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Parents' Public Value Orientation and Personal Networks

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Abstract

Empirical studies on educational inequality have repeatedly reported on the extent and persistence of class differences in educational attainment. Although such research on educational inequality is undoubtedly valuable, these reports unintentionally strengthen the view that educational success depends on the formation of academic ability and the acquisition of higher educational credentials. The purpose of education, however, is not only to help individuals achieve the above mentioned successes, but to instill members of society with publicness. In today's society where the individualistic pursuit of educational success has become dominant, under what conditions can people have public value orientations?

In order to explore the research interests discussed above, we conducted a survey of mothers of elementary and junior high school students. The reason for selecting these subjects is that they themselves are members of modern society mentioned above, and at the same time, they educate their children at home. Using these data, we investigated the relationship between their private and public value orientations and the features of their personal network. The main findings are that (1) public value orientations are positively correlated with positive networks that are supportive or provide role models and a place of comfort, and (2) private value orientations are positively correlated with negative networks in which people compete, compare themselves with others, and engage in peer pressure.

Key words: conviviality; positive network; publicness

1. Introduction

The education gap is a contemporary challenge. The term has various meanings, but today, it is mainly used to refer to the gap in an individual's educational attainments owing to their family background.[1] This view is emphasized because, in today's society, where academic achievement and educational attainment are strongly linked to socioeconomic success, it is recognized that large differences in such attainment due to family conditions represent an inequality of opportunity and deviate from the ideal of meritocracy.

Certainly, inequality of educational opportunities cannot be overlooked, and there is no disagreement that the reduction or elimination of this inequality is an ideal. However, repeatedly pointing out that people from more socioeconomically or culturally advantaged families have more advantageous educational attainments may unintentionally reinforce the trend toward considering whether education is successful solely from the perspective of individual attainment. No criticism should be leveled against individual actors' aspirations for high academic attainments, but caution is essential if, as mentioned above, a narrow view of education is spreading in society. Education is not only intended for individuals to attain academic abilities and educational credentials alone but to pass on styles of living from one generation to the next and ensure the stability and continuation of order in the community (Nobira 2000). Education makes people members of society and can thus be considered to have the purpose of forming publicness.

Compared to the vigorous debate that considers the education gap a problem, little has been heard of the debate on the public role of education in recent years. Ikeda (2005) expresses the following concerns: school education today is deemed a means for success in life; the knowledge taught in school is brought into question in terms of whether it is useful for future careers; schools are showing a stronger tendency toward being evaluated solely from the perspective of academic abilities as indicated by marks and of rates of students progressing to higher levels of education. These concerns convey a sense of danger directed at the social perspectives regarding school education today.

Notably, pursuing individual interests alone tends to narrow the perspective on the roles of school education and includes the risk of leading to a lack of concern for others and disinterest in society (Nobira 2000). Bellah et al. (1991) describes American society, where market economics is highly developed, as like a game of Monopoly and depicts a situation where the pursuit of individualistic happiness has caused the loss of interest in democratic social participation and social justice. Ikeda (2005) noted that in contemporary Japanese society, lauding individual achievement and self-actualization has eroded the tradition of looking at relationships between individuals and society from the perspective of individuals' public roles and their contribution to the common good. In other words, in present-day society, with its intense market competition, people have become so preoccupied with the pursuit of individual goals and self-actualization that they cannot communicate and maintain common values and norms based on mutual trust and mutual support. Consequently, they are losing the

"common good" as an object of individual dedication and contribution.

Based on these premises, this study investigates the following. People's interest in contemporary society is biased toward individual achievement and success, and there is little debate on the publicness of education and common good, as Nobira (2000), Ikeda (2005), and Bellah et al. (1985, 1991) pointed out. However, even in such a society, everyone may not aim solely for individualistic achievement, and consciousness of public value may not be completely lost. Thus, the question of the kinds of situations where people can maintain an orientation toward public value piques our interest. Focusing on how the public value orientation of parents—members of society and agents who educate children at home— can be shaped is extremely significant while looking at how society should be in the future. This paper focuses on how parents of school-aged children can form their individualistic and public value orientations.

