

Generation Y and the Post 80s' Culture Identity:

A Cross Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: The study examined culture identification of Generation Y and the Post 80s with measurements integrating Western mindsets as well as Oriental wisdom. The findings of this study demonstrate the cultural differences in Generation Y and the Post 80s' cultural identification as well as in measurements. When examined with Western measurement, American subjects were more likely to identify themselves as horizontal individualism than Chinese subjects, while Chinese subjects more inclined to associate themselves with vertical individualism than American counterparts. When investigated under the Chinese value system, Chinese subjects became more collective oriented than Americans and Chinese were found to be long-term oriented while Americans were short-term oriented.

INTRODUCTION

In today's market, youth have become one of the most lucrative segments coveted by marketers. According to Wolburg and Pokrywczynski (2001), the reasons why marketers are longing for this segment are: the sheer size of the youth market demands attention; young people are often trendsetters and the leading consumers in fashion markets; the pre-adulthood years are a crucial period for the youth to establish brand loyalty that may last an entire lifetime; one subgroup of the youth, college student, is expected to attain a high standard of living after graduation; the youthful are more receptive to new products and tend to be early adopters; young kids influence parental choices for major purchases; and, today's youth have significant buying power.

Due to the above factors, the young consumers are pursued avidly by domestic and international marketers and advertisers. However, young folks are a more diverse group than previous generations. They have distinctive characteristics and are considered capricious and notoriously difficult to reach. Some marketers even call them "the unreachable" (Devaney, 2004). Therefore, how to communicate with them effectively as well as penetrate into their minds and gain their hearts has become an imperative task in today's marketing practice.

In order to reach "the unreachable," market segment, finding groups of consumers with strong, homogeneous bonds may be an effective strategy. Traditionally, birth age is employed as a useful way to create market segments. Nevertheless, Schewe and Meredith (2004) point out that birth age may describe segments, but it does not help to understand segment motivations. They suggest using generational cohort theory, a highly accurate and more

effective method to define market segments. Simply speaking, a generational cohort refers to an age group, bonded by certain momentous environmental events during their coming-of-age years, who share similar values that remain relatively unchanged throughout their whole lives. According to this theory, Generation Y and the Post 80s are identified as the most representative subgroups of the youth existing in the current American and Chinese societies, respectively.

Since the youth is a rather diverse and complex cohort, in order to achieve a relatively deep understanding of this particular generation, culture analysis may offer valuable insights. Culture is seen as the collective programming of the mind by providing cognitive maps for people within a given societal group to perceive, think, and interact, which distinguishes one group from another (Egri & Ralston, 2004). To make intangible culture measurable, Hofstede (2001) developed a cultural dimension model consisting of five distinctive dimensions to examine different aspects of culture. Based on generational cohort theory and culture dimension theory, the current study is designed to investigate the culture identification of two similar young generations, Generation Y and the Post 80s, in two culturally dissimilar societies, the U.S.A and China, to gain some insights into their minds as well as to compare cultural differences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generational Cohort Theory

Generation is a popular terminology used to identify subgroups. It has a wide range of application in different research fields, such as psychology, management, marketing, and

mass communication (Rogler, 2002; Egri & Ralston, 2004; Schewe & Meredith, 2004; Dou, Wang & Zhou, 2006). Rogler (2002) defined generation as “The classification of persons of more or less the same age by attributing to them characteristics thought to be prevalent in their period” (p.1014). In other words, generation refers to a cluster of people born in the same year or in a certain period of time, who share similar values, attitudes, and life styles shaped by the particular epoch, thereby representing the characteristics of that specific era. Different generations have different symbols and distinctive characteristics that attach them to the in-group and differentiate them from the out-group (Rogler, 2002). The members of each generation are bound together by an intricate network of perceptions, judgments, feelings, and aspirations.

Generally, generation is categorized by age. The age as an indicator of generation is a way to simplify and facilitate the understanding of the complicated society. In addition to age, social structural elements are also utilized to classify generations in regards to the social mobility, ethnical heterogeneity, regional diversity, and mass culture nurtured by mass media. In this sense, generation labels represent one way of making cognitive sense of contemporary society (Rogler, 2002).

Cohort is another important concept used to differentiate subgroups. According to Schewe and Meredith (2004), cohorts are “groups of individuals who are born during the same time period and travel through life together” (p.51). The assumption of cohorts is that individuals are influenced by events occurring during their coming-of-age (teens and early 20s) years. People in the same cohort experience similar external events during their adolescent or early adulthood years. These crucial moments influence their values,

preferences, attitudes, and buying behaviors in ways that remain with them over their whole lives. In other words, cohort effects are relatively persistent and stable, and embed deeply in the heart of a certain group of people.

Schewe and Meredith (2002) considered cohort as a different concept from generation because they think cohort is not strictly defined by the year of birth. A cohort could be long or short depending on the external events that define it. Not all societies have cohorts. For a cohort to be formed, at least three requirements must be satisfied: mass communication capabilities, literacy, and social consequences (Schewe & Meredith, 2002). Mass communication channels, such as TV, newspaper, and the Internet help disseminate historical events among certain groups of people to build the foundation for a cohort. Literacy influences cohorts' formation by determining people's understanding of implications, importance, or impact of a defining event. Finally, whether or not an event could be a defining moment depends on its societal impacts. Schewe and Meredith (2002) believed that all developed countries are appropriate for cohort analysis. Some developing countries, such as India, Eastern European nations, Lebanon, and China may be examples of good areas for cohort analysis as well.

