

## The Use of the Kirton Adaption-innovation Inventory in Thailand: An Exploratory Study

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### **Abstract**

*The generalisability of Western personality research to non-Western cultures is challenged when concepts and constructs rooted in one culture (the UK) are transported to another (Thai), particularly where there is purportedly a marked difference in the concept of self. The Kirton Adaption-innovation (KAI) inventory (Kirton 2006) when viewed from a Western perspective comprises items that are related to both the Innovative and Adaptive poles; the items associated with the latter pole are reverse-scored within the measure to align with the Innovative items ( $r = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$   $n = 562$ ) so as to provide an Innovatively oriented scale of 32 items (Mean=95 Alpha=0.88). In the Thai sample, while there were no significant differences in the item scores the Innovative items were negatively related to the reversed-scored Adaptive items ( $r = -0.37$   $p < 0.001$   $n = 202$ ), in effect bringing together the two opposite poles of the bipolar concept into a single holistic group (e.g. Nisbett & Peng 1999; Spencer Rogers & Peng 2005). While the factor configuration for the Thai sample was fragmented a number of the more significant items were selected to represent the original three factors of the Kai scale. This scale of 15 items was factored and the three original factors were easily identified. However, the Innovative items (the factor SO) retained their negative relationship with other items in the scale.*

**Key Words:** Cognitive Style, Cultural Differences East -West, Holism, Bipolar Scales,

### **Research Question**

Does Thai culture produce expectations that require Thai nationals to be proficient in English in order to assess the UK-constructed scale items of the Kirton Adaption-innovation (KAI) measure in ways that do not support the Western view of the cognitive style concept (Kirton 1976, 1999, 2006)?

### **Introduction**

Psychological concepts cover a broad collection of behaviours arranged into groups that are assumed to broadly apply to all individuals irrespective of culture, country or language

(McCrae 2001). These are so-called Universal concepts. However many psychological concepts have associated measures that cannot be satisfactorily transported from one culture to another. Where the concept is operationalised through culturally-general (etic) constructs then the transportation is reduced to the translation of both the completion instructions (rarely considered as part of the problem) and the individual scale items, resulting in a measure that can be used efficiently in the target culture.

While concepts are culture-general, but, either through choice or necessity the measurement focus or some of the individual scale items within a measure are culture-specific (emic), then those variables that distinguish one country from another, usually referred to as national culture (see Hofstede 1980; and Schwartz 1999) are implicated in any transportation. The problem then becomes one that is beyond that of mere translation.

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