

# Original Research

## Collectivism and individualism in US culture: An analysis of attitudes to group work

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**Article history** Received November 10, 2021 | Revised March 12, 2022 | Accepted June 3, 2022

**Conflicts of interest** The authors declared no conflicts of interest

**Research funding** No funding was reported for this research

**doi** [10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-2-20-34](https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-2-20-34)

**For citation** Tamimy, M., Setayesh Zarei, L., & Khaghaninejad, M. S. (2022). Collectivism and individualism in US culture: An analysis of attitudes to group work. *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(2), 20-34.

*Group work has recently gained attention in educational settings, and culture is an important factor influencing group work so the connection between the American culture and attitudes towards group work is worth studying. The present corpus-based study utilises the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to determine the current and the longitudinal traits of American cultural attitudes, which could influence the Americans' disposition towards collective activities including group work. Analysing the American discourse of different academic genres, it was revealed that while the American culture is predominantly individualistic, it has some potential for collectivism. Interestingly, it was observed that the American cultural is getting slightly less individualistic over time, especially after its individualistic soar in the second half of the 90s.*

**KEYWORDS:** American culture, group work, individualism, collectivism, COCA



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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Group work, whether instantiated as cooperative learning or collaborative learning, is the staple of many recent educational recommendations because plenty of research undergirds its effectiveness in terms of cognitive, affective, and social gains (see Baye et al., 2019; Kyndt et al., 2013; Slavin, 2013; Swanson et al., 2017; Van Ryzin & Roseth, 2019). Despite its experimental repute, it is generally underutilised in classrooms (see Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Buchs et al., 2017; Gillies, 2003; Gillies & Boyle, 2010; Howe, 2014; Le et al., 2018; Mulisa & Mekonnen, 2019; Popov et al., 2012). This paradox is commonly attributed to factors

including student preparation, teachers' beliefs, task construction, group composition, communicative skills, and curriculum (Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020; Abrami et al., 2004; Buchs et al., 2017; Gillies & Boyle, 2010).

Aside from those factors, culture is another factor whose role in cooperative learning has drawn attention. As an instance, Inns and Slavin (2018) maintained that 'culture has an impact on how cooperative learning is enacted and how students benefit. The differences across groups that are evident in the literature may be related to how well cooperative learning methods mesh with existing cultural norms and values' (Inns & Slavin, 2018, p. 258). Tamimy (2019) through a study of lin-

guistic ethnography found that culture influences cooperative learning and group work. Mulisa and Mekonnen (2019) also pointed out '*in Ethiopia, community views cooperative work both as an asset and a liability*', acknowledging the fact that cooperative learning is culturally influenced (Mulisa & Mekonnen, 2019, p. 503). Highlighting the role of culture in cooperative learning, Thanh (2014) noted that East Asian culture is not readily consistent with cooperative learning. Given the import of this newly found factor on cooperative learning, calls can be heard for more attention to be paid to the role of culture (see Ghahraman & Tamimy, 2017; Ghaith, 2018; Hennebry & Fordyce, 2018; Vasileva & Ivanova, 2021).

Although these works have evidenced the impact of culture on cooperative learning, they were mostly concerned with the East Asian countries, or what is called the Confucian Heritage Culture (see Flowerdew, 1998; Inns & Slavin, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2005, 2009, 2012; Thanh, 2014), and thus have assumed that group work is readily compatible with American culture. This is evident in Inns and Slavin (2018), where they uphold that '*while cooperative learning is widely accepted in Western societies, how might it work in Asian cultures?*' (Inns & Slavin, 2018, p. 235) or in the fact that Nguyen et al. (2012) simply identify the origination of cooperative learning in some Western universities with its congruity with the American culture.

Moreover, while studies purport that essentialisation and stereotyping of Asian cultures should be defied, they fall into the trap of essentialism by seeking recourse to the concept of the West, which is explanatorily inadequate due to its indeterminacy (Vignoles, 2018).

