

The Effect of Culture on Gender and Racial Bias

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the effect culture has on gender and racial biases. Possible behaviors expressed to show gender bias include linking different characteristics and items to different genders; for example, more than half of participants ($N > 600,000$) linked males with subjects representing rationality and reason and females with subjects relating to sensations (liberal arts). Biological responses to different races are also studied by previous research to elucidate the possible bias toward out-group people. Cultural influences significantly affected a person's perception of gender and race: for the gender issues in India's case, people tend to believe women as inferior roles and negligible existence. Those Indian women are taught and forced to follow the local traditions, becoming those who obey males in their family. Thus, the culture of the living place where people grow up considerably determines people's mindset about these biases.

Keywords: culture, learned behaviors, gender bias, implicit bias, racism

1. INTRODUCTION

Exploring the Clarks' doll experiment, children exposed to racist ideas are also biased against the out-group themselves, no matter which position they are at: even some African children would consider their own skin color as evil and ugly [1]. Clark elucidated that status and skin color had a strong effect on their self-esteem. This raises a question: what are some possible factors that make them biased against themselves? It could be what others told them, the entire society's trend, and their learned behaviors from people around them.

This experiment only explored the racial side of cultural effects, leaving the recent popular topic, gender issues, unaddressed. Since gender bias can be dated back to the Neolithic age (where difference in occupations separated the social status of the two sexes), the gender issues could be more complicated with its long existence and different variables that affected the bias throughout history. Thus, the gap of previous experiment is the cause of such bias and the inability to extend the racial bias experiments to gender bias, to which I'm going to address in this paper.

This topic is important because many females are exposed to a growing environment with sexist culture, and in many cases, most of these females wouldn't succeed much nor would achieve their dreams. This is caused by destroyed self-esteem, as explored by the Clarks couple

[1]. To explore gender issues, it's also important to dive deeper into the racial biases to understand the cause of such bias better. Thus, my hypothesis is that the culture of a person's family or living background influences their perception of gender and race.

There could be family stereotypes and biases that are exposed to children since their childhood, or culturally linked attitudes, such as family structure and family power dynamics [2]. In the context of Indian culture, many females are taught to be devout mothers and faithful wives and trained to be obedient and non-rebellious toward masculinity or power. Similarly, their economic contributions, for example, working outside for payment, are less valued and less respected [3]. The stereotypical view of women in India, therefore, focuses on their inferiority, which resulted in the low status of females within the society. This is a negative feedback loop, were with lower female status, there will be more biased views against Indian females, further enhancing their low status.

When racism is linked with sexism, there are more devastating effects: in the United States, women of color experience extremely high rates of HIV/AIDS and fewer opportunities for political engagement [4]. These women experiencing such unfair treatments are mostly due to the traditional view of the public, which is people of color and females are less capable of political affairs.

In the work, the main cause of these prejudices is discussed. The paper combined past papers and research and analyzed them to further explain the link between

culture and these gender and racial discrimination and prejudice.

2. METHOD

The major supporting evidence from previously published papers were first gathered to form the basic structure of this paper, with the rest used for enhancing the reliability of many details this paper included. The papers that are not related to culture or not reasonable evidence of how culture is linked to the cause of biases are excluded.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Culture Influences Gender Bias

The perception of females being inferior and more emotional is shown in different aspects. Over the past few years, people tend to associate male to science and female to liberal arts. 70 percent of a 628, 295 scores collection from the web respondents of the test has an automatic association of male with science and female with liberal arts, with a 32.85 percent of those having a strong association, shown in Figure 1. In Figure 2, another 75% of 846, 020 scores reveal an association of male with career and female with family [5]. The test is done by linking words together to test the immediate response of a person to the word stimuli. This unawareness of association between gender and academic or economic-related issues clearly demonstrates the implicit bias or stereotypical perception of people on gender issues, which is that females should take over domestic affairs or be more sentimental while males should deal with economic issues or be more rational.

There were also targeted bias toward female that associates with physical abuse. Violence toward female

could be due to alcohol stimulations. Alcohol-related stimuli can decrease people's behavior control, thus engaging in activities or actions that are guided by their unconsciousness [6]. This implies that males who engaged in alcoholic consumption and female abuse have an implicit bias against female, in which case they might believe that females are inferior to themselves.

