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Communalism as a Fundamental Dimension of Culture

by Andrew A. Moemeka

This essay does not dispute the authenticity of individualism and collectivism as dimensions of culture. However, existing literature has missed a fundamental dimension, communalism, and has mistakenly attributed the characteristics of communalism to collectivism. Here, I affirm the fundamental nature of communalism as a cultural dimension and discuss how its characteristics markedly differ from those of collectivism and individualism. I then examine how communication works in communalistic communities. I throw some light on the concept of cultural dualism and introduce personalism as an emerging social order in both individualistic societies and urban centers of communalistic societies.

Geertz (1965) unequivocally pointed out that humanity is as various in its essence as it is in its expression (p. 36). Simply stated, cultures differ, as does the process by which cultures are expressed and given substance. The validity of this variability hypothesis has been confirmed in many studies. Some of these studies examined special characteristics of individual cultures (e.g., Bledsoe, 1980; Choldin, 1981; Gellner &Waterbury, 1977; Meucke, 1983: Silverman, 1965). Others, from different perspectives, discussed dimensions that have universal connotations, such as syntality, nations, and national character (e.g., Cattell & Brennan, 1984; Inkeles & Levinson, 1969; Rummel, 1972). In an attempt to synthesize the many different research efforts, Naroll (1970) reviewed 150 comparative studies identifying characteristics of cultural systems that tend to coevolve (e.g., weak-strong command of the environment, simple-complex organizational structure, rural-urban population pattern, consensual-authoritative leadership patterns, general-specific occupational specialization).

Not satisfied with these schemas, Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) have examined other schemas of cultural variability that tend to influence communication more directly. Of direct relevance here is their rather emphatic statement on the variability of cultural dimensions—aspects of culture that can be measured

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INDIVIDUALISM	< >	COLLECTIVISM
Universalistic		Particularistic
Achievement-oriented		Ascription-oriented
Self-interest		Group interest
Self-reliance		Cooperation
Individual rights		Group solidarity
Low-context communication		High-context communication

Figure 1. Major dimensions of cultural variability from Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988)

relative to other cultures. Based on their careful study of the work of such theorists as Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985), Hofstede and Bond (1983), Hui and Triandis (1986), and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) concluded that individualism-collectivism is the major dimension of cultural variability isolated by theorists across disciplines (p. 40). Lonner and Berry (1994) posited the same view when they asserted that the concepts of individualism and collectivism appear to define the endpoints of a hypothesized continuum that can be used to help explain sources of variability in human thought and interaction (p. xv). The research findings suggest that Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey are correct in their assertion. Of the five cultural continua identified by Hofstede (1991)—namely, collectivism versus individualism, power distance (from small to large), femininity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance (from weak to strong), and long-term orientation versus short-term orientation—the most fundamental would appear to be individualism versus collectivism (p. 14). As Hofstede (1991) pointed out, at the root of the difference between cultures is a fundamental issue in human societies—the role of the individual versus the role of the group (p. 50). However, the continuum of individualism-collectivism used to represent this "fundamental issue in human societies" is incorrect. The extreme right of the continuum is not collectivism, but communalism. Past theorists and researchers, as well as existing literature, have omitted communalism as this fundamental type of cultural social order under which individuals virtually "lose the self" for the welfare of their community.

The omission of this fundamental dimension is instructive. It would appear that the concept of communality does not occupy a visible space in the codes of Western culture and communication specialists. The concept is conspicuously missing from the *American Encyclopedia of Sociology*. It also is missing from existing texts on culture and cultural variability. Western culture and communication specialists, although ostensibly addressing collectivism, unknowingly use many characteristics of communalism. Half the characteristics identified with collectivism by these theorists and researchers are, in reality, the characteristics of communalism (see Figure 1). Thus, although the concept of communalism has been absent from discussions of cultural variability, its characteristics have been present (though misapplied). Although the concept of collectivism has been conspicuously present, it has done so mostly on borrowed and inappropriate characteristics. It is mainly this inappropriate characterization that has led researchers and authors erroneously to classify such countries as Nigeria, Brazil, Korea, Thailand,

Saudi Arabia, and Jamaica as collectivistic societies when, in fact, they are fundamentally communalistic societies. Adding to this confusion is the constant use of the concept "group" in place of "community." By doing this, researchers and authors appear to assume that the two concepts are synonymous. In cultural and anthropological terms, they are not. Groups are formed. So are interest-oriented communities. Traditional communities, however, concerned with the "total person" and his or her complex environment, evolve. Groups and interest-oriented communities may form and may disintegrate. Traditional communities endure.

Conceptual Clarification

To set an appropriately intellectual scene for our discussion, it is necessary to define and discuss the following key concepts: group, community, individualism, collectivism, and communalism.

Group

It might seem difficult to have a concise and tightly descriptive definition of the term *group*, because there are many types of groups. Some are loosely connected, others are very tightly connected. However, there are many definitions of the term in use. Each almost always is directed at describing a particular type of group. Four examples can be cited. Bass (1960) defined group as "a collection of individuals whose existence as a collection is rewarding to the individuals" (p. 39). This definition stresses the terms collection and individual, implying that even though members have close contact as a collective, they each still maintain a high degree of individuality. Each one is in the group because the cost–benefit ratio of belonging to it is higher on the benefit side for the individual. The second definition, by Fiedler (1967), is more suited to the term *community* than to *group*. Fiedler stated that a group is "a set of individuals who share a common fate, that is, who are interdependent in the sense that an event which affects one member is likely to affect all" (p. 7). This definition stresses what Campbell (1958) has called "entitativity" (i.e., the extent to which a group has the nature of an entity or real existence). Entitativity would appear to divide groups into two broad types—those that have a high degree of identity (modern communities?), and those that do not have a high degree of identity (nominal social aggregates). This definition would seem to be concerned with social aggregates that have high entitativity. That is, social aggregates in which "people are close to one another, are similar to one another, seem to be doing the same things over time, and are spatially arranged in a cohesive pattern" (Mullen & Goethals, 1987, p. 4). The definition points to the confusion that has been created by using the concepts of group and community interchangeably. Shaw (1981) provided a third definition, acknowledged by Schultz (1989) and Reicher (1982) as that which is most widely used. It says that a group is "two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such a way that each person influences and is influenced by each other person" (p. 8). Shaw's definition stresses interaction and mutual influence as the chief characteristics of the group. The fourth definition, by Reicher (1982), sees the

group as "two or more people who share a common social identification of themselves, or perceive themselves to be members of the same social category" (p. 42).

