

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the study in general tend ^{to} support the main hypothesis (Please refer to p. 20). While the "Sino-Thai" group show less social distance towards the "Thai" than towards the "Chinese", the "Sino-Thai" group's acceptance of the "Thai" as compared to the "Chinese" is not statistically significant. However the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" shows a statistically significant level of acceptance of the "Thai" as compared with the "Chinese", ($25 > p > .10$). The implication of these findings will be discussed further.

The sub-hypothesis that the "Chinese" will have less social distance towards the "Chinese" than towards the "Thai", and that the "Thai" will have less social distance towards the "Thai" than towards the "Chinese" is also confirmed.* This sub-hypothesis is set up to check the validity of the Social Distance Scale as the tool for measuring the individual's identification. Therefore, the following discussion will depend on the assumption that the scores on the Social Distance Scale received or expressed by each group can be used as valid sources of interpretation.

Of the many interesting results coming out of this study, the following seem to the writer to be the most significant:

* but in the Chinese case, the significant level of differences of Social Distance means appeared between the "Thai" and the "Extreme Chinese".

1. The "Extreme Chinese" group enjoys the greatest amount of acceptance by the "Chinese" as expected. But of all the stimulus persons, the "Extreme Thai" received the greatest degree of rejection from the "Thai" group. The "Thai" were able to accept the "Chinese" a little more than they were able to accept the "Extreme Thai". What does this mean? Are the "Thai" less ethnocentric than the "Chinese"? Does it mean that the "Thai" are less prejudiced than the "Chinese", and thus resent the prejudiced "Thai"? Or does it mean that the "Thai" in general are benevolent and do not want to hurt the "Chinese", and thus resent the "Thai" who discriminate against the "Chinese"? These questions cannot be answered by the present study, but it is felt that any further research done on this problem would be worthwhile.

2. The Social Distance Scale scores which are given to the "Extreme Chinese" and the "Chinese" by the "Thai", the "Chinese", and the "High Thai cultural Sino-Thai" subject are extremely close as shown in Table II. But the Social Distance Scale scores received by the "Extreme Thai" from all subjects is significantly high as compared with the Social Distance Scale scores received by the "Thai", ($p < .01$). Again, why this happens cannot be explained from the available data. It is possible that the differences came from the negative connotations in the words used in the description of the "Extreme Thai".

However, there may be a plausible reason why the "Extreme Thai" are rejected by all ethnic "Chinese" subjects. It may be that the "Extreme Thai" are perceived by the Chinese as a potential

social and economic rival. They are the group of people who favour "Chinese" discrimination in almost every respect. It is this group which expresses over hostility towards the "Chinese".

For both "Sino-Thai" groups, the "Extreme Thai" is probably perceived as a hinderance to their assimilation into Thai society. May be this "Extreme Thai" is viewed as the group which frustrated their aspirations and goals. This is the group which will deny them their full rights as citizens of Thailand. This is the one which will block their social mobility.

3. It is interesting that the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" experiences a greater amount of social distance than all the ethnic Chinese. The "Sino-Thai" rejected them most strongly. The "Chinese" also fejected them to an even greater extent than they did the ordinary "Thai" people. But for the "Thai" this group is the most acceptable of all the "Chinese". In spite of the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" group being accepted by its own members most, this acceptance is somewhat noncommittal, (see Social Distance Mean score in Table II and also appendix B.)

The "Chinese" and the "Sino-Thai's" rejection of the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" is understandable. For them, this group is perhaps a turncoat or renegade. This is the group which repudiates their "Chinese" group values and norms, and becomes orientated to the Thai society. Merton, in his discussion of the reference group theory and ex-membership, wrote

.... The behaviour of the repudiated membership

group towards the former members tends to be more hostile and bitter than that directed towards people who have always been members of an out group.⁴⁰

This is because the ex-member's repudiation of the group's norms and values affects the groups in at least two ways. First, it is a symbolic threat to the values of the group. The individual who repudiates them used to accept them. Therefore, his opposition to these values cannot be interpreted as a matter of pure ignorance as is done with the member of the outgroup. Second, the fact that there are people leaving the group, is a threat to group solidarity. Merton concluded:

The estranged ex-member is thus a living symbol both of the inferiority imputed to the group's values and of the tenuous character of group loyalties.⁴¹

4. One of the most interesting findings is the relationship between the "Sino-Thai" and the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai". Of all the cultural groups the "Sino-Thai" reject the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" most strongly. The mean social distance expressed by the "Sino-Thai" towards this group is 54. But the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" found the "Sino-Thai" to be the next most acceptable after the "Thai"; the mean social distance expressed by the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" towards the "Sino-Thai" is 30.0. The question arises, "what is the cause of this?" In fact, the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" group should, to all intents and

⁴⁰ Merton, op cit.; p. 296.

