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Family: Variations and Changes Across Cultures

James Georgas

The University of Athens, Greece, dgeorgas@psych.uoa.gr

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Abstract

In order to study psychological phenomena cross-culturally, it is necessary to understand the different types of family in cultures throughout the world and also how family types are related to cultural features of societies. This article discusses: The definitions and the structure and functions of family; the different family types and relationships with kin; the ecocultural determinants of variations of family types, e.g, ecological features, means of subsistence, political and legal system, education and religion; changes in family in different cultures; the influence of modernization and globalization on family change throughout the world.

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Introduction

It is common knowledge that cultures seem to have different types of family systems. In the United States and Canada and the countries of northern Europe the nuclear family, father, mother and the children, appears to predominate. In almost all of the rest of the world, extended families, the grandparents, father, mother, children, but also aunts, uncles, cousins, and other kin are considered to be "family." The 20th century has seen the greatest upheaval in history of family change.



Family types in North America and northern Europe have been changing with the increase of nuclear families and the decrease of extended families, and during the past 20 or more years, with the increase of unmarried families, divorced families, unmarried mothers, and homosexual families. Nuclear families have also been increasing in all the continents of the world.

The purpose of this article is to describe the different types of families in different cultures throughout the world and to describe the types of changes in family. This goal is an integral part of cross-cultural psychology, whose aim is to search for similarities and differences in psychology variables in cultures; that is, psychological phenomena that are universal across all cultures as well as variations in the manifestation of psychological phenomena as a function of specific aspects of cultures. What are these specific aspects of culture that we are interested in? They are the "context" of societies which shape human behavior according to cultural institutions, norms, values, language, history and traditions. The search for differences and similarities in psychological phenomena is dependent on an understanding of the social structure and the cultural traditions of countries and small societies. Only then can the cross-cultural psychologist analyze "why" scores on psychological measures are the same and differ. Analysis of the culture of a society and even its history is a necessary element for the cross-cultural understanding of similarities and variations of psychological phenomena. This approach has two dimensions, an indigenous and a cross-cultural. The indigenous approach is the vertical dimension; understanding psychological phenomena in terms of the social structure and culture of individual countries. The cross-cultural approach is the horizontal dimension; understanding psychological phenomena by comparing the social structure and culture of many countries.

Thus, we will analyze the family as a social system in different cultures, so that the interested person can then understand how psychological phenomena are related to family and culture. The first section presents definitions of family and the structure and functions of family. The second describes the different family types and relationships with kin. The third section an important issue in cultures and family: determinants of family types. That is, what are the ecocultural determinants of variations of family types and the changes in families across cultures; the ecological features, means of subsistence, political and legal system, education and religion. The fourth section will discuss issues related to family

change in different cultures throughout the world. What are the consequences of modernization and globalization on family change? Will families throughout the world eventually evolve into the nuclear family, divorced family and one-parent family systems of North America and northern Europe? Or do cultural features of each nation shape changes in family types?

Family, Structure and Function

The anthropologist George Murdock's definition of the family over fifty years ago was, "The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults." The functions of family were considered to be: sexual, reproduction, socialization, and economic. More recently, the sociologist Popenoe defined family in terms of recent social and economic changes in the United States, e.g., the increases in one-parent divorced and unmarried mother families, and homosexual families. Popenoe's definition differs from that of Murdock in that the minimum number constituting a family is one adult and one dependent person, the parents do not have to be of both sexes, and the couple does not have to be married. The functions of the family are procreation and socialization of children, sexual regulation, economic cooperation, and provision of care, affection and companionship.

Two concepts are employed by anthropologists and sociologists in discussing the family: *structure* and *function*. Structure refers to the number of members of the family and to familial positions such as mother, father, son, daughter, grandfather, grandmother, uncles and aunts, cousins and other kin. The nuclear family, for example, is composed of two generations, the parents and the children, while the different extended family types are composed of at least three generations, for example, the grandparents, the parents, the children, as well as kin on both sides. The functions, as described above, refer to how the families satisfy their physical and psychological needs in order to maintain the family and to survive as a group. For example, families universally must provide shelter for themselves - a house - either a permanent edifice or a temporary abode such as a tent or an igloo. They must maintain the home, clean and repair it, add rooms, etc. Families must be engaged in some type of work in order to provide sustenance and the other family needs. This work might be farming, fishing, hunting, herding, gathering of berries, or working in a store, a factory, or owning a small business, working as a nurse, a computer specialist, etc. The family must provide food for its members, which entails tasks of acquiring, cooking, cleaning the utensils, storing food, etc. The family provides, mends and cleans clothes, as well as cares for the cleanliness of their bodies. Raising the children, educating them, maintaining contacts with the kin, engaging them in the traditions of the community are part of the process of socialization. The parents provide emotional warmth and comfort to the child and to each other, set limits to behavior, are responsible for the psychological development of the child at different ages. Upon reaching adulthood, the family participates in the marriage of the sons and daughters and the emergent family

