

## **Humanities and Social Sciences: Before**

### **Introduction**

I have meandered across many disciplines, including Psychology, Chinese Literature, Philosophy, and History, trying to quarry out of the core of my primal concern, that is, how do people think and appreciate the world, how do people be influence by different languages and cultures, and how to help those who are suffering due to their different thinking styles. Observing the human mind from every facet, I finally penetrate that although it may sparkle a riot of color in different lights; still the gemstone of human mind has its unique, fundamental hue. And among my inter-discipline studying process, I gradually converge my interest of research, that is, to discover the characteristic of human mind and human cognition through the light filter of culture.

Behavioral difference due to cultural difference has been an attractive issue since people noticed the between each other. And as the boundary of you-group and we-group became salient, people became aware of the influence of culture and language on human behavior, thinking, and option. However, culture does not dissimilate the ways people act and think thoroughly, but does shape the different focus on aspects and dimensions of concerning. All being the human, our commonality must surpass our divergence in nature; and our divergence must serve as reflection of our potential for adaption, and further enrich our appreciation of human nature.

Studying Cultural Anthropology and Culture Linguistics help me become conscious of variety, yet immersing in Chinese academic thought while reading Western philosophy simultaneously make me realize that some issues were mutual among cultures. For instance, both philosophies developed some kind of theories of metaphysics, dialectic, and ethics, and had commonalities between the two philosophies because all the issues were important and inevitable to people: we all need to know about the unknown, coordinate the opposites, and deal with conflicts. As Shwede states, there are many mentalities, yet one mind.

### **Research Interest and Educational Backgrounds**

Therefore, I tried to take a view of mental commonality and apply it to many independent researches I have made in courses, besides the regular practices of statistics and experimental design. I have been interested in the possibility of dialogue and integration between cultures, not for comparing, but for deeply understanding. In the beginning I tried to re-interpret thoughts and literary works of Chinese people

with the terms of psychology. For example, in one essay I wrote in History of Chinese Thought, I discussed the differences between interpersonal theories belong to different sects in aspect of social psychology. In another project, I discuss how Chinese literary works express an entire scenic imagery by mere but elaborate interspersions of words, with psychological processing theory. I espied that the two different realms formed in different cultures could communicate with each other; and their interaction could even elicit some deeper insights of both Chinese culture and psychology to us.

It is true that philosophy and critics of literary works are different with scientific psychology in essence. Thus I started reading psychological papers widely, and gradually focused on the realm of cognitive psychology, especially papers discussing the influence of culture to human thinking and reasoning, and more specific, in Chinese culture. While studying, I hope to delve into some deeper issues: Are the different behavioral and inferential forms of different cultures generated from the common potential of human beings? Do different ways of reasoning and categorization provide more profound knowledge of human cognitive process and make people more flexible and creative than we expect? Could we rightly appreciate the value of thinking strategies used among those who think in a different way?

Cognitive psychology in the past often applied a research outcome in a specific culture to other populations because of an assumption that people had the same mental structure. More recently, researchers have figured out that there are different strategies for reasoning and categorization used in different cultures, and holistic versus analytic reasoning has also been a topic of concern. Although cultural influences are noticed, the focus of research seems to be on divergences, however. Yet a person who performs a cognitive task might be influenced by multiple and complex cultures. Therefore, I hope to generate researches to discover the effect of culture on human cognition, with my knowledge of Chinese history, language and culture, and with my experience of acculturation to different cultures.

To specific, the domains to which I want to devote are reasoning; concepts and categorization; analogy and symbols. I have been interested in these topics, but not limited to them. In fact, I have discussed some issues in these domains in my independent subjects. For one, I discussed the difference of inferential strategies between Eastern and Western cultures, and provided an alternative explanation by tracing its cultural root in history of China in one of my reports. I also did a project of Cultural Linguistics with psychological theories of concepts, such as prototype and exemplar models, and theories of Chinese writing characters to explore the

particularity of Chinese language, and states that it reflects the difference in some dimensions yet the 'one mind' in another point of view.

### **Future Directions**

I am very familiar with Chinese culture and thinking style; however, I have relatively few insights to other cultures. I could explore the commonality of human cognition with understanding mere Chinese culture, but I am not contented with that. I hope to exposure to a different milieu, and to be saturated by the academic tradition in a familiar yet alien culture: the practice of science and logic, the tradition of epistemology and methodology. That is why I choose to study abroad. And I believe that slightly clashing between different people is the beginning of true understanding, understand each other and the true meaning of human.

Since my research interests focus on cultural related cognition processes, I wish to pursue a PhD degree from (university name) not only because one of faculty member, (professor) , has been doing research in language, culture and cognition, but also there is a firm curriculum of cognitive psychology, including studies of critical aspects of human inference. I am also interests in the Culture and Cognition Lab, though the main area of this lab is social psychology. Moreover, the department of East Asian Studies in (university name) is very prominent and resourceful, and that would greatly help when studying cultural related issues. I believe that (university name) is a perfect place for studying culture and cognition.

At this moment, I aspire to conduct research of culture and cognition. Besides devoting to an academic profession, I anticipate expressing the true value of different forms of thinking and cognition while discovering the underlying principles of human mind. Knowing that many people are suffering because they could not exhibit social favored ability such as abstract thinking, I hope that I could eventually help them with accurately and happily accept the values of their thinking style and themselves. As far as my concern, a practical means to do so might be to disseminate what I have learned and studied, and that is what I have been doing. I have stepped in to the land of psychology for these sufferers, I would step out to the world form them.