

Collectivist Behaviour Patterns Portrayed by Waymond Wang in the Movie "Everything Everywhere All at Once"

Siti Norsaleha Binti Anuar, Haliza Ab Ghani*

Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Shah Alam

*Corresponding author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.102100119>

Received: 07 September 2026; Accepted: 16 September 2026; Published: 01 October 2026

ABSTRACT

Collectivism shapes behaviour patterns by reinforcing group-oriented actions through behaviourist principles, highlighting its significance in maintaining social harmony and cultural continuity. Using Harry C. Triandis's Vertical-Horizontal Individualism-Collectivism (1995) theory as the theoretical framework, this study conducts an in-depth exploration of the collectivist behaviour patterns exhibited by the characters in the movie, focusing on how their interactions, decision-making processes, and expressions of loyalty and obligation reflect the dimensions of vertical and horizontal collectivism. This study seeks to analyse and compare the collectivist behaviour patterns portrayed by Waymond Wang in the movie 'Everything Everywhere All At Once' (2022). Using qualitative content analysis, this study explores the relationship between cultural values and collectivist behaviours, along with the patterns that form from these influences. The findings of this study highlight that Waymond Wang exemplifies horizontal collectivism by valuing equality, mutual support and respect between in-group members and maintaining harmonious relationships. The implication of the study is to examine the diversity of collectivistic behaviour within the same cultural background, offering valuable insights for researchers, educators and students on human behaviour, cultural values and the influence of upbringing on social interaction.

Keywords: behaviour, cultural values, collectivism

INTRODUCTION

Collectivism emphasises interdependence and in-group harmony over individual interests as a societal orientation. Members of collectivistic societies often depict the characteristics of unity and group cohesion, intending to establish a sense of belonging within a group, a "we"-consciousness, as a persona in their social phenomenon. (Hofstede, 2011).

Collectivistic behaviour has often been portrayed in films and television shows, particularly when the central theme revolves around family. This is especially evident when the characters depicted are Asian or have an Asian cultural background. In such cultures, individuals are expected to prioritise the needs of the community and adhere to group values (William & Cumins, 2023).

The importance of learning more about collectivism is to nurture the sense of unity and harmony within a community. As collectivism is a common trait in Asia, the movie 'Everything Everywhere All At Once' provides a portrayal of collectivistic behaviours from a Chinese cultural background. The aim of this study is to identify the collectivistic behaviours embodied by Waymond Wang, who is of Chinese descent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Collectivism is central to Chinese culture, where individuals are encouraged to uphold family values and

attitudes, believing that devotion to one's family ensures protection and solidarity. Relationships are highly valued, as the culture places strong emphasis on harmony and unity. Chinese culture is increasingly visible on the global stage, yet its social behaviour remains closely regulated, and aspects of its culture still reflect the country's feudal past (Scroope & Evason, 2017).

A fundamental component of collectivist orientation is 'group identity' and 'cohesiveness'. Group identification is crucial because it makes it clear how an individual fits into the group and fosters a sense of belonging.

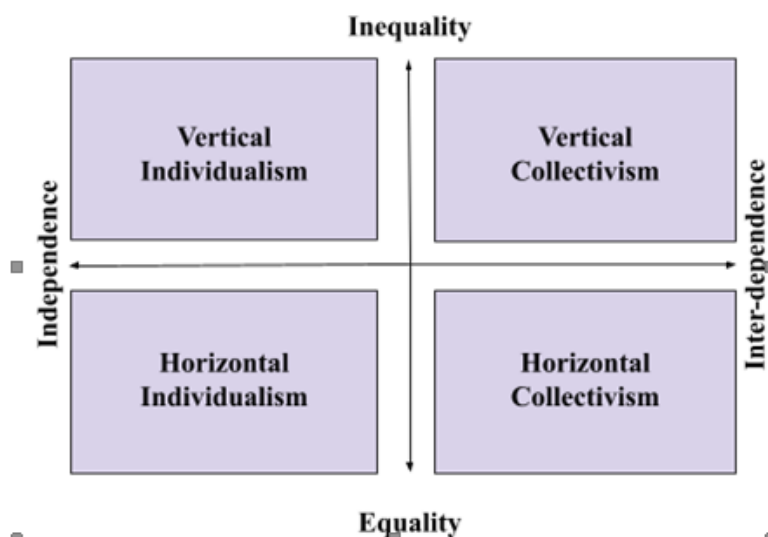
((William & Cumins, 2023). A study by Tehrani and Yamini (2022) investigated gender differences in horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism using a meta-analysis. The researchers found that women are more likely to align with horizontal collectivism, while men are more complex, showing greater variation. Women tend to value group belonging, while men sometimes favour hierarchical structure or lean towards individualism. However, despite that, their cultural background is significant in influencing it, as in some collectivist cultures.

