

Individualism and Collectivism Transition in Chinese college students : Evidence from After 70's, 80's, and 90's

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Abstract:

In the paper, We will mainly discuss the individualism and collectivism transition in Chinese college students. We select the data from three groups-after 70's, after 80's, after 90's. Then we use the empirical modeling method, after hypothesis & testing, we got the results: (1) In general, Chinese college students are still collectivistic. (2) On the time latitude, the degree of Chinese college students' collectivism reduced, individualism increased. (3) On the spatial latitude, the object groups of Chinese college students' collectivism changed, gradually expand from the group of relatives to the society. (4) Within the organization, collectivism changed from vertical to horizontal.

Keywords: individualism, collectivism, Chinese college students

1.Introduction

For nowadays, college students can be the most dynamic team for our country. And the members of the team are almost after 70's, 80's, 90's. Only all the members get together, that our society can have a steady and rapid growth. But friction that is not good for our society often occurs among the three groups. What makes this result? We believe that because the values, especially the different collectivist values or individualist values among

the three groups.

Collectivism (hereinafter referred to as "C") first appeared in the foreign studies, especially cross-cultural psychological research. And with individualism (hereinafter referred to as "I"), is one of the five cultural dimensions by Geert Hofstede Proposed. Since Hofstede (1980) identified individualism and collectivism (I/C) as one of national culture dimensions, I/C have been discussed in variety of disciplines as opposite poles. Until Triandis et al. (1986, 1988, 1990) suggested that individualism and collectivism can coexist, but emphasized more or less in different culture, or changed because of setting contexts. Since then, many new and often competing structure models have emerged to explain the complexity and variability of individualism and collectivism (Freeman & Bordia), such as horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism (Triandis, 1995), multidimensional I/C context, and multiple collectivism domains (Hui, 1988; Freeman 2001;)

Although most of the research have suggested that people from Asia are collectivists and people from North America and Western Europe are individualists (Hofstede, 1980), it is important to note that there is growing evidence that challenges this stereotypic notion (Shulruf, 2011; Birnbaum-More et al. 1995). Especially in China, traditional Chinese culture has been changed dramatically after it's opening to the world in 1978, since

then individualism factors such as material resources, market competition, and western cultures waved into Chinese everyday life and changed their traditional value system. Ralston et al. (1995) suggested a growing spirit of "Chinese -style" individualism and more Western ways of thinking are being adopted by these young Chinese managers in China. However, most researchers agree that Chinese still depend on families and friends and tend to keep in-group harmony, but lack of social and working place collectivism (Fushan).

Is Chinese still collectivism, or partly collectivism in certain domains and specific context? Since turbulent environment are the key factor of Chinese value changing, are generations of Chinese in different position of collectivism and individualism polar? Suppose there are obvious transition I/C among Chinese generations, what are the drivers behind? All of these are the main content that will be made clear in our paper.

2.The research hypothesis of Chinese college students collectivism change

When Hofstede Put forward that individualism and collectivism are the opposite poles on one linear dimension, he thought China was in the collectivism pole. Earlier collectivism/individualism study were in favor of that Chinese people should be less more collectivistic and less individualistic compared to the westerns (for example, Gudykunst, 1996; Hui, 1988; Singelis, 1995; Hofstede, 1984). Along with the development of the structure of individualism/collectivism, whether later orthogonal structure, and other differentiate subtypes according to the motivation or reference groups, these studies have admitted that China is collectivistic orientation than individualistic. So we propose:

H1: In general, Chinese college students still towards collectivism value orientation

However, the degree of the collective value orientation must be changed along with the time.

After the reform and opening up in 1978, great changes have taken place in Chinese traditional culture.

Thereafter, factors of individualism such as material resources, market competition, and western culture insinuated into the daily life of Chinese people, and changed their traditional value system. The research of Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990) suggested that the social collectivism score of America related is significantly higher than Chinese, even, the degree of Chinese individualism orientation is not lower than the United States'. Ralston, etc. (1995) put forward a kind of increasingly "Chinese-style" individualism, more and more western ways of thinking have been accepted by the Chinese young people.