3.2 Culture Influences Racial Bias

Biased behaviors are not the only way to reflect a person's perception of gender. Studies have verified the use of fMRI to determine the implicit bias of participants. People's brains react accordingly to racial in-group and out-group faces. Researchers detected less activation in participants' fusiform face area when they were shown racial out-group faces than in-group faces [7]. Lipp et al. explore the responses Caucasian-Australians and Chinese Australians have toward different racial faces (Caucasian and Chinese) [8]. Electroencephalogram results from participants show only a subtle difference between responses from all participants towards the same picture; thus, it infers that regardless of the participants' gender or race, they process the out-group faces all in a certain way that could imply about biases: having a larger N1 amplitude to racial out-group faces. The most significant finding of this research shows that Caucasian males display a larger N1 amplitude towards Chinese deviants, indicating that an implicit bias takes place toward Chinese participants.

Not only Lipp and his fellow researchers has found such race categorization in face processing without taking into consideration of cultural context, but Ito and Urland has also found such pattern of having implicit biases toward different races regardless of gender nor participants' own race, this time under a different context — in the United States [9, 10].

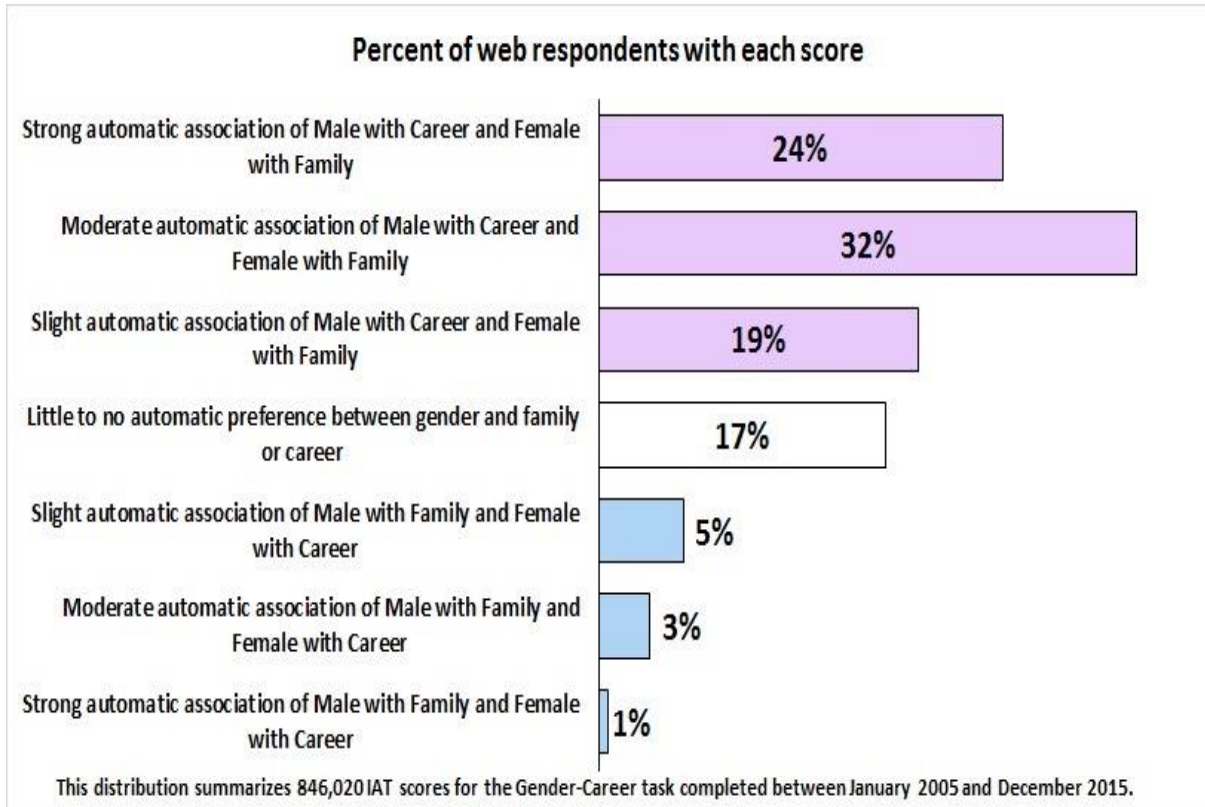


Figure 1, Percent web respondents with each score. This bar graph displays the scale of association of gender with career and family (N=846,020).

