

# Revisiting Individualism-Collectivism

## A Cross-Cultural Comparison among College Students in Four Countries

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the validity, fruitfulness, and constructive potential of Individualism-collectivism dimension in the contemporary world. With increasing interrelationship among countries and improvement of technologies and transportations, value differences among cultures might not be as significant as what people thought before. A questionnaire was constructed, tested, and distributed to 2,000 college students in South Korea, Japan, Canada, and the United States. Among the 1,547 questionnaires returned, 1,495 were included in the analysis. Although differences in cultural values still exist among college students in all four countries, the findings of the present study indicate meaningful implications on cultural changes in the modern world. To draw more accurate guidelines on cultural tendencies, the present study suggests that further investigations should explore other factors such as age, occupations, education, degrees of contact with people in other cultures, and use of technologies and media.

**Keywords:** *Individualism, Collectivism, Comparison, South Korea, Japan, Canada, The United States*

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### Introduction

Geert Hofstede conducted perhaps the most comprehensive and one of the most influential studies of how culture influences people's values. He originally collected data from 1967 to 1973 and presented the findings in his book (Hofstede, 1980). Before the introduction of the individualism and collectivism dimension in the field of cross-cultural studies, many scholars have used various terms to explore cultural differences. For example, collectivity-orientation and self-orientation (Parsons, 1951), collaterality and individualism (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961), tradition-direction and inner-direction (Riesman, Glazer, & Denney, 1961), cooperation and individualism (Mead, 1967), and moral involvement and calculative involvement (Etzioni, 1975) have been used to study variability from cultural, psychological, and social standpoints. Even after the introduction of individualism and collectivism dimension, other researchers have used terms such as interdependence and individualism (Waterman, 1981), allocentrism and idiocentrism (Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985), groupism and individualism (Banks & McGee Banks, 1993) and I-identity and we-identity (Ting-Toomey, 2010) to investigate cultural differences. Since its introduction, however, the individualism and collectivism dimension has become a popular tool of studying cultural variability.

This dimension indicates the position of culture on a bipolar continuum (Hofstede & Bond, 1984) and was originally introduced to distinguish work-related values of people in a multi-national organization (Hofstede, 1980). Later, this dimension was applied to study various aspects in cross-cultural settings such as business practices (Tang & Ward, 2003), conflict behaviors (Cai & Fink, 2002), romantic relationships (Dion & Dion, 1991), negotiations (Carrell & Heavrin, 2008), leadership (Hackman & Johnson, 2004), use of decision rules (Mann, 1986), child development practices (Yi, 2001), gender

differences (Wood, 2009), health care (Ford & Yep, 2003) and other topics in business and social sciences.

While the study of Hofstede gained popularity and an increasing number of scholars utilized this concept in cultural studies, some researchers questioned the accuracy and usefulness of the individualism and collectivism dimension (e.g., Schwartz, 1990; Waterman, 1981) and re-analyzed what this dimension offers (Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). Moreover, other scholars have criticized the validity, limitations, and applicability of this cultural dimension. For example, methodology was questioned (Fiske, 2002), assumptions and logic were criticized, (Ailon, 2008), and the analysis of the data was not trusted (McSweeney, 2002). Regardless of the criticism, however, it is generally agreed by researchers and scholars that this dimension has made a contribution to the study of cultural comparisons and has proven the existence of cultural differences. To make continuous improvement on this dimension to provide more accurate guidelines for people working, residing, and studying in intercultural environments, it is important to take careful approaches to reassure the effectiveness and adaptability of this cultural theme.

## Individualism and Collectivism

The word “individualism” was first used by Tocqueville in 1835 when he used this term to describe the characteristics of people in the United States (Jandt, 1998). Traditionally, individualism describes broad cultural value tendencies that emphasize the importance of individual needs over group needs, individual rights over group rights, and individual identity over group identity (Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). This is a common cultural pattern found in most northern and western European countries and in North America (Triandis et al., 1988), including Canada (Borden, 1991; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). In contrast, collectivism refers to the cultural values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns of people in Asia, Africa, Latin America (Hsu, 1971; Neuliep, 2012), and Arab societies (Ayyash-Abdo; 2001; Martin & Nakyama, 2010). This characteristic involves the need to maintain group harmony above interests of individuals (Mann, Radford, & Kanagawa, 1985) and promote relational interdependence and in-group laborative spirit (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

