

跨國性比較高中生之成就感 A Cross-Cultural Study on High School Students' Thoughts and Attitudes toward Achievement

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中文摘要

本研究探討比較台灣、中國大陸、日本及美國高中生之成就感，包括對未來、金錢、教育、生涯、自我評估、社會參與度〔外向或內向〕。研究比較不同國度、年級及性別之差異。研究結果發現美國學生對金錢重要性之態度明顯高於台灣。日本學生對未來充滿自信並認為金錢是衡量成功的重要指標。台灣學生在教育、生涯、自我評估及社會參與度上之態度最突出。研究結果提供專家學者及家長依國情重新了解高中學生之價值觀以作為日後教育之參考。

Abstract

This study analyzes high school students' thoughts and attitudes toward achievement, including *the future, money, education, career, self-evaluation, and social involvement (retrospect versus introspect)*, among Taiwan, China (Mainland), Japan, and the United States. Researchers compare the levels of these variables by area, grade, and gender. Research results found that US students had significantly higher scores in their attitudes toward *money* than that of Taiwanese students. Japanese students revealed high confidence toward the *future* and believed that *money* is most important factor to judge achievement. Taiwanese students obtained the highest scores on four variables - *education, career, self-evaluation, and retrospect versus introspect*, but not for money. These results provide valuable information for administrators, researchers, teachers, and parents to reconsider students' attitude toward career planning and future work we can do in education.

Theoretical Framework

The motivation that is used when an individual tries to achieve a certain goal is considered one of the most important factors in affecting attitudes and thoughts toward the future (McClelland, 1961). Kornadt, Eckensberger, and Emminghaus (1980) proposed that the cross-cultural achievement motive involves a culture-specific standard of excellence which group members strive to achieve. In line with this position, Fyans, Salili, Maehr, and Desai (1982) found that a generalized achievement theme extended across more than 30 cultures studied. However, the meaning of achievement varied highly between cultures and was found to be conceptually linked to culturally defined notions of success and power (Holt & Keats, 1992).

The influence of culture on thoughts has been the subject of a number of previous studies (see Adler & Graham, 1989). Within Chinese culture, social-oriented success or achievement is regarded as most important (Yang, 1986), while Western culture views success as a process of self-actualization (Rogers, 1955). Chinese culture is usually hypothesized to be distinct from Western culture but is closer to other Oriental cultures (Ma & Cheung, 1996).

There is a definite concern among those involved in studying thoughts in Chinese societies that the influence of government, modernization, and westernization is changing the traditional value patterns. In Taiwan, Rea, Chao, and Good (1981) noted that changing values have the most impact on youth. However, they believe the Taiwanese in general are still greatly influenced by Confucianism. Gielen (1989) also feels the major influence in the Taiwan is still Confucianism. Ekblad (1986) contends that the Chinese orientation toward children is moralistic rather than psychological. Underlying socialization is also Confucianism; individuals are believed to have the potential within themselves to achieve fulfillment and happiness. Satisfaction is gained through the person's diligent and sincere efforts to conduct themselves morally and to develop their potential (Suzuki, 1980).

However, Chinese students from the People's Republic of China are unique in some ways of value and attitude toward achievement because of the influences of authorities and communism. Gielen (1989, p. 5) points out that governmental disapproval has taken a larger toll on value systems in the People's Republic of China. Under the communist regime, Confucianism and "traditional world views" have been attacked as "evils of feudal society." The Cultural Revolution in general has taken a toll on all aspects of Chinese culture in the mainland. Little data has been available on the related topics in the People's Republic of China since 1949 (Lai & Lam, 1986). However, because it is now a country

that wants to become a part of the international economic community, understanding its value system is becoming increasingly important (Ralston, Gustafson, Elsass, & Cheung, 1992).

Between these extremes is Japan, a country with over development in economy. As a fully developed country, Japan has functioned within a free environment comparable to that of the United States. However, teenagers in this country were less concerned with legal concepts and moral judgement. Therefore, Japan is economically comparable to the United States and culturally opposite to the Republic of China.

Research Methods

Subjects

A total of 989 high school students were randomly selected from four cities of China (287 students), Japan (193 students), Taiwan (216 students), and the U.S.A. (293 students). The sample included 494 males and 474 females. The students enrolled in grades 10-12. These four areas were selected because of their diversity and importance to world trade (Chiu, Jao, & Wu, 1987). Since countries represent substantially different backgrounds, based on their cultural and economic systems, this study looked at an interesting mix of Eastern and Western cultures.

Data Collection

The authors developed a survey based on related tests and questionnaires. Thirty-five items were classified into six variables, which included students' attitudes and thoughts toward the *future, money, education, career, self-evaluation, and social involvement (retrospect versus introspect)*. Each variable included 5-6 items. The Likert scale was used to score from 'strongly disagree -1' to 'strongly agree -5'. Students' achievement in

reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, and computer science were recorded by self-report. Chinese and Japanese versions of the survey were translated and edited by the authors and experts in language.

