

# A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Chinese Traditional Culture and American Culture Elements of the Movie of Guasha Treatment

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**Abstract**—With the rapid development of globalization and the increasing frequency of cross-cultural communication, the input and output of culture has become the focus of people's attention. The film "Guasha" is the reappearance of life and culture. Through the film, we can see the fierce conflict between different cultures and life. The film describes about the misunderstanding of traditional Chinese therapy in the United States. This essay will take the film "Gusha" as the carrier, analyzing the fierce conflict between Chinese and western culture and the root causes of this conflict, aiming at overcoming cultural conflicts in cross-cultural communication and improving the ability in cross-cultural communication.

**Index Terms**—Culture conflict, intercultural communication, "guasha".

## I. INTRODUCTION

The film "Guasha" takes place under the background of St. Louis in the United States. Xu Datong and his wife moved to the United States eight years ago, and finally realized his American dream. He had a happy family, lovely children and respectable social status. However, when they were economically successful, they found that to become "real Americans" was much more difficult than the success of their careers [1]. Xu Datong worked as a developer of online games, and had certain achievements. "I love America," he said excitedly at the company's annual awards, "I finally realized my American dream."

However, unexpected accident happened, and the American dream was repeatedly hit hard. Xu's five-year-old son, Dennis, had a sudden stomachache. His father didn't understand English and couldn't read the instructions, so he had to use traditional Chinese folk remedies to give him a scratch. Coincidentally, Datong's father came across his old friend in America, so the two old men went out in the evening. Unfortunately, his father's old friend died suddenly on the way home. Datong's father got lost, so his father had to wait at the police station to wait his son to take him home. Datong need to pick his father up, but his wife went out. Finally, Datong left his son alone at home. Unfortunately, Dennis accidentally fell down in a dark room. In the process of treatment, doctors found the child's back having the bruises. At the same time, the welfare house took the evidence of child abuse to court. For the sake of his father's safety, Xu Datong lied to the court that he had given his son a scrape. He

took the responsibility and hid the truth. Chinese's thinking is the whole priority, and the cognitive style is mainly intuitive, Which is different from the Western's thinking [2]. The story shows the intercultural communication between Chinese and western culture.

In the film, Xu's son Dennis quarreled with the son of his boss when playing the game. Forcing his son to apologize, Datong gave Dennis a slap, which was a natural reaction in the eyes of the Chinese people. When your child had an argument with someone, Chinese would give each other a "face". However, Datong's boss confirmed the incident and said, "I'm telling the truth, you shouldn't hit the kids." Then, Datong asked, "What I did is just show my respect." Datong used his Chinese thinking to measure the value of American thinking. He ignored the cultural conflict in the communication between different cultural values. This conflict of culture in the film also warned us to pay attention to cultural conflicts in the process of cross-cultural communication.

## II. CULTURAL CONFLICTS UNDER THEORY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Many scholars believe that the concept of intercultural communication proposed by American anthropologist Edward T. Hall in 1959 is the earliest system concept. He believes that people of different cultural backgrounds have obvious differences in time and space. Across communication and Intercultural communication are translated into Chinese as "跨文化交际". The intercultural communication theorist Gudykunst thinks that there is a big difference between the two concepts and research content [3]. The main research focus of across communication is on comparative studies of culture. The scope of intercultural communication involves the study of interpersonal communication in different cultures or cultures in any sense or level. The former is part of the latter. Barnett & Lee defines intercultural communication as: the exchange of cultural information between people from different cultures [4]. Samovar al. defines as: face-to-face communication between people from different cultural backgrounds [5]. Chinese scholars generally believe that intercultural communication refers to the process of communication and communication between people with different cultural backgrounds [6], [7]. This paper studies intercultural communication, that is, interpersonal communication from different countries or cultural groups.

The essence of intercultural communication means that in

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the most general sense, cross-cultural communication occurs when members of a certain culture send out a message for members of another culture to understand. Therefore, cross-cultural communication is designed for people with different cultural backgrounds.

When facing different cultural systems, we must not only have a sense of cultural differences, but also find ways to adapt. Culture is colorful, and every nation has its own unique cultural traditions. Differences are inevitable. Chinese and western cultural background are different, the big differences between Chinese and western thinking mode would give rise to the cultural conflict in the cross-cultural communication.

In China, people emphasize the importance of cooperation between each other. In this way, Chinese traditional culture shows strong collective values. As a mode of cultural thinking, China made the world's unique traditional Chinese medicine, emphasizing the balance between "Yin" and "Yang". Chinese attach great importance to the recognition of their social status and reputation. However, western countries believe in the personal independence. Westerners focus on data analysis, and they attach importance to the objectivity and justice of law, emphasizing the facts.

