

On the Differences Between the Chinese Masculine Culture and the Finnish Feminine Culture - Taking Culture Shock Described by the YouTuber 北京妞儿遇上芬兰 Na meets Finland as An Example

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Abstract: Masculinity and femininity have been seen as distinct characteristics of a country, influencing its people and showing a general image of that country. The thesis aims to examine the differences between the Chinese Masculine Culture and the Finnish Feminine Culture through the model proposed by Geert Hofstede, taking the culture shock described by the YouTuber 北京妞儿遇上芬兰 Na meets Finland as an example. The first part of this thesis gives an introduction to the background information and main ideas. In the second part, the model of Hofstede's cultural dimensions concerning this study is illustrated. Lastly, detailed analyses and conclusions are given.

Keywords: Finland, China, Cultural Dimensions, Masculinity, Femininity.

1. Introduction

During these decades, the discussion of the division between masculinity and femininity has been inflamed in China through globalization. As the hypermasculinity of Anglo-Saxon cultures ushered in China, Chinese conceptions of manhood were significantly influenced and redefined by its norms [1]. However, countries with femininity, such as Norway, Finland, and Chile, seemingly disappeared in the narration of this historical process. Behaving like a female is criticized as a shame in the male group of China. Boys with high-pitched voices were bullied in school for a long time [2], while "sissy" male stars have been insulted by so-called "real men" in China since K-pop

culture flowed. Even the Ministry of Education in China released a notice to strengthen physical education among students and cultivate their "masculinity." [3] By comparing the Chinese Masculine Culture and the Finnish Feminine Culture through discussing the video *Culture Shock in Finland as a Chinese* posted by the YouTuber 北京妞儿遇上芬兰 Na meets Finland (hereinafter referred to as Na), the author aims to destigmatize the feminine qualities, including shyness, sensibility, and so on, while exhibiting a country with low masculinity, equalizing the masculine and feminine characteristics.

2. Literature Review

Na, a YouTuber who comes from Beijing, China, has lived in Finland for more than 10 years. In this thesis, based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the distinctions between the Chinese Masculine Culture and the Finnish Feminine Culture presented in her cases have been analyzed through the dimension of Masculinity versus Femininity. Masculinity versus its opposite, Femininity, again as a societal, not as an individual characteristic, refers to the distribution of values between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society, to which a range of solutions can be found. In a highly masculine society, emotional and social role differentiation between the genders is maximized; men should be, and women may be assertive and ambitious; admiration will be offered to the strong; girls cry, boys don't; moralistic attitudes about sexuality are obvious. To the contrary, in a feminine society, emotional and social role differentiation between the genders is minimized; men and women should be modest and caring; sympathy will be provided to the weak; both boys and girls may cry; matter-of-fact attitudes about sexuality are more common [4]. According to Hofstede's comparison model, China is a masculine society with a score of 66,

while Finland is considered a feminine society with a score of 26 [5]. In this thesis, a strong contrast between a masculine country and a feminine country will be demonstrated, which might trigger a consideration of the harmonious coexistence of the characteristics of masculinity and femininity.

3. The Differences Between the Chinese Masculine Culture and the Finnish Feminine Culture

3.1 Shyness

According to Na's description, she found that Finns talk very little with other people. When she greeted her schoolmate in the school, that person seemed really shy and tried to avoid talking too much by slightly lowering his head, and then he passed by her. This situation also happened when she first hung out with her husband's best friend. The man kept silent the whole trip to the campsite to avoid mistakes and show respect; however, Na was afraid that his husband's friend disliked her. She was shocked by Finnish behavior at first and started to wonder if she had done something wrong or if they hated her. It is all because she was educated to be "luoluodafang" ("落落大方", which means to behave naturally and gracefully in Chinese) towards strangers in China. She felt extremely contradictory at first, but she finally found that most Finns are shy and bashful, especially Finnish men. It can even be described as their genetic features.

