

# A Comparative Analysis of Chinese and American Cultural Values in Cross-cultural Communication

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## Abstract

With the deepening of global internationalization, the forms of exchanges and interaction between countries have become more and more abundant. Many outstanding Chinese talents go abroad to represent and show China in the new era, and many high-quality foreign talents are also attracted by the charming China. Through different ways of communication and conversation, we can exchange our views, find similarities from the differences, see their different differences in the same way, reunderstand ourselves and the world in the frictions and conflicts, and guide all mankind to make progress together. This article by listing full of conflicts between China and the American cross-cultural film, variety interview and the author around the American students and to the American professor Chinese teacher communication case, citing value orientation, cultural scale theory analysis of China, the cross-cultural communication of highly educated talents and the values behind the conflict, comprehensive thinking, for its more effective understanding of differences put forward some suggestions, so as to help them more smooth communication.

## Keywords

China and the US; Highly educated talents; Values; Conflict; Understanding.

## 1. The Different Views of Life and Death in Individualism and Collectivism Culture

### 1.1. Case 1: A Family Lie Is The "Truth"

#### 1.1.1. Problems Found

In early 2020, the Hollywood film "Don't Tell Her" created by the famous Chinese team was released in Chinese mainland. The director used his own experience to tell the typical collectivism and individualism values between China and the United States behind the life and death of his relatives. The protagonist, Bly, is a Chinese high-quality intellectual who grew up in the United States and has a full American education. In the film, she can both express her thoughts and be inclusive of different cultures, but she always cannot agree with the lies in the story.

The story begins with Grandma's sister lying, and Grandma's cancer test is corrected to a "benign shadow." Under the concealment of the family, Billy became the last person to know her time left. Her first reaction to the news was to go back to see her grandmother and tell her the full result of the examination. But dad immediately denied it, saying, "Our family thought it was best not to tell her anything, so you can't say anything." Billie wondered, "I don't understand. She doesn't have much time left. She should know the truth, right." The story begins with whether to tell the patient about the real illness, and repeatedly advances with Billy's six questions. "Do you tell grandma?" My mother explained that there is a Chinese saying that "cancer patients will die." It is often not cancer that kills patients, but fear. My aunt replied, "Why tell her that she has nothing left to do. It's too painful for grandma to say goodbye." Even the doctor who came to check the exam with his grandmother's own experience to persuade Billie,

the lie has not been broken down, it is not a lie, just a white lie."Everyone thought it was normal to deprive grandma of her right to know.

The conflict broke out after the last time the family discussed whether they should tell grandma about her illness. The middle-aged immigrant dad revisited the problem and said, "It's illegal in the United States."Uncle denied," This is in China, you went to the United States very early.

### 1.1.2. Analysis of the Problems

In their value orientation theory, Klucchih and Strodbeck divide the relationship between people into three orientations: authority relationship, collective relationship, and individualistic relationship."A culture focusing on collective relations believes that the collective is very important, and that the goal of the collective is higher than the goal of the individual, and that it emphasizes the interdependence between people."This is a typical feature of East Asian culture. In East Asia, especially the Chinese family is the link that maintains everything, which determines the development and fate of the family members. Through this case, we have found the conflict between China and the United States in treating family relations. Although grandma is the core of the whole family, the family as a whole naturally deprived her of the right to know her illness."So dad was determined that it was illegal."The individualistic relationship culture emphasizes individual choice and control of one's own destiny, believing that individual goals are above all else. 1"Uncle as Japan work high-quality intellectuals deeply influenced by east Asian values," the United States of life as an individual, this is the difference between China and the west, Oriental see life as a collective family society, you want to tell grandma, because afraid of responsibility, because the responsibility is too big, if you told him, we have no burden, I don't tell grandma, is to help her share the ideological pressure."It can be seen that although he can identify with American individualism, he understands the equality, independence and freedom of individual power under individualism as refusing to take responsibility, and regards not telling grandma as the meaning of family affection, which is a universal practice, not rising to the legal level. This shows that both sides do not really understand each other and are trying to hide the sharpest conflict with reasonable parts of their values.

### 1.1.3. Problem Solving

To solve the misunderstanding barriers brought on by individualism and collectivism, we can first try to put ourselves from the perspective of cultural values, rather than simply attribute the problem, and avoid judging the right and wrong things by our own values as the only correct criterion. When necessary, do as the Romans do without violating the law.