2. The concept of conviviality

First, let us consider the concepts of publicness and public value. Bellah et al. (1985, 1991) and Ikeda (2005) detected the influence of utilitarian individualism in the background of the growing debate seeking individualistic achievements as identified above. Fundamental to utilitarian individualism is the idea that the pursuit of individual advantage benefits society overall (Bellah et al. 1985). Expressive individualism, which places value in one's rich internal world and self-expression, appeared contrary to utilitarian individualism, which aims solely for economic success. However, they are similar in that both place more importance on individual independence and autonomy than on public life and mutual dependence in a community and concentrate on calculations of means and goals for one's benefit (Ikeda 2005).

Utilitarian individualistic thinking supposes that public welfare will be achieved by improving individuals' abilities, and it is not true that it aims solely at the self-centered success of an individual. Nevertheless, this supposition is no more than an attractive but unreliable preconception (Bellah et al. 1991). This is because "utilitarian individualism considers relationships with others competitive and opposed to the self and has depicted the individual who actualizes their life without interference from others, insulated from others, according to their own plan or scenario as being the ideal form" (Ikeda 2005: 102). Under these conditions, if everyone pursued a utilitarian individualistic lifestyle, the abundance and happiness of the whole would not be actualized, contrary to the supposition—even having a fulfilling private life would be uncertain (Bellah et al. 1985, 1991). For society to be enriched and happy, it may be necessary to care for the community and its members (Imada 2006), unlike the supposition of utilitarian individualism.

This idea is shared by communitarianism. Its key points were summarized by Kikuchi (2007: 50) as follows: "People [are not] 'atomistic' individuals who lack mutual links, pursue nothing but their own rights and interests, and join a 'political community' by their own decision to protect their own rights and interests"; instead, they are "beings to whom the 'encumberedness' of language, history,

tradition, community, ethics (right and wrong), and the like are given in common" and "political beings who form a community they belong to, in consciousness of the 'relationships' and 'commonalities' between themselves and others because of such encumberedness and fulfill responsibilities to the community with the aim of actualizing the 'common good'."

Communitarianism is criticized as an obstinate mode of thinking that demands monistic identification and commonality. However, according to Kikuchi (2007), this criticism is a misunderstanding. Communitarianism recognizes pluralistic identification and supposes that commonality exists within each person and is not mandated by others. Nevertheless, it is concerning that communitarian thinking tends to assume a local community in solidarity because, as Wellman (1979) pointed out, people in today's society (especially in urban areas) do not bury themselves in close-knit, united local networks but tend to form geographically dispersed, branching networks.

In considering cooperation and commonality in communities as networks, we should also touch upon the concept of "conviviality." According to Mieno (2018), the convivial view of humanity encompasses others based on the establishment of the individual and transcends the utilitarian view of humanity. The convivial view of society represents solidarity and unity that tolerates heterogeneity and diversity. The concept of "conviviality" means social unity such that heterogeneous, diverse people allow each other opportunities for free activity and participation and proactively build up mutual relationships. It must be recognized as distinct from "symbiosis"—living amiably and harmoniously on the inside of a closed system that assumes homogeneous individuals, like the Japanese-style collectivism (Inoue et al. 1992).

Conviviality seems to be a characteristic of the late modern era rather than a necessarily universal value (Ozoe 2018) because, in the former society validated by the Japanese-style collectivism, individuals were naturally incorporated into a homogeneous group (community) and "symbiotic" with it. However, in the urbanized, individualized, and mobilized late modern era, individuals must relate autonomously and proactively with external functions that match their separate needs and form networks to be in communities of solidarity (= conviviality).[2] The concept of conviviality, which does not necessarily assume local communities, can be expected to be valid in considering the functions of modern Japanese people's networks, including the geographically dispersed, branching parts. In this study, we call the orientation that values cooperation and assistance among heterogeneous others while respecting each other's free activities "convivial value orientation" and examine the factors behind this orientation.