Notice the absence from all four definitions of similarity of cultural identity, physical and psychological proximity, and common ancestry—all of which are sine qua non characteristics of traditional communities. All the above definitions, with the possible exception of Fiedler's (1967), imply the act of formation or creation. As Bertcher and Maple (1977) have pointed out:

> In group creation, you select members for a group that doesn't yet exist. The potential members may have had little or no prior social contact as a group. As a result you literally 'create' a group from a collection of people who are often strangers to one another. (p. 15)

This coming together gives rise to a common life with a common purpose determined during the formation phase of the group. As Mullen and Goethals (1987) explained: "Group members come together and begin to arrive at definitions of tasks and requirements of group members. They exchange information and begin to develop the interpersonal relations that are to define membership in the group" (p. 11). The optional (membership) and temporal (structure) dimensions of groups are also subtly implied in the definitions.

Community

The concept of *community* can be characterized in different ways, but all characterizations emphasize one or more of the following features: common ancestry, defined boundary, close affinity, common interest, and social control. Therefore, there are communities of interest (sociocultural, socioeconomic, sociopolitical), communities of ideas (paradigmatic groupings in the intellectual world), and communities of common heritage (ethnic communes, villages, towns). These conceptual categories are, of course, not mutually exclusive communities. For example, those who live in a rural village occupy a defined area with limited boundary. They usually have a common ancestry, close relationships, and interrelated social and economic roles. They accept social control and have an overriding common purpose.

There are two basic types of community. The first—formed communities—are interest- or specific purpose-oriented communities geared toward achieving specific or limited goals. This would appear to be the type that Hillery (1968) had in mind when he defined the community as "that unit of social organization or structure which comes into being when interactional activities become sufficiently regularized or patterned for us to say that the total complex of them comprise an identifiable entity" (p. 198). This definition emphasizes formation and formal structure, two extremely important characteristics of modern communities like communes, senior citizen homes, monasteries, boarding schools, convents, and satellite towns or villages. Membership in such communities is voluntary or optional and is often contractual in nature. The second type of community—culturally evolved communities—are tradition- or people-oriented (culture-conscious) communities, which are always based on common ancestry and have a holistic perspective. It seems that this is the type of community Warren (1978) was attempting

to describe when he defined the term as "an area in which groups and individuals interact as they carry on daily activities and in which regularized means of solving common problems have been developed" (p. 9). Membership in such communities is culturally mandatory for all the descendants of the common ancestor. Individual members have no choice but to be members. They are born into the community, not selected into it. There may be strangers within the boundaries of such communities. However, such people are recognized only as strangers and are not seen as members of the community. Members of the traditional community are those who can show appropriate evidence of birth and heredity. A member may emigrate, or may relocate hundreds of miles away from the locus of his or her community. He or she may even reject the norms and mores of the community and discard all their trappings, yet culturally he or she still remains a member. Not only is the individual an eternal member of the traditional community, his or her offspring are, whether they like it or not, also eternal members of the community. The degree of entitativity in traditional communities, as Martinez-Brawley (1990) indicated, is of the highest order. "Community human relationships are intimate, enduring and based on a clear understanding of where each person is in society. A man's worth is estimated according to who he is, not what he has done" (p. 5). Within such communities, there are groups based on major occupational distinctions. Because occupations within such communities are generally diffuse, a man can be a farmer, a hunter, and a blacksmith; a woman can be a cloth weaver, a trader, and a musician. However, it is the individual's major occupation that determines to which group he or she belongs.

The existence of groups within the community is clear evidence that the group concept cannot be rightly equated with the community concept. People can belong to as many groups as they like, but they can belong to only one traditional community. All communities, the membership in which is voluntary and optional, are contractual in nature and are more or less collectivistic. These usually are communities that are, like the group, formed by a collection of formerly unrelated individuals. All communities, the membership of which is mandatory, are hereditary in nature and are communalistic. These are communities that evolved from common ancestry. The purest form of common ancestral communities are traditional communities. The type of social order that obtains in such communities is Communalism. This is a social order that is not only as valid as Individualism and Collectivism in cultural variability, but is, in fact, more fundamental than Collectivism.

Individualism

Individualism is a social order that gives the pride of place to the individual over the group or the community. It is the practice or social order in which single human beings living in the same community or society are considered separate, distinct entities. Although people are treated as more important than the society or community to which they belong, no one is recognized as having more rights than the others in the same society or community. Culturally, all are equal. All citizens have freedom to pursue their own socioeconomic interests and are expected to succeed by their own initiative.

According to Hofstede (1991), "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" (p. 50). This definition appears to be on the extreme side, approaching what Hsu (1983) called rugged individualism, or what Tonnies (1887/1963) called gesellschaft (high individualism). Not all individualistic social orders are of this extreme type. Individualism is built on the principles of self-interest and self-reliance. Contrary to what now appears to be popular opinion, selfishness is not one of the characteristics of authentic individualism. Although it is a social order in which the interest of the individual prevails over the interest of the group, individualism recognizes the worth and rights of all individuals in the society. Under authentic individualism, the concept of envy is divested of its pejorative connotation. It assumes a positive connotation instead. Envy becomes a mental instrument for positive action towards self-propelled achievement. In this social order, envy provokes healthy competition, leading people not to begrudge others their successes, but to make necessary and lawful efforts toward achieving one's own goals.

