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The Politics of Marriage and Gender: Global Issues in Local Contexts



CHINESE MARRIAGES IN TRANSITION

XIAOLING SHU
JINGJING CHEN

From Patriarchy
to New Familism

Chinese Marriages in Transition

**The Politics of Marriage and Gender:
Global Issues in Local Contexts**

Series Editor: Péter Berta

The Politics of Marriage and Gender: Global Issues in Local Context series from Rutgers University Press fills a gap in research by examining the politics of marriage and related practices, ideologies, and interpretations, and addresses the key question of how the politics of marriage has affected social, cultural, and political processes, relations, and boundaries. The series looks at the complex relationships between the politics of marriage and gender, ethnic, national, religious, racial, and class identities, and analyzes how these relationships contribute to the development and management of social and political differences, inequalities, and conflicts.

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Chinese Marriages in Transition

From Patriarchy to New Familism

XIAOLING SHU
JINGJING CHEN



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS
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To Casey, Kina, and Dong with Love and Gratitude

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SERIES FOREWORD

The politics of marriage (and divorce) is an often-used strategic tool in various social, cultural, economic, and political identity projects as well as in symbolic conflicts between ethnic, national, or religious communities. Despite having multiple strategic applicabilities, pervasiveness in everyday life, and huge significance in performing and managing identities, the politics of marriage is surprisingly underrepresented both in the international book publishing market and the social sciences.

The Politics of Marriage and Gender: Global Issues in Local Contexts is a series from Rutgers University Press examining the politics of marriage as a phenomenon embedded into and intensely interacting with much broader social, cultural, economic, and political processes and practices such as globalization; transnationalization; international migration; human trafficking; vertical social mobility; the creation of symbolic boundaries between ethnic populations, nations, religious denominations, or classes; family formation; or struggles for women's and children's rights. The series primarily aims to analyze practices, ideologies, and interpretations related to the politics of marriage, and to outline the dynamics and diversity of relatedness—interplay and interdependence, for instance—between the politics of marriage and the broader processes and practices mentioned above. In other words, most books in the series devote special attention to how the politics of marriage and these processes and practices mutually shape and explain each other.

The series concentrates on, among other things, the complex relationships between the politics of marriage and gender, ethnic, national, religious, racial, and class identities globally, and examines how these relationships contribute to the development and management of social, cultural, and political differences, inequalities, and conflicts.

The series seeks to publish single authored books and edited volumes that develop a gap-filling and thought-provoking critical perspective, that are well-balanced between a high degree of theoretical sophistication and empirical richness, and that cross or rethink disciplinary, methodological, or theoretical boundaries. The thematic scope of the series is intentionally left broad to encourage creative submissions that fit within the perspectives outlined above.

Among the potential topics closely connected with the problem sensitivity of the series are “honor”-based violence; arranged (forced, child, etc.) marriage; transnational marriage markets, migration, and brokerage; intersections of marriage and religion/class/race; the politics of agency and power within marriage; reconfiguration of family: same-sex marriage/union; the politics of love, intimacy, and desire; marriage and multicultural families; the (religious, legal, etc.) politics of divorce; the causes, forms, and consequences of polygamy in contemporary societies; sport marriage; refusing marriage; and so forth.

Chinese Marriages in Transition: From Patriarchy to New Familism is a fascinating overview of how patterns of marriage, family, gender, and fertility as well as attitudes toward them have been changing rapidly in China over the past several decades. Using national data sets from multiple waves of the World Value Survey, the General Social Survey, and the Chinese Family Panel Studies, the monograph not only explains how and why the convolution of Confucianism, socialism, and modernization has affected the patterns and attitudes mentioned above, but it also highlights the mechanisms through which the Chinese patriarchal family system based on Confucianism has undergone transformation during socialism and in the contexts of (postsocialist) modernization and globalization. Using complex and large-scale historical national data, the authors offer a nuanced and comprehensive picture of marital dynamics in contemporary China with a special focus on transformations of ideologies, practices, and patterns of gender, marriage, and family as well as on the main contextual forces (social norms, legal and governmental perspectives, and so on) that have shaped them.

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Chinese Marriages in Transition

Introduction

The Second Demographic Transition and the Chinese Gender and Family System

Since the 1970s, industrialized countries have experienced major transformations in family behaviors and norms. These changes are frequently referred to as the second demographic transition (SDT) (Lesthaeghe 2010). These profound transitions include a retreat from marriage, with increasingly more people cohabiting and delaying, avoiding, or dissolving formal nuptial ties. Childbearing and childrearing are separated from marriage, and a high percentage of children are born out of marriage. These changes are said to have occurred contemporaneously with the rise in female labor force participation since female employment is linked with delayed marriage and nonmarriage (Espenshade 1985), union dissolution (Ruggles 1997), and low fertility (Bernhardt 1993; Brewster and Rindfuss 2000).

Such demographic transitions are seen as outcomes of a broad range of societal change that has impacted the relationship between men and women. These transformations in the gender relationship, or the gender revolution, have profound ramifications on marriage and family choices (Breen and Cooke 2005; Edin and Kefalas 2011). As a result, employed women marry at an older age and have fewer children than women who do not engage in paid employment (Andersson and Scott 2007). Working women also spend less time on housework than unemployed women (Aguiar and Hurst 2009) but put in the same amount of time on childcare (Bianchi 2000). Marriages of working women are less stable than those of women who do not work outside of the home (Sayer and Bianchi 2000). States with higher levels of female labor force participation have experienced higher levels of divorce, according to historical data from the U.S. Census (Ruggles 1997).

These trends in gender relations in the labor market, marriage, and family are spreading beyond industrialized countries to Asia and Latin America (Lesthaeghe 2010; Esteve, Lesthaegh, and Lopez-Gay 2012). Although many scholars

have moved beyond the belief that human history follows a linear trajectory in which the West defines a development pathway to be followed by non-Western countries (Thornton 2012), it remains customary for scholars to predict changes in less developed societies based on the developmental trajectories of the Western world. The SDT that Western countries have experienced, seen as a result of higher gender equity in education and the labor market, is often regarded as the future direction of family and marriage change in non-Western societies.

However, there is an ongoing debate on the determinants, consequences, and scope of the SDT globally (Bernhardt 2004; Cliquet 1992; Coleman 2004; van de Kaa 2004). One account uses rich evidence linking female labor force participation to the SDT and argues that women's participation in paid employment is the root cause of the family transition. Employed women marry later in life, have fewer children, spend less time on housework, and are more likely to experience marital dissolution (Andersson and Scott 2007; Aguiar and Hurst 2009; Sayer and Bianchi 2000; Ruggles 1997). A second account focuses on value transformation. It argues that since economic development brings material well-being, people prioritize their pursuit of individualistic and expressive "higher-order needs" over family relationships (Lesthaeghe 2010; Amato 2009). As a result, commitment to marital relationships has become weak and transitory, and parenthood is often minimized or avoided altogether. These ideational trends are seen as based on secularization (Kertzer et al. 2009; Lesthaeghe 2010) and growing aspirations for high levels of consumption and leisure. "Developmental idealism" (Thornton 2001), "preference theory" (Hakim 2001), and "individualization" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Yan 2009) see family transformations as responding to the development of new values, such as the rise of individualism that encompasses the pursuit of personal freedom and fulfillment.

Within this large intellectual context, we analyze changing patterns of gender, marriage, and family in China to unravel how development, history, and traditions shape these behaviors and norms to understand how the Chinese transformation pathway converges with or diverges from the Western pattern and to shed light on the determinants and consequences of the SDT. First, we strive to document patterns of transformation in marriage, family, fertility behaviors, and attitudes using a series of historical and national data. Although there are a plethora of studies on gender attitudes (Shu 2004; Shu and Zhu 2012), marriage (Xu, Li, and Yu 2014; Qian and Qian 2017; Hu and Qian 2015), divorce (Yan 2013; Zeng and Wu 2000), cohabitation (Yu and Xie 2015b), housework and decision power (Shu, Zhu, and Zhang 2013; Zuo and Bian 2001), and fertility (Xu 2021; Zhang 2017; Poston 2002), this research either focuses on only some dimensions of this large-scale multifaceted transformation in the relative isolation of other changes or is based on regional or local observations of a small number of cases. We aim to provide a comprehensive account of the transitions in gender, marriage, and family in the past few decades.

Second, we illustrate how gender, marriage, and family values and behaviors are shaped by the confluence of cultural traditions, globalization, public policies, and economic forces through conflicts, adaptation, and modification. We demonstrate how modernization interplays with tradition and history to shape family changes. We shed light on how Chinese women, caught between contradictions between family and work and between modernity and tradition, navigate Confucian gender ideology, the socialist gender equality legacy, Western ideas of gender essentialism and intensive mothering, and “modern” ideas of individualism and gender egalitarianism to sort out their choices and decisions.

Last, we analyze how marriage, family, and fertility behaviors change in response to economic development, female labor force participation, and changing value orientations as well as larger political and economic transformations. We systematically track the multifaceted changes in marriage and family behaviors as products of societal transformations to shed light on the determinants and the scope of these transitions and to inform the theory development of global family transition. Although many advanced Western societies are experiencing SDT, it is not necessarily a normative form of societal transition. We consider the possibility of an alternative regime of family transition that deserves scholarly attention in its own right. In this way, we provide insights into the determinants, consequences, and scope of the marriage and family transition globally using extensive historical national data from China.

Patterns of Gender, Marriage, and Family Values and Behaviors

Changes in marriage and family behaviors in East Asian countries with Confucian traditions are indicative of how and why marriage and family values and behaviors are transforming in China. Countries such as Japan and South Korea experienced modernization slightly earlier than China did. Several gender and family changes have been observed in these countries: marriage rates have declined and the age at first marriage has increased, surpassing that of many Western societies (Frejka, Jones, and Sardon 2010; Jones 2012; Jones and Yeung 2014). Between 1970 and 2014 the gender gap in enrollment in tertiary education decreased but remained stable, as shown in Table 1.1. Female labor force participation rose to the level of 55–65 percent, on par with the West, although it is still customary for women to exit the labor force for childbearing and childrearing. Marriage rates declined from 9.2 to 6.0 per 1,000 persons in Korea, and 10.0 to 5.1 in Japan from 1970 to 2014. These rates are lower than those in the United States. Those who do marry do so in their late twenties, similar to the average age at first marriage in the United States. The divorce rate grew rapidly from 0.4 to 2.3 in South Korea, and 0.9 to 1.8 in Japan in this same period. During the years 1970–2014 the total fertility rate declined from 4.5 to 1.2 in South Korea and from 2.1 to 1.5 in Japan.

TABLE 1.1

Comparison of Changing Patterns in Women's Education, Labor Force Participation, and Marriage and Family Behaviors in Western Countries, Other East Asian Countries, and China

	<i>SDT in Western countries</i>	<i>East Asian countries except China</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Signs of SDT in China</i>
Gender gap in education	More women than men in higher education	Gender gap shrinking but remains. F:M tertiary education ratio (.75–.90):1.	Women surpassed men in tertiary education with F:M ratio of 1.13:1	Yes
Female labor force participation (ages 15–64)	51% in European Union and 56% in North America in 2017	M-shaped to accommodate childrearing. Rate is 55%–65%.	Remains high even in childrearing years at 70%	Yes
Marriage rates	Declined from 8.1 to 4.6 (per 1,000 persons) in 1970–2014 in EU, and from 10.6 to 6.9 in the U.S. in 2000–2014	Declined from 9.2 to 6.0 in Korea, and from 10.0 to 5.1 in Japan in 1970–2014	Remains high at 9.6 in 2014	No
Age at first marriage	>30 for women, 32–36 for men in western and northern Europe; 27 (women) and 29 (men) in the U.S.	Close to 30	Early 20s: 23.5 (women) and 25.7 (men)	No

	<i>SDT in Western countries</i>	<i>East Asian countries except China</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Signs of SDT in China</i>
Marriage hypergamy	Declined	Declining among the most educated; increasing with educational expansion ^a	Increasing	No
Nonmarital cohabitation	8.4% in EU and 7% in the U.S. in 2014	Low, precursor of marriage	Increasing, precursor of marriage	Mixed
Divorce	3.1–4.0 (per 1,000 persons) in 2000–2015 in the U.S.; 2.0 in EU	Increased from 0.4 to 2.3 in S. Korea, and from 0.9 to 1.8 in Japan in 1970–2014	1.8 in 2014	Yes
Total fertility rate	1.6 in EU and 1.8 in the U.S. in 2014	Declined from 4.5 to 1.2 in S. Korea, and from 2.1 to 1.5 in Japan in 1970–2014	Declined from 5.7 to 1.6 in 1970–2014	Yes
Nonmarital birth	40.5% in EU and 40% in U.S. in 2014	Rare. 1.9% in S. Korea and 2.3% in Japan in 2014	Rare	No
Domestic division of labor	Primary share of housework and caretaker	Primary share of housework and caretaker	Primary share of housework and caretaker	Yes

Source: International Labour Organization n.d.; Further Eurostat Information 2017; National Center for Health Statistics 2021; OECD Family Database 2017; World Bank 2015, and Smits and Park 2009.

^a Smits and Park 2009.

Despite changes consistent with the SDT, these East Asian societies differentiate themselves from Western societies in several ways. Nonmarital birth rates are very low at 1.9 percent in South Korea and 2.3 percent in Japan in 2014, which is substantially lower than the average rate of 40 percent in the European Union and the United States. Meanwhile, Japan and South Korea have very low cohabitation rates. For those who do, cohabitation is often a precursor of legal nuptials. Cohabitation leading to marriage has become common among those who intend to get married in Japan and Taiwan (Lesthaeghe 2010; Raymo et al. 2015).

The China Case

To unpack these transitions in marriage and family in China, it is critical to understand the impacts of the gender revolution and women's experiences in the family and labor force. Women's roles and positions in public and private spheres in China present contradictions and inconsistencies in light of the family patterns in Western countries and those in other East Asian societies. These different trajectories of gender, marriage, family, and fertility behaviors pose interesting questions and provide an opportunity to unravel the multiple social, cultural, political, historical, and economic influences that illuminate the distinctive patterns in China.

Chinese women have made substantial strides in education and employment. Chinese women's labor force participation rate outnumbers all countries in the world, remaining high at 70 percent even in their childrearing years. This rate surpasses by far the rates in the European Union and the United States, which are in the percentage range of the low fifties, and Japan and South Korea, which range from 55 to 65 percent. Chinese women also outnumber men in tertiary education with a female versus male ratio of 1.13 to 1. The gendered pattern of occupational segregation in STEM occupations is less pronounced in China, with women making up approximately 40 percent of the STEM workforce, while U.S. women account for less than a quarter at 24 percent (Noonan 2017).

Although Chinese women have experienced more opportunities in education and the labor market with the country's rapid economic development, urbanization, and opening up to the West since the 1980s, many traditional marital behaviors have remained largely intact. Marital prevalence, timing, and hypergamy (women marrying up to men of higher status and income) have changed little in the past several decades, which is inconsistent with the predictions of the SDT. Different from trends in other East Asian societies, marriage remains nearly universal and the average age at first marriage continues to be young (Ji and Yeung 2014; Jones 2007; Jones and Gubhaju 2009; Yeung and Hu 2013)—23.5 and 25.7 for women and men, respectively. The Chinese marriage rate remains high at 9.6 per 1,000 persons in 2014, similar to levels of the United States, the European Union countries, Japan, and South Korea in 1970 (Table 1.1).

The 2005 population census shows that by their late thirties virtually all women are married, and less than 5 percent of men remain single (Ji and Yeung 2014). This pattern of universal and early marriage is only moderately negatively associated with education; college-educated people delay marriage slightly (Jones and Gubhaju 2009). It is quite puzzling that education level, urbanization, and economic development have resulted in only a small shift in marriage prevalence and age at first marriage (Ji and Yeung 2014). The traditional practice of hypergamy (Thornton and Lin 1994; Xu, Ji, and Tung 2000) is not only persisting but appears to have intensified (Mu and Xie 2014). Similar to Western countries (Esteve, Garcia-Román, and Permanyer 2012), educational hypergamy with women marrying men with higher educational attainment has become unattainable owing to the declining gender gap in education. However, an alternative form of hypergamy, an age gap between husband and wife to the advantage of men, has increased among the young marriage cohorts, since older men have more opportunities to accumulate economic resources (Mu and Xie 2014). Some scholars attribute this different pattern divergent from other East Asian countries and Western countries to multiple processes that have been unfolding in China, including the resurgence of the Confucian patriarchal tradition and pro-family values, a weakened welfare system for families, and a stringent legal system restricting childbirth to marriages (Ji and Yeung 2014).

Contrary to the SDT but consistent with other East Asian countries, marriage remains a powerful institution in regulating fertility and cohabitation behaviors. Almost all births are linked with marriages, and nonmarital births are rare. Besides the traditional stigma and legal discrimination against out-of-wedlock birth, government regulations have also made nonmarital birth unattainable and unattractive since official permission is required for childbearing and household registration of the newborn (Cai 2010). Cohabitation, although increasing, is purposeful and intended to lead to eventual formal nuptials. The youngest marriage cohort of those born after 1974 or married after 2000, as well as those who are college educated and living in large coastal cities, tends to have practiced premarital cohabitation (Xu, Li, and Yu 2014; Yu and Xie 2015b). These premarital cohabitations are often antecedent to legal marriages (Raymo et al. 2015).

Despite some strongholds of traditional family behaviors and norms, there are signs of the weakening of family conventions and norms in marital dissolution and fertility decline, consistent with patterns of the SDT. Divorce rates were less than 0.3 per 1,000 people before 1978. From 1985 to 2015 the crude divorce rate increased sixfold, from 0.44 to 2.80 per 1,000 people, on par with the United States and many European countries (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2008). These behavior changes were accompanied by a gradual cultural shift toward endorsing divorce. In 2001, 56.4 percent of those interviewed in the World Value Survey Wave IV held the belief that divorce is never justifiable, yet only 31 percent held the same belief in 2012–2013 (World Value

Survey Wave VI). The total fertility rate in China has declined from almost 6.0 per woman in 1970 to 1.6 in 2010 (Raymo et al. 2015) and 1.8 in 2014, comparable with declines from 4.5 to 1.2 and 2.1 to 1.5 in South Korea and Japan, respectively, in the same period of 1970–2014, and fertility rates of 1.6 in the EU and 1.8 in the United States in 2014 (OECD Family Database 2017). The Chinese fertility rate rose modestly to 1.7 in 2016 after the country formally phased out the one-child policy and implemented the two-child policy in 2015 (Zeng and Hesketh 2016), but this increase was short-lived and a new three-child policy was enforced in 2021 in an effort to sustain the population replacement (Attané 2022, figure 1). In 2014, 70 percent of the respondents in a national survey stated that women must have children to feel fulfilled; the majority still expect women to give birth to at least one boy to extend the family lineage (Chinese Family Panel Studies). The strong attachment to this patriarchal idea of the importance of having children, particularly sons, is likely to dampen some of the impact of modernization on fertility behaviors.

Explaining the China Pattern

Despite some signs of the impact of the SDT, traditional Chinese family and marriage behaviors and norms remain largely intact. On the one hand, some modern changes in women's status have been linked to family changes consistent with the SDT. The gender gap in education is closing and has even been reversed at the tertiary level to women's advantage. Female labor force participation remains one of the highest in the world. Divorce rates have grown substantially. Cohabitation rates have sharply increased. Fertility rates have declined rapidly. On the other hand, traditional family behaviors are persisting. The timing of marriage remains early in the life course. Marriage is still the prevalent family form. The hypergamy form of marriage with women marrying men with more income, with higher status, and who are older remains strong and has even been reinforced. Cohabitation, although increasing, is often closely linked with eventual marriage. Although the fertility rate has declined, it is also strongly linked to marriage. The marriage institution remains strong and regulates people's family, fertility, and labor market behaviors. To account for the resilience of the marriage institution in China, we evaluate the theoretical frameworks and social forces that have shaped institutions and norms guiding people's decisions and behaviors regarding gender, marriage, family, and fertility.

Tensions between Opportunities in Employment and Constraints in the Family

One theory emphasizes the tensions between increasing opportunities in the labor market and the restrictions of traditional family obligations and expectations

(McDonald 2000a, 2000b). As a result of rapidly changing public spheres of education and employment for women, women are experiencing increasing opportunities and ambitions in the public sphere while wrestling with unwavering family expectations and obligations that require them to handle the bulk of housework and childrearing. Caught in this dilemma, women often choose to forgo marriage and family to achieve their ambitions and self-fulfillment. This framework was originally developed to explain fertility variations among countries to account for the low fertility rate in the Mediterranean and East Asian societies and the relatively high fertility rate in Scandinavia (McDonald 2000a, 2000b). Scandinavian women not only enjoy education and employment opportunities but also experience more egalitarian status in the family and institutional support in the form of generous paternity leave and good-quality childcare. As a result, they are more willing to engage in childbearing, and this has resulted in relatively higher fertility rates. In contrast, women in East Asian and Mediterranean societies see growing opportunities in education and employment while encountering the constraints of traditional family obligations of housework and childrearing with little institutional and policy support. Given the opportunity cost of childbearing and childrearing, a large number of women in these societies who encounter an uneven development between the public and private spheres forgo childbirth and/or marriage altogether.

Calculations of the costs and benefits of entering into adult family roles are conditioned by the economic resources available to these individuals. Entering into the adult roles of spouse, son- or daughter-in-law, or parenthood in the Chinese family system means submitting oneself to a social contract with a “package of family expectations and obligations” (Bumpass et al. 2009, 218). These normative family demands may present divergent opportunity structures to people of different socioeconomic backgrounds (Bumpass et al. 2009; Rindfuss et al. 2004). This family package may appear unattractive to some well-educated young people, women in particular since it restricts their personal freedom, career development, professional fulfillment, and individual happiness (Becker 1974). On the one hand, people with resources such as education and income may be better equipped to handle the conflict between work and family since they can afford quality services and products by outsourcing housework to domestic workers or nannies from less developed areas, paying tuition to send their children to quality daycare, and purchasing ready-made food from food services (Rindfuss et al. 2007). They can thus navigate these issues with better interpersonal and problem-solving skills (Blossfeld et al. 1995; Amato 1996; Härkönen and Dronkers 2006). On the other hand, in lower-income groups, marriage and family may be unattainable for young people, especially men. In China, men with low levels of education and income are unlikely to marry since they are considered incapable of fulfilling the breadwinner role in a family (Yu and Xie 2015a).

The calculation of the costs and benefits of entering into adult family roles is also conditioned by policy stipulations, workplace and community resources, and extended family support to alleviate the burden of housework and childrearing. The large context within which individuals anchor their evaluations of life decisions has also experienced transformations in the past few decades in China. The socialist state strongly promoted women's labor force participation and equal marriage rights, believing that women's limitations in these areas were sources of gender inequality (Wolf 1985). The 1950 Trade Union Law mandated equal pay for equal work and provided maternity leave and the right to nurse babies at work (Cleverley 1991). The marriage law of the same year declared that husbands and wives enjoy equal status and have the same rights to property after divorce (Cleverley 1991). The work unit (*danwei*) system of state and collective enterprises and institutions provided socialized family support in the form of dining halls, shower rooms, medical clinics, nurseries, grocery stores, pre-schools, and even elementary and high schools. With the market transition and the new neoliberal ideology of market reliance, the *danwei* system has been reformed, weakened, or dismantled altogether. Many of the services, provisions, and facilities that *danwei* used to provide have been reduced, canceled, or replaced by market mechanisms. These market allocations, not workplace or *danwei* allocations, have undercut resources and support for women's labor market participation. They may thus force women to choose either full participation in the labor force while delaying or abstaining from marriage and family, or returning to the family as wives and mothers and relinquishing paid employment.

The Conflict between the Worker Role and the Wife/Mother Role

Another theoretical orientation emphasizes women's role incompatibility between work and childrearing (Rindfuss, Guzzo, and Morgan 2003). Women have higher fertility rates in societies with institutional structures and norms that are flexible and accommodating to parental needs, such as paternal, medical, and family care leave, and breaks for nursing mothers. In societies in which there are rigid traditional expectations regarding mothers' roles, women find it difficult to reconcile the roles of mother and worker (Bumpass et al. 2009).

The socialist legacy has shaped the Chinese population's notion of family and worker roles for women. The socialist state encouraged women to work and provided legal, institutional, and ideological support. Maternity leave was implemented in all organizations with more than one hundred employees (Zhou 2004). Work unit-sponsored childcare facilities were available, and nursing mothers were allowed breaks to feed their babies. Official socialist discourse extolled women's work, framing it as glorious and even heroic. Women were encouraged to "hold up half of the sky," and female labor models were celebrated as public figures and "revolutionary icons" (Honig and Hershatter 1988). The

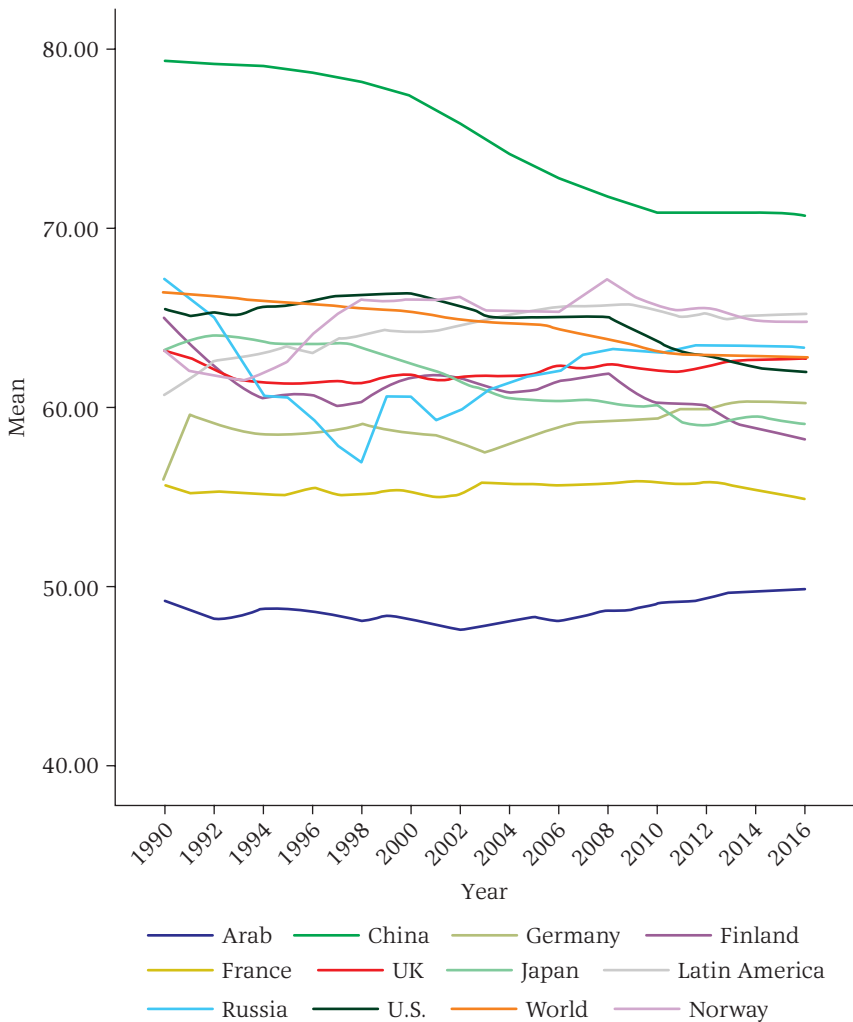


FIGURE 1.1 Female labor force participation rate, 1990–2016.

Source: International Labour Organization n.d.

labor force participation rate for Chinese women ages fifteen and older rose from less than 10 percent in 1949 to close to 80 percent in the period 1990–2002 (Figure 1.1). There was a decline during the 2000s, in which the rate dropped to 70 percent in the 2010s. This is consistent with a similar decline in men's labor force participation since more urban young men and women delay employment to attain college and graduate education.

Chinese people's perception of women's worker and mother roles has experienced multifaceted changes during China's transition to a market economy. On the one hand, market opportunities create more employment for women,

enhance their economic status, and cultivate a more egalitarian relationship with men in rural China (Matthews and Nee 2000). On the other hand, marketization encroaches on the power of the state to protect women's rights (Honig and Hershatter 1988), increases labor market discrimination against female workers (Zhang, Hannum, and Wang 2008), and channels women into marginal sectors with lower pay and fewer benefits (Shu 2005). Nevertheless, women's labor force participation in China has remained one of the highest in the world. Women as salary earners have long been a widely accepted social reality and necessity in both socialist and postsocialist China (Parish and Busse 2000; Whyte 1984; Stockman, Bonney, and Sheng 1995). Perspectives on the compatibility between women's economic and family roles had already permeated the entire population; approval of women's combination of work and domestic roles is close to universal (Shu and Zhu 2012). A comparison of national data from 1995 and 2001 shows that the proportion agreeing with the statement "A working mother can establish warm and secure relationships with her children" rose from 80 percent to 90 percent over time, and those agreeing with the statement "Both husband and wife should contribute to household income" increased from 90 percent to almost 100 percent (Shu and Zhu 2012). There was no cohort difference in these two attitudes, indicating that the sense of role compatibility of mother and worker among the Chinese population remains resilient despite significant societal changes. During the early years of economic marketization, Chinese families generally rejected the Western maternal deprivation theory (Wolf 1985), believing that childrearing is better left to trained experts rather than to parents. More than 71 percent of the women interviewed in the Sino-Japanese Working Women's Life Survey rejected a question posed in the form of maternal deprivation that probed whether a child could be harmed if both mother and father were working (Stockman, Bonney, and Sheng 1995).

Ironically, along with loosening state control, a discourse emerges that encourages women to return home, based on two very different ideologies: Confucian traditionalism and a neogender traditionalism from the West. Both perspectives advocate that women should return home to care for the family because they are biologically and socially more suitable for housework and caring for family members and less fit for work outside the home (Song 2011). The Confucian tradition advocates this practice as fulfilling women's duty and exemplifies their sacrifices as acts of ideal women and mothers living up to the example of the virtuous woman as glorified in Confucian classics. The Western gender essentialists mix the ideas of traditional gender roles and gender egalitarianism, advocating that women should return to the home as a personal choice because this serves the best interests of their children and their spouses as well as the women themselves (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2011; Shu and Meagher 2018).

Developmental Idealism versus Confucian Traditionalism

A third theoretical perspective focuses on the impact of economic development and the changes it brings about to people's perceptions of the meaning and choices of life (Thornton 2001, 2005). The developmental idealism perspective argues that economic development leads to the modern family form characterized by late marriage, low fertility, nuclear families, and an egalitarian relationship between the couple. This modern family form also includes characteristics considered undesirable according to some cultures and traditions, such as cohabitation, divorce, and nonmarital birth. Instead, developmental idealism argues that northwest Europe is the standard for what a desirable good life is. People believe the modern family is good and attainable, and it is this belief that motivates similar social change globally. Developmental idealism has been postulated as universal, and evidence of its acceptance is considered widespread even in some of the most underdeveloped societies (Axinn and Barber 2001; Ghimire, Axinn, Yabiku, and Thornton 2006; Cai 2010; Thornton et al. 2012). Despite this, the change is often uneven, and many features of the traditional family can remain largely intact (Thornton 2012).

The social transformation in China can be understood through the lens of developmental idealism. Confucianism as a value system has dominated China for thousands of years, buttressing the traditional Chinese family system. This elaborate family and gender value system advocates female chastity, universal marriage, multiple children, patrilineal descent, filial piety, family interdependence, and the devaluation of women. The Confucianism family system has been one of the most patriarchal family structures among all the gender and family systems of the world for thousands of years (Stacey 1983; Therborn 2004; Wolf 1985). This system granted women very low status. In all stages of life, women were subordinate to men. They were mandated to obey fathers when young, husbands when married, and adult sons when widowed. Most women had no access to schooling and lacked economic roles outside the home. Once married, women were not allowed to divorce or remarry (Stacey 1983; Tao and Min 1994; Wolf 1985). Elite ideals encouraged suicide as an honorable response to a violation of chastity. Female foot-binding was widely practiced. This pattern of male domination extended well into the first half of the twentieth century, and some of these patriarchal beliefs and practices continued into the 1980s (Honig and Hershatter 1988; Stacey 1983; Wolf 1985). The change came about through the first modern movement, the May Fourth movement in 1919, which spread modern ideas, including family reform and women's rights, among urban students, intellectuals, and young female workers (Johnson 1983). Educational institutions established by both Westerners and Chinese introduced concepts such as political freedom, individualism, self-reliance, and the Western treatment of women (Levy 1963).

The Chinese socialist state has been a believer and practitioner of developmental idealism. In addition to its efforts in promoting industrial development, it also endeavored to make modern changes by sending girls to schools and women to work, passing laws protecting women's rights, providing family planning, and helping meet working mothers' needs. As a result, modernization has eroded many of the Confucian values and practices. The nuclear family has become the normative form (Xu, Li, and Yu 2014). In urban China, social welfare is gradually replacing family support for the care of the elderly among state workers (Feng et al. 2012). Marriage and childbirth rates have declined (Yu and Xie 2015a; Wu et al. 2014). A large proportion of women work full time in the labor force, contributing substantially to family income (Shu, Zhu, and Zhang 2013).

For the most part, the state is responsible for the rapidly declining fertility rates. In 1970 the government began implementing its family planning policy and accelerated China's fertility transition. The government rigorously enforced its comprehensive family planning policy. Marriage laws raised the minimum marriage age, and local officials further persuaded young people to delay marriage. In order to promote *wan* (later marriage), *xi* (longer spacing between children), and *shao* (fewer births), local and community officials strictly controlled births through a variety of approaches ranging from birthing quota, contraception provision, and education to forced abortion or sterilization (Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005). By the late 1970s, 80 percent of women had used contraception by age thirty-five. The national fertility level declined precipitously from 5.7 in 1970 to 2.8 in 1979 (Lee and Wang 1999) and to less than 2.0 in 1990, as shown in Figure 1.2 (National Population and Family Planning Commission of China 2006).

The socialist state also promoted marital freedom and equality (Shu 2004; Stacey 1983; Whyte and Parish 1984; Wolf 1985). It changed its laws and policies in recognition of the developments in family practices, gradually loosening its control and adopting more lenient policies toward marital behaviors. Before 1980 divorce was discouraged and repressed by the concerted efforts of family, friends, relatives, the workplace, and neighborhood authorities. Divorce rates remained low and stable with less than 0.3 per 1,000 people before 1978 (Whyte and Parish 1984; Shu and Zhu 2012; Goode 1993). The 1980 marriage law established a "no-fault divorce" and recognized a lack of mutual affection as a basis for divorce, although communities and courts still practiced heavy mediation. Divorce rates more than doubled from 0.18 per 1,000 people in 1978 to 0.44 in 1985 and further doubled to 0.96 in 2000 (China National Bureau of Statistics 2009). By 2001 a new marriage law and a series of judicial interpretations removed court interventions, thus further reducing legal barriers to divorce (Li and Friedman 2016). The rising divorce rate has been buttressed by a cultural shift toward endorsing women's rights in divorce, remarriage, and sexual freedom, and a more liberal social view on premarital and extramarital sexual behaviors (Shu and Zhu 2012; Davis 2014b). Premarital cohabitation has become increasingly more common

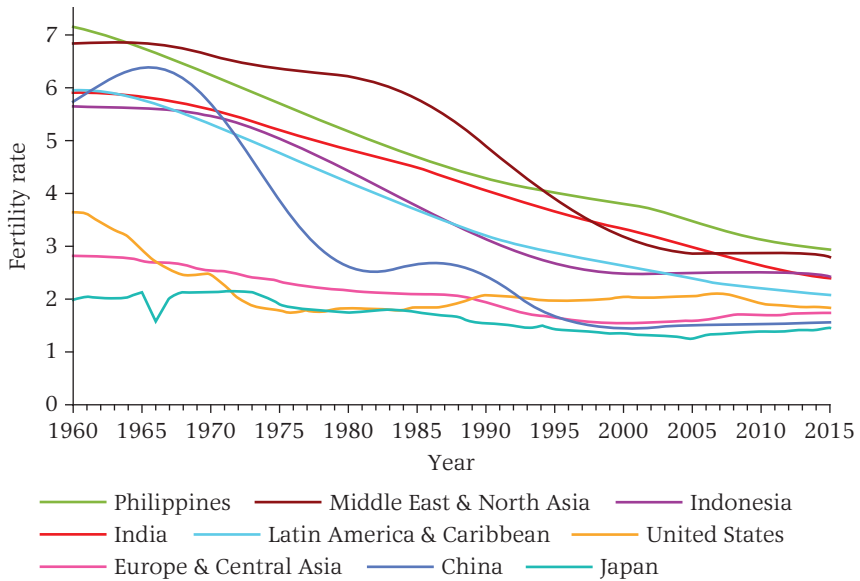


FIGURE 1.2 Average number of births per woman, 1960–2015, by country and region

Source: World Bank n.d., <https://data.worldbank.org/>

for both men and women, increasing from less than 2 percent in the 1970s to over 40 percent in 2010–2012 (Yu and Xie 2015b). In the period 2001, 56.4 percent of the population held the belief that divorce is never justifiable according to the World Value Survey Wave IV, but only 31 percent held the same belief in 2012–2013 based on data from the World Value Survey Wave VI. As a result of these changes, within the three decades from 1978 to 2015, the crude divorce rate increased more than fourteenfold, from 0.18 to 2.8 per 1,000 people, comparable to or even surpassing those in the United States and many developed European countries (China National Bureau of Statistics 2009, 2016). The divorce rates continue to rise in 2016, as shown in Figure 1.3. Meanwhile, marriage rates have declined since 2013 from almost 10.0 to around 8.0 per 1,000 people.

The Chinese Gender and Family System

Chinese gender and family values and behaviors are shaped by the confluence of cultural traditions, Westernization, public policies, and economic forces through conflicts, adaptation, and modification. In what ways does modernization interplay with tradition and history to shape these family changes? How are Chinese women caught between family and work and contradictions between modernity and tradition? How do people navigate Confucian gender ideology, the

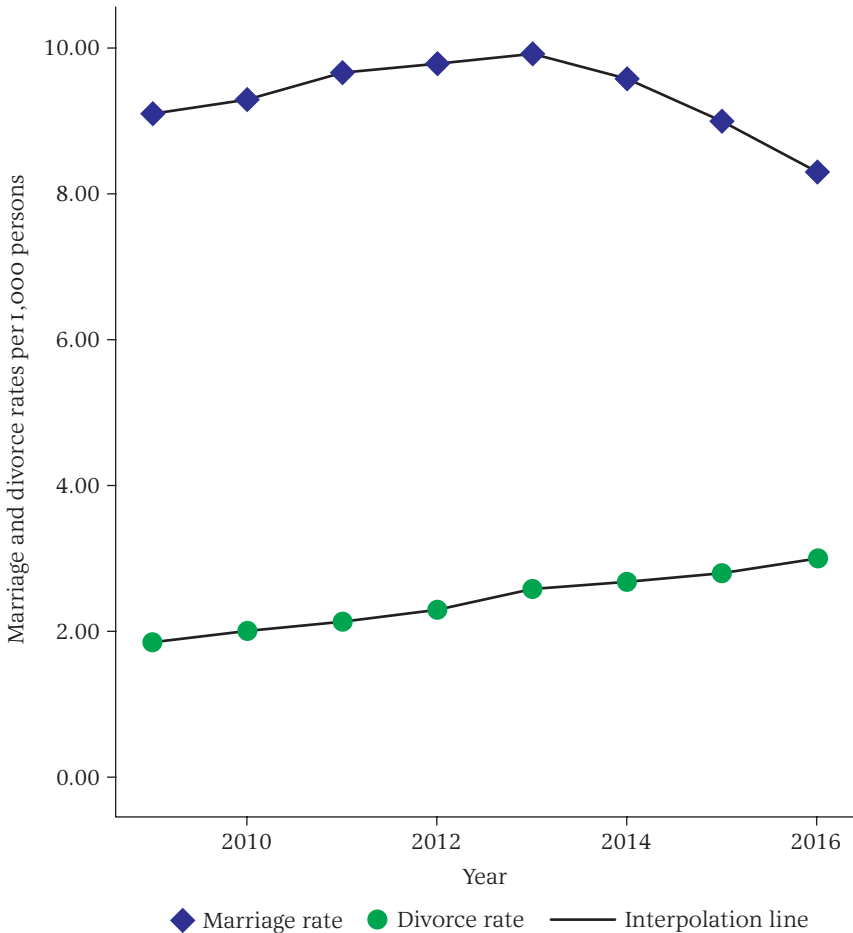


FIGURE 1.3 Marriage and divorce rates per thousand in China, 2000–2016

Source: Ministry of Civil Affairs 2017, <https://www.mca.gov.cn/article/sj/tjgb/201708/20170815005382.shtml>

socialist gender equality legacy, and the Western ideas of individualism and gender egalitarianism to sort out their choices and decisions? In what ways do marriage, family, and fertility behaviors change in response to economic development, female labor force participation, and changing value orientations as well as political transformations? How do we systematically track the multifaceted change in marriage and family behaviors? How do we grapple with the determinants of these transformations? How do we inform theory development on global family transition?

The foundation of the Chinese family system is its gender ideology of flexible traditionalism that regulates people's behaviors, directs public policies, and

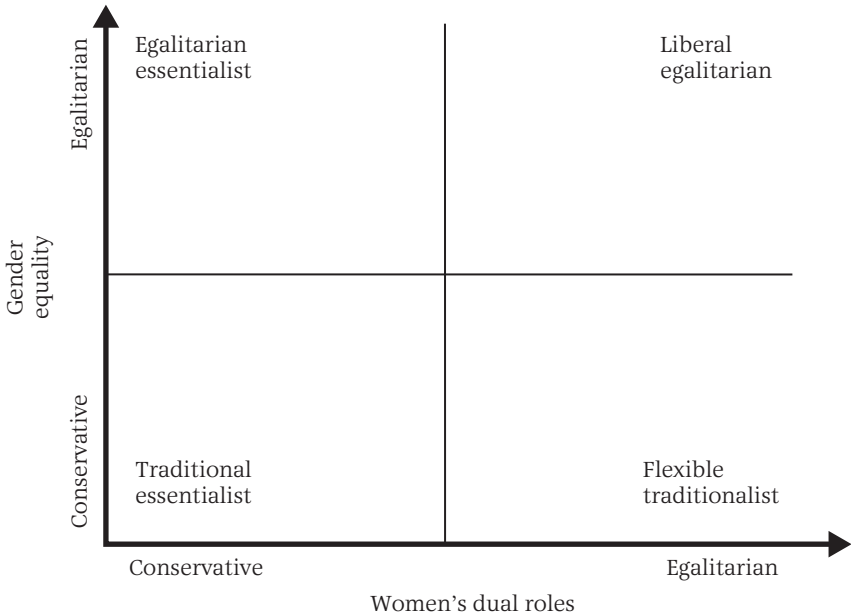


FIGURE 1.4 Frames of gender ideology toward gender equality and women's dual roles

influences laws. We treat gender ideology as a two-dimensional construct based on a vertical dimension of gender equality and a horizontal dimension of combining the worker and mother roles. Gender equality is indicative of support for women's equal rights and status. Sometimes labeled as the "male primacy" ideology, it measures "vertical" distinctions between men and women. The second dimension represents attitudes about women combining the dual roles of mother and worker, based on the notion of separate spheres (Davis and Greenstein 2009). Sometimes identified as "gender essentialism," it measures attitudes about "horizontal" gender differentiation. The two attitudinal dimensions of gender equality and women's dual roles yield four distinct gender ideologies: liberal egalitarian (liberal attitudes on both dimensions), egalitarian essentialist (liberal attitudes on gender equality but conservative attitudes toward women's dual roles), flexible traditionalist (conservative attitudes on gender equality but liberal attitudes toward women's dual roles), and traditional essentialist (conservative attitudes on both dimensions). Figure 1.4 demonstrates the relative distribution of these ideologies in a two-dimensional space.

The upper-right cell is liberal egalitarian. This ideology supports egalitarian attitudes toward gender equality and women's paid employment. It endorses women as full citizens with equal rights to educational, employment, and political opportunities. It also supports women's dual roles, believing that women

can function well as loving mothers as well as competent workers. It thus recognizes gender roles as cultural constructs rather than “natural” divisions between men and women with unique skills and knowledge. People in Scandinavian countries tend to share this ideological orientation (Shu, Zhu, and Meagher 2017).

The upper-left cell is egalitarian essentialist. It endorses women’s equal rights but is less approving of paid work for married women or mothers of young children. Men are expected to fulfill the breadwinner role, while women serve as caretakers of the family and household. The notion of “separate spheres” of domestic and paid work is based on the belief that men and women are essentially different human beings with distinct abilities and behavioral characteristics. People who subscribe to this ideology endorse the notion of “separate but equal” treatment of women; men and women are expected to specialize in different tasks according to their unique traits, yet their roles share equal social status. This is the dominant ideology of the population in the remaining Western countries with a tradition of individual liberalism, including the United States, Germany, France, and the UK. The egalitarian essentialist ideology highly resembles the “egalitarian-essentialist” ideology that Charles and Grusky (2004) identified in the United States, which combines support for egalitarianism in the public sphere with the essentialist notion that women are best at being at home with the children, and is similar to the “egalitarian familism” ideology in Europe (Knight and Brinton 2017) and more recent work on “egalitarian-essentialist” and “ambivalent” gender attitudes in the United States (Scarborough, Sin, and Risman 2019; Scarborough and Sin 2020).

Using data from the U.S. General Social Survey (2006–2016) aggregated to measure gender attitudes in commuting zones (metropolitan areas that maximize the degree to which commuting patterns are contained in a geographic space), Scarborough and Sin (2020) found that, among eighty-two commuting zones covering 82.4 percent of the U.S. population, more than half (forty-four zones) are classified as espousing egalitarian essentialist attitudes, eleven zones hold liberal-egalitarian attitudes, and twenty-seven zones support traditionalist attitudes. Despite a marked decline in “traditionalism” ideology and an increase in support of “flexible egalitarianism” and “liberal egalitarianism” in a diverse group of European countries from 1990 to 2009, the proportion supporting “egalitarian familism”—one of the four ideologies identified—remains stable at approximately 30 percent in liberal and conservative welfare states of Italy, France, Belgium, and the UK (Knight and Brinton 2017).

The lower-right cell is flexible traditionalist. This represents low support for women’s equal rights in the labor force despite widespread acceptance of their paid work. It is widely accepted or even expected that all women, even married women and mothers of young children, work alongside men in the labor force. However, women are not seen as deserving of full rights and equal opportunities

in education, employment, and politics. This is the dominant ideology in countries with a socialist legacy, such as Russia, Romania, Hungary, Vietnam, and Belarus.

The lower-left cell is traditional essentialist. This ideology believes in male primacy, regarding men as superior and deserving of higher status and privileges. Women are seen as subordinate to men, functioning as wives and mothers who tend to the needs of their husbands and children. Labor force participation is not encouraged, and the few women who are allowed to work are relegated to segregated jobs or workplaces. Islamic countries generally share this ideology.

The Chinese gender ideology is characterized as flexible traditionalism (Shu, Zhu, and Meagher 2017). This configuration of gender ideology is widespread among former socialist states based on an analysis of the World Survey Data (Shu, Zhu, and Meagher 2017). These countries pushed the Engels Strategy, pursuing gender equality by including women in the labor force, socializing domestic labor, and arguing that capitalism oppressed women by chaining them to childcare and domestic work. China extended the “right to work” to all citizens, enabling women to establish selfhood through work rather than through their husbands and children. Domestic obligations did not prevent women from taking on full-time employment, because the state provided childcare on a wide scale. Chinese families have been encouraged to think of childrearing as a contribution to national regeneration and do not accept the maternal deprivation theory; instead, they believe nursery and school teachers as trained professionals are more capable than mothers in caring for children’s well-being (Wolf 1985). However, despite being full-time workers, women still perform unpaid care work at home. Although the state provides childcare to support mothers’ paid employment, domestic work is not regarded as worthy of state intervention. National policies mandate that women retire at age fifty-five in order to provide full-time employment to younger mothers, while grandmothers on pensions are available for childcare (Bian, Logan, Shu 1998; Crompton and Harris 1997).

In this system of flexible traditionalism, it is risky for women to forgo marriage and family altogether to pursue a career; it is more acceptable for women to embrace the dual roles of work and family. In paid employment, women are highly likely to encounter discrimination and unlikely to enjoy full equality in the labor market. They have a slim chance of experiencing employment advancement and career opportunities equal to those of men. The transition to a market economy has allowed room for more gender discrimination, thus further diminishing women’s advancement in the labor force and enlarging the gender gap in earnings (Shu and Bian 2003). On the other hand, this gender system sees the roles of worker and mother as compatible. Society accepts working mothers, even mothers of very young children, engaging in full-time employment. In this culture that emphasizes universal marriage and resists changes to

marriage formation, young men are under constant pressure, particularly from their parents, to enter into marriage and have children to extend the family line. A delay in fulfilling these gendered expectations can lead to parental depression (Chen and Tong 2021). Women are often expected, forced, shamed, or enticed to get married, often at ages younger than twenty-five, because of parental pressure, the cultural tradition that glorifies being married as elevated social status, and the difficulties in seeking professional success in sexist workplaces (Ji 2015).

The transition to a market economy and the opening up to the West have initiated a process of contradictory transitions influenced by multiple forces. The government has retreated from intervening to promote gender equality, and traditional Confucian marriage and family values have been revitalized (Pimentel 2006). These forces may have triggered a very small fraction of women to retreat to the family as full-time wives and mothers, but this change is limited to a small minority of women who can afford to do so. Increasing global contact has made the Western notion of individual freedom, choices, and rights increasingly popular among the Chinese, particularly among urban young people (Whyte 2005; Yan 2011).

Several lines of arguments characterize this transformation in China as emphasizing different driving forces. The deinstitutionalization thesis argues that family and gender relations in China are being “deinstitutionalized” (Davis and Friedman 2014). New values of individual self-fulfillment are replacing the long-standing norms, institutions, and practices that govern marriage, family, and sexual relationships. Looser government control over individuals’ lives allows for both a lenient attitude toward and higher rates of divorce, premarital sex, and cohabitation (Davis 2014b). This transition has not only created more individual space in dating, sex, marriage, and family relations but also ushered in anxieties in negotiating the old and new, traditional and modern, and local and global ideas and behaviors. Although people are becoming more accepting of premarital sex and cohabitation, they are struggling to come to terms with new norms governing sexuality, gender, marriage, and family. Despite these transitions, the process of deinstitutionalization has left rather intact the intergenerational family codependence and commitment to family ties. Cross-generational reciprocity and devotion to nonconjugal family ties remain strong and resilient, showing no sign of weakening against the wave of rising individualism and deinstitutionalization of the Chinese marriage and family.

