

# A Cross-cultural Contrastive Analysis of Views on Friendship in Chinese and English Proverbs

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**Abstract**—By applying a contrastive analysis, this paper aims at presenting the differences of the views on friendship between China and Americans reflected in proverbs about friendship and friends under the guidance of Cultural Dimensions Theory. Differences are found in the acceptance of the hierarchy in human relations, expectations of loyalty and long-term commitments from friends, and inclination of independence. Power distance dimension, individualism versus collectivism dimension and long-term versus short-term orientation dimension are exploited to account for the differences.

**Index Terms**—views on friendship, proverbs, power distance, individualism versus collectivism, long-term versus short-term orientation

## I. INTRODUCTION

The desire for friendship is engraved in human nature. However, the pursuit for such a desire is often impeded during cross-cultural interaction because of the cultural differences, especially those concerning the values and ideologies. Different views on friendship, which are part of the values, lead to different definitions on friends and friendship, varied expectations on friends, assorted means to maintain the friendship, etc. Understanding the differences in views on friendship from cultural perspective, therefore, is both necessary and important for the amelioration of cross-cultural communications.

Proverbs can mirror “a whole tradition of wisdom and beliefs shared by members of their cultural community” (Gibbs, 2001, p. 173). Focusing exclusively on the differences in views on friendship between Chinese and Americans, this paper therefore chooses proverbs as the research subjects. The theoretical framework of this study is three of the six dimensions of Geert Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory, a framework for cross-cultural communication that describes the influences of a culture on the values of its members and the how the values associate with behaviours (Adeoye & Tomei, 2014). Till 2010, six dimensions are proposed: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, long-term orientation versus short-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and indulgence versus self-restraint (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Power distance depicts how individuals perceive the power relations among people (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Individualism/collectivism dimension is about how an individual relates with the society (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation dimension associates with the ways in which a society deals with the past, the present and the future (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Low/high uncertainty avoidance dimension relates to the ways of coping with uncertainty (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Masculinity versus femininity dimension is about the dominant values in a culture (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Indulgence versus self-restraint dimension is essentially about the extent to which a person attempts to control the emotions (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J. & Minkov, 2010). The last three dimensions are not too relevant to views on friendship and therefore will not be employed in present study. Details about power distance, individualism versus collectivism, long-term orientation versus short-term orientation will be introduced in chapter four.

Chart 1 is adapted from an official website (<https://geert-hofstede.com/united-states.html>) of Geert Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory. It compares China and United States from six dimensions. It shows that Chinese score higher in terms of power distance and long-term orientation and lower in terms of individualism. The present study will examine the views on friendship reflected in proverbs and try to account for the differences based on Hofstede’s model.

The second chapter reviews the studies on views on friendship between Chinese and Americans. The third chapter illustrates the methodology employed in this paper and chapter four reports the findings and analyses reasons by resorting to the theoretical framework. Chapter five concludes this paper and points out the limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research.

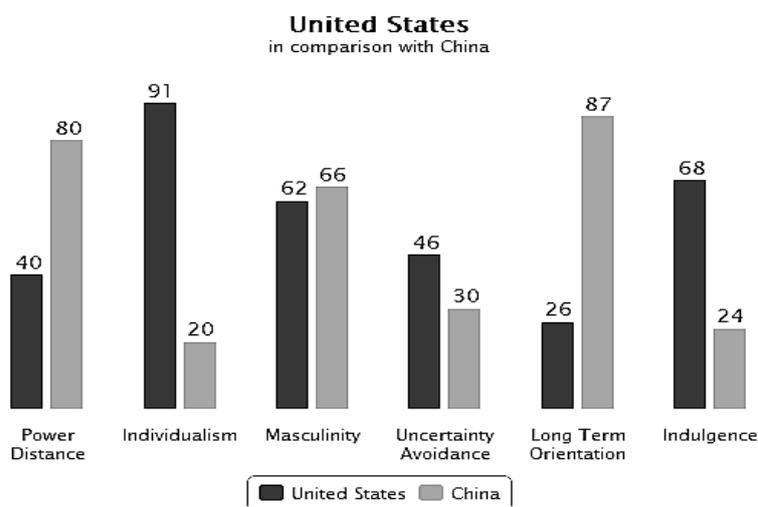


Chart 1

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The contrastive studies between China and the America are enormous while research on views of friendship between Chinese and Americans are relatively fewer. Relevant studies can be categorized into three groups:

