Do Asian Values Exist?
Empirical Tests of the Four Dimensions of Asian Values

So Young Kim

The Asian values debate has been long on speculative advocacy but short on empirical validation, with statistical tests emerging only lately. This study explores two questions: whether Asians indeed hold distinct cultural attitudes when compared with non-Asians and whether these cultural attitudes and beliefs identified as Asian values form coherent dimensions among Asians. The study first identifies four dimensions of Asian values based on a review of various Asian values discourses: familism, communalism, authority orientations, and work ethic. The findings from the empirical analysis based on multilevel models and factor analysis return mixed support for the Asian values hypothesis. Although East Asian respondents do exhibit strong work-related values compared with those from other regions, commitment to familial values and authoritarian orientations are actually lower among East Asians. Also, while preference for strong leadership and parental duty do turn out to form distinct sets of attitudes among South and Southeast Asians, the four dimensions do not constitute a clear value complex in the minds of East Asians.

**KEYWORDS:** Asian values, authority, authoritarianism, communalism, congruence theory, culture, democracy, familism, multilevel analysis, postmaterialism, work ethic

Do Asian values exist? Yes and no. Yes, because Asians have traditions and patterns of life that are different from those of Westerners and that both reflect and reinforce their cultural values and norms. As advocates of Asian values would argue, Asians, like people of any other region (say, Latin Americans), hold their own cultural norms, rituals, and traditions inherited from their histories. In this sense, there is nothing ideological when we say that Asian values are cultural traits that distinguish Asians from non-Asians. No, because
some Asian values may in fact be imaginary, summoned by some Asian leaders to justify their quasi-democratic rule. Critics of Asian values would claim that the notion of Asian values has served as a pretext for soft authoritarianism prevailing in certain parts of the region. For instance, some of the values that Asian political leaders claim to be irreconcilable with Western norms include fundamental human rights, which should be equally binding for Asians.

Perhaps the truth may lie somewhere between the two extreme positions. As Donald Emmerson nicely remarked:

The extreme understanding of “Asian values” as a unique set of preferences found only in Asia is untenable. But Asians do have some values, and certain Asians (and Westerners) have identified certain values as characteristically Asian. These observations imply a strategy for shifting constructively from the extremes of the “Asian values” debate toward the center by trying to determine what values Asians do hold and ascribe to one another (Emmerson 1995, 100–101).

While more than a decade has passed since his comment, empirical efforts to delineate the range of Asian values have emerged only lately with notable collections of research essays assembled by well-known scholars of Asian politics and society (Dalton and Shin 2006a; Chu et al. 2008). This study is an attempt to improve upon these existing empirical studies of Asian values. Noting that the Asian values debate has been long on speculative advocacy but short on empirical substantiation, the study aims to provide a comprehensive empirical exploration of the so-called Asian values hypothesis. In this exploration, the current study examines two issues. First is whether Asians are indeed different from non-Asians in their value orientations. Second is whether those value orientations form a coherent pattern among Asians. The first question calls for a comparative analysis, as can be answered by comparing the cultural views and perceptions of people from different regions. The second question needs some form of factor analysis, since it can be answered by looking into the patterns of correlations among Asians’ endorsements of various value statements.

One of the innovative aspects of this study is that it classifies various cultural attitudes and norms associated with Asian values into four dimensions rather than lumping them all together. Indeed, some of the confusion over the existence of Asian values seems to have arisen from mixing different features of those values. For instance, studies finding Asians to be less supportive of authority or hierarchical order do not...
necessarily contradict those finding them to value family relationships, because the authority orientation and familial norms may be distinct qualities within Asian values (Dalton and Ong 2005; Wang and Tan 2006).

The current study provides a fuller account of Asian values in other aspects, too. In contrast to previous empirical studies, most of which rely on simple descriptive statistics, the study utilizes multilevel regressions and factor analysis. Also, while existing empirical research mostly draws on a few advanced countries when taking a comparative perspective, this study makes more comprehensive comparisons encompassing a large cross-section of advanced and developing countries beyond Asia. Finally, the current study looks more systematically into intraregional differences by comparing East and South Asia, and South-East Asia. The discourse on Asian values has a distinct reference to Confucian Asia, yet proponents of Asian values span much broader parts of the region.

The study is organized as follows. The next section offers an overview of the Asian values debate as a basis for deriving the range of Asian values for empirical examination. This is followed by a section that discusses the four dimensions of Asian values and one that presents the data, methods, and results of the empirical analysis. The last section concludes the study by summarizing and discussing the implications of the findings.

**Asian Values Debate: Levels of Discourse**

While the concept of Asian values goes back much further (Emmerson 1995; Rozman 1991; Thompson 2000),

2 the debate on Asian values was triggered more recently by a series of political events in the mid-1990s, including the caning of an American teenager in Singapore for vandalism and the trial of a foreign professor criticizing Asian governments and their judicial systems as undemocratic. What was then at issue was primarily the stringent legal system in Asian countries (notably Singapore) that seemingly led to what Westerners regarded as an outright infringement of human rights. To such criticism, Singaporean officials defended their system as one based on distinct cultural values such as strong morality.

The Asian values debate has since then been adrift between the extremes of cultural relativism and universalism. In the former perspective, Asian values are the cultural orientations, beliefs, norms, or attitudes
unique to the Asian region that form the base of their political, economic, and cultural institutions and processes. In the second perspective, the claim for Asians’ own standards with respect to certain norms like individual freedom is nothing but an attempt to suppress basic human rights that transcend cultural peculiarities. Moreover, it is argued, Asia is a huge region with such heterogeneous cultures and religions that no single set of values can reasonably characterize the region.³

While simple descriptions of the Asian values debate are available in many academic articles or opinion pieces, a fuller account of the debate is still lacking. This is because the Asian values debate has in fact transpired at multiple levels that are not necessarily commensurate. At one level of the discourse, the Asian values debate refers to more or less informal exchanges of views about the cultural foundations of Asian politics and economy among high-profile politicians, journalists, and public commentators. Central to this level of the debate is the claim that certain democratic values and institutions, such as civil liberties, political competition, press freedom, and rule of law, are essentially Western constructs alien to Asian societies. Ardent supporters of Asian values, especially Southeast Asian political leaders, insist on the “Asian way” of politics and development grounded on a sense of collective destiny, individual sacrifice, and strong work ethic, which they regard as distinctly “Asian.” To the critics, however, such a claim has only served to disguise, justify, and preserve semidemocratic regimes prevailing in the region (Kim 1994; Ibrahim 2006; Zakaria 2002).

