

Research in Practice (ADAD5004)
Dissertation Proposal.
Culture, Individualism and Masculinity

Proposed question for Independent Inquiry: How does culture influence design?: A comparison between the United Kingdom and the Philippines'

Word Count: 2496 words

Shannen Boorman | BA Graphic Design | 1800530 | Timi O'Neill

Cultural Representation in Art: The difference between two countries

An Independent Research Document Proposal

Within my proposal for my dissertation, I have decided that I am going to compare how culture has an influence on art between different countries. My chosen area of research is mainly based around culture itself and how societies from different countries create and interpret art. This research aims to link the three key words of culture, individualism and masculinity, as these are three important factors when it comes to culture in art. I will reflect on how culture is represented by artists from these countries or how their own culture changes the way in which they work. Critically comparing cross-cultural differences will give me a better understanding of how artists they have been influenced by their country's history and their upbringing. I have chosen to focus my research on cross-cultural differences as I am half British and half Filipino, and therefore, I have witnessed the differences between the way that culture is portrayed in the art produced by artists from them. By conducting this research, I am aiming to get a clearer understanding of what influences artists from different countries in the way that they produce their work. Through the exploration of my chosen keywords, I am aiming to gain better knowledge on how a person's background has a factor in how they work and also how they perceive another person's work.

Culture

Culture is a term with a variety of meanings, and the concept of culture has changed throughout time. The concept of culture at first seems quite simple as we all have a relative understanding of what it means. But do we really know the meaning of culture? Also, how do the characteristics of different cultures influenced art. The word "culture" was originated from the Latin word "cultura", which means "cultivating". To cultivate is to nurture and help grow. In primordial times, "culture" was often opposed to "civilisation", and therefore, a culture was synonymous with a country (Jandt, 2004). It goes without saying that "culture" is a confusing word. Kroeber, A. and Kluckholm, C (1951) collected over 160 definitions of culture. One was that "Culture is a 'design for living' held by the members of a particular society". Furthermore, "Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Tylor, 1871). Through the exploration of these definitions, I believe that they both describe culture as an essential part of life and having an identity. A crucial part of survival is to learn the accepted ways of behaving in a society from birth. One must gain knowledge of that specific society's culture, which is a process known as socialisation. Culture tends to dictate a person's actions and their outlook on life. It's a way to form a sense of unity with one another and is passed between different generations for future guidance.

The definitions for “culture” suggest that culture is a part of our identity. Furthermore, this allows me to not understand the idea that culture has a big influence on designers and their work, but also how we interpret design is down to our culture. To begin with, visuals are broken down into two elements: colour and symbolism. These design elements are greatly influenced by cultural perceptions. Different cultures will attach their own meaning to specific symbols and colours, for example, the colour white in most Western cultures signifies peace and purity. However, in certain cultures, it is attached to mourning and sadness.



(SALEGUMBA, 2015)

I have decided to look at art created by a Filipino, as it allows me to understand the symbolism and colours used in this piece of work. The definitions that I have explored for the concept of culture, allows me to understand the meaning behind Rovi Jeshor Salegumba oil painting 'Thrive'. This painting portrays the many challenges that are faced by Filipinos; poverty, natural and manmade disasters, and social unrest. These challenges are shown through different visual representations, such as extreme weather conditions in the upper left of the painting and the arrows depicting social unrest. These conditions are a part of Filipino culture, however, it is passed from generation to generation to always be resilient, as this will always overcome the negative issues that Filipinos have to deal with. The flower blooming in the centre of the painting represents growth and their ability to prosper even in the face of hardship. The painting features a dove that is held by the woman, and going back to how religion plays a major part in Filipino culture, Christianity symbolises the dove to be a sign of peace. Looking at the colours that have been featured in this art, it is clear to see that the main colours are red, blue and yellow/cream. To begin with, these three colours are the colours represented on the Filipino flag. Going back to what this painting is symbolising, it is clear that the red is there to symbolise danger, whereas the blue is to represent calmness.

In contrast to Filipino art and design, I believe that British art and design is mainly influenced on trends rather than culture. This leads me to ask the question, can being brought up in an individualist culture have an impact on your work?