Another thesis characterizing this transformation in the Chinese family is the individualization perspective (Yan 2009). Individualization reflects a transition in the relation between the individual and society in pursuit of self-realization of modernity (Beck 1992; Beck-Gernsheim 2002). This process frees individuals from all-encompassing institutions including family, kinship, gender, and class. Although the driving force is fundamentally at an individual and personal level—a rising awareness of personal freedom and

self-fulfillment—individualization has been argued as a significant institutionalized process. Individualization in China is a broad process encompassing all social relations, including family relations. The process of individualization with regard to family and kinship unfolded when the long-standing patriarchal system of kinship and gender relations was breaking down and the power of the vertical generational hierarchy is weakened while the horizontal conjugal ties are strengthened (Yan 2011, 2013).

Combined, the two theses of individualization and deinstitutionalization have given rise to a new framework of Chinese neo-familism (Yan 2018). Individualization takes place in the context of a long-standing patriarchal society with strong state interventions and rising global influences. These convoluted forces—historical, local, and global—have given rise to a pragmatic and innovative form of Chinese neo-familism that wrestles between individual fulfillment and family interests (Yan 2018). Such a hybrid family system, consisting of elements old and new, reflects the great variety of conjugal and intergenerational relations in China today. The deinstitutionalized marriage and sexual relationships and persistently institutionalized intergenerational codependence reflect the nuanced and multifaceted process of social change. Individuals increasingly act in their self-interest to break the confines of the persistent powers of social connections, norms, rules, and expectations during a time of transition to a neo-liberal state and globalization.

The objective of this book is to document the complex, nuanced, and multidirectional nature of the transformation in the Chinese gender, marriage, and family that defies models portraying this social transition as streamlined and unidirectional from traditional to modern, from public to private, from collective to individual. We expect that some of the traditional and patriarchal norms and practices continue to prevail, extending into the twenty-first century and beyond, perpetuating century-old traditions. We also expect that some of these transformations chart a categorical separation from the old practices, reflecting the weakening of the existing marriage and family institutions and replacement by individual choices, preferences, and strategies. Yet, we also expect to observe other marriage and family innovations that combine new and old, traditional and modern, revolutionary and preservational.

There are already signs that many of the characteristics of the SDT may be transitional. Changes in the opposite direction in marriage and fertility have been observed among the most developed countries. For example, European countries with the highest levels of female labor force participation also have the highest fertility rates, and this trend has been observed at both macro levels and microlevels (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Brandén 2013; Torr and Short 2004). The relationships between education and union formation and dissolution have experienced turnarounds. Some credit these new trends to the second half of the gender revolution in which men are changing and adapting to new gender

relations and sharing domestic work (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappergård 2015). The Chinese society may never reach the SDT since the two fundamental conditions of such a transition—tensions between the public and private sphere and the incompatibility of mother and worker roles—have not been attained to the same degree. The prevailing social norms in China support women's labor force participation and endorse their combination of work and family roles. The trajectory of Chinese marriage and family values and behaviors is not following the path of the Western world, which consists of an SDT with marriage deinstitutionalization and a reversal of this process as seen in Scandinavian countries. The Chinese gender, family, and marriage system is charting a different course.

Organization of the Book

This book tracks and analyzes patterns and transformations of gender, marriage, family, sexual, and fertility values and behaviors in China over the past several decades. It addresses how the convolution of Confucianism, socialism, and modernization has shaped these attitudes and behaviors. Using complex and large-scale historical national data as well as comprehensive data from multiple countries for cross-national analyses, we provide a multidimensional analysis of the Chinese gender, marriage, and family system in the era of SDT. We illustrate how the Chinese patriarchal family system based on Confucianism has evolved and transformed in the era from socialism to modernization and globalization.

Chapter 2 describes how modernization, Confucianism, and socialism shape the gender and family system in China. This chapter describes socioeconomic developments and institutional sanctions on gender, marriage, and family in China, and how family, societal norms, laws, governments, institutions, and public policy jointly shape values and behaviors in the Chinese gender, family, and marriage.

Chapter 3 analyzes gender ideology in China from a comparative and historical view. This chapter first positions gender attitudes in China globally, analyzing gender attitudes in multiple countries using data from forty-seven countries in Wave III (1995–1998) and Wave IV (1999–2004) of the World Value Survey, which provides the most comprehensive measures of gender ideology from a diverse group of countries. It then tracks the transition of gender attitudes in China from 1995 to 2018. Analyses are based on data from the World Value Survey (1995, 2001, 2007, 2013, and 2018) and the Chinese General Social Survey (2010, 2012, 2013, and 2015).

Chapter 4 tracks changing patterns of family and marriage in China. This chapter describes cohort changes in marriage, cohabitation, divorce, remarriage, and fertility in China over the past several decades, using various data sources from the Chinese Family Panel Studies (2010, 2012, and 2014).

Chapter 5 analyzes gender, family, marriage, and sexual attitudes in China. We discuss patterns and changes in attitudes toward gender, patrilineality, filial piety, family responsibility, marriage, sexuality and divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness using data from the 2017 Chinese General Social Survey.

Chapter 6 examines the relationship between risks of divorce and the number and gender of children in Chinese families since the 1980s using data from the Chinese Family Panel Studies (2010 and 2014). By analyzing historical and spatial variations in the relationship between children and divorce, this chapter sheds light on the changing patterns of family composition and marital dissolution in transitional China.

Chapter 7 addresses marital dynamics in China. It analyzes the multifaceted dynamics among housework, income, decision-making power, and marital relationships, and the pathways through which they jointly shape married people's perception of the quality of their marriage. These analyses are based on data from the 2017 Chinese General Social Survey.

Chapter 8 is the conclusion. It summarizes our findings, characterizes the Chinese marriage and family system in transition, and reflects on the theoretical and empirical significance of these patterns and transformations.

Data in the Analyses

We carry out both historical and cross-national analysis by using several national data-sets from multiple waves of the Chinese General Social Survey (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2017), the Chinese Family Panel Studies (2010, 2012, 2014), and the China portion of the World Value Survey (1995, 2001, 2007, 2013, and 2018). We also employ multinational data from the World Value Survey of forty-seven countries (Waves III–VII from 1995, 2001, 2007, 2013, and 2018) to classify and map the prevailing gender ideologies globally, including social-democratic welfare states, liberal and conservative welfare states, countries with socialist experiences, Islamic countries, and other developing countries in Africa, Asia, and South America.

Chinese General Social Survey (2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2017)

Chapter 3 uses data from five national surveys, the Chinese General Social Surveys (CGSS) in 2010 ($N=7,222$), 2012 ($N=7,077$), 2013 ($N=7,022$), 2015 ($N=10,968$), and 2017 ($N=12,582$, among them $N=3,093$ in Module D on family). Survey participants were adults ages eighteen and older. All surveys are multistage stratified samples with five strata: (1) urban areas of the three municipalities under the central government: Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin; (2) urban areas of Chongqing¹ and twenty-six provincial capital cities (Lhasa is excluded); and (3–5) cities below provincial capitals in the eastern, central, and western regions of

China. A total of 125 primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected for the national sample, and four secondary sampling units (SSUs) were selected in each PSU. Two third-level sampling units (TSUs) were selected in each SSU, and ten households were selected in each TSU. These surveys selected households based on street mapping, reducing the underrepresentation of rural migrants without urban registration. The CGSS is the first annual/biannual national social survey project that covers all the territory of China except Tibet.

Chapters 5 and 7 use data from the 2017 wave of the CGSS (CGSS 2017). The CGSS 2017 is a nationally representative survey of the Chinese population that includes adults in twenty-eight provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions of mainland China, except Xinjiang, Tibet, Hainan, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. The survey was conducted by the National Survey Research Center at the Renmin University of China. It sampled respondents through stratified, multistage probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling and employed face-to-face interviews to gather information. The total sample size is 12,582. Among them, 3,093 respondents participated in Module D on family and provided information on measures of gender, family, marriage, and sexual attitudes.

Chinese Family Panel Studies (2010, 2012, and 2014)

Chapters 4 and 6 use three waves (2010, 2012, and 2014) of the Chinese Family Panel Studies (CFPS). CFPS is a nationally representative, longitudinal survey of Chinese communities, families, and individuals collected by Peking University in China biannually from 2010. Detailed information on the timing and conditions of marriage, fertility, and sociodemographic background is provided in the survey. The sample is collected by multistage PPS sampling with implicit stratification, including twenty-five provinces and their administrative equivalences. A total of 16,000 households were targeted, among which half were from the oversampled five provinces and equivalences—namely, Shanghai, Liaoning, Henan, Gansu, and Guangdong; the rest were from the other twenty provinces (Xie and Hu 2014).

In 2010, 33,600 adults and 8,990 children in 14,798 households were interviewed. The CFPS 2012 and 2014 aimed to follow individuals in the 2010 baseline survey and new core family members living with original CFPS respondents (Xie and Hu 2014). The sample used in this study includes individuals in 2010, and their marital and fertility information was updated using wave 2014, which included respondents' marital status in 2012 and the birth years and genders of newborn children since 2010. This sample, as a result, collects a relatively complete individual marital and fertility history in the era of the one-child policy. Moreover, in 2014, CFPS includes a series of questions on values of gender and family, including attitudes toward parents, children, and gender roles. It provides a rare opportunity to explore reported son preference and other gender and family attitudes that might explain marital and fertility behaviors.

World Value Survey, China Surveys (1995, 2001, 2007, 2013, and 2018)

The analysis of historical trajectories of gender values in chapter 3 uses data from the China portion of the World Value Survey (WVS-China), Waves II, III, IV, V, and VI (1995, 2001, 2007, 2013, and 2018). All five waves of WVS-China are nationally representative surveys of the adult Chinese population ages eighteen and older. The 1995 survey was conducted by Gallup-China Beijing Office. It used a proportionate stratified sampling method to produce a self-weighted national sample. The total sample size is 1,500. The 2001 survey was conducted by the Research Center for Contemporary China at Peking University. It used a stratified, proportionally allocated multistage PPS sampling method. The total sample size is 1,000. The 2007 WVS-China portion was conducted by the Research Center for Contemporary China (RCCC) at Peking University. It is a national sample of adults ages eighteen to seventy in all thirty-one provinces of mainland China, except Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. It used a “GPS/GIS Assistant Area Sampling” methodology and sampled respondents through stratified, multistage PPS sampling. The sample size was 2,015. The 2013 wave was also conducted by the RCCC. The sample targets the Chinese adult population ages eighteen to seventy-five residing in all provinces. The survey used “GPS/GIS Assistant Area Sampling” to fulfill overall coverage of all Chinese adults, including migrants. Respondents were sampled through a stratified, multistage PPS sampling. The sample size was 7,791. The 2018 WVS-China was conducted by a consortium led by the Public Opinion Research Center of the School of International and Public Affairs at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and composed of university research centers and faculties from seven universities. The target population covered Chinese rural and urban residents ages eighteen and above who had resided in the surveyed communities for at least one month. The sampling frame covered Chinese citizens who live in both rural and urban areas of China in all provinces except Tibet and Xinjiang. The sample size was 3,036. All five surveys employed face-to-face interviews to gather information. The questionnaires were administered in Chinese.

World Value Survey, Waves III and IV of Forty-Seven Countries

The multinational analysis in chapter 3 uses data from the World Values Survey, Wave III (1995–1998) and Wave IV (1999–2004), because they include all measures of gender attitudes on both vertical equality and horizontal differentiation. Unfortunately, the more recent waves of the World Value Survey do not provide measures of attitudes toward women’s paid employment. We exclude countries for which information on GDP or parental leave provision was unavailable for 1994. The analysis uses data from forty-seven nations—thirty-seven from Wave III and ten from Wave IV—constituting the largest number of countries ever studied on gender attitudes. These surveys were conducted between 1995 and 2004,

covering a diverse group of countries during a time of enormous global change. The surveys were conducted for the first time in former socialist countries in central and eastern Europe, Islamic countries in the Middle East, and developing countries in Africa and Asia that were underrepresented in previous waves (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2016). These surveys were conducted by national agencies using both national random and quota sampling. Agencies used translated survey instruments of almost identical questions, although the nature and quality of interviews varied somewhat among countries (Inglehart et al. 2000). These data provide an important snapshot of a historical moment of great upheaval in societal transitions; the earlier 1990s saw the collapse of the former socialist bloc in central and eastern Europe, while Middle Eastern countries experienced the war on terror in the early 2000s. The data we use for this research on a diverse group of countries reflect the historical period of the late 1990s and earlier 2000s when nations in eastern Europe and the Middle East were undergoing dramatic changes. Despite drastic transitions, continuities have persisted even in eastern European countries (Kay 2007; Lippmann and Senik 2018). These historical legacies provide clues in understanding current patterns and future trajectories in gender ideology.

From Patriarchy to New Familism

The Chinese Gender and Family System

The Chinese gender and family system has experienced many transformations, from the feudalist system, to a socialist system, to a highly globalized market system with Chinese characteristics. Social norms, laws, government, institutions, and public policies have shaped and reshaped the gender, marriage, and family system in these transitions.

The Traditional Confucian Family System

For thousands of years, the Confucian family system was one of the most patriarchal family structures among all the gender and family systems of the world (Stacey 1983; Therborn 2004; Wolf 1985). In this tradition, people entered marriage at a very young age, with the majority of marriages arranged by their parents (Xu and Whyte 1990). Soon after marriage, couples were expected to have many children, especially sons, since the primary function of marriage was to produce male offspring to continue the family lineage (Chu and Yu 2010). Confucian ideas strictly prohibited premarital sex and cohabitation, and female chastity was tightly guarded. Women were not permitted to divorce or remarry (Stacey 1983; Tao and Min 1994; Wolf 1985). Although divorce was generally forbidden, those initiated by men were permitted. An elaborate divorce system regulated marital dissolution in the Chinese traditional marriage system (Chai 2013).

Besides advocating female chastity, universal marriage, and multiple children, this family and gender value system also promoted patrilineal descent, filial piety, and family interdependence. A typical Chinese family consisted of several generations of male adult descendants and their families living together (Chu, Xie, and Yu 2011). Daughters were married out to live with their husbands' families and were permitted only occasional visits to their parental homes. This

patrilineal and patrilocal family system profoundly devalued women and deprived them of a support system. Sons and daughters-in-law demonstrated filial piety by providing financial support and elderly care, while parents also assisted with household chores and the care of grandchildren in this interdependent family system (Lin et al. 2003; Xie and Zhu 2009; Xu 2013).

This system prescribed a very low status for women. In all stages of life, women were subordinate to men. The Confucian doctrine prescribed “three obedience and four virtues” (三从四德) for women. They were mandated to obey fathers when young, husbands when married, and adult sons when widowed (从父从夫从子). They were required to exemplify upright virtues, proper language, a dignified presence, and homemaking expertise (德言 容功). Most parents did not provide schooling to their daughters; rather, education was viewed as something that could damage their worth (“Too much learning does not become a virtuous woman”; 女子无才便是德). Female foot-binding was widely practiced. Elite ideals encouraged suicide as an honorable response to a violation of chastity. Women did not work outside the home but helped out in the field during the harvest season. They lacked power both inside and outside of the home.

The Republic Era (1911–1949)

The Confucian pattern of the patriarchal family system characterized by male domination extended well into the first half of the twentieth century (Honig and Hershatter 1988; Stacey 1983; Wolf 1985). Changes were brought about by the first modern movement, the May Fourth movement in 1919, which spread modern ideas, including family reform and women’s rights, among urban students, intellectuals, and young female workers (Johnson 1983). Educational institutions established by both Westerners and Chinese introduced concepts like political freedom, individualism, self-reliance, and the Western treatment of women (Levy 1963). In 1919 there were nine female college students in Peking, and this number grew to 364 in 1922 (Chen [1937] 2015). In 1947 around 600,000 women were literate in Shanghai, the most cosmopolitan city. This number represented one-third of the female population in the city, and there were 8,863 female college graduates (Luo and Song 1999).

The early twentieth century saw the creation of greater educational opportunities for both sexes in urban China. The cultural influence of the West raised awareness of the social status of Chinese women, particularly among well-educated women. With the end of the exclusively male system of imperial examinations and the adoption of new models of schooling from the West and Japan (Cleverley 1991), urban women’s school enrollment started to increase and the gender gap in years of schooling began to narrow. The illiteracy rate for women born between 1910 and 1930 declined from 70 percent to 50 percent (Lavelly et al. 1990). For those who started school in 1918, the average number of years

of schooling was one for women and seven for men. This number jumped to 7 years and 9.5 years, respectively, for those who started school in 1949 (Whyte and Parish 1984).

Early industrial development also brought employment opportunities for many women to gainfully work outside of the home for the first time. In Shanghai in 1934, 158,000 women worked in the textile, tobacco, silk, and garment industries (Luo and Song 1999). They became economically independent, and this economic autonomy gained them power within the household as well.

Educated urban youth ushered in the new concepts of freedom in dating and marriage, and equality between husband and wife as the new foundations of marriage. These urban young people led the new trend in transforming values regarding marriage and family. According to a survey in 1927 published in a newspaper, 100.0 percent opposed arranged marriages, while 80.6 percent supported the idea that marriage should be decided by the youths themselves, with advice from parents or other elderly family members (Liu and Liu 2003). Changes to the marriage system also increased the age at first marriage among urban young people. Several surveys show that the average age of men at first marriage for city workers was over 20-23 in 1929, 24.1 in 1930, and 24.7 in 1936 (Luo and Song 1999; Liu and Liu 2003; Yang 1996).

However, data from Chinese censuses indicate that more than 95 percent of rural women born between 1910 and 1930 were illiterate (Lavelly et al. 1990). The bulk of rural women's work consisted of housework and childrearing (Davin 1975). Women in rural areas participated only minimally in remunerative farmwork and subsidiary production, and then only during the busy seasons (Buck 1937; Davin 1975). Rural women were also handicapped by continuous pregnancies (Buck 1937) and had limited economic power.

Despite these changes toward modernization, traditional practices persisted. A survey in 1921 of 184 married men in middle schools and colleges revealed that 93 percent were in arranged marriages in which they had no input. Only 3 percent had chosen their own bride, 3 percent decided jointly with their parents and relatives, and 76 percent did not know their wife before the wedding (Chen 1921). Although the Republic government recognized monogamy as the only legal form of marriage, polygamy was widely practiced according to a survey in Guangzhou; this practice ranged from one concubine in every ten families to one in every family depending on the district (Liu and Liu 2003). Divorce was quite rare even in Shanghai. In 1929 only 645 couples in the entire city divorced, a rate of 2.4 divorces per 10,000 people (Liu and Liu 2003).

Urbanization and migration disrupted the traditional family structure and led to the rise of nuclear families in cities. Industrial and commercial development in middle-sized and large cities attracted rural migrants, mostly young people, seeking opportunities. This growing urban population further expanded urban economies and led to even more rural-urban migration. As a result,

migrants became the majority of the population in many urban centers. For instance, in Shanghai from 1929 to 1936, migrants from other parts of China, mainly rural, made up as much as 72–76 percent of the population. Many of these first-generation migrants eventually married and settled in cities, while those who were already married relocated their spouses and children to cities once they could afford to do so. Among 289 families in a study in Tianjin, 52 percent were nuclear families, 29 percent were stem families, and 13 percent were combined families. The family patterns were similar in Chengdu of Sichuan province, where 50 percent of the families interviewed were nuclear families (Pan 1986). As a result of rising urbanization and migration, nuclear families appeared to have become the dominant form in some large metropolitans.

Overall, during the Republic era, Western influence and industrialization brought about some changes in the gender and marriage system, and there was a growing awareness of gender inequalities and the constraints of the Confucian gender, marriage, and family system regarding individual freedom. This enlightenment and urge to change took place only among the educated and industrial workers in large urban cities. Despite these pockets of modern transformation, the Confucian patriarchal family system with male domination remained prevalent in the vast land and among the majority of people in China.

Mao's Socialist Era (1949–1977)

The Communist Party established a socialist state in 1949 that brought about some revolutionary transformations to gender relationships, marriage, and the family. The socialist state pursued the Engels Strategy by promoting gender equality, recruiting women into the labor force, and socializing domestic labor. To augment its political power, the Communist Party consistently encouraged the development of the women's movement. The party strongly promoted women's labor force participation and equal marriage rights, believing that women's limitations in these areas were sources of gender inequality (Wolf 1985). They saw this as an approach to dismantle capitalism, which oppressed women by chaining them to childcare and domestic work. China extended the right to work to women, enabling women to establish selfhood through work rather than through familial responsibilities and identities. The educational system served as an apparatus for mobilizing women into the labor force. As a result, urban women's labor force participation rates remained high even during their reproductive years (Whyte and Parish 1984), and the population's acceptance of women's dual roles as mothers and workers remained very high (Shu and Zhu 2012). To promote women's labor force participation, the state provided childcare on a wide scale so that domestic obligations did not prevent women from taking full-time employment. Families were encouraged to think of childrearing as a contribution to national regeneration and generally reject the Western maternal

deprivation theory (Wolf 1985), which argues that mothers are the primary caregivers and are responsible for maintaining a warm and stable attachment with their children, and so any disruption of such may lead to long-term cognitive, social, and emotional difficulties for the children. They believed that childrearing was better left to trained experts rather than parents. Public institutions, enterprises, and government agencies established institutions such as cafeterias, kindergartens, and nurseries and staffed them mainly with women, even in rural China. According to one source, "There were estimates that 4,980,000 nurseries and kindergartens and more than 3,600,000 dining-halls were set up in rural areas by 1959" (Stacey 1983, 214).

China's rapidly expanding educational system provided educational opportunities to girls and boys and changed their perceptions with regard to women's status and roles. Between 1949 and 1976 the number of elementary schools tripled, and the number of middle schools experienced an over thirty-six-fold increase. Enrollment levels tripled in elementary schools and increased forty-five-fold in middle schools. The number of colleges almost doubled, and the number of college students grew by a factor of greater than six between 1949 and 1965 (Research Institute 1991). The number of middle schools and their students grew the fastest in rural China, with the female illiteracy rate dropping rapidly from nearly 20 percent of those born in the 1930s to less than 5 percent of those born in the 1960s. More than 92 percent of the women in this younger cohort obtained some secondary education (Lavelly et al. 1990; Research Institute 1991; Shu 2004). The Communist Party valued schools as an important tool for indoctrinating young people to communist ideology and ethics. In 1950 the Department of Education instructed middle schools and universities to promote a "revolutionary attitude toward life" among students and to devalue old feudal ideas and values, including Confucianism. Both regular classes and extracurricular activities included political education that endorsed ideas of gender equality (China Education Yearbook 1984).

To further protect women's rights and achieve gender equality, in 1950, a year after the Communist Party officially came to power, the Trade Union Law mandated equal pay for equal work and provided paid maternity leave and the right to nurse babies at work (Cleverley 1991), thirteen years before the 1963 Equal Pay Act in the United State. As a result, Chinese women's labor force participation rate was the highest in the world, even during their years raising young children; the participation rate was well above those of the Nordic countries, which had some of the most generous paternity leave policies and egalitarian gender attitudes. Among women who married between 1950 and 1965, 70 percent worked outside the home. Of those married between 1966 and 1976, 92 percent had jobs (Bauer et al. 1992). By the early 1990s, the gross gender gap between female and male full-time work in earnings was around 16 percent, one of the lowest in the world (Shu and Bian 2003) and on par with an advanced Nordic country,

Sweden (Ortiz-Ospina and Roser 2018). These results are consistent with other urban samples. A 1993 sample from Tianjin indicates that in 1978 the wage gap between women and men was 13.2 percent, and this percentage remained almost unchanged through 1993 (Bian and Logan 1996, table 3). A twenty-city sample from 1994 shows that the gap remained in the range of 14–19 percent between 1978 and 1993 (Zhou 2000).

To further rid feudalism influences on marriage and women, the Chinese government instituted the marriage law in 1950. This new law formally legalized free choice in marriage and explicitly equalized wives' rights with those of their husbands. Prostitution, arranged marriage, and concubinage were outlawed. Marriage was to be based on love and mutual consent. The codes advocated free marriage, monogamy, free divorce, women's economic independence, and wives' rights to the marital property after divorce, concepts foreign to the majority of the population (Cleverley 1991). It also outlawed child betrothal and interference in the remarriage of widows. The government mobilized campaigns and used art forms such as movies and operas to educate the public about these new concepts of free marriage, free divorce, and equal rights for both sexes. By 1991, 95 percent of all marriages were decided on by the couple themselves (Parish and Farrer 2000). By the early 1990s, more than 90 percent of urban residents endorsed women's right to divorce and remarry. Attitudes toward women's careers and sexual freedom also started to transition in an egalitarian direction, although at a slower pace and with lower levels of support (Shu 2004). Women unhappy with their arranged marriages sought and were granted a divorce. There was a rise in the divorce rate resulting from the dissolution of "feudal" marriages. The divorce rate during the early 1950s was estimated to be as high as 1.3 per 1,000 population (Stacey 1983). This uptick in divorce was halted by 1953 because the state ceased to actively promote free divorce and required official mediation by local officials after a divorce petition was filed. Once the state stopped actively challenging unhappy marriages and implementing the roadblock of local official mediation, most women were not in a position to confront the conservative forces arrayed against them (Parish and Whyte 1978; Honig and Hershatter 1988). This was especially the case in rural villages when the local mediating officials were sometimes relatives of the husband's family. "Illiterate, inexperienced women" who were removed from their kinship networks could not circumvent these blocking forces to seek marital dissolution (Wolf 1985). The number of divorce court cases soared to 1.99 per 1,000 population in 1953 but gradually declined subsequently. By 1979, at the dawn of the economic reform, the number of cases reached its lowest point of only 0.21 per 1,000 population (Platte 1988, table 1).

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Chinese government enforced a policy of late marriage and late birth in order to control population growth. The stipulated minimum ages at first marriage were twenty-three years for women and twenty-five years for men in rural areas, and twenty-five and twenty-eight years

for urban women and men, respectively. This policy considerably increased the average age of first marriage for both men and women (Li 1996) and resulted in a substantial increase of two years in the age at first marriage for those who married in the 1970s (Figure 4.1 in chapter 4). However, in spite of these changes, marriages were still universal, and divorce and other untraditional marriage behaviors were still uncommon (Zeng 1995). Almost all of the women born before 1955 were married by age thirty-five, and less than 2 percent of men over age thirty-five remained unmarried (Figure 4.3 in chapter 4).

However, the women's liberation program promoted by the socialist state was lopsided and unidimensional. While Chinese women rapidly moved into the public sphere through educational advancement and labor force participation, there was little change in the private sphere, where men still largely shirked childcare and household responsibilities and left the bulk of the housework, childcare, and home management to their working wives (Shu, Zhu, and Zhang 2013). Although some men increasingly participated in caregiving and housework, household responsibilities were ultimately still considered women's obligations as good wives and good mothers. The economic autonomy gained by women did not translate into liberation from housework chores; rather, women's participation in the labor force added an additional role of worker on top of the already demanding roles of caretaker, mother, and wife at home. Chinese wives spend twice as much time on cooking and laundry as their husbands do, although Chinese husbands' participation levels in housework are higher than those of American and European men (Parish and Farrer 2000). Chinese wives take on more than 70 percent of cooking, grocery shopping, laundry, and housecleaning tasks (Parish and Farrer 2000; Whyte and Parish 1984).

The state did not regard domestic work as worthy of policy intervention other than providing socialized childcare to support women's time away from home to work in paid employment. After full-time paid work, women returned home to assume a second shift of housework, care work, management, and emotional labor. One national policy assisted some young working mothers whose mothers or mothers-in-law also worked by mandating that women retire at age fifty-five. This opened up opportunities for full-time employment to younger mothers, and these grandmothers on pensions were available for childcare (Bian, Logan, and Shu 2000). However, although this policy benefited some young families, it came at a cost of curtailing older women's working careers when their earning potential was at its peak, thus contributing to a persistent gender gap in earnings (Shu and Bian 2003). This policy also encouraged multigenerational family and family codependence and delayed the transition to the nuclear family.

In rural China, fundamental transformations in social and economic structures also changed women's status, but the change was more modest. The expansion of the educational system reached rural China much later and at a slower pace than in the cities. Data from the Third Census show that the overall illiteracy

rate in rural China in 1982 remained as high as 35 percent, with the rates for those born in the 1950s ranging from 25 percent to 29 percent and for those born in the 1960s ranging from 11 percent to 17 percent (Research Institute 1991). The female illiteracy rate among rural residents born in the 1960s remained as high as 20 percent, although it had declined from more than 90 percent for the older cohorts (Lavelly et al. 1990).

The household registration system (*hukou*), implemented in stages in the 1950s and vigorously enforced by the state in 1960, permanently tied men to their birthplace and women to their husband's residences (Cheng and Selden 1994). The *hukou* system is the household registration system that the party-state established in China in the 1950s. It was intended to control geographic mobility and maintain an agricultural labor force. The dual-classification system designates each resident into urban or rural *hukou* on the basis of one's location of birth and essentially indicates one's socioeconomic status and entitlement to rights and privileges (Liu and Erwin 2015; Chan and Zhang 1996). The state exercised tight control over population migration between the urban-rural divide as well as within the hierarchy of cities, rarely permitting officially sanctioned relocation. These restrictions on migration stabilized and strengthened traditional extended families. During this period Chinese families managed to survive and reproduce in their traditional form (Parish and Whyte 1978; Tsui 1989).

The socialist era brought dramatic transformations to the Chinese gender, marriage, and family system. State policies advocated for women's education and employment by expanding schools and recruiting women into paid employment. Urban women achieved considerable progress in education, and a great majority participated in paid employment even during their childbearing years. The government promoted free marriage, free divorce, and equality between husbands and wives through the implementation of a new marriage law. Arranged marriages, a centuries-old institution, almost disappeared, while free divorce remained rather difficult to obtain. Urban women not only were responsible for the bulk of housework and childcare but also contributed substantially to household income. Both men and women gained in education, the illiteracy rate dropped sharply, and free marriage became the norm. However, these forms of modernity barely touched rural China. The restriction on rural-urban migration tightly chained the rural population to their villages, and traditional practices of the patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal family persisted.

Economic Reform and Development (1978–2003)

The transition to a market economy, initiated in the late 1970s, has brought profound changes to the Chinese population. The hallmark of the economic reform was to gradually shift away from using government administrative dictates in the allocation of economic resources to distribution through market mechanisms

(Nee and Matthews 1996). This shift unleashed an enormous impetus for economic growth. The GDP surged more than fiftyfold in three decades from less than \$150 billion in 1978 to \$8,227 billion in 2012 (Purdy 2013). The average annual GDP growth remained close to 10 percent, and household consumption increased fivefold (China National Bureau of Statistics 2007). More than 700 million have escaped poverty since 1990, while tens of millions have joined the middle class (World Bank 2020). However, uneven economic development and globalization also resulted in inequalities across regions and individuals (Wang 2008; Khan and Riskin 2001; Gustaffson, Li, and Sicular 2008; Xie and Zhou 2014).

Another transformation is the rapid expansion of international trade and global connection. The process of creating access to international investment and production unfolded swiftly and in multiple steps. China established special economic zones, opened coastal cities for overseas investment, and extended the economic zones into an open coastal belt. Since 1992 the state has opened several border cities as well as all the capital cities of inland provinces and autonomous regions and has established fifteen free-trade zones. From 1978 to 2000 total export and import value increased by twenty-two times (Guthrie 2006; China National Bureau of Statistics 2003). By the end of 2004, more than 250,000 foreign enterprises had invested in China. Of the 500 largest multinationals, 450 have investments in China. In 2003 foreign-invested companies accounted for 11 percent of the total investment in fixed assets and employed 10 percent of China's nonagricultural working population (*People's Daily* 2004).

This enormous economic growth and strong global connection promoted an expanding educational system and active cultural exchanges with the West. The growth in China's education was concentrated at the college level, with the number of colleges more than doubling and the enrollment of students more than tripling by the end of the 1980s (Research Institute 1991). The Open Door Policy initiated a wave of extensive cultural exchange with foreign institutions of higher learning, including offering short- and long-term teaching assignments to foreign faculty, mutual visits, exchanges of students, research and teaching collaborations, and donations of library collections from foreign universities (Research Institute 1991). Mastery of one or two foreign languages was required to fulfill college educational requirements. Reading, audio, and video materials in foreign languages, English in particular, became popular among college students. The Western influence made inroads into Chinese universities. In particular, Western ideas of sexual fulfillment and sexual liberalism gained popularity among the educated elite, and a more relaxed attitude toward pre- and extramarital sexuality began to spread among the Chinese population (Farrer 2002; Parish and Farrer 2000).

Another impact of the economic transformation and expansion has had ramifications on labor supply. The labor force participation rates of both men and women remained high. In 1987 the percentages of employed men and women

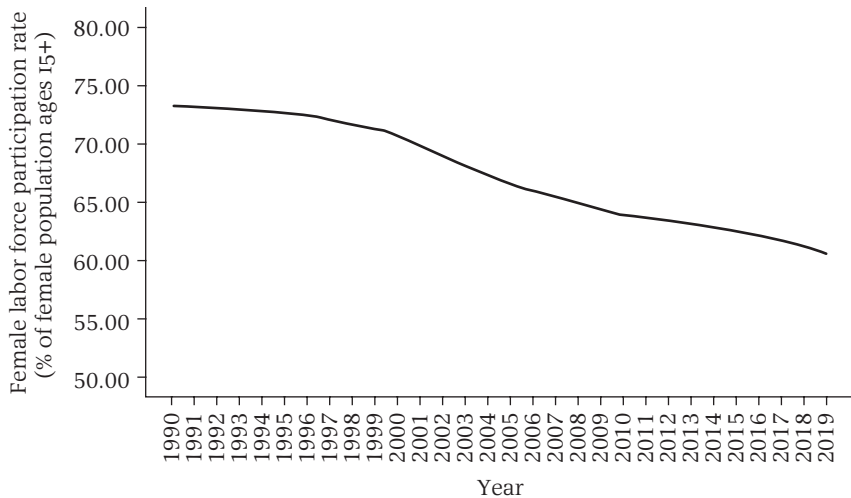


FIGURE 2.1 Female labor force participation rate, 1990–2019
Source: International Labour Organization n.d., ILOSTAT database

were 97.7 and 73.6, respectively, for the age group of forty-five to forty-nine years old (Bauer et al. 1992). The enterprise restructuring program of reforming state factories to face market competition initiated in 1994 led to large-scale layoffs in state-owned enterprises and a loss of state benefits. This impacted women more than men since women are seen as more disposable workers. This economic restructuring lasted for a decade until 2003 when the rising unemployment rate was halted, downsizing decreased, and employment increased in urban sectors (Wu and Zhou 2015). Figure 2.1 shows that the female labor force declined from 73 percent in 1990 to 68.5 percent in 2003 (International Labour Organization n.d.).

A third impact of the economic expansion is the large-scale rural-to-urban migration in search of economic opportunities. The rigorous household registration system experienced revisions during the 1997–2002 hukou reform. It streamlined internal migration procedures nationwide for both temporary and permanent migration, as well as initiated a general relaxation of internal migration restrictions (Wang 2004). The rural-urban migrant population exploded to 144 million in 2000 (China National Bureau of Statistics 2003) and reached 261 million in 2010 (China National Bureau of Statistics 2012). The great majority of migrant workers work in China's eastern areas in large or medium-sized cities. They are concentrated in manufacturing and construction (International Labour Organization 2021). The percentage of the urban population more than doubled in 2003 to 40 percent, compared with 18 percent in 1978, as illustrated in Figure 2.2. This large-scale, historically unprecedented population migration

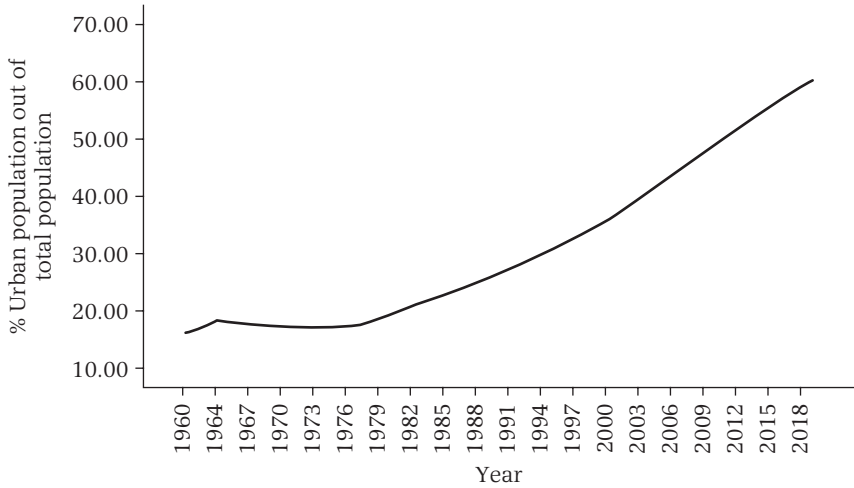


FIGURE 2.2 Percentage of urban population out of total population, 1960–2018

Source: United Nations Population Division. 2018. World Urbanization Prospects

has had a significant impact on marriage and family in both inflow urban areas and outflow rural regions. Those who gain permanent urban residence enjoy more education and employment opportunities, have exposure to modern ideas, and change family and marriage arrangements and behaviors. Meanwhile, migrant families adopt new forms of family to cope with migration by living separately from their spouses and/or children, leaving children behind, and having grandparents take care of grandchildren (Chen et al. 2020; Zhou et al. 2015).

During this period the government continued to shape marriage and the family through its legislation. It began implementing the 1981 marriage law. One change was to raise the legal minimum age for marriage to twenty for women and twenty-two for men, although the government practice in the 1970s already pushed marriage ages to twenty-three and twenty-five for women and men, respectively. As a result, the average age at first marriage for both sexes dropped during the 1980s (Davis and Harrell 1993). Data show that among women born between 1956 and 1961, the average age at first marriage of 22.7 is the highest among all birth cohorts, including the youngest cohort, reflecting the higher age requirement that the government pushed in the 1970s and early 1980s (chapter 4). This number fell back slightly among the younger cohorts after the 1982 marriage law stipulated twenty and twenty-two as the legal marriage ages for women and men, respectively (chapter 4).

The 1981 law also makes it easier to obtain a divorce. It permits divorce when spouses claim a lack of mutual affection after mediation has failed. In 1978, 285,000 couples divorced; this number doubled to 581,000 couples in 1987. In a decade this number again doubled to 1,190,000 in 1997 and further increased to

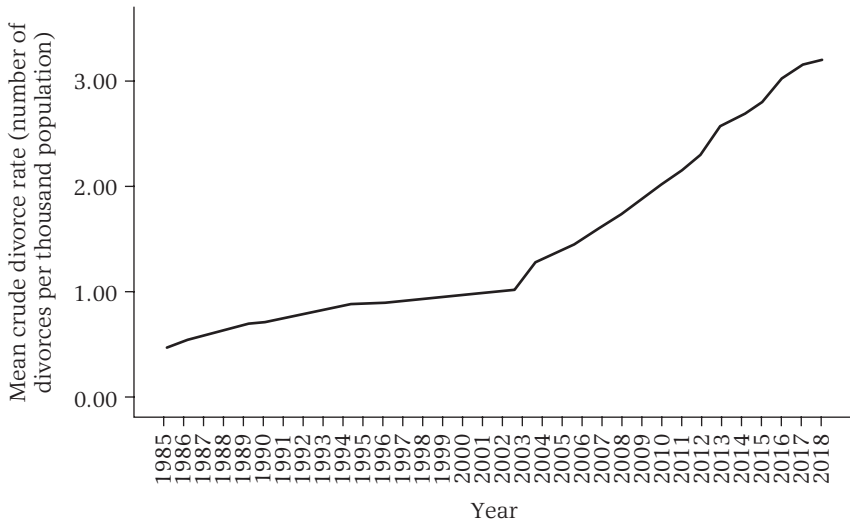


FIGURE 2.3 Crude divorce rates per thousand population, 1985–2018

Source: China National Bureau of Statistics 2010

Note: We extrapolated rates for the years 1986–1989, 1991–1994, 1996–1999, and 2001–2004 as this information was absent.

1,330,000 in 2003 (China National Bureau of Statistics 2009). Figure 2.3 shows that the crude divorce rate rose from 0.44 per thousand in 1985 to 0.69 in 1990, to 0.88 in 1995, to 0.96 in 2000, and 1.37 in 2005, almost threefold in two decades (China National Bureau of Statistics 2009).

During this time, the Chinese government's focus on women's issues shifted to family planning policy as a means of population control. Late marriage and late childbirth were emphasized as part of China's attempt to limit its population growth. The government launched its most stringent birth control campaign in history (Guo et al. 2012; Li 1996). Fertility rates dropped from 2.5 in 1980 to below the replacement rate of 1.98 in 1992, and by 2000 the fertility rate was at 1.6 and remains at this level, as Figure 2.4 shows (World Bank 2021). As a result, family size significantly decreased from an average of 4.43 members in 1982 to 3.96 by 1990 (Zeng and Wang 2004) and further reduced to 3.13 in 2000 (China National Bureau of Statistics 2003).

Despite laws and family planning policies sanctioning marriage and reproductive behaviors, the government retreated from the provision of benefits in urban China. Many state enterprises were either privatized or went bankrupt, replaced by private businesses that did not sponsor additional subsidies or facilities. After the state abandoned the provision of housing, childcare, pensions, and health and disability insurance, the market took over and allocated these resources with mechanisms to generate profits. The remaining state and work

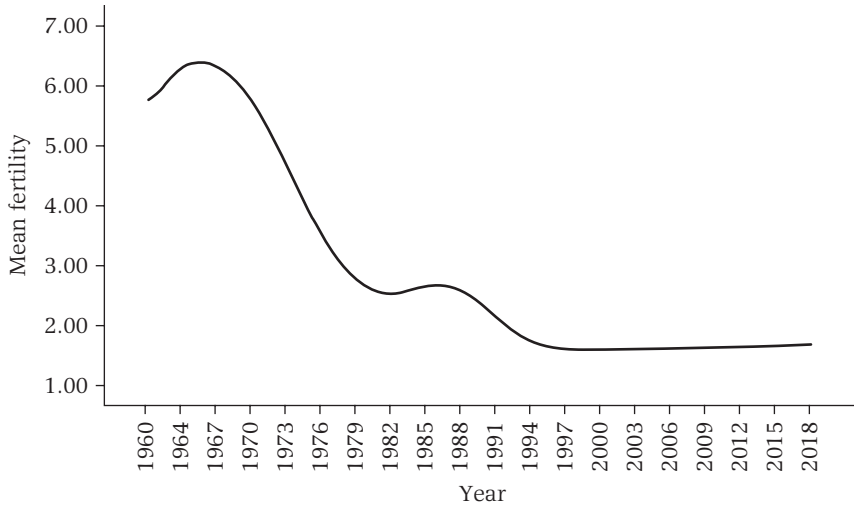


FIGURE 2.4 Fertility rate, total births per woman, 1960–2018

Source: World Bank 2021

units also ceased to provide benefits such as subsidized housing, inexpensive meals in dining halls, and workplace nurseries and preschools, as well as recreational facilities such as theaters, swimming pools, and stores. Instead, such facilities and services are available for employees to purchase on the market. These services and insurance become increasingly unaffordable, and people have to increase their reliance on family and kinship for economic and childrearing support. Young families rely on their parents to support their purchase of housing and share childrearing responsibilities. As a result, this increasing family interdependence has reinforced the power of familial control on young people's marriages, family, and labor force behaviors (Yan 2009; Davis 2014b).

Globalization and Neoliberalism (2004–)

Since China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, its pace of globalization, development, and urbanization has rapidly increased, with international trade expanding more than eight times. Both imported and exported values doubled in 2004, quadrupled in 2008, and grew to eight times in 2013, as shown in Figure 2.5. Foreign investment also doubled its size in 2005 and grew to six times at its peak in 2013. This enormous economic growth attracted a huge labor migration from rural China. Urbanization continued at an unprecedented pace. The urban population was 41 percent in 2003, expanded to 51 percent in 2011, and swelled to 60 percent in 2019 (Figure 2.2). Forty percent of the Chinese population, more than 500 million people and almost 1.5 times the total U.S.

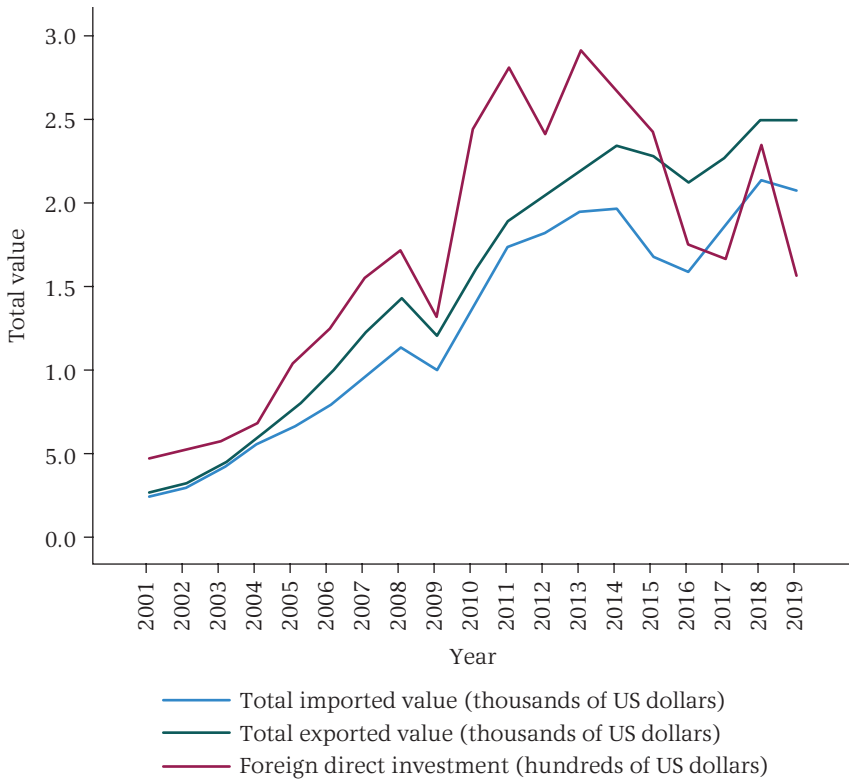


FIGURE 2.5 Total value in international trade, 2001–2019

Sources: International Trade Center [ITC] calculations based on General Customs Administration of China statistics since January 2015. ITC calculations based on UN COMTRADE statistics until January 2015

population, experienced urbanization in a span of less than forty years. The growing income and wealth of the Chinese population also led to increases in multiple forms of global exchange such as foreign tourism, international students and scholars, and consumption of Western and global television, movies, sports, and arts. The rising internet culture and influence has further intensified the global exchange of ideas and values through telecommunication (Shu, Barnett, and Faris 2020).

These increasing globalization forces manifest in two forms of changes in the Chinese gender, marriage, and family system. First, highly educated, well-employed, and urbanized young people who have the most exposure to modern ideas of gender relations started to adopt increasingly individualistic attitudes. They endorse modern ideas regarding gender, marriage, family, and sexuality and lead a new trend of nonmarriage, cohabitation, late marriage, and childless and nuclear families (Shu and Zhu 2019).

Second, this increasing interaction with Western countries, particularly the United States, has also helped gender essentialism ideas and beliefs in intensive parenting make inroads into China. This ideology emphasizes men's and women's biological, psychological, and aptitude differences and regards women as more suitable for childrearing and homemaking and men as more skillful in paid employment. It advocates women's freedom and individual rights to make the choice of returning to stay at home because it serves their own best interests as well as those of their children and spouse (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2011; Shu and Meagher 2018). Women who follow this Western form of gender relations pursue individual freedom and rights, refuse to subject themselves to the expectation of fulfilling the male role of wage earners, reject the socialist model of women holding up half of the sky, and enact their feminine self as caring and loving wives and mothers.

Consistent with an emerging neoliberalism ideology, the Chinese state sped up its withdrawal from interfering in its citizens' private lives. The state no longer mandates the link between marriage and sexual behavior, permitting only marital sex. Prostitution, premarital sex, extramarital sex, and even homosexuality are tolerated. Premarital and extramarital sexuality used to be formerly heavily penalized in the form of job loss, expulsion, or even jail time, but the state now rarely punishes these behaviors (Farrer 2002; Farrer and Sun 2003; Shen 2008; Pei 2011; Yan 2011). As a result, prostitution has returned, premarital sex is prevalent, and extramarital sex has become common (Farrer 2002; Farrer and Sun 2003; Osburg 2013; Parish, Laumann, and Mojola 2007). Another such change is the divorce law enacted in the fall of 2003, which no longer requires permission from employers to approve divorces. Couples seeking a divorce can simply submit application forms to government offices indicating that they do not dispute children's custody and property rights. This streamlined divorce procedure lifted barriers for those who found it difficult to resolve a loveless marriage. Since the passage of the law, the divorce rate has increased at a steeper pace after decades of a very slow increase (Figure 2.3).

Another impact of the neoliberalism withdrawal of the state involves a retreat in urban China for state employees from the provision of public housing, childcare facilities, pension plans, and family support. The socialist state used to supply affordable public housing, daycare centers, dining halls, health clinics, retirement support, and medical insurance, as well as other entertainment and welfare facilities (Logan, Bian, and Bian 1999; Xie, Lai, and Wu 2009). The shift to privatization and marketization has eroded the mechanisms that protected women's work rights. For-profit enterprises are reluctant to handle caretaking needs. The work-unit-based socialist welfare system was dismantled, dining halls were commercialized, and subsidized childcare and paid maternity leave were diminished. These withdrawals of family support have substantially undermined women's ability to participate in the labor force (Cook and Dong

2011). Pension benefits were reduced, and health care is marketized, increasing the needs of the elderly for financial and physical assistance (Zhan and Montgomery 2003). The state's retreat from benefit and welfare provision forces families to seek assistance across vertical generations: grandparents taking care of grandchildren and adult children caring for elderly parents. As a result, new forms of gender, marriage, and family patterns have emerged. More women have left paid employment and returned home to care for the young and elderly, and cross-generational codependence has been enhanced. Labor force participation rates for mothers fell substantially, from 89 percent in 1990 to 56 percent in 2005 for those with children younger than two, and from 91 percent to 77 percent for those with children younger than six (Jia and Dong 2011).

