Introduction to Social Research

Week 8: Social Surveys

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Outline

I. Introduction to Surveys & Questionnaires

II. An Illustration: Questionnaire about students' evaluation of Kyoto University

III. III. Social Psychology: Inquiring the Etchic of No Harm (無害の倫理)

Conclusions

I. Introduction to Surveys & Questionnaires

Survey, Popular Technique

- **Survey research:** very common technique as well in social sciences as policy assessment and design, opinion polls, marketing research, advertising and customer satisfaction, media audience, etc.

- **Different categories:**
  1. large-scale probability sampling (census)
  2. systematic questionnaires
  3. quantitative data analysis: descriptive (health and social surveys), explanatory (NELS), or both
  4. In Japan, **Statistics Bureau:** https://www.stat.go.jp/english/

     https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en

     The national survey of Social Stratification and social Mobility (SSM調査) : http://tsigeto.info/ssm/e.html

The surveys: their merits

- **Why so popular?** Important means of social description of several topics (academic achievement, alcohol consumption, tax burden, etc.)

- **The gathered information:** social background information – reports of past behaviour – attitudes, beliefs, and values – behaviour intentions – sensitive questions

- **Disadvantages:** use in explanatory research & directionality – standardisation – reactivity of the respondents – **less emphasis on hypothesis testing**

Types of Surveys

- **Cross-sectional designs:**

  1. a sample chosen to represent a population and questionnaire administered at one point in time

  2. Contextual designs: sample to describe a social context

  3. Social network designs: connections among actors & the transaction flows

- **Longitudinal designs: study of process and change**

  1. trend studies: new, independent sample of the target population

  2. panel studies: same respondents are surveyed, and life histories

II. An Illustration: Questionnaire about students' evaluation of Kyoto University

How to prepare a questionnaire?

- **Open-ended, closed-ended questions:**
  1. How would you rate the president's performance so far?
  2. How would you rate the president's performance so far?
  ()Poor
  ()Below average
  ()Average
  ()Above average
  ()Excellent

- **The choice of questions depends on:** the objective of the survey – the level of information possessed by the respondent – the degree or structure of respondent's opinions – motivation of respondent to communicate – researcher's knowledge of respondent's characteristics

How to prepare a questionnaire?

I. Why did you choose Kyoto University and to study your specific field?

II. What is your general evaluation of Kyoto University?

( ) Very enjoyable environment
( ) Enjoyable environment
( ) Normal environment
( ) Unpleasant environment
( ) Very unpleasant environment

III. Do you think that the life on the campus is enjoyable?

( ) Yes
( ) No
( ) No opinion

IV. Can you tell me why you feel that way?

How to prepare a questionnaire?

V. How many courses do you attend each week?

( ) Very few
( ) Few
( ) Normal
( ) Many
( ) Very many

VI. On the whole, how satisfied are you with the teachings at Kyoto University?

1. Very satisfied	3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	5. Very dissatisfied
2. Satisfied	4. Dissatisfied	6. Don't know

VII. Rate you evaluation of your classes from -3 (very poor) to +3 (very excellent)

Very poor_____Very excellent

-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

How to prepare a questionnaire?

VIII. Rank the factors listed below from 1 to 5, according to the importance to you in choosing the class Introduction to Social Research in English

_____Learning English
_____Being curious about social sciences
_____Getting grades easily
_____Having opportunity to learn other fields than my major
_____Sharing class with friend(s)

IX. Do you agree that female and Japanese professors are more serious than male and foreign professors?

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Agree
( ) Uncertain
( ) Disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

X. What is your evaluation of your professors

Serious	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	: Unserious
Professional	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	: Unprofessional
Friendly	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	: Unfriendly
Warm	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	: Cold
Knowledge	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	: Unknowledgeable

Survey Instruments

- **Usually, closed-ended questions:** wording and order of the questions are the same

- **Cognitive prerequisites:** comprehend the question – retrieved the information requested from memory – formulate a response in accord with the question – communicate a response deemed appropriate

- **Conversational prerequisites:** truthfulness – relevance – nonredundancy – clarity

- **Rating scales:** how successful would you say you have been in life? – rate happiness and rate satisfaction with life

Survey Instruments

- **Drawing a sketch:** introduction – order of questions – transitions

- **The choice of question wording:**

  1. **are the items unambiguous, easily read, and sufficiently brief?** "How many years have you been living here?"