Generational cohort is a combination concept of generation and cohort. Generational cohorts are "societal subcultures whose value orientations reflect the significant cultural, political, and economic developments that occurred during a generation's preadult years" (Egri & Raltson, 2004, p.211). Generational cohort theory was developed by Renald Inglehart in 1977 (Dou, Wang & Zhou, 2006). The theory is based on two basic assumptions: socialization hypothesis and scarcity hypothesis (Egri & Raltson, 2004; Dou, Wang & Zhou,

2006). The socialization hypothesis proposes that adults' basic values reflect the socioeconomic conditions of childhood and adolescence. Although the change of societal conditions may influence their personal values in adulthood, the relative importance that a generation attributes to various personal values that were developed in the early stage of life remains stable. The scarcity hypothesis proposes that generational cohorts incline to place the greatest subjective value on those socioeconomic environmental aspects that are in short supply during a generation's youth. Thus, generations growing up during periods of socioeconomic and physical insecurity (e.g., social upheaval, war, economic distress) learn modernist survival values (e.g., economic determinism, rationality, materialism, conformity, and respect for authority). By contrast, generations growing up during periods of socioeconomic security learn postmodernist values (e.g., egalitarianism, individualism, interpersonal trust, tolerance of diversity, self-transcendence). Therefore, a nation's history can reflect the differences in values and attitudes across its generational cohorts (Rogler, 2002). Similarly, the personal values, attitudes and life styles of a generational cohort could mirror the characteristics of a particular society.

As Schewe and Meredith (2002) mentioned, the U.S.A. and China are good examples for generational cohort analysis because each of them has experienced several distinctive momentous historical events during the 20th century. For Americans, the "Great Depression", "World War II", the "Great Economic Prosperity", the "Vietnam War", the "Watergate Scandal", and the "Invention of Internet" are the "defining moments" helping to shape the structure of the whole society as well as becoming the impressive memories of certain groups of people. Based on those historical events, the population of U.S.A. can be categorized into

four groups: the Matures (born between 1909-1945), the Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964), Generation X (born between 1965-1976/79), and Generation Y (born between 1977/80-) (Wolburg & Pokrywczynki, 2001). For the Chinese, the “Democratic Revolution”, “World WarII”, the “Founding of PRC”, the “Anti-Rights and Great Leap Forward Movements”, the “Cultural Revolution”, and the “Economic Reforms” are significant events resulting in four distinctive generational cohorts among today’s Chinese: the Red Generation (born before 1950), the Pre-Cultural Revolution Generation (1951-1964), the Post-Cultural Revolution Generation (1965-1973), and Generation X (1979-1984) (Dou, Wang & Zhou, 2006). Recently, a new generation, labeled as the “Post 80s” and referring to people born during the 80s has emerged in Chinese society (Elegant, 2007; Gallop, 2005; Moore, 2005).

Culture Dimension Theory

While generational cohort theory provides a horizontal perspective to categorize and analyze a specific group of people, culture dimension theory is developed to understand human beings by exploring the historical and societal influence with a vertical standpoint. The Culture Dimension Model, introduced by Hofstede (2001), is used to differentiate and explain cultural differences in national culture level. The development of the model is based on Hofstede’s understanding of culture. According to him, culture is “The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 9). This definition stresses that (1) culture is collective, not individualistic, which differentiates it from values. Therefore, in studying values we compare individuals, while studying culture, we compare societies (Hofstede, 2001). (2) Culture is not

directly visible, but we can observe it from people's behavior. In this way, the complicated and intangible culture can be measured. (3) Culture is shared within certain groups but differentiated from others.

The original data for developing culture dimensions were derived from IBM surveys administered in 72 countries and in 20 languages between 1967 and 1973. Based on intensive data analysis, four distinctive culture dimensions were found: Power Distance (PDI), Individualism/Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity/Femininity (MAS), and Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI). In order to overcome Western mind bias, the fifth dimension – Long-term versus Short-term Orientation (LTO) derived from Chinese Value Survey was added in 1985.

Power Distance (PDI). Two assumptions are behind this dimension: 1. Power and inequality are fundamental facts of any society; and 2. All societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others. Simply, Power Distance describes how less powerful people of different societies accept and expect inequality of power distribution (Komlodi, 2006; Mooij, 2005; Hofstede, 2001). In large power distance cultures, everyone has a rightful position in the social hierarchy and one's social status is clear so that others can show proper respect. Inequality is seen as the basis of societal order. People are not supposed to challenge authority. In low power distance cultures, by contrast, people are considered to be interdependent to each other. Inequality in society should be minimized. Superiors are considerably more open to be challenged by subordinates.

Individualism/Collectivism (IDV). The assumption behind IDV is that different human societies show gregariousness to a different degree. Individualism versus collectivism refers to "the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups" (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004,

p.63). In individualistic societies, people are more focused on themselves and their immediate families, and the bonds among individuals are loose. People don't draw a very clear line between ingroups and outgroups. It is an "I" conscious society. One's self-concept is in terms of idiocentrism. In collectivist societies, people are strongly tied to ingroups and extended families. The individual is protected by the group and owes loyalty to it. In such societies, "We" is conscious, and self-concept is in terms of group.

Masculinity/Femininity (MAS). Assumptions behind this dimension are: 1. The duality of the sexes is a fundamental fact with which different societies cope in different ways; and 2. The biological differences between sexes should have implications for the emotional and social roles of the genders. Masculinity refers to a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct and the values traditionally related to the male, such as assertiveness, competition, and material success are emphasized. Femininity describes a society in which social gender roles are not clearly differentiated, and the values traditionally related to the female, such as modesty, tenderness, and quality of life are highlighted (Komlodi, 2006; Mooij, 2005; Hofstede, 2001).

Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI). Two assumptions are behind this dimension: 1. Uncertainty about the future is a basic fact of human life; and 2. Ways of coping with uncertainty belong to the cultural heritages of societies. Uncertainty Avoidance describes how much members of a society feel comfortable or uncomfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations refer to "novel, unknown, surprising, and different than usual" (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004, p.62). In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, people emphasize orders and tend to establish strict laws and rules to minimize uncertainty. They believe in one

absolute Truth. They feel highly stressful, anxious, and try to express their emotions to release tensions. In low uncertainty avoidance cultures, on the contrary, people are more tolerant of diversity and try to have as few rules as possible. They believe in relative truth. They feel at ease and are supposed to suppress their inner emotions.

Long-term versus Short-term Orientation (LTO). The theoretic rationales that support this dimension are Confucian teachings. Long-term orientation describes a society that is future oriented and cherishes the virtues of perseverance and thrift. Short-term orientation, on the other hand, refers to a society that focuses on the past and present, highlighting the virtues of respect for tradition, preservation of “face,” and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede, 2001).

Generation Y and the Post 80s

Generation Y is a subculture of the U.S. society also labeled as the Echo Boomers, the Millennials, the Baby Bulge, and the Net Generation (Wolburg & Pokryweczynski, 2001; Dembo, 2000; Eisner, 2005; Bonnie & Hughes, 2001). They are the offspring of Baby Boomers. Some researchers define Generation Y as the group of people born between 1979 and 1994 (Dembo, 2000; Ellen & Kerwin, 1999), whereas others identify Generation Y as the cohort born after 1980 (Eisner, 2005; Bonnie & Hughes, 2001). The population size of Gen Y is between 60 millions and 80 millions, similar to Baby Boomers (72 millions), and more than three times the size of Generation X (Ellen & Kerwin, 1999; Gronbach, 2000). Generation Y was raised in a time of economic expansion and prosperity with material needs well satisfied by their affluent Baby Boomer parents. However, they are also coming of an

age in an era of uncertainty and violence (Eisner, 2005).

Living in such a complex society, Yers are considered to have unique characteristics, personal values, and life styles that are different from preceding generations (Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001). They are the most ethnically diverse group, with one third of its members minorities, one fourth growing up in a single parent household, and three fourths having a working mother (Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001; Dembo, 2000). They are smart, aware, and fair-minded. They are more self-sufficient and mature than any generation before them (Gronbach, 2000). They tend to have a strong sense of morality, be patriotic, be willing to fight for freedom, be social, and value home and family (Eisner, 2005). Compared with Generation X, Gen Y is characterized as less cynical, more optimistic, more idealistic, more inclined to value tradition, and more similar to Baby Boomers (Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001).

Growing up in a media saturated, high technology disseminated, and brand conscious world, Generation Y is the best educated, most technically literate, and media savvy cohort. They equip themselves with personal computers, cell phones, iPods, video games and pagers. In the Y world, those gadgets are not only the necessary communication tools but also the icons for their generational identity (Huntley, 2006). Unlike Boomers and Generation X, Yers are less cynical about advertising (Gronbach, 2000). They understand that commercials and advertisements exist to sell. They are receptive to marketing messages, as long as those messages are pertinent, well executed, and enticing (Cheng, 1999). They like to be entertained in the ads directed towards them (Gronbach, 2000).

Generation Y has big buying power with a large discretionary income (Wolburg &

Pokrywczynski, 2001; Gronbach, 2000; Eisner, 2005). Teens between the ages of 12 and 15 have a personal annual income of \$1,664, 16-to-17-year-olds have \$4,940 and 18-to-19-years-olds have \$7,852 a year. Their income sources are odds jobs and chores around the house, baby-sitting, part-time jobs, and generous monetary gifts from relatives and parents for birthdays and other special occasions (Dembo, 2000). In addition, since Gen Y has established an equal relationship with their parents, their opinions are given much more weight compared to previous generations. Consequently, they will participate or influence their parents' purchase decision in different ways (Gronbach, 2000).

The Post 80s (80 hou) are a unique generation of today's Chinese society, a group with 200 million people. They are also entitled as the "China's Me Generation", the "China' Y Generation", and the "Ku Generation" (Elegant, 2007; Gallop, 2005; Moore, 2005). The concept "Post 80s" was first coined by a famous young writer Xiaobing Gong, referring to the cluster of young writers born between 1980 and 1989. Later, this term was popularized by the Internet and was applied in a wide range of fields signifying the whole generational cohort born in 1980s. The Post 80s are growing up in a relatively stable and affluent society characterized by economic boosting, material prosperity, and cultural diversity. They are seen as a demographic cohort that "serves as a bridge between the closed, xenophobic China of the Mao years and the globalized economic powerhouse that its becoming" (Elegant, 2007, p.32). They are a hybrid generation, mixing tradition and modernity, conciliating Eastern thought and Western culture, with distinctive characteristics differentiating from previous generations.