3. Network functions regarding the formation of individual consciousness

Several approaches may be taken while considering the formation of individuals' value orientations. The most common is adopting the view that value orientations are formed from the individuals' attributes based on the stance of methodological individualism. Most research based on quantitative data particularly adopts this framework. The view that places importance on attributes that assume a social

structure can be considered the most basic stance in the sociological approach. However, the view that draws a direct line between the individual's micro-level consciousness and the position it is given in macro-level social structures will be limited vis-à-vis how well it grasps the process of forming that consciousness. One measure in social class theory to combat such a limitation is to adopt the Wisconsin model (Sewell et al. 1969, etc.), which attracted attention to social psychological mediator variables. It does not directly link the social structure and individual but sets as a mediator the formation of aspirations through interactions with "significant others" (parents, teachers, and friends) surrounding the actor (high school students) and seeks to capture the process of educational and social status attainment via these.

If the idea of focusing on the influence of interactions with significant others is expanded, it is possible to hypothesize influences on an individual's consciousness from relationships with people around them—influences from their personal networks. That the network theory framework, which holds that people are influenced by their interactions with others, is valid for this study is evident from the above discussion of the philosophy of communitarianism and the concept of conviviality.

This paper focuses on the influences of personal networks that occupy a position linking the macro-level structure and the micro-level acts of individuals. Major network researchers such as Wellman (1979) and Granovetter (1973) have also mentioned focusing on the functions of networks from the perspective of micro-macro links. While they do not necessarily have the perspective of micro-macro links, many studies have accumulated regarding personal networks' influences on individuals' formation of consciousness and decision-making. Several acts on various objects have been considered, such as the following: formulation of school evaluation standards by elementary school teachers (Friedkin 1993); individuals' attitudes toward gender roles (Ishiguro 1998); school participation by mothers of elementary school students (Sheldon 2002); determination of knowledge as important for conducting operations in corporate organizations (Wong 2008); naval cadets' attitudes toward military discipline (de Klepper et al. 2010); educational expectations of mothers of elementary and junior high school students (Aramaki 2019). Therefore, examining the influences of personal networks regarding convivial value orientation appears worthwhile. This paper elucidates the relationships between individualistic and convivial value orientations and personal networks based on data from surveys of parents with school-aged children.

4. Research method

4-1. Data

Our sample, created through stratified two-stage random sampling, comprised 1,200 women with children in elementary or junior high school who lived in 4 prefectures in the southern Kantō region; a postal survey was conducted from September to October 2021.[3] We received 715 responses. The response rate (rate of cooperation in the survey) compared to the 1,184 surveys remaining after excluding 4 sampling mistakes, 11 undeliverable items, and 1 hospital admittee was 60.4%. The sampling from

Table 1

Composition of value orientations

	Convivial orientation	Competitive achievement orientation
I want to be useful to society	.61	.03
I want to help people in trouble	.60	-.10
Cooperation and helping each other are important	.50	-.12
I do not want to have less than others	.15	.69
High remuneration for superior people is importan	.00	.70
Contribution rate	33.0	22.7
Eigenvalue	1.65	1.13

the Basic Resident Register and conduct of the postal survey (including three reminders) were outsourced to Nippon Research Center (NRC).

4-2. Indices of value orientations

The subject of this paper is to capture value orientations toward helping others and contributing to society (convivial orientation) and opposing value orientations aimed at competing with others and individual achievement (competitive achievement orientation). We used the responses to question items about what the survey respondents consider an ideal lifestyle and society. For the ideal lifestyle, we used responses to the three items "I want to be useful to society," "I want to help people who are in trouble, even if I suffer a small detriment," and "I do not want to have a less rich life than others" on a 4-point scale from "I think so" to "I do not think so." For the ideal society, we used responses to the two items "People cooperate with and help each other" and "Those with superior achievements receive higher remuneration" on a 4-point scale from "Important" to "Not important."

A principal component analysis of the responses to these five items extracted in two principal components with eigenvalues exceeding 1 (Table 1). The first shows high loadings for "I want to be useful to society," "I want to help people in trouble," and "Cooperation and helping each other are important" and can be determined to have captured the conviviality orientation. The second shows high loadings for "I do not want to have less than others" and "High remuneration for superior people is important" and can be considered an indicator of the competitive achievement orientation. The scores for these principal components are used as indices of the two orientations, respectively.