As the individualism and collectivism concepts produced a myriad of cultural studies, this dimension was well combined with pre-existing ideas of cultural researches. For example, in-group and out-group differences among cultures were evidenced by the individualism and collectivism dimension. In collectivistic cultures, in-group members are characterized by internal cohesiveness (Neuliep, 2015), loyalty (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012) and sacrifices (Triandis, 1988), while members of individualistic cultures exert relatively little influence on behavior (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). These cultural traits of in-group and out-group relationships support the view that “collectivists pay more attention to the views, needs and goals of their in-group” (Triandis, 1991, p.79) whereas “individualists are more concerned with the relation of their behaviors to their own needs, interests, and goals” (Leung & Bond, 1984, p. 794). Although the in-group and out-group distinction among cultures was not new (Summer, 1906), this concept, with individualism and collectivism dimension, has provided a clear explanation of distinction among cultures.

Combined with the studies of the past, individualism and collectivism dimension has branched out to more detailed schemes to investigate specific causes of cultural differences. Singelis, et al. (1995) argued that individualism can be divided into horizontal individualism (self is valued with more or less equal in status with others) and vertical individualism (self is valued and different from others). Also, collectivism can be split into horizontal collectivism (self is a member of in-group and similar to one another) and vertical collectivism (self is a member of in-group but different from one another). Because individualistic cultures share similarities and differences and the same can be said of collectivistic cultures, they believe this division could help to comprehend unique cultural characteristics. Moreover, this idea is dissected further into the individual level of horizontal self-construal (treat people equally regardless of their position, status, and age) and the vertical self-construal (treat people differently based on their position, status, and age) (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

# Importance of Revisiting Cultural Dimensions

When intercultural relationships were not as predominant, significant differences in human behavior and their value systems might have been easier to notice. That was time when countries were in different stages of social structure. When the 102-story Empire State Building was opened in 1931, most people in Asian countries were still dependent on farming as the principal source of income and diet. Intercultural encounters during this time would have been minimal. However, with the growing commercial, political, social, and educational relationships among countries around the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the importance of understanding cultures has been a tremendous factor for the success of international interactions. An even more important element of satisfaction from cultural encounters is being sensitive to cultural changes. Culture is a learned phenomenon (Martin & Nakayama, 2005), but at the same time, it is dynamic (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2008), accumulative (Neuliep, 2012), and emergent (Miller, 2015).

While it is clear that cultural differences exist among nations, it is also perceptible that cultures change. Each culture experiences different factors that affect cultural modification or even transformation. Countries that were listed on the individualism dimension forty years ago have no guarantee to occupy the same positions now. The same would be true for countries on the collectivism dimension. Rapid industrialization and westernization in many Asian countries have forced those populations to adjust to new cultural phenomena in their societies. Latin American nations have struggled through social, political, and financial turbulences. Many incidents of ethical and racial conflicts have made a huge impact to the culture of the United States and have developed new perspectives of cultural evolutions.

In a rapidly changing world of cultures, it might be hard to catch up with all cultural changes and provide prudent guidelines for people to exercise more appropriate behavioral patterns in cultural settings. However, simply accepting proven findings from decades ago would not be advisable either. It has become imperative that cultural sensitivity is not an option but a necessity when interacting with people from different cultures. Thus, new tests, new investigations, new approaches, and new comparisons of cultural phenomena should be examined to suggest more instructive precepts.

To explore the applicability of previous research done on individualism and collectivism differences among cultures, the present study was designed to investigate three research questions by collecting and analyzing the data relating to them:

**RQ1:** Do college students in Asian countries such as South Korea and Japan present a higher degree of collectivism than the students in Western countries such as Canada and the United States?

**RQ2:** Do college students in Western countries such as Canada and the United States display more individualistic tendencies than the students in Asian countries such as South Korea and Japan?

**RQ3:** Do students in larger cities show more individualistic dispositions and less collectivistic tendencies than the students in smaller cities?

## Method

To investigate the current validity of cultural value differences of college students in four countries, a questionnaire was used to collect data. After a pilot study was conducted with 124 participants (South Korean, N = 35; Japanese, N = 29; Canadian, N = 21; American, N = 39) using Korean, Japanese, and English versions of the questionnaire, modifications and improvement of the questionnaire was made. The questionnaire for the main study, which contained 42 items, explored such issues as in-group and out-group perceptions, cooperative and competitive behavioral patterns, dealing with interpersonal problems, and material perspectives. Twenty-one items were included to study individualistic values and another twenty-one items were targeted to inquire about collectivistic tendencies.

