

Following Changes and Consistency of Japanese Families: Message to World Sociologists from the Japan Society of Family Sociology

Japan Society of Family Sociology

I. The History and the Organization of Japan Society of Family Sociology (JSFS)

The Japan Society of Family Sociology (JSFS) was established in 1991, and is still relatively new with a little over 20 years of history. However, family sociology research in Japan has the long history since before World War II. Although there were no professional organizations in prewar days, the Council on Family Relations (*Kazoku Mondai Kenkyukai*) was formed in the postwar year of 1955. Thus, we will explain the formation and history of JSFS based on the history of family sociology research in Japan including the prewar era.

The prewar family research was not limited to sociology, but was performed in the multidisciplinary form with folklore, anthropology, and economic history, among others. Moreover, the main themes of the family sociological research were the Japanese traditional family system "ie" and "douzoku" which is the union of "ie". The research of "ie" and "douzoku" has been conducted in relation with the social structure of a village or the ethnic feature of Japan. The representatives of such research are ARUGA Kizaemon and KITANO Seiichi. On the other hand, TODA Teizou, the founder of family sociology in Japan, analyzed Japanese family structure quantitatively, using sample data from Japan's first national census (1920). Toda's research led to postwar family sociology research.

Family research in Japan changed greatly after the Second World War. The study of traditional family system of "ie" and "douzoku" which were the main stream of family research in prewar days became the research subjects of rural sociology after the war. The family research of Toda which was a minority in prewar days was inherited by KOYAMA Takashi, and made a fresh start as postwar family sociology. In 1955, Koyama organized the Council on Family Relations which was the first professional society in Japan. The main activities of this society included a monthly research meeting, and the administration of a cooperative family survey by its members. The results of the first cooperative survey were published in 1960 as *A Study of the Contemporary Family: Reality and Adjustments*. This highly esteemed work is considered as the monumental work that used the model of postwar family research. The purpose of postwar family sociology which Koyama proposed was the clarification of family changes accompanying the drastic social changes from the prewar to the postwar periods, and the elucidation and solution of family problems which arose in connection with such family changes. The Council on Family Relations included interdisciplinary members in order to find solutions to family problems. While attracting mostly family sociologists, members also included the researchers of adjacent sciences, clinical investigators and staff members of Family Court. Based on these activities, postwar family sociology grew steadily. In 1965, under the co-sponsorship with the Japan Sociological Society and Japanese National Commission for

UNESCO, the 9th International Family Research Seminar, which featured many prominent family sociologists, was held in Tokyo, and selected Koyama as chairperson.

The 9th International Family Research Seminar led to creation of the Seminar of Family Sociology which preceded the present JSFS and started in 1968. The founder of this seminar was MORIOKA Kiyomi who served as the director of International Family Research Seminar under the Chair Koyama. According to Morioka's ideal, the participants in this seminar were restricted to relatively small-scale specialists, and the purpose of the seminar was to exchange research results and information. Therefore, the large-scale organization was not formed; instead, an annual professional overnight seminar was held. Moreover, the results of the seminar were published periodically in serial form. This newly started seminar has contributed greatly to the development of family sociology research since the 1970s. This development occurred during a time of rapid economic growth which ended the period of postwar chaos, and the research concerns had also shifted from the solution of family problems to the aspects of ordinary family. The participants in this seminar were specialized in family sociology and this was a departure from the interdisciplinary researchers of an adjacent science. In the 1970s, the Council on Family Relations also became more active. Membership exceeded 200, and publication of the bulletin, *Kazoku Kenkyuu Nempo (Annals of Family Studies)*, for which members waited eagerly, also started in 1975. Thus, unprecedented prosperity was seen in family sociology research against the background of high economic growth of Japan in the 1970s.

The members of the Seminar of Family Sociology were motivated to form a larger scale professional organization. These efforts became clearer in the 1980s. In 1988, 20 years after the first seminar, it was decided to form the Society in 1991, three years after the initial decision. Moreover, in advance of the Society's establishment, the *Kazoku Shakaigaku Kenkyuu (Japanese Journal of Family Sociology, JJFS)* was started in 1989. The Society has held an annual convention since 1991, and the 2013 conference was the 23rd convention. As of 2013, the *Japanese Journal of Family Sociology* is publishing its 25th volume. Although one issue of the journal was published per year for approximately the first ten years, it became a bi-annual publication from the 12th volume in 2000.

