

Individualism and Collectivism

Outcomes: In this segment we will explore the concept of self as it relates to a cultural group's orientation towards individualism or collectivism and reflect on how these two different cultural perspectives influence teaching and learning.

So far we have looked at some of the differences between the characteristics, beliefs, and values of mainstream American culture and some of the other cultures represented by our students. One of the major differences is the concept of self.

As we saw through the proverbs, mainstream American culture tends to be highly individualistic. The wants, needs, and characteristics of the individual tend to take precedence over those of the group. Please remember that within any cultural group there will be great variations, but there is a tendency for cultural groups to be more individualistic or collectivist. Understanding the individualism and collectivism provides us with a framework for observing and analyzing students' behavior in order to design educational programming that will best support academic achievement.

Individualism can be characterized by:

- Identifying with self
- Valuing self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and independence
- Joining groups, but group membership is not essential to one's identity or success
- Taking care of oneself guarantees the well-being of the group

Collectivism can be characterized by:

- Identifies with one's role in the group
- Valuing interdependence and harmony of group
- Taking care of the group ensures the well-being of the individual

As one of your assignments, you will read more about individualism and collectivism from an extremely informative website. While you are reading, think about how individualism and collectivism apply to your classroom and your teaching.

Reflection:

How might the classroom behaviors of students from collectivist cultures differ from students with an individualistic orientation? Record your ideas on your capture sheet.