RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Rethinking Cultural Competence Education in the Global Era: Insights from Fei Xiaotong's Theory of Cultural Self-Awareness

Abstract　Since humanity entered the 20th century, diversity has become a key feature that manifests itself in all aspects of society. As a venue for people and ideas to meet, universities face ever-increasing challenges in fulfilling their cultural mission. With unprecedented human connectivity, cultural competence is more than a goal. It has become an essential skill for students and a key concern for policymakers and practitioners across the world. Considering the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches to cultural competence education, this article aims to elucidate the significance of the notion of cultural self-awareness proposed by Fei Xiaotong, China's premier social anthropologist. It explores how Fei's insights can facilitate universities to rethink their conception and delivery of cultural competence education. By challenging the tendency for cultural competence education to be segregated among a range of disciplines and moving it to the core of the university's curricular offerings, the article promises an approach whereby all students, regardless of their disciplinary backgrounds, can benefit from the full development of their cultural capability, as can the institution, wider community, and society as a whole.

Keywords　Fei Xiaotong, cultural competence, university, cultural self-awareness, diversity, globalization

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Introduction: Fei Xiaotong and Cultural Competence Education

The past decades have witnessed so many radical changes in the cultural, social, and political landscapes of diversity that we do not even have the language through which the current super-diversity can be described, conceptualized, understood, explained, and researched (Beck, 2011). One scholar who deserves our attention is Fei Xiaotong (费孝通, 1910–2005), or Fei Hsiao-Tung as his name was previously transcribed. Widely credited as China's foremost social scientist in the 20th century, he devoted his entire life to the development of sociological and anthropological studies in China. His works were instrumental in laying a solid foundation for these fields and in introducing China's unique social and cultural phenomena to the international community. In the West, he is particularly noted for his field studies on Chinese villages (Fei, 1939; Fei & Chang, 1948; see Celarent, 2013), yet in China he is known principally for *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* (*Xiangtu Zhongguo* 乡土中国), a work first published in 1947 and translated into English by Gary G. Hamilton and Wang Zheng and published by the University California Press in 1992. The intellectual appeal of *From the Soil* is largely through the application of a concept developed in the book, the "differential mode of association" (*chaxugeju* 差序格局). His insightful research on rural China has won him wide international acclaim and numerous awards.[1]

Fei Xiaotong was born into a gentry family of Wujiang county in Jiangsu province. Upon his graduation from high school, he was admitted into the medical program of Soochow University in 1928. Influenced by progressive beliefs about saving the nation, he transferred to Yenching University in 1930 to study sociology. Immediately after obtaining his bachelor's degree he accepted an invitation from Liang Shuming (梁漱溟, 1893–1988) to participate in a famous rural construction project in Zouping county, Shandong province. In 1933, he enrolled in a master's program in sociology and anthropology at Tsinghua University, where he was nurtured by Wu Wenzao (吴文藻, 1901–1985), studied with Pan Guangdan (潘光旦, 1899–1967), and learned fieldwork methods

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[1] These include the Malinowski Prize of the International Applied Anthropology Association, the Huxley Memorial Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, the Encyclopaedia Britannica Prize, and the USA and Asian Cultural Prize in Fukuoka, Japan.

from Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogorov (1887–1939). From 1936 to 1938, he studied at the London School of Economics and Political Science under Bronisław Malinowski. His 1938 doctoral thesis, based on earlier fieldwork in rural China, was published in London and New York as *Peasant Life in China*, with a laudatory preface by Malinowski (1938/2010), who considered the work as "a landmark in the development of anthropological field-work and theory" (p. ii), and felt "genuine admiration, at times not untinged with envy" (p. v).

Today, globalization is here with us, as indeed has been foreseen. In this era of unprecedented human connectivity, learning from others has never been more important. Many of Fei's insights are more relevant than ever. As diversity becomes a key feature that manifests itself in all aspects of society, people of different gender, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds encounter each other everywhere and all the time. The globalization process, featured by increasing transnational mobility of capital, knowledge, people, values, and ideas, has further intensified issues of diversity. Universities, as the place for people and ideas to meet, have been shaped with profound changes in their core functions of teaching, research, and service. Over the past few decades, the number of students enrolled outside their countries of citizenship has risen from 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 to 5.3 million in 2017 (OECD, 2019), while the international movement of scholars has also accelerated at a record rate (Rostan & Höhle, 2014). Such developments have strong implications for universities in all aspects (Scott, 2005, 2015), especially in terms of their cultural mission (Chan, 2009; Chankseliani, 2018; Yang & Li, 2017).