## Respondents

Two universities in each country, South Korea, Japan, Canada, and the United States, were selected on the basis of city size in which the schools are located. One university from each country was chosen in the city with less than 500,000 people. The second university from each country was selected in the city of more than two million people. Because geographical locations (Yi, 2004) and the degree of urbanization (Hofstede, 2001) could influence people's perception of individualism-collectivism values and their behavioral patterns, it was imperative to make such selections to draw more accurate comparisons among and within these countries. Universities were selected after providing explanations of the present study by contacting instructors who were listed as members in the National Communication Association directory in the United States. After obtaining the agreement from instructors, a written proposal was mailed to the instructors. After the confirmation of participation agreement, 250 copies of the questionnaires were sent to each university by air mail. Among 1,547 questionnaires returned, 52 were excluded from the statistical analysis due to missing signatures on consent forms and/or some of the demographic information such as age, gender, academic major, and nationality was not indicated.

For the remaining 1,495 participants (N = 754, males; N = 741, females), the number of participants representing each country varied. In South Korea, there were 172 participants from a university in a large city (Busan: N = 89, males; N = 83, females) and 188 students from a university in a small city (Chuncheon: N = 102, males; N = 86, females). In Japan, 189 participants were from a large city university (Yokohama: N = 110, males; N = 79, females) and 168 were from a small city university (Matsudo: N = 92, males; N = 76, females). In Canada 191 participants' questionnaires were included in the analysis from a university in a large city (Toronto: N = 104, males; N = 87, females) and 181 respondents were from a small city university (Kitchener: N = 94, males; N = 87, females). Two American universities were the only ones with more female participants than male participants. There were 202 American participants from a metropolitan area university (Chicago: N = 98, males; N = 104, females) and 204 respondents from a small city university (Dayton: N = 95, males; N = 109, females). Seventy-eight percent of participants (N = 1,166; N = 694, males; N = 472, females) indicated that they grew up in or near the city where they attend the university.

Since all respondents were college students, there was no significant age variation among participants in eight groups. South Korean participants were the oldest group (average = 22.6 years) followed by the Japanese group (average = 22.3 years) and the Canadian group (average = 21.8 years). American participants were the youngest group on average (21.2 years) but included the oldest student in the present study (42.0 years) from a small city university. The youngest participant also was an American student who was 17.2 years old.

The questionnaire was conducted in communication courses in a small city in an American university, Economics and Public Administration courses in a small city in a South Korean university. The remaining six universities distributed the questionnaire in general requirement courses. There were 468 participants studying in the social sciences, 398 in the natural sciences, and 289 in engineering. The remaining 340 participants were majors in other academic fields.

## Procedure

Because the present study was designed for a cross-cultural comparison of a cultural dimension, it included participants who do not speak English as their native language. Thus, the questionnaire was constructed in English and translated into Korean and Japanese. Even though most Korean and Japanese students are required to take English courses from junior high school years, there was no guarantee that all participants have English proficiency to complete the questionnaire. To minimize possible problems and to improve translation fidelity, the back translation method (Brislin, 1970) was used by employing native speakers of Korean, Japanese, and English. Using questionnaires translated into participants' native languages has been suggested as an effective tool for obtaining reliable data (Brislin, 1980; Gudykunst et al., 1992a; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991) and has been put to use in cross-cultural studies (e.g., Ayyash-Abdo, 2001; Smith et al., 1998; Xia et al., 2016).

Although the purpose of the present study and the items in the questionnaire were explained to the participants when it was distributed, the questionnaire itself did not divide the individualism and collectivism items. This was done to prevent a possible response bias stemming from attitude, beliefs, or values relating to each item. That way, more accurate responses of what the respondents actually think could be collected rather than what they were expected to think. After explaining the present study to participants, instructors conducted the questionnaire during class sessions. All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and would not affect their course performance positively or negatively. Also, to inhibit influences among respondents while completing the questionnaire, participants were instructed not to interact, share ideas, or discuss the questionnaire with other participants.

Demographic information such as nationality, age, gender, and academic majors were collected but not statistically analyzed except separating gender for all eight groups in individualism and collectivism sections. Nationality was asked in the questionnaire to exclude students from taking a class in a foreign country. There were seven international students in an American university, three international students in a Canadian university, and one was an American student in a Japanese university. Students residing in a foreign country might have adjusted to a new culture and their answers may not accurately present original cultural tendencies. Thus, questionnaires of eleven international students were not included in the statistical analysis to avoid possible contaminating influences.