This withdrawal of state control from private spheres and an increase in income have also given rise to the revitalization of the traditional Chinese culture that was largely destroyed during the Mao era. Ironically, Western gender essentialist ideas considered as an "advanced" form of gender relations found an alliance with this revitalized Confucian tradition. Confucianism chastises women who are educated and ambitious as contemptible and selfish and glorifies women who are obedient and devoted to the welfare of their husbands and children as idolized virtuous women. Ideal women sacrifice their own desires and wants and cater to the needs of their families. This comeback of the patriarchal ideology gives rise to popular public lectures, discussions, and workshops on "female virtues" (女德) that subject women and girls to Confucian patriarchal standards of the virtuous female who submits herself to the man's needs. Similarly, the public discourse has shifted its attention from structural gender inequality to focus on individual private lives, designates women to the private sphere, and attributes women's frustrations and failures to their personal choices (Sun and Chen 2015). Western gender essentialism and the Confucian view of female virtues work hand in hand to co-opt women out of the labor force in order to devote themselves to domestic duties, either to fulfill the yearnings of their individual femininity (gender essentialism) or to achieve the image of the ideal woman who caters to the interests of her husband and children. This emergent narrative of reinforcing a conservative gender norm may be partly responsible for the decline in women's labor force participation since traditional community gender norms are associated with a larger gender gap in labor force participation (Xiao and Asadullah 2020). The female labor force participation rates dropped from 68 percent in 2003 to 60 percent in 2019 (Figure 2.1).

The neoliberal state has also turned a blind eye to violations of labor law in the pursuit of economic growth. The state first relinquished its power in regulating legal working hours in the manufacturing industry when it became a powerhouse of economic development. As the world's manufacturing factory, China's participation in international production is based on the export of low value-added consumer goods that profited from a race to the bottom. To remain

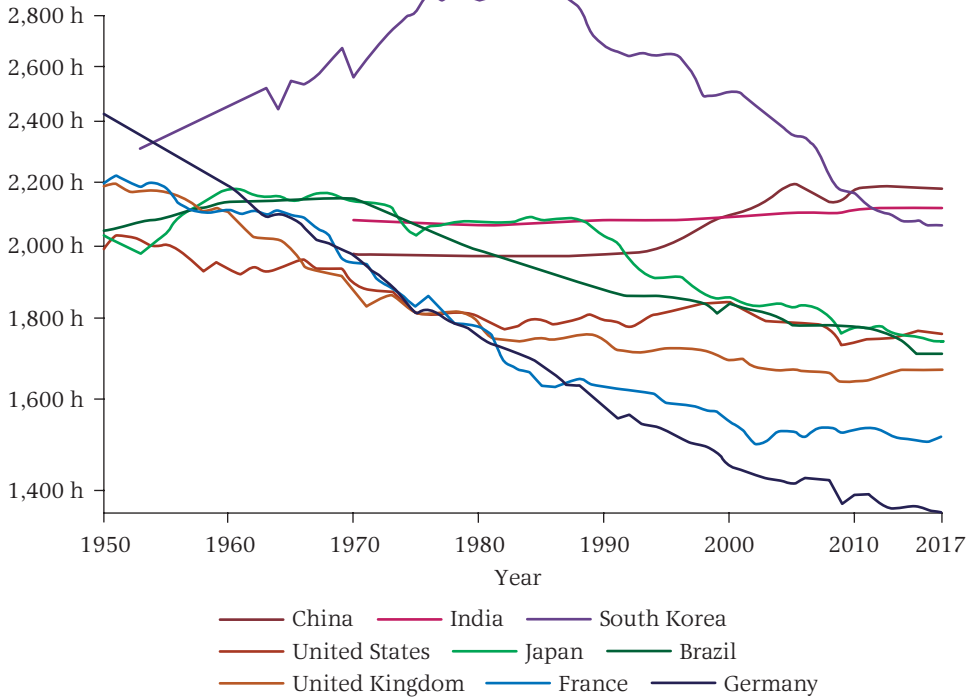


FIGURE 2.6 Annual average working hours per worker over a full year in China, India, South Korea, United States, Japan, Brazil, United Kingdom, France, and Germany, 1950–2017

Source: Penn World Table [PWT] 9.1 [2019]. PWT 9.1 sources its working hours data from the Total Economy Database, an updated version of the same source used by Huberman and Minns 2007, <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/productivity/pwt/?lang=en>

globally competitive, businesses depend on increased labor exploitation via lower wages and longer working hours (Barnet and Cavanaugh 1994; Greider 1997). After decades of long hours in often-risky environments in the manufacturing industry, the culture of overwork has spread to white-collar workers, thanks in part to the country's rising internet and technology sector. Under the labor law, the Chinese government stipulates a five-day workweek and regulates eight hours a day and a cap of forty-four hours a week on the average (Chapter IV, Labor Law of the PRC). It has been widely documented that workers in tech companies routinely follow a work schedule of "996": from 9:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. six days a week. Annual total working hours have risen rapidly since the mid-1990s. By 2010 China had surpassed South Korea to become one of the most overworked countries at 2,200 hours on average per year, compared with fewer than 1,800 hours in the United States and Japan (Figure 2.6). Chinese workers have no choice but to accept the culture of overwork for job security, salary, and

promotion. Profit-seeking businesses facing intense global and domestic competition force this excessive and illegal work schedule on their employees, while the neoliberal regime, as well as labor unions backed by the government, have largely ignored these violations in the interest of pursuing economic growth (Zeng, Lu, and Idris 2005).

The culture of overwork not only has implications on labor force inequalities by driving some women workers out of the workplace but also influences societal gender attitudes as well as marriage and family behaviors (Shu and Meagher 2018). Male workers are more likely to be able to work long hours when their female spouses bear the burden of overwork by providing unpaid household work (Hochschild 1997; Ridgeway 2011). Women, especially those with children, face more difficulties in extending their working hours and are less likely to live up to the expectation of ideal workers who overwork (Cahusac and Kanji 2014; Cha 2013; Rutherford 2001). Women who are unable to meet both occupational demands and housework demands exit the labor force and return to the “separate sphere” of domestic work (Cha 2010). Attitudes toward women’s role and status in society are thus shaped by the impression that women are less deserving of employment opportunities since they often fail to rise to the image of devoted employee.

Conclusion

Confucianism, the socialist legacy, economic neoliberalism, and globalization have all left marks on Chinese gender and family values and behaviors. The Confucian family and gender system advocated a comprehensive set of values and expectations that regulated traditional Chinese families. It promoted female chastity, universal marriage, multiple childbirth, patrilineal descent, filial piety, and family interdependence. This system was built on the low status of women. Women were expected to remain submissive to men through all stages of life, deprived of education at a young age, and removed to live with their husband’s family at marriage. They performed reproduction obligations and took care of young and old in the family.

The Republic period saw some modernization influences. Industrialization brought about some changes in the gender and marriage system, and there was a growing awareness of gender inequalities and the constraints of the Confucianism gender, marriage, and family system on individual freedom. This enlightenment and urge to change took place only among the educated and industrial workers in large urban cities. Despite these pockets of modern transformation, the Confucianism patriarchal family system with male domination remained prevalent in the vast land and among the majority of people in China.

The socialist era ushered in dramatic transformations to the Chinese gender, marriage, and family system. The state policies advocated for women’s

education and employment by expanding schools and recruiting women in paid employment. Urban women achieved considerable progress in education, and a great majority participated in paid employment even during their childbearing years. The government promoted free marriage, free divorce, and equality between husbands and wives through the implementation of the new marriage law. Arranged marriages, a centuries-old institution, almost disappeared while free divorce remained rather difficult to obtain. Urban women not only were responsible for the bulk of housework and childcare but also contributed substantially to household income. These forms of modernity barely touched rural China. Both men and women gained in education, illiteracy rates dropped sharply, and free marriage became the norm. However, the restriction on rural-urban migration tightly chained the rural population to their villages, and traditional practices of patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal families persisted in rural China.

The enormous economic growth and opening up during the economic reform period promoted an expanding educational system and active cultural exchanges with the West. Sexual liberalism gained popularity among the educated elite, and some sections of the population started to adopt a more relaxed attitude toward pre- and extramarital sexuality. The failures of state enterprises during the transition have led to some decline in female labor force participation. Rural-to-urban migration accelerated, and the migrants experienced exposure to modern ideas as well as changed family and marriage behaviors such as living separately from spouses and/or children, leaving children behind, and grandparents taking care of grandchildren. Despite these dramatic structural changes, age at first marriage remained the same. Divorce rates continued to grow. The family planning policy perpetuated a declining fertility rate over and above the modernization forces.

The intensified global exchange during the era of globalization and neoliberalism brought about contradictory changes. Young urban people are more open to a new marriage and family pattern of nonmarriage, cohabitation, late marriage, and childlessness. Gender essentialist ideas and beliefs in intensive parenting have also made inroads into China, leading to some rejections of the socialist model of working women, and some women returned home to enact their feminine selves as caring and loving wives and mothers. In line with the state's neoliberalism withdrawal from private lives, prostitution has returned, premarital sex is prevalent, extramarital sex has become common, and the divorce rate increased at a steeper pace than before. The neoliberal practice of the regime also includes a retreat from provisions of public housing, childcare facilities, pension plans, and family support that has led to women's exit from the labor force and cross-generational codependence. A revitalization of the traditional culture has led to the return of the Confucian patriarchal standard of obedient and virtuous females and an emergent narrative to restore conservative

gender norms. The withdrawal of state enforcement of the labor law in sanctioning the rampant practice of long working hours has reinforced a “patriarchal closure” (Shu and Meagher 2018). Overwork shuts mothers out of occupational competition, resulting in either their exit from the labor force or deprivation of career opportunities. The culture of overwork has also depressed societal gender norms from becoming more liberal.

Flexible Traditionalism Ideology

Global Comparison and Historical Transformation

A society's gender ideology is reflective of the overall gender relations in a society at a macro level. Dominant ideas in a society with regard to women's roles and status may yield national patterns of women's labor force participation, national policies, and labor market practices that impact women's economic independence, status, and power. Societal patterns of gender equality in the public spheres of the labor force, education, policies, laws, and politics also shape individual perceptions of gender relations and views toward women's status and roles. It is highly likely that these two processes are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing, with the social structure and gender ideology each reflecting the prevailing characteristics of each other (Shu 2004; Shu and Zhu 2012; Shu, Zhu, and Meagher 2017). Understanding a society's prevailing gender ideology provides a deep appreciation of the ideological foundation on which patterns of gender inequality in both the public and the private spheres emerge.

The prevailing gender ideology in a society shapes individual attitudes and behaviors, thus leading its members to envision different futures, develop variant skills, and invest in divergent career and family pathways. For example, urban Chinese wives with egalitarian gender attitudes enjoy economic decision-making power, and husbands with egalitarian gender attitudes seem willing to relinquish some power in child-related and economic decisions. Couples with egalitarian gender attitudes thus strike a more equal balance of power at home (Shu, Zhu, and Zhang 2013). The resurgence of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States initiated a cultural change that encouraged young women to shift their occupational aspirations. This led to large-scale inroads of women into the labor force and professional jobs (Shu and Marini 1998). A process of intergenerational learning of the prevailing beliefs regarding women's paid employment has led to an S-shaped rise in female labor force participation rates in the United States over the past century (Fernández 2013).

Societal gender norms sanction individual views. The power of the prevailing gender norms in a local community can sometimes negate self-interest, as evidenced by rural Chinese women espousing the least egalitarian gender attitudes in data collected in 1991, which were even more conservative than those of rural and urban men (Shu 2004). Prevailing gender attitudes in U.S. communities influence individual gender perspectives above and beyond their personal characteristics since the local cultural environment shapes residents' attitudes and behaviors to align with the dominant norm of the community (Scarborough and Sin 2020). Although the vast majority of young married men in Saudi Arabia privately support female labor force participation outside of the home, they misperceive higher disapproval than the actual level from similar men. Even these mistaken beliefs about prevailing social norms lead to an unwillingness to let their wives join the labor force (Bursztyn, González, and Yanagizawa-Drott 2018).

We use data from a series of global surveys to analyze gender ideology in China through both a global comparison and a historical analysis. By identifying the prevalent gender ideology in China in comparison with ideologies in countries of different social, political, and economic permutations, we develop an understanding of the pattern of gender attitudes in China and the macro-level social, political, cultural, and economic forces that gave rise to such gender ideology. Through studying the historical dynamics of gender attitudes in China, we track the pathways through which Chinese gender ideology evolved and transitioned in response to shifting social forces of public policies, cultural tendencies, and economic trends.

Gender Ideology in China: A Global Comparison

In order to conduct a global comparison of gender ideology to position China in a cross-national framework of gender attitudes, we characterize gender ideology with a multidimensional view. Although most previous research on gender attitudes conceptualizes a single dimension from traditional to progressive (Davis and Greenstein 2009), a growing body of new research supports multidimensional conceptions of gender ideology (Grunow, Begall, and Buchler 2018; Knight and Brinton 2017; Scarborough and Sin 2020). We conceptualize gender attitudes along two dimensions to capture both “vertical” and “horizontal” gender divisions in status and roles. The first dimension is vertical gender equality, which measures support for women's equal rights and status. Often labeled as “gender egalitarianism” ideology, it measures vertical status distinctions between men and women. It taps into the notion that both genders have equal abilities, competence, and vision and thus deserve equal status, income, power, and other resources and opportunities in society.

The second dimension represents attitudes toward horizontal gender differentiation and is sometimes identified as “gender essentialism.” It is indicative of

people's perceptions of gender differences in essential traits such that differences in personality and skills between men and women lead to different roles and functions (Gilligan 1982; Shurchkov and Eckel 2018). One dominant form of gender essentialism is the identification of women as naturally nurturing and caring mothers but not competitive workers (Davis and Greenstein 2009). This view has been used to justify a gendered division of labor with men as breadwinners and women specializing in the domestic work of caring for children and husbands.

Using data from the World Value Survey Waves III and IV, we identified five measures of two dimensions of gender attitudes: orientations toward vertical equality and horizontal differentiation of women's dual roles as workers and mothers. All variables were recoded so that higher values represent greater egalitarianism.

Three variables measure attitudes toward vertical equality:

1. "Men have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce" (Disagree, Neither, Agree)
2. "Men make better political leaders than women" (Disagree Strongly, Disagree, Agree, Agree Strongly)
3. "A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl" (Disagree Strongly, Disagree, Agree, Agree Strongly)

Two variables measure attitudes toward horizontal differentiation of women's dual roles:

1. "A working mother can establish a warm and secure relationship with her children" (Disagree Strongly, Disagree, Agree, Agree Strongly)
2. "Both husband and wife should contribute to household income" (Disagree Strongly, Disagree, Agree, Agree Strongly)

The Chinese population's perception of gender equality, as indicated by the three measures, ranks in the middle to lower range globally. As shown in Figure 3.1, when respondents were asked if they agree with the statement that men have more rights to a job than women, China ranks twenty-fifth among the forty-seven countries included in the analysis in its egalitarian attitude, behind all three Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, and Finland), all the other Western countries (New Zealand, United States, Germany, Australia, and Spain), some Latin American countries (Dominican Republic, Argentina, Peru, Venezuela, and Chile), a few African countries (Tanzania, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Uganda), and former socialist countries (Czech Republic, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Vietnam, Poland, and Romania). China is also five places behind Singapore but out-ranked Russia, India, Japan, South Korea, and all the Islamic countries on this measure.

On the measure of gender equality in politics, when respondents were asked if they agree with the statement that men make better political leaders than

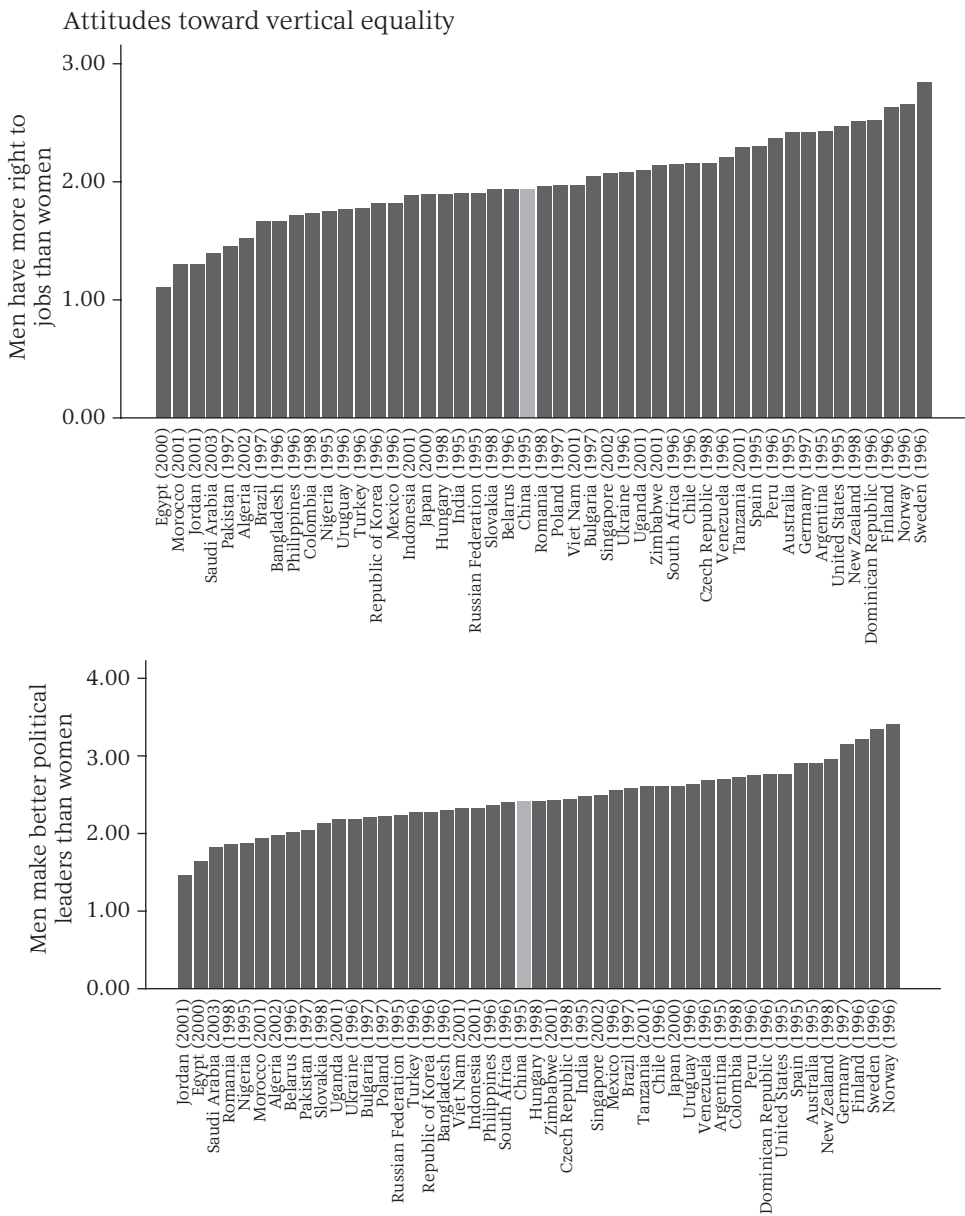


FIGURE 3.1 Global comparison of gender attitudes

Source: World Value Survey, Waves III and IV, N=72,304

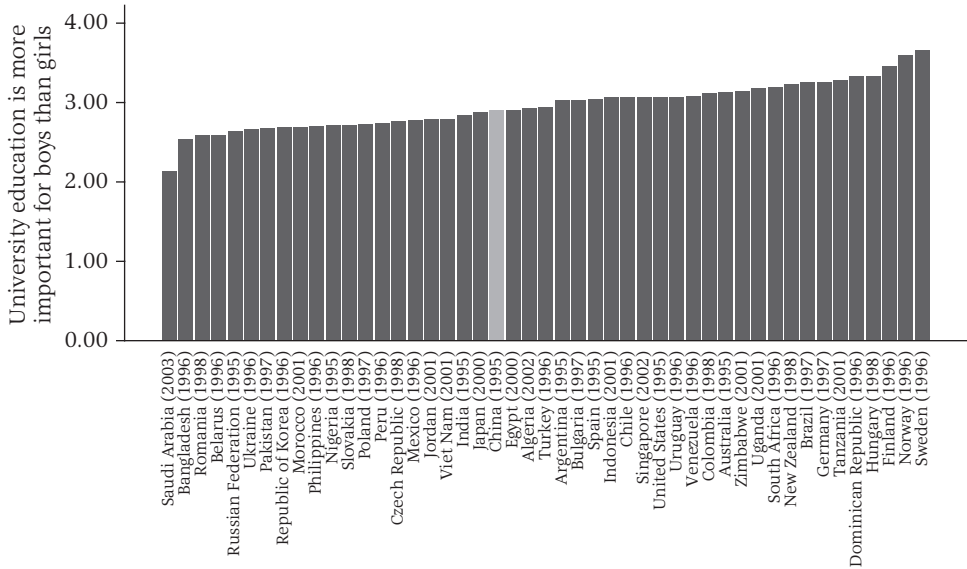


FIGURE 3.1 (continued)

women, China is again in the position of twenty-fifth among forty-seven countries. The leading countries are again the three Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, and Finland), the other Western countries (Germany, New Zealand, Australia, Spain, and the United States), Latin American countries (Dominican Republic, Peru, Colombian, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, and Mexico), African countries (Tanzania and Zimbabwe), and former socialist countries (the Czech Republic and Hungary). China is also ten places behind Japan, five places behind Singapore, and four places behind India. China leads Vietnam, South Korea, Russia, and all the Islamic countries on this measure.

China is behind twenty-six countries on the measure of egalitarian attitude toward gender equality in receiving a university education. When respondents were asked if they agreed that a university education is more important for boys than for girls, the Chinese population again trails behind the three Nordic countries, five other Western countries, five Latin American countries, two former socialist countries, four Islamic countries (Indonesia, Turkey, Algeria, and Egypt), five other African countries, and Singapore. China preceded twenty countries on this measure, including four Asian countries (Japan, India, the Philippines, and South Korea), eight former socialist states (Vietnam, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Romania), five Islamic countries (Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Saudi Arabia), two Latin American countries (Mexico and Peru), and one African country (Nigeria).

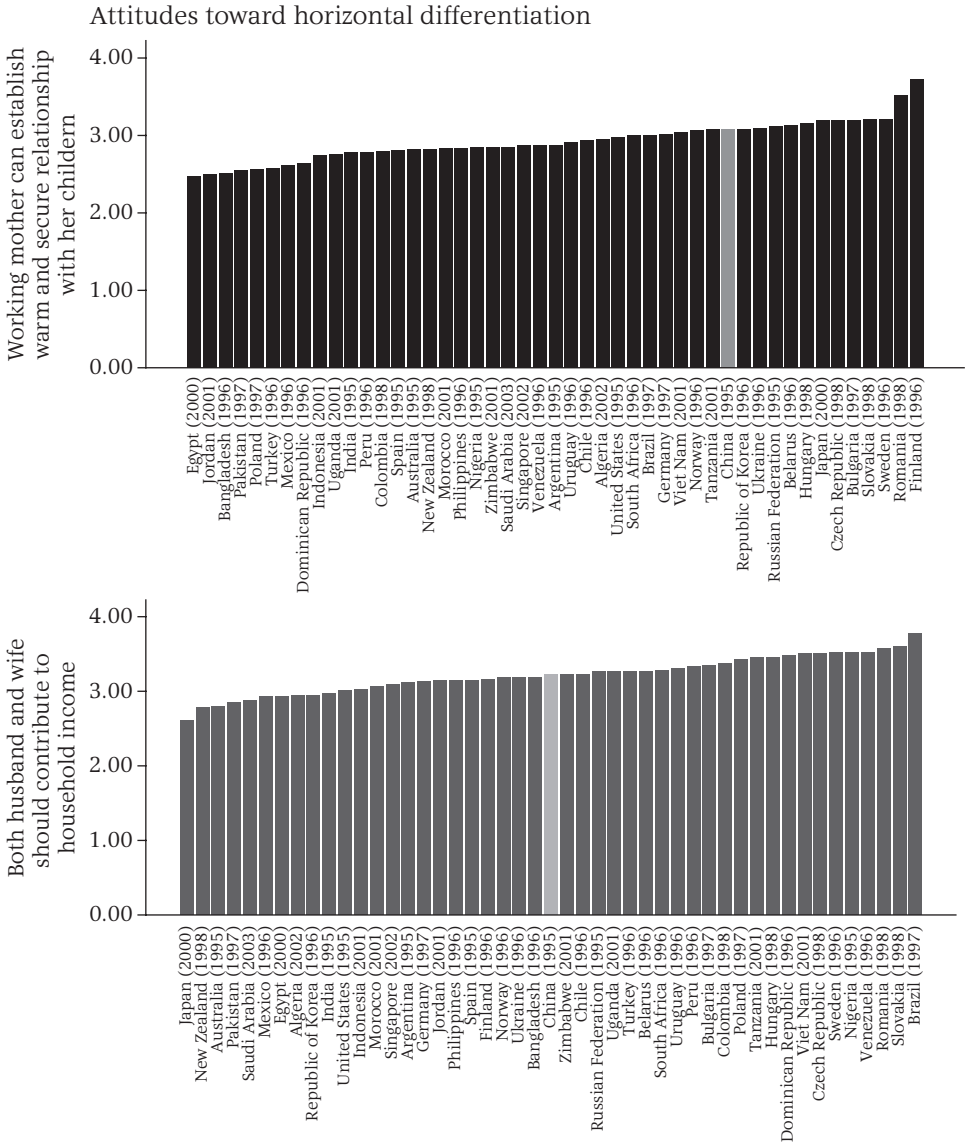


FIGURE 3.1 (continued)

The bottom panel provides information on the global ranking of the two measures of attitude toward women’s dual roles of worker and mother. China ranks thirteenth on an egalitarian attitude toward a working mother’s capacity to establish a warm and secure relationship with her children, behind two Nordic countries (Finland and Sweden), eight former socialist countries (Romania,

Slovakia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine), and two Asian countries (Japan and South Korea).

On attitudes toward both husband and wife contributing to household income, China is in the middle of the ranking at twenty-fourth. Nine former socialist countries (Slovakia, Romania, Czech Republic, Vietnam, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Belarus, and Russia) register more nontraditional attitudes. Seven Latin American countries (Brazil, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, and Chile) also outrank China, as do five African countries (Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe). Norway and Turkey also hold more nontraditional attitudes than China.

On these five measures of gender attitudes, China ranks in the middle range of four attitudes and is among the top one-third in attitudes toward a working mother's warm and secure relationship with her children. This is indicative of China's largely traditional gender ideology with some flexibility in accepting women's work.

Chinese Gender Ideology in a Two-Dimensional Space

By characterizing a country's gender ideology in a two-dimensional space of vertical gender equality and horizontal gender differentiation of work and family roles, we can illustrate the country's relative positions of gender attitudes and the dominant feature of its gender ideology. We use the approach of confirmatory factor analysis to construct two latent constructs:¹ vertical gender equality from the three measures of equality in access to jobs, political power, and education; and horizontal gender role differentiation in working mothers having a warm and secure relationship with their children, and both husband and wife contributing to household income (Shu, Barnett, and Faris 2020; Shu, Zhu, and Meagher 2020). Figure 3.2 maps the average gender attitudes of forty-seven countries in such a two-dimensional space. The three Nordic countries of Finland, Sweden, and Norway are in the upper-right corner, characterized by highly egalitarian attitudes on both dimensions, while the Islamic countries concentrate in the lower-left corner, indicative of less liberal attitudes on both ideological dimensions. The other Western countries of Germany, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Spain are in the upper-left corner, registering fairly egalitarian attitudes toward gender equality and a more traditional outlook toward women's dual roles of worker and mother. China and almost all of the countries with a socialist legacy (except Poland) are located in the lower-right cell, demonstrating less egalitarian attitudes toward gender equality while showing a more nontraditional perception toward working women.

China is slightly more egalitarian toward women's dual roles than the East Asian countries of Japan and South Korea. On the attitude toward gender equality, China almost matches Japan but precedes South Korea.

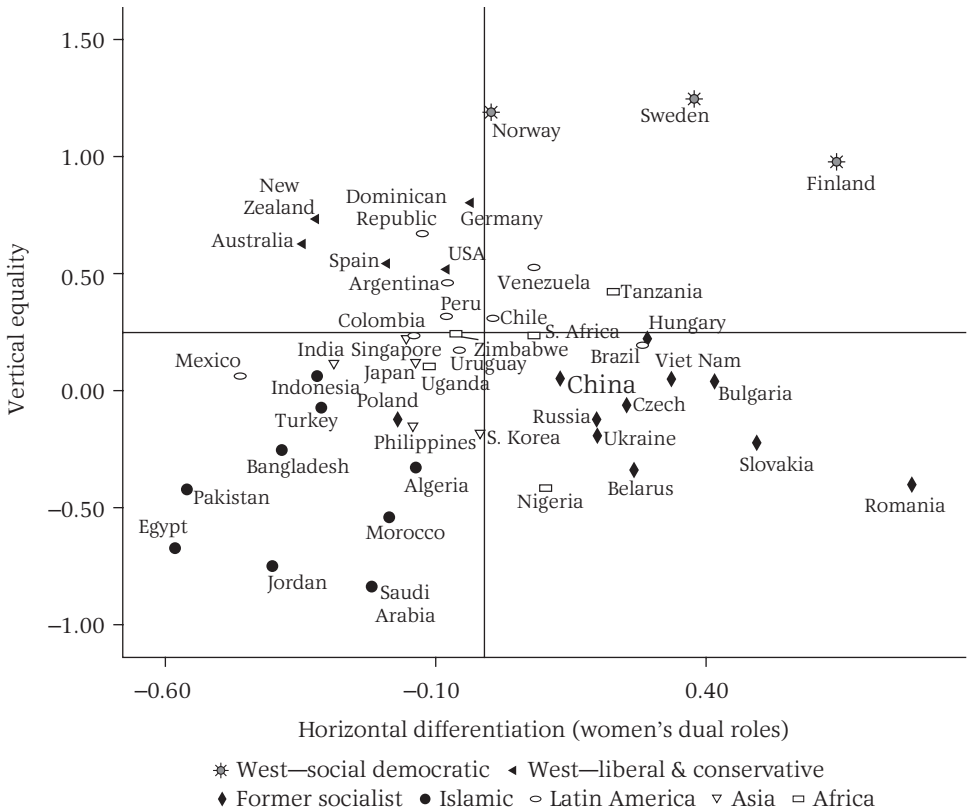


FIGURE 3.2 Flexible traditionalist ideology prevalent in China in the global frame of gender ideologies

Source: World Value Survey, Waves III and IV, $N=72,304$

Frames of Gender Ideology

From the centrality of attitudes on these two dimensions of gender attitude constructs, we can identify four classes of gender ideology (Shu, Zhu, and Meagher 2020).² The first one is “liberal egalitarian.” This ideology supports egalitarian attitudes toward both dimensions, advocating for both gender equality and women’s paid employment. It endorses women as full citizens with equal rights to educational, employment, and political opportunities. It also supports women’s dual roles, believing that women can function well as both loving mothers and competent workers. It thus rejects the essentialist view by recognizing gender roles as cultural constructs rather than natural divisions between men and women with unique skills and knowledge. Using data from seventeen European countries, Knight and Brinton (2017) find evidence for this ideology, which they label as “liberal-egalitarianism.”

A second gender ideology can be labeled “egalitarian essentialist.” This belief endorses women’s equal rights in the public domain but is less approving of paid work for married women or mothers of young children. Men are expected to be the breadwinners, while women are caretakers of the family and household. The notion of separate spheres of domestic and paid work is based on the belief that men and women are essentially different human beings with distinct abilities and behavioral characteristics. People who subscribe to this ideology endorse a separate but equal treatment of women; men and women are expected to specialize in different tasks according to their unique traits, yet their roles share equal social status. This highly resembles the egalitarian-essentialist ideology that Charles and Grusky (2004) identified in the United States, which combines support for egalitarianism in the public sphere with the essentialist notion that women are best at being at home with the children. It is also similar to the egalitarian familism ideology in Europe (Knight and Brinton 2017).

A third ideology class is “traditional essentialist.” This ideology represents a belief in male primacy and regards men as superior and deserving of higher status and privilege. Women are seen as subordinate to men and functioning as wives and mothers. Women’s labor force participation is not encouraged, and the few women who are allowed to work are relegated to segregated jobs or workplaces. This resembles the traditionalist ideology identified in both Europe and the United States (Knight and Brinton 2017; Scarborough, Sin, and Risman 2019) or the combination of traditional-essentialist and traditional-breadwinner ideologies in the United States (Scarborough and Sin 2020).

The fourth ideology, “flexible traditionalist,” represents low support for women’s equal rights despite widespread acceptance of their paid work. In this ideology, it is widely recognized or even expected that all women, even married women and mothers of young children, will join men in the labor force. However, women are not seen as equals to men and deserving of full rights and equal opportunities in education, employment, and politics. Women are perceived as playing a supplementary or secondary role to men in paid employment and are still expected to take full responsibility for domestic work and childcare while supporting the family financially. This ideology has not been detected in an analysis of seventeen European countries using data from the World Value Surveys 1990–2009 (Knight and Brinton 2017).

China is among the states with a socialist legacy that pursued the Engels Strategy, promoting gender equality by including women in the labor force and socializing domestic labor, and arguing that capitalism oppresses women by chaining them to childcare and domestic work. The former Soviet Union, central and eastern Europe, and China extended the right to work to all citizens, enabling women to establish selfhood through work rather than through familial responsibilities. Domestic obligations did not prevent women from taking full-time employment, because the state provided childcare on a wide scale. In

China, families have been encouraged to think of childrearing as a contribution to national regeneration. Chinese families generally reject the Western maternal deprivation theory (Wolf 1985), believing that childrearing is better left to trained experts rather than parents. Despite being full-time workers, women still perform the great majority of unpaid care work and domestic labor at home. The state provides childcare to support mothers' paid employment, but domestic work is not regarded as worthy of state intervention.

Despite high levels of women's labor force participation and a general acceptance of women's paid work, socialist states' commitment to gender equality has often been undercut by the states' emphasis on women's roles as mothers and wives who strengthen the family as a solution to the pressing social problems of population growth, societal cohesion, and social control (Kay 2007). As a result, gender inequalities in the labor market are substantial. Gender discrimination in hiring, retention, and promotion is common, and public support for gender equality is depressed (Gerber and Mayorova 2006; Shu and Bian 2003; Shu and Zhu 2012).

The prevalent gender ideology in China is similar to that of states with a socialist legacy. These societies are less economically developed compared with the West, boast high female labor force participation, and provide decent parental leave provisions. These features foster an ideology that endorses women's paid employment and dual roles. However, gender inequalities in the labor market and political power are widespread and public support for gender equality is depressed, which is reflected in gender attitudes upholding marked gender inequality.

Historical and Cohort Changes in Gender Ideology in China

Several micro and macro processes drive historical transformations in public attitudes about gender roles. Attitudes vary by birth cohort, as older people with more traditional gender attitudes are replaced by younger, more-egalitarian cohorts via the demographic processes of birth and death (Davis and Greenstein 2009). Attitudinal differences across cohorts are caused both by compositional differences in demographic characteristics (e.g., younger cohorts having higher levels of education) and by different life experiences stemming from each cohort's unique economic, social, and political circumstances during critical periods of attitude formation. Attitudes about gender also change over the life course, owing both to the aging process and to external events that shift the entire population's attitudes simultaneously (i.e., period effects). Previous research shows that all three demographic processes—aging, cohort replacement, and period effects—are linked to the historical trajectory of U.S. gender attitudes, with cohort replacement of younger cohorts with different compositional characteristics being responsible for the largest share of the rising gender egalitarianism

over birth cohorts (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004; Brewster and Padavic 2000; Scarborough, Sin, and Risman 2019; Wilkie 1993) and historical variations in labor market dynamics accounting for a larger proportion of the period variations in gender attitudes (Shu and Meagher 2018). National data from China from 1995 to 2007 show that orientations toward gender equality manifest both cohort and period effects. The youngest cohort of both sexes holds the most liberal attitudes. The positive effect of college education has increased over time (Shu and Zhu 2012).

One powerful source of historical change in gender attitude is economic growth. Modernization theory argues that economic growth leads to improvements in the status of and regard for women. Women in nations shifting from agrarian to industrial societies have lower fertility rates, increased labor force participation, and higher rates of education, forces seen as an impetus for attitudinal change (Inglehart and Norris 2003). China's rapid modernization over the past decades saw a reduction in fertility from 6.39 births per woman in 1965 to 2.61 in 1980. It further declined to the lowest point of 1.60 in 1999 and rebounded slightly to 1.69 in 2018 despite a relaxation of the one-child policy in 2014 (World Bank 2021). Education rose for both women and men. The country achieved 93 percent of lower-secondary-school education for both males and females, and the gender gap in upper-secondary-school education has reversed with a gender parity of 1.04 in 2019 in favor of females (UNICEF 2020). Enrollment in tertiary education grew from 6.7 million to 24.4 million for women, and from 8.5 million to 22.6 million for men in the period 2003–2019, with females outnumbering males both in the growth and in the total number of college enrollment (UNESCO-UIS 2021). Since economic growth provides women with more employment options, economic gains can translate into power (Blumberg 1984). As women enter jobs equally with men, it is harder to attribute gender inequality to basic differences between the sexes (Epstein 1988).

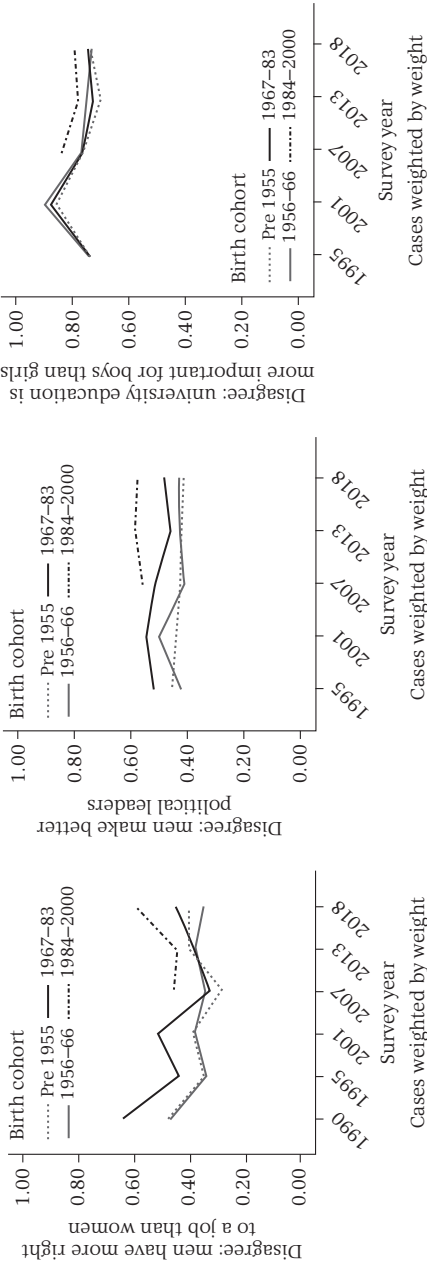
While these changes can be seen as an impetus toward more liberal gender attitudes, behavioral and institutional changes in China indicate otherwise. For young women, particularly those with children, there were signs of a moderate decline in market work by 1995 (Parish and Busse 2000). Part of this change was voluntary, as women chose to stay home to care for their children. It may thus be seen as a changing attitude toward work and family incompatibility. Also, institutionally provided daycare at work has largely disappeared, and standards of homemaking and childrearing have risen substantially. Firms in competitive markets are reluctant to employ pregnant women or mothers of young children (Zhang, Hannum, and Wang 2008). In Beijing, husbands in younger marriage cohorts hold more conservative gender attitudes than those of older cohorts (Pimentel 2006). Longitudinal data on college students from the former socialist countries of Croatia, Poland, Russia, and Slovenia show that attitude toward gender equality declined in the 1990s, although it rebounded later, perhaps due

to improved economic conditions (Olson et al. 2007). These changes appear to suggest a conservative trend. Previous studies have identified little historical change in the period 1995–2007 in attitudes toward gender equality in China since there was an absence of either a shift toward conservatism or an over-time trend toward egalitarianism, despite the rapid economic growth during this period (Shu and Zhu 2012).

By studying historical and cohort variations in gender attitudes we shed light on the pattern and pace of value transition in different dimensions of gender ideology. Despite sweeping modernization, there is evidence that the pace of change in gender attitudes is conditioned by the cultural legacy and institutional structure of a society (Inglehart and Norris 2003). In the United States, the transition in views on women's work responsibilities took place two decades before changes in attitude toward the division of labor in the home (Mason and Bumpass 1975; Spitze and Huber 1980; Thornton and Freedman 1979). In China, egalitarian gender attitudes are unevenly distributed on different dimensions (Shu 2004). Despite universal support for women's marriage rights, son preference is still prevalent, especially in rural areas (Coale and Banister 1994; Guilmito 2009; Gupta et al. 2003). The Chinese population registers high support for women to work in paid employment and contribute to household income, yet it remains lukewarm to embracing gender equality in the labor force, college education, and politics (Shu and Zhu 2012).

Transitions in gender attitudes take place in the form of period- and cohort-related changes. For example, in the United States, period- and cohort-related changes in gender attitude account not only for the consistent shift in an egalitarian direction between the 1970s and the 1990s (Davis and Greenstein 2009) but also the largely unchanged attitudes since then (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2011). There are larger historical and cohort variations in the three attitudes toward vertical equality than in the attitudes toward horizontal differentiation of women's dual roles. The 1990–2018 period saw an overall L-shaped declining trend in egalitarian attitudes toward gender equality among all birth cohorts, except for the youngest (those born after 1984). The top panel in Figure 3.3 presents birth cohort and period variations in three measures of gender attitude toward gender equality from 1990 to 2018, and two measures toward women's dual roles from 1990 to 2001. First, the attitude toward men's rights to jobs over women's decreases to the lowest point in 2007, slightly rebounds in the subsequent years of 2013 and 2018, but does not return to the levels of the 1990s. The most striking decline is among the 1967–1983 cohort, in which the percentage of those holding egalitarian attitudes plummets from more than 60 percent to about 30 percent from 1990 to 2007. The recovery in egalitarianism in the 2007–2018 period is more prominent among the two younger cohorts. The 1984–2000 birth cohort, which already holds the most egalitarian attitude among all cohorts, experienced a further significant rise in egalitarianism in

Attitudes toward vertical equality



Attitudes toward horizontal differentiation

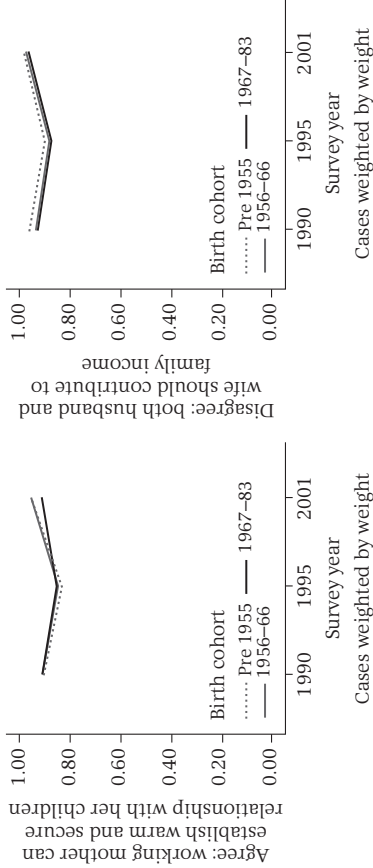


FIGURE 3.3 Variations in proportion holding egalitarian gender attitudes by birth cohort and survey year

Source: World Value Survey, Waves 1-7, $n = 10,827$

2013–2018, with 60 percent disagreeing with men having more rights to jobs. This makes it the only cohort that has not experienced a decline in this attitude. The second-youngest cohort, born in 1967–1983, also raised its egalitarianism in 2007–2018 but still substantially lags the youngest cohort with only about 45 percent disagreeing with the statement. Although the 1967–1983 cohort is more egalitarian than the two older cohorts before 2007, this difference no longer exists after 2007, making the 1984–2000 cohort the only one that differs from the other three cohorts.

Second, the historical transition in the attitude toward men as better political leaders is more modest. The attitude experienced a decline of around 10 percent among those holding egalitarian attitudes. Although the decline is relatively small, it stagnates and does not rebound. The youngest cohort, born after 1984, is again the most egalitarian one with close to 60 percent endorsing an egalitarian attitude.

Third, the attitude toward the importance of college education remained virtually unchanged from 1995 to 2018—except for 2001, when it spiked by 10 percentage points. Around 80 percent of all cohorts support this egalitarian attitude, with the youngest cohort outpacing the others by around 5 percent. Finally, the two measures of attitude toward women’s dual roles, mother-child relationship, and wife contributing to household income demonstrate virtually no cohort difference and little historical change. These attitudes demonstrate high levels of egalitarianism, with 85–95 percent of people endorsing women’s dual roles of worker and mother. These attitudes declined slightly from 1990 to 1995 but rebounded in 2001. With no available data since 2001, we cannot detect whether there have been further shifts in these attitudes.

Gender Differences in Gender Ideology in China

Theoretical explanations for the formation and shift of attitudes generally focus on two types of mechanisms: interest-based explanations and socialization (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004). When a person’s own interests benefit from a given ideology, they are more likely to endorse that ideology, which is the rationale behind the interest-based mechanism. American women hold more egalitarian gender attitudes because women have more to gain than men do from equal treatment in gaining social status and economic benefits (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004). Socialization theory, on the other hand, argues that attitudes are shaped by socialization with family and friends, in educational and work settings, through personal experiences, and larger social contexts of the community or the nation. Data from the 1990s show that rural Chinese women uphold a more traditional gender attitude than that of both rural and urban men, negating their self-interest as an illustration of the power of socialization forces over self-benefits (Shu 2004). It is unclear whether rural women have broken with their

false consciousness that accepts and endorses male supremacy and gained a new awareness of their own interests and position.

Gender differences in attitude toward vertical equality and horizontal differentiation present different patterns as shown in Figure 3.4. There is a general trend of a growing gender gap in egalitarianism toward vertical gender equality since 2007. On the other hand, there is no gender difference in attitude toward women's dual roles. First, women hold more liberal attitudes toward the right to jobs in all six survey years, although the size of this gender gap fluctuates over time. It converged in the early period in 1990–2007, but since 2007 it has enlarged while rebounding. This changing gender gap largely stems from the fluctuation in women's gender attitude while men's attitude remains relatively stable during the entire three decades under study.

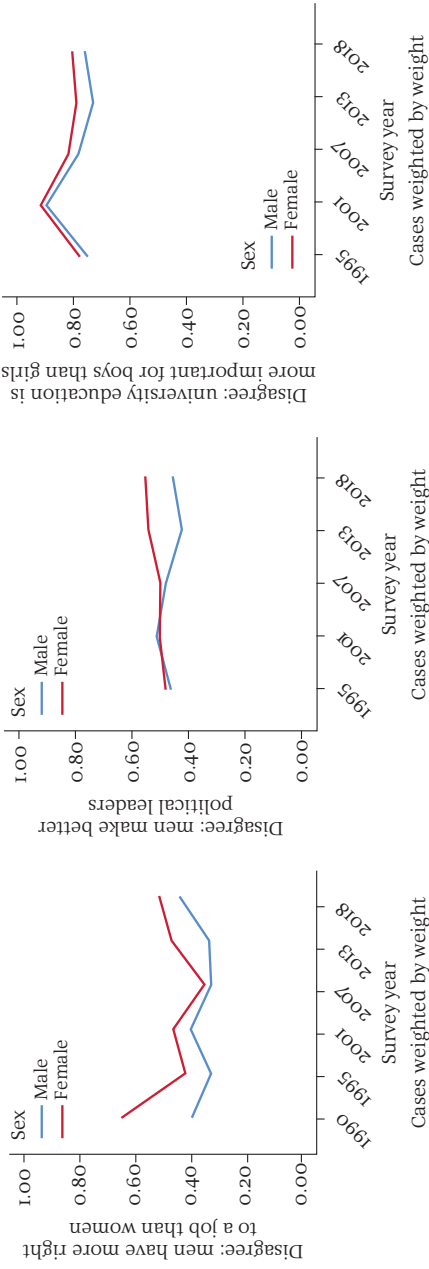
Second, men's egalitarian attitude toward gender equality in politics declined while women's egalitarian attitude increased slightly, enlarging the gender gap in this attitude from nonexistent from 1995 to 2007 to significant in 2013 and 2017.

Third, women's attitude toward the importance of college education remained virtually unchanged at about 80 percent endorsing an egalitarian attitude, except for a onetime spike in 2001. Men's attitude declined somewhat, also increasing the gender gap from minuscule to visible.

Finally, there is no gender difference in measures of attitude toward working mother–child relationship and wives' contribution to household income. Both attitudes registered high support at 80–90 percent, with a slight dip in 1995 among both sexes, but rebounded to a similar highly egalitarian level in 2001.

Gender differences by cohort present a similar pattern of an enlarged gender gap in attitudes toward vertical equality and no gender gap in attitudes toward horizontal differentiation. According to Figure 3.5, on attitude toward equality in access to jobs, men of the two younger cohorts, 1967–1983 and 1984–2000, demonstrated slightly more egalitarian attitudes. However, this increase does not match up with younger women's substantial rise in disapproval of men's priority in access to jobs, with a significantly enlarged gender gap on this attitude. The gender difference in disapproval of men's supremacy in politics grew from no difference among the two older cohorts to a difference of 10 percent among the second-youngest cohort. This gender gap further increased to 20 percent in the younger cohort. Men's attitude toward occupational and political gender equality remained largely unchanged from the oldest to the youngest cohorts, while the younger cohorts of women became more egalitarian, enlarging gender differences on these attitudes. As to the third attitude toward gender equality in education, which was already fairly egalitarian for both genders, there has been little cohort- and gender-based changes, with the youngest cohort of women being slightly more egalitarian than all the other groups.