Because of China's one-child policy, instituted in 1978, the majority of the Post 80s are the only kid in their families. They are the focus of the whole household, not only cosseted by

their parents, but also pampered by their grandparents. Consequently, one of the most typical characteristics of 80s is “self-centeredness” or “egotism.” They care much about their own feelings and subjective judgments, while paying less attention to other people’s opinions. They claim that they live for themselves (Elegant, 2007). Regardless of their parents’ feelings, those 80s dye their hair bizarre colors and dress in unusual clothes because they consider such things to be “ku” (a slang prevalent among the Post 80s having similar meaning to English word “cool”)(Moore, 2005). They purchase something just because they like it. Their consumption behaviors often follow their emotional feelings. They believe “the liked one is the best” (Computer World, 2006, p. 4). Similar to 60s and 70s, 80s cherish family, love and friendship. Different from 60s and 70s, however, they are more likely to express their personal emotions and would like to make their families, lovers, and friends aware of their feelings.

Growing up in a comparatively rich and diverse world, 80s are better educated and open-minded than their predecessors. About 25% of Chinese in their 20s have attended college. Some 37 million 80s will travel overseas in 2007 (Elegant, 2007). They consider themselves as having more freedom than their parents (Moore, 2005). They are confident, believing in their future. They are active thinkers, embracing various challenges and new ideas. They like trying different new products and tend to be the early adopters. They pay close attention to fashion trends and consider clothing and accessories as the extension of their unique tastes and personalities (Chen, 2007). They are generation tech, sophisticated in technology. According to Gallup poll (2005), 87% of Gen Y Chinese have access to computers, 88% have used computers, and every three in four have used the Internet. They

are blogging, chatting in MSN, and searching via Google. They identify digital products as their most favorite belongings (Fast Company 2.0, 2007).

Due to the huge population, considerable discretionary money, and distinctive consumption pattern, the Post 80s are becoming a rising star of today's market. The average expense of the Post 80s is about 1,300 Ren Min Bi (Chinese currency), equal to all the income of a worker living in Beijing (Chen, 2007). Those Chinese twentysomethings have a nickname: "Yue Guang Zu" (spending all the money every month). Their concept of consumption is totally different from that of their parents who have a habit of balancing income and expense and value thrift as a traditional virtue. By contrast, the Post 80s like shopping and don't think much about input and output. They consider shopping an important way of enjoying life and indulging themselves (China Fashion Weekly, 2007). They are inclined to spend all their money on hand and sometimes expend future income in advance. They never worry about their living because they know their parents will always support them. They are brand conscious, but not loyal to any brand. Their purchase decisions are easily influenced by others, especially opinion leaders within their group. They love shopping online and have a tendency towards impulsive purchase behavior (Chen, 2007).

Generation Y and the Post 80s' Culture Identity

Although living in different parts of the world, Generation Y and the Post 80s are similar in many aspects. They both grew up in a comparatively affluent period; they are better-educated, open-minded, technology sophisticated, and media savvy. They drink coke, wear Nikes, listen to iPods, and blog obsessively. Some researchers suggested that youth are globally more alike than any other age group and thus can be considered as a global market

segment (Parmar, 2002; Tully, 1994). Young people all around the world show amazing similarities in taste, language and attitude. Their consumption habits are highly homogenous in certain product categories, such as music, fashion, film, video games, and sports products (Parmar, 2002). An experiment conducted by an ad agency in New York videotaped teenagers' rooms in 25 countries and found out that from the gear and posters on display, it was hard to tell whether the rooms are in Los Angeles, Mexico City, or Tokyo (Tully, 1994). "Last year I was in 17 countries, and it's pretty difficult to find anything that is different, other than language among a teenager in Japan, a teenager in the U. K., and a teenager in China" contended Schultz, professor of integrated marketing communication at Northwestern University (Parmar, 2002, p.50).

Based on the idea of a global youth market segment, Kjeldgaard and Askegaard (2006) proposed a concept of "Global Youth Culture," referring to "a manifestation of a transnational, market-based ideology that is manifested through a dialectic between structures of common difference and the adaption and objection of these structures in local context" (p.232). They suggested that youth culture emerged as an ideology due to the development of Western modernity, the growing sophistication of advertising and market segmentation strategies, and the rising global cultural economy. Therefore, "Youth culture is inherently modern and global and Western at its core" (p. 234). The most important dimensions of youth culture ideology are identity, style, and cultural innovation. The project of identity is a reflexive process in which the self is negotiated in terms of choice among a variety of life styles. Style is the most prominent cultural medium for expressing the identity aspirations of youth culture. The combination of identity construction and stylized consumption arenas

constitutes youth as a stage for innovation and cultural renewal.

Youth culture's global diffusion is not only in terms of style expression, but also as a particular space for social identity. In this sense, Generation Y and the Post 80s belong to the same global youth culture and thus share the same cultural identities. However, Mooij (2004) argued that the global youth market is the illusion of Western marketers and that the values of youth worldwide are basically the same is a big misunderstanding. Several value studies show that across countries young people vary as much as adults. According to a study from a European market research company in 2003, teenagers are affected more by the value of the country and culture in which they live than a global "Youth Culture." Teens tended to have the same fundamental values as their parents rather than with other people of the same age around world (Brand Strategy, 2003). The youths from different places may use the same type of mobile phone or computer, but they may have bought it for very different reasons. Even the youth living in the similar geographical area is not homogenous. Mooij (2004) pointed out that there is not just one teenage culture in Asia and there is enormous diversity among Asian teenage lifestyles. Young Japanese or Chinese may be typically Western on the surface, but traditional values are still rooted deeply in their hearts. Therefore, "Global Youth Culture" is a superficial expression (Brand Strategy, 2003). From this point of view, Generation Y and the Post 80s should be seen as heterogeneous subcultures that closely attach the values of local societies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Since previous literature shows discrepancy in the youth's culture identification, it is not

clear whether the young people from different areas in the world will identify themselves with a homogenous global youth culture or they will distinguish themselves by means of a particular culture that ties to the tradition, history, and mental programs of a specific country or society. In order to clarify this puzzle, it is necessary to compare the youth's culture orientation in nations that display disparate cultural characteristics. Traditionally, China is seen as a representative of long-established Oriental culture, whereas the United States of America is deemed as a symbol of modern Western culture. They have significantly different cultural, socioeconomic, and political histories (Egri & Ralston, 2004).

