Family Values in Korea: A Comparative Analysis

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Introduction

One of the most recent points of contention surrounding the changes of values and attitudes in Korean society revolves around the perception that there is an extreme schism in the value system between older and younger generations. Media reports concerning the presidential election of 2002 and the congressional election of 2004 seemed premised on the idea that in Korean society the younger and the older generations hold entirely different sets of values and that the results of the two elections were the consequence of antagonism between the younger and older generations. These reports assumed that the age-based factors determining the preferences for the presidential and congressional candidates or parties resided in the value differences between liberals and conservatives, the young presumed to be liberal and the old conservative. As reported in the press and the media, the value sets between generations are clearly distinguished, and it was assumed, without any scientific analysis or examination, that Korean society is undergoing a polarization of values between generations, causing a polarization of values in society.

Korean society is not alone in its concern over polarization of values within society. In the United States, the clash of values and attitudes is already emerging as a serious social issue often referred to as “Culture Wars” (Hunter 1991; Wolfe 1998). Using the data from the General Social Survey and National Election Study, DiMaggio and his colleagues concluded that that American society was not as polarized in values as people had feared (DiMaggio, Evans and Bryson 1996).

The purpose of this study is to examine if there is a generation gap in family values in Korea as is widely perceived at election times, and if so, how great the gap is. Current research purports to analyze the generational difference in the limited area of family values among various value systems, investigating the following points in particular. First, where do Korean family values fall in relation to those of other societies in the world? We assume that Korean family values have undergone changes, and we need to ascertain the placement of Korean values on marriage, cohabitation,
divorce and gender roles in relation to other countries. Second, we need to ascertain if there are age-based or generational differences in Korean family values. Instead of depending on the analysis of Korean data alone, we want to examine whether there are significant generational value differences between Korea and other countries. Third, we want to examine whether the family values in Korea are indeed experiencing polarization. If the intergenerational clash of values is indeed profound, both the younger generation and the older generation will be concentrated around issues with conflicting values. Thus, we intend to examine if there is a large generation gap in the value system and whether the resulting family values are being polarized.

**Literature Review**

Research on family values in the United States appears polarized by political considerations. David Popenoe, a family sociologist in America, argues that the traditional family and traditional values should be restored in America. Popenoe (1988) hypothesizes the family of 1950s, composed of parents and their children, as the typically ideal family in America, and argues that the family is disintegrating due to increased divorces in the late 20th century, which he argues is leading to a crisis in American society. There is indeed research that shows the adverse effects of family breakdown on children (Waite & Gallagher 2000; Marquardt 2005). Others of a more liberal viewpoint, however, have objected to such views, asserting that the traditional family and family values of the 1950s were in fact only an aberration in American history (Coontz 1992; Skolnick 1991), and that a multilateral approach must be taken for a proper understanding of reality (Skolnick and Skolnick 1997). Yet others argue that the 1950’s family was patriarchal and therefore wrong, and that the U.S. must get away from the images of such an alleged male-centric family (Thorn 1992). Stacey (1990) argues that the post-industrial, traditional family has disintegrated, and that novel forms of families should not be seen as dysfunctional but as adapting to the changing times and social environment, with family values that we should accept and respect.

There is an on-going debate about the changes in family and family values based on a wide range of research topics, from how unmarried mothers construct their life processes with premarital sex on the rise (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn & Morgan 1987) to the monumental research on how working women, under the influence of conservative family values, begin secondary labor once they return home from work (Hochschild 1989), to the study discussing whether these images of family signify the appearance of entirely new kind of family than before, or whether we should consider
them as an indication for the extinction of family as a social institution (Goldscheider & Waite 1991).

