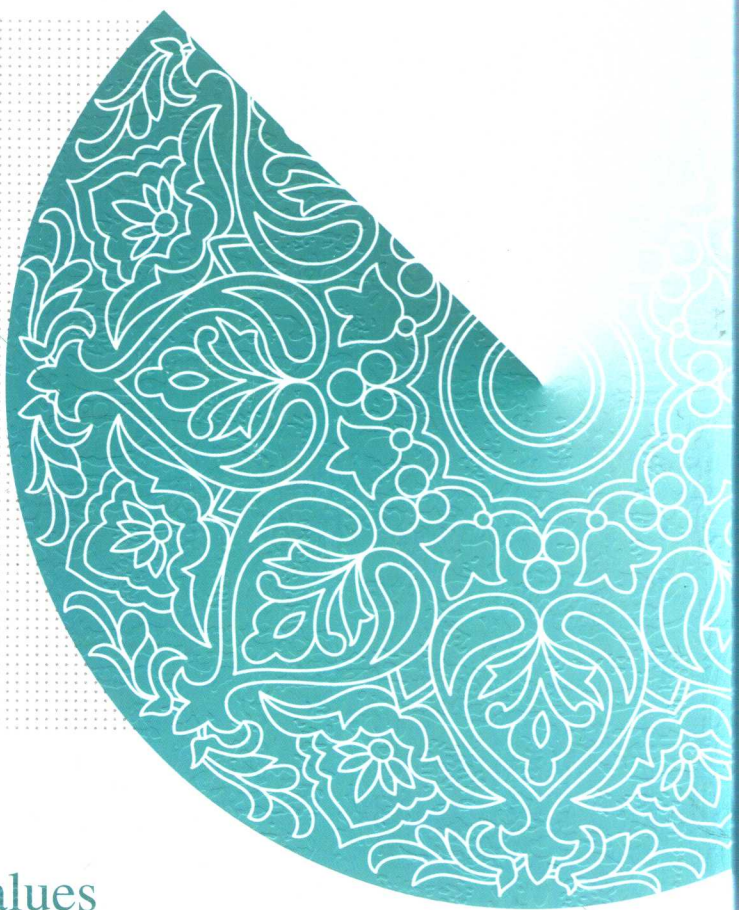
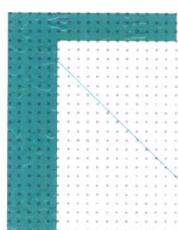


# 文化与价值观研究 论文集

郭 莲 著



Anthology of  
Culture and Values

中国社会科学出版社

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## 内容简介

本书是作者多年从事文化理论与价值观比较研究所发表的20余篇论文、译文的结集。论文主要聚焦于文化定义、构建比较价值观的尺度体系、西方“后现代化理论”的验证研究，以及中美苏等国价值观比较的实证研究等方面；译文则主要涉及文化研究的诸多领域，例如宗教、人权、女权运动、资本主义、文化帝国主义、互联网、传媒、多元文化主义、马克思和传媒与文化研究等，主要是向国内专家学者译介国外相关领域的同行对这些问题的分析与探讨，以期对国内相关领域的研究起到推动作用。

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# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TEACHER/ STUDENT ROLE RELATIONSHIPS IN CHINA AND SWEDEN

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**Abstract:** This study investigates people's conceptions of an unequal role relationship in two different types of society: People's Republic of China and Sweden, the former, classified, according to Hofstede's (1980), as a typical collectivist society characterized by large power distance, strong uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity, and the latter, an individualist society characterized by small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance, and strongly feminine within the frames of masculine dominance. The study focuses on the role relationship between teacher and student. 30 Chinese graduate students studying presently in a Swedish university and 9 Swedish students who have once visited China for academic studies were asked to complete the questionnaire (with space for written comments at the end) that was designed to probe their conceptions of degrees of Hofstede's 4 - D model of cultural

differences and Hall's (1976) high and low context communication theory in this role relationship. Some of the Chinese students were interviewed afterwards by phone on some supplementary questions related to the questionnaire. Both emic and etic approaches were adopted when the cultural dimensions were discussed. The statistical results from the questionnaire and the written comments supported the hypotheses generated in the literature review and verified the feasibility and validity of Hofstede's and Hall's theories on cultural dimensions in this limited context. The reason for the low feedback of the questionnaire has been tentatively explored in terms of cultural context.

