6

Cross-Cultural Level

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the profound influence of culture on key factors underlying voluntary compliance, with a particular emphasis on prosocial behavior, rule of law, values, and culture.[1] This examination is important because it will help us understand, both descriptively and normatively, what lessons can be learned from cross-country comparison when examining the level of success of various trust-based regulatory tools, which are built on the need to trust the public's willingness to engage in voluntary compliance.

Machiavelli introduced the model of the lion, representing force, and the fox, representing cunning, to illustrate how the discourse on power can be tailored, considering the variations in power's significance within a given culture.[2] Indeed, the role of culture is an important component to examine when determining whether states can allow themselves to relinquish any of their coercive power. Intuitively, many scholars recognize the close association between the topics raised in previous chapters and culture. While, in some countries, a positive relationship between the state's expectations and the public's voluntary compliance is the norm, in other

[1] OECD. "Society at a glance 2019." *OECD Social Indicators*. www.oecd.org/social/society-at-a-glance-19991290.htm (2019); Weingast, Barry R. "Why developing countries prove so resistant to the rule-of-law." In *Global perspectives on the rule of law*, edited by James J. Heckman, Robert L. Nelson and Lee Cabatingan, Routledge-Cavendish, 2013: 44–68; Moors, Guy, and Charlotte Wennekers. "Comparing moral values in Western European countries between 1981 and 1999. A multiple group latent-class factor approach." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 44.2 (2003): 155–172; De Groot, Judith I. M., and Linda Steg. "Value orientations and environmental beliefs in five countries: Validity of an instrument to measure egoistic, altruistic and biospheric value orientations." *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology* 38.3 (2007): 318–332; Vauclair, Christin-Melanie, and Ronald Fischer. "Do cultural values predict individuals' moral attitudes? A cross-cultural multilevel approach." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 41.5 (2011): 645–657; Álvarez, Gloria, Yasuhiro Kotera, and Juan Pina. *World index of moral freedom, WIMF 2022*. Fundación para el Avance de la Libertad, 2020; Harrington, Jesse R., and Michele J. Gelfand. "Tightness–looseness across the 50 United States." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111.22 (2014): 7990–7995.

[2] Lukes, Timothy J. "Lionizing Machiavelli." *American Political Science Review* 95.3 (2001): 561–575.

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countries, trust between the government and the public is low and it would be futile to expect any major cooperation. This chapter aims to examine which factors may predict those cultures in which voluntary compliance is likely to be successful.

The variations between states in terms of how culture relates to predictors of effective voluntary compliance are dramatic.[3] This chapter will explore and compare the impact of culture in countries with varying levels of voluntary compliance, whether high, moderate, or low. It will analyze how this cultural impact is related to other predictors of voluntary compliance and various measures of trust,[4] as well as how it affects the perception of the rule of law in these countries.[5] Finally, we will compile and compare possible predictors across some prominent cultures. This should enable us to determine the true impact of culture on voluntary compliance.

Research supports the view that an individual's response to voluntary compliance is a function of their cultural background. According to Coleman and Freeman,[6] understanding and integrating cultural nuances and values, such as attitudes toward taxes, perceptions of fairness, and peer influences, can enhance voluntary compliance programs. Additionally, taking into account cultural factors, such as holding the system accountable and increasing transparency about spending, can improve the outcomes of compliance efforts.[7] Studies suggest that interpersonal trust, while reflecting an individual's positive expectation of others for overall well-being, plays a pivotal role in shaping behavioral tendencies.[8] Interpersonal trust fosters cooperation by reducing the individual's fear of being exploited by others.[9] Evidence suggests that the individual's cultural context can moderate the relationship between interpersonal trust and willingness to comply voluntarily, as in

[3] For an elaboration, see OECD. "Society at a glance, 2011." *OECD Social Indicators*. www.oecd.org/social/societyataglance2011.html (2011); Gallup World Poll: www.gallup.com; OECD, "Growing unequal? Income distribution and poverty in OECD countries." www.oecd.org/els/social/inequality (2008).

[4] Marien, Sofie, and Marc Hooghe. "Does political trust matter? An empirical investigation into the relation between political trust and support for law compliance." *European Journal of Political Research* 50.2 (2011): 267–291; Bjørnskov, Christian. "Determinants of generalized trust: A cross-country comparison." *Public Choice* 130 (2007): 1–21; Delhey, Jan, and Kenneth Newton. "Predicting cross-national levels of social trust: Global pattern or Nordic exceptionalism?" *European Sociological Review* 21.4 (2005): 311–327.

[5] Dinesen, Peter Thisted, and Kim Mannemar Sønderskov. "Ethnic diversity and social trust." In *The Oxford handbook of social and political trust*, edited by Eric M. Uslaner, Oxford University Press, 2018: 175–204.

[6] Coleman, Cynthia, and Lynne Freeman. "Cultural foundations of taxpayer attitudes to voluntary compliance." *Australian Tax Forum* 13 (1997): 311–336.

[7] There are many studies in this tradition, for example: Coleman and Freeman. "Cultural foundations of taxpayer attitudes to voluntary compliance," 311–336.

[8] Dineson, P., and Rene Bekkers. "The foundations of individuals' generalized social trust: A review." In *Trust in social dilemmas*, edited by Paul A. M. van Lange, Bettina Rockenbach, and Toshio Yamagishi, Oxford University Press, 2017: 77–100.

[9] Yamagishi, Toshio, and Kaori Sato. "Motivational bases of the public goods problem." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50.1 (1986): 67–73.

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the case of COVID-19 regulations, for example.[10] It was found that interpersonal trust served as a mediator between risk perception and self-restraint during the pandemic.[11] Tight cultures, characterized by strong norms, adherence to regulations, and a low tolerance for deviant behavior, have been associated with lower mortality rates during the pandemic.[12] However, it remains less clear whether a tight culture inherently fosters a sense of voluntary compliance. Recent research has investigated how cultural factors influenced people's willingness to voluntarily comply with COVID-19 regulations, exploring when and under what cultural conditions certain voluntary components are accepted and implemented.[13]

In the context of taxation, studies have suggested that a taxpayer's willingness to comply with regulations is linked to their trust in the government and their belief that the authorities have the right to monitor them. When there is a high level of trust in the authorities, taxpayers are more likely to have the intention to voluntarily pay taxes. Voluntary compliance arises from the taxpayer's willingness to cooperate effectively and fulfill both their moral and their civil obligations to contribute to the "public good."[14]

CULTURE AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Contrary to what might be intuitively expected, it has been found that individualistic societies tend to trigger higher levels of prosocial behaviors rather than collectivist societies.[15] The longevity of cultural norms significantly influences their resistance to change, potentially affecting patterns of voluntary compliance. Importantly, these norms, which vary across countries, play a vital role in shaping prosocial behavior beyond mere legal obligations. Cross-cultural psychology research emphasizes that community norms, developed uniquely in different societies, can foster a culture that encourages voluntary actions that extend beyond legal requirements. This study shows that cultural dimensions are interrelated and together affect the likelihood of prosocial actions within a society.[16]

[10] Yuan, Hang, et al. "Different roles of interpersonal trust and institutional trust in COVID-19 pandemic control." *Social Science & Medicine* 293 (2022): 1–10.

