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978-0-521-82297-8 - Families Across Cultures: A 30-Nation Psychological Study

Edited by James Georgas, John W. Berry, Fons J. R. van de Vijver, Cigdem Kagitcibasi, and

Ype H. Poortinga

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Families Across Cultures

Contemporary trends such as the increasing number of one-parent families, high divorce rates, second marriages and homosexual partnerships have all contributed to variations in the traditional family structure. But to what degree has the function of the family changed and how have these changes affected family roles in cultures throughout the world? This book attempts to answer these questions through a psychological study of families in thirty nations, carefully selected to present a diverse cultural mix. The study utilizes both cross-cultural and indigenous perspectives to analyze variables including family networks, family roles, emotional bonds, personality traits, self-construal, and “family portraits” in which the authors address common core themes of the family as they apply to their native countries. From the introductory history of the study of the family to the concluding indigenous psychological analysis of the family, this book is a unique source for students and researchers in psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

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This book is dedicated to

Στην οικογένεια μου, την Κατερίνα και τον Αλέξανδρο και, επίσης, σε όλους τους δεκάδες συγγενείς J. G.

All my family, Joan, Heather, Susan, Michael, David, Chris, Janice, Emma, Alex, Nolan, Owen, Graeme, and Charlotte for their strong belief in the importance of family. J. W. B.

Aan onze ouders van wie wij de betekenis van gezin en familie hebben geleerd. F. J. R. v. d. V. and Y. H. P.

Bütün aileme: Oğuz, Elif, Emrah, Ebru, Ece, Rana, Murat, Kitty, Defne onlarin eşleriyle çocuklarına. Ç. K.

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Prologue

This book is about similarities and differences in families across cultures. Family has been studied during the past two centuries by many disciplines, including sociology, cultural anthropology, psychology, education, psychiatry, economics, and historical demography, among other disciplines.

The perspective in this book is the relationships between psychological variables, the ecocultural context of countries, and family variables.

The book centers around three issues. The first examines how families differ in cultures across the world. What are the differences in family networks, family roles, and psychological variables among countries with different ecological and sociopolitical systems?

The second issue examines how families are alike across cultures. That is, to what degree are features of family similar in countries throughout the world?

The third issue involves family changes in societies throughout the world as a result of social changes, such as economic level, education, political systems, the global influence of television, and of communication through telephones, email, and the internet. Changes in family types in the last two centuries, as a result of industrialization and urbanization, have been described as transitions from the extended types of family systems to the nuclear family and more recently to the one-parent family. Understanding the nature of these developments is of scientific interest, but these changes are also important social issues in almost all countries throughout the world; research on the family has influenced government policies in many countries. Some family researchers as well

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as the media and governments talk about the crisis of the institution of family. Others have predicted the death of the family. Others have described the changes as adaptations to economic and social changes in today's world, and assert that the family is undergoing a transformation, but will continue to be an important social institution.

For some family sociologists, cultural anthropologists, and psychologists, these changes are considered to lead to an inevitable convergence of the types of family structure, function, and psychological relationships in the Majority World toward those characteristics found in North America and Northern Europe. Modernization and globalization theories would predict, as supported by some family experts, the inevitable convergence, sooner or later, of family types, involving changes from the extended family types in non-Western to the nuclear family and the one-person family of Western societies. However, over a hundred years of cultural anthropological studies have documented the diversity of family types in thousands of societies throughout the world and how different family types are embedded in ecological and cultural factors such as means of subsistence, religion, values, and traditions. The question is whether the forces of economic development as embodied in modernization theory and globalization theory will inevitably result in the convergence of family types, or whether cultural factors and psychological factors related to bonding and children are strong enough to maintain diversity in family types, despite changes in the economic and social systems of countries.

This book describes the results of a 30-nation project, in which the countries were chosen so as to represent the different geopolitical zones around the globe: north (Canada, the United States), central (Mexico), and south America (Brazil, Chile); north (the Netherlands, France, Germany, the United Kingdom) and south Europe (Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, Cyprus, Spain); north (Algeria), east (Saudi Arabia), central (Nigeria, Ghana), and south Africa (South Africa, Botswana); west (Ukraine, Georgia, Iran); south (Pakistan, India), and east Asia (China, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea); and Oceania (Indonesia).

The project was guided by hypotheses stemming from the Ecocultural Framework of Berry (1976, 1979) and the Model of Family Change of Kağıtçıbaşı (1990, 1996a).

The editors are cross-cultural psychologists and the approach is that of cross-cultural psychology. The analysis is from two perspectives: cross-cultural and indigenous. The cross-cultural quantitative analyses are based on data from variables at four hierarchical levels: cultural level ecological and sociopolitical variables; family roles; family networks; and the psychological variables: emotional bonds with members of the

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nuclear family and kin, personality traits, self-construal, family values, and personal values.

The analyses are directed toward determining similarities and differences among countries in the relationships among the four hierarchical levels. In addition, the findings were not only analyzed between the countries, but between clusters of countries, or “cultural zones” based on ecological and sociopolitical variables of cultures. The similarities among countries may represent psychological universals in family structures and in psychological variables across cultures.