Individualism allows each person to concentrate on, and to propagate, his or her own rights and freedom, but without denying others the right to do the same for themselves. This requires an intricate balance between what the individual wants vis-à-vis what others want. Therefore, individualism upholds the old Roman adage that "virtue stands in the middle." It also would seem to uphold the Golden Rule of treating others as you would like them to treat you. This is balanced self-interest that recognizes that an individual's right to throw a punch at someone else's face should stop where that someone else's nose begins. The immediate or ultimate goal of individualism is to give primacy to the rights of the individual and priority to his or her welfare.

Collectivism

Belloc (1977) defined *collectivism* as "the placing of the means of production in the hands of the political officers of the community—the principle or a system of ownership and control of the means of production and distribution by the people collectively" (pp. 41–42). This economic-oriented definition of collectivism is not sufficiently inclusive. It seems to ignore the sociopolitical component, under which collectivism reflects the practice of contemporary Western democracies—the coming together of basically individualistic people to form a union (i.e., government) ostensibly for the common good, but fundamentally to protect individual rights and liberties. Collectivism, therefore, is a social order that recognizes the rights of individuals to self-actualization and acknowledges that self-actualization would be easier to achieve if people banded together for the purposes of pooling resources and making decisions. It is a social order in which individuals come together to form an aggregate to have the collective power and protection of the group behind them in their individual pursuits. It stands between individualism and communalism, apparently utilizing the best of the two social orders without denying the uniqueness and utility of their separate identities. No wonder Eliot (1910) saw the action of municipalities that housed the homeless, fed the hungry, and provided free elementary education for the poor as not practicing 19th-century socialism, but "abiding by the principles of collectivism, without intending

even the least interference with private property, family duty or the self-respecting independence of the individual tax-paying citizen" (p. 7).

In collectivism, like in individualism, self-interest (not selfishness) undergirds actions, and effectiveness (not affectiveness) underscores communication intentions. Most individuals who make up a collective are more interested in what they can get out of the collective than in what they can contribute to it. When they communicate, more emphasis is placed on how to get to the target audience, and how to achieve the desired goal, than on how the achievement or nonachievement of the desired goal would affect existing or future relationships. Interpersonal relationships are heavily weighed in favor of what Cushman (1989, p. 90) called creative coordination behavior, that is, interaction based on mutually developed and agreed upon (between interactants only) behavior type or pattern. However, because the success of the individual largely depends on the collective creating an enhancing and supporting environment, appropriate allowance is made for standardized coordination behavior (Cushman, 1989, p. 90), that is, interaction based solely on socially sanctioned and collectively agreed-upon behavior type or pattern. This delicate balancing of individual and collective rights has given collectivism its unique identity. Its ostensibly immediate goal is the welfare of the collective. Its ultimate goal is the protection of the rights of the individual.

Communalism

Communalism is the principle or system of social order in which, among other things, the supremacy of the community is culturally and socially entrenched, society is hierarchically ordered, life is sacrosanct, and religion is a way of life. In such a community, people are not seen as important in their own right. Each one is an integral part of the whole, and derives his or her place in the context of the community. People in a communalistic community are born into the community. They are not selected into it. Such a community is not created as a result of the coming together of individuals. It is an evolved community whose membership is hereditary.

In a communalistic social order, community welfare undergirds actions. Nothing done, no matter how important and useful it is to the individual, is considered good unless it has relevance for the community. No misfortune, no matter how distinctly personal, is left for the individual to bear all alone. The community laughs together and also cries together. Affectiveness (in addition to affectedness and effectiveness) underscores communication intentions. Not only are members concerned about their messages reaching their destinations and meeting the needs for which they were sent, they are more concerned about how the result of their communication would affect existing and potential future human relationships. In interpersonal relationships and in social actions, standardized coordination behavior is the rule (Cushman, 1989). Adherence to communication rules (tacit but socially sanctioned understandings about appropriate ways to interact in given situations) is a strict requirement. Noncompliance provokes strict social, and often economic and psychological, sanctions.

Unlike in collectivism, where the concern of the individual is with the adaptability of self-presentation image (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988), in commu-

nalism the concern is the authenticity of community-presentation image. Therefore, the guiding dictum is this: "I am because we are" (Mbiti, 1969, p. 108). Meanings and understandings are mostly projected through specific nonverbal codes (e.g., eye behavior, body movements, signs, silence), and through the use of idioms, proverbs, and wise sayings. This high-context communication environment (Hall, 1976) produces situations in which very little is said to imply much. Coorientation is achieved through mental application of codes and contexts sometimes external to ongoing communication. Appropriate feedback is expected as a matter of course.

Communalism is the fundamental culture in almost all developing societies, and certainly in Africa. It is also the social order for American Indians, Australian Aborigines, Canadian Indians, Eskimos, Southeast Asians, and those in the Caribbean countries, to mention just a few. Its immediate and ultimate goal is not the protection of the rights of the individual or of the goals of groups within the community, but the maintenance of the supremacy of the community as an entity and the safeguard of its welfare.

The communalistic social order is so unique that one finds it difficult to understand why cultural theorists and researchers have ignored its concept and misapplied its indicators. It is particularly surprising that one of the most prolific theorists in cross-cultural studies, Harry Triandis, still has not noticed the omission and the misapplication. In his works on this particular issue (Triandis, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1994, 1995), the individualism-collectivism continuum remains the basis of discussion.[1] There is no mention of communalism. Even Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961, pp. 17–20), who delineated three relational principles (i.e., lineal, collateral, and individualistic) that are similar (in reverse order) to the individualistic-collectivistic-communalistic classification used *group* instead of *community* and engaged in wrong application of characteristics. Even though they affirmed correctly that linearity derives from hereditary factors, they used the concept of group to describe Navaho Indians, whom they classified under the collateral, collectivistic principle instead of the lineal, communalistic principle.

