CHINESE FAMILIES

Tradition, Modernisation, and Change

Edited by Man-Yee Kan
and Sampson Lee Blair

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES
IN FAMILY RESEARCH

VOLUME 16

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CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN FAMILY RESEARCH VOLUME 16

CHINESE FAMILIES: TRADITION, MODERNISATION, AND CHANGE

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Timothy Madigan is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Mansfield University of Pennsylvania where he has been teaching a variety of courses for two decades, including one on the sociology of China. He received his Ph.D. in Sociology and a Minor in Statistics from Pennsylvania State University. In addition, he studied mandarin Chinese at Penn State and abroad. Before becoming a Professor, he directed the office of institutional research at Shippensburg University. Before that he worked as a Demographer and Statistical Consultant at both the US Census Bureau and the National Center for Educational Statistics in Washington D.C. There he tracked, analysed and reported on the condition of education in the United States. He is a member of the American Sociological Association, the Eastern Sociological Society and the Pennsylvania Sociological Society, the latter of which he was Past President. He specialises in the sociology of education and quantitative research, fielding a series of state-wide policy surveys over the years while at Mansfield. He has taught, researched and travelled extensively across China and Taiwan. His latest research focusses on the attitudes and behaviours of Chinese and American college students towards dating, marriage and the environment.

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Ting-Yu Su is a junior high school teacher and a doctoral programme of gender education student, Graduate Institute of Gender Education, National Kaohsiung Normal University. She is deeply aware of the importance of gender education in junior high school. Thus, she devotes herself to the promotion of education on gender equality in Taiwan. 'Multigenerational Experiences of Women in Taiwanese Families' is adapted from her master's thesis. It is about the story of two generations of women. When writing her master's thesis about her grandmother, she was facing some difficulties in marriage. Her grandmother's story gave her strength and inspiration. Although her grandmother was illiterate, she knew a lot of Taiwanese proverbs. Her proverbial language is simple, and she can express true feelings and life's wisdom. However, because it is difficult to translate Taiwanese proverbs into English, the author deleted most of the proverbs, while still conveying the overall meaning of the work.

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FOREWORD

Over the last half of a century, Chinese societies have undergone a tremendous amount of social, cultural, and economic changes. Although Chinese family structures and norms have been established over thousands of years, economic developments, expansion in education, global trade, and migration have resulted in substantial changes to those structures and norms. In particular, families and marriages have experienced several rapid changes in Chinese societies over the last three decades: marriage rates have declined, gender gaps in education have been narrowed down or closed, the age of first having a child has increased, and non-traditional forms of family trajectories, such as pre-marital cohabitation have become increasingly common. Yet, Chinese families have also become more diverse, both culturally and geographically, as they have been under varying historical and political influences and different public family-related policies within Greater China.

This volume of Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research aims at comprehending the various changes, continuities, and diversities in Chinese families. There are 10 chapters focussing upon families in Greater China, including the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. These chapters address a wide array of topics, including education and cohabitation, rural–urban variations in family structures, gender attitudes, fertility aspirations, spousal relationships and marital quality, and intergenerational relations. The first five chapters are about the People's Republic of China and address topics on cohabitation, mother-and-daughter relationships, gender division of labour, and marital satisfaction. The last four chapters each focusses on a particular Chinese society: one on Shanghai, two on Taiwan, and one on Hong Kong. The final chapter takes a comparative perspective about China and the United States. These chapters altogether provide a rich set of data to show the variations and commonalities among contemporary Chinese families.

In Chinese societies, premarital cohabitation is still not common. However, this practice is increasing over time. From experiences of several Western industrialised countries, highly educated people are the foremost group to cohabit before marriage and cohabitation will diffuse to all educational groups over time. In 'Changes in the Association between Education and Cohabitation in Post-reform China', Wei Wang and Man-Yee Kan analyse data from the China Family Panel Studies (2010–2016) to examine how premarital cohabitation is associated with educational qualifications across different marriage cohorts in China. They find that, unlike the experiences of Western industrialised countries, the positive association between education and premarital cohabitation has not decreased, but instead has increased across the cohorts.

Education plays a key role in transforming gender and family norms. The gender gap in higher education has been closed in China in recent years. How might the educational mobility of women be influenced by their mothers? In 'Like Mother, Like Daughter? Mother–Daughter Educational Mobility in Rural China', Manting Chen analyses data of the China Family Panel Studies 2010 to investigate the association between mothers' and daughters' educational attainments in rural China. Her findings suggest that mothers' educational attainment is positively associated with their daughters' one. Moreover, the association between mothers' and daughters' educational attainments is stronger than those between mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, and fathers and sons, especially among the most highly educated groups. Mothers' higher education also mitigates negative effects of the daughters being born at an older age and having brothers.

The home is where modern and traditional behaviours often conflict with one other. It is also where gender is performed, reinforced, and challenged in daily activities, especially in housework. What determines the gender division of domestic labour and what are the implications for marital satisfaction? In 'Satisfaction with Family Status and Housework Participation in Modern China', Man-Yee Kan, Guangye He and Xiaogang Wu analyse data of the Women's Status Survey 2010 to look into how the division of housework between husbands and wives is associated with the satisfaction with family status. They find that both husbands and wives are less satisfied with their family status if they do more housework than their spouses. What is more, relative housework contribution is more significantly and negatively associated with family status satisfaction than absolute housework time. Their findings also highlight differences between urban and rural areas. Housework is negatively associated with women's and men's satisfaction with family status in urban area but not in rural area when endogeneity between these housework and satisfaction is taken into account.

