
RESEARCH NOTE

*The Differential Mode of Association in Contemporary China: An Enriched Portrayal**

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Abstract

Drawing on the 2022 Traditional Culture and Cognitive Pattern Survey (TCCPS), this article reports an enriched portrayal of *chaxugeju* (the differential mode of association) in today's China, an influential sociological conception coined by Fei Xiaotong. Empirical investigations show that the interpersonal connections of Chinese citizens still manifest a typical differential mode of association from family members (such as parents) through to ordinary acquaintances. This differential mode is more salient among rural residents. In addition, the kinship-versus-non-kinship distinction stands out with the significantly higher trust in kinship members. Within kinship members, senior and younger generations are perceived to be more trustworthy than referees of the contemporaneous generation. The conjugal relationship matters, as reflected by the strong trust in the spouse. Partly due to the one-child policy, trust in brothers and sisters declines with age. However, the patrilineal principle is not supported where kinship members of both maternal and paternal descent lines are seen to be comparably trustworthy. For individuals outside of family, the perceived trustworthiness of close friends reveals a high level. Generally speaking, the non-kinship domain is structurally tripartite: the most trusted close friends, the intermediately trusted people with socially meaningful ties, and the least trusted strangers.

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