Previous research suggest that the U.S.A. is a highly individualistic culture characterized by a great emphasis on "self reliance," while China is a highly collectivistic culture centered on a set of relationships defined by Confucian doctrine (Lin, 2001; Zhang & Neelankavil, 1997). According to Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001), China shows a relatively low individualistic orientation, at the same time, the U.S.A. is a country which highly values individualism. If young people's culture identification is highly attached to their country's traditional values, Chinese youth should be more collectivistic oriented and American youth should show more individualistic characteristics.

However, a study analyzing cultural values in advertising to Chinese X generation indicated that with the promotion of modernity, individualism values are predominant in current Chinese advertising targeting the youth (Zhang & Shavitt, 2003). Simultaneously, a research focusing on Chinese young people's slang also suggested that a new kind of individualism is valued by China's millennial youth (Moore, 2005). As Parmar (2002) pointed out, one of the most important characteristics of young consumers globally is a sense

of individualism that goes beyond what their parents' generation felt. If youth are influenced more by "Global Youth Culture," it is possible that both American and Chinese young youth should share similar individualistic values. Since research in this area is unequivocal, the first research question is proposed:

R1: Will the culture identification of Chinese youth be collectivism, and that of American youth be individualism, or will both of them be individualistic oriented?

As mentioned before, Long-term orientation (LTO) is a culture dimension developed to introduce Eastern values complementary to Western mindset culture dimensions. This culture dimension is based on Confucianism that could be seen as a school of thoughts or philosophy originated from China more than 2000 years ago. China is deeply influenced by Confucian philosophy. Since the Han dynasty (206 BC- AD 220), Confucianism held a dominant position in China and became the mainstream value of the whole society for thousands of years. It performed an important role in reinforcing the centralized monarchy and shaping ideology (Jacobs & Gao, 1995). Although Confucianism is not now in official vogue in China, the influence is still felt in many facets of Chinese life. By contrast, originated and developed on the basis of Western philosophy, and representing the prophet of modernization and industrialization, the U.S.A is a short-term oriented society, characterized by consumerism, hedonism, and competitiveness. Referring to the Chinese Value Survey (Hofstede, 2001), China ranks the highest on the LTO index, while the U.S.A. locates at the low end of the LTO index. From this point of view, Chinese youth should be long-term oriented whereas American youth should be short-term oriented. Nevertheless, with the penetration of global consumerism and pop culture, the Chinese young generation expresses

more and more values that are related to short-term orientation, such as overspending, entertaining themselves obsessively through the Internet, being ambitious, and “working hard, playing hard” (China Fashion Weekly, 2007; Chen, 2007). In this sense, both Chinese and American youth may show a short-term orientation. Therefore, the second research question is proposed:

RQ2: Will the culture identification of Chinese youth be Long-term orientation, and that of American youth be Short-term orientation, or will both of them be Short-term oriented?

METHODOLOGY

Design of Study

In order to test Generation Y and the Post 80s’ culture identity with a cross-cultural perspective, a paper-and-pencil survey was conducted simultaneously in the U.S.A. and China. Two culture dimensions: Individualism/Collectivism (IDV) and Long- and Short-term Orientation (LTO), selected from Hofstede’s Culture Dimension Model (2001) were employed to test the research questions. These two dimensions were chosen because 1) they represent Western mindset (IDV) and Eastern mindset (LTO) values respectively; 2) the U.S.A. and China are located at the opposite ends of the index of those two dimensions. Further, while IDV is the most popular cultural index and has been investigated in a variety of disciplines, LTO has not received as much attention and needs more examination. It might be interesting to apply them concurrently to compare the differences.

The study was conducted in March 2008. The researcher supervised the research

process in the U.S.A. A Chinese Ph.D. student was asked to act as investigator and supervised the whole research process in China. Participants were given a 7-page self-administered questionnaire. After the investigator's brief introduction of the study, they were asked to finish the questionnaire at home and submitted it in the next class session.

Sampling

Convenient sampling was utilized in this study. As Hofstede (2001) mentioned, cross-national research should be done only on matched samples, that is, samples similar in all respects except nationality. Undergraduate students are an appropriate sample for the current study. First, undergraduate students are the subgroup of Generation Y and the Post 80s, who could act as the proper proxy for the population. Second, undergraduate students could be considered as a matched sample because they have similar demographic as well as psychographic characteristics.

The subjects were 135 undergraduate students from a public speaking class at a public university in the central U.S.A. and 195 undergraduate students from an introductory advertising course at a public university in central China. At the data analysis stage, 11 American subjects and 14 Chinese subjects were deleted due to either different nationalities or unqualified ages. Among the respondents, 40.7% were American and 59.3% were Chinese. 39% of the subjects were male as well as 61% were female. Respondents' age ranged from 19 to 29 years old with an average age of 21. The subjects were distributed across four grades with 34.8% freshman, 23% sophomore, 24.6% junior, and 17.7% senior. Table 1 provides a description of the sample characteristics.