  2. **the nature of the question:** double-barrelled, leading questions, etc.

Survey Instruments

- **Direct and indirect questions:** link between the researcher interest and the question

- **Example of sex-role attitudes:** “Would you mind having a woman as supervisor?” vs. “Do you believe your co-workers would mind having a woman as supervisor?”

- **Why indirect questions?** When the respondent is unwilling or unable to give a straightforward answer – projection of inner attitudes to the outer world

Survey Instruments

- **Response format:** “don’t know” option & satisficing strategy
- **Measuring attitudes, opinions, feelings and Likert response scale:** series of responses from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” – “Excellent” to Poor” – “Very Satisfied” to “Very Dissatisfied”
- **Rating scales:** numerical or adjectival categories
- **Ranking questions:** what is more important in one choice (for example the choice of a career)

III. Social Psychology: Inquiring the Etchic of No Harm (無害の倫理)

New forms and ethics of individualism and their social consequences in Korea

Dong-Kyun Im
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology
Seoul National University

The Age of Individualism

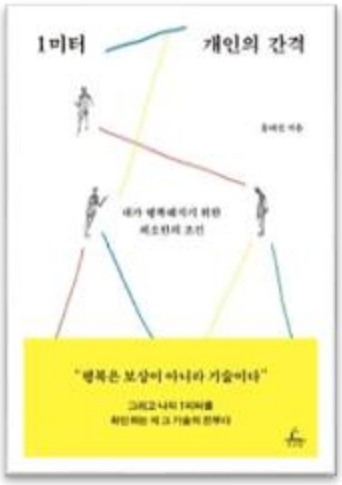
- New trends of individualism emerging in Korean Society
  - ***Negative*** evaluation: individualization without individualism (**Kyung-Sup Chang**)
    - **Chang (2018)** argues that Korea can be characterized as "familial liberalism" rather than "individual liberalism", in which family, not individual, is the fundamental unit of society.
    - **Lim, Im, and Lee (2021)**: In Korea, a higher level of individualism is associated with weaker trust toward strangers (- narrower radius of trust) ; a higher level of collectivism is associated with stronger trust toward strangers (- wider radius of trust)
  - ***Positive*** evaluation: emergence of new ethical sensibilities. These new individuals strive to live a harmless life, avoiding inconveniences and conflicts that could potentially harm themselves or others. Increased sensitivity to vulnerability, harm, emotions, and feelings (Hong-Jung Kim)
- New popular books published in recent years

The New Ethics of Harmlessness? (or Ethics of No Harm) 無害の倫理

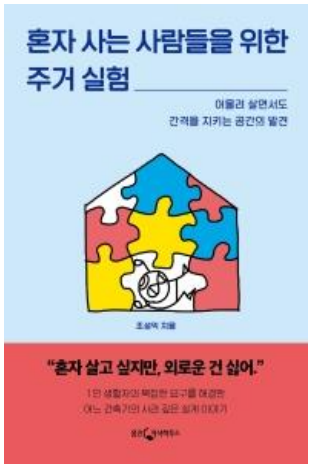
- “One day last year, while chatting with a close acquaintance, I heard an interesting story. **These days, young people attach considerable moral value to 'harmlessness' and try to be 'harmless' to others as much as possible…In fact, at some point, we have become intolerant of people who are nosy and try to stick to us. We react sensitively to the ‘violence' of the things that creep into our private realm…to sticky gaze, a clinging attitude... Social life seems to be being reconstructed with a new humanistic command to ‘be harmless to your neighbors’. Sympathy for getting harmed, anger at causing harm, and the will to be harmless dominate our daily lives.**

<Hong-jung Kim, *The Age of Harmlessness: Genealogy and Prospects of the 21st Century Safety Paradigm*>

Sweet/friendly indifference



1 meter spacing between individuals



Residence experiments for people living alone

Recommending individualism

A sweet/friendly individualist

A person harmless to me

- **In Korean people's everyday lives, there is a new cultural-ethical trend to avoid interfering in other people's life as much as possible, keep a distance even from close people, and avoid causing trouble or being indebted to others.**
- Increased sensitivity to (inbound and outbound) harm.

