

THE ACTIVE AND THE PASSIVE SYNDROMES

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In previous papers (2) (3) (4) we have tried to illustrate that an adequate approach to a) the study of the effects of culture upon personality and b) the study of cross cultural differences would be: 1. to develop a construct or constructs sympathetic to what the authors have traditionally been calling "culture"; 2. to break down on the basis of that construct or constructs the probable multivariate nature of the effects of culture upon behavior; 3. to determine the within culture relevance and power of the construct or constructs for different areas of behavior; 4. to develop dimensions—in terms of the constructs—which will provide an opportunity for "culture" to make its effects appear in cross-cultural comparisons and to circumscribe and more clearly define them.

One construct that we have developed is called the sociocultural premise construct or the S.C.P. This construct has been defined with greater extension elsewhere (3). Suffice it to say that the socio cultural premise is simple a) a statement, a culturally significant statement, which is held by an operationally defined majority of the subjects in a given culture and b) it is also, preferably, a statement that will held differentially across cultures.

But a socio cultural premise may be a clearly conscious assumption upon which a given group bases its thinking, feeling and behavior and it may also be unconscious, i.e., a not clearly verbalized assumption which may still—or perhaps because of this—be even more powerful in its effects upon the thinking, feeling and action of the individuals of a given group. As a matter of fact, much of what goes on as very natural and unquestioned behavior in a given culture, may be described by its members as "just the way we are" or "just the way we do things" without any clear ability to refer it to a powerful but un verbalized socio-cultural assumption or premise that may command it. It may also be that these more powerful socio-cultural premises of a given group are altered and turned into caricatured stereotypes by members of other cultural groups, who perceive them from their own over-powering and unconscious socio-cultural context. Further, the power of a given socio-cultural premise in regard to its effects upon the thinking, feeling and action of the members of a given culture may vary greatly and there may be primary socio-cultural premises and secondary socio-cultural premises.

This paper deals with one apparently powerful and somewhat unconscious socio-cultural premise which we considered, from its inception, as one that

should be in command of a large number of behaviors, would affect these behaviors measurably within each culture, and should show variation cross-culturally. This powerful explanatory socio-cultural premise was inferred to be one that would encompass the entire philosophy of life of a given culture in regard to the mode or style with which this culture would face stress. It was hypothesized further that there are at least two clearly different ways in which cultures appear to have reached a solution to the problem of how to deal with life stress. In one of these, people belonging to what we may call the active socio-cultures (for which we use the socio-culture in the United States as the model) would tend to consider that the best, proper, and even virtuous way of dealing with stress would be actively, that is, by doing something, preferably in the environment, in order to modify the source of the stress. On the other hand, it was indicated that other socio-cultures (the model culture utilized was the Mexican socio-culture) would have developed the generalized approach that life poses a great many different problems and that the best, the proper, and even the virtuous way of dealing with them would be not to do something about them in the environment, but adjusting to them by accepting them and with a tendency, therefore, to modify the self rather than the environment in the face of stress. From these inferential socio-cultural premises a large number of hypothesis were derived in regard to its effect in many areas of the expression of human life from physiology to culture. Some reported research findings (5) (8) (1) (6) (7) appear to partially substantiate some of the hypothesis derived from the two stated socio-cultural premises. We have referred to this set of S.C.Ps. as the active-passive cross-cultural dichotomy.

However, it was evident from the many hypothesis, derived from this active-passive cross-cultural dichotomy that there was not only one dimension but a series of dimensions and in the last two years we have been increasingly referring to the active-passive dichotomy as the active versus the passive syndromes. It is not accidental that we are calling these phenomena a syndrome. We have some reason to believe that whether or not the dimensions included in the syndrome form one factor—since factors are derived by methodologies that cut across certain directions of similarity of response but not across all of them—we believe that we shall be able to demonstrate that the dimensions in the syndrome *hang meaningfully together* and for a given culture represent something akin to a syndrome, in medical terminology, where it refers to a series of symptoms or signs that appear consistently together, but which do not depend on one single mechanism for their production.