Attitudes toward vertical equality



Attitudes toward horizontal differentiation

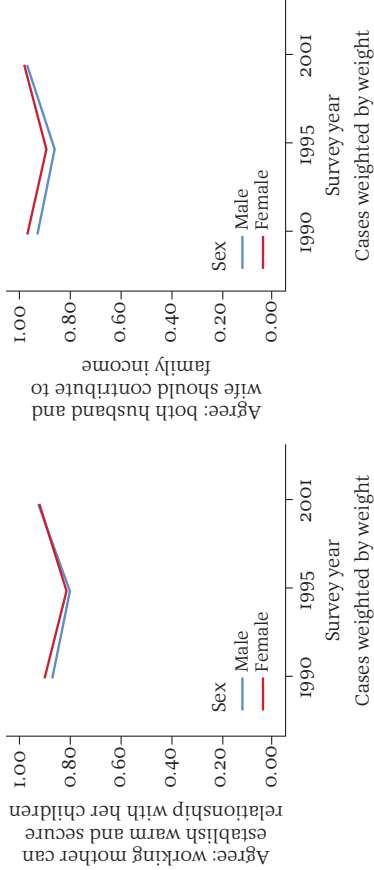
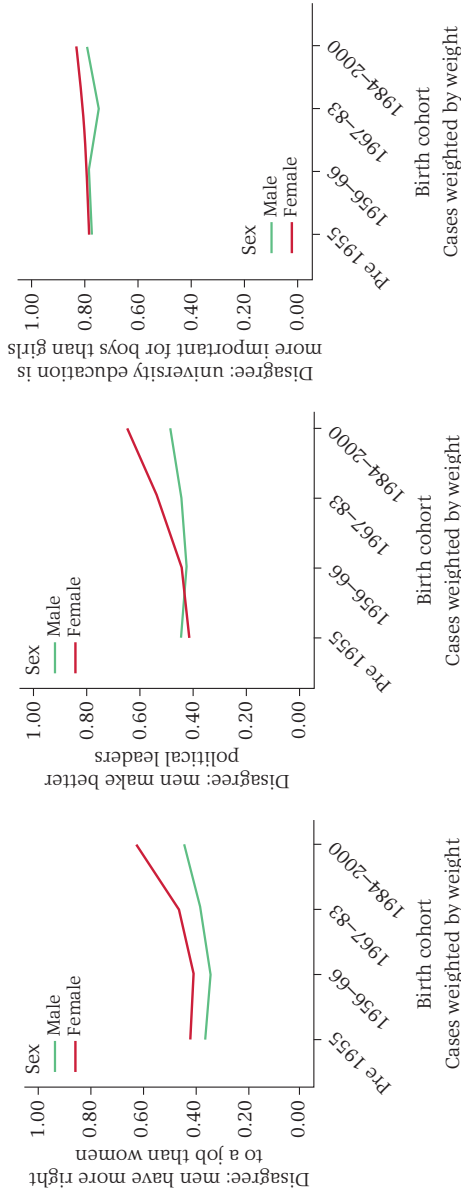


FIGURE 3.4 Variations in proportion holding egalitarian gender attitudes by gender and survey year

Source: World Value Survey, Waves 1–7, $n = 10,827$

Attitudes toward vertical equality



Attitudes toward horizontal differentiation

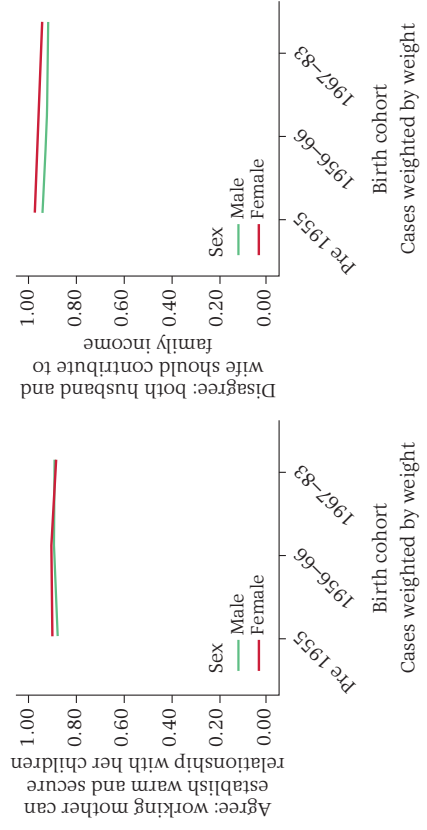


FIGURE 3.5 Variations in proportion holding egalitarian gender attitudes by gender and birth cohort

Source: World Value Survey, Waves 1-7, n = 10,827

Attitudes toward the two measures of gender differentiation, working motherhood and contribution to household income, remained unchanged over birth cohorts and gender groups. Because of the lack of data on the youngest cohort, it is unclear whether the younger generation has more or less egalitarian attitudes on these two measures. An examination of more recent data on similar measures will shed some light on this.

To examine gender differences in attitudes by residence and education in more recent years, we analyze data from the General Social Survey (2010–2015). These results are presented in Figure 3.6. The top four panels show gender differences by rural/urban division. On three of the four measures, urban women outpace all the other groups in egalitarianism toward women's right to jobs, women's abilities, and separate spheres. Surprisingly, urban women fall short of urban men in attitude toward the importance of marriage for women versus career. On the other hand, rural women hold the least egalitarian views on all but one of the attitudes, again showing the persistent power of socialization that contradicts their own self-interest. Rural women are the least likely to disagree with statements that emphasize the importance of women's marriage over career, affirm men's superior capacity, and prefer a gendered division of separate spheres. They share the same conservative attitudes as their male counterparts in attitudes toward men's higher ability and separate spheres.

The bottom four panels show gender differences in these attitudes by education. College-educated women hold the most egalitarian attitudes on all four measures, demonstrating awareness of their self-interest as well as the empowerment of education. On the other hand, women without college education possess the least egalitarian outlooks on three attitudes: men are more capable, gendered separate spheres, and importance of marriage for women over career, indicative of their being oblivious to ideas that boost their status and rights in the society. Only on the attitude toward women's right to jobs are women without college education slightly more egalitarian than their male counterparts. Since more than 86 percent of women are without college education, the prevailing perception among women is that marriage trumps career and that it is more important for women to marry well than to seek success professionally. Perhaps this dominant attitude emphasizing marriage for women has served as an important sanction power in Chinese society to ensure early and universal marriage and has sustained the marriage institution. This emphasis, particularly for women without college education and those living in rural areas, persists even though marriage is an institution that benefits men more and gives women the short end of the stick in regard to their careers, leisure, well-being, life satisfaction, happiness, and life expectancy (Hughes and Maurer-Fazio 2002; Zhang, Hanum, and Wang 2008). College-educated men hold the second-most egalitarian attitude on all four measures, demonstrating that their educational experiences have enlightened them to be more accepting of women's interests and

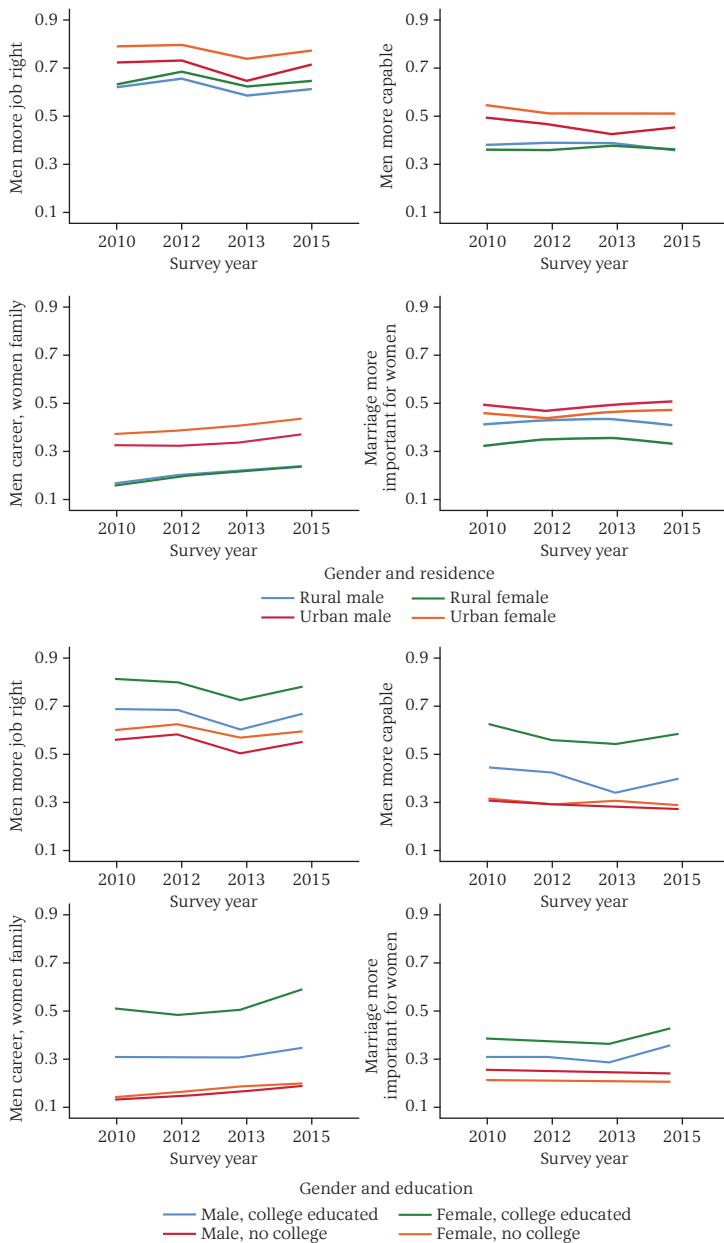


FIGURE 3.6 Gender differences in gender attitudes, by residence and education

Source: World Value Survey, Waves I-7, $n=10,827$

status. However, the attitudes of college-educated men still lag behind those of college-educated women, showing that men are reluctant to assert women's rights to the same degree as their female counterparts, and again demonstrating the pervasive power of men's self-interest in preserving their relative position and privilege. Not surprisingly, rural men hold the least liberal attitudes on three of the measures and the second-lowest on the fourth one, outpaced only by rural women in attitude toward the importance of marriage for women over their careers.

Growing GDP, Rising Working Hours, and Stagnated Gender Attitudes

Despite China's rapid modernization characterized by fast-rising GDP, education, and urbanization, people's gender attitudes experienced little change. In particular, the attitudes of Chinese men have stagnated. What are the macro-level influences that counteract the forces of modernization and lead to such a standstill? Substantial evidence shows that a culture of overwork is correlated with a conservative gender ideology. In the United States, after two decades of rising gender egalitarianism, gender attitudes stagnated and then became more conservative in the mid-1990s (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2011; Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001). The stalled gender revolution and its restart correlated with the rise and fall of men's overwork (Shu and Meagher 2018). The new economy since 1990 has encompassed increasingly global operations, outsourcing, and technological advances and has allowed employers to expect employees to be constantly available to clients and supervisors (Presser 2005; Rubin and Brody 2005). Many employees work long hours to signal their commitment and increase their chances for promotion (Blair-Loy 2003; Epstein et al. 1999; Hochschild 1997). Although norms of overwork in the new economy may appear gender neutral, they reinforce traditional gender roles. Men are more capable of conforming to the expectations of long working hours, while women's significant domestic labor prevents them from doing so (Cha and Weeden 2014). Japan ranks at the bottom in measures of gender equality among industrialized countries and is a country characterized by a prevalent culture of overwork. This norm of working long hours not only perpetuates the existing structural inequality in the labor force but also impacts women's perception of work and family plans as dichotomized paths of either devoting themselves to the job by putting in long hours or opting out of the labor force altogether (Nemoto 2013).

Long working hours correlate well with men's provider role while shifting even more household labor to their female partners (Hochschild 1997; Ridgeway 2011). Women face difficulties in extending their working hours, and the cultural norm of "intensive mothering" makes overwork impossible (Hays 1998; Cha 2010). As a result, female workers are thus perceived as less committed to the

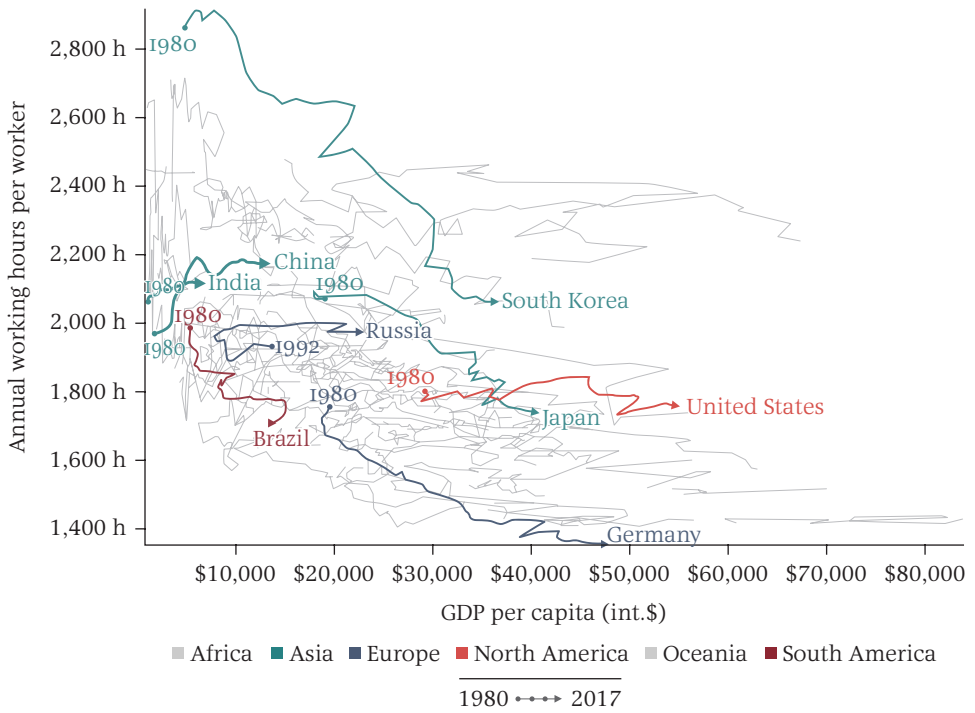


FIGURE 3.7 Rising GDP with rising working hours

Source: Extracted from "Annual working hours vs. GDP per capita," Our World in Data, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/annual-working-hours-vs-gdp-per-capita-pwt>

workplace (Cahusac and Kanji 2014; Cha 2013; Rutherford 2001), and some are forced to exit the labor force (Cha 2010).

Overwork functions as a mechanism for "patriarchal closure" (Rutherford 2001) by reinforcing gendered assumptions about the ideal worker who devotes himself or herself to an organization's needs (Acker 1990; Williams 2000). This expectation is best fulfilled by men whose female partners take on unpaid domestic responsibilities. Overwork reinforces the traditional, gender essentialist ideology of men as breadwinners and women as caretakers (Cha 2013). Norms of overwork may lead people to believe that true gender equality is unattainable because women are often unable to rise to this expectation of an ideal worker who is willing to overwork.

China's economic growth has been built up by an overworked workforce. Figure 3.7 shows that during the period 1990–2017 the GDP grew from less than \$2,000 per capita to about \$16,000. This rapid economic development was accompanied by a rise of 10 percent in the already-high average annual working hours, from fewer than 2,000 hours per year to almost 2,200 hours per year.

Microlevel survey data are consistent with this national assessment. An online survey of participants from seventeen provinces in 2018–2020 shows that respondents worked overtime an average of 15.8 hours per week (Huang et al. 2020). Three-quarters of participants in a 2015 survey of 512 companies in nineteen primary industries reported that they were in a state of overwork (Wang, Yang, and Nagai 2021). The 2016 China Labor Dynamics Survey, based on 21,086 people, estimated that employees put in an average of 44.7 hours a week at work, and more than 40 percent of the respondents worked more than 50 hours a week (Cai 2017).

The gains of economic development are dampened by the toll of overwork on the country's female population, who shoulder the bulk of domestic labor to absorb the overflow of negative impacts on the domestic sphere. Although higher GDP brings growing education, massive urbanization, and intense global connections, it is also built on the underappreciated and undervalued sacrifice of Chinese women who provide hours of invisible labor to support their husbands, rear children, and care for the elderly while trying to keep up these relentlessly long hours at work.

Conclusion

We have analyzed gender ideology in China from both a comparative and a historical perspective. We position the prevailing gender ideology of the Chinese people globally in a two-dimensional space of gender equality and gender essentialism to shed light on the broad influences of economic development, national policies, and labor force characteristics on gender relations in the nation. We have examined historical trajectories and cohort variations in transition in gender ideology among the Chinese to demonstrate the shifts in population attitudes toward women's position, status, and roles in society. In doing so, we focus on education, the urban and rural divide, and gender as important indicators of socialization experiences and interest orientations to arrive at an appreciation of the driving forces behind this stagnation and these dynamics.

The prevailing gender ideology in China is a flexible-traditionalist one that treats women as inferior to men in their right to educational, occupational, and political opportunities while expecting them to share in breadwinning and childrearing. Such an ideological pattern is a joint product of the Confucian patriarchy and socialist policies. The traditional Chinese gender system devalues women and treats them as inferior to men in intelligence, ability, traits, and strength. In such a belief system, men are more deserving of educational opportunities, occupational prospects, and political power while women are seen as subordinate and secondary subjects to men's control and order. Although modernization forces have eroded some of these beliefs in male supremacy, the

essence of this traditional ideology persists, illustrated by the relatively lower support for women's rights and status in the public domain of education, work, and politics.

On the other hand, in the period of the 1950s–1970s, the socialist state advocated for women's paid employment and mobilized women into the labor force as a pathway to gender equality. As a result, female labor force participation rates in China are one of the highest in the world. Chinese women remain in full-time employment even in their childbearing and childrearing years. However, the progress in achieving gender equality remains slow. People's perception of women as deserving equal rights in the public domains remains traditional. Many still regard men as superior to women in their natural ability, intelligence, and leadership. If this widespread support for women's dual roles of worker and mother persists in Chinese society, the socialist belief that women should be economically self-reliant will remain popular and endorsement of full-time homemaker will stay low. Women either remain unmarried and wrestle with the societal pressure for universal marriage or enter into a married life of both working full time and doing the bulk of housework and childrearing.

Women have become more egalitarian over time and over cohorts, while men's gender attitudes have stagnated or even reversed to a more conservative direction. As a result, the gender gap in egalitarian attitudes has enlarged. Urban, college-educated, and younger women have heightened awareness of their interests and have become more egalitarian regarding their status and roles in society, while men resist these forces and remain unchanged despite increased education. Young women with the most egalitarian attitudes must also cope with male peers who lag substantially behind in their gender attitudes, and may face more marital conflict once they enter into marriage with these men. The more egalitarian gender attitudes of urban, young, and college-educated women reflect the power of self-interest as these women become more aware of their own interests and strive for their own well-being in the existing social order. On the other hand, rural women hold the least egalitarian attitudes and uphold the notion of male supremacy, even more so than men themselves. This is a testament to the potent influence of socialization that instills traditional ideas in these women even when these ideas oppose their own interests.

A rapidly growing GDP has not brought progress toward a more egalitarian gender ideology. Rather, economic advancement took place at the cost of substantially expanding working hours. The overwork ethic that workplaces expect forms a "patriarchal closure" that reinforces the notion of separate spheres, reaffirming men's domination in paid work and excluding women from jobs that provide high prestige and high earnings. Most importantly, the norm of overwork molds people's perception of female workers as unable to live up to the expectation of ideal workers, and shifts gender ideology in a conservative direction.

To summarize, Chinese women, particularly the young, urban, and well educated, are wrestling on multiple fronts. If they choose to remain unmarried they have to withstand the societal pressure for universal marriage. If they do marry they are expected to work full time and do the bulk of housework and childrearing. Their partners may hold gender attitudes that are substantially more conservative than their own, exacerbating the negative consequences of work-family conflicts on these women. In addition, both spouses face an increasing demand at work to extend their already long working hours, which further adds to the stresses these women face in a hostile society.

Changing Patterns of Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, and Fertility

Some scholars have stated that patterns of the second demographic transition (SDT) have spread beyond the Western developed world to Asian countries. The SDT encompasses a series of changes in marriage and family, including an increase in cohabitation, a delay in age at first marriage, subreplacement fertility, rising divorce and remarriage rates, and more complex households (Lesthaeghe 2010, 2014). Substantial research shows that such a framework has largely failed to explain East Asian family patterns and transformations. East Asian families emphasize filial piety, which places great emphasis on bearing and rearing children and taking care of elderly parents. Marriage is not an individual choice and achievement but a “package of responsibilities” of bearing and caring for children, doing housework, and tending to in-laws (Raymo et al. 2015; Cherlin 2004). As a result, traditional East Asian families are characterized by almost universal marriage, earlier age at first marriage, having children soon after the first marriage, strong preference for sons, low divorce and remarriage rates, strong family ties, and prevalent multigeneration coresidence.

East Asian marriage and family behaviors deviate from the predictions of SDT in general, and Chinese families further differentiate from not only the SDT model but also other East Asian societies. Compared with families in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, Chinese families have a much younger age at first marriage, a much higher marriage rate, a much lower mean age at first birth, and a higher fertility rate. These traditional family patterns have been retained even with Chinese women sustaining the highest female labor participation rate in the world (Raymo et al. 2015). Since most social changes are ushered in the form of cohort changes whereby younger generations bring new thinking, new norms, and new behaviors, we engage a cohort analysis to predict future trends in marriage, cohabitation, divorce, remarriage, and fertility.

Social scientists regularly use the method of cohort analysis to detect and observe social change. A cohort is a group of people going through the same or similar social conditions and events. A birth cohort is banded together according to their birth year. When they go through life-course events such as marriage, childbirth, or divorce, these behaviors reflect the historical trajectories of marriage and family transitions. Through the lens of varying life events across birth cohorts, we are able to understand how behaviors, social values, and conditions change or continue from the past decades. This chapter summarizes these patterns using three waves of nationally representative data from the Chinese Family Panel Studies (waves 2010, 2012, 2014). When carrying out these analyses we address the idea that although the Chinese family seemingly shares similar traits of the SDT, China is unique in its cultural and historical contexts that shape family and marital behaviors. Stable and institutional marriage and persistent gender and class disparity are the most pronounced characteristics. Furthermore, theories developed in Western countries cannot adequately explain these changes. This chapter is divided into four sections, with each concentrating on these respective topics: patterns of marriage and nonmarriage, cohabitation before marriage, divorce and remarriage, and fertility.

Patterns of Marriage and Nonmarriage

Age at First Marriage

An increase in higher age at first marriage and in the nonmarriage rate are some of the most salient characteristics of the SDT. In 2010 the average age at first marriage in the United States was twenty-eight among men and twenty-six among women, an increase from twenty-three among men and twenty-one among women in 1970. In the United Kingdom, the same statistic increased from twenty-nine to thirty-two for men and twenty-eight to thirty for women. The average age at first marriage at roughly the same time (2009 or 2010) was similar to if not higher than the age among northern European countries such as Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, with both genders over thirty at their entry into first marriage (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2013). Similar patterns are found in East Asia. The age at entry into first marriage increased rapidly from the 1970s to 2010 in Japan (26.9 to 30.5 among men, 24.42 to 28.8 among women), Korea (27.1 to 31.8 among men, 23.3 to 28.9 among women), and Taiwan (26.6 to 31.8 among men, and 22.3 to 29.2 among women).

However, China has sustained a significantly earlier entry into first marriage compared with Western and other East Asian countries. In 2010 the average age at first marriage among men was twenty-six, increasing by one year from 1980, and for women it was 23.9, increasing from 20.2 in 1970 (Raymo et al. 2015). We find similar patterns by using birth cohorts from three waves of the Chinese

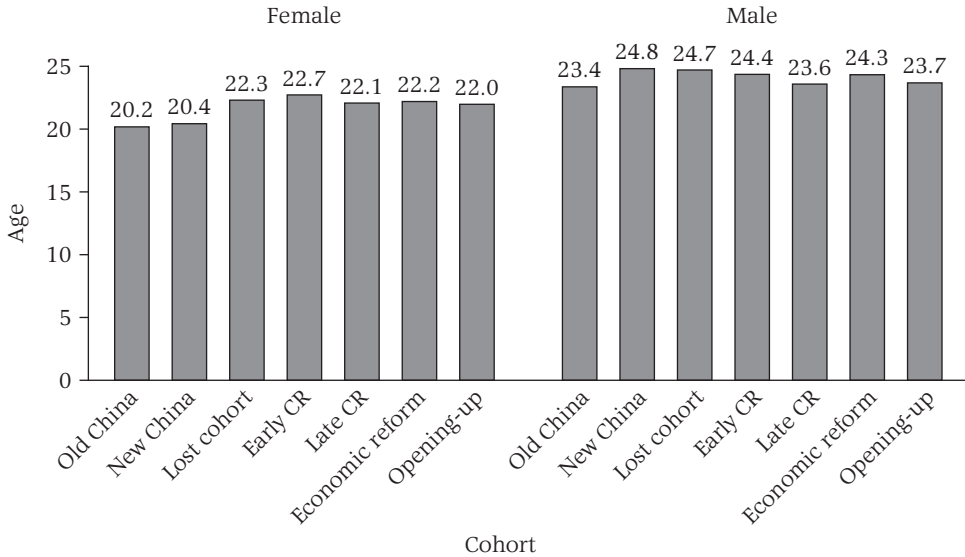


FIGURE 4.1 Average age at first marriage by gender and birth cohort

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

Family Panel Studies (2010, 2012, 2014). We define birth cohorts based on people's birth years that subject them to distinctive life experiences due to China's drastic and rapid social changes. The Children of Old China cohort was born before 1939, the Children of New China between 1939 and 1946, the Lost Cohort between 1947 and 1955, the Children of Early Cultural Revolution between 1956 and 1961, the Children of Late Cultural Revolution between 1962 and 1966, the Children of Economic Reforms between 1967 and 1976, and the Children of Opening-Up in 1977 and later (Shu, Chen, and Zhu forthcoming).

Overall, age at first marriage has changed little since the 1960s, as shown in Figure 4.1. The average age at entry into marriage increased by two years, from 20.0 to 22.3 for women. This number peaked among those of the Early Cultural Revolution cohort to 22.7, reflecting the government policy in the 1970s and early 1980s that pushed marriage ages to twenty-three and twenty-five for women and men, respectively. It then fell back slightly among the younger cohorts after the 1982 marriage law stipulated twenty and twenty-two as the legal marriage ages for women and men, respectively. Among men, age at first marriage remained virtually unchanged among the seven birth cohorts, fluctuating only slightly between ages 23.4 and 24.8.

The more education people have, the older their age is at the time of their first marriage, according to Figure 4.2. Women's age at entry into first marriage generally increases with education. This pattern holds across birth cohorts

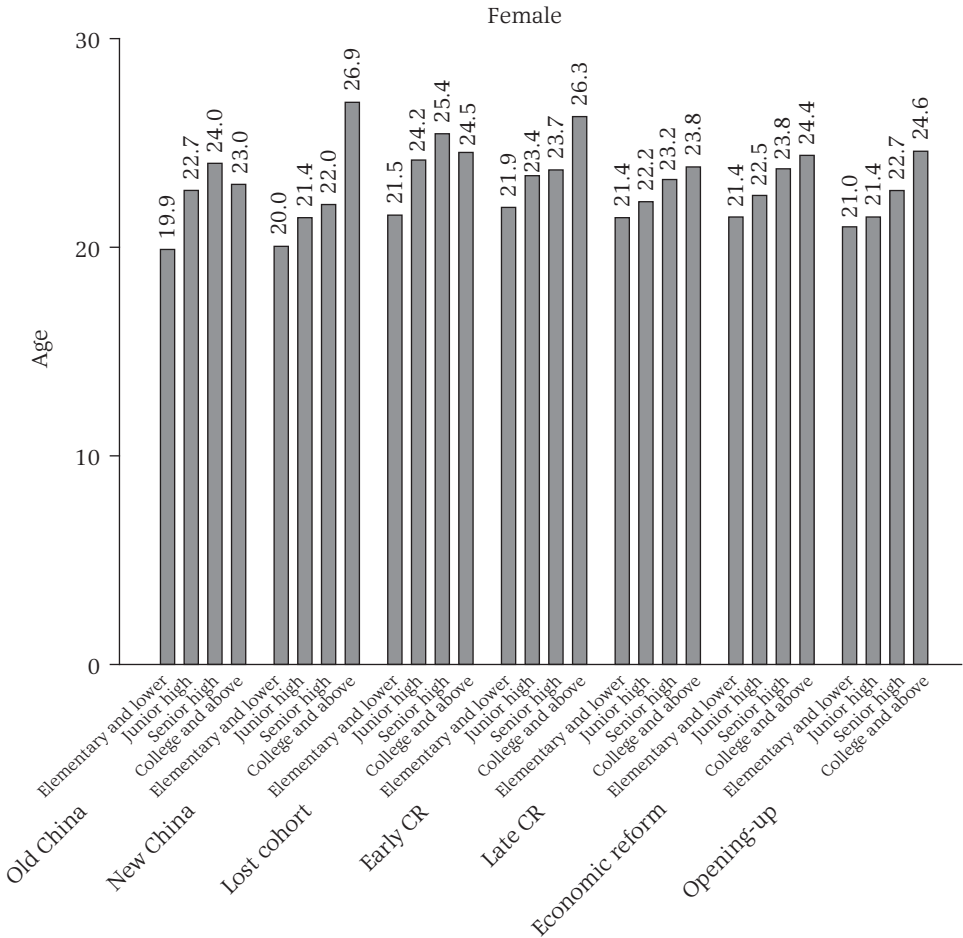


FIGURE 4.2 Average age at first marriage by education, gender, and birth cohort

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

except for two of the three oldest cohorts, in which most women had very little education. Among men, however, there is little educational difference in age at first marriage among those who do not attend college. College-educated men marry at ages two to four years older than less educated men. This differentiation effect of education has become more marked in the two youngest cohorts, in which each level of education is starting to show a delaying effect on age at the first marriage. These results agree with previous studies arguing that there are few cohort differences in entry into marriage due to education (Tian 2013; Ji and Yeung 2014). This delay seems to have consistently existed since the New China cohort.

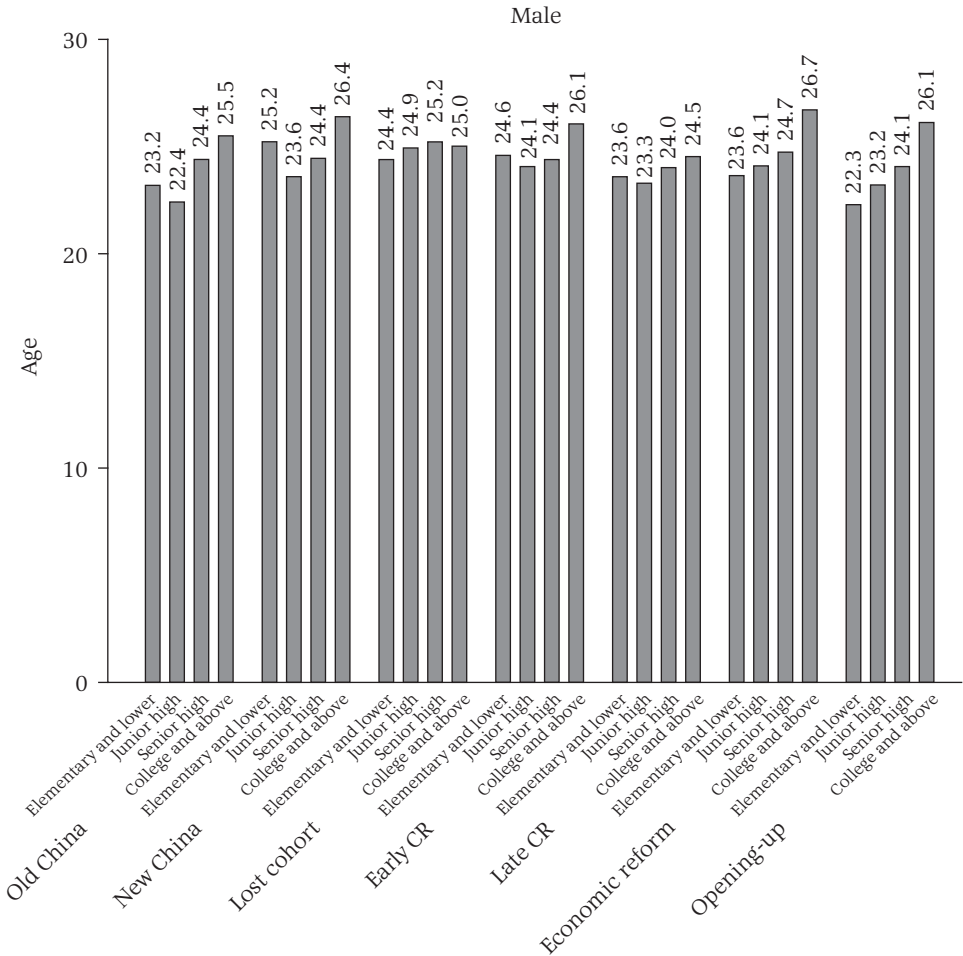


FIGURE 4.2 (continued)

The Never Married

The average age at first marriage presents only partial information on the marriage process since it reflects the characteristics of those who are married and leaves out those who are not married. We evaluated those who were thirty-five and older and remained unmarried to show the prevalence of marriage in China and whether there are changes in this measure among the birth cohorts. Universal marriage in China persists over birth cohorts. Figure 4.3 shows that less than 8 percent of the people in each age group have never married. This is very low compared with the United States, in which 27.2 percent of adults ages thirty-five to thirty-nine and 21.0 percent of adults ages forty to forty-four have never

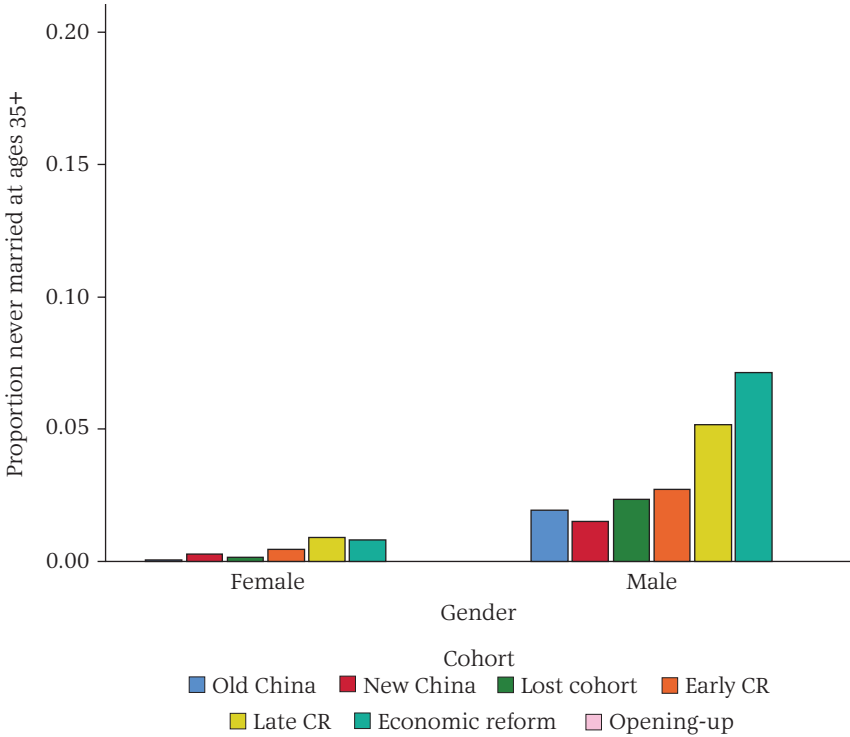


FIGURE 4.3 Percentage of never married over 35 years old

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

married (Current Population Survey 2021). Only about 3 percent of Chinese people ages fifty and above have never married in China, compared with 23.37 percent of Japanese fifty and older who have never married, as reported in the country's National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (Kyodo 2017).

Figure 4.4 shows that the proportion of never-married increased dramatically among the Lost Cohort and the Economic Reform cohort, who were born in 1947–1955 and 1967–1976, respectively. This increase is most marked among men, particularly rural men.

Logistic regression results confirm this finding. After controlling for gender, education, and rural versus urban disparities, the Lost Cohort is no different from the other cohorts, except for the Economic Reform cohort, in their risk of remaining never married. The Economic Reform cohort is more than five times more likely to never marry compared with their earlier cohorts (odds ratio=5.394, $p < .01$, Model 1, Table 4.1).

Is there gender and rural disparity across cohorts on the percentage of never-married? Descriptively, there are higher percentages of rural men and women who have never been married compared with their urban counterparts, and there

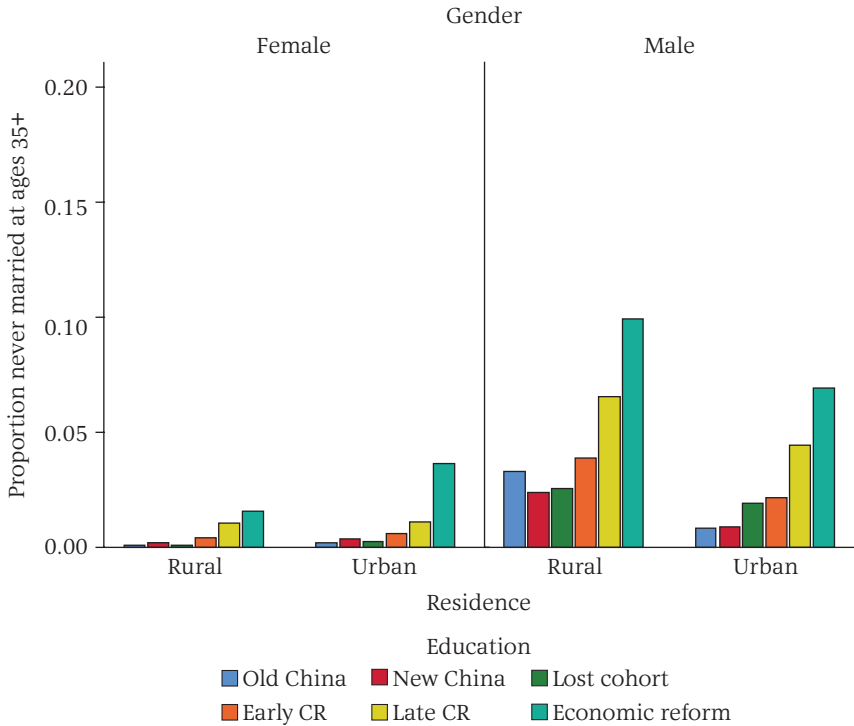


FIGURE 4.4 Never married over 35 years old by cohort, gender, and rural residence
 Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

seems to be little gender difference in the never-married pattern. Net of education and age, both rural and gender differences are statistically significant, as shown in Table 4.1. Rural residents are 1.86 times more likely than urban residents to never marry. Men are eleven times more likely than women to never marry. Of all the gender and residence groups, rural men are the most likely to remain unmarried (Figure 4.5). If we control for all other sociodemographic characteristics (Table 4.1, Model 3) and calculate the predicted probabilities of never-married among those over thirty-five years old, we find that only men with elementary and lower education are significantly more likely to never marry compared with all other groups of men (Figure 4.6); and only rural men are significantly more likely to never marry compared with all other groups (Figure 4.7).

In sum, despite the claim that universal marriage in China is a thing of the past, marriage in China remains a vital institution in which the vast majority of people (over 90 percent) spend their lives (Yu and Xie 2015b). Despite a small increase, the average age at first marriage has remained lower than those in other East Asian countries and the Western developed world. Higher education has always been correlated with later entry into first marriage for both men and

TABLE 4.1
**Odds Ratio from Logistic Regression on the Likelihood of Never
Marrying for Those Ages 35 and Above**

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Gender (female as reference)			
Male	11.140*** (3.835)	53.740*** (28.620)	53.840*** (28.700)
Residence (urban as reference)			
Rural	1.862** (0.407)	1.933** (0.427)	2.278** (0.666)
Education (elementary and lower as reference)			
Junior high	0.418*** (0.0986)	2.500 (2.062)	1.957 (1.571)
Senior high	0.337** (0.121)	14.260*** (10.430)	16.960*** (12.880)
College and above	0.781 (0.418)	37.550*** (34.55)	32.930*** (30.82)
Birth cohort (Old China as reference)			
New China	2.310 (1.615)	2.263 (1.574)	2.228 (1.553)
Lost Cohort	1.585 (1.064)	1.54 (1.035)	1.502 (1.012)
Early CR	2.638 (1.800)	2.627 (1.799)	2.523 (1.742)
Late CR	2.216 (1.522)	2.158 (1.491)	2.081 (1.449)
Economic Reform	5.394** (3.461)	5.207* (3.354)	5.040* (3.268)
Gender X Education			
Men with junior high degree		0.148* (0.127)	0.154* (0.131)
Men with senior high degree		0.011*** (0.009)	0.010*** (0.008)

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Men with college degree		0.009*** (0.009)	0.008*** (0.009)
Residence X Education			
Rural, junior high			0.530 (0.266)
Rural, senior high			1.148 (0.766)
Rural, college and above			0.754 (0.747)
AIC	78928595.9	76579482.3	76455796.8
BIC	78928679.7	76579588.9	76455926.3

Note: Odds ratios and standard errors are reported. $N = 15,024$. Based on AIC and BIC, Model 3 is the best-fitting model.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.1$.

women since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. We found no evidence that college-educated individuals have a more delayed entry into first marriage since the economic reforms (Yu and Xie 2015b). On the other hand, rural men and men with the least education may continue to be more likely to never marry if status hypergamy continues to be the norm (Mu and Xie 2014).

Cohabitation before Marriage

Cohabitation is an increasingly common form of union in many parts of the world. In European countries, it is conventional that couples in cohabitation have children, and cohabitation enjoys an institutionalized status to provide benefits similar to those of married couples (Liu and Reczek 2012; Lee and Ono 2012; Perelli-Harris and Gassen 2012). In China, nonmarital cohabitation has been rising rapidly over the past thirty years, but mainly as a precursor to marriage (Yu and Xie 2015a; Wang 2007). According to data from 2010, as many as one-third of the couples in the youngest marriage cohort had cohabited before they married (Xie 2013). Figure 4.8 shows that cohabitation was virtually nonexistent among the first three cohorts but started to pick up rapidly beginning with the fourth cohort, the rate doubling in each of the subsequent cohorts and reaching 25 percent in the youngest cohort. Among women, 2 percent of those who

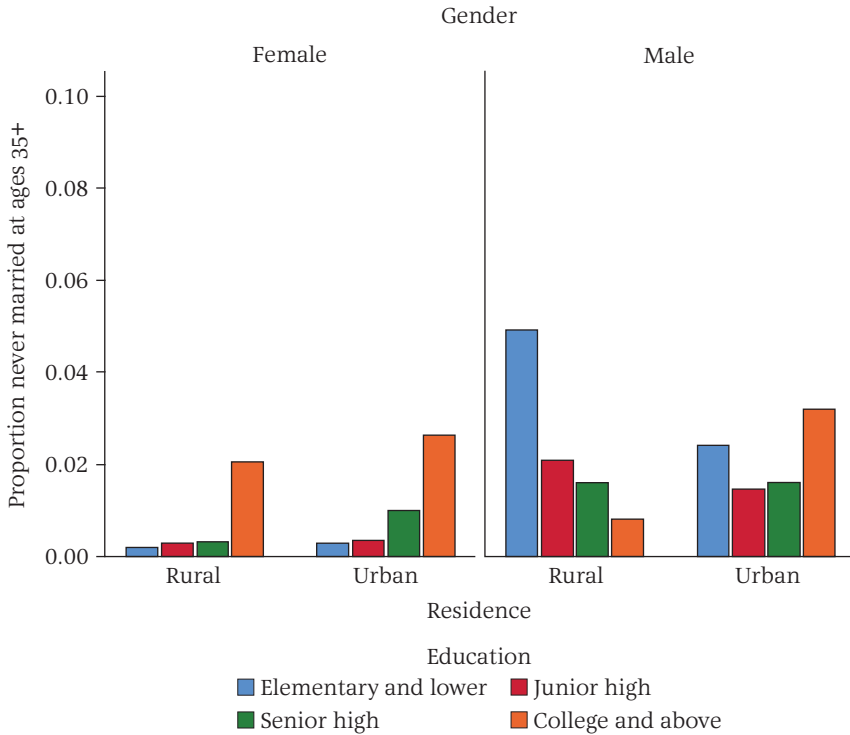


FIGURE 4.5 Percentage of never married 35+ by gender, education, and residence

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

were born between 1956 and 1961 have cohabited. This percentage doubled to 4 percent for the 1962–1966 cohort, and more than doubled to 10 percent among the next younger cohort, those born between 1967 and 1976. Among the youngest cohort, the percentage of cohabitation surged to 25 percent, again more than doubling. The pattern of cohabitation and the pace of growth among men are similar to those of women.

The rural and urban disparity seems to be most salient among members of the youngest cohort. Figure 4.9 shows that 30 percent of the members of the youngest cohort in cities have cohabited, whereas only 22–23 percent of their rural counterparts have cohabited. However, once gender, education, and cohort are controlled, the rural versus urban disparity no longer exists. It is the educational disparity, not the rural-urban disparity per se, that accounts for this difference.

Figure 4.10 shows the predicted probabilities of cohabitation by gender, urban residence, and education. College-educated men are the most likely to have cohabited, at 26 percent, while men with high school or junior high school education are half as likely to do so. Men with less than elementary education

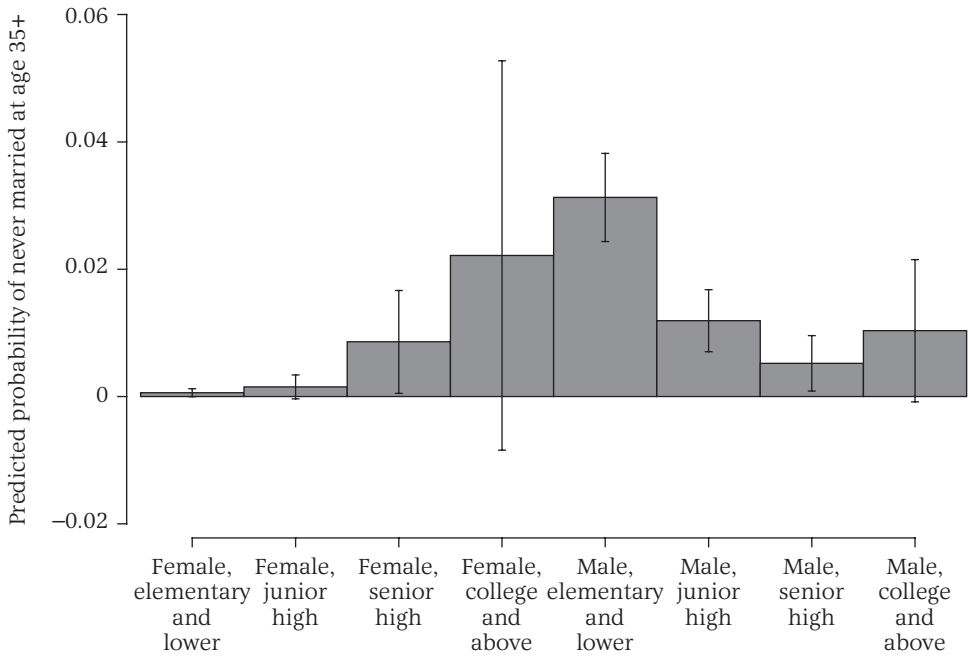


FIGURE 4.6 Predicted probabilities of never married 35+ by gender and education

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

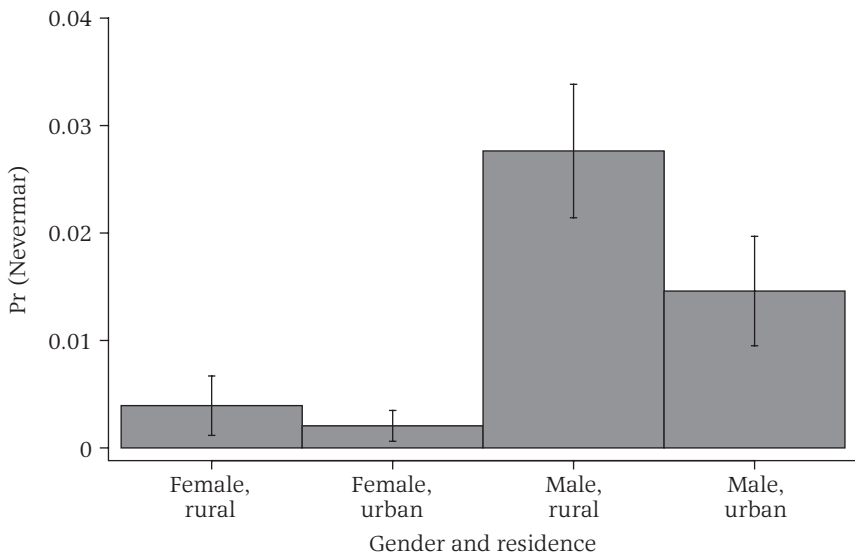


FIGURE 4.7 Predicted probabilities of never married 35+ by gender and residence

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

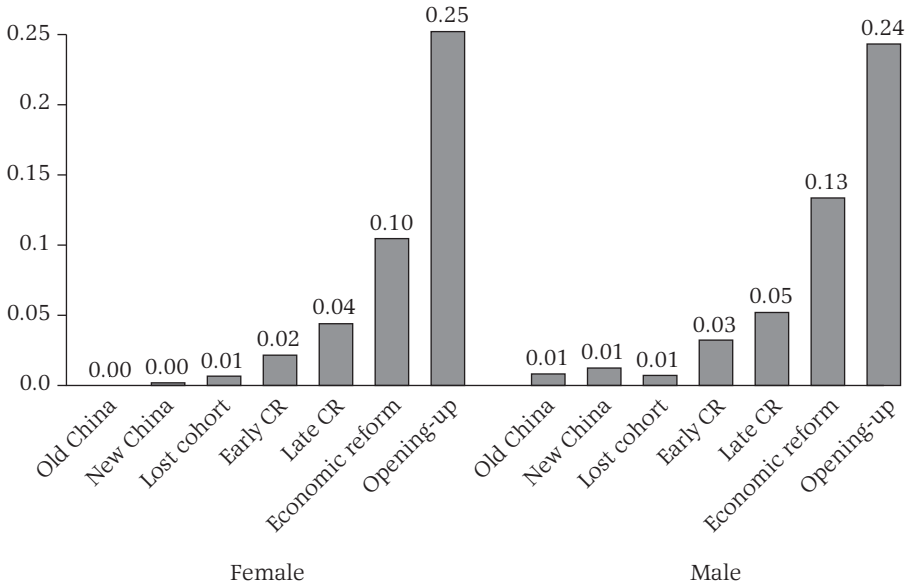


FIGURE 4.8 Proportion of cohabitation by gender and birth cohort

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

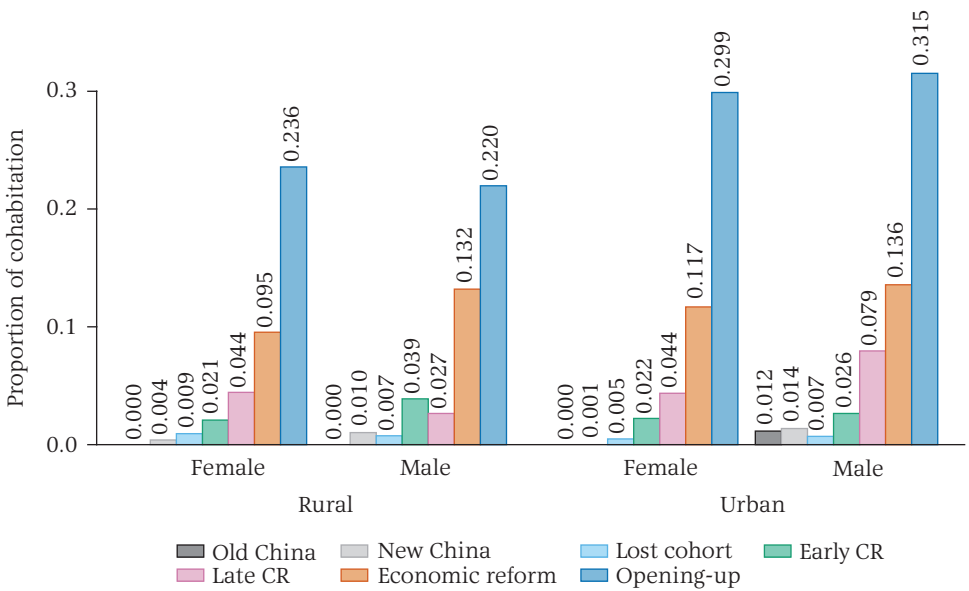


FIGURE 4.9 Proportion of cohabitation by cohort, gender, and rural/urban

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

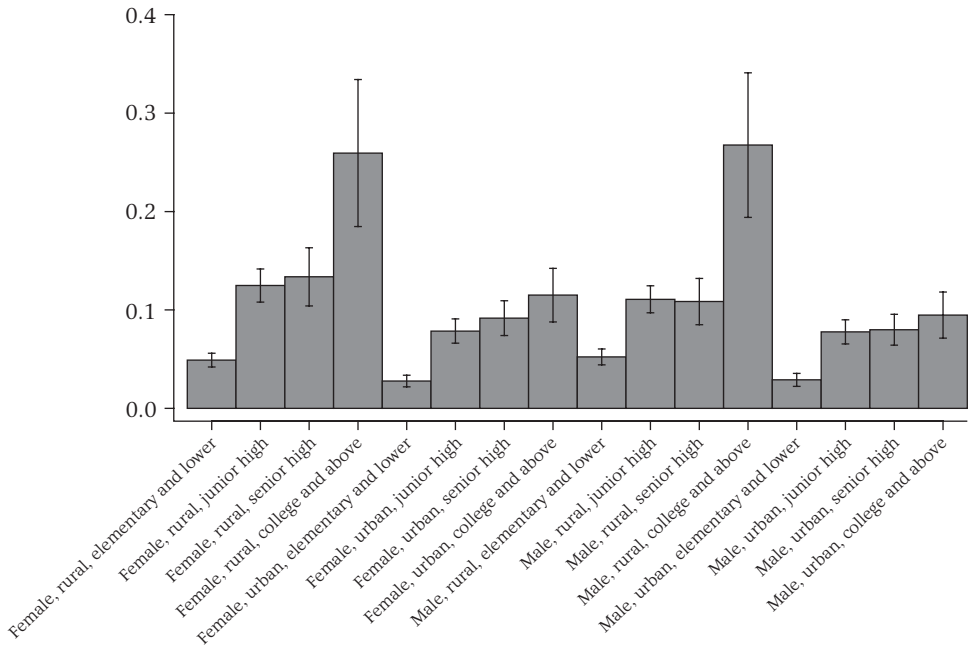


FIGURE 4.10 Predicted probabilities of cohabitation by gender, residence, and education

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

have less than a 10 percent predicted probability of cohabiting before first marriage. This pattern is similar for both urban and rural men. Women with elementary and less education have probabilities of cohabiting that are similar to those of their male counterparts, but women overall have a much lower likelihood of cohabiting compared with their male counterparts with similar education and residence.

