



## The Differences of Sino-American Culture and Effects on the Motivation Pattern in Chinese Enterprises

Shengmin Liu

Economic Management Department

Zhujiang College of South China Agricultural University

Guangzhou 510980, China

E-mail: lsm19801222@126.com

### Abstract

The paper addresses the differences between American and Chinese culture. Associated with the typical American and Chinese culture, the paper further addresses the affection of the difference to the theory of motivation. At the end of this paper, it gives a model that suitable to the Chinese company.

**Keywords:** Culture difference, Motivation

### 1. Introduction

China is an big eastern country with civilized history of 5,000 years, its culture is of long standing and well established; U.S.A, of which history is only 200 years, a new big country with developed economy, its leading culture is European culture. Because of these differences in such factors as geographical environment, historical background, evolution, etc., the culture of China and the United States demonstrates enormous differences too. These differences are shown in the following three aspects mainly. And consider the difference among these three respects, if apply the traditional encouragement way in the west to China, which must be revised essentially, we have proposed a motivation models for Chinese enterprises, only for reference.

### 2. Grade idea and human rights idea

Taking Confucianism as the core traditional culture of China, we always maintain different hierarchy, senior and young in order. Mencius asserts claims: "Shun make Qie as Situ, teaches with moral principles, father and son kiss, officials have justice, couples are different, senior and young in order, friends must be of credit." ("on Teng WenGong") In the long process of feudal society, China has formed a whole set of hierarchy relationship between father and son, officials, couples, namely " father guides son, ruler guides officials husband controls wife ", no one can violate such 3 cardinal rules. The Confucianists' ethics has quite far-reaching influence on the Chinese social behavior, and make people judge things with its standards. The one who violates the principles will be considered as treason who is not accepted by people all around. The author of " Romance of the Three Kingdoms " demotes Cao Cao and praises Liu Bei, for which fact, a very important reason is that Cao Cao is not " loyal " and that Liu Bei " keeping duty ". Cao Cao takes as official in feudal times, " hold the emperor under the arm and make duke under an emperor ", can't " work for monarch with loyalty", a treasonable and treacherous official; Moreover Cao Cao is not a member of family name called Liu, but he wants to handle the Han room, which can't be accepted for Chinese whose family's idea is very strong. In view of this, Cao Cao should be flogged by the criticism.

In Chinese society, people are always restricted by their own status and role , while communicating, otherwise of impoliteness. For example, subordinate or the younger generation should greet first voluntarily while seeing authorities or the elder. For showing the respect, the younger generation often say " you " at calling elder, subordinate often calls senior authorities with post, for instance " section chief Wang " , " secretary Zhao " , etc.. While talking, the high of the position or elder is often the leading party, the other should demonstrate the humble expression of respectful attention. Often there is such kind of situation in daily life: Children see adult and greet "uncle fine", "auntie fine" voluntarily, adult praise "courteous", otherwise "bad-mannered" Most Chinese schools define "respecting teachers "as one of the rules students must obey, or, they are most likely considered as "bad thought and quality ". In addition, Chinese follow a certain rule too while choosing priority of sitting down and standing up or coming in and going out.

To some extent, this strong grade idea from Chinese culture is expressed in the Chinese language too .It is not wanton to arrange the order under a lot of situations when several words stand side by side in Chinese, generally arrange the order according to hierarchy, from main fact to subordination, from great to little ", for instance " the monarch and his

subjects , father and son , brothers , sisters , master and apprentice , being up and down , the party and the masses , soldiers and officers , men , woman ,the old and the young " ,etc..

Different from Chinese culture, U.S.A.'s culture can be flaunted with "human rights". Human right is all power people should enjoy (include personal power and other democratic power). Americans do one's best to insist that freedom is equal, think all people are born equally, and pursue freedom and power to enjoy happiness. Such an equal idea permeates through Americans' life and thinking field, their behaviors , work , amusement , language, politics reflect the equal idea invariably ,and various kinds of relations in real life are limited by this kind of idea invariably .

In Chinese enterprises, job grade often marks the grade of position, so even if the staff of Chinese enterprise is capable, one does not dare to surmount his superior's achievement yet, otherwise others will not think he shows no respect on higher authorities.

In U.S.A., for the father and son, teachers and students, people of different positions, all their power is equal legally. Because the idea of grade and identity is faint, in U.S.A. culture, people have less punctilious while mingling. When one meets other acquaintances, whether seniority in the family and status in the society, he express " hello " without exception. The generation of grandsons can call grandfather's name, children call parents' name, students can call teachers' name, too. With Americans' initial meeting, after both sides interflow names, Americans often said: ' Call me the Bills /John ' (including no family name). It's natural and cordial.