With more diversity in society, universities are empowered to help students understand their own cultural identities, and foster their competence to communicate with and appreciate others of different backgrounds (Gao, 2019). Transnational mobility offers new possibilities for universities to fulfill such tasks. Students and staff experience different cultures via various activities on their increasingly internationalized campuses. Being able to have encounters inter-culturally contributes to a better understanding of both others and oneself. We learn "when shaken by new facts, beliefs, experiences and viewpoints" (Conklin, 2004, p. 38), which allows us to comprehend that there are multiple, equally legitimate ontologies that we need to respect (Chiu, Lonner, Matsumoto, & Ward, 2013). Such experiences help us develop tolerance and empathy for others (Black & Duhon, 2006; Williams, 2005), increase our comfort and ability in communicating with others (Drews & Meyer, 1996; Hadis, 2005), and broaden

our knowledge of and interest in global affairs (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Herfst, van Oudenhoven, & Timmerman, 2008).

However, such benefits cannot be taken for granted. The inconvenient truth is that they often exist only in our imagination. A deep understanding of oneself and others does not occur automatically. It needs to be nurtured with great effort and intellectual energy. Simply being in the presence of different people does not necessarily result in meaningful, intercultural understanding (Allport, 1954; British Council, 2014; Putnam, 2007). While integrating people of various cultural backgrounds through and in academic and social activities is vitally important in achieving mutual cultural understanding, studies have repeatedly shown that meaningful cultural interactions in higher education communities remain far from the reality (Healey, 2017; Teichler, 2017). Furthermore, not all intercultural experiences are positive. If managed improperly, encounters with other cultures can even lead to conflict between different cultural groups, humiliation, anger toward one other (Iyer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2007), and discrimination against mainstream culture (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Such challenges and potential negative outcomes could increase stereotyping and intergroup hostility, and consolidate prejudicial attitudes towards others (Asmar, 2005; Rothman, Lipset, & Nevitte, 2003).

Cultural competence is a critical factor for people to ensure positive outcomes in their intercultural encounters. With a rich diversity of people and various cultural traditions, universities are best positioned to facilitate people on campus developing their capability for significant achievement in understanding their own culture and that of others and fostering the necessary skills for cross-cultural interaction. At an individual level, cultural capabilities help students perform successfully in modern society and achieve personal development to a fuller degree. At the collective level, people with high-level cultural capabilities can work together to reduce intercultural conflicts and build a commonwealth for all humankind. Huntington (1993) was right to point out "that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural" (Huntington, 1993, p. 22).[2] Here, Fei Xiaotong's

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[2] However, on such a theme, Huntington has not been very helpful. Instead, he has been criticized heavily. The criticism is somewhat unfair as he did indeed indicate the necessity for multiculturalism in his works. It is true that he only touched on this lightly, perhaps just as a salutary gesture. Where he fell short is on how to tackle the clash between civilizations intellectually and practically. In this respect, Fei Xiaotong stands in marked contrast to Huntington.

(1997/2016) insights about the nature and future of human cultural diversity offer rays of hope. He proposes a scenario in which every civilization develops itself constantly by maintaining its own characteristics and learning from others, while making its unique contributions to world prosperity. For the scenario to come true, appropriate cultural views and competence are required, and universities have a vital role to play in shaping them.

Current Approaches to Cultural Competence Education

The unprecedented human connectedness has challenged all professions and the education and training of their practitioners. Cultural competence education has consequently been incorporated into curricula in various disciplines from counselling psychology (Pedersen & Marsella, 1982; Sue et al., 1982), social work (Green, 1982) to healthcare (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Issacs, 1989; Purnell, 2002). Given its multidisciplinary origin, there have been different approaches to defining, framing, and theorizing cultural competence. Most often it is described as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, organization, or among professionals to allow effective work in cross-cultural situations (Cross, 1988). This definition suggests its strongly pragmatic nature. Indeed, the term "competence" implies "capability, sufficiency, and adequacy" (Lum, 2000, p. 6). It refers to the ways various groups have adopted to survive in their environments, including their abilities to function successfully (Aponte, 1995). Regardless of whether it is interpreted as a social judgment one makes (evaluation) or an action one takes (performance), it describes an individual's potential or ability to perform a job (Koester & Lustig, 2015).