Nevertheless, from Na's perspective, in China, shyness is not accepted or appreciated by most people. And she never heard any of her friends directly say that they were shy. Through observation in daily life, the author also finds that boys and girls are educated to be bold and speak up in Chinese society. Moreover, an introverted person in China tends to be unwelcome and even be described as cold-blooded. For example, if you don't warmly greet your neighbors in the elevator,

gossip about you being impolite or uneducated will probably spread in the next few days. Being shy and not naturally treating strangers seems like an unacceptable habit in China; nonetheless, as time went by, a Chinese like Na became accustomed to the shyness of the Finns and found that they were easygoing and friendly, which proved that feminine traits like these are able to coexist with masculine traits. It is not as difficult as people thought to find a harmonious existence between them, as long as we try to understand and embrace differences.

3.2 Sincerity

Na concluded that Finnish people say what they mean, and they don't fake the words to fulfill your expectations. For example, American friends greeted her energetically, but when they asked, "How are you?" "What have you been doing?" just means "Hi". When she asked the same question to her Finnish schoolmates, they always treated it seriously and started to tell her the whole weekend's stories with genuineness to let her know if they were happy or not. But when an American friend talked energetically to her, he asked, "How are you?" While she was thinking about what she did during the weekend and going to say something about it, he had already passed her and said "bye" from 2-3 meters away from her. Similarly, in China, people also treat "How are you?" as small talk but do not take it as a big deal. During daily conversation, they also avoid talking about their true feelings, especially among men; for Chinese men, directly discussing their sorrows is much harder than climbing the Himalayas.

It is evident that the narration of Na is not separated by male or female, which means the Finnish friends she met, both male and female, are all willing to share their feelings and emotions. By contrast, males in China prefer to hide their true sentiments and unleash their anger on computer

games or sports. In the meantime, Chinese women are also extremely careful about conveying attitudes and emotions. Saying embellished words is a way to socialize in Chinese society, which is inevitable most of the time. However, disguising too much may lead to a loss of sincerity; explicitly expressing true feelings has a significant role in interpersonal relationships. As Marty Rubin said, "One word spoken from the heart is worth a thousand clever remarks."

3.3 Trust

Na found that Finnish people give trust first. No matter if it was Finnish students, Finnish bosses, or her Finnish husband, she could feel the trust before starting anything. It was hard to believe at the beginning. Na was surprised that trust could be offered to strangers like her. When she talked about this problem with her husband later, he said that Finnish people tend to give trust first. Then it becomes the receiver's responsibility to shoulder the tasks and keep the trust. To examine this trust more specifically, this YouTuber is not only a foreigner but also a woman. As she said, her companies gave her 100% trust when she just began her work, regardless of her identity and sex. Without doubt, she completed the jobs required with quality and efficiency.

To the contrary, when the author browsed the news or blog articles written by employees working for China's company, it was rare to see any company offering such trust to a woman in a Finnish way. If a woman in China gets an interview offer from a new company, the HR department might take her off the list if she says that she is unmarried or married but doesn't have a child [6]. Faced with the risk of maternity leave, individual values and personal abilities are trivial. Employers are not willing to give women an opportunity, let alone trust. But in Finland, parental leave has been designed in detail for both mother and father, which is beneficial to eliminating the

worries of employers and promoting gender equality in workplaces [7]. Women have the ability to perform well if opportunities and trust are given.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is of great significance to compare China with a low-feminine country. Finland, as a country that selected the youngest prime minister, a woman, in its history [8], is a typical example of analyzing discrepancies between masculinity and femininity. From the culture shock experiences described by the YouTuber 北京妞儿遇上芬兰 Na meets Finland, the shyness, sincerity, and trust of Finnish people have directly collided with her early life experiences in China. Nevertheless, she became accustomed to their feminine characteristics and felt comfortable staying with them as time passed. Being absent from Chinese mainstream culture and mass media, Finland, a country located in Northern Europe, has mild and acceptable cultural advantages that China can learn from. The YouTuber is a representative reference for Chinese people to understand countries with feminine cultures, and Hofstede's cultural dimension theory of Masculinity versus Femininity has provided a theoretical basis for this essay. However, this thesis only caught a glimpse of the possibilities of harmonious coexistence between masculinity and femininity. Further exploration of this problem requires a deeper understanding and wider acceptance of cultural diversity.

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