

Revisiting Chinese Values Through Self-generated Proverbs and Sayings

Liping Weng , Shanghai International Studies University

This study primarily examined the completeness of self-generated value-laden proverbs and sayings in reflecting Schwartz's 45 near-universal values as well as key operative values embedded in respondents' saying preferences. Also addressed were questions inherent in the research process concerning the impact of pop culture on respondents' saying preferences and value shifts as revealed in a comparison between the present data and those generated 10 years ago. One hundred and forty female English majors at a mid-sized national language university in Shanghai participated in the research.

Value-saying match and content analysis suggested a) that self-generated proverbs and sayings have the potential to map a near-universal value set in the Chinese context, b) that *achievement* is of supreme importance to the respondents, while *security*, *power*, *conformity* and *hedonism* appear to be of least significance, c) that pop culture, advertisement and pop music in particular, has manifested a significant influence on respondents' value preferences, and d) that the respondents' value priorities exhibit a stronger tendency toward individualism compared with 10 years ago. Theoretical implications for future values studies and intercultural training were discussed.

Need for New Insights on Chinese Values Research

Chinese values have been a subject of extensive investigation as studying value emphases facilitates the characterization of cultures (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Inglehart, 1997; Schwartz, 2003). While Chinese society has generally been placed on the collectivistic side of the individualistic-collectivistic dichotomy (e.g., Bond, 1988; CCC, 1987; Hofstede & Bond, 1984), recent research findings have suggested a need to move beyond the dichotomy to look at other aspects of Chinese values. Schwartz's (1992, 1994) data, for example, suggested that China is not a prototypical collective society. Garrott (1995) found evidence supportive of the notion that mainland Chinese college students exhibit a strong tendency toward individualism in their value preferences.

In contrast, indigenous research such as Kulich et al.'s (2006) and Xu's (1999) value clarification efforts indicated the enduring influence of the Chinese value system. New social realities emerging in the ever-changing world pose a challenge to the established theoretical frameworks on Chinese values studies. Updating our systematic understanding of mainland Chinese cultural members' value preferences and linking values to stimuli as value changing agents is deemed important.

The author wishes to thank Prof. Steve Kulich of Shanghai International Studies University Intercultural Institute for his supervision of the research reported here.

Proverbs and Sayings as Alternative Analytic Tools for Values Studies

Research by Sapir (1949), Whorf (1956) and others has facilitated our understanding of how culture and language are closely interrelated and how values and beliefs shape the way we think and speak. Proverbs and sayings as a universal form of discourse undoubtedly present themselves as a window into values and beliefs of a given culture where these proverbial phrases are found. According to Kohls (2001), looking at proverbs, axioms and adages of a culture provides a way to “get at the concrete yet evasive values that guide our lives” (p. 40). Proverbs and sayings both reflect and can be reflected by values and beliefs that the culture has endorsed, thereby opening a window for the mind of the given cultural group in intercultural communication and training (Brick, 1991; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Kohls, 2001; Kohls & Knight, 1994; Samovar & Porter, 2004). They are used as analytic tools in rigorous empirical research to explore values in different cultural contexts (Kaplan, 2002; Weber, Hsee & Sokolowska, 1998; Zormeier & Samovar, 1997).

While the official recognition of the importance of Chinese proverbial phrases probably dates back to the mid Qing Dynasty when *Zeng Guang Xian Wen* (Chinese Golden Sayings) was supposedly compiled, attempts to link Chinese proverbs to values in a systematic manner have been recent. Some scholars analyzed selected Chinese sayings to dig out inherent values and cultural significance (e.g., Cui, 1997; Hu & Grove, 1991; Lee, 2000; Mah, 2002; Wu & Ma, 1998). Others approached Chinese cultural sayings in a rigorous empirical fashion. Ho and Chiu (1994), for example, used their proposed conceptual schemes for classifying the component ideas of individualism, collectivism, and social organization as analytic tools to statistically analyze popular Chinese sayings related to these concepts. Zhang and Zhang (2001) developed a questionnaire consisting of sayings that reflect a wide range of traditional Chinese values to explore college students’ value preferences.