While the compatibility of group learning with American culture is taken for granted and thus, virtually no study has vetted it, the complexity with which American culture is played out might pose more doubts regarding group work. This convolution lies in the fact that there is contradictory evidence regarding both the individualism and collectivism of American culture. On the one hand, a growing body of scholarship shows that American culture is marked by individualism or rugged individualism, even culminating in stereotype formation (see Bazzi et al., 2020; Hofstede, 1986; Hsu & Barker, 2013; Myers, 2000; Twenge et al., 2013). In fact, this strand considers American culture as competitive, agentive, prioritising the self over the group, and seeking individual pleasure. On the other hand, there are thought provoking reports (see Fischer, 2008; Tamimy

& Sahragard, 2021) which maintain that American culture is not monolithically individualistic and includes a considerable amount of collectivism as well. This is reified in the coexistence of proverbs denoting individualism (e.g., 'every man for himself') and collectivism (e.g., 'every little helps') within American culture. Fischer (2008) surmised, based upon a sociological reflection, that this ambivalence might be due to the fact that different areas of activities, better called discourses, might have their own specific contingencies, demanding varying degrees of individualism. However, this argument needs more empirical scrutiny (Fischer, 2008). Adding more to the complexity of American culture, it must be remembered that cultures are dynamic and can change longitudinally (DeWall et al., 2011; Twenge et al., 2013), so it is vital to study the quality of these changes (Ogihara, 2017). These contradictions show that the compatibility of group work with American culture cannot be taken for granted.

Before recapitulating this preamble to state the problem, it must be mentioned that culturality and historicity have undeniable impact on people's behaviour and learning styles (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). However, the interaction between American culture and group work is still understudied. This inattention gets more serious when one notices that there are reports which gainsay the stereotyping of American culture as individualistic. Addressing these issues and untangling the Americans' cultural disposition towards group work warrants that the status of American culture in terms of individualism and collectivism be revisited through multiple methodologies.

So, this study draws upon corpus analyses to unravel (a) how collectivistic and/or individualistic American culture is, (b) if there are variations in terms of the preference for individualism across different genres of American discourse, and (c) how American culture's preference for individualism/collectivism has possibly changed over time. This study answers the recommendation of Fischer and Poortinga (2018) to use a mixed-method research into cultural matters to arrive at more convincing findings and heeds the criticism of Schwartz (2011) of the statistical integration of individual level data at a culture level by opting for the scrutiny of a comprehensive corpus of natural language use, which is already integrated.

This study can also provide a nuanced understanding of American culture which can contribute to the honing of social mediation environments such as educational group work and cooperative learning.

It must be mentioned that Hogg and Levine (2010) suggest that human interpersonal behaviour can be placed on a continuum ranging from competition and individualism to cooperation. Cooperation is any state wherein people lend each other a hand to reach a mutual goal. The opposite of cooperation is competition, also described as rugged individualism, wherein any individual seeks only his or her benefit, necessarily at the cost of others' gains. Between the two extremes, there is a state recognised as individualism, which maintains that sometimes people neither compete nor cooperate. They are simply in pursuit of their own benefit, with no regard, either positive or negative, for the others. Similarly, social interdependence theory maintains that individuals can be independent, or alternatively positively or negatively interdependent, resembling cooperation and competition (Johnson et al., 2007).

These psychological issues when translated into the cultural realm correspond to individualism/collectivism. Individualism denotes that individuals are separate with substantial differences, so they prioritise their personal needs, ideas, values over the group, but collectivism includes closely intertwined links between the individuals and social entities so that shared values and norms are preferred to individual benefits and values (Cheng et al., 2020). The self-concept theory also is associated with these discussions. It relates that people can have independent and/or interdependent understanding of themselves.

In fact, *'people with an independent construal of the self view the self as unique, private, and autonomous, whereas people with an interdependent construal of the self view the self as related to others, incorporating and referencing the views of other people'* (Cheek & Cheek, 2020, p. 257). This fleshes out its kin theories by classifying interdependence into relational, public, and collective selves, respectively representing relationships, public image, and group membership.

Since Social interdependence theory and Self-concept theory explain human behaviour in terms of the ideas closely similar to those brought up by individualism and collectivism, it would not be unwise to study the Americans' cultural orientations in terms of the characterisations these theories provide. Within these theories, attention to individuality, rather than commonality, is known as a defining characteristic which can differentiate subcultures (Cheek & Cheek, 2020; Cheng et al., 2020). Therefore, these notions, consistent with the procedure suggested by some empirical re-

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search (see DeWall et al., 2011; Twenge et al., 2013), would be operationally defined as the frequency of first person singular /plural pronouns in social interactions.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Language and culture