The second perspective was the indigenous approach, which analyzed the common themes across countries, based on descriptions of the relationships between cultural, family and psychological variables in “family portraits” written by the authors in each of the 30 countries. (The quantitative analyses were based on data from 27 of the 30 countries.)

Part 1 consists of eight chapters presenting the theories and findings of family studies, the theory, and methodology of cross-cultural psychology, common themes across the family portraits, the hypotheses of the study, the methodology of the project, the results, and the synthesis.

Chapter 1, Families and family change by James Georgas, reviews the theories and the findings on culture and family, based on the literature from primarily sociological and cultural anthropological studies. The definitions of family are presented and discussed with the goal of seeking a universally applicable definition of family types across cultures. This is followed by discussions of the sociological family theories of the nineteenth century, and the findings of studies of family change and family networks in Western societies. The next section discusses the study of family history and the development of nuclear and extended families in Western countries. The methodological problems related to determining types of families, primarily nuclear and extended, based on demographic data are then discussed. The final section discusses family change in non-Western countries, followed by an examination of the predictions of modernization theory and globalization as possible explanations for family change in these countries and the convergence of family structures and family functioning with those of Western societies.

Chapter 2, Cross-cultural theory and methodology by John W. Berry and Ype H. Poortinga, presents the concepts of cross-cultural theory, culture, and human biology, and discusses three theoretical approaches to how cultural and biological factors are reflected in the course of human psychological development (termed *absolutism*, *relativism*, and *universalism*). The complementary approaches of the “cultural,” the “indigenous,” and the “comparative” schools of thinking about cultural and biological influences are then related to these three theoretical

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approaches. The Ecocultural Framework of J. W. Berry is one of the approaches that guides the research reported in this book. From this perspective, family is considered as an institution that is adapted to its ecological, cultural, and sociopolitical situation, and in turn provides the main context for the ontogenetic development from infancy to adulthood. The final section discusses methodological issues in cross-cultural psychology and their links with the implication of universalism in aspects of psychological functioning that are common to humans in all cultures.

Chapter 3, Theoretical perspectives on family change by Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, presents a related conceptual approach to understanding family dynamics and change from a cross-cultural psychological perspective, with an emphasis on changing global social structural and ecocultural contexts. The literature on the current Western family, which has served as a prototype for family research in sociology, is discussed, followed by the non-Western family, both in the “Majority World” and also as immigrant communities in the Western countries. The patterns of change are explained with a comparative orientation and from an ecocultural perspective. The Model of Family Change (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1990, 1996a) that has proven useful in understanding family patterns in relation to different ecocultural contexts is then presented.

Chapter 4, Family portraits from 30 countries: an overview by Ype H. Poortinga and James Georgas, is an analysis of the important themes emerging from the qualitative descriptions of the family portraits in Part 2 of this book. Each author has presented a family portrait of the country, from an indigenous perspective, with a standard format so as to be comparable across the portraits. The chapter summarizes the common aspects of change in families across the countries, and functions and roles that have remained much the same.

Chapter 5, Hypotheses by John W. Berry, Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, James Georgas, Ype H. Poortinga, and Fons J. R. van de Vijver, presents the hypotheses of the study. The first section presents the hypotheses stemming from Berry’s Ecocultural Framework, the second presents the hypotheses based on Kağıtçıbaşı’s Model of Family Change, and the third presents some specific hypotheses based on the literature from family studies.

Chapter 6, Methodology of the study by James Georgas, Fons J. R. van de Vijver, John W. Berry, Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, and Ype H. Poortinga, describes the methods of analysis. The first section presents an overview of the four levels of analyses: ecocultural, social structural, family roles, and individual. The second section describes characteristics of the samples in 27 countries employed in the study and

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characteristics of the samples of students in each country (total sample $N = 5,482$). The third section describes the variables and the procedures employed in the study.

Chapter 7, Results: cross-cultural analyses of the family by Fons J. R. van de Vijver, Kostas Mylonas, Vassilis Pavlopoulos, and James Georgas, provides an overview of the cross-cultural data analyses. The first two sections involve the analyses of the psychometric properties of the instruments, that is, they construct equivalence of the variables across countries, and the effects of gender and educational level of the parents of the respondents. The next two sections involve the cross-cultural data analyses and the testing of hypotheses.

Chapter 8, Synthesis: how similar and how different are families across cultures? by James Georgas, John W. Berry, and Çigdem Kağıtçibasi presents a synthesis of the findings of the study. The predictions of the Ecocultural Framework of Berry and the Model of Family change of Kağıtçibasi, as well as hypotheses based on the general family literature are discussed. The extent to which families are changing throughout the world, as a result of changes in social, media, information technology, increase in education, reduction of agriculture as the primary means of economic subsistence, and other cultural changes, and the degree to which there are similarities among countries, are discussed and related to the literature on family and family change. The findings are also discussed in terms of modernization and globalization theory.

Part 2 consists of the 30 family portraits and ethnographic descriptions of the participating countries.