maintains different degrees of contact with the parents/grandparents and other kin. These are some of the major functions of the family which are universal across all societies in the world. It is the variations in these functions in different cultures that are of interest to observe and study.

While the structure refers to the positions of the members of the family, e.g., mother and father, each society assigns specific roles assigned to the family members. For example, traditional roles of the nuclear family in North America and northern Europe in the middle of the 20th century were the working father, and the mother whose role was the "housewife" and responsible for raising the children. All societies have unwritten social constructs and values regarding the proper roles of family members, although there are individual differences in all societies as to agreement or disagreement with these roles. For example, many women in almost all societies today, even in countries such as Nigeria and Japan, disagree that the mother's place is in the home and believe the woman should be educated and work. On the other hand, many women agree with the traditional roles that society has assigned them.

Types of Families

The different family types or structures are based on anthropological and sociological studies of small and large societies throughout the world.

There are a number of typologies of family types, but a simple one will be presented here.

Two Generation Families

- The *nuclear* family consists of two generations: the wife/mother, husband/father, and their children.
- The *one-parent* family, divorced or unmarried parent, is also a two-generation family.

Three Generation Families

The different types of *extended* families consist of at least three generations: the grandparents on both sides, the wife/mother, husband/father, and their children, the aunts, siblings, cousins, nieces and other kin of the wife and husband. However, before discussing the types of extended families, an important distinction must be made between the *polygynous* (one husband/father and two or more wives/mothers) family and the *monogamous* (one husband one wife) family. Polygynous families are found in many cultures, e.g., four wives are permitted according to Islam. However, the actual number of polygamous families in Islamic nations today is very small, e.g, almost 90 % of husbands in Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, have only one wife. In Pakistan, a man seeking a second wife must obtain permission from an Arbitration Council, which requires a statement of consent from the first wife before granting permission. Thus some of the different types of extended families may be either polygynous or monogamous.

- The *patrilineal and matrilineal*, or in terms of authority structure, the *patriarchal* and *matriarchal* families are at least three-generational. They can potentially consist of the grandparents, the married sons, the grandchildren, and also the grandfather's or grandmother's siblings, nieces, grandnieces, and in many cases, other kin. This is perhaps the most common form of family and is found in many countries throughout the world. The patriarch or matriarch of this family is the head of family, controls the family property and the finances, makes all the important decisions, and is responsible for the protection and welfare of the entire family. The Queen of England is the head of a matriarchal family and the royal houses of many countries are patriarchal in form.
- The *stem* family consists of the grandparents and the eldest married son and their children who live together under the authority of the grandfather/household head. The eldest son inherits the family plot and the stem continues through the first son. The other sons and daughters usually leave the household upon marriage. The stem family was characteristic of central European countries, such as Austria, southern Germany and other societies throughout the world.
- The *joint* family is a continuation of the patriarchal family after the death of the grandfather, but the difference is that all the married sons share the inheritance and work together.
- The *fully extended* family, the *zadruga* in the Balkans countries of Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, has a structure similar to that of the joint family, but with the difference that cousins and other kin were also included as members of the family. The total number of family members might be over 50.

Kinship Relationships

Kinship relationships in extended families vary widely. *Lineal* relationships refer to those between the grandparents and the grandchildren. *Collateral* relationships refer to those with uncles and aunts, cousins, and nephews and nieces. *Affinal* refer to those between parents-in-law, children-in-law, and siblings-in-law as well as with matrilineal and patrilineal kin. Kinship relationships and obligations toward affinal, collateral and affinal kin are related to lines of descent, to residence, to inheritance of property, to marriage, divorce and to roles in different cultures.