First, direct analyses the differences of the views of concepts of friendship between Chinese and Americans. In these studies, researchers focus mainly on the analyses of the distinctive features of Chinese and Americans' views on friendship and provide reasons for such a discrepancy. Some scholars analyze the differences and reasons based on well-established theories, such as Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory and Edward T. Hall's High-Context and Low-Context Communication Theory (Xu, 2009), basic theories of human relations (Huang, 2008) and Markus & Kitayama's Self-Construal Theory (Shen, 2009). Other researchers like Yang (1993) and Gao (2011) instead turn to traditional cultures and historical backgrounds and elucidate their points from cultural perspective. These studies have merits in their collaboration between arguments and theoretical supports. However, their arguments and conclusions are often too general. Either concrete and detailed materials or empirical evidences are required to further support their illustrations so as to enhance the credibility of their analyses and the applicability of their conclusions. The current study will instead provide specific evidence and materials by probing into the proverbs.

Second, analyses focusing on linguistic symbols. Studies of this category endeavour to explore the differences by observing the idioms or aphorisms concerning friendship (Yang, 2011; Zhang & Tian, 2014), by examining the Olympic slogans (Wang, 2011), by studying the songs about friendship (Yan & Chen, 2003) cross-culturally or by analyzing the dialogues in American films or drama (Li, 2008; Wang, 2013; Guo, Ji, & Yang, 2014) so as to discuss implications for cross-cultural communications based on the features of views on friendships of Americans. By adding the elements of language, their analyses are more reliable than those of the first group. All these studies hold that "language and culture are closely interrelated" (Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993) and believe in Sapir-Whorf hypothesis about language and thought. These are also underpinning principles of the present study. The author tries to analyse views on friendship cross-culturally from the perspective of proverbs exclusively. It should be noted that previous research like Zhang & Tian (2014) seems to have confused the notion of idioms and proverbs: though claiming that they centre on idioms, the examples also contain proverbs. According to The New International Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus of the English Language, a proverb is "a pithy saying, especially one condensing the wisdom of experience" (780) while the idiom is "an expression peculiar to a language, not readily analyzable from its grammatical construction or from the meaning of its component parts" (481).

Third, contrastive studies based on empirical evidence. Studies of this type usually produce their conclusions based on the findings generated from experiments or interviews. Huang (2008) conducts in-depth interviews with 24 Chinese international students and U.S. nationals to explore their conceptualizations of friendship. Luo (2013) carries out case studies of friendship among students in Chengdu. Shi (2007) holds in-depths interviews of 17 students both from home and abroad and illustrates her points by applying to the theory of "third culture", a kind of culture with special form that arises when people with various cultural national backgrounds communicate with each other for a specific common goal (Adair, Tinsley & Taylor, 2006). These studies have advantages in their empirical evidence. Nevertheless, most of these studies focus on the views of students, which limit the applications of their findings to a more general context. The current study instead will not be confined in this respect by taking proverbs as the subjects.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to explore the differences in views on friendship reflected by Chinese and Americans proverbs under the guidance of part of Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory.

The research questions are as follows:

- (1) What are the differences in views on friendship between Chinese and Americans as suggested by the proverbs?
- (2) How can the differences be explained based on power distance dimension, individualism versus collectivism dimension and long-term orientation versus short-term orientation dimension?