Questions

- What are the characteristics of this new individualism that emerged in Korean society?
- How does the ethics of harmlessness relate to other social and cultural attitudes?
- What will be the impact of the EoH if it becomes a new, general socio-cultural ethics in Korean society?
- Can EoH be a positive cultural force for social solidarity?
- How does EoH relate to vertical/horizontal individualism/collectivism?

Data

- Two waves of social surveys were conducted as part of the *Reciprocity and Cooperation in the 21st century Korea* Project, funded by Academy of Korean Studies (October, 2022)
- Online survey, 2,915 respondents (19-69 years old)

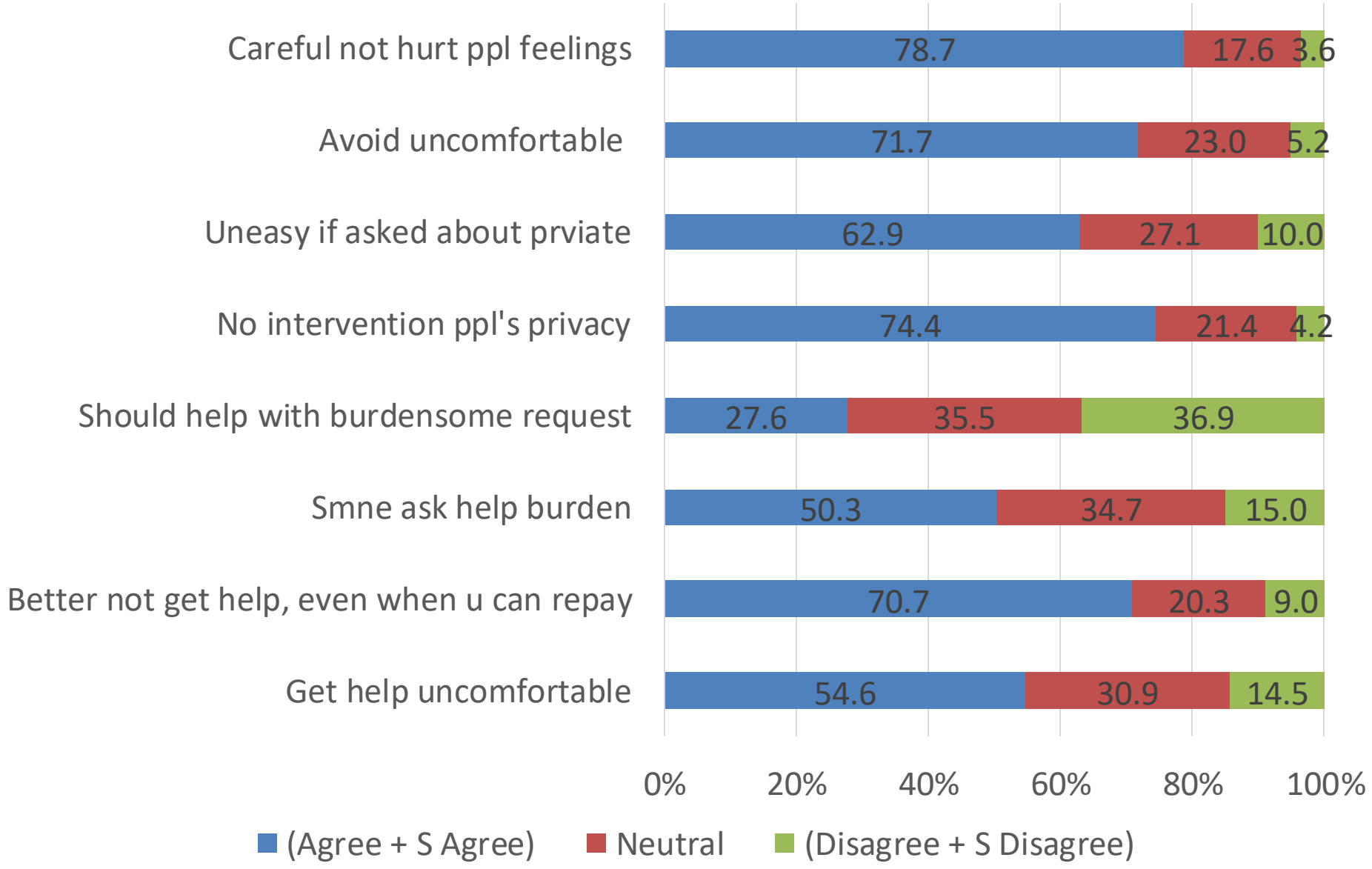
Variable/Scale construction

- Ethics of Harmlessness
- The burden of interpersonal interaction
- Cultural scripts
  - (often tacit) knowledge about a set of taken-for-granted behaviors for interacting with others in certain situations according to cultural norms

Ethics of Harmlessness (Personal)

1) I don't feel comfortable when I receive help from someone.
2) I think it's better not to receive help from others if possible, even if I can pay it back later.
3) I feel burdened if someone asks me for help.
4) I think that if people around me ask me for help, I should provide as much help as possible, even if the request is burdensome. (R)
5) I don't ask or interfere as much as I can about the privacy of people around me.
6) I feel uneasy when people around me ask about my personal problems.
7) I make every effort to avoid people if they say or act in ways that make me even a little uncomfortable.
8) I try to be as careful with my words and actions as I can to avoid hurting others' feelings.