Methodologically, in order to have a balanced view of values of a given cultural group, Pike’s (1967) dual emic and etic approaches and Berry’s (1989) emics-derived-etics approach in cultural studies are pertinent. Etic approaches, “no matter how carefully executed, will be unable to unravel those psychological characteristics that are unique to, and most representative of, Chinese people as a cultural group” (Yang, 1986, as cited in Kulich, 2003, p. 170). Emic, indigenous approaches are thus encouraged to overcome the inherent deficiencies of etic approaches. With rich cultural traditions and expected codes of behavior, proverbs and sayings are one of the key emic value carriers and transmitters, qualities that render them important tools for emic values research. And mapping an etic value framework with a culture’s sayings represents the initial efforts toward developing a mixed values research method.

In response to diverse foci of etic and emic values studies, both abstract and concrete measurements have been developed. Studies combining the abstract level of measurement, such as self-report inventories with value items given in words or synonyms to be rated, with contextually specific measurements, such as analyses of cultural products, may deepen our understanding of value priorities of a given cultural group (e.g., Bond, 1996; Schwartz, 1992). Being a potential concrete value measurement, proverbs and sayings as a cultural product may be salient in understanding how values enter into concrete decision-making (Schwartz, 1992).

Overview of Kulich's Two Unpublished Proverb-Related Papers

Research reported in Kulich's (1997, 1998) two unpublished papers represents Kulich's initial attempts to look into Chinese values through self-generated proverbs and sayings. Two goals have been achieved:

First, based on the responses of 170 participants who were considered "to provide a human cross-section of the variety of educational, career and geographic backgrounds of the younger generation" (Kulich, 1997, p. 6) of the Chinese mainland then, a list of 45 most frequently selected value-laden proverbs and sayings written in Chinese was identified and a comparison with Bond's (1988) and the CCC's (1987) CVS (Chinese Value Survey) resulted in 20 values that found no equivalence to the CVS's 40 value items. Twenty seemingly more abstract ideals in the CVS were not represented by any saying in the list. A 60-item instrument termed the "New Chinese Value Survey" was thus proposed.

Second, a comparison between the Chinese proverb sample and a comparable American sample was conducted and, subsequently, the two proverb lists were examined against Schwartz's (1994) culture-level value dimensions respectively. Results show a) that the proverb sampling method is vigorous in reflecting the broad cultural strength, a method through which a reliable sample may be yielded for cultural comparison; b) that four of Schwartz' seven culture-level value dimensions, namely, hierarchy, affective autonomy, intellectual autonomy and harmony, did not surface in both Chinese and American comparisons, revealing the limitations of the proverb method in mapping the value list operative in a given socio-cultural group but concurrently providing a point of departure for developing an extensive "master list" of value-laden proverbs and sayings; and c) that personally generated proverbs proved a fruitful approach to establishing the link between individual-level and culture-level value orientations.

Forming Research Questions

Need for Reevaluating the Proverb Sampling Method

The fundamental purpose of the present study is to further test the viability of the proverb sampling method in values studies. There is evidence that this research method requires new empirical tests. First, developed nearly 10 years ago, this method needs to be examined in today's socio-cultural context. The past ten years have been a period of China's continuing change, rapid economic development and societal de-politicizing. Media culture such as the Internet has exerted an increasing influence on socialization agendas and enculturation processes. It is thus imperative to reinvestigate how cultural sayings, both traditional and novel, influence cultural members' decision-making. Sampling a new saying list may reveal new trends within a given cultural group in terms of the nature and comprehensiveness of the preferred sayings.

Second, given the changing social context, it behooves us to reconsider the generalizability of research findings so generated. If the turn of the century was characterized by a comparatively homogenous society, the present society is more diverse and stratified. Differences across cultural contexts and across time periods will bring somewhat different psychological outcomes for the members of each Chinese society (Yang, 1996). In

consequence, we should avoid the presumptuous generalization of our findings and move beyond the Chinese monolith to take the diverse nature of Chinese societies into consideration (Bond, 2007). The cultural representativeness of the samples indicated in earlier studies (e.g., Kulich 1997, 1998) may not be readily identifiable in today's cultural context.

Two Modifications in Research Focus

To bring out the potential of the proverb method more, two modifications in the research focus were achieved. One is pertaining to the scope of proverbs and sayings. To do justice to the exceeding complexity and vastness of the Chinese corpus of idiomatic expressions, a broader category of *shuyu* is introduced (Cui, 1997). According to the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary (2002), a *shuyu* is a "group of words whose implicit meaning cannot be deduced from its constituent words" (p. 1784). *Shuyu* thus moves beyond Kulich's (1997) *chengyu* (historical sayings), *yanyu* (proverbs), *suyu* (folk adages) and *xiehoyu* (witty sayings) to incorporate pop cultural sayings (*liuxingyu*) and literary sayings as they reflect the pervasive influence of pop and literary cultures on socialization and enculturation processes.