In an effort to clarify my own ideas about the active syndrome and the passive syndrome, I developed the following document on socio-cultural premises for a seminar at the Department of Educational Psychology, The University of Texas. The document is reproduced in full because it is the main source for the experiment that will be described later.

It is felt that passivity and activity are given as syndromes of characteristics. Cross-culturally these syndromes may be best described as dichotomies. It is felt that the passivity syndromes characterizes the under-developed, and to quite an extent, the developing countries; and the activity syndrome characterizes the more industrialized countries. However, certain aspects of the passivity syndrome also describe the culture of most European countries. The model of the activity syndrome is the United States. Germany and Japan have portions of both syndromes. Mexico may be the model for the passivity syndrome.

Here follows a list of dichotomies which we believe apply in the areas of work, family structure, authority, and civic action.

Passive Syndrome

1. Less rather than more action
2. Deliberation
3. Inaction
4. Man has limited powers and aspirations
5. Self doubting
6. Tends to minimize negative aspects of humans
7. Reflexive thought
8. Work is a necessary evil
9. Man as a part of nature, shaped by it, (the moved, the shaped), immersed in interwoven with nature
10. Final accomplishment—rest and enjoyment
11. Virtue in self denial
12. More interdependency with others, essentially of an emotional type, although also economic
13. Modification of subject's behavior by other individuals, institutions or premises
14. Compliance, through modification of self, to external stresses in order to adapt to them
15. Tendency to use indirect types of behavior (he modifies others, so that they might modify surroundings) rather than direct types of behavior towards surroundings or other individuals
16. Tendency to achieve harmony and collaboration rather—than competition between human subjects
17. Achievement through affiliation or symbols rather than achievement through autonomy, individuality or personal prestige
18. Tendency to be polite, have good manners, subject prefers not to say things directly. Avoids being tough. Uses indirect types of speech or jokes
19. Tendency to agree rather than disagree

Active Syndrome

57. More rather than less action
58. Speed
59. Action
60. Man has unlimited powers and aspirations
61. Self confident
62. Tends to maximize negative aspects of humans
63. Practical action
64. Work has its own inherent pleasures
65. Man as a changer of nature, the mover, the shaper, detached from nature
66. One can never stop accomplishing or things will fall apart
67. Virtue in self fulfillment
68. Less interdependency with others, more autonomy
69. Modification of the subject's behavior by his own independent and autonomous motivations
70. Modification of the environment, to have environment adaptable to self
71. Tendency to use direct types of behavior, he himself modifies the environment
72. Tendency to compete rather than collaborate, to succeed even if this breaks harmony with others
73. Achievement through autonomy or to gain personal prestige
74. Tendency to be frank, to say truths and truisms that hurt
75. Tendency to disagree rather than agree
76. Tendency not to take words of others as the final words whether they are peers or parents of elders
77. Prefers to speed up life up to maturity
78. Prefers to speed up life's developmental stages up to maturity
79. Optimism of personal initiatives for work

Passive Syndrome

20. Acceptance and spontaneous reliance in what others say, specially if others are beloved and respected persons, or happen to be parents, teachers or elders in general, etc.
21. Prefers to slow down life all the way
22. Prefers to slow down life's developmental stages
23. Fatalism of personal initiatives for work plans of activity
24. Prefers to leave the initiative to others
25. Prefers to obey rather than to command
26. Prefers to put future on supernatural hands rather than own efforts (God, good luck, fortune, destiny, etc.)
27. Co-operation
28. Minimizes external reality
29. Particularistic
30. Relatively larger importance to interpersonal relations
31. Relatively larger importance to sentimental romantic love life
32. Low expectations in pragmatic life
33. High expectations of what can be obtained from: friends, love, romance, family, fiesta, etc.
34. Authority of parents
35. Authority of peers
36. Authority of teachers
37. Degree of acceptance of authority
38. Overt expression of affect
39. Expressive
40. Authority of family
41. Authority of police
42. Authority of government
43. Civic interest
44. Greater amount of verbalization—that is to say, statements, proverbs, S.E.P.'s—of confrontation and defense in respect to love, interpersonal relations, etc.
45. Amount of ambivalence in respect to love, interpersonal relations, etc.
46. Amount of verbalization of confrontation and defense in respect to work, efficiency, the pragmatic life
47. Amount of ambivalence in respect to work, efficiency, the pragmatic life
48. Less accurate and more variable time estimation
49. Selfish pluralism—student helps another in exam, helps another with his homework
50. Work or task achievement done in obedience to others

