

# Taiwan's North-South Gap: A Study of Taipei and Kaohsiung Citizens' Moral Cognition of Fairness and Careness

Chien-Ning Chen

Department of Administrative Management  
National Tainan University

Chun-Chieh Ma

Department of Administrative Management  
National Tainan University  
School of Government, Peking University

Ming-Shen Wang

Institute of Public Affairs Management  
National Sun-Yat-Sen University

## Abstract

Taiwan's north-south gap includes both individual and social factors. A number of researchers have studied this gap with regard to economic, social, political and governmental aspects. Yet little research so far has focused on the issue of moral cognition, where here I define this (somewhat abbreviated) term to mean the "cognition" or mental awareness, sense or definition of "morality." Thus this study is an empirical comparison of Taipei/Kaohsiung's citizens' moral cognition of what the researchers call "fairness" and "careness," where the latter really means an emphasis on or predisposition toward "caring about others." The study employs Social Judgment Theory to investigate Taipei and Kaohsiung citizen's "moral cognition" in everyday life. The aim is to clarify the abstract concept of moral cognition, to reflect on the role of individuality in the social structure, and to provide an empirical basis for studying moral cognition in future studies.

The moral cognition priority ratings were as follows: for fairness, Taipei 38%, Kaohsiung 31%; for "careness," Taipei 42%, Kaohsiung 47%; for an equal priority to fairness and careness, Taipei 20%, Kaohsiung 22%. These results reflect the fact that Kaohsiung is still a traditional society, Taipei a modern one. Thus it is natural, and could easily have been predicted, that Taipei would emphasize (rational and abstract) justice or fairness more, and Kaohsiung (emotional) care, caring or "careness." These findings are significant for our future attempts to overcome the problem of Taiwan's North-South gap, especially as regards economic development, public affairs and management, and also education in these same fields.

**Keywords:** fairness, social judgment theory, morality cognition, careness