Meanwhile, Inglehart (1990, 1997) conducted extensive research under the premise that in the course of economic development, the value system of a society shifts from a materialistic value system to a post-materialistic value system. In Korea, a research under Inglehart’s premise was carried out by Soo-Young Auh (1997). However, whether these changes in family values reflect a transition from materialism to post-materialism is not certain in Korea. Also, the connection between family values and the value system that stresses progress over environment, preservation over development, and quality over quantity is unclear. Even though Auh (1997) highlights as his central thesis that the changes in family values show the evidence of a shift from materialistic values to post-materialistic values through such theses as the changes in the perception of women’s social roles, the changes in the family relations, and changing values in the sexual revolution, we do not believe these theses to be the central theses which Inglehart had originally set out to prove. In fact, it falls under the research area of directly proving a shift from materialistic values to post-materialistic values of the changes in the value system regarding work and labor, environment, nation, and economic development.

Eun (2004) examined whether the materialistic vs. post-materialistic value distinction was a useful factor in explaining the differences in value changes by comparing the value system of Korea and several other countries based on Inglehart’s proposition on materialistic values and post-materialistic values, but he failed to get significant results.

Recently, Inglehart and Baker (2000) observed that traditional values, while going through the transformation from materialistic to post-materialistic values, do not disappear but still exercise strong influence. Such argument suggests that the changes in the value system do not occur uniformly from materialistic to post-materialistic values, but different modes of value changes appear based on historical and socio-cultural background. If we apply these arguments to Korean society, we find that there are some areas showing a rapid shift from a materialistic to a post-materialistic value system, while in other areas such as family, the material to post-material value shift does not occur easily due to the strong influence of traditional values. This is congruent with Eun’s (2004) argument that the materialistic/post-materialistic distinction is not always successful in explaining all value changes.

Therefore, in comparative research on family values, even if we were to use data created by Inglehart, rather than analyzing the data using materialistic/post-materialistic
value distinction as an independent variable, we need to pay closer attention to existing demographic variables such as gender, age, and education. Furthermore, allowing Inglehart’s recent argument that traditional values are still significant in determining people’s values and behavior, we need to evaluate the usefulness of Inglehart’s choice of religion as a variable.

Data and Methods

In order to examine whether Korean family values are polarized along generational lines, the current study employs several types of data simultaneously. First, this study employs the original data from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). ISSP stipulates that all the countries participating in the program study the same theme module during the same year. The module for the theme of current research, Family and Gender Role, was conducted in 1994 and 2002. In this study, the family module data from 1994 and 2002 were used together.

Korea joined ISSP in 2003. Therefore, Korea could not participate in the Family and Gender Role module surveys of 1994 and 2002 and does not have the data from the identical years. However, the first Korean General Social Survey (KGSS), conducted in 2003, included parts of the Family and Gender Role module, thus providing a basis for comparison with the 2002 ISSP survey data. In this research, for international comparison between Korea and other countries, the 2002 ISSP family module and the contents included in the 2003 KGSS family module will be compared.

In this study, rather than an in-depth analysis of changes in family values, we focus primarily on where Korea’s family values stand in relation to those of other countries and secondarily on whether there indeed is a process of polarization underway in Korean society, as is feared. First of all, for the changes in family values in each country, we calculate the mean of values of responses and look at the differences in the mean of values between 1994 and 2002. Then we look at the differences in the mean values with 95% or 99% confidence intervals in order to see the differences in family values between Korea in 2003 and other countries in 2002. Next, to look at the possible differences in family values along generational lines by country, we calculate the coefficient of variables in regression with 95% confidence intervals and examine whether the differences in family values by age group is a phenomenon unique to Korea.

In order to examine the existence of polarization in family values, a statistic called Kurtosis is used (DiMaggio, Evans & Bryson 1996). DiMaggio and his colleagues used this statistic, along with other statistics, in order to verify the polarization of values.
in America. Kurtosis (k) can be expressed by the equation

\[ k = \left[ \frac{(X-m)^4}{N} \right] / s^4 - 3, \]

where \( m \) is the mean value and \( s \) is the standard deviation. If the distribution is unimodal, the kurtosis will have a positive value. However, if the distribution is more spread out than the normal distribution, kurtosis will have a negative value. If all the values have identical ratios without any peak in the shape of the distribution, the kurtosis will have the value of -1.3. If the distribution is completely polarized, kurtosis will have the value of -2.