Active Syndrome

- or plans of activity
80. Prefers to take the initiative himself
81. Prefers to command rather than to obey
82. Prefers to put future on own efforts rather than the supernatural
83. Competition
84. Maximizes external reality
85. Universalistic
86. Relatively larger importance to pragmatic results
87. Relatively larger importance to the pragmatic aspects of life
88. High expectations in pragmatic life
89. Low expectations of what can be obtained from: friends, love, romance, family, fiesta, etc.
90. Authority of parents
91. Authority of peers
92. Authority of teachers
93. Degree of acceptance of authority
94. Overt expression of affect
95. Instrumental
96. Authority of family
97. Authority of police
98. Authority of government
99. Civic interest
100. Greater amount of verbalization—that is to say, statements, proverbs, S.E.P.'s—of confrontation and defense in respect to love, interpersonal relations, etc.
101. Amount of ambivalence in respect to love, interpersonal relations, etc.
102. Amount of verbalization of confrontation and defense in respect to work, efficiency, the pragmatic life
103. Amount of ambivalence in respect to work, efficiency, the pragmatic life
104. More accurate and less variable time estimation
105. Selfish individualism—student does not help another in exam, does not help another with homework
106. Work or task achievement done autonomously
107. Work because of enjoyment of work
108. Work to demonstrate personal ability
109. Work for the satisfaction of using own skills
110. Work because of liking of work
111. Work for own personal advancement
112. Greater interest in money to do the work

*Passive Syndrome**Active Syndrome*

51. Work because it is the normal thing to do
52. Work to give children an education
53. Work to support the family
54. Work for the progress of own nation
55. Work because it is a duty
56. Lesser interest in money to do the work

METHODOLOGY

The series of dichotomies were presented to the students in the Socio-Cultural Premises Seminar at about the fifth meeting. The students had been exposed to a great deal of discussion regarding the active-passive cross-cultural dichotomy and had read previously published papers by this author. One of the goals of the seminar was to develop a fairly clear picture of the differences between the Mexican and the American cultures, particularly from the point of view of the active versus the passive attitudes in life. It was felt that as a first step in this direction it would be of interest to find out the degree of agreement of the eight graduate students in the seminar in the rating of each of the elements of the 56 dichotomies were rated individually by each student independently as representative of either a passive socio-culture or an active socio-culture or representative of neither. The same method was utilized with 12 research assistants in Mexico City after a 30 minute lecture to refreshen their knowledge of the active and the passive syndromes.

The results regarding the total degree of agreement for each one of the dichotomous elements and for the Mexican and the American student groups separately are presented in Table 1 and 2.

DISCUSSION

The reported results indicate that this list of dichotomous elements has high face validity and that there is high reliability of judgement regarding whether the statement belongs within an active or a passive socio-culture for the eight American and the 12 Mexican graduate students. Out of 112 statements there were various disagreements, mainly between judges in Mexico and the U.S., in 11 elements (numbers 1, 6, 35, 47, 51, 53, 54, 56, 62, 91, 103). This list of dichotomies has been used as a source of ideas for the development of items that might differentiate in college populations American from Mexican students, and will be used as a predictor of the results. This writer and the students in the seminar developed a couple of hundred items. Later with the help of Dr. Robert F. Peck and Dr. Walter Stenning of the Cross National Research Staff of The University of Texas, a questionnaire with 120 items has been developed