The terms for kin vary in cultures. That is, in addition to differentiating family positions such as mother, father, son, daughter, grandfather, grandmother, niece, nephew, father and mother-in-law and other family positions, many societies employ even more differentiated systems. For example, in Pakistan generic terms such as "aunt," "uncle" or even "grandparents" are not employed, but very specific terms delineating matrilineal and patrilineal kin, such as "my-maternal-aunt." The very complex "architectural" system of kinship relationships of the Chinese is based on 17 determinants. These determinants permit the identification of a kin within the entire extended family system based on specific

names in terms of lineal and collateral differentiation and also in terms of generational stratification, e.g., "father's sister's son's daughter's son."

Cultures have different rules as to where the couple resides after marriage. The most common form of post-marital residence is *patrilocal*, residence with or near the husband's patrilineal kinsmen. *Avunculocal* refers to residence with or near the maternal uncle or other male matrilineal kinsmen of the husband. *Neolocal* means residence apart from the relatives of both spouses, which is the most characteristic form of nuclear family residence in northern Europe and North America.

Cultures have specific rules of descent, that is, relationships with paternal and maternal kin. *Bilateral* refers to affiliation with both mother's and father's relatives. *Patrilineal* refers to affiliation with kin of both sexes through the maternal and paternal fathers only, but not through maternal and paternal mothers. *Matrilineal* refers to affiliation with kin of both sexes through the maternal and paternal mothers only, but not through maternal and paternal fathers. *Ambilineal* or *cognatic* refers to affiliation with kin through either the maternal parents or the paternal parents. *Double* refers to affiliation with both father's patrilineal kin and mother's matrilineal kin.

Cultures have rules regarding whom one is permitted to marry (*endogamy*), and restrictions regarding whom one cannot marry (*exogamy*). In some societies, as in India or Pakistan, endogamy means that marriage is restricted to the same caste, the same village, the same religion, the same race. These social norms are not as restrictive in North America and Europe. In also societies, marriage is not permitted between siblings, but some permit marriage with first cousins, or with the son or daughter of a godparent. In most cultures, marriages were arranged between the two families, and a verbal or written contract was agreed upon regarding the dowry or the bride wealth, although at the present time this is changing gradually in many societies in Africa and Asia.

Inheritance of property is an important feature of arranged marriages and is related to lineal descent. For example, in the royal family of Great Britain, the oldest son, the Prince of Wales, inherits the title and all the property. If there is no male heir, as was the case with the present Queen, the eldest daughter. In China up to the 19th century, inheritance was egalitarian, but in Japan a single child inherited the property and a father could disinherit his son if he was not worthy and adopt a young man who inherited the property.

Divorce is socially disapproved in all societies, but permitted in most. Catholic nations do not permitted divorce except under highly unusual situations requiring a special dispensation. The Orthodox Church permits three marriages and three divorces. Islamic law, the sharia, permits divorces, but divorce has legal and social consequences. Since the married daughter inherits property from the father, the wife retains property in her name after marriage, and the husband has no legal claim to it after divorce, as well custody of the children under age seven.

Is the Nuclear Family Separate or Part of the Extended Family?

One of the questions related to the nuclear family is the degree to which it is separate and autonomous and the degree to which it maintains bonds with the kin - the extended family members. Much of the thinking about the structure and function of the nuclear family was shaped by the sociologist Talcott Parsons in the 1940s. Parson theorized that the adaptation of the American family from its extended family system in agricultural areas to urban areas required a nuclear family structure. The young couple in the large city lived far away and was fragmented from their families in the small towns. The nuclear family became primarily a unit of residence and consumption. The financial and educative functions become dependent on the state, in contrast with the extended family in small towns. Thus, the nuclear family was isolated geographically and psychologically from its kin and its major remaining function was to provide for the psychological aspects of the family, such as the socialization of the children. Parsons argued that this social mobility which characterizes America was made possible by the breaking of family ties, but at the cost of psychological isolation. Actually, America had a long history, going back to colonial times, of the independent nuclear family, as did England, northern France and some other European countries.

Parson's theory of the isolation of the nuclear family from its extended family and kinship network, leading to psychological isolation and anomie had a strong influence on psychological and sociological theorizing about the nuclear family. However, studies of social networks in North America and Northern Europe in the past 40 years have indicated that the nuclear family is not isolated from its kin not is it independent to the degree assumed by Parsons and other sociologists of the family. Nuclear families, even in industrial countries, have networks with grandparents, brothers and sisters and other kin. The question is the degree of contact and communication with these kin, even in nations of Northern America and northern Europe.

