3. Cross-cultural perspectives in family research

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1. INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN THE CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF FAMILIES

1.1 Xenological Approaches

Cross-cultural analyses have found their way into family-related sciences through various paths. Indeed, most of the pioneering work on the family applied a cross-cultural perspective when describing different family types over time and space (e.g., Durkheim 1978 [1888]; Le Play 1883; Morgan 1988 [1877]; Westermarck 1922 [1891]). However, in most of this research, the concept of ‘culture’ was and still is used in a xenological framework in which family-related phenomena are described and explained in relation to ‘other’ ethnic groups and their cultural ‘differences’. Thus, ‘culture’ is routinely used as an explanatory factor if family behaviour is perceived as strange, unusual, or even exotic; whereas such arguments are seldom made if it is assumed that the behaviour can be placed in the context of everyday experiences. This usage dominates not just public debates, but scientific discourses, organisations, and journals. For example, while the 50th anniversary special issue of the *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* (Martin 2019) contains articles on cohabitation in Chile, parenting decisions in South Korea, and marital quality in China, similar papers on families from countries such as the United States or England would be considered misplaced. Even more astonishing is that not a single paper providing a cross-cultural comparison was published in this issue of the journal, which claims on its homepage to publish ‘high quality articles on research in comparative and cross cultural family studies’. Thus, studying ‘non-Western’ families is considered to be per se a contribution to cross-cultural comparisons (Lee 1987, p. 60), even if the comparative perspective is, at best, only implicit. While references to such ‘different’ family and kinship systems may generate some insights in the public and scientific discourse when the aim is to demonstrate how context-specific various theoretical premises and empirical regularities are, they do not represent explicit contributions to cross-cultural comparative family research.

1.2 Cross-National, Cross-Societal, and Cross-Cultural Family Research

Substantial cross-cultural comparative family research implies the analysis of two or more family cultures for one of the two following purposes (Lee and Haas 1993, p. 117). The first purpose is to *establish the generality of theories, hypotheses, or empirical generalisations that are already well established for one culture*. For example, since the work of Blood and Wolfe (1960), various studies conducted in North America and Europe have found that economic resources have a large impact on marital power. However, when cross-cultural studies took the cultural context of gender ideologies into account, they concluded that this relationship holds only for countries in a transitional phase in which they are moving away from traditional gender norms and towards egalitarian gender roles (Rodman 1967). Based on empirical evi-

dence from numerous time series from Europe and North America, it has been taken for granted for decades that when societies industrialise, their divorce rates rise. However, Goode (1993) and others demonstrated that in Arabia and in East Asian countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and Malaysia, divorce rates decreased during this transition from relatively high levels in the pre-industrial period. The second purpose is to *analyse variations in overarching cultural patterns in the institutionalisation of family and kinship systems and individual behaviour in families*. For example, it is assumed that whether a society's predominant economic activities are hunting and gathering on the one hand or agriculture and pastoral farming on the other has a direct impact not only on the society's kinship system, spouse selection, inheritance regulations, and gendered division of labour (Harris 1987, see also Ehmer in this volume), but on the value it places on children and on its fertility strategies (Nauck 2014a). In hunter-gatherer societies, levels of spousal cooperation on child care are high while levels of polygamy and fertility are low, in part because women strive to have long intervals between births in order to avoid having to carry more than one child at a time, and to extend their economic activities (Hewlett 1992). By contrast, in agricultural families, polygamy is more common, the gendered division of labour is more prevalent, and fertility is higher, in part because the children can extend and contribute early to the family economy (Nauck and Klaus 2008).

However, given these purposes of cross-cultural family research, the specifics of cross-cultural approaches must be compared with other types of comparative research. Lee and Haas (1993, p. 118) characterised 'cross-cultural' research as the analysis of 'interrelations among systemic properties of nonindustrial societies'; and thus follow the traditional division of labour between ethnological and sociological research, which in their view concentrates on 'modern', 'industrial' societies. However, such distinctions have become increasingly obsolete since social research has been broadly applied to *all* human societies; and given that recent comparative research has forcefully demonstrated the enormous cultural variability of families, even among societies with the same levels of industrial development and functional differentiation, such as between families in East Asian countries on the one hand and families in North America and Europe on the other (Furstenberg 2013; Raymo et al. 2015; Yeung et al. 2018). Cross-cultural comparisons of these families are theoretically challenging, as they have to overcome the predominant developmental paradigm (Thornton 2005). This paradigm has dominated theoretical reasoning since it began as Social Darwinism in the nineteenth century and evolved into modernisation theory in the twentieth century, because cultural differences can no longer be attributed to differences in economic development or levels of modernisation alone.

The common current understanding is to (gradually) differentiate between 'cross-national', 'cross-societal', and 'cross-cultural' research. This differentiation can be traced back to the pioneering work of Rokkan (1970), Lee (1982), and Kohn (1987). The most general term is 'cross-national family research', which refers to research that studies 'the effects of national and sub-national contexts on behaviors and attitudes of individual actors' (Andreß et al. 2019, p. 2); and that may, in principle, include families from any nation across the globe. 'Cross-societal' research concentrates on comparisons of families from nations with identical or rather similar institutional structures; e.g., comparisons of intergenerational relationships or family policies across Europe (Szydlik 2016, see Neyer in this volume), or of family values across East Asia (Iwai and Yasuda 2011; Yasuda et al. 2011). By contrast, 'cross-cultural' comparisons emphasise such differences within the general institutional structure of societies, and the resulting framing of family and kinship relationships. This framing may include expect-

tations about the validity of specific rules, rights, and obligations related to the respective positions in the family and kinship system, and their societal enforcement. These differences may, in turn, result in culture-specific variations in fertility strategies, socialisation practices, the division of labour between spouses, inheritance patterns, or emotional closeness among kinship members.