Individualism

In terms of cultural differences, “individualism” is an important aspect. To put it simply, individualism is a social theory that favours freedom of action over collective control. The concept of individualism rooted from historical contexts where personal differences were dismissed by the ruling body. When defining individualism today, it can often be associated with the attributes of distinct and describable theory. In the book ‘Individualism And Collectivism’ (Kim, U., 1999), the definition for this term is that “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”. Masakazu (1994) defines modern individualism as “a view of humanity that justifies inner beliefs and unilateral self-assertion, as well as competition based on these”. Individualism implies a dynamic capitalist economic rationality and in its simplest form, we see in individualism what we want to see in it. Through the exploration of the term “individualism”, I have learnt that to be in an “individualistic culture” is to be in a society where self-independence is prioritised over identifying with a group mentality.

Table 7.1 Individualism Rankings for 50 Countries and Three Regions

1	United States	28	Turkey
2	Australia	29	Uruguay
3	Great Britain	30	Greece
4/5	Canada	31	Philippines
4/5	The Netherlands	32	Mexico
6	New Zealand	33/35	East Africa
7	Italy	33/35	Yugoslavia
8	Belgium	33/35	Portugal
9	Denmark	36	Malaysia
10/11	Sweden	37	Hong Kong
10/11	France	38	Chile
12	Ireland	39/41	West Africa
13	Norway	39/41	Singapore
14	Switzerland	39/41	Thailand
15	Germany (F.R.)	42	El Salvador
16	South Africa	43	South Korea
17	Finland	44	Taiwan
18	Austria	45	Peru
19	Israel	46	Costa Rica
20	Spain	47/48	Pakistan
21	India	47/48	Indonesia
22/23	Japan	49	Colombia
22/23	Argentina	50	Venezuela
24	Iran	51	Panama
25	Jamaica	52	Ecuador
26/27	Brazil	53	Guatemala
26/27	Arab countries		

(Hofstede, 2001)

From the table above, it is apparent that Great Britain is ranked third in the world for having an individualist culture. The concept of individualism allows me to understand

why designers from a country with an individualist culture may have a different design thinking process compared to that of a country with a collectivist culture. Art itself is a form of individualism, however, specifically being an individualist will change your style of work to that of someone who is a collectivist. What does it mean to be a part of an individualist culture? As the United Kingdom is a highly ranked individualistic country, people tend to only have to care for themselves and their close family, and do not care so much about their community. Such people tend to have a high regard for privacy and pursue things that fulfil them personally.

On the other hand, the Philippines ranks at number 31 in the table for individualism. The Philippines is a collectivist country and individuals tend to understand themselves as part of a group. This is due to them being very family oriented and being taught to respect one another from a young age. To be in a collectivist culture is to put the interest of a group over the interest of an individual. Cultures characterised by collectivism tend to emphasise and prioritise relationships to a greater extent. People from countries that have a low individualism rank commonly put the interests of a group in front of their own. Personal relationships are massively important in such societies and hostility is a key factor to doing business.

To be an individualist or collectivist is determined by the values and rules a specific culture needs to flourish. When comparing designs between the United Kingdom and the Philippines, it is clear to see how individualism in the United Kingdom has an impact on the designers work. Individuals from different cultures show differences in preferred creative processes and creative processing modes. Individualism has an important role in the field of design because it shapes the style of the designers and it also has an influence on mainstream narratives around what art and artists are. This is evident due to the fact that in the United Kingdom, designers gravitate more towards expressing themselves in their own way and have a style each of their own. It is often that design in the United Kingdom follows trends to keep work modern and contemporary. It is quite rare to see contemporary design from the United Kingdom depict the culture of the country and it's citizens' way of living. Although following trends is not an individualistic trait, it is apparent that designers from the United Kingdom interpret these trends in their own way. When looking at designs produced by a variety of designers in the United Kingdom, it is clear to see that these are totally different from one another, and have not been influenced by common aspects of their culture. In contrast, the art of the Philippines commonly depicts the Filipino's way of life and their culture. This is shown through common elements such as colours, symbols that have a deeper meaning behind them, and what the design represents overall.