Data Analysis

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha was used to obtain reliabilities of survey. Descriptive method was used to list variable distributions of whole sample and each area. A three-way ANOVA was used to compare attitude variables by area, gender, and grade. Tukey Multiple Test was used when ANOVA revealed significant differences in the processes. Multiple Linear Regression was used to predict students' academic achievement by attitude variables.

Results

Reliability of the Survey

The results of Cronbach Coefficient reliabilities were very high: $\alpha_{\text{Whole}} = .92$, $\alpha_{\text{China}} = .95$, $\alpha_{\text{Japan}} = .63$, $\alpha_{\text{Taiwan}} = .77$, and $\alpha_{\text{USA}} = .93$.

Comparisons of Area

Means and "F" values of attitude variables are summarized in Table 1. All comparisons of areas showed significant differences. Japanese students' scores were especially different from Taiwanese students in *attitudes toward money, education, career, self-evaluation, and social involvement (retrospect versus introspect)*. US students had significantly higher scores in their attitudes toward *money* than that of Taiwanese students.

Table 1. Means and "F" values of attitude variables

Area	Future	Money	Education	Career	Self-Eval.	Social Invo.
China	3.32	3.34	3.35	3.38	3.29	3.27
Japan	3.43	2.30	2.63	2.33	2.80	2.33
Taiwan	3.03	3.68	3.89	3.95	3.39	3.88
USA	3.04	2.95	3.01	3.12	3.04	3.09
F	20.05**	108.59**	94.82**	212.93**	36.79**	198.39**

Comparisons of Grade

ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences between 10th and 11th graders, but the scores of 10th and 11th grade students were significantly higher than those of 12th grade students in six variables.

Gender Differences

The difference of attitudes of males and females were not very obvious. All variables were insignificant, except in the variable of retrospect versus introspect, male students were significantly more retrospect than that of females ($F = 4.62^*$).

Predictions of Achievement by Attitude Variables

Predictions of achievement by attitude variables are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of multiple linear regression

		constant	Future	Money	Education	Career	Self-Eval.	Social Invo.
China	B	2.502	.029	.006	-.045	-.058	.073	.145
	t	17.334	.504	.122	-.707	-.860	.867	2.421*
Japan	B	4.589	-.087	-.118	-.194	-.127	-.322	.129
	t	9.677	-.998	-1.812	-2.727**	-1.401	-2.522*	1.714
Taiwan	B	.452	.012	.040	-.001	.115	.277	.011

	t	1.138	.172	.687	-.019	1.554	3.106**	.158
USA	B	3.329	.085	-.011	.064	-.142	.014	-.030
	t	14.941	1.223	-.207	1.131	-2.010*	.197	-.488

$$R^2_C = .037, R^2_J = .147, R^2_T = .094, \& R^2_{US} = .024.$$

Discussion and Conclusion

Different cultural and social backgrounds produced the students' different thoughts and attitudes toward the *future, money, education, career, self-evaluation, and retrospect versus introspect*. This study's findings of cultural variation in thought and attitude confirm not only the presence of the Kornadt et al. (1980) cross-cultural standard of excellence but also support the Fyans et al. (1982) thesis that different cultural groups have different achievement standards or norms toward which they strive.

ANOVA and Tucky test revealed that six variables between areas were significantly different. Japanese students were significantly different from students in Taiwan. Japanese students revealed high confidence toward the *future* and believed that *money* is most important, but they had very low scores on the other four variables (*attitude toward education, career, self-evaluation, and retrospect versus introspect*). Taiwanese students obtained the highest scores on four variables - *education, career, self-evaluation, and retrospect versus introspect*, but not for money. This difference between Japan and Taiwan is also not too difficult to accept. With the Western influences in Japanese education and business without emphasizing moral education as in China or law education as in United States, it is reasonable to expect Japanese high school students to score lower than Taiwanese students who have not been subject to those influences (Lai & Lam, 1986).

Non-significant results were obtained for students in Mainland China. These findings support the hypothesis on Confucian values. As noted, the teachings of Confucius emphasize a social hierarchy or structure and protection of the status quo. The 1960s saw the Cultural Revolution denounce the teachings of Confucius (Munro, 1965). Therefore, to a degree, one might expect a lessened support for Confucian values in Mainland China.

This study found that gender difference did not cause any difference in attitude. However, the declining of senior students' attitudes and thoughts is a cause for educators to pay more attention.

The U.S. students' attitudes toward *money* were very high. The US high school students considered that *money* was more important than their education, career, meaningful lives, and the law. From the results of correlation and regression of the US sample, the attitudes toward *money* had significant correlation with the other five variables scores, but it had a negative correlation with academic achievement ($r = -.056, p = .343$). Also, academic achievement had negative correlation with other variables except attitude toward the *future*. This study also revealed that U.S. high school students needed to focus more on academic study and to improve thoughts and attitudes toward education and lives.

Future research can highlight on: Are thoughts and attitude toward achievement changing? If so, which ones and in which direction? These questions appear interesting to the United States, the People's Republic of China, Japan, as well as Taiwan.

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