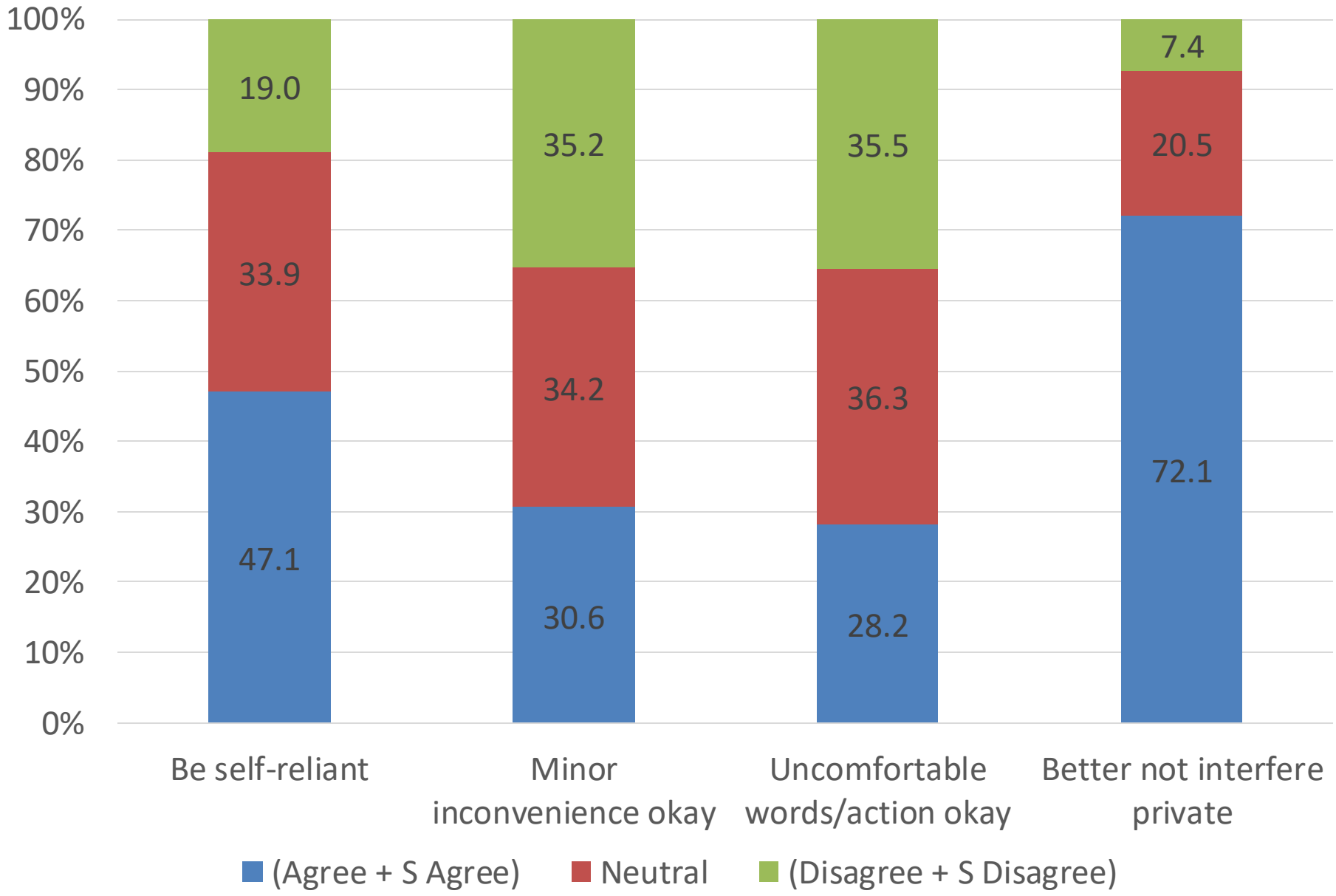
Results


Careful not hurt ppl feelings
78.7
17.6
3.6
Avoid uncomfortable
71.7
23.0
5.2
Uneasy if asked about prviate
62.9
27.1
10.0
No intervention ppl's privacy
74.4
21.4
4.2
Should help with burdensome request
27.6
35.5
36.9
Smne ask help burden
50.3
34.7
15.0
Better not get help, even when u can repay
70.7
20.3
9.0
Get help uncomfortable
54.6
30.9
14.5
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
(Agree + S Agree)
Neutral
(Disagree + S Disagree)

Ethics of Harmlessness (Social)

1) It is preferable to live independently, solving your problems on your own without relying on the help of other people.
2) In the social world, it is natural to cause minor inconveniences to one another. (R)
3) When people live together, sometimes they can say uncomfortable words or make uncomfortable actions to each other, and most of them are acceptable. (R)
4) It's better not to ask or interfere with another person's privacy even in a close relationship.
5) It is better to be close to people without distance, even if there are times when it becomes uncomfortable. (R)
6) If everyone tries not to depend too much on each other, it will be difficult to maintain society.

