Intracultural variation: collectivism v. individualism

Large-Scale Psychological Differences Within China Explained by Rice Versus Wheat Agriculture

T. Talhelm et al.
East (collectivistic) and West Contrasts (individualistic)

- In the west people see themselves as
  - Individualistic
  - Independent
  - Willing to engage outside their own social or religious groups

- In the east people see themselves as
  - Enmeshed in social networks and
  - Dependent on kin for their identity
  - Own cooperate property which they inherit
  - Inward looking
**Details: Individualistic and Collectivist Cultures**

**Individualism vs Collectivism Cultures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ten Differences Between Collectivist and Individualist Societies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individualism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Collectivism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself and his or her immediate family only</td>
<td>People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;I&quot; - consciousness</td>
<td>&quot;We&quot; - consciousness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right of privacy</td>
<td>Stress on belonging</td>
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<td>Speaking one’s mind is healthy</td>
<td>Harmony should always be maintained</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others classified as individuals</td>
<td>Others classified as in-group or out-group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal opinion expected: one person one vote</td>
<td>Opinions and votes predetermined by in-group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transgression of norms leads to guilt feelings</td>
<td>Transgression of norms leads to shame feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages in which the word &quot;I&quot; is indispensable</td>
<td>Languages in which the word &quot;I&quot; is avoided</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose of education is learning how to learn</td>
<td>Purpose of education is learning how to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task prevails over relationship</td>
<td>Relationship prevails over task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[http://www.acwwu.edu/~culture/hofstede.htm](http://www.acwwu.edu/~culture/hofstede.htm)
Three broad tests on analytical thinking and individualism

- **Analytic thinking with triads**
  - Categories (dog and rabbit) versus relationship (carrot and rabbit)
  - Place in social network: large and central or average and part of a whole
  - In-group versus out-group loyalty in rewarding and punishing friends or strangers
Psychologically, growing up in an individualistic social world biases one toward the use of analytical reasoning, whereas exposure to more collectivistic environments favors holistic approaches.

Various lines of evidence suggest that greater individualism and more analytical thinking are linked to innovation, novelty, and creativity.
Findings: intra-cultural variation

- Tested individualism and collectivism survey in
  - Northern China wheat growing area
  - Southern China paddy rice growing area

- By demanding intense cooperation, paddy rice cultivation fosters and reinforces the social norms that govern patrilineal clans. Growing up in strong clans creates a particular kind of collectivistic psychology.

- In contrast, wheat cultivation permits independent nuclear households and fosters more individualistic psychologies.
Rice Agriculture
Rice irrigation complexity
Wheat agriculture, Northern China