   Many models have been developed to frame cultural competence in a particular discipline, such as the Leininger Sunrise Model (Leininger, 1991), Purnell Model (Purnell, 2002), and Campinha-Bacote Model (Campinha-Bacote, 2002) in healthcare; social constructionist (George & Tsang, 1999), humanistic (Goldstein, 1987), person-in-environment/ecological (Haynes & Singh, 1992), and cognitive sophistication (Latting, 1990) in social work; as well as multicultural counselling and therapy (Banks, 2002; Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996) and existential worldview theory (Ibrahim, 1991; McFadden, 1996) in counselling and educational psychology. These models and approaches reflect the complexity of cultural competence, and the underlying diversity of views on

what culture is. Consensus on the nature of culture has never been achieved (Keesing, 1974). In cultural competence studies, it usually refers to a set of beliefs, assumptions, values, and norms that a group of individuals largely observes and transfers across generations (Leininger & McFarland, 2006), or a learned worldview that affects individual and group beliefs, values, norms, and behaviors (Ingram, 2012). Such perceptions of culture highlight its diverse components that are manifested in a variety of the dimensions and elements of different cultural competence models.

In practice many teaching and learning techniques have been employed to apply these models and approaches. For example, the cultural assimilator method (Fiedler, Mitchell, & Triandis, 1971), based primarily on cognitive learning, employs programmed learning materials to teach students specific elements of a foreign culture. Experiential methods are also popular, including role-playing and simulated cultural encounters (Kraemer, 1973; Weaver, 2000). Other techniques used frequently include guided self-reflection and examination of cultural influences on one's perceptions and behaviors (Althen, 1970; Kolb, 1984), and their demonstrations (Wedge, 1968).

The approaches developed in various disciplines have greatly enriched our understanding of cultural competence, with valuable practical implications. Yet, their weaknesses have been observed mainly in terms of two aspects: relevance and sustainability. Firstly, current approaches emphasize the instrumental and professional benefits for individuals of gaining cultural competence, thus reducing the relevance to all students across disciplines. Students from disciplines that require less intercultural engagement are less motivated to develop their intercultural competence. They feel apathetic about cultural competence because they view it as a "soft science" that is less valuable than basic science and clinical knowledge (Jernigan, Hearod, Tran, Norris, & Buchwald, 2016). They may even feel alienated, defensive, resistant, distressed, and confused when exposed to worldviews that differ from their own and required to examine their own biases or ethnocentrism critically (Boutin-Foster, Foster, & Konopasek, 2008; Watt, Abbott, & Reath, 2016). Secondly, the pragmatic nature of current approaches stresses instrumental benefits. When students complete such education or training or change their occupations, if and how they will continue to develop their cultural competence is in question. As Watt et al. (2016) argue, cultural competence development should be lifelong.

However, there is little evidence to suggest that current approaches encourage students to sustain their interest and practice in developing their cultural competence.

Possible Contributions of Fei Xiaotong's Cultural Insights

The aforementioned drawbacks of current approaches signal the theoretical and practical need for universities to rethink their cultural competence education. Universities are increasingly requested to reduce disciplinary segregation and move cultural competence education to the core of their mission fulfilment. To demonstrate appreciation of other cultures, a holistic development-oriented approach is needed. Going beyond performing one's tasks effectively in cross-cultural situations, this approach brings together spiritual, emotional, and intellectual pleasure and assists people in developing a lifelong commitment to and internalized competence in cross-cultural appreciation and action. In this aspect, Fei's (1997/2016, 2002/2015) cultural self-awareness theory has much to offer.[3] It calls for those who live within a specific culture to come to understand themselves including the history, origins, formation, distinctive features, and future trends of their own culture.