Results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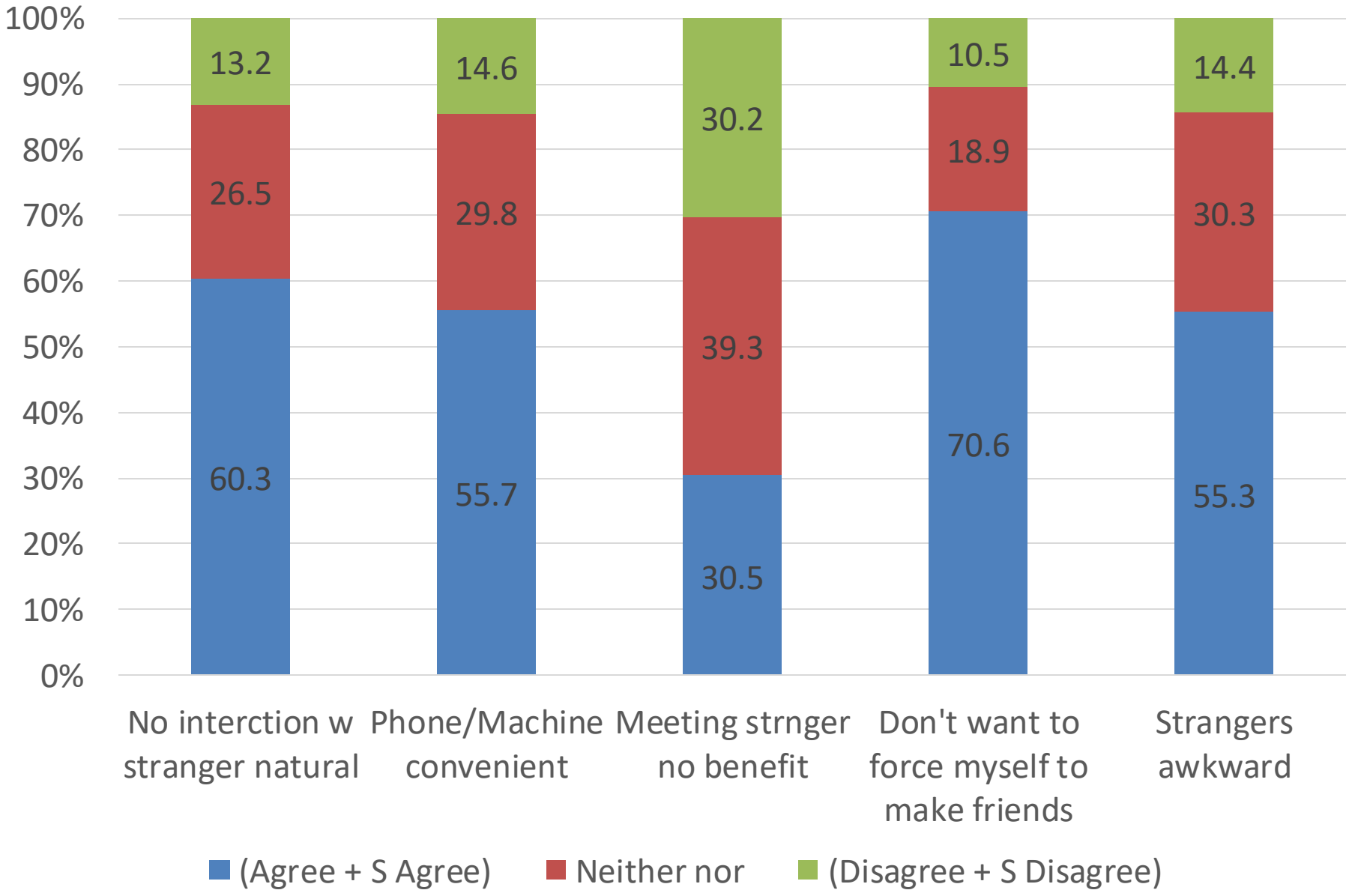
30.6
35.5
36.3
28.2
7.4
20.5
72.1
Be self-reliant
Minor inconvenience okay
Uncomfortable words/action okay
Better not interfere private
(Agree + S Agree)
Neutral
(Disagree + S Disagree)

Interactional burden

1) It's more natural not to talk to strangers.
2) It's convenient to make an order using a smartphone or a machine because thereby you don’t need to talk to others.
3) To go out and talk to strangers do not benefit me in any ways.
4) I don't want to force myself to make friends with others simply because I am lonely.
5) It's awkward and uncomfortable to be in the same space with a stranger.