#### A. Data Collection

To collect as many proverbs as possible and to ensure that the expressions were indeed proverbs, the author turned to specialized dictionaries. A Dictionary of American Proverbs (1992) was chosen for its extensiveness and exclusiveness in terms of American proverbs. Based on the same standard, a proverb dictionary first published by Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House in 2011 and another first published by Shanghai People's Publishing House in 2004 were picked to stand as the base of Chinese proverbs.

Next, a thorough search was conducted to pick out relevant proverbs. 272 American proverbs (variants not included) and 109 Chinese proverbs (variants not included) were selected for further analysis.

#### B. Data Analysis

Then, these proverbs were thoroughly read through and classified according to their meanings and themes. 25 themes were discovered while 53 Chinese proverbs (variants not included) and 68 American proverbs (variants not included) were found to illustrate the differences. They were then put under three dimensions based on the relevance with the dimensions. The last step was the contrastive analysis. Under each cultural dimension, views on friendship reflected in the proverbs were decoded and differences were elaborated. Reasons for differences were provided by applying the theory of power distance dimension, individualism versus collectivism dimension and long-term orientation versus short-term orientation dimension. English translations for Chinese proverbs are provided for reference.

### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### A. Power Distance

Power distance depicts people's views on power relationships between people. It is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede & Bond, 1984, p.419). Individuals in cultures with a high power distance are more likely to conform to the belief that everybody has a place and there is a chasm between persons who are powerful and persons who are not and that the chasm cannot be filled. While in cultures demonstrating a low power distance, individuals are less likely to accept the unequal distribution of power and hold that everyone is equal in spite of their positions based on power. In terms of views on friendship, two differences are most evident: views on chasm and views on similarities of power among friends.

##### Chasm Between the Powerful and the Powerless

As the economic basis determines the superstructure, more money may ensure more power. Therefore it is quite understandable to find that most of the relevant proverbs concern the wealth.

Table 1 illustrates that both cultures accept the fact that more money and power will bring more friends, be it true or not. However, the Chinese proverbs are inclined to place the rich and the poor in conflicting positions. The sharp contrast illustrated by proverbs suggests that Chinese tend to believe that there are huge gaps between the rich and the poor and that people with different power are treated differently by the society. The unequal distribution of power is admitted among Chinese.

TABLE 1

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
A full purse has many friends. (Mieder, 1992, p. 491)	有钱千里通，无钱隔壁聋。 (Wen, 2011, p. 1263)	Money brings friends from afar, poverty brings ignorance of the neighbours.
They are rich who have friends. (Mieder, 1992, p. 239)	富贵多士，贫贱寡友。 (Wen, 2011, p. 229)	The rich have many friends while the poor, little.

Table 2 suggests that making friends or the desires to be friends with powerful and wealthy figures are despised by Chinese. Such actions and cravings are snobbish and utilitarian and are equal to fawning on the rich and the powerful. Friendship between people with different social status is less likely to be accepted by Chinese because they tend to believe that it is to prey on the wealth and power that the less powerful ones approach to the powerful ones. As a result, such friendship can never be true and long lasting. Although Chinese also contend that "结交须胜己，似我不如无" (Wen, 2011, p. 385) (Friends must be better than I am; if not, I'd rather have no friends.) and that "拄棍要拄长，结伴要结强" (Wen, 2011, p. 1368) (One should befriend with who is strong just like one should choose a long stick to hold.), the "better" or "strong" here refer to anything else but power and wealth. By contrast, no despise is shown in

American proverbs. They think being utilitarian is nothing wrong and they are willing or even are encouraged to establish friendship with powerful and wealthy individuals regardless of their positions in society. They admit an unequal power distribution but they do not accept that. For Americans, power relations among individuals are not hierarchical. A more widely accepted view is that everyone is equal regardless of their social status.

TABLE 2

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
A rich friend is a treasure. (Mieder, 1992, p. 234)	富贵有亲朋，穷困无兄弟。 (He, 2004, p.112)	Relatives and friends come around when one is rich and leave when one is poor.
It is better to have one friend of great value than to have many friends of little value. (Mieder, 1992, p. 237)		

One should never forget and neglect friends with less power and money when one is rich and influential: it is what both cultures consent to according to the proverbs in Table 3 below. The difference is that the second American proverb specifically points out the equality between friends while no Chinese one does so.