According to Fei (2002/2015), self-awareness cannot be achieved without referring to others and valuing their differences. Rather, it can only be attained by comparing with others and developing an understanding of underlying reasons for differences between groups and nations. It therefore echoes much of Joseph Needham's (1969) emphasis that knowledge of the other is indeed an indispensable element of self-knowledge. Such self-examination contributes to a better understanding of the relationship with others, given that all cultures are a mixture of many different ethnic traditions. This form of self-knowledge increases the ability to make deliberate and conscious choices to adapt to new times and circumstances that affect culture (Fei, 1997/2016). In this respect, the thesis of cultural self-awareness not only recognizes the importance of self-knowledge in itself, but also highlights sophisticated methods of achieving it.

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[3] Although this argument is well-developed, it has not yet been theorized systematically or in an integral way to a great extent because the theme has been discussed, presented and distributed in a dispersed way across time and space.

Advocating learning one's own culture may seem like gilding the lily, as we have lived in our own cultures all our lives, which means we assume knowledge of them. Unfortunately, as anthropologist Edward Hall (1976) explained, "What is known least well, and is therefore in the poorest position to be studied, is what is closest to oneself" (p. 45). People are shocked to realize how little they know about their own cultural characteristics when forced to look at and think about them consciously (Bauman, 1990). Similarly, Fei (1997/2016, 1998/2015) observes the lack of a systematic, fact-based understanding of the culture in which one lives. In social life, people experience without reflection or understanding, and act without knowing "why," which becomes a source of incompetence in cultural encounters that call for direct cultural transformation. Cultural self-awareness empowers people and allows them to avoid senseless, impulsive, and blind social behaviors. Fei highlights the development of cultural self-awareness as a long and arduous process. One is always positioned at any time at a particular point along the spectrum between very little and complete self-awareness, but never reaches either end.

Fei's theory of cultural self-awareness is rooted in his understanding of what culture constitutes. According to him:

> In its broadest sense, culture refers to the man-made world and includes social systems and ideologies…Man has built his world on the basis of natural conditions, so culture was born from nature and is a kind of processing of it. (Fei, 1989/2015, p. 6)

> If we look carefully into the components of this human world, we note that it is made up of innumerable separate innovations created thanks to individuals' inborn qualities, as well as their accumulated experiences of interactions with the natural world. However, once these innovations are accepted by the group, the human world no longer belongs to any one individual anymore. This is what we mean by the social nature of culture…The human world thus flourishes and decays according to historical laws of its own. Such is the historical nature of culture. (Fei, 2002/2015, p. 130)

Encounters as Enablers

Despite numerous differences in the conceptualization of cultural competence,

Fei shares some common ground with other researchers, especially in that encounters with people from other cultures are recognized as the factor that allows such competence to develop. As Chiu and Hong (2005) observe, as long as individuals cross cultural boundaries, either sojourning in a new culture or encountering people from foreign cultures in their own country, they often become more aware of the existence of their native culture as well as its influence. Once individuals begin to see themselves clearly by engaging with other cultures, they can begin to modify their behaviors, strengthening their most appropriate and effective characteristics and minimizing those least helpful. To the extent that someone is culturally self-aware, he or she becomes aware of the effects his or her behaviors will have on others (Adler, 1991). Similarly, Fei (1988/2015) advocates the role of encounters in achieving cultural self-awareness:

> Generally speaking, a people will name "the other" first before naming "the self." Members of a community with a similar way of living will have no clear sense of their own common identity until they come in contact with "outsiders." This encounter with "the other" fosters a conscious sense of "self." (p. 83)

Here, Fei's view echoes perfectly that of the renowned Chinese philosopher, Liang Shuming, who remarked that people will never gain a clear understanding if they remain only within the structures of their own society; if they look first at others and then at themselves, then they will understand immediately (Liang, 1921/1990).

Appreciation as Both a Means and an End

Encountering different cultures is the pre-condition for the development of cultural competence. Yet, encounters alone will not lead to awareness automatically. Critical introspection, self-examination, and reflection are required in all encounters. Individuals with a high degree of self-consciousness tend to engage in more introspection (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and pay more attention to their own values, beliefs, and emotional experiences (Duval, Silvia, & Lalwani, 2001). According to Fei (1997/2016), such self-reflection on cultural experiences

is a process of learning appreciation. He highlights the approach to attaining cultural self-awareness: "Each appreciates its best, appreciates the best of others" (p. 405). "Each appreciates its best" suggests that individuals from different cultures first learn to appreciate their own traditions and seek the wisdom of self-knowledge, while "appreciates the best of others" indicates an understanding of the merits and aesthetics of other cultures. A reciprocal attitude is essential to appreciate the best of others, because appreciating one's own best does not preclude appreciating others.