Because family values per se cover a wide area, this article does not provide a comprehensive coverage of all aspects of family values. Instead, in this article, values and attitudes on marriage, cohabitation, divorce and gender roles will be examined. We could look at the compiled responses to all the survey questions, since the survey questions for each area are very diverse, but the current study uses the following statements for marriage, cohabitation, divorce and gender roles within the family in order to utilize the analyzing strategies chosen for this research:

- **Attitude toward marriage:** Married people are generally happier than unmarried people.
- **Attitude toward cohabitation:** It is all right for a couple to live together without intending to get married.
- **Attitude toward divorce:** Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple cannot seem to work out their marriage problems.
- **Attitude toward gender role within the family:** A man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family.

Premising that each of the above four statements represents the concepts for marriage, cohabitation, divorce, and gender role, we attempt to understand each country’s family values based on responses to these statements. The response set contained a five-point scale of “strongly agree” (5), “agree” (4), “neutral” (3), “disagree” (2), and “strongly disagree” (1).

**International Comparison of Korean Family Values: 2002 ISSP and 2003 KGSS**

Where does Korea stand in terms of family values internationally? In this section, we compare and analyze the placement of Korean family values using the data
from 2002 ISSP and 2003 KGSS.

1. International comparison on the attitude toward marriage

Figure 1 displays the attitude toward marriage with the mean values and 99% confidence interval.

As seen in Figure 1, the most conspicuous phenomenon is that the attitude toward marriage held by Koreans, along with those held by Filipinos, is the most traditional in the world. The mean values for the statement that “married people are generally happier than unmarried people” score the highest among Koreans and Filipinos. After Korea and the Philippines, Eastern European countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland are shown to have relatively traditional values regarding attitude toward marriage. Following that, the data indicates that the US still holds relatively traditional values. Japan and Taiwan, other Asian counties like Korea and the Philippines, actually show an attitude toward marriage that is less traditional than the US. On the other hand, despite the fact Spain is a country in Southern Europe, where family or family ideology is very strong, the Spanish attitude toward marriage is highly post-traditional, on par with France, Sweden or Norway.

Through Figure 1, Korea is shown to be an extremely traditional country when
it comes to attitudes toward marriage, and the level of her marriage values appear to be equally traditional to the Philippines. Such results are very shocking. At the time of analysis, the per capita gross national income of Korea was reaching $10,000 while that of the Philippines did not reach $1,000, thus there was a large gap in the level of economic development. Considering that economic growth greatly influences the changes in people’s minds, that Korean marriage values and the Philippine marriage values are similar is a very surprising result.

2. International Comparison of the Attitude toward Cohabitation

Where, then, would Korean attitude toward cohabitation stand in international comparison? Figure 2 shows the result of international comparison on the attitude toward this topic.

![Figure 2. Mean and 99% confidence interval of the attitude toward cohabitation](image)

Figure 2. Mean and 99% confidence interval of the attitude toward cohabitation

 Regarding cohabitation, Koreans, along with Filipinos, hold highly traditional attitude toward cohabitation, or living together. Korea shows a strong aversion to cohabitation, enough to be distinguished from Japan or Taiwan. Filipinos, who showed highly traditional values with regard to marriage, again show a similar level of resistance to cohabitation as Koreans. Japan shows greater tolerance compared to Korea, the Philippines or Taiwan. However, on the whole, Asian countries such as Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Japan show relatively less tolerance with regard to
cohabitation compared to other countries. On the other hand, Sweden and France displayed extremely high ratio of responses in favor of cohabitation. The rest of Northern, Western and Southern European countries already show significantly high levels of tolerance. Countries like the US, Mexico and Chile show only relatively low levels of support. Hungary is a member of Eastern European countries, but she shows a very high ratio of attitude in favor of cohabitation that is comparable to Norway, Finland, West Germany, or Portugal.

Consistent with the traditional attitude toward marriage, the data confirms that Koreans exhibit very strong traditional attitudes toward cohabitation. Again, the most surprising result here is the fact the attitude toward cohabitation is as traditional as that of the Philippines.

