Family Change in Global Perspective

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Overview: Understanding the Process of Family Change

- Understanding the Impact of the Global Family Change (GFC) and its consequences for children has been a life long quest.

- Paper places the growing diversification of family forms in the U.S. and globally in an historical context.

- Discuss sources of change: why and how the family systems are changing in advanced as well as low and middle income nations.

- Rapid change (especially in Western nations) in late 20th Century initially took social scientists by surprise.

- Family change accompanied by social inequality among children and families. Cause or consequence?

- Introduce new study designed to understand dynamics of GFC
Major Descriptive Changes in Advanced Economies

- Link between initiation of sex and marriage broken down.

- Postponement of adult transitions
  - Delay of Family Formation
  - Delay of Economic independence and Homeleaving

- Weakening of marriage institution, permitting more alternative forms (cohabitation in particular)
  - Breakdown of gender-based division of labor in marriage
  - Growth in non-marital childbearing
  - Growth of childlessness

- At a country level “convergence to divergence” (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010)

- Widening of social class differences in the family in the U.S., Europe, and the Anglo-speaking nations: Emergence of Two-tier Family
Marriage Occurs Less Often in Nations with Developed Economies

Crude marriage rate, 1970, 1995 and 2012a

Source: OECD Family Database
In almost all nations, marriage occurs later

Mean age at first marriage by sex, 1990, 2000 and 2012

Source: OECD Family Database
Fertility Decline is Widespread in Regions of the World


Source: OECD Family Database
Sharp Rise in Non-marital Childbearing

Share of births outside of marriage, 1970, 1990 and 2014 or latest available year

Source: OECD Family Database
Growing Levels of Childlessness

Percent of definitive childless women per cohort

Source: OECD Family Database
Percent completing transition to adulthood in 1960, 2000, and 2010 using traditional benchmarks, ages: 25 and 35, USA (Census)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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- 1960
- 2000
- 2010
Sources and Mediators of Change

What accounts for Country-level Differences?


- Cultural and historical differences among countries
  - Gender Role Attitudes and Practices: degree of embedded patriarchy
  - Institutional Differences (schooling, labor market)
  - Policy-orientations (political and legal response)

- Technology and the role of digitization (media)

- Demography: change plays out differently depending on the age structure of the population.
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Family Change and Economic Inequality

- Adaptations are experienced differently at different social strata

- As inequality grows globally, family change will manifest itself different depending on the distribution of wealth and economic opportunities

- In the U.S., we are seeing the development of a two-tiered family system
Change Occurred Differently Among Privileged and Disadvantaged

- The widening of social class differences in family types
- Marriage, family formation, parenting practices all become differentiated.
- Two family forms: **conjugal** (marriage-based) and **matrilineal**
- Is this a cultural or structural change? A mindless debate!
- Reciprocal relationship between economic inequality and family change.
Privileged Family Form

- Larger parental investment owing to resources and small family size.
  - Concerted Cultivation (Lareau)
  - Social Capital through family connections
  - Family Management of social environment (class containment)

- Lengthy Transition to Adulthood with education and subsidized work experience

- Late marriage pattern (growing marital homophily)

- Planned parenthood
Disadvantaged Family Form

- Early and often unplanned family formation
- Cohabitation as alternative to marriage
- Unstable Unions
- Complex families (multi-partnered fertility, that is childbearing across households)
- More children, fewer resources, and hence lower investment
  - Less human, social, and cultural capital
  - Lower opportunities
- Lower social mobility
Families in the Middle

- Pulled in both directions
- Parents attempting concerted cultivation without the resources of the privileged
- Parental skills and knowledge become more important.
- Necessary downgrading of expectations
Consequences for Child Welfare in Advanced Societies

- All advanced societies have developed social welfare systems but they vary enormously in scope.

- Among others, Espe-Anderson has contended that welfare states may mediate both family change and its consequences.

- Evidence is at best equivocal though clearly the emergence of a two-tier family system is most evident in Anglo-speaking countries.

- Child welfare is clearly related to a variety of macro-level factors such as investment, institutional arrangements, commitment to gender and economic equality.

- Understanding specific links of these macro-level conditions in economically advanced nations to child well being is a topic that will be explored in subsequent presentations in this seminar.

- I will conclude by a few comments about a new project just underway.
Global Family Change

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Project goals

• (1) Macro-level overview on the changing nature of *families* across 84 Lower and Middle Income Countries
  • DHS data files
  • National Census Data (Catalonia Research Institute)
• (2) Examining (L&MI) countries now in the process of witnessing changes in their family systems across the globe
• (3) Understanding both the macro-level drivers of change and how and why family systems change
• (4) The consequences of system change for the welfare of children
What indicators of child welfare will examine?

- At the National Level
  - Virtual all health and well-being data collected can be appended to the information on country-level context
  - This could include: mortality, neo-natal mortality, health, nutrition, schooling, and so on.
  - We plan to do this but currently lack the funding.

- At the Individual Level (From the DHS)
  - **Early Childhood Mortality**
  - **Maternal and Child Health**: Child health includes data on many aspects including birth weight and size, immunization, and the extent and prevalence and treatment of important childhood diseases (diarrhea, acute respiratory infection, and fever).
Indicators from DHS (continued)

- Nutrition
- HIV/AIDS