[11] Diotaiuti, Pierluigi, et al. "Perception of risk, self-efficacy and social trust during the diffusion of COVID-19 in Italy." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18.7 (2021): 1–17.

[12] Gelfand, Michele J., et al. "The relationship between cultural tightness–looseness and COVID-19 cases and deaths: A global analysis." *The Lancet Planetary Health* 5.3 (2021): e135–e144.

[13] Besley, Timothy, and Chris Dann. "Why political trust and voluntary compliance have been key to government pandemic responsiveness in Europe." LSE European Politics and Policy (EUROPP) blog (2023).

[14] Kirchler, Erich, and Ingrid Wahl. "Tax compliance inventory TAX-I: Designing an inventory for surveys of tax compliance." *Journal of Economic Psychology* 31.3 (2010): 331–346.

[15] Luria, Gil, Ram A. Cnaan, and Amnon Boehm. "National culture and prosocial behaviors: Results from 66 countries." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 44.5 (2015): 1041–1065.

[16] Luria, Cnaan, and Boehm. "National culture and prosocial behaviors."

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Norms that have developed in different countries can play a crucial role in cultivating a culture that promotes voluntary actions beyond legal obligations. This observation aligns with cross-cultural psychology research, which demonstrates that human behavior is significantly influenced not only by legal frameworks but also by community norms of prosocial behavior.[17]

COMPARING DIFFERENT COUNTRIES' PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

As discussed, it is widely acknowledged that culture exerts an influence on individuals' behavior.[18] Some studies show that the impact of national culture on behavior is greater than any organizational or environmental factor.[19] Researchers often use five measuring tools to conduct a societal culture study: Individualism; Power Distance; Uncertainty Avoidance; Masculinity versus Femininity; and Future Orientation.[20]

In addition, the cultural aspect of voluntary compliance shares similarities with a broader and well-known argument regarding the role of civic society in US democracy. Studies have shown that citizens' active involvement in family, school, work, voluntary associations, and religion has a notable impact on their participation as voters and protesters.[21] Generally, studies show that there has been a systematic decline in civic engagement among America's younger generations compared to previous ones. This decrease in social and political involvement is attributed to a combination of technological, social, and economic changes, such as increased media consumption, changing family structures, and greater economic pressures.[22] It has also been observed that since the mid 1960s (post-Vietnam War), Americans' distrust in their government has steadily increased. One study has suggested that the decline of trust in government and lack of confidence in leaders and institutions among the American people reflect a growing skepticism toward many forms of power.[23]

An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) questionnaire that collected data from 140 countries on prosocial and antisocial behavior around the world found the highest levels of prosocial behavior in five Anglophone

[17] Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis. "The moral economy of communities: Structured populations and the evolution of pro-social norms." *Evolution and Human Behavior* 19.1 (1998): 3–25.

[18] House, Robert J. "Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies." (2004); Ashkanasy, Neal M., Celeste P. M. Wilderom, and Mark F. Peterson, eds. *Handbook of organizational culture and climate*. SAGE, 2000.

[19] Gelfand, Michele J., Miriam Erez, and Zeynep Aycan. "Cross-cultural organizational behavior." *Annual Review of Psychology* 58.1 (2007): 479–514.

[20] Hofstede, G., and Hofstede, G. J. *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind, revised and expanded* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill, 2005.

[21] Verba, Sidney. *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press, 1995.

[22] Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster, 2000.

[23] Cook, Timothy E., and Paul Gronke. "The skeptical American: Revisiting the meanings of trust in government and confidence in institutions." *Journal of Politics* 67.3 (2005): 784–803.

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countries (the United States, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom).[24] In contrast, Chile and Mexico stood out as having high levels of antisocial behavior. Surprisingly, the Nordic countries, often considered leaders in various social indicators, showed comparatively average performance in this area. On the other hand, Mediterranean and Eastern European countries, including Israel, typically had lower levels of prosocial behavior.

However, it appears that there is no correlation between countries with high levels of prosocial behavior and low levels of antisocial behavior, or vice versa. It was also found that countries with higher income levels exhibited more prosocial behavior. However, it was found that the positive correlation between income inequality and antisocial behavior is weak.[25]

Social norms were found to have an impact on prosocial behavior. To comprehend the workings of law "outside of sanction or direct coercion," one must recognize that the law typically does not affect individual conduct in isolation from the social environment. For example, one study has shown that promoting seat belt use is more effective when addressing all relevant beliefs that shape people's attitudes and social norms about seat belts, rather than simply raising awareness about driving risks.[26] A study conducted in Turkey explored the reasons why a significant number of car passengers do not use seat belts despite their proven effectiveness in reducing injury severity during road traffic accidents. The study confirmed that attitudes and subjective norms have a positive correlation with the intention of using seat belts.[27]

Along those lines, Janice Nadler's research on the expressive function of the law suggests that, unlike the instrumental view of law, which sees legal systems as directly influencing autonomous individuals through incentives, the social groups perspective argues that legal compliance is primarily shaped by group dynamics.[28] This view contends that an individual's response to legal demands stems from the interplay of law, social influence, and motivational goals tied to in-group commitments. Law, in this context, operates expressively by shaping group norms and values, which in turn affect individual attitudes and behaviors. Thus, the relationship

[24] OECD. "Pro- and anti-social behaviour." In "Society at a Glance 2011." *OECD Social Indicators* (2011): 94–39. https://doi.org/10.1787/soc_glance-2011-en.

[25] Krueger, Robert F., Brian M. Hicks, and Matt McGue. "Altruism and antisocial behavior: Independent tendencies, unique personality correlates, distinct etiologies." *Psychological Science* 12.5 (2001): 397–402.

[26] Stasson, Mark, and Martin Fishbein. "The relation between perceived risk and preventive action: A within-subject analysis of perceived driving risk and intentions to wear seatbelts." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 20.19 (1990): 1541–1557.

[27] Şimşekoğlu, Özlem, and Timo Lajunen. "Social psychology of seat belt use: A comparison of theory of planned behavior and health belief model." *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour* 11.3 (2008): 181–191.

[28] Nadler, Janice. "Expressive law, social norms, and social groups." *Law & Social Inquiry* 42.1 (2017): 60–75.

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between people and the law is mediated by the complexities of group life rather than through direct individual interaction.