3. International Comparison of the Attitude toward Divorce

Divorce is on the rise all over the world. In Korea, the rate of divorce is steadily increasing as well, and it is rapidly increasing, especially since the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. Divorce is no longer taboo, and the sentiment is that it is a matter of choice. If so, what attitude do Koreans hold toward divorce?

![Figure 3. Mean and 99% confidence interval of the attitude toward divorce](image)

With respect to divorce, the Asian countries exhibit similar attitudes. The
Philippines, where divorce has not been legalized, show the most traditional attitude toward divorce, but statistically, there were no significant differences in attitude toward divorce among Korea, Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines. Among the non-Asian countries, the US displays the most conservative position on divorce.

On the other hand, Mexico and Latin American countries like Chile, where divorce is not legal, Southern European countries like Spain or Portugal, and Germany show very high level of tolerance for divorce. In Eastern European countries such as Hungary, The Czech Republic, and Poland, divorce is accepted as one of the most appropriate solutions when a couple has incompatible differences. Divorce is accepted at a similar level in most of the Northern European and Western European countries such as France, the UK, Sweden, Norway and Finland. New Zealand shows a relatively lower tolerance toward divorce compared to European nations.

4. International Comparison of the Attitude toward Gender Roles

The next topic deals with where Korea stands on gender roles within the family compared to the rest of the world. Figure 4 shows the result of international comparison of attitudes toward gender roles within the family.

![Figure 4. Mean and 99% confidence interval of the attitude toward gender role](image)

Compared with the results on marriage, cohabitation and divorce, it cannot be
said that Korea holds the most traditional values on gender roles within the family compared to other parts of the world. As seen in Figure 4, the country with the most traditional values on gender roles is the Philippines. The Philippines are second to none in their strict adherence to traditional values that proclaim men should earn bread outside the home and women should take care of housework and the family inside the home. Among Asian countries, Taiwan shows the next most traditional family values with respect to gender roles within the family. Korea and Japan follow, in that order. Among those analyzed, the countries that show more traditional values than Korea include Eastern European countries such as Hungary, The Czech Republic, and Poland, and Latin American countries such as Mexico and Chile.

Among the countries analyzed, Sweden shows the most unfavorable attitude toward traditional notions of gender roles within the family. Next, Norway, Germany and Finland follow, in that order. Other European countries and the US no longer accept traditional gender roles.

So far, in this section, we analyzed where Korean family values stand compared to other countries. Despite the fact Korea is on par with the advanced countries in terms of economic development, in terms of family values on marriage, cohabitation, divorce, and gender roles within the family, Korean family values appeared to be as traditional and as conservative as the Philippines, a country that lags far behind Korea in economic development. Just within Asian countries, Korean family values seem to be similarly traditional or only slightly less traditional than those of the Philippines. They seem to be more traditional and more conservative than the Japanese or the Taiwanese family values. Korea is known to be a representative country that is most severely experiencing the changes in the value system (Inglehart 1997, 146-147), but when it comes to family values, Korea appears to have some of the most traditional and conservative values in the world.

Comparison of Family Values by Age: 2002 ISSP & 2003 KGSS

This section looks at the next issue in this study: whether there are differences in family values by age group or generation, and whether Korea shows greater differences in family values by generation compared to other countries.

1. Age Group Differences in the Attitude toward Marriage

If the values in Korean society are polarized by generation, there will be a clear
difference in the value system between the younger generation and the older generation. Before looking into polarization of values in Korean society, we will look at the possible differences in family values in six countries, including Korea. Figure 5 shows the differences in family values based on age variable.

![Figure 5. The coefficient and its 95% confidence interval of the attitude toward marriage](image)

Figure 5 shows that there is a significant difference in attitudes toward marriage between the young and the old in Korea, Japan, the US, Spain, Sweden and Poland. The figure above shows that in all of the six countries analyzed, the younger generations hold more negative or post-traditional attitude toward marriage compared to the older generations. Such result tells us that when it comes to attitudes toward marriage, although the generational differences in values exist, it cannot be said that Korea alone has exceptional differences in value systems along the generational divide. This is because age-based differences in attitudes toward marriage exist in all of the six countries analyzed.

