

Getting the Big Picture on Chinese Values: Developing Approaches to Study the Shifting Core of Chinese Culture

Steve J. Kulich, Shanghai International Studies University

Many scholars in recent years have noted that Chinese values are undergoing changes. But few have designed empirical studies to analyze these changes. This paper builds on the intercultural communication tradition toward developing a comprehensive approach to frame such studies. Values clarification has always been an important starting point for cultural comparisons and interactions. As Kluckhohn (1952/1962) suggested, in times of rapid change there is a need to re-examine the contexts of shifting values. Scholars like Hofstede (1980, 1997) and Schwartz (1992, 1994, 1999, 2001) have been doing this, but with limited new empirical work in China.

Starting with a review of the need to study value shifts during times of cultural transition, this paper proposes six directions toward developing a social science research process such as that incorporated in the Shanghai Chinese Values Project (SCVP). The key features of the SCVP include proposing (a) A focus on sub-cultural contexts; (b) A multi-dimensional model; (c) Synchronous diversity; (d) An inductive and indigenous review; (e) Analysis of “products of culture”; and (f) The blending of qualitative and quantitative methods. This paper includes a list of resource materials that are being developed to aid values researchers and papers that have been presented under the SCVP project. Prospects for the continued clarification of Chinese culture in transition are put forward.

Studying Values in Times of Cultural Transitions

The matter of values is certainly the prime intellectual issue of the present day...Our cohesiveness and strength as a people depend upon the achievement of greater clarity and force in making explicit among ourselves and to the outside world what we conceive to be good, what we hold to be right or wrong in private acts or official duties, and the responsibilities of our nation in its dealings with other nations. (Kluckhohn, 1962, p. 286)

During a time of booming economic prosperity, rapidly developing technology, and the beginning of major shifts in social patterns, C. Kluckhohn addressed those words to American educators, scholars and policy makers (Kluckhohn, 1962). He foresaw that societies experiencing rapid transformation need to take time to identify the shifts in their values, identities, and how these affect both domestic and international influences. This trend was also anticipated in the principle put forward by his Harvard Values Project associates (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961); that in societies undergoing cultural change, the new rank ordering of values may not yet be clear. In fact, it could be argued that it particularly is in

these times of rapid cultural change that scholars, policy makers and practitioners seek to study and clarify values.

In support of this “cultures in change” hypothesis, the Chinese scholar Hu Shi noted the radical changes going on and commented,

The larger problem is: how can we Chinese feel at ease in the new world which at first sight appears to be so much at variance with what we have long regarded as our own civilization? For it is perfectly natural and justifiable that a nation with a glorious past and with a distinctive civilization of its own making should never feel quite at home in a new civilization, if that new civilization is looked upon as part and parcel imported from alien lands and forced upon it by external necessities of national existence. And it would surely be a great loss to mankind at large if the acceptance of this new civilization should take the form of abrupt displacement instead of organic assimilation, thereby causing the disappearance of the old civilization. The real problem, therefore, may be restated thus: How can we best assimilate modern civilization in such a manner as to make it congenial and congruous and continuous with the civilization of our own making? (Hu, 1920/2000, p. 8)

As contemporary as those ideas sound, they were not put forward over worries about the influence of the WTO or globalization, but were made in 1917 by early reformer Hu Shi as his generation of scholars saw China facing similar challenges of international integration (Hu, 1920/2000). Both in the transitional context of then and now, the issues of identifying core aspects of Chinese culture for its maintenance, evaluation or development were at stake.

In the current climate of modernization and internationalization, Hu Wenzhong provides a related commentary:

During the past two decades China has undergone tremendous social changes.... China is deeply involved in the globalization process....[and] has been adopting a policy of opening out to the outside world and established extensive political, economic and cultural ties with many nations of the world...Against this background Chinese people's values are changing rapidly. What was once held as gospel truth is now forsaken as outdated norm and instead people, especially younger people, are acquiring values which are in many ways different from the values held by their parents and forefathers. (Hu, 2003, p. 1)

There is no doubt that China is in transition. Parts of the country are globalizing, other parts are modernizing, and almost every part is changing in some way. There are internal forces pushing it to catch up or gain an equal playing field with other countries as well as external forces in economics (the WTO, World and Asian Development Banks, and Multinationals), in politics, in medicine and health (the WHO during the SARS crisis and the Avian Flu Virus scare), and in myriad types of cultural exchange or international contact. Where scholars might have thought it appropriate to discuss the homogeneity of “the Chinese” people in the 1970s or 1980's, by the mid 1990s, such national generalizations were no longer accurate or relevant.