One consequence of the culture-specific framing of family and kinship is the shared understanding of ‘family’ within cultural groups; e.g., who is considered to be a member and who is not, sometimes culminating in a discussion about whether a beloved pet ‘is family’. In European societies, this question is especially relevant in the case of step-parenthood; e.g., whether a step-parent is a complementary family member, a substitute parent, or just a new personal relationship of a parent (Arránz Becker et al. 2013). This is a matter not only of subjective definitions, but of legal regulations of parental rights and duties. An early contribution on this topic was an analysis of kinship terminologies by Morgan (1998 [1877]), who demonstrated how the degree of social differentiation between kinship members varied systematically between hunter-gatherer societies and horticultural and pastoral societies, and examined their specific forms of cooperation requirements. The analysis showed that whereas the former (and modern ‘Western’) societies clearly distinguished between members of the nuclear family based on generation and gender, the latter did not differentiate between mothers and their sisters and fathers and their brothers. While such analyses provide important insights into the cultural framing of family and kinship structures, cross-cultural analyses require a general conceptual framework within which such differences may be described and explained. This framework may vary in complexity according to the type of analysis being performed. In the following, family is conceptualised as a social group that is purposively long-lasting, has clear membership boundaries, is constituted by positions defined by generation and gender, and produces collective goods exclusively for its members. This definition takes into account that while the boundaries between family and kinship, the collective goods produced, the sizes of the generations, and the gender positions may vary, they are sufficiently clear to distinguish the family from other social groups.

1.3 Cross-Cultural Family Research as a Multi-Level Problem

As is already implied in the notion of studying the effects of contexts on behaviours, a multi-level approach is inherent in cross-cultural family research. Explicit multi-level models seek to avoid reducing ‘culture’ to differences in individual attitudes, preferences, and cognitions between societies or ethnic groups. Moreover, these models take into account that cultural settings are also characterised by the shapes of social institutions, such as kinship, marriage, and family; and by the overarching setting of institutions within a society. Accordingly, at a minimum, cross-cultural family research has to consider the following levels. On the *individual level*, the specific cognitive maps, preferences, and probability expectations that define the culture-bound selection mechanisms and the routine solutions for problem solving, and thus ‘frame’ individual action repertoires, must be taken into account. On the *relational level*, the cultural definitions of what is ‘fair’ and meaningful in spousal, intergenerational, and kinship relationships, and how status transitions in the (family) life cycle are normatively regulated, must be considered. On the *institutional level*, it may be assumed that the allocation of responsibilities and tasks to spousal partners, families, and kinship systems – e.g., tasks related to childcare and care for the elderly or mutual insurance against life risks – depends

on the institutional setting in the respective society; i.e., on the extent to which these responsibilities and tasks are performed by institutions outside of the family, and thus also shape the opportunity structures of families.

As an example of this complex interplay, nations vary considerably with regard to the inclusiveness of the population in insurances against the risks of life and the level of their coverage. In China, for example, the inclusiveness of insurance has generally increased, but the level of insurance coverage is extremely low, which has led to financial resources being pooled within the broader kinship system to cover the costs of major emergencies. This arrangement is, in turn, based on high levels of solidarity not only within the nuclear family, but among the entire patrilineal kinship system, which is reinforced by practices such as ancestral worship and filial piety (Hu and Tian 2018; Kim 2016). In Germany, on the other hand, the inclusiveness of insurance is almost total, and the coverage is comparably high. Thus, in Germany, intergenerational and – to an even greater extent – kinship functional solidarity has been reduced to a minimum, while the spousal relationship has traditionally been the primary unit of solidarity.

When this dynamic multi-level perspective is applied in cross-cultural family research, the primary task is to formulate and test bridging hypotheses regarding mechanisms that explain cross-cultural differences as an interplay of variations across these levels. Moreover, the use of this perspective enables scholars to resolve the two-sided explanatory problem of cross-cultural family research. On the one hand, the question of under what contextual conditions specific family relations become institutionalised has to be addressed; while on the other, how these institutional regulations shape the individual behaviour of family members must be explained.

In the following, an institutional perspective on family structures is taken within the multi-level framework in order to examine the effects of institutional regulations on family role expectations and behaviours. As is the case for institutions in general, the family as an institution is comprised of complexes of regulations, which are ‘the permanent solution of a “permanent” problem’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 74). As such solutions have been proven to be successful in the past, they are legitimised by traditions and customs and enforced by internalisation, social control, and governance. For centuries, both historical family research and comparative analyses have clearly shown the lasting effects of such institutional regulations, which have resulted in significant behavioural differences being observed even under similar economic conditions. One striking example of this influence is the polarisation on the collectivism-individualism dimension (Fischer et al. 2009; Gelfand et al. 2004). A collectivistic orientation and kinship labour organisation emerged in the rice-growing regions of southern China, whereas an individualistic orientation developed in the Chinese north, supposedly because complex cooperation is a prerequisite for growing rice and distributing water, but not for growing crops. These differences are still salient among the urban population of modern China (Talhelm et al. 2014). Another example is that growing crops, using ploughs, and mechanising farming favours patrilineal kinship organisation, male dominance in spousal relationships, dowry payments, strong sex preferences for offspring, and gender differentiation in task allocation; whereas growing and selling vegetables in the marketplace tends to be female dominated, and thus increases the bargaining power of women and makes the payment of a bridewealth more likely (Alesina et al. 2013; Boserup 1970).