TABLE 1
Passive Syndrome

Statement No.	U.S. Judges N=7			Mex. Judges N=12			Total Judgments N=19		
	Active	Passive	D.K.	Active	Passive	D.K.	Active	Passive	D.K.
1	0	7	0	1	11	0	1	18	0
2	1	6	0	7	5	0	8	11	0
3	0	7	0	0	10	3	0	17	3
4	2	4	1	1	11	0	3	15	1
5	0	4	3	0	11	1	0	15	4
6	3	2	2	3	9	0	6	11	2
7	0	7	0	2	10	0	2	17	0
8	1	6	0	0	12	0	1	18	0
9	1	6	0	0	12	0	1	18	0
10	0	7	0	1	11	0	1	18	0
11	0	5	2	1	10	1	1	15	3
12	1	6	0	0	12	0	1	18	0
13	2	4	1	1	11	0	3	15	1
14	2	5	0	0	12	0	2	17	0
15	2	4	1	1	11	0	3	15	1
16	2	5	0	0	12	0	2	17	0
17	1	4	2	0	12	0	1	16	2
18	0	5	2	1	11	0	1	16	3
19	0	6	1	0	12	0	0	18	1
20	0	7	0	0	12	0	0	19	0
21	0	7	0	0	12	0	0	19	0
22	0	7	0	0	12	0	0	19	0
23	0	6	1	0	12	0	0	18	1
24	0	7	0	0	12	0	0	19	0
25	1	5	1	0	12	0	1	17	1
26	0	7	0	0	12	0	0	19	0
27	1	3	3	0	12	0	1	15	3
28	0	7	0	2	9	1	2	16	1
29	2	2	3	2	10	0	4	12	3
30	1	5	1	0	12	0	1	17	1
31	0	6	1	0	12	0	0	18	1
32	0	7	0	1	11	0	1	18	0
33	2	5	0	2	10	0	4	15	0
34	1	6	0	0	12	0	1	8	0
35	1	4	2	5	6	1	6	10	3
36	3	4	0	1	11	0	4	15	0
37	0	6	1	4	8	0	4	14	1
38	2	4	1	0	12	0	2	16	1
39	1	5	1	0	12	0	1	17	1

THE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE SYNDROMES

TABLE 1 (Cont.)

Passive Syndrome

No. Statement	Active Passive D.K. U.S. Judges N=7			Active Passive D.K. Mex. Judges N=12			Active Passive D.K. Total Judgments N=19		
40	0	6	1	0	12	0	0	18	1
41	2	4	1	0	12	0	2	16	1
42	1	6	0	1	11	0	2	17	0
43	0	5	2	3	9	0	3	14	2
44	2	5	0	1	11	0	3	16	0
45	3	3	1	4	8	0	7	11	1
46	0	5	2	4	8	0	4	13	2
47	1	5	1	6	6	0	7	11	1
48	0	7	0	2	10	0	2	17	0
49	2	5	0	0	12	0	2	17	0
50	1	6	0	0	12	0	1	18	0
51	5	2	0	0	12	0	5	14	0
52	4	2	1	0	12	0	4	14	1
53	4	2	1	0	12	0	4	14	1
54	4	2	1	3	9	0	7	11	1
55	3	3	1	0	12	0	3	15	1
56	1	6	0	5	7	0	6	13	0

TABLE 2

Active Syndrome

No. Statement	Active Passive D.K. U.S. Judges N=7			Active Passive D.K. Mex. Judges N=12			Active Passive D.K. Total Judgments N=19		
57	8	0	0	11	1	0	19	1	0
58	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
59	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
60	8	0	0	11	1	0	19	1	0
61	4	1	3	11	1	0	15	2	3
62	2	3	3	8	4	0	10	7	3
63	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
64	8	0	0	11	1	0	19	1	0
65	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
66	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
67	8	0	0	11	1	0	19	1	0
68	7	0	1	12	0	0	19	0	1
69	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
70	7	1	0	12	0	0	19	1	0
71	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0