Shuanghao She (1999), referring to the value of the trend of contemporary college students, considered that collectivism value didn't internalize into the action of the youth, but tended to be individualistic values. Songxing Su and Zhenping Hu (2002) believed that along with the reform and opening up and modernization process, the majority of young people began to re-understanding and evaluation of "self" and their social orientation gradually changed, self-orientation began to appear. Jingbo Wang (2002) opposed to simply thought that the value of Chinese young people was mainly collectivism. Lifeng Zhu (2003) talk about "a considerable number of students eyes fixed on individual effort, hard work, everything start from themselves, self-centered, personal struggle, self-actualization, more emphasis on individuality, freedom and rights, while ignoring the collectivity discipline and duty." Biao Zuo (2005) considered the values of individualism and collectivism in contemporary college students already arised serious "separation", "fragmented" and "opposition" phenomenon. All studies show that the values of individualism in contemporary youth and college students have occupied a prominent position. Therefore, we propose:

H2: On the time latitude, the degree of Chinese college students' collectivism tendency reduced, individualism tendency degree increased.

Further analysis of the internal structure of collectivism, such as collectivism in different reference

groups, the value selection of college students also has occurred movement . Many researchers agreed that the Chinese people still relied on family and friends, and tended to maintain harmony within the group, but lacked of collectivism in social and work environment (Fukuyama). Many domestic and foreign research on individualism / collectivism reference group also found that Chinese people in some collectivity (eg. family, friends) is collectivistic, while in other groups (such as social) is individualistic, but this fixed model also changed among contemporary college students. Their patriotic consciousness fade gradually, but social responsibility appear gradually . Therefore, we propose:

H3:On the spatial latitude, the object groups of Chinese college students collectivism value changed, gradually expand from the group of relatives to the society.

But what happens to the inside of collectivism of further micro-level sub-groups? Triandis divided collectivism into vertical and horizontal two sides. He also found that unlike the Nordic countries, the Chinese collectivism were in the vertical direction, meaning, obedience to authority, respect the elders and so on. Today, however, more students showed a challenge to authority, more adept at self-expression. This can also be considered a gradual weakening among Chinese college students in the vertical collectivism of organization , while the willing of pursuing equality , expressing the enhancement of But what happens to the inside of collectivism of further micro-level sub-groups ? Triandis divided collectivism into vertical and horizontal two sides. He also found that unlike the Nordic countries, the Chinese collectivism were in the vertical direction, meaning, obedience to authority, respect the elders and so on. Today, however, more students showed a challenge to authority, more adept at self-expression. This can also be considered a gradual weakening among Chinese college students in the vertical collectivism of organization , while the willing of pursuing equality , expressing the enhancement of horizontal collectivism. Chen (1997) using a framework of vertical-horizontal two dimensions

of individualism - collectivism to analyze the concept of the reward distribution of Chinese state-owned employees, he believed more and more Chinese people are individualists in organization, but collectivistic among family, colleagues and friends. Empirical research of Ralston (1999)supported Chen's. His results showed the new generation of Chinese managers are more and more inclined to individualism, and the behaviors were getting more and more independent. Therefore, we propose:

H4: Within the organization, collectivism changed from vertical to horizontal.

3.The hypothesis verification of Chinese college students collectivism change

In this study, we took depth interview and questionnaire method. The main respondents of the investigation included: after 70's,80's,90's college students. Through the questionnaire items from in-depth interview, open-ended questionnaire and relevant foreign research, we compiled three parts including open questions, self-description questionnaire and background information. We designed a questionnaire after pre-test screening revised several times to form a final questionnaire, and put the questionnaire online. In the process, the collection of the questionnaire of the after 90's students come from some freshman of SHU-UTS SILC Business School. We sent the paper questionnaires during the lesson and collect back after the class. The questionnaire data of the after 80's students mostly come from the schoolmate of the author. Data of questionnaire of the after 70's college students mainly come from the author's relatives, colleagues, and friends. The questionnaire online were mainly sent to relatives and friends and through this friend-to-friend way to more people. 245 paper and online questionnaires were distributed and were returned 191.The recovery rate was 78%. Valid questionnaires were 170, including 51 from the after 70's college students,62 from the after 80's and 57 from the after 90's.

