

TEENAGERS' LONELINESS IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

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Abstract

The perception of loneliness changes not only from an individual to an individual but it also does so based on gender, culture, age or role in the society. Despite the fact that everyone is born alone and dies alone people still do not differentiate between aloneness and loneliness. Since people may experience loneliness at every age, the capstone projects is narrowed down to include the age group of adolescents since this one has the likelihood to develop signs of loneliness. It is because the age group is in the process of growing up and as adults they may choose to be lonely or not. The project will try to answer questions such as whether loneliness is hereditary, how lonely people may experience the phenomenon and whether there is a need not to be lonely or not. The media of the project are American and Japanese movies and the cultures are known for Individualism and Collectivism respectively.

Introduction

The concept of loneliness and solitude is often not favored by others, more commonly by extroverts who cannot imagine how a human being can be an introvert when s/he make a part in a society and where everyone is to hold some kind of relationship with others. Indeed, long-term loneliness is linked to a number of diseases when its psychological aspects eventually lead to the deterioration of human body and psyche.

The purpose of this project is to illustrate that cultures in which adolescents live shape their perception of life and because of this they respond to adolescence differently. The study is a cross-cultural analysis based on movies which reflect everyday lives of characters to see how Individualism and Collectivism define the cultures in which they live. It will try to address questions such as what makes people choose to be lonely and whether they need to develop companions with others. Since the concept of loneliness changes from culture to culture the project will also answer statements whether Individualist nations are more prone to become lonely compared with Collectivist cultures basing the analysis on psychological aspects. The project may draw parallels in the behavior of adolescents' parents and children to understand whether loneliness is hereditary or not. Besides, it will analyze what are the consequences of loneliness on adolescents' lives.

Hawkley and Cacioppo (2013) write that loneliness causes long-term consequences in life if people overlook it. The effects of loneliness on a human body are associated with cardiovascular problems in adults, imbalance in cholesterol level or blood pressure. They explain that solitude affects the whole neuropsychology of a person in that a lonely person is shy and self-conscious since it is a result of accumulation of negative emotions: the authors compare the phenomenon with the damaged scaffold which spreads the crumbling of the self. Those people associate social isolation with feeling unsafe and are careful when they choose who to interact with. However, such individuals do not recognize the essence of solitude and think they cannot fix the problem by themselves since they are not the cause of it.

Cacioppo and others (2010) cite earlier House, Landis, and Umberson (1988) who came to the conclusion that loneliness eventually led to morbidity and mortality. They make a distinction between a *perceived* social isolation "where it is much a more important predictor of a variety of adverse health outcomes than is objective social isolation" (Cole et al., 2007; Hawkley, Masi, Berry, & Cacioppo, 2006; Penninx et al., 1997; Seeman, 2000; Sugisawa, Liang, & Liu, 1994 in Cacioppo, Fowler, Christakis). However, teenagers are the age group who are prone to develop signs of loneliness the most.

Loneliness and solitude are not the same things since the former is the lack of being content in social interactions, meanwhile isolated do not necessarily mean the feeling of loneliness, nor do social connections hinder an individual from feeling lonely (Hawkley, Cacioppo, 2010; Golden, Conroy, Bruce, Denihan, Greene, Kirby, Lawlor, 2009). Nonetheless the concepts share some similarities (Matthews, Danese, Wertz, et al., 2016).

Isolation and loneliness or loneliness and depression share genetic or environmental phenomena which contribute to their co-occurrence. For instance, genetic factors play a role in about 40-50 % of the variance in loneliness (McGuire, Clifford, 2000; Goossens, van Roekel, Verhagen, Cacioppo, Cacioppo, Maes, Boomsma, 2015). "The genetic contribution to loneliness" arises from an evolutionary framework where it "is an adaptive response to social disconnection that provides the impetus to re-integrate with social groups" (Cacioppo, Hawkley, Ernst, Burleson, Berntson, Nouriani, Spiegel in Matthews, et al.) So, environment is a contribution to loneliness since it is an individual's response which is genetically reoccurred and social isolation raises the possibility of hereditary factors (Matthews, Danese, Wertz, Ambler, Kelly, Diver, Caspi, Moffitt, Arseneault, 2015).

The recognition of isolation "makes individuals feel vulnerable, triggering a range of cognitive, behavioural and physiological responses geared towards self-protection" (Cacioppo, et al. 2006 in Matthews et al.). As a result, lonely individuals trust less, are anxious or pessimistic: they perceive others more negatively and "approach social interactions in a defensive, hostile

manner" (Cacioppo, Hawkley, 2009 in Matthews, et al.). Distancing them from others, such individuals become more isolated and lose the opportunity to make positive connections. There is also a possibility that the "defensive patterns of thought and behavior" found in genetics may contribute to social isolation (Matthews, et al.).

It is not so easy to recognize oneself is lonely in adolescence since it is the period when a person turns into adulthood and does not have a clear understanding of the outer world and the feeling of loneliness takes an inevitable part in adolescents' lives. It is only the adolescents' responsibility to assure loneliness does not become chronic since lonely individuals often become more pessimistic which changes their whole life journey. They tend to become secluded from society, try to escape from making friendships or even interacting with family members.