The following discussion illustrates how major institutional regulations shape selected dimensions of family relations. Two ideal types of kinship systems were chosen for this purpose, and the cross-cultural comparison looks specifically at differences in their institutionalisation

in East Asian and Western European societies. This comparison was chosen because these two types of societies are roughly at the same level of economic development, but differ in their cultural traditions. As it was solely driven by space limitations, this exemplary approach does not neglect other dimensions of family relations (basically, all of the topics of the research handbook could be analysed in a cross-cultural perspective), nor does it neglect other cultural areas in the world or living arrangements in societies with lower levels of economic prosperity, which represent other challenging avenues for cross-cultural comparisons.

2. MAJOR KINSHIP SYSTEMS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES FOR FAMILY RELATIONS

2.1 Affinal and Descent Kinship Regimes

One of the most consequential distinctions observed in the institutionalisation of families is whether family solidarity is organised primarily through partnership and marriage (*affinal regime* in the following) or through intergenerational relationships (*descent regime* in the following). Both regimes have far-reaching consequences for marriage rules, household composition, residence and inheritance rules, power relations between spouses and generations, and the (gendered) value placed on children. One of the early observations of cultural anthropologists was that this distinction is not just reflected in kinship terminologies (Morgan 1998 [1877]), as the affinal regime prevails in hunter-gatherer societies and in many modern, industrialised societies, whereas the descent regime prevails in most horticultural and pastoral societies (Harris 1987).

This distinction is also the theoretical basis for the description of a major ‘social-historical divide’ that separates societies that do or do not adhere to the ‘Western European marriage pattern’. This term was coined by Hajnal (1965), who divided societies based on whether they were west or east of the line from Trieste to St Petersburg. He showed that at the end of the nineteenth century, around half of the men and almost half of the women in Western Europe remained unmarried until the age of 30; whereas in Eastern Europe (and in other parts of the world), around half of the men were married at the age of 25 and half of the women were married at the age of 20. The description of this special developmental pathway in Western Europe and its ‘colonial descendants’ such as the United States and Australia was subsequently supported and extended by results from historical family research (Goody 1990; for a comprehensive discussion, see Ehmer in this volume). This specific marriage pattern is usually typologised as being based on consensual marriage at a relatively late age; a high proportion of never-married individuals in the population (Hajnal 1965); and the legally enforced principle of the unity of household and marriage, which excludes extended family forms and results in neolocal family formation. Laslett (1971, 1977) as well as Laslett and Wall (1972) and Mitterauer and Kagan (1982) showed that households with multiple families did not exceed 5 per cent of all households anywhere in historical Western Europe and Colonial America, whereas in Eastern Europe and East Asia, this proportion was generally more than 25 per cent. This pattern was also characterised by exogamy and smaller age differences between spouses, with the spousal relationship serving as the primary unit of solidarity; lower levels of gender inequality (Szoltysek and Poniat 2018); and an inheritance pattern that generally did not differentiate by gender or parity (Kohli 2005). However, the observation ‘that the West,

until industrialization, had a unique familial pattern of its own' (Laslett 1977, p. 114) was already made in Goode's seminal work on *World Revolution and Family Patterns*:

For the past thousand years, the Western family systems have been very different from those in China, India, Japan, and the Arab countries. There has been no clan system or lineage pattern. There has been no ancestor worship, and individuals rather than families have been held responsible for crimes. Arranged marriages have been common, but youngsters have had a greater voice in the final choice ... Although child marriages did occur, they were never the ideal or the statistically usual ... There was no polygyny or regularized concubinage. The eldest male was not even ideally the leader of the family, though he was of course paid deference. We cannot, then, view non-Western family systems as basically similar to the Western system at some undefined earlier historical phase just before industrialization. (Goode 1963, p. 22)

This affinal regime is indeed in many ways the opposite of the descent regime that is prevalent in most parts of the world. The affinal regime is based on monogamy, exogamy, neolocality (and, thus, nuclear families), bi-linear descent, and kindred. By contrast, the descent regime is based on membership in a kinship group of unilineal descent and the belief in common ancestry and related worship rituals, and may include polygamy or polyandry and endogamous marriages of various kinds. Murdock's ethnographic atlas (1967) listed 164 societies with matrilineal-organised kinship systems and 558 societies with patrilineal-organised kinship systems. In almost all cases, patrilinearity was combined with patrilocal family formation. This was not the case for matrilinearity, which is not just a mirror of patrilinearity. In most matrilinear societies, a woman lived with her brother, who also had the control rights over her children, whereas the biological father of the children played only a minor temporal role.

2.2 Consequences of Patrilineal Descent

The type of institutionalised patrilinearity that is most dominant worldwide has some 'inbuilt' features that affect intergenerational and intragenerational relationships. In contrast to the kindreds in bi-linear systems, in which every individual has his or her personal configuration of kinship relations, patrilinearity provides a clear structure of belongingness. All individuals are members of just one lineage, which enables high levels of social control and kinship solidarity. This kinship system is an effective form of insurance against life risks, and can be mobilised as a corporate actor. It also has a clear structure of intergenerational wealth flows, as inheritance takes place between the male members only. It regulates intergenerational obligations, traditionally as service and economic transfers from the younger to the older generation (Caldwell 1982). It also provides clear and highly ritualised rules of inclusion. When a woman in a patrilineal society marries, this is a transaction – in the case of cross-cousin marriages, within or between lineages – that is frequently accompanied by an economic transaction, such as the payment of a bridewealth or dowry, which affects the status of the wife in the receiving lineage, positively in the case of a bridewealth, and negatively in the case of a dowry. The woman is expected to leave her lineage of origin and be permanently absorbed into the lineage of her husband, even in case of widowhood; and her children belong to the husband's lineage in case of divorce.

