Exploring the Influence of East Asian Culture Tendencies to Judge Others Based on Familial Factors

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the influence of familial factors on prejudice among East Asians, considering the ambiguous impact of Confucian collectivism. To achieve this, a literature review was conducted to examine previous research on prejudice and its association with familial factors. The study employed the Implicit Bias Test and collected data from a voluntary sample of 33 East Asian individuals. The results of a logistical regression test (p=4.31 e -0.5) demonstrated that the participants placed considerable importance on familial factors: parental income, parental occupational prestige, and parental education. These findings indicate a significant influence of familial qualities in the judgments made by East Asians. However, further investigation is necessary to understand the specific role of Confucian culture in shaping these dynamics (R-square =0.532). Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature and highlights the need for additional research to fully comprehend the complex interplay between familial factors, prejudice, and cultural influences among East Asians.

Introduction

It is a common saying in South Korea, "The child is the mirror of their parents." Not only in Korean culture but in many Asian cultures, someone's reputation can be pre-conceived by the image of their family. Confucius's philosophy and culture are habitually "blamed" for this tendency of judgment based on familial factors in East Asia. However, similar and even more extreme behaviors are observed throughout the globe in all cultures and nations.

Reasons Behind the Prejudice

The tendency to judge others based on their relatives, especially parents can be explained biologically as well as through surrounding social environments, in other words, nature vs nurture. Genetics determines human characteristics and personality as well as professional qualities like leadership, academics, and economic outcomes. The earliest research on the transmission of personality traits through genetics was by Francis Galton, an English polymath in the Victorian era. Through his research of the pedigree of "100 individuals whom he considered to be 'great man'", Galton concluded that "'greatness' appeared to be more prevalent within the family history of the subjects"(Johnson 1). Subsequent studies by modern scientists, most prominently neurologist Paul Thomas, have discovered that genes determine the intelligence of individuals and even identified the 24 genetic variations within 6 different genes that affected the efficiency of brain functions. The influence of genes over a nurturing environment is displayed in an experiment by Gail Anderson where he discovered that 12% of adopted children from criminal parents became criminals, 6% of children adopted by criminal parents from biological non-criminal parents became criminals and 40% of children who were born and raised in criminal households became criminals. Genetics even proved to affect one's academic and

economic outcomes. According to the 2006 research by Jencks and Tach studying twin and adoption data in Sweden and the United States about 2/5th of adult earnings is accounted for by genetic similarities and a similar study by Björklund showed that the most conservative estimates suggest that genetics account for 20 percent of earnings inequality for men and more than 10 percent for women.

On the other hand, the environment one was nurtured in also plays a significant role, adding another reason why people judge others based on their family and relatives who directly determine the environment one grew up in many of the cases. As proven in many modern studies, academic outcomes are largely determined by household income and culture. Research analyzing the college attendance of Korean adoptees in American households revealed that "a doubling of median family income is associated with a 10-percent decrease in the probability of having "no-college" status"(Sacerdote, 345). Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) developed by Vygotsky shows the difference between what a child can do with adult guidance and what he/she can do independently. Children's future independent performance is largely dependent upon the types of guidance provided by the parents and hence influenced by various familial and cultural values.

Negative Impacts

As familial factors get taken into consideration when judging others, the intrinsic values of many people are ignored and disregarded. One of the most studied examples of such occurrence is the "courtesy stigma". Coined by sociologists, courtesy stigma refers to the "prejudice and discrimination that is extended to people because they are somehow linked to a person with the stigmatized mark"(Corrigan 239). Courtesy stigma is typically exhibited in environments surrounding the mentally ill, incarcerated, divorced, and other individuals possessing similar socially stigmatizing characters. Historically families of mental illness patients have been the illustrative victims of courtesy stigma. Schizophrenia and autism were blamed on refrigerator mothers (cold, uncaring mothers) and homosexuality was blamed on absent fathers. Families of patients with psychiatric disorders were considered more blamable compared to ones with physical disease and dysfunction and especially the children of mental illness patients were viewed as "contaminated". In the case of the families of incarcerated individuals, courtesy stigmas were exacerbated due to many of them being socially/economically marginalized and as well as the common biological stereotype of "bad blood". Lastly, children of divorced parents were believed to be less happy and unsuccessful in emotional adjustment and stress coping by their teachers. Researchers Rosenberg and Sedlak carried out survey-based experiments to prove the Implicit Personality Theory of how people's first impressions determine one's understanding and judgment of others. The experiment revealed that "teachers who were told the child's parents were divorced had classified the child differently, evoked different sets of associations, formed different "implicit personalities" for the child, and formed different judgments" (Guttman 558).