Awareness of the association between language and culture is significant in educational settings (Atkinson, 2015; Kramsch, 2014). Language and culture are not distinct from each other, and language can portray culture which can be inferred from different perspectives. From the sociolinguistic perspective, language cannot be separated from its sociocultural context (Dubin & Olshain, 1986). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, concerning the connection between language and culture, includes the principles of language determinism and language relativity. The first suggests that language determines individuals' thinking or cognition (Hussein, 2012; Leavitt, 2010). Based on the latter, human thinking is dependent on language and each language holds a specific world view for its speakers that differs from the way in which speakers of other languages perceive the world (Carroll, 1956), and the distinctions between languages are related to cultural differences (Denisova et al., 2019). Sapir Whorf represents the view that language is not dissociated from culture, *'that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives'* (Sapir, 1970, p. 207), and understanding one of them is not possible in isolation from another. From the cognitive linguistic point of view, language represents the cultural experience of its speakers (Geeraerts, 2006). Based on this perspective, *'all cognition is embodied in cultural situations'* (Gibbs, 1999, p. 156), and meaning making, reflection, and emotion are dependent on biological, social, and cultural experience (Yu, 2014). Considering embodied cognition, language is perceived to represent culture, and its conceptualisations are shaped within the cultural settings (Palmer, 1996; Bugaeva, 2021). In fact, the metaphorical expressions used in each lan-

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guage convey essential linguistic meaning and have a cultural basis. In addition, considering Vygotsky's (1978) perspective, culture offers conceptual categories to arrange and sort out the objects and phenomena within the world. These concepts are reflected in the linguistic signs that transfer across generations, and people within different cultures think about the world differently based on these concepts. This claim also implies an interconnection between language and culture. Furthermore, Byram (1989) explained that *'the language holds the culture through the denotations and connotations of its semantics'* (Byram, 1989, p. 94).

## 2.2. Educational group work

Educational group work is a teaching approach in which the students with different proficiency levels join small groups and cooperate with each other to achieve a particular goal. Hammar Chiriac (2014) explained the group work as a way to learn how to think for yourself, as well as developing the students' argumentative abilities and critical thinking within students' collaboration which leads to higher productivity and greater results. According to Kirschner et al. (2009), group work has economic, social, and specifically academic benefits. It provides *'the opportunity to develop student's learning skills and abilities and helps students to gain more knowledge'* (Meiramova & Zhanysbayeva, 2020, p. 383). It also promotes learners' achievement (Al-Sheedi, 2009), improves learning (Smialek & Boburka, 2006), assists learners to comprehend concepts well (Al-Sheedi, 2009; Li et al., 2010), increases discussion among individuals (Arumugam et al., 2013; Ibranian, 2012), and engages the learners completely in the content of the course (Yazedjian & Kolkhorst, 2007).

Collaboration improves activities such as *'elaboration, justification and argumentation that trigger learning mechanisms'*, which are not easily achievable in individual learning (Yadin & Or-Back, 2010, p. 186). In addition, it helps the achievement of intrinsic and extrinsic goals, brings the feeling of satisfaction from performance, provides the opportunity to influence others,

and promotes friendship (Decker et al., 2015). Students' social skills and self-confidence develop, and their stress decreases through group study (Petress, 2004). Cooperative learning lowers foreign language anxiety (Bailey et al., 1999) as well as performance anxiety (De Saint Leger & Storch, 2009). Finally, cooperative learning is a benefit because, as Vygotsky (1978) asserted, learners learn to do what they are unable to accomplish individually through interaction with an expert person or their peers within the group.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Corpus

The design of this study can best be described as corpus-based because it draws upon a corpus as a tool to answer the research questions (Biber, 2010). A corpus is a large collection of naturally occurring language usage, representative of a language (McEnery et al., 2006) whereby research questions can be empirically answered (Pérez-Paredes, 2021). Corpus studies are appropriate for focusing on the culture because *'culture is more than a collection of individuals. Culture includes assumptions and patterns shared by members; these patterns are often reflected in cultural products such as TV shows, song lyrics, and books'* (Twenge et al., 2013, p. 406). Moreover, corpora are not diluted with biases involved in self-reported measurement of beliefs (Twenge et al., 2013).

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is a large corpus of American English which is updated biannually and at the time of writing includes more than one billion syntactically and semantically tagged words used in different genres since 1990 up to 2021. The data, based on their origin, are divided into eight genres, including Conversation, Fiction, Magazine, Newspaper, Academic, Web (general), web (blog), and TV/Movies. So, COCA is not only a balanced corpus as including different genres, but also each of its genres is balanced internally because it includes different types of material within that genre. For instance, the Newspaper genre includes a balanced array of language data from different sections of different newspapers such as local, news, opinion, etc. The data available in COCA is truly naturally occurring language and no part of it is fabricated for this corpus.