Chen, S. (2022) delves into the cultural tensions portrayed in the film 'The Farewell' through the lens of individualism and collectivism. The author analyses the central conflict of the film, which involves the family's decision to hide the terminal illness diagnosis of their grandmother, a choice rooted in the Chinese cultural value of collectivism, where the needs of the family and the collective values are prioritised over individual rights or desires. The study focuses on how individualism and collectivism could shape the characters' actions and perspectives, reflecting broader cultural differences between East Asia and the West. This film offers a compelling example of how cultural values can clash in cross-cultural contexts.

Previous research on cultural dimensions, particularly Hofstede's framework, has explored individualism, collectivism, gender differences, and media representation from different perspectives. Several studies have examined individualism and collectivism across different cultural contexts. For example, Abdul Halim and Abdul Ghani (2023) compared individualism and collectivism in Asian and Western cultures. Similarly, Fatehi, Priestley, and Taasobshirazi (2020) provided an expanded view of individualism and collectivism by examining the four-dimensional model of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. Using confirmatory factor analysis, their study supported the validity of this expanded model and provided a more detailed understanding of individualism and collectivism across cultures.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Table 1: Adopted from Triandis's Vertical-Horizontal Individualism-Collectivism (1995) framework



Triandis's Vertical-Horizontal Individualism-Collectivism (1995) framework serves as the conceptual framework for this study. Collectivism focuses on the beliefs, needs, and objectives of the in-group rather than the self. It also emphasises behaviour guided by social obligations and conventions rather than personal pleasure or self-interest, shared values within the in-group, and a willingness to work together.

As illustrated in Table 1, this framework distinguishes between vertical collectivism and horizontal collectivism, which provides an in-depth understanding of the collectivistic behavioural patterns found in the movie. Triandis also suggests that two distinct cultural syndromes, cultural tightness versus looseness and cultural complexity versus simplicity, influence whether a culture is more collectivistic or individualistic. Therefore, this framework allows for a more detailed analysis of the different collectivistic behavioural patterns exhibited by the characters, particularly in terms of hierarchy and equality within their cultural orientations

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach underpins this study in analysing collectivistic behaviour patterns of Waymond Wang in 'Everything Everywhere All At Once' (2022). The data analysis procedure (Table 2) is organised based on the coding schemes outlined in Tables 3 and 4.

The data analysis procedure is as follows:

Table 2: Data Analysis Procedure

Step 1	Define the coding categories by aligning the criteria for each component under both the Vertical and Horizontal Collectivism.
Step 2	Identify the instances of collectivism occurring in ' <i>Everything Everywhere All At Once</i> '.
Step 3	Classify each instance of collectivism using Triandis's collectivism cultural dimension.
Step 4	Analyse the data to identify the instances in collectivist behaviour patterns.
Step 5	Assess the behaviour portrayed by the character.
Step 6	Conclude the findings in relation to Triandis's framework

Table 3: Coding Scheme for Triandis's Vertical Collectivism (1995)

Category	Vertical Collectivism	Code
Group vs Individual	Sacrificing personal desires for the benefit of the group	VA1
In-group loyalty	Loyalty based on hierarchical roles and seniority	VA2
Harmony and Conflict	Maintaining Harmony by respecting authority	VA3
Guidance & Interdependence	Seeking support or direction from authority figures	VA4
Roles & Decision-Making	Adhering to roles and decisions based on authority and hierarchy	VA5

Table 4: Coding Scheme for Triandis's Horizontal Collectivism (1995)

Category	Horizontal Collectivism	Code
Group vs Individual	Group decisions made collectively with equal input from all members	HA1
In-group loyalty	Loyalty to the group as a whole with no emphasis on hierarchy	HA2

Harmony & Conflict	Maintaining harmony through cooperation and mutual respect	HA3
Guidance & Interdependence	Shared responsibility and mutual support within the group	HA4
Roles & Decision-Making	No strict roles; collective decisions by consensus	HA5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 5: Excerpt 1 Portrayed by Waymond Wang

Timestamp 01:18 - 02:08		Code
Waymond:	I know better than to ask to help you. But is now a good time to talk about something else? (Waymond is holding the divorce papers as they speak.)	HA3
Evelyn :	I'm listening. Talk. (Evelyn took the papers from his hand without really reading them.)	
Evelyn :	What's going on with you?	
Waymond:	I know you aren't listening. Let's talk later when we have time.	HA3
Evelyn :	Oh, I have to finish all this before my father wakes up. Go and steam the tablecloths for tonight. I'm going to paint over that water stain in the ceiling.	
Waymond:	Already did. Also, I just talked to Byron about tonight. The men's choir has a fun surprise for Dad.	HA1
Evelyn :	Noodles. Help me to cook the noodles.	
Waymond:	Huh? Oh. So we'll talk later, after our appointment? Like, this afternoon?	HA1 HA3
Evelyn :	Five minutes!	
Waymond:	What?	
Evelyn :	Check the pot in 5 minutes. My father hates overcooked noodles.	VA1
Waymond:	Oh, okay. I know.	