In American enterprises, there is only difference in working and functions and powers between the superior and the subordinate, and never in the position. So only concern oneself with facts and not with individuals in establishment of the incentive system, who works better, who can obtain higher remuneration, taking no consideration of position levels.

### **3. Taking care of sympathy seriously and individualism**

Say as above, the ethics that Chinese generally practise is the Confucianists' ethics, and the central idea of the Confucianists' ethics is "benevolence ". What is the benevolence? Analects of Confucius Fan Chi ask people, the person says "caring about the people", namely love everybody. Since people have the responsibility of caring about the people, who should be cared first? Say again on the Analects of Confucius: "Xiaodi is the principle of behavior?" "xiaodi", is filial towards parents and to show and respects to the elder brother. It's to teach people to love one's own brothers and parents first, and then expand to others' brothers and parents, until everybody. The love and affections are close and related, caring about love must caring about affections. Therefore, the Confucian culture taking "benevolence" as the core, namely China's traditional culture, must pay attention to the emotions between people. In other words, Chinese culture demonstrates one side that cares about hierarchy, it represents the other side that takes care sympathy seriously, of which the two supplement each other, bring out the best in each other, form distinctive Chinese traditional culture.

Say "benevolence" needs to explain "xiaodi " at first , this is easy to understand. People who do not love the brothers of parents, how could everybody be loved? So, the development of the benevolence one must begin at home. The fact is exactly like this too. Chinese culture serious one side of feeling, display each other treatment among kinfolks and is it love to imprison at first, so-called father kind sub filial piety, friend younger brother respectful brother have, quite harmonious whole family have. In the traditional Chinese family, treat each other with respect, live a long life together exquisitely between couple; Mostly help each other and like each other among siblings; At bringing up children, parents try their best to satisfy their children' need, seldom consider how much oneself pays; Get parents to be getting on in years, lose work or after the viability, children is it support, wait upon the old man to want, enable it to spend remaining years in comfort. Live in this kind of family which is full of kindred, even if the material life is poor, it is happy and happy and harmonious too. No wonder mention this wording of "family ", Chinese drifting about outside, a true men, unavoidable thoughts surging in the mind too.

To the person beyond kinfolks, Chinese have always maintained in order to already push people, see things as one would if he were in someone else's place, feel for others; Maintaining old I am old and people are old, young I am young and the person one is young; Advocate behaving exactly in the same way as one thinks one ought to, by treating people sincerely. When others need help, such behaviors as "hesitating to do what is right", " helping generously with money ", etc. were people's generally acknowledged benefaction, magnanimous act undertaken for the public good. Generally speaking, each Chinese has several friends who sing the same song, can rely on. Often help each other between the good friends, keep no secrets from each other. Such intimate friendship duration is generally relatively long, even can last all one's life.

So in Chinese enterprises, it is harmonious to pay attention to the colony, it is harmonic to organize. In this way, encouraging colony's performance is a very large breach.

U.S.A. has quite different culture. U.S.A.'s social human feeling is cold, individualism overflows, and long-standing. Cross-cultural exchange scholar Larry A Sam and Richard E Potter says: "Individual is the most lofty in western culture, individualism is primary and definite values. This kind of values may be everything leading in U.S.A. "Among English written language," I " (I) must be capitalized on any occasion, while, others not. From this side, we can see that " I " is

more important than " we ", " you ", " you ", " he (she ) " .

Americans attach great importance to the individual right and freedom. In the human communication, Americans often cause the deterioration of the interpersonal relationships because emphasize oneself power and freedom excessively. Have read such news on the newspaper: There are American married couples correctly, in case of wife's unwilling sexual life in one day, the husband has sexual intercourse by force, the wife thinks one's own personal power is encroached on, then gone to the court to indict the husband and commit the crime of raping. Therefore, Americans' attention to the individual right. We do not go to judge the right and wrong tentatively, but such and such conjugal relation lets people tremble with fear unavoidably.

Cold and detached emotions have by father and son, couple, have any affection that can be spoken between men while being other. Extreme individualism has determined "the relation between people and human world is just terrible with the relation of the public affair type in U.S.A. When you are favorable to others, it is a guest on a mat that you may be invited, but when you do not contribute others' interests at all, others treat you coldly naturally. "Perhaps this is one of the reasons U.S.A.'s social crime rate to remain high and the neurasthenia and disease are of common occurrence.

In brief, pay attention to the personal actual effect in American enterprises, but does not mind the relation is harmonious, in fact it is for achieving personal purpose too that the relation is harmonious. So the encouragement ways of American enterprises are generally subject to personal result achievement.