Measure

A structured questionnaire was developed to test research questions. The questionnaire was first drawn up in English and then translated into Chinese by a native Chinese who speaks both Chinese and English. Once translated into Chinese, it was back translated into English by another bilingual Chinese to ensure its accuracy. The questionnaire was composed of three sections: the first section measured the Individualism/Collectivism culture dimension; the second section examined the culture dimension of Long-term vs. Short-term orientation; and the last section collected the demographic information of participants.

The multiple measures of latent variables of the study were based on an extensive literature review. All measures used in the present study had already been used and found to be valid and reliable indicators of the corresponding constructs in one or more previous studies (Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 2001; Lee & Choi, 2006; Lin 2001; Zhang & Neelankavil, 1997; Zhang & Shavitt, 2003; The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987).

Individualism/Collectivism

Given the complexity of the value system and culture orientation of today's young generation, Triandis's four-way typology was applied to measure the youth's culture identification. According to Triandis (1998), both individualism and collectivism could be horizontal (emphasizing equality) or vertical (emphasizing hierarchy). Four sub-dimensions were found under the concepts of individualism/collectivism: (1) Horizontal Individualism (HI-uniqueness), where people strive to be unique and do their own thing; (2) Vertical Individualism (VI-achievement oriented), where people want to do their own thing and strive to be the best; (3) Horizontal Collectivism (HC-cooperativeness), where people merge

themselves with their in-groups; and (4) Vertical Collectivism (VC-dutifulness), where people submit to the authorities of the in-group and are willing to sacrifice themselves for their in-group (Lee & Choi, 2006; Triandis, 2001). Each of the four dimensions was measured by a 4-item, 7-point semantic differential scale position weighted from 1 to 7 containing end points of “Strongly disagree-Strongly agree.” (See Appendix)

Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Orientation

The culture dimension of Long- and Short-Term Orientation was derived from the Chinese Value Survey (CVS) conducted in 22 countries from 1983 to 1985 (Bond, M. H., 1988; Hofstede, 2001; The Chinese Culture Connection, 1987). The development of the Chinese Value Survey was administered to tap concerns fundamental to the Chinese worldview. In the current study, Long- and Short-term Orientation was measured by the “Confucian Work Dynamism” scale. The “Confucian Work Dynamism” scale was composed of eight values loaded from the Chinese Value Survey which were thought to represent Oriental value systems distinctive from Western mentalities. Among these eight items, four measured Long-term Orientation and the other four tested Short-term Orientation. Respondents were asked how important each concept was to them on a 7 point scale, where 7 = of supreme importance and 1 = of no importance at all (See Appendix). In addition, eleven values correlated to individualism/collectivism were tested to compare with Triandis’s measurement. Table 2 provides the results of measurement reliability between two countries.

RESULTS

ANOVA was run with Western Individualism (WI), Western Collectivism (WC),

Horizontal Individualism (HI), Vertical Individualism (VI), Horizontal Collectivism (HC), Vertical Collectivism (VC), Long-term Orientation (LTO), Short-term Orientation (STO), Chinese Individualism Index (CII), and Chinese Collectivism Index (CCI) as dependent variables, when nationality was entered as an independent variable. Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics of each measurement and table 4 provides the ANOVA results.

Individualism/Collectivism

Research question 1 was attempting to find out Generation Y and the Post 80s' cultural identification regarding the individualism/collectivism dimension. ANOVA results indicated that no statistically significant difference was found between American and Chinese subjects using the Western Individualism/Collectivism measurement ($F_{WI} = 1.15$, $Sig. = .29$; $F_{WC} = .45$, $Sig. = .51$). When measured with Triandis's four-way typology, American subjects were more likely to identify themselves as horizontal individualism than Chinese subjects ($F = 7.20$, $Sig = .01$, $Mean_{American} = 5.34$, $Mean_{Chinese} = 5.08$), whereas Chinese subjects were more inclined to associate themselves with vertical individualism than American counterparts ($F = 13.88$, $Sig = .00$, $Mean_{American} = 4.10$, $Mean_{Chinese} = 4.52$). No statistically significant difference was found between American and Chinese subjects towards the collectivism sub-dimension. However, when measured under the framework of the Chinese value system,

Chinese subjects were more collectivistic than American subject ($F = 106.14$, $Sig = .00$, $Mean_{American} = 4.44$, $Mean_{Chinese} = 5.81$) and no statistically significant difference was detected on the individualism sub-dimension.

Long-term / Short-term Orientation

Research question 2 was trying to ascertain Generation Y and the Post 80s' cultural identification with the consideration of long-term and short-term orientation. The ANOVA results indicated that American subjects were more short-term oriented than Chinese subjects ($F = 18.48$, $Sig = .00$, $Mean_{American} = 5.23$, $Mean_{Chinese} = 4.79$) and Chinese subjects cherished long-term values more than American subjects ($F = 67.74$, $Sig = .00$, $Mean_{American} = 4.55$, $Mean_{Chinese} = 5.42$).

Discussion

As an exploratory study, the purpose of the study is trying to find out Generation Y and the Post 80s' cultural identification. In order to overcome the possible bias caused by a single value system, multiple measurements integrating Oriental wisdom and Western mindset were applied. The results well reflected cultural differences. When examined with Western measurement, both American and Chinese subjects showed similar attitudes toward individualistic and collective values. It could not differentiate whether their identity belongs

to individualism or collectivism. However, differences existed within the individualism sub-dimension. American subjects were more likely to identify themselves as horizontal individualism than Chinese subjects, while Chinese subjects were more inclined to associate themselves with vertical individualism than American counterparts. In other words, although both American and Chinese subjects tended to do their own thing, American people were striving to be unique and Chinese people were achievement-oriented.