A second modification concerns the employment of the 45 near-universal values representing Schwartz's (1992, 1994) seven culture-level dimensions in the value-saying match. According to Schwartz, 56 or 57 values surfaced in his critical literature review that represent *a priori* theorized 10 motivationally distinct value types organized on two higher-order bipolar dimensions in response to three universal requirements of human existence. Extensive empirical research has supported the near-universality of the 10 motivational value types and revealed the dynamics of compatibility and conflict among all the 10 value types, resulting in a circumflex model reflecting such dynamics. The 10 value types are represented by the following dimensions: *openness to change* (self-direction and stimulation) versus *conservation* (security, conformity, and tradition), and *self-transcendence* (universalism and benevolence) versus *self-enhancement* (power and achievement). Hedonism is related to both openness to change and self-enhancement. Based on the three critical issues that confront all societies, culture-level analysis was conducted, yielding three bipolar dimensions of culture that represent alternatives to each of the three societal problems: *embeddedness* versus *autonomy* (affective autonomy and intellectual autonomy), *hierarchy* versus *egalitarianism*, and *mastery* versus *harmony*.

One noteworthy fact on Schwartz's work is that it uses as measures only items tested for cross-cultural equivalence of meaning (Smith & Bond, 1993). At culture-level analysis, only 45 values have been confirmed across all samples in all societies. Therefore, I employ those 45 here.

Research Questions

Based on the above analyses, four research questions are advanced:

1. How important are pop cultural sayings in reflecting the value preferences of college women studying English in Shanghai today?
2. What are some of the most significant operative values held by college women studying English in Shanghai today as manifested in their saying preferences?

3. What are some of the possible value shifts as revealed in a comparison between the present data and those generated in 1997?
4. How complete, or what are the limitations of emically-derived self-generated value-laden proverbial phrases both in oral and written form in reflecting a comprehensive value set like the 45 widely tested values in the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS)?

Method

Subjects

One hundred and forty female English majors at a mid-sized national language university in Shanghai participated in the research. Ages ranged 17-28 years, the average being 19.5. Seventy-one percent of the participants were freshmen in a four-year undergraduate program, and the other 29% were sophomores in a three-year undergraduate diploma program. Nearly 83% had no siblings. Seventy-five point seven percent were from large or mid-sized cities, 20.7% from small cities, and the other 3.6% from the countryside.

Procedures

Respondents were asked to write down 8 proverbial phrases (*shuyu*) that are important to them as “the guiding principles in their lives” (Schwartz, 1992) and to clarify each with one- or two-word value summary. Then they provided demographic information on age, sibling status, and size of hometown. The questionnaire was administered in class by two course instructors. The average time spent completing the survey was about 20 minutes.

Sayings and their value summaries were then transferred into a computer. Compound sayings were broken down into single phrases to ensure that each saying only has one major distinct value concept. Sayings that are expressed both in Chinese and English were calculated as one saying.

The data were then sorted according to frequency of selection. Finally Schwartz’s 45 values were matched with sayings from the data pool according to value interpretations suggested by both participants and me. To do this, three steps were taken. First, based on the existing sayings and value summaries provided by each participant, I and my advisor provided our own value interpretation to each saying, which was listed next to that of the participant. When it comes to sayings that may involve Schwartz’s values, discussions with other professors were conducted until consensus was reached. Second, utilizing Microsoft Office’s search engine, for each of the value items, I typed in the value phrase and let the computer conduct the search. Then any conceivable synonyms of the value phrase were typed in for further search. Finally, a thorough one-by-one review of the sayings was performed to ensure that no saying candidates had been left out.

The top 41 sayings were also content analyzed and compared with Kulich’s top saying list.