2. Age Group Differences in Attitude toward Cohabitation

The following analysis is a result of regression analysis while controlling for gender variable. Regression by age variable shows 95% confidence levels. Subjects who are 45 years old and above were set as the standard category, and the regression coefficient from the analysis represents subjects between 15 and 34 years old. Ages between 35 and 44 were excluded from the regression analysis.
This section examines whether there is an age-based difference in attitudes about cohabitation.

![Coefficient and 95% confidence interval of attitudes toward cohabitation](image)

**Figure 6.** The coefficient and its 95% confidence interval of attitudes toward cohabitation

With respect to cohabitation, statistically significant age-based differences exist in the six countries that were analyzed. Japan shows the greatest differences in attitudes toward cohabitation between the younger age group and the older age group. Next to Japan, Korea shows next greatest differences in attitude toward cohabitation between the younger and the older age groups. On the whole, the age-based differences in attitudes toward cohabitation tend to be greatest in conservative and traditional Asian countries like Japan and Korea.

However, age-based differences exist even in European societies, where there is a greater tolerance toward cohabitation. Even in countries such as Spain, Sweden, or Poland, the younger age groups have a more tolerant attitude toward cohabitation. The US shows a similar tendency. Therefore, it cannot be said that Korea alone holds age-based differences in attitudes toward cohabitation.

3. Age Group Differences in the Attitude toward Divorce
Would there be age differences in attitude toward divorce? The answer to this question might be found in Figure 7.

The age-based differences regarding divorce appear very differently in each country. First of all, the attitude toward marriage, cohabitation and divorce is extremely disparate depending on age group. Regarding marriage and cohabitation, the younger generation showed post-traditional attitude. However, regarding divorce, with the exception of Korea, all of the younger generations show more conservative attitudes than the older generation.

In the US, compared to the older age group, the younger age group assumes a more conservative position on whether divorce is the best solution when there is an incompatible difference in a marriage. In other words, their position is that divorce is not necessarily the best solution. In the case of Sweden and Poland, similar to the US, the younger age group agrees less with the statement that divorce is the best solution when there is an incompatible difference than the older generation.

Looking at the regression coefficient alone, Japan and Sweden also show more conservative attitudes in the younger generations. However, the difference is not statistically significant at the 95% significance level.
In all the other countries such as Japan, the US, Spain, Sweden, and Poland, the younger age groups all show more conservative attitudes toward divorce than the older generations, but in Korea, the younger age group shows more positive attitudes toward divorce. This means more young people think divorce is the best solution to incompatible differences in a marriage than older people, and this difference is statistically significant. Therefore, in terms of attitude toward divorce, it is difficult to generalize any significant differences that are common in the analyzed countries. However, it is confirmed that the younger generation in Korea shows more post-traditional attitude in terms of divorce than the older generation, just as in marriage and cohabitation.

4. Age Group Differences in the Attitude toward Gender Roles within the Family

Lastly, let us look at possible age-based differences in the attitude toward gender roles within the family through Figure 8.

![Figure 8. The coefficient and its 95% confidence interval of the attitude toward gender roles within the family](image)

As easily seen in Figure 8, the younger age groups in all of the six countries analyzed are against traditional gender roles compared to the older age groups.
Family-oriented societies such as Spain, Korea, and Japan actually tend to show greater opposition to traditional gender roles within the family among the younger generation compared to the older generation. Even in a Northern European country such as Sweden or an Eastern European country such as Poland, the younger age groups show more post-traditional attitudes toward gender roles within the family compared to the older generation. Therefore, it cannot be said that the age-based differences in attitudes toward gender roles within the family exist only in Korea.

Let us briefly summarize the results analyzed so far in this section on whether there are age-based differences in family values. In terms of family values on marriage, cohabitation and gender roles within the family, all the younger age groups in Korea, Japan, the US, Spain, Sweden and Poland hold more post-traditional attitudes compared to all the older age groups. On the other hand, in terms of attitudes toward divorce, in Korea alone the younger age group shows greater post-traditional attitudes than the older age group, and in all the other countries, the younger generation shows more negative attitudes toward divorce than the older generation. However, the differences in Japan and Sweden are not statistically significant. In sum, age-based differences in family values exist in all the Asian, American and European societies, and it can be said that the younger people hold more post-traditional family values than the older people.