3.1 The overall tendency of Chinese college students collectivism / individualism

In the collected questionnaire, there were 48, 45, 56 individuals from the after 70's, 80's, 90's groups respectively answering the first one ,open-ended questions. We classified the calculated I / C value according to the after 70's,80's,90's, and drew the scatter diagram of I / C values of these three ages .As shown in the figure below:

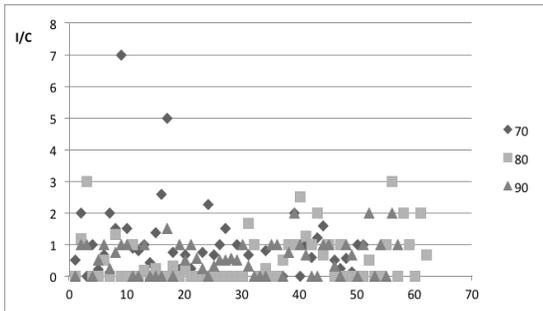


Fig.1: Chinese after 70's,80's,90's college students I / C value scatterplot

As can be seen from the figure, most of the value of I / C is less than 1. Therefore, after 70's,80's,90's college students were in favor of collectivism in general and there were no significant differences in three age groups. So, the "Hypothesis 1: In general, Chinese college students still towards collectivism value orientation" was proved.

3.2 The measure of Chinese Students' Collectivist Values transition—Eliminate interference term

By SPSS, we made factor analysis of sex, place of birth, current residence, only child, returnees, serving institutions. Then the results are as follows:

KMO and Bartlett test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	.484
Bartlett	67.945
df	15
Sig.	.000

Fig.2: KMO and Bartlett test of interference term factor analysis

Ingredient	Initial eigenvalues			Extract sum of squares loading			Rotate sum of squares loading		
	Total	Variance%	Accumulation%	Total	Variance%	Accumulation%	Total	Variance%	Accumulation%
1	1.550	25.828	25.828	1.550	25.828	25.828	1.524	25.397	25.397
2	1.458	24.301	50.129	1.458	24.301	50.129	1.477	24.616	50.013
3	1.037	17.283	67.413	1.037	17.283	67.413	1.044	17.400	67.413
4	.895	14.911	82.323						
5	.583	9.723	92.047						
6	.477	7.953	100.000						

Fig.3: The explanation total square deviation of interference term factor analysis

The above table showed that, KMO was 0.484, less than 0.5. The total accumulation was 67.413%, far less than 80%. So these six variables could not be the factor analysis, and, the influence of background information on the collectivism changes could be excluded.

3.3 The hypothesis test of time dimension

We counted the questionnaire results according to the 6 collective groups, 11 dimensions, and calculated the mean, made the following table:

Dimension	After70' s	After80' s	After90' s
Family collectivism	5.09	4.68	4.72
Family individualism	3.8	4.1	3.66
Friends collectivism	4.76	4.61	4.3
Friends individualism	3.65	3.68	3.63
National collectivism	5.1	4.39	4.55
National individualism	3.24	3.14	2.86
Schools (unit) collectivism	5.52	5.14	4.9
Schools (unit) individualism	3.78	4.01	4.07
Schoolmate (colleagues) collectivism	5.54	5.54	5.04
Schoolmate (colleagues) individualism	2.31	2.44	2.58
Strangers collectivism	5.11	5.11	5.05

Fig.4: Comparison of the collectivism of Chinese after 70's,80's,90's college students on time dimension

Look at the scores of collectivism in darker form. Among them, the scores of the style of friends, school (units) collectivism significantly reduced. During family collectivism and state collectivism, the score dropped from after 70's to after 80's ,andrised a little from after 80's to after 90's, but the overall trend is still downward. Upon students (colleagues) collectivism and strangers collectivism, after 70's and after 80's got the same score, after 90's is lower , and the overall trend is still downward.

