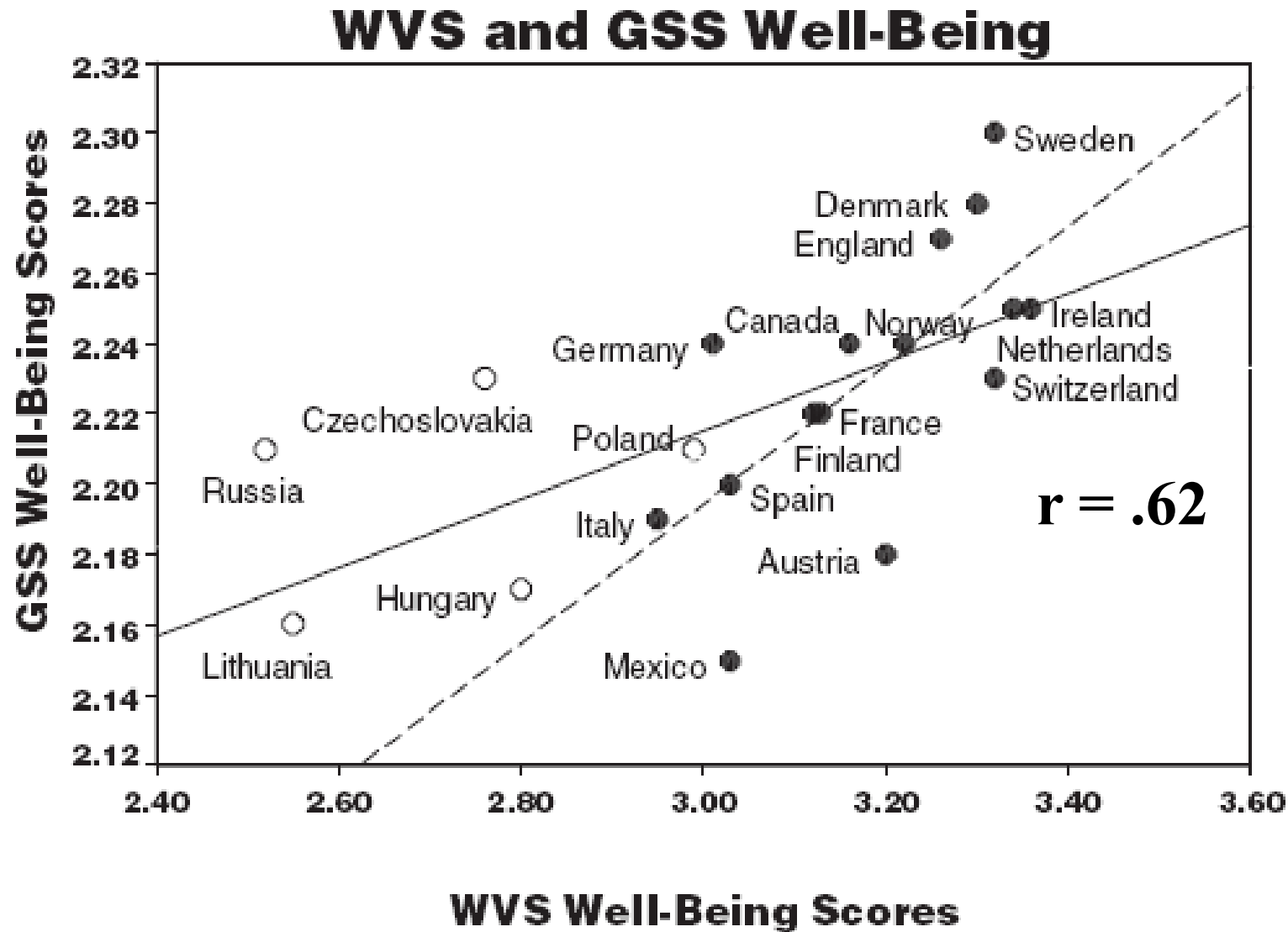
# Transmitted Culture

- Culture specific ideas, values and beliefs that are transmitted to others within the culture
  - Taught to children early in life, through socialization
- Moral behavior
  - Is it wrong to:
    - Comb your hair in a thunderstorm?
    - Watch dogs mate?
    - Kill a wasp?
    - Have sex during the day?
  - If you're from certain parts of Malaysia, YES!
- Other examples of cultural differences in morality?

# Transmitted Culture Affects Subjective Well-Being

- Rice & Steele (2004) compared SWB of citizens in 20 nations with SWB of Americans who had ancestors from those nations
  - General Social Survey (GSS) : US survey
    - Taken all together, how would you say things are these days—would you say that you are:
      - very happy
      - pretty happy
      - or not too happy
  - World Values Survey (WVS) : 20 nations survey
    - Taking all things together, would you say you are
      - very happy
      - quite happy
      - not very happy
      - or not at all happy

# Links between SWB of culture of origin and SWB of immigrants



# What causes this connection?

TABLE 2  
Well-Being by Church Attendance

<i>Aggregate GSS Well-Being Scores by GSS Church Attendance</i>			
	<i>Attend Church at Least Once a Week</i>	<i>Attend Church Once a Year Attend to Almost Once a Week</i>	<i>Attend Church Less Than Once a Year</i>
Aggregate WVS well-being scores	.79 ( $p < .01$ )	.37 ( $p < .12$ )	.15 ( $p < .32$ )

GSS = General Social Surveys; WVS = World Values Surveys. Cell entries are z-order correlation coefficients.  $N = 11$ .

# Next Class

- Wrap up culture
- Overview of personality
- Homework:
  - Read Larsen & Buss, Chapter 20