⁴¹ Ibid.

purposes, be considered as the most desirable group, because they seem to be the final product of complete assimilation. They are more accepted by the "Thai" than the other "Chinese" and thus have a good opportunity for greater social mobility. And is this not the final social position towards which every "Sino-Thai" is carried through his social mobility? Then is it possible to suggest that this rejection of the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" by the "Sino-Thai" is a kind of resistance towards their destination - that is resistance towards becoming a Thai at last? Does the assimilation cost the Chinese any mental suffering? Is it also true for the following statement? As Elegant writes:

... When the feeling that there is no hope in China, the Chinese as realistic as ever are likely to conclude that they must adjust themselves into the host country. The adjustment will certainly be painful though not as painful as accepting the reality which forces estrangement from China.⁴²

Also is this why the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" accept the "Sino-Thai" more than their own group, (though not at a statistically significant level)? Do they wish that they themselves had not become so "Thai" that they were estranged from things "Chinese" and thus admire the people who still keep their Chinese-ness and at the same time manage to get along with the "Thai"?

But at the same time, the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" shows least social distance to the "Thai". From this can be inferred that the "High Thai culture Sino-Thai" aspires to belong

⁴²Elegant, op cit.; p. 303.

to the Thai society. He accepts Thai cultural behaviour. He also minimises his social distance to the "Thai" and maximises his social distance to the "Chinese". A similar finding was reported by Robert Perucci. Perucci studied⁴³ "social distance strategies employed in inter-status and intra-status relationships on a psychiatric ward". He used sociometry to determine the patient's status and from sociometric data divided patients into three groups - "Hi-positives", "Hi-negatives", and "Hi-leaders". Then he observed the contacts of these three groups of patients among themselves and the staff members. His social distance is defined by the amount and quality of such contacts. He found that the "Hi-negatives" - the patients who are rejected in the sociometric choices,

... stand out for their relatively frequent contact with staff as well as the amount of contact that involves doing favours for the staff. They have adopted a conversion mode of adaptation and maintain strong identification with the staff. ... "Hi-negatives" (also) ... organize their behaviour on the ward in a way that minimizes the social distance between themselves and the staff, and maximises social distance between themselves and the other patients.⁴⁴

5. Another cultural group which deserves a detailed discussion is the "Sino-Thai". The "Sino-Thai" does not show deep attachment to any group. The lowest of the social distance he

⁴³ Robert Perrucci, "Social Distance Strategies and Intra-organizational Stratification: A Study of the Status System of a Psychiatric Ward", American Sociological Review, 1963, 28 (6), 951 - 965.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

expressed towards the stimulus persons is 30.10, (towards the "Thai"). From the Social Distance Scale the score 30 means 'I would co-operate with this person in business', and, 'I would accept this person as a speaking acquaintance'. Even the members of the "Sino-Thai" himself is accepted at this level of relationship. The "Sino-Thai" is accepted by all groups but also at a secondary level of relationship. They are not rejected by any group but are not deeply accepted either.

As far as the data is concerned, the "Sino-Thai" seems to be uncertain of his identity. He is not certain whether he should consider himself a "Thai", a "Chinese" or a "Sino-Thai". The social distances expressed by him towards these three are not statistically different, (See also Table VI). His uncertainty of his identification is peculiar to this group and so his social behaviour is as well. Skinner described the "Sino-Thai" social behaviour as follows:-

Local born Chinese, ..., have no organization of their own. They are members alongside of immigrants in the Chinese organizations, and at the same time join Thai and Sino-Thai associations. ... Their way of life is in general intermediate between the norms of the two core societies, but they are not welded into a separate social grouping, class or society.⁴⁵

In these circumstances, the "Sino-Thai" is described as having 'double identity'. However the present study may modify this label and show the "Sino-Thai" to be a person of 'triple

⁴⁵ Skinner, (1957) op cit.; p. 314.

identity'.