These inbuilt features of the two regimes that were already institutionalised in pre-industrial times provide an important backdrop for understanding how these regimes changed in the last century. From its beginnings, cross-cultural family sociology was accompanied (and in

many cases dominated) by the theoretical question of whether the functional differentiation of modern societies, the mobility demands of the labour market, and the impact of increased affluence on individual choices will result in a worldwide convergence of family structures; or whether the differences in the antecedent societies will result in path-dependent developments. The challenging research question that then arises is whether societies that have similar levels of economic development but institutionalised differences in their family and kinship systems will develop similar family structures, or will continue to display path-dependent features.

3. MAJOR APPROACHES TO FAMILY CHANGE

3.1 Modernisation Theory

The first major (and still most influential) approach was developed by Goode (1963), who argued that urbanisation and industrialisation are the main forces of family change:

Even traditional family systems in such widely separate and diverse societies as Papua, Manus, China, and Yugoslavia are reported to be changing as a result of these forces, although at different rates and speed. The alteration seems to be in the direction of some type of conjugal family pattern – that is, toward fewer kinship ties with distant relatives and a greater emphasis on the ‘nuclear’ family unit of couple and children ... If it is true that the rough outlines of a conjugal system are beginning to emerge in such disparate cultures as China and the Arab world, we are witnessing a remarkable phenomenon: The development of similar family behavior and values among much of the world’s population. (Goode 1963, p. 1)

In this regard, Goode followed contemporary modernisation theories (Inkeles and Smith 1974; Lerner 1958) with their unquestioned assumption that ‘less developed’ societies will follow the ‘developed’ societies along the same path. Thus, it was posited, in societies where the marriage age is low, while the level of parental influence on partner choice and the age differences between spouses are high, industrialisation and urbanisation will result in reduced levels of parental influence and fewer arranged marriages, increases in the marriage age, and decreases in the age differences between spouses. In his review half a century later, Cherlin (2012) stated that Goode ‘took the 1950s Western family as the end point of social change. Just as most sociologists at the time considered Western-style industrialization as the high-water mark of social organization, so too did they consider the Western-style breadwinner-homemaker marriage the high-water mark of family organization’ (Cherlin 2012, p. 584).

In fact, about 95 per cent of men and women in the U.S. were married, and they did so at historically young ages: at a median of about 23 years for men and 21 for women. Women who were in their twenties during the 1950s had about three children, on average. Divorce rates, which had been rising slowly since the Civil War, were flat. Marriage was more dominant as an institution than at any time before or afterward in the twentieth century. (Cherlin 2012, p. 579)

Thus, while Goode assumed from his perspective in the 1960s that the increasing functional differentiation of modern societies would result in a de-differentiation of family structures, the subsequent developments clearly showed an increasing pluralisation of family structures as part of the individualisation of living arrangements and life course trajectories, and of the deinstitutionalisation of marriage (Cherlin 2004).

3.2 Second Demographic Transition

The second approach was developed in the context of efforts to describe a 'second demographic transition' (SDT) (Lesthaeghe 2010; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2008; van de Kaa 1987). With regard to changes in the reproduction in families, this approach emphasises that there are different fertility motivations in the 'first' and the 'second' demographic transitions. The first transition is driven by the changes in the benefits associated with having children, and the increased investment costs of children; i.e., by the changing value of children. The first demographic transition thus describes a shift from children having an instrumental utility (additional income for the family group and insurance against life risks; early economic productivity and wealth flows from children to parents, especially in lineage-based subsistence economies), with strong incentives for high parities; to children having a relational utility (lifelong dialogical interaction, large parental investments in the 'quality' of children, and life-long wealth flows from parents to children) with strong incentives for low parities (Caldwell 1982; Hoffman and Hoffman 1973; Nauck 2007, 2014a). By contrast, the subsequent SDT is assumed to be driven by forces of self-realisation that result in increases in cohabitation, late marriage, more frequent separation and divorce, low fertility, and increases in 'voluntary' childlessness.

Unlike the structuralist view of Goode, which explains the uni-directional worldwide change in the structure of families by citing changes in opportunities and constraints, the SDT approach is based on the assumption that this shift is driven by ideational changes: 'Once the basic material preoccupations, particularly long-term financial security, are satisfied through welfare state provisions, more existential and expressive needs become articulated. These are centered on self-actualization in formulating goals, individual autonomy in choosing means, and recognition by others for their realization' (Lesthaeghe 2010, p. 218). The SDT model further assumes that these ideational changes are based on worldwide diffusion processes, regardless of the structural conditions in the respective countries. The core features of this transition are the recognition of individual autonomy; flexible life course organisation; multiple lifestyles; free partner choice and female autonomy; premarital cohabitation as an acceptable and common living arrangement; and the postponement of marriage and childbearing, which results in sub-replacement fertility, increases in extramarital fertility, and, ultimately, rising childlessness (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2008, p. 85). Based on these criteria, Lesthaeghe provided rich empirical evidence that the SDT has 'spread' from Northern and Western Europe and North America not only to the other parts of Europe, but to other regions of the world, such as South America and Asia (Thornton et al. 2008). He also found evidence that the 'postponement of parenthood can be linked to the same value orientations as those associated with the SDT in Europe' (Lesthaeghe 2010, p. 241f.).