The key to studying how family structure is related to function and how it effects psychological differentiation, and how family type is related to economic base and culture, is the nuclear family. Murdock made an important distinction (1949) regarding the relationship of the nuclear family to the extended family; that the extended family represents a constellation of nuclear families; the nuclear family of the paternal grandparents, the nuclear family of the maternal grandparents, the nuclear family of the married sons, married daughter, married cousins, etc. Thus, in focusing on a particular nuclear family, it is a mistake to assume it is an independent unit, but because the extended family is essentially a constellation of nuclear families across at least three-generations. The important question is the degree of contact and interdependence between this constellation of nuclear families.

The different cycles of family are a related issue. In countries in which the extended family system is predominant, not all families are extended in structure and function. At the time of marriage and then after children, the nuclear family of the married sons and daughters is an integral part of the extended family. The three-generation extended family has a lifetime of, perhaps 20 or 30 years. However, after the death of the patriarch of the

family, the grandparent, one cycle closes, and a new cycle begins with the two or three nuclear families of the married and unmarried sons and daughters. These are nuclear families in transition. Some will form new extended families, others may not have children, some will not marry, others, e.g., the second son in the stem family, will not have the economic base to form a new stem family. That is, even in cultures with a dominant extended family system, there are always nuclear families.

Another issue is how nuclear families are determined by demographers and researchers. The census, demographic and research studies are based on interviews with people. Respondents are asked the number of people who live in the apartment or house and their family positions, e.g., mother, father, children, grandparents, etc. If two generations, parents and the children, live in the household, they are identified as a nuclear or two-generation family. However demographic statistics provide only "surface" information, difficult to interpret without data about family networks, attitudes, values, and the degree of interaction between family members. Generalizing only on the basis of the percent of nuclear families in a country may lead to erroneous conclusions about the functions of nuclear families in a country. For example, in a demographic study of European Union nations, Germany and Austria were found to have lower percents of nuclear families than Greece. Nuclear households in Greece, as in many other countries throughout the world, are very near to the grandparents; in the apartment next door, on the next floor, in the neighborhood, and the visits and telephone calls between kin are very frequent. Thus, although nuclear in terms of "common residence" the Greek families are in fact extended in terms of their relationships and interaction, and it would be a mistake to assume that the Greek family is more "nuclear" than the German or Austrian.

That is, there is also the psychological component of those who one considers to be "family." Social representation of one's "family" may consist of a mosaic of parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins on both sides, together with different degrees of emotional attachments to each one, different types of interactions, bonds, memories, etc. Each person has a genealogical tree consisting of a constellation of overlapping kinship groups; through the mother, the father, the mother-in-law, father-in-law, but also through the sister-in-law, brother-in-law, cousin-in-law, etc. The overlapping circles of nuclear families in this constellation of kin relationships are almost endless. Both the psychological dimension of "family" - one's social representation - and the social values regarding which kin relationships are important, determine which kin affiliations are important to the individual ("my favorite uncle") or the family ("our older brother's family). Thus, it is not so important "who lives in the box," but what are the types of affiliations and psychological ties with the constellation of different family members in the person's conception of his/her "family," whether it is an "independent" nuclear family in Germany or an "extended family" in Nigeria.

In a cross-cultural study Georgas studied residence patterns, interaction and telephone communication with grandparents, aunts/uncles, and cousins in 16 countries from North and Central America, northern and southern Europe and East Asia. Although countries of southern Europe and East Asia lived closest to their kin, and had the highest interaction and communication, and although the United States and Canada as well as the

UK, Germany, the Netherlands had lower levels of geographic proximity and contacts, their nuclear families could not be described as psychologically "isolated."

In conclusion, although the United States, Canada and the countries of northern Europe have more nuclear families who live in a separate house and who are financially independent, contacts and social support from relatives are still maintained to a certain degree. In addition, in a polyethnic society such as the United States with many recent migrants from throughout the world, the typical family is not nuclear, but one in which close ties are maintained with the other nuclear families in their extended family.