CULTURE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Robert D. Putnam's study on the decline of social capital in the United States since the 1950s provides valuable insights into the changing nature of civic engagement and its impact on democracy. In *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*, Putnam explores the concept of social capital, which encompasses networks, trust, and norms that facilitate effective collaboration among individuals. Putnam's comprehensive analysis reveals a significant decrease in face-to-face social interactions, which have been essential for constructing and sustaining the social fabric of American society. He contends that this decline has had a profound impact on active participation in civic life, a vital component of a thriving democracy and citizen engagement. The consequences of this decline are evident in various aspects of civic life, such as reduced voter turnout, lower attendance at public meetings, decreased participation in committees, and diminished political cooperation. Furthermore, Putnam highlights a growing public distrust toward the government, suggesting that while some of this may be attributed to political changes since the 1960s, there are more profound, systemic issues at play. Putnam's work underscores the critical role of social capital in maintaining a robust democratic society and highlights the need for renewed efforts to foster civic engagement. This research not only provides a framework for understanding the erosion of social ties but also serves as a call to action for policymakers and citizens alike to reinvigorate community connections.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE IN EXPLAINING VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE

Our analysis examines how countries differ in their levels of trust, legitimacy, and compliance with specific policies, particularly in areas like taxation and environmental protection. For instance, a well-known cross-cultural study on punishment and cooperation found that during public goods games, countries with stronger rule of law traditions showed higher levels of cooperation among their citizens. The rule of law influenced two types of punishment: antisocial punishment (penalizing those who cooperate or contribute to the public good) and social punishment (penalizing those who don't cooperate or contribute). The effect of the rule of law on antisocial punishment was more prominent, which overshadowed its impact on social punishment.[29] In addition to the role of culture, we must also address whether policymakers can foster a shift in culture toward greater cooperation through softer regulatory approaches (this question will be discussed in the next chapter).

[29] Herrmann, Benedikt, Christian Thoni, and Simon Gächter. "Antisocial punishment across societies." *Science* 319.5868 (2008): 1362–1367.

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Can We Change Culture?

In countries where cultural norms don't support trusting citizens, policymakers implementing trust-based regulations must consider whether their policies can catalyze cultural change. A key question emerges: Can adopting more trusting regulatory approaches gradually shift societal attitudes? If evolutionary and environmental factors shape these cultural mechanisms, we need to understand both the likelihood and conditions under which such changes might occur?[30]

The implications for regulators and policymakers extend far beyond merely matching regulatory approaches to existing cultural contexts, if indeed, there is a chance that their choices may actively reshape how society relates to state institutions. This transformative potential means policymakers must consider not only which regulatory approaches suit current cultural norms, but also how the widespread adoption of specific regulatory strategies might fundamentally alter the culture of compliance and institutional trust.

The scholarship on this issue presents a mixed perspective, with some studies supporting the ability to change culture and others concluding the opposite. Notably, in our discussions later in this chapter on the "Nordic model," we will explore research that highlights the potential for cultural change.[31] In contrast, we will also delve into studies supporting the idea that cultural norms may be traced back hundreds and even thousands of years in history. As a result, the ability to change them is far more limited.

Can Trust Mechanisms Change Culture?

The work of the famous Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede stands at the forefront of research on how cultural values persist over time. His influential studies on how culture shapes workplace behavior show that culture acts as a collective mindset, distinguishing members of one group from another.[32] His perspective on culture leans toward determinism, asserting that cultural influences are inescapable.

Hofstede, in collaboration with Michael Minkov and their research teams,[33] developed one of the earliest and most popular frameworks for measuring cultural differences between countries. This framework encompasses six dimensions: Power Distance,

[30] Varnum, Michael E. W., and Igor Grossmann. "Cultural change: The how and the why." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 12.6 (2017): 956–972.

[31] Mjøset, Lars. "Nordic economic policies in the 1970s and 1980s." *International Organization* 41.3 (1987): 403–456, at 403.

[32] Minkov, Michael, and Geert Hofstede. "Is national culture a meaningful concept? Cultural values delineate homogeneous national clusters of in-country regions." *Cross-Cultural Research* 46.2 (2012): 133–159.

[33] Minkov, Michael, and Geert Hofstede. "The evolution of Hofstede's doctrine." *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal* 18.1 (2011): 10–20.

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Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, Long-Term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint.

Hofstede's framework, utilized in both academic and professional management settings throughout the world, represents what he terms "the software of the mind."[34] Through it, he seeks to explain how culture affects behavior. For example, according to Hofstede,[35] countries in which Romance languages (Italian, Spanish, and French) were spoken had scored significantly higher on Uncertainty Avoidance (preference for structure, clear rules, and predictability) than did countries in which Germanic languages (German, Dutch, and English) were spoken. It could be argued that the enduring influence of the Roman Empire's strict legal system led to a greater tendency among citizens many centuries later to avoid uncertainty. In addition, Romance-language-speaking countries scored higher on Power Distance compared to Germanic-language-speaking ones, suggesting greater acceptance of hierarchy and centralized authority among citizens of these countries. Both sets of results suggest a greater preference for command-and-control compliance than for intrinsically motivated voluntary compliance in countries speaking Romance languages. The World Values Survey measures additional sets of dimensions related to the work of Hofstede, Ronald Inglehart, and Wayne Baker. According to this survey, Romance-language-speaking countries tend to favor Traditional and Survival values while Germanic-language-speaking countries lean more toward Secular-Rational and Self-Expression values.[36] For example, Romance-language-speaking France, Italy, and Spain are located in the Catholic Europe cluster, which emphasizes traditional values, while Germanic-language-speaking Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden are in the Protestant Europe cluster, characterized by secular-rational and self-expression-oriented values. This distinction seems relevant to understanding voluntary compliance, though further research is needed to confirm its impact. Importantly, the longevity of cultural norms plays a crucial role in determining how susceptible a culture is to change. Older, more established norms may be more resistant to modification, potentially affecting the dynamics of voluntary compliance. When examining some strands of the research on culture, one of the most significant findings is that many of the characteristics that differ between countries are nearly impossible to change. Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, some of Hofstede's research implies the continuing influence of some of Europe's Roman Empire ancestry.[37] If this is the case, what is the point of even

[34] Hofstede, Geert. *Cultures and organizations* (rev. ed.). McGraw-Hill, 1997.

[35] Hofstede, Geert. "Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context." *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture* 2.1 (2011): 1–26.

[36] Inglehart, Ronald, and Wayne E. Baker. "Modernization, cultural change, and the persistence of traditional values." *American Sociological Review* 65.1 (2000): 19–51.

[37] Hofstede. "Dimensionalizing cultures"; Minkov, Michael, and Geert Hofstede. "Nations versus religions: Which has a stronger effect on societal values?" *Management International Review* 54 (2014): 801–824.

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arguing that adopting a trust-based regulatory approach might lead to a sustainable change in a country's culture?