#### **4. Ethics and legal system**

As everyone knows, the family occupies the centre position in Chinese society. The family is not only a basic public organization; but also the models of all social organizations. In the past, emperor was called "the son of Heaven". Local officers were called "parental officers". Good friends become sworn brothers or sisters. Nowadays, it is often said that the people of all ethnic groups live happily in the big family of China. Even in a popular song, it is sung that our large China, a large family. Therefore, social organization and social relationships of China regard family as the mode generally. And the ethics of Chinese family can be pushed and spread out to the whole society.

According to the Confucian ethics, people should be filial towards parents, love their brothers and sisters in the family, which is the principles to deal with relationship in the family. People all pay great attention to the relationship between parents and children in the traditional Chinese families. It means people should acts scrupulously abide by his or her status in the family. Unless everyone acts its role that should act, everybody could live together harmony, the family could be steady and prosperous. To spread out the ethics of family relationship to the society refers to extend the intimate attitude toward family members to the faithful spirit of order toward other members of the society. Simply say, we should be loyal to the king or superiors as be filial towards parents, respect colleagues and friends as brothers or sisters.

The Confucian advocates comity, loyalty and mercy. The most remarkable meaning of comity is that people respect each other, which purpose is to make the relationships harmonious. Confucius said "Benevolence is asking oneself to comply with legislation", which emphasizes the importance of the comity. The comity represents respect which is the inherent spirit of comity. Comity and respect have magical effect in maintaining and improving the relationships. Loyalty includes being loyal toward monarch, but means more. The original meaning of loyalty is devotion which refers to taking on one's own responsibility. Everybody has the responsibility to help others according to one's own kindheartedness. Therefore, loyalty gets people to devote themselves to other people. One has loyal responsibility for others, also has the responsibility of mercy. It is said that "Person full of benevolence, would improve others for improving oneself, and would enrich others for enrich oneself." in Analects. This is mercy, which advises people to treat others like oneself. Don't give others the thing you don't need. Mercy is the basic principle. If everybody obeys the principle, everyone can live peacefully.

According to the Confucian ethics, everyone has his proper position, everybody should keep courtly and merciful and should not act foolishly. This is the important insurance the operation of traditional Chinese society and the harmoniousness of the relationships.

In fact, China is a people control system the society, and Chinese enterprises are of people control system type. For a long time, the prosperity of enterprises depends on a certain leader's wisdom, not depend on enterprise system. When the enterprise system conflicts with leadership style, people will choice the latter one without hesitation.

Different from Chinese traditional culture, the legal system is valued in American society. There are various kinds of laws in America, numberless as the sand, which involves politics, economic, education, marriage, public welfare and other aspects of daily life. With the respect of law, most government officials are all or once practitioners. Legal spirit extends its reach gradually to the bottom stratum of society through the managerial bulwark. It is deeply convinced that the methods could be found in the legal clauses to solve all the problems. Then, the father and son will go to the court once they become estranged, couples will go to the court once they dispute the property, even the neighbors will appeal to the court if the dog enters others' courtyard by mistake.

However, the human nature is very complicated. Sometimes, the law is useless. It can be enough proved by the phenomena that the drugs are overflow in America recently, crime rates rise, divorce rate remains high, political scandals never stop and so on. Another example, no matter how detailed the law stipulates about the right and incumbency, it is of no help to improve couples' sentiment and stabilize marriage relation when they pursue the freedom and happiness by themselves, do not consider about each others.

Under the guidance of individualism values, everyone in American social vies with each other and eagerly to succeed. In order to achieve this target, some people disregard the law, rush into danger. Moreover, carnalism and mammonism prevail in American society. Money talks may make the law twiddled with by some rich people. Though it values the legal system in America, which is still not an ideal kingdom.

As a result of the prevalence of this value concept, money motivating seems more effective. American enterprises often motivate employees to achieve the goals of the organization by money.

### **5. Proposition of the motivation pattern of aim at Chinese enterprise**

First of all, considering that Chinese traditional social estate system is deep-rooted, the system of post subsidy should be implemented to motivate employees. The subsidy is different according to the post.

Then to provide Seniority subsidy monthly according to the length they worked for the enterprise, which meet the needs of Chinese culture that aim at people not business.

Chinese pay great attention to harmoniousness and do not like to destroy relationship of collectivity. Therefore, the motivator aim at individual in west is not applicable in china any more. Chinese enterprises should consider the collective motivation. It is undoubted that some collective encouragement does not need to be apportioned. For example the company organized the collective to travel. However, there is a problem that some divisible collective encouragement needs to be distributed to individual. To distributive justice will make everybody satisfied and the collective more harmonious; otherwise, it will affect collective relationship.