Determinants of Family Types

How are family types related to the type of society? As discussed above, cultures vary widely in terms of types of family, the complex relationships between kin, how marriage takes place, how divorce is obtained, place of residence, the development of children, etc. Cultural anthropologists have described in great detail the rules of small societies related to family life and have tried to relate them to the traditions, the meanings, and institutions of the culture. However, it is very difficult to analyze and isolate the determinants which shape the types of family and the practices related to them in each culture and to generalize them across cultures. Cross-cultural psychology has also played an important role in this quest, by comparing different cultures across psychological dimensions. A cross-cultural theory of the relationship between cultures and psychological variables is the Ecocultural Framework of Berry. The Framework seeks to explain similarities and differences in psychological diversity, at both the individual level and the cultural level, by taking into account two sources of influence, the ecological and the sociopolitical, and a set of variables that link these influences to psychological characteristics (cultural and biological adaptation at the population level, and various "transmission variables" to individuals such as enculturation, socialization, genetics, and acculturation). The Ecocultural Framework considers human diversity, both cultural and psychological, to be a set of collective (the society) and individual adaptations to the context. The Framework is useful in teasing out the ecological and sociopolitical determinants of family types.

Some of the determinants of family types which have been studied are the ecological features, the means of subsistence of the society, and religion.

Ecology and Subsistence

Anthropologists have documented how ecological features determine means of subsistence of the members of the society. Humans have subsisted during many millennia mostly through agriculture. That is, people who live in areas where the land is fertile grow crops in order to subsist. Herding of animals also takes place in areas where land is fertile, but even in mountains or savannas or the desert. Some societies by the sea or lakes survive by fishing, others by hunting, and others by gathering. In today's complex societies the means of subsistence is to work in industry, in commerce, a small business such as a restaurant, providing services such as a government employee, etc.

Studies have shown that the type of family is related to ecological features and means of subsistence. Agricultural families are characterized by large extended families. The small nuclear family is usually characteristic of small hunting and gathering societies as well as life in large urban areas. Another finding is that extended families are characterized by highly differentiated social stratification, while nuclear families less stratified.

Agricultural societies tend to have a permanent base, land and houses, and to live near kin, usually part of a town or small community. Before the mechanization of farming, and the presently in most of the world, farming requires the help of many people, usually children and kin, who cooperate to cultivate crops. Studies have found that children in agricultural and pastoral societies are taught to be responsible, compliant, obedient, to respect their elders and the hierarchy.

On the other hand, hunting or gathering as a means of subsistence requires moving from area to area. Many hunting and gathering societies do not have a permanent home, but temporary huts or shelters. Mobility means that the small nuclear family is more adaptable for survival under these ecological restraints. Children in hunting and gathering societies tend to be self-reliant, independent, and achievement oriented and the family is less stratified. A good hunter of any age is respected for his/her competence in killing game, which is different from the hierarchical structure of the agricultural society.

The Political and Legal System

The political system in complex societies passes laws regulating types of families and the judicial system adjudicates issue related to the family. The United States does not permit polygamous families and the judicial system makes decisions regarding divorce and custody of the children. In Scandinavian countries, unmarried mothers are recognized as families and receive child benefits. In the Netherlands, homosexual marriages are recognized. In Pakistan and other Islamic nations, polygamous marriages are recognized and the law protects the property of the divorced woman.

Bonds in the Small Communities

In the past, the world was composed primarily of small communities that were tightly organized through relationships with kin and the clan. The large nation-state with centralized powers, such as the British Empire, or the United States in the 18th century, or Germany in the 19th century does not represent the globe. In India or the Arabic countries, e.g., nations were created in the 20th century based on many ethnic groups or clans. For most people throughout the world, the central government was a powerful, distant, unfriendly, institution whose only contact with their community was to collect taxes and impose unwanted laws. Small communities were composed of extended families, tied together through blood relationships, through marriage and forming a clan. through the need for survival. The family loyalty was to the extended family and the clan and not to the state, because the family and the clan was the basis for survival, protection, and development. This is still the case in many polyethnic countries throughout the world. In

these small communities, all issues related to the family were decided by the leader or elders of the community without formal laws, and continued through tradition.

Religion

Religious dogma is a major factor in the types of families, divorce and custody of the children. Christianity permits only monogamous marriages while Islam permits polygamous marriages. The Catholic church does not permit divorce while the Orthodox permits three divorces and the Protestant churches permit divorce. There are many other examples from other cultures regarding how religion shapes family types.