The second level of the discourse on Asian values involves a different type of participant—philosophers and historians. These scholars trace the historical roots of Asian values and try to delineate the range of these values by situating them in traditional Asian philosophies. In so doing, they have extracted essential elements of Asian values, which are often at odds with the claims of political advocates of Asian values. Among these studies are philosophical inquiries debunking a monolithic characterization of Asian cultures as authoritarian and paternalistic. Studying Confucian and other Asian traditional writings, scholars such as William de Bary and Amartya Sen find a rich and diverse repertoire of cultural norms and expectations in Asian countries. These cultural values are not only compatible with Western notions of political rights and individual liberty but also democratic in their nature (Ackerly 2005; Bell 1997, 2000; Bell et al. 1995; De Bary 1998; Fox 1997; Lee 2000; Mendes n.d.; Sen 1997; Tu 1984).⁴ However, such attempts to discern liberal and democratic ideals in the traditional Asian philosophical texts have been criticized as reading too much into selective
passages in their effort to establish the Asian human rights tradition (Hood 1998). In addition, since Asian societies have such long and rich philosophical traditions “it is possible to ‘prove’ nearly anything about pro-democratic ideas” (Kausikan 1998, 17).

Finally, another body of scholarly research places the discourse of Asian values in a broader comparative context. This level of the Asian values discussion is a rather recent trend and is empirical in its nature, as its main emphasis is on the empirical linkages of culture and other macrolevel phenomena such as democracy and development (Ahn and Kang 2002; Apodaca 2002; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2001; Han 1999; Kim 1997; Lee 2002). An important question in this comparative scholarship on Asian values is how Asians’ cultural orientations have influenced their levels and patterns of political and economic development. Francis Fukuyama notes the conflicting implications of Asian values for economic growth and modernization. On the one hand, Asian emphasis on the value of work, thrift, and responsibility can be seen as a form of social capital, which must be conducive to economic development. On the other hand, he claims that family-centered attitudes characteristic of many Asian societies have in fact hampered the emergence of large-scale businesses by depressing trust in people other than family members (Fukuyama 1995a, 1995b, 2001). Clearly, certain elements of Asian values such as a strong work ethic, emphasis on social harmony, and priority of collective goals are conducive to development, whereas other elements such as paternalism and duty-based obedience to higher authority are antithetical to political democracy and a free-market economy.

Interestingly, empirical studies examining the degree of shared political or social orientations among Asians present mixed findings (Dalton and Ong 2005; Dalton and Shin 2003; Flanagan and Lee 2000; Hitchcock 1994). Some find that “East Asian publics have a vision of a good society and good government that differs somewhat from that of their non-Asian counterparts” (Wang and Tan 2006, 69), while others find some Confucian values to be more prevalent among non-Asians.

In short, the three levels of the discourse on Asian values correspond to the Asian values debate among politicians/journalists, Asianists, and comparativists, each with varying lines of argument. The first group tends to focus on the validity of the concept of Asian values, debating about the selective affinity of Western institutions to Asian societies. The second group has devoted its efforts to identifying the essence of Asian values, questioning a stereotyped characterization of those values. The third group has studied Asian values in a cross-national or cross-regional perspective with an empirical bent, seeking to understand
the implications of shared cultural attitudes for developmental outcomes in the region.

Despite such differences in the focus of the debate, however, the participants in the Asian values debate seem to share one commonality, which is that Asian values are presumed to be either existent or nonexistent. The advocates of Asian values take it for granted that Asians share common cultural values that uniquely define what it means to be an Asian. In contrast, the critics of Asian values point out the contrived nature of the notion, doubting its validity in characterizing Asia’s diverse cultures. To a large extent, the validity of each claim would hinge on corroborating the underlying premise: whether Asian values do in fact exist. Yet much of the existing research (with the notable exception of a few empirical studies of the comparativists) has been on the implications of the presence or absence of Asian values rather than on demonstrating that such values are indeed shared by Asians and distinguish them from people of other regions.

**Dimensions of Asian Values**

While the Asian values debate comprises different points of argument and different types of claimants, some common aspects of Asian values can be discerned from previous writings on Asian values, which can be subjected to empirical corroboration.

Notably, Asian values are themselves multifaceted norms, and thus it is very common in the literature to mention more than one trait when defining Asian values. For example, Goh Chok Tong (1994, 417) characterizes Asian values as entailing “a sense of community and nationhood, a disciplined and hardworking people, strong moral values and family ties.” Russell Dalton and Doh Chull Shin (2006b, 174) identify “respect for hierarchy and concern for collective well-being” as two key features of Confucian values. Therefore, depending on which aspect to focus on, evaluations of the influences and implications of Asian values will vary considerably.

The first dimension of Asian values easily identifiable in the existing literature is **familism**, which refers to explicit or tacit acknowledgment of the importance of family in both public and private arenas of life. As one of the most rudimentary units of collective life, family plays key functions—such as socialization—in many societies, yet it takes on particular significance in Confucian Asia. In the Confucian context, family-related norms have long dominated not only private re-
relationships but also people’s expectations and imaginations of their roles in public life, giving rise to “a sense of community of trust modeled on the family” (Tu 1991, 31).

In particular, filial piety, unconditional respect for parents and obedience to their wishes, is a central norm defining Confucian family relations. Good children in the Confucian tradition are supposed to not only abide by the rules set by their parents but also take great care of the parents’ welfare. Filial piety also extends to the imaginary relationship of the king and the followers as the one between parents and children in which the king, like a parent, wields unquestionable authority.

Closely tied to familism is the second dimension, which might be called communalism or communitarianism—that is, the primacy of group or community goals over individual welfare and freedom. The argument for the superiority of communitarian norms in governing society is one of the staples of Southeast Asian political leaders putting forward the Asian values claim. According to Lee Kuan Yew, “A society with communitarian values where the interests of society take precedence over that of the individual” suits Asians better than American-style individualism. Another high-level Singaporean officer, Bilahari Kausikan (1993, 35), praises the “communitarian traditions of Asia” over the “adversarial traditions of the West.” As such, these advocates of Asian values have politicized the term community putting it in the individual-society dichotomy and thus calling into question the claims of liberal democracy.