Surprisingly, people who cohabited are 56 percent less likely to divorce after they marry their cohabiting partner. Although cohabitation used to be correlated with divorce owing to its rarity and social stigma, it is now becoming prevalent and an acceptable approach as a test run to see if a relationship is ready for marriage, thus reducing the risk of divorce (Zhang 2017). Scholars project that cohabitation will be more common and will spread to the less educated groups (Yu and Xie 2015a).

Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce

Until the economic and marriage law reforms in the 1980s, China was always a country with stable low divorce and remarriage rates. Since then, the crude

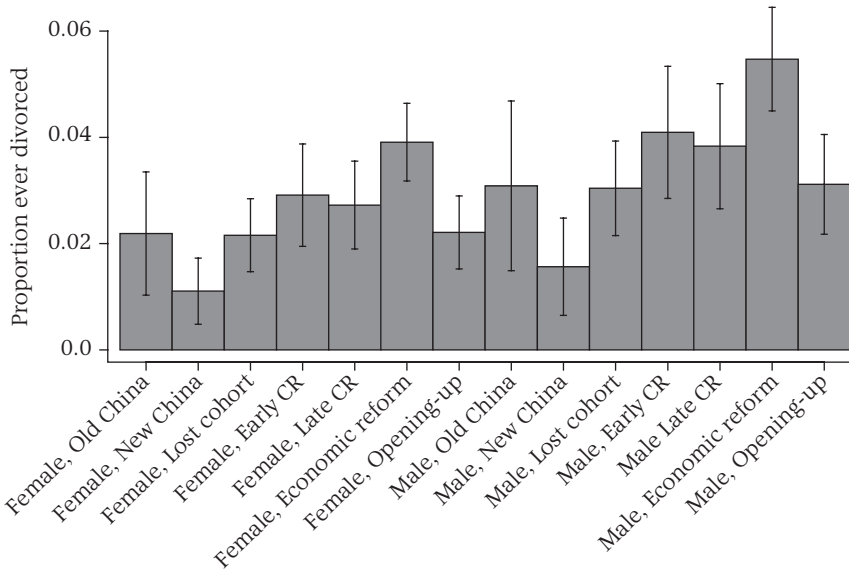


FIGURE 4.11 Proportion of ever divorced by gender and birth cohort

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

divorce rate in China has increased sixfold, from 0.03 percent in 1979 to 3.84 percent in 2015 (China National Bureau of Statistics 2016). These figures are on par with European countries and the United States. This leaves China with an estimated divorced population of 3 million—a huge number of people’s lives are affected by divorce in China.

Figure 4.11 presents the proportion of people ever divorced by gender and cohort. In general, in all cohorts, more men than women are divorced. The divorce trend among men has been steadily increasing over time and peaks in the second-youngest cohort (0.054). The youngest cohort has a lower proportion of divorce since their marriages are still in the early years with a low risk of divorce. However, the divorce trend among women fluctuates over birth cohorts. The second-oldest cohort has the lowest percentage of divorce (about 0.01). Women in the Early CR cohort reach the first peak at around 0.03, then the Economic Reform cohort reaches a second peak at about 0.04. Additionally, compared with the New China cohort, the Economic Reform cohort saw significant increases in divorce among men and women.

Figure 4.12 shows the difference in divorce rates between rural and urban people. Compared with rural women, urban women have a higher proportion of divorce. This is consistent across all cohorts. Compared with rural men, urban men exceed the proportion of divorce in cohorts only since the Lost Cohort.

Even though men are more likely to divorce, females with college education are the most likely to have divorced of all groups defined by gender, cohort, and

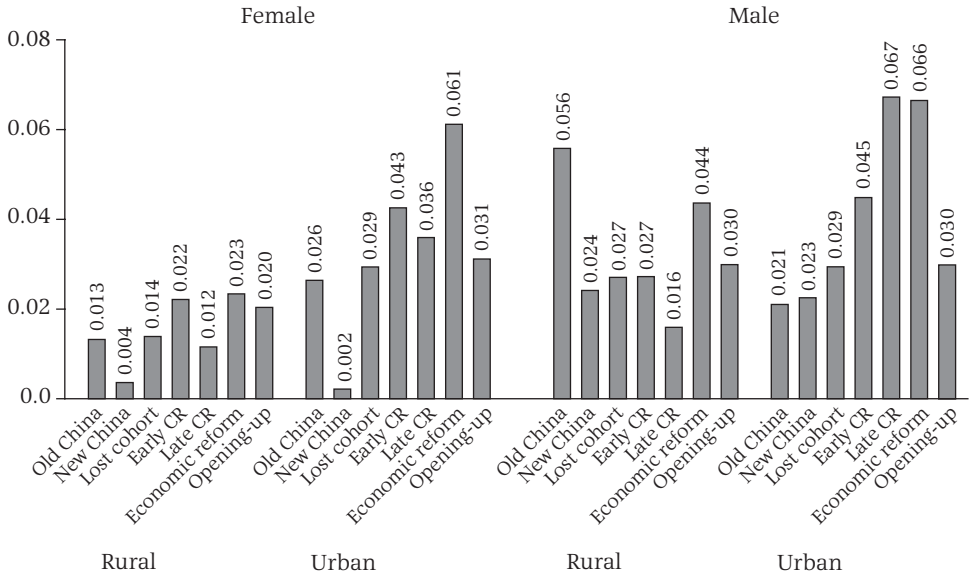


FIGURE 4.12 Proportion of ever divorced by gender, cohort, and urban residence

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

education. Figure 4.13 illustrates that women in the Early CR cohort have experienced the highest proportion of divorce of all groups (38 percent). On the other hand, divorce rates among women with elementary education remain very low—less than 3 percent throughout all cohorts. Among men older than the CR cohort, high school graduates have a consistently higher proportion of divorce. College-educated men have experienced a sharp increase in divorce among the Late CR cohort (from 6 percent to 15 percent) but an even-sharper decline (from 15 percent to 3 percent) among the Economic Reform cohort. Among men of the second- and third-youngest cohorts, the Late CR cohort and the Economic Reform cohort, those without college education have also experienced an increase in divorce.

Remarriage

Similar to the divorce rate in China, the remarriage rate has been rising rapidly over the past thirty years. In 1985 only 0.5 percent had remarried, but in 2015, 3.4 percent were remarried (China Statistical Yearbook 2016). In our analysis using data from the Chinese Family Panel Studies, we found that of the 549 divorce cases (weighted, a total of about 3 percent in the sample), 65.6 percent of the divorced individuals never remarried after the dissolution of their first marriage, while about 30 percent of divorced individuals entered into new marriages. Less than 1 percent of the divorced individuals have married three or

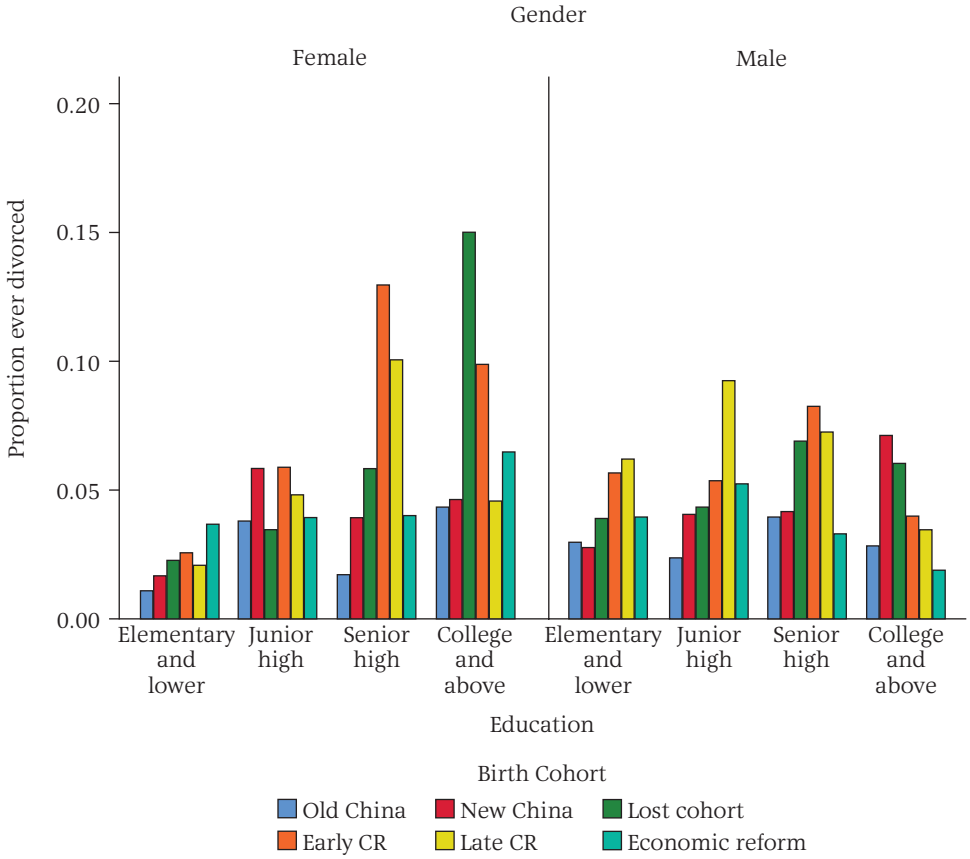


FIGURE 4.13 Proportion of ever divorced by gender, cohort, and education

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

more times. This amounts to only 2 percent of the total population who are in second marriages, and less than 0.1 percent who have had more than two marriages. Remarriage in China is still very low compared with the United States. Between 2008 and 2012 (Lewis and Kreider 2015) about 13–14 percent of Americans had married twice and 4 percent more than three times.

Figure 4.14 shows the percentage of remarried individuals by gender and cohort. Except for the older cohort, the percentage of remarried individuals has doubled among women (from 1.5 percent to 3.4 percent) but declined among men (3.9 percent to 2.0 percent). This could be attributed to the 1950 marriage law that banned polygamy and offered equal rights to marriage and divorce to both men and women. Higher proportions of women have remarried compared with men. We found no statistical differences among the cohorts.

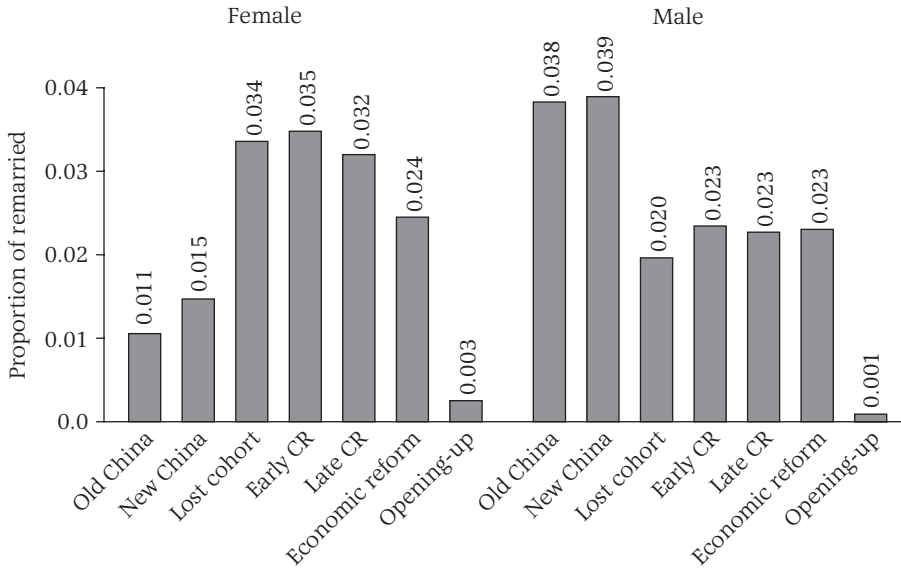


FIGURE 4.14 Proportion of remarriage by gender and cohort

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

Examining the pattern of remarriage by gender, education, and residence in Figure 4.15, we find that urban residents are more likely to remarry than rural residents. College-educated women are less likely to remarry than their less educated counterparts. Urban women with middle school education have the highest remarriage rates. The rural versus urban divide is the most marked among men; rural men with at least junior high education are the least likely to remarry, while urban men with more than junior high education are the most likely to remarry. Education is negatively associated with remarriage among rural men, while there is a U-shaped relationship between education and remarriage among urban men.

Overall, we have found salient cohort, gender, and class differences in divorce and remarriage. Divorce rates have risen steadily among men in every cohort, but they fluctuate among different cohorts of women. The percentage of remarriage has increased among women yet decreased among men. Compared with men, women are more likely to stay married; and if they divorce, they are more likely to remarry and less likely to remain divorced. The social stigma that divorced women face, as well as the scant resources for divorced women and children, make remaining divorced an undesirable status for women.

Urban residents of all cohorts except for the oldest one are more likely to divorce and remarry than their rural counterparts. Women with college education

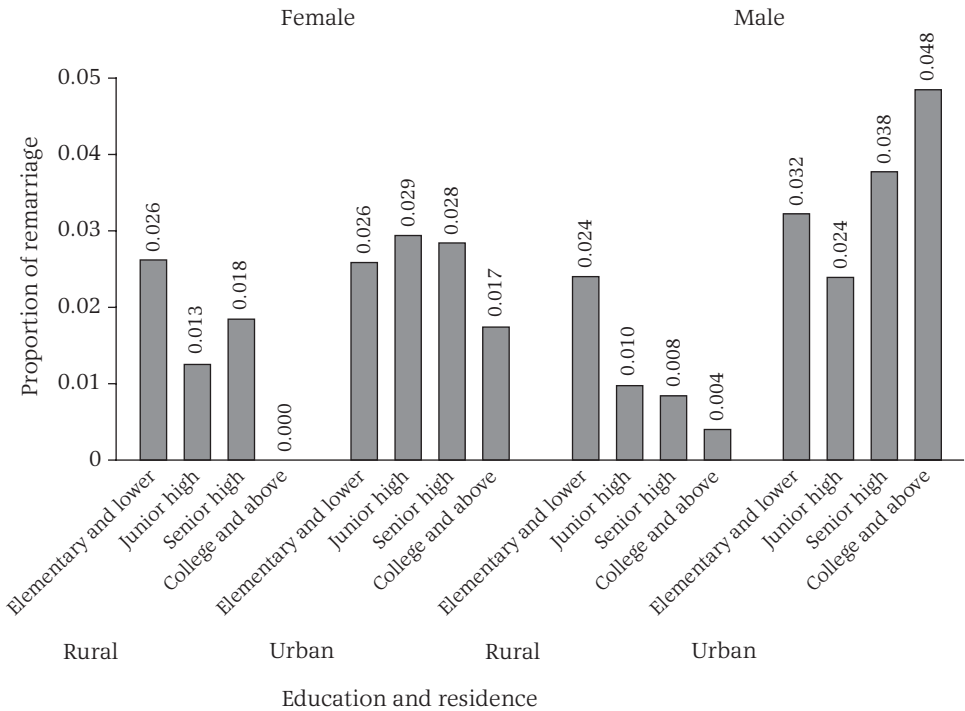


FIGURE 4.15 Proportion of remarriage by gender and education

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

are the most likely to divorce yet the least likely to remarry. Highly educated men are less likely to divorce. Divorce among men with less than college education has increased steadily. College-educated men in urban areas are the most likely to remarry.

Fertility

The Chinese marriage and family system has always centered on producing descendants, particularly male offspring. Unlike people in the United States, who perceive marriage as a personal development (Cherlin 2004), people in China, as in other East Asian countries, see marriage as encompassing a package of responsibilities (Bumpass et al 2009). These responsibilities include having children, usually soon after the marriage, and taking care of the elderly. In such a cultural system, having multiple children, especially sons, means fulfilling filial piety duties and acting properly as “good” sons and daughters to satisfy their parents. In rural areas, where pensions are not a major source of support for the

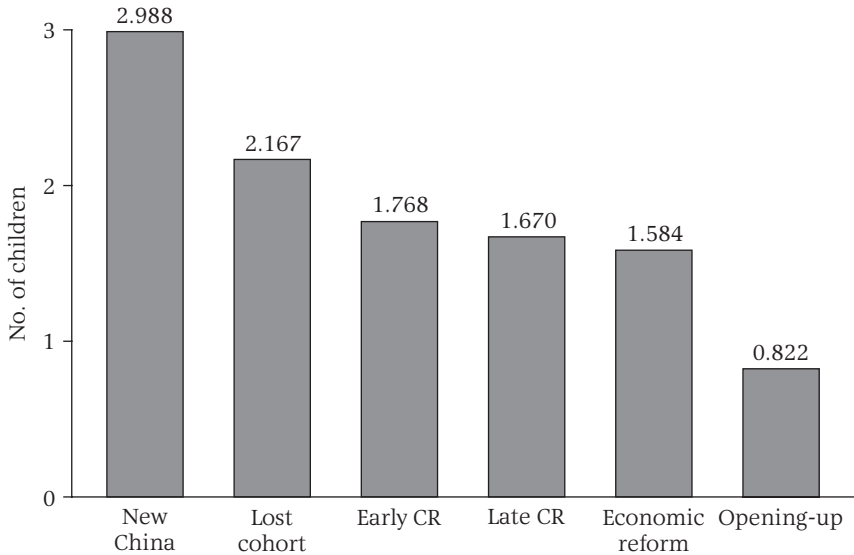


FIGURE 4.16 Average number of children by birth cohort

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

elderly, children also provide financial and emotional support later in life (Zhang and Liu 2007; Dong, Wang, and Ollendick 2002; Liu 2014; Zimmer and Kwong 2003; Lee and Xiao 1998).

This cultural tradition and practices in regard to fertility behaviors have received heavy state intervention. The one-child policy (1979–2014) restricted many families to only one child, raising tensions between the state’s goal of controlling population growth and the traditional idea of family prosperity and filial piety. Despite this, having children remains an important function of marriage and marriage stability. According to data from the CFPC, in 2014 only 9.8 percent of married women had no children, while 30.4 percent had one child and 33.7 percent had two children. Overall, 87.8 percent of married women have one to three children.

The average number of children per family declined sharply among the cohorts, from 3.1 to 1.6 in the second-youngest cohort, and then to less than one child in the Opening-Up cohort, as illustrated in Figure 4.16. The decline is largest between those born before 1947 and those born in the period 1947–1955, from 3 to 2.2 children per family. This is consistent with a drastic decline in fertility rates in the period 1970–1980 prior to the most rigorous enforcement of family planning. The Early CR cohort, born between 1956 and 1961, who experienced the brunt of the one-child policy during their fertile years, had the second-largest decline, from 2.2 to 1.8 children. The decline of the fertility rate was already in

full swing before the rigorous enforcement of the one-child policy, as scholars have argued (Whyte 2015; Whyte, Feng, and Cai 2015).

As Figure 4.17 shows, the association between education and the average number of children is negative. Among the least educated mothers, the number of children declined from 3.3 to 1.2 between the New China cohort and the Opening-up cohort, the highest drop among all educational groups. The number of children experienced similar declines among all educational groups: 47 percent among junior high educated, 64 percent senior high, and 56 percent college.

With the declining number of children, sibling structure changed dramatically over the cohorts. Figure 4.18 shows that “three or more children with at least one boy” was the overwhelmingly dominant sibling structure at 70 percent among the oldest cohort of women. This percentage declined dramatically to 40 percent and 20 percent in the next two younger cohorts of women. Among women of the Late CR cohort, “two children, one of each” moved from the second most popular type to the top and remained as the top type in the next younger cohort, Economic Reform, with “one boy only” close behind in second place.

There is a marked gendered pattern in the sibling structure in favor of boys. Among women of all cohorts, the group “boys only” always outnumbers sibling types with girls only. Women with “one boy only” outnumber those with “one girl only,” and “two boys” outnumbers “two girls.” This finding is not surprising given our knowledge about the skewed sex ratio in the Chinese population.

Premarital birth remains consistently low in China, holding at less than 5 percent since the 1940s. There seems to be an increase in premarital births among the youngest cohort at 9 percent, as shown in Figure 4.19.

Premarital births are concentrated in rural women. Education level is not linearly associated with premarital birth in China. Figure 4.20 shows that the highest proportion of premarital births is among rural high school graduates, and the lowest is among urban women with college education (only 1.5 percent). This pattern differs from what has been found in other countries—that premarital births occur more often among women with the fewest resources and education (Amato 2010; Weitzman 2017).

In summary, despite a rapidly declining fertility rate in China, children still play a central role in marriage. In 2014 less than 10 percent of all married women in China had no children, and this percentage remained consistently low in the past decades. The major change is the decline in the number of women having three or more children, from over 70 percent to around 8 percent. Having one or two children has become the new norm. We have found patterns of gender selection in children over time. This pattern is especially salient among members of the Economic Reform cohort, whose fertile years overlapped with the enforcement of the one-child policy. Finally, premarital births are low (around 10 percent) and positively associated with divorce.

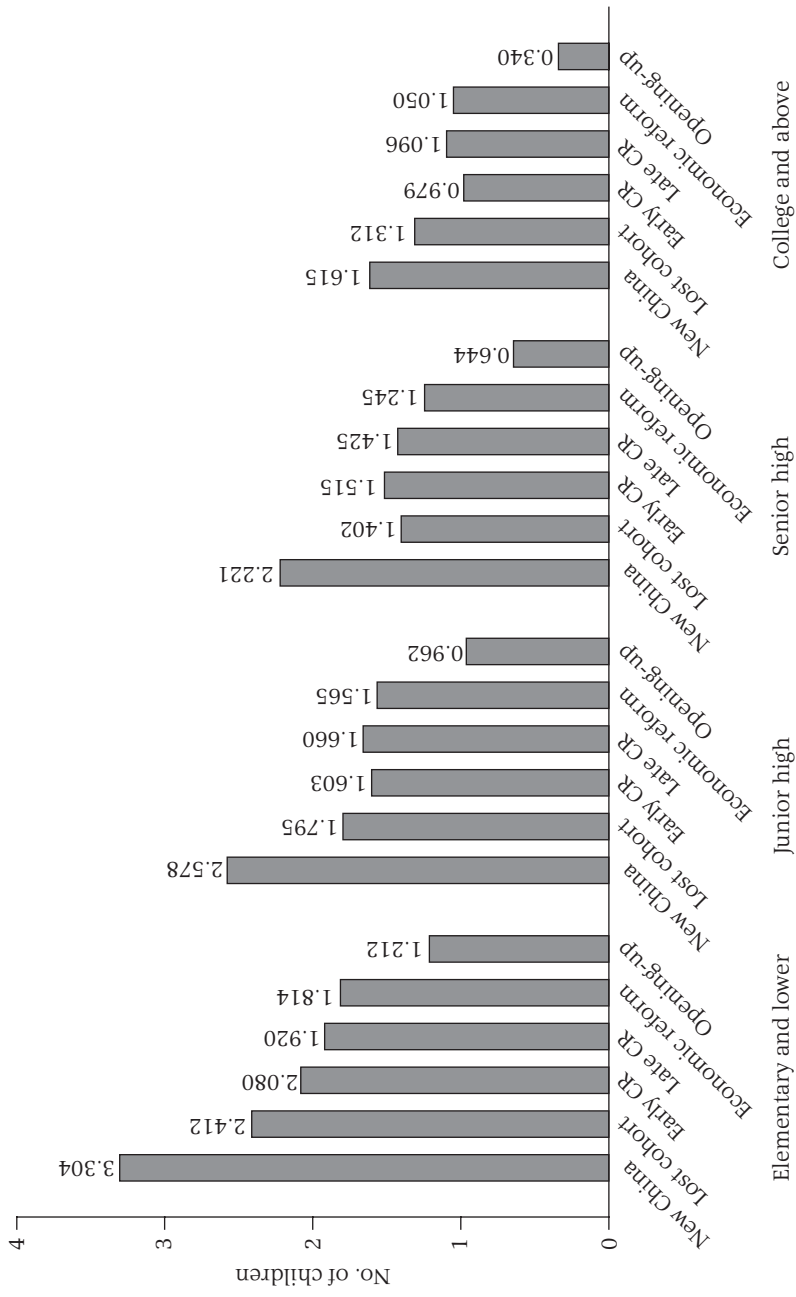


FIGURE 4.17 Average number of children by education and birth cohort

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

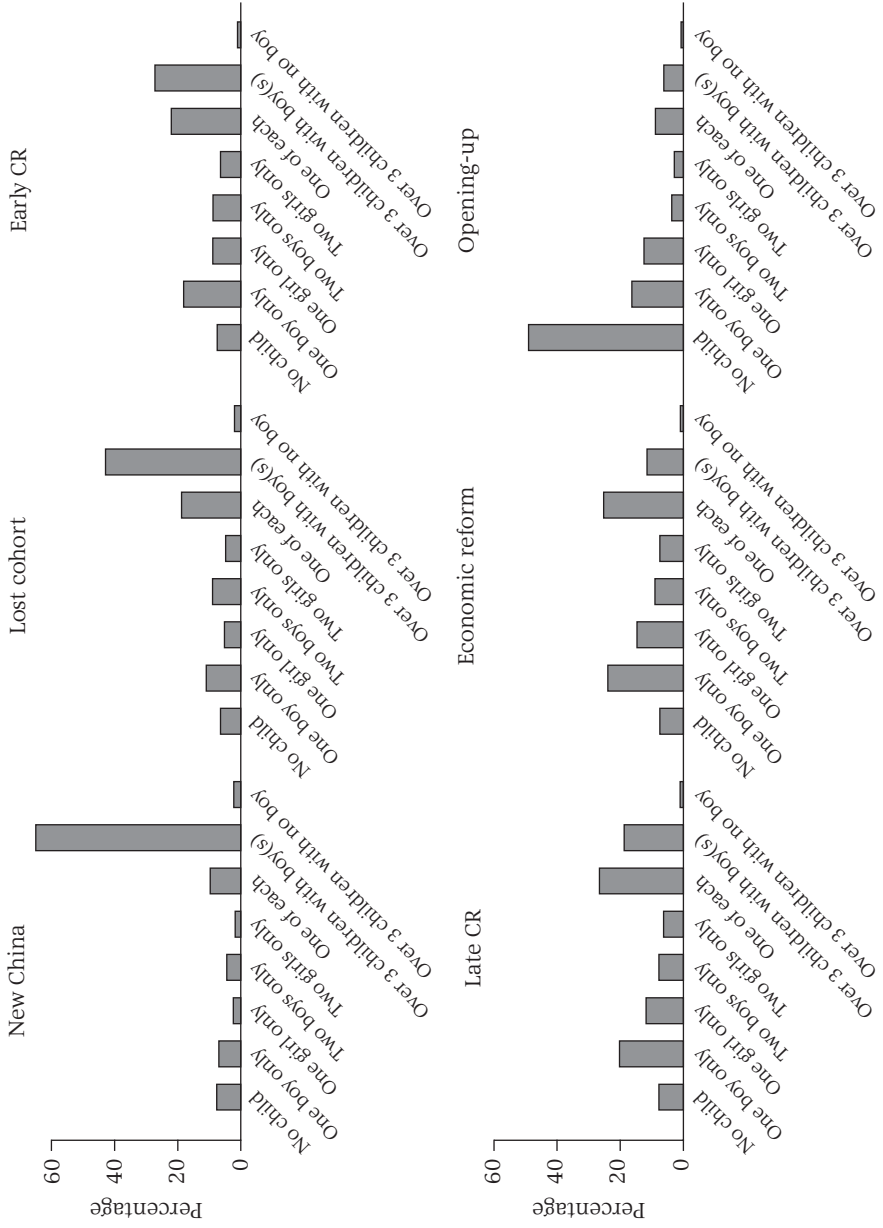


FIGURE 4.18 Sibling structure by cohort

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

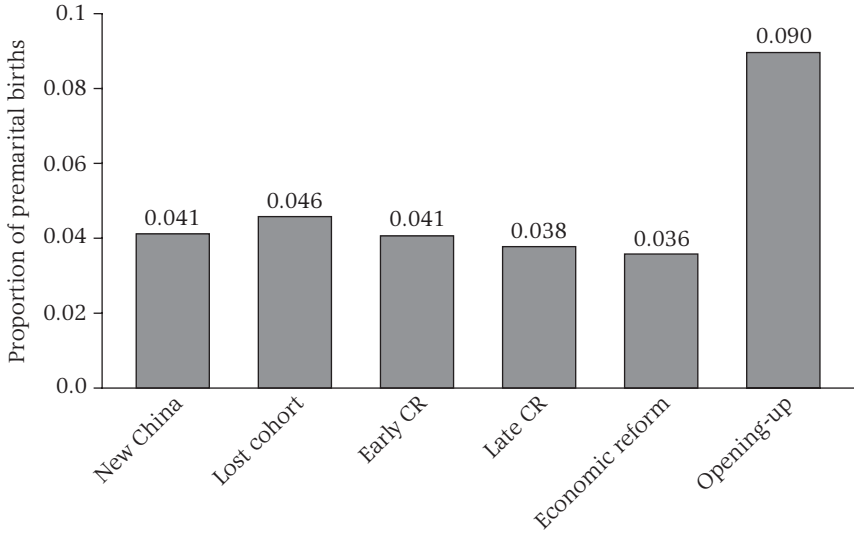


FIGURE 4.19 Proportion of premarital births by cohort
 Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

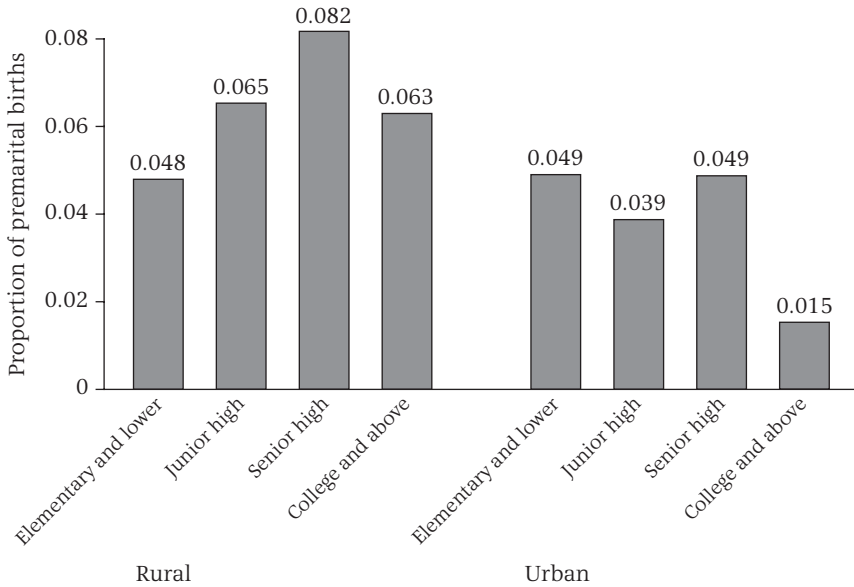


FIGURE 4.20 Proportion of premarital births by education and region
 Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010, 2012, and 2014

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes family changes over the course of seventy years among seven birth cohorts. There are several key findings. First, marriage in China remains an important life-course process that the vast majority of the population experiences. Chinese people enter marriage at earlier ages than individuals in other East Asian countries and the Western developed world. College-educated women and the least educated men are the most likely to delay marriage or remain unmarried. The reinforcement of hypergamy in the marriage market leaves out the most educated women and the least educated men because they are perceived as the least desirable groups. Second, rising cohabitation is marriage oriented and is more common among men, particularly highly educated men. Third, women are more likely to remain married, especially women without college education. Divorce among men has increased steadily from the older to the younger cohorts, but there is no corresponding increase among women. Divorced men are also less likely to remarry. Marriage as an institution has more staying power among Chinese women since women outside of marriage (single, divorced, or widowed) face more stigma and discrimination than unmarried men. Fourth, college-educated women are the least likely to enter into marriage and remain married. They enter first marriages at an older age than all the other groups, are the most likely to divorce, and are the least likely to remarry. In contrast, college-educated men are the most likely to stay married. They are the least likely to divorce and the most likely to remarry in urban areas. Last, declining fertility rates result in fewer women having three or more children. A greater majority of women now have only one or two children.

What do these findings tell us about family changes in China? At first glance, it appears that China has experienced demographic transitions similar to those predicted by the SDT: higher rates of never married, an increasing divorce rate, more cohabitation, an increasing remarriage rate, and a declining fertility rate. However, we found that family change in China is unique, with its own characteristics. Unlike the marriage deinstitutionalization experiences in many European countries and the United States, marriage in China remains a strong and central institution in society. We observed a much earlier and largely universal entry into first marriage. Cohabitation is a precursor of marriage and a sign of intent to marry. People tend to stay married. Childbirth is almost always linked with marriage. Persisting status hypergamy and traditional gender roles have given rise to pronounced gender and class disparities. As a result, contrary to the trend in advanced Western and other East Asian countries in which women are experiencing “a flight from marriage,” Chinese women tend to get married early and stay married more than men do. The exception is college-educated women, who are more likely to cohabit, enter into first marriage at an older age, and divorce and are less likely to remarry. This is the group of women

whose family behavioral changes resemble those in Western developed countries. In contrast, men with resources—those who are highly educated and residing in urban areas—are more likely to remain married. It is men with minimum education who have difficulties getting married and staying married.

College-educated women are the trendsetters, leading the changes in marriage and the family. However, they encounter substantial societal resistance against this transition—they are called the leftover women, pressured to get married and have children, have to take on the lion's share of the housework, and have insignificant decision-making power (Pimentel 2006; Shu, Zhu, and Zhang 2013; Ji 2015). At the same time, the shift toward more conservative attitudes in the population (Chinese General Social Survey 2006–2015), particularly among men (Pimentel 2006), indicates that in China the move toward equal gender roles and the SDT either will be delayed or will take an alternative form.

New Familism

Changing Gender, Family, Marriage, and Sexual Values

Modernization theory argues that economic development brings changes in people's perceptions of gender, marriage, family, and sexuality. Economic development has brought about broad transformations in practice and beliefs about the relationship between men and women; the meaning, content, and forms of marriage; family structure; fertility behaviors; and sexual practices. According to this perspective, these cultural shifts are achieved through several pathways.

The first is that economic development at advanced levels has encouraged women's entry into the paid labor force (Pampel and Tanaka 1986). Although at earlier stages economic development depressed women's labor force participation because the separation of work and family made it difficult for women to take part in the formal labor force, continued economic growth has led to the expansion of the tertiary industry, which in turn increases the demand for female workers (Oppenheimer 1970). This high demand, brought about by continued industrial growth, eventually increased female labor force participation (Land and Pampel 1980). This growth then resulted in a range of social changes in the fertility rate, marriage age, domestic division of labor, and marital dissolution. Employed women marry at an older age and have fewer children, spend less time on housework, but maintain childcare work (Andersson and Scott 2007; Aguiar and Hurst 2009; Bianchi 2000). Working women are more likely to seek an exit from unhappy marriages than women who do not work outside the home (Sayer and Bianchi 2000). More importantly, women's large-scale entry into paid employment and its broad range of societal impacts have revolutionized the relationship between men and women and has profoundly transformed the ideologies that buttress the system of gender, marriage, and family (Bell 1974; Stacey 1998; Wilensky 2002; Inglehart and Norris 2003). These transformations in the gender relationship have profound ramifications on the choices people make

with regard to family and marriage (Breen and Cooke 2005; Edin and Kefalas 2011).

The second outcome of economic development is a series of socioeconomic transformations that have altered people's behaviors and value orientations toward marriage, family, sexuality, and gender (Inglehart and Norris 2003). Economic development results in shifting occupational structure, intensifying education, expanding urbanization, growing migration, rising social welfare, and an escalating cost of raising children. The increasing economic costs, decreasing financial benefits of childrearing, and growing pension and welfare programs have led to a lower desire to have children (Poston 2000) and less reliance on family and kinship support. Urbanization gives better-educated younger generations opportunities to move away from ancestral villages and from patrilineal authorities, resulting in a decline of extended multigenerational households and the rise of nuclear families. In advanced industrial countries, conventional nuclear families composed of heterosexual parents with children have declined, while the emphasis on the subordination of individual interests to the welfare of the family has diminished (Bellah et al. 1985; Popenoe 1993).

The third result of economic development is value transformation. The rise of white-collar occupations and the expansion of tertiary education have given women strong incentives to pursue higher education and paid employment, resulting in higher rates of gender equality among both men and women (Inglehart and Norris 2003). Evidence abounds for global trends toward gender equality, including increasingly egalitarian attitudes, greater rights and status for women, fairer gendered divisions of labor, norms against domestic violence toward women, and the proliferation of national and international laws promoting gender equality (Bradley and Charles 2003; Pierotti 2013; Ramirez, Soysal, and Shanahan 1997; Shu 2004). This global "rising tide" of gender egalitarianism, led by Western industrialized countries, has widespread influence globally (Inglehart and Norris 2003). In addition, economic development has also brought about changes to people's perceptions of the meaning and choices of life (Thornton 2001, 2005). Material wealth and improved living standards enable people to prioritize their pursuit of individualistic and expressive self-fulfillment over family relationships (Lesthaeghe 2010; Amato 2009). Commitment toward marital relationships has become weak and transitory. Parenthood is often minimized or avoided altogether. These ideational trends are seen as based on secularization (Kertzer et al. 2009; Lesthaeghe 2010) and growing aspirations for high levels of consumption and leisure. Developmental idealism (Thornton 2001) and preference theory (Hakim 2001) see family transformations as responding to the rise of individualism that encompasses the pursuit of personal freedom and fulfillment. People have become less willing to invest time, money, and energy in family life, concentrating instead on their self-actualization (Popenoe

1993). The developmental idealism perspective argues that economic development leads to a value shift that is more accepting of a modern family form. This new organization of the family includes late marriage, low fertility, childlessness, nuclear families, cohabitation, divorce, nonmarital births, sexuality separate from heterosexual marriage, and an egalitarian relationship between the couple (Stacey 1998).

Despite widespread evidence in support of such a developmental trend, it is unlikely that these forces of modernization will unfold universally in a similar pattern globally. The pace of change in attitudes is conditioned by the cultural legacy and institutional structure of a society (Inglehart and Norris 2003). The change is often uneven, and many features of the traditional gender and family system can remain largely intact (Thornton 2011) while others may transition into a new hybrid form of marriage and family organization. Despite sweeping modernization, in China egalitarian gender attitudes are unevenly distributed on different dimensions (Shu 2004). For example, there is universal support for women's marriage rights, but son preference is still prevalent, especially in rural areas (Coale and Banister 1994; Guilmoto 2009; Gupta et al. 2003).

Value Transition: Confucian Patriarchy, Gender Liberation, and New Familism

The process of value transformation in China can be understood as resulting from the unfolding of economic development in some cases, and the party-state's direct and sweeping intervention through policies and executive orders in other cases. The Confucian family system is one of the most long-lasting patriarchal family structures among all the gender and family systems of the world (Stacey 1983; Therborn 2004; Wolf 1985). Confucianism elaborates a family and gender system that advocates female chastity, universal marriage, multiple childbirth, patrilineal descent, filial piety, family interdependence, and devaluation of women. This thousand-year-old system has undergone revisions during the socialist era and the marketization phase in China. Industrialization, market transition, social development, urbanization, demographic transitions, and public policies have weakened some Confucian values and practices. Women's labor force participation and increased earning power have boosted their status in both the family and society. The nuclear family has become the normative form (Xu, Li, and Yu 2014). In urban China, social welfare is gradually replacing family support for the care of the elderly (Feng et al. 2012). Marriage and childbirth rates have declined (Yu and Xie 2015b; Wu, Ye, and He 2014). Marriage laws raised the minimum marriage age, and local officials further persuaded young people to delay marriage. The state has precipitated the declining fertility rates by implementing the family planning policy and accelerating the

fertility transition since 1970 (Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005). Marriage rates have declined while age at first marriage rose, rates of divorce and cohabitation grew, and childless couples increased.

Gender

The Confucian patriarchal system prescribes a very low status for women, subordinating them to men in all stages of life: they were expected to obey fathers when young, husbands when married, and adult sons when widowed. Once married, women were not allowed to divorce or remarry (Stacey 1983; Tao and Min 1994; Wolf 1985). Elite ideals encouraged suicide as an honorable response to a violation of chastity. This pattern of male domination extended well into the first half of the twentieth century, and some of these patriarchal beliefs and practices continued into the 1980s and beyond (Honig and Hershatter 1988; Stacey 1983; Wolf 1985; Shu 2004). The socialist state established in 1949 sent girls to schools and women to work, passed laws to protect women's rights, provided family planning, and helped with working mothers' needs. A large proportion of women work full time in the labor force, contributing substantially to family income (Shu, Zhu, and Zhang 2013). By 2001 women's dual roles had been universally accepted. Ninety-four percent agreed with the statement "A working mother can establish a warm and secure relationship with her children," and 98 percent accepted "Both husband and wife should contribute to household income" (Shu and Zhu 2012). However, the attitude toward gender equality lagged, with less than 50 percent endorsing women's equal rights in the labor market and politics, but higher percentages (91 percent in 2001 and 79 percent in 2007) supporting women's access to university education (Shu and Zhu 2012).

Patrilineality

The cornerstone of the Confucian patriarchal system is the patrilineal family organization. Patrilineality uses the father-son relationship to determine property rights, privileges, titles, and social position, while daughters inherit nothing. It also defines the father as the authority in the family and operates on a scheme of male dominance and supremacy in society. Because patrilineality involves a principle of defining relationships and identities in terms of male ancestors, it thus emphasizes four forms of male power and male lineage: the father's central authority, the importance of having male heirs, sons' privilege in the inheritance of property, and patrilocal residence. Within patrilineal family systems, parents value sons more than daughters (Yan 2003) for two reasons. One is that adult sons are providers of both old-age care and financial support since they stay with their parents to care for them in old age. The other is that sons and grandsons expand and reinforce patrilineal kinship as symbols of both family line vitality and kinship clout in local/village politics (Murphy, Tao, and Lu 2011). Development and policies have substantially weakened patrilineal

practices and beliefs. Urbanization has eroded patrilocal residence since many young men moved away from their parents to cities. The family planning policy leaves families with only girls to pass on the property as well as responsibilities of parental old-age support to daughters. The family planning policy has also shifted the attitude toward son preference, particularly in urban China. In rural China, where government support and pension plans are lacking and elderly parents depend on their children for support, the one-child policy had to adjust to this strong belief: if the first child is a girl, parents are allowed to try again for a boy (Davin 1990; Greenhalgh 1993).

Filial Piety

Filial piety is the fundamental principle of the Confucian family, social, and moral order. Filial piety as a virtue promoted by Confucianism advocates children's unconditional obligation to their parents. Filial piety encompasses care, support, love, service, respect, and obedience. Children, particularly elder sons, are expected to take care of their parents by providing both financial support and emotional respect in their old age as their way of repaying their parents for raising them (Whyte 2004). In an agrarian society with no public old-age support, filial piety ensures that generations of a family take care of their young and old to fulfill their duties (Hu and Scott 2016). The idea of filial piety became popular in China because of the many functions and roles beyond regulating the parent-child relationship. It mandates how the younger generation behaves toward elders in the extended family and society in general. It is often generalized as a virtue associated with one's loyalty to authority, devotion to the state, and being a dutiful person in general. An obedient, dutiful, and filial son will become a loyal official, devoted citizen, and dutiful person. The socialist regime has never aimed to reorient its people away from this Confucian idea for two possible reasons. First, this glorified virtue is consistent with the behavior the state expects of its citizens: obedient and devoted to authority, loyal to the country, and dutiful to the family, community, and the state. Second, filial sons and daughters who take care of their elderly parents take the pressure and responsibility of old-age care away from the state, and the regime welcomes this practice to maintain social order. Since the 1980s the family planning policy has resulted in only-child households as a dominant form of family in urban China. Despite concerns that the overwhelming family resources concentrated on this generation of single children will render them self-centered and unappreciative, these children remain committed to the idea of filial piety, spontaneously expressing gratitude toward and intention to support their parents (Deutsch 2006).

Family Responsibility

Another traditional family value in China is familism, the belief in mutual assistance among family members, a concern for the perpetuation of the family

unit, a strong sense of family identification and loyalty, and the subordination of individual family members' interests to that of the entire family. This tradition remained strong even during the socialist era when the regime pushed women into paid employment in urban areas and agricultural production in rural areas. Despite the social and economic transition, the state has not taken on more responsibility for funding and provision of care for elders and children. China's care infrastructure of services and financing, and the distribution of provisions, remain traditional and rely heavily on the family (Shang and Wu 2011). The urban pension system covers only 35.3 percent of urban workers, and rural farmers receive virtually nothing (Wang 2006). Adult children are thus the primary providers of old-age care. Forty-one percent of those aged sixty years and older live with an adult child, 34 percent in the same neighborhood as an adult child, and 14 percent in the same county (Lei et al. 2015). Forty-six percent of both nonresident sons and daughters provide intergenerational financial transfers to parents (Gruijters 2018).

Marriage

Marriage remains a resilient institution in China. Parents, relatives, friends, coworkers, communities, workplaces, and society at large expect almost all young people of marriage age to marry. This cultural expectation is so powerful that despite rising rates of premarital sex, cohabitation, and divorce, the marriage rate remains high and has increased. In 2010 more than 70 percent of the population aged fifteen and older were married, and by age forty more than 90 percent were married (China Census 2010). Similarly, data from the Chinese Family Panel Study 2010, 2012, and 2014 show that less than 8 percent of all birth cohorts have not married by age thirty-five, compared with 32.5 percent in the United States, while only 3 percent of those aged fifty and above have never married in China, compared with 23.37 percent in Japan (see chapter 4). This pattern of marriage prevalence varies by region and housing price (Ji and Yeung 2014; Wrenn, Yi, and Zhang 2019), and age at first marriage varies by education, particularly among women. Marriage rates are the lowest at the two extremes of the socioeconomic spectrum: highly educated women with high incomes and poorly educated men with low incomes are caught in the marriage squeeze with slimmer prospects (Yu and Xie 2015b). The socioeconomic changes have barely impacted the desirability of marriage. National surveys show that younger cohorts are no less eager to enter legal marriage, and one-third consider a bad marriage to be better than being single (Yeung and Hu 2016). There are signs that the notion of marriage—a contract to a series of obligations including childbearing, household management and labor, elderly care, and emotional labor—is falling out of favor among highly educated women since they stand to lose the most in personal autonomy, career prospects, professional development, and individual fulfillment. Many college-educated women delay marriage or forgo it completely, resulting in lower

marriage rates (Yu and Xie 2015b). On the other hand, men with the fewest socio-economic resources find marriage unattainable since they are regarded as incapable of providing for a family as breadwinners (Yu and Xie 2015b). It is unclear whether the desirability of marriage also changes among these different socio-economic groups, genders, and cohorts.

Divorce, Cohabitation, and Childlessness

These broad social and economic changes have also reoriented people's views toward practices of new family forms of divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness (DCC). Chinese society sees marriage as universal; is less open to alternative forms of unions, divorce, single parenthood, and cohabitation; and emphasizes reproduction as an obligation to extend the family line. Divorce was previously difficult to attain and strongly discouraged by family and friends, work units, neighborhood committees, and the courts. It was not until the 1980s, when divorce was seen as an individual choice and other parties interfered in it less, that a substantial increase in divorces took place (Zeng and Wu 2000). This trend of rising divorce rates continued into the 1990s but stagnated in the 2000s (Ma, Turunen, and Rizzi 2018) when premarital cohabitation became more prevalent and the association between premarital cohabitation and divorce disappeared (Zhang 2017). These changes are indicative of changing norms that are more accepting of divorce and cohabitation as alternatives to marriage and place less emphasis on marital union as a prescribed family form.

Cohabitation was rare in the past but has risen rapidly in recent decades, largely among the younger cohort, and mainly as a precursor to marriage in the form of premarital cohabitation (Yu and Xie 2015a; Ma and Rizzi 2017). One-third of the couples in the youngest marriage cohort had cohabited before marriage, as shown in data from 2010 (Yu and Xie 2015b). Premarital cohabitation is the highest among the youngest cohort, at 30 percent of urbanites and 23 percent of rural residents (see chapter 4). Among the first marriages that took place in the decade since 2000, 24 percent were preceded by cohabitation (Ma and Rizzi 2017). Premarital cohabitation intended for marriage appears to be gaining support in China, particularly among urban people and younger cohorts.