TABLE 3

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
Never drop the friends you make on the way up; you may need them on the way down. (Mieder, 1992, p. 238)	贫贱之交不可忘，糟糠之妻不下堂。(Wen, 2011, p. 578)	Never forget friends made in adversity and your wife who accompanies you through adversity.
	富贵不忘贫贱友。(Wen, 2011, p. 228)	Forget not friends made in poverty when you are rich.
2. He is a friend that helps me, and not he that pities me. (Mieder, 1992, p. 236)	贫贱相为命，富贵毋相忘。(Wen, 2011, p. 578)	When you are rich, do not forget friends who support you and are supported by you in adversity.

### Power Similarities among Friends

Proverbs in Table 4 show that both cultures admit that the similarities are crucial in terms of friendship. People are more likely to make friends to whom they are similar, including the similarities in power and wealth. Americans are also encouraged to make friends similar to them in terms of money and power. However, American proverbs such as “it is good to have some friends both in heaven and in hell” (Mieder, 1992, p. 237) and “little friends sometimes prove to be big friends” (Mieder, 1992, p. 237) demonstrate that friendships among people with different backgrounds (social status and financial status included) are promoted as well. Believing in universal equality, Americans view friendships between two power levels as a commonplace. No Chinese proverbs are found to express the same encouragement.

TABLE 4

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
Bird of a feather flock together. (Mieder, 1992, p. 205)	鱼找鱼，虾找虾。(Wen, 2011, p. 1281)	Fishes look for fishes while shrimps look for shrimps.
Have no friends not equal to yourself. (Mieder, 1992, p. 236)	富攀富，穷帮穷。(He, 2004, p. 113)	The rich make friends with the rich while the poor make friends with the poor.
Make not your friend too cheap to you, nor yourself too dear to him. (Mieder, 1992, p. 237)		

### B. Individualism versus Collectivism

Individualism/collectivism dimension deals with the relationship between an individual and the society. Individualism acclaims a loosely knit social structure while collectivism upholds a tightly knit one. The former lays stress on individual rights and freedom while the latter emphasizes group interests and harmony among group members. “The basic anthropological / societal issue to which it relates is the individual’s dependence on the group.” (Hofstede & Bond, 1984. p. 419) According to Hofstede, the relationships in an individualist society are “voluntary” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 353) while in the collectivist society, they are not. When it comes to friendship, the differences in views are manifested in two aspects: amount of friends and assistance among friends.

#### Amount of Friends

Both cultures acknowledge the hardship of finding a true and fast friend. In America, people maintain that “it takes half of our lives to learn who our friends are and the other half to keep them” (Mieder, 1992, p. 237) while the Chinese complain that “交遍天下友，知心有几人” (He, 2004, p207) (True friends are rare even when one has friends all over the world.) and that “千金易得，知音难求” (Wen, 2011, p. 609) (It is easy to get thousands pieces of gold but hard to find a true friend.). Nevertheless, according to the proverbs presented in Table 5, two cultures diverge in terms of the number of friends they desire to hold. Compared with the American counterparts, Chinese tend to believe the more, the better. The latter attach great importance to the interactions and interdependence among individuals and hope to be closely linked with more individuals in communities. The hope for a tightly knit social structure is reflected, a cardinal feature of collectivism. The Americans, on the contrary, lay less stress on the quantity of friends. The do not believe

that more friends will certainly bring more convenience to them. Independence and a loosely knit social structure are acclaimed in American culture, exhibiting individualism.