Yet scholars such as William de Bary (1998) recognize that communitarian elements of the Confucian tradition are complementary rather than antagonistic to democratic ideals, since those elements stress cooperation and collaboration among free and independent individuals. Russell Fox also notes that the community in classical Confucian texts is a horizontal concept in which “everyone holds to their roles, and everyone, in different times and places, has the potential to show forth, through their participation in community activities, the sort of authority which binds the community together” (Fox 1997, 582).

The third dimension of Asian values is perhaps the most intensely studied aspect of Asian values. This dimension entails a range of attitudes toward power and authority, including deference to higher authority and hierarchy, penchant for order and stability, preference for strong leadership, and emphasis on consensual governance over competition and contention. Also, the long tradition of reverence of sage-kings (as exemplified by the famous ancient Chinese kings Yao and Shun) is closely tied to Asians’ tendency to venerate expert rule. Paternalistic in nature, these
cultural attitudes are the very features of Asian values that led some to claim outright that “Confucian ideas are antithetical to Anglo-American democracy” (Kim 1997, 1125). In particular, in the framework of the congruence theory, authoritarian regimes in many parts of Asia may be said to be congruent with their political culture stressing allegiance to authority (Dalton and Ong 2005; Dalton and Shin 2006a).

The fourth dimension is strong emphasis on work ethic and education. Asians are commonly held up to strong norms of self-discipline, including hard work and thrift. Such traits are contrasted with Latin Americans’ supposed emphasis on mañana and are praised as having contributed to the Asian economic miracle (Zakaria 2002). Relatedly, self-cultivation through education is one of the fundamental foundations of Confucianism. In the Confucian understanding of education, education is not an instrument to build skills and expertise to enable one to climb a social ladder; rather, it is viewed to have an intrinsic value as a process of cultivation of human virtues (Ackerly 2005, Tu 1991).

While the preceding discussion classifies Asian values into different dimensions, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive and in fact may be closely intertwined. For example, the norms underlying family relationships are transferred to those regulating the relationships beyond the family. But little work has sought to test out the extent to which these values are in fact related; we turn now to this question.

**Empirical Analysis: Data, Methods, and Findings**

The empirical analysis aims to answer two distinct questions that have often been blurred in the previous literature. First, do Asians really hold different values than non-Asians? This question calls for a comparative approach, because it cannot be answered just by looking into Asians’ own attitudes. You can discover the uniqueness of apples are only when you compare them with, say, oranges. Second, do the cultural attitudes and norms referred to as Asian values form distinct dimensions as identified in the previous discussion? This question requires factor analysis, because we need to find out whether multiple survey items on Asian values are indeed grouped into distinct factors.

Before introducing the data and design of the empirical analysis, it should be noted that empirical approaches to studying cultural values have inherent limitations. Cultural attitudes that might be named Asian values are multitrait norms, comprising a rich set of views, beliefs, and expectations for individual and social relations. Yet, existing cross-
Data and Methods

The first part of the current empirical analysis is concerned with whether Asians indeed hold cultural attitudes distinct from those of non-Asians. Three cross-national surveys are used in this part of the analysis: the World Values Surveys IV (WVS IV), 1999–2004; the Asia Barometer (AB), 2003; and the East Asia Barometer (EAB), Rounds I (2001–2003) and II (2005–2006). These surveys cover roughly the same period yet they contain somewhat different sets of Asian countries (see Appendix for the list of countries classified as East versus Southeast Asian countries).

To answer whether cultural attitudes uniquely characterizing Asians really exist, I extracted from each survey the questions of relevance to the four dimensions of Asian values introduced earlier. Some of these questions use the Likert scale (such as 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree) and others use dichotomous responses. To make it easier to compare across survey items, all of the survey question responses were converted into a binary scale with “0” (“1”) meaning the response disagreed (agreed) with the given statement on Asian values.¹⁵

The total of twenty-two survey questions were selected from WVS IV with five questions on familism, four on communalism, seven on authority orientations, and six on work ethic. Somewhat surprisingly, the two barometers have much smaller numbers of questions related to Asian values—ten questions from AB and nine questions from EAB. The countries in WVS IV are grouped into four regions for a comparative analysis—East Asia (EA, including the Northeast Asian countries minus Japan), South and Southeast Asia (SSA), other developing countries (DEV), and Western European/North American countries (WENA). Since the two barometers contain only Asian countries, the comparison is made between East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian countries.¹⁶

Using the survey questions and the regional classifications, I calculated the percentage point differences in average response rates between national survey data contain a limited range of survey questions that potentially tap into Asian values. Furthermore, most such questions reflect Asian values only approximately, since the existing cross-national surveys were not created to study Asian values themselves. Therefore, the problem of validity—that is, whether the survey items indeed measure what they are supposed to measure—is likely to be particularly acute for any empirical study of the Asian values claim.
two regions at a time. These comparisons are presented in Table 1. For instance, in Table 1, –2.19 percent in the first row under the column of “EA vs. SSA” means that the average rate of responses agreeing that family is an important social circle is 2.19 percentage points lower in East Asian countries than in the South and Southeast Asian countries. Table 1 contains the comparisons between the two subregions of Asia for the survey questions from AB and EAB.

All of these comparisons are essentially based on descriptive statistics. As such they are not enough to draw firm conclusions on the cultural disparities between Asians and non-Asians, since those differences might in fact be due to other conditions. Therefore, we need an analysis that controls for the influences of other social and economic factors that may give rise to such differences. To this end, I utilize a multilevel or mixed-effects regression model, which enables controlling for both the individual and aggregate level conditions.

The use of a multilevel model is necessary for two reasons. First, cross-national surveys naturally form the data of multiple levels—individuals within nations, nations within world regions, etc. A multilevel model allows one to take account of the effects of different levels of explanatory factors simultaneously. For example, if we find differences in authority orientations between Asians and non-Asians, we may wonder whether such differences would still remain even after we control for the differing levels of development of their societies and for individual factors such as age and sex. Second, it is also possible that the effect of individual factors varies depending on aggregate conditions, which calls for a model that can capture the “interlevel” interaction effect. For example, many survey items on authority orientations are closely related to what is known as postmaterialist attitudes. While one can control for postmaterialism as an individual-level variable, it would not be enough if the relationship of postmaterialist views and authority orientation varies by the level of societal development. In this case, only a multilevel analysis can provide effective control for such interlevel interaction.