3.3 Path Dependency as an Opposite View?

Although the structuralist and the ideationalist approaches have provided different explanations for family changes in the last century, they have both predicted that the differences across countries in the institutionalisation of marriage and family and in related basic cultural traits are about to vanish, and instead foresee a worldwide convergence of patterns. These two approaches have dominated the scientific discussion for decades, and have rarely been challenged by alternative perspectives. One of these perspectives was provided by Kağıtçıbaşı

(2007) as ‘a view from the other side’ (subtitle of the book) of the ‘majority-world’. Her central claim was that most academic theories and descriptions of family change are informed by the culture of ‘individualism’ in Western societies. She therefore proposed an alternative model of family change for collectivistic ‘cultures of relatedness’. Her ‘Model of Family Change’ posits that there will be a fundamental shift away from a family and kinship-based utilitarian system of solidarity and towards a system of close emotional bonds, lifelong relatedness, and psychological support (Kağıtçıbaşı 2005, 2007). With the structural shift away from poverty and towards affluence, Kağıtçıbaşı predicted that a cultural change will take place for the countries with a culture of relatedness from economic to psychological interdependence. These arguments imply that in these societies, marriage rates will remain stably high (but perhaps with delayed timing), divorce rates will remain relatively low, and birth rates may be significantly reduced (down to the one child), but childlessness will not be a choice made ‘voluntarily’. Contrary to modernisation theory and the SDT approach, this model asserts different pathways of family change for ‘cultures of individualism’ and ‘cultures of relatedness’.

4. THE PUZZLE OVER EAST ASIA

An interesting case for testing such assumptions about cultural changes in the institutionalisation of marriage and family is East Asia, as its dominant family patterns are in many ways the opposite of the Western European marriage pattern proposed by Hajnal (1965) and his followers. On the one hand, these countries underwent an extremely rapid social transformation during the second half of the twentieth century, with Japan starting first, followed by South Korea and Taiwan, and, finally, by mainland China. Trends in economic and social indicators show that gross domestic product doubled in Japan between 1970 and 2010, increased almost tenfold in South Korea and Taiwan, and increased almost twentyfold in China. Over the same period, the gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education increased from 18 to 58 per cent in Japan, from 8 to 100 per cent in South Korea, from 8 to 84 per cent in Taiwan, and from 0.1 to 23 per cent in China (Raymo et al. 2015, p. 474). On the other hand, East Asian countries such as China, Taiwan, and South Korea (and to some extent Vietnam and Singapore) have a common culture that is deeply rooted in Confucianism, which has important implications for the organisation of gender and intergenerational relations in kinship and family (Chu et al. 2011; Hu 2017; Hu and Scott 2014; Hu and Tian 2018; Lin and Yi 2013; Raymo et al. 2015; Yeh et al. 2013). In these countries, the kinship system is patrilineal, with related rules of inheritance (Hu 2017); and the dominant marriage pattern is exogamous:

On marriage, a woman was exported to her husband’s lineage; her (temporary) ‘slot’ in the household ceased to exist, and a new (permanent) ‘slot’ was created for an incoming bride. Daughters were effectively lost to their parents when they married. And marriage offered adult women the only legitimate access to support by a household. (Das Gupta 2010, p. 128)

However, this separation of a married woman from her family of origin was only in terms of her instrumental relationships, such as those involving inheritance and financial and work support, whereas her emotional ties to her family of origin would be maintained (Nauck 2010, 2014b). Empirical analyses of historical data indicate that Japan had a similar pre-industrial baseline for social change in family structures (Dribe et al. 2014). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the mean age at marriage in Japan was 14.7 years for women and 18.6

years for men, and was thus even lower than it was in China at that time. Marriage was nearly universal in Japan, as the proportion of the population who never married was 1.0 per cent for women and 4.6 per cent for men.

All these East Asian societies have the ‘predominance of parent–child relationship over conjugal relationship’ (Atoh et al. 2004, p. 54) in common, which is normatively regulated by the ‘filial piety complex’ (Hashimoto and Ikels 2005; Yeh et al. 2013; Zhang et al. 2014), and accompanied by practices of ancestor worship. Sons are more likely than daughters to co-reside with their parents and to engage in functional exchanges with parents (Hu 2017). The flow of financial aid and help with household chores between the generations is mainly from adult children to their parents: ‘The percentage of intergenerational co-residence in the four societies (China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) ranges from 23.5% to 47.4%. While parents with greater need such as widowed parents tend to live with adult children, most co-residence occurs among married sons and their parents – a typical, traditional patriarchal family structure’ (Lin and Yi 2013, p. 311).

