

CHAPTER IV
INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION



It was hypothesized earlier in this study that the second-generation Chinese who identify themselves with the Chinese rather than with the Thai will be more different from the Thai in values than those who identify themselves with the Thai rather than with the Chinese. It was also delimited that the values to be investigated were those concerned with wealth, prestige, education, and benevolence.

On the basis of the findings presented in Chapter III, this hypothesis is partially supported. When the second-generation Chinese, treated as three separate groups according to their identification, i.e., the low Chinese, the medium Chinese, and the high Chinese, were compared with one another as well as with the Thai, only the values concerning prestige was found to be significantly different ($p < .05$). This difference increases as the degree of Thai identification of the second-generation Chinese decreases. The high Chinese tend to value prestige more than do the middle and the low Chinese; and similarly, the middle and the low Chinese tend to value prestige more than do the Thai.

It was discussed in Chapter I that prestige is one of the key values of the Chinese community in Thailand. But for the Thai, although it was observed that prestige is also one of the key values, a strong desire for it did not emerge in

the SCT of Phillips¹. Thus, along with the findings of this study, it is likely that Thais tend to value prestige less than do the Chinese. Thus, values concerning prestige of the high Chinese, while closer to those of the Chinese, are more different from those of the Thai.

However, it is interesting to note that the middle Chinese do not differ from the low Chinese in the weight they put on prestige. This may be due to the fact that when dividing the second-generation Chinese into three subgroups, the D-scores of the middle Chinese were closer to those of the low Chinese than to those of the high Chinese. This was also indicated by the social distance expressed toward the anti-Chinese Thai. The mean social distance score of the low Chinese do not differ significantly from that of the medium Chinese even at the .10 level.

For the other values, each of the three second-generation Chinese groups do not differ significantly from one another; nor do they differ from the Thai.

A question then rises: are Thais and the second-generation Chinese not different in values regarding wealth, education, and benevolence?

When the second-generation Chinese were treated, as a group and then compared with the Thai, one more significant difference emerged. Second-generation Chinese subjects were

¹Phillips, loc. cit.

more sensitive to values concerning wealth than are the Thai: they accepted those who desire a moderate amount of wealth and rejected those who desire an excessive amount of wealth more than do Thai subjects ($p < .05$). As this finding implies, the second-generation Chinese are less likely to value wealth than are the Thai.

It was stated earlier that the Chinese in Thailand are perceived to be materialistic and concern themselves principally with the acquisition of wealth as an end in itself or as a means to social position². But now such persons are rejected by the second-generation Chinese. Is it possible that the second-generation Chinese depart from their parents in values concerning wealth?

One possibility is that the backgrounds of these two generations are different. Most immigrant Chinese were formerly South China peasants who were poor and little educated. As mentioned before, these Chinese were forced by poverty to emigrate to countries in Southeast Asia, or what they called Nan-Yang, to seek fortune. Their intention was not to settle abroad, but rather, to acquire money with which they could return and raise the status of their families³.

On the other hand, the second-generation Chinese came

²Skinner (1957), op. cit., p.91; and Coughlin, op. cit., p. 197.

³Skinner (1957), op. cit., p. 95.

on the scene when the economic hardships of their parents had been lessened. They have not undergone the hardships that their parents had to experience. According to Coughlin, the second-generation Chinese are "the inheritors of wealth rather than its creators;" and thus they find no reason to "work as hard or as long as their parents ---- they want more leisure, more enjoyment than the task of making money affords⁴." Therefore, it is likely that the second-generation Chinese are found to be less materialistic than are the immigrant Chinese.

The finding that Thais are materialistic is consistent with the observation of Khrukaew⁵ and the results of the SCT of Phillips⁶. Nevertheless, this finding is inconsistent with the observations of many other westerners. They reported evidence to support the idea that wealth and its acquisition is discouraged by Thai society and, therefore, Thais do not show high value for it. Instead, Thais emphasize the devotion of wealth in order to attain merit⁷.

As revealed in this study, the Thai do not show great social distance to those who desire an excessive amount of wealth. The variance accounted for by wealth is far less than

⁴Coughlin, op. cit., p. 200.

⁵Khrukaew, loc. cit.

⁶Phillips, loc. cit.

⁷Skinner (1957), loc. cit., Blanchard et al., loc. cit., and Coughlin, op. cit., p. 197.

that accounted for by other values such as education and benevolence. This implies that the acquisition of wealth is not so much discouraged as western writers might assume.

One may argue that in Thai society, all social contacts must be happy, pleasant, smooth, and must not contain face to face conflict. Whether or not one likes another person, he is to treat that person kindly. Any desire that might disgust others must be concealed⁸. Thus, a lower social distance to any non-conformist is expected.

However, one might not consider the response given privately to an artificial stimulus person a social interaction. Nor do the Thai show less social distance because of tolerance since the difference between the total social distance of the Thai and that of the second-generation Chinese is not significant (see page 44). It is likely that this social distance is a valid measure of values.

Another interesting result is that both the Thai and the second-generation Chinese put great emphasis on the importance of education. For the Thai, this result is already expected, as discussed in Chapter I. But for the second-generation Chinese, this may be considered as another indication of their departure from their parents' values. For the immigrant Chinese, scholars have not been appreciated because Chinese social status is determined solely by wealth⁹. Nevertheless, the

⁸Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-76.

⁹Skinner (1958). *loc. cit.*, and Coughlin, *loc. cit.*

second-generation Chinese have a different viewpoint. They see education as very important and as a means to upward mobility.

Regarding benevolence, both the Thai and the second-generation Chinese put much value on it. Despite Phillips' finding that the Thai give little attention to religious concerns or the accumulation of merit¹⁰, the Thai, as the results of this study indicate, strongly reject those who are not benevolent.

Many of the results discussed indicate that the Thai and the second-generation Chinese hold different, as well as similar, values. For example, there is an inconsistency between them in regard to the weights they put on wealth and prestige. There is also a consistency between them in regard to the emphasis they put on education and benevolence.

However, one must be cautious because the difference in value concerning wealth between these two groups is significant only at the .05 level. This difference, unless supported by further research, may be due to chance¹¹.

There are at least 4 other limitations of this study:

1. Owing to the fact that this study was based on the responses of adolescent subjects, cautions should be used in

¹⁰Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

¹¹Quinn McNemar, Psychological Statistics, Toppan Company Ltd., Tokyo, Japan, 1962, p. 69.

generalizing these results to Thais and the second-generation Chinese of other age groups.

2. Existing descriptions of Thai and Chinese values are almost wholly based on subjective observations---- few of which have been empirically verified. Hence, care should be given when comparing these observations to the findings of this study.

3. Due to unequal sample size, the sensitiveness of the analyses of variance employed in this study was lessened¹². Results would probably have been more meaningful if the subjects in each group had been equalized.

4. The use of the behavioral differential to assess a person's values represents an original approach in this study. Its validity and reliability have not been established.

¹²Winer, loc. cit.