Nonetheless, other scholars provide a different point of view,[38] suggesting that the idea of trust can be influenced both positively and negatively by more flexible elements, such as effective governance, population homogeneity, and equal income distribution. The presence of these factors helps explain the high trust levels in Nordic countries.[39] This perspective is consistent with research suggesting that the high levels of interpersonal trust observed in Scandinavian countries is a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging since around the mid 1980s, as these characteristics have become more prominent in these countries.[40]

CREATION OF A TRUST CULTURE IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

As research and surveys indicate, the Nordic countries serve as a dynamic model for building trust, offering an optimistic message regarding the efficacy of trust-enhancing approaches.[41] Nordic countries are characterized by a "virtue" cycle in which various key institutional and cultural indicators of a good society mutually reinforce each other. These include a well-functioning democracy, generosity, effective social welfare benefits, low levels of crime and corruption, and satisfied citizens who feel free and who trust each other and their governmental institutions. It has been suggested that the historical fact that the Nordic countries did not have an underclass of slaves or cheap labor imported from colonies may have played a role in shaping the development of their welfare societies.

In addition, Nicholas Charron and Bo Rothstein's research suggests that the impact of ethnic diversity on social trust diminishes significantly when factors related to the quality of government are considered. This indicates that in countries with high-quality institutions, like the Nordic countries, ethnic diversity may not affect social trust.[42] Trust in state institutions has been found to have a positive impact on social trust, although evidence for the reverse relationship is limited. A study from Denmark found that increased citizen trust in institutions was one of the factors contributing to higher social trust in the country.[43]

[38] Norris, Pippa. *Democratic deficit: Critical citizens revisited*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

[39] Delhey and Newton. "Predicting cross-national levels of social trust."

[40] Inglehart, Ronald, and Karlheinz Reif, eds. *Eurobarometer: The dynamics of European public opinion essays in honour of Jacques-René Rabier*. Springer, 2016.

[41] Martela, Frank, et al. "The Nordic exceptionalism: What explains why the Nordic countries are constantly among the happiest in the world." *World Happiness Report* 2020 (2020): 129–146.

[42] Charron, Nicholas, and Bo Rothstein. "Regions of trust and distrust: How good institutions can foster social cohesion" In *Bridging the prosperity gap in the EU*, edited by Ulf Bernitz, Moa Mårtensson, Lars Oxelheim and Thomas Persson, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018: 220–242.

[43] Sønderskov, Kim Mannemar, and Peter Thisted Dinesen. "Trusting the state, trusting each other? The effect of institutional trust on social trust." *Political Behavior* 38 (2016): 179–202.

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Other studies show that cultural traditions evolve in response to new laws and policies, suggesting that by trusting their citizens more in their regulatory and compliance approaches, governments might spearhead cultural change. For example, a recent influential work concluded that the terms of pension plans may alter certain saving customs.[44] Another important study summarizing over half a century of cross-cultural research has shown specific changes at a group level in psychological and behavioral phenomena such as values, attention, and neural responses.[45]

POWER DISTANCE AND VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE

A very relevant factor influencing the likelihood of voluntary compliance within a culture is the level of "Power Distance" in each country. High Power Distance countries are often associated with authoritarian values. In contrast, low Power Distance countries are less likely to emphasize obedience, thereby creating opportunities for other factors to play a role in compliance.[46] Although obedience is typically associated with positive attributes, such as honesty and civility, the relationship between obedience and these qualities is not always straightforward. Power Distance significantly influences societal expectations and behaviors. In high Power Distance societies, individuals readily accept a hierarchical order without questioning its justification and each person is expected to occupy a specific place within this hierarchy. Conversely, low Power Distance societies strive for equal power distribution, with members often challenging perceived inequalities.

This cultural dimension affects how people respond to authority and engage in collective behaviors. In low Power Distance contexts, individuals are more likely to express concerns about power dynamics, seeking consensus before conforming to group behaviors. Consequently, the willingness to comply voluntarily is closely tied to perceptions of equal treatment and respect. The impact of Power Distance on voluntary compliance is thus twofold: First, it shapes expectations about power distribution and the acceptability of hierarchies. Second, it influences individuals' demands for equal treatment, which in turn affects their likelihood of engaging in voluntary compliance.[47]

Power Distance is a crucial dimension of cultural variation that reflects how societies manage inequality. It measures the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect unequal power distribution. This dimension significantly influences the likelihood of voluntary compliance within different cultural contexts.

[44] Bau, Natalie. "Can policy change culture? Government pension plans and traditional kinship practices." *American Economic Review* 111.6 (2021): 1880–1917.

[45] Varnum and Grossmann. "Cultural change."

[46] Brockner, Joel, et al. "Culture and procedural justice: The influence of power distance on reactions to voice." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 37.4 (2001): 300–315.

[47] Fiala, Andrew. "The fragility of civility: Virtue, civil society, and tragic breakdowns of civility." *Dialogue and Universalism* 3 (2013): 109–122.

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In the context of voluntary compliance, cultural attitudes toward hierarchical relationships play a crucial role, particularly through the lens of Power Distance. Research by De Meulenaer and colleagues (2018)[48] reveals that societies with high Power Distance, where hierarchical relationships are more readily accepted and justified, may facilitate easier persuasion for compliance with authority. This dynamic stands in marked contrast to low Power Distance societies, where individuals typically require substantial justification from authorities before accepting hierarchical structures. The degree of Power Distance in a given cultural context fundamentally shapes how hierarchical relationships are perceived and justified, as well as the level of justification expected from governmental authorities. These cultural variations in Power Distance have profound implications for governance strategies and policy implementation, as approaches that prove effective in high Power Distance societies may falter in low Power Distance contexts. This understanding suggests the critical importance of developing culturally tailored strategies for promoting voluntary compliance that accounts for these fundamental differences in how authority is perceived and accepted.

Cultural Orientation and Voluntary Compliance

Power Distance and the Collectivism–Individualism spectrum are two interrelated cultural factors that can significantly influence collective decision-making, such as the adoption of COVID-19 preventive measures.[49]

Furthermore, research suggests that in cultures with an individualistic orientation, people may prioritize personal convenience or preference over collective welfare, potentially leading to a reduced willingness to comply for the public good, such as wearing face masks during the pandemic.[50] However, individuals can still exhibit prosocial behavior through their commitment to personal values and fulfilling individual responsibilities.[51] Additionally, studies suggest that there is a correlation between individualism and both charitable donations and volunteer activity.[52]

[48] De Meulenaer, Sarah, Patrick De Pelsmacker, and Nathalie Dens. "Power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and the effects of source credibility on health risk message compliance." *Health Communication* 33.3 (2018): 291–298.

[49] Zhu, Nan, Skyler T. Hawk, and Judith G. Smetana. "The influence of power on US and Chinese individuals' judgments and reasoning about intersocietal conflicts." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 51.1 (2020): 77–105.