Table 3.1 displays core indicators of demographic developments of East Asian countries, such as the mean age at marriage and the proportion of the population who never married or were divorced at an age in their 50s. Thus, the table shows the development of the prevalence and the stability of marriage in these societies. Moreover, the table reports the development of the total fertility rate and the sex ratio (proportion of boys to 100 girls) at birth in East Asian countries. These highly aggregated, comparable demographic measures were selected because they are the only ones available for a longer historical period. Comparable micro-data, such as family and household panel surveys or value and attitude surveys, represent at best a cross-sectional picture. All of the trends in the demographic indicators show linear development. In all four societies, the mean age at marriage of men and women increased throughout the entire observation period, with South Korea (31.5/33.9 years) having the highest and China (24.8/26.9 years) having the lowest marriage age in 2010. The increase in the overall costs of marriage is a major reason for this postponement trend:

As most of these costs are borne by grooms and their family, young men often have to wait longer before saving enough to pay for their marriage, and these ruinous costs exert a heavy burden on young people and their family. They include the wedding ceremony itself, the bride-price – a practice that remains prevalent in rural areas – and last but not least, the purchase of a house or an apartment that is becoming a pre-condition for attracting a potential wife in urban areas. (Lu and Wang 2014, p. 48)

Noticeable differences exist with regard to the share of the population who are married. In Japan, the proportion of the population who were never married at age 50–54 increased from 1.2 to 12.0 per cent for women and from 1.4 to 20.9 per cent for men. A modest increase on a much lower level occurred in South Korea and Taiwan, where the share of men who were married was affected by an external shock in the middle of the twentieth century (flight from the Communist revolution in mainland China), which resulted in an imbalanced marriage market at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Francis 2011), and an *increase* in the share of men who are married in recent decades. In China, marriage has been almost universal at all times, with a stable proportion of 0.3 per cent of women and around 3 per cent of men being never married at age 50–54.

The proportion of the population who are divorced in this age bracket increased in all four countries, especially in the most recent decades, when the percentage of women who are divorced passed the 10 per cent mark in Japan and South Korea, but remained at a low level

Table 3.1 *Changes in marriage and fertility behaviour in China, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea*

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
<i>China</i>								
Mean age at first marriage: women	19.7 ²⁰	20.4 ²⁰	20.6 ¹	22.4 ¹	22.1 ²	23.3 ²	24.7 ²	24.8 ²
Mean age at first marriage: men			25.0 ¹	25.1 ¹	23.8 ²	25.1 ²	26.5 ²	26.9 ²
% never married at age 50–54: women				0.2 ^{2,3}	0.2 ²	0.2 ²	0.3 ²	0.3 ²
% never married at age 50–54: men				3.0 ^{2,3}	3.5 ²	4.1 ²	3.2 ²	2.4 ²
% divorced at age 50–54: women				0.5 ^{2,3}	0.4 ²	0.6 ²	1.8 ²	2.4 ²
% divorced at age 50–54: men				2.0 ^{2,3}	1.5 ²	1.4 ²	2.3 ²	2.8 ²
Total fertility rate	6.1 ²	4.3 ²	5.7 ²	2.7 ²	2.3 ²	1.7 ²	1.6 ²	1.7 ²
Sex ratio at birth	105 ⁴	109 ⁴	106 ⁴	106 ⁴	112 ⁴	119 ⁴	119 ⁴	116 ⁵
<i>Taiwan</i>								
Mean age at first marriage: women	20.1 ⁹	21.2 ⁹	21.7 ⁹	23.8 ²	25.9 ²	27.6 ²	29.2 ⁶	30.0 ²¹
Mean age at first marriage: men				25.3 ²	28.8 ²	30.5 ²	31.8 ⁶	30.2 ²¹
% never married at age 50–54: women	0.6 ²¹	0.7 ²¹	1.2 ²¹	1.0 ²¹	1.0 ²¹	4.5 ²²	8.2 ²²	11.2 ²²
% never married at age 50–54: men	3.1 ²¹	8.7 ²¹	8.2 ²¹	14.1 ²¹	8.4 ²¹	4.7 ²²	6.9 ²²	9.6 ²²
% divorced at age 50–54: women	1.0 ²¹	1.9 ²¹	1.4 ²¹	1.6 ²¹	1.9 ²¹	5.9 ²²	12.7 ²²	14.4 ²²
% divorced at age 50–54: men	1.9 ²¹	5.0 ²¹	2.7 ²¹	3.1 ²¹	2.8 ²¹	6.8 ²²	12.2 ²²	14.7 ²²
Total fertility rate	6.0 ²	5.6 ²	4.0 ²	2.5 ^{2,7}	1.8 ²	1.7 ²	0.9 ²	1.2 ²
Sex ratio at birth	119 ⁸	115 ⁸	113 ⁸	110 ⁸	109 ¹⁵	110 ¹⁵	109 ¹⁵	108 ¹⁵
<i>Japan</i>								
Mean age at first marriage: women	23.0 ¹⁴	24.4 ¹⁴	24.2 ¹⁴	25.2 ¹⁴	25.9 ¹⁴	27.0 ¹⁴	28.8 ¹⁴	29.4 ¹⁴
Mean age at first marriage: men	25.9 ¹⁴	27.2 ¹⁴	26.9 ¹⁴	27.8 ¹⁴	28.4 ¹⁴	28.8 ¹⁴	30.5 ¹⁴	31.1 ¹⁴
% never married at age 50–54: women	1.2 ¹⁴	1.7 ¹⁴	2.7 ¹⁴	4.4 ¹⁴	4.1 ¹⁴	5.3 ¹⁴	8.7 ¹⁴	12.0 ¹⁴
% never married at age 50–54: men	1.4 ¹⁴	1.1 ¹⁴	1.5 ¹⁴	2.1 ¹⁴	4.4 ¹⁴	10.3 ¹⁴	17.8 ¹⁴	20.9 ¹⁴
% divorced at age 50–54: women	2.0 ¹⁴	2.9 ¹⁴	3.8 ¹⁴	4.1 ¹⁴	4.8 ¹⁴	7.4 ¹⁴	9.2 ¹⁴	10.4 ¹⁴
% divorced at age 50–54: men	1.3 ¹⁴	1.5 ¹⁴	1.5 ¹⁴	1.9 ¹⁴	3.3 ¹⁴	5.0 ¹⁴	6.3 ¹⁴	6.7 ¹⁴
Total fertility rate	3.7 ¹⁴	2.0 ¹⁴	2.1 ¹⁴	1.8 ¹⁴	1.5 ¹⁴	1.4 ¹⁴	1.4 ¹⁴	1.5 ¹⁴
Sex ratio at birth	106 ¹⁴	106 ¹⁴	107 ¹⁴	106 ¹⁴	105 ¹⁴	106 ¹⁴	106 ¹⁴	105 ¹⁴
<i>South Korea</i>								
Mean age at first marriage: women	20.5 ^{13,11}	21.5 ¹³	23.3 ²	24.1 ²	24.1 ²	27.1 ²	30.2 ²	31.5 ²
Mean age at first marriage: men	24.6 ^{13,11}	25.5 ¹³	27.2 ²	27.3 ²	28.5 ²	30.3 ²	33.2 ²	33.9 ²
% never married at age 50–54: women	0.2 ^{12,11}	0.1 ¹¹	0.1 ²	0.2 ²	0.4 ²	1.1 ²	2.3 ²	3.7 ²
% never married at age 50–54: men	0.4 ^{12,11}	0.2 ¹¹	0.1 ²	0.3 ²	0.5 ²	1.3 ²	4.1 ²	7.9 ²
% divorced at age 50–54: women	1.4 ^{12,11}	0.8 ¹¹	0.9 ²	0.8 ²	1.3 ²	3.7 ²	9.1 ²	12.1 ²
% divorced at age 50–54: men	1.6 ^{12,11}	0.8 ¹¹	0.6 ²	0.6 ²	1.1 ²	3.8 ²	8.0 ²	9.6 ²
Total fertility rate	5.6 ¹⁶	6.0 ²	4.5 ²	2.7 ²	1.6 ²	1.5 ²	1.2 ²	1.2 ²
Sex ratio at birth	104 ^{17,18}	106 ¹⁷	107 ¹⁷	108 ¹⁷	111 ¹⁷	110 ¹⁷	107 ¹⁹	105 ¹⁰

