How Family Matters in Shaping Offspring Worldviews: Personal and Interpersonal Antecedents of Children’s Social Axioms

MONET M. T. WONG
SYLVIA XIAOHUA CHEN
WESLEY C. H. WU
Hong Kong Polytechnic University

The present study examined the applicability of social beliefs in school-aged children and investigated factors contributing to the formation of their views about the world. As an extension of the authors’ previous work on family dysfunction and social axioms, they hypothesized a mediation model to identify personal and interpersonal antecedents for two dimensions of social axioms, namely, social cynicism and reward for application. Data on general family functioning were collected from elementary school students in Hong Kong. Results of path analysis showed that family dysfunction predicted self-esteem and relationship harmony negatively; in turn, self-esteem predicted social cynicism negatively and relationship harmony predicted reward for application positively. These findings confirmed the mediating effect of self-esteem on personal development and that of relationship harmony on interpersonal development, with both...
leading from the quality of family functioning to different beliefs on the dimensional profile of a person’s social axioms. The direct effect of family dysfunction was also significant on the two axioms. Together, these results support the position that familial influences shape the formation of a child’s worldview.

Keywords: social axioms, self-esteem, relationship harmony, family dysfunction, children

Since Leung and Bond (2004) proposed the construct of social beliefs to capture cultural variations and depict generalized beliefs about the world, research on social beliefs has grown rapidly. Leung and colleagues (2002) termed this construct, “social axioms” and refined the definition as

generalized beliefs about people, social groups, social institutions, the physical environment, or the spiritual world as well as about categories of events and phenomena in the social world. These generalized beliefs are encoded in the form of an assertion about the relationship between two entities or concepts. (Leung & Bond, 2008, p. 198)

Multicultural studies have been conducted in more than 40 cultural groups to identify the factor structure of social axioms (Leung & Bond, 2004, 2009). Five factors have been validated pan-culturally (e.g., Cheung, Leung, & Au, 2006), namely, social cynicism, social complexity, reward for application, fate control, and religiosity (previously labeled spirituality).

Of the axioms, social cynicism indicates the extent to which people expect positive versus negative outcomes from their engagements with life, especially with more powerful others. Social complexity refers to the belief that there are multiple ways to achieve a given outcome and agreement that human behavior is variable across situations. Reward for application refers to a general belief that effort, knowledge, and careful planning will exercise an outcome. Fate control indicates the degree to which important outcomes in life are believed to be fated, but at the same time they are predictable and alterable to some extent. Religiosity indicates an assessment about the positive, personal, and social consequences of religious practices and institutions, along with the belief in the existence of a supreme being.

While previous studies have demonstrated the predictive power, incremental validity, and functional utility of social axioms (e.g., Chen,
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家庭對塑造子女的世界觀如何重要：兒童社會通則的個人及人際前因

黃美婷
陳曉華
胡智恒
香港理工大學

摘 要

本研究調查社會信念對在學兒童的應用性，及研究促進他們的世界觀形成的因素。作為有關家庭功能失調 (family dysfunction) 和社會通則 (social axiom) 研究的延續，作者假設一個中介模型來鑑定社會通則中兩個維度，即憤世嫉俗 (social cynicism) 及付出有回報 (reward for application) 的個人及人際前因。這研究收集了香港的一群小學生總體家庭功能的數據。路徑分析 (path analysis) 的結果顯示家庭功能失調負向預測自尊心 (self-esteem) 及和諧關係 (relationship harmony); 另一方面，自尊心負向預測憤世嫉俗的信念，及和諧關係正向預測付出有回報的信念。這些結果確定自尊心與和諧關係在個人及人際發展上，令家庭功能的質素導致社會通則中不同的信念維度構成中介作用，而家庭功能失調響對以上兩個社會通則都有顯著的直接影響。這些結果皆支持家庭影響塑造孩童世界觀的立場。

關鍵詞：社會通則、自尊心、和諧關係、家庭功能失調、兒童