To sum up, the institutionalization of family sociology in postwar Japan started with an establishment of the Council on Family Relations in 1955. In addition, the Seminar of Family Sociology started in 1968. The prosperity of family sociology research in the 1970s became possible because many researchers in family sociology participated in both of these two organizations. The JSFS which consists of over 700 members is the largest professional society of family sociology in Japan, developed from the Seminar of Family Sociology as the predecessor in 1991. The Japan Society of Family Sociology intends to guide and support family sociology in cooperation with the Council of Family Relations. (IKEOKA Yoshitaka)

II. Current Research in Family Sociology

1. Current status of the Japan Society of Family Sociology

The Japan Society of Family Sociology has been one of the most active academic sociological

societies in Japan. Major work of JSFS is the publication of the scholarly journal JJFS and sponsorship of annual meetings and other academic activities.

JSFS members have made public many academic products, ranging from journal articles, paper presentations, books, book chapters and various academic reports. Not much seems to be known in English-speaking countries about these scholarly publications because most of them are written in Japanese. Because limitation of space does not allow us to give a comprehensive review, we would like to introduce to the readers the characteristic trend of these academic products focusing on the papers which appeared in JJFS¹. The first part deals with research topics, and the second part with methodological issues.

Japanese families have undergone significant changes such as the delay in the timing of marriage, declining birth rate and rapid population aging during the last half of the twentieth century. These changes appear to have influenced the research trend of Japanese family sociology. IKEOKA Yoshitaka argued that these changes in families started in the 1970s, and that against this backdrop Japanese family sociology experienced a “turning point” in the 1980s, when researchers began to criticize the “nuclear family paradigm” (Ikeoka 2010). In a similar vein, in a recent review article on the history of Japanese family sociology, OCHIAI Emiko pointed out that the 1980s marked the “paradigm shift” in the history of family sociology in Japan (Ochiai 2013). She argues that the new generation of family researchers, mainly prompted by gender studies and family historical studies, began to criticize the paradigm of modern nuclear family and to insist that we need to conceptualize “families” as networks of individuals interacting with macro-level factors such as social institutions. According to Ochiai, many scholarly works based on this new paradigm appeared after the 1980s, which “put the emphasis on individualism and diversity, and the interaction between the intimate and public spheres” (Ochiai 2013: 121).

What are the characteristics of the JSFS research trends after this “paradigm shift”? We select two important research topics tackled by JSFS members, focusing mainly on the articles in JJFS. The first topic to note is “care” and families. By the term “care” we refer to care for the frail elderly, child care and care for adults with disabilities. Rapid population aging after the 1980s has resulted in higher frequency and extended periods of caregiving between family members. Accordingly, family sociology in Japan has produced much empirical literature on how families manage the care for the frail elderly. Social policies regarding “socialization” (Shakai-ka) of care for the frail elderly in Japan have made great advances in the 2000s, when mandatory “long-term care insurance” was initiated. This has changed the institutional context in which family care for the frail elderly is provided. In a review article, IGUCHI Takashi noted that the literature on the elderly care in the past two decades had begun to focus on how the individuals “choose” the arrangements of care (Iguchi 2010). According to Iguchi, the “socialization” of care has shifted research topics to include the fields where members, other than families, play significant roles in the process of forming arrangements of care. Sociologists who study social welfare and social policy now also play important roles in this research area.

With regard to child care, with more women with infants entering the labor force, and with more policy emphasis being given on curbing fertility decline, child care issues have attracted

notable research interest among family sociologists in Japan. Work-family balance is a keyword in this research area. Factors that are likely to facilitate fathers' participation in child-care and household labor have been widely researched and discussed. Research on the determinants of marital satisfaction has also paid attention to how fathers' involvement in household labor and child care affects marital quality.

The second topic chosen is concerned with family problems and family policies. Studies on "family problems" or "family pathology" have traditionally been important research areas in Japanese family sociology. According to SHIMIZU Shinji (1998) the 1970s and 1980s saw an expansion of sociological research on family problems in Japan. Whereas Shimizu argued that studies on family problems seemed to be on the ebb in 1990s, YASUDA Tokio showed in his recent review article that increasing number of articles appeared on JJFS after the late 1990s which dealt with families with problems (Yasuda 2010). Yasuda stressed that in the 2000s research based on qualitative methods seems to be increasing in number. Themes of articles which dealt with family problems include domestic violence, truancy, drug abuse, and family suicide. As Ikeoka (2010) argues, these studies appear to assume that these "problems" can be experienced by any family. At the same time, the increasing economic instability of Japanese society indicates the need to accumulate more research on how the changing economy and family problems intersect. Much research has been conducted on the interrelationship between job insecurity and declining marital rates among younger cohorts. As the family arrangements of the elderly continue to change, research issues such as poverty and family life, and social exclusion and families will be of greater importance in future research (featured articles in 2009 volume of JJFS dealt with social stratification and families).

