

Individualism and collectivism in society



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The interworking of most societies around the globe can be analyzed and categorical isolated into two main sociocultural systems; Collectivist and Individualistic. When studying these sociocultural systems, it is important to emphasize their purist forms they are rarely practically implemented in full but are often both represented in a singular society. For example, it would be inaccurate to say that the United States is a 100% capitalist society or that China is a 100% communist one; as there are varying degrees of these ideologies, and they can often be in direct conflict within the society itself (Martin & Nakayama, 393). In order to capture the macro view, one must understand that the tendencies to align with one ideology over the other can dramatically impact human relations within the society and its behavior towards other cultures. These fundamental foundations influence every level within the society affecting not only individual member behavior, but also the posture of governments towards their citizens and its relations with outsiders.

Collectivism is a cultural belief that focuses on the importance of the group's needs; taking priority over any singular individual's need in order to maintain harmony (LeFevre, 5). This ideology is rooted in the philosophy that the individual must make certain sacrifices for the greater good of the group. This sense of community first; is intended to ensure the success of the whole as opposed to allowance for the achievement of some individuals. The perceived inequities in only partial success of the group are projected to society members as selfish and even immoral. (LeFevre, 5). This belief system extends restricted rights to the individual only to the extent the individual serves the group. I see my family as a most pure model of

collectivism because we are emotional tied; therefore, each of us cooperates and sometimes sacrifices our own distresses to keep the harmony within the family.

Individualism is rooted in the ideology that each person's life belongs to the individual and the actions, decisions, values, and judgements are to remain within their control as long as through the exercise of those rights they do not infringe upon the rights of others. The rewards obtained through the efforts put forth by the individual should remain largely his own. Those fruits of his labor should not be seized by the state or any other group who seeks ownership through collective appropriation. Individualist societies often strive for limited government interference and mechanisms to ensure protections of minority stakeholders (LeFevre, 6). People directed by an individualist orientation have relationships that are emotionally distant even though they interact constantly. For example, "the marketplace encourages competition, and status which are determined by the individual achievement (LeFevre, 5)."

The battle between Individualism and Collectivism will never cease if fact will only be cyclical as long as there are humans inhabiting the planet. Societies will shift and morph from one polarity to the other as governments rise and fall. As views evolve within each society these approaches will be realized for periods and then reverse themselves as new ideas and human perceptions evolve through the influences of everything around us. As technology and globalization continue to advance so too will the ideology. The transfer of information and ideas will only add to the severity of the ongoing cycle.

I am an immigrant to the United States and have lived in the Latin American country of Venezuela for nearly all my life. In my native country I have seen with great vigor the systematic and calculated implementation of Collectivist ideology. The virtues of this “ greater good approach” have made promises which could not be realized. Their inspiration of equality and fairness have remained only that inspiration with no actualization. The culture of Venezuela and nearly all Latin America is based in unity and the need to protect each other to survive. The sense of family is of the greatest importance. I strongly believe this is what makes Latin culture so friendly, loving, and understanding. It is with great misfortune that leaders have utilized this willingness to come together as a vehicle to erase the individual. The trojan horse of collectivism entered the gates of Venezuelan society. This perceived gift was only an illusion that has brought us misery and separation. Perhaps once designed with good intentions the end results were never in doubt. All societies that have based their systems of management and government upon this ideology have failed or been forced to retract it.

As a naturalized American citizen, I take great pride in the foundation laid by the Founding Fathers of the United States. Their thoughtful approach to insist upon the protection of the individual has been critical to ensuring the preservation and success of the United States. This nation constructed of immigrants and composed of diverse cultures, religions, beliefs can attribute nearly all its achievements to the insistence on the protection of individual freedoms and liberties. I highly appreciate those values because not only have allowed me to develop a sense of resilience to face my individual's

battles, but those ideas have been the cornerstone for me to build a legacy for my next generations.

My essay is titled a Collection for the Individual as I believe we should lend ourselves to unite for our fellow man; however, not at the expense of our individual freedoms. We must first be an Individual before we can be part of any Collective. Our desire to associate and contribute to any collective can only be suitable when it is genuine and generated in free will, not by the prescription of others. Our desire to unite and support each other is healthy, but it must never be exercised through mandate. Our desire to collect ourselves is noble and achievable if we must first understand that the integrity of any structure lies not in the sum of its components but in the value of each brick required in its construction. Let us each gather a collection in support of our neighbor the individual in understanding the ability to influence all things for the positive must be done by our own free will. I think each of us is a single piece with unique characteristics that belong to giant puzzle, and it just makes sense when it is strategically located in collective. Each of us carries an instinct for distinction within our spirit to produce something special so that we can serve back our communities; the greatest women and men were giver not takers (Sharma, 5).

I will leave with some beautiful words from Fredrick Douglas. " I am myself; you are yourself; we are two distinct persons, equal persons. What you are, I am. You are a man, and so am I. God created both, and made us separate beings. I am not by nature bound to you, or you to me. Nature does not make your existence depend upon me, or mine to depend upon yours. I

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cannot walk upon your legs, or you upon mine. I cannot breathe for you, or you for me; I must breathe for myself, and you for yourself. We are distinct persons, and are each equally provided with faculties necessary to our individual existence. In leaving you, I took nothing but what belonged to me, and in no way lessened your means for obtaining an honest living. Your faculties remained yours, and mine became useful to their rightful owner (Douglass, 111)".

Work Cited

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