Together with a growing self-awareness, one is able to establish closer relationships with others by seeking common ground while preserving differences. It is necessary to "appreciate the best of others" in the same way that one appreciates and understands one's own value systems (Fei, 2004/2013). This is very much in line with Needham's (1969) claim that one should study the words of one's saints and sages as well as those of others, and experience one's own humanity in the image of others. Appreciating others does not mean adopting their culture as one's own, but rather tolerating or embracing the differences. In particular, regardless whether the best in oneself or others, it should be appreciated in a rational, calm, and thoughtful way. After all, no culture is perfect in all situations; they all have strengths and weaknesses, and therefore, both understanding and selection are indispensable (Fei, 2004/2013). Any kind of cultural centrism must be avoided, as Fei (1993/2015) wrote:

> When people only appreciate their own best encounter with others, they are likely to end up believing that they alone are the best; in other words, they develop a superiority complex which excludes all who do not share their values. This kind of mentality will inevitably lead to imposing one's values on others and arousing antagonism. (p. 23)

Through the practice of appreciating the best in oneself as well as others, the desirable end, namely that "all appreciate the best together to build greater harmony for all" (Fei, 1997/2016, p. 405) may be reached. Competence in appreciating the best together requires a critical, yet confident attitude towards one's own culture as well as respect for that of others. Only when such a dynamic is achieved, can cross-cultural dialogues become possible (Fei, 1999/2015).

The appreciation Fei encourages may be viewed as both a means and an end.

As a means, appreciating the best in oneself and in others requires deliberate guidance and unremitting practice. As a pedagogy, appreciation has been employed widely in teaching literature, music, painting, and other forms of arts. The original Latin meaning of the word appreciation is "to price or to set a value upon" (Hilliker, 1934, p. 41), which suggests that appreciation is not only an emotional response, but also depends on the use of one's cognitive faculties as a way to approach emotions. Appreciation is a combination of intellectual and emotional activities that increase awareness. The combined nature of exercising appreciation indicates the ability to develop cultural self-awareness, given that culture is characterized by emotion, mental attitudes, habits, beliefs, all of which are non-rational; thus, cultural interactions cannot be managed solely by using straightforward logic, argument, or rationality (Fei, 2004/2013).

One's knowledge of a subject is vital to a critical appreciation of it, and one's emotional response relies on intellectual comparison, analysis, and criticism. Appreciation cannot be developed without great intellectual effort. It is often true that the failure to appreciate may be traced to a lack of understanding of the subject. The only remedy for this is learning. The greater one's knowledge of a subject in which there is vital interest, the greater the degree of appreciation (Hilliker, 1934). Through persistent exercise, appreciation can be acquired as an individual's internalized ability. It is a broadly educable capacity, not determined or differentiated socially (Buckridge, 2006). As Hilliker (1934) argues, "If appreciation is not the outcome then our modern theory of learning is on the wrong track" (p. 53).

A Global Approach to Overcoming Parochialism and Ethnocentrism

The conceptual appeal of Fei's theory of cultural self-awareness is a combined result of a variety of factors including the contemporary interface between Chinese and Western civilizations, globalization, and China's tremendous social transformations in the 20th century. Fei therefore distinguishes himself from both his Western peers and his fellow Chinese researchers in a substantial way. His insights inspire us to become better prepared to tackle lingering issues in socio-cultural research and practice such as parochialism and ethnocentrism.

Ever since its rise, the West has been anxious about the rise of non-Western powers. A typical example in a period of imperialism was Alfred T. Mahan

(1840–1914) who stressed the role of the military and considered launching a war to be an indicator of "a healthy nation" and that "a progressive nation" should aim for expansion. To him, inter-civilizational relations were emerging as the key issue confronting the world as it entered the 20th century (Russell, 2006). A century later, inheriting the mantle of Mahan, Samuel P. Huntington (1996) points out that the West won over the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion, but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. He argues that the clash of civilizations would persist well into the 21st century. So long as non-Western civilizations remain traditional, insufficiently developed, and distant, the West has little cause for worry. But having acquired modern technology and developed military forces, they will present a serious challenge to world order and Western interests.