Family policy is another issue which has recently received increasing research attention. Changing relationships between welfare states and families, and macro-level population changes such as lowering birth rate and increasing population aging have led to increased research interest into comparative studies of family policies. Increased interest in "care" may also have had a similar effect. Although papers directly analyzing family policies are relatively few in JJFS, research interest in family policy continues to be of significance in Japanese family sociology. It is worth noting that family policy constitutes an interdisciplinary research issue in Japan. Scholars belonging to societies such as Japan Welfare Sociology Association (Fukushi Shakai Gakkai, est. in 2003) and Society for the Study of Social Policy (Shakai Seisaku Gakkai, est. in 1896) add important contributions in this research area.

These two research topics obviously do not cover the wide ranging research conducted by JSFS members. We were not able to mention empirical research targeting "ordinary" families, which continues to take a great share. INABA Akihito showed that families composed of two adults and one or more children have been stable in their structure in the last decade, based on the analysis of NFRJ data (mentioned in the next section) from 1998 through 2008 (Inaba 2011). Survey results on family values in Japan also seem to suggest that changes in attitudes toward families have been very modest. Do these facts mean that the status of Japanese families is peculiar compared with other developed countries? We believe future research collaboration from comparative perspective by

family scholars of Japan and other countries will be required in order to answer this question.

(TABUCHI Rokuro)

2. Methods and data

Methods used for sociological research of families in Japan are diversified. For example, articles that appeared in the JJFS are based on studies ranging from empirical studies using quantitative and qualitative approach, to theoretical discussion about the definition and problematization of family that is based on classical sociological studies on families and family institutions. Articles by family sociologists in other journals and books add more variety.

Reflecting increasing difficulties in accessing sampling frames such as a list of registered voters or residents because of privacy and cost issues, conducting quantitative research based on random sampling has become more and more difficult for individual researchers and small research groups. While the proportion of empirical studies for family sociology in Japan is growing, the difficulties in accessing sampling frames described above resulted in a relatively small increase of quantitative studies (Yasuda 2010).

Public-use survey data and data archives as a platform for sharing those data have started to meet the needs of access to national random samples for individual researchers.

Public-use (with approval) data sets that are used most frequently for sociological analysis of Japanese families include National Family Research of Japan (NFRJ) and Japanese General Social Survey (JGSS). Out of these two, NFRJ is more closely related to JSFS. The series of NFRJ surveys has been planned and conducted by a group of researchers that comprise a committee within JSFS by referring to National Survey of Families and Household conducted in the United States. NFRJ includes cross-sectional surveys in 1998, 2003, and 2008, a retrospective survey with life course questions and panel studies that follows the 2008 survey participants. On the other hand, JGSS, which is modeled after GSS developed in the United States, is not specifically designed for family research. However, since it contains many questions that can be used for family research, there are many articles in family sociology using JGSS. Because of the large sample size, and the continuing effort to promote the use of these data sets, in particular NFRJ, studies using multivariate models have become more prevalent. While most of them use traditional models such as linear regression using OLS estimates and factor analysis, some use other advanced models such as discrete-time and continuous-time event history analysis for panel or retrospective data and multi-level modeling for comparative studies of micro samples in more than thirty countries.

Qualitative data sources include not only interviews, but documents such as diaries, court records, obituary columns in the newspaper and articles in magazines for parents. These sources are used for qualitative approaches such as life history and discourse analysis as well as more quantitative approaches such as content analysis.

Comparative perspective also characterizes a significant proportion of the literature. While research focusing on families in Western countries (including comparison with Japanese families) still plays a significant part, there is an increasing number of papers and books with focus on families in Asian countries. An international joint effort of research using quantitative surveys in

China and Korea that is comparable to NFRJ is an important example of the growing field of comparative family sociology in Asian countries. There is also an increasing number of qualitative studies that focus on families in Asian countries such as Taiwan and the Philippines. An increasing number of paper presentations at annual meetings of JSFS by scholars and students from Asian countries also reflect this growing interaction with these countries.

After the impact of the “paradigm shift” mentioned above, historical analysis has importance in the study of Japanese families. Although most of the historical studies are based on qualitative approach, there is important contribution by quantitative analysis using the method of historical demography with the data sets drawing from population registers.

(NAKAZATO Hideki)

III. Our Messages to World Sociologists

Members of the JSFS are wide-ranging in terms of their research agenda and activities. It is thus difficult to send one message representing our entire membership. This section, therefore, focuses on three areas in which our messages to world sociologists can be made; our responses to the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake, research agenda and practices, and the need for global collaboration.

