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82-273

Project Draft

Introduction:

The topic of my project is collectivism and conformism in Japanese society. I plan to explain how these two concepts have an effect on the way Japanese people act and how their society functions. Collectivism and conformism in Japan are very common in Japan, and it is common for someone to prioritize group harmony over their individualism. I will be exploring how this concept is shown in the media, especially in a potential life or death situation. I will also compare it to American culture and possibly Korean culture. If I decide to compare it to Korean culture, I will definitely have to do more research as my knowledge of Korean culture is limited. I will try to find studies or articles on collectivism and conformism in American culture as well. My primary research will be observations on a TV show and possibly an older movie to highlight differences between older and modern Japanese culture.

Research Questions:

My hypothesis will be how conformism and collectivism can affect people's relationships. I will answer questions regarding the consequences it can have on relationships and individuals, and the ways in which people conform to these values. In "Alice in Borderland", I expect to see (or have seen) extreme examples of people participating in collectivism and conformism due to their lives being on the line. I will analyze the show as well as real life examples of these values in Japan. I expect that the real-life examples will be significantly less extreme, and will take place in school or work related settings.

Background Research:

I plan to include a study found in the research journal *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* titled “Fitting in or Sticking Together: The Prevalence and Adaptivity of Conformity, Relatedness, and Autonomy in Japan and Turkey”. This article explains how conformity is present in Japan and Turkey and then explains a study they conducted to see exactly how it differs in the two countries. The authors mention that conformity may be seen as a “lack of autonomy” in Western countries, it is seen as a way to fit in in Asian societies (Güngör).

Another source I found is an online article from *The International School of the Sacred Heart's Student Publication* titled “Conformity in Japanese Society”. This article details the ways in which conformity in Japan is so extreme to the extent where it harms Japanese citizens. One example stated in the article is a high-school student who had been forced to dye her naturally brunette hair to the point where it damaged her hair and scalp (L, 2019). This kind of action shows how such a strict belief on conformity not only restricts students’ individuality, but also forces people to change natural parts of themselves to fit everyone else. Additionally, those who are victims of this form of treatment hesitate to speak up, as the conformist culture also promotes being compliant to not disturb group harmony. I may mention the change in the Japanese testing policy that was put into place in 2021, in which university entrance exams were changed to include fewer multiple choice and more free-response questions that would require test-takers to think of their own answers. I believe that this article shows how collectivism exists even in the way Japanese students are taught, where they are taught to perfectly emulate what their instructor does.

In order to utilize different perspectives and viewpoints, I will also explain the more positive sides to collectivism and conformism. The article mentioned previously also stated that Japan’s crime rate is significantly lower than America’s. This can be viewed as a positive effect

of conformism. Also, prioritizing the needs of a group is beneficial in cases where someone chooses to forgo their own opinions for the sake of everyone else, like in a group project or a business discussion.

I plan to use and analyze a recent Japanese television show titled “Alice in Borderland”, which is an action/thriller drama that aired from 2020-2022. The concept behind the show is that people in Japan are suddenly put in a universe that is exactly the same except for the fact that they now have to play “games” in order to survive. Surviving a game provides the player with a “Visa” that allows them to stay alive for a certain number of days. These games are often strenuous and cruel both physically and emotionally. The reason I want to include this show in my project is that I believe it does a good job in showing how big of a role conformity and collectivism plays in Japanese society.

Research Design:

I will use a spreadsheet to keep track of certain instances in “Alice in Borderland” where I see collectivism and conformism come into play. A limiting factor is that the show is clearly not realistic, and the events are heavily exaggerated as the situation in the show would never occur in real life. However, although the actions of the characters are very extreme, I believe that there is some truth and real-life behavior shown through these characters, and it demonstrates how Japanese people may act when suddenly placed into an extreme scenario.

I will compare with the United States by finding examples of conformism in the United States. I may reference American media like “The Hunger Games” which is a movie where characters are put in a situation where their lives are on the line, and real-life situations where people in the US demonstrate collectivism and conformism. I will also collect data by tracking specific scenes in “The Hunger Games” where I see conformism and collectivism.

Works Cited

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(Not quite sure how to cite these)

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Alice in Borderland