This cultural difference may be due to different traditions, society structures, and economic factors. As mentioned before, China is strongly influenced by Confucian philosophy. Social rank is highly emphasized by Confucius. According to him, everyone has a fixed position in society and each person should behave according to rank, through which social harmony can be achieved. As a result, Chinese society structure is hierarchically constructed focusing on order and relationships. Under such a system, inequality is highlighted and only a few people should be independent and most should be dependent. Although Confucius emphasizes hierarchy of society and self-content with one's position, he also encourages people to study to change their social status. Under his tenet, an imperial examination system was established in ancient China to select talented officials. This system offers opportunities to all people to acquire power and wealth. To attain their goals, people have to work hard and endure many hardships. Following this tradition, an achievement oriented value was developed among Chinese intellectuals and passed down generation by generation. The Post 80's cultural identification reflected the influence of Confucian philosophy in a mixed way. On the one hand, trying to do their own thing and to be independent could be seen as their rebelling against the traditionally hierarchical ideas and

their critical attitudes toward Chinese traditional values. On the other hand, being achievement oriented revealed their maintenance of the Confucian philosophy.

Economic factors may contribute to explain the 80's cultural identity as well. Before 1979, the economic system of China was a planned economy. One of the characteristics of this system is egalitarianism. It advocates an equal distribution of wealth of society. Since there is no difference between a hard worker and a lazy man, people become inert and lack aggressiveness. At the same time, no matter how hard people work, the achievement is attributed to the group and shared by every body in it. Therefore, people lack motivation to be achievement oriented. From 1979, China began an economic reform and gradually switched to a market economy. This kind of economic system promotes materialism and emphasizes competition. People are encouraged to work hard to gain wealth and distinguish themselves by individual success. Cultivated by the market economy, Chinese people become more and more aggressive and achievement oriented. This explains why the Post 80s want to prove themselves through personal achievement.

Different from China, the U.S.A. is developed based on Western philosophy. From the very beginning, freedom, democracy and equality are emphasized in this country. Individualism, self-reliance, and equality of opportunity are highlighted by the society. It is natural that Generation Y is individualistic and inclined to do their own thing. Since every body has an equal opportunity to develop, personal success and achievement is appreciated by Americans. The "American Dream" is the typical representation of this kind of value. Thus, under the influence of American culture, Generation Y is supposed to be achievement oriented. Contrary to the expectation, they didn't show more appreciation of competition and

personal achievement than Chinese counterparts. Like the Post 80s' rebelling against hierarchy, this could be seen as Generation Y's defiance of the old values cherished by the previous generations. Another characteristic of American society is diversity. The population of the United States includes a large variety of ethnic groups coming from many races, nationalities, and religions. People refer to the United States as an "immigrant country" or a "melting pot". People from different parts of the world rushed to the U.S.A. and brought their own culture to this country. Because of this diversity, American culture is embracing differences and more tolerant of disparities and deviations. Nurtured by this value, it is not surprising that Generation Y wants to be different and show their uniqueness.

When investigated with the Chinese value system, Chinese subjects cherished collective values more than Americans and no difference was found towards the individualism sub-dimension. From Chinese perspective, the differentiation of individualism/collectivism is based on the relationship with others. In the individualist society, relationships with others are not obvious and prearranged; they are voluntary and have to be carefully fostered. In the collectivist society there is no need to make specific friendship because one's friends are predetermined by one's group membership. The group membership is maintained through filial piety, chastity in women, and is associated with patriotism. Although both American and Chinese subjects showed no discrepancy on individualistic values, Chinese are more agreeable with the three oriental collective values than American counterparts.

Simultaneously, Chinese people are more long-term oriented than American people and Americans more embrace short-term values than Chinese people. In other words, Chinese people tend to foster the virtues towards future rewards. Therefore, they attach great

importance to perseverance and thrift. By contrast, American people are focusing on past and present. The related values include respect for tradition, preservation of “face”, and satisfaction with present life.

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrated the cultural differences in Generation Y and the Post 80s’ cultural identification as well as in measurements. Using different measurements, the results were different. When tested with Traindis’s four-typology, no difference was found in the collectivism sub-dimension. The difference is displayed within the individualism sub-dimension as to be unique or to be achievement oriented. Under the examination of the Chinese mentality, by contrast, no difference was found in the individualism sub-dimension but in the collectivism sub-dimension: Chinese are found to be more collective oriented than Americans. At the same time, Generation Y could be labeled as a short-term orientation group and the Post 80s is marked as a long-term orientation generation when evaluating by CVS measurement.

Limitation and Future Research

The participants were all undergraduate students. Although they were the subgroups of Generation Y and the Post 80s, they might not be representative of people out of the age range of this study and people without a high education experience. Therefore, the recruited sample limited in size and scope, which may impede the generalization of the study findings. Future research should employ probability sampling technique to recruit sample whose demographics, psychology, and lifestyles are more diverse, which is more representative of Generation Y and the Post 80s.

In order to overcome the possible bias caused by a single value system, multiple measurements integrating Oriental wisdom and Western mindset were applied. The results suggested that the differences were not only found in subjects' culture identification but also in measurement itself. The difference in measurement might reflect subjects' cultural identifications but it could also be due to their different understanding and interpretations of the measured items. Future research may consider testing invariance of measurement among different countries to increase accuracy and get more robust results.