One major purpose of Chinese marriages, more important than the love and happiness of the husband and the wife, is to produce offspring, particularly male heirs, to extend the family line and provide parents with a safety net for old-age care. According to the Confucian classics, being heirless was considered the biggest sin of an unfilial son. Childless couples thus run a higher risk of marital dissolution than unions with children (Ma, Rizzi, and Turunen 2019; see also chapter 6 in this book). Children, particularly sons, are viewed as a valued attraction that strengthens the marital relationship and holds the family together. Divorce proceedings are quicker for childless couples since they involve few legal

considerations. On the other hand, with the rise of individualistic values of self-fulfillment, the pursuit of happiness, and the growing cost of and energy demanded by childrearing, along with increasing pension and retirement welfare provisions, the attraction of having children has decreased, particularly among urban and well-educated couples. The number of households without children is on the rise, and the number of childless-couple households aged thirty-five to forty-nine in urban areas increased several times between 1990 and 2010 (Hu and Peng 2015).

Sexuality

Shortly after the establishment of the socialist regime, the state strictly sanctioned sexuality as monogamous, heterosexual, and marital. In the 1950s and 1960s, its laws, policies, and other materials rejected premarital, extramarital, homosexual, casual, and commercial sex (Evans 1995; Jeffreys and Yu 2015; Ruan and Lau 1997). After China opened up in the late 1970s and enforced its family planning policy, sex was further severed from procreation. This encouraged public discourse on women's sexual pleasure for enjoyment rather than wifely duties (Evans 1995), and sex within marriage for pleasure rather than for child-bearing (Pan 2006). Nonmarital sexuality also became less restricted when contraception and abortion became widely available (Pan 2009). A 2006 national probability survey showed that 4.5 percent of women and 11.0 percent of men had nonmarital, noncommercial sex in the past twelve months, while 5.5 percent of men had commercial sex in the same period. These numbers either match or exceed the median for other countries (Zhang et al. 2012). However, these same data also reported a conservative attitude toward nonmarital sex, with 95 percent of both men and women reporting extramarital sex as either somewhat or completely unacceptable. Before China's opening up, homosexuality was regarded as a form of crime, sexual inversion, or psychiatric disorder and thus was largely concealed (Jeffreys and Yu 2015). Homosexuality was first introduced into the public discourse in the form of disease prevention and treatment. With the increasing influence of the transnational lesbian and gay culture, homosexual identities, communities, businesses, and arts started to become visible and expanded, particularly among the young.

Overall, the traditional Chinese family and gender values buttress a closely interwoven system that sanctions and supports the functionality of the family, the organization of marriage, childrearing, elderly care, marital forms of social organization, sexual relations, and the roles and status of men and women. When the socioeconomic and cultural context within which these values are anchored experiences transitions through the socialist organization, globalization, market transition, and liberalization, these values are likely to shift in expected and unexpected ways.

Data and Measures

We used data from the 2017 wave of the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS 2017). The CGSS 2017 is a nationally representative survey of the Chinese population that includes adults in twenty-eight provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions of mainland China, except Xinjiang, Tibet, Hainan, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. The survey was conducted by the National Survey Research Center at the Renmin University of China. It sampled respondents through stratified, multistage probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling and employed face-to-face interviews to gather information. The total sample size is 12,582. Among them, 3,093 respondents participated in Module D on family and provided information on measures of gender, family, marriage, and sexual attitudes.

We analyzed twenty-five such measures. The respondents were asked to express their opinions on four statements with regard to gender roles: "It is more important for a wife to support a husband's career than her own," "The husband's responsibility is breadwinning and the wife's is homemaking," "It may be good for mothers of preschoolers to not work," and "Women should not be laid off first in a poor economy." Respondents were given a choice of seven categories to answer: strongly agree, fairly agree, somewhat agree, either, somewhat disagree, fairly disagree, and strongly disagree. All the measures were assigned scores from 1 to 7, except the four measures of family responsibility, which were on a scale of 1–5. For all the measures we recoded the scores so that higher values represented nontraditional attitudes. Three measures tap respondents' attitudes toward patrilineality: "The father's authority need not always be respected," "Oldest sons are not entitled to more inheritance," and "There is no need to have a son to preserve the family line." Attitudes toward filial piety are gauged by four statements: "Children do not need to have respect for their parents," "There is no need to be grateful to parents for bringing one up," "You should respect your own parents regardless of how they treat their children," and "You should support parents to make their lives more comfortable." Four statements asked the respondents to express their perceptions of the family responsibility of caring for the old and young: "The government is more responsible for elders' medical care than the family," "The government is more responsible for elders' basic needs than the family," "The government is more responsible for children's upbringing than the family," and "The government is more responsible for children's educational expenses than the family." These measures are expressed in a range of 1–5, with the lowest score indicating the most traditional attitude, the highest score the most nontraditional, and the middle scores moderate attitudes. Attitudes toward marriage are measured by responses to these four statements: "Married men are not necessarily happier than unmarried men," "Married women are not necessarily happier than unmarried women," "A poor

marriage is worse than being single,” and “A poor marriage is worse than divorce.” Three measures gauge people’s perceptions of DCC: “Divorce is the best way out when couples can’t reconcile,” “It’s OK to live together with no intention to marry,” and “It’s OK to not have children after marriage.” Attitudes toward sexuality are indicated by three measures: “It’s OK to have premarital sex,” “It’s OK to have extramarital sex,” and “It’s OK to have homosexual sex.”

Attitudes toward gender, family, marriage, and sexuality in China demonstrate considerable variation in the pace of value transition. Figure 5.1 illustrates the average scores of these measures. Overall, attitudes toward gender, marriage, and patrilineality have moved away from traditionalism, while perception of family responsibility, filial piety, and sexuality remain very traditional. Attitudes toward DCC are neither the most liberal nor the most conservative.

All four measures of gender attitudes score close to or more than 4, indicating that more people endorse egalitarian rather than nonegalitarian gender attitudes. The attitude toward women’s equal right to jobs is the most liberal among all measures, averaging about 5. An analysis using data from the 2006 CGSS showed that the average score from the first two measures, wives support husbands’ careers and gendered separate spheres, is 3.4 (Hu and Scott 2016). In the decade of 2006–2017, these gender attitudes have become slightly more egalitarian, increasing from equal numbers of conservative and liberal attitudes to slightly more liberal attitudes.

Similarly, attitudes toward marriage also show a relatively nontraditional trend on all four measures under examination. On these measures—married men happier, married women happier, poor marriage better than being single, and poor marriage better than divorce—the average scores are around 4 on a scale of 1–7, surpassing the middle point, and demonstrating that more people hold attitudes that marriage neither trumps singlehood and divorce nor brings more happiness.

Two of the three measures of attitude toward patrilineality also show a nontraditional trend. The average score on the item “Oldest sons are not entitled to more inheritance” is close to 5 while the average score on “There is no need to have sons to preserve the family line” is close to 4. Both are higher than the middle point of 3.5, again affirming that more people hold nontraditional rather than traditional attitudes. These two items appear to have moved further toward a nontraditional direction since 2006 when the average score was 3.8 (Hu and Scott 2016). The item with a more traditional attitude is in regard to respect for the father’s authority, which is around 2.5. This shows a considerable number of people still hold this belief of treating fathers as patriarchal heads and that children should revere their authority.

Attitudes toward DCC are slightly more conservative, but all three measures are around 3.5, showing an even divide between those who hold traditional attitudes and those who hold nontraditional attitudes. The average score on

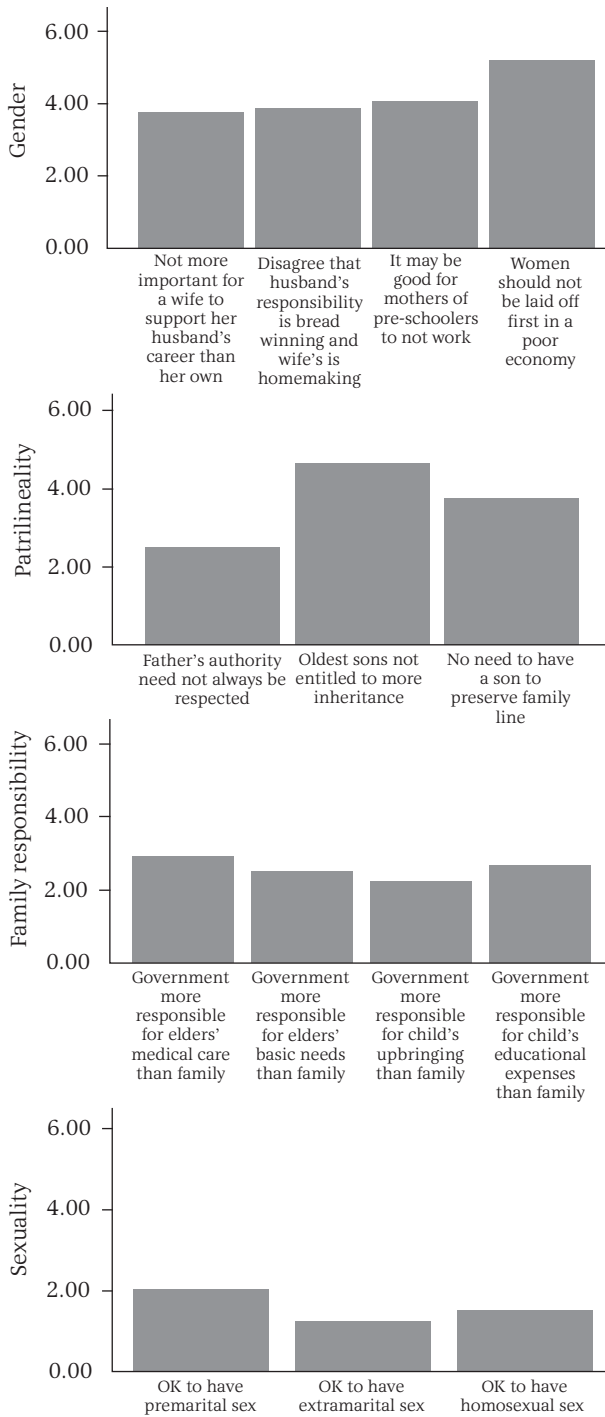


FIGURE 5.1 Gender, family, marriage, and sexual attitudes in China

Source: Chinese Generation Social Survey 2017, $N = 3,380$

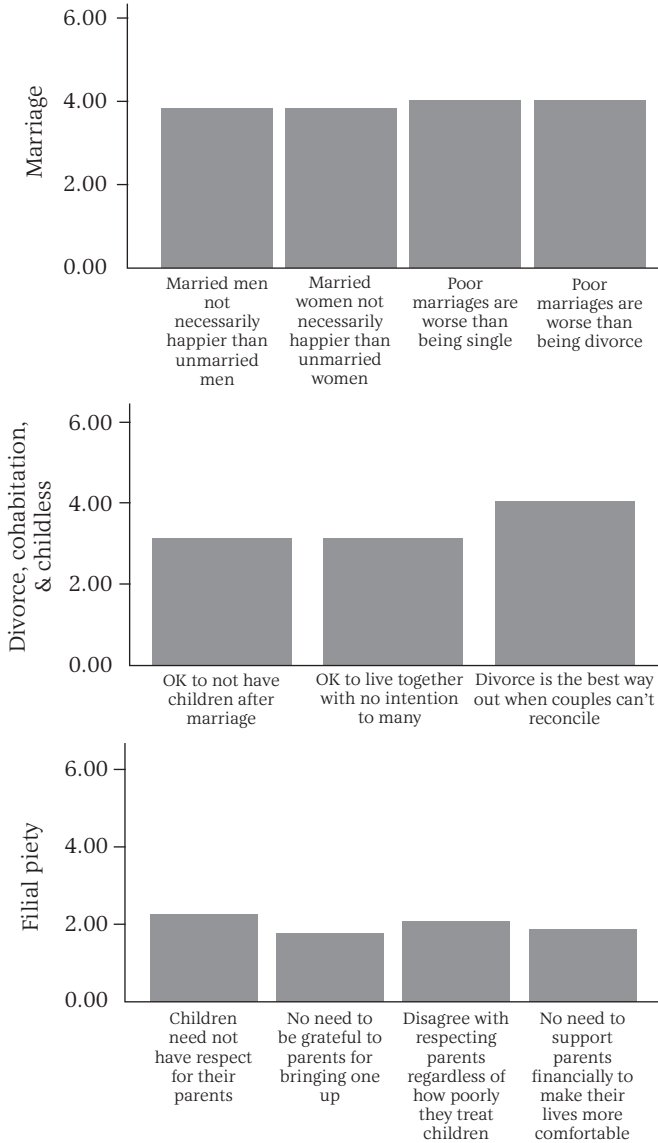


FIGURE 5.1 (continued)

endorsing divorce is the highest at 4.0, and the other two items, on nonmarital cohabitation and childlessness, score around 3.5. This shows stronger support for divorce than for cohabitation and childlessness.

The four measures of family responsibility illustrate a predominantly traditional tendency. All four items on family responsibilities for the elderly and children are within the range of 2–3 on a scale of 1–7, demonstrating a

predominantly traditional outlook that emphasizes the family's responsibility of taking care of the young and old rather than holding the government accountable for this care and asserting a continuing popular trend in family self-reliance and codependence.

Filial piety remains very strongly traditional. The majority of people endorse the idea that children are expected to have respect for their parents, be grateful to parents, respect parents unconditionally, and provide financial support to parents. On all four measures, the average scores measuring nontraditionalism are low, at around 2.0 in a range of 1–7. These same four items remain virtually unchanged in the period 2006–2017 when data from the 2006 CGSS show an average score of 2.2 on these measures (Hu and Scott 2016).

The most traditional attitude is toward sexuality. On measures of premarital sex, extramarital sex, and homosexual sex, the respondents hold very conservative attitudes. Extramarital sex is the least endorsed, scoring at the lowest possible rating (an average of around 1.0 on a scale of 1–5), and thus demonstrating universal rejection. It also scored the most conservative rating of all the measures under analysis. Homosexual sex is not far behind, with a slightly higher average score, registering an almost universal dismissal of such behavior. The attitude toward premarital sex registers a score of 2.0, indicating overwhelming opposition but not to the same degree as attitudes toward the other two sexual behaviors.

We carried out a factor analysis to simplify our analysis by reducing this large number of measure items into latent constructs of attitudes. Table 5.1 shows the factor loading of twenty-five measures on seven latent constructs of attitudes toward gender, patrilineality, filial piety, family responsibility, marriage, sexuality, and DCC. We constructed seven latent constructs to facilitate analyses of population variations in these attitudes.

Variations in Gender, Family, Marriage, and Sexual Attitudes

To unravel the way in which attitudes toward gender, family, marriage, and sexuality vary by population characteristics, we next analyzed the association of these seven attitudinal constructs with education, birth cohort, gender, and residence and dual household registration (*hukou*) status. These results are presented in Figure 5.2.

The variation in attitudes by education is the largest among education, cohort, gender, and *hukou* and residence. In particular, educational variation in gender attitude exceeds all the other attitudes, showing the powerful influence of education in increasing people's awareness of women's status and role in society. The attitudes toward DCC become significantly less traditional with increasing education, although the change is slightly smaller. Attitudes toward patrilineality, family responsibility, marriage, and filial piety also become slightly

TABLE 5.1

Factor Loadings of Gender, Family, Marriage, and Sexual Attitudes (N = 3,380)

	<i>Rotated component matrix</i>				<i>Divorce, cohabitation, childless</i>	
	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Patrilineality</i>	<i>Filial piety</i>	<i>Family responsibility</i>		<i>Marriage</i>
Not more important for a wife to support her husband's career than her own	.821					
Disagree that husband's responsibility is breadwinning and wife's is homemaking	.864					
It may be good for mothers of preschoolers to not work	.754					
Women should not be laid off first in a poor economy	.489					
Father's authority need not always be respected		.516				
Oldest sons are not entitled to more inheritance		.833				

(continued)

Table 5.1. (continued)

	<i>Rotated component matrix</i>				
	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Patrilineality</i>	<i>Filial piety</i>	<i>Family responsibility</i>	<i>Marriage</i> <i>Sexuality</i> <i>Divorce, cohabitation, childless</i>
There is no need to have a son to preserve the family line		.613			
Children do not need to have respect for their parents			.648		
There is no need to be grateful to parents for bringing one up			.815		
Disagree with respecting parents regardless of how poorly they treat their children			.729		
There is no need to support parents financially to make their lives more comfortable			.795		
The government is more responsible for elders' medical care than the family				.800	

Rotated component matrix

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Patrilineality</i>	<i>Filial piety</i>	<i>Family responsibility</i>	<i>Marriage</i>	<i>Sexuality</i>	<i>Divorce, cohabitation, childless</i>
The government is more responsible for elders' basic needs than the family				.818			
The government is more responsible for children's upbringing than the family				.779			
The government is more responsible for children's educational expenses than the family				.761			
Married men are not necessarily happier than unmarried men					.861		
Married women are not necessarily happier than unmarried women					.847		

(continued)

Table 5.1. (continued)

	<i>Rotated component matrix</i>						
	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Patrilineality</i>	<i>Filial piety</i>	<i>Family responsibility</i>	<i>Marriage</i>	<i>Sexuality</i>	<i>Divorce, cohabitation, childless</i>
A poor marriage is worse than being single					.490		
A poor marriage is worse than divorce					.459		
Is it OK to have premarital sex						.844	
Is it OK to have extramarital sex						.847	
Is it OK to have homosexual sex						.738	
It's OK to not have children after marriage							.590
It's OK to live together with no intention to marry							.548
Divorce is the best way out when couples can't reconcile							.561

Source: Chinese Generation Social Survey 2017.

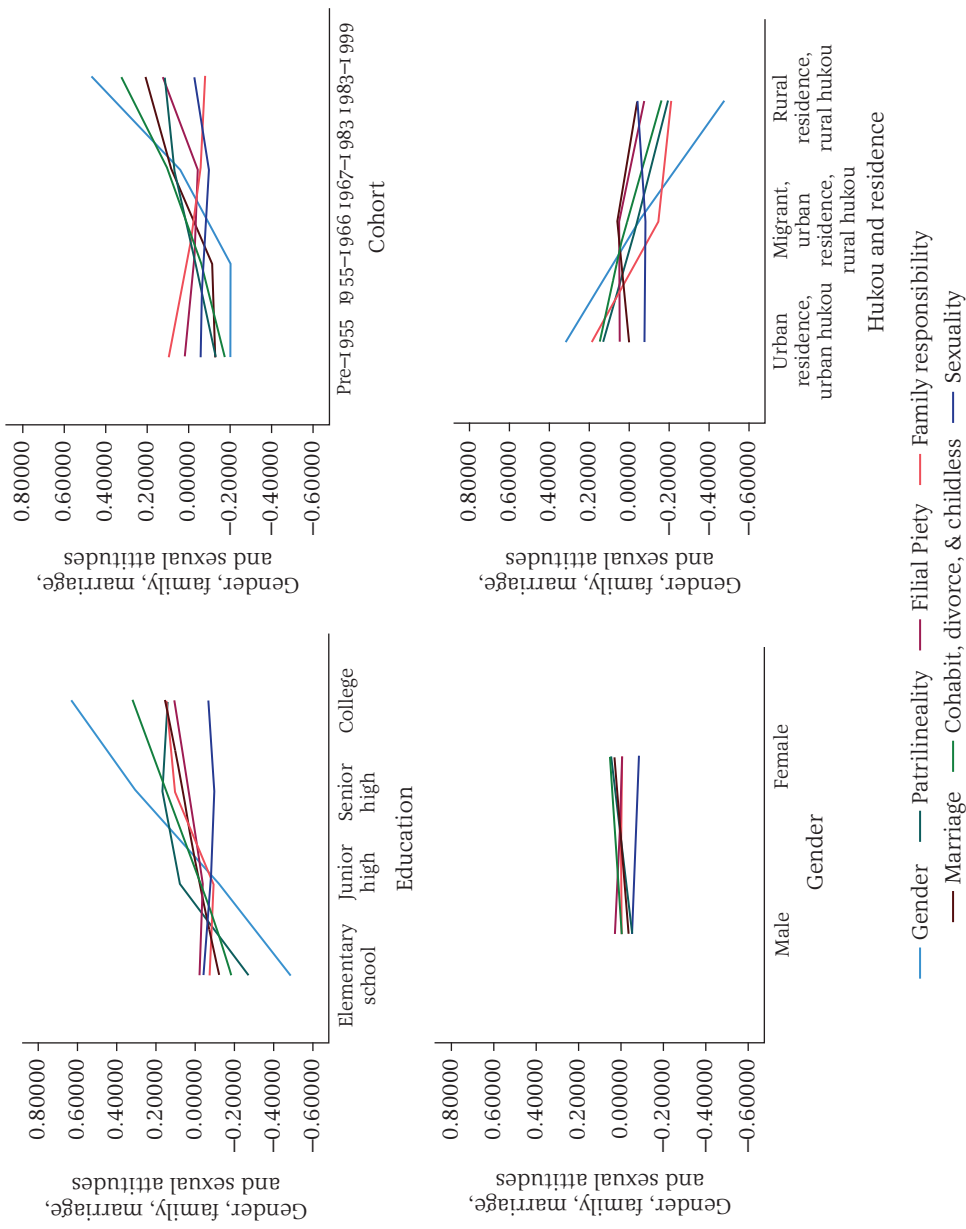


FIGURE 5.2 Variations in gender, family, marriage, and sexual attitudes by education, cohort, gender, and residence

Source: Chinese Generation Social Survey 2017, N = 3,380

more liberal with more education. The attitude toward sexuality does not vary with education level.

Among some birth cohorts, there are variations in some attitudes. Few differences exist in the attitudes of the two oldest cohorts, people born in 1966 and earlier. The 1967–1983 birth cohort holds less traditional attitudes toward gender, DCC, marriage, and patrilineality than the two older cohorts, and these liberal trends continue among members of the youngest cohort, those born in 1983–1999. The attitude toward sexuality remains the same among all birth cohorts, while the attitude toward family responsibility becomes slightly more traditional in the youngest cohort. The perception of filial piety is the most traditional in the second-youngest cohort but rebounds to slightly more nontraditional in the youngest cohort than in the second most liberal cohort on this attitude, the oldest cohort.

There are few gender differences in these attitudes. Women appear to be slightly more liberal in attitudes toward gender, patrilineality, marriage, and DCC but are less liberal in attitudes toward sexuality. There are virtually no differences between the two sexes in their support of family responsibility for the elderly and young, and in filial piety.

Differentiation in attitudes by residence and hukou status is substantial in some attitudes but minor in other attitudes. Perceptions of gender, patrilineality, and DCC change from the most traditional among rural residents (rural residence and rural hukou), to less traditional among migrants (urban residents and rural hukou), to more liberal among urban residents (urban residents and urban hukou). Migrants remain virtually identical to rural residents in their traditional attitude asserting the family's responsibility for children and the elderly, while urban residents are more likely to agree that the government shares these responsibilities. This bifurcation is a reflection of the divergent social welfare system in rural and urban China, in which urban hukou ensures that their holders enjoy a more generous pension and health care provided by the government, while those with rural hukou, regardless of actual residence, are left out of the system of state welfare and must fend for themselves, a legacy of the socialist dichotomous organizational system (Wu and Treiman 2007). Migrants hold the most nontraditional attitudes toward marriage and filial piety, even more so than urban residents. This may reflect their distance from their parents and sometimes from their spouses. They change their beliefs to adjust to the living conditions of this separation and deem respecting and obeying parents and the importance of marriage as less valuable than both their rural counterparts and urbanites. It is again the case that there is no variation among these three groups of people in their attitudes toward premarital, extramarital, and homosexual sex.

To shed some light on the puzzle of why there is little gender difference in these attitudes, the data were analyzed separately by birth cohort, education, and status of hukou and residence. These results are presented in Figure 5.3.

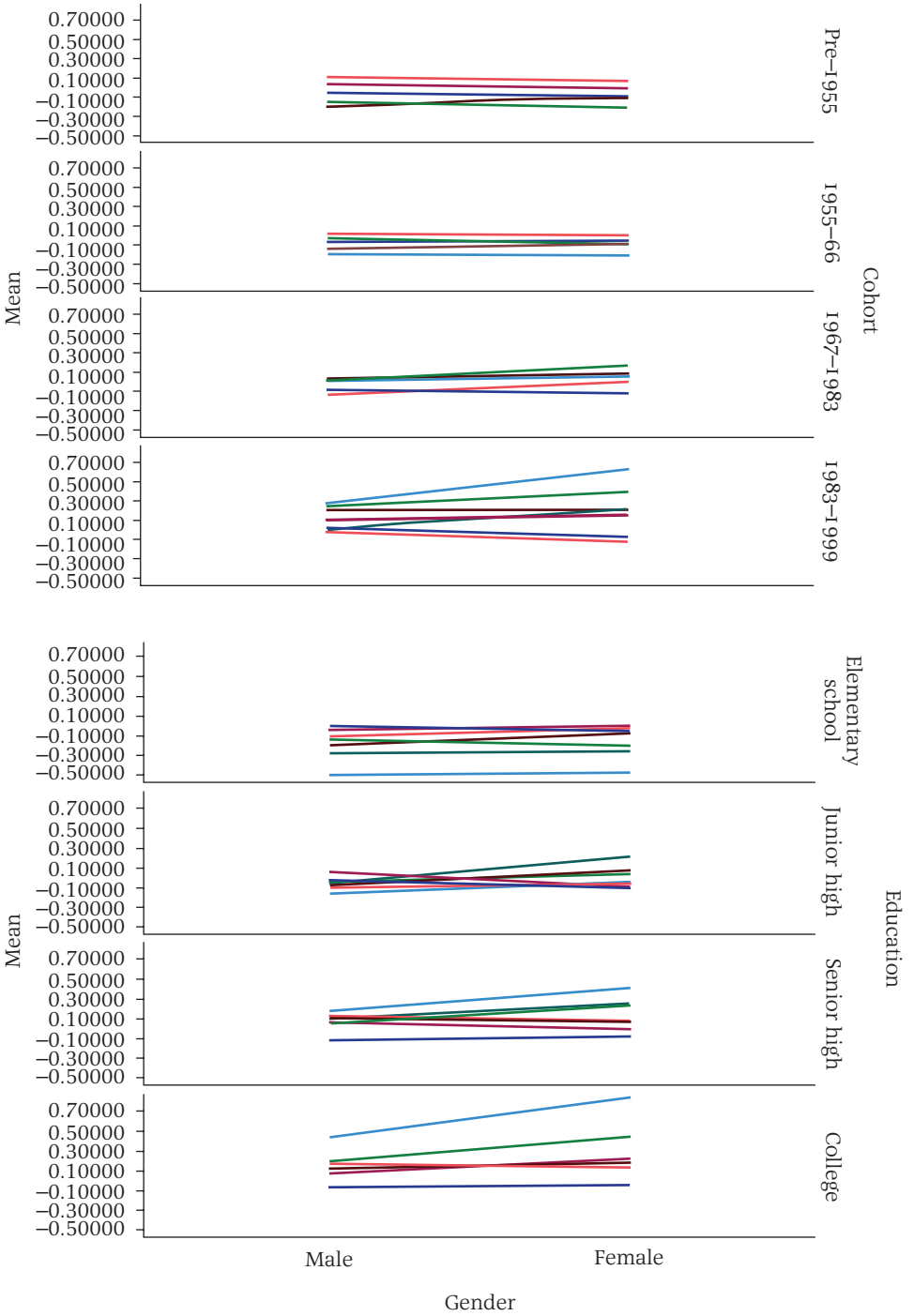


FIGURE 5.3 Gender differences in gender, family, marriage, and sexual attitudes by cohort, education, and residence

Source: Chinese Generation Social Survey 2017, N=3,380

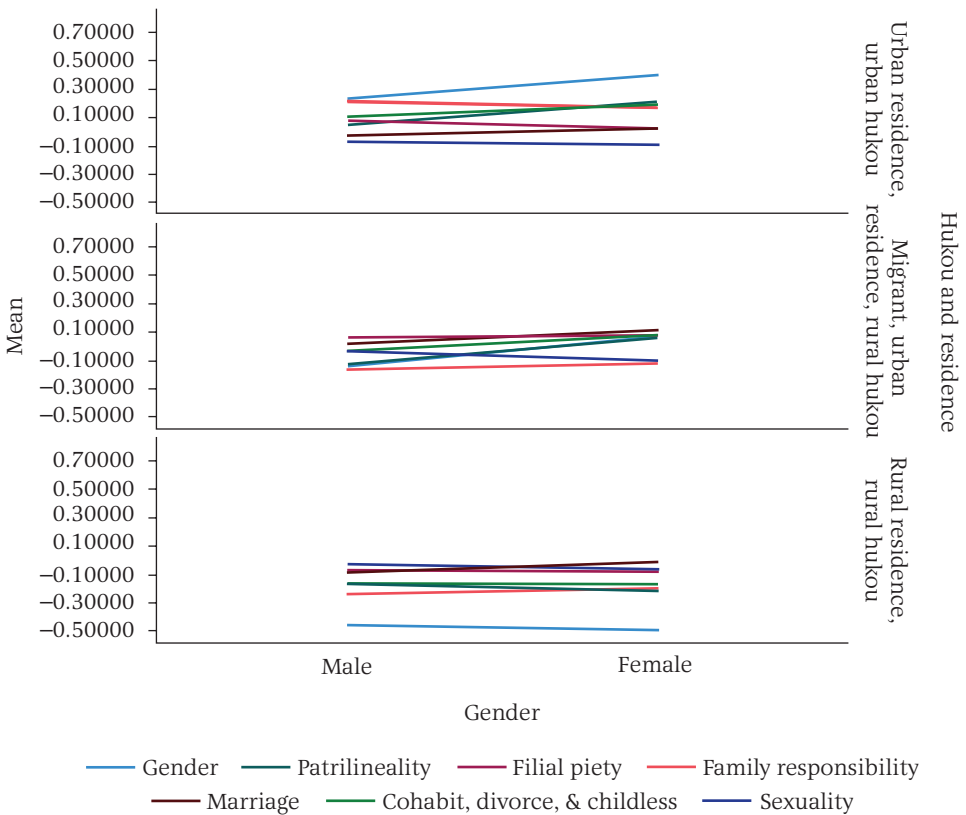


FIGURE 5.3 (continued)

Consistent with the findings from the general population, there is virtually no gender difference among the three older cohorts on all attitudes. We observed some gender differences in some of the attitudes among people in the youngest birth cohort (born in 1983–1999). Among these people, women are more liberal than men in gender attitudes, patrilineality conception, and, to a lesser degree, perception of DCC. Interestingly, among this young cohort, women hold slightly more conservative attitudes toward family responsibility and sexuality. There are no gender differences in attitude toward filial piety and marriage.

The amount of gender difference also varies by education level. We observed no gender difference among people with elementary and junior high school education. Both men and women with an education level below senior high hold conservative attitudes, particularly a very conservative attitude toward gender. Among people with senior high education, there are clear gender differences in gender attitude and perception of DCC, with women holding more liberal attitudes than men. There is no gender difference in other attitudes. It is among the college educated that these gender differences in attitudes toward gender and

unconventional arrangement of marriage and family (DCC) become even more prominent. Among the college educated, gender attitude is the most nontraditional among all attitudes, and college-educated women lead all groups in their most progressive gender attitude. This group of women also stands out in their liberal attitude toward nontraditional marriage and family in DCC, but they remain identical to their male counterparts in all the remaining attitudes.

Similar to the pattern of gender differences by education, gender differences by residence also show a divergent pattern. Among rural residents, there is no gender difference in all of the attitudes studied. Rural residents of both sexes hold very conservative gender attitudes. Among migrants who live in cities with rural hukou, there are few differences in attitudes between the two sexes, although migrant women's attitudes toward gender, patrilineality, and DCC are starting to diverge from those of men. These gender differences of women holding more modern attitudes than men toward gender, patrilineality, and unconventional marriage and family become larger among urbanites.

The greatest change in attitudes takes place among women born after 1983, the college educated, and urban residents in their attitudes toward gender, patrilineality, and nontraditional marriage and family behaviors such as DCC. No gender differences exist among those born before 1983, those with less than senior high school education, and rural residents.

Predicting Gender, Family, Marriage, and Sexual Attitudes

To test ideas on the driving forces of attitudinal changes, we estimate a series of multiple regression models using measures of demographic status of gender, ethnicity, religiosity, birth cohort, education, marital status, income, employment, residence and hukou status, and number and gender of children to estimate people's value orientations. These results are presented in Table 5.2. These models account for 22.9 percent of the variance in gender attitudes, 7.3 percent of the variance in attitudes toward DCC, 6.3 percent of the variance in attitudes toward patrilineality, 5.2 percent of the variance in attitudes toward family responsibility, 2.7 percent of the variance in attitudes toward marriage, 1.2 percent of the variance in attitudes toward filial piety, and 0.5 percent of the variance in attitudes toward sexuality. With the exception of the last model of sexuality, all the F tests of the remaining models are statistically significant despite relatively modest R squares in some of these models. Of all the independent variations, education is statistically significant in estimating attitudes toward gender, patrilineality, marriage, and DCC. Residence and hukou status accounts for variations in attitudes: compared with rural residents, urbanites hold more liberal attitudes toward gender, patrilineality, family responsibility, and DCC, while migrants are more nontraditional in perceptions of gender and filial piety. Birth cohorts are associated with attitudes: compared with the oldest cohort

TABLE 5.2

**Regression of Demographic, Cohort, and Socioeconomic Influences on
Gender, Family, Marriage, and Sexual Attitudes in China (N = 3,380)**

	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Patrilineality</i>		<i>Filial piety</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>
(Constant)	-0.551***	0.086	-0.368***	0.094	0.116	0.098
Female	0.164***	0.032	0.122***	0.035	-0.024	0.036
Ethnic minority	0.006	0.063	-0.098	0.069	-0.033	0.071
Religious	-0.086	0.052	-0.022	0.057	-0.114	0.059
<i>Birth cohort (born pre-1955 = omitted category)</i>						
Born 1955–66	-0.147**	0.047	-0.005	0.052	-0.069	0.054
Born 1967–83	-0.012	0.050	0.079	0.055	-0.116	0.059
Born 1984–99	0.156*	0.066	0.053	0.072	-0.023	0.075
<i>Residence and hukou status (rural residence and rural hukou = omitted category)</i>						
Migrant	0.220***	0.045	0.048	0.049	0.130*	0.051
Urban	0.413***	0.043	0.176***	0.047	0.087	0.049
<i>Education (elementary = omitted category)</i>						
Junior high	0.241***	0.042	0.277***	0.046	-0.032	0.048
Senior high	0.538***	0.051	0.313***	0.056	0.001	0.059
College	0.714***	0.058	0.221***	0.064	0.054	0.066
Income (100,000 yuan)	-0.009	0.005	0.012*	0.006	-0.012	0.006
Not working	-0.079*	0.036	0.039	0.039	-0.007	0.041
<i>Marital status (single = omitted category)</i>						
Married	0.088	0.092	0.023	0.101	0.002	0.105
Divorced, separated, widowed	0.122	0.102	0.003	0.112	-0.015	0.117
<i>Children (no child = omitted category)</i>						
Have one child	-0.078	0.087	-0.164	0.095	-0.095	0.099
Have two children	-0.220*	0.088	-0.047	0.096	-0.101	0.100

<i>Family responsibility</i>		<i>Marriage</i>		<i>Divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness</i>		<i>Sexuality</i>	
<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>
-0.007	0.094	-0.019	0.096	-0.134	0.094	0.063	0.071
0.015	0.035	0.083*	0.035	0.061	0.035	-0.024	0.026
-0.109	0.069	0.059	0.070	-0.004	0.069	0.026	0.052
-0.089	0.057	0.048	0.058	-0.096	0.057	0.010	0.043
-0.091	0.052	0.011	0.053	0.022	0.052	0.026	0.039
-0.148**	0.055	0.166**	0.056	0.171*	0.055	0.019	0.041
-0.267***	0.072	0.124	0.073	0.255**	0.072	-0.011	0.054
0.053	0.049	0.010	0.050	0.039	0.049	-0.022	0.037
0.304***	0.047	-0.081	0.048	0.128**	0.047	-0.012	0.035
-0.068	0.046	0.094*	0.047	0.030	0.046	-0.028	0.035
0.043	0.056	0.193**	0.057	0.134*	0.056	-0.062	0.042
0.062	0.064	0.223**	0.065	0.160*	0.064	-0.022	0.048
-0.006	0.006	0.000	0.006	0.023***	0.006	0.000	0.004
0.101*	0.039	0.008	0.040	0.017	0.039	0.032	0.030
0.066	0.101	-0.131	0.103	0.144	0.101	-0.022	0.076
0.015	0.112	0.011	0.114	0.270*	0.112	0.012	0.085
-0.081	0.095	-0.084	0.096	-0.232*	0.095	-0.134	0.071
-0.214*	0.096	-0.119	0.098	-0.340***	0.096	-0.118	0.073

(continued)

Table 5.2. (continued)

	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Patrilineality</i>		<i>Filial piety</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>
Have three or more children	-0.214*	0.094	-0.169	0.104	-0.149	0.108
Have daughter only	0.060	0.040	0.298***	0.044	0.001	0.046
R Squared	.229***		.063***		.012**	

Source: Chinese Generation Social Survey 2017.

$p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

(born before 1955), the two youngest cohorts hold more nontraditional attitudes toward gender and marriage, are more supportive of unconventional marriages and family arrangements of DCC, but are less likely to endorse the idea of the government rather than the family providing support for the elderly and young. The number of children is negatively associated with modern ideas about gender, marriage, and family. Compared with those without children, individuals with two or three children hold more conservative attitudes toward gender, family responsibility, and unconventional arrangements of marriage and family. Individuals' gender is also associated with three attitudes. Women are more likely to endorse gender egalitarianism and reject patrilineality, and less likely to emphasize the value and benefit of marriage. Higher income is associated with nontraditional ideas toward patrilineality and alternative marriage and family arrangements of DCC. Employment influences attitudes as well, with the unemployed being less egalitarian toward women's roles and status and more likely to endorse government support of the elderly and young. It is not surprising that marital status is associated with attitudes toward nontraditional marriage and family arrangements, and that divorced, separated, and widowed people are more supportive of DCC. Parents with no sons hold more progressive attitudes toward patrilineality.

To establish which factors are the overall most important variables in attitudes, we estimated a series of neural networks to take into account the nonlinear, interactive, and combined effects of variables. Neural networks use a supervised learning approach by employing a training set along with the target outcome variable. The neural network processes each case from the training set

<i>Family responsibility</i>		<i>Marriage</i>		<i>Divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness</i>		<i>Sexuality</i>	
<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>
-0.232*	0.104	-0.070	0.105	-0.495***	0.104	-0.115	0.078
0.023	0.044	0.001	0.045	0.064	0.044	-0.001	0.033
.052***		.027***		.073***		.005	

by reading the predictor variables in the input nodes, analyzing these variables in the hidden layers, and producing an output value in the output node. With the help of multilevel hidden nodes, neural networks handle nonlinear relationships more efficiently and accurately than regressions. They do so by modeling without the researcher's explicit input about the nature and type of nonlinear function. After comparing the output value calculated by the neural network with the actual outcome value in the training set, the error between the estimated output Y and the actual target variable is calculated as the squared errors summed over all the output nodes and all the observations in the training set in the form of $SSE = \sum \sum (y - \hat{y})^2$. Similar to the least squares approach in regression, neural networks aim to construct a set of model weights that minimize the SSE. We also evaluated models using a testing set. We used a two-layer neural network with the hyperbolic tangent function in the hidden layer and the identity function in the output layer with inputs of the same variables used in the regression analyses in Table 5.2. We used a cross-validation approach with 70 percent of the sample as the training set and 30 percent as the testing set. Figure 5.4 shows the ranked total importance of the input variables that are invisible in Table 5.2.

These results are generally consistent with the estimates from the regression analysis in that education, number of children, and birth cohorts are influential predictors. Somewhat surprisingly, marital status also emerges as important in predicting some attitudes. Education is by far the most important influence on attitudes. Among the seven attitudes analyzed, education is the most important for three (gender, marriage, and patrilineality), second most

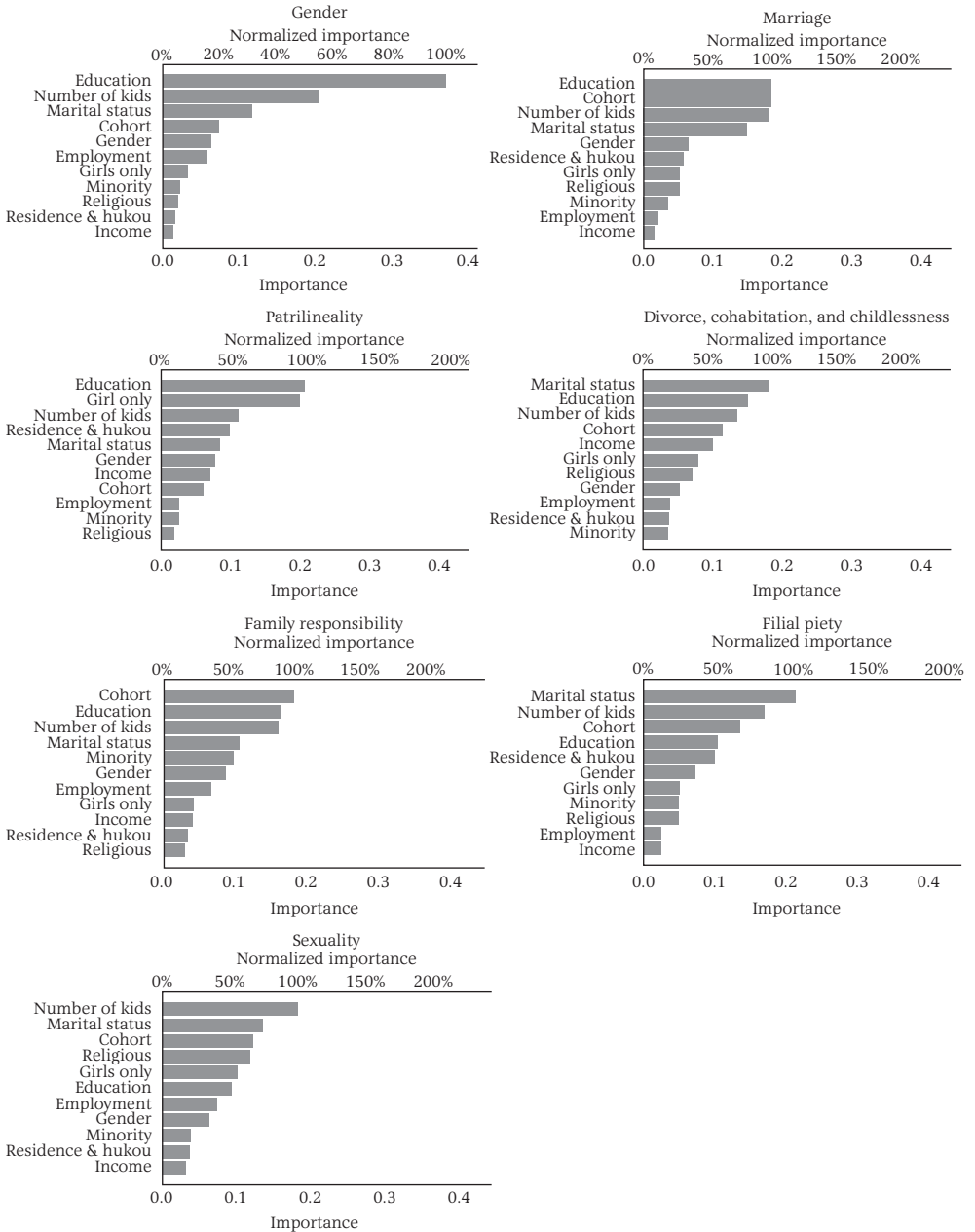


FIGURE 5.4 Independent variable importance in using neural networks to estimate attitudes toward gender, family, marriage, and sexuality in China

Source: China General Social Survey 2017, $N=3,380$

important for two (family responsibility and DCC), and the fourth most important for filial piety. Number of children is the most important input on attitudes toward sexuality, the second most important in predicting attitudes toward gender and filial piety, and the third most important for the remaining four attitudes toward marriage, patrilineality, DCC, and family responsibility. Cohort is the most important in predicting family responsibility, second most important for attitude toward marriage, and third most important for the perception of filial piety and sexuality. Marital status is the most important in predicting attitudes toward DCC and filial piety, second most important in estimating attitudes toward sexuality, and third most important in formulating gender attitudes.

Conclusion

Economic development is expected to bring transitions to gender inequalities, marriage and family behaviors, and value orientations. One such hypothesized transformation is the changing perceptions of meanings and choices of life and a shift away from prioritizing family interests over individual happiness and fulfillment. This chapter analyzes this hypothesis using data from the most current national survey of the 2017 CGSS ($N=3,380$). The Chinese development model with its strong Confucian tradition and state control has led to a transition of the gender and family system into a new hybrid. This new familism consists of a persistent belief in obedience to parents, codependence of family members, rejection of premarital, extramarital, and homosexual sex, declining gender role differentiation, decreasing value of legal marriage, less emphasis on patrilineality, and more tolerance of modern family forms of DCC. Modernization forces such as education and younger birth cohorts are important harbingers of value transition, as are individual circumstances such as marital status and number of children. These transformations reflect negotiations and concessions between individualism and collectivism, tradition and modernization, and state and market in China's gender and family system.

Value transitions in gender, family, marriage, and sexual attitudes in China are uneven. There are more dramatic transitions in some dimensions but virtually no change in others. These resilient and flexible features of the traditional values in the gender and family system and their inconsistent transformations form a new familism value orientation in contemporary China. This form of new familism is both a reflection and a driving force that will have ramifications on the patterns and features of the Chinese demographic transition, family formation and transition, and gender relations. The Chinese new familism consists of three features: the persistence of some traditional familism beliefs and practices, a transition to modern perceptions of the gender relationship, and an adaptation to some modern forms of family formation. Despite drastic changes in residence, migration, occupation, and education patterns, the Chinese population

holds firmly to the traditional notion of filial piety with persistent obedience to and respect for parents, strong acceptance of family codependence, responsibility for the care of its young and elderly, and a stout belief in marital sex by rejecting premarital, extramarital, and homosexual sex. However, among these traditional ideas of persistent familism, people are becoming more accepting of declining gender role differentiation, seeing less value in legal marriage, and placing less emphasis on the patrilineal family line. There is also an increase in the tolerance of modern family forms of divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness.

Modernization forces are harbingers of transformation in some values, including attitudes toward gender role differentiation, patrilineality, the importance of marriage, and acceptance of modern nonmarital forms of divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness. Better-educated individuals hold more nontraditional ideas regarding women's status and role in the family and society, are less supportive of fathers' authority and the male line of family inheritance and continuity, are less likely to endorse the value and importance of marriage (even at a cost of enduring unhappiness), and are more likely to accept DCC. With expanding education, these trends are likely to further increase, moving the population further along this line of modern transformation. Members of the younger cohorts are also more likely to reject the traditional gendered role and status of men and women and are more accepting of new and novel family forms of DCC, delinking a function of the family emphasized by traditional family values: marital procreation to ensure continuation of the family line—the male line. Urbanization encourages egalitarian gender attitudes, a shift away from the patrilineal arrangement, acceptance of nonmarital forms of family arrangements of DCC, and a shift of the caretaking responsibilities for the young and elderly away from families and to the government. Despite these strong modernization trends, some traditional familism values show no signs of budging. Better education and being a member of the younger cohorts do not impact orientations toward filial piety, family responsibilities, and nontraditional sexual behaviors.

Individuals negotiate and adjust their beliefs based on their life circumstances and situations, reflecting a process of calculation and consideration of prevailing ideas and self-interests and justification. Women are most likely to reject traditional ideas of gender differentiation, patrilineality, and the value of marriage, reflecting their awareness of their own interests. Those with two or more children hold more conservative gender attitudes, emphasize family responsibility more, and are less accepting of modern nonmarital forms of family. Divorced, separated, and widowed people are more supportive of nonmarital families. Members of the oldest cohort and those who are unemployed are more likely to endorse governmental sharing of family responsibilities. Rural-urban migrants who have moved away from villages and parents are less supportive of filial piety.

These uneven transformations have caused a shift from traditional gender, family, marriage, and sexual values to a hybrid form of mixed traditional and modern values. This new familism consists of persistent filial piety, family codependency, and sexuality constrained to marriage; a declining emphasis on male supremacy, the male line of family continuity, and legal marriage; and increasing tolerance of novel family forms of DCC. This combination of old and new values reflects the negotiations and concessions between individualism and collectivism, tradition and modernization, and state and market in the gender and family system in China.

Fertility and Divorce

Are Number and Gender of Children Associated with Divorce?

China has witnessed a rapid expansion in divorce since the 1980s. The crude divorce rate rose from 0.33 per 1,000 people in 1975 to 3.15 in 2017 (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2017). Since a rising divorce rate is a major signal of the second demographic transition (SDT) when a negative association between the number of children and the risks of divorce is commonly found, it begs the question of whether China is experiencing a similar trend of a negative association between fertility and divorce. This chapter examines the relationship between the risks of divorce and the number and gender of children in Chinese families since the 1980s when the Chinese state retreated from intervening in interpersonal romantic relationships yet tightened its grip on fertility to slow down population growth.

Research abounds on the relationship between the number and gender of children and divorce (Thornton 1977; Morgan, Lye, and Condran 1988; Waite and Lillard 1991; Svarer and Verner 2008). This is largely motivated by the well-documented potential consequences of divorce for the well-being of both adults and children (Amato 2010; McLanahan 2009; England 2016; Edin and Kefalas 2011; Chen 2008; Xu, Zhang, and Xia 2008), and the shared pattern of higher divorce risks in marriages with a daughter across the social contexts of the United States, Canada, and China (Morgan, Lye, and Condran 1988; Postular and Srinivasan 2018; Xu, Yu, and Qiu 2015). However, previous studies on the historical trend of this relationship are scarce and mainly rooted in wealthy Western countries. This chapter situates the empirical study of the association between the number and gender of children and marital instability in postreform China and examines whether and how such an association has changed over time. We do so by drawing on retrospective reports of marital dissolution from the nationally representative survey, the Chinese Family Panel Study (CFPS 2010, 2014).