4-3. Indices of personal networks

By organizing research on networks' influences on individuals' diverse consciousnesses and attitudes, Aramaki (2022) revealed that functions of child-rearing networks can be classified into

"support", "constraints", "reference (normative and comparative references)", "penetration", and "place of comfort". Of these, penetration means that the thinking of those around one penetrates one unintentionally[4] and is not well suited for measurement with a questionnaire. Therefore, we created question items and conducted the survey in relation to the remaining four functions.

As Yabe (2000) indicated, individuals' personal networks tend to be segmented according to the social contexts in which the individuals meet them, relatives and non-relatives are particularly likely to form separate cliques. As Wellman and Wortley (1990) noted, the support obtained tends to differ based on the types of ties (differences according to whether they are relatives, colleagues, or friends, for example). Studies of Japanese child-rearing networks have revealed that while instrumental support, such as looking after children, and economic support are more easily obtained from relative networks, emotional and informational support is more easily obtained from non-relative networks (Ochiai 1989; Sekii et al. 1991; Kubo 2001; Hoshi 2012, etc.). This suggests that the questions on network functions would benefit from asking at least for each of the relatives and non-relatives.[5]

Based on the above, for the functions of the personal networks, we used the results of a questionnaire in which respondents were asked to indicate the number of people (network size) who fall into the following seven categories among those to whom they "talk frequently on child rearing and children's education," separately for relatives and non-relatives: "people who listen to concerns about child-rearing (support function)"; "people whose thinking about child-rearing serves as a reference (role model function)"; "people with whom you can share joys and sorrows (place of comfort function)"; "people you can trust (place of comfort function)"; "people who want to compare their children's growth and performance with your children's (comparison function)"; "people who want to compare their family's wealth and possessions with yours (comparison function)"; "people who require you to behave like them (constraints function)".

The correlation matrix for the responses on network sizes for each of these functions showed significant correlations between network sizes where a positive function for the ego was predicted, such as support, role model, and place of comfort. Significant correlations were also found between network sizes where a negative function for the ego was predicted, such as comparison and constraints. Upon performing principal component analyses for relatives' and non-relatives' networks, two principal components with an eigenvalue exceeding 1 were extracted for each case. Tables 2 (relatives) and 3 (non-relatives) present the results. For both, the loadings for support, role model, and place of comfort are higher in the first component, which can be deemed an axis that captures positive network sizes for the respondents. In the second component, the loadings for comparison and constraints are higher, which can be considered an axis that captures negative network sizes. Both principal component scores were used in the analysis as the indices of the positive and negative network sizes, respectively.

The correlation coefficients between the above network sizes for relatives and non-relatives showed statistically significant relationships of 0.356 between positive network sizes and 0.344 between negative network sizes. This shows that among relatives and non-relatives, those where the positive network size for one is large tend to have a large positive network size for the other and similarly for the

Table 2

Principal component analysis of relatives' networks

	Positive PN	Negative PN
Support: People who listen to concerns	.50	.00
Role model: Reference for child-rearing	.47	.03
Place of comfort: Sharing joys and sorrows	.51	-.08
Place of comfort: Trust	.51	-.11
Comparison: Comparing children's results	.03	.63
Comparison: Competing with wealth	.01	.61
Constraints: Pressure to conform	.11	.46
Contribution rate	42.1	25.1
Eigenvalue	2.9	1.8

Table 3

Principal component analysis of non-relatives' networks

	Positive PN	Negative PN
Support: People who listen to concerns	.47	-.18
Role model: Reference for child-rearing	.47	-.15
Place of comfort: Sharing joys and sorrows	.48	-.16
Place of comfort: Trust	.48	-.16
Comparison: Comparing children's results	.21	.53
Comparison: Competing with wealth	.17	.58
Constraints: Pressure to conform	.18	.52
Contribution rate	52.1	27.3
Eigenvalue	3.6	1.9

negative network sizes. However, no significant relationship was found between the positive and negative network sizes. Thus, the positive and negative network sizes are independent; for example, some of those with large positive network sizes for relatives may have either large or small negative network sizes for non-relatives. When the network size responses for relatives and non-relatives were simultaneously subjected to principal component analysis, the principal components were not extracted well. As mentioned above, because of the segmentation of networks (cliques) between relatives and non-relatives, there is not necessarily a direct link between the positive and negative functions of the relative network and the positive and negative functions of the non-relative network.

