

Goode W J. *World revolution and family patterns*.  
Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1963. 432 p.  
[Columbia University, New York, NY]

*World Revolution and Family Patterns* analyzed the relationships between social structure and family patterns as they have changed over roughly the past century in China, Japan, India, Arabic Islam, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Western nations. Its findings are thus historical and cross-national, and they suggest directions of change in the future. [The *Science Citation Index*® (SCI®) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI®) indicate that this book has been cited in over 540 publications since 1963.]

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Had I understood what I was attempting, I would not have begun the task. I started with modest goals and was gradually drawn into larger ones. Along with other prominent sociologists who had been students at the University of Texas—my classmates C. Wright Mills, Kingsley Davis, Logan Wilson, and Marion J. Levy—I was invited in 1958 to give a lecture in honor of Warner E. Gettys and took the occasion to summarize the complex set of broad changes in the family. I then believed I was only codifying some ideas and data that were fairly obvious but scattered in the research literature. However, some colleagues challenged my unpretentious paper, and I set about amassing further proof. Each time I reached a new synthesis, I found other skeptics—for of course I continued to hit upon new findings and to expand upon my coverage of both history and nations.

Eventually, I had collected demographic data on a dozen or more nations (e.g., Russia, whose quantitative research was too poor to be used). I had read books and articles in six foreign languages (seven, if one adds the one Afrikaans book I read), found a treasure of data from the 1950s, probably translated by the CIA in that period of China-watching, and cajoled hundreds of tables from foreign scholars (especially those in governmental statistical bureaus), which I could not have obtained at Columbia University where I was working. Thus, in successive revisions and expansions of my inquiry, I had come to include much of the world's population over the last century.

What has been the fate of the book's findings? First, none of its main trends have been reversed (a revised edition, bringing some findings up-to-date has appeared in Italian under the title *Famiglia e Trasformazioni Sociali*). Second, some were confirmed faster than I had supposed possible (e.g., the age of women at marriage in some countries where that age had been very low). Third, my general hypothesis that in some modernizing countries the divorce rate would fall and then rise applies to several countries (Taiwan, China, some Arab nations; will Malaysia follow?). Fourth, some contemporary patterns are at times carelessly described as "traditional" (contrary to my analysis) but they are structurally in accord with my expectations (e.g., the three-generational household is still fairly common in Japan, but it is no longer the elders' household).

Most important are the evaluations that others have been making, as witness the citations, and there is an interesting irony in this frequency. My guess is that there is a substantial undercount in the number of citations the *Index* reports, since the book seems to be noted in a high percentage of family texts and research monographs that touch on family change cross-nationally in this and European countries. Why so many citations in this literature? (I do not think that it is because the book won the MacIver Prize.)

My answer is a hunch without any quantitative basis. I feel that the book became one of those "standard" works that are useful for introducing a known, broad theoretical framework in which new contrary findings acquire some weight. ("Goode says the joint family is disappearing, but I have just completed a study in Mahaliburipam, and at least 10 percent of households still claim to be joint.") Or, a more pointed challenge may be offered, noting that I was in error about how fast the change would come. ("Goode implies the *Onakodo-San* will diminish in importance, but the go-between is still common in Japanese marriage.")

All such citations, even when they correct my errors, are a kind of flattery, as was the comment by a reviewer in a major anthropology journal that the work *should* have been done by an anthropologist. That in the social sciences one can still be cited and chided many years after publication testifies to the complexities and difficulties we face in arriving at final answers to our larger questions. In this field, we are still trying to answer such a question: What are the relationships between social structures and family patterns over time?

1. Goode W J. *Famiglia e trasformazioni sociali*. Bologna, Italy: Nicola Zanichelli S.p.A., 1982. 512 p.