1. Our responses to the Great East Japan Earthquake

In September 2011, our President WATANABE Hideki sent a call to gather information concerning research and other activities related to the Great East Japan Earthquake. Several members responded to this call, and their activities ranged from visiting and helping residents in temporary housing in the Tohoku region, organizing a symposium that focused on children and families living near the nuclear disaster areas to collecting interview data from staff in nursery and child support centers. In our Newsletter of May 2012, IWAI Noriko, a JSFS member, described relief-related activities of other professional associations and the government as well as the research concerning energy conservation, and community and volunteer activities. During the annual meetings in September 2012, a theme session entitled “Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and Great East Japan Earthquake, and Families: Concerning Reproduction” organized by TAMA Yasuko included three papers that focused on pregnant mothers, midwives, health professionals, and community support network in the aftermath of the earthquakes.

Despite our observations of how families have been greatly affected by the earthquakes and nuclear disaster, we feel that our research is still limited, and thus we need to continue to study families in the Tohoku area in an attempt to bridge the gap between our research findings and assistance efforts. For example, more family sociological studies are sorely needed to identify the effects of the human and structural losses on parents and children, and to examine the family separation caused by nuclear disasters in Fukushima.

2. Research and practice

Diversity in Japanese families and the tasks that we, family sociologists, face are described by Watanabe (2013) in JJFS. In this essay, Watanabe emphasizes the importance of expanding (rather than converging) our paradigms. He further states that our organization needs to provide a place for facilitating the development of various new paradigms on families. This “expansion” approach to accommodate the coexistence of various paradigms is one of the most important tasks we are charged with in an ever-diversifying society and its families. This perspective also allows us to engage in fruitful dialogue over different research topics and methodologies.

As outlined in previous sections, recent research topics in Japanese family sociology are diverse. The accumulation of research findings related to families is voluminous, but there is a need for these findings to be translated into the practice, policy making and education. ISHII-KUNTZ Masako (2013) stated the important role of “social engineers” who can make use of the research findings for helping families and children, and for creating family-friendly policies and workplaces.

There is also a need to globalize our research by disseminating our findings in English language journals. Our members are engaged in the top quality family research, but as described earlier, not much has been widely known outside of Japan primarily because these studies are published only in Japanese. Our message, therefore, is that we will be making utmost efforts to be active members of family research community at the global level by disseminating our research findings in English.

3. Global collaboration

Various attempts have been made to globalize our membership including inviting family researchers from overseas to our symposium and international sessions at our annual meetings, and conducting information sessions at professional associations’ annual conferences in other countries. We have also sponsored the speech by Dr. Rudolf RICHTER, the president of Research Committee 06 of the ISA during our annual conference in 2011, and co-sponsored presentations by noted U.S. family sociologists, Ralph LaROSSA, and Katherine ALLEN in 2005 and 2008, respectively, and U.S.-Japan Stepfamily Conference in 2011. In collaboration with researchers from other countries, we have also organized international sessions and roundtables in our annual conferences on the themes of the immigration of families and children in the global era (2006), international comparative research on home education (2007), families in East Asia (2008), and life course and social change in Asia (2009).

The back numbers of the bi-annual JJFS are available free of charge for one year after publication, and the number of online accesses to JSFS’s English abstracts is increasing. Although the society’s English homepage provides only a limited amount of information, we are in the process of providing more online information in English with the hope of increasing overseas membership.

One notable activity that our association sponsors is the collection of NFRJ data described in the previous section. Although many large-scale data have been collected from Japanese families by the government and other research projects, few of them have been made available to researchers. In contrast to these data, the NFRJ data have been collected with a clear intent to be shared with

researchers and students in and out of Japan. These data are now archived by the Center for Social Research and Data Archives, Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo.

The main objectives of the NFRJ project are to gather nationwide random sampling data, and to make them available to researchers and students worldwide. The project maintains a homepage in English which also contains questionnaires and data usage rules in English (<http://nfrj.org/index-e.htm>). We want to emphasize that the requests to use these data from overseas researchers are strongly encouraged.

Finally, we hope to convey our message about the JSFS members' strong interests in collaborative research at the global level. We believe that this international collaboration will allow a better understanding of how families and children are affected by various social institutions in different cultural and social settings. We believe that identifying similarities and differences between and among countries will enable us to enrich the lives of families and children not only in Japan but also in other countries. The 2014 ISA meetings in Yokohama will provide us with valuable opportunities to expand our family research network at the global level.

(ISHII-KUNTZ Masako)

Note

¹JJFS was launched in 1989 and it has been the leading journal in the field of family sociology in Japan.

(<https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/browse/jjoffamilysociology>)

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