Those individuals often have the urge to reproach parents or even peers who may not have the same views to a given question which create conflict situations in their lives. However, parents' role is to help them cope with this life stage since they have already passed through adolescence and know how to find solutions to problems. Meanwhile, adolescents do not always agree with them saying that they live in different periods and thus differ in their perception.

Literature Review

Hawkey and Capitanio cite a British research project which can imply that loneliness and depression are often misused and merged according to which constant loneliness eventually results in depression. In the study of 296 British children aged 5, 9 and 13 they were more likely to show signs of depression when they were persistently lonely and they could develop symptoms as early as 9 years of age and explicitly at age 13 (Qualter and others, 2010).

Meanwhile, another study of 209 British pre-adolescents (Harris, Qualter, Robinson, 2013 in Hawkey and Capitanio) concluded that children who had maintained a low level of loneliness between the ages eight to eleven were more prone to depressive symptoms at age 11 rather than those who kept the level of loneliness in a relatively high but declining manner. Hawkey and Capitanio question whether depressive symptoms take part in the *evolutionary fitness* of the children which means the passing of genes in offspring in form of traits where clinical depression results "in reduced reproductive fitness" (Bowins, 2008 in Cacioppo) and verbal and nonverbal sadness expressions can drive others out (Cacioppo et al).

Nonverbal communication plays a more important role in expressions than verbal communication since human beings may express emotions with body gestures better than with words. The development of relations between parents and adolescents of attachment or conflict translate into nonverbal terms, approach or avoidance (Kahlbaugh, Haviland, 1994).

Communication by *approach* is all about the positive characteristics in nonverbal communication: "smiling, gazing, flashing interest with brows, sitting in an open position, or aligning one's body with the companion's" (p. 91). Nonetheless, by *avoidance* the authors mean "hostility, separation, distancing, conflict or shame" (p. 92). In addition to this, the facial expressions which are of negative essence may be "anger, contempt, disgust, or shame as signals of avoidance, as well as body movements such as crossed arms, head and body moved up and back, face covered or down and away" (p. 92).

Kahlbaugh and Haviland elaborate on this point basing it on a psychodynamic development hypothesis implied by A. Freud (1958) who found out individuation in adolescence followed "the child's rapid physical and sexual maturation" was a consequence of Oedipal issues in puberty which created a conflict between parents and adolescents where both groups sought separation. Brandt (1977) even embraced this state since separation, distance, or avoidance within the family were defensive reactions and normal consequences of pubertal development (in Kahlbaugh, Haviland, p. 92). However, Blos (1962) disagreed with the Freudian theory of development since he saw loneliness would eventually produce conflict and a sense of loss (in Kahlbaugh, Haviland): for instance the "reversal of affect" defense predicted an adolescent would become distant and hostile toward the parent as s/he grew up and was "also more self-conscious about sexual separation issues". Kahlbaugh and Haviland believe that separation issues may record "an increase in both hostile nonverbal behavior as well as more hiding, covering, and shame behavior." They add that as a reaction to such behavior parents may also become hostile.

Blakemore and Choudhury (2006 in Hawkley and Capitano) found that *executive function* and *social cognitive skills* improved along with brain development in adolescent years. These factors can also lead to *impaired prefrontal cortical function*, a region responsible for executive control (Cacioppo, Hawkley, 2009). A study of 419 Norwegian schoolchildren of grades 1 to 10 (aged 7 to 16) experiencing loneliness and some forms of victimization (e.g. bullying) found that a long-term loneliness was associated with *somatic symptoms* (e.g. stomach ache, headache), sadness and anxiety (Løhre, 2012 in Hawkley and Capitano). Hawkley and Capitano believed a child had to recognize s/he was lonely in the case of victimization, a risk group for unhealthy symptoms. Timothy Matthews (et al, 2015) introduce a new concept according to which those children who are isolated, studying at primary and secondary schools, experiencing great mental health difficulties in forms of behavioral problems or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) at age 5 have a higher risk of becoming more isolated at age 12. However, this does not mean that those who were isolated at age 5 would have greater mental health struggles by the

time they reached age 12. Rubin and others (1995) came to the conclusion that social withdrawal at seven years of age was a potential for negative self-regard and loneliness at age 9 and 10 and loneliness at age 7 predicted such behavior at a later age of 14 (in Rubin, Coplan, Bowker, 2009/2013).