## 2. From Friends, Families Between The Beautiful Power Distance

During the undergraduate course, the author participated in a school composed of several countries composed of students in China as a foreign world. Organizers tried to explore a variety of interesting ways, such as the typical imitation, drama performances, cultural exchanges, etc., through a variety of students to senior Chinese as a foreign world, organizers tried to explore a variety of interesting ways, such as the typical imitation, drama performances, cultural exchanges, etc., through a variety of students to senior Chinese level in the application of Chinese at the same time of communication culture. Among them, there were also some interesting questions raised in the discussion, which seem to represent the cultural values of their respective countries today. I selected the answer records of Chinese and American students at that time for comparative analysis.

## 2.1. Case 2: I Will Not Make Friends with People Who Are Very Different From Me

### 2.1.1. Problems Found

American classmate A: I think two people to be friends must have the same topic. If two people live in two different worlds, there is no common topic, such as different things they like, different places to live, different experiences and feelings. You have no common topic talk, how to be friends.

Chinese classmate A: Two people with different status basically fail to communicate and understand each other. For example, it is impossible for famous fashion designers to understand the hard work of unknown models. Unfamous models crowded buses every day, but famous designers have drivers to pick up every day, the life of these two people is not touched.

American classmate B: I think there must be an equal relationship between friends. Because if I am lower than your social status, then I may not be able to buy those things you like, but then you still insist on going to those places you like, and you pay for it every time, it will make me very uncomfortable. I will feel like I am a burden on you, so that I will gradually distance myself from us.

Chinese classmate B: There may not be a final conclusion. But we can find that the boundaries of the world are eliminated, so are all kinds of unreasonable rules and rules. As we sit here today, precisely because we abandon many ideas and many boundaries, we can only sit on a table and sit today to chat.

### 2.1.2. Analysis of the Problems

The four students put forward their typical opinions representing their own country on the status difference between their friends and themselves. Hofstede's theory of power distance points out that "power inequality exists in all cultures, and the difference is people's acceptance and attitude towards it." In a culture of large distance from power, people believe that the existence of power inequality is a basic fact of society, and the high status people think that there is a gap between them and those with low status people, and it will strengthen this gap. At the beginning of his speech, Chinese classmate A stressed that the two people with different status basically could not understand and communicate with each other, highlighting the importance of status, and representing that China is a typical country with high power distance. Indeed, due to identity differences, social meetings were fixed in their own circle, forming a "circle culture". And American students value friends is whether the personality, whether the hobby is consistent and other aspects of personal characteristics. This is because the United States is a small power distance, although there is the phenomenon of power inequality, "but the inequality as far as possible, low status people think they and high status is equal, all should be laws and norms as guidance" such as American students B said, be friends must first seek equality, in the relationship, power differences between people should respect each other, take care of each other's face, to close the distance. 3

### 2.1.3. Problem Solving

It can be seen that the friendship cultural differences between China and the United States are influenced by the power distance. Regarding the same behavior as Americans because of the traditional concept of superiority and inferiority. This difference is affected by the geographical location, total population, education level and economic development level. There are various power distance in friendship, it is difficult for China to do the same behavior as Americans because of the traditional concept of superiority and inferiority. This difference is affected by the geographical location, total population, education level and economic development level. There are various power unfairness in both the real life of China and the United States, but no

matter where, the pursuit of fairness is the eternal goal of our struggle. At the exchange meeting, it was obvious that Chinese students, as a member of high-quality intellectuals, had realized the importance of abandoning old ideas and narrowing the distance between power after understanding the differences. In short, the world is developing, and so are our hearts. People from different countries can be good friends, proof. Now Chinese young people gradually realize that everyone's profession, regardless of high or low, plays an important role in the society. With the development of the economy and the opening of the country, it is believed that the concept of emphasizing hierarchy will be abandoned, and small circles can also be integrated into big circles.

## **2.2. Case 3: Should I block my parents in my WeChat Moments?**

### **2.2.1. Problems Found**

American classmate A: I think friends can share your life. If you block your parents, you are blocking their care. I prefer to share it voluntarily.