Positive Impacts

Familial influence on the judgment of other people is not limited to negative influences. Political dynasties, hereditary rules, and arranged marriages are examples of family and relatives playing positive criteria and attributes for an individual. Political dynasties are common phenomena prominent in Eastern democracies such as Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam. Japan's former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was the grandson of Nobusuke Kishi, who served as a Prime Minister from 1957-1960 and the Grand Nephew of Eisaku Satowho served from 1964-1972. Political dynasties are also significant in the Western world as can be seen through the Bush, Clinton, and Adams families. The success of political dynasties cannot be simply addressed to "nepotism and name recognition but the trust people bestow on certain images of the families" (Fleischman 10). The most well-studied examples are the *Sheshu* (second-generation) politicians of Japan. Voters believed that Sheshu politicians were "better educated, have more political experience and benefit their political constituency" despite "52% of the respondents not remembering whether they

ever had a legacy member of the House of Representatives elected from their district"(Hirofumi 9). In addition, voters had stereotypes of legacy Prime Ministers as being better at diplomacy and at handling public works as well as superior in national security matters and industrial policy than non-legacy MPs. Apart from democratic political dynasties, thousands of years of hereditary rulers also prove to be another example of a positive influence of judgments based on families and relatives. The hereditary rule has been the standard rule of succession for most of human history. If someone was a good ruler, people expected their children to be a good ruler. Influence of parents and relatives even prevailed for royal bastards who often ended up in prominent political positions despite their illegitimacy as people expected similar leadership and qualities as their parents. Arranged marriages are the most direct display of familial influence. Arranged marriages are the most prevalent in Hindu cultures. In Hindu-majority India, arranged marriages took up 84% of the total marriages in 2016. In Hindu cultures, "marriage is more than just a simple bond between two people, rather a bond between families and a promise of continuity in patriarchal family lines with deep religious, social, and institutional significance"(Allendorf, 9). Hence, "spouses are chosen on the basis of caste, economic status of the spouse's family" (Allendorf, 14).

Confucian Collectivism

Whether true or not, prejudice against others based on familial factors is believed to be more prevalent in East Asia. Oftentimes such prejudice is attributed to Confucius's collectivist culture. However, comparison studies on Asian collectivism and Western collectivism put the theory in question. In Asian collectivism, contrary to popular belief, the personal self does not turn into the collective self. Rather, the relationship between personal selves in the group is considered key to Asian collectivism. On the other hand, "Western collectivism defines collective self in terms of prototypical properties shared among depersonalized members of a common in-group"(Yuki, 3). Derived from the Confucian emphasis on intra-group relationships, Asian collectivism is focused on building more intra-group networks than intergroup differences.

Methodology

Study Design

Data was collected through a survey of randomly selected subjects from various demographics. A modified template of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) was used for the survey. "IAT is a survey format designed to assess the strength of association between a concept and one's underlying evaluation/stereotypes on the concept" (Project Implicit).

The modified IAT consisted of 56 questions including 6 explicit questions and 50 prompt-based implicit questions. Explicit questions were used to obtain the demographic data as well as the survey subjects' explicit opinions on the topic. Information including age, ethnicity, country of residency, and level of education was collected for each subject. Of the 6 explicit questions, 5 asked the subjects to pick how strongly they agree with the given statement from 1-5 with 5 being the strongest. Questions included:
- Do you believe children inherit their parents' personalities?
- Do you believe children inherit their parents' abilities in professional settings?
- How vital are parents to children's success?
- How comfortable are you becoming friends with people from working-class/impoverished families?
- How comfortable are you with becoming friends with people from middle/upper-class families?

The final explicit question asked the subjects to select a statement that describes them the best from the options of strongly, moderately, or slightly preferring people from a working-class family, middle/upper-class family, or liking them equally.

Prompt-based implicit questions consisted of prompts describing the socioeconomic status of made-up individuals as well as their family backgrounds. Subjects were instructed to sort the given prompts as either "positive" or "negative" as quickly as possible, based on their initial perception.

Each prompt of the implicit questions included 11 factors that determine the respondents' judgments on the made-up individuals including parental income, parental occupational prestige, parental education, marital status of parents, family health history, history of addiction, parental criminal record, individual criminal record, individual income, individual occupational prestige, and individual education level. Each factor was then given scores based on the social perceptions of each level of the factors, presented in Table 1. The scores on occupational prestige were decided using Choi TR's occupational prestige scale formulated using the Korean Social Stratification Survey. Occupations with a prestige rating over 80 were given a score of 5, a rating over 70 was given 4, a rating over 50 was given 3, a rating over 40 was given 2, and below 40 was given 1. Similarly, "Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment 2021" from the U.S. The Bureau of Labor Statistics was used for income level, and "DSM-5 Criteria for Substance Use Disorders: Recommendations and Rationale" from the National Library of Medicine for family health history. Scores for marital status derived from Claire Etaugh and Joann Mlastrom's survey of college students which revealed that students favored married individuals, followed by widowed individuals, and then divorced and never-married individuals.