[50] Lu, Jackson G., Peter Jin, and Alexander S. English. "Collectivism predicts mask use during COVID-19." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118.23 (2021): 1–8.

[51] Waterman, Alan S. "Individualism and interdependence." *American Psychologist* 36.7 (1981): 762–773; Adams, Gerald. "Alan S. Waterman: The psychology of individualism. New York: Praeger: 1984." *Journal of Adolescence* 9.1 (1986): 107—107.

[52] Kemmelmeier, Markus, Edina E. Jambor, and Joyce Letner. "Individualism and good works: Cultural variation and volunteering across the United States." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 37.3 (2006): 327–344.

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Similarly, it has been found that people with an independent self-concept displayed a higher willingness to wear face masks.[53]

In the context of voluntary compliance with COVID-19 measures,[54] many required behaviors, such as social distancing and hygiene practices, are inherently collective. They depend on individuals' willingness to adopt strict practices while considering their broader community impact. The cultural dimension of collectivism versus individualism plays a significant role in shaping these behaviors.

Individuals in collectivist societies are generally better equipped to undertake collective action, as these societies place high value on unity and strong interpersonal connections within the wider community.[55] Collectivists are often more receptive to actions involving greater personal sacrifice if it improves the well-being of the greater society.

Conversely, in more individualistic societies, people may prioritize personal freedoms and individual needs over collective well-being. This cultural orientation can potentially impact the adoption of and compliance with community-focused health measures.[56]

It's important to note that while these cultural tendencies exist, individual behaviors can vary within both collectivist and individualistic societies. The degree of collectivism or individualism in society can influence, but does not entirely determine, individual responses to public health measures.

Masculine vs. Feminine Cultures and Voluntary Compliance

Gender identity appears to be an additional cultural dimension strongly associated with the likelihood of voluntary compliance in a country.

Research suggests that men and women often perceive their environment differently. Women frequently view themselves as part of a wider network of social relationships and feel a moral obligation to contribute to the network's well-being. In contrast, men tend to prioritize individual rights over group needs and view their environment as a system of hierarchical relationships.[57] Generally, it is commonly

[53] Kemmelmeier, Markus, and Waleed A. Jami. "Mask wearing as cultural behavior: An investigation across 45 US states during the COVID-19 pandemic." *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 1–24.

[54] As discussed in Chapter 8.

[55] Castle, Cassandra, Corrado Di Guilmi, and Olena Stavrunova. "Individualism and collectivism as predictors of compliance with COVID-19 public health safety expectations." *Ultimo, Australia: University of Technology Sydney* 2021/03 (2021).

[56] Dheer, Ratan, Carolyn Egri, and Len J. Treviño. "A cross-cultural exploratory analysis of pandemic growth: The case of COVID-19." *Journal of International Business Studies* 52.9 (2021): 1871–1892.

[57] Gilligan, Carol. *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Harvard University Press, 1993; Rosener, J. B. "Ways women lead." *Harvard Business Review* 68.1 (1990): 119–125. See also the ensuing debate in the Epstein, Cynthia Fuchs. "Ways men and women lead." *Harvard Business Review* 69.1 (January–February 1991): 150–160.

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believed that women show a greater interest in cooperation and working with others, particularly in countries with a high likelihood of voluntary cooperation.[58]

Broadening this perspective, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory offers insights into how gender-related cultural traits might influence voluntary compliance. Hofstede distinguishes between national cultures based on Masculinity versus Femininity. This dimension reflects the overall "toughness" and competitiveness of society, with "masculine cultures" tending to be more aggressive and ambitious, while "feminine cultures" are typically more modest and nurturing.[59]

In masculine cultures, competition is viewed from a distributive perspective where the world is seen as consisting of winners and losers. Moreover, in these cultures, cooperative alliances are typically formed under the guise of a win-win situation.[60] This perspective on cooperation and competition could potentially impact attitudes toward voluntary compliance, especially in situations requiring collective action for the common good.

Interestingly, research indicates that entrepreneurs from more masculine and individualistic societies exhibit a lower appreciation for cooperative strategies compared to entrepreneurs from feminine and collectivist societies.[61] This finding suggests that the Masculinity–Femininity dimension of culture could play a role in shaping attitudes toward voluntary compliance and cooperative behaviors at a societal level.

GALLUP DATA ON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

As could be seen from data from the Gallup World Poll as reported in the OECD publication,[62] it is possible to see the different dimensions of the relationship between culture and compliance. This data offers insights into the cultural and regulatory landscapes of these nations, highlighting differences in social behavior, trust levels, and environmental policies.

Prosocial behavior is represented as a percentage, indicating the proportion of the population engaging in altruistic or helpful actions. The United States leads with 60 percent, followed closely by the United Kingdom at 57 percent, while Greece shows the lowest rate at 13 percent.

[58] However, it should be noted that a careful meta-analysis on this very question in the context of social dilemmas didn't find an overall significant main effect. Balliet, Daniel, et al. "Sex differences in cooperation: A meta-analytic review of social dilemmas." *Psychological Bulletin* 137.6 (2011): 881.

[59] Doney, Patricia M., Joseph P. Cannon, and Michael R. Mullen. "Understanding the influence of national culture on the development of trust." *Academy of Management Review* 23.3 (1998): 601–620.

[60] Hamel, Gary, Yves L. Doz, and Coimbatore K. Prahalad. "Collaborate with your competitors and win." *Harvard Business Review* 67.1 (1989): 133–139.

[61] Steensma, H. Kevin, Louis Marino, and K. Mark Weaver. "Attitudes toward cooperative strategies: A cross-cultural analysis of entrepreneurs." *Journal of International Business Studies* 31 (2000): 591–609.

[62] OECD. "Pro- and anti-social behaviour."

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The perception of voluntary environmental "codes of conduct" by citizens is also expressed as a percentage. Greece surprisingly tops this category at 59 percent, with Denmark following at 57 percent, suggesting strong environmental awareness among their populations.

Trust is measured on a scale where positive numbers indicate higher trust levels. The Netherlands shows the highest trust at 0.30, while Italy has the lowest at –0.7, indicating significant variations in social trust across these countries.

Social cohesion is measured on a scale up to 10, with higher numbers indicating stronger cohesion. The Netherlands leads with 7.15, while Israel has the lowest score at 4.29. International tax evasion is measured in billions of euros, with Italy showing the highest amount at 3.1 billion, while Denmark has the lowest at 0.2 billion.

The environmental regulatory regime is represented by an index, with the Netherlands having the strongest regime at 1.747 and Greece the weakest at –0.619.