China is diversifying. There have always been clear cultural demarcations between north and south Chinese, but now the subcultures of coastal China are quite distinct from inland China, the Yangtze delta from the Southwest, Northwest or Northeast. More and more we need to consider the cultural variations between rural and urban Chinese, or even those between the large metropolitan centers of Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Chongqing and Guangzhou. Such increasingly cosmopolitan mega-cities share some common characteristics, but also have their regional distinctions, not to mention differences in other provincial cities. And our awareness of the cultural distinctions of minority cultural groups in Yunnan, Xizang (Tibet), Xinjiang and other provinces has grown in the last decades.

In this growing heterogeneity, what does it mean to be Chinese now? How do we study the core of culture in such a shifting context? Are there still some enduring traditional Chinese values, attitudes and beliefs? Or do we now need to consider younger Chinese as being more influenced by consumerism, modernism, post-modernism, globalization or westernization? The widespread learning of English is certainly serving as a catalyst for new thought patterns, as are the mass production of Hollywood DVDs, pop music CD's and high-speed MTV and access to the Internet. But how are these impacting today's China and tomorrow's Chinese values?

Expanding the Language and Culture Paradigm

Intercultural specialists often argue that the first step toward cross-cultural comparison is to understand oneself (Kohls, 2001). The Chinese have a saying that "to make progress, you have to make comparisons" (in Chinese "有比较, 才有进步"). "Like a fish in water," we are often unaware and unconscious of the context around us. Often only experiences or training that push us to feel like "a fish out of water" help us realize the importance or influence on us of our original cultural setting.

Since the publication of *Language and Culture* (Deng & Liu, 1989) nearly 20 years ago, English language teaching, translation, and linguistic programs have sought to deal increasingly with the culture component. But foreign language teaching (FLT) programs have primarily focused on teaching "the cultures of native English countries." In Liu Huijie's (2003) critique,

Effective intercultural communication involves the students' awareness of not only the culture of their target language, but also of their own culture, on the basis of which their sensitivity to cultural differences, an important part of communicative competence, can be built up. However, when the students are concentrating on learning English and the culture of Anglo-American English in the EFL classroom ... the education of students' own culture is neglected. This loss of the Chinese traditional culture in the EFL classroom has become a serious problem ... [and] may well account for the fact that many Chinese college students ... cannot express their own traditional culture. (p. 2)

This element has been missing both in foreign language instruction and in cross-cultural communication programs (Fei, 2004). Increasingly aware of this deficiency, Chinese educators are acknowledging and addressing this need; new books and materials are now

appearing to help students discover or clarify their home culture. How can scholars focus their research and reporting to add substance to this need for “home culture awareness” to develop a more rigorous program of research, writing and teaching on what does it mean to be Chinese today? In the earlier cultural shifts of the May Fourth period, somewhat “bicultural” sojourners like Gu (1917/1998), Hu (1920/2000) and Lin (1936/2000) served as clarifiers and interpreters of Chinese culture. Who or what new insights will serve this generation as it participates in what appears to be an even greater cultural transformation?

Getting to One Core Domain of Culture through Values Studies

Gu & Lu (2002) argue for new efforts toward studying covert culture, using Gudykunst’s term, which Triandis (1972, 1994) called “subjective culture,” and Hall (1998) considered “hidden”:

Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the ultimate purpose of the study of culture is not so much the understanding of foreign cultures as much as the light that study sheds on our own. (Hall, 1998, p. 59)

Like the iceberg model, much of every culture is obscured below the readily observable surface. So how does the researcher uncover the deeper or core areas which influence a people’s visible behaviors and communication preferences?