### 3.2. Data collection procedure

It was noticed that a determining difference between various psychosocial and cultural theories, including social interdependence theory, self-concept

theory, and individualism/collectivism introduced for the classification of people and cultures, is the weight and attention they assign to the self versus others. Self-oriented independent people consider themselves as the centre or focus of different phenomena with little or no regard for the communality with others whereas an interdependent people define themselves as relative to others, giving them a collective vantage and thinking point (Cheng et al., 2020; Hogg & Levine, 2010). Thus, the individualist self-oriented cultures tend to use first person pronouns, I and me, more than first person plural pronouns, we and us (DeWall et al., 2011; Twenge et al., 2013).

More attention to personal benefit in contrast to a shared goal is another characteristic by which cultures can be distinguished. This feature occurs in the frequency of ‘my’ versus ‘our’ and ‘personal/individual’ versus ‘common/shared’. Preference for competition or cooperation, as another difference between cultures (Cheek & Cheek, 2020; Cheng et al., 2020), appears as the frequency of ‘competition/rivalry’ versus ‘cooperation/collaboration’.

Consistent with the conceptualisations offered by the theories, empirical linguistic ethnographies (Tamimy, 2019; Tamimy & Sahragard, 2021) also suggest that egoism/self-interest/selfishness are predictors of individualism, whereas altruism/selflessness are among the drivers of collectivism, so the frequency of their use is an indication of their operational meaning. It should not be forgotten that (inter)dependence versus independence and autonomy versus conformity are key

distinguishing concepts (Cheek & Cheek, 2020; Cheng et al., 2020). So, the number of examples of use can be considered operationally meaningful.

To improve the credibility of the research through theoretical triangulation (Ary et al., 2019), self-theory was also drawn upon to collect the data because it, consistent with the social interdependence theory and collectivism/individualism model, maintains that individuals can be culturally different in terms of their view of themselves as independent of or dependent on others (Cheek & Cheek, 2020). It defines independent self-construal as preference for autonomy over connections with others while dependent self-construal ‘views the self as related to others, incorporating and referencing the views of other people and groups in their identity’ (Cheek & Cheek, 2020, p. 257). Based on this distinction, it is believed that emotions can be socially disengaging or engaging, respectively representing independent self-construal and dependent self-construal. Socially engaging emotions, which are normally created as result of social ties, represent dependence and socially disengaging ones, more personally oriented such as pride, are reflective of independence (Cheek & Cheek, 2020). These emotions can be evident in the ways pronouns and adjectives are used. For example, adjectives such as ‘self-reliant’, ‘introspective’, and ‘strong’ when used in a ‘I TO BE adj [independence]’ construction can herald independent self-construal whereas adjectives like ‘sympathetic’, ‘popular’, and ‘beloved’ used in such a construction denote engaging emotions and dependent self-construal.

Table 1  
 The keywords researched in the COCA and their justifying theories/models

THEORY	INDIVIDUALISM	COLLECTIVISM
Collectivism/Individualism Model & Social Interdependence Theory	I/me my personal/individual competition/rivalry egoism/self-interest/selfishness independence autonomy	we/us our common/shared cooperation/collaboration altruism/sacrifice/selflessness dependence conformity
Self-Concept Theory	socially disengaging emotions (e.g., pride, anger)	socially engaging emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, friendliness)

In order to collect the data demanded by the first research question, enquiring about the current status of American culture in terms of collectivism and/or individualism, the corpus of COCA, as a proxy to American culture, was searched for the keywords listed in Table 1 within the period from 2015-2019 and their frequencies were reported. Apropos of the second question, asking about cross-generic cultural differences, the keywords were again searched within the same time span but their frequencies were cross-tabulated across eight genres of the COCA, namely, TV/Movie, Spoken word, Fiction, Magazine, Newspaper, Academic, Web, and Blog. For the third research question, enquiring about the trend of changes in American culture, the keywords were searched within five-year time spans provided by COCA (1990-1994, 1995-1999, 2000-2004, 2005-2009, 2010-2014, 2015-2019) and their frequencies were shortlisted. It is worth mentioning, wherever the search words had more than one element, for example, as with individualism which requires I and me to be both searched, their average frequency was counted in order to balance the unequal quantity.