Education

Access to education has been a major determinant in different types of families, and particularly in the changes in family types. In many societies, both in the East and West, changes from an agricultural economic system to an industrial system in the 19th and early 20th centuries were accompanied by an increasing number of young people attending secondary schools and universities. After obtaining their degree, they sought jobs in industry or in services or as professionals. Returning to the farm or the small town was not an option, and thus education played a major role in changes in the family from the extended type to the nuclear type. Also, in almost all societies, education was only for the males. In the second half of the 20th century, women increasingly continued on to university level, and also found jobs. This also resulted in changes in their roles as mothers in the traditional family. In many societies, e.g., Africa, only orphans or abandoned children went to Western type schools, while the children in extended families learned the tasks of the extended family at home and in the fields.

Changes in Family

These issues discussed above, such as, the different types family, the relations with kin, marriage, divorce, children, are based on studies since the 19th century. Many of the rules, practices and family types have changed in recent years, while others have remained. In a changing world in which small societies have been exposed to television and cd's, computers, economic changes, technology, tourism, the structure and function of the family has been changing, just as these societies have also been changing. Acculturation and enculturation in response to these pressures for change have also affected the links between ecology, social structure, family types and psychological variables. How much has the family changed in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas and Oceania? It is clear that family types have changed most radically in North America and northern Europe. But changes in the family have occurred throughout the world at different rates and in different forms. A critical question raised by modernization theory and globalization is, "Will the traditional types of families in these cultures eventually evolve into the nuclear family, divorced family and one-parent family systems of North America and northern Europe? Or do cultural features of each society continue to play a role in

maintaining aspects of their traditional family structure and function and also in shaping changes in family types?" Let us analyze more closely issues related to this important question.

Because of economic changes, television, movies, education, the internet, tourism, commerce, the traditional family systems of small societies are no longer totally dependent on subsistence systems such as hunting, gathering or even agriculture. The number of nuclear families are increasing in urban areas in most developing societies, young people are increasingly choosing their spouses rather than having to submit to arranged marriages, women are entering the work force, traditional family roles have changed, the father no longer has absolute power in the family. There is a trend toward more families becoming structurally nuclear, even in small societies. But it may be misleading to conclude that families throughout the world are "becoming ...nuclear" functionally in the sense of the north American and northern European nuclear family. Even though the numbers of nuclear families are increasing in most societies, they still maintain very close relations with their kin. In urban areas in almost all societies, many nuclear families of the married sons and daughters are either in the same building or very near by the grandparents. There is an economic explanation for this. In the richest nations of world, e.g., the U.S. and Canada, northern Europe, Japan and South Korea, high economic level means that young people who work can also rent an apartment or obtain a mortgage to buy a house. In the rest of the world, the wages of young people are not high enough for them to secure an independent abode. So nuclear families live near the grandparents. But in Japan and South Korea, for example, where economic circumstances permit a married son to acquire a separate home, the married son and the wife still maintain very close relationships with the grandparents, and continue to adhere to values such as respecting the grandparents. Even working wives with higher education takes pains in maintaining many traditional family values in these countries.

Securing an independent home is a basic psychological need for privacy, whether the home is thousands of miles away from the grandparents or in the next apartment. Thus, a separate residence does not necessarily mean isolation from kin relationships. Geographical proximity and psychological distance are not the same. A separate domicile of the nuclear family members, either next door or far away, is technically geographical separation, but does not necessarily imply psychological separation from the kin.

Another change is in the power of the father in the family. With the increase of educated and working mothers in many societies throughout the world, mother has gained economic power as have working children, while the father has been losing his absolute control of the family. In Mongolia, studies have found that children in urban areas side with mother because she not only works and brings money in, but also cooks, cares for the house and them.

Kagitcibasi has developed a model of family change based on socio-economic development in which she theorizes three patterns of family interaction: 1) the traditional family in developing countries characterized by total interdependence between generations in material and emotional realms, 2) the individualistic nuclear family model of

Western society based on independence, and 3) a synthesis of these two, involving material independence but psychological interdependence between generations.