Table 5 displays an excerpt of Waymond when he intends to confront his wife, Evelyn, about their divorce. However, with his father-in-law present in their house, Evelyn is preoccupied with making sure everything is perfect. Waymond, recognising that this moment could be his only chance, tries persistently to bring up the topic, though it's clear Evelyn is not fully engaged with him. From their conversation, it becomes clear that Waymond is willing to sacrifice his personal desires at that moment, discussing their marriage, by prioritising Evelyn's needs and trying to keep the peace in the household.

From excerpt 1, Waymond portrays the collectivistic behaviour patterns of resolving disagreements by encouraging open dialogue and equal participation and sacrificing personal desires to meet the group's needs. It

is clear that Waymond demonstrates horizontal collectivism by encouraging an open conversation and equal participation from Evelyn, despite the heavy subject matter. His actions reflect his desire to maintain harmony, even when it involves something as difficult as their marriage. He also shows horizontal collectivism when he informs Evelyn that he has steamed the tablecloth and repainted the ceiling in their laundromat. Despite feeling dissatisfied with their marriage, Waymond still tends to the family's needs, showing his ongoing respect for Evelyn and their relationship.

Moreover, when Evelyn reminds him to check the noodles, he complies, even though he continues to feel ignored. This act highlights a form of vertical collectivism because Waymond attends to Evelyn's father's preferences,

respecting the higher status of elders in the family. Waymond values the roles within the family structure, prioritising harmony and peace over his personal desires.

Table 6: Excerpt 2 Portrayed by Waymond Wang

Timestamp: 12:33 - 12:51		Code
Gong Gong	: Where are we?	
Evelyn	: This is... um... Our business is so busy that we are applying for a new business licence so we can expand.	
Gong Gong	: Hmph. Another laundromat.	
Waymond	: People always have dirty clothes, Father. It's nice to feel needed.	HA3

Table 6 displays a scene where Waymond and Evelyn brought Gong Gong along to meet her auditor because she does not want her father to be alone in the house. Evelyn is feeling nervous because she is getting nearer to the meeting, and she also does not want her father to know her business is being audited. So, when her father asked them where they were heading, Evelyn tried to explain to her father. Waymond, sensing his wife's distress, tried to help her by providing an explanation to Gong Gong.

It can be concluded that Waymond's response in this scene reflects horizontal collectivism, as described in Triandis's framework. Horizontal collectivism emphasises equality, cooperation and maintaining harmony within relationships, which Waymond consistently embodies. Rather than where he tries to resolve disputes by encouraging open dialogue. He intervenes to ensure that Gong Gong understands the situation in a way that avoids confrontation or misunderstanding. His non-confrontational approach aligns with Triandis's view that collectivistic individuals prioritise group cohesion over individual desires. Moreover, his effort to keep the harmony within the family mirrors Triandis's concept that horizontal collectivists value maintaining social harmony without asserting dominance or hierarchy.

Table 7: Excerpt 3 Portrayed by Waymond Wang

Timestamp 42:31 - 44:30		Code
Waymond	: I'm not trying to hurt you. Byron from church said he and his wife were miserable until they discussed divorce, and talking it out actually helped.	HA3
Evelyn	: This doesn't make any sense.	
Waymond	: Think about it. Unless it's an emergency, whenever I try to talk to you, you always get pulled away.	HA5
Waymond	: I wanted to start off the new year on a new foot. <i>(tear up)</i> But... maybe you're	HA1

		right. Maybe we would have been better off if we had never got married.	HA4
Evelyn		I never said that...	
Waymond		You didn't have to. It's the way you look at me.	

Based on Table 7 displaying excerpt 3, as their marriage seems to be falling apart, Waymond came to the conclusion that a divorce could solve their problems, despite him not actually being happy about it. He also portrayed horizontal collectivism when he encouraged Evelyn to give her own opinion because he valued her opinion. When having the talk with his wife, Waymond wants them to have an open conversation, and by the end of it, they can reach a collective decision.