Results

The Data Pool

Previous studies show that respondents sometimes make no distinctions between Chinese and foreign sayings even though it is specified in the instructions that Chinese sayings are desired. For example, the Chinese version of Francis Bacon's famous remark "Knowledge is power" is among the top selections in one study (Kulich, 1997). Such foreign products have been assimilated, localized, sometimes modified, and eventually became part of the Chinese corpus. Based on this finding, the present study intentionally avoided the differentiation of the two types of sayings to get as complete a picture as possible of sayings that guide the respondents' lives. Nevertheless, it still came as a surprise to me that the 140 female English majors came up with 100 sayings written in English along with 861 in Chinese. The average selections were 6.86 statements (of a desired 8.0 an 85.6% completion rate). Eight hundred and forty sayings were accompanied by one or two value items reflecting the corresponding value content, which accounted for 87.4% of the desired total. The total number of sayings increased to 985 after compound sayings were broken down into single phrases. By integrating items and organizing them by selection frequency, 520 sayings were found to be distinct. Table 1 provides a summary of the frequencies of statement selection across the sample.

Pop Cultural Sayings

To have a comparable size of selections to the previous studies, a cut-point of frequency at 5 choices was sought, yielding a list of 41 top selections. Among the 41 sayings selected for analysis, there were four advertising slogans, three lines from pop songs, and one university motto, all of which may be viewed as pop sayings. They accounted for 19.5% of the total.

The Adidas slogan "Impossible is nothing" and the Nike slogan "Just do it" co-ranked number two in selection with the same amount of 15 hits, not too far behind the top saying derived from the Dante Alighieri quote "Follow your own course, and let others say what they want," which had a frequency of 29 hits. As was expected, there were various interpretations for each saying, reflecting respondents' different perspectives. For example, the Adidas slogan "Impossible is nothing" was ascribed such meanings as self-confidence, ambition, determination, perseverance, and initiative.

Mapping Schwartz's Value List

Based on the value interpretations of both participants and me, 42 out of Schwartz's 45 near-universal values were found to have corresponding proverbs and sayings with varied equivalence. The remaining three items, namely, *unity with nature*, *a world of beauty* and *curious*, were remotely related to a few sayings.

Table 1. Frequencies of Statement Selection across the Sample

Freq.	#Distinct Sayings	Total Entries		
29	1	29		
15	3	45		
14	1	14		
12	1	12	Running Total	
11	5	55		
10	1	10	165	
9	2	18		Totals 18
8	4	32	215	0.218
7	5	35	250	0.254
6	5	30	280	0.284
5	<u>13</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>345</u>	<u>0.35</u>
4	15	60	405	0.411
3	26	78		<u>Totals 41</u>
2	64	128		
1	374	374		
TOTAL	520	985		

Comparison with Kulich's Top Saying List

The top five sayings in 1997:

1. *You zhi zhe, shi jing cheng* (Where there's a will, there's a way)
2. *Yi cun guang yin yi cun jin* (Time is precious, don't waste it)
3. *Zhi zu chang le* (Happiness is contentment)
4. *San si er hou xing* (Think thrice before acting)
5. *Mou shi zai ren, cheng shi zai tian* (Man plans but Heaven brings them to pass)

The top five sayings identified in the present study:

1. *Zou zi ji de lu, rang bie ren qu shuo ba* (Follow your own course, and let others say what they want)
2. Impossible is nothing (Adidas slogan)
3. Just do it (Nike slogan)
4. *Wu yi e xiao er wei zhi, wu yi shan xiao er bu wei* (Do not do evil deeds though they may be insignificant; do not give up good deeds though they may seem minor)
5. *Yi cun guang yin yi cun jin* (Time is precious, don't waste it)

Table 2. Value Units Distribution among Schwartz's Individual-Level Value Dimensions Based on Sayings' Selection Frequency

Value Dimension	Value type	Number of Value Units	Total Number of Value Units
Self-transcendence	Universalism	24.8	74.0
	Benevolence	49.2	
Conservation	Conformity/Tradition	6.25/25.5	31.8
	Security	0	
Self-enhancement	Power	2	129.4
	Achievement	127.4	
	Hedonism	9.5	9.5
Openness to Change	Stimulation	21	61.2
	Self-direction	40.2	

Content Analysis of the Present Top Saying List

The top 41 sayings consisted of 17 proverbs (*yanyu*), 14 literary sayings (11 from Chinese classics and 3 Western), 8 pop sayings (*liuxingyu*), and 2 historical idioms (*chengyu*). Values of the 41 sayings were interpreted in SVS terms (Schwartz, 1992), resulting in 81 value units due to the doubling value nature of some sayings. Of the 81 units, 15 were not SVS terms but 9 of them, represented by kindness, loving children, integrity, simple living, self-improvement, and mutual respect, were able to be related to SVS terms. Nevertheless, 6 units, represented by the concept of *optimism*, were unable to transfer into any SVS term. Table 2 provides the detailed value units distribution (In case of one saying containing more than one value, each value was calculated as a fraction of one value unit).