There is much debate over where “the core” of any culture lies. Is the heart of a culture in its beliefs (Bond, 2003; Leung, 1996), its world view systems (Iishi, Klopff & Cooke, 2003), or in a set of “social axioms” (Bond et al., 2004)? Or can some of these core elements be identified in the cultural- or individual-level values that generations of scholars from Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961), to Rokeach (1972, 1973, 1979), Hofstede (1980), Bond (1988) and now Shalom Schwartz (1992, 1994, 1999, 2001) have proposed? The development of the approaches and project described here are built on the assumption that value orientations are at least one worthy and fruitful area of study.

Indeed, there is a long and rich tradition of values studies in the fields of cross-cultural psychology and intercultural communications (outlined in Jin & Xin, 2003; Kulich, 2004; Yang, 1998). Since identifying values is “of prime importance” (Kluckhohn, 1962) an ongoing research project has been developed at Shanghai International Studies University.

Features of the Shanghai Chinese Values Project

The “Shanghai Chinese Values Project (SCVP)” has aimed to employ a multi-method social science approach for the observation, identification and clarification of Chinese values both as they have been traditionally expressed and as they are being transformed or are in transition today. The development and scope of the project is documented in Kulich (2004), so this article will focus on some of the primary foci of the SCVP project, which include research approaches that move us:

Toward a contextual assessment of values;
 Toward a multi-dimensional matrix of values;
 Toward a synchronous inclusion of varied value sets;
 Toward an inductive and indigenous review of cultural elements;
 Toward a broader investigation into “products of culture”;
 Toward the blending of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Toward a Contextual View of Culture and Values

The first question to ask is, “What is our conception of culture?” As C. Kluckhohn and A. Kroeber noted in their seminal review in 1952, there are as many diverse views of culture as there are of academic sub-disciplines. It continues to be true that the role or place that we assign to culture affects our research perspective and design. Cultural psychologists like Kitayama (2002) have presented similar perspectives (e.g., his contrast of static entity views of culture with dynamic system views of culture). Such discussions alert us to the need for each researcher to carefully address the following:

Is culture viewed only as a language-based phenomenon?
 Is it only an isolatable “variable” in our comparisons?
 Is it only a single dimension considered among other “contextual” or “noise” factors?
 Or is culture actually a comprehensive and complex system of interrelated factors?

Chinese foreign language teaching has traditionally viewed culture as a content area to be taught in language courses. For some scholars, it is an area of academic interest where basic elements of culture can be compared and contrasted. In many of the established theories or research studies of both social linguistics and intercultural communications, culture is treated as one isolatable variable (e.g. among the varied ways of making apologies, we can identify a Chinese pattern versus an American pattern). Others may break culture down into a set of identifiable dimensions that can be compared and contrasted (e.g. Chinese collectivism vs. American individualism). But we find most of these approaches limited and rather distant from cultural realities. Believing culture to be complex and strongly influenced by context, we are seeking to develop a less generalized and more contextually sensitive view of culture. Values might not be the broad trans-situational cultural guides to behavior as once conceptualized (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Rokeach, 1972), but rather might exist as latent sets of conceptual-behavioral motifs activated or constrained by contextual or situational factors.

There may have been a time when “the Chinese” could have been considered a fairly homogeneous social group, and generalizing about “Chinese culture” may have been productive. Many Chinese would argue that there still is a strong cultural core that links Chinese around the world with a certain sense of “Chineseness” (as the Chinese Culture Connection’s work with the Chinese Values Survey demonstrated in 1987). But we also acknowledge that there are vast diversities in the broad field of “Chinese values,” some embraced by Chinese in the north and others by southerners, some enjoyed by coastal Chinese in contrast to inlanders, some cherished by urban Chinese as distinct from various rural populations. And Michael Bond notes that on some domains, Chinese groups align quite differentially with other unexpected national groupings (Bond, 2007) making it almost

impossible or not useful to generalize on “Chineseness.” So instead of seeking generalizations for the sake of national/cultural simplicity, we hope to identify the full range of variations among the diverse contexts of Chinese people(s), taking their geographic, historical, economic, educational, family background or other contextual influences into consideration. Projects under the SCVP will seek to specify which Chinese group we are describing.

