

I am a 66-year-old, retired, Chinese man. I was born in Taiwan, came to the United States forty years ago for graduate school education, then stayed in the United States until now. In this course, I learned that culture is the learned and shared knowledge that people use to generate behavior and interpret experience. In my life, my behavior and world view are shaped by Chinese culture, American culture, and Christian culture.

My personal experiences of culture shock occurred during my first-year graduate study in Texas, U.S.A. The ways of greeting, the new language, and the school class environments were all different from my home country. When I arrived in America, I was confused by the way American people greet one another, especially when I faced a woman who gave me a warm hug. In Chinese traditional culture, men and women are supposed to greet each other by keeping a respectful distance. In school triad discussion, I was surprised to hear classmates shared their private stories and their past trauma experiences vulnerably. In Chinese culture, 'saving face' is deemed as a primary value. No matter how many shortcomings a family has, all family members should not expose any of them publicly. In terms of social engagement, people are supposed to praise the merits of people, for others and for themselves.

Language

My native language is Chinese. English is my second language. These two languages have big differences. No matter how long I have studied English grammar, I still have trouble using the correct tense, number, and voice in my English writing. Other than the differences in grammar, some concepts are different in these two languages as well. In my early days in

America, I often confused the relationship role of 'cousin.' Later, I understood that a cousin is the child of one's uncle or aunt, no matter whether they are male or female. However, the Chinese kinship system is classified as a "Sudanese" or "descriptive" system for the definition of family, and a child of one's uncle has a title different from the child of one's aunt, the title name of a male cousin is different from a female cousin.

Emotional expression

During my teenage years, my parents spent a lot of time on the stock market, and I hated being home when my parents were arguing about stock losses. Those years, I felt lonely, ignored, and rejected. I could show my anger at home, but when I went outside, I had to stay polite. This Chinese cultural principle affected my behavior to this day. Maybe this is why my wife says to me 'why are you always yelling at family members at home, but never angry at outsiders?' In Chinese, we call this behavior 'a lamb on the outside, but a wolf at home.'

Work perspective

During my school years I was not a good test taker; I was afraid of taking the competitive tests, and I thought that no matter how hard I studied the subject, it was already too late for me to win the competition against other students. I thought working hard is a good Chinese virtue, and I tried to study hard. In America, I learned that working smart was as important as working hard. However, my most valuable lesson about work was observed from the lives of an American couple: Charles Cullum and Pebble, during my study in Alpine, Texas. Through those school years, Pebble cared for me through her active listening; and Charles Cullum spent many hours and days unselfishly helping me and other Chinese students with our transportation needs. I called Charles Cullum and Pebble Cullum my adopted parents. Unfortunately, Charles lost his

job as a pastor after he worked for two years in the local church. When I saw Charles' head of hair turn white and watched them drive their movable house to leave Alpine, TX, I felt sad and worried about their future. After losing contact for many years, I received a call from Pebble shortly after the September 11, 2001, attack event. They were worried about me because they knew I worked in downtown Manhattan at that time. Around the year 2010, I took my wife and two children to Goodwell, Oklahoma to visit Charles Cullum and Pebble. Amazingly, I found out they have a big house, a huge farm, many cattle, horses, goats, and fruit trees. Charles took us to Church to attend Sunday worship, and he delivered a sermon. I knew he prepared that sermon for me; and I will never forget it. The sermon title was 'Communication, Cultivation, Conversion. (C.C.C.)' In my mind, C.C.C. also meant Charles Cullum followed Christ. Charles had a missionary mind, and his method of proclaiming the gospel was 'Communication, Cultivation, Conversion.' Charles' perspective on work was not only to 'work hard and work smart,' but also to 'work heartily for God.' True Christianity is about inner transformation.

Conclusion

My life is impacted by a mix of cultures. The Chinese traditional cultural values of harmony, courtesy, wisdom, and filial piety shaped my family and social life. The American cultural values of independence, and democracy shaped my workplace life. The Christian cultural values of grace and emotional vulnerability shaped my emotional life. No one culture is perfect. Even the Christian culture I am in makes me sad and mad sometimes. Many years ago, I watched pastors fight against each other and some pastors left the church. Why do these things happen in church? I felt pain and became afraid to be a pastor in church. Nevertheless, I hope my spiritual journey can help me build faith to overcome all cultural differences and embody the restored Godly life.