Chinese classmate A: In fact, our parents really want to integrate into our lives. They want to care about us in such a way similar to a bridge, and they may also want to know the world with the help of our circle of friends and our eyes. But, you just mentioned one thing, the world is changing too fast, it is very likely that we send something, something very interesting, they may run over and ask us, excessive care may increase our burden, and make them live very tired.

Chinese classmate B: I didn't block my parents before, but when they saw my sharing, they let me keep a low profile and let me post less. I don't think I had much more information compared with my classmates, so we were very unhappy, and then we gradually blocked our parents.

### **2.2.2. Analysis of the Problems**

In the United States, where power is small, family relations are more like friends. Parents often listen to their children's opinions, and parents and children participate in important family decisions together. Therefore, American children are negative about some positive events about whether to block their parents. They are willing to share their lives with their parents, believing that "blocking their parents is blocking their care". In contrast to China, where children often see this as a burden, fearing that their parents' excessive interference will interfere with each other's lives. Although Chinese family relations are not as strict and sensitive as Japan and South Korea, in many families, parents still treat their children very strictly. In high-power families, children can only shield their parents in order to avoid uncertainty and maintain harmonious family relations in the face of unequal status.

### **2.2.3. Problem Solving**

For the Chinese people, the most important group is the family. In Confucianism, "cultivating one's morality, regulating the family, governing the country and leveling the world" also emphasizes that maintaining personal cultivation and maintaining family harmony and happiness is the primary goal. Therefore, in China's family relationship with high power distance, parents have higher expectations for their children's words and deeds, but as children, we also have the right to express ourselves. We can fully communicate with our parents and express their needs on the basis of mutual understanding.

## **3. Practical Problems in the Informal Talks**

4Language and culture are closely related."The most direct expression of the relationship between language and culture is that language expresses people's views, attitudes, and prices about the world."By understanding the words that people talk to, we can understand that the values of various cultures are the way the world must communicate. We need to go through different ways of communication and different ways of conversation to exchange our opinions

and find unity from our differences. See the respective different opinions in the same. Elite people from all over the world express their views in China in the past and the future in Chinese.

### **3.1. Case 4: Time Orientation Difference between China and the United States**

If you use a time machine, do you want to go back to the past or go to the future?

#### **3.1.1. Find the Problem**

American A: I will choose to go to the future, because I can use the knowledge gained in the future to change the situation. It is dangerous to try to change something in the past, and it will change nothing else. If I go to the future, I can foreknow the technology from a thousand years later and bring it back to the present. While it's fun to see the past alone, it can't make the world any better. So, it is better to go to the future and help humans change the world faster and better.

American B: I won't choose, either in the past or in the future. There are things about the past that I would do again, and I would do a little different from the first time. But I don't regret that ...I am very satisfied with my life right now, so I don't want to change what has passed. I hope that the future is something that I can control and change by myself. But for me to travel straight into the future, it will be boring.

Chinese A: If I sometimes shine, I should want to go back to the past. Because, the reason for my poor expression ability is that I did not work hard to learn ..... When I was young there were many shortcomings in history, sociology, language, etc. So, I want to go back to the past and tell myself who I once was, and I must study hard.

#### **3.1.2. Analysis of the Problems**

On this issue, we can observe that Americans abandon the past, experience and stability. Whether they choose the future or enjoy the present, they remain optimistic that change will bring progress and development. There are three different orientations in the principle of value orientation: emphasizing the past, emphasizing the present, and emphasizing the future. American culture is typically futuristic, emphasizing change, and believing that the future will be better than now, and people who stick to tradition tend to be ridiculed. And for the future, they are more willing to experience and face the new challenges in their life. And China and other Asian countries are typical of the past time orientation of countries, we speak in many public places in " century-old schools, we have achieved ...in the past glorious achievements "; " look back at the long history, predecessors ..."The longest description I have heard in my life is " century-old schools, we have achieved ...in the past glorious achievements "; " look back at the long history, predecessors ..."The longest description I have heard in my life is also: " When I was young, I was the most. ", a past time-oriented culture that values historical traditions. Because these countries have a long history and cultural tradition, the vast majority of popular cultures today can be found in the past. Chinese students regret that they have not done anything in the past. To make up for the past, they tend to judge the rationality of realistic behavior based on the choice of the future or the present through historical experience. This time orientation greatly affects the way people behave and communicate. It is the expectation of the future time that accelerates the renewal speed of American technology companies, pays more attention to innovation and change in the choice of talent areas, and is certainly young and ener tend to be future-oriented in culture and focus on their own future development.

