

Individualism and collectivism

Sociology



In the United States, individualism and collectivism can be seen in many ways. Individualism can be dated back to the 17th and 18th centuries in the United States. A perfect event of individualism in American history was the frontier. A person was believed to fail or to succeed based on their own individual effort. Many people actually died during this period trying to prove to them that they can be individualists in the frontier farms and the forests. Certain people like Franklin and Washington succeeded based on their own intelligence and ambition and they are perfect examples of individualism (Kim, 1994, p. 23). Collectivism is something that was mainly practiced in the United States after the world war. Events like the United States gaining its independence from Europe in 1776 also shows that individualism worked really well for America. Today, the United States wants to be a bigger part of something by practicing collectivism. An event of collectivism in the United States was the political system which happened to be a representative democracy. In such an event when a president is elected by the majority the people are all expected to embrace their new leader. An ideal case in point would be the choice of Barack Obama as the president in 2012. The totality of the votes cast in the college showed the collectivism of the people in the election of the president (Kitayama, & Cohen, 2007, p. 259). In the real world experience, some people believe that individual work is what will make them successful while others believe working collectively in a society is what will bring about success. These two aspects help one understand the cultural differences of people. In an individualist culture, they put personal interests before the interests of the community while in collectivist culture a group of people is considered more important than any individual. Conflict mainly arises in collectivism because they have to work together and different

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people have different views on what they consider is the best decision for the society or nation. In my individual life, I find it very conflicting to work collectively as compared to being an individualist because in my culture people were focused on the importance of working individually. In my community today, people work individually and collectively depending on the set goals. Cultural conflict mainly comes about because of individualism. Different people have different cultures and practicing collectivism will help solve the problem of cultural conflict as everyone will embrace the different cultures. Individualism and collectivism bring about cultural differences. Individualists tend to have different beliefs compared to collectivists. In the workplace, collectivism can be seen through teamwork. Many employees are sometimes expected to work together on certain projects in order to meet the set objectives. Shared responsibility helps increase the profitability of the business. Individualism can also be very helpful in the workplace. Different employees are very ambitious and are focused on their own individual contributions and accomplishments. This brings about a healthy competition which can be very helpful to the success of a company or business as everyone wants to succeed (Farnham).