

Global Family Change (GFC)



Newsletter 2017-1: Project Description



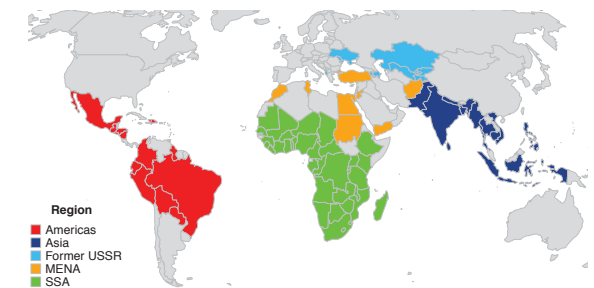
Global Family Change: Background & Motivation

The family remains the fundamental building block of human societies, affecting health, reproduction, and well-being of both present and future generations. Decades of sweeping demographic, economic and social change have radically transformed the structures, gender roles, and intergenerational bonds of families worldwide, initially in high-income countries, and more recently in low- and middle-income countries. At the *global* level, however, changing families and family systems are inadequately documented and understood. This gap in understanding *Global Family Change (GFC)* is striking, especially when compared to other socio-demographic processes such as fertility, mortality, migration, and education, for which extensive high-quality data exist across most world regions (e.g., Human Fertility Database, Human Mortality Database, Global Bilateral Migration Database, and Global Human Capital Project). No equivalent data resource exists for GFC, and neither does a corresponding integrated research agenda on GFC.

The inadequate understanding of Global Family Change (GFC) is a critical gap in sociologists' research on global social change. The largest-ever cohort of young adults entering the transition to adulthood, dramatic technological change, rising economic uncertainty, longer lives and low fertility, narrowing gender gaps in schooling and the labor market, and unstoppable globalization forces affecting the flow of information, goods and persons across the globe have emerged as potent drivers of GFC. Families have adjusted in diverse and sometimes surprising ways to these forces and changing social contexts. Arguably, the profound transformation of the family that has occurred across high-income countries in recent decades is currently entering its height in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). But GFC in LMICs is unlikely to be a simple extension of patterns observed in high-income countries. Heterogeneity

in social, institutional, cultural and legal contexts, and differences in roles and functions of families may result in a diversity of GFC patterns that far exceeds the divergences in family trajectories that have been documented to date. While country-specific and small-scale comparative research on GFC exists, sociologists currently lack a global and comprehensive lens on these profound changes of family systems, particularly in LMICs where change is most rapid and dramatic.

Countries for GFC Analyses (using DHS Data)



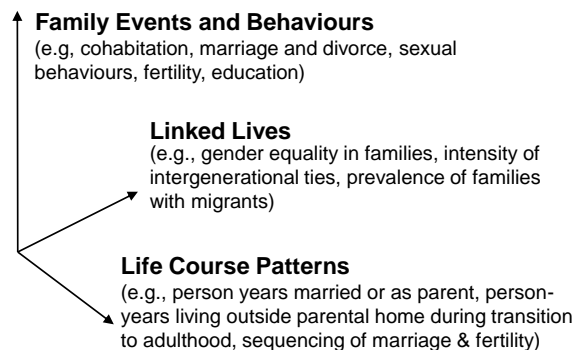
Global Family Change: Project Aims

¶ Our **overall aim** is to provide a quantum leap in studying the dramatic changes in family patterns that are unfolding in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). By augmenting existing and ongoing research and data resources from high income countries, we seek to (i) create a public-use resource for studying *global* family change (GFC), (ii) address leading theoretical and empirical challenges in understanding the determinants and consequences of GFC, and (iii) help create a knowledge and data infrastructure that can bring global family change to the forefront of sociological and demographic research. Our aims include:

