

Comments to “Families in Asia: a Cross-National Comparison of Intergenerational Co-residence”, by Albert Esteve and Chia Liu

Comments from discussant: Brígida García (El Colegio de México)

I found the paper straightforward and most interesting. I think that it definitely accomplishes the objective of “inviting, facilitating and inspiring ideas...on the topic of family life in Asia...” It is hard to find studies like this, looking at families in so many Asian countries as a whole. So, I definitely think that this line of research, with so many data bases ready to be analyzed, is very promising. The quantity and scope of the information analyzed is really impressive.

From the methodological standpoint, one positive aspect of the paper is the combination of the household and the individual perspective. I found very creative the way the authors deal with the pointer variables of “living with at least one parent”, “living with spouse”, and “living with at least one child”. In this regard, one first comment that I have is that they should devote more space in the paper to clarify since the beginning all the different aspects of intergenerational co-residence that can be addressed with these three variables, when analyzed along the life course. This is done later in the paper regarding “living with at least one child”, but it would enrich the study to do so since the beginning.

Regarding more substantial issues, I think that the paper successfully backs up the idea that the intergenerational co-residence in Asian countries presents distinctive aspects from the rest of the world. Although it is difficult to avoid in a paper like this, I think that the convergence hypothesis is dealt with in a very careful manner. That is to say, in many sections they highlight the difficulties in assuming that these countries will follow what has happened “in the west”. The only part that I would suggest reconsidering in this context, is the last page of the discussion, when I felt that they abandoned the more careful language and they definitely say that “we expect to eventually observe the unraveling of a revolution of family patterns and living arrangements upon the onset of demographic transition in these countries following the footsteps of their more affluent neighbors...”

Coming from Latin America, and having been influenced by the work of David Reher (about weak and strong families), I like to believe that the different family patters will persist in different parts of the world. Albert, Chia, what do you think?