Paper 1 Practice on Culture Dimensions

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Masculinity vs. Femininity

Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede explains cultural differences among countries through Hofstede’s cultural dimension theory. He believes that culture is what defines a group of people from others in an environment. He summarized the differences between cultures into six basic dimensions of cultural values: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and short vs. long-term orientation. Specifically, masculinity versus femininity, this dimension focuses on what extent a society emphasizes achievement or nurture. In other contexts, masculinity versus femininity is sometimes also related to “tough versus tender” cultures. Masculinity traits include ambition, assertiveness, and toughness. On the contrary, feminine traits include modesty, nurturing, and an overall focus on the quality of life. In feminine societies, there is an overlap between male and female roles, with an emphasis on good relationships with peers and coworkers. In Hofstede's words, “Masculinity stands for a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct: Men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. Femininity stands for a society in which social gender roles overlap: Both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.” If a society has a high masculinity rate, it is usually ego orientated, conflict is solved through force, religion plays a big factor, larger gender wage gap and traditional family structure - Husband works and wife stays home and takes care of children. On the other hand, if a society has a low masculinity rate, it is usually relationship-oriented, conflict is solved through negotiation, religion is less significant, more women in management and there is a flexible family structure - All roles in the family are interchangeable.

In 1997, Fernandez and his colleagues conducted a study of Hofstede's work-related cultural dimensions in 9 countries and observed the changes over 25 years. They believed that societal changes such as economic growth, education, and democracy could affect work-related cultural dimensions. For each university, questionnaire distribution and data collection were performed by one university worker. All of the questions were put in large envelopes and distributed to different departments in the university, and all were answered anonymously. In this study, 180 questionnaires were distributed by Taiwanese universities, where 158 answered (87.2%, only 86.7% were valid) and 180 questionnaires were distributed to American universities, where 147 answered (81.7%). These quantitative questionnaires measured Hofstede’s five cultural dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, and Confucian work dynamics) and were used as the research instrument. In this study, the Taiwanese participants had a medium score (M=3.58) on masculinity; the U.S. participants have a very low score (M=1.90) on masculinity. As a result of possible sources of internal validity, this study can ultimately be considered slightly biased. Of course, experimental bias plays a role in this study’s internal validity. It is possible for the participant to change their answers based on their society’s norms but because of the anonymity of the experiment, participants are less likely to fall under social pressure. Continuing, because this questionnaire is given in one sitting, the instrumentation would not play a factor in questioning the internal validity. The scores of the Taiwanese and American participants are quite similar to the predicted theoretical trait. The United States scored well below the mean as there are changes in the workforce where women are continually gaining positions of power, whilst the Taiwanese had a higher score as Confucianism partakes in their society.

Fernandez et al. (1997) did not study Taiwan but they studied China’s cultural dimension, “China scored the highest of the masculinity counties. …This finding may reflect the more traditional role of separation of men and women in this country.” Similar to China, Taiwan is affected by Confucianism, a belief that emphasizes ancestor worship and human-centered virtues for living a peaceful life. Confucianism has had a strong influence on gender roles, as it expects men to be extroverted and females to be introverted and submissive. It is also often associated with the oppression of women, whether that is foot binding, concubinage, subjugating women to their fathers during childhood, or even widow suicide. Additionally, an important concept of Confucianism is the 5 relationships: Ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. According to Chen and Chung (1994), "these relationships are assumed to be unequal and complementary". It is undeniable that Confucianism places the emphasis on learning for men, and women are limited to housekeeping. Thus, there is a stronger contrast between men's and women's roles in Taiwanese society because of the considerable influence of Confucianism.