Loneliness in adolescence (13 to 17 years)

This is the age group which is the most likely to register cases of loneliness in children since more than 70 % of adolescents experience some kind of loneliness at the age of 18 and there is a decreasing pattern to 60 % of lonely adults (35 to 40 years) and 39 % for older adults (Heinrich and Gullone 2006; Parlee 1979; Savikko et al. 2005 in Goosby et al. 2013). Suicide ideation and attempts (Heinrich and Gullone, 2006) and psychosomatic complaints (e.g. headaches, nausea, etc. Ponzetti 1990) are other possible outcomes of loneliness. This age group also plays a crucial role for later mental development in adolescents since this is a period when they may fall in love in search for mates which is directly proportional to *reproductive fitness* (Laursen, Hartl, 2013 in Hawkley and Capitano). Another study of 585 children aged 6 to 16 discovered the degree of loneliness at age 12 might predict such behavior after 1 to 3 years' period (Fontaine et al., 2009 in Hawkley and Capitano). Brennan (1982, p. 66 in Rokach and Neto, 2000) also believed that adolescence was the onset when people felt lonely the most, however other researchers disagree with the common stereotype that elderly people feel lonely the most. Brennan explains his point by mentioning that adolescence is the life stage when people undergo psychological changes such as "separation from parents, maturation, striving for personal autonomy, and the struggle for significance." A study of 1997 (Rokach and Brock) concluded that loneliness experienced at ages 13 to 20 differed from the loneliness at later stages of life. Seagall, Lonner and Berry (1998) analyzed the relationship of culture and psychology are some of the factors dealing with human development, thought and behavior which mean they represent a focal point of interest in cross-cultural studies rather than being of a peripheral significance (p. 1108 in Rokach and Neto, p. 67).

Medora, Woodward and Larson (1987 in Rokach and Neto, p. 67) also believe that the culture and the family in which an individual grows up affect loneliness level in a given person. To prove their point, Rokach and Neto held a cross-cultural comparative analysis of Canadian and Portuguese participants and came to the conclusion that North American culture embraced the mentality of loneliness in the manner of individualism, so loneliness was prevalent in the culture (Schneider, 1998; Sermat, 1980). Ostrov and Offer (1980) explain this theory by stating that North American civilization (Canadians in this case) favors and promotes individual achievement, competitiveness and impersonal social relations. Saxton (1986) also noted that contemporary North American culture recorded a decline in primary group contacts which were "face-to-face, intimate contacts with family members, relatives, and close friends which were much more prevalent several decades ago" (Rokach and Neto, p. 67). Medora et al. (1987) elaborate this phenomenon by announcing that hectic lifestyle in huge metropolitan areas, for instance "social prejudice and fear of crime" contribute to "people's reluctance to interact and get involved with each other" (Medora, Woodward and Larson, 1987 in Rokach and Neto, p. 68). Schneider (1998 in Rokach and Neto, p. 68) pointed out that a typical North American life was characterized with conditions such as *spiritual and emotional emptiness* (Cushman, 1995), *Type A personality*, and *workaholism* (Passel, 1990), factors that have been demonstrated to erode physical and mental health (Bracke and Bugental, 1995). On the contrary to the Canadian culture, the Portuguese placed the role of family in a high rank in that they would rather spend more time in the kinship. Another feature of the Portuguese society was that the nation did not have a middle stratum given that they could either be representatives of an elite or peasants (Solsten, 1994 in Rokach and Neto, p. 68). Rokach and Neto also provided an example of the Portuguese culture where the role of the godparent was of high importance to the godchild where the former assisted the latter in tough life situations and the latter had to be loyal and devoted to the godparent instead. Meanwhile, Solsten strongly believed that the relationships outside the nuclear family were weaker, and that the family

would still decide who their child would marry in the 1990s. Thus, culture plays a part in shaping an individual's perception of loneliness.

Adolescents may show differences in *suicidal ideation* or in *eating habits*. Those individuals who were diagnosed with chronic or high increasing loneliness trajectory were about 11% and 7% more likely to participate in suicide attempts at age 15 than those in low but stable circuits (Hawkley and Capitano). Those children whose loneliness level was high in early childhood but decreased over time were 19 times less likely to be lonely than the constantly lonely group and they thought about suicide 28 times less. This indicated they showed lower levels of depression at follow-up (Schinka, et al. 2013) where the symptoms arose over time and the remediation of loneliness might alleviate the symptoms of *suicidal ideation* and *depression*. These symptoms affect a lonely person's role in the society as well in terms of acceptance and social inclusion (Jones, Schinka et al. 2011).

Eating behavior, an executive function in social factors, was analyzed in a research group of 59 adolescent participants aged 12 to 14 where experimental manipulation simulated *ostracism* (the exclusion from the society) or *inclusion* (Hawkley and Capitano). The participants would choose between unhealthy eating habits of snack food and socializing with a same-sex peer. The study was conducted in a way in which the participants pressed the mouse to earn points and the number of presses signalled their motivation for eating or socializing. The experimenters would then give an opportunity to the participants to eat snack food. Overweight participants having the ostracism condition were urged to eat and do so in greater quantities in comparison to overweight participants who had the condition of social inclusion. Unlike all others, the participants whose weight was balanced did not show any of these signs (Salvy, et al. 2011). Thus, the imbalance in weight proved to promote ostracism, rejection or isolation in individuals which distorted their self-image (Hawkley and Capitano).