Table 1. Prompt Scoring Rubric

Rating Value	Parental Income	Parental Occupational Prestige	Parental Education	Marital Status of Parents	Family Health History	History of Addiction	Parental Criminal Record	Criminal Record	Individual Income	Individual Occupational Prestige	Individual Education Level
1	Impoverished	Prestige Score <40	Less than a Highschool Diploma	Orphan	Mental Illness	Risky Use	Felonies (Execution, Prison, Probation, Fine)	Felonies (Execution, Prison, Probation, Fine)	Impoverished	Prestige Score <40	Less than a Highschool Diploma
2	Working Class	Prestige Score >40	Highschool Diploma	Single	Hereditary Disease	Social Problems	Felony-Misdemeanors	Felony-Misdemeanors	Working Class	Prestige Score >40	Highschool Diploma
3	Middle Class	Prestige Score >50	Graduated/Attending College (2-year)	Divorced	Parental Non-Hereditary Disease	Impaired Control	Misdemeanors (Jail, Probation, Fine)	Misdemeanors (Jail, Probation, Fine)	Middle Class	Prestige Score >50	Graduated/Attending College (2-year)
4	Upper Class	Prestige Score >70	Graduated/Attending 4 Year College	Widowed	None	Occasional Use of Substances	Infractions/Violations (Fine Only)	Infractions/Violations (Fine Only)	Upper Class	Prestige Score >70	Graduated/Attending 4 Year College
5		Prestige Score >80	Graduated/Attending Famous College	Remarried		None	Juvenile Delinquent	Juvenile Delinquent		Prestige score >80	Graduated/Attending Famous College
6			Master's degree	Married			No Criminal Record	No Criminal Record			Master's degree
7			Doctoral Degree								Doctoral Degree

Data Processing and Analysis

After collecting the data, the positive frequency and negative frequency was then tabulated into a new table. Based on the positive selective probability calculated as such below, logistic regression was fitted with the positive selection probability as the response variable and the 11 prompt factors as the independent variables.

$$Positive\ Selection\ Probability\ = \frac{Positive\ Frequency}{Positive\ Frequncy\ +\ Negative\ Frequncy}$$

Results

Demographics

A voluntary and purposive sample of 33 respondents participated in the survey with all being ethnic East Asians residing in nations including South Korea, Indonesia, Australia, and Hong Kong. All respondents were from middle/upper-class backgrounds and ages ranged from 16 to 35, with a median age of 18. Responses to explicit questions were organized into graphs and displayed in figure 1. Y-axis shows the frequency of respondents who chose the particular number on the scale for to what extent they agree with each question. X-axis is the scoring option on a Likert scale, where 1-strongly disagree, and 5-strongly agree.
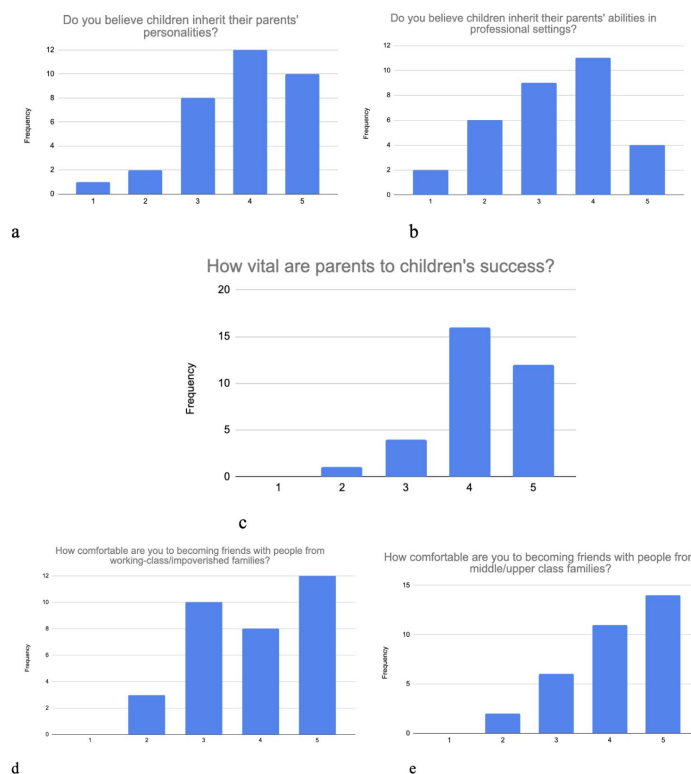

Figure 1. Is the results of explicit questions displayed in bar graphs. Figure 1a. and 1b. are the answers to the questions of how much the respondents believed that children inherit parents' personalities and abilities in professional settings respectively. Figure 1c. shows how vital the respondents believe parents are in children's success. Lastly 1d. and 1e. are the answers to how comfortable the respondents are with being friends with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Implicit Question Results

Table 2. Logistic Regression Evaluation Values.