### III. THE INTERPRETATION OF CULTURAL CONFLICT IN THE MOVIE UNDER THE THEORY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Every story of the film "Guasha" is a fierce conflict between Chinese and western culture. The following is an interpretation of the specific conflict between Chinese and western culture in the film.

#### A. *The Cultural Conflict between Chinese Traditional Therapy and Western Medical Treatment*

In the film, "Guasha" is widespread in China's traditional folk therapy, but in the United States, it brought severe disaster and conflict. Because there is no introduction about the "Guasha", it was recognized as child abuse. No matter how Datong tried to explain, he was unable to convince Americans. In the film, the judge asked the Datong looking for an official doctor who can use concise language to give the explanation, but there is no record about "Guasha" in America. Because it is not scientific, no one is willing to testify. In the film, Datong's father said sadly, "How did it make no sense in the United States? It was a Chinese therapy that was popular for thousands of years." This is the cultural conflicts in cross-cultural communication. On the surface, it is the traditional Chinese medicine therapy conflicts with the United States medical treatment. In essence, it reflects the Chinese traditional culture and western culture conflict.

#### B. *The Cultural Conflict between Chinese Traditional Family Ethics and Western Law*

Chinese audience was moved by the touching feeling between the two generations. Datong helped his father from the punishment of the law. He also gave his children Christmas gift at the risk of arresting. He climbed into the window from the water pipes in order to send his son the most warm greetings and wishes. These all reflect the

Chinese attaching great importance to affection. Chinese audience was moved by the moving pictures. However, the behavior of Datong was not allowed by U.S. law. Is everything in American society based on law? Chinese audiences can understand Datong's desperation. No matter how Datong used language to express his share of the deep love to his son, he can't move the judge the heart of "justice", because everything needs evidence.

As is known to all, the United States is a country ruled by law, and the value in the United States is in evidence. Law eventually made Datong and his son in isolation. But if we calm down and think on this issue, we will find how the United States attaches great importance to human rights and protects the lawful rights and interests of children.

In the film, Datong educated his son in public. Datong slapped his son in front of many people. In the eyes of the Chinese parents, they think Datong's behavior is normal. However, Americans pay more attention on objective facts, so the behavior of Datong is cruel for Americans. In Chinese traditional concept, parents believe that punishment is able to let children become better. Actually, Americans also love their children. Sending Dennis to welfare for guardianship is also out of respect for Dennis safety. In the film, the welfare institute finds evidence that the abuse of Dennis also expresses the love for children, but the different national culture has different thinking.

#### C. *The Cultural Conflict between "Face" Culture in Chinese and Western Culture*

In the film, the boss confirmed Datong's behavior of beating his son. Datong felt very angry and disappointed, even cutting off the cooperation with his boss. In a later conversation, we learned the reason for the big fight.

昆兰: "我只看到了事实,你打了丹尼斯,你不应该打丹尼斯!"

大同: "我为什么要打我的儿子?还不是为了给你面子?"

昆兰: "什么乱七八糟的中国思维,你打孩子还能给我面子?"

大同: "无可救药。"

Datong has imposed China's "face" culture on his boss. Because of the different cultural backgrounds, his boss did not understand what Datong said to leave him face. In China, thousands of years of feudal autocracy were deeply rooted. At the beginning, Datong asked Dennis to apologize to his boss's son. Dennis did not follow his father's words. It challenged the father's authority in the family. It can also be said that he did not give Datong a face in front of the boss. This made Datong angry and beat Dennis. Datong did both to discipline the child and to give his boss a face. His boss believed that everyone should be equal, even parents and children should be treated equally. Therefore, his boss did not understand. This is a conflict between two different cultures. Because people had different education, different traditional cultural concepts, and different ways of thinking, they had different ways of dealing with things. This often causes misunderstandings in intercultural communication, leading to communication failure.

Language is the carrier of culture. Chinese can understand Datong. Datong educated his son showing his respect for the boss. For Americans, however, this “face” is seen as a crude act. The reason is China’s face culture. Chinese “face” culture advocates peace between people, maintains a harmonious interpersonal relationship. In China, respecting others and blaming their relatives is to give face.

#### *D. The Cultural Conflict between Chinese Education Concept and Western Parenting Concept*

Although Xu Datong and his wife have lived in the United States for eight years, the traditional Chinese way of life and education have long been rooted in their hearts, so when their younger son Dennis and his boss’s son had a dispute. Datong slapped his son and his behavior was unreasonable in the eyes of Westerners. Western countries pursue democracy and freedom. Therefore, in Western families, parents and children are equal. Parents have no right to punish children, leaving underage children alone at home. It is an illegal act. When the officials of the US Welfare Bureau saw that Xu Datong left Dennis alone at home, they thought that the Xu Datong couple were not competent to be parents and prohibited Xu Datong from approaching to the children. The difference between Chinese and Western educational concepts has led to an uninterrupted cultural conflict between the two.