Studies show that sleep disturbance plays a factor not only in later childhood or early adolescence but also in later periods of adolescence (Hawkley and Capitano). Mahon (1994 in

Hawkley and Capitano) found that loneliness did not affect sleep duration in 11-17 year olds but was rather in essence of more frequent sleep disturbances. A study of 82 adolescents who were to graduate from high school and enter into university were probed with a device "Actiwatch" which recorded their movements during the day and during sleep and it checked their sleep duration, efficiency and its onset latency. The data of four consecutive nights exposed some differences in sleep duration and latency after stressful days. Hence, the sleep latency and duration were shorter when children spent their days in a more stressful manner (Doane, Thurston, 2014 in Hawkley and Capitano) where the shorter sleep duration weakened the ability to recover from daily stress and might make "lonely adolescents feel more vulnerable to stress-related mental, somatic and health complaints" (Hawkley and Capitano). Hawkley and Capitano believe that the impression of connectedness and belonging may decrease the likelihood of physical health problems in the future. Qualter et al. (Hawkley and Capitano) found high and increasing levels of loneliness between the ages 5 to 17 also increased the chances of doctor visits besides depressive symptoms and a low self-esteem at age 17. A study of nine European countries of 11 to 15 year olds found that those youngsters who were associated with higher levels of loneliness had worse physical health and well-being, moreover those participants whose well-being was affiliated with lower levels of social integration (Eder, 1990) showed a decline in social connected and well-being (in Hawkley and Capitano).

Several studies have shown that adolescents feel lonely on Friday or Saturday nights when they are alone (Larson et al., 1982 in Roedel, Verhagen, Engels, Scholte, Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2016). However, there have been registered differences in levels of adolescence: the age group produces changes in the perception of loneliness in this life stage. Meanwhile, the level of loneliness not only changes from year to year but also the representation of the phenomenon changes from culture to culture. Roedel and others further write that a comparative study of Dutch and American students who graduated from school indicated that the Dutch were less likely to move away from families to study in colleges than the Americans since the commuting

distances were much shorter. Meanwhile, American students might even have to move to a new city/state to further their studies.

The abovementioned statement can also indicate that Americans are more individualistic when they choose between human interactions and independence. Markus and Kitayama (1991) make a distinction between cultures in sense of their independence and interdependence basing on a theory of Hofstede (1983, 2001): American culture is more independent than the Asian cultures as well which are interdependent. Markus and Kitayama explain that Americans stress the importance of individualism where people are actors separate from others with their "unique qualities, traits, and preferences" who are responsible for their choices (1991, in Lykes and Kimmelmeier, 2013). Unlike those, interdependent individuals focus on their relationship with others whose experience and behavior are usually shaped by the society and their actions are in behalf of others. Lykes and Kimmelmeier argue that individualistic nationalities feel less lonely than collectivist nationalities because the former are used to live alone more often and family ties are weaker, whereas the latter's expectations may not be met and they will feel more lonely as a consequence. Similarly, Anderson (1999, in Lykes and Kimmelmeier) found in a study the Chinese participants were more lonely than the Americans, where the Chinese would feel guilty of being lonely, meanwhile the latter blamed others because of having issues in their social lives.

Rokach (2007, in Lykes and Kimmelmeier) compared Canadians with Czechs where the former might score "higher on developmental, relocation/separation, and social marginality", however Canadians scored "lower on personal inadequacies". Other studies of the Portuguese (Rokach & Neto, 2005) and the Spaniards (Rokach et al., 2002) indicated they were more collectivist than Canadians since North Americans "were painfully aware of their own contribution to their loneliness" (Rokach et al., 2002) which was one of their drawbacks. Lykes and Kimmelmeier conclude culture not only shapes the levels of individualism but the situations in which a person is to feel lonely: culture is an indicator in human relationships where one has

the option to interact with others in individualistic cultures, nonetheless collectivist cultures do not embrace this phenomenon.

Methodology and Research Questions

The project was conducted using the method of textual analysis which provided a background for further research. The movies were about the hardships teenagers go through and how loneliness had an impact on their lives. The movies were analyzed to prove the point that adolescents experienced loneliness no matter the country of their origin since it made an indivisible part of their everyday reality.

Hofstede was a Dutch social psychologist whose theory indicated that cultures are either Collectivist or Individualist basing his hypothesis on six primary dimensions of culture: immediacy, individualism-collectivism, gender, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and high & low context. However, the capstone project's analysis will be only based on Individualism and Collectivism dimensions. Hofstede came to the conclusion that cultures can be divided into collectivistic and individualistic groups thanks to numerous surveys which he conducted in business administration, however the socio-cultural theory is not exhaustive in the field given that it can analyze cultures in other aspects as well, for instance in social psychology. The findings have suggested countries such as the United States, Canada or Western European countries are individualistic, meanwhile Asian countries are known for their collectivist spirit, for instance. Moreover, collectivist nations seemed to show fewer signals of loneliness compared with individualist nations which indicated there was a necessity to compare their lives from a psychological standpoint including the study of the discipline of human development and personality.

The research will be based on Cultural and Cross-Cultural Psychology, subfields of Social Psychology where the former defines a culture's behavior and the latter how cultures interact

with one another. Meanwhile, Social Psychology focuses on how an individual lives and behaves in a group setting compared to when s/he is alone.

The purpose of the capstone is to find out how adolescents from different nations experience the phenomenon of loneliness which makes them both the carriers of the nation and the group which is the most likely to have high levels of loneliness.