TABLE 5

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
Have few friends, many acquaintances. (Mieder, 1992, p. 236)	多个朋友多条路, 多个冤家多堵墙。(Wen, 2011, p. 175)	One more friend means one more solution; one more enemy means one more obstacle.
He who has many friends has no friends. (Mieder, 1992, p. 236)	朋友千个少, 冤家一个多。(He, 2004, p. 331)	One thousand friends are not enough; one enemy is too much.
Many friends, few helpers. (Mieder, 1992, p. 238)	朋友越多越好, 冤家越少越好。(Wen, 2011, p. 569)	Better to have more friends and fewer enemies.
Real friends are few and far between. (Mieder, 1992, p. 238)	朋友是个宝, 多个朋友多条道。(Wen, 2011, p. 569)	Friends are treasures. One more friend means one more solution.
Choose your friends like your books--few but choice. (Mieder, 1992, p. 235)	在家靠父母, 出门靠朋友。(Wen, 2011, p. 1313)	Count on parents when at home and on friends when out.
	一人为仇嫌太多, 百人为友嫌太少。(He, 2004, p. 636)	One enemy is too many while one hundred friends are too few.
He that has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare. (Mieder, 1992, p. 236)	海内存知己, 天涯若比邻。(He, 2004, p. 146)	A bosom friend afar brings distance near.
	四海之内, 皆为朋友。(He, 2004, p. 504)	Everyone is a friend to anyone else.

### Assistance among Friends

Table 6 proves that both cultures value the assistance from friends and loathe fair-weather friends. Friendships that can go through thick and thin are highly praised.

TABLE 6

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
A friend in need is a friend indeed. (Mieder, 1992, p. 233)	患难见朋友。(Wen, 2011, p. 328)	A friend in need is a friend indeed.
	人到难处显宾朋。(Wen, 2011, p. 699)	True friends are there in adversity.
Fall sick and you will know who is your friend and who is not. (Mieder, 1992, p. 235)	遇急思亲戚, 临危托故人。(Wen, 2011, p. 1292)	When in danger, one think about his relatives and friends.
True friends share both the bad and the good. (Mieder, 1992, p. 239)	有福同享, 有难同当。(Wen, 2011, p. 1246)	True friends go through thick and thin.
	甘泉知于干渴时, 良友识别于患难日。(He, 2004, p. 114)	Sweet spring is known in thirst; a good friend is known in adversity.
A friend is best found in adversity. (Mieder, 1992, p. 233)	遇早知甘泉, 患难见真友。(He, 2004, p. 666)	Sweet spring is known in drought; a good friend is known in adversity.
A long spell of illness is apt to point out your best friends. (Mieder, 1992, p. 234)	战场上识别骏马, 患难中了解朋友。(He, 2004, p. 679)	A good horse is known on the battlefield; a good friend is known in adversity.
	贫贱见交情。(He, 2004, p. 577)	Poverty tests friendship.
Strife makes friendship stronger. ((Mieder, 1992, p. 241))	酒肉弟兄千个有, 落难之中无一人。(He, 2004, p. 402)	A thousand false friends never stand out for you in adversity.
	打出来的朋友, 杀出来的交情。(He, 2004, p. 95)	Friends and friendship are acquired in adversity.
Don't be a fair-weather friend. (Mieder, 1992, p. 235)	一生一死, 乃见交情。(He, 2004, p. 639)	Friendship is known in a life-and-death situation.
A true friend is one that steps in when the rest of the world steps out. (Mieder, 1992, p. 234)	生死关头识真交。(He, 2004, p. 870)	Friendship is known in a life-and-death situation.
	朋友落难, 烧饼当饭。(He, 2004, p. 331)	Stand by your friends' sides when they are in adversity.

Differences emerge when it comes to how far one should go to assist a friend. Indeed, both cultures mention that there should be a limit, as can be shown in the followings examples in Table 7.

TABLE 7

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
If your friend is honey, do not lick him up altogether. (Mieder, 1992, p. 237)	靠亲戚吃饭饿死, 靠朋友穿衣冻死。(He, 2004, p. 235)	You'll starve to death if you rely totally on relatives for food and will be cold to death if you rely totally on friends for clothes.
He who asks more of a friend than he can bestow deserves to be refused. (Mieder, 1992, p. 239)	亲友救急不救贫。(He, 2004, p. 373)	Relatives and friends should help you but not rescue you from poverty.