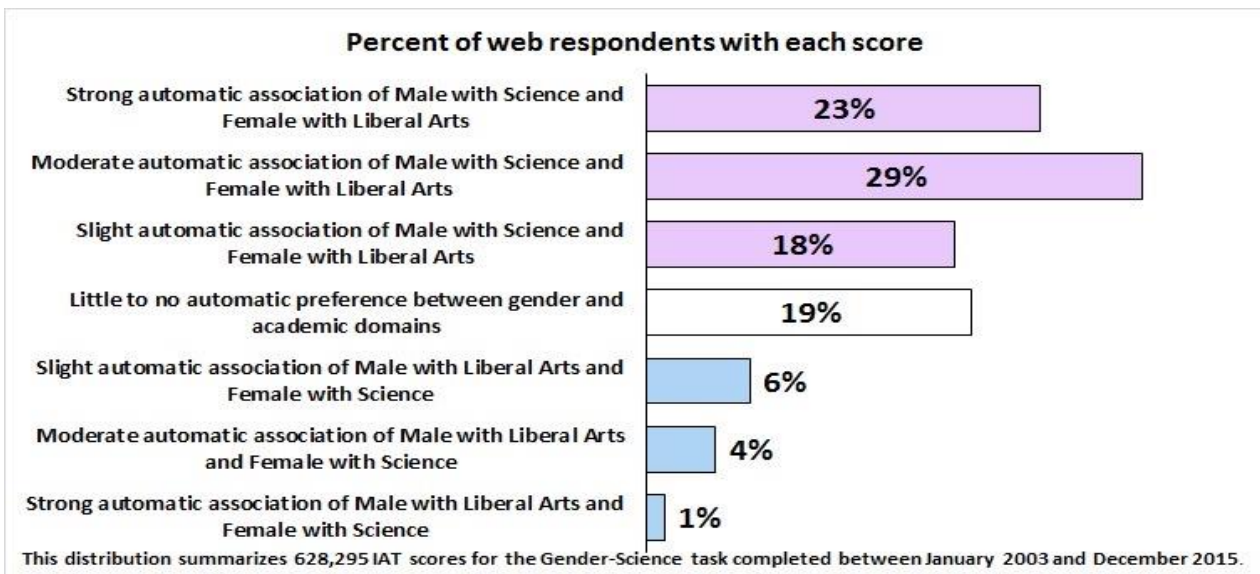


Figure 2, Percent of web respondents with each score. This bar graph displays the scale of association of gender with subjects (N=628,295).

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the effect of culture on biases. The hypothesis is that culture strongly influences the perception of a person on biases. This hypothesis is proven and verified by various studies that shows how some certain culture from some countries (i.e.,

India) displays the effects culture have on people and their beliefs in both behavioral and biological ways. People respond in different behaviors toward different sexes, while having a slight difference toward races in their brainwaves. No matter what their social background and gender are, all participants in the Lipp et al. experiment is biased against the out-group [8], indicating that their own culture and family background are the main factors

that influence their view, since they live in the same community and take the standard form of education. Thus, it can be implied that a person's bias is very much influenced by their cultural and living background with considerations of their own perspectives. People from the same social background but different cultural background (Chinese versus Caucasian, which is more "western" and open comparing to Chinese culture) have the opposite bias, where the Chinese Australian are biased against the Caucasian-Australian and vice versa. Thus, it can be indicated that these people are under strong cultural influences about biased issues without taking societal influence into consideration.

5. CONCLUSION

Indeed, culture is not the only factor that is influencing people's bias. In the racial case about African and Caucasians, some African Americans are biased even against themselves. Clarks' experiment about black and white dolls reminds people of how racism and segregation of races have strongly affected the cognitive development of children of color [3]. When they were asked which one was "the ugly doll" and "the bad doll", most of the children pointed at the black doll, whereas they pointed at the white doll when they were asked which doll was prettier and better. This reveals that they are biased against even themselves, which is possibly influenced by the social trends during the time and by the segregation of races that enforced the belief into the children's mind. Some other research papers indicated that stereotypes are also strongly influencing people's biases and perception on race and gender [11,12].

Admittedly, most of my data that support the culture influencing people's perceptions come from the previous decade, which does not take into view the effect of social media that rise and become more popular during the recent years. Social media, in many ways, seep into people's life and have a decisive effect on people's views on the world: with the platforms provided, information could spread throughout the world within seconds, and more people began to be exposed to ideas about equality and slowly getting rid of the old stereotypical view toward gender issues. This is also a reason why racial and gender issues are so commonly addressed. Thus, with social media involving in, the situation will become more complicated since culture is no longer the major factor that is affecting people's view; there should be a comparison between the effects of culture and of social media towards people's perception.

As previous studies have found out, females are not treated equally even in workplaces [13-15]. Wage, participation in leadership development program, assigned projects, and participation evaluation are all different for different gender, which highlights the unfair results of bias people have toward female. Therefore, it's also important to sort out what possible solutions there can

be to address this problem. But due to a lack of theories that could be studied and researched, it's difficult to develop a solution for the culturally affected bias, since countries have different conditions and regulations.

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