Research Findings

The dimensions of Individualism-Collectivism link to all cultures and it is not so obvious what makes a culture individualistic or collectivistic since those tendencies exist in all cultures. It is however possible for a culture to be seen as individualistic or collectivistic since a culture becomes collectivistic when it shows three aspects: "subordinating individual goals to group goals, viewing the ingroup as an extension of the self, and having a strong ingroup identity" (Triandis et al., 1985 in Gudykunst, 2004). Ingroups are those groups that assure others' welfare is not violated and may make sacrifices for others, meanwhile individualistic cultures have ingroups of specific purposes each of which may have importance for them (e.g. family, religion, social clubs, profession) (Gudykunst). Gudykunst believes since there are many ingroups, individualistic ingroups do not make sense in individualistic cultures changing people's behavior. Meanwhile, as in collectivistic cultures Gudykunst sees there are groups of broader aspects such as work group, university, family which influence behavior across situations (p. 47). Individualism and Collectivism may coexist since a culture can have both of these characteristics (Gudykunst).

Comparing Americans and the Japanese for instance there arise specific attributes of a culture: those Americans who strongly identify with the US culture value "social recognition, freedom and independence" more than those ones who weakly identify with the culture (Gudykunst). However, Gudykunst makes a clear distinction comparing the cultures: unlike Americans the Japanese identify nationalism with "self-sacrifice, harmony and accepting

traditions", but there may be cases when the Japanese or Americans do not feel there is a need to be patriotic.

To differentiate between cultures and compare them one has to study their differences and similarities in communications since a given culture would respond to a situation differently than the other one. For instance, Japanese are known for communicating indirectly, meanwhile Americans prefer face to face communication or else communicating directly (Gudykunst, p. 44). As it comes to cross-cultural communications individualistic society emphasize an "individual's initiatives and achievement", however Collectivism relies on belonging to a group (p. 47). Thus, the relations in a group differ from individualistic societies to collectivistic societies: individualistic cultures are universalistic in that they communicate similarly with their group members, meanwhile collectivistic cultures assure that everyone's needs are met (Gudykunst, p. 47).

Since the notion of groups differs in collectivistic and individualistic societies the ingroup may be the same, "but the sphere of its influence is different" (Gudykunst, p. 47). As it refers to Individualism, the influence of ingroups differ from collectivistic cultures since they may affect a person's life in a circumstance which would be of little importance, for instance (p. 47).

There are three types of self-ingroup relationships "in collectivistic cultures: undifferentiated, relational, and coexistence" (Kim, 1994 in Gudykunst, p. 48). The *undifferentiated* type of Collectivism has firm and explicit group boundaries (Kim, 1994, p. 33 in Gudykunst) which can later be subcategorized into when someone has "not developed separation from their ingroups" and sees himself/herself as a part of the group (Gudykunst, p. 48). Secondly, some individuals may "choose to give up their self-identities and immerse themselves in their groups (e.g., cult members)" (p. 48). So, in this form of Collectivism an individuals are governed by others (p. 48).

The *relational facet* of Collectivism does not allow free flow of thoughts, ideas and emotions between in-group members since there are boundaries preventing the communication (Gudykunst, p. 48). "This form of Collectivism requires 'the willingness and ability to feel and

think what others are feeling and thinking, to absorb this information without being told, and to help others satisfy their wishes and realize their goals' " (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p. 229 in Gudykunst).

The *coexistence facet* "separates the public self and the private self" (Kim, 1994; Gudykunst) where the public one has collectivistic values such as "ingroup solidarity, family loyalty" but "coexists with the private self" maintaining individualistic values, for instance personal striving (Kim, p. 36 in Gudykunst). This form of collectivism arises when "individuals follow group norms and fulfill their roles because collective actions 'need to be orchestrated cooperatively and harmoniously' " (Kim, p. 37 in Gudykunst). So when individuals' goals do not coincide "with the ingroup's goals" those individuals "make sacrifices for the harmony of the group" (Gudykunst, p. 48).

Besides the facets Individualism-Collectivism can define cultures as *horizontal* and *vertical* (Triandis, 1995; Gudykunst, p. 49). As in horizontal cultures people do not favor of standing out and "see themselves as the same as the others" valuing equality (p. 49). Meanwhile, in vertical cultures people tend to stand out "and equality is not valued highly" (Gudykunst, p. 49).

Bond (1994) shares the belief of Hofstede that there are certain links between cultural distinctions and psychological phenomena (in Kim, p. 3) which gives an opportunity to narrow down this research project basing it on the characters' mental forces. Bond also makes a distinction between the Western and Eastern societies defining them on four dimensions: integration, human-heartedness, interpersonal harmony and group solidarity (Moran, Harris, Moran, 2011, p.25). These factors also provide an insight for future research since a person's attitude differs when s/he is alone compared when s/he is with an individual. All those characteristics may provide ground for analysing the movies from a psychological aspect since nationalities also differ from each other in that their attitudes are shaped by their cultures. Bond's idea may further elaborate Hofstede's psycho-social theory clearly defining "I" in individualistic

nations and the concept of "We" in Collectivistic ones. Hofstede provides the definition in this way (Kim, p. 4; Hofstede, 1991; italics original, p. 51):

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family.

Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

According to Hofstede (1980; Kim, p. 4) individualistic societies emphasize the importance of factors such as "consciousness, autonomy, emotional independence, individual initiative, right to privacy, autonomy", et al. Meanwhile, Collectivist nations stress "collective authority, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing, duties and obligations, need for stable and predetermined friendship" and so on (Hofstede; Kim).

Eighth grade

One of the media for the capstone project is an American movie "*Eighth grade*" which is about an adolescent girl, Kayla who likes to spend time both with friends and alone but is not lonely in reality. However her classmates assume she is such since she does not bother interacting with them because she is constantly harassed by them. She falls in love with one of the characters and he becomes an attribute based on which Kayla decides whether or not to shoot vlogs. Kayla's father is supportive of her despite the fact that she often scolds him.

One of the scenes in which Hofstede's socio-cultural theory can be applied to the movie is when Kayla decides to go on a party because the teenage boy she likes will likely be there. The girl decides to go to the party although she does not like the birthday girl, however after an hour calls the father and asks him to take her home. Hofstede's theory indicates that Americans are an Individualistic nation in that they take the responsibility for their actions and in this case, Kayla decides it is time to leave the party since she feels lonely there. So, she urges her father not to change her mind since she believes her behavior does not have to correspond with the need of others (Hui and Triandis, 1986; Kim).

Hui and Triandis further explain that although living in nuclear families, member may still share their opinions with them, however there is a certain limit when they feel they are responsible for their success or failure. Hofstede links the concept of Individualism back to families which are models of society where an individual is raised and is its smallest unit. Children growing in such societies are taught to think of themselves first in importance before others, since others' concept of "I" differs from theirs and the latter may not become a member of their in-group.

Hofstede assumes it is a virtue in individualistic cultures to be able to explain oneself in interpersonal communications as others should know the truth without caring much about others' feelings (p. 229). However, one should be considerate of the effects without changing the facts and adults in these societies teach their children "to take direct feedback constructively" (p. 229). Additionally, such cultures teach children that coping with a conflict situation is a normal part of life (Hofstede, p. 229).

One can see in "*Eighth grade*" that Kayla behaved in a similar manner; she approached the birthday girl later at school and told her angrily that she could have instead thanked Kayla for the present but she did not. This illustrates Hofstede's theory that individualistic cultures do not allow others to become an in-group member when they feel like others may cause harm to their self-esteem. However, people in these cultures are open in verbal communication since they do not like silence even when conversations seem boring (Hofstede, p. 229). This is obvious when Kayla has conversations with teenager boys at the party which do not last long. Besides, individualist societies are known to cultivate friendships specifically (p. 229). After entering high school, the character tried to make a good impression on students and even made friends with a girl who later invited Kayla to go shopping with her friends. Unlike the fact Kayla liked the person as a friend she was not in favor of palling with others.

Kayla is pretty active in self-actualization since she urges her peers to find themselves no matter who their friends are. Unlike the fact the others make fun of her she is Individualistic in

that she does not care much about what others think of her but instead decides not to interact with others. However, the peers had a negative impact on her since she became secretive in her activities. Although she was an active user of social media she chose what to post carefully.

As a typical adolescent she would change her mind and temper a few times a day. For instance, she did not feel like attending the birthday party, but she eventually went there. She also lost her temper when her father asked her something, however she became calm then and answered the questions. As a process of self-actualization she realized this was the period when she had to go through certain changes and even announced on her vlog that this was a natural process that everyone went through and one could not pass by it. These factors show that Kayla is individualistic in her actions and chooses what to do with her life.

The adolescents who are attached to their parents strongly achieve higher levels of identity development (Berman, Weems, Rodriguez, & Zamora, 2006). Those adolescents are known for coping with conflict situations better than the adolescents who feel insecure (Kobak, Cole, Ferenz-Gilles, Fleming, & Gamble, 1993). Kobak and Cole (1994) emphasize the importance of advances in adolescents' "reflective and critical thinking capacity" (Shumaker, Deutsch, Brenninkmeyer, 2010) when their emotional and cognitive independence from parents is their main goal which complements with their desire of exploring the limits of their physical environment (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994).

Kayla was not attached to the father but tried to work on identity development on her own. As one can see Kayla had difficulties getting along with her father in the movie, however she recognized that something went wrong in their relationships but could not figure out what it was. Growing up Kayla however did not see the father was a figure who she could rely on in difficult times since there was a gap in life experience: father knew that everything would go smoothly for Kayla, so he was calm. However, he was authoritative since he used to follow Kayla wherever she went, who she interacted with or what she did simply because he was overprotective since she did not have a mother in addition to the fact she was adolescent. The

father's figure was authoritative in that he did not control what Kayla liked/followed on social media or did in reality but because he gave her freedom within limits.