In contrast to the pessimistic and conflict-focused views of Mahan and Huntington, Fei treats the world as one global society. His ideas about the importance of building patterns of multicultural and international "pluralistic unity" within "one world" is part of his broader conceptualization of global governance. He developed his notion of the "pattern of pluralistic unity" (*duoyuanyiti geju* 多元一体格局) over a period of four decades. His notion of cultural self-awareness expresses Chinese intellectuals' response to economic globalization and reflects the anxiety of human beings in general provoked by increased frequency of cultural contact. In December 1990, he coined the famous 16-character maxim, noted above, in a speech on his personal experience of research on human individuals in China—"each appreciates his own best, appreciates the best of others, all appreciate the best together for the greater harmony of all"[4]. All these point consistently to one direction of a peaceful and prosperous human community that is both national and universal.

Many people from highly different backgrounds in all parts of the world have long been trying hard to find ways out of the tendency to cultural clash and civilizational decay. In English-speaking societies, for example, there is a burgeoning body of literature on cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and

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[4] It was at an international symposium on East Asian societies in Tokyo when Professors Chie Nakane from University of Tokyo and Chien Chiao from Academia Sinica celebrated Professor Fei's 80th birthday. On the spot, he wrote the maxim in his own hand, which says: "each appreciates his own best, appreciates the best of others, all appreciate the best together for the greater harmony of all" [*Ge mei qi mei, mei ren zhi mei, mei mei yu gong, tianxia datong* 各美其美, 美人之美, 美美与共, 天下大同].

inter-civilizational dialogue. As a political ideology, multiculturalism generally refers to ideas about the legal and political accommodation of ethnic diversity. It emerged as a vehicle for replacing older forms of ethnic and racial hierarchy with new relations of democratic citizenship (Kymlicka, 2012). While some progress has been made in a variety of countries especially in those of migrants, recent years have witnessed growing discontent with it. Some political leaders have even publicly declared its failure and death. Some recent studies argue that its popular master narrative is not well-based conceptually, and that it is geared to more or less homogenous groups within a nation-state framework (Beck, 2011).

In comparison, cosmopolitanism seems to be re-entering global discourse as a philosophical orientation (Hansen, 2017; Hébert, 2013). An emergent trend appears to span from multiculturalism to cosmopolitanism (Patell, 2014), the latter attracting considerable attention from scholars across the humanities and social science as a lens for interpreting how people in contemporary societies engage in cross-cultural interaction. The idea spotlights ways in which people can move beyond tolerance of difference to reimagining, appreciating, and learning from it. Although much has been achieved, the literature has an unsettled quality (Hansen, 2010). While researchers are correct to point out the necessity to become open reflectively to new persons, ideas, values, and practices (Hansen, 2014), such good will is difficult to practice in reality without seriously modifying the way we are educated to think cross-culturally and about cultures.

For decades, a number of people with breadth of vision and noble aspirations have made efforts in promoting dialogue between civilizations (see, e.g., Hayhoe & Pan, 2001; Segesvary, 2004), with active participation by supranational organizations such as the UNESCO (d'Orville, 2012). Once again, the effect has been limited. One explanation is that simply bringing together different people is a necessary yet only initial step. It needs to be followed by something much more real and substantial, that is, the internalization of values of different civilizations within one person. Until this happens, true dialogue may not commence. In consideration of the current asymmetries in global knowledge and values, hopes are slim. Therefore, we cannot stress enough the need for and significance of fostering a bi/multi-cultural identity in the global era, as exemplified by Fei Xiaotong as a person and as a scholar. This has critical implications for cultural competence education in all societies.