The basic form of a multilevel regression is as follows:

Level 1: \[ Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{ij} X_{ij} + r_{ij} \]

Level 2: \[ \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} W_{j} + u_{0j} \]
\[ \beta_{ij} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} W_{j} + u_{ij} \]

where \( i \) denotes an individual observation and \( j \) an aggregate unit (a country in this analysis). The level 1 regression uses individual data
such as individual responses to the survey questions. The level 2 regression refers to aggregate observations such as the level of development. Here, the dependent variables become the intercept and slope of the first-level regressions, which implies that both the mean and the effects of the independent variables vary by countries. The two level regressions can also be expressed as the mixed-effects form:

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**Table 1 Intraregional Comparison of the Survey Questions on Asian Values**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>EA vs. SSA (in percentage points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Familism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following social circles or groups are important to you? Family.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>−2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family is the most important.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>−1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will adopt somebody to continue the family line.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>−15.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second.</td>
<td>EAB</td>
<td>−5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions.</td>
<td>EAB</td>
<td>−23.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communalism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People can be trusted.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>20.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people can be trusted.</td>
<td>EAB</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to your local community or to society is important.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>−4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authority</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even if parents’ demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask.</td>
<td>EAB</td>
<td>−3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person should not insist on his own opinion if his coworkers disagree with him.</td>
<td>EAB</td>
<td>−10.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony of the community will be disrupted if people organize lots of groups.</td>
<td>EAB</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If people have too many different ways of thinking, society will be chaotic.</td>
<td>EAB</td>
<td>−0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the sake of the national community/society, the individual should be prepared to sacrifice his personal interest.</td>
<td>EAB</td>
<td>−22.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government run by a powerful leader, unrestricted by parliament or elections, is good.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>22.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things.</td>
<td>EAB</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System run by experts according to what they think is best for the country is good.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>5.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasis on Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having access to higher education is important.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>−2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like to see my son become a great scholar.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>−35.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like to see my daughter become a great scholar.</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>−28.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources: Asia Barometer (AB) and East Asia Barometer (EAB).*

*Notes:* Shown are the percentage point differences in the average response rates between East Asian countries (EA) and Southeast/South Asian countries (SSA). See Appendix for the list of countries classified as EA vs. SSA.

a. This question was not asked in China.
\[ Y_{ij} = \{ \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10} W_j + \gamma_{01} W_j^2 + \gamma_{11} W_j^2 \} + \{ u_{ij} + u_{ij}^* + \epsilon_{ij} \}, \]

where the first part captures the fixed effects and the second part the random effects. Here, \( \gamma_{01} \) indicates the effect of the aggregate conditions, and \( \gamma_{11} \) indicates the interactive effect of the individual and aggregate conditions. Put differently, \( \gamma_{11} \) captures the coefficients on individual-level independent variables that take different values for different countries. More specific details about the model specification will be provided in the next section when presenting the findings.

The second part of the analysis tries to determine whether the four dimensions of Asian values delineated in the previous literature review indeed characterize Asians’ beliefs and norms about social and political life. This part draws primarily on the principal factor analysis (PFA) rather than the principal component analysis (PCA). PFA is a more appropriate extraction method given the purpose of the current analysis, because PFA aims to determine whether the data conform to the hypothesized factor structure such as the number of factors and the pattern of factor loadings, whereas PCA’s goal is to detect the underlying structure of a set of variables without a priori assumption about factor patterns. These two methods are often considered interchangeable despite important differences in the goal and assumptions of the two types of factor analysis. In essence, PCA is a method of data reduction, whereas PFA is a method of testing factor structures. Although PFA is a more proper method of analysis for the current study, the results of PCA are also presented as a way to check the robustness of the results.

Factor analysis is accompanied by rotation to facilitate interpretation of the results. There are also choices for rotation methods—orthogonal and oblique. Orthogonal rotation assumes that the extracted factors are uncorrelated with one another, whereas oblique rotation allows such correlations. While we are testing whether the four aspects of Asian values identified form distinct dimensions, it does not necessarily mean that those dimensions are independent from one another. In fact, all four dimensions should correlate with one another given that they all supposedly relate to the same philosophical tradition of Confucianism. Thus oblique rotation will be a better method of rotation, yet orthogonal rotation is also performed to increase the reliability of the results.

As a final note, the current factor analysis is run on the tetrachoric correlation matrix because all variables are dichotomous. Tetrachoric correlations are calculated for binary variables that are assumed to represent underlying bivariate normal distributions, as in the case when a dichotomous test item is used to measure some dimension of achieve-
ment. In the current analysis, most binary variables are converted from Likert scales, which can be treated like continuous variables; it therefore makes sense to run factor analysis on tetrachoric correlations.

Results

This subsection presents the findings from the empirical analyses explained above, which are organized into three parts: descriptive analysis (Table 1), multilevel regression analysis (Table 2), and factor analysis (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 1 presents the comparisons between East and Southeast Asian countries for nineteen survey questions from the Asia Barometer and the East Asia Barometer. These questions are classified into four categories—familism, communalism, authority orientations, and emphasis on education. Most notably, the family norms turn out to be stronger among South and Southeast Asians than among East Asians, as seen in the negative differences for all statements on familism. In particular, the imagery of the state as an extended family stands out more strongly among South and Southeast Asians.

Notably, many comparisons of the approval rates are negative, meaning that East Asians are less supportive of those statements on Asian values than the residents of other regions. First, East Asians endorse the importance of family relationships to a lesser degree than people of other regions (including South and Southeast Asians). This conflicts with the view of Asian values proponents. Second, East Asians also hold much less authoritarian values compared to the residents of other regions. In all seven question items concerning the value of authority and order, East Asians score lower than people of other developing countries as well as South and Southeast Asians. As compared to Westerners of advanced countries, East Asians also score lower in all but one item.

However, the statements related to communalism and work ethic show the opposite pattern. In these two aspects of Asian values, East Asians generally agree more to the given statements than people of other regions do. As for communalism, it turns out that East Asians hold greater levels of trust and regard for others’ preferences than the residents of other regions. As for the work ethic–related statements, the levels of agreement are consistently higher in East Asia than in WENA.

The findings presented so far are primarily obtained from the descriptive statistics, which is of limited value for an explanatory analysis. Since cultural values, norms, or beliefs are all affected by a multitude of
factors, the current analysis would remain inadequate if it did not take them into account. The multilevel regression analysis presented in Table 2 is an attempt to address whether those regional differences in the approval rates still remain if one controls for various factors influencing cultural views.

As introduced previously, a multilevel analysis allows one to model the influence of individual and aggregate conditions simultaneously. Although there are numerous factors that might contribute to systematic differences in cultural attitudes, I consider the following four individual-level variables: AGE, GENDER, INCOME, and POSTMAT. GENDER is a dummy variable taking the value of one for male respondents.