The overprotectiveness of Kayla's father does not represent Americans' notion of Individualism since a human being's development process is seen as something to which an individual should reach on his/her own. The father's protection is shown negatively in this case since it only deteriorates the father's and Kayla's relationship and the girl becomes isolated from him more. The girl nonetheless had the option to ask for advice from the father and he should have not interfered with daughter's life as much. Kayla reacted aggressively to father's requests or questions since something would not go well in her favor: relations with peers made her aggressive because she could not control others' emotions and actions and as a result got frustrated easily. For instance, her crush's disregard would make her angry and she would start to blame the father for that.

Kayla did not realize she was in the stage when her mind would change day to day basis and so would her dreams and hopes for the future. As a typical teenager she did not know what she wanted to do with her life, nonetheless wanted to make a good impression on her new friends when she started high school. It turns out she preferred friends to herself to please which is a sign of altruism. She did so when she tried to interact with males who were the same age as her and could not make the communication work for her. Even though she was open while communicating with them she did not bother sharing her feelings with them since she felt embarrassed that she did not act like them.

In addition to this, when people are in their early and middle childhood they have unrealistically positive self-image and inability to distinguish from their real and ideal selves, meanwhile as they mature they have a clearer sense of self-evaluation (Harter & Pike, 1984; Harter, 1999; in Brinthaupt & Lipka, p. 5) and thus they show greater differentiation between the real and ideal selves (Shirk & Renouf, 1992 in Brinthaupt & Lipka, p. 5). As in Kayla's case she felt better around her peers while developing romance with a male teenager and blamed herself for not being

desirable for him. This may be linked to low self-esteem since it is the negative emotional response between the desired and achieved qualities (Peplau & Perlman, 1982 in Vanhalst, 2012) which eventually result in lower well-being. Moreover, adolescents are expected to develop relationships with their peers and simultaneously form their inner selves (Erikson, 1968; Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Vanhalst). Nonetheless, lonely individuals attribute their social failures to internal causes and blame themselves for feeling lonely (Anderson et al., 1983; Renshaw & Brown, 1993) which may explain why Kayla used to get angry on father easily.

One week friends

Another media for the project is a Japanese romantic movie between a schoolgirl (Kaori) who had a medical condition which makes her lose memory on a weekly basis because of an accident and her classmate who does everything to win her heart. However, Kaori avoids getting in touch with Yuki since she does not want to be a burden on him. The storyline starts when they meet each other at the train station and Kaori also becomes Yuki's classmate. Yuki tries to communicate with Kaori via giving her a life journal writing about what happened to her on a weekly basis and after multiple attempts Kaori recognizes Yuki.

Given that romance has to evolve over a long period, adolescents should be aware of the concept as true love and that they may be hurt or have feelings of confusion in earlier stages (Arnett, 2014; Brown, Feiring, Furman, 1999; Kato, 2016; Montgomery, Sorell, 1998; Price, et al.). Romantic relationships have an impact on "psychosocial development and mental health during adolescence" (Price, et al.). However, Kaori does not bother interacting with Yuki because of her condition and thus feels self-conscious.

The Japanese are known for their Collectivism due to historicism since the spread of Confucianism made them seek empathy and benevolence in their daily lives. This factor has further shaped the collectivist spirit of their nation. As a characteristic of Collectivism, the Japanese see that the wishes and needs of a group are more important than theirs but we can see

that Yuki does not fall in this category: he tries to make contact with Kaori no matter what happens. After the schoolteacher advises him not to get in contact with Kaori much, Yuke anyway speaks to her.

Hofstede (2001, p. 216) writes that the distinction between Collectivism and Individualism in psychology bases upon on a fact that a person's individualism is more important in a group setting and disagreeing with this concept views not the characteristics of individuals but of societies on the whole. He contradicts with the objective of traditional psychology noting that this discipline is no longer applicable since the differences have evolved thanks to Western thinking. Additionally, these objectives "are replaced by more collectivist assumptions, another psychology emerges that differs in important respects" (p. 215). The distinction is further elaborated by the definition of "ego" in collectivistic and individualistic cultures in that "the ego is inseparable from its social context" in collectivist psychology (p. 215). Further exploring the shift from collectivism to individualism, he came to the conclusion that not only "ego" and "ego-in-context" caused problems in his research, but also the distinction was not from a psychological viewpoint but from an anthropological one.

Analyzing the characters of *"One week friends"* it becomes clear that Kaori is collectivistic and Yuki is individualistic placing the Japanese between Individualism and Collectivism since Yuki makes decisions as he pleases. One can see he does so even when Kaori's father asks him not to contact with her since this may worsen the situation. However, Hofstede does not illustrate clearly how a given culture is individualistic or collectivistic: the Japanese lie somewhere between Collectivism and Individualism, but both Kaori and Yuki do not show signs of those respectively at the same time since Kaori chooses to go to a fireworks festival with Yuki. There are times when Kaori shows signs of Collectivism when she goes to festivals with friends but most of the times she is individualistic. Given that others would attend the festival was the reason why Kaori attended the festival so as to be a part of a larger group. Yuki, on the other

hand is an open person who used to attend such festivals with Kaori but did not do so to be a part of the group but to be next to her.