From that conversation, he also exhibits collectivistic behaviour by being interdependent and seeking emotional support from Evelyn. Overall, this excerpt shows how Waymond strongly embodied and leaned towards horizontal collectivism as he valued his relationship with his family. Despite sacrificing what he really desired, Waymond tried to cooperate with the members of the community, which was to consider dissolution of marriage between him and Evelyn

Table 8: Summary of Collectivist Behaviour Pattern Portrayed by Waymond Wang

Collectivistic Behaviour Pattern	Code	Instances
Sacrifices personal desires for the group's needs	VA1	low
Remains loyal to family even if it conflicts with personal values	VA2	low
Avoids conflict by deferring to an authority figure	VA3	low
Seeks help from a senior figure for advice	VA4	none
Follows a traditional role in the family (example: parent, elder)	VA5	none
Sacrifices personal desires to meet the group's needs	HA1	moderate
Shows loyalty to the group, acting as an equal member	HA2	low
Avoids conflict by ensuring that all voices are heard	HA3	high
Depends on others equally within the group	HA4	low
Participates in family decisions	HA5	low

Table 8 illustrates the instances of vertical and horizontal collectivism portrayed by Waymond Wang in the movie. He demonstrates a higher tendency towards horizontal collectivism and a lower tendency towards vertical collectivism. In horizontal collectivism, people value harmonious relationships within their communities and groups. Community members are interdependent but also emphasise social cohesion and a sense of togetherness. Horizontal collectivism includes showing sympathy, finding pleasure in making others happy, and maintaining harmonious relationships with others.

Waymond's portrayal of collectivism, particularly horizontal, supports the notion from Tehrani and Yamini (2022), as it was stated that men are more complex in the collectivism and individualism areas. Even though men are more likely to lean towards individualism or hierarchical structures because men are always expected to be the protectors, their upbringing and societal experience affect their views toward the world.

Next, the findings show that Waymond Wang demonstrates characteristics of both vertical and horizontal collectivism. In terms of vertical collectivism, Waymond sacrifices his personal desires for the needs of his family and shows respect for authority and social expectations. As he comes from a collectivist cultural

background, his willingness to put aside his personal wants and needs for the well-being of his family can be understood as a reflection of collectivistic values. His behaviour is also consistent with Abdul Halim and Abdul Ghani (2023), who state that people in collectivist cultures emphasise group harmony and social relationships. This is particularly evident in Waymond's efforts to maintain a sense of belonging and harmony within his family and community.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The gathered findings provided an in-depth understanding of the dynamic nature of collectivism, their interactions, decision-making processes and expressions of loyalty and obligation, reflecting the dimensions of vertical and horizontal collectivism. These findings provide a profound understanding of the complexities of cultural representations in the media and offer insights for future research. It serves as a valuable reference for linguistic learners and future researchers, urging them to expand their discoveries specifically on the complexity of human behaviours.

REFERENCES

1. Abdul Halim, A. H., & Abdul Ghani, W. S. W. (2023). A comparative analysis of individualism and collectivism effects on customer satisfaction in the retail sector: examining Asian and Western cultures. *Information Management and Business Review*, 15(3), 12–18. [https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v15i3\(I\).3512](https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v15i3(I).3512)
2. Aririguzoh, S. (2022). Communication competencies, culture and SDGs: effective processes to cross-cultural communication. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 9(96), 1-9. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01109-4>
3. Chen, S. (2022). Discover the cultural antagonism in The Farewell: Individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Innovation and Social Science Research*, 9(4), 155–157. doi.org
4. Fatehi, K., Priestley, J. L., & Taasobshirazi, G. (2020). The expanded view of individualism and collectivism: One, two, or four dimensions? *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 20(1), 7-24. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595820913077>
5. Hoff, H. E. (2020). The evolution of intercultural communicative competence: Conceptualisations, critiques and consequences for 21st-century classroom practice. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 3(2), 55–74. <https://doi.org/10.29140/ice.v3n2.264>
6. Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalising cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
7. Lhapeerakul, P. (2019). The Interaction of Cultural Genes and the Transformation of “Collectivism” in China. *International Journal of East Asian Studies*, 23(2), 58-68.
8. <https://so02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/easttu/article/download/241337/164315>
9. Scroope, C., & Evason, N. (2017). Chinese Culture - Core Concepts. *Cultural Atlas*. <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/chinese-culture/chinese-culture-core-concepts>
10. Triandis, H. C. (1995). Individualism and Collectivism. In Routledge eBooks (1st ed.).
11. Tehrani, H. D. & Yamini, S. (2022). Gender Differences Concerning the Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism: A Meta-Analysis, *Psychol Stud*, 67(1), 11-27. 11-27. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12646-022-00638-x>
12. Williams, K. M., & Cummins, E. (2023, November 21). Collectivist Culture | Definitions, Countries & Examples. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/collectivist-culture-definition-examples.html>