Table 2  Multilevel Regressions of Asian Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Effects</th>
<th>FAM</th>
<th>COMM</th>
<th>AUTH</th>
<th>WORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE (β₁)</td>
<td>0.0020***</td>
<td>0.0001***</td>
<td>0.0024***</td>
<td>0.0024***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE (β₂)</td>
<td>-0.0188***</td>
<td>0.0103</td>
<td>-0.0164</td>
<td>-0.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDPPC (γ₀)</td>
<td>0.0026</td>
<td>0.0024</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.0038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCOME (γ₁)</td>
<td>-0.0053</td>
<td>0.0066</td>
<td>-0.0379</td>
<td>0.0025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCOME×GDPPC (γ₂)</td>
<td>-0.0000</td>
<td>0.0011**</td>
<td>-0.0012</td>
<td>-0.0004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSTMAT (γ₃)</td>
<td>-0.0043</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>-0.0794***</td>
<td>0.0006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSTMAT×GDPPC (γ₄)</td>
<td>-0.0023***</td>
<td>0.0028***</td>
<td>-0.0045**</td>
<td>-0.0029***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSA (β₅)</td>
<td>0.6024***</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>1.4258***</td>
<td>-0.2508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEV (β₆)</td>
<td>0.5804***</td>
<td>-0.2836*</td>
<td>1.5310***</td>
<td>-0.5954***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WENA (β₇)</td>
<td>0.5060***</td>
<td>-0.3616*</td>
<td>1.4101***</td>
<td>-0.6041***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept (γ₀)</td>
<td>2.0804***</td>
<td>1.2693***</td>
<td>1.7386***</td>
<td>2.0739***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Random Effects (Variance)

| Intercept (u₀) | 0.0002 | 0.0004 | 0.0022 | 0.0006 |
| INCOME Slope (u₁) | 0.0008 | 0.0007 | 0.0081 | 0.0008 |
| POSTMAT Slope (u₂) | 0.0251 | 0.0548 | 0.3362 | 0.0514 |
| Residual (r) | 0.2988 | 0.6091 | 1.4736 | 0.5857 |

Model Fit

| Wald (χ²)     | 204.48*** | 79.75*** | 134.84*** | 167.16*** |
| LR Test (χ²) | 3163.33*** | 2530.59*** | 3870.67*** | 3361.01*** |
| ICC           | 0.0775 | 0.0825 | 0.1858 | 0.0807 |
| Total N       | 44,497 | 38,292 | 32,954 | 46,131 |
| Number of Countries | 37 | 34 | 34 | 38 |

Source: Data are from World Values Survey IV.

Notes: The dependent variable in each regression is the sum of the variables that show consistent differences between East Asia and other regions. LR test is a test for the appropriateness for a multilevel instead of one-level model. ICC (intraclass correlation coefficient) indicates the proportion of variance of the dependent variable that is accounted for by level-two units.

See text for information on model specification.

Note that all variance estimates in the random effects section are 95% significant.
INCOME is an ordinal variable consisting of ten personal income levels standardized across countries. POSTMAT is Ronald Inglehart’s twelve-item postmaterialism index, which ranges from zero (materialist) to five (postmaterialist) (Inglehart 1977, 1997).\footnote{If \textit{INCOME} represents socioeconomic condition, \textit{POSTMAT} captures the respondent’s attitudinal outlook.\footnote{In particular, \textit{POSTMAT} can serve as a summary measure for the degree to which an individual’s cultural orientation is influenced by traditional belief system; the lower the value of \textit{POSTMAT}, the more traditional one’s cultural attitude would be. Both \textit{INCOME} and \textit{POSTMAT} are important variables because an individual’s cultural belief is shaped by both objective and subjective conditions.}} It is also expected that these two variables may have different impacts across the surveyed countries given their different levels of developmental experiences. Such varying impacts can be modeled by a random intercept and a random slope in the multilevel model.

Since the chief purpose of the current multilevel analysis is to check whether the regional differences still hold when controlling for potential factors influencing them, the dependent variable is created out of the variables that show consistent differences between East Asia and all other regions. For instance, out of five familism-related variables, the three variables that are all negative in the regional comparisons are summed up to generate the dependent variable called \textit{FAM}. Three more dependent variables corresponding to the rest of the dimensions (\textit{COMM, AUTH, and WORK}) are generated in a similar fashion.\footnote{In sum, the current multilevel model takes the following form:}

In sum, the current multilevel model takes the following form:

\begin{align*}
\text{Level 1: } AV_{ij} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{30} \text{GDPPC}_{ij} + u_{ij} \\
&+ \gamma_{40} \text{inCOME}_{ij} + \gamma_{41} \text{GDPPC}_{ij} \times \text{GDPPC}_{ij} + \gamma_{42} \text{POSTMAT}_{ij} + \gamma_{43} \text{GDPPC}_{ij} \times \text{POSTMAT}_{ij} + \gamma_{44} \text{GDPPC}_{ij} \times \text{POSTMAT}_{ij} + r_{ij},
\end{align*}

where \textit{AV} is the aforementioned dependent variables—\textit{FAM, COMM, AUTH, and WORK}. This model is then converted into the mixed-effects form for estimation:

\begin{align*}
AV_{ij} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{30} \text{GDPPC}_{ij} + \gamma_{40} \text{inCOME}_{ij} + \gamma_{41} \text{GDPPC}_{ij} \times \text{GDPPC}_{ij} + \gamma_{42} \text{POSTMAT}_{ij} + \gamma_{43} \text{GDPPC}_{ij} \times \text{POSTMAT}_{ij} + \gamma_{44} \text{GDPPC}_{ij} \times \text{POSTMAT}_{ij} + r_{ij},
\end{align*}
where the first part contains the fixed effects and the second part contains the random effects. Note that $\gamma_{31}$ and $\gamma_{41}$ captures the cross-level effects of income and postmaterialism, respectively.

The results of the estimation are displayed in Table 2. Again, the purpose of these regressions is to check whether the consistent differences between East Asia and other regions for the four aspects of Asian values still remain after controlling for various influences on such values. Hence, the key findings are concerned with those highlighted coefficient estimates on the three regional dummies—SSA, DEV, and WENA. Negative estimates on these regional dummies indicate that East Asians hold a greater degree of the concerned aspect of Asian values as compared to other regions, even when we control for their differing levels of economic development as well as individual differences such as age, gender, and postmaterialist views. Positive estimates indicate the opposite—that is, East Asians in fact hold the concerned aspect of Asian values to a lesser degree than people of other regions do.

