



BEING AN INTERGENERATIONAL CHURCH

Resource Paper #3 | AN EASTERN & WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

The Uniting Church in Australia seeks to be a genuinely intergenerational church in which all ages are welcomed and valued, where every generation is engaged together in active discipleship, growing in and sharing faith in Jesus.

This paper is one of a series that has emerged to assist the church in being and becoming more intentionally intergenerational. It is offered as a resource for all those who share the dream of a more intergenerational church – a church comprised of lifelong followers of Jesus, of all ages, caring, praying, celebrating, learning and serving faith-fully together.

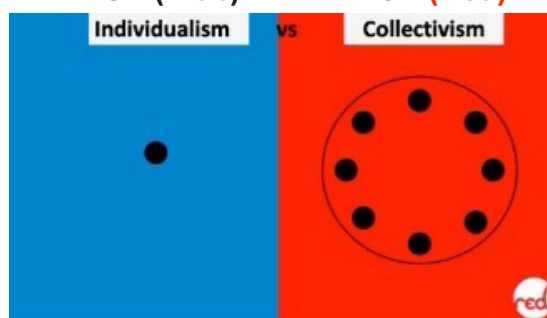
AN EASTERN & WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

Understanding culture – the strength of collectivism in intergenerational ministry

Culture can be like an iceberg, 10% on top of the water is easily seen and the larger 90% under the water can be very difficult to see. Culture is similar. Some parts of culture can be easily seen such as different foods, languages and clothing. Then there is the large part under the surface which gives the culture it's framework such as the nature of relationships, understanding of self, values, beliefs and worldview can be very difficult to see. An example of values which are under the iceberg is individualism v collectivism.

WEST (Blue)

EAST (Red)



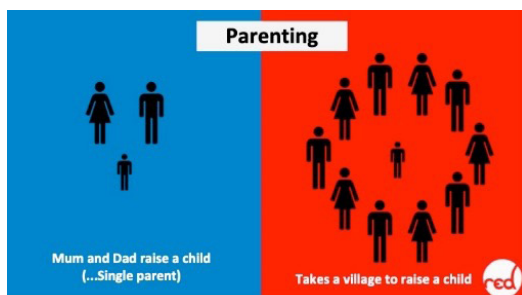
Individualism v. collectivism

Collectivism focus on group goals and what is best for the group.

Individualism focus on individual goals and the rights of the individual.

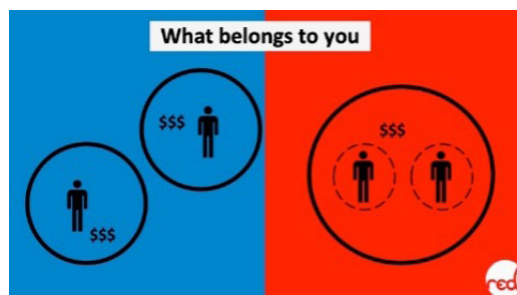
Collectivism can be a great value when it comes to intergenerational ministry.

How collectivism supports intergenerational ministry can be seen in Eastern cultures in the following 4 areas.



WEST: Nuclear family, parents and the children.

EAST: The village parents the children.



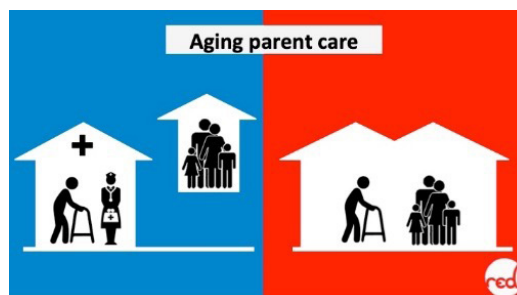
WEST: What belongs to you is yours.

EAST: What belongs to you is ours.



WEST: Transactional homes.

EAST: Give into the community and the community will give back in time.



WEST: Elderly cared for in nursing homes.

EAST: Elderly cared for at home with the family.