Note: ¹ Jones and Yeung 2014; ² UNPD 2019; ³ age 50–59; ⁴ Huang 2014; Chen and Zhang 2019; ⁵ National Bureau of Statistics of China 2016; ⁶ Raymo et al. 2015; ⁷ 1981; ⁸ Francis 2011; ⁹ Thornton et al. 1994; ¹⁰ Korean Statistical Information Service 2020; ¹¹ Kwon and Kwon 1975; ¹² 1955; ¹³ Tai-Hwan 2007; ¹⁴ National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2017; ¹⁵ Department of Household Registration 2020; ¹⁶ 1953; ¹⁷ Chung and Das Gupta 2007; ¹⁸ 1949; ¹⁹ Guilmo 2015; ²⁰ Renmin University School of Sociology and Population Studies 1983; ²¹ Lee 1994; ²² Statistics Department of the Ministry of the Interior 2020

of less than 3 per cent in China. In all four countries, the total fertility rate declined to a level below the replacement rate, with South Korea and Taiwan (with a record low total fertility rate of 0.9) belonging to the group of countries with 'lowest low' fertility.

The decrease in fertility in these countries has been attributed to the increasing costs of raising children in combination with a patrilineal kinship system. Maintaining the supply of at least one male descendant has thus become difficult. However, having a son is seen as important for continuing the lineage, providing assistance and housing for the elderly, and guaranteeing the worship of the ancestors. This pressure is reflected in evidence showing that the risk of divorce is 2.2 times higher for women who had three or more daughters but no son than it is for women who had at least one son (Lu and Wang 2014; Zeng et al. 2002). Thus, 'an increase in the cost of children leads not only to smaller family sizes, but also greater neglect of daughters – and hence rising sex ratios' (Babiarz et al. 2019, p. 325). The results displayed in Table 3.1 show that in recent decades, the sex ratio increased in China and South Korea, remained stable at a high level in Taiwan, and remained at the natural level in Japan. This finding for Japan is consistent with Japanese survey results on gender preference, which show an increasing indifference to gender, but offer no conclusive arguments as to why Japan deviates in this regard from other East Asian countries (Fuse 2013).

Couples who have only female children are more likely to have another child, which increases the imbalances in the sex ratio at birth. Accordingly, girls are more likely than boys to grow up with siblings. The preference for male offspring also results in a marriage squeeze for men, especially for those who have less education and live in rural areas. A study in Taiwan additionally shows that the extent of the imbalance affects payments related to marriage:

71% of marriages involved a dowry, bride price, or both ... the marriage market sex ratio is positively associated with the bride price relative to the dowry. Therefore, when the sex ratio rises, competition among men for scarce women bids up the bride price relative to the dowry. Women rise in value relative to men ... (and) a decrease in the marriage market sex ratio caused dowry payments to increase. (Francis 2011)

Finally, the combination of decreased fertility and a preference for male children results in changes in household composition. According to Chinese family tradition, older parents usually live with only one of their married children (stem family), while the other children move out after marriage and set up their own households (nuclear families). Therefore, the number of stem families is always one, while the number of nuclear families depends to a large extent on the number of children. Counterintuitively, this has led to an *increased* proportion of sons living with their parents. Thus, in China between 1982 and 2010, the proportion of nuclear family households dropped from 67 per cent to 42 per cent, whereas the proportion of stem family households increased from 18 to 23 per cent – even though over the same period the proportion of people aged 65+ who were living with their children declined from 68 to 47 per cent for men and from 74 to 58 per cent for women (Xu et al. 2014, p. 48).