Although the frequency count for the keywords suggested by the individualism/collectivism model and social interdependence theory was important, data collection extended beyond them to include metaphor analysis regarding the American expression of emotions. As emotions are usually expressed using adjectives, 'I am ADJ' was looked up in the COCA. The results including 500 records and their frequencies were then fed into qualitative analysis and coding. This search produced phrases like 'I'm ready', 'I'm tired', 'I am grateful', 'I am ashamed', in which the adjectives used could be marked either as socially engaging or disengaging. They were coded independently by two assessors who were doctorate candidates in applied linguistics. Emotions '*that are derived from social interdependence and relationally embedded nature of self are referred to as socially engaging*' and the emotions '*that are grounded in independence and autonomy of self and its separateness from others in a relationship may be said to be socially disengaging*' (Kitayama et al., 2006, p. 891). The reliability of the assessors was found to be satisfactory (Kohen's Kappa= 0.87).

In order to know how individualistic/collective American culture currently is, measures of individualism and collectivism as of 1990-2019 were reported separately. The 500 records which showed how people can describe themselves, either as dependent or independent, were coded deductively either as socially en-

gaging, disengaging, or not applicable. The subtotal of frequency for each of these categories was calculated and was added to the other measures of individualism and collectivism. All these measures, according to their types, were averaged to arrive at two integrated measures of the frequency of individualistic and collectivistic linguistic clues. For the second research question, the data were cross tabulated based on their genres and a chi-square test was used to determine the significance of cross-genre variations. And finally, for the third research question, the data was cross-tabulated across five-year periods and the difference between each period with the others was tested using the chi-square.

#### 4. RESULTS

The analysis of the data representing individualism and collectivism from COCA revealed that American culture is overall significantly more individualistic than collectivistic (Table 2). Table 3, evincing more details, provides evidence that American culture is currently on average at least twice as individualistic as collectivistic. Among different measures, the first and the second conspicuous differences were related to the frequency of autonomy in comparison to conformity (ratio= 7.41, std. residual >  $\mp 1.96$ ) and independence in comparison to dependence (ratio= 3.05, std. residual >  $\mp 1.96$ ). This suggests that American culture is individualistic and within its individualism, autonomy is of great importance. This can have an important bearing on the concept of American life-style and American liberty, which will be touched upon later in the Discussion section. Interestingly, competition was only 40% more frequently used than cooperation (Table 3), suggesting that American culture has also considerable potential for collectivism. How this collectivism is born out of the individualism and what motivates it will be further be discussed below.

To find out if there are any cross-generic differences in terms of individualism and collectivism, a 2 x 8 chi-square test was conducted and as Table 4 demonstrates, there were significant differences between the genres in terms of the cultural pattern, individualistic or collectivistic ( $\chi^2(7) = 91282.494$ ,  $p = .00$ ). The existence of individualism was significantly different across almost all the genres, save for the blogs (Table 5). The blog genre showed no significant differences in terms of individualism or collectivism (Std. Residualindiv.= -0.3, Std. Residualcollec.= 0.5). Within the other genres, the TV/Movies was the most individualistic (81.7%) and the academic was the most collectivistic (49.1%). The least

individualistic genre was the Academic and the least collectivistic was TV/Movie. Suffice it to mention that the amount of collectivism and individualism in the academic genre is almost equal.

The trends of change in individualism and collectivism from 1990 to 2019 were also focused on. The Chi-square test, represented in Table 6, revealed that time and the instantiation of individualism/collectivism are not independent ( $\chi^2(5)= 511.66, p= .00$ ). This suggests that over time significant differences in the amount of individualism have occurred in American culture. As Table 7 shows, this significance is mostly driven by the changes in 1990-1994, 1995-1999, and 2015-2019, but the amount of individualism and collectivism in 2000-2014 does not seem to have changed significantly (Standard residual  $< \pm 1.96$ ). According to Table 7, individualism reached to its maximum in 1995-1999 (17.6%, Std. Residual  $> \pm 1.96$ ) and was at its lowest level in 1990-1994 (15.4%, Std. Residual  $> \pm 1.96$ ). Al-

though collectivism has not varied significantly over the period studied, it can be seen that it was at its peak in 2015-2019 with a significant rise (17.1%, Std. Residual  $> \pm 1.96$ ). Figure 1 also illustrates the trend of change and it can be clearly seen that American culture has undergone a relatively radical rise in individualism and then a moderate fall, ending in an estimate of individuality higher than 1990-1994. However, collectivism generally evinced a significant rise, but its slope is very low, heralding a very gradual change in American culture towards higher collectivism within the individualistic milieu (Figure 1).