Table 4

Correlation coefficients between value orientations and positive and

negative network sizes

		Convivial orientation	Competitive achievement orientation
Positive PN	Relatives	.153**	-.056
	Non-relatives	.220**	.019
Negative PN	Relatives	.015	.133**
	Non-relatives	-.033	.086*

Note: N＝585.　　** $p<.01$　　* $p<.05$

5.　Characteristics of value orientation

5-1. Value orientation and network sizes

Let us confirm the relationships between the two value orientations and the positive and negative network sizes. Table 4 presents these correlation coefficients. For both relatives and non-relatives, positive network size had a statistically significant positive correlation coefficient with convivial orientations, as did negative network size with competitive achievement orientations. The positive network size had a stronger correlation with conviviality orientations in non-relatives' than in relatives' networks. The negative network size had a stronger correlation with competitive achievement orientations in relatives' than in non-relatives' networks. Thus, we can expect that people are more likely to hold competition-oriented values when there is a competitive and oppressive atmosphere in their supposedly allied relatives. Conversely, when non-relatives, who are supposed to be strangers, have positive functions such as support, place of comfort, and role models, we can expect that they are more likely to hold conviviality-oriented values. However, the relationship between network size and value orientation is not necessarily strong. These value orientations are predicted to be related to attributes, as well. Thus, whether these relationships can still be found, even while controlling for other factors, must be verified.

5-2. Results of multivariate analysis

We conducted OLS regression analyses using 10 attributes predicted to show association for the two value orientations. These attributes were as follows: children's age range (school year of first child), current employment status, employment history, respondent's education (years of education), husband's

Table 5

OLS regression analyses on two value orientations

	Convivial orientation	Competitive achievement orientation
Positive PN: Relatives	.100 *	-.077 +
Positive PN: Non-relatives	.165 **	-.018
Negative PN: Relatives	-.012	.117 **
Negative PN: Non-relatives	-.041	.056
Oldest child's year level	.100 *	-.105 *
Respondent's education	.131 **	-.042
Number of books owned	.153 **	-.007
Household income	-.091	.560 *
Household income squared	.069	-.472 *
Husband's education	-.004	.130 **
R^2	.109	.077
Adj R^2	.092	.059

Note: N＝516.   ** $p<.01$ * $p<.05$ + $p<.10$

Numerical values are standardized partial regression coefficients.

education (higher education dummy),[6] number of books owned, household income (including squared terms), current residence, and main areas where the respondent grew up. Table 5 summarizes the results, excluding four items that were not found to produce significant effects—employment status[7] and history, current residence, and main areas where the respondent grew up.

First, confirming the effects of personal networks shows that the results were almost as found in the correlation coefficients depicted above. Positive network sizes of relatives and non-relatives are correlated with convivial orientation. Negative network size of relatives is correlated with competitive achievement orientation. However, unlike the correlation coefficient results, negative network size of non-relatives does not have a significant effect on the competitive achievement orientation. A negative correlation, albeit at the 10% level, was found between positive network sizes of relatives and the competitive achievement orientation. Thus, the smaller the size of the positive network of relatives, the more likely they are to be competitive achievement oriented.

It is interesting to note that attributes presented completely opposite effects for the convivial orientations and the competitive achievement orientations. The respondent's education and number of books owned had a positive effect only on the convivial orientation. Household income and husband's education demonstrated significant positive effects only on the competitive achievement orientation.

The children's age range demonstrated a positive correlation with convivial orientations and negative correlation with the competitive achievement orientations.

From the above, it can be summarized that the convivial orientation is associated with friendly relationships, especially with non-relatives, and the cultural hierarchy of the individual; the competitive achievement orientation is associated with the husband's education and economic power and isolation from relatives.