Despite the inclusion of various control variables, the findings from the multilevel regressions are very similar to those from the comparisons based on simple percentage differences. First, all regional dummies are positive and strongly significant in the regressions of FAM and COMM. This indicates that the two dimensions of Asian values showing less endorsement from East Asians—familism and authority orientations—are indeed less prevalent among East Asians than among the residents of other regions even if we consider their diverse developmental experiences. This finding also is in line with those of the recent empirical studies of Asian values.

However, East Asians turn out to hold a greater degree of the communal values and put more emphasis on the importance of work than non-Asians do, as indicated by the significantly negative estimates on DEV and WENA in the regressions of COMM and WORK. In particular, the value of work ethic is strongly significant. Interestingly, the intra-regional differences in these two aspects of Asian values are not significant. This means that while East and Southeast Asians hold meaningfully different attitudes as to the importance of family and valuation of authority and order, they are not much different in terms of the values concerning community norms, trust, and work ethic.

Turning to other independent variables, we find AGE to have a consistently positive effect on all four aspects of Asian values—meaning that the older one is, the more likely she or he is to hold on to those values. This is not surprising given that most Asian values are associated with traditions and customs that tend to be cherished more by older generations. In comparison, gender difference does not seem to exist; only
the regression of \textit{FAM} shows a significantly negative coefficient estimate on \textit{MALE}.

The other two individual-level independent variables, \textit{INCOME} and \textit{POSTMAT}, are interacted with the aggregate level of development since their effects are expected to vary by countries. Indeed, postmaterialist attitudes turn out to have different effects by countries on the four aspects of Asian values, as shown by the significant estimates on the interaction term \((\text{GDPPC} \times \text{POSTMAT})\) in all regressions. The negative coefficient estimate on this interaction term in the regressions of \textit{FAM}, \textit{AUTH}, and \textit{WORK} implies that the relationship of postmaterialist attitudes with those three dimensions of Asian values becomes weaker in more developed societies. This result makes sense given that cultural orientations embodied in those three dimensions are closer to the tradition and survival values in the discourse of postmaterialism than to rationalism and self-expression values. Since more developed societies would have a larger share of postmaterialists, being a postmaterialist would not make a big difference in those aspects of Asian values largely overlapping with traditional value systems.

The analysis so far is concerned with whether Asians hold different cultural attitudes from non-Asians. The next analysis addresses the question of whether the four aspects of Asian values identified from the review of the existing discourse—familism, communalism, authority orientations, and work ethic—indeed form distinct elements among Asians.

Answering these questions relies on factor analysis to check whether the correlations among the responses to the survey questions for the four dimensions of Asian values coalesce around each dimension. The results are shown in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 shows the factor loadings from four factor analyses (PFA with oblique and orthogonal rotation and PCA with oblique and orthogonal rotation) for East Asians, and Table 4 shows the same for Southeast Asians. As mentioned earlier, PFA with oblique rotation is the most proper type of factor analysis given the purpose of the current analysis (i.e., testing of factor structure rather than data reduction) as well as the interrelated nature of the four aspects of Asian values. Yet the results from other types of factor analysis are presented as a way to check the robustness of the results.

The WVS survey questions selected for their relevance to Asian values do not form clear patterns around the four dimensions for East Asians. As seen in Table 3, not only is the number of the extracted factors smaller than four, but also some survey items load across factors. Yet there exists consistency in the results of the four factor analyses. In this table, the first two factors extracted from each factor analysis contain almost the same sets of variables. The first factor is loaded high on the
Table 3  Factor Analysis of the Survey Questions on Asian Values (East Asians)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retained Factors</th>
<th>Principal Factor Analysis</th>
<th>Principal Component Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oblique</td>
<td>Orthogonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraction Method</td>
<td>Principal Factor Analysis</td>
<td>Principal Component Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotation Method</td>
<td>Oblique</td>
<td>Orthogonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained Factors</td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Familism**
- Family is very important. -0.129 0.449 -0.059
- More emphasis on family life is good. 0.242 0.087 0.012
- One must always love/respect parents. **0.407** -0.063 0.051
- Parents’ duty is to do their best for children. 0.245 -0.036 0.169
- One of my goals has been to make my parents proud. -0.014 0.123 0.080

**Communalism**
- Most people can be trusted. 0.167 -0.107 -0.064
- To build good human relationships, it is important to understand others’ preferences. -0.048 0.136 -0.003
- Children should learn tolerance and respect for other people. 0.077 0.011 -0.092
- Children should learn unselfishness. -0.275 -0.109 -0.053

**Authority/Order/Stability**
- Children should learn obedience. 0.002 -0.187 **0.600**
- One should follow one’s superior’s instructions even if one does not fully agree with them. 0.035 **0.304** 0.226
- Greater respect for authority is good. **0.811** -0.122 -0.006

*continues*
Table 3  Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extraction Method</th>
<th>Principal Factor Analysis</th>
<th>Principal Component Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oblique</td>
<td>Orthogonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotation Method</td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained Factors</td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is good to have a strong leader who does not bother with parliament/elections.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.206</td>
<td>-0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is good to have experts, not governments, make decisions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining order is most important.</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracies aren’t good at maintaining order.</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>0.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td><strong>-0.015</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.701</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should learn feelings of responsibility.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is important in looking for a job? A responsible job.</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
<td>0.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should learn thrift and saving money.</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should learn hard work.</td>
<td><strong>0.674</strong></td>
<td>-0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One should put greater weight on work than on leisure.</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More emphasis on work is good.</td>
<td>-0.134</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data are from World Values Survey IV (N = 3562).