This can happen due to the advent of social networks or even increased immigration. The very fact that slopes of changes in individualism are not equal to the changes in collectivism shows there is no trade-off between them, suggesting that individualism and collectivism are not at each end of the same variable, rather two distinct variables.

Table 2

*The difference between the measures of individualism and collectivism since 2015 till 2019*

	VALUE	df	ASYMP. SIG. (2-SIDED)
Pearson Chi-Square	4611.005 <sup>a</sup>	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	4550.743	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	4435.696	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	2134586	16%	31

Table 3

*American culture as represented in COCA since 2015-2019*

	SELF-CONSTRUAL		BENEFIT PREFERENCE		BEHAVIOUR		PERSONALITY	
INDIVIDUALISM	l/me vs we/us	emotions (engaging vs disengaging)	my vs our	personal/individual vs common/shared	competition/rivalry vs cooperation/collaboration	independence vs dependence	autonomy vs conformity	self-interest/selfishness vs altruism/selflessness
		1111988	3514	381789	15478	3234	3024	1520
	Std. Residual= 19.2*		-30.80*		-2.9*		-1.0	
COLLECTIVISM	420544	1474	176350	11898	2311	992	205	90
	Std. Residual= 30.3*		48.40*		4.6*		1.6	
RATIO*	2.64	2.38	2.16	1.30	1.40	3.05	7.41	1.94

\*Note: ratio = the individualism divided by the collectivism; \*= significant difference

Table 4

*The difference between overall frequency of individualism and collectivism across genres*

	VALUE	df	ASYMP. SIG. (2-SIDED)
Pearson Chi-Square	91282.494	7	.000
Likelihood Ratio	89934.318	7	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	16898.831	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	2364404		

Table 5

*Individualism and collectivism across different genres*

		BLOG	WEB	TV/MOV	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC
INDIVIDUALISM	Count	230441	183472	575489	242991	278159	111410	81158	42027
	% within type	13.2%	10.5%	33.0%	13.9%	15.9%	6.4%	4.7%	2.4%
	% within genre	73.8%	71.7%	81.7%	64.7%	83.2%	65.9%	62.4%	50.9%
	% of total	9.7%	7.8%	24.3%	10.3%	11.8%	4.7%	3.4%	1.8%
	Std. Residual	-0.3	-12.6	76.9	-64.8	63.5	-38.1	-48.1	-76.5
COLLECTIVISM	Count	81977	72540	129098	132414	55989	57761	48985	40493
	% within type	13.2%	11.7%	20.8%	21.4%	9.0%	9.3%	7.9%	6.5%
	% within genre	26.2%	28.3%	18.3%	35.3%	16.8%	34.1%	37.6%	49.1%
	% of total	3.5%	3.1%	5.5%	5.6%	2.4%	2.4%	2.1%	1.7%
	Std. Residual	0.5	21.2	-129.1	108.7	-106.6	63.9	80.7	128.4

Table 6

*The difference between individualism and collectivism across different time spans*

	VALUE	df	ASYMP. SIG. (2-SIDED)
Pearson Chi-Square	511.660	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	512.024	5	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.794	1	.180
N of Valid Cases	1803454		