## Statistical Analysis

The present study was structured to measure the participants' cultural dispositions on both individualism and collectivism dimensions, separately. Because people in the same nation can, and do, present characteristics of both individualism and collectivism (Singelis et al., 1995; McCann, Honeycutt, & Keaton, 2010), it is imperative to explore both dimensions to draw more accurate results.

Collected data were statistically analyzed by utilizing a simple analysis of variance (ANOVA), which allows comparison of several means for factor scores, simultaneously. Collectivism and individualism were the dependent variable, and the location of each university was the independent variable. Separate mean score for individualism and collectivism for each respondent was the unit of analysis. Significant F-ratios were conducted before the Duncan Multiple Range test.

When analyzing the data for the main study, a factor analysis was conducted again to ascertain how items were grouped and whether the groupings were consistent with those from previous studies. This was done to assure that such scores could be interpreted as indicators of the underlying constructs. Questions were constructed in the Likert format and scored in the following manner for both individualism and collectivism items. For each statement, "5" represents "strongly agree," "4" represents "agree," "3" represents "neutral," "2" represents "disagree," and "1" represents "strongly disagree". Reliability was computed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for inter-item consistency.

## Results

The findings of this present study were generally inconsistent with previous understandings of cultural differences in individualism and collectivism dimension. Research questions 1 and 2 were not supported by the data. Research question 3 showed consistency with previous scholarly findings for both individualism and collectivism items. Japanese college students presented the highest overall individualistic value ( $N = 357$ ;  $M = 81.87$ ;  $SD = 11.82$ ) followed by American participants ( $N = 406$ ;  $M = 79.88$ ;  $SD = 10.24$ ), Korean respondents ( $N = 360$ ;  $M = 77.57$ ;  $SD = 9.88$ ), and Canadian group ( $N = 372$ ;  $M = 74.45$ ;  $SD = 10.02$ ). There were no significant differences among countries except between Japan and Canada ( $F = 1.62$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.05$ ).

Table 1 indicates that Japanese respondents at a large city university showed the highest individualistic value ( $N = 189$ ;  $M = 84.75$ ;  $SD = 12.4$ ) followed by American college students at a large city university ( $N = 202$ ;  $M = 81.95$ ;  $SD = 16.2$ ) without presenting significant differences ( $F = 1.33$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.5$ ).

The third group was Korean respondents at a large city university (N = 172; M = 79.99; SD = 9.74) and the group with the lowest individualistic value was Canadian respondents from a small city university (N = 191; M = 74.32; SD = 17.4) and the data showed significant differences from a large city Japanese group (F = 3.24; df = 1; p = 0.05). Although this finding was not consistent with the general understanding of cultural dimensions, it is supported by studies that have argued that Japanese college students value individualism more than the Japanese society does as a whole (Woodring, 1995), and they show more individualistic traits when compared with college students in the United States (Gudykunst et al., 1992b; Triandis et al., 1988).

**Table 1:** *Individualism Differences among Eight Locations in Four Countries*

	<b>Number of Items / Possible Score</b>	<b>Overall Mean Score (ranking)</b>	<b>Male Mean Score</b>	<b>Female Mean Score</b>
Chuncheon, Korea *	21/110	76.39 (6)	78.87	71.87
Busan, Korea **	21/110	79.99 (3)	82.49	74.34
Matsudo, Japan *	21/110	77.90 (5)	85.35	73.88
Yokohama, Japan **	21/110	84.75 (1)	87.24	80.35
Kitchener, Canada *	21/110	74.32 (8)	78.25	67.18
Toronto, Canada **	21/110	74.56 (7)	78.82	68.23
Dayton, The U. S. *	21/110	78.35 (4)	80.29	76.73
Chicago, The U. S. **	21/110	81.95 (2)	81.35	83.25

\* city with less than 500,000 people in the population \*\*city with more than 2,000,000 people in the population

Five questions regarding in-group and out-group perceptions of the individualism items yielded interesting findings. For example, one item asked participants: “If I had a job, I would think that an increase in salary would be more important than maintaining good relationships with my co-workers.” For this item, the overall mean score for Japanese participants (M = 4.03) was significantly higher than that of American participants (M = 3.22; F = 1.33; df = 1; p = 0.05), South Korean respondents (M = 2.82; F = 1.36; df = 1; p = 0.05), and Canadian college students (M = 2.74; F = 1.38; df = 1; p = 0.05). Although Japanese people are known to value relational harmony (Martin & Nakayama, 2011) and group-consciousness (Klopf, 1998), there also is evidence that a new sense of individualism is growing among Japanese youth (Harris, Moran, & Moran, 2004). This finding should be carefully examined to draw a conclusion if value changes are evident among younger generations in Japan.