Culture is a rather complex phenomenon. It is hard to measure people's cultural identification accurately by using a single method. Qualitative techniques, such as in-depth interview, focus group, and ethnography may provide insights into the research subjects and add depth to the research findings. Even within the quantitative method framework, multiple techniques should be applied to achieve triangulation and enhance the reliability and validity. Therefore, future research should improve research design and integrate multiple research methods.

Finally, Hofstede (2001) has mentioned that cross-cultural study requires data from a sufficient number of countries. He suggested ten or more for quantitative research and two or more for qualitative research. Confined by limited money and time, this study only examined the cultural differences in two countries. Future research should try to collect data from various countries and areas.

TABLE 1
Sample Characteristics

	Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Nationality	American	124	40.7%
	Chinese	181	59.3%
Sex	Male	119	39.0%
	Female	186	61.0%
Age	19	68	22.3%
	20	76	24.9%
	21	62	20.3%
	22	72	23.6%
	23	22	7.2%
	24	3	1.0%
	26	1	0.3%
	29	1	0.3%
College Year	Freshman	106	34.8%
	Sophomore	70	23.0%
	Junior	75	24.6%
	Senior	54	17.7%

TABLE 2
Measurement Reliability

Scale	American	Chinese
Western Individualism	.74	.64

Western Collectivism	.77	.78
Horizontal Individualism	.62	.50
Vertical Individualism	.80	.63
Horizontal Collectivism	.74	.76
Vertical Individualism	.72	.58
Long-term Orientation	.44	.60
Short-term Orientation	.54	.55
Chinese Individualism	.65	.63
Chinese Collectivism	.57	.69

TABLE 3
Descriptive Statistics of Measurement

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western Individualism	American	123	4.71	.77
	Chinese	181	4.80	.77
Western Collectivism	American	122	5.05	.82
	Chinese	181	5.12	.91
Horizontal Individualism	American	123	5.34	.80
	Chinese	181	5.08	.85
Vertical Individualism	American	124	4.05	1.11
	Chinese	181	4.52	1.04
Horizontal Collectivism	American	123	5.13	.92
	Chinese	181	5.21	1.04
Vertical Collectivism	American	123	4.99	1.04
	Chinese	181	5.03	1.03
Long-term Orientation	American	119	4.55	.80
	Chinese	181	5.42	.95
Short-term Orientation	American	123	5.23	.81
	Chinese	181	4.79	.93
Chinese Individualism	American	123	5.24	.66
	Chinese	179	5.25	.68
Chinese Collectivism	American	124	4.44	1.19
	Chinese	179	5.81	1.11

TABLE 4
ANOVA Results

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Western Individualism	Between Groups	.67	1	.67	1.15	.29
	Within Groups	176.91	302	.59		
	Total	177.58	303			
Western Collectivism	Between Groups	.34	1	.34	.45	.51
	Within Groups	229.49	301	.76		
	Total	229.83	302			
Horizontal Individualism	Between Groups	4.97	1	4.97	7.20	.01
	Within Groups	208.56	302	.69		
	Total	213.53	303			
Vertical Individualism	Between Groups	15.91	1	15.91	13.88	.00
	Within Groups	347.25	303	1.15		
	Total	363.16	304			
Horizontal Collectivism	Between Groups	.39	1	.39	.39	.53
	Within Groups	300.39	302	1.00		
	Total	300.78	303			
Vertical Collectivism	Between Groups	.11	1	.11	.10	.75
	Within Groups	323.06	302	1.07		
	Total	323.17	303			

Long-term Orientation	Between Groups	53.75	1	53.75	67.74	.00
	Within Groups	236.48	298	.79		
	Total	290.24	299			
Short-term Orientation	Between Groups	14.42	1	14.42	18.48	.00
	Within Groups	235.72	302	.78		
	Total	250.14	303			
Chinese Individualism	Between Groups	.00	1	.00	.00	.99
	Within Groups	134.54	300	.45		
	Total	134.54	301			
Chinese Collectivism	Between Groups	138.79	1	138.79	106.14	.00
	Within Groups	393.60	301	1.31		
	Total	532.38	302			

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Appendix 1

Culture Identification Survey

INSTRUCTION: Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

1. I'd rather depend on myself than others.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. I rely on myself most of the time and I rarely rely on others.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. I often do "my own thing."

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. It is important that I do my job better than others.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. Winning is everything to me.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. I believe that competition is the law of nature.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. When another person at my level does better than I do, I get tense and upset.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. I feel good when I cooperate with others.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. I believe that parents and children must stay together as much as possible.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. I believe that family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.

Strongly disagree ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Strong agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

INSTRUCTION: Please indicate how important the following values are to you.

1. Perseverance.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Ordering relationships by status and observing this order.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Thrift.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. Having a sense of shame.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. Personal steadiness and stability

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. Protecting your “face” (self-image) in the presence of others.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. Respect for tradition.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. Reciprocating of greetings, favors, and gifts.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. Tolerance of others.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. Harmony with others.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. Non-competitiveness.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. Having close, intimate friends.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. Trustworthiness.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. Being content with one's position in life.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. Solidarity with others.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. Being conservative.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. Filial piety (please refer to the attachment for explanation).

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. Chastity in women.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. Being patriotic.

Of no importance at all ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ of supreme importance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please tell us a little about yourself:

1. I was born in: 19____

2. I am: _____ Male _____ Female

3. I am: _____ Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____ Senior _____ Graduate Student

4. My nationality is: _____ American _____ Chinese _____ Other (Please specify)

~ The end ~

Thank you so much for your time!