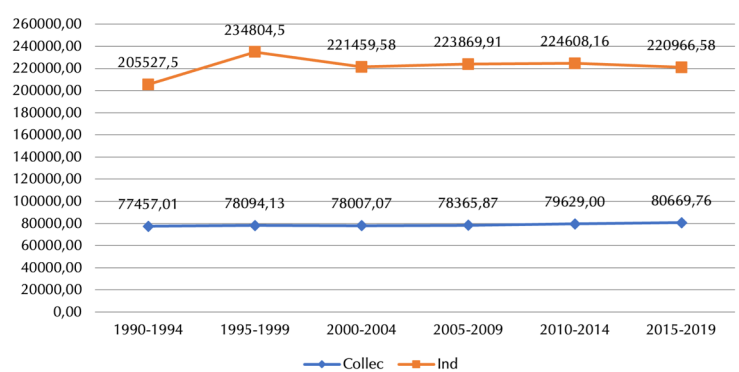


Figure 1. The trend of change in individualism and collectivism



Table 7  
*The trend of changes in individualism and collectivism over time*

		1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2019
INDIVIDUALISTIC	Count	205527	234804	221459	223869	224608	220966
	Expected count	208886.7	230968.0	221053.1	223096.3	224574.8	222654.1
	% within type	15.4%	17.6%	16.6%	16.8%	16.9%	16.6%
	% within time	72.6%	75.0%	74.0%	74.1%	73.8%	73.3%
	% of total	11.4%	13.0%	12.3%	12.4%	12.5%	12.3%
	Std. Residual	-7.4*	8.0*	.9	1.6	.1	-3.6*
COLLECTIVISTIC	Count	77457	78094	78007	78365	79629	80669
	Expected count	74097.3	81930.0	78412.9	79137.7	79662.2	78980.9
	% within type	16.4%	16.5%	16.5%	16.6%	16.9%	17.1%
	% within time	27.4%	25.0%	26.0%	25.9%	26.2%	26.7%
	% of total	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.4%	4.5%
	Std. Residual	12.3*	-13.4*	-1.4	-2.7*	-1	6.0*

### 5. DISCUSSION

The literature has demonstrated the effective role of collectivism, sometimes regarded as cooperative learning, in educational settings, and culture is considered as a significant factor affecting cooperative learning. The findings related to the analysis of the corpus from 2015 to 2019 revealed that American culture tended to be more individualistic rather than collectivist as a tendency toward autonomy and independence is salient throughout these years. This implies that American culture emphasises the individuality of the people, and it is not readily consistent with group work or cooperative learning by design (Myers, 2000). American people are more willing to perceive the world through the lens of independence, relying on their own selves (Fischer, 2008). Similarly, Schwartz (2011), through the analysis of the US samples, found that Americans value autonomy primarily, suggesting individualism. Individualism is at *'the core of American culture and the most representative integral part of American values. It is a moral, political and social philosophy, emphasising the importance of personal, self-contained virtue as well as personal independence'* (Zhang, 2013, p. 36).

In addition, the scrutiny of the unpacked elements of culture showed that American culture is relatively more competitive than cooperative. Americans reckon that competition promotes individuality, and it is a progressive belief in life (Zhang, 2013). This finding

demonstrated that the cultural representations regarding group work within American discourse is mixed rather than monolithic. Although indicating the potential for cooperation, it is individualistic and competitive to a larger extent. However, in line with Fischer (2008) and Tamimy and Sahragard (2021), the study indicated that American culture is not purely individualistic, and that it has the possibility to be collectivist. As cultures, like the individual selves, encompass contradictions (Archer, 1985), American culture employs individualism in some aspects rather than all (Cerulo, 2002), expecting commitment to the group.

Considering different genres of American discourse, representing different social institutions, all categories except blogs, were determined as mostly representing a significant tendency toward individualism. The greatest preference for individualism was evident within the TV/Movie genre while the academic genre tended to be the most collectivist. Nevertheless, the academic genre encompassed almost an equal degree of individualism. This might suggest neutrality within the academic genre, which might have been transpired due to the different degrees of objectivity or subjectivity across different disciplines. Overall, The cultural products mentioned prioritise the significance of the individual over the group. However, the extent of individualism varied across different genres, which might be due to the dissimilar nature of those cultural

discourses. In line with the findings, Twenge et al. (2012) investigated the words and phrases used in a corpus of the American books that concerned individualism and found a cultural tendency toward the increase of individualism with a focus on self and uniqueness. While their study revealed the remarkable position of individualism within American culture, it did not take the cross-generic differences into consideration, unlike the current study, and thus, its findings should be used with caution. Moreover, Hsu and Barker (2013) also found a higher degree of individualism in comparison with collectivism in American television advertisements, and American literature showed a greater focus on self (DeWall et al., 2011). According to Bianchi (2016), economic conditions affect peoples' perspectives as well as the cultural products and added that the economic growth is associated with social change and subsequently with greater individualism and self-focus within American society. Hence, one reason for the changes in the amount of individualism within different genres such as TV and newspapers may be due to the economic issues.

The study also revealed considerable changes regarding individualism within American culture over the passage of time, especially during 1990-1999 and 2015-2019. In agreement with Twenge et al. (2012, 2013), the study indicated the dynamism of American culture and its augmented orientation toward individualism throughout the time under study. The tendency toward individualism was considered the lowest throughout 1990-1994, and it was the highest within 1995-1999. Individualism underwent a remarkable rise within American culture, then, it experienced a moderate decrease in 2000-2004, albeit higher than the previous lowest range. But, the change of collectivism within the American culture has been trivial and progressed at the same rate during the time studied. Although differences related to collectivism were not salient during that time, it reached its highest level between 2015 and 2019. Based on the study, individualism and collectivism can be considered as two discrete variables rather than the two opposite poles of a dichotomous variable that is in contrast with Hofstede (1984). This contributes to the hotly debated controversy regarding the unidimensionality of individualism/collectivism as a single construct or their independence as two constructs (Taras et al., 2013). Consistent with Taras et al. (2013), the findings showed clearly that at the national level, as is the case with our study, individualism and collectivism appear as independent constructs. According to

Hofstede, the shifts in the cultural values can be associated with '*the form of forces of nature or forces of human beings: trade, conquest, economic or political dominance, and technological breakthroughs*' (Hofstede, 2001, p. 34) and language use (Hua, 2010).