#### **3.1.3. Solve the Problem**

The first is to understand their own culture. Each culture has its own value and significance. If the cultural values can conform to the development trend of the country, it means that the culture is suitable for the country, facing the impact of different cultures, we can try to understand, absorb the positive part of it, continue to insist at the same time.

## 3.2. Case 5: Uncertainty Avoidance and High and Low Context in Modern Social Etiquette

Do Wechat need to add the HAVE READ function?

### 3.2.1. Find the Problem

American A: The HAVE READ function will make all people more mature. For example, my colleague tweeted to me at 10 PM, saying, " Are you going to have dinner with me tonight?" I saw it, but I didn't want to go, so I didn't return. If I didn't have the HAVE READ function, I could directly reply the next morning, " I'm sorry, I was very tired yesterday. I went to bed early and didn't see it." I think it's very bad, our society still needs to be honest, if there is this read function, I will have to say directly to him that day, " Sorry, thank you for inviting me, but I want to eat at home tonight." If everyone can be so honest, our society will get better and better.

Chinese A: The functions in the world's communication software, including Wechat, are controversial. Choosing online, invisible, busy, invisible, and visible to it, means that the recipient has the right not to return to reply to you from the root. In this age, because your phone is always in your hands, you can't hide it. Add a more powerful feature to this old one, which is worth lower for many people because you lose your right to choose.

### 3.2.2. Analysis of the Problems

As mentioned above, Americans are more inclined to choose the unknown challenges at work, but Wechat, the social networking tool for modern work, breaks the American value. Social tools are constantly developing, and there is a lot of social etiquette. If some etiquette is broken, or is not observed, and often people will be disliked or hated, they will feel that the person is not polite. China and the United States have shown an anti-traditional side in the question of whether to stick to their unreadable values. Americans think about whether the approach is impolite, inefficient and disobeying the rules. Because the delay in response creates uncertainty about the work. They are " much more inclined to establish more rules and regulations, cannot tolerate unconventional thoughts and behavior, seek group consensus and identity, believe in absolute truth and expertise, and feel anxious and nervous about vague things." The Chinese care more about whether they have the power to respond to messages, not about the consequences of uncertainty. "In this respect, China is more tolerant of unconventional people and things, emphasizing personal creativity, being willing to take risks, and being more flexible and casual. 5

At the same time, can not read back also reflects the conflict between high and low context in Chinese and American verbal communication. "Hall's theory of high and low context culture refers to a matter of course idea when people socialize about how much listeners know what they are talking about. In low context communication, the listener knows very little about what is said and must be clearly informed of all things, while in high context communication, the listener already understands the context and does not need to provide background information." Here, as Wechat serves as a written language system, Americans' attention to the timeliness of message responses reflects the characteristics of being a high-context culture, while Chinese people try to refuse things, trying to maintain interpersonal harmony by maintaining silence, delayed responses and ambiguous words. Therefore, many Westerners from low-context countries often fail to understand the implicit and awkward expression of Chinese people, believing that they cannot lack responsibility, and Chinese people do not like the direct and frank problems of Westerners, and often believe that Westerners have "low EQ. 6

### 3.2.3. Problem Solving

Cultural values and patterns are dynamic and updated with the development of new things in society. The problem of "not reading back" is very common in cross-cultural cooperation

projects, but different cultural values produce different treatment rules. Facing the problems caused by such cultural barriers, we must timely communicate and solve them through consultation. In addition, to a new culture to timely understand, not just one thing, one person, an experience on the simple inappropriate definition, reduce the occurrence of prejudice and misunderstanding.

#### 4. Summary

Through the above five obstacles encountered by modern young and high-quality intellectuals in cross-cultural communication, we can better find that the values are hidden in the deepest culture, often guiding people's behavioral activities unconsciously, and affecting the communication between China and the United States. In the future, between the two sides, while adhering to the respective values of the two countries, we can rely on each other's characteristics. We should also fully understand and respect each other's values, enhance the flexibility in cross-cultural communication, and adjust the communication methods at any time, so as to promote better cross-cultural communication between China and the United States.

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