The Polarization of Family Values in Korea?

Now we will try to verify the possible polarization of family values in Korea through an international comparison. First, let us examine if the attitude toward marriage is polarized.

5. Verification of Polarization Regarding the Attitude toward Marriage

As explained above, this study plans to determine the occurrence of polarization with kurtosis value. Table 1 shows the ratio of distribution of responses on a five-point scale, variance, and kurtosis of attitudes toward marriage in the six countries including Korea.

Table 1. Percent distribution, variance, and kurtosis of the attitude toward marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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As seen in Table 1, the response measures for the five-point scale show diversity in the tendency of responses among the countries. Looking at this table, it is hard to determine whether values are polarized. However, if we determine the possible polarization with the kurtosis value used in this research, Japan is found to be the most polarized society when it comes to values about marriage. Looking at the percent distribution, 25.3% of Japanese respond “Strongly Disagree” to the statement “Married people are generally happier than unmarried people.” On the other hand, the percentage for “Neutral” was 34.2, constituting another peak in the distribution.

Next to Japan, the US and Poland have the lowest kurtosis values. Sweden follows next. Korea has kurtosis value of -0.38 and is rather high, only second to Spain. Spain shows the least amount of polarization, as seen from the 44.3% who disagrees with the statement that married people are generally happier than unmarried people.

From Table 1, we have found little evidence to say that there is a polarization of values in Korean society in terms of attitudes toward marriage compared with other countries. Furthermore, polarization of values on marriage occurs most acutely in neighboring Japan.

6. Verification of Polarization Regarding Attitudes toward Cohabitation

This time, let us look into attitudes toward cohabitation.

Table 2. Percent distribution, variance, and kurtosis of the attitude toward cohabitation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither, Nor</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>-0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>-1.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at the possible polarization in attitude toward cohabitation using kurtosis, similar to the attitudes toward marriage, Japan is found to have most acute polarization of values. The kurtosis value of Japan is -1.5, showing a considerable amount of polarization. The US follows Japan with kurtosis value of -1.23. Korea can be said to experience polarization of attitude toward cohabitation after Japan and the US. On the other hand, Sweden’s kurtosis on cohabitation is 2.83, indicating that her attitude is skewed to one side. The percentage distribution of the response shows that 44.6% agreed and 42.3% strongly agreed, so 87% of respondents form a consensus in favor of living together before marriage.

In terms of attitudes toward cohabitation, Korea is found to be less polarized than Japan or the US.

7. Verification of Polarization Regarding Attitudes toward Divorce

Now let us turn to the polarization of attitudes toward divorce.

Table 3. Percent distribution, variance, and kurtosis of the attitude toward divorce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither, Nor</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>-1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Japan is again the society with the lowest kurtosis value regarding attitude toward divorce. The Japanese kurtosis value is -1.18, the lowest among the six countries. After Japan, the US stands at -1.08. The Korean attitude toward divorce stands at a kurtosis value of -1.04, which is about the same level as that of the US,
leading us to think that perhaps Korea is beginning to experience polarization in attitudes toward divorce, unlike her attitude toward marriage and cohabitation.

On the other hand, Spain’s kurtosis value is 1.25, indicating that there is a large tendency toward consensus to one side. Sweden and Poland’s kurtosis values are negative, but they are not far from 0, so it is hard to say their attitudes are polarized.

In attitudes toward divorce, it can be said that Korea is not a polarized society compared with Japan.

8. Verification of Polarization Regarding Attitudes toward Gender Roles within the Family

Lastly, let us examine the question of polarization of attitudes toward gender roles within the family through international comparison.