## Introduction

There exist four fundamental institutions in all human societies. They are the family, the school, the job and the community. Each of the four has its pair of unequal but complementary basic roles. Teacher and student are an archetypal role pair in schools (Hofstede, 1986).

According to Bandura (1963, p. 90), "role behavior usually refers to the occurrence of complex adult responses that are guided by social norms or similar forms of symbolic models". Gudykunst et al. (1984, p. 67) indicate, "a role is a set of behavioral expectations associated with a particular position in a group". Dodd has more concrete explanations:

*Cultural attitudes also revolve around categories of people and their expected pattern of performance or activity. These predetermined pat-*

*terns, or at least prescribed and expected behaviors about categories people occupy, are called roles (Dodd, 1995, p. 42).*

To illustrate, the behaviors people expect teachers (or students, lawyers, fathers, clerks) to perform are considered their roles. Since there are various role areas, such as age roles, occupational roles, friendship roles, and gender roles, according to Dodd, each culture possesses different expectations on the people in this culture depending on their different roles. And also what are the appropriate performances that the people expect a certain role in a certain social position to operate may vary across cultures. For example, it is surely not considered to be a proper way to address teachers by their first names at Chinese schools whereas it is a quite acceptable behavior in most schools in countries like Sweden and U. S. . Role patterns, as a matter of fact, are the products of a society's culture. Hence culture has an important saying in role relationships, including teacher-student relationships.

In addition, the basic principle of human social organization is that of communication involving participation in the other as Mead argues:

*This participation is made possible through the type of communication which the human animal is able to carry out—a type of communication distinguished from that which takes place among other forms which have not this principle in their societies (Mead, 1934, p. 253).*

Therefore, when people from different cultural backgrounds en-

counter and communicate with each other, the ways of communication differ greatly because people's behaviors are, more or less, influenced by the culture they live in with its specific language, rules and norms. Hall (1959), in his well-known book *The Silent Language*, maintains that "culture is communication" and "communication is culture". Therefore when teachers and students from different cultures encounter and communicate with each other in schools perplexities and even problems may arise due to the differences in their respective cultural expectations of teacher-student role relationships, their recognition of proper behaviors for certain roles in their own cultures and their different ways of communication.

This research attempts to probe the similarities and differences in the teacher and student relationships between China and Sweden from an intercultural perspective.

## Literature Review

### *Culture*

Gross (1995) states, "All human beings are born into a particular cultural environment, and culture may be regarded as something which makes human beings different from other species". But what virtually is "culture"? The term culture has been defined in various ways as descriptive, historical, normative, psychological, structural, and genetic by anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and even natural science scientists in human history, each with its own different emphasis (Kroeber et al., 1952). Jenks (1993) summarizes the gene-

sis of the concept “culture” in as many as four categories: a cognitive category; a more embodied and collective category; a descriptive and concrete category; and a social category. With more than two hundred definitions in the present social science literature as Williams (1976) describes it as one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language, the meaning of the word itself has changed along with the changes in our social, economic, and political life. Williams (1961, p. 285) argues that “the idea of culture describes our common inquiry, but our conclusions are diverse, as our starting points were diverse”. Therefore the word “culture”, in reality, means many different things to different people.

Some culture researchers define culture in relation to the learned behavior as Hofstede (1980, p. 21) puts it: “culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another”. Other cultural theorists give broad definitions with emphasis on enumeration of content, such as Kroeber who states:

*The mass of learned and transmitted motor reactions, habits, techniques, ideas, and values—and the behavior they induce—is what constitutes culture. Culture is the special and exclusive product of men, and is their distinctive quality in the cosmos. . . . Culture. . . is at one and the same time the totality of products of social men, and a tremendous force affecting all human beings, socially and individually (Kroeber, 1952, p. 44).*

Still some researchers hold culture as the way of thinking and inter-

preting the world as one Swedish researcher, Engelbrektsson, states:

*Culture is the image and model of reality that a group of people, the bearers of a culture, have. Included are rules for reading and interpreting reality, and rules for accepted and non-accepted behavior within this reality (cited in Lundberg, 1991: 13).*

Hall (1959), discusses culture in terms of communication as has been mentioned above (Hall). Since this study focuses on the interactive behavior between teachers and students in China and Sweden the concepts of culture relating to the learned behavior and communication are adopted.