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR ≠ ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

As mentioned, opinions on a voluntary environmental "code of conduct" vary significantly among countries, as reflected in the rates of positive opinions ranging from high to low. Greece emerges as the leading nation, with 59 percent of its population holding a positive opinion. Following closely is Denmark, where 57 percent of the population expresses a positive opinion, followed by Austria with a 53 percent approval rate. The Netherlands also demonstrates significant support, as 50 percent of the respondents endorse this code of conduct. Italy, while still supportive, ranks lower, with 44 percent of its population expressing positive opinions toward voluntary environmental standards.

Examining both sources of information, it is apparent that there are diverse attitudes toward prosocial behavior and environmental awareness and no correlation seems to emerge between them. For example, the Netherlands has a high prosocial behavior rate (55 percent) but is not ranked high in environmental awareness relative to other countries. Denmark and Austria both demonstrate strong prosocial behavior (46 percent and 43 percent) and support for environmental codes (57 percent and 53 percent). In contrast, Greece has the lowest prosocial rate (13 percent) but the highest approval for environmental codes (59 percent), indicating that prosocial behavior does not necessarily predict environmental attitudes.[63]

CROSS-CULTURAL TRUST

The inconsistency among various measures available in cross-country datasets is not limited to tax morale; it is also evident in the context of trust. Countries that

[63] Based on OECD. "Pro- and anti-social behaviour." Data sourced from Gallup World Poll 2010.

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score highly on certain social measures do not necessarily maintain this ranking across all metrics.

For instance, in our VCOMP (Voluntary Compliance Lab)[64] research group, high rates of trust are observed in countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands (0.30), and slightly lower ones in countries such as Austria (0.15), while countries such as Israel (-0.5), Italy (-0.7), and Greece (-0.35) demonstrate even lower levels of trust. At the upper end of the spectrum, in nations like Norway and Sweden, over 60 percent of respondents in the World Values Survey agree that most people can be trusted.

Data from European nations reveal a nuanced and somewhat inconsistent picture of institutional trust. Generally, people exhibit higher levels of trust in law enforcement compared to political and legal systems. Except for Switzerland, trust in the political system is notably low across all countries, significantly below the level of interpersonal trust. Conversely, there is a remarkably high level of confidence in the police, with the majority of European countries demonstrating greater trust in law enforcement than in fellow citizens.[65] On the opposite end, in countries such as Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru, fewer than 10 percent of respondents share this belief in law enforcement.[66] Data from the United States suggests that people have less trust in each other now than they did in the 1980s.[67] This decline in interpersonal trust in the United States has been accompanied by a long-term reduction in public trust in government.[68]

High rates of social cohesion were shown in several countries, with Canada achieving the highest score (9.42), followed by the United States (8.34), the Netherlands (7.15), Denmark (7.08), Germany (7.0), Italy (6.55), and Austria (6.35). However, low rates of social cohesion were shown in Israel (4.29) and China (5.52), and the lowest score was given to Greece (5.39).[69]

CULTURE DYNAMICS

As mentioned previously, Hofstede's theory suggests that a culture may have deep historical roots, which can limit its capacity for change. However, some economists and political scientists believe that institutional design can influence the level of trust in a country. As mentioned, the transformation of Scandinavian countries in the twentieth century offers the most well-known example of such institutional

[64] Funded by the ERC: Advanced Grant VCOMP 101054656: www.voluntary-compliance-lab.org/.

[65] Haerpfer, Christian, et al. "World values survey wave 7 (2017–2020) cross-national data-set." (2020). www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp.

[66] Ortiz-Ospina, Esteban, and Max Roser. "Trust." (2016). https://ourworldindata.org/trust.

[67] The General Social Survey has been gathering information about trust attitudes since 1972.

[68] According to estimates compiled by the Pew Research Center since 1958.

[69] Foa, Roberto Stefan. "The economic rationale for social cohesion: The cross-country evidence" (2011) doi:10.17863/CAM.90182, roughly corresponds with their prosocial rates. See also www.oecd.org/development/pgd/46908575.pdf.

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influence on cultural trust.[70] This change accompanied the enactment of their famous welfare systems and the ensuing reduction in inequality. Following these institutional changes, these countries soon vaulted to the top levels in many of the values related to solidarity and trust.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF HONESTY AND COOPERATION

In addition to culture, various other factors that have been described in the literature influence behaviors associated with voluntary compliance.[71] For example, Joshua Bourdage and colleagues (2018) suggested that age might affect honesty in job interviews.[72] According to their findings, older individuals may be less inclined to lie in job interviews because they possess more job knowledge and are perceived as more competent in their jobs. Allen Huffcutt and colleagues (2011) have argued that education is also relevant regarding honesty.[73] Similarly studying job applicants, they found that well-educated applicants are more likely to prioritize honesty in the context of demonstrating that they meet the job requirements. Additionally, factors like income, education, and age can predict how likely people are to believe they should deceive during interviews, as well as their confidence in their ability to do so successfully to improve their evaluation outcomes. In general, studies indicate that trust and cooperation vary with sex, schooling, age, household size, quality of living, and placement on a psychological cooperation scale.[74] Additionally, we have observed a correlation between prosocial behavior and several factors, such as home ownership, community homogeneity, past participation in community projects, the relationship between individuals and their neighbors, and community leadership.[75]

[70] Gärtner, Svenja, and Svante Prado. "Unlocking the social trap: Inequality, trust and the Scandinavian welfare state." *Social Science History* 40.1 (2016): 33–62.

[71] For a very recent contribution to the predictor of honesty and the relationship with compliance see Shalvi, S. et al. "The science of honesty-setting the agenda." *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (in press).

[72] Bourdage, Joshua S., Nicolas Roulin, and Rima Tarraf. "'I (might be) just that good': Honest and deceptive impression management in employment interviews." *Personnel Psychology* 71.4 (2018): 597–632.

[73] Huffcutt, Allen I., Chad H. Van Iddekinge, and Philip L. Roth. "Understanding applicant behavior in employment interviews: A theoretical model of interviewee performance." *Human Resource Management Review* 21.4 (2011): 353–367.

[74] Sutter, Matthias, and Martin G. Kocher. "Trust and trustworthiness across different age groups." *Games and Economic Behavior* 59.2 (2007): 364–382; Ho, Jordan L., and Deborah Powell. "A test of expectancy theory and demographic characteristics as predictors of faking and honesty in employment interviews." *Personnel Assessment and Decisions* 7.2 (2021): 1–10; Croson, Rachel, and Uri Gneezy. "Gender differences in preferences." *Journal of Economic Literature* 47.2 (2009): 448–474.

[75] Carpenter, Jeffrey P., Amrita G. Daniere, and Lois M. Takahashi. "Cooperation, trust, and social capital in Southeast Asian urban slums." *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 55.4 (2004): 533–551.