How to distributive justice?

Here, we will involve the third difference of the culture that Chinese adopt people system while American value legal system. We can vote to elect several supervisors who are approved. Let the supervisors to contrive several schemes anonymously by Delphi analysis, then discuss and select the best allocative decision.

Of course, certain enterprises will have concrete motivation pattern. This is the basic frames.

According to Herzberg's Two-Factors Theory, hygiene factors of Chinese enterprises should refer to the subsidy by particular post based on social hierarchy and the collective encouragement, in order to form a harmonious environment that employees help each other and improve themselves. It should work definitely.

Indivisible collective encouragement will motivate employees directly, and then distribute the divisible reward to individual in the collective according to Delphi analysis. This method meets the material needs and self-fulfillment, self-esteem needs.

As the Figure 1, compared Chinese culture with American, we do not want to belittle a certain culture. In fact, each culture has strong and weak points. For example, Chinese value ethics and emphasize commiseration, which is the lubricant to keep good relationships. However, growing up in this kind of culture, Chinese make decision aim at people not business. On the contrast, Americans emphasize legal system, and will not be bothered by the human feelings when make decisions. In addition, although the individualism prevail in the American society has its negative side, it benefits for independence, creativity and bringing forth the new talents. It is obvious that the strong point of American culture is exactly a weakness of China. Chinese should learn from American the strong point. I advocate this motivation pattern should be the leading pattern in china, and encouragement emphasizes the individual achievement also can be used to play a assistant role under the guidance of Chinese traditional culture. The motivation pattern in Chinese enterprise which leans to Chinese culture is easier to be accepted by employees. Whether it will get actual effect in companies, and how to execute in certain enterprise remain to study!

### **Acknowledgement**

I appreciate the efforts of my classmate: Lan Qiu, Zi'an Zhou and Bei Xu to translate the paper from Chinese to English.

### **References**

- Deng, ZT. (2004). *Analects Xueer*, Yunnan: Yunnan University Press.
- E., Albert. (1968). *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Vol. 16, New York: Macmillan.
- Edward, C., Stewart & Milton, J. Bennett. (1991). *American Cultural Patterns, a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.
- Eun Y., Kim. (2001). *The Yin and Yang of American Culture*, intercultural Press.

Francis L.K. Hsu. (1981). *Americans and Chinese* 3rd ed. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Garrott, June Rose. (1995). *Chinese Cultural Values: New Angles, Added Insights. International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 2.

Gary, Althen. (2003). *American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States*, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

George, Barna. (2001). *Real Teens*, Ventura: Regal Books.

Harold Laski. (1984). *American Democracy: A Commentary and an Interpretation*. New York: Kelly Augustus M Publishers.

Hofstede, Geert. (1980). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-related values*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Patrick, S. Poon, Feficitas U. Evangefista & Gerald Albaum. (2005). *A Comparative study of the Management Styles of marketing managers in Australia and the People's Republic of China. International Journal of Business and Management*.

Yang, CY. (1998). *Statement of Culture between China and American*. Yantai: Transaction of Yantai University, pp. 58-61.

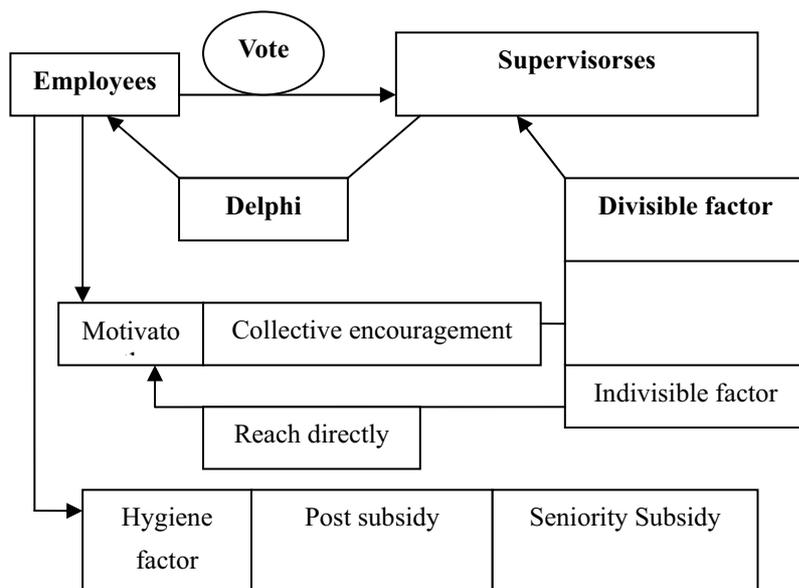


Figure 1. Liu Shengmin model