¶ **GFC Data: Build a database to track and investigate Global Family Change (GFC)**, including: (1) Develop a comprehensive, theory-based and policy-relevant set of *comparative indicators of*

family change at the global level, encompassing (i) existing and novel indicators of family patterns and behaviors (e.g., percent and years sexual active before marriage), (ii) newly-developed indicators of life-course patterns and transitions (e.g., person years married or divorced, person years living with children and/or parents), (iii) innovative indicators of “linked lives” (e.g., extent of assortative mating, intensity of intergenerational relation, and prevalence of families with migrants), and (iv) information on family policies and linkages to contextual determinants of GFC; (2) Create a public-use *GFC Web Portal and Database* covering the key period of rapid GFC since the mid-1980s for 118 countries across low and middle-income regions using vast existing micro-data that have largely been untapped for GFC research.

GFC Conceptual Framework



¶ **Determinants of GFC: Test the leading theories of how and why family systems change with economic and demographic development**, including analyses of whether and how demographic and economic development leads to the convergence of family systems, and how culture and institutions contribute to divergent patterns within regions or nations. We will examine the overarching hypothesis of a global convergence of family patterns to later marriage and/or cohabitation, divorce and union dissolution, and a reduction in co-residence of generations, as has occurred throughout the Western world. Further research includes across- and within-country patterns of

convergence in family change by socioeconomic status, interrelations between GFC and migration patterns, connectedness of GFC (or lack thereof) to other demographic changes, and the relationship of GFC to networks of globalization in regional contexts. Other topics include whether unbalanced sex ratios and reversals in educational differences by gender affect transitions into marriage, assortative mating, childbearing and divorce.

¶ **Consequences of GFC: Investigate the potent implications of GFC for the welfare of nations undergoing rapid social change** by linking diverse patterns of GFC throughout LMICs to their demographic, economic, health, and social consequences. Analyses include the extent to which early childbearing and early marriage compete with the aim of attaining universal secondary education by 2030; the relevance of changes in assortative mating for enhancing within-family gender equality and increasing across-family social inequality; how GFC interacts with family planning capacity and sexual and reproductive health; and which social institutions predict a growing disconnect between the onset of sexual activity, marriage and childbearing, and the implications of these changes for UN Sustainable Development Goals.

¶ **Broader impacts** of this project are contributions to theoretical and empirical understandings of the determinants and consequences of GFC, training of scholars from LMICs and disadvantaged backgrounds, and the creation of an important public-use resource for studying GFC that will be accessible to scholars and policy-makers.

Global Family Change: Key Personnel

The GFC Project is conducted by the [Population Studies Center](#) at the University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with [Nuffield College](#) at Oxford University, [Bocconi University](#) and the [Centre for Demographic Studies](#) at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Key personnel includes:

University of Pennsylvania

Hans-Peter Kohler, hpkohler@pop.upenn.edu.
Frank F. Furstenberg, fff@sas.upenn.edu.
Andrés F. Castro, candres@sas.upenn.edu.
Pilar Gonalons-Pons, pgonalon@sas.upenn.edu.
Luca Maria Pesando, lucapes@sas.upenn.edu.

Nuffield College, Oxford University

Christiaan Monden, christiaan.monden@sociology.ox.ac.uk.
Liliana Andriano, liliana.andriano@nuffield.ox.ac.uk.
Julia Behrman, julia.behrman@nuffield.ox.ac.uk.

Bocconi University

Francesco Billari, francesco.billari@unibocconi.it.
Nicoletta Balbo, nicoletta.balbo@unibocconi.it.

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Albert Esteve Palós, aesteve@ced.uab.es.
Joan Román García, jgarcia@ced.uab.es.

Global Family Change: Project Website

<http://web.sas.upenn.edu/gfc/>

Acknowledgments

The GFC Project gratefully acknowledges support through the National Science Foundation Grant #1729185, the Population Studies Center, the University Foundation at the University of Pennsylvania, the John Fell Fund and Nuffield College at the University of Oxford, the Centro de Estudios Demográficos (CED) at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, and Bocconi University.



Global Family Change

October 24, 2017