Fortunately, authors from the so-called collectivistic countries are now convinced that the fundamental basis of their social order is communalism. Kim (1994) said that "the boundaries within a culture or across cultures are dynamic; thus the patterns depicted by Individualism/Collectivism are approximations that need further refinements, elaboration, and validation" (p. 40, see also Schwartz, 1994).[2] Kim (1994) also found that "family-oriented communalism has been transformed into corporate communalism in the Korean business sector; 'communal particularism' appears to permeate the 'diffused, shared' systems of occupational welfare in

[1] Triandis (1995) made no allowance for any other cultural dimension. In spite of his mention of communitarianism and his careful delineation of the difference between it and both individualism and collectivism (p. 37), he rejected the idea of any dimension other than individualism and collectivism.

[2] Schwartz (1994) asserted that even though value profiles of nations support well-known dichotomies of cultural variability as Individualism-Collectivism (Triandis, 1990) and Independent-Interdependent Selves (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), they also suggested that more complex dimensions are needed to capture the diversity of culture differences (pp. 42–43).

INDIVIDUALISM	< >	COLLECTIVISM	< >	COMMUNALISM
Universalistic		Universalistic		Particularistic
Self-interest		Group-Individual interest		Communal interest
Self-reliance		Cooperation		Coordination
Achievement-oriented		Achievement-oriented		Ascription-oriented
Individual rights		Collective-Individual welfare		Community welfare
Low-context communication		Low-context communication		High-context communication

Figure 2. Fundamental dimensions of cultural variability

Japan" (p. 251). Evidence points to the fact that the major dimensions of cultural variability are not just individualism and collectivism, but individualism, collectivism, and communalism. The West is primarily associated with individualism, and the developing societies are primarily associated with communalism. For both, collectivism has relevance.

Two sets of the differentiating characteristics shown in Figure 2 above, universalism-particularism and low-context–high-context communication, need further explanation. The others are self-explanatory. According to Parsons (1951), a universalistic orientation is one in which people or objects are categorized in terms of some universal or general frame of reference. This means that the same standard is applied in the same way in different situations. For example, a handshake (as a sign of welcome, good relationship, or greeting) is extended to everyone by anyone. In a particularistic orientation, people and objects are categorized in specific terms, resulting in interactions that are unique to situations. For example, a young person may not shake hands with an older person unless the older person initiated the process, and women do not usually shake hands with men. Hall (1976), using communication context to differentiate cultures, identified two, the low and the high. High-context communication is that in which "most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (p. 79). A low-context communication or message, in contrast, is that in which "the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code" (p. 79). The West is associated with low-context communication. The developing societies are associated with high-context communication.

Cultural Dualism

This short explanation should help highlight the close relationship between collectivism and individualism, and raise questions. Are the so-called individualistic societies (e.g., United States, Germany, United Kingdom) truly individualistic, are they collectivistic, or both? Our investigation has revealed that most of the world has come under the influence of cultural dualism, that is, two or more cultural dimensions operating side by side in the same society or community. Based on the definition of individualism given above, to what extent is the United States (with city, state, and federal governments, and numerous nongovernmental and

philanthropic organizations) an individualistic society? It is true that existing research reports and popular opinion point to the U.S. as an ideal example of an individualistic culture, but much of what happens in the U.S. is conspicuously collectivistic. How else can one, for example, explain the existence of free elementary and high school education, unemployment benefits, and social welfare? The same questions can be asked about other Western nations (e.g., United Kingdom, France, Canada, Germany, and Norway). These countries, like the U.S., seem to exhibit visible traits of cultural dualism. They are societies in which two cultural dimensions—individualism and collectivism—operate side by side.

Cultural dualism is, of course, not unique to the so-called individualistic societies. It is also a problem with many so-called communalistic societies, whose cosmopolitan centers cannot wait to imitate the cultural traits of the West. It is not clearly evident that the countries we have identified as communalistic are truly communalistic, or are (as existing texts would have us believe) authentically collectivistic. To what extent is Korea, for example, with numerous privately owned industries and distinct self-serving socioeconomic and political groups, communalistic? It is true that traditional Korean familism (Yi, 1983), or what Okochi, Karsh, & Levine (1973) have called family-oriented communalism, engenders an attachment to lineage. Even though this attachment is so tenacious that it often takes precedence over the attachment to the society or nation, the presence of industrial organizations and representative government is a strong evidence of collectivism. Similarly, how correct is it to call what happens in Lagos (Nigeria) and other centers of economic and political power in the developing world (e.g., accumulation of wealth, through both legal and illegal means, disregard of authority and morbid desire of many to be dissociated from their original rural communities and associated only with their urban and city groups) characteristics of communalism? Once again, it appears that countries such as these are under the influence of cultural dualism.

Although it seems that there are, at present, no communities that can be classified as authentically individualistic, there are communities that are still distinctly communalistic. Examples can be found in different continents of the world: the Aborigines of Australia (Arden, 1994; Tonkinson, 1991); the Shuswap of Canada and the Eskimos (Cooper, 1994); the people of Southern India (Dumont, 1983); the Shona of East Africa (Gelfand, 1973); the Oromo of Ethiopia (Hassen, 1990); and the Aniocha of Nigeria (Moemeka, 1989). Communities such as these still maintain their communalistic characteristics despite the encroaching force of materialistic modernization.

Caveat

Before turning our attention to communication within communalistic societies, it is necessary to say a few more words about collectivism and communalism. The two definitions of collectivism provided by Belloc (1977) and Eliot (1910) show clearly that collectivism was originally (and remains) a social order practiced in the Western world before the advent of cultural theorists. It was used not only as a welfare-oriented concept, but also as a generic concept covering the political philosophies of fascism, communism, and dictatorship practiced in Germany, Italy,

and the Soviet Union (Chamberlin, 1938, pp. 66–115). Western scholars have a propensity to ascribe to the developing world what they consider unbefitting of the developed West; this has prompted the ascription of collectivism to developing societies. The pejorative meaning (Lawler, 1980) that fascism and dictatorship gave collectivism in the West, along with the shallow understanding of the social order of traditional societies and the subsequent misinterpretations of its tenets and rationale, appear to have given the impression that such an ascription was (and is) appropriate.