In investigating what key operative values were represented in the saying list, the following basic themes were identified based on Schwartz's individual-level value analysis:

- In terms of value dimensions, there is a juxtaposition of sayings that reflect *self-transcendence* and sayings that reflect *self-enhancement*, with the latter weighing considerably more than the former. Likewise, *Openness to change* outweighs *conservation* considerably in saying strength.
- In terms of the 10 universal value types, *achievement* is of supreme importance to the respondents, but the neighboring areas of *security*, *power*, *conformity* and *hedonism* appear to be of least significance.
- In terms of the 57 specific values, *ambitious*, *capable* and *choosing own goal* are of supreme importance to the respondents.
- The concept of *optimism* seems to be important to the respondents.

Discussion

Impact of Pop Culture on Value Preferences

The finding reveals the interplay of pop and traditional sayings with the latter continuing to dominate the top 40 plus saying list, demonstrating the enduring quality of Chinese value system in the clash between modern and traditional values. Pop culture, however, has manifested a significant role in value socialization. Advertisement and pop music, in particular, have exerted strong influence on the respondents' value preferences. Kellner's (1995) claim that advertisements "resolve social contradictions, provide models of identity, and celebrate the existing social order" (p. 247) has received support in the present study.

The influence of pop culture has been magnified due to the increasingly intense impact of media. The concept of media culture seems to depict the core parts of what we perceive as pop culture. According to Kellner (1995), media culture is "a form of techno-culture that merges culture and technology in new forms and configurations, producing new types of societies in which media and technology become organizing principles" (p. 2). In this culture, media can "serve to repress as well as to liberate, to unite as well as fragment society, both to promote and to hold back change" (McQuail, 1994, p. 64). This makes media an extremely powerful tool, an initiator and promoter of social change, and a role model for cultural members to follow. Among eight potential effects media has on society, persuasion in matters of opinion and belief and influencing behavior stand out as a convincing force that reshapes cultural members' value priorities through the mesh of pop culture (McQuail, 1994).

Worthy of special notice is that the prosperity of the Internet as a public, global computer network offers an unlimited resource for information of any kind and flavor. As a medium of pop culture transmission and pop culture itself, the Internet inevitably plays an essential role in shaping users' value emphases, identity construction and behavioral choice. Cheung (2004), for example, found that personal homepages have revealed multiple and contradictory identities which may lead to identity confusion. These identity choices are not marginal but substantial ones (Giddens, 1991).

Key Operative Values and Value Shifts

Key operative values. Although a "top 40" list of sayings is unable to depict a complete picture of values held by a given socio-cultural group (Kulich, 1998), it is nevertheless deemed meaningful to content analyze it to identify some of the key operative values. Key operative values may be those most readily activated in the individual's daily life experience. They often constitute the core elements of the individual's personal value system and are closely interrelated with the particular social context which the individual finds him/herself in.

The dynamic nature of operative values is seen in the way they are associated with the individual's consciousness. Values as ideals and the desirable in abstract mental-emotional judgment of things, people and events (Schwartz 1992, 1994) are frequently clothed in one form or another and may be retrieved from one's conscious or unconscious mind when activated. By being clothed, I mean values do not always take the form of just a word or phrase in one's mind; rather, they may be encased in a grandparent's favorite tale or a

particular saying that was picked up in middle school. Sayings that quickly come to the respondent's mind are thus very likely to represent some of the most important value preferences operative in his/her daily social experience (Kulich, 1997). They are sometimes even taken as the life motto or guiding principles in the respondent's life.

Overall, the salience of the value type *success*, represented by value items *ambitious* and *capable* and reflected in a considerable number of quotes from Chinese classics, and the supreme importance of the value *choosing own goal* as reflected in the top saying "Follow your own course, and let others say what they want" offers an excellent example on how traditional Chinese values coexist with the Western individualism. Among the least important value types, *security* may have been taken for granted given the strong tradition that sanctions the younger generation's heavy financial and emotional reliance on their parents; *power* and *hedonism* tend to be associated more with masculinity, at least on the surface level; and low *conformity* appears to be another manifestation of the individualistic value orientation. Finally, whether today's college students are becoming more and more optimistic requires further empirical confirmation.

