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<th>Family violence: Attitudes and beliefs – A cross-cultural comparison among Hong Kong, Singapore and Australian human service workers</th>
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The Singapore Copyright Act applies to the use of this document.
This collaborative research project is being undertaken with Dr Kurt Lushington, Professor Freda Briggs, Dr Greg Ireland and Ms Josie Luscree of the University of South Australia and Masters in counselling students at the University of Hong Kong.

This study explores the attitudes and beliefs about family violence held by persons working in human services (e.g. teachers, social workers, nurses, psychologists) in Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia.

The aims of this study are to explore the attitudes and beliefs about family violence held by those who work in human service professions with a view to identifying necessary support and professional programs for members of the communities and the workers.

Family violence is a costly problem both socially and economically. The social impact of family violence is unequivocal. It has a negative effect on psychological, family and community well being. It also has a direct economic cost to the community. Government bodies in Australia spend in excess of 226 million dollars each year directly dealing with incidence of family violence. A better understanding of the factors that contribute to family violence will result in social and economic benefit.

Governments in Hong Kong and Singapore have recently identified this as an area of need. While there are many parallels between the experiences of Hong Kong Singapore and Australia, it is well recognised that family violence occurs within a cultural context where certain behaviours are considered acceptable while others are considered unacceptable. To what extent the cultural norms on family violence in Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia converge, is not known. This knowledge is important because policy makers in each country are increasingly looking outside of their own experience to better inform practice and this process is clearly informed by cultural norms. A useful starting point to begin a comparison between cultural norms on family violence is to examine the attitudes and beliefs held by those in the human service profession; there is a paucity of information about this. Moreover, cross-cultural comparisons of attitudes and beliefs are yet to be explored.

At the time of writing this article a questionnaire on attitudes and beliefs about family violence has been administered to human service workers in Australia and Singapore and will be administered in Hong Kong later this year. This questionnaire contains statements obtained previously from interviews with Australian professionals, perpetrators and victims of family violence. Participants are asked to rate how strongly they agree or disagree with the statements. To control for “faking good”, participants are also asked to complete the Mawlowe-Crown Social desirability scale which will be used to validate responses on the attitudes and beliefs questionnaire. Data obtained from this study will be used to establish the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, to establish normative values and enable comparisons between Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore human service workers.

Principle component analysis will be used to explore the underlying commonalities between items in the questionnaire. This will be performed separately for Parts A, B and C. Part A focuses on sexual abuse, Part B on emotional abuse and Part C on family violence. Initially, data from the three countries will be combined. This will enable the identification of the factor structure of the questionnaires and further refinement of construct validity. Factor scores will then be compared between Australian, Hong Kong and Singaporean groups. Principle component
analyses will also be performed in each of the target populations to explore whether there are any cultural differences in factor structure. Combined groups and individual groups factor scores for Parts A, B, and C will also be cross-correlated to explore the relationship between attitudes and beliefs toward spousal abuse with that toward child emotional abuse and similarly, and with that toward child sexual abuse.

As there has been no similar project carried out, the findings will interest human service providers, trainers and policy makers as they design and implement relevant services and support programs for community members and professionals. Findings of the research will be published so they can be used by students undertaking teacher education, special education, nursing, counselling and other relevant social science programs at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Mathematics Education in Different Cultural Traditions: An ICMI Study

Fan Lianghuo

Recent large-scale international comparative studies such as the Second International Mathematics Study and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study have consistently shown that students in East Asian countries such as Singapore, China, Japan, and Korea perform substantially better than their counterparts in American and European countries. These results have generated interest by researchers in mathematics education to investigate the factors behind the differences in mathematics performance between East Asia and the West. Consequently, it is timely for the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction (ICMI) to undertake a study entitled "Mathematics Education in Different Cultural Traditions: A Comparative Study of East Asia and the West", simply referred to as the "ICMI EastWest Study".

ICMI, which has been in existence for approximately 100 years, is one of the most important and well-established international organisations in the field of mathematics education. In the last two decades, ICMI has invested considerable effort in identifying themes of key significance to the international mathematics education community and has initiated a series of specific studies on these themes. So far, twelve studies have been conducted in the series. Recent themes of the ICMI Studies included Assessment in Mathematics Education, Gender and Mathematics Education, and The Teaching and Learning of Mathematics at University Level. The ICMI EastWest Study is the thirteenth one in the series.

The Study was launched in early 2000. As with earlier ICMI Studies, ICMI appointed an International Program Committee (IPC) as the overall decision-making body for this study. The IPC has the following members: Annie BESSOT (France), Alan BISHOP (Australia), FAN Lianghuo (Singapore), Walter FISCHER (Germany), Klaus-Dieter GRAF (Germany, Co-chair), Bernard HODGSON (Canada), LIN Fou Lai (Taiwan), Frederick K.S. LEUNG (Hong Kong, Co-chair), Kyung-Mee PARK (Korea), Katsuhiko SHIMIZU (Japan), Jim STIGLER (USA), Margaret WU (Australia), and ZHANG Dainzhou (China). The main tasks of the IPC include producing the study's Discussion Document, organizing an invited study conference, and publishing a Study Volume in the ICMI Study series. In addition, it will set up an online Discussion Forum for all researchers and others who are interested in the theme of the study.

The recently released Discussion Document was based on two meetings of the IPC held, respectively, in Tokyo in August 2000 and Berlin in December 2000. According to the Discussion Document, the Study aims, by comparing different cultural traditions and their influences on and reflections in mathematics education between East Asian and Western societies, to achieve the following: (1) "gain a deeper understanding of various aspects of mathematics learning and teaching", (2) "develop a process of self-reflection on our own traditional ways that we often take for granted", and (3) "share between us the latest educational development and research".

Fourteen specific aspects of the Study have been identified and the IPC will invite individual researchers and groups of researchers to participate in and contribute to the Study. These aspects include the context of mathematics education, curriculum and content, teachers and teacher education, students and learning, styles/attitudes, teaching methods, and media, assessment of students' achievement, views on the nature of mathematics, non-formal mathematics education, and the evolution of mathematics education. Participants are encouraged to consider joint contributions, take different approaches (particularly including document analysis, literature review, and case study methodology), and use