Kaori does not show signs of loneliness or tries to cope with it since she lives in her own world but it may also result participating in social situations as well when adolescents lack stable social relations and the phenomenon is not synonymous with social isolation, however it is still unpleasant and distressing (Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Pavri, 2016, p. 86). In most cases the experience is temporary and transient, however it may also turn into chronic loneliness having serious consequences. Kaori has friends but she does not share her feelings with them and her only supporter is her family who believes she had better not interacted with her peers.

Loneliness is often linked to "peer rejection, low quality friendship patterns, and decreased social support" (Asher & Paquette, 2003; Heinrich & Gullone, 2006; Pavri). No one wanted to befriend Kaori since she seemed to be extraordinary, and after knowing the real reason why she lost memory something changed in her. The girl who told her not to get into a relationship with her crush made Kaori walk away and this resulted in the car accident. However, the girl confessed she was the reason behind the car accident which made Kaori confused and she recognized she was lonely. This was when Yuki supported her by telling Kaori she was not alone and that everything would go smoothly by holding her hands. Kaori also confessed she thought of her as a friend but then felt she was broken.

Another question that raises concerns in Hofstede's theory is that he does not see that Individualism is the opposite of Collectivism further explaining that they may be "two poles of one dimension" and also "be treated as two separate dimensions" at different levels (p. 216). The point he makes is that at an individual level a person does not show signs of idiocentric or allocentric personality at the same time so Individualism and Collectivism should be separated. Meanwhile, at a societal level Collectivism that is individualistically inspired excludes components of Collectivism and this level they are opposites of one dimension (p. 216). So, at an individualistic level the relationship between Kaori and Yuki is inconstant and thus it cannot be

seen as collectivistic, nonetheless the characters are open while interacting with their friends to some extent.

Hofstede's point summarizes Sugimoto and Mouer's findings (1989, p. 143) which indicate that the Japanese's feeling of ego is not well defined on a personal-psychological level, and they are collectivistic on an inter-personal level. Meanwhile, on a societal level the characteristics of Collectivism become harmony or consensus (Sugimoto and Mouer In Kalland and Sorensen, 1990) which also link to Confucianism.

As is in Kaori's case loneliness may also be a consequence of peer victimization at school (Campbell, 2013; Pavri, p. 87) and has been one of its most reliable predictors in youngsters (Atik & Guneri, 2013; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Pavri). Similarly, those adolescents who are lonely often attract bullies and become victimized (Pavri). This is seen when Kaori's classmates do not wish to interact with her because she is individualistic in school and they do not share the same views on life, so to save her from trouble Kaori became introverted.

The experience of loneliness changes not only from gender to gender but also it does so based on culture, age and ethnic groups (Fleming & Jacobsen, 2009; Wu et al., 2015; Pavri). Nonetheless, girls are more prone to signs such as sadness, depression, loneliness or hopelessness (Fleming & Jacobsen, 2009; Pavri). Besides, timing and duration of victimization also moderate loneliness experience and since there are differences in the ways cultures experience loneliness, "the incidence of bullying and the likelihood that victimization will affect emotional maladjustment are higher in Western, individualistic cultures" (Wu et al., 2015; Pavri, p. 89). Meanwhile, collectivist cultures such as Asians can find "a more active approach to dealing with victimization" (Pavri, p. 89), so they are more likely to solve the issue easily.

There is a clear differentiation between Americans and the Japanese when they are compared based on their interpretation of Individualism and Collectivism. Unlike the Americans who are open to foreigners the Japanese are seen as people of an isolated island where foreigners are not welcomed the way like they would be in the US (Jandt, p. 173). This is further explained by

stating the Japanese concept of the self distinguished with Americans where the former have to operate in a group organization to be productive (p. 173). Additionally, the Japanese do not favor Individualism as a part of a homogenous society since "group life is to the Japanese what individualism is to the United States" (Jandt, p. 173).

Hofstede (1983, in Jandt, p. 167) also places Japan somewhere between Collectivism and Individualism since its population is stereotyped as group-oriented. Additionally, Hofstede's research may not be stereotypical since the elderly are less individualistic in Japan, meanwhile the younger population "feels moderately independent of collective thought and action" (Jandt, p. 167).

Limitations and Avenues for future research

Since the topic of loneliness is broad it can be applied to all ages and the way the elderly experience it differs greatly from that of adolescents. Mostly, adolescents experience it because of being victims in school bullying when others tease them and they end up feeling alone and hopeless. The project can be expanded to include situations in which adolescents feel lonely such as when they are in school, when they fall in love or they do not get along with parents.

Another limitation of the project was that its media were two movies, however more movies could be analyzed since any culture might be defined as either collectivistic or individualistic and some would be similar in this sense: for instance as Asians were known for Collectivism, the Japanese could be compared with the Chinese and Koreans. However, as much they would be alike in the sense of Collectivism they might also be different in other aspects.

As Americans were known for their Individualism, they differed from the Japanese because those cultures highlighted how living in such environments made them live their lives according to norms.

Besides, I would also like to analyze the cultures from South America particularly Argentines who are collectivist but are not calm unlike the Japanese, Canada and the Arab World.

Argentines might be compared to other peoples of Latin America and Spain because of heritage, for instance. Canadians might be compared to Americans.

The project might also be furthered to study minority groups such as Japanese or Korean Americans.

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