Value shifts. Leaving out the possible methodological influence, a comparison of the top 5 sayings between the present list and that of Kulich (1997) sheds light on the possible value shifts. Ten years ago, values such as industry, persistence, ambitious, time treasuring, fate/contentment, and careful/prudent/conservative seem to have been important among college students; today college students place high value on independence/self-confidence/assertiveness, ambitious, high moral quality, and time treasuring. The conflicting coexistence of values of ambitious and fate/contentment in the old study reveals respondents' ambivalent attitudes toward their lives: an inner desire to become successful is coupled with confusion, fear and worry on the incontrollable outside world. This is typical of the time period when China presented initial responses to the global changing context. At the time of Kulich's data collection, China was in the times of WTO negotiations, felt distrusted in international issues like losing the vote for Beijing 2000 Olympic bid and the impending economic woes that led to the 1997 Asian economic crisis.

However, the present saying list glares with a strong sense of individualism as values of independence/self-confidence/determination are manifested. This change presents itself as logical and rational as it outlines the process of shifting from a mixed value orientation to a more defined individualism. It also reflects the strong positive spirit that came after the WTO was signed in 2000, the national pride in the successful launch of the *Shenzhou* spacecraft, China's rising economic and diplomatic confidence on the world stage, and other factors.

Rarely treated as an independent value in Western value measurements, the concept of using time well is of paramount importance in the Chinese cultural context and endures despite modernization. Time treasuring has long been held firmly as a virtue closely related with entrepreneurship as a hallmark of China as a culture (Schwartz, 1994). Educational enculturation and socialization have, therefore, the tradition to foster the concept.

Another phenomenon concerns the salience of the concept of high moral quality. There has been debate on the overall moral degradation and lower societal moral standards in this rapidly changing social context. One example concerns the wild worship of wealth at the expense of traditional virtues on integrity. The heavy weight on integrity as reflected in saying selections may be a manifestation of college students' response to those issues.

Summary. Overall, these findings provide evidence for Inglehart and Baker's (2000) claim that economic development is associated with both massive cultural change and the persistence of distinctive cultural traditions. The seemingly paradoxical juxtaposition of traditional Chinese values and values typical of Western individualism supports both Garrott's (1995) claim on individualism and Kulich et al.'s (2006) and Xu's (1999) contention on the persistence of Chinese value system. However, today's Chinese college students' value priorities appear to exhibit a stronger tendency toward individualism compared with 10 years ago.

Link between Sayings and Near-Universal Values

To maximize the truthfulness and objectivity in interpreting sayings, apart from maintaining participants' voices in the searching process, I also indicated the degree of equivalence ranging from low to high, with good and fair in between. It should be noted that value-laden sayings, unlike values expressed in words or phrases, often take the form of a complete judgment, with richer contextual implications than the latter. Therefore, sayings are necessarily richer in meaning and subject to multiple interpretations. This is especially true of pop cultural sayings, whose internalization is highly dependent upon perceptions of mass media, a channel characterized by multiple voices and opinions. As a corollary of the different interpretations a saying can have, one saying is likely to match more than one value item in Schwartz's list. Kulich (1998) had noted the challenge of this problem and therefore split some sayings as half scores in two domains.

The task of matching yielded some interesting results. First, the number of matches varies from one value item to another. Some items seem to be more central values in the local context as evidenced by multiple sayings matching one item. Others are represented by just one match with varied degrees of equivalence. Second, degrees of equivalence vary. High equivalence is exemplified by such matches as "choosing own goal" to *zou zi ji de lu, rang bie ren qu shuo ba* (Follow your own course, and let others say what they want) and "reciprocation of favors" to *di shui zhi en, dang yong quan xiang bao* (The kindness of a drop of water will be repaid with a flowing spring). Low equivalence, however, often occurs when the target value is matched with a minor value contained in a saying. For example, the value "respect for tradition" is found in *qian shi bu wang, hou shi zhi shi* (By not forgetting past events, one can draw lessons from them). For the sake of clarity, each value item was assessed based on the number *and* quality of sayings that match it. High equivalence was found in 20 value items; good equivalence, 10; fair equivalence, 6; low equivalence, 6; and extremely low equivalence, 3. Although this process represents the most subjective part of the study, it nevertheless allows us to see how Schwartz's conceptualization of values reflects the way values are understood in the Chinese context and how these universal values differ in their richness or thickness of expression when examined locally.