Notes: Reported figures are the factor loadings from the factor analysis of the tetrachoric correlation matrix with pairwise deletion.
See text for more information on the model specification and Appendix for the regional classifications of the surveyed countries.
### Table 4  Factor Analysis of the Survey Questions on Asian Values (Southeast/South Asians)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region Method</th>
<th>Principal Factor Analysis</th>
<th>Principal Component Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oblique</td>
<td>Orthogonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained Factors</td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Familism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family is very important.</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More emphasis on family life is good.</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td><strong>0.714</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One must always love/respect parents.</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ duty is to do their best for children.</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of my goals has been to make my parents proud.</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>-0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communalism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people can be trusted.</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>-0.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To build good human relationships, it is important to understand others’ preferences.</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should learn tolerance and respect for other people.</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should learn unselfishness.</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authority/Order/Stability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should learn obedience.</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One should follow one’s superior’s instructions even if one does not fully agree with them.</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater respect for authority is good.</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td><strong>0.630</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is good to have a strong leader who does not bother with parliament/elections.</td>
<td><strong>0.720</strong></td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continues
### Table 4  Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region Method</th>
<th>Extraction Method</th>
<th>Principal Factor Analysis</th>
<th>Principal Component Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oblique</td>
<td>Orthogonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained Factors</td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
<td>Factor 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>F2</td>
<td>F3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is good to have experts, not governments, make decisions.</td>
<td>0.721</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining order is most important.</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracies aren’t good at maintaining order.</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should learn feelings of responsibility.</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is important in looking for a job?</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>-0.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A responsible job.</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should learn thrift and saving money.</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>-0.058</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should learn hard work.</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td>0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One should put greater weight on work than on leisure.</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Data are from World Values Survey IV (N = 10,218)

*Notes:* Reported figures are the factor loadings from the factor analysis of the tetrachoric correlation matrix with pairwise deletion. See text for more information on the model specification and Appendix for the regional classifications of the surveyed countries.
following four statements: “one must always love/respect parents,” “greater respect for authority is good,” “children should learn thrift and saving money,” and “children should learn hard work.” And in all factor analyses, the second factor is also loaded high on the following four statements: “family is very important,” “one should follow one’s superior’s instruction even if one does not fully agree with them,” “children should learn feelings of responsibility,” and “responsibility is an important consideration in job search.” Note that both sets of the statements include two items associated with work ethic, which implies that the dimension of work ethic is more salient than any other dimensions for East Asians.

The results of the factor analyses for South and Southeast Asians are a little better in that the number of the extracted factors is close to four and there are fewer cross-factor loadings compared to those for East Asians. Most notably, the first extracted factor consistently loads on two items under authority/order attitudes: “it is good to have a strong leader who does not bother with parliament/elections” and “it is good to have experts, not governments, make decisions.” Within the authority dimension, these two items are particularly relevant to democracy support. Therefore, the current finding seems to be partially supportive of the Asian values thesis. The second factor contains two cross-factor items, which is hard to interpret: “more emphasis on family life is good” and “greater respect for authority is good.” The third factor is loaded on two items under familism: “one must always love/respect parents” and “parents’ duty is to do their best for children.” Note that among the various familism-related questions these two statements are most closely tied to the norm of filial piety. This result thus implies that the norm regarding the parent-child relationship forms a coherent dimension of values for Southeast/South Asians.

Overall, the current factor analyses do not lend much support to the hypothesized pattern of four dimensions of Asian values. On the one hand, the factor patterns and loadings of Table 3 do not show strong evidence that East Asians perceive the four aspects as distinct categories of values. On the other hand, preference for strong leadership and expert rule over democratic decisionmaking forms a distinct factor among South and Southeast Asians, as does filial piety.

Discussion and Conclusion

Ignited by a series of political events in the early 1990s, the Asian values debate occupied a central place in the discourses on Asian politics and society during much of the 1990s. Yet the debate proceeded like a
dialogue between the deaf, as the two extreme views of Asian values took either the presence or absence of such values for granted. As such, the debate was long on theoretical conjecture but short on empirical validation. Only recently has a series of empirical studies emerged to examine whether Asians indeed hold cultural attitudes distinct from those of non-Asians. This study is an attempt to improve on those emerging empirical studies by exploring two questions based on large survey data—whether Asians indeed hold views and perceptions different from those of non-Asians toward cultural beliefs and attitudes associated with Asian values, and whether the four dimensions of Asian values discernible in the existing discourse of Asian values really form distinct sets of values among Asians.

The findings of the current statistical analysis yield mixed answers to these two questions. As to the first question of whether Asians hold different cultural attitudes from non-Asians, cross-regional comparisons as well as the multilevel regressions reveal that familial values and authority orientations are significantly lower among East Asians as compared to non-Asians and Southeast Asians, which contradicts the

### Appendix Regional Classification of the Surveyed Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Classification</th>
<th>East Asia (EA)</th>
<th>South/Southeast Asia (SSA)</th>
<th>Non–Asian developing countries (DEV)</th>
<th>Western European and North American countries (WENA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Values Survey Wave IV (1999–2004)</td>
<td>China, Japan, South Korea</td>
<td>Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam</td>
<td>Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Belarus, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia/Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, S. Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, UK, US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia Barometer (various years, 2001–2006)</td>
<td>China, Hong Kong, Japan, S. Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan</td>
<td>Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
claims of the Asian values proponents. In particular, it calls into ques-
tion the cultural defenders of authoritarian rule in East Asia. In contrast,
various survey items concerning the importance of work, responsibil-
ity, and thrift do turn out to receive greater endorsement from East
Asians than from non-Asians, suggesting that cultural factors may in
fact play a role in economic development.

As to the second question of whether the cultural traits associated
with Asian values form distinct dimensions as identified in the litera-
ture on Asian values, the factor analysis does not generate a clear pat-
tern around the four dimensions identified. A penchant for strong lead-
ership and an emphasis on parental duty and filial piety show up as
clearly distinct factors, but for South and Southeast Asians rather than
for Northeast Asians.

While the findings do not offer a gratifyingly simple answer to either
question about Asian values, they are distinguished from previous stud-
ies in several aspects. First, the current results were obtained from much
more comprehensive regional (as well as intraregional) comparisons. In
addition, they were generated using a method that explicitly accounts for
different individual and aggregate conditions that may influence cultural
perceptions. Finally, the results are cross-checked against different spec-
ifications of the models as seen in the factor analyses.

The Asian values debate has waned somewhat, but the question of
whether there exist distinctively “Asian” cultural values is still relevant in
light of increasing contentions and conflicts around cultural, ethnic, and
religious identities in world politics. Indeed, a recent study by Ronald In-
glehart and Pippa Norris (2003) finds the greatest difference between Is-
lamic and Western public opinion to lie in social and cultural issues (such
as gender equality, homosexuality, abortion, and divorce) rather than in
political or ideological attitudes. With the so-called rise of Asia, it remains
critical to not take stereotypes for granted about what Asians think, but to
take a more rigorously empirical approach to the issue.