Toward a Matrix of Value Sets

Most approaches to values seem to be guided by western linear thinking; that is they seek to identify a set of binary opposites. Broadly stated, these models seem to imply contrasting observations – “if man is not inherently good, then he is bad”; “The opposite of an American individualist must be a Chinese collectivist” – and so on (hence Parsons’ pattern variables, in Parsons & Shils, 1951; and the Hofstede dimensions, 1980). The question is whether culture can be reduced to a simple set of opposing dimensions? The pioneering work of Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961) was far-sighted in that it sought to view values along a range and took pains to identify the “middle ground” of each dimension (Russo, 2000). But even this approach plots values orientations on linear, straight, and unassociated lines.

The SCVP has moved away from this binary segmentation to incorporate the work of Shalom Schwartz (many articles since 1992) which construes values as an integrated circular field. Values do not fall neatly into a line of contrasting opposites, but lie on or near interrelated orientation areas. Recent Schwartz work (2004a, b) has identified three dynamic trends in these values domains, though these three axes also appear somewhat as polar opposites. A multi-domain, three-dimensional approach is also found in the ground-breaking work developed by Ralph Ennis (2003). Such models have led us to consider the construction of a matrix of values.

The SCVP seeks to gather data through various methods and plot these values as interrelated sets upon a matrix field. Our goal would be to refrain from the simplistic categorizing of such sets under opposing categories, but rather to see them in their blended, interrelated value domains. We believe this aim toward identifying a broad etic field of values located in preference sectors (as Schwartz proposes and does) will help us better understand the emic sets of interrelated or even contrasting values that any cultural group (or contextually situated person) may select at any given time. We also believe that these sets will show some consistency of evolution (or identifiable shifts) across the longitudinal development of any group’s cultural preferences and patterns. Tentatively termed a matrix-modal model, the matrix represents the broader etic dimensions represented across any culture and the modal component seeks to show the identifiably operative emic set of values within sub-cultural populations. Further development of multi-dimensional scaling and least-space analysis methods may be needed to plot such matricial fields effectively.

Toward the Synchronous Inclusion of Divergent Values

Historically, most values research has provided broad stroke comparisons of cultural (national) mainstreams and has tended to reduce culture to a simplified set of generalities. This may make life easier for the cross-cultural trainer or business enterprise that wants a quick executive summary on gross cultural differences. But we believe that culture is much

more complex than that and desire to attempt to take this complexity into consideration. As mentioned above, we assume that multiple modal value sets operate in any given culture at any given time.

If our methods can be refined enough, we think we will find that individuals are also very complex and, in fact, often hold varying sets of values which they apply variably in their varied contexts. An individual may cognitively affirm the ideals passed on to him by his parents and teachers, but in the pressures of a competitive workplace behave and operate by another set. Both are parts of his or her values orientation, one describing appreciation for collective traditions (which he or she may also seek to implement later in her or his own family) and the other guiding his or her daily decisions as an individual in society. And this person may have another value set – the ideals of what they hope to gain or achieve in the future, no matter how realistic. Thus, any values study's design needs to somehow isolate this time continuum:

past (socialization) → present (actualization) → future (idealization) values dimensions.

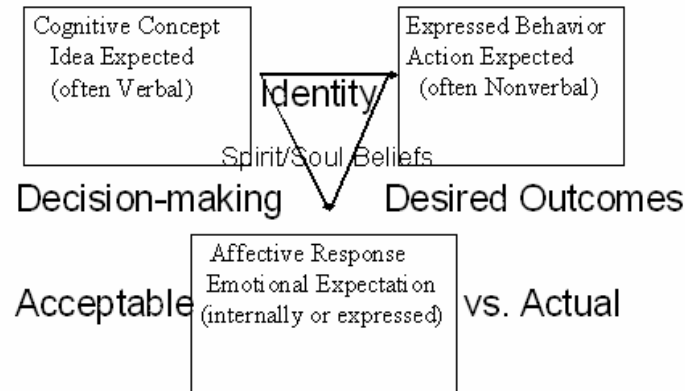
This is more than just the generational study of values but the association perception of values that individuals (in their smaller cultural groups) affirm as they deal with various localized contexts.