Furthermore, intergenerational support is a key characteristics of Chinese societies. How might this affect the domestic division of labour at home and marital satisfaction? Fang Fang's paper 'Satisfaction of Division of Household Labour in China', based on analysis of the Women's Status Survey 2000 data, examines how satisfaction with division of household labour between spouses is associated with economic resources, gender ideology, time availability, and domestic help from parents and parents-in-law. Her findings show that intergenerational relationship is intertwined with the gender dynamics between spouses in families in China. Only married women's satisfaction, but not married men's, is shown to be associated with domestic help provided by parents or parents-in-law.

The gender dynamics in married couples are not only manifested in domestic labour, but also in other socio-economic characterises. In 'Couple Similarity and Life Satisfaction: A Study of Young Couples in Shanghai of Mainland China', Ke Shen, H. Brin Xu, Omkar Joshi, and Feinian Chen examined how life satisfaction of Shanghai young couples is influenced by similarity in each other's characteristics. They analyse data of the Fudan Yangtze River Delta Social Transformation Survey, which interviewed the first single-child generation youths born in Shanghai between 1980 and 1989, and find that similarity in age,

educational levels, and income between married spouses do not have any impacts on the couples' life satisfaction. The most important factor that explains life satisfaction is the *hukou* (urban and rural household registration) composition of the spouses. When the husband has the urban *hukou* and the wife has the rural one, and when both spouses hold the urban *hukou*, they will be more satisfied with their life, especially for those without college education.

The rural and urban differences in gender attitudes, housework, and their associations with subjective well-being are not only found among younger people, but also among older adults in China. In 'Gender Egalitarianism and Subjective Well-being Among Older Adults in China', Chengming Han and Jiehua Lu focus on older adults aged between 63 and 95 and look into how gender egalitarian attitudes and routine housework might affect their subjective well-being. They employ data of the 2010 Survey on the Social Status of Women in China. They find clear differences between rural and urban older people in gender attitudes and housework. Although women undertake much more housework, housework is associated with subjective well-being only among rural women but not urban women.

The gendered division of housework is likely to affect other important family decisions. Will the division of housework between spouses affect their fertility intentions? In 'Housework Participation and Fertility Intentions: Analysing the Gendered Division of Labour and Fertility in Taiwan', Kamila Kolpashnikova and Man-Yee Kan investigate this question by using data of the 2007–2016 Taiwan Panel Study of Family Dynamics. They find that married women tend to desire for more children if their husbands undertake more housework. On the contrary, married men's fertility intention does not seem to be affected by their own or their wives' housework participation. Such gender imbalance reflects, to a certain extent, that Taiwan is transitioning only slowly from a male breadwinner family model to a gender egalitarian one.

To what extent have women's experiences in growing up, getting married, becoming mothers, and so on have changed over the last 50 years in Taiwan? Focussing again on Taiwan, and taking a different methodological approach from the previous chapter, in 'The Multigenerational Experiences of Women in Taiwanese Families', Ting-Yu Su employs a critical theory framework and provides narratives of stories of a woman's and her grandmother's gendered perceptions and experiences in Taiwan. Her research reveals how gendered experiences as daughters and mothers have changed and what traditions are still culturally embedded.

How gender roles and norms have been transformed in Chinese societies depend very much on public policies. Are the policies reinforcing traditional male breadwinner model of families or are they encouraging couples to form dual earner gender egalitarian families? In 'The Policy Measures Used by the Hong Kong Government to Respond to the Adult Worker Model and the Male-breadwinner Model', Sam Wai Kam Yu, Iris Po Yee Lo and Ruby Chui Man Chau examine how the Hong Kong government's policies have responded to these two family models. In particular, they look into policy measures which can support women's employment, the local work-based pension scheme, and measures that may help full time family carers to secure resources for retirement. Their study is

also based on interview findings of a number of professional women about their views of the pension scheme in Hong Kong.

Do young Chinese people hold different attitudes towards marriages and family compared to people from Western countries? In 'Attitudes towards Marriage among Chinese and American College Students: A Comparative Study', Timothy Madigan analyses data collected from colleges students in China and the United States about their attitudes towards marriage, age to get married, the number of desired children, the age to have children, divorce, pre-marital cohabitation, and gender division of labour within marriage. He finds that Chinese students tend to support the marriage institution and plan having children a year later in age compared to the US students. Chinese students also prefer having fewer total number of children than US students. Chinese students and US students differ in their attitudes towards divorce and gender division of labour at home, but they shared similar attitudes about cohabitation.

In sum, these chapters showcase how gender relations, family norms, and intergenerational ties are being performed, transformed, challenged, and reproduced in the home and marriages of Chinese families in different regions. They also provide valuable insights into the gender and intergenerational dynamics of modern Chinese families.

Man-Yee Kan
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