Results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39.3
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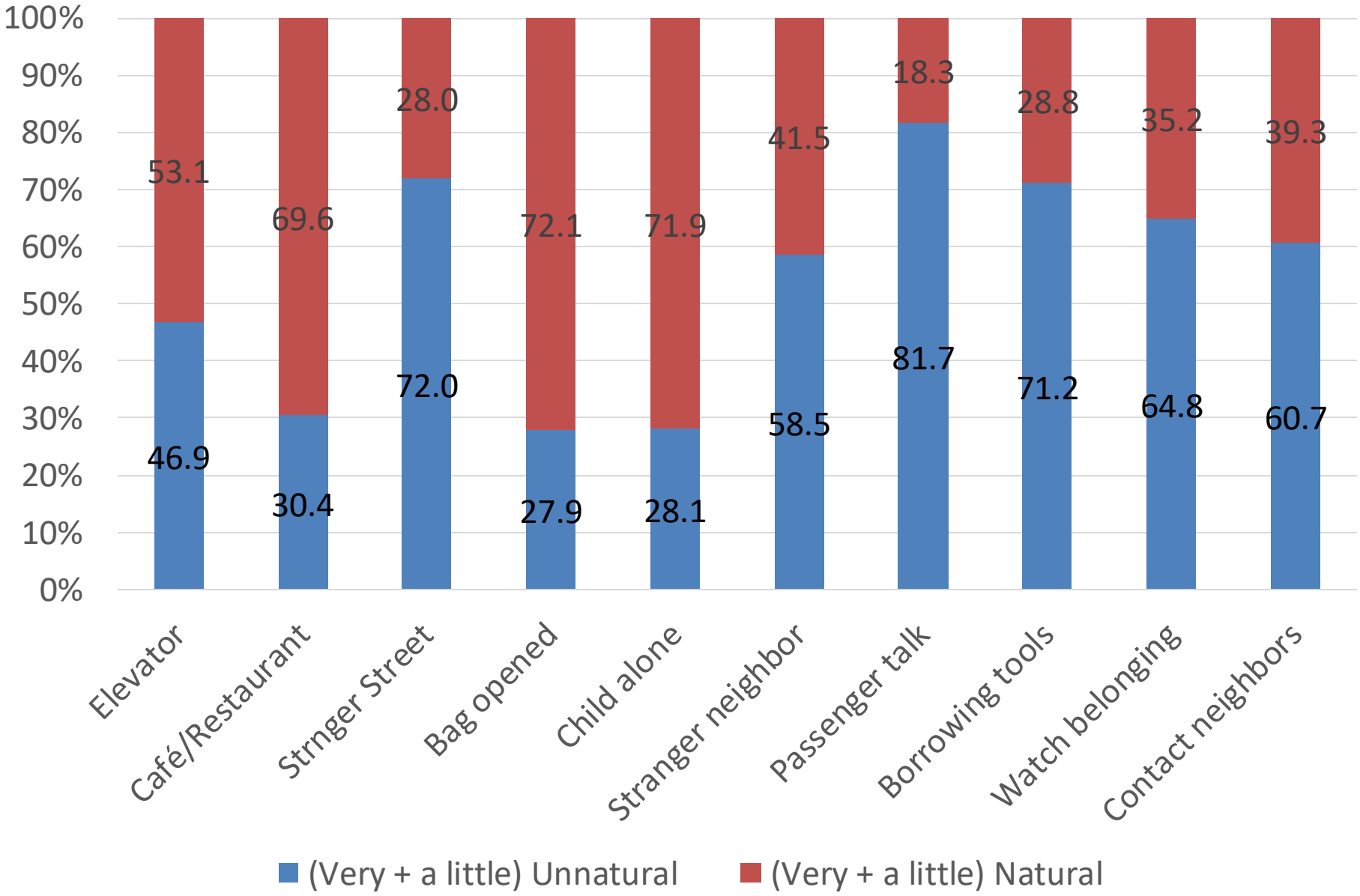
30.3
55.3
No interction w stranger natural
Phone/Machine convenient
Meeting strnger no benefit
Don't want to force myself to make friends
Strangers awkward
(Agree + S Agree)
Neither nor
(Disagree + S Disagree)

Measuring the "Cultural Scripts"

Q. To what extent do the following behaviors feel *natural* to you?

1) Saying hello to a stranger in the same elevator.
2) To have a light conversation with an server/employee at a cafe or restaurant.
3) Talking to a stranger on the street who has an unusual, special item that I was interested in.
4) To tell a stranger that his or her bag is opened.
5) To see a child alone on the street and ask if s/he has lost his parents.
6) You see someone wandering around the neighborhood, so you ask the person if s/he needs help.
7) To have a conversation about your personal worries with a stranger next to you on a plane or train.
8) To ask a neighbor you have never met before to lend you some tools so you can fix something around your house.
9) To ask someone sitting near me at a public space to keep on eye on my belongings while I go to the restroom.
10) To contact and have meetings with neighbors you don't know to solve problems in your neighborhood.

