

# The Myth of Collectivism vs Individualism

Shaomei Wu  
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Source:

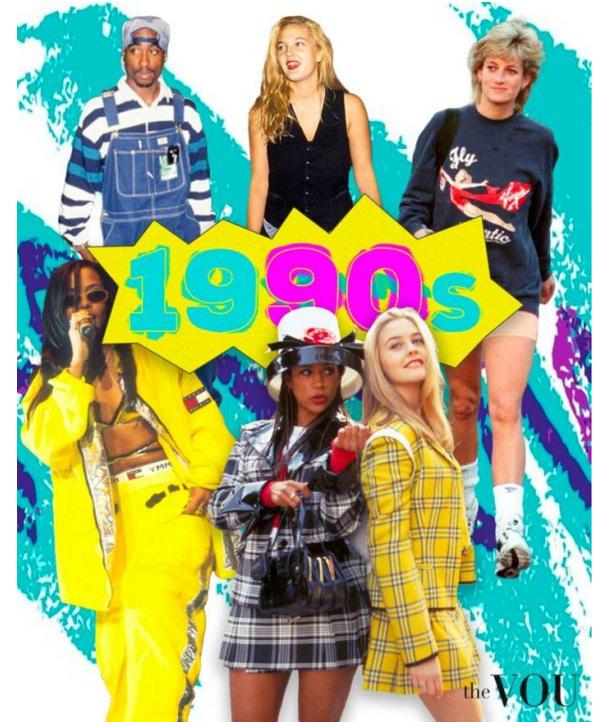
<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/why-your-understanding-of-collectivism-is-probably-wrong>

# When it all started...

Cultural psychologists (mostly based in North America and Europe) designed surveys to measure collectivism across cultures, by asking people:

- “I feel good when I cooperate with others.”
- “I like sharing little things with my neighbors.”

Singelis, T. M. (1994). The measurement of independent and interdependent self-construals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 580–591.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167294205014>



# What can go wrong?

Data showed:

- America was more collectivistic than Japan, Philippines and Tanzania (Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002).
- No statistically significant, reliable difference between East and West (Heine et al., 2002).

Oyserman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kimmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological Bulletin*, *128*, 3–72.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.128.1.3>

Heine, S. J., Lehman, D. R., Peng, K., & Greenholtz, J. (2002). What's wrong with cross-cultural comparisons of subjective Likert scales? The reference-group effect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *82*, 903–918.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.903>

# Within country variance

Within China, people in rice areas **show more hallmarks of collectivism** than people in wheat areas (Talhelm et al., 2014)

Talhelm, T., Zhang, X., Oishi, S., Chen, S., Duan, D., Lan, X., & Kitayama, S. (2014). Large-scale psychological differences within China explained by rice versus wheat agriculture. *Science*, *344*, 603–608.

<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1246850>

# RIP: Individualism - Collectivism Theory

Review

> [J Soc Psychol.](#) 2002 Aug;142(4):461-80. doi: 10.1080/00224540209603912.

## The myth of individualism–collectivism: a critical review

[Maxim Voronov](#)<sup>1</sup>, [Jefferson A Singer](#)

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 12153123 DOI: [10.1080/00224540209603912](#)

### Abstract

The authors critically assess the dimension of individualism–collectivism (I-C) and its various uses in cross-cultural psychology. They argue that I-C research is characterized largely by insufficient conceptual clarity and a lack of systematic data. As a result, they call into question the utility of I-C as an explanatory tool for cultural variation in behavior, suggest alternative dimensions for cross-cultural research, and interpret the weaknesses of research on I-C as illustrative of a general trend in social psychology.

Source: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12153123/>