Although expressed in different concepts, disciplines, and constellations, Fei

shares much of the spirit of cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and inter-civilization dialogue. What distinguishes his conceptualization is the mode of thinking he has demonstrated. Many theorists in studies of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, including inter-civilizational dialogue, often fall into a trap of binary or dichotomous thinking, of framing issues in terms of opposites, which is basic in the Western scholarly tradition. However, the foremost requirement for people of different cultural backgrounds to live together peacefully is to understand others first and then appreciate different values and life styles. In this respect, Western-style binary thinking, whose impact becomes even less constructive in a context of individualistic ideology, has been a major intellectual barrier. Fei himself benefitted greatly from his Chinese side, particularly the correlative mutually beneficial thinking rooted in traditional Chinese culture (Hall & Ames, 1995), which takes human relations, rather than "self," as the priority. Keeping his own culture while cultivating cultural composure, he was able to overcome the impact of binary opposition in his theorization. This explains how he differed from Mahan and Huntington, as well as those advocating cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and inter-civilizational dialogue.

What also needs to be noted is the ways in which Fei's theoretical approach and perspective differ from those of his fellow Chinese scholars. As a result of a much wider historical development, there have been continuing debates over the cultural relations between China and the West, taking various forms according to geopolitical situations. Against such an intellectual backdrop, very few Chinese social scientists have been able to strike a nuanced balance. Their attitudes toward the two traditions and toward their interactions have often been highly radical, locating the two in opposite positions.[5] Some of them also change their viewpoints drastically, including some of China's best thinkers. For instance, after their stay in Europe, during which they witnessed World War I, both Yan Fu (严复, 1854–1921) and Liang Qichao (梁启超, 1873–1929) changed their attitude toward Western civilization dramatically, with corresponding changes to their views about Chinese traditions. Fei is one of the few exceptions who remained sober-minded in all the discussions on Chinese and Western traditions and their interplay. With such a disposition he was much better positioned to overcome

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[5] While this is mainly due to the great tragedies in Chinese history of recent centuries, it is also because of the formal (which is Western) education and (binary) thinking these scholars have received from their earliest school days.

cultural nihilism, parochialism and ethnocentrism (Gao, 2018; Hu & Cheng, 2015).

Implications of Fei's Similar but Different Conceptualization

While addressing similar issues, Fei's theory of cultural self-awareness is quite distinct from other models that are often overly instrumental. His construction of the concept has personal development as the ultimate goal. According to Fei (2003/2013), cultural self-awareness not only offers effective functioning in and with other cultures but also leads to personal growth in spiritual, intellectual, and emotional domains through better understanding of one's own culture as well as that of others. In this respect, cultural competence has the same nature as all other core knowledge, attributes, and skills that higher education is expected to instill in young people that help individuals maximize their potential and achieve full personal development. The developmental nature of such an approach guarantees that cultural competence education is relevant to everyone on campus especially students, regardless of disciplinary areas. Fei's works present tremendous potential that could enable universities, policymakers and practitioners to adopt new approaches to foster and further strengthen people's cultural awareness and competence in ways that are featured by appreciating both their own and other cultures as both a pedagogy and the primary means to self-examination and introspection.

Fei's own personal and professional experiences serve as a perfect example of high-level cultural awareness and an approach to achieving it. His penetrating understanding of Chinese and Western cultures, familiarity with both scholarly traditions, and his assiduous critical and analytic introspection on these experiences and knowledge enabled him to develop his advanced cultural awareness. He attended local missionary schools and received English and classical Chinese training, before studying at top institutions in China and Britain where he was stimulated by leading Chinese and Western theorists. Such experiences made him well versed in both Chinese and Western learning so that he could appreciate both and manage their relationship in a sophisticated way. In his later years, he paid more attention to globalization and treated the world as one global society. His profound understanding and appreciation of both Chinese and Western civilizations is manifest in the 16-character maxim noted above.

Most of his works demonstrate such high achievement (see, e.g., Fei 2002/2015, 2003/2013, 2003/2015). His theorization of cross-cultural interaction is both similar to and different from the existing literature. The similarities and differences deserve much greater attention in the practice of cultural competence education.

Concluding Discussion: Transformation from Structural to Cultural Diversity

Over three decades ago, a few economically developed countries took the lead in recognizing the potential of a new discourse on international student mobility that created a market in higher education (Rizvi, 2011), and allowed universities in those countries to obtain a competitive advantage in the global higher education field and became leading players on the market. The global higher education market was then established and went on to experience a rapid boom. Such a notion of internationalization has been largely limited to the economic sphere and has contributed little to the kinds of cross-cultural understanding and appreciation which lie at the core of the internationalization of higher education. As noted above, simply having the presence of people of different cultural backgrounds does not naturally lead to more inter-cultural understanding and tolerance. In some cases, the clash between different cultural values becomes even more evident. Throughout the affluent education-exporting societies, which are (not accidently) overwhelmingly Western, there is generally a lack of a sense of urgency to learn from such international students as a significant cultural resource.