But views on material assistance from friends are divergent. Proverbs in Table 8 demonstrate that people in both countries accept that friendship cannot be built on money or other material supports.

TABLE 8

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
A friend whom you can buy can be bought from you. (Mieder, 1992, p. 234)	朋友莫交财，交财仁义绝。(Wen, 2011, p. 568)	Friendship should never be established based on wealth, or there will be no friendship at all.
Bought friends are not friends indeed. (Mieder, 1992, p. 235) A friend won with a feather can be lost with a straw. (Mieder, 1992, p. 234)	酒朋饭友，没钱分手。(He, 2004, p. 219)	False friends flee away when you have no money to spare.
When you buy friends with anything other than friendship, they don't stay bought long. (Mieder, 1992, p. 239)	酒肉朋友，难得长久。(He, 2004, p. 219)	Friendship based on money never last for long.
Friendship is not to be bought at a fair. (Mieder, 1992, p. 241) It's a poor friendship that needs to be constantly bought. (Mieder, 1992, p. 241)	有茶有酒兄弟多，疾难来了不见人。(He, 2004, p. 652) 君子结交不为财，小人结交专为嘴。(Wen, 2011, p. 417)	Friendship based on money disappear when one is ill or in trouble. The noble make friends based not on money while the villains do.
Choose not friends by outward show, for feathers float while pearls lie low. (Mieder, 1992, p. 235)	君子之交淡如水，小人之交浓若醴。(Wen, 2011, p. 225) 生前如水，死后如醴。(Wen, 2011, p. 469)	Friendship between noble men is light like water while friendship among villains is thick like wine. Friendship between noble men is light like water when they are alive but last longer after they die like the wine.

Nevertheless, after the establishment of friendship, situations change, as can be seen in the following examples in Table 9. Although Americans also believe that "friends tie their purses with spider's thread" (Mieder, 1992, p. 236), they tend to be more cautious with the material assistance than Chinese. The latter believe that once friends, one is supposed to supply assistance as best as one can, including provide material assistance. No fuss should be made about the material gains and losses among true and fast friends. In American culture, by contrast, the material objects, especially money, are not supposed to be shared among friends; otherwise, the friendship will be damaged. Chinese culture even speaks highly of the sacrifice for a friend when necessary. The proverbs "舍命陪君子" (Wen, 2011, p. 464) (I will sacrifice my life to accompany my friends), "为朋友两肋插刀" (Wen, 2011, p. 543) (I'm willing to stab knives between my ribs for my friends) and "为朋友者生，为朋友者死" (Wen, 2011, p. 543) (I'm willing to live for my friends and die for them) all suggest that people will do whatever they can to help friends, even at the cost of their lives. No similar American proverbs are found.

TABLE 9

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
Lend money, lose a friend. (Mieder, 1992, p. 237)	交情似水淡长浓。(Wen, 2011, p. 379)	Friendship light like water lasts longer.
If you want to keep a friend, never borrow, never lend. (Mieder, 1992, p. 237)	朋友朋友，只朋得个友。(Wen, 2011, p. 568)	Friendship based on money and power is workable only when both parties are rich.
When two friends have a common purse, one sings and the other weeps. (Mieder, 1992, p. 239)		
Pay your debts or lose your friends. (Mieder, 1992, p. 240)	朋友有通财之义。(Wen, 2011, p. 569)	Friends should not make fuss about material gains and losses.
Short accounts make long friends. (Mieder, 1992, p. 240)		

Such differences actually can be elucidated by the notion of loyalty to a group or a community. Chinese value the loyalty to a group and group members so that they are more willing to or at least obliged to do anything to show their loyalty in exchange for the loyalty from other group members. Interdependence among group members is also stressed. The way of demonstrating loyalty reflects a culture valuing collectivism. By comparison, Americans cherish independence and are inclined to stick to self-reliance. They are not accustomed to trading loyalty for loyalty. Help from friends is appreciated but at the end of the day, they maintain that it is they that should face the music and tackle the problems by themselves. Neither material cost nor life-relating sacrifice is approved, let alone encouraged. The undestimations of loyalty of any community and the belief of independence reflect a culture valuing individualism.