It seems safe to assume that it is this distancing of the West from collectivism that led to the ascendancy of the rugged individualism that has so alarmed some intellectuals that they are now calling for communitarianism—a middle-of-the-course social order aimed at creating a happy balance between (or, in fact, replacing) individualism and collectivism (Christians, Ferre, & Fackler, 1993, pp. 44–48; Etzioni, 1993). The main goal of communitarianism is the achievement of appropriate and necessary "public good" without denying the primacy of individual rights (recall Eliot's, 1910, definition of collectivism above). This is why it is different than communalism (for which the primary and unquestioned goal is community welfare). This primary concern of communalism is also one of the two major differences between communalism and collectivism: It is geared toward collective actions meant to help individuals achieve goals that cannot be easily or willingly achieved on their own.

Perhaps, some substantive and specific examples of the type of behavior expected of members of communalistic communities would be appropriate here. In truly communalistic communities, parents experience strong mixed feelings when their children mature and stay on their own. These parents usually feel "emptied," but shed tears of joy. They do not, as often happens in individualistic and collectivistic societies, get into a hilarious frenzy of joy and happiness, celebrating their freedom. It is seen as an abomination to refuse to marry. It is even more antisocial to refuse to have children. One of the greatest debts that a man or a woman is held to owe the community is to, at least, reproduce themselves. The survival and continuation of the community depend on, among other things, not inviting outsiders to join, but on increasing the population from within.

Communication in Communalistic Societies

Cultural values and attitudes are informed by the philosophical foundations of the culture, foundations that are basic to the understanding of all aspects of the culture. The philosophical foundations that sustain communalism are basically the same for all communalistic societies even though they may be given different names in different communities. In truly and authentic communalistic communities, communication (whether horizontal or vertical, verbal or nonverbal, or for social, religious, or political matters) is carried on strictly according to the established norms (i.e., communication rules) of the community. These norms are, on the whole, based on several fundamental principles that have been shown to have strong philosophical implications that underscore the ratio-

nale for the unique communication pattern in communalistic cultures (Moemeka, 1984, pp. 41–56).

Supremacy of the Community

The most important of these fundamental principles is the supremacy of the community, that is, the undisputed authority over individual members given to the community as a supreme power. In truly communalistic communities individual needs and aspirations are viewed as extensions of community needs and aspiration and are examined in light of the welfare of the community. This holistic perspective holds true for every aspect of community life. Yet, it does not mean that individual needs and aspirations are ignored or subjugated to those of the community. Rather they are merged with community needs in a holistic attempt to ensure effectively efficient prioritization in the interest of all. The understanding, of course, is that whatever is of benefit to the community will eventually be of benefit to its individual members.

Total obedience to the community as an entity that exists for the good of all is demanded not only with respect to physical or material needs, but also with respect to emotional and communication needs. For example, if personal matters, no matter how urgent and important, conflict with community needs, they are required to be postponed or set aside. If some individual grievances are at variance with the interest of the community, they are downplayed or ignored. If what a person has to say is not in the best interest of the community, he or she is bound by custom to "swallow his or her words." The high pedestal on which the community is placed imposes limitations and demands on what the individual can say about the community, to whom, when, and how. In general, all community members are expected to present their community as the best, in all places, at all times. One may criticize individual members of the community, but the community itself must remain sacrosanct.

Sanctity of Authority

The second fundamental principle is sanctity of authority. In communalistic communities, leaders are not just citizens of the community. They are both the temporal and spiritual heads. As a result, they are seen as representing Divine Providence, and, therefore, given the honor and prestige that befits that position. No community can remain supreme for long without a leader who commands the recognition and respect of its members. The high honor reserved for leaders, however, must be deserved. As long as leaders live exemplary lives, the honor and prestige of the office is accorded them. Otherwise they would not only lose the leadership but also fall into disrepute. Therefore, even for leaders, the demands of the supremacy of the community are in force. They lead, but they are not above, the community. In truly communalistic communities, leaders do not rule. They merely reign or lead. The act of governing in such communities is carried on through a cabinet of elders who, in fact, make the decisions (after consultation with the leader) that the leader announces. Such consultations are, of course, strictly confidential so as not to give the impression that leaders are not, after all, as powerful as tradition presents them to be.

Apart from formal forms of leadership, all communalistic societies strongly believe in the fluid type of leadership structure emanating from the philosophy of gerontocracy (i.e., leadership by elders). In the sociocultural arena, leadership is the responsibility of everyone from the very oldest in the community to the youngest who are old enough to "know the difference between good and evil." Anyone who finds himself or herself in a situation in which he or she is the oldest person around, is required to assume the leadership position in that situation, and to lead the group to the successful completion of ongoing activity. All those over whom the individual exercises this normative on-the-spot leadership are also required to recognize and respect his or her authority. Tradition requires on-the-spot leaders to correct, advise, admonish, and help those under their care. They are also culturally empowered to render on the spot, appropriate punishment for antisocial behavior. Those who are being led may privately criticize, but must not confront the leaders. These leaders are held responsible for the actions of those over whom they exercise the power of leadership and must answer to the community for what is done or not done.

Usefulness of the Individual

The third principle is the usefulness of the individual (underscored by the sanctity of life). This principle derives its strength from the strong belief in communalistic societies that (a) people are looking glasses to one another (i.e., they are "instruments" that help people see how others see them); (b) people are also providential guides for one another (i.e., useful companions who help people through various ways and means to live as providence would have them live); and (c) there can be no community without individual members who are willing to serve selflessly (Moemeka, 1996, pp. 170–193). The community depends on its individual members for its existence and survival. In return, the community performs two broad functions. First, it accords every member the right, based on established norms, to participate fully in the government of the community. Second, it takes on the responsibility of guarding, guiding, and protecting the individual's and the people's cherished norms and mores.

