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*A People's Republic of China–
Taiwanese Comparison*

Lorand B. Szalay and
Jean B. Strohl

*Institute of Comparative Social and Cultural Studies, Inc.
Chevy Chase, Maryland*

Liu Fu

*North East University
Shenyang, China*

and

Pen-Shui Lao

*Kaohsiung Normal University
Kaohsiung, Taiwan*

Springer Science+Business Media, LLC

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

On file

ISBN 978-0-306-44980-2 ISBN 978-1-4757-9148-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4757-9148-8

© 1994 Springer Science+Business Media New York
Originally published by Plenum Press, New York in 1994.

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**AMERICAN AND CHINESE PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS
A PRC-TAIWANESE COMPARISON**

Preface

The findings presented here were drawn from an in-depth study of comparable college student samples (n=100) tested in Shenyang (PRC), Taiwan, and Washington, D.C. The data were obtained through an analytic technique called the Associative Group Analysis (AGA) method. Unlike traditional surveys, views and beliefs are reconstructed from the distribution of hundreds of thousands of spontaneous reactions to strategically selected issues and themes as elicited from respondents in their native language. A computer-assisted analysis of this data base makes it possible to reconstruct people's belief systems and subjective representation of their world.

Based on a comparative analysis of Chinese and American student samples, this volume presents findings on the contemporary views and values developed in three different socio-political settings: (a) the post modern, industrial environment of the U.S.; (b) the planned and controlled socialistic environment of the PRC; and (c) the fast developing free market environment of Taiwan. The results reveal previously uncharted dimensions of cultural similarities and differences and show the effects of different economic and social systems on people's views of the self and world.

This volume, which is the second in a series to come out of research conducted in the late eighties, encompasses the domains of Family, National Images, Religion, Economy, and Education. The results are summarized in bar graphs showing the main components of American and Chinese perceptions and evaluations of the key issues studied. At a higher level the analysis shows trends of perceptions and value orientations observed across related themes. For example, results on specific themes such as family, mother, and father reveal some consistent trends applicable to the whole domain of family relations (e.g., an American focus on love based personal ties, on individual roles, on husband-wife relationship; and a Chinese emphasis on social qualities of kindness, affection, and respect, on the parent-child relationship, etc.)

The analysis shows overall similarities and differences between the American, PRC, and Taiwanese culture groups on specific issues, on particular domains, and across their frames of reference in general. The results offer new insights into the scope and nature of both cultural and ideological influences. This volume, along with the previous one based on comparisons of American, PRC, and Hong Kong students, provides rich resource material for integrating culture and language in education, intercultural communication, and language and area training.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to express their personal appreciation and gratitude to the Department of Education, Language and Area Studies Research Program and to our Project Monitor Jose Martinez for sponsoring this comparative study of American and Chinese perceptions and belief systems.

The research involved the cooperation of scholars representing various fields of social and behavioral sciences from the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Taiwan, Republic of China, Hong Kong, and the United States.

Dr. Andres Inn from the Chinese University of Hong Kong organized the data collection efforts in Hong Kong and China and developed software for this research effort. Dr. Irene Chow collected all Hong Kong data and assisted in the data collection efforts in Shenyang. Dr. Liu Fu, head of the Department of Management at the Northeast University of Technology, provided subjects for the research and Dr. Chow collected the data in Shenyang. Mr. Sun MingHe translated the Chinese ideographs to English and performed the initial data analyses by collapsing responses across subjects. Mr. Sun spent many months of full time effort to complete this phase for both the Hong Kong and Shenyang samples.

The data collection in Taipei was organized by Professor Carl P. Epstein from University of Soochow; he provided valuable help without accepting any remuneration. The data collection in Taipei was performed by Dr. Epstein in cooperation with Dr. Pen-Shui Liao, formerly of Soochow University (now at Kaohsiung Normal University), and Dr. Emery Zsoldosh from Fu Jen University. We also received help from Professor Der-heuy Yee from National Taiwan University. Most of the extensive data organization in Chinese and the translation of the extensive response material was performed by Ms. Ming Fong Hsu and Professor Liao at Soochow University. They performed this time-consuming task with high accuracy and with motivation.

In Washington, D.C., Jean Bryson Strohl completed the data analysis, presentation of results on the groups tested, and comparative interpretation of the results. Mr. John Dombrowski, Ms. Shelley Vilov, and Ms. Heather Bent also contributed to the analysis and interpretation of results. We appreciate the diligence and youthful energy of our student assistant Giovanni Galvez in finalizing the manuscript.

Dr. Lorand B. Szalay, the Principal Investigator and Director of the Institute of Comparative Social and Cultural Studies, organized and implemented the project through its main phases from development to completion.

The project was delayed in its completion due to the repeated medical problems of key participants. The authors want to express their sincere thanks for all the participants, identified and anonymous. They express their sincere gratitude to Mr. Jose Martinez for his help and understanding in coping with the various problems encountered.

The work upon which this publication is based was performed pursuant to Grant No. G00844054 with the U.S. Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the Department of Education should be inferred.

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