This chapter has two motivations. First, studying the changing association between children and divorce over historical time helps us understand how children's role and women's status in marriage shift with institutional and cultural transformations in different contexts (Teachman and Schollaert 1989). A weakening link between children and divorce can be found in more recent studies across social contexts, suggesting both the number and the gender of children matter less in divorce decisions. However, we do not know whether China has also experienced such a historical trend. A recent study shows that in China, having fewer children and having any daughters is associated with a higher likelihood of divorce (Xu, Yu, and Qiu 2015). It argues that children, sons in particular, still play an important role in maintaining marriage stability. However, we have no knowledge of whether such a trend is consistent over historical time and whether it is possible that with women's rising socioeconomic status and a potential decline in son preference (Xie 2013; Shu 2004), children no longer shape divorce decisions among the younger cohorts in postreform China. Existing research has not looked into whether younger cohorts are leading this global trend of lesser emphasis on the number and gender of children in decisions on marital dissolution.

Second, postreform China offers a rare opportunity to examine how divorce expansion is shaped by state social engineering (Whyte 2005) and how the rising risks of divorce may vary across families of different values and socioeconomic conditions (Xie 2011). Few studies have paid attention to countries where the patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal family practices put women at a substantial socioeconomic disadvantage, and where the state heavily monitors and sanctions women's fertility. Such fertility restraint and its implications for divorce may also vary by region owing to the enlarging social and economic disparities between rural and urban areas since the economic reforms (Skalla 2004; Peng 2000). This chapter examines how the liberal divorce reform, one-child policy, and dual household registration (*hukou*) system have shaped divorce and fertility, the relationship between them, and family heterogeneity under the tensions of the reforms.

We analyze the association between the number and gender of children and divorce across marriage cohorts, types of household registration, and migrant status. We do so using female-only data from the CFPS 2010 and 2014, and discrete-time event history analysis with Firth procedure ($N=160,926$) to assess the association between the number and gender of children and divorce, controlling for individual socioeconomic status, geographical regions, son preference, and marital characteristics. We also compare the relationship between children and divorce among marriage cohorts (married before 1980, married between 1980 and 2000, and married after 2000). We further investigate how these changes are differentiated by *hukou* and migration status. By analyzing

historical and spatial variations in the relationship between children and divorce, this chapter sheds light on the changing patterns of family composition and marital dissolution in transitional China.

The Weakening Link between Fertility and Divorce

The association between children and divorce seems to have weakened over time across social contexts, yet the mechanisms of such change may vary. We review existing studies on the link between divorce and the number and gender of children respectively in the contexts of wealthy Western countries and East Asia, including China, and discuss the potential heterogeneity in the driving forces of change and the gaps in the literature.

The gender revolution framework uses theories of change to understand the relationship between children and divorce (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappergård 2015). It suggests that the increasingly egalitarian gender attitudes and subsequent behavioral and institutional changes may account for the weakening link between the number of children and divorce. The gender revolution framework (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappergård 2015) argues that the earlier theory of family change—the SDT (Lesthaeghe 2010)—represents only the first phase of the gender revolution. This initial stage made it difficult for women to achieve work-family balance because the stalled change at home with women continuing to handle the bulk of housework and childcare conflicts with women's progress in the public sphere in the form of rising education and participation in the labor market. A higher number of children meant more housework with little help from the husband, and the costs of having children were high for women on their rising economic opportunities in the public sphere. Consequently, women delayed entry into their first marriage, and their growing economic independence enabled them to leave unhappy marriages. As a result, the early gender revolution is characterized by declining fertility and rising divorce, and a negative association between the number of children and divorce (Feldman 1981; Peters 1986; Morgan, Lye, and Condran 1988; Svarer and Verner 2008).

The next phase of the gender revolution emerges when gender attitudes become more equal, social policies are generous toward parents, and men are more committed to sharing housework and childcare. Such ideational and subsequent behavioral changes make the work-life balance attainable for women, encouraging them to stay married and have more children. However, this advanced stage of the gender revolution is currently observed mainly among highly educated women and in northern Europe. Many wealthy Western countries are facing a new diverging trend in which highly educated women have more stable marriages with rising fertility, while less educated women are in unstable marriages with still relatively high fertility (Schwartz and Han 2014;

Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård 2015; Nitsche et al. 2015; Esteve et al. 2016).

However, existing frameworks may not be helpful in understanding family changes in East Asian settings since scholars have argued that similar demographic transitions occur with little change in attitudes toward family and gender (Raymo et al. 2015). For instance, marriage is increasingly more stable among the highly educated in Japan, Korea, and urban China, even though gender relations are still highly unequal in both the public and private spheres (Park and Raymo 2013; Chen 2019; Ji et al. 2017). Additionally, women in postreform China have experienced more intense work-family conflicts, mainly because of declining public childcare services (Honing and Hershatter 1988; Ji et al. 2018) rather than a result of women's increasing labor force participation, which occurred in many wealthy Western countries in the first phase of the gender revolution (Les-thaeghe 2010; Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård 2015). We have sparse knowledge of the changing association between the number of children and divorce in the non-Western social context. This analysis helps close the gap by analyzing the historical dynamics of this association over time in postreform China.

In regard to the relationship between the gender of children and divorce, research has found that it has also been weakened over time, similar to the relationship between the number of children and divorce in wealthy Western countries. Numerous earlier research works have documented evidence of son preference in marital dissolution. The presence of son(s) in marriages deters divorce, whereas having daughters is associated with higher risks of marital dissolution. For instance, in the United States, parents who have firstborn girls are more likely to divorce, and fathers are more likely to gain custody of sons rather than daughters postdivorce (Katzev, Warner, and Acock 1994; Morgan, Lye, and Condran 1988; Teachman and Schollaert 1989). Since the 1990s, however, the association between having a daughter and getting divorced appears to have weakened, possibly driven by the declining popularity of the belief that fathers must be more involved in parenting sons than daughters (Raley and Bianchi 2006; Dahl and Moretti 2004; Hamoudi and Nobels 2014).

Scholars emphasize parenting and gender socialization to explain the association between children's gender and divorce in the Western context. However, the pronounced and well-documented son preference in East Asian countries was argued to be caused by patrilineal and patrilocal kinship systems. Such systems marginalize women and reduce parents' gains from having daughters (Gupta et al. 2003). Abundant research has demonstrated discrimination against daughters in China and other East Asian countries, including prenatal sex-selective abortions (Qi and Mason 2012), female infanticide, and excessive female infant mortality (Gupta et al. 2003; Arnold and Liu 1986; Gu and Roy 1995;

Greenhalgh 1985). However, few studies have examined whether the number and sex composition of children lead to marital instability, especially whether the association between the number and gender of children and divorce has shifted over the past three decades. Only one paper (Xu, Yu, and Qiu 2015) has found that having a higher number of children stabilizes marriage; having any daughters is associated with a higher risk of divorce in China. Unfortunately, this study has not conducted a cohort analysis to show whether such a pattern has shifted over time, especially during the increase in divorces since the 1980s.

Additionally, researchers have observed a decline in son preference in several East Asian societies such as South Korea (Chung and Gupta 2007) and Taiwan (Lin 2009). These findings were based on reported son preference from answers to the question “Do you believe that a woman must have a son?” However, few studies have examined whether son preference is declining in China, although gender values are generally more liberal among younger cohorts and the more educated (Shu and Zhu 2012; Hu and Scott 2016). More importantly, we have no knowledge of whether the potential declining self-reported commitment to having a son is manifested over time in the decision-making process of divorce. Families with only daughters and a strong son preference may experience more stress, and conflicts may occur if only one of the spouses has a strong son preference. Pressure from parents and in-laws may also increase stress within the family, which leads to divorce. This chapter aims to examine the stability of and change in the association between children and divorce in China and expand our understanding of how structural and cultural forces jointly shape family change. The following sections discuss these structural and cultural forces pertinent to China and their impact on marriage, fertility, and the link between them.

Historical Dynamics in Divorce: State Policies and Family Change

The state engenders social engineering that can lead to changes in families directly by enforcing laws and regulations, and indirectly by fostering certain family patterns and attitudes (Whyte 2005; Davis and Friedman 2014; Goode 1993). For instance, in European countries, welfare state expenditure is beneficial to women with limited resources to maintain stable marriages (Harkonen and Dronkers 2006), and policies such as sharing paid parental leave help fathers take on more childrearing responsibilities and encourage childbirth (Duvander 2014). Heavy state social engineering is a salient feature of Chinese society. Since the 1980s the state interventions into Chinese families are threefold. First, the state intervenes directly through a retreat from intervening in interpersonal romantic relationships, such as the liberalization of divorce, and second, through a tighter grip on fertility to slow down population growth. Third, the state intervenes indirectly by reducing control on geographical mobility while maintaining

a strict household registration system, creating a large number of migrant families who have rural hukou but reside in urban areas.

The Liberalization of Divorce

Divorce was hardly an option for women in Old China, and men were the only ones allowed to initiate divorce (Platte 1988). There was a short period of divorce upsurge in the 1950s right after the 1950 marriage law granted divorce by mutual consent and women's right to divorce. However, this was quickly suppressed by the lengthy procedures and social and economic barriers to divorce imposed by the socialist state. These barriers included having to file for divorce through work units, which mediated first and prevented divorce, as well as the difficulty of obtaining separate housing after divorce since these resources were rare and allocated by the work units. Therefore, China maintained low crude divorce rates before the 1980s (Zeng and Wu 2000; Platte 1988; Whyte and Parish 1984; Shu, Zhu, and Zhang, 2012; Goode 1993). Since the 1980s, the Chinese government has gradually retreated from control over marital relationships through the introduction of liberal marriage laws (Davis 2014b; Li and Friedman 2016). The 1980 marriage law allowed no-fault divorce after failed reconciliation, although the mediation process continued to be tedious and lengthy. Since 2001 new marriage laws and a series of judicial interpretations have discarded court interventions and community-based mediation, thus further lowering the legal and economic barriers to divorce (Li and Friedman 2016; Palmer 2007). One of the major signals of the SDT is the association of a high divorce rate with low fertility, we expect a negative correlation between the number of children and the risk of divorce. We thus hypothesize that since the 1980s, couples with a higher number of children are consistently less likely to divorce (Hypothesis 1a).

The One-Child Policy and the Rural-Urban Divide

At roughly the same time as the beginning of the liberalization of divorce in 1980, the state issued the one-child policy and began its thirty-six-year control over fertility to constrain population growth. This continued until 2016, when the population policy was changed to two children, as many scholars urged (Wang, Gu, and Cai 2016). The one-child policy was strictly implemented in urban areas with only a few exceptions after the 2000s (Xia et al. 2014). The policy was generally accepted by urban residents and achieved the intended results among them—since the 1980s over 80 percent of urbanites had only one child (CFPS 2010, 2014; Festini and Martino 2004; Peng 1989). Nonetheless, some scholars argue that other important factors, such as the privatization of childcare and the comprehensive pension reforms in urban areas, have contributed to the increasing preference for only one child among urban families (Du and Dong 2010; Zheng et al. 2009). They claim that rising costs of private childcare and the increasingly unavailable public-funded or employer-subsidized childcare have

rendered children a financial burden that competes for parents' time and attention with their work and self-fulfillment. Additionally, since almost all urban residents, both men and women, enjoy universal pensions after retirement, their reliance on children for elderly care has been substantially weakened (Xie and Zhu 2009; Ebenstein and Leung 2010). For example, research has found that in several major cities in China, parents preferred not to live with married sons (Logan and Bian 1999) or any child at all (Unger 1993). Given that having a higher number of children may be more difficult, costly, unnecessary, and even undesired among the younger cohorts in urban China, we expect that compared with older or rural cohorts, for younger marriage cohorts, especially those in urban areas, having more children is not associated with a lower probability of divorce (Hypothesis 1b).

The one-child policy encountered strong resistance in rural China and was later adjusted to allow rural families a second child if the firstborn is a girl (Skalla 2004). The support for filial piety and son preference is much stronger in rural areas, where the traditional value system is deeply rooted in socioeconomic conditions (Ho 1996; Chen and Short 2008). The traditional patrilineal and patrilocal system endowed sons with many functions that caused support of son preference to continue in the reform era. Sons are still considered a more viable source of labor as well as income and emotional support for parents in old age, whereas daughters generally marry and care for their in-law families. This need is heightened by the fact that elderly rural residents have no retirement income, healthcare plans, and quality healthcare clinics like those their urban counterparts can access (Cong and Silverstein 2012; Chen and Short 2008; Ebenstein and Leung 2010). In rural China, less than half of parents have only one child since the 1980s (CFPS 2010, 2014). Research shows that over 60 percent of older adults depend almost exclusively on their children for economic support in rural China (Lee and Xiao 1998; Zimmer and Kwong 2003), and rural parents are more likely to reside with or live near married sons instead of married daughters, although there is no difference in the emotional and financial support provided by sons and daughters (Chen and Short 2008; Yi and Wang 2003; Gruijters and Ermisch 2018). In the early 1980s, the relaxed terms of family planning policies were extended to rural residents, and more than one child was allowed with some exceptions such as poverty, disabled, or female firstborn (Gu et al. 2007; Skalla 2004). However, the one-child policy is believed to be one of the main reasons for the gender ratio imbalance in China, given the persistent patrilineal and patrilocal culture (Festini and Martino 2004; Skalla 2004; Ebenstein 2008). This policy motivated families with son preference to practice sex-selective behaviors, which include mostly prenatal sex-selective abortions, continue having children until a son is born, and, in some cases, infanticide and child neglect (Qi and Mason 2012; Whyte 2015; Whyte, Feng, and Cai 2015; Davis 2014a). The differential response to policy treatment in rural and urban China may also result in a

rural-urban divide in the association between fertility and divorce. With strong son preference, rural families may be more likely to divorce since having only daughters and no son creates major conflicts between the couple (Xu, Yu, and Qiu 2015). Women may face more judgment and pressure from the extended family and community for failing to give birth to a son. Thus it is possible that rural women may be more likely to experience divorce. We expect that, across cohorts, among rural families, couples with only daughters are more likely to divorce than other families with at least one boy (Hypothesis 2a). We also hypothesize that among urban families and especially among younger cohorts, couples with only daughters are not associated with a higher risk of divorce than couples with at least a boy (Hypothesis 2b).

Migration and Its Implications for Children and Divorce in Postreform China

In the 1980s the state relaxed control over geographical mobility to fulfill labor demand in urban development while still maintaining the dual household registration system (urban vs. rural hukou). Consequently, China witnessed an unprecedented massive internal migration—an estimated 220 million migrants moving mainly from rural agricultural areas to cities, many of whom were married with children (Lu 2012; National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011). Known as the “floating population” (Luo 2006), the majority of these migrants retain their rural hukou and have no access to the benefits enjoyed by their urban counterparts, such as sufficient pensions, subsidized housing, health care, medical care, and public schools for their children (Liu and Erwin 2015). The economic and social difficulties of migration with a rural hukou drive many migrant families to leave their children behind (Lu 2012).

Migration complicates the association between fertility and divorce in China in several ways. First, rural migrants may have stronger son preference. For instance, in the one-child policy era, rural families avoided their local family planning agencies and had more children in their efforts to get at least one son (Yang 2000). Second, other researchers suggest that rural-urban migrants may adapt to the higher-divorce/lower-fertility norm in urban areas that reduces both their divorce and fertility (Yang 2000; Hu 2016). Returnees, in particular female migrants who returned to their rural homes, acquired greater autonomy in their marital decisions owing to their increased socioeconomic status (Davin 1996). Even though few studies have examined their risks of divorce, research demonstrates that rural-urban migrants in China have lower fertility than rural non-migrants but higher fertility than urban residents (Goldstein, White, and Goldstein 1997). Finally, migrant families are more susceptible to family disruption such as spouse separation and leaving children behind because of the high costs of living in cities and limited access to education for children (Liu and Erwin 2015). This may increase parents’ chances of marital dissolution and discourage them from having more children.

Given the scale of rural-urban migration, the systemic discrimination imposed on these rural migrants because of their hukou status, and the potential impact of migration on the link between fertility and divorce, it is important to distinguish families by their migration and hukou status when examining the changing association between fertility and divorce. This study tests whether the association between fertility and divorce has shifted similarly across different families based on their migration and hukou status. We pay special attention to three types of families: rural nonmigrant families, rural-urban migrant families, and urban families. Rural-rural and rural-urban migrations cannot be distinguished in the CFPS. Hypotheses 1b and 2 specify the potential differences between rural (nonmigrant included) and urban families. We now hypothesize the changing association between children and divorce among rural migrant families.

We expect that rural migrants with a higher number of children are more likely to divorce, given the rising costs of childrearing in the cities and the higher chance of family separation, and they display son preference in divorce owing to insufficient economic support from the pension system because of their rural hukou status. We hypothesize that among rural migrant families and younger marriage cohorts, those who have more children are more likely to divorce (Hypothesis 3a). We also expect that among rural migrant families, those who have any girls are more likely to divorce (Hypothesis 3b).

Comparing the demographic transitions of these families not only acknowledges the family heterogeneity in postreform China but also serves as a useful approach to dissect and explain the overall trend of fertility and divorce in China. If rural residents, regardless of their migration status, display son preference in divorce over time, it provides further evidence that access to pensions (attached to urban hukou status and not migration) is an important factor that contributes to son preference, and the rigid dual household registration is part of the institution that helps maintain filial piety and son preference in China. These results may help us understand how state policies shape profound family inequalities in postreform China.

Findings

Cohort Differences in Patterns of Divorce and Fertility

Figure 6.1 presents the proportions of divorce over twenty years into first marriage among the first two cohorts, and fifteen years in the last cohort. Before the 1980 marriage reform, divorce was practically nonexistent. Among the cohort married between 1980 and 2000, the proportion of divorced people had risen over years into the first marriage, but mostly among women without children. Among the youngest cohort, who married after 2000, the proportion of divorced among childless women rose much faster than that of their counterparts in the

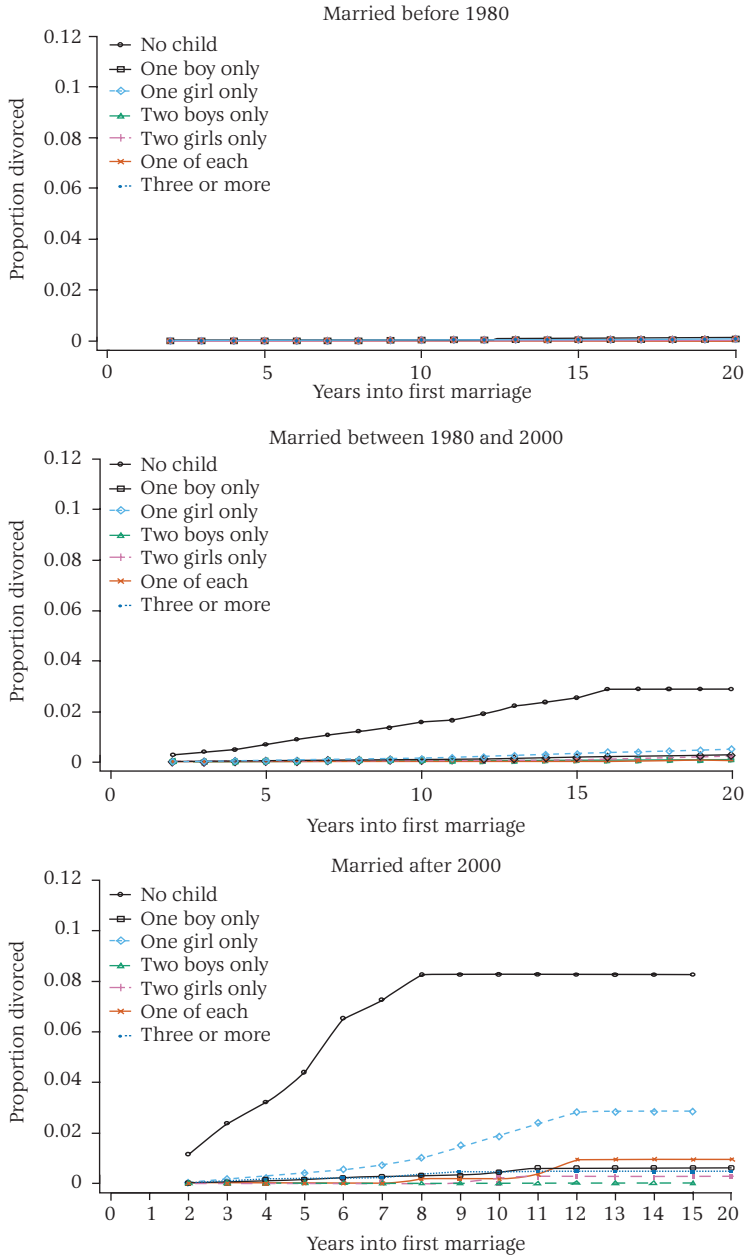


FIGURE 6.1 Proportion divorced over years into first marriage by parity and marriage cohort

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010 and 2014

earlier cohorts and stabilized after eight years into the first marriage. Those who had children experienced higher proportions of divorce compared with their counterparts in previous cohorts, especially one-girl-only families.

Overall, since the marriage reform in the 1980s, the proportion of divorce increased first among families without children, then after 2000 among almost all families. Since 2000, one-girl families ranked between childless and other families in proportion divorced, and there was no consistent negative association between the number of children and the proportion divorced (Hypothesis 1b). Even though reported son preference declined from 64.5 percent among cohorts married before 1980 to 34.9 percent among the youngest cohort (married after 2000, Table 6.1), no evidence suggests a weakening of son preference in divorce (Hypothesis 2a). Instead, there seems to be a more salient display of son preference, given that one-girl families are more likely to divorce over cohorts (Hypothesis 2a).

Table 6.2 presents discrete-time logistic regression models to examine the association between divorce and the number and gender of children in three separate columns, each representing one marriage cohort. This table allows us to compare across cohorts the coefficients of divorce by each independent variable and observe patterns of cohort change. For those married before 1980, compared with women without children, women with one boy, one girl, two boys, or two girls had a similar risk of divorce. However, the differences enlarged significantly for the cohort married between 1980 and 2000. For this cohort, compared with having no child, having one boy was 93.0 percent ($1 - e^{-2.685}$) less likely to divorce, and having one girl was 88.7 percent ($1 - e^{-2.181}$) less likely to divorce. This figure was 96.1 percent ($1 - e^{-3.242}$) for having two boys, 88.2 percent ($1 - e^{-2.138}$) for having two girls, 93.4 percent ($1 - e^{-2.719}$) for having one of each, and 97.9 percent ($1 - e^{-3.878}$) for having three or more children. In short, for those married between 1980 and 2000, having any child was associated with a significantly lower risk of divorce for the family, and having any girl was associated with a higher risk (1.58 times) of divorce compared with families with one or two boys. The number of children was not consistently associated with a lower risk of divorce, yet having a higher number of boys and having more than three children were associated with the lowest risk of divorce.

For those married after 2000, compared with the risk of divorce among childless women, those with one boy, one of each, and three or more children had lower risk of divorce. Compared with childless families, having one boy was 85.4 percent ($1 - e^{-1.922}$) less likely to divorce, and this figure was 85.5 percent ($1 - e^{-1.928}$) for one of each and 88.6 percent ($1 - e^{-2.168}$) for those with three children. Two-boy families were 96.6 percent ($1 - e^{-3.372}$) less likely to divorce, and two-girl families were 92.5 percent ($1 - e^{-2.584}$) less likely to divorce. Additionally, having one girl was not significantly different in the likelihood of divorce compared with being childless ($t = -0.772$, $p > 0.1$).

TABLE 6.1
Descriptive Statistics by Marriage Cohorts

	<i>Married before 1980</i>	<i>Married between 1980 and 2000</i>	<i>Married after 2000</i>	χ^2
Ever divorced	0.012	0.034	0.017	***
Demographic characteristics				
Age (2014)	67.380	48.568	32.788	***
Years into first marriage	44.612	24.644	9.172	***
Education				***
Elementary and lower	0.718	0.456	0.315	
Junior high	0.172	0.338	0.417	
Senior high	0.077	0.154	0.150	
College and above	0.033	0.053	0.118	
Urban hukou status	0.228	0.229	0.246	***
Migrant	0.321	0.287	0.294	***
Family types				***
Rural nonmigrant	0.584	0.593	0.570	
Rural migrant	0.191	0.182	0.180	
Urban nonmigrant	0.100	0.118	0.155	
Urban migrant	0.126	0.107	0.095	
Characteristics of marriage				
Age at first marriage	20.860	22.560	23.312	***
Premarital cohabitation	0.006	0.061	0.219	***
Age gap (husband-wife)	2.022	1.581	2.029	***
Fertility conditions				
Had premarital birth(s)	0.040	0.033	0.031	
Parity				***
No child	0.014	0.009	0.123	
One boy	0.079	0.285	0.275	
One girl	0.021	0.164	0.164	
Two boys	0.139	0.158	0.070	
Two girls	0.006	0.045	0.060	

(continued)

Table 6.1. (continued)

	<i>Married before 1980</i>	<i>Married between 1980 and 2000</i>	<i>Married after 2000</i>	χ^2
One of each	0.020	0.134	0.171	
Three or more children	0.717	0.199	0.130	
Geographical location				
Coastal regions	0.350	0.335	0.354	
Son preference				
Must have a boy	0.645	0.491	0.349	***
Total	2,106	3,791	1,337	

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010 and 2014.

Note: + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Across cohort differences reported with χ^2 results.

In short, across cohorts, having a higher number of children was not consistently associated with a lower chance of divorce, and those with three or more children were not the most stable families among the youngest cohorts. This again provides little support for Hypothesis 1a, which argues that there is a consistent negative association between number of children and risks of divorce. Moreover, given the same number of children, having any girl was associated with higher risk of divorce beginning with the cohort married between 1980 and 2000, yet two-girl families may have been more stable in the youngest cohort. These results indicate that the number and gender of children jointly shape divorce risk. Complementary analysis using one boy as the reference category confirmed the above results. It also confirmed that one-girl-only families were more likely to divorce than one-boy-only families. The association was the strongest among the youngest cohort (Hypothesis 2a).

Do the Results Change over Marriage Cohorts and Marital Duration?

A discrete-time logistic model with Firth method results showed that across all marriage cohorts, one-girl-only families have higher risk of divorce compared with one-boy-only families. Pairwise comparison results showed that compared with one-boy-only families in the same marriage cohort, one-girl-only families

TABLE 6.2
Coefficients from Discrete-Time Logistic Regressions of Divorce
on Independent Variables by Marriage Cohorts

	<i>Married before 1980</i>	<i>Married between 1980 and 2000</i>	<i>Married after 2000</i>
Education (elementary school)			
Middle school	-0.611 (0.774)	0.316 (0.293)	-0.336 (0.506)
High school	-0.064 (0.920)	0.611 (0.348)	0.496 (0.611)
College	1.08 (1.017)	1.306** (0.414)	0.121 (0.699)
Family type (rural nonmigrant)			
Rural migrant	1.328* (0.544)	0.185 (0.335)	0.438 (0.518)
Urban nonmigrant	0.456 (0.840)	0.183 (0.348)	1.025 (0.536)
Urban migrant	0.74 (0.720)	0.501 (0.327)	-0.372 (0.781)
Marital duration (years)	0.004 (0.018)	0.021 (0.013)	0.027 (0.056)
Characteristics of marriage			
Age at first marriage	-0.046 (0.077)	-0.038 (0.040)	-0.118 (0.066)
Age gap between husband and wife	-0.05 (0.048)	-0.009 (0.040)	-0.067 (0.064)
Cohabitation with first spouse	1.091 (1.486)	0.949** (0.315)	-0.197 (0.450)
Residential regions (inland)			
Coastal areas	-1.411* (0.706)	-1.073*** (0.323)	0.453 (0.379)

(continued)

Table 6.2. (continued)

	<i>Married before 1980</i>	<i>Married between 1980 and 2000</i>	<i>Married after 2000</i>
Son preference			
Must have a boy	-0.635 (0.493)	-0.594* (0.251)	-0.610 (0.512)
Conditions of fertility			
Having premarital birth(s)	-0.348 (1.480)	0.745 (0.474)	2.037** (0.649)
Parity (no child)			
One boy only	-1.114 (0.707)	-2.685*** (0.351)	-1.922** (0.689)
One girl only	0.094 (0.664)	-2.181*** (0.346)	-0.772 (0.614)
Two boys	-3.009* (1.514)	-3.242*** (0.608)	-3.372* (1.537)
Two girls	-1.873 (1.506)	-2.138*** (0.449)	-2.584* (1.020)
One of each	-2.113* (0.979)	-2.719*** (0.403)	-1.928* (0.899)
Three or more children	-2.377** (0.724)	-3.878*** (0.698)	-2.168* (0.874)
Constant	-5.209** (1.628)	-3.737*** (0.944)	-1.729 (1.617)
N	68,198	80,167	10,259

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010 and 2014.

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Marital characteristics controlled in all models.

were more likely to divorce among cohorts married before 1980 ($t=1.521, p<0.05$), between 1980 and 2000 ($t=0.594, p<0.05$), and after 2000 ($t=1.386, p<0.05$). One-girl-only families experienced significantly higher risk of divorce since 2000. Pairwise comparison results showed that one-girl-only families married after 2000 were more likely to divorce than one-girl-only families married between 1980 and 2000 ($t=1.333, p<0.05$), yet there were no significant differences in divorce risk between the same type of families among cohorts married before 1980 and cohorts married between 1980 and 2000 ($t=-0.002, p>0.05$). Childless families experienced rising divorce risks after 1980, which then stabilized. Pairwise comparison results showed that compared with those who married before 1980, those who married between 1980 and 2000 and had one child were more likely to divorce ($t=2.864, p<0.05$), yet there were no significant differences in the divorce risk among childless women married between 1980 and 2000 and childless women married after 2000 ($t=0.516, p>0.05$). To visualize and interpret the change across historical and marital time, we separated the three cohorts, adding interactions between marital duration and parity to each model representing each cohort (Table 6.3), and plotted the predicted probability of divorce based on these models (Figure 6.2).

Table 6.3 and Figure 6.2 confirm several major findings. First, there were two phases in the transitioning pattern of divorce and fertility. Controlling for all other characteristics, childless women were the trendsetters in divorce and the most likely to divorce after the 1980s, while women with children remained married. After 2000, women with children experienced an elevated risk of divorce along with the childless women. Thus Hypothesis 1b was partially supported, and the evidence suggests that there was a weaker association between the number of children and risk of divorce over marriage cohorts. Second, one-girl-only families experienced the highest risk of divorce among married mothers after 2000 (Hypothesis 2a). These families became as vulnerable, if not more, to divorce as childless women after nine years into the first marriage. Despite reported declining son preference (see Table 6.1), women with only one girl were still more likely to divorce when divorce with children was attainable. Women who had two girls only did not experience the same elevated risk of divorce after 2000. Finally, women with more than three children, who were one of the most stable families before 2000, had signs of growing risk of divorce after 2000. Consequently, families with a higher number of children were no longer the most stable families after 2000, thus refuting Hypothesis 1a and suggesting that fertility preference may have changed to fewer than three children.

Do the Results Vary by Family Type?

The sample was stratified by women's hukou and migration status and marriage cohorts to examine whether the above results vary by family type. Table 6.4

TABLE 6.3

**Coefficients from Discrete-Time Logistic Regressions of Divorce
on Independent Variables by Marriage Cohorts Including
Interactions with Years into First Marriage**

	<i>Married before 1980</i>	<i>Married between 1980 and 2000</i>	<i>Married after 2000</i>
Parity (no child)			
One boy only	-2.953* (1.287)	-3.822*** (0.626)	-2.875* (1.252)
One girl only	-1.357 (1.031)	-2.737*** (0.563)	-1.723 (1.108)
Two boys	-3.670 (1.665)	-4.062** (1.405)	-4.124 (3.620)
Two girls	-2.458 (2.763)	-3.205*** (0.969)	-5.020 (2.581)
One of each	-4.621 (2.790)	-3.008*** (0.807)	-3.587 (2.202)
Three or more children	-1.933 (1.172)	-4.657** (1.747)	-3.728* (1.632)
Parity X Years into first marriage			
One boy	0.121 (0.074)	0.086* (0.042)	0.215 (0.292)
One girl	0.110 (0.072)	0.047 (0.041)	0.223 (0.278)
Two boys	0.095 (0.095)	0.069 (0.078)	0.286 (0.514)
Two girls	0.094 (0.125)	0.079 (0.056)	0.458 (0.374)
One of each	0.143 (0.102)	0.031 (0.052)	0.334 (0.341)
Three or more children	0.027 (0.077)	0.068 (0.091)	0.347 (0.318)
Constant	-4.472* (1.607)	-3.117** (0.977)	-0.766 (1.827)
N	68,198	80,167	10,259

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010 and 2014.

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Education, family type, marriage characteristics, regions, and son preference were controlled.

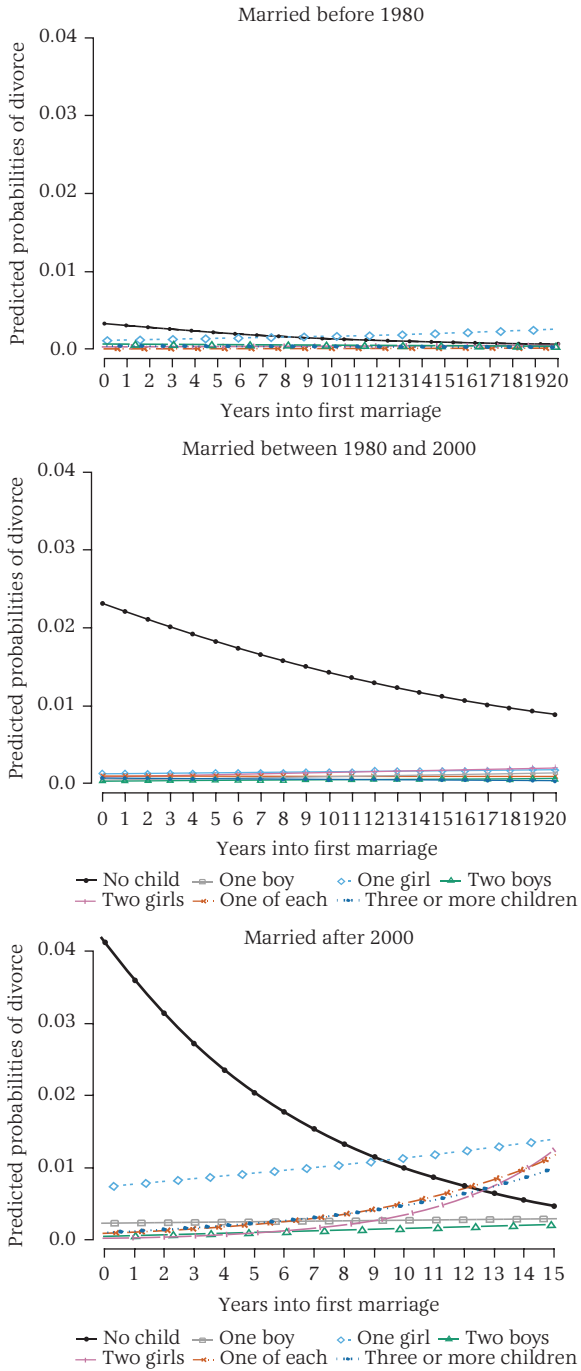


FIGURE 6.2 Predicted probabilities of divorce over years into first marriage by parity and marriage cohorts

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010 and 2014

TABLE 6.4

Coefficients from Discrete-Time Logistic Regressions of Divorce by Family Type and Marriage Cohort

	<i>Married between 1980 and 2000</i>				<i>Married after 2000</i>			
	<i>Rural</i>		<i>Urban</i>		<i>Rural</i>		<i>Urban</i>	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Migrant								
No child								
One boy	-2.476*** (0.540)	-5.288*** (1.010)	-1.251 (1.200)	-2.834*** (0.730)	-2.623** (0.890)	-5.569* (2.790)	-1.812 (1.219)	0.136 (1.760)
One girl	-2.349*** (0.590)	-4.757*** (1.010)	-0.261 (1.170)	-2.306** (0.700)	-2.076* (0.840)	-3.197 (2.290)	-0.886 (0.990)	-1.031 (2.080)
Two boys	-2.901*** (0.680)	-6.004*** (1.600)	-1.199 (1.820)	-2.669 (1.560)	-3.540* (1.580)	-7.947 (4.260)	-2.232 (1.810)	-0.385 (2.970)
Two girls	-2.500*** (0.680)	-4.353*** (1.190)	-0.489 (1.290)	-1.602 (0.900)	-4.015* (1.590)	-6.717 (4.130)	-1.266 (1.320)	0.677 (2.330)
One of each	-2.921*** (0.570)	-5.851*** (1.170)	-0.264 (1.230)	-1.628 (0.880)	-2.801* (1.100)	-6.231 (3.210)	-0.749 (1.550)	1.598 (2.560)
Three or more children	-4.012*** (0.910)	-5.152*** (1.090)	-0.942 (1.850)	-2.477 (1.570)	-2.267* (0.950)	-10.727 (6.000)	-2.619 (2.010)	-0.383 (2.140)

	Married between 1980 and 2000		Married after 2000	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Constant	-5.185*** (1.550)	-5.642* (2.380)	-2.237 (2.860)	-1.731 (3.440)
N	47,764	9,351	5,683	1,498
		14,428	1,906	1,172
				-2.681 (6.130)

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010 and 2014.

*Note: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001. Education, marital duration, other marriage characteristics, regions, and son preference were controlled. Complementary analysis with one boy as the reference group showed that among younger rural migrants, having one girl is associated with higher risks of divorce compared with having one boy (t = 3.425, p < 0.05).*

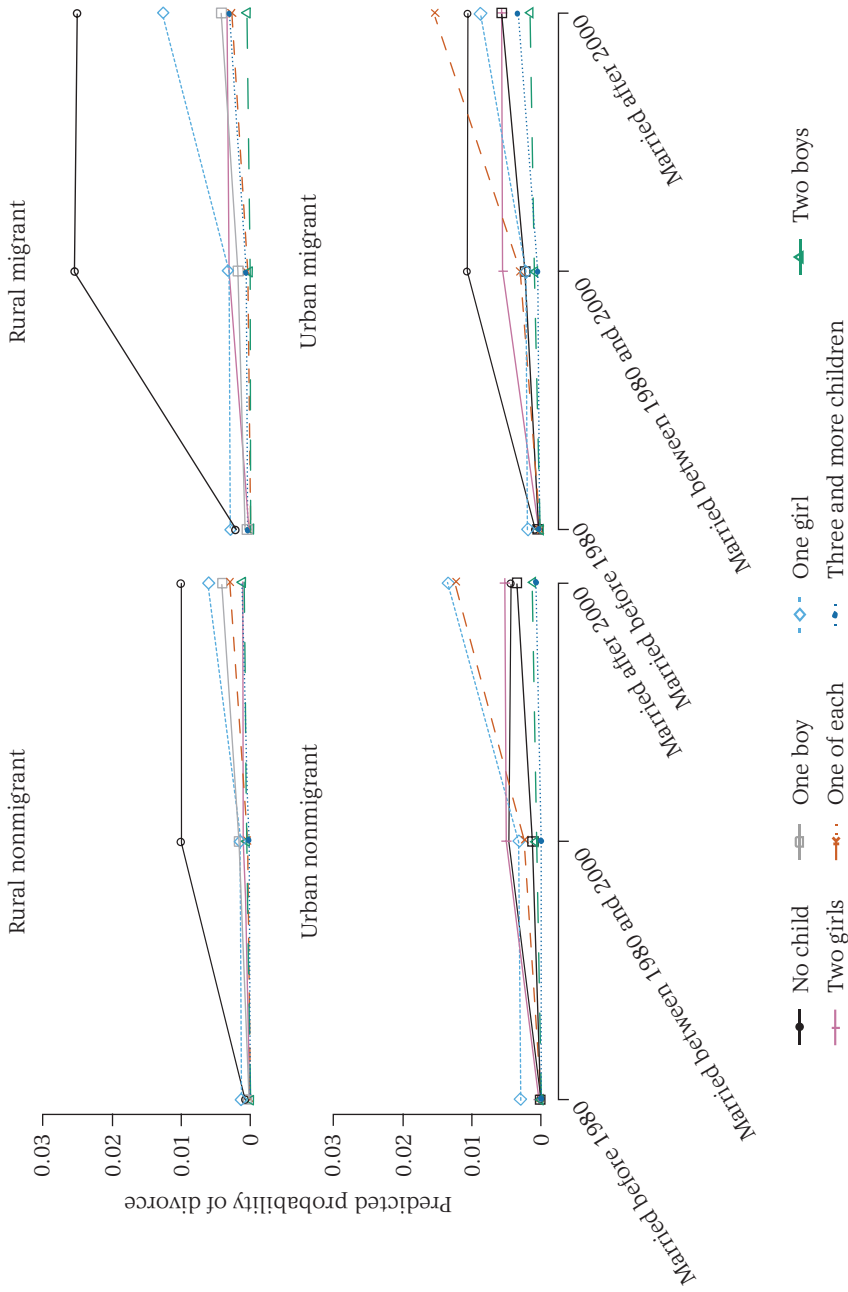


FIGURE 6.3 Predicted probabilities of divorce by marriage cohorts and household registration status (hukou)

Source: Chinese Family Panel Studies 2010 and 2014

presents the results from discrete-time logistic regressions with the stratified sample. Because divorce risks were very low and stable for all before 1980, they are not included. Figure 6.3 visualizes the results by presenting the predicted probabilities of divorce by family type and cohort. Pairwise comparisons were also conducted to examine whether group differences were significant, as well as complementary analysis with one boy as the reference group (see Table 6.4 footnote).

The results show that the overall patterns among these groups were similar to the full sample—childless couples were the most likely to divorce among women married between 1980 and 2000, and couples with children were more likely to divorce since 2000. However, stratifying patterns on risk of divorce over cohorts and parity were revealed. Regardless of hukou status, migrants without children have higher predicted probabilities of divorce since the 1980s, which may reflect the higher family disruption and spouse separation associated with migration. Moreover, both migrant and nonmigrant women without children who hold rural hukou were more likely to divorce compared with their urban counterparts. Urban mothers' risk of divorce no longer depended on the number and gender of children since 2000 (Hypotheses 1b and 2 supported), yet rural mothers maintained relatively more stable marriages with the exception of one-daughter-only mothers (Hypotheses 1b and 2a supported), especially those who were also rural migrants. Hypothesis 3b was supported in that rural migrant mothers with only one daughter were more likely to divorce, but opposite to Hypothesis 3a these mothers still had very stable marriages with other parity conditions and were not more likely to divorce with a higher number of children. Pairwise comparison results showed that compared with those who married before 1980, those who married between 1980 and 2000 and had one child were more likely to divorce ($t=2.864$, $p<0.05$), yet there were no significant differences in the divorce risk among childless women married between 1980 and 2000 and childless women married after 2000 ($t=0.516$, $p>0.05$). Pairwise comparison results confirmed that among families with only one daughter, rural migrant mothers had a higher risk of divorce than rural nonmigrant mothers ($t=1.567$, $p<0.05$), and there were no significant differences among other mothers.

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to better elucidate the changing relationship between fertility and marital instability in the case of postreform China (1980–2014). Previous studies on this relationship were elusive and mainly employed empirical evidence from wealthy Western countries, and the most recent framework on family change is inadequate for explaining East Asian families. Since the 1980s, China has experienced dramatic social transformations that shape family change: (1) relaxed state intervention in marital relationships, (2) tightened fertility

control (one-child policy), and (3) loosened control over geographical mobility for urban development while maintaining the strict dual household registration system. This unique set of forces shapes Chinese family change and provides an interesting and important case to study the changing association between fertility and divorce. Drawing on the CFPS (2010, 2014), this chapter contributes to the current literature by expanding our understanding of family change outside of wealthy Western contexts and frameworks and offers valuable insight into how children shape family decisions under the shifting social policies and ideologies toward marriage and the family.

The results show two stages of divorce based on the number of children a woman has in China. Childless women were the most likely to divorce after the 1980s when divorce became accessible, whereas women with children experienced an elevated risk of divorce after 2000. These results partially support Xu et al.'s (Xu, Yu, and Qiu 2015) findings that children stabilized marriage in China. With cohort analysis, we argue that this trend may be waning in urban areas among the youngest cohort (married after 2000). The two-stage divorce pattern suggests that the "no-fault" divorce law in 1980 mainly benefited those who had no children. Divorce may be more difficult and messier among parents, possibly due to disputes over child custody and childcare, which raises the costs of divorce for parents. It is also possible that couples without children had a higher chance of divorce in the earlier stages of the reform owing to the social stigma of not having children, whereas parents with children faced greater stigma regarding divorce (Du and Dong 2010). However, with the 2001 marriage law reform, divorce became even more accessible when court interventions and community-based mediation were discarded, and legal and social barriers to divorce between parents may have also declined. Additionally, the state retreat from childcare services and rising childcare costs made having more children increasingly expensive (Du and Dong 2010; Zheng et al. 2009). Thus, having more children may reduce marital satisfaction and raise the risks of marital instability. Nonetheless, no evidence suggests that mothers with a higher number of children are more likely to divorce in China. This differs from what was observed in the United States in the SDT (Thornton 1977; Heaton 1990), which showed a U-shaped association between the number of children and risks of divorce. Given that China was under the one-child policy during this period, having a higher number of children may have induced more stress owing to the breach of the policy. It remains to be seen whether this trend shifts under the two-children policy, in which the state started to encourage higher fertility. Future studies should further investigate these explanations and provide more evidence on what led to the rising divorce rate in parents since 2000.

Despite reported declining son preference, women with one girl were increasingly more likely to divorce after the 2000s. This result is in line with and expands on the previous findings on the positive association between divorce

and having any girl (Xu, Yu, and Qiu 2015). It is possible that women with girls face pressure from their husbands and in-laws to have a son and thus were increasingly more prone to end (or forced to end) strained relationships, especially given that divorce has become more feasible than trying to have more children under the one-child policy. This result indicates that the confluence of son preference and the one-child policy extends its demographic impact beyond fertility to marital instability and shapes the patterns of family change in China. The interesting finding that mothers with two daughters did not seem more likely to divorce may be a result of selection—women with liberal values and thus prone to divorce are less likely to have more than one child in the first place. This is supported by the fact that compared with urban women, who are more liberal (Hu 2016), rural women are more likely to have two daughters and stay in their marriages. Future studies should further explore the potential selection and the assumption that women are more likely to initiate divorce.

Finally, diverging patterns of divorce and fertility were found among rural and urban residents. First, the weakening association between the number of children and divorce was a more salient feature among urban mothers than among rural mothers. Despite rising divorce rates among rural childless families, they still maintained a stable low divorce risk, except for one-daughter-only families. Second, son preference in divorce seems to be persistent among rural mothers but not among urban mothers. Rural nonmigrant mothers showed significant but weak son preference in divorce (less likely to divorce with any son), likely due to the overall low risk of divorce within the group. Divorce may be more difficult for rural women since they usually lose their land after divorce, and the economic burden of raising children alone without any land or source of income may be too overwhelming (Li 2003; Yi et al. 2002). However, for rural migrants, the rising divorce risk among the childless may be due to higher risk of spouse separation and female migrants' increasing socioeconomic status (Davin 1996). Interestingly, whereas for urban residents the higher costs of living on top of higher risk of family disruption increased divorce risk, this was not the case for rural migrants with more than one child, possibly as a result of temporary migration (thus temporary separation) and assistance from other family members (Liu and Erwin 2015). Moreover, despite the fact that rural migrants live in the vicinity of their urban counterparts, they do not enjoy sufficient pensions and other social services and are thus likely to rely on their sons as the main source of elderly care. This may explain why having a daughter may induce marital strain and lead to divorce. Future studies should pay close attention to the mechanisms behind the diverging patterns of son preference in divorce in China, specifically testing the effect of wealth and other socioeconomic status indicators on patterns of fertility and divorce.

Taken together, these results suggest that while urban China has observed a weakening association between children and divorce, as have many wealthy

Western countries, the two are still closely linked in postreform rural China. While research attention has been directed toward gender egalitarian attitudes and behaviors in wealthy Western countries, we argue that in China the driving forces of the changing association between children and divorce are both structural and cultural, and both are significantly different from those in wealthy Western countries. Specifically, structural forces such as the combination of liberal marriage law reforms and tightened fertility control, as well as the dual hukou system and migration, coexist and interact with cultural forces such as persisting son preference rooted in individuals' socioeconomic status, shaping family change and demographic transitions in China.

Profound implications on social inequalities can be drawn from the findings of this chapter. An increasing number of single-parent families by divorce has been observed since the 2000s, and in particular one-girl families are disproportionately more unstable over time. Abundant research has documented the potential disadvantages confronted by single-parent households, especially single-mother households, such as higher risk of poverty, poorer mental and physical health, and, among children, a higher chance of delinquent behavior, lower self-esteem, and other developmental deficits (Lichter, Qian, and Mellott 2006; McLanahan 2009; England 2016; Edin and Kefalas 2011; McLanahan and Percheski 2008; Chen 2008; Xu, Zhang, and Xia 2008). Thus, families with only one girl in China may suffer more economic, mental, and social hardships, and the only daughters in China under the one-child policy may confront poorer life chances even after the battle for survival at birth. Furthermore, since a large share of these one-daughter-only families have rural migrant mothers, they may have suffered from early family separation that could intensify the negative consequences of divorce. More attention should be directed toward these families in future studies to deepen our understanding of the consequences of the rising number of single households and the rural-urban divide in family transitions in China.

Marital Dynamics

Housework, Breadwinning, Decision-Making, and Marital Satisfaction

In early 2021 a divorce case in Beijing made news on CNN, BBC, NBC, and CBS and in the *Guardian* in which the court ordered the husband to pay \$7,700 to his wife to compensate for her five years of housework during the marriage. This was the first judicial decision after the new provisions in the civil code that took effect in January 2021 to rule on “intangible property” in a divorce, which includes housework. Despite the small amount of compensation, this ruling marks a legal recognition of the value of housework. It will impact people’s perception of invisible domestic labor and what marital fairness in China consists of.

A typical Chinese marriage is composed of a husband and a wife, each with a full-time job. This is the result of the socialist state’s efforts to mobilize women to the labor force, and women’s high labor force participation rate even during reproductive years. Many Chinese marriages are characterized by a fairly equal match of education and income between the husband and wife. Twenty percent of wives have more education than their husbands, whereas 40 percent of married couples are equally educated (Parish and Farrer 2000). Approximately 85 percent of wives work full time, and most earn nearly as much income as their husbands, contributing 40–50 percent of the couple’s joint income (Parish and Farrer 2000).

However, equal education and income do not automatically lead to an equal domestic division of labor. Wives spend twice as much time on cooking and laundry as their husbands do (Parish and Farrer 2000). Women handle more than 70 percent of the cooking, grocery shopping, laundry, taking care of children, and housecleaning tasks (Parish and Farrer 2000; Shu, Zhu, and Zhang 2013). Husbands contribute more to occasional housework that requires physical strength (Shu, Zhu, and Zhang 2013).