Among female respondents in all eight groups, American college students at a large city university showed the highest individualistic value (N = 104; M = 83.25; SD = 16.24) followed by Japanese female respondents at a large city university (N = 79; M = 80.35; SD = 10.68). A female group with the lowest individualistic value was Canadian students at a small city university (N = 87; M = 67.18; SD = 21.20)

that presented a significant difference with the American female respondents from a large city university ( $F = 1.51$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ). Interestingly, American females from a large city university were the only respondents out of all eight groups that had a higher individualistic score than the males from the same university.

Table 2 shows that Canadian participants at a small city university presented the highest collectivistic tendency ( $N = 181$ ;  $M = 84.40$ ;  $SD = 10.64$ ) followed by Japanese participants from a small city university ( $N = 168$ ;  $M = 81.21$ ;  $SD = 9.43$ ) and Canadian participants from a large city university ( $N = 181$ ;  $M = 79.19$ ;  $SD = 9.68$ ). The group with the lowest score was American college students from a large city ( $N = 202$ ;  $M = 69.36$ ;  $SD = 8.46$ ) that showed a significant difference with a small city of Canadian participants ( $F = 1.34$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.05$ ). Since Canadians believe that their cultural identity is heavily influenced by the culture of the United States (Martin & Nakayama, 2011), geographical sizes could have been a factor for these differences.

**Table 2:** *Collectivism Differences among Eight Locations in Four Countries*

	<b>Number of Items / Possible Score</b>	<b>Overall Mean Score (ranking)</b>	<b>Male Mean Score</b>	<b>Female Mean Score</b>
Chuncheon, Korea *	21/110	75.93 (5)	73.69	79.30
Busan, Korea **	21/110	69.69 (7)	66.48	74.23
Matsudo, Japan *	21/110	81.21 (2)	77.69	85.39
Yokohama, Japan **	21/110	73.03 (6)	68.48	80.38
Kitchener, Canada *	21/110	84.40 (1)	83.58	86.44
Toronto, Canada **	21/110	79.19 (3)	74.85	82.48
Dayton, The U. S. *	21/110	78.83 (4)	74.48	81.28
Chicago, The U. S. **	42/110	69.36 (8)	66.89	75.05

\* city with less than 500,000 people in the population

\*\* city with more than 2,000,000 people in the population

Five questions in the collectivism section were designed to ask participants about the issues of in-group and out-group perceptions and yielded intriguing findings. For example, one item asked participants: "Without the help of others who love and care about me, I would not be where I am and what I am today." For this item, the overall mean score for Canadian participants ( $M = 3.89$ ) was higher than that of Japanese respondents ( $M = 3.64$ ), American respondents ( $M = 3.54$ ), and South Korean respondents ( $M = 3.52$ ). Although the Canadian group showed the highest score for this item, there were no significant differences among participants from all four countries. Canada and the United States are generally known as individualistic countries, but there are findings that show this aspect is changing. For instance, Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier (2002) also note in their study that no differences are found between

Americans and South Koreans on collectivistic measures and Americans were slightly more collectivistic than Japanese.

Female Canadian participants at a small city university showed the highest collectivistic value ( $N = 87$ ;  $M = 86.44$ ;  $SD = 12.64$ ) among all eight female groups. The second group was the Japanese respondents ( $N = 76$ ;  $M = 85.39$ ;  $SD = 8.62$ ) followed by Canadian participants from a large city university ( $N = 87$ ;  $M = 82.48$ ;  $SD = 9.86$ ). A female group with the lowest collectivistic value was South Korean participants from a large city university ( $N = 83$ ;  $M = 74.23$ ;  $SD = 9.42$ ) that showed a significant difference from the Canadian female group ( $F = 1.49$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.05$ ). Another group that showed a significant difference from Canadian females on collectivistic values was American female participants at a large city university ( $N = 104$ ;  $M = 75.05$ ;  $SD = 12.04$ ) ( $F = 2.02$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.05$ ).