TABLE 2 (Cont.)
Active Syndrome

<i>No. Statement</i>	<i>Active Passive D.K. U.S. Judges N=7</i>			<i>Active Passive D.K. Mex. Judges N=12</i>			<i>Active Passive D.K. Total Judgments N=19</i>		
72	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
73	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
74	7	0	1	11	1	0	18	1	1
75	5	0	3	12	0	0	17	0	3
76	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
77	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
78	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
79	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
80	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
81	6	1	1	12	0	0	18	1	1
82	8	0	0	11	1	0	19	1	0
83	5	1	2	12	0	0	17	1	2
84	8	0	0	9	2	1	17	2	1
85	5	1	2	11	1	0	16	2	2
86	8	0	0	11	1	0	19	1	0
87	8	0	0	11	1	0	19	1	0
88	8	0	0	11	1	0	19	1	0
89	5	2	1	10	2	0	15	4	1
90	7	1	0	12	0	0	19	1	0
91	6	1	1	6	5	1	12	6	2
92	6	2	0	8	3	1	14	5	1
93	6	1	1	8	4	0	14	5	1
94	5	1	2	12	0	0	17	1	2
95	6	0	2	12	0	0	18	0	2
96	6	1	1	12	0	0	18	1	1
97	7	1	0	12	0	0	19	1	0
98	6	1	1	11	1	0	17	2	1
99	6	0	2	9	3	0	15	3	2
100	6	1	1	11	1	0	17	2	1
101	4	2	2	8	4	0	12	6	2
102	7	0	1	8	4	0	15	4	1
103	5	2	1	6	6	0	11	8	1
104	8	0	0	10	2	0	18	2	0
105	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
106	7	0	1	11	1	0	18	1	1
107	7	1	0	12	0	0	19	1	0
108	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
109	6	0	2	12	0	0	18	0	2
110	8	0	0	11	1	0	19	1	0
111	8	0	0	12	0	0	20	0	0
112	7	0	1	7	5	0	14	5	1

which has been applied to college students in Mexico and the United States. The details of the work with this questionnaire and the results obtained will be reported later.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A list of dichotomies describing characteristics which were believed to represent differences between an active socio-culture like that in the United States and a passive socio-culture like that in Mexico were given to a group of graduate students at The University of Texas and a group of graduate students at the University of Mexico in order to determine: a) the degree of agreement of the judges; and b) the face validity of these differences. The results clearly substantiate both a high interjudge reliability and a differential face validity for 101 of the 112 dichotomous elements in the list.

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ABSTRACT

The active syndrome and the passive syndrome are presented as explanatory constructs for the study of the effect of culture on personality and the study of cross-cultural differences. These constructs are mediated by socio-cultural premises that are, in simplest terms, culturally significant statements held by a majority of the members of a society.

In order to demonstrate the use of these constructs the United States was chosen as an "active" culture and Mexico as a "passive" culture. A series of 112 statements, dichotomized on the active-passive dimension, were presented to graduate students in the two countries. The results showed 101 of the statements to have high interjudge reliability and a differential face validity.

RESUMEN

Los síndromes activo y pasivo son presentados como estructuras explicativas para el estudio del efecto de la cultura en la personalidad y el estudio de las diferencias transculturales. Estas estructuras son procuradas por medio de premisas socioculturales que, en breves palabras, son expresivas declaraciones culturales sostenidas por la mayoría de los miembros de una sociedad.

A fin de demostrar el empleo de estas estructuras, Estados Unidos fue escogido como una cultura "activa" y México como una cultura "pasiva." Una serie de 112 oraciones clasificadas en la dimensión activa-pasiva, fueron presentados a estudiantes post graduados en ambos países. Los resultados mostraron que 11 de las declaraciones tenían alta veracidad y un aspecto diferencial válido.

RESUMO

A síndrome ativa e a síndrome passiva são apresentadas como construtos explicativos para o estudo do efeito da cultura na personalidade e para o estudo de diferenças transculturais. Estes construtos são mediados através de premissas sócio-culturais que são, em termos simples, frases culturalmente significativas, aceitas pela maioria dos membros de uma sociedade.

Com o fim de demonstrar o uso destes construtos, os Estados Unidos foi escolhido como uma cultura "ativa" e o México como uma cultura "passiva." Uma série de 112 frases, dicotomizadas na dimensão ativo-passivo, foram apresentadas a estudantes pós-graduados nos dois países. Os resultados mostraram que 101 frases têm alta reprodutibilidade entre-juizes e aparente validade diferencial.