This principle—usefulness of the individual—is that which, through the exercise of communal responsibility, reinforces the inherent social unity nature of authentic communalistic societies. The community requires each of its members to be his or her neighbor's keeper. In this way, it discharges its responsibility for guiding and guarding the welfare of its citizens. The most valued aspect of this responsibility is the sustenance of community spirit which demands that the hungry be fed, that the sick be looked after, the community takes care of what the individual does for a living during periods of illness, that orphans be fostered without delay, and that adult members be fathers and mothers to the young. This cultural trait finds philosophical justification in some aspects of African oral literature and adages (Moemeka, 1989). The Fante of Ghana transmit this value with the adage: "The poor kinsman does not lack a resting place." The Igbo of Nigeria transmit this value with the adage: "Two children of the same mother do not need a lamp to eat together even in the darkest corner." The Zulu of South Africa transmit this value with: "Hands wash each other to keep the fingers clean"

(Moemeka, 1989, p. 6). These adages, which are sociocultural in nature, but have a very strong religious undertone, demand (a) honesty and trust in interpersonal and group relationships, and (b) willing acceptance of the cultural demands of service to the community and help to one's kinsman.

Respect for the Elderly

Respect for the elderly is the fourth principle. In all communalistic societies, older age is honorable and elderly men and women are treated with dignity and respect. This is next only to official positions in determining who should speak first, sit first, make final decisions, give orders, and make first choices. This is cultural deference to gerontocracy—leadership based almost entirely on the number of years one has spent on earth. The longer one lives, the wider one's traditional and social span of authority within the community. The elderly are seen as repositories of wisdom and knowledge and, therefore, as assets of great value to the community, especially to the young. As a result, their cultural right to lead is seen as providential. The future of the community, though not placed in their hands, is intricately linked with the type and quality of advice they give. To assure a constant flow of words of wisdom from the elderly, the elderly are given a place of honor in the government of the community. Their advice, in general, is not easily set aside or ignored. It is believed that living to a "ripe" age is providential reward for a life of justice, fair play, high integrity, honesty, and chastity, that is, a life well spent observing and respecting the norms and mores of society.

The exalted position that the culture has bestowed on the elderly gives communalistic communities a learning environment in which the experienced and knowledgeable are culturally required to guide the community and to educate and guide the inexperienced and the young. This learning environment finds expression in meetings, moonlight storytelling, impromptu village-square discussions, one-on-one conversations along the streets and footpaths, and settlement of disputes. Because of their usual success in guiding the community and the younger generation, the elderly are seen to have carved a niche for themselves as reference points for judging and directing both communal and individual behavior.

Religion as a Way of Life

The last of the five fundamental principles is the recognition of religion as a way of life. Religion, here, is meant to mean any traditionally recognized spiritual way through which people in communalistic societies manifest their relationship with the almighty. Religion pervades life in truly communalistic communities (Mbiti, 1969), and it is used as a tool for safeguarding social order and protecting social norms and communication rules (Moemeka, 1994). Communalism demands that people's lives reflect a solid blend of what is regarded as holy and what is accepted as socially permissible. The explicit dichotomy one finds in most collectivistic and individualistic societies between the secular and the religious does not exist in communalistic societies. There is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the nonreligious, or between the spiritual and the material arenas of life. Accordingly, what is a crime in law is a moral

vice and a religious sin. What is a duty is a moral obligation and a religious imperative (Moemeka, 1984, p. 45).

The symbols representing the gods through which the people seek the favors of the almighty are physically near, and their presence is felt everywhere (e.g., in the village square, in the marketplace, along the footpaths, in the streets, and in the home). This symbolic proximity, which strongly implies the actual presence of the gods, and their watchful eyes over individual behavior and community activities, helps ensure that rules and regulations are obeyed, and that mores and norms are observed. This makes the task of maintaining social order easier than it would be without the impact of religion.

The five fundamental principles discussed above underlie the culture of traditional communities and reflect the type of social order in strictly communalistic societies. Once assimilated by the individual, each principle communicates its own values and helps to guide individual and societal behavior according to the culture of the community. For example, the usefulness of the individual principle demands reward for considerate behavior, concern for the underprivileged, abhorrence of selfishness, love of one's kin, respect for life, and the right to participate in community affairs. All these reflect the wise saying of the Aniocha of Nigeria that "it is people who make people become people," and the strong belief of the Japanese that "one becomes a human being only in relation to another person" (Gudykunst & Antonio, 1993, p. 27; Yoshikawa, 1988, p. 143). The implication here is that only in helping others and treating them as important members of the society can one really and truly acknowledge one's own humanity and utility.

The values of respect for the elderly, most of which are also related to values of the sanctity of authority, also reflect the total assimilation and practice of the fundamental principles. From the Far East to South America, and from Africa to the Northwestern territories of Canada, respect for the elderly is not an option. It is a requirement. The Koreans are a case in point. According to the Korean Overseas Information Service (1987), "The Head of the family was traditionally regarded as the source of authority, and all members were expected to do what was demanded and desired by the family head" (p. 237). Just as the culture requires parents personally to look after their children when these children are young and helpless, it also demands that children personally (materially and emotionally) look after their parents when these parents have become older and helpless. Children are forbidden to contract this responsibility out to someone else. This strict demand helps to keep the sanctity of the family intact.

The collective impact of the fundamental principles strengthens the bonds that sustain communalistic societies. These bonds, which find expression in unique ways of creating social penetration (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1983), ensure uncertainty avoidance (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988, p. 192), maintain power distance (Hofstede, 1980), establish friend and mate relationships (Moemeka & Nicotera, 1993, pp. 107–124, 169–186), and ensure conflict management (Olsen, 1978, p. 308). These bonds are the shared symbols, rituals, values, and beliefs of members of these societies. These shared symbols contain the meaning of commonality. The communal bonds are strengthened and revitalized when those whom

the people look up to for guidance and leadership live what the community considers exemplary lives.