In summary, the empirical conclusion is: the collectivism of after 70's,80's,90's collegestudents' has weakened among family, friends, country, work

environment, and strangers groups.

Therefore, the "Hypothesis 2: On the time latitude, the degree of Chinese college students' collectivism tendency reduced, individualism tendency degree increased." Proved.

3.4 The hypothesis test of spatial dimensions

Histograms were made according to the different age groups:

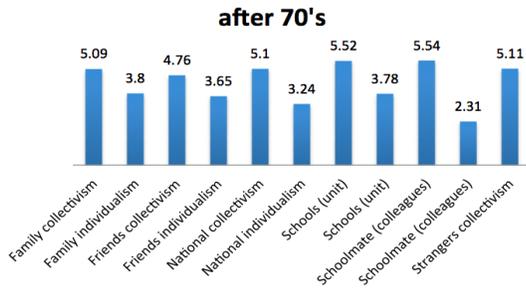


Fig.5: the scores of after 70's in different dimension

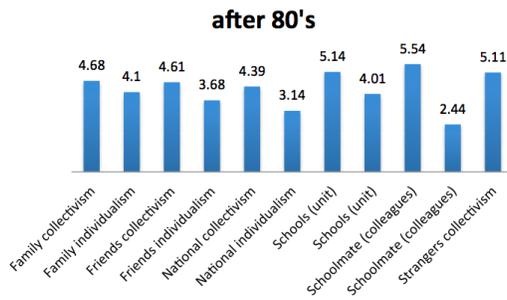


Fig.6: the scores of after 80's in different dimension

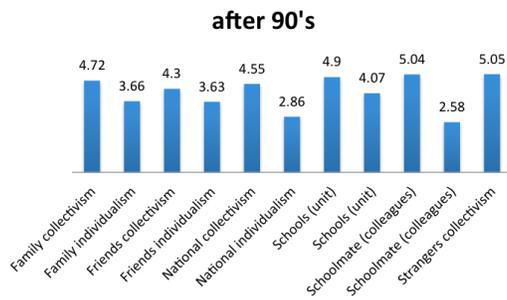


Fig.7: the scores of after 90's in different dimension

On the whole, to the family collectivism, the highest score come from after 70's, others decreased. In the dimension of family individualism, the after 90's got the

lowest score. The three groups, from after 70's, after 80's and after 90's, at the dimension of friends, significantly reduced the degree of collectivism tendency, but the degree of individualism differed little.

For national collectivism, the score of after 70's is highest, after 80's is lowest, after 90 rebounded a little. The scores of the students from three ages decreased gradually in school (units) of collectivism dimension, but increased gradually in individualism dimension. On the dimension of the students (colleagues) collectivism, three generations generally got a higher score, and on the dimensions of individualism the score rised gradually. On the dimension of stranger collectivism, the scores of these three groups were higher. Although the after 90's got the lowest score, stranger was their collective group with the highest score. Although the scores of three groups were generally higher on the dimension of strangers collectivism, while the score of after 90's was lowest. However, due to the hypothesis 2 "the extent of the tendency of collectivism reduced overall", and after 90's got the highest score in strangers collectivism, so, stranger collectivism has been enhanced. Therefore, the "Hypothesis 3: On the spatial latitude, the object groups of Chinese college students collectivism value changed, gradually expand from the group of relatives to the society." Proved.

3.5 The hypothesis testing within the organization

Extracted schools (units) and students (colleagues) collectivism alone:

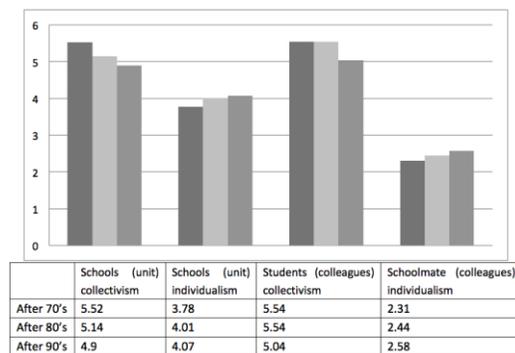


Fig.8: the trend of collectivism within the organization changing

The scores of the students from these three years decreased gradually in school (units) of collectivism dimension, but opposite in individualism dimension. This trend indicates that under the vertical collectivism of work environment, college students diluted the relationship between superior and subordinate gradually, was no longer afraid to authority, dared to criticize negative error tradition, and had the courage to express their ideas.