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Cultural variations within a nation can result from different communal identities or geographic factors. Studies have shown that foreign shoppers are more likely to engage in fraudulent behavior in grocery stores in urban centers compared to other neighborhoods. This pattern may reflect the reduced likelihood of repeated encounters in urban areas, demonstrating how environmental context can shape ethical decision-making.[76]

From various data sources which were accumulated during COVID,[77] analysis reveals an inverse relationship between interpersonal trust and excess mortality across countries. Poland shows the highest excess mortality (around 15) combined with low trust (about 1.3), while Spain and Portugal follow a similar pattern of high mortality and low trust.

In contrast, countries with higher interpersonal trust show lower excess mortality. Nordic nations, particularly Denmark and Norway, demonstrate the highest trust levels (around 1.8) alongside the lowest excess mortality scores (near 0 or slightly negative).

Some exceptions exist: The United States shows higher excess mortality than its trust level would suggest, while New Zealand achieved negative excess mortality despite moderate trust levels.

The Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland form a cluster characterized by high trust and low excess mortality, while Germany, Ireland, and Austria occupy middle positions on both scales. This pattern suggests that societies with higher interpersonal trust may be more resilient in managing mortality risks.

The data indicates that cultural background and interpersonal trust influence voluntary compliance, highlighting the importance of understanding cultural attitudes toward governance when developing compliance strategies.

CULTURE AND PUNISHMENT LIKELIHOOD

Important work carried out by Daniel Balliet and Paul Van Lange examines the relationship between society's cultural trust and punishment.[78] They show that punishment encourages people to contribute to public goods, but its effectiveness varies across different societies. The variation has been thought to depend on the levels of trust within these societies and how punishment, as a means of enforcing social norms, encourages cooperative behavior. Some theories suggest that punishment is more likely to encourage cooperation in low-trust societies, where people might contribute to public goods only if they face significant incentives or consequences.

[76] Vranka, Marek, et al. "Cheating customers in grocery stores: A field study on dishonesty." *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics* 83 (2019): 1–7.

[77] See generally, Casey, Bernard H. "COVID-19: Did higher trust societies fare better?" *Discover Social Science and Health* 3.1 (2023): 1–17.

[78] Balliet, Daniel, and Paul A. M. Van Lange. "Trust, punishment, and cooperation across 18 societies: A meta-analysis." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 8.4 (2013): 363–379.

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Conversely, others have argued that punishment is more effective in high-trust societies, where people tend to cooperate and support public interests while being willing to punish those who do not. This raises an important question: Is punishment more effective in fostering cooperation in societies with high trust or low trust? To tackle this issue, in their comprehensive meta-analysis they reviewed 83 studies, including 7,361 participants from 18 different societies, examining the impact of punishment on public goods dilemmas.[79]

Their study concluded that punishment generally has a positive effect on cooperation, with its effectiveness varying based on factors such as group size, punishment severity, and communication opportunities. Although it may seem more logical to assume that punishment is more successful in countries with low trust levels, some meta-analyses indicate the opposite: In societies where trust is high, punishment is more common. This is likely because high-trust societies tend to view norm enforcement actions positively. In these societies, people often see punishment as a necessary step toward the common good, rather than a personal attack.

This openness to punishment can increase its effectiveness in promoting adherence to social norms and promoting collective well-being, which can encourage further cooperative behavior. In contrast, in low-trust societies, punitive measures might be viewed with skepticism or hostility, reducing their ability to encourage cooperation. The importance of societal trust is emphasized in the Balliet and colleagues' studies, as it acts as a foundational element that affects the effectiveness of norm enforcement mechanisms, such as punishment.

The findings clearly show that punishment significantly enhances cooperation in high-trust societies more than in low-trust ones.[80] Furthermore, beyond formal punishment drawing on the work of scholars like Simon Gächter and others,[81] who have explored social punishment, we can anticipate that when regulators allow for flexibility, individuals are less likely to shirk their responsibilities due to the high probability of social enforcement.

VOLUNTARISM VS. VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE

It is possible to expect that there would be a correlation between people who voluntarily comply with laws and their willingness to do things for others that are not required. Generally, there are different varieties of prosocial behaviors and it's usually measured by three aspects: volunteering for organizations, donating to charities, and helping strangers.[82] It appears that people with higher social and economic

[79] Balliet and Van Lange. "Trust, punishment, and cooperation across 18 societies."
[80] Balliet and Van Lange. "Trust, punishment, and cooperation across 18 societies."
[81] Herrmann, Thoni, and Gächter. "Antisocial punishment across societies."
[82] Jones, Keely S. "Giving and volunteering as distinct forms of civic engagement: The role of community integration and personal resources in formal helping." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 35.2 (2006): 249–266; Putnam. *Bowling alone*; Verba. *Voice and equality*.

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status tend to volunteer more.[83] Religious participation is also assumed to enhance prosocial behaviors.[84] Other explanations that have been advanced for prosocial behavior include trust, altruism, age, family structure, norms, solicitation, response to disaster or crisis, and more.[85]

CROSS-CULTURAL HETEROGENEITY IN COMPLIANCE

A study conducted in Sweden examined how reduced enforcement affects the extent to which regulated actors comply with government regulations. It unexpectedly found that removing an unenforced law had a negative impact on employers' vacancy-posting behavior. This finding contradicts the emphasis placed on the role of effective punishment in standard deterrence models of regulatory compliance, highlighting instead the significance of organizational factors such as culture and norms.[86]

Studies of organizational culture show how it influences compliance behavior. For example, research comparing different government sectors found that local government employees, who typically work in environments with stronger law-abiding cultures, were more likely to follow regulations even without enforcement than their counterparts in central government. This is particularly noticeable in the context of advertising job vacancies.[87] Further analyses has shown that local governments characterized by a more law-abiding organizational culture and stronger commitment to social responsibility are more likely to comply with regulations that are not enforced.[88]

DOES POLARIZATION THREATEN VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE?

In a work in progress with Tom Tyler and Libby Maman,[89] we investigated how polarization and extreme ideology affect trust, cooperation, and the effectiveness

[83] Wilson, John. "Volunteering." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26.1 (2000): 215–240.

[84] Bekkers, René, and Pamala Wiepking. "Who gives? A literature review of predictors of charitable giving part one: Religion, education, age and socialization." *Voluntary Sector Review* 2.3 (2011): 337–365; Musick, Marc A., John Wilson, and William B. Bynum Jr. "Race and formal volunteering: The differential effects of class and religion." *Social Forces* 78.4 (2000): 1539–1570; Putnam, Robert D., and David E. Campbell. *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.

[85] Bekkers, René, and Pamala Wiepking. "A literature review of empirical studies of philanthropy: Eight mechanisms that drive charitable giving." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40.5 (2011): 924–973; Smith, Joanne R., and Andreè McSweeney. "Charitable giving: The effectiveness of a revised theory of planned behaviour model in predicting donating intentions and behaviour." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 17.5 (2007): 363–386.