Table 4. Percent distribution, variance, and kurtosis of the attitude toward gender roles within the family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither, Nor</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>-1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to gender roles within the family, the society showing the most polarized attitude is Japan. In the case of Japan, kurtosis for gender roles within the family is the lowest at -1.33. Next, the US follows at -1.23. Then Poland stands at -1.20, similar to the US. After Poland, Korea reports kurtosis of -0.98. On the other hand, the kurtosis of Sweden is 0.72, indicating that Swedish responses are relatively concentrated on one point.

Having compared the attitude toward gender roles within the family by calculating the kurtosis values, we can see that there are many societies where the attitudes are more polarized than Korea. Japan, where there is seemingly less concern over the polarization of values, actually shows a greater degree of polarization in family
values than Korea. In addition, DiMaggio concluded that it is difficult to see that there is a polarization of values in American society, but Korean society is found to be less polarized than American society when it comes to values concerning marriage, cohabitation, divorce, and gender roles within the family. Therefore, as seen in this section, although there are age-based differences in family values, and it is true that the younger generation holds more post-traditional attitudes than the older generation, we are able to confirm that these do not mean that the family values are so polarized as to be seen as a confrontation or conflict between the younger and the older generations.

**Conclusion**

Korean society has experienced rapid social changes in a short period of time, and it is still in the midst of a rapid change. Such changes are known to be acute in the changes in the value system as well. Especially in the 2002 presidential election and the 2004 general election for the National Assembly, it was perceived that there was a profound generation gap in terms of values and that such difference in values had a decisive impact on the result of the two elections.

The current study began by questioning whether there is indeed a significant generational difference in the values as was generally perceived and whether it could be said that the result of the presidential or general election was rooted in such differences. Among various areas of values, the current study centered on family values, which, although they are thought to be the most fundamental of the values, they are changing as rapidly as other values. This study examined generational differences in family values and any subsequent polarization of family values within the society.

Based on the comparative analysis of the data from the common survey of the countries participating in International Social Survey Program and the Korean data, highly conservative and traditional family values were found to be predominant. Furthermore, the attitudes toward marriage and cohabitation were found to be extremely traditional, identical to the Philippines, where the economy is qualitatively different from Korea. In terms of divorce, Korean values are similar to other Asian countries and relatively conservative compared to countries in Latin America and Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern Europe. In terms of gender roles within the family, Korea shows relatively less traditional attitudes compared to marriage, cohabitation and divorce, but this is still on the traditional side compared to other societies.

Even though Korea has highly conservative and traditional attitude on the
whole, perhaps there is a big difference in attitudes depending on age group, or
generation, relative to other countries. The current study attempted to verify whether
there are age-based differences in family values. As a result, we found age-based
differences in family values not only in Korea but also in other countries. In other
words, the younger generation was found to be less traditional and less conservative
than the older generation in three areas of family values with the exception of attitudes
toward divorce. In every country, the younger generations showed more progressive
and post-traditional attitudes than the older generations.

Could these age differences be reflected in Korean society, resulting in the
polarization of family values at societal level? After having compared the cases of
various countries such as Korea, Japan, the US, Spain, Sweden, and Poland, we came to
the conclusion that it is hard to say that Korean family values are particularly polarized.
In fact, rather than Korea, neighboring Japan’s family values were the most polarized
among the six countries analyzed.

From the above analysis, it was confirmed that we live in a society that is still
very much conservative and traditional in attitudes towards the family. As Korea
underwent the recent general election, the press and the media reported that there was
an intense conflict of values between generations and that the conflict was one of the
major deciding factors of the presidential and general elections. Thus, as we live in a
society with huge generational value conflicts, we could not but perceive such conflict
to be one of the major social problems facing Korean society. However, most reports
were produced without strong scientific bases for their claims. In this research, having
examined evidence for generational polarization of family values, we were able to
confirm that Korea is an internationally conservative society, and the intergenerational
conflict of values were smaller than in neighboring Japan.

What might explain the less-than-expected generational gap in values in Korean
society? We believe that intergenerational value transmission is still going strong, and
it functions as a major constraint suppressing the intergenerational conflict of values.
We plan to discuss this in more detail in further studies.
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