### ***Cultural Dimensions***

There are basically two ways to approach culture: “emic” versus “etic” (Berry, 1980; Brislin et al., 1973; Gross, 1995; Gudykunst et al., 1996). The emic approach, a more specific one, is often adopted by anthropological researchers to study one particular culture from inside, understanding cultures as the members of the cultures understand them, whereas the etic approach, a more general one, focuses on understanding cultures from outside by comparing cultures using predetermined characteristics. The present research is focused on the comparative study on the teacher-student relationship in China and Sweden both emic and etic approaches are applied to try to analyze two cultures from inside and, at the same time, try to compare them as well.

According to Gudykunst et al. (1996), etic aspects of culture are

often examined in terms of cultural variability; that is, dimensions on which cultures differ or are similar. They can be used to explain differences or similarities in communication behavior across cultures. There are many theories concerning cultural dimensions when culture is studied. Among them Hofstede's dimension theory has been extensively employed in the domain. Hall's low-context and high-context dimension, the major ways that communication varies in individualist and collectivist cultures, has also been widely adopted. In this study both Hofstede's 4-D model and Hall's context model are focused because they have been linked most closely to communication behavior. In addition, Triandis's theory on individualism-collectivism, the major dimension of cultural variability, is also included when differences and similarities between Chinese and Swedish teachers and students' communication behavior are analyzed in the study.

Based on the data of the survey questionnaire from multinational corporate employees in over forty countries Hofstede published his *Culture's Consequences—International Differences in Work-Related Values* in 1980. By theoretical and statistical analysis Hofstede discovered the four main dimensions upon which national cultures differ. They were labeled Power Distance (high or large vs. low or small), Uncertainty Avoidance (strong vs. weak), Individualism (vs. Collectivism), and Masculinity (vs. Femininity). Hofstede's fifth dimension labeled as Confucian Dynamism was launched in his book *Cultures and Organizations* in 1991. His new dimension consisted of two contrasting sets of Confucian values: "long-term orientation" vs. "short-term orientation" values. But this dimension has not been received very enthusiastically

by scholars (Fang, 1999).

According to Hofstede (1991, p. 28), power distance is “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.” In high or large power distance cultures, inequalities in power are considered and accepted as the cultural norm. They are hierarchical cultures, and the authoritarian style of communication is more common. Much more oppressive behavior and more formalized rituals, such as respect, attentiveness, and agreement, are expected in these cultures. People in low or small power distance cultures, as contrast, are assumed to be equal and demand justification for power inequalities. Many of the Asian, African and Latin American countries exhibit a high power-distance index in Hofstede’s survey. And the countries with the low power-distance scores are mostly European-style countries.

Hofstede (1991, p. 113) defined uncertainty avoidance as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.” Some cultures cannot stand the unknown or the ambiguity. People in these high uncertainty avoidance cultures view uncertainty as dangerous and try to avoid it. Other cultures, however, seem more comfortable dealing with diversity and ambiguity and view uncertainty as a necessary part of life which they must deal with. Countries with strong uncertainty avoidance cultures are the Southern European countries, Latin American countries, and most Asian countries. Northern European countries, the United States, Great Britain, India, Singapore and Hong Kong belong to the weak uncertainty avoidance cultures.



The third dimension of Hofstede's 4-D model is designated as individualism and its antipode is collectivism. The dimension has encouraged most amount of research (e. g. , *The Chinese Culture Connection*, 1987; Triandis, 1988, 1995). "The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among individuals" (Hofstede, 1984, p. 83). In individualistic cultures, "people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only," whereas in collectivist cultures, "people belong to in-groups or collectivities which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty" (Hofstede et al. , 1984, p. 419). In individualistic cultures the needs, values, and goals of the individual take precedence over the needs, values, and goals of the group. In collectivist cultures, the needs, values, and goals of the in-group take precedence over the needs, values, and goals of the individual (Triandis, 1995). In the former cultures, competition, initiative, ambition, responsibility, and success are regarded as positive ideas. The significant communication expectations that people in the cultures emphasize are truth telling and clear, direct, and straight talk. People are more independent, and use more "I" than "we" kind of self-referent messages in their linear pattern of conversation. In contrast, a salient feature in the latter cultures is keeping the harmony and balance in the group. People in these cultures concern for other's feelings and avoid hurting others. Community, kinship, solidarity, harmony, and maintaining face are emphasized and more appreciated by the people in the cultures. Moreover, people are more group concerned and interdependent and use indirect way of communication. The individualistic cultures include most of European coun-