Therefore, equivalence in its broadest sense would lead to all of the 45 values items having corresponding self-selected proverbs or sayings. But if we raise the standards, then items that were represented by extreme low equivalents should be left out, which account for 6.7% of the total.

While the self-generated proverb study highlighted three of Schwartz's seven value dimensions, i.e., *egalitarianism*, *mastery* and *embeddedness* (Kulich, 1998), the procedures

designed to work with the whole data pool in the present study allowed the remaining four dimensions to surface. This finding suggests that value-laden proverbs and sayings *operative* within a well-educated cultural group do *have* the potential to map a near-universal value set.

Conclusion

There are several limitations and challenges inherent in this study. First, while lack of diversity in the pool of respondents (female English majors at a language university in a cosmopolitan city) does not hinder, if not facilitate, the exploration of how complete self-generated cultural sayings in reflecting a near-universal value set, it does narrow down the generalizability of findings associated with the impact of pop culture on value preferences and the key operative values identified in the top saying list. With complete gender representation and more specialty diversity, it would be possible not only to increase findings' generalizability but also to explore interesting questions such as how gender affects students' value preferences as reflected in sayings they have generated and how students in sciences and in the arts differ in their saying priorities. Therefore, a study of comparable males is needed first to consider the gender map of values. Then studies investigating other majors, age, location, or economic segments should be initiated.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of a mechanism for verifying the truthfulness and accuracy in values-through-sayings analysis (Kaplan, 2002). Respondents' own value interpretations and suggestions from my advisor and colleagues did help, but a more effective way would be involving some of the respondents in a focus group interview to comment on their perceptions of value content in each of the sayings generated by the respondents. More qualitative research approaches need to be applied to verify or clarify the assumptions that otherwise have to be made.

Based on the viability of the proverb sampling method, a master list of emically-derived cultural sayings that reflect and enrich a set of near-universal values may be developed. This master list, when carefully refined, could be developed into a value instrument for future Chinese values research. It would be equally useful in intercultural training as proverbs and sayings also serve as effective educational tools in the classroom or training seminar (Kohls, 2001; Kohls & Knight, 1994).

References

- Berry, J. W. (1989). Imposed etics-emics-derived etics: The operationalization of a compelling idea. *International Journal of Psychology*, 24, 721-735.
- Bond, M. H. (1988). Finding universal dimensions of individual variation in multicultural studies of values: the Rokeach and Chinese value surveys. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55, 1009-1015.
- Bond, M. H. (1996). Chinese values. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The handbook of Chinese psychology* (pp. 208-226). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Bond, M. H. (2007). Fashioning a new psychology of the Chinese people: Insights from developments in cross-cultural psychology. In S. J. Kulich & M. H. Prosser (Eds.), *Intercultural perspectives on Chinese communication* (pp. 233-251). Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