[86] Cronert, Axel. "When the paper tiger bites: Evidence of compliance with unenforced regulation among employers in Sweden." *Regulation & Governance* 16.4 (2022): 1141–1159.

[87] Cronert. "When the paper tiger bites."

[88] See Cronert. "When the paper tiger bites."

[89] Maman, Libby, Yuval Feldman, and Tom Tyler. "Polarization and voluntary compliance: The impact of ideological extremity on the effectiveness of self-regulation." Available at SSRN 4822965 (2024). https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rego.70020.

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of self-regulatory tools in governance. We have used data from the World Value Survey and the European Social Survey.[90]

Contrary to initial expectations, holding extreme ideological views did not necessarily reduce trust. Right-wing views were associated with increased trust in institutions while left-wing views appeared to have no significant impact on trust.

The study shows that ideological extremism can significantly affect how authority is perceived. Specifically, the study found that left-wing extremism increased the significance of trust in legal authorities when deciding to comply. On the other hand, right-wing extremism has resulted in a reduction in the significance of trust in legal authorities. At the aggregate level, countries with higher levels of left-wing extremism showed a stronger correlation between trust in legal authorities and cooperation; on the other hand, countries with a higher degree of right-wing extremism showed a weaker correlation. Regarding cooperative behavior, an association was found between left-wing extremity and increased cooperation, while right-wing extremity showed a similar trend.

Finally, we examined whether the political party in power had an impact on this relationship and discovered that individuals with extreme views placed a greater emphasis on this factor when making decisions regarding trust and compliance. Consistent with our expectations, extremity reduced the willingness to trust and show deference to "others."

According to these findings, polarization and extremism may not directly erode trust, but they can make self-regulation and voluntary compliance more vulnerable to changes in trust levels. Our study found that extremism does not adversely affect trust, but it does alter the dynamics of authority, where the relationship between individual trust and cooperation intensifies, making cooperation more dependent on the perceptions of the government.

This heightened sensitivity could potentially jeopardize the effectiveness of self-regulatory measures in highly polarized societies, especially if trust in the government were to decline. Our analysis also reveals significant overall differences between left- and right-wing ideologies. In extreme left-wing societies, trust plays a crucial role, whereas extreme right-wing societies tend to place less emphasis on trust. Thus, our study suggests that policymakers in polarized societies who are considering self-regulatory tools should be aware of the varying effects of left- and right-wing extremism on the importance of trust in decisions related to compliance and cooperation.

When we look at Niklas Luhmann's work and what we've discussed about trust and social capital,[91] we see a striking difference in how trust works in small communities versus big cities. In small villages, trust tends to develop naturally – people know their neighbors, understand who's reliable, and share common values. This

[90] www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp; www.europeansocialsurvey.org/.

[91] Luhmann, Niklas. "Familiarity, confidence, trust: Problems and alternatives." *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* 6.1 (2000): 94–107.

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fits with what we've seen about how tight-knit communities build trust through day-to-day interactions and shared expectations.

The story is quite different in urban areas, where we often don't know the people around us personally. Here, the power of reputation isn't as strong and building trust becomes more complicated. As we explored earlier when discussing modern society's challenges, we need to create systems that help us figure out who we can rely on in specific situations, even when we don't know them personally.

This difference between urban and rural settings really brings home one of the main challenges in encouraging voluntary compliance in today's diverse and complex societies. It shows just how important it is to build institutions and norms that can help strangers trust and work together – essentially trying to create the same kind of trust that naturally exists in smaller communities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the complex relationship between culture and voluntary compliance across different societies. Several key themes and findings emerged in this chapter. First, cultural dimensions: Hofstede's cultural dimensions, particularly Power Distance, Individualism–Collectivism, and Masculinity–Femininity, appear to significantly influence propensities for voluntary compliance. Low Power Distance, individualistic, and feminine cultures tend to exhibit higher levels of voluntary compliance and prosocial behavior.[92]

Second, the relationship between trust and social capital: Societies with higher levels of interpersonal and institutional trust generally demonstrate greater voluntary compliance. The "Nordic model" exemplifies how trust can be cultivated through effective governance and social policies, leading to increased cooperation.[93]

Third, the ability to change culture – cultural malleability: While some cultural traits appear deeply rooted, evidence suggests that cultural change is possible, as demonstrated by the relatively recent increases in trust and social cohesion in Nordic countries. This offers hope for the potential of policy interventions to shape cultural norms over time.[94]

Fourth, when focusing on cross-cultural variation it is important to account also for heterogeneity within cultures. Significant variation exists within cultures regarding compliance behaviors. Factors such as education, age, and socioeconomic status interact with cultural norms to influence individual propensities for voluntary compliance.[95]

[92] Hofstede. "Dimensionalizing cultures," 8.

[93] Sønderskov, Kim Mannemar, and Peter Thisted Dinesen. "Danish exceptionalism: Explaining the unique increase in social trust over the past 30 years." *European Sociological Review* 30.6 (2014): 782–795.

[94] Varnum and Grossmann. "Cultural change."

[95] Carpenter, Daniere, and Takahashi. "Cooperation, trust, and social capital in Southeast Asian urban slums"; Luria, Cnaan, and Boehm. "National culture and prosocial behaviors."

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Fifth, the interplay of formal and informal institutions: The effectiveness of formal rules and enforcement mechanisms is heavily moderated by cultural norms and informal institutions. Understanding this interplay is crucial for designing effective compliance strategies.[96]

Sixth, a crucial observation is that while trust is generally considered more important for voluntary compliance than for command-and-control approaches, the effectiveness of punitive measures in promoting cooperation varies across cultures. Interestingly, we have reviewed research that high-trust societies tend to respond more positively to punishment than low-trust ones, challenging the intuitive assumption about the relationship between trust and enforcement strategies.[97]

In conclusion, while culture plays a significant role in shaping voluntary compliance, it is neither deterministic nor immutable. Policymakers seeking to enhance voluntary compliance must consider the cultural context in which they operate, recognizing both the constraints and opportunities it presents. The success of the Nordic model suggests that trust-building measures and inclusive governance can, over time, foster a culture more conducive to voluntary compliance.

However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Strategies that work in high-trust, individualistic societies may be less effective or even counterproductive in low-trust, collectivist contexts. Thus, a nuanced, culturally informed approach is necessary, combining elements of trust-building, appropriate enforcement mechanisms, and targeted interventions that align with local cultural values and norms.

Future research on culture and compliance should focus on identifying specific policy levers that can effectively shape cultural norms toward greater voluntary compliance while respecting the diversity of cultural contexts. Additionally, more cross-cultural comparative studies are needed to better understand how different aspects of culture interact with various regulatory approaches.

[96] Helmke, Gretchen, and Steven Levitsky. *Informal institutions and comparative politics: A research agenda*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012.

[97] Balliet and Van Lange. "Trust, punishment, and cooperation across 18 societies."

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