Furthermore, it was observed that collectivism, notwithstanding its low growth rate, has significantly increased between 1990 and 2019. This interesting phenomenon can be explained from different vantage points. Based on an ecological framework, Vandello and Cohen (1999) stated that the individualism/collectivism orientation in US is associated with the environment and regional history. Therefore, the American people had a tendency toward individualism in the regions where the economy was more concerned with self-reliant businesses while in the regions where the focus of the economy was on agriculture, people had a tendency toward collectivism as they needed to work together.

Moreover, Carter (2018) found that political ideology, socioeconomic status, and sociodemographic status are more representative of the collectivist values in America. Political ideology and socioeconomic status influence trust in the government to a great extent, and the higher trust rate is associated with more collectivist perspectives since constructing democratic political institutions was due to the need for collective problem-solving at a broad level (Carter, 2018). In addition, Americans consider themselves to be collectivist when it includes seeking advice as a way to interact and connect as well as the sense of belonging to in-groups (Oyserman et al., 2002). Furthermore, American culture can be influenced by immigrants, especially the second generation, who have inherited collectivistic values from their own culture. Decker et al. (2015) found that the Americans are developing a higher tendency for group work because they are getting more involved in a global economy, so their manifest should be adapted to the business requirements. Business students may focus on group work to study and resolve business problems and to promote social interaction that deals with the collectivist orientation (Decker et al., 2015). While American students and businesses tend to focus more on group work, their orientation toward individualistic values seems strong (Sosik & Jung, 2002).

It was found that American culture, despite its sluggish move towards collectivism, is dominantly individualistic, but how this translates into the use of group work in classes merits attention. Although it might intuitively be presumed that collectivism sits better with

group work than individualism (see Flowerdew, 1998; Kyndt et al., 2013), their relationship is not this straightforward because Brown (2007) noted that group/pair work, regardless of its surface similarities with collectivism, demands some qualities including active learning, expressiveness, openness, and low power distance to perform effectively, qualities which are not strongly embraced much by collectivistic societies. Similarly, Ghahraman and Tamimy (2017) highlighted that 'there are complex relations between culture and CL [cooperative learning]. ...it was evident that cultural dimensions differently affected different processes of CL' (Ghahraman & Tamimy, 2017, p.108) and observed that although collectivism can partially enhance group work through its effect on task cohesion, there are stronger factors such as uncertainty avoidance, assertiveness, and power distance which advantage individualism over collectivism in its positive influence on group work. These findings together suggest that individualism, and in turn American culture, is fertile for group work.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Considering the increasing significance of group work within academic contexts in recent years and the role that culture plays in cooperative learning, the present study employed a corpus-based analysis to investigate the position of individualism and collectivism within American culture to unveil its trend toward group work. The study revealed a cultural tendency to-

ward greater individualism and competitiveness with a lower potentiality for cooperation, which indicated that to a considerable extent Americans do not have a favourable attitude toward group work. This is due to a great emphasis that is devoted to autonomy and independence in American culture in contrast to conformity and dependence. In cultures where individualism gains a great importance and dominance, 'the self is regarded as independent and autonomous and defined by a unique constellation of attributes, preferences, and values' (Bianchi, 2016, p. 567). Moreover, examining different genres within COCA represented that the cultural products (i.e. TV/Movie, Spoken, Fiction, Magazine, Newspaper) more or less include greater degrees of individualism. However, the academic genre has almost an equal preference for both individualism and collectivism. The changes within the American corpus throughout the time studied have also displayed a cultural orientation toward individualism. The study suggests that the implementation of group work or cooperative learning is culture-dependent, and American culture has an ambivalent attitude toward it.

This study involves some delimitations and limitations. In the trend analysis it was confined to 1990-2019 so it only shows the contemporary changes, but it is certain that culture, by its nature, undergoes more salient transformation in the long run. The future research is recommended to triangulate the data from COCA with those available from the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA).

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