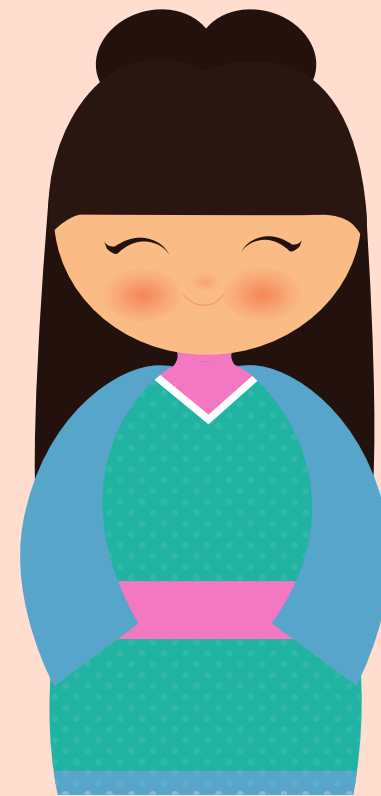


“Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself
in your way of thinking.”
(Marcus Aurelius)



What does happiness mean, and where to find it? Is it an individual or a collective value?

Cultural Dimensions: Collectivism/Individualism (G. Hofstede)

Collectivist Cultures

Including (but not limited to)
most Latin-American, Southern
European, Middle-Easterner, Asian,
African countries, tribal communities
around the world (*to varying extents)



Individualistic Cultures

Including most Western societies:
English-, German speaking countries,
Scandinavian countries, other central
and northern European countries
(*to varying extents)



Collectivist Cultures: WE

Group oriented (family, extended family, tribe, organization, etc). The group takes care of individuals, individuals are loyal to the group they belong to

Collective interest is more important than personal interest. The focus is on preserving harmony and respecting hierarchy within the community

Members of collective cultures are highly likely to practice extreme self-control, since they are fully aware that their words and actions have an impact on others

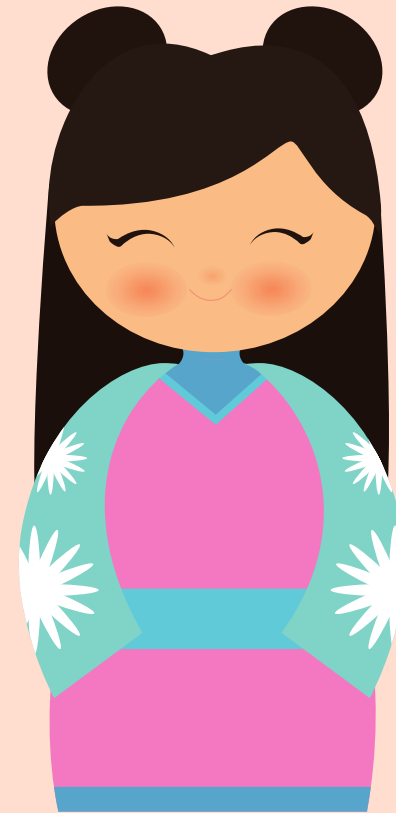
Relationships are rarely a matter of choice: they are formed within the group members belong to, often inaccessible to outsiders



Collectivist Cultures: WE

Defining one's identity in terms of one's social roles and reputation is typical of collectivist cultures ("I am a good son")

Selflessness and conformity are highly valued, individual achievements are often portrayed as a result of external circumstances rather than personal merit



Non-verbal communication is common and aimed at preventing a "loss of face" (public humiliation and embarrassment) from happening

Communication does heavily rely on context rather than personal traits "I" is not a commonly used word

Individualistic Cultures: I

People in individualistic cultures (typically Western societies) appear to be happier than those in collectivist cultures

Focus is on personal priorities and self-realization. People emphasize individual freedom and achievements

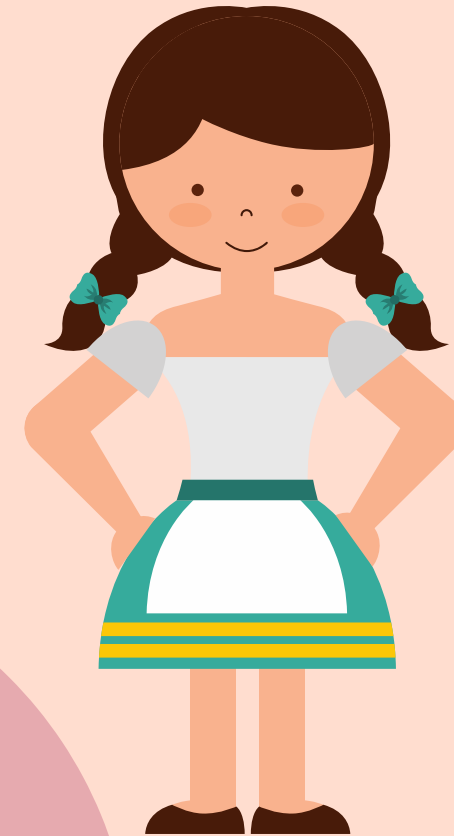
Happiness is reserved for those who are successful or perceive themselves as such

Independence and self-reliance are highly valued. People are expected to take care of themselves and a few loved ones and to take responsibility for the outcomes



Individualistic Cultures: I

Self-concepts are based on personal traits rather than social roles ("I am kind" vs "I am a good son" typical of collectivist societies)



Private life is important and unlikely to be "intruded" by those groups individuals belong to

Confrontation is accepted, people are encouraged to express their opinions and to be assertive

Work is often seen as a key factor to happiness in terms of pleasant feelings, satisfying judgments, self-validation

“Some people think they can find satisfaction in good food, fine clothes, lively music, and sexual pleasure. However, when they have all these things, they are not satisfied. They realize happiness is not simply having their material needs met. Thus, society has set up a system of rewards that go beyond material goods. These include titles, social recognition, status, and political power, all wrapped up in a package called self-fulfillment. Attracted by these prizes and goaded on by social pressure, people spend their short lives tiring body and mind to chase after these goals.



Perhaps this gives them the feeling that they have achieved something in their lives, but in reality they have sacrificed a lot in life. They can no longer see, hear, act, feel, or think from their hearts. Everything they do is dictated by whether it can get them social gains. In the end, they've spent their lives following other people's demands and never lived a life of their own. How different is this from the life of a slave or a prisoner?”

— Liezi, Lieh-tzu: A Taoist Guide to Practical Living

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