

This article written by Anand Giridharadas from Cambridge deals with the United States's recent past writings. They hold now more the words "fun" and "achievement" than "pleasure" or "excellence". What does it reveal about American society according to Anand Giridharadas?

First of all, we can clearly identify that the American culture is action-oriented. Indeed, "fun" and "achieving" are all about doing, whereas "pleasure" and "excellence" are more like being. "You don't feel fun [(while you do feel pleasure)], you do something fun", reads the text. On the contrary, "excellence" is "the quality of being excellent". An example of what is fun is paintball while gushing in waterfalls provides pleasure. When you play paintball, you move, you do something but when you gush in waterfalls you remain still. The United States is thus definitively more action-oriented.

Meanwhile, we can connect it to the high masculinity of this society. Achievement is a part of the definition of masculinity given by Hofstede! On the other hand, since pleasure is provided, you needn't do anything to feel, you can wait for it. "Merriam-Webster defines "pleasure" as "a state of gratification"", reads the text. A society where people are being taken care of and where there is gratification is more feminine than masculine, which is obviously not the case of the United States.

In addition to that, the article reminds us that the United States is not a court society. It is said that "fun has no hint of elitism, whereas pleasure vaguely does". The same goes for excellence, which is not given to anybody, while "anyone can achieve". As a matter of fact, "achievement is a result gained by effort", so what you do and what comes out of it is important. This is definitely an element of the United States being a merchant society.

Finally, there are some examples of the low uncertainty avoidance and the individualism of the United States. The sentence "It [(achievement)] is more about checking boxes than fulfilling inner potentialities" lets us infer it. Since you don't have to fulfill your abilities without worrying about the future, we can talk about low uncertainty avoidance. Moreover, in very collectivist countries such as China, fulfilling your abilities, doing all that you can, is highly valued because it's how you can contribute to the common interest best. The example of Wall Street is also very much colored with low uncertainty avoidance.