



International Family Change: Ideational Perspectives

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Many dimensions of family life have changed. Age at marriage has risen, arranged marriages and extended families have declined, intergenerational relationships have been altered, and contraceptive usage has become widespread. Until now, most explanations have focused on structural influences that emphasize changes in social and economic circumstances and constraints.

There is growing recognition, however, that structural changes alone are insufficient and that broad ideational and normative forces must be included in order to better understand family changes around the world. These ideational forces include the growing emphasis on personal freedom, social equality, and individual prerogative. These new ideas are related to the place and role of individuals relative to family and larger community, and to changing norms concerning marriage, the relationships between men and women, the connections across generations, and the place of children in families. Featuring contributions from an international group of scholars, this new book emphasizes the ideational and motivational underpinnings of family life and the ways that attitudinal and value changes have influenced family behavior and relationships.

International Family Change examines family attitudes, beliefs, and relationships in virtually every region of the globe, with an emphasis on the theoretical models for examining family changes. In particular, it argues that family life in the Western world is not the sole product of social and economic trends and that family change outside the West is not destined to follow the same trajectory. Chapters focusing on Iran and Vietnam help demonstrate that, rather than following a Western model, some global family change has resulted from rejecting it. The chapters on Nepal and Africa illustrate how the introduction of new ideas through the media and religion can reshape family beliefs. The chapters on Japan and Argentina demonstrate how unique cultural circumstances can influence family change.

Intended for researchers and advanced students in human development, family studies, social psychology, sociology, geography, anthropology, economics, and history, this book also serves as a resource for advanced courses on the family and its history, family development, and social change taught in those departments.

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