The fact that independence is cited to account for both the differences in this section suggests that it is actually "central to individualism" (Harkness, Super & Tijen, 2000, p30). More American proverbs are provided in Table 10 below.

TABLE 10

American proverbs
There is no friendship without freedom, no freedom without the friendship of brothers. (Mieder, 1992, p. 241)
A hedge between keeps friendship green. (Mieder, 1992, p. 295)
True friends never run deep. (Mieder, 1992, p. 239)
Friends are lost by calling often and calling seldom. (Mieder, 1992, p. 235)
It is easier to visit friends than to live with them. (Mieder, 1992, p. 237)

### C. Long-term versus Short-term Orientation

Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation dimension associates with the degree to which a society values long-term commitments and respect for tradition. The former values the virtues and actions that will bring future rewards while the latter prefer the virtues and actions that are past or present related (Hofstede, 2001, p. 359). The related differences of views on friendship are reflected in two aspects: preferred time length of friendship and views on old friends.

#### Long-term Friendship vs. Short-term Friendship

Relevant proverbs are shown in Table 11 below. These proverbs show that the hope for a long-term friendship is actually shared between Americans and Chinese. However, it should be noted that the long-term friendship in Americans proverbs always goes hand-in hand with the term “true”. Only true friendship is expected to be life-long in America while in China, no special requirements are demanded. The difference suggests that Americans do not always expect that the friendship could last for a long time while Chinese do. The reason concerns the length of commitment to the friendship. Chinese people value long-term commitment and contend that friendship survives the time is most precious. The virtue called perseverance is also stressed, a virtue championed by cultures with a long-term orientation. Although like American counterparts, Chinese believe that friends will part on day and rejoin at another day, they tend to be more sentimental and usually express their reluctance to be away from each other when friends have to part for fear that long distance between friends will erode friendships, in which case the hope for a long-term friendship will be dashed.

On the contrary, Americans tend to believe that such a commitment will constrain them from freedom and independence. They are therefore more cautious with the notion “life-long” and feel more at ease with a short-term friendship, though they also crave for a long-term one.

TABLE 11

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
A true friend is forever a friend. (Mieder, 1992, p. 234)	结交要像长流水, 莫学杨柳一时青。(He, 2004, p. 210)	Friendship should last like water flows but not like willows that turn green temporarily.
A true friend is the wine of life. (Mieder, 1992, p. 234)	好铁不生锈, 好友不忘情。(He, 2004, p. 160)	Good iron never rusts and good friends never give up the friendship.
A true friend loves at all time. (Mieder, 1992, p. 234)		
True friends, like ivy and the wall, both stand together and together fall. (Mieder, 1992, p. 239)	千里相送, 归于一别。(He, 2004, p. 613)	I have send you away for a thousand li but have to say goodbye in the end.
Flowers of true friendship never fade. (Mieder, 1992, p. 240)	送君千里, 终须一别。(He, 2004, p. 971)	I have send you away for a thousand li but have to say goodbye in the end.
The best of friends must part. (Mieder, 1992, p. 238)	山水尚有相逢之日。(He, 2004, p. 453)	Even mountains and rivers will greet their friends one day.
Friends may meet but mountains never greet. (Mieder, 1992, p. 236)		

#### Old Friends

Both cultures value old friends as can be interpreted from proverbs in Table 12. Chinese consider old friends are always better than the new ones. Americans by contrast, state old friends are the best but still claim that “old friends are the best, but new ones are the most fun” (Mieder, 1992, p. 238) Chinese think old ones are better due to the long-term commitment. There is a larger investment of time involved in the friendship concerning the old friends than the new ones. By comparison, with less care for and more fear of the long-term investment, a cardinal feature of a culture with a short-term orientation, Americans do not believe that old friends are forever better than new friends.

