

International Conversation Cafe

Lifestyle Topic: Three World Views

Have you ever wondered why people in society do not commit more crimes than they do? Of course,- there are laws and prisons, police officers and judges that keep people from wrongdoing. But it seems that within groups of people there are systems that keep people orderly. Two of these systems were revealed In 1946 when anthropologist Ruth Benedict published a book called, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.

One system Benedict explained centers around the idea of guilt. Guilt is a feeling of remorse or sadness when you have done something wrong, something that hurt another person. A guilt-based society relies on an internal value system of right and wrong. When a person does wrong, they suffer from an internal sense of guilt or humiliation.

The other system she explains is shame-based. Shame is a feeling of intense embarrassment over something you have done that disrupts a community's or family's sense of honor. The shame comes from the opinion of others about you or your family rather than a recognition of sin from within.

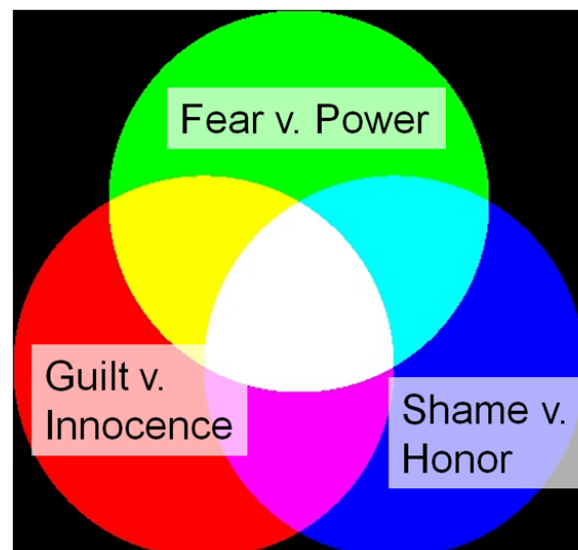
The third system, though not shown in Benedict's book, is the idea of fear. This fear comes from what powerful people might do to you if you disobey a code of conduct within the community. Sometimes the fear has to do with people who have spiritual authority who can bring curses on you. Witch doctors, sorcery, and paganism hold people under their power through fear.

What system influenced you the most as you were growing up? Give an example.

Certain parts of the world are generally known for each system. The West is known for producing people controlled by guilt. The East and the Middle East are known for their systems of honor and shame. Certain parts of Africa and South America are known for their emphasis on power and fear. Again, these are generalizations and may not be true of an entire region.

What is your opinion?

What can you learn about the three world views based on this diagram?



Below are seven questions to help you identify what influence you grew up with; guilt/innocence, honor/shame, fear/power. In your groups, share your answers. There may be several influences that you will recognize.

1. How do you choose your college major?
 - i. G/I What seems right and wrong to you?
 - ii. H/S What your family/parents urge on you?
 - iii. F/P Do you consult a spiritual advisor?
2. Whom will you marry?
 - i. G/I What seems right to you?
 - ii. H/S What your parents and family suggest?
 - iii. F/P Do you consult a spiritual advisor?
3. What happens when a teenage girl becomes pregnant?
 - i. G/I To whom would she turn?
 - ii. H/S How do parents react?
 - iii. F/P Is there a spiritual component in this situation?
4. What happens when someone leaves the religion they grew up with?
 - i. G/I Is there any consequence?
 - ii. H/S What do parents do?
 - iii. F/P What enchantments are put upon him or her?
5. If someone cheats on their spouse and is caught?
 - i. G/I For the guilty party, what do they do? What about the innocent one?
 - ii. H/S What will the family of the guilty party do? What about the innocent one?
 - iii. F/P Will spiritual authorities be advised? What might they do?
6. What happens if someone is caught in an illegal act such as drugs or an academic scheme?
 - i. G/I Will they be prosecuted?
 - ii. H/S How will the guilty person face their family?
 - iii. F/P Are curses or enchantments used?
7. What happens at birth and death?
 - i. G/I Are there any ceremonies or procedures?
 - ii. H/S Are there any rituals?
 - iii. F/P What is the role of the spiritual leader?