Results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72.0
72.1
27.9
71.9
28.1
41.5
58.5
18.3
81.7
28.8
71.2
35.2
64.8
39.3
60.7
Elevator
Café/Restaurant
Strnger Street
Bag opened
Child alone
Stranger neighbor
Passenger talk
Borrowing tools
Watch belonging
Contact neighbors
(Very + a little) Unnatural
(Very + a little) Natural

- **How is the ethic of harmlessness associated with the following?**

1) openness of cultural scripts and subjective burden of interaction
2) concerns for climate crisis and animal welfare / tolerance towards the collective actions of socially vulnerable groups
3) willingness to help others
4) tax attitudes
5) social & interpersonal trust

Vertical Collectivism – seeing the self as a part of a collective and being willing to accept hierarchy and inequality within that collective

Vertical Individualism – seeing the self as fully autonomous, but recognizing that inequality will exist among individuals and that accepting this inequality.

Horizontal Collectivism –seeing the self as part of a collective but perceiving all the members of that collective as equal.

Horizontal Individualism –seeing the self as fully autonomous, and believing that equality between individuals is the ideal.

Singelis, T. M., Triandis, H. C., Bhawuk, D. P., & Gelfand, M. J. (1995). Horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism: A theoretical and measurement refinement. *Cross-cultural research*, *29*(3), 240-275.

Horizontal individualism items:

1. I'd rather depend on myself than others.
2. I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.
3. I often do "my own thing."
4. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.

Vertical individualism items:

1. It is important that I do my job better than others.
2. Winning is everything.
3. Competition is the law of nature.
4. When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.

Horizontal collectivism items:

1. If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.
2. The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.
3. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.
4. I feel good when I cooperate with others.

Vertical collectivism items:

1. Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.
2. It is my duty to take care of my family, even when 1 have to sacrifice what I want.
3. Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.
4. It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.

- Overall, different effects in two kinds of ethics of harmlessness are identified.
- The ethics of harmlessness (social) is associated with
  - more closed/exclusive cultural scripts
  - greater interactional burden
  - lower tolerance toward collective actions of socially vulnerable groups
  - less experience of exchanging help with other people
  - more conservative tax attitudes
  - more willingness to help other people including family members, friends, neighbors, and strangers
  - lower trust toward strangers, neighbors, and relatives
  - less interest in climate change and animal welfare

- The stronger the EoH (personal) is associated with
  - higher tolerance toward collective actions of socially vulnerable groups
  - more willingness to pay more taxes for welfare expansion (but not for helping the poor)
  - greater interest in climate change and veganism
  - more closed/exclusive cultural scripts
  - greater interactional burden
  - less experience of exchanging help with other people
  - stronger trust in ingroups such as family members and weaker trust in 'most people,' neighbors, and friends
  - more willingness to help family members and friends but less willingness to help strangers

- EoH (social), which concerns individuals' attitudes and understanding about cultural or ethical norms for appropriate behaviors, is negatively associated with social/interpersonal trust, reciprocal exchange, and social cooperation
- EoH (personal), which concerns individuals' practices, seems to have mixed effects. Those with high levels of EoH (personal) show more pro-social attitudes about some social issues, but less pro-social orientations in actual interpersonal contexts and experiences.
  - *Politically liberal but socially isolated*

- Both are negatively associated with horizontal collectivism

- The results suggest that the EoH stems from people's desire to retreat and escape from the pressures of interpersonal relationships and cultural constraints.

- The emerging form of individualism in Korea, driven by the necessity for self-care and self-protection, is likely to lead to a paradoxical outcome of lower well-being and decreased human flourishing due to social isolation and a lack of meaningful human connections.

IV. Conclusions

Conclusions

- Survey researches, while heterogeneous, became the most popular tool in social sciences in the XXth century
- Surveys inquire attitudes… but not behaviours
- Surveys encounter several bias, due to the construction of questionnaires and the reaction of respondents

References

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- Seymour SUDMAN, Norman M. BRADBURN. 1982. *Asking Questions: A Practical Guide to Questionnaire Design*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.