Human community is now located dangerously in conflict with nature on one hand, and within seemingly endless conflicts between nations on the other, with the weak continuing to be the prey of the powerful. In this sense, human community can hardly be called a community. To ensure the wellbeing of every member, mutual understanding and respect is an urgent must. Unfortunately while nearly all non-Western societies spare no effort to learn Western knowledge, most people in Western societies have ignored the immensely rich non-Western intellectual traditions, except a handful of open-minded individuals. This is of course historical, in that the West has been in a prestigious position for centuries. It is almost natural for them not to realize the need to learn from

non-Western others, let alone show appreciation or respect. If things continue this way, all the talk of cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, internationalism and human destiny is empty at best, and disastrous outcomes are highly likely. This explains the relevance and significance of Fei Xiaotong's insights.

On a more positive note, with growing diversity on campuses today, we are well placed to make breakthroughs and innovations in cultural competence education and to achieve a transformation from structural to cultural diversity. Indeed, universities in different parts of the world have been increasingly facing the challenge of cultural diversity especially since the closing decades of the 20th century (Goastellec, 2006). When the cultural challenge is positively managed and effectively tackled, people may enjoy unprecedented opportunities to maximize their potential, intellectually, professionally, spiritually, and emotionally. To make this transformation happen, everyone on campus is required to foster cultural competence. While current approaches to cultural competence development have provided valuable lessons, to make cultural competence education relevant to all and advocate its continuing practice, it is vital to demonstrate that cultural competence not only contributes to performing well in one's professions, but also benefits a person intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally.

As Fei's cultural self-awareness shows, everyone on campus benefits from fully developing his or her own cultural capability, as does the institution, wider community, and society as a whole. Fei's insights urge universities to re-think the way cultural competence education has been conceptualized and delivered. By appreciating the best of one's own culture and that of others, identification of similar cultural values will emerge over time (Fei, 1993/2015) and a cross-cultural dialogue will become plausible, in which civilizations engage and learn from each other to achieve harmony with diversity (Fei, 1999/2015). This article also intends to show what an outstanding scholar Fei Xiaotong was. With his great sophistication in interpreting China to an international audience, he was both national and international. He is not a Western-mined scholar who makes Chinese culture sing to a Western tune. Instead, he advances the idea that China must dance to its own music.

Believing that the principle of "pluralistic unity" could be applied not only to China, but also to other multi-ethnic societies, he led the way for Chinese and Western scholars to develop a dialogue based on comparative studies of the

institutional differences that distinguish one society from another, as well as on the commonalities that unite us. Throughout his life, he never lost his cultural footing, trying persistently to find solutions to China's many problems. His scholarly works are deeply rooted in Chinese society and culture on one hand, and are solidly based on modern (Western) theories and methods on the other. Early in his career, he used a social science inspired by Western academics to cure Chinese ills, but the more he worked in China, the more he saw the power of Chinese society to cure its own troubles, and by extension to cure troubles elsewhere. He should be remembered as a great humanitarian, as well as a remarkable sociologist and anthropologist (Hamilton & Chang, 2011).

One of our major challenges today is the development of dialogue and cooperation across cultural and civilizational worlds at both local and global levels (Beck, 2011). Research on the interplay of civilizations necessarily touches on the cultural traits of various nations and their assessment. It requires researchers to be intellectually profound, culturally reflective and socially responsive toward all civilizations including their own. With the highly unequal relationships between civilizations, this is extremely difficult to maintain consistently in both theory and practice. It is especially the case for Chinese scholars due to the traumas experienced in China's modern history. In this respect, Fei Xiaotong has set an extraordinarily high bar in comparison with both his fellow Chinese and scholars in the West. He was able to overcome great difficulties in comparing China with other societies and won acclaim. Both sides of the comparison were empirically well informed, and presented in graceful prose in a disarmingly straightforward way (Hamilton & Chang, 2011).

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