In many ways, the demographic indicators for East Asian countries suggest that, as predicted by the SDT approach, the family systems in these countries are on their way to converge with those in the rest of the economically developed world. Increasingly in East Asia, *marriage* is postponed and follows a phase of *cohabitation*. For example, almost one-third of the couples in the most recent marriage cohort in China cohabited before marriage (Xu et al. 2014; Yu and Xie 2015). *Divorces* have become increasingly common in recent decades, whereas *fertility* rates have dropped far below the replacement level. However, some indica-

tors for East Asia do not suggest that convergence is occurring. Compared with countries that follow the Western European marriage pattern, the marriage age in China is comparatively low, especially for Chinese men, and the share of the Chinese population who marry is comparatively high. Although the total fertility rate has decreased sharply, the proportion of women who are childless has remained at a very low level. Indeed, the association between marriage and parenthood continues to be high in China, as marriage is often immediately followed by the birth of a child, and non-marital births are rare (Ji 2015). Most importantly, the level of intergenerational solidarity in the patrilineal kinship system is high in China, which is reflected not only in the inheritance patterns, but in the much higher proportion of stem family households or patterns adapted to the housing situation in urban centres, the functional exchange of money and labour, and the ongoing preference for male descendants.

In sum, among the key demographic developments observed in East Asian countries are the continuation of near universal marriage (albeit delayed) and parenthood (albeit with reduced parities), with voluntary childlessness remaining rare. Moreover, the core of the patrilineal regime, with all its implications for women in the family system, remains largely untouched. Critics of the SDT approach have pointed out the tensions between rapid economic changes and the limited changes in family expectations and obligations: ‘These tensions may contribute to later and less marriage and childbearing by increasing the opportunity costs of marriage for women (especially for women with higher levels of education), decreasing the ability of men to fulfil the provider role (especially for men with lower levels of education)’ (Raymo et al. 2015, p. 485). However, what institutional changes will result from these tensions in East Asian marriages and families is a question that has yet to be resolved. Will these societies develop their own path-dependent transformation of family structures, as Kağıtçıbaşı’s (2007) model of family change suggests; or will worldwide ideational changes result in a convergence of private lifestyles, as the SDT model assumes (Lesthaeghe 2010)? Alternatively, will the structural constraints of functionally differentiated societies be the major drivers of family change, as modernisation theory (Goode 1963) asserted six decades ago (albeit combined with partially wrong predictions)?

5. CONCLUSIONS

One aim of this chapter was to provide arguments for the use of an explicit multi-level approach in cross-cultural family research, both theoretically and empirically. While significant progress has been made in applying such theoretical models, serious limitations in the availability of adequate data sources still restrict the ability to test cross-level effects in comparative research. For example, because the empirical tests of the various models of family change are based on highly aggregated demographic indicators alone (see Section 4), most of the empirical evidence favours convergence assumptions. But these analyses are, in fact, descriptive, and are not able to test the causal mechanisms underlying cross-cultural differences in family change. Thus, they are methodologically superior to the compilations of qualitative cross-sectional materials in the ethnographic Human Relations Area Files (Murdock 1967). However, the potential of family research to test such mechanisms is expected to change rapidly in the near future, as new and comparable data sources at the micro-level are emerging in many countries.

The predecessors of these new data sources are large-scale, nationally representative cross-sectional micro-datasets that were designed to be internationally comparable, such

as the series of cross-sectional fertility surveys that have existed for decades for many developing countries, like the Demographic and Health Surveys or the World Value Survey series. Analyses based on these data sources have considerably enriched descriptions of cross-cultural similarities and differences in family behaviour, because these sources allowed for socio-structural differentiations to be made. Thus, such analyses were able to go beyond simplistic visions of ‘national cultures’ to explore whether societies with the same socio-structural antecedents, such as similar levels of (female) education or urban contexts, have the same outcomes cross-culturally.

Recently, however, family and household panel studies have been developed that make it possible to follow family members and their relations over time. Since the introduction of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics in the United States in 1968, similar and largely comparable studies have been established in other countries, including in Germany (German Socio-Economic Panel) in 1983 and in the United Kingdom (British Household Panel Survey, UK Household Longitudinal Study) in 1991. More recently, such studies have also been established in East Asian countries, including in South Korea (Korea Labor and Income Panel Study) in 1998, in Taiwan (Panel Study of Family Dynamics) in 1999, in Japan (Japan Household Panel Survey) in 2004, and in China (China Family Panel Studies) in 2010. Several of these studies have already been integrated into a Cross National Equivalent File (Ohio State University 2020), and thus can be used for cross-national comparisons of standardised economic and socio-structural variables (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik and Warner 2014). However, additional data harmonisation efforts will be needed to exploit the full potential of these panel data sources (Nauck et al. 2017; Nauck and Ren 2018). Moreover, the measurement equivalence of these data sources must be tested (Cieciuch et al. 2019; Matsumoto and van de Vijver 2011), especially when the attitudes, activities, and relationships of family members are taken into account. Comparing family panels will allow researchers to investigate for the first time the full potential of the multi-level approach, which was initially described as essential for any cross-cultural comparison, as it can be used to link individual behavioural change to various levels, from individual cognitive frames, to the relational structure of the family, to the settings of societal institutions. The pursuit of this research programme has the potential to restore the relevance of cross-cultural research to family sociology that it had at its beginnings.

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