On the dimension of the students (colleagues) collectivism, three generations generally got higher scores. Although after 90's got the lowest scores, all the scores of after 90's in different collectivism dimension decreased compared with after 70's after 80's. So relatively speaking, students (colleagues) dimension of collectivism trend among after 90's rose. Meanwhile, the three age groups gradually increased the trending dimensions of individualism. This showed that Chinese college students has been at a higher level collectivism inside of organization. It's same to say that they generally required equality and cooperation in the organization, but also willing to express their ideas in such a group.

Therefore, the "Hypothesis 4: collectivism inside of the organization from vertical turn into horizontal." Proved.

4. Results and discussion

Through review on the correlating literature of international study and our empirical research, we found that Chinese college students still towards collectivism value orientation in general. The degree of Chinese college students' collectivism tendency reduced and individualism tendency degree increased on the time latitude. The object groups of Chinese college students collectivism value changed, gradually expand from the group of relatives to the society on the spatial latitude. Collectivism changed from vertical to horizontal within the organization.

The transition of the collectivist values of Chinese college students is the result of a comprehensive internal and external causes. Internal factors, Chinese culture has

the characteristics of turning to be weak, complicated, and heteroplasmy. And Chinese society is in the midst of transformation. Institutional competition becomes stronger. All these variations besides reform and opening up and other special historical create the conditions to collectivism weakening, individualism rising of college students. In addition, a wide range of social status, the increasing population of the only-child, and the specificity of the college students are also the main reason of individualism growth. External environment, intensified international competition, the mass media to promote the values of individualism, alienation interpersonal relationships bring information network, as well as western individualistic culture steeped in the United States are mainly college students continue to impact this attitude to traditional values. Group outside factors, international competition intensifies, the values of individualism promoted by the mass media, the alienation of interpersonal relationships bought by information network, as well as US-based western individualistic culture continue to impact this attitude of college students to the traditional concept.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Advocate positive collectivism education

Our article proved that the Chinese college students were collectivistic in general. Collectivism values have positive and negative effects. Collectivism values education of contemporary college students should develop a positive impact and avoid the negative effects.

5.2 Encourage college students to combine all-round development and the realization of the collective interests

The full development of individual, the play of creativity is the power and source of the ultimate realization of the collective interests of the community. First, pay attention to the harmony of society and the individual needs. Second, from the "practice and innovation" to start, take full implementation of Quality Education

5.3 Optimize other groups collectivism socially oriented

In horizontal structure of collectivism values, now, collectivism values continued to strengthen in social groups, while was weakened among family, friends, relatives, country, and working groups. Dialectically view collectivist values structure of Chinese college students, appropriate adjustments can optimize the value orientation of university students.

5.4 Reform the education management

Hypothesis 4 confirmed that the collectivism inside of organization turn vertical into horizontal. Accordingly, the ways and means of education also requires subsequent transformation.

6. Conclusion

Among Chinese college students, the ideology of after 70's is relatively traditional. They inherited the patriotism from older generation of proletarian martyrs and have a strong sense of social responsibility. After 80's are growing up in the era of reform and opening up, thinking gradually open but not completely, thereby resulting in a relative lack of ability to think independently, easy to follow the trend of blind obedience and features. But after 90's are growing up in the information age when reform and opening up achieved remarkable results. They have an open mind, a strong sense of independence and good performance of self-awareness.

Future, I believe, in the purpose of creating a harmonious society, we students will actively participate in nation building, the combination of collective and individual ideal, while self-realization, and not forget the contribution to society, the concern for others.

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