So Young Kim is assistant professor in the School of Humanities and Social Sci-
ences, College of Cultural Science, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and
Technology (KAIST). She earned a PhD in political science from Northwestern
University and worked in various positions prior to the KAIST appointment, in-
cluding data archivist for the Social Science Computing Center at the Univer-
sity of Chicago, data analyst for various large-scale policy analysis projects, and
assistant professor at Florida Atlantic University. Her research interests span in-
ternational political economy, Asian politics and society, quantitative political
methodology, and science and technology policies, with her works appearing in *International Organization* and *Journal of International and Area Studies*.

**Notes**

I wish to thank the editor and two reviewers for their insightful and detailed comments on the previous versions of the manuscript, which improved both the theoretical and empirical aspects of the study substantially.

1. Much of the empirical evidence contained in these recent books reveals that Emmerson was right, as some empirical studies find Asians to differ from non-Asians on certain cultural values while others find Asians to be no different from Westerners on other political orientations.

2. Emmerson discusses the ancient origin of the Asian values debate, which dates back to the first contacts of the Greeks with the Persians in the sixth century B.C.E. From the dichotomy of democratic Athens and despotic Persia emerged the image of barbarian Asia and the Western depiction of the “Orient” as irrational, authoritarian, and anti-Western. See also Edward Said (1978) for his famous exposition of the imaginary stereotyping of Asia or the Orient as the counterentity of the West. See also Thompson 2000 for a discussion of the parallel between Germany’s *zivilisationskritik* and Asian values. A more recent predecessor to the notion of Asian values is the theory of Confucian capitalism, which traces Asian economic miracles to Confucian ethics. See Cha (2003) for the linkage of Asian values and Confucian capitalism.

3. In his well-known book on the clash of civilizations, Samuel Huntington referred to Asia as the cauldron of civilizations, noting cultural diversity in this region; in fact Asia contains six of the nine civilizations he classified (Huntington 1996).

4. Ackerly finds the Confucian norm of *ren* to be inherently democratic because it is based on the belief that everyone is capable of *ren*. Sen provides a detailed account of the Hindu tradition that appreciates the values of individual liberty and tolerance, which are central to well-functioning liberal democracy.

5. Precedents of these comparative studies of Asian values can be traced back to the earlier literature on political culture, such as Lasswell et al. 1976; Pye and Pye 1985; Scalapino 1989; and Seah 1977. For a more general discussion of the importance of culture in understanding human and social progress as well as economic development, see Granato, Inglehart, and Leblang 1996; Harrison and Huntington 2000, and Swank 1996.

6. Yung-Myung Kim (1997) also discerns different elements of Confucian ethics having differing impacts on East Asian development. Confucian emphasis on values such as group solidarity and higher education are conducive to rapid economic growth, whereas lack of individual ingenuity obstructs such growth.
7. In their empirical analysis of Confucian values in relation to public support for market capitalism, Dalton and Shin (2006b) find that people in six East Asian countries in fact opt for hierarchism less often than people in two North American countries. Also, Dalton and Ong (2005) present the evidence showing that East Asians are not much different from people of established Western countries in authority orientations.

8. See also Lee 1994.

9. The primacy of filial piety is also revealed in the order of the *wu lun* (five relationships) of Confucianism (father/son, older brother/younger brother, ruler/minister, husband/wife, and friend/friend).


11. Citing such communal traditions, some notable scholars of comparative politics point out an inherent limitation of Asian societies in forging “liberal” democracy grounded in individual rights (Pye and Pye 1985, Scalapino 1989).

12. According to Confucius and Mencius, the ideal form of governance is realized when the ruler governs by the example of refined benevolence. In such a regime, people would follow naturally the king who rules in a kingly fashion with concern for humanity. Translated into the modern context, this Confucian view of good government has close affinity to the notion of “legitimacy by performance.” As is well known, the East Asian developmental state built a strong economy to compensate for its lack of political legitimacy. It is worthy of note that one of the key elements of such developmental regimes was the utilitarian utilization of technocrats reified to serve the goals of the nation.

13. Tu (1991, 31) also notes “the primacy of education as character building” in Confucian thought.

14. Interestingly, one of the passages of *Analects* says that “a young person who is filial and respectful of his elders rarely becomes the kind of person who is inclined to defy his superiors” (*Analects* 1.2 quoted in Tu 1991, 559).

15. This standardization of response scales was also needed to facilitate a more intuitive interpretation, because many question responses are reversely coded in their original form, with lower values indicating greater agreement.

16. Conventional usages of the terms *East Asia* and *Southeast Asia* often collide in their historical, cultural, ethnic, political, or geographic demarcations. This study follows the UN classification of East Asia, which refers to Northeast Asian countries with Confucian heritages (Greater China, Japan, two Koreas, and Mongolia). On the contrary, South and Southeast Asia in this study covers all other Asian countries. First, the main interest of this study is to uncover cultural patterns associated with Asian values, most of which imply Confucian norms, and thus East Asia is limited to the geographic area with undoubtedly Confucian traditions. Second, the tiny size of South Asian samples made it hard to do a balanced comparison for three subregions.

17. See Luke 2004 for a more detailed treatment of various types of the multilevel model.
18. Note that due to the multivariate normality assumption, factor analysis cannot be run on the usual correlations matrix in case of dichotomous variables.

19. The two barometers did not ask questions specifically about work attitudes, yet the Asia Barometer has a set of questions asking about the importance of education and scholarship, which is included as the fourth dimension in Table 1.

20. The WVS contains two postmaterialism indices, one based on four items and the other based on twelve items.

21. I also checked other socioeconomic variables, such as education, town size, and subjective class status. Since all of these variables are highly correlated both with INCOME and POSTMAT, their inclusion in the estimation model did not lead to a significant improvement of the explained variance. The results of these regressions are available on request to the author.

22. In other words, for each dimension, the variables are added up to represent consistent differences between East Asia and other regions on that dimension. Therefore, FAM is created out of the following variables: “family is important,” “parents’ duty is to do their best for children,” and “one of my goals is to make my parents proud.”

23. Note that the results of the likelihood tests for the simple versus multilevel model indicate that the latter model is an appropriate choice.

24. For instance, Dalton and Ong (2005) find no systematic difference in the perceptions of paternal duty between East Asia and Western nations (though their Western nation sample is limited to certain Pacific Rim countries—Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States). Dalton and Shin (2006b) also find that East Asians’ endorsement of hierarchism is no higher than that of Westerners.

25. This means that family relationships and norms are more likely to be valued by women.

References