Unlike research questions 1 and 2, research question 3 was supported by the data. Participants from all eight universities in four countries showed that students residing in large cities presented more individualistic tendencies than students in small city universities of the same country. Also, participants from all eight universities in four countries presented that students residing in small cities possessed more collectivistic characteristics than the students in the large city university of the same country. These findings of individualistic and collectivistic values of the present study were consistent with previous research (e.g., Triandis, 1989; Yi, 2004).

The reliability for the pilot study questionnaire items were  $\alpha = 0.68$  for individualism and  $\alpha = 0.74$  for collectivism items. After the modification of items, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of reliability for the main study were  $\alpha = 0.88$  for individualistic items and  $\alpha = 0.92$  for collectivistic items, and  $\alpha = 0.89$  for the total score. For the individualistic items, inter-item correlations ranged from -0.01 to 0.42 with a mean score of 0.22. For the collectivistic items, inter-item correlations ranged from -0.03 to 0.35 with a mean score of 0.19.

## Discussion and Implications

The present study was designed neither to criticize the individualism-collectivism dimension nor to find causes to question its logic or methodology. As much as knowing the existence of cultural differences, people are aware that cultures change. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to investigate whether the individualism and collectivism dimensions are still applicable and valid when they were first introduced decades ago. Many factors have been added to cultures for their changes and directions. People from Asian countries may believe that their cultures are still collectivistic without knowing changes in their attitudes, values, behavioral patterns, and media influence. Even if they were aware of these changes, they might believe their deeply rooted cultural constitutions bind them as more collectivistic than people of Western cultures. Also, people from Western cultures might be overwhelmed by the social emphasis on independence, self-reliance, competition, and other individualistic tendencies without knowing their actual location along the individualistic-collectivistic dimension.

In the present study, South Korean and Japanese male participants showed higher individualistic values than Canadian and American participants. College students at small city universities in Canada and the United States showed more collectivistic values that were higher or generally similar to South Korean and Japanese college students in four similar locations in population size. These findings may not be surprising as cultures are shifting in different directions. For example, although the Japanese culture in general is still considered collectivistic, the younger generations are more individualistic than older generations (Woodring, 1995), and many American companies utilize the collectivistic model of management that emphasizes teamwork and cooperation (Neuliep, 2012).

In spite of the fact that economic and social conditions differ among countries, many Asian countries are now well into or, at least, at the beginning stages of an industrialized society. Industrialization does not only mean an increasing reliance on information and high technology, but also it contributes to new forms of relationships among people within and across cultures. Industrialization and westernization would affect the Gross National Product (GNP), and it is likely to influence a country's level of individualistic

tendencies (Triandia et al., 1988). With Japan and South Korea succeeding well in the international economy, it is a natural change for both countries to see more individualistic values in their cultures.

In interpreting the findings of cultural studies, it is important to acknowledge limitations. Methodological problems easily surface in cross-cultural studies including obtaining representative samples and deficiencies in methods of collecting data. For this study, all participants were college students from eight locations in four countries. Although they might represent younger generations' behavioral or psychological patterns, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the general populations in the countries included in this study. Also, because "the problem of measures is one of the most difficult challenges cross-cultural researchers face" (Oh, 1994, p.145), it would be more desirable to utilize a combination of survey and experimental methods. This study relied exclusively on the participants' self-reports to measure different values, beliefs, and attitudes. However, experimental methods could allow observation of actual behavior that could be different from participants' judgment on their patterns of behavior and value formations. Therefore, to draw more accurate findings from these countries, future studies should consider more promising methodologies as well as including various factors such as occupations, age, education, and socio economic status of participants.

Some people experience cultural change in many aspects of their lives, whereas others do not but rather merely adjust to a new culture. While doing so, people of collectivistic cultures might obtain more individualistic values and people of individualistic cultures might acquire collectivistic patterns. Whether they become aware of these changes or not, it should be clear that culture is not a stagnant phenomenon. At least on the basis of the findings of the present study, one could speculate that cultures change over time, move to the next stage, and, possibly combine with other cultures that used to be known as different cultures. Thus, it should be understood that dormancy, continuity, and sustainability are not guaranteed characteristics of cultural phenomena, at least in this modern time of cultural locomotion. Further investigation is needed to find how individualistic and collectivistic tendencies change in cultures. As it is evident that increasing interrelationships among nations influence cultural changes, degrees of social exchanges including sports events, use of foreign commercial products and entertainment, and the influence of media could be good factors to examine cultural modifications

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