The question of the marginality of the "Sino-Thai" is also one of interest. Coughlin wrote:-

The Sino-Thai is in no sense a marginal man who can find a place in neither group. On the contrary, he is accepted by both the Thai and the Chinese without prejudice.⁴⁶

Coughlin is correct from a sociological point of view. In this present study it was also found that the "Sino-Thai" was almost equally accepted by the "Chinese" and the "Thai". But apparently they are accepted a little more by the "Chinese". The investigation of small town Jews in the United States by Peter I. Rose also revealed that the Jews in communities with populations below ten thousand also

... proved to be bi-cultural rather than marginal. Rather than being on the periphery of the two cultures and psychologically torn between them, the small town Jews actively participate in both.⁴⁷

However the author would like to point out that the acceptance, as shown in this study, of the "Sino-Thai" by the "Chinese" and the "Thai" is also at a superficial and secondary level (see Table II and appendix B.). The Social Distance Scale scores show that no group is willing to establish an intimate relationship with the "Sino-Thai", even the "Sino-Thai" themselves.*

⁴⁶Coughlin, op cit.; p. 91

⁴⁷Peter I. Rose, "Small Town Jews and Their Neighbours in the United States", The Jewish Journal of Sociology, 1961, II (2) as cited in R. Williams, Strangers next Door (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

* In actual fact all groups except the "Extreme Thai" and the "Extreme Chinese" do establish intimate relationships with the "Sino-Thai", - e.g. intermarriage occurs at a rather high rate. The author cannot account for this contradiction between the test scores and the actual observations of behaviour.

Therefore, psychologically, is it possible that the "Sino-Thai" is marginal? He belongs to no group. He is uncertain about his identity. His marginality does not come from the rejection of his reference groups, but rather from his own indecision in choosing his reference group.

Nevertheless the above discussion is not to be taken as decisive. One may suggest that the methodology used in this study is not refined or sophisticated enough to assess the "Sino-Thai" identity. The author has no objection to this criticism. In fact, she feels that further complimentary research is necessary; and other more refined techniques should be employed. The behavioural study is the most recommended. That is, if possible, some sort of observation techniques should be used.

The last point the author would like to discuss is the theoretical problems involved in this type of research.

The theoretical problems of this study lie in the question as to whether this type of methodology, the so called 'paper and pencil' method is valid or adequate for use in the study of such a complex process as assimilation and the extremely private process of self identification. Moreover this study is an attempt to measure quantitatively behaviour which has traditionally been examined qualitatively. All through the project, the author was fully aware of the limitations of the tools used and the methodological problems involved. Nevertheless the confinement of oneself to the traditional techniques, methods and thinking inhibits scientific progress. The author feels that the advancement of

science is achieved through the spirit of experimentation. This research was carried out in this spirit.

The outcome of this research in general seems to suggest that this type of study has some value. The quantitative data (Cultural and Social Distance Scores) seem to correlate in some degree with the conclusion derived from qualitative study. For example the "Sino-Thai"s double identity" character as described by Coughlin is also detected in his score on the Social Distance Scale. The quantitative method has the advantage of being able to handle large samples quickly and is more suitable for use in the preliminary stage. The justification for this type of study seems to be closely related to the pragmatic point of view that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, i.e. the validity of the experiment is proved by its results. Therefore the criticisms one can make of this study will be similar to the ones one can make of the theory of pragmatism, namely that which works in one situation may not work in another. Moreover the fact that a conclusion has been reached in both quantitative and qualitative study is not necessarily a proof of its validity. Another limitation which is especially true for the qualitative method is that it cannot give information on human emotions or affections. This study has raised many questions which it is doubtful whether this or any other quantitative method can solve.

We are led to the conclusion that existing methodology used in social psychology is hardly satisfactory for solving the problems before us. We are still very far from the goal of attaining complete knowledge of human behaviour. The temptation is therefore to give up attempting to find the answers and ignore all social and psychological problems with an attitude of helplessness. But difficulties and imperfections are not reasons for ceasing to attempt to solve the problems. As human beings, we perpetually strive to understand, predict, control and explain our own behaviour and others'. Thousands of methods and techniques are tried; and none of them are perfect. But each method, in spite of its imperfection and limitations, has contributed in some degree to the understanding of the human race.