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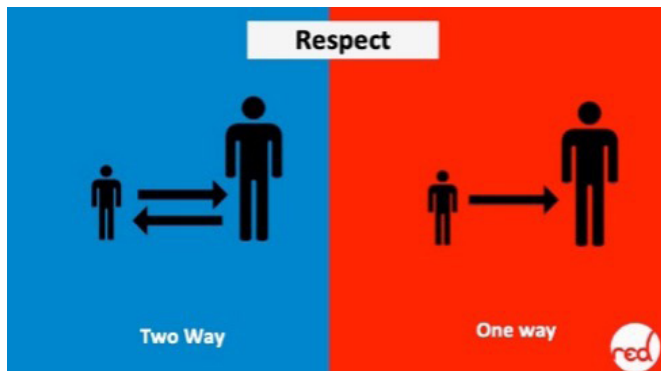


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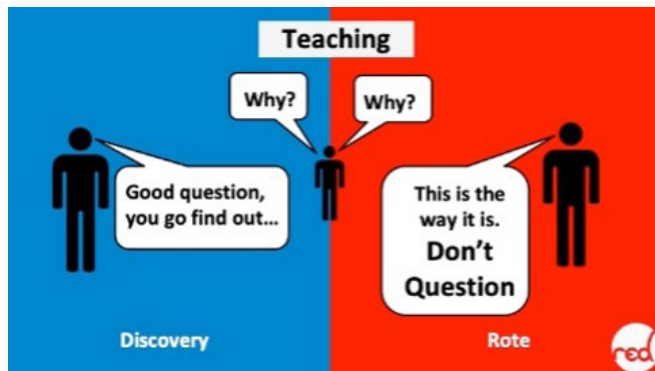
The challenge of hierarchy in intergenerational ministry

Within a collective culture there is often a hierarchy, which is an understanding of where a person sits in the collective society. It dictates who they are to look up to or who they are to take responsibility for. In contrast, in an Individualistic culture equality is a significant value – everyone is more equal. Intergenerational ministry that values equality comes from a Western framework. In this context, hierarchy in eastern culture can make intergenerational ministry difficult but lack of hierarchy can be a strength for western cultures. This can be seen in these 4 areas.



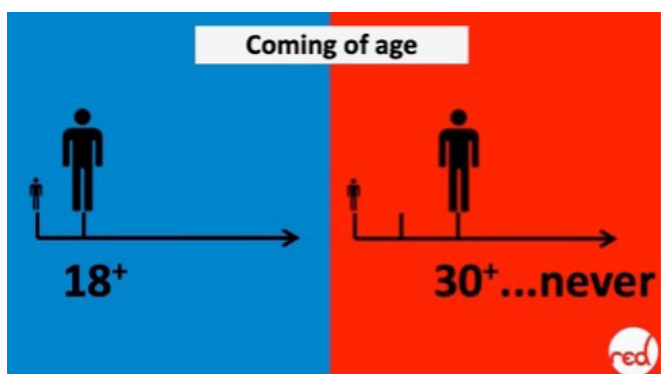
WEST: Respect is two ways.

EAST: Younger respects the older.



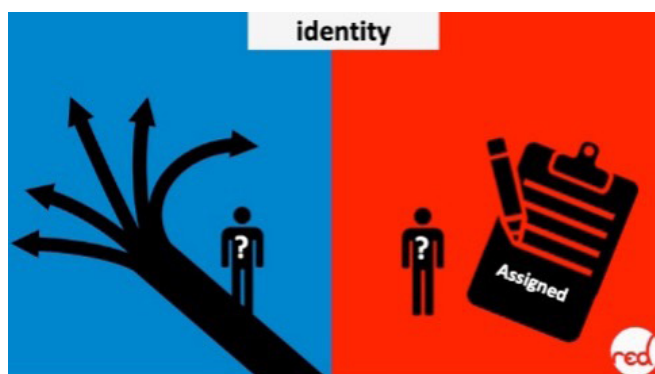
WEST: Discovery based learning.

EAST: Rote learning (from elders).



WEST: At 18, one becomes an adult.

EAST: Understanding your place in the community.



WEST: Freedom to choose an identity.

EAST: Identity is assigned at birth.

These are large generalisations of eastern and western cultures. There are many differences within eastern or western cultures. Other factors which may contribute to why people vary in their cultural values include when they come to Australia, why they come to Australia, how long they have been in Australia.

How this applies in a migrant church

1st Gen are those who migrate to Australia in adulthood.

2nd Gen are those who grow up inbetween cultures.

1. Often the 1st Gen are the church leaders who teach the 2nd Gen faith. There is a generational gap as well as a cultural gap. This can lead to a lack of connection between the 1st Gen and 2nd Gen, conflict and hurt. A need for apology and reconciliation can be greatly needed.
2. 2nd Gen may find faith formation more helpful through uni and under 2nd Gen youth leaders rather than the 1st Gen. This situation is highly complex. It requires consideration of significant issues such as cultural conflict (collectivism and hierarchy), power distribution and contextualisation of faith in order to find a way forward.

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