#### *E. The Cultural Conflicts between Chinese and Western Human Morality*

The way people live in the East and the West is very different, and Chinese people are extremely friendly. Westerners are more inclined to rationality, focus on facts and evidence, and distinguish between public and private. In the film, Xu Datong specially invited the company’s boss, to testify for himself, thinking that he will certainly help him, but the facts make Xu Datong disappointed. His friend chose to stand on the side of the law, which made the Datong couple very surprised and puzzled. Xu Datong, who was under anger, resolutely resigned, and the friendship with his boss broke down. Because of the differences in moral culture between the East and the West, it led to mutual questioning between the two.

### IV. SUGGESTION ON HOW TO IMPROVE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

#### *A. Be Tolerant*

In many intercultural exchanges, there are inevitably some unpredictable confusions and ambiguities. The traditional Chinese medicinal therapy “Guasha” is the main conflict in the film, which is regarded by Westerners as abusing. In addition, it is very common to leave children alone at home in China. However, it is considered an illegal act in the United States. These are the various cultural customs and beliefs that have been passed down from the times. Learning to be inclusive is the best measure of coexistence and can solve problems encountered in various social and cultural practices.

Then, learning to tolerate these cultural issues is a key factor in cross-cultural communication. Without tolerance,

cultural exchanges are impossible, and it is bound to hinder their own development because of the conflicting culture of different values.

Culture is the accumulation of the history of various ethnic groups. The culture of each nation is unique because of its geographical differences. The world cultural corridor is also more colorful because of the existence of different cultures. In today’s world, with the accelerating process of economic globalization and the continuous development of information technology, cultural exchanges and exchanges between ethnic groups are becoming more frequent. This requires people of different nationalities to accept different cultures with a tolerant attitude of understanding and respect

#### *B. Adapting to Cultural Diversity*

Many examples in the film can be seen as forms of cultural diversity, such as different educational concepts and different ways of expressing emotions. Our mobility allows us to connect with people around the world. That is to say, the diversity of culture cannot be denied because of the difference between the different levels of development between China and the West. Cultural diversity has become an established fact.

The cultural diversity of the United States will attract immigrants like Xu Datong. Therefore, we must ensure that cultural diversity will not become a new starting point for racism and prejudice.

#### *C. Cultivating Cross-Cultural Awareness*

The film “Guasha” is a cross-cultural conflict set in the United States and has written a wonderful story. In cross-cultural conflicts, the audience is unconsciously enhances their cross-cultural awareness. During the years of in the United States, Xu Datong was convinced that they were the same like other Americans. But no matter how fluent English he speaks, how passionate he talks about the United States, his nature of thinking as a Chinese cannot be changed from the roots. Lack of awareness causes many cross-cultural conflicts. Cross-cultural awareness is that we get a new perspective from the world around us. Due to our own cultural shackles, we often don’t see the whole picture of what is happening around us. Once we get out of our culture, we can come up with a more objective understanding and a better solution. As the horizon expands, our attitudes towards cultural differences become more open and understand the thoughts of other people. We all face similar problems in life, but we may find that it has different solutions. We will learn how to suspend our judgment and be more tolerant of cultural diversity. Learning cross-culture can also give us more flexibility in judging relationships and solving cultural problems.

### V. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the film, Xu Datong revealed his enthusiasm for American life in his speech, and he was full of confidence in his future in the United States. He believed that as long as he worked hard, he would be able to realize his American dream. In order to integrate into the American society, he also asked his son Dennis to communicate in

English at home. He also sent his son to a noble school, hoping that his son would become an elite of the upper class in the United States. He talked like an American, joking, but he failed to accept American culture. Xu Datong was the epitome of many immigrants who were deeply influenced by Chinese traditional culture and wanted to integrate into other countries.

Through the film “Guasha”, we can see the failure of intercultural communication because of the different ways of thinking between China and the West. Culture is the sum of material wealth and spiritual wealth created in the historical practice of human society, reflecting the basic quality and comprehensive state of a nation. The film is the product of culture, showing the cultural elements through the film and making the audience understand a country. The film “Guasha” as a good example shows the difference between Eastern culture and Western culture, the perceived difference in interpersonal relationships between China and the United States. The film “Guasha” is the product of the struggle between Chinese and western culture. Westerners are also finally accepted it as a traditional Chinese medicine therapy. The existence of cultural differences will lead to cultural conflict. When conducting cross-cultural communication, we must fully understand and master the cultural background, mode of thinking, and behavioral patterns of the communicative objects, so that cross-cultural communication can minimize the occurrence of conflicts and conflicts and achieve effective cross cultural communication.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Dou Chen is responsible for the literature review of this article. She also participates in the writing and revision of this article.

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