TABLE 12

American proverbs	Chinese proverbs	Translations for Chinese Proverbs
Old friends and old wine are best. (Mieder, 1992, p. 238)	人惟旧, 物惟新。(He, 2004, p. 414)	Old friends and new clothes are cherished.
New friends are like silver, but old ones are like gold. (Mieder, 1992, p. 238)		
No friend is like an old friend. (Mieder, 1992, p. 238)		
One old friend is better than two new ones. (Mieder, 1992, p. 238)		
To see an old friend is as agreeable as a good meal. (Mieder, 1992, p. 239)	衣不如新, 人不如故。(He, 2004, p. 644)	New clothes are better and old friends are better.
While you seek new friendships, cultivate the old. (Mieder, 1992, p. 241)		
Make new friends but keep the old. (Mieder, 1992, p. 237)		
An old friend do(es) not forsake. (Mieder, 1992, p. 235)		
An old friend is a mount for a black day. (Mieder, 1992, p. 235)		
An old friend is a new house. (Mieder, 1992, p. 235)		

## V. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this paper is to conduct a contrastive study of the views on friendship between Chinese and Americans reflected in proverbs based on three dimensions of Hofstede's cultural dimension theory: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism and long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation. Theoretically, this paper provides evidence to support cultural dimensions theory from the perspective of proverbs, by which enriches relevant studies. Practically, it offers guidelines for cross-cultural friendships between Americans and Chinese by analysing and summarizing the differences on the views of friendship between Americans and Chinese, thus facilitating cross-cultural communications. The major findings, limitations of this study and future suggestions are presented below.

### A. Major Findings

(1) Chinese's views on friendship reflect a culture with a high power distance. A chasm among different power levels is emphasised and accepted. The power relations among individuals are hierarchical. Consequently, Chinese doubt and even despise friendships across power levels. Americans' views on friendship reflect a culture with a low power distance. They reject the unequal power distribution and act on the principle that everyone is equal when establishing friendships. Friendships across power levels are nothing different from friendships within one power level.

(2) Chinese views on friendship reflect a collectivist orientation. Desires for a closely linked society or community and dependence drive Chinese to make friends as many as possible and do anything necessary to assist friends in exchange for loyalty. Americans' views on friendship reflect an individualist orientation. Americans find no urgent need for more friends and loyalty from others due to the desires for a loosely linked society or community and independence.

(3) Chinese views on friendship reflect a culture with a long-term orientation. Chinese always cherish old friends and long-term friendship more due to their appreciations of long-term commitment which include large amount of time investment and perseverance. Americans do not always speak highly of old friends. The time investment in friendship is not that valued as the Chinese counterparts do. Despite life-long friendship is also treasured by Americans, they usually prefer short-term friendships for fear that their freedom and independence will be threatened.

### B. Limitations of the Present Study

The major limitation of the present study concerns the comprehensiveness of relevant proverbs. It is impossible to claim that the author has examined all relevant proverbs although for a perfect research, it is a must. However, while relying mainly on one dictionary for American proverbs and two for Chinese ones, the author has consulted several other dictionaries specifically centred on proverbs to ensure that most of the relevant proverbs are considered, which weakens the negative effects on credibility due to not being inclusive.

### C. Suggestions for Future Research

First, further studies can focus on other linguistic forms. Views on friendship reflected in poems, moments on social networks or daily communications can be recruited as the subjects for a cross-cultural comparison.

Second, this study compares two cultures considered to be quite different from each other in terms of cultural dimensions. Future studies can focus on what differences in views on friendship can there be between Chinese and people from a culture that is similar to Chinese one in terms of cultural dimensions.

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