Masculinity

In today's society, gender-role stereotyping is something that is rarely talked about, however, it impacts our lives every day. Socialising children to be either masculine or feminine occurs from the moment they are born. In *Culture's Consequences* (Hofstede, 2001), Individualism/Collectivism and Masculinity/Femininity were described as being twin dimensions that derived as independent orthogonal factors from the same country-level factor analysis of work goals. These twin dimensions were suggested as anthropological contrasts between societies, which then affects sociological and psychological processes within those societies. Society's understanding of masculinity is changing, redefining culture and challenging long-held beliefs. So, what is the term 'masculinity'? Masculinity refers back to the set of attributes, behaviour and culture associated with boys/men and the different ways of being a man. The term is a socially constructed concept, in which boys/men are taught "appropriate" genders roles correlating to the masculine expectations of their given society. However, it could be argued that masculinity is biologically influenced to a certain extent. In the book *Masculinity And Femininity* (Hofstede, 1999), it states that "Masculinity stands for a society in which men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success". Another definition for the term 'masculinity' is that "Masculinity is composed of many masculinities. It is always interpolated by cultural, historical and geographic location and in our time, the combined movement of feminism and the gay movement has exploded the conception of a uniform masculinity" (Beynon, 2002). Both of these definitions are quite important when it comes to understanding the meaning of the term 'masculinity' as they show how masculinity is not something one is born with, and is therefore something into which a boy is acculturated and is composed of social codes of behaviour which they are taught to behave in culturally appropriate ways. Through the exploration of these definitions, this allows me to understand how gender could be interpreted differently in art between two different cultures. Representations of gender in art are the outcome of a certain culture's process of defining sexual and social identity. Through transformation and stylisation, the most predominant media of reflecting this cultural process is through pictorial art and literature. The way in which someone may interpret a piece of art could be heavily influenced by how they have been taught on the socially constructed conceptions of masculinity and femininity in their own culture.



(David, 1784)

This painting shows men fighting whilst there are women in the background in distress. Being brought up in the United Kingdom, I have been taught that men are to be powerful whilst women are more fragile. Under Hofstede's analysis, the United Kingdom is considered a fairly 'masculine' country. A country that is more 'masculine' tends to have a society that is more driven by competition, achievement and success. The focal point of this painting is the men, and the use of swords in this imagery suggests that the men have power and have dominance compared to the women in the back who look powerless. I believe that time and culture had an influence on this painting because not many artists from this time period were male, and therefore, the 'masculine' culture influenced this painting by depicting a socially constructed concept. Visuals like this painting will be preferred in male dominated cultures as these images are related to competition, success, and personal growth. In contrast, a country that has more of a 'feminine' culture, tends to have a society that has dominant values for caring for other and quality of life. If an artist came from a background that promotes femininity, then they would not degrade women to be weak, and would instead depict them as also being powerful. In terms of interpreting art, if there is a visual that has more of a feminine theme including family, this tends to be preferred in highly feminine countries.

In conclusion, I have looked at the keywords Culture, Individualism, and Masculinity. These three key words are important when it comes to how culture is embedded in art. Through researching individualism, this allowed me to look at what it means to be a part of an individualist country, and how that can influence your thinking process and then in contrast, I looked at collectivism. These two terms can differentiate the behaviour and attitude two people have towards something. Through looking at the concept of masculinity, this allowed me to explore different ways in which a country can be defined as being 'masculine', and how this can change the way in which someone either creates or perceives a piece of artwork. It also allowed me to look at the contrasting factor, 'femininity'. Through researching these keywords, I have decided that my final research question will be 'How does culture influence design?: A comparison between the United Kingdom and the Philippines'. I have chosen to do a comparison on how design from two different countries is influenced by culture as, I have only discussed two dimensions that cultures are dependent on, Individualism/Collectivism and Masculinity/Femininity. There are other dimensions such as Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance, which differentiates

one culture from another. I have chosen to compare the United Kingdom to the Philippines, as there is a big contrast between them in terms of culture, and therefore, I would like to see how designers from these countries are influenced by their culture.

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