6. Conclusion

6-1. Summary of results and conclusion

This study examined how the individualistic and convivial value orientations of mothers with school-aged children are correlated to personal networks based on data from surveys of such mothers. The results revealed that the sizes of networks that perform positive functions for the ego, such as support, role model, and place of comfort, have a positive correlation with the convivial orientation even when attribute factors are controlled, and the correlation is stronger for non-relatives' networks. The data revealed that the size of relatives' negative networks that demand comparison and constraints were correlated with the competitive achievement orientation, which aimed at individual achievement while competing with others. It is interesting that a convivial orientation correlated with positive relationships with non-relatives and that a competitive achievement orientation correlated with isolation from relatives. Attributes that correlated with the convivial orientation were the opposite of those correlated with competitive achievement orientations, and vice versa. As far as social class factors are concerned, the respondent's education and number of books owned had a significant effect only on convivial orientation, while the husband's education and household income had a significant effect only on the competitive achievement orientation.

Synthesizing these findings lead to the following tentative conclusions. Those who build amicable relationships with others (particularly non-relatives) and are in higher cultural strata tend to have a convivial orientation that values cooperating with and helping others. Conversely, those whose husbands have a higher socioeconomic status and are isolated from relatives tend to have a competitive achievement orientation that seeks competition with others and individual achievement. Those with older children tend to have a convivial orientation more than a competitive achievement orientation, possibly because they are more relaxed in raising their children.

6-2. Study limitations and future research directions

This study has a few limitations. First, the concepts of convivial and competitive achievement orientations have not been fully examined in the literature, and their measurement methodology remains limited. It is particularly problematic that the measurement methodology for the convivial orientation discussed in this paper cannot clearly distinguish whether it means the "symbiosis" that is homogeneous and closed or the "conviviality" that assumes the mutual approval of heterogeneous, diverse individuals.

A similar point may be raised about the functions of personal networks. The theoretical consideration was insufficient, and measurements were limited to network sizes for each function. Although previous studies have shown that size is the most important in measuring the effects of network functions, it is not sufficient on its own. The effect of the network structure should be considered first. Drawing on Bott (1955) and Coleman (1988), more closed networks are predicted to demonstrate a stronger operation of the power of norms. If we assume, as Coleman (1988) pointed out, that the social capital of norms causes people to work for the public interest, highly dense networks can be predicted to place importance on public interest. Conversely, as Wellman (1979) pointed out, today, people lead their lives while forming dispersed personal networks. The key finding of this study is that even when personal networks are geographically dispersed and branched, they can contribute to the formation of a convivial value orientation if they are supportive and provide a place of comfort. Contrary to what might be expected from Coleman's (1988) point, this result indicates that low-density networks may generate public orientation. What is needed next is a clearer elucidation of the nature of the network such that it generates a public orientation. Based on this awareness, we wish to continue our research on this topic.

Notes

1) However, it began to be used in this sense in the 2000s. The word "education gap" appeared in newspapers from the 1960s onward; it was initially used to highlight differences in educational conditions based on region, gender, and provider (Aramaki 2019).

2) In the late modern era, there are fewer and fewer situations in which the old social relationships (relationships based on in-group attributes) are applicable, and there is an increasing need for people to demonstrate communication skills and enter society. Thus, people have become excessively conscious of communicative abilities in modern society, as Ozoe (2018) pointed out.

3) In this Kaken project, the author conducted a similar survey of men with children in elementary and junior high school. Reporting on the results of an analysis of this survey will be a topic for future research.

4) The phenomenon of being unintentionally influenced by people around one is explained in social psychology using the concept of the "information environment" (Yasuno 2006).

5) Nevertheless, different types of ties may form stratified networks in the way that relatives may be friends and child-rearing fellows, as in the example of "Mr. and Mrs. N", who were introduced in Bott (1955), which is considered a classic of network research. As networks tend to be mixed in regional cities (Maeda 2008), including regional cities in the survey allows room to find mixed ties between relatives and non-relatives.

6) Husband's education was used as a dummy variable indicating whether it was clear that he had received higher education, and if the husband's education was unknown, it was included in the criterion category. Even if the respondent's education is used as a dummy variable as in the case of the husband, the results are similar to those shown in Table 5.

7) In the correlation coefficient between employment status and convivial orientation, a stronger tendency toward convivial orientation was observed for those who were self-employed or family employees than for those who were housewives. Although this relationship disappears in the multivariate analysis, being self-employed facilitates the formation of relationships with local residents, and we would expect such individuals to tend to have a convivial orientation.

Acknowledgments

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