Logistic Regression	Value
R-Squared	0.647
Adj R-Squared	0.532
F-Statistic	5.659
Prob (F-statistic)	4.31 e -0.5

R-squared values show the percentage of the variations in dependent variables able to be explained by the independent variables in the model. Though it does not directly translate to the model being a good predictor, it shows the existence of causal relationships between the variables. Adjusted R-Squared value is a modified R-squared value that takes into consideration the number of predictor variables in the model. Adjusted R-Squared value is always lower than the R-Squared value and the results reveal the same information as the original R-Squared value. The F-statistic measures the overall significance of a linear regression model. If the F-statistic is large and the associated p-value (Prob (F-statistic)) is less than the significance level of 0.1 then the null hypothesis can be rejected, indicating that the model is significant and has predictive power.

Table 3. Logistic regression results on the implicit bias test prompt results.

	Criteria	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P-value
1	const	0.7966	0.09	8.865	0
2	Parental Income	0.0259	0.04	0.653	**0.038**
3	Parental Occupational Prestige	0.0164	0.033	-0.192	**0.0755**
4	Parental Education	0.025	0.015	-1.711	**0.048**
5	Marital Status of Parents	-0.0049	0.014	-0.356	0.138
6	Family Health History	-0.0136	0.035	-0.391	0.698
7	History of Addiction	0.0478	0.026	-1.834	**0.075**
8	Parental Criminal Record	0.0333	0.061	-0.546	0.589
9	Criminal Record	-0.2114	0.041	-5.094	**0**
10	Individual Income	-0.0202	0.04	-0.502	0.619
11	Individual Occupational Prestige	0.0326	0.034	0.97	0.339
12	Individual Education Level	0.0137	0.016	0.846	0.403

The coefficients on the chart show how each factor is related to respondents choosing positive or negative for each prompt. Parental Income, Parental Occupational Prestige, Parental Education, History of Addiction, Parental Criminal Record, Individual Occupational Prestige, and Individual Educational level all have positive values for coefficients,

meaning the higher the score for those criteria, the more likely the response to be positive. On the other hand, criteria with negative values for coefficients including Marital Status of Parents, Family Health History, Criminal Record, and Individual Income have negative correlation meaning the higher the score for those criteria more likely the response to be negative.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from the explicit questionnaire indicate that the majority of respondents showed a preference for positive social factors associated with parents. The results of Figure 1a and 1b demonstrate a similar trend, with respondents believing that children inherit their parents' personalities and abilities in professional settings to some extent. However, a significantly higher number of respondents agreed more strongly with the notion of children inheriting their parents' personalities compared to their abilities in professional settings. Additionally, figure 1c revealed that all respondents believed parents play a vital role in their children's success to a certain extent.

When comparing the comfort levels of respondents in befriending individuals from working-class/impoverished families versus middle/upper-class families (Figure 1d and 1e), it was observed that respondents were more comfortable on average with befriending individuals from middle/upper-class families. Furthermore, in response to the question about preferences for people from middle/upper-class families and working-class families, a small portion of respondents showed a slight or moderate preference for people from working-class families, while the majority (58%) expressed an equal liking for both groups. However, among those who expressed a preference, the majority (42%) leaned towards people from middle/upper-class families, with 6% strongly preferring, 21% moderately preferring, and 15% slightly preferring individuals from this socioeconomic group.

The logistic model analysis demonstrated that the model had significant predictive power, as indicated by a p-value of 4.31e-0.5. This suggests that the independent variables had a significant effect on the dependent variable. Parental Income, Parental Occupational Prestige, Parental Education, History of Addiction, and Criminal Record were identified as critical criteria for the respondents when evaluating the given prompts as positive or negative. Among these significant criteria, more than half were related to the individual's family background rather than the individual themselves. While income, occupational prestige, and education level also had criteria related to the individual, respondents placed more weight on the parental side. The other two significant criteria were personal history of addiction and criminal record. These results indicate that, apart from addiction or criminal records, familial background is considered more important than an individual's intrinsic abilities.

Comparing the results from the explicit questionnaire and the implicit test suggests that respondents were aware of their implicit prejudice favoring individuals from "good" familial backgrounds. The responses were significantly influenced by familial factors, with respondents generally showing a preference for people from middle/upper socioeconomic class. Although the data pool is not extensive enough to draw comparisons between the responses of East Asian culture and other ethnicities, it provides an estimation of the emphasis East Asian cultures place on familial factors when judging others, given the significant majority of East Asian respondents. Further research with a larger sample size is necessary to explore how the results of East Asians differ from other ethnicities and to identify the sociocultural aspects contributing to these findings.

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