Since values are not the only “core” of culture, the way that identities influence value perceptions must also be considered, as proposed by Hitlin (2003). Early attempts with Chinese research participants shows that their top ordered values lists and identity lists have a great deal of overlap (Kulich et al, 2006; Zhang & Kulich, 2008). Thus, research design should also seek to consider the multiple role or associative identities one has:

broad collective identities → the smaller group identities → and the personal identities.
(my China, my people) (my family, friends, in-group) (myself)

Each person has a constellation of these value priorities, some of which may even be conflicting. Thus we may consider values to be parasyncretic, coined here to describe the synthesis of varied perspectives alongside or within one person or people. Jones and Scollon (1997) discuss the idea of multiple “voices” represented in the varied perspectives of varied communities and coin the term polyvocality, which could also be applied here.

So whether we use the word synchronous, polyvocalic or parasyncretic, we do think that multiple value realities exist concurrently, sometimes in dynamic opposition, both in individuals and or cultural groups, and they must be carefully evaluated. Values have not only a real, pragmatic dimension of determining the choices or decisions we make (guiding both positive and negative behaviors; Kulich, Ennis, Ennis, & Rhey, 1999), but also the qualities that we hope to affirm (a kind of social or developmental ideal) as the global aspirations of all humankind, (like Rokeach's universal values). This multiplicity of dimensions must be taken into consideration, much in the way that Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck proposed (1961, described in Prosser, 1978/1989). For the SCVP we have graphically illustrated those dimensions as follows, showing the underlying importance of the affective dimension:



Most research surveys ask participants to cognitively list or pick out value orientations. Some research projects study values from observed behavior or visible communication patterns. But very little has been directed at identifying the emotional impact we attach to our various value conceptions (researchers affiliated with Tetlock are moving in this direction in their focus on sacred values and taboos; e.g. Fiske & Tetlock, 1997; Tetlock et al., 2000; Tetlock, 2003). As an example, a panel discussion at the 2004 Harbin Language and Culture Conference illustrated that Chinese may have rather strong affective expectations that “sincerity” be clearly demonstrated, while their American counterparts seemed to be emotionally upset if there was not direct, accurate verbal expression (“sincerity”). Though Hall’s high and low context frame might be called on to explain these differences, more analysis is needed to explain why the same value (in name) carries two very different culturally conditioned cognitive, behavioral and emotive interpretations, and thus can cause cultural misunderstandings. Research design must somehow account for how the people of any given sub-culture assign meanings locally to what might be considered global cultural value elements.

Toward an Inductive and Indigenous Review of Values

In moving toward these goals, The SCVP has sought to apply an inductive social science process to examine previous value studies in their context, compile values references that seem to be foundational for further study, and then design open, emic instruments that will give a true and complex view of local values orientations.

a. Trends in the Inductive Literature Review: An extensive review of values studies shows that there are many ways to investigate values. In terms of the literature on “the Chinese” (or various communities thereof), we have primarily noted four main categories:

1) Mono-cultural Descriptions

From literary, historical, personal/experiential, or change perspectives.

One is immediately reminded of the May Fourth Literature like Gu (1917/1998), Hu (1920/2000) or later works like Lin (1936/2000) or Sha’s comprehensive summary (1988).

Some foreigners also wrote their observations or critiques, including Smith (1894), Pye (1982), and Jia (2001).

2) Bi-cultural Comparisons

a) From personal experience, historical reflection, anthropological analysis.

Here we immediately think of the classic work comparing Americans and Chinese by Hsu (1953/1981) and other recent studies such as Pan et al. (1994).

b) From a functional (“how to”) or training perspective

Here we consider the flood of books on doing business, studying, or succeeding at anything in China, notably Hu and Grove (1991) and Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998).

3) Bi-/Tri-cultural Empirical Investigations

Here we find a wide range of psychologically-based survey instruments and empirical data analysis (Bond, 1988; Garrot, 1995; Morris, 1956; Sha, 1989; Sheh, 2001; Singh, Huang & Thompson, 1962; Yang, 1972).