Modernization, a theory developed by sociology and political science, hypothesizes that increasing economic level and industrialization in a society results in the rejection of traditional values and culture, and inevitable convergence toward a system of "modern" values and increasing individualization. One of the consequences of modernization is the transition of the extended family system in economically underdeveloped societies to the nuclear family characteristic of industrial societies. Increasing evidence from studies of small societies and developing nations indicates that these predictions, that families in these societies will eventually change to the Western type of nuclear family system may be mistaken. However, the sociologist Inkeles, a leading proponent of modernization theory expresses doubt that families throughout the world will converge to a universal nuclear family type, despite changes in residence patterns, choice of marriage partner, parental authority, and rates of female employment in developing and industrialized countries. He believes that family relations are too complex and subtle to respond uniformly to economic changes, most likely because of different cultural "sensitivities." In addition, he states that despite changes in the forms of family, certain patterns of family life remain constant across cultures over time, and certain basic human remain resistant to any type of change in social organization. An example given is that which links a man and a woman in a long-term association through some arrangement similar to what is called "marriage". We would also add to this; a long-term association with kin. Another example regarding universal psychological relationships (Georgas et al., 1999) was the finding in 16 countries that the emotional bonds between children and mothers were uniformly closest, second closest were bonds between siblings, and third were bonds between children and fathers. That is, this phenomenon was common across 16 countries with very different cultures and social institutions such as, the United States, China, India, and Britain. Thus, this relationship appears to be universal and that modernization has not changed this relationship, even in wealthy countries.

A recent challenge to modernization theory has been made by Huntington with his thesis that the ideological distinctions between capitalism and Marxism which characterized the 20th century stopped with the end of the cold war. Huntington argues that age old cultural values of long-standing "civilizations," such as religion, have replaced ideological distinctions, and that modernization theory and economic development cannot account for many current changes in the world. Globalization is also a current term employed in many ways by different theorists, but with a common chord that cultures throughout the world are opening up and becoming more similar in many ways.

Thus, modernization and globalization would predict that the morphological change of traditional types of families to the nuclear and one-parent family structure and function of North America and Western Europe, bulldozed by an economic engine is just a matter of time. On the other hand, there is support for the argument that there many paths leading to different forms of family structure and function, influenced by economic growth but also influenced by long standing cultural traditions. The answer is not yet in to these questions. It is also a question of whether the centrifugal forces of economic and institutional

changes, which tend to weaken emotional ties among family members, are more powerful than the centripetal psychological forces which establish emotional bonds between people and particularly among family members. Psychology, and particularly cross-cultural psychology, can play a critical role in attempting to find answers to this dilemma.

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Questions for Discussion

1. Will the traditional types of families in cultures in Asia, Africa, Oceania, and South America eventually evolve into the nuclear family, divorced family and one-parent family systems of North America and northern Europe? Or do cultural features of each society continue to play a role in maintaining aspects of their traditional family structure and function and also in shaping changes in family types?
2. Draw a genealogical chart of your extended family. Start with your mother, father and your brothers or sisters, if you have them. Then begin with your mother's father and mother (your maternal grandparents) and your father's mother and father (your

paternal grandparents). List your paternal and maternal grandparents' brothers and sisters (your great uncles and great aunts). Then list your mother's and father's brothers and sisters (your uncles and aunts). Then list your uncles' and aunts' sons and daughters (your cousins). How close to you feel emotionally to which members of your extended family? How often do you see them? How often do you telephone them? How close do you live near them? This is an indication of your family network and the strength of your bonds with some of them.

3. Agricultural families in many cultures throughout the world are characterized by large extended families because many people are required in order to cultivate the land. The small nuclear family is usually characteristic of small hunting and gathering societies because mobility is necessary in order to find game or to gather food. Nuclear or one-person families are characteristic of large urban areas. Discuss why the nuclear family is characteristic of industrial societies and urban areas.
4. The sociologist Popenoe defined the minimal family as composed of at least one adult and one dependent person; the parents do not have to be of both sexes; the couple does not have to be married. The U.S. Bureau of the Census defines family as "...two or more persons living together and related by blood, marriage or adoption." What may be the problems of the latter definition in identifying whether the occupants of a household are a family?
5. Some sociologists and psychologists maintain that the increased divorce rate signals the breakdown of the family as a social institution. Others maintain that the increase in divorce rate signals the increased opportunity in today's world for women and men to end a bad marriage and to seek a new relationship built on trust and communication, which is an indication of the continued importance of the family. What are the arguments for each position?