

“Comparison of Senior Leisure Activities in China and the United States from the Perspective of Cultural Differences”

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Abstract

Cultural values strongly influence how older adults spend their free time. This poster compares daily leisure patterns among adults aged 55 and over in China and the United States, examining how factors like independence, family ties, and tradition shape indoor and outdoor activities.



Cultural Theory

Although this study does not explicitly refer to Hofstede’s model, it applies key concepts from the individualism–collectivism dimension to interpret cultural differences.

American seniors tend to prioritize independence and self-fulfillment, favoring solitary hobbies and personal wellness. In contrast, Chinese seniors emphasize family bonding and group activities, often rooted in caregiving roles and traditions like Taiji. These preferences reflect deeper cultural differences in family roles and lifestyle expectations.

Methodology

For the purpose of this research a cross-cultural comparison was conducted using two distinct data sources to analyze leisure preferences among older adults. Primary data was collected in China via questionnaires in three communities in Hangzhou. In contrast, U.S. data was sourced from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS), a nationally representative dataset.

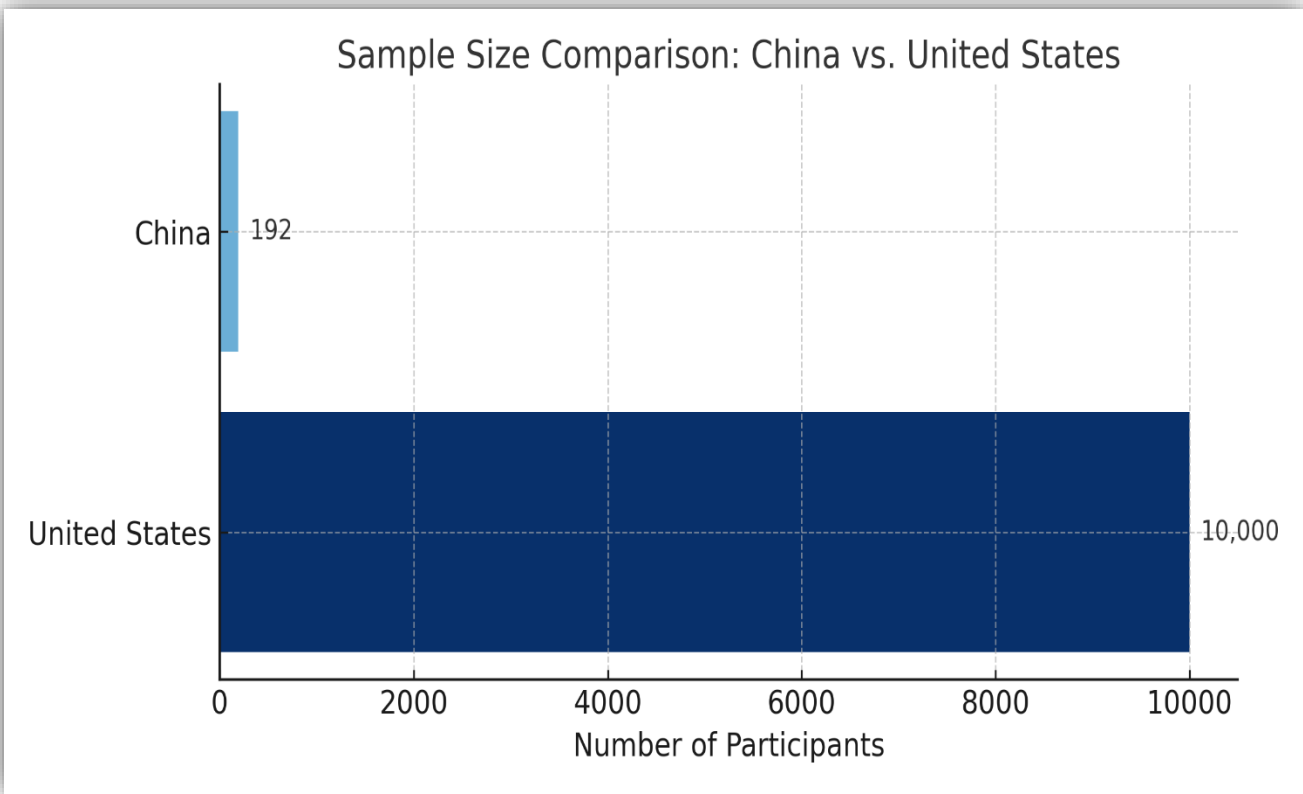


Table 1: The chart illustrates the significant difference in sample sizes between the two countries. While China relied on a local sample of 192 individuals, the United States used national data from ATUS, representing tens of thousands of participants.

Limitations: A major limitation is the difference in sample size and data collection methods. The Chinese sample appears to be small and localized, whereas the US data are large and nationally representative. As a result, direct comparisons should be made with caution, and findings should be interpreted as descriptive rather than statistically equivalent.

Key Findings

Similarities

- **Watching TV** is the most common indoor activity in both countries.
- **Walking** is the most frequent outdoor activity.



Differences

CN China	US United States
Traditional group activities (e.g., Taiji, sword dancing, mahjong)	Individual hobbies and fitness (e.g., reading, gym, golf)
High internet use (23.4%) among seniors	Strong emphasis on reading and structured self-care
Leisure is family-oriented and often occurs in community spaces	Leisure emphasizes personal growth and independence

Implications

Leisure behavior in later life reflects cultural values. These findings suggest elderly services should adapt to cultural contexts. In China, fostering autonomy may enhance well-being, while in the U.S., promoting family- and community-based activities could strengthen social ties. Culturally informed planning is key to inclusive leisure programs.

Conclusion

While seniors in both countries prefer walking and watching television, their motivations differ: American seniors seek independence, while Chinese seniors value family connection and tradition. Recognizing these patterns is essential for designing leisure initiatives that respect cultural differences and support diverse ageing needs.

References

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