

Collectivism and individualism framework

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The team was to develop a program that had to be launched at a trade fair. The program was going on well but Yulan was the only person who had worked on the actual coding of the program while Paul Horn and other members had provided support in the form of briefings, some writing work, and supplies.

Interestingly at the eleventh hour, Yulan chooses to change the program and removes the traces of original work completely. She tells Horn that she had done this to make sure that she was given proper credit for her work. Yulan Sun was insistent that her work and individual contribution be acknowledged explicitly since she had worked long hours all by herself in the completion of the program. Paul Horn, on the other hand, found this rather absurd and reminded Yulan rather cogently that he and his team had done a lot of work on the project and thus securing individual credit for work was a ridiculous demand.

In case Yulan Sun refuses to provide the code of the program, the project would be a disaster. The deadline would be over and the firm will not be able to participate in the trade fair where the program was scheduled for launch. Yulan Sun was, on the other hand, was adamant that it was her program and she could do whatever she chose to with the program. She is willing to provide the code if her individual work is acknowledged and if credit was given to her in explicit terms. Yulan had no issues with the team receiving bonuses or some credit but she wanted the program to remain in her name. This was unacceptable to Paul Horn who felt that it was a team effort and would thus be acknowledged in the same way.

Analysis:

This case has often been analyzed in the collectivism/individualism

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framework, which obviously doesn't apply here. Yulan coming from a culture that respects collectivism is looking for individual acknowledgment while Paul Horn born into an individualistic culture recognizes team effort. This is then a paradoxical situation. Studying the case closely, we realize that the standoff is grounded in differing definitions of teamwork and team ethics that exist in two different cultures.

For Paul Horn who is a typically modern Canadian, teamwork means every person playing the role assigned to them and all must seek the same result. They must not get into each other's way but instead concentrate on their part in the project and bring the project to fruition.

Yulan Sun, on the other hand, feels that teamwork is all about helping out each other. She believes that the main objective of a team is to assist each other. However, when she came to Canada she realized that no one actually worked this way rather everyone tried to stay out of each other's work and path. The Canadians felt this was the right way of doing teamwork while Yulan Sun found it against her idea of teamwork and ethics.

For this reason, Yulan demanded that her work be acknowledged separately because from where she stood, she couldn't see anyone doing any work on the project. Others had not assisted her when she stayed up all night to complete her task. Paul Horn feels that they had played their part in the project effectively.