4) Empirical Theory Building Toward Global Frameworks

Here are placed the classic theory-based frameworks of Hofstede (1980) and Schwartz (1992, 2001), or studies such as Bond and Mak (1996) and Chen and Starosta (1998) which consider Chinese culture in its broad context or comparison to other cultures.

What still needs to be done is an evaluation of the content of these four types of literature along the lines of the paradigmatic models, such as the two-dimensional matrix developed by Martin and Nakayama (1999) or the similar four quadrant model of Anderson and Baym (2004) which locate the theoretical assumptions of culturally-related or communication scholarship along two axes. Whether the evaluation of content is based on scholars attitudes toward change or regulation, subjective (descriptive, analytical) vs. objective (empirical, positivist), or modern vs. post-modern perspectives, we think such two-dimensional models can be expanded to three dimensions (perhaps by including etic and emic orientations). Such framing of culture research allows us to detect the assumptive worlds of scholarship (Hwang, 2007) and can contribute to our suggestion to move toward more inclusive matrix models.

b. Materials development for the local context: Obviously, with such range and variety of values perspectives, an early goal of this project has been to identify the significant literature in each area. Since much of it is out of print or simply unavailable in China, there was a need to collect and compile volumes for future students and scholars. This compiling began in the fall of 2002 with the first course taught to second year post-graduates at SISU, “Intercultural Perspectives on International Values Studies.” From the concerted efforts of participants in these seminars, two series of values reference works are planned. Students are currently using draft volumes of:

The Intercultural Values Studies Reader Series:

Volume 1: Concepts of Culture and Values

Volume 2: Comparative Values Studies Frameworks

The Chinese Values Study Readers Series:

Volume 2: Chinese Values in Comparison: The Way We Have Been

Two further volumes to this latter series are under development:

Volume 1: Chinese Values in Retrospect: The Way We Were

Volume 3: Chinese Values in Transition: The Way We Are Becoming

With the aim to provide Chinese researchers with more up-to-date reviews and approaches, the Intercultural Research series was launched with Volume 1 dedicated to

Intercultural Perspectives on Chinese Communication (Kulich & Prosser, 2007), while Volumes 2 and 3 profile intercultural values studies; 2 focuses more on frameworks and approaches and 3 focuses more on theory and applications (Kulich & Prosser, 2008). These materials and the introductory literature review provided here and elsewhere (Kulich, 2004) have helped lay the foundation for new thinking and new studies in the present dynamic Chinese context, and have guided a diversity of project designs.

c. Emic design of initial values data collection: It was Bond's call that "we desperately need more usable data on values from the Chinese in the People's Republic of China" (1991, p. 40) and Yang's note that "more representative samples should be tested in typical Chinese societies" (1986, p. 119) that motivated the beginnings of this project in 1993. Yang further cautioned against the "double-imposed etic" of using imported questionnaires and outsider interpretations (1986, p. 164). So from the outset, an emic approach (Berry, 1999) was sought that would provide local data with local interpretations. But as Bond noted (1994, p. 68), summarizing such data can be a "Linnaean" tedium of categorizing input and generating a satisfying synthesis. Various projects are underway with the help of students research assistants, some of this bulk of data has been digested, and some initial clues to potential emic dimensions in the broad range of values that exist in Chinese society are being identified.

Toward Assessment of "Products of Culture" and their Subjective Influences

Triandis (1972, 1994) first suggested the conception of "subjective culture" and this project has sought to build on the approaches and methodologies of cross-cultural psychology to analyze these "hidden" or "covert" dimensions. A comment by Schwartz has been particularly formative:

The culture-level values that characterize a society cannot be observed directly. Rather they must be inferred from various cultural products (e.g. folktales). Presumably, these cultural products reflect assumptions about the desirable that are built into the institutions of the society and are passed on through intentional and unintentional socialization. (1994, p. 92)

Thus the SCVP has sought "cultural products" that can be analyzed longitudinally. We began focusing our attention on self-generated lists of Chinese values, Chinese proverbs and values (as reported in Weng Liping's paper), cultural heroes and values, cultural/personal identity and their corresponding values, common cross-cultural conflicts related to values, important rules foreigners need to know about Chinese culture, specific Chinese values domains (e.g. face dynamics, *guanxi* rules), media analysis and values. Many of these studies are in draft form and the newly formed SISU Intercultural Institute (SII) staff members are now working toward issuing them as monographs.