- Brick, J. (1991). *China: A handbook in intercultural communication*. Sydney: Macquarie University.
- Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (1998). *Foundations of intercultural communication*. Needham Height, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Cheung, C. (2004). Identity construction and self-presentation on personal homepages: Emancipatory potentials and reality constraints. In D. Gauntlett & R. Horsley (Eds.), *Web.Studies* (2nd ed., pp. 53-68). New York: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Limited.
- Chinese Culture Connections (CCC) (1987). Chinese values and the search for culture-free dimensions of culture. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 18, 143-164.
- Cui, X. L. (1997). *Chinese shuyu and Chinese civilization*. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press.
- Garrott, J. (1995). Chinese cultural values: New angles, added insights. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 19, 211-225.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Lambridge: Polity Press.
- Ho, D. Y. F., & Chiu, C. Y. (1994). Component ideas of individualism, collectivism, and social organization: An application in the study of Chinese culture. In U. Kim, H. C. Triandis, C. Kagitchibasi, S. C. Choi, & G. Yoon (Eds.), *Individualism and collectivism: Theory, method, and applications* (pp. 137-156). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. H. (1984). Hofstede's culture dimensions: An independent validation using Rokeach's value survey. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 15, 417-433.
- Hu, W. Z., & Grove, C. L. (1991). *Encountering the Chinese: A guide for Americans*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.
- Inglehart, R. (1997). *Modernization and postmodernization: Cultural, economic and political change in 43 societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, R., & Baker, W. E. (2000). Modernization, cultural change, and the persistence of traditional values. *American Sociological Review*, 65, 19-51.
- Kaplan, M. (2002). Employing proverbs to explore intergenerational relations across cultures. In M. Kaplan, N. Henkin, & A. Kusano (Eds.), *Linking lifetimes: A global view of intergenerational exchange* (pp. 39-64). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Kellner, D. (1995). *Media culture*. London: Routledge.
- Kohls, L. R. (2001). *Survival kit for overseas living* (4th ed.). London: Nicholas Brealey & Intercultural Press.
- Kohls, L. R., & Knight, J. M. (1994). *Developing intercultural awareness: A cross-cultural trainer's handbook* (2nd ed.). Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.
- Kulich, S. J. (1997). *Apt aphorisms: The search for Chinese values in the voice of self-selected proverbs and sayings*. Paper presented at the third annual conference of the David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong.
- Kulich, S. J. (1998). *Chinese and American proverbs – Self-generated lists, related values and correlation to Schwartz's culture-level values*. Paper presented at the inaugural

- meeting of the Academy for Intercultural Research at the California State University, Fullerton.
- Kulich, S. J. (2003). *Chinese values in comparison: The way we have been*. Unpublished in-class reader, Shanghai International Studies University.
- Kulich, S. J., Zhang, S., & Zhu, M. (2006). Global impacts on Chinese education, identity, and values – Implications for intercultural training. *International Management Review*, 2(1), 41-59.
- Lee, W. S. (2000). In search of my mother's tongue: From proverbs to contextualized sensibility. In M. W. Lustig & J. Koester (Eds.), *Among US: Essays on identity, belonging, and intercultural competence* (pp. 48-56). New York: Longman.
- Mah, A. Y. (2002). *A thousand pieces of gold: A memoir of China's past through its proverbs*. London: Haper Collins Publishers.
- McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass communication theory: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pike, K. L. (1967). Etic and emic standpoints for the description of behavior. In D. C. Hildum (Ed.), *Language and thought: an enduring problem in psychology* (pp. 32-39). Princeton, NJ: D. Van Norstrand Company.
- Samovar, L. A., & Porter, E. R. (2004). *Communicating between cultures* (5th ed.). Beijing: Peking University Press & Wadsworth.
- Sapir, E. (1949). *Selected writings in language, culture and personality*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 1-65). New York: Academic Press.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1994). Beyond individualism-collectivism: New cultural dimensions of values. In U. Kim, H. Triandis, C. Kagitcibasi, S. Choi & G. Yoon (Eds.), *Individualism and collectivism: Theory, method and applications* (pp. 85-123). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schwartz, S. H. (2003). Mapping and interpreting cultural differences around the world. In H. Vinken, J. Soeters, & P. Ester (Eds.), *Comparing cultures, dimensions of culture in a comparative perspective* (pp. 43-73). Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill.
- Smith, P. B., & Bond, M. H. (1993). *Social psychology across cultures: Analysis and perspectives*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- The contemporary Chinese dictionary* (Chinese-English Edition). (2002). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Weber, E. U., Hsee, C. K., & Sokolowska, J. (1998). What folklore tells us about risk and risk taking: Cross-cultural comparisons of American, German, and Chinese proverbs. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 75(2), 170-186.
- Whorf, B. L. (1956). *Language, thought, and reality: Selected writings*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wu, Z. K., & Ma, G. F. (1998). *Proverbs*. Neimenggu People's Press.
- Xu, Y. (1999). Values of college students in Beijing and educational implications. *Education Research*, 5, 33-38.

- Yang, K. S. (1996). Psychological transformation of the Chinese people as a result of societal modernization. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The psychology of the Chinese people* (pp. 479-498). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Zhang, J. F., & Zhang, Z. Y. (2001). A study on Chinese college students' life values. *Journal of Southwest Normal University (humanities edition)*, 27(1), 44-49.
- Zormeier, S., & Samovar, L. (1997). Language as a mirror of reality: Mexican American proverbs. In L. Samovar & R. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader* (8th ed., pp. 235-239). Belmont: Wadsworth.