Communication Rules and Rationale

In communalistic cultures, communicative acts are engaged in to confirm, solidify, and promote communal social order. In such cultures, communication is always a question of attitude toward one's neighbor and, therefore, is constrained by ethical demands that are closely tied to communication rules designed to ensure communal social order. The acceptance or rejection of information, the flow, content, and context of communication, the appropriate level at which exchange of ideas should occur, and the appropriate atmosphere for specific types of communication are normatively determined based on how they will affect established or expected interpersonal relationships, or both. Vertical communication follows the hierarchical sociopolitical ranks within the community. What a person says is as important as who he or she is. Social status within the community carries with it certain cultural limitations vis-à-vis the exercise of the right to communicate. Horizontal communication is relatively open and usually occurs among people of the same age (sometimes, only of the same gender), those who work together, live within the same proximity, or belong to the same ethnic group. This is not to say that interpersonal communication and relationships in all communalistic societies follow the same format and structure. Even though basic cultural demands are generally universal among communalistic societies, there are distinct variations in their application.

The two major modes of communication, verbal and nonverbal, that occur everywhere in the modern world, also occur in communalistic societies, but here they are utilized in a unique way. Whereas elders have the right to communicate mostly verbally, young children and youths are, by tradition, expected to communicate mostly nonverbally. Because younger generations are presumed to have limited experience in life, they are expected to watch and listen, and act according to what is judged to be the best for them in the context of the overall welfare of the community. This norm is buttressed by many cultural adages. For example, the Wolof of Senegal affirm that "The child looks everywhere and very often sees nothing, but the elderly person while sitting down sees everything." The Aniocha of Nigeria, although conceding that some children may see something, hold the view that such children have no cultural right to announce personally or to say publicly what they have seen. They must "tell it" through the elders. This leads to the saying that: "The child may own a cock, but it must crow in the compound of the elder." As typified by the Shuswap, "free speech is somewhat modified by age, gender and position. Chiefs, elders and other authorities have the most freedom of expression. They cannot be interrupted nor disturbed" (Cooper, 1994, pp. 327–345). This gerontocracy-driven mode of communication is also at work among the Aborigines of Australia, for whom power and authority is vested largely in older men (although some women also have a say in camp affairs in their late years; Tonkinson, 1991).

Communication in authentic communalistic societies is almost entirely through the interpersonal mode carried out in dyads, small groups (e.g., family meetings), and large groups (e.g., village meetings). The marketplace, the village school, social forums, and funeral ceremonies also serve as very important channels for messages and exchange of information (Moemeka, 1981, p. 46). In addition, storytelling, ballads, and praise songs are used to relive the experiences of past and preceding generations and help to educate culturally and to guide the younger generation.

Although some of these communicative behaviors may lose importance as communalists intermingle with individualists and collectivists, two unique types of communicative behavior, paying compliments and giving gifts, remain almost completely indelible (Fong, 1995). The communalist may openly and directly compliment strangers and people not closely related to him or her and acknowledge their unique qualities in their presence. He or she does not do the same, however, to close relatives or to his or her children for fear that such direct and face-to-face compliments and acknowledgments may "get into their heads" and induce pride and arrogant behavior. Although individualists and collectivists always acknowledge the beauty of their daughters in front of these daughters, the communalist would voice such acknowledgment only when the daughters are not around to hear it directly. The other communicative behavior that tends to remain with communalists for life is the method of giving gifts. In a communalistic social order, people do not give gifts to others by themselves, especially if such gifts are an indication of how highly valuable these others are to them. They usually send it through someone else or mail it. This is done mainly to avoid receiving immediate verbal reward for the gift, but also to save the recipients from pretending to like gifts that they may not like. Such behavior is the opposite of what happens in individualistic or collectivistic social orders, where the recipient is given the gift by hand, prevailed upon by the giver to open it, and then asked what communalists call a pompous and self-justifying question, "Do you like it?", that elicits only one and obvious response, "Yes, it is beautiful."

It is not only word-of-mouth and nonverbal acts that are extremely important in the communication environment of communalistic societies. There also are some instruments of communication that have very significant cultural value. Three such instruments that are regarded as sine qua non in the process of using information and communication to induce effective communal participation in the government of the community and in the preservation of the people's shared identity are the gong, the flute, and the drum. Though used differently in different communities, the widespread use of these instruments attests to their cultural significance. Despite ethnic differences in use, these instruments perform universal roles. They inform the community, mediate interpersonal and group communication, and serve as part of the paraphernalia of cultural instruments for entertainment.

In most of Africa, for example, the gong is particularly seen mostly as an indispensable instrument in the process of disseminating civil and social-order messages. The gong is used to gain attention and deliver important messages from the leader, community council, or both. Such messages usually include explicitly stated

punishment for noncompliance. When the flute and the drum are used for purposes other than entertainment, they are acknowledged as emergency communication channels. In this capacity, they play the surveillance role, informing the community of impending dangers, of the death of the leader, of possible catastrophes, of flagrant violations of taboos, of visits of important dignitaries, of declaration of wars, and of summoning the community to emergency meetings.

Extensions of Fundamental Dimensions

It is important to note that the original and authentic cultural social orders, individualism and communalism, are now rare. Because a mixture of cultural dimensions seems to be prevalent today, the peculiar communication patterns that were integral parts of the original and authentic cultural dimensions have also changed in line with changes in the cultural sphere. It would appear that these cultural changes are inevitable consequences of the advent of (democratic) representative government. In the originally individualistic societies (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, Holland, Germany), people came together to form collectives (i.e., governments and organizations) that could provide a conducive environment in which the individual can live a more peaceful and satisfying life. In originally communalistic societies (e.g., cities and urban areas of developing societies), communities also agreed, on urgings from the West, to come together to create governing authorities. The ultimate goal of these originally isolated communalistic communities was not to safeguard the interests of the individual, though, but to promote and protect the welfare of the bonding communities. In either case, very significant erosion of the original cultural conditions has taken place. Both individualism and communalism have fallen prey to the diluting powers of collectivism.