Toward the Blending of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

The work of Shalom Schwartz (1994, 1999) and his associates has been an inspiration for the development of the SCVP. We have sought to apply his "multi-method probe" concept to our work in linking local emic data with etic theories. One example is how we start with emic

collection of an open-ended list of “my top 10 values,” then have participants examine the Kohls and Knight list of values statements (1994) to correlate those they affirm as their own. Participants are then asked to provide an emic listing of Chinese statements that would better represent their values in each area. This application of the common back-translation model provides data that should both highlight some Chinese distinctions in varied contexts and serve to test or expand global models.

Applications and Studies Underway

To date, nearly 100 post-graduate students have gone through the “Intercultural Values Studies” seminar, and a number of them have developed research designs as part of the SCVP. Building on the methodology of earlier work (Kulich’s “Proverbs and Values,” 1997, 1998), a number of initial conceptual papers were presented at the October, 2003 5th Chinese Symposium for Intercultural Communications at Xiangtan University (Zhao Bingxia on “Gender Identity”; Chi Ruobing on “Cultural Heroes”; Ding Hongyan summarizing “Schwartz’ Values Approach”; and Liu Limei “Ting-Toomey’s Face Theories”). At the 2004 Harbin conference, more extensions of the SCVP were presented (“Conceptualizing Cultural Heroes and Icons: How Values are Manifested in Idolization Behavior,” by Chi Ruobing and Shao Weiying; “Evaluating Shifts in the Chinese Communication Style’s Concern for Face” by Liu Limei; “Interpersonal Cross-cultural Conflict Themes of the Chinese Business Context,” by Ding Hongyan and Mu Weijing). Further projects were presented at the May, 2004 Intercultural Academy for Intercultural Research symposium in Taiwan, “Analyzing Chinese Values Shifts over a Decade of International Impact,” by Steve Kulich & Min Zhu, and at the August, 2004 International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology conference in Xi’an, namely: “Icons, Values, Trends? Empirical Analysis of Idolization Patterns of Chinese Youth” by Chi Ruobing & Shao Weiying and “Underlying Reasons of Biased Attribution in Cross-cultural Conflicts” by Ding Hongyan.

In addition, the author has been working on a large-scale qualitative project identifying what it means to “be Chinese” in today’s international climate. This project seeks to answer Liu’s (2003) and Fei’s (2004) calls to develop Chinese cultural values and identity material for students of English. The conception, development and scope of that project will be described in another article.

Conclusion

We agree that values are of primary importance. And we believe we can eventually uncover some aspects of “the core” of culture, even in a complex culture like China. Prof. He Daokuan rightly called this attempt a “mammoth” effort and the students who work with the author often feel we need the strength of Hercules, the Wisdom of Solomon and maybe the lifespan of Methuselah to be able to break through to really understand and identify the particular value domains that constitute “the core of culture.” But foundations are being laid that will hopefully contribute to new insights into both the study of Chinese values and of global values dimensions.

China is changing rapidly, as noted generally by many scholars (Hu, 2003; Ouyang, 2002; Song, 2003). The goal of the SCVP purposes to build on the history of solid

international values theory and apply it both in emic and etic ways to specifically analyze some of these changes underway in various contexts on the Chinese mainland. Step by step, progress is being made that we hope will help all of us see the bigger picture of what constitutes Chinese values. It is a picture worth seeing more clearly.

NOTE: This paper is a revision of keynote speeches presented January 6-7, 2004 at the First International Conference on Language, Teaching and Culture organized by Jia Yuxin, Bates Hoffer and Robert Bayley, and at the combined 7th CAFIC/ 13th IAICS Intercultural Conference June 22-24, 2007, both of which were hosted by Harbin Institute of Technology in Harbin, China. This project was funded by REI Research Grants.

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