These changes affected the purposes and patterns of communication. The presence of dual dimensions has made double loyalty inescapable and appears to have opened the gates for the entry of a new and growing dimension, personalism (or selfish individualism). Since the 1960s, this new cultural trait, described as the "me mentality" in the U.S., has been spreading in the originally individualistic societies. This emerging cultural trait under which Bellah et al. (1985) said that "utility replaces duty; self-expression unseats authority and being good becomes feeling good" (p. 110) would seem to treat people as noninclusive individuals with rights to anything and everything that makes them happy, without any regard as to how the achievement of such happiness would affect others and the society. Its impact has adversely affected education, family values, morality, and media content. Describing this trait as extreme individualism, Greenfield (1996) wrote: "The plagues of extreme individualism are isolation, alienation and a failure to nurture the next generation. These plagues have become epidemic in our society. The witnesses are random crime, gangs, no-parent children, homelessness" (p. C3).

In the modern sectors of the originally communalistic societies, representative democracy in the midst of well-entrenched communalistic principles has led to a

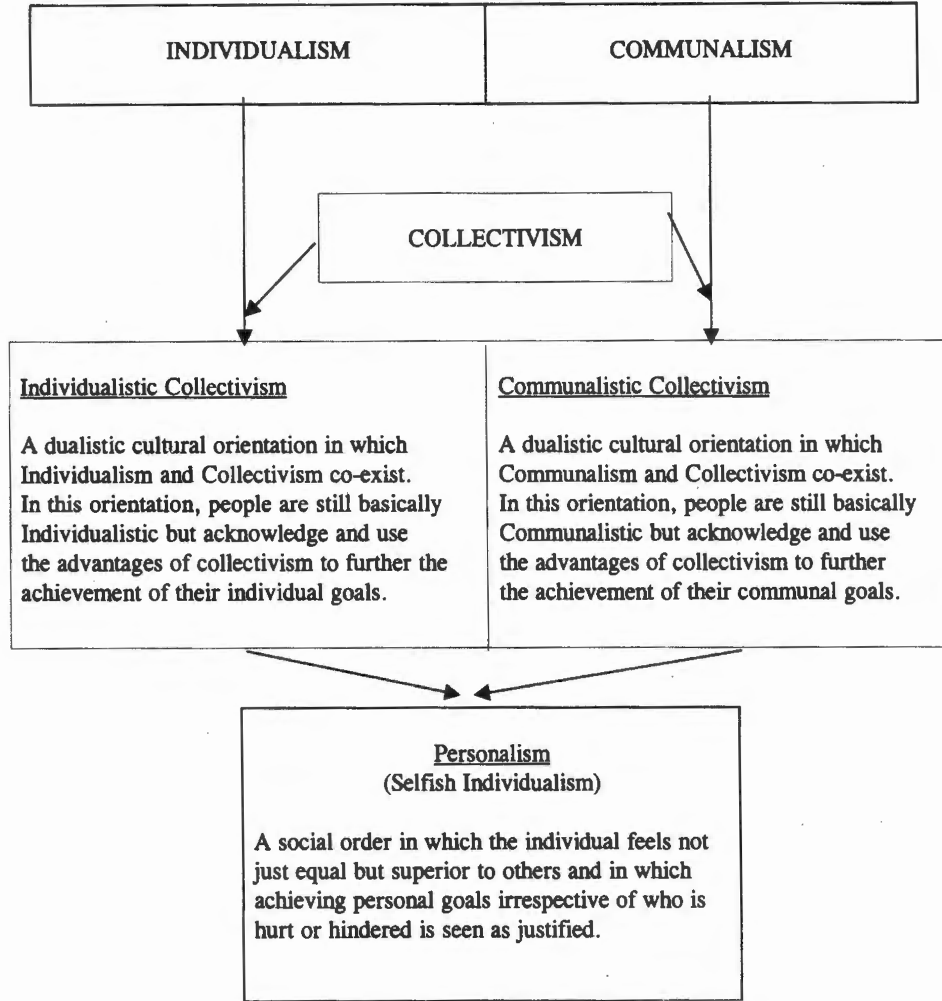

Figure 3. Fundamental dimensions and their modern outgrowths

situation in which the people see government as distinct from society or community. Consequently, society developed a dual interaction or communication pattern, that is, creative coordination for the government or the collective arena and standardized coordination for the community or the communalistic arena. A standardized-coordination behavior pattern is demanded by some in an unending struggle to preserve and strengthen the fundamental principles that had sustained communalism for centuries. Creative coordination, however, has created a fertile ground for seriously questioning these principles and undermining their values. Such serious questioning of the fundamental principles has not only led to the

development of opposing worldviews, but has also put significant strains on sociocultural relationship between city or urban dwellers (who have been more affected by the impact of collectivism) on the one hand, and traditional or rural community inhabitants (who still value and live under communalism) on the other. In addition, in the traditional sectors of communalistic societies, an insignificant but growing number of youths are questioning and rejecting communalistic values. They are also questioning and rejecting collectivistic values that they see as inconvenient, opting instead for personalistic values (see Figure 3).

Conclusion

Today, the division between those standing firm in favor of the fundamental principles of communalism and those who oppose most such principles is very clear. They use very contradictory communication codes, communicate on different arenas of the social environment, and have opposing views on what constitutes the "good," and for whom. For example, although most tradition-conscious people still hold on strongly to the values of honesty, trust, and absolute respect for parents and elders, the reverse is the case with most modernity-conscious (restless, selfish, the end-justifies-the means, and get-rich-quick) individuals. Although the supremacy of the community is still a very highly valued principle among communalists, it no longer commands respect among self-interested, modernity-conscious individuals. Such opposing views on social reality have created a lack of coorientation between the two sides. It has also put very seriously negative communication strains on the relationship between parents and elders in rural (communalistic) communities and between parents and their children in cities and urban centers.

The result has been that the expected exemplary life required for revitalizing social bonds in communalistic societies is lacking in modern cities and urban settings of these societies. The impact of its absence in such politically and economically powerful segments of these societies is creeping slowly but surely into the traditional segments, and turning people away from their traditional customs and values. On the whole, however, tradition, though not completely impervious to modern sociocultural, economic, and political influences, is still holding on strongly to the time-tested basic principles of communalism. In the traditional setting, through effective communication and good leadership, social bonds are still able to direct communal and individual actions toward meeting social approval and to guide social behavior toward the survival and strengthening of the communalistic social order.

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