Different from the division of labor in housework, the prevailing form of decision-making among urban Chinese couples is an egalitarian one in which

husbands and wives share power (Pimentel 2006). Husbands and wives practice a high level of joint decision-making in household purchases and other matters, whereas wives dominate in the management of household money (Shu et al. 2012; Stockman, Bonney, and Sheng 1995; Zuo and Bian 2005). Some argue that women's power in making routine decisions stems from their expertise in running the household (Shu et al. 2012).

Division of housework, contribution to income, and share of decision-making form the foundation on which husbands and wives evaluate the quality of their marriages and conclude whether their nuptials are satisfactory. Evidence shows that the relationship between the share of housework and marital satisfaction is negative, with a caveat. Some find that Chinese wives who do more housework are generally less satisfied with their marriages (Oshio, Nozaki, and Kobayashi 2013). Others reveal that such a negative association only appears among wives with a strong egalitarian gender attitude, perhaps because wives upholding a traditional notion of gender roles perceive doing housework as a form of "gender display" that aligns well with their understanding of what constitutes being a good wife and good mother (Qian and Sayer 2016).

Past research on the effect of wives' income share on marital satisfaction is inconclusive since these studies were based on data from the United States and Western countries. While some identify a positive relationship between wives' contribution to income and their marital satisfaction and marital happiness, others find no such relationship (Rogers and DeBoer 2001; Sayer and Bianchi 2000; Wilcox and Nock 2006). Husbands' evaluation of marital quality is more susceptible to inconsistencies between beliefs about gender roles and their own relative earnings (Brennan, Barnett, and Gareis 2001). Analysis of data from China on this association is scant. One study finds that as wives' share of income rises, they become happier (Oshio, Nozaki, and Kobayashi 2013).

This chapter analyzes the multifaceted dynamics among housework, income, decision-making power, and marital relationship, and the pathways through which they jointly shape married people's perception of the quality of their marriage. In doing so, we draw on insights from the classic resource theory, theory of utility maximization, gender theory, and modified resource theory by analyzing marital dynamics among heterosexual couples in China. Couples formulate and negotiate a division of household labor, breadwinning, and decision-making power within the confines of socially prescribed gendered roles. Spouses evaluate their contributions, self-worth, and authority in the balance of unpaid work, paid employment, and decision-making against the prevailing gender norms of women and men's roles and status in the society and family. With these appraisals, individuals formulate perceptions of the quality of their marriage. We analyze the relationship among the division of housework, breadwinning, and marital communication to further our understanding of these marital dynamics.

Theoretical Arguments

The balance of contribution to housework and income, and authority within the household form the foundation on which couples evaluate the quality of their marriage. Several theoretical orientations predict the nature of these multifaceted relationships among the dynamic dimensions of marriages.

Classic Resource Theory

Classic resource theory posits that the balance of power at home is negotiated during the process of resource exchange between husband and wife (Blood and Wolfe 1960; Brines 1994; Lennon and Rosenfield 1994; Scanzoni and Szinovacz 1980). Resources are in the form of socioeconomic capital such as income, education, occupation, and skills in organizations. The spouse who holds a more prestigious job and makes more money is less dependent on the partner and may use these assets to negotiate for less housework and greater authority at home. The classic form of resource theory is gender neutral and claims that either husband or wife can attain more marital power and do less housework by bringing more resources to the marriage. However, empirical support for classic resource theory is mixed. Women's increase in relative income reduces their housework time only in urban China and in some more modernized rural areas (Yu 2014). Comparative studies on marital power in developing societies generally support a positive association between relative income and decision-making power (Oropesa 1997; Xu and Lai 2002). However, this association is not universal in the United States since wives who make more money and have higher occupational status than their husbands do not necessarily have more say in the household (Tichenor 1999).

Theory of Utility Maximization

The neoclassical model of utility maximization holds that marital partners jointly maximize a single household welfare function. The joint goal of the household encourages spouses to prioritize the collective interest of the marriage over and above individual interests (Becker 1964). It argues that utility maximization is achieved through specialization, and investments in different human capital give each of the spouses a comparative advantage. Specialization is not necessarily a result of biological differences between men and women. In traditional breadwinner-homemaker marriages, women and men enjoy comparative advantages in distinct productive or reproductive activities. The theory postulates that since women are generally more productive in childrearing and other domestic activities and men more productive at paid work, it is most advantageous for the household to maximize their utility with the husband specializing in paid work and the wife in housework (Becker 1981). Contemporary marriages with a greater degree of symmetry between the spouses are more

likely to share housework, breadwinning, and decision-making power based on the spouses' ability, thus maximizing household utility.

Gender Theory

Gender is a primary cultural frame that organizes social relations and influences social institutions and patterns of social connections (Ridgeway 2009). This cultural frame has a strong influence on family and marital behaviors, both in addition to and as part of the effects of structural resources (Greenstein 1996; Kamo 1988; Kulik 1999; Scanzoni and Szinovacz 1980; Tichenor 1999; Xu and Lai 2002). In all societies, traditional gender norms emphasize the man's breadwinner role and the woman's housekeeper role (Blumberg and Coleman 1989; Ferree 1990; Scanzoni and Szinovacz 1980; Vogler 1998). Societal gender norms determine the power, authority, and autonomy to which people aspire, as well as the interactions in which they are involved. Gender can affect the allocation of housework, the breadwinner, and power "through the norms internalized by men and women" above and beyond the resources husbands and wives bring to the marriage (Bittman et al. 2003, 190). Exchange of resources and utility maximization take place in gendered societies in patterns consistent with the prevailing norms governing "proper" gender roles and functions.

Modified Resource Theory

Influenced by gender theory, modified resource theory posits that the resources couples bring to the marital exchange should be seen through gendered lenses. Gender can affect the distribution of housework, breadwinning, and power because husband and wife enact and affirm their gender identities in daily interactions through engaging/disengaging in gender-coded activities (Berk 1985; Gupta 1999; West and Zimmerman 1987). Doing housework, providing for the family, and making major decisions at home are all gender-coded activities (Blood and Wolfe 1960; Brines 1994; Gupta 1999; West and Zimmerman 1987). Almost all societies culturally associate doing housework with women and being the economic supporter and authority figure of the household with men. When such culturally prescribed gender roles are reversed in marriages in which the wife is the primary earner, both husbands and wives are under pressure to account for their nontraditional gender identities. Wives with more earning power do not do less housework, as predicted by classic resource theory and utility maximization theory; rather, they increase the amount of domestic labor to compensate for trespassing the gender codes to doubly assert their feminine role of homemaker (Brines 1994).

Marital Satisfaction and Division of Household Labor

Marital satisfaction is subject to the influence of the division of household labor (Coltrane 2000; Davis and Greenstein 2009). Marital satisfaction taps individuals'

subjective evaluation of the nuptial relationship (Glenn 1990) and gauges the positive qualities, such as marital harmony and positive interaction, that give rise to individuals' impressions of the marital relationship (Xu 1996). Perceived inequity in the division of household labor is negatively associated with both husbands' and wives' reported marital happiness in the United States (Frisco and Williams 2003). Data on married women from thirty countries also yield a similar association between a wife's share of household labor and her marital satisfaction (Greenstein 2009). In general, substantial evidence demonstrates that a fairer division of domestic labor is linked with greater marital satisfaction, particularly for women (Coltrane 2000).

Marital Satisfaction and Breadwinning

Empirical studies show mixed results regarding the association between a wife's share of household income and marital satisfaction. Although an increase in a wife's income increases total household income and her bargaining power, both of which may be positively associated with marital satisfaction, the association varies. Some studies found a positive association between wives' income and marital satisfaction in the United States (Rogers and DeBoer 2001; Sayer and Bianchi 2000), while others show that there is no association between the two (Brennan, Barnett, and Gareis 2001; Wilcox and Nock 2006). Still, others found the relationship between a wife's income and marital dysfunction to be nonlinear or inconclusive. Some identified that wives' earnings have a U-shaped association with their risk of marital dissolution (Ono 1998), while others found that wives' share of total family income has an inverted U-shaped relationship to the odds of divorce (Rogers 2004). Research on this relationship in China is scant. One study analyzing urban couples from five cities found that wives' relative contribution to household income is negatively associated with marital satisfaction. This negative association is larger among married women than among married men (Zhang et al. 2012).

Gendered Resources, Gendered Specialization, and Gender Ideology

Evaluating the relationships among housework, breadwinning, and marital satisfaction should not be done independently of the cultural and individual beliefs about women's and men's roles in society and within marriages. Marriage is a gendered institution that rewards men and women more when they maintain appropriate marital roles and penalizes them when they violate these gendered codes. People tend to evaluate marriages as more satisfying and beneficial when they correspond with the prevailing beliefs about women's and men's roles within marriages (Sayer et al. 2011). Gender influences marital satisfaction in multiple ways. First, in marriages where the husband brings more income in line with men's breadwinner role, both husbands and wives are more likely to positively evaluate the marital relationship. However, an increase in the wife's

income, particularly when it surpasses that of the husband, encroaches on the husband's domain of breadwinning, undermines the husband's authority as the provider, and trespasses on the gendered expectations of proper male and female roles. Wives who outearn their husbands have taken on the breadwinner role and reversed the culturally prescribed gendered roles. Through this gendered lens, spouses are unlikely to perceive their marriages as satisfactory.

Second, although there is consistent evidence that both spouses have greater marital satisfaction when household labor is more equally divided, this negative association is stronger among women than among men (Coltrane 2000) because women suffer from a lopsided division of domestic labor. Men benefit from this division even when wives have full-time employment and are earning an equal amount or more.

Last, individual gender attitudes impact the perception of marital quality. Egalitarian gender attitudes are negatively associated with marital satisfaction for women, but positively for men (Amato and Booth 1995; Lye and Biblarz 1993; Mickelson, Claffey, and Williams 2006). Gender attitudes affect individuals' perceptions of fairness in the roles and functions both spouses perform within the household. People who hold egalitarian values view marriage as a partnership of equals with shared roles and responsibilities, and this association is stronger among women than among men (Yodanis 2010). Women with more egalitarian ideologies are more likely to identify dimensions of the marital relationship as deviant from the expectations of equal partnership and are less likely to have stronger marital satisfaction than those with less egalitarian ideologies (Lavee and Katz 2002; Wilkie, Ferree, and Ratcliff 1998).

Analyses

We use data from the 2017 Chinese General Social Survey to analyze 3,050 married respondents. We evaluate patterns of division of household labor, decision-making power, share of income, and marital satisfaction. We also reveal the relationships among them as well as patterns of these distributions among married people with different education levels, marital cohorts, and residences.

Division of Household Labor

To illustrate the pattern of a gendered division of household labor, we analyze within-couple gender gaps in housework. Figure 7.1 shows this gender gap within pairs of husbands and wives by their marriage cohort, education level, resident/migration status, and wives' share of income. All four panels show a clear gender gap in which wives do substantially more cooking, laundry, and cleaning than do husbands, while husbands do slightly more in repairing and maintenance work. As to differences among marital cohorts, gender differences in

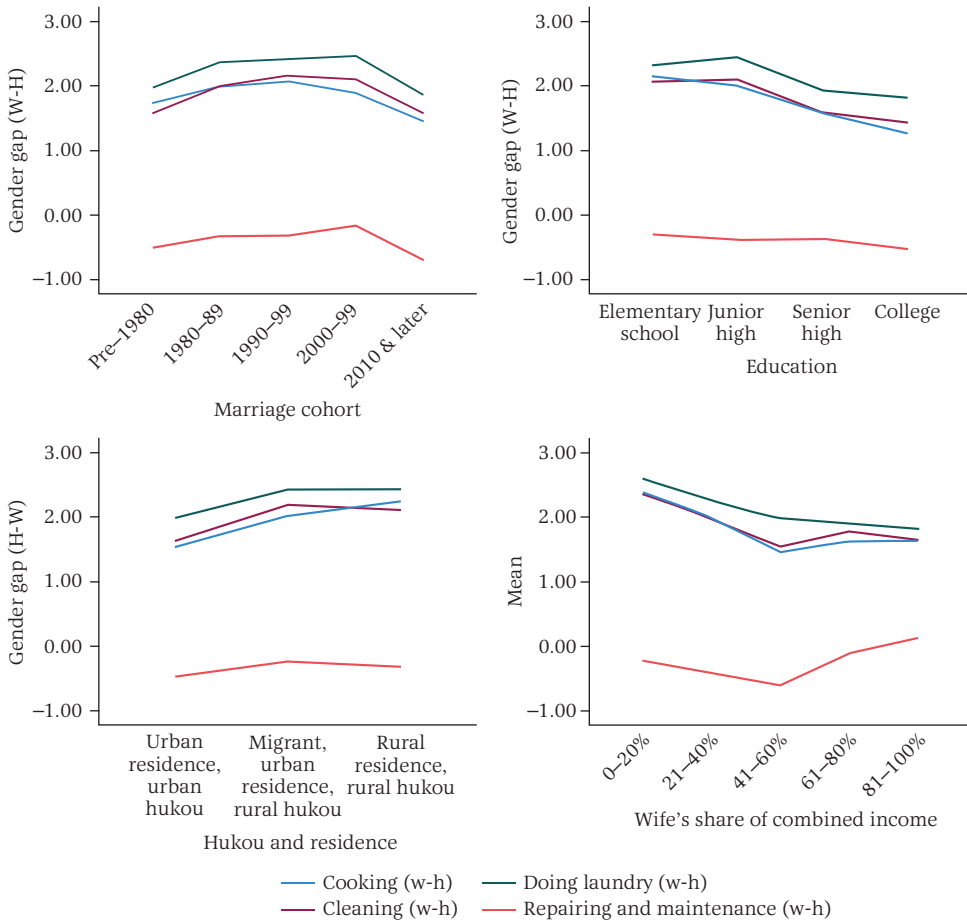


FIGURE 7.1 Within-couple gender gaps in housework by marriage cohort, education, hukou and residence, and wife's share of combined income

these three female-type activities—cooking, doing laundry, and cleaning— increase from the oldest to the middle cohorts and decline in the youngest cohort. The opposite pattern is true for the one male-typed work of repairing and maintenance, whereby the gap shrinks from the oldest to the second-youngest marital cohort of 2000–2009 and enlarges among the youngest, those married in 2010 and later. This change may be indicative of a more egalitarian trend in the division of housework: among the youngest marital cohort, couples share more female-typed work while husbands increase their share of male-typed labor.

Education also promotes a more equal pattern of housework sharing. Among those with senior high school education, the gender gap in female-typed work is reduced compared with those with less education. Among college-educated

people, the unequal distribution of cooking, laundry, and cleaning diminishes further. The educational impact on husbands' slightly more work in repairing and maintenance barely changes, with only a small increase among the college educated.

Urbanites also have a more equal share of housework compared with rural residents and migrants. Urban residents' gender gap in female-typed work is the smallest, and that in male-typed work is the largest, showing that husbands are more involved in both types of housework. There is no detectable difference between migrants and rural residents in their pattern of gendered housework division with one exception: migrant couples share cooking more equally than rural residents.

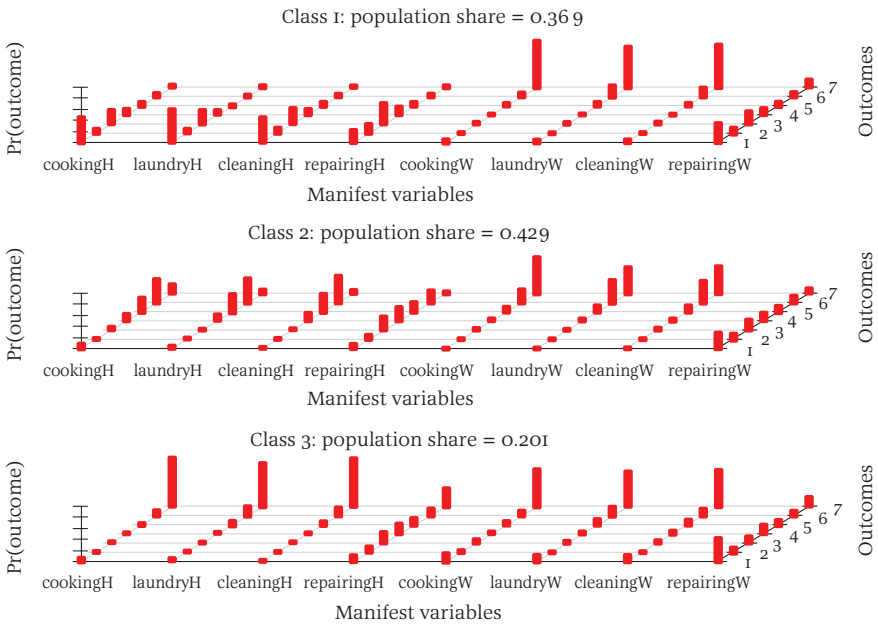
Wives' share of joint income of husband and wife diminishes the gender gap only before their income surpasses that of their spouse. As a result of known gender inequality in the labor force, women's salaries are around 70 percent of those of men on average (Shu and Bian 2003). In our sample, half of the wives made less than 40 percent of the combined income (30% contributed to 0%–20% of joint income, and 20% of wives are in the 21%–40% range). Thirty-nine percent of wives contributed similarly to their husbands, making 41–60 percent of the combined income. Only 6 and 5 percent of wives were in the next two higher quintiles of contributing 60 and 80 percent financially, respectively. Before reaching the parity of 40–60 percent of the combined income, wives' increasing contributions to the household economy convert to diminishing gender gaps in female-typed housework of cooking, doing laundry, and cleaning. Husbands also do more repair and maintenance work, resulting in a larger gender gap in this work. It is only when wives' incomes surpass those of their husbands that the gender gap in cooking, doing laundry, and cleaning starts to stagnate or even increase. When wives are making the majority of household income, the gender gap in cooking and cleaning starts to widen, while the gap in doing laundry remains almost unchanged even with wives' increasing share of contributions to household finances. When wives dominate household income, contributing 80 percent and higher, husbands also do less male-typed housework of repairing and maintenance, effectively eliminating the gender difference in this work. These results are consistent with findings from the United States that show spouses in marriages with reversed gender roles use division of housework to make up for that norm violation (Brines 1994). Wives who are primary wage earners do more housework to compensate for and emphasize their traditional feminine qualities as caring wives and mothers, while dependent husbands do less housework to affirm their traditional muscular traits. We now provide consistent evidence from China that lends strong support to the arguments advanced by gender theory and modified resource theory that the prevailing gender norms exert a powerful impact on the perception of marital fairness and harmony above and beyond the resources couples bring to their marriages.

To summarize, these patterns of housework division demonstrate that forces of modernization work through education, urbanization, and younger cohorts to impact Chinese people's marital perceptions and behaviors and shape a shifting pattern of division of domestic labor toward a more egalitarian direction. Women's economic power converts to a smaller gender gap in housework only before they become the primary breadwinners. Women who make the majority or all of household income (60% and higher of joint income) not only continue to do more mundane housework of cooking, doing laundry, and cleaning than their spouses but also do cooking and cleaning more frequently than wives who contribute to household income at the 40–60 percent range. Beyond this point, a wife's higher financial contribution not only fails to reduce her housework but also leads to an increase in her share of domestic labor and a decrease in her husband's housework.

To classify patterns of house division of labor, we investigated latent classes of the gendered division of labor. Latent class modeling is a statistical technique for identifying unobservable subgroups who share similar characteristics within a population by analyzing the structure of the relationships among discrete observed variables. It reduces a set of observed categorical variables, measures of housework, into a single latent variable with a set of underlying classes. Latent class models generate two outputs: the probability of who belongs to which class, and the relationship between the classes and the observed variables (McCutcheon 1987). Our analysis yielded three classes of housework division of labor. Figure 7.2 shows the three classes and the distribution of the four measures of housework. The first class is composed of marriages in which wives do housework very frequently and husbands rarely. We call it "traditional." This class contains 37 percent of the marriages we studied. The second class is composed of couples in which both husbands and wives do housework fairly frequently but wives do slightly more work than husbands. We labeled it "quasi-egalitarian." This class consists of 43 percent of the couples, and it is the largest group, showing the prevailing form of semi-egalitarian division of domestic labor in China. The last class contains marriages in which husbands do housework slightly more frequently than wives, and both husbands and wives do work fairly often. We classify it as "nontraditional." This is the least dominant group, with 20 percent of the marriages.

To characterize these couples who negotiate and strategize housework and the resulting division of household labor into these three classes, we analyzed some of the defining traits that differentiate these groups of marriages. The results are presented in Table 7.1. Members of the marriage cohort 2000–2009 are most likely to belong to the traditional class in the division of housework, perhaps owing to their life-course trajectory of childrearing stages eight to seventeen years into the marriage at the time of the survey. Rural migrants and rural residents are also more likely to be in the traditional class, as are husbands

	Traditional	Quasi-egalitarian	Non-traditional	Total
	37%	43%	20%	100%
Husband cooking	2.5956	5.3093	6.5572	4.4331
Husband doing laundry	1.8679	5.1029	6.3678	4.0177
Husband cleaning	2.3347	5.3564	6.7841	4.3875
Husband repairing & maintenance	2.8611	4.0717	4.5410	3.6656
Wife cooking	6.3930	6.4160	5.8985	6.3148
Wife doing laundry	6.3460	6.3030	5.9594	6.2593
Wife cleaning	6.4238	6.3038	6.0461	6.3066
Wife repairing & maintenance	3.0245	3.4755	3.3810	3.2764



Class 1: Traditional: wives do housework very frequently and husbands rarely.

Class 2: Quasi-egalitarian: both husbands and wives do housework fairly frequently but wives do more.

Class 3: Nontraditional: husbands do housework slightly more frequently than wives.

FIGURE 7.2 Latent classes of household division of labor. Class 1: Traditional: wives do housework very frequently and husbands rarely. Class 2: Quasi-egalitarian: both husbands and wives do housework fairly frequently but wives do more. Class 3: Nontraditional: husbands do housework slightly more frequently than wives.

TABLE 7.1
Characteristics of Three Classes of Division of Household Labor
(N = 3,050)

	<i>Traditional</i> (37%)	<i>Quasi-egalitarian</i> (43%)	<i>Nontraditional</i> (20%)	<i>Total</i>
Marriage cohort				
Pre-1979	.2253	.2135	.3210	.2374
1980–89	.2488	.2284	.3173	.2525
1990–99	.1929	.2041	.1218	.1849
2000–2009	.1823	.1656	.1236	.1649
2010–17	.0916	.1342	.0738	.1062
Residence and hukou				
Rural hukou, rural residence	.3809	.3140	.3063	.3397
Migrants with rural hukou	.2156	.2080	.1550	.2016
Urban hukou, urban residence	.4036	.4780	.5387	.4587
Husband's education				
Elementary	.3104	.2567	.2989	.2859
Junior high	.3663	.2951	.3469	.3331
Senior high	.1686	.2174	.2122	.1967
College	.1499	.2261	.1421	.1803
Wife's education				
Elementary	.4433	.3611	.3893	.3993
Junior high	.2966	.2527	.2878	.2767
Senior high	.1467	.1923	.1919	.1738
College	.1086	.1907	.1310	.1469
Income				
Husband's income (10K yuan)	2.6516	4.2345	1.9912	3.1972
Wife's income (10K yuan)	.9400	1.4578	1.3926	1.2370
Wife's share of income	.3101	.3563	.3910	.3441

(continued)

Table 7.1. (continued)

	<i>Traditional</i> (37%)	<i>Quasi-egalitarian</i> (43%)	<i>Nontraditional</i> (20%)	<i>Total</i>
Husband has no income	.0746	.0581	.1052	.0731
Wife has no income	.2853	.2049	.2196	.2400
Work				
Husband's working hours	35.9839	34.2062	26.8770	33.6378
Wife's working hours	19.0180	22.7781	18.8297	20.5605
Children				
Number of children under 18	.5959	.5225	.3907	.5288
Have daughters only	.2277	.2480	.2768	.2449

Source: 2017 Chinese General Social Survey.

and wives with elementary and junior high school education. These are also the marriages with the most number of children younger than eighteen. It has the highest proportion of wives without income. Two factors are at work that result in these couples' traditional pattern of division of domestic labor: they have limited exposure to ideas of gender equality owing to their growing up in rural China and their lower educational level, and they are in the midst of childrearing and many wives are full-time homemakers without income from paid employment.

The quasi-egalitarian class is the largest one, at 43 percent of the respondents, and consists of couples who are more likely to be members of the youngest marriage cohort of 2010–2017 or the cohort of 1990–1999, who are either yet to enter into parenthood or have already or almost completed childrearing obligations. Both husbands and wives in this group are more likely to have a senior high school or college education and higher income. Wives in this class work longer hours than those in the other two classes. These egalitarian couples formulate a more equal division of housework because they both have more exposure to ideas of gender equality in their educational experiences and from living in cities. They also have higher incomes, and wives in these marriages have more bargaining power because they work the longest hours among the three classes and have the highest earnings.

The nontraditional class is the smallest group, with 20 percent of the respondents. They are more likely to be from the two oldest marriage cohorts, who tied the knot before 1989. They are more likely to be urban residents with wives who have the largest share of combined income among the three classes. More husbands in this group are without income. They are also more likely to have daughters only. These unconventional characteristics of these marriages form the perceptual and behavioral foundation of the unconventional division of household labor. It is also somewhat surprising to see that the two oldest cohorts are more likely to belong to this class, perhaps because of their experiences in the socialist era, and are more susceptible to ideas of gender equality. This result is inconsistent with the idea that the youngest cohort is more likely to accept modern ideas and innovations in gendered practices. This signals that the nontraditional arrangement of household division of labor is not a result of idea innovation and modernization of the younger generation; rather, it is indicative of wives' relative success in employment compared with that of their husbands, which results in wives' smaller share of housework. This is more prevalent among urban marriages of cohorts before 1989 with daughters only. Of the three classes, they are not the marriages with the most education or the highest earnings.

Household Decision-Making Power

Household decisions are also differentiated into male and female types. Daily expenses and children's education are extensions of women's domestic roles of childrearing and household management, and wives usually have more expertise and knowledge in making these decisions. On the other hand, the Confucian patrilineality tradition prescribes that sons be the primary economic supporter and caretaker of their parents, while daughters, once married, belong to their husbands' families. They are no longer obligated to their own parents, who often go to their sons for assistance for old-age care and financial support. As a result, husbands are more likely to be responsible for the care of their parents and thus the primary decision-makers of parental care. The conventional perception of the male role is a breadwinner who is likely to possess financial and business knowledge and knows how the markets and business dealings work. Husbands are thus bestowed more power in making decisions on big-ticket expenses such as cars and housing, as well as judging investments and stocks. We thus expected that women dominate decisions on children's education and daily expenses, and men on parental care and big-ticket expenses. Figure 7.3 analyzes how this pattern varies by type of household division of labor, marriage cohort, education, residence, and wives' share of income.

The gendered pattern of decision-making persisted in all three classes of housework division, but these gaps varied across the classes. The gender difference was the largest in decisions regarding children's education and daily expenses (female typed) in marriages exercising the traditional model of division

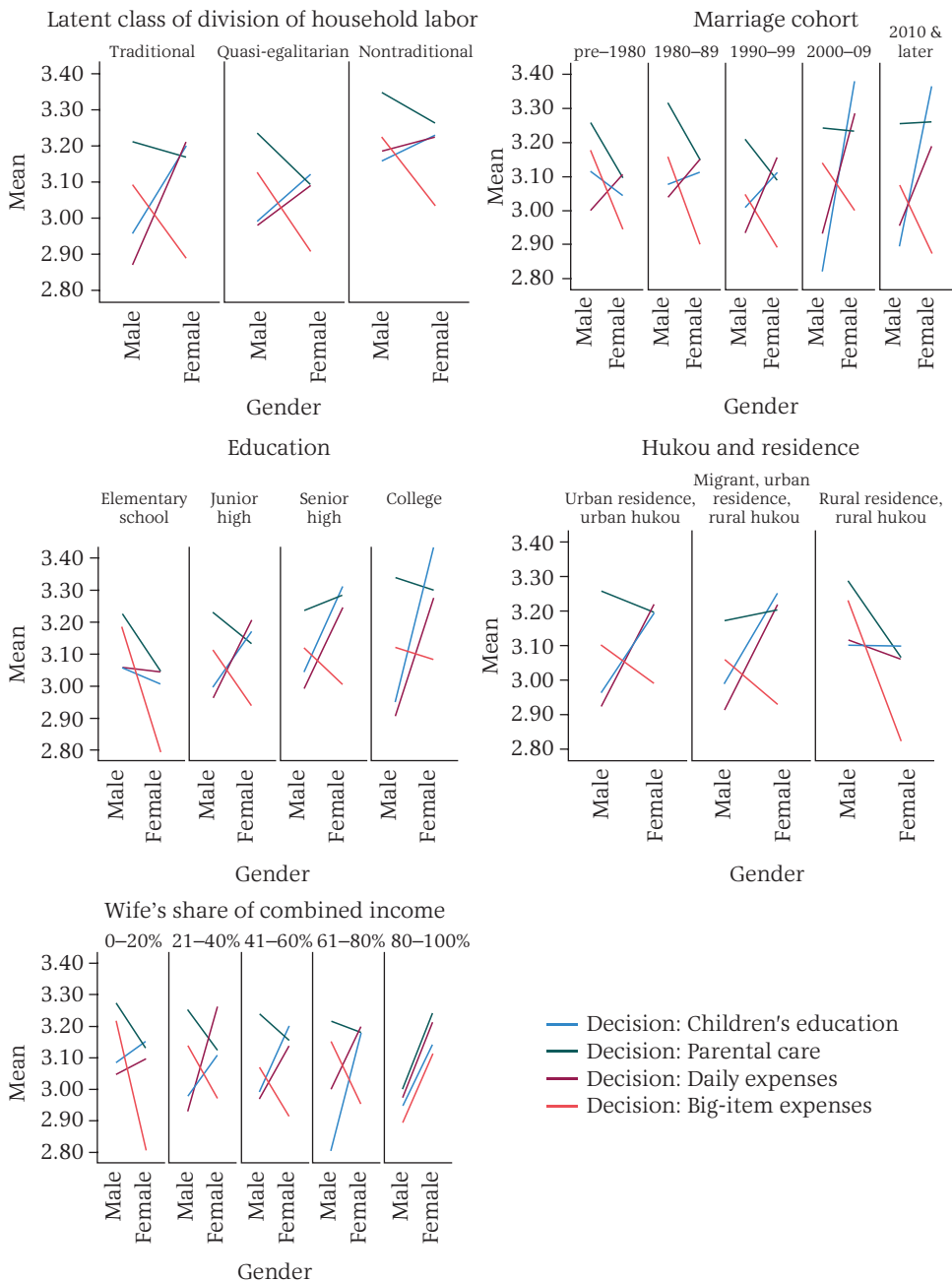


FIGURE 7.3 Gender differences in household decision-making, by type of household division of labor, marriage cohort, education, and hukou and residence

of labor, and smallest in the nontraditional class. This pattern shows that decision-making in these domains is an extension of routine housework and childrearing, and husbands who engage more in this work also gain more decision-making power. However, regardless of the mode of division of domestic labor, males remain to dominate in the male-type decisions regarding big-ticket expenses, showing that even women in marriages who earn more and do less routine housework than their spouses do not gain more power in this male-typed domain. Female-typed power is more porous, and husbands can gain more via doing more housework, while male-type power is closed even to female primary wage earners who do less housework. Women in marriages of traditional division of labor participate more equally in decisions on parental care, perhaps because they are more likely to live with their parents-in-law and are directly responsible for their daily care. Both men and women in the nontraditional class engage more in decision-making. The gender gaps in decision-making (except for parental care) are the smallest compared with people in other groups, which indicates a pattern of engaged and shared power relationships in these marriages.

These general patterns of male- and female-dominant decision-making persist across marriage cohorts with some variation. The gender gaps in female-type decisions on children's education and daily expenses are the largest among the two youngest marital cohorts. These may be the marriages with dependent children and mothers who are deeply involved in their education while fathers are not. Men continue to dominate decisions on big-ticket purchases and parental care, although the gender gap in the latter is almost nonexistent in the two youngest cohorts owing to women's substantial increase in this power, perhaps as a result of an increasing number of only children in these younger cohorts, who are responsible for parents' care.

Similar patterns of the gendered division of decision-making exist among respondents across all education levels. Interestingly, the gender gaps in female-typed decisions increase with education, with the gender gap among respondents with the least education reversed but smallest, and the gender gap the largest among the college educated. On the other hand, gender gaps in male-typed decision-making on big-ticket expenses shrink with education, with minimal difference among the college educated. The difference in decisions on parental care is reversed among those with senior high education and very small among the college educated. College-educated women enjoy the most equitable power, having more say in female-typed decisions and an almost equal voice in male-typed decisions. Women with elementary school education have less power than men in all four decisions, even the female-typed decisions on daily expenses and children's education.

Where people live matters more than hukou status, showing that exposure to urban life overrides the experiences of growing up in rural China. Both urban residents and migrants have a similar pattern of a gendered division of power.

Women dominate decisions on children's education and daily expenses, men prevail in major financial decisions, and the gender difference in parental care choices is small. Rural marriages differ sharply from this pattern. Women have substantially less say in male-typed decisions on parental care and major expenses and do not have more power in deciding on daily expenses and children's education. Women in rural China are deprived of power even in these traditionally female areas.

Wives' share of income also influences marital power. With an increase in wives' share of income, men's power in deciding on daily expenses, children's education, and parental care declines and women's power in these areas rises, enlarging the gender gap to the advantage of women in the first two, and shrinking the gap substantially in the last. The gender gap in major financial decisions to the disadvantage of women is much larger in the lowest quintile of income share, is much smaller in the 20–80 percent range, and is reversed to the advantage of women in the highest range of more than 80 percent of income. Breadwinner women making the majority of income dominate in all four types of decision-making. Men do not lose economic power until they contribute 20 percent or less to the combined income.

We can derive several conclusions from these comparisons. Most importantly, decision-making power is gendered. Women consistently have more say in female-typed domains of daily expenses and children's education, while men do in male-typed areas of large expenses and parental care. Second, resources, domain knowledge, and their impact on power are also gendered. Women are bestowed more say than men in female-typed decisions as an extension of their overwhelming share of routine housework and childcare, while men who invest more in these areas have increased power but it never surpasses that of women. Men dominate in major financial decisions in all levels of education, mode of housework division, marital cohort, type of residence, and income (with one exception). Income as a gendered resource does not increase women's power in financial decisions until their income accounts for more than 80 percent of the joint income. Third, these results lend some support to resource theory. Education and income bring more power, and these resources are more important for women than for men. Fourth, we also found evidence consistent with the utility maximization theory that those with more expert knowledge in certain housework domains are entitled to decision-making in these areas. Women who specialize in daily housework and childrearing tend to have more say in decisions on daily expenses and children's education, and men who do more housework gain power in female-typed decision making. Women with college education or making more than 80 percent of the joint income gain major economic decision-making power in the household. Last, modernization forces such as education and living in cities bestow women with more power. Rural women and women with elementary school education have little say in any of the four areas of

decision-making, not even in female-typed domains of daily expenses and children's education.

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is a subjective evaluation of the quality of marriage. We first evaluated the correlates of marital satisfaction. We next unraveled these variables along with demographic controls to estimate the net effects of these important covariates of marital satisfaction.

Correlates of Marital Satisfaction

What factors are associated with men's and women's satisfaction with marital relationships? We analyzed the association of patterns of division of housework, education, marital cohort, residence and hukou, and wives' share of income. These results are presented in Figure 7.4.

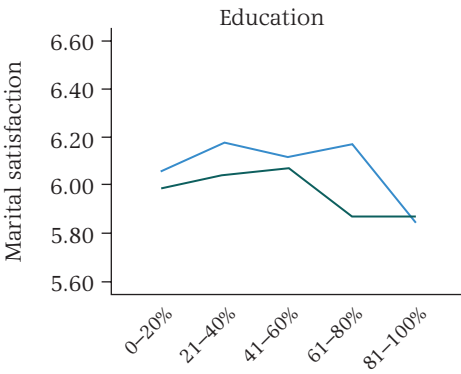
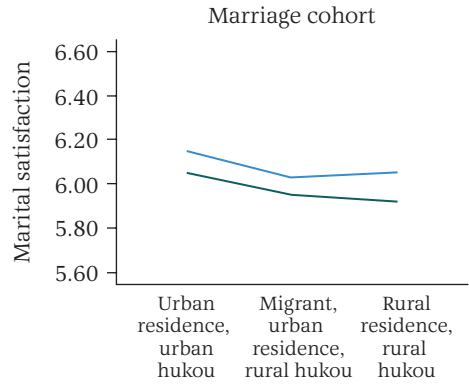
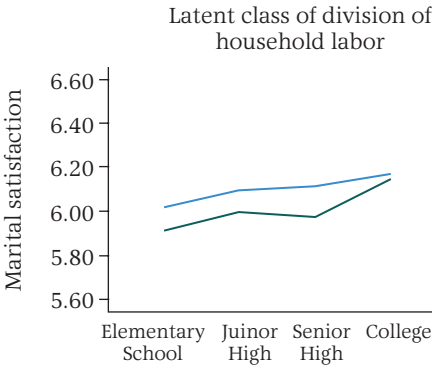
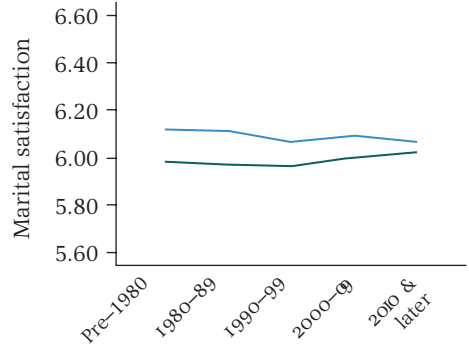
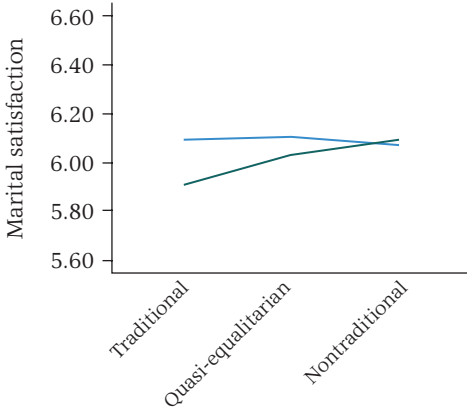
There is a gendered difference in the relationship between the type of housework division of labor and marital satisfaction. Women's satisfaction rises with the spouse's greater involvement in housework. Women in marriages of the nontraditional form of domestic labor with husbands doing more are the most satisfied with their marriages, while women in marriages with the traditional division of labor with women doing the great majority of domestic work are the least satisfied. On the other hand, men's marital satisfaction is not elastic to the mode of division of labor; it remains almost identical across the three classes of division of domestic labor.

The gender gap in marital satisfaction slightly decreases from the oldest to the youngest cohort. Men are more satisfied with their marriages than are women across all cohorts, but this gender gap continues to shrink over the marital cohorts with men and women in the youngest marital cohort having fairly close levels of satisfaction. This convergence in men's and women's marital satisfaction appears to be due to men's small decline and women's small rise in levels of satisfaction over marital cohorts.

Both men and women with more education are more satisfied with their marriages than the less educated, but this rise is larger for women than for men. In particular, college-educated women enjoy a substantial increase in their marital satisfaction, making their levels almost identical to those of men and effectively eliminating the gender gap to the advantage of men.

Urban men and women are more satisfied with their marriages than are rural people and migrants. Migrant men's satisfaction ratings remain virtually identical to those of rural men while migrant women's ratings rise. This demonstrates the liberating effects of migration on women but not on men.

The association between marital satisfaction and share of income follows different trajectories for men and women. A woman's marital satisfaction



Gender
 — Male
 — Female

FIGURE 7.4 Gender differences in marital satisfaction by class of housework division, marital cohort, education, hukou and residence, and wives' share of joint income

increases with her income share initially, peaks when her income reaches parity with that of her partner at 40–60 percent, but sharply declines beyond this range. As a result, women who make more than 80 percent of combined income are substantially less satisfied with their marriages than those who contribute less than 20 percent of income. On the other hand, men's marital satisfaction peaks in the middle ranges of 20–80 percent and sharply dips to the lowest level once their income share is more than 80 percent. Primary breadwinners of both sexes are the least satisfied people regarding their marriages.

These results show that both partners are more satisfied in marriages in which both housework and breadwinning are shared more equally. College-educated and urban people are more satisfied than the lesser educated, rural residents, and migrants.

Regression Analyses of Marital Satisfaction

To gauge the net effect of these correlates of marital satisfaction, we estimated a series of multiple regression models. These correlates are often associated with each other. For example, members of the younger marital cohorts are more likely to have higher education, more likely to migrate to cities, and more likely to have higher income. We evaluated three sets of models. The first one, Model A, includes all the correlates we have analyzed so far—the division of household labor, education, marital cohort, hukou and residence, and wife's share of joint income. In Model B we included a series of control variables. In Model C we added two measures of the marital relationship. The results from these regression models are shown in Table 7.2.

The factors that shape people's satisfaction with their marriages vary substantially between men and women. Model A shows that the most critical factor of men's marital satisfaction is wives' share of income. Men's satisfaction is highest when they contribute more than 80 percent of the joint income, which makes them the sole breadwinner. On the other hand, men's satisfaction plummets to the lowest level when their breadwinner role is reversed and they make only 20 percent or less of the joint income while their wives are the primary breadwinners (80% or more of the total income). Division of household labor is a critical factor for women. Women who are in marriages with a nontraditional or quasi-egalitarian division of domestic labor are more satisfied with their marriages than women who are in marriages with a traditional mode of division of labor, in which they do most of the work and their husbands do little. The same applies to women who share breadwinning with their husbands, contributing 40–60 percent of the joint income. Breadwinner wives making more than 60 percent of the joint income are also less happy with their marriages. Overall, husbands' marital satisfaction is tied to their breadwinner role: contributing more than 80 percent of the joint income makes them more satisfied with their

TABLE 7.2.
Regression Coefficients for Marital Satisfaction (N = 3,050)

Independent variables	Model A				Model B				Model C			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error
(Constant)	6.032***	.047	5.878***	.045	5.900***	.142	5.323***	.132	5.075***	.154	4.715***	.141
<i>Division of household labor (traditional is the reference)</i>												
Quasi-egalitarian	.010	.037	.087*	.036	.039	.040	.083*	.037	.031	.038	.056	.036
Nontraditional	-.006	.045	.137**	.049	.021	.049	.103*	.051	.043	.047	.059	.049
<i>Wife's share of joint income (1st quintile is the reference)</i>												
2nd quintile	.098*	.044	.052	.052	.070	.053	.025	.057	.087#	.050	.019	.055
3rd quintile	.028	.040	.061	.040	.008	.050	.048*	.047	.010	.047	.042	.045
4th quintile	.088	.089	-.126#	.067	.041	.099	-.136#	.074	.079	.094	-.120#	.071
5th quintile	-.216*	.097	-.111	.076	-.224*	.114	-.019	.084	-.212*	.108	-.005	.081

	Model A				Model B				Model C			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error
<i>Independent variables</i>												
	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error
<i>R Education (elementary school is the reference)</i>												
Junior high	.073#	.043	.066	.044	.048	.046	-.036*	.048	.035	.044	-.051	.046
Senior high	.078	.053	.015	.056	.053	.057	-.085	.061	.039	.054	-.103#	.059
College	.099	.062	.177**	.067	.091	.069	.049	.073	.076	.066	-.004	.071
<i>Marital cohort (pre-1980 is the reference)</i>												
1980-89	-.008	.044	-.022	.046	-.058	.050	-.097	.051	-.034	.047	-.069	.049
1990-99	-.059	.050	-.036	.050	-.135*	.060	-.154	.060	-.111#	.057	-.161**	.058
2000-2009	-.058	.054	-.031	.055	-.181*	.071	-.126#	.074	-.202**	.068	-.133#	.072
2010-17	-.079	.063	-.058	.068	-.210***	.077	-.185*	.082	-.210**	.073	-.185*	.079
<i>R hukou and residence (rural hukou and rural residence is the reference)</i>												
Rural hukou, urban residence (migrants)	-.045	.046	.034	.047	-.065	.050	.046#	.049	-.062	.048	.057	.048

(continued)

Table 7.2. (continued)

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Model A</i>				<i>Model B</i>				<i>Model C</i>			
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>
Urban hukou, urban residence	.041	.044	.049	.045	.001	.051	.108*	.049	-.008	.049	.102*	.047
R ethnic minority					.129#	.073	.197**	.066	.140*	.070	.192**	.064
R religious					-.051	.067	-.090#	.054	-.045	.064	-.079	.052
R gender attitude					-.003	.020	-.030	.019	.003	.019	-.037*	.019
Number of children under 18					.013	.027	-.022	.027	.019	.026	-.016	.026
Have daughters only					.029	.042	.036	.040	.053	.040	.034	.039
R health					.016	.020	.070***	.019	.018	.019	.068***	.019
Spouse health					.078***	.019	.135***	.019	.060**	.018	.121***	.019
R unemployed					-.001	.067	-.026	.063	.011	.064	-.040	.061
Spouse unemployed					.059	.076	.025	.069	.085	.073	.055	.066

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Model A</i>			<i>Model B</i>			<i>Model C</i>			
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>
R working hours per week	-.000	.001	-.002	.001	-.000	.001	-.001	.001	-.001	.001
Spouse working hours per week	.001	.001	.002#	.001	.001	.001	.002#	.001	.002#	.001
Joint income (10,000 yuan)	.000	.005	.000	.000	-.002	.005	.000	.005	.000	.000
Joint income missing	-.116	.072	-.073	.069	-.070	.069	-.051	.069	-.051	.068
<i>Household decision-making</i>										
Children's education	-.040	.025	-.032	.024	-.043#	.024	-.023	.024	-.023	.024
Parental care	.017	.027	.041	.028	.009	.026	.043	.026	.043	.027
Daily expense	-.031	.026	-.019	.025	-.024	.024	-.025	.024	-.025	.024
Big expenses	-.005	.027	-.013	.024	-.004	.026	-.025	.026	-.025	.024

(continued)

Table 7.2. (continued)

Independent variables	Model A			Model B			Model C			
	Male		Female	Male		Female	Male		Female	
	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error	B	Std. error
Children's education missing			.021	.132	-.243#	.134	.037	.127	-.221#	.129
Parental care missing			.084	.111	.123	.108	.109	.106	.160	.105
Daily expenses missing			-.175	.187	-.160	.182	-.051	.182	-.095	.176
Big expense missing			-.205	.131	-.076	.115	-.168	.126	-.114	.112
<i>Marital relationship</i>										
Spouse listens to R							.111***	.022	.082***	.019
Spouse confides in R							.050*	.023	.053**	.018
R squared	.020*	.029***	.057***	.115***	.148***	.176*				

Source: 2017 Chinese General Social Survey.

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$ (two-tailed test); # $< .05$ (one-tailed test).

marriage, while contributing less than 20 percent of the joint income lowers their evaluation of marital quality. Wives' source of marital satisfaction is from two factors: those in marriages with a fairer division of housework are more content with their marriages, and wives who are primary breadwinners are less happy with their marriages.

This same gendered pattern persists in Model B after we added a series of control variables. Wives' share of income continues to impact men's marital satisfaction, with men whose wives are breadwinners (more than 80% of joint income) being the least satisfied. Women in marriages with a nontraditional or quasi-egalitarian division of labor are the happiest. Wives who share breadwinning and make 40–60 percent of joint income are more satisfied than dependent wives, but are less happy when they are the primary wage earners once their earnings become higher than 60 percent of the total income. With the additional controls, the younger cohorts, the three youngest among men (married after 1990), and the two youngest among women (married after 2000) are less satisfied with their marriages than the oldest cohort. With all the resources they possess and exposure they have experienced, these younger cohorts have not reached the level of satisfaction they should have. In addition, women in urban areas and migrant women are more satisfied with their marriages than rural women.

This pattern of both men and women being less satisfied with their marriages when wives become the primary earners persists after control for two measures of marital relationship: spouse listens and spouse confides. Men are less satisfied when their wives make 80 percent or more of the joint income, and women are less happy when they make 60 percent or more of the joint income. However, the effects of type of housework division on women's satisfaction are no longer present. There appears to be a connection between marital relationships and the division of housework. The two measures are highly and positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Both men and women who report that their spouses listen to them and confide in them are more satisfied with their marriages.

Marital Interaction and Communication

Our analyses show that marital interaction constitutes an important element of the positive dimension of marital quality. Marital interaction is "a collective property of the marriage that refers to the amount of joint participation in daily activities and the pattern of communicative behavior between couples" (Johnson et al. 1986). Marital interaction is the most important predictor of the marital relationship since the two measures of marital communication account for a substantial amount of the variance in marital relationships. We further explored the two measures of the marital relationship: "Spouse listens to me" and "Spouse confides in me." We analyzed the variations in these measures by

type of division of housework, marriage cohort, education, hukou and residence, and wife's share of joint income. These results are presented in Figure 7.5.

Women who are in marriages with a quasi-egalitarian or nontraditional division of housework enjoy the strongest marital interaction, but only men in the class of quasi-egalitarian report the highest score in marital closeness. Those in marriages with a nontraditional division of labor are the least likely to report that their wives listen to them and confide in them.

The wife's share of income has an inverse U-shaped relationship with marital interaction. Among women, marital communication peaks when wives make approximately equal incomes as their husbands, but beyond this point, both measures of marital communication decline sharply. Marital interaction is the lowest for women who are the sole breadwinner. This similar pattern also holds for men, although both the increase and the decline with wives' share of income are not as sharp as those for women. These results show that when the prescribed gender roles are reversed, marital closeness and communication deteriorate, and this deterioration is felt more strongly by women than by men. Marital communication improves with increased education, among younger cohorts, and among urban residents. This demonstrates that these modernization forces influence how couples interact with each other and that spouses in these modern marriages communicate with each other better and more frequently.

Conclusion

Men and women view marital satisfaction through a gendered lens. They attach different meanings to domestic labor and earnings and arrive at an evaluation of marital quality in different ways. Wives value their spouse's contribution to both housework and income. They are the happiest when both spouses share housework and breadwinning and when they engage in either quasi-egalitarian or nontraditional models of housework and both spouses contribute similar income. Wives are less satisfied when they become the primary wage earner who contributes 60 percent or more to the joint income. On the other hand, husbands emphasize their breadwinner roles solely and become less satisfied with their marriage when their wives make 80 percent or more of the combined income. Neither division of housework nor decision-making power is associated with husbands' evaluation of marital satisfaction. The prevailing gender norms exert a powerful impact on the perception of marital fairness and harmony above and beyond the resources couples bring to their marriages.

This powerful influence of the prevailing gendered expectation negates the argument of resource theory that economic resources will give women the power to negotiate less housework. Women's economic power reduces the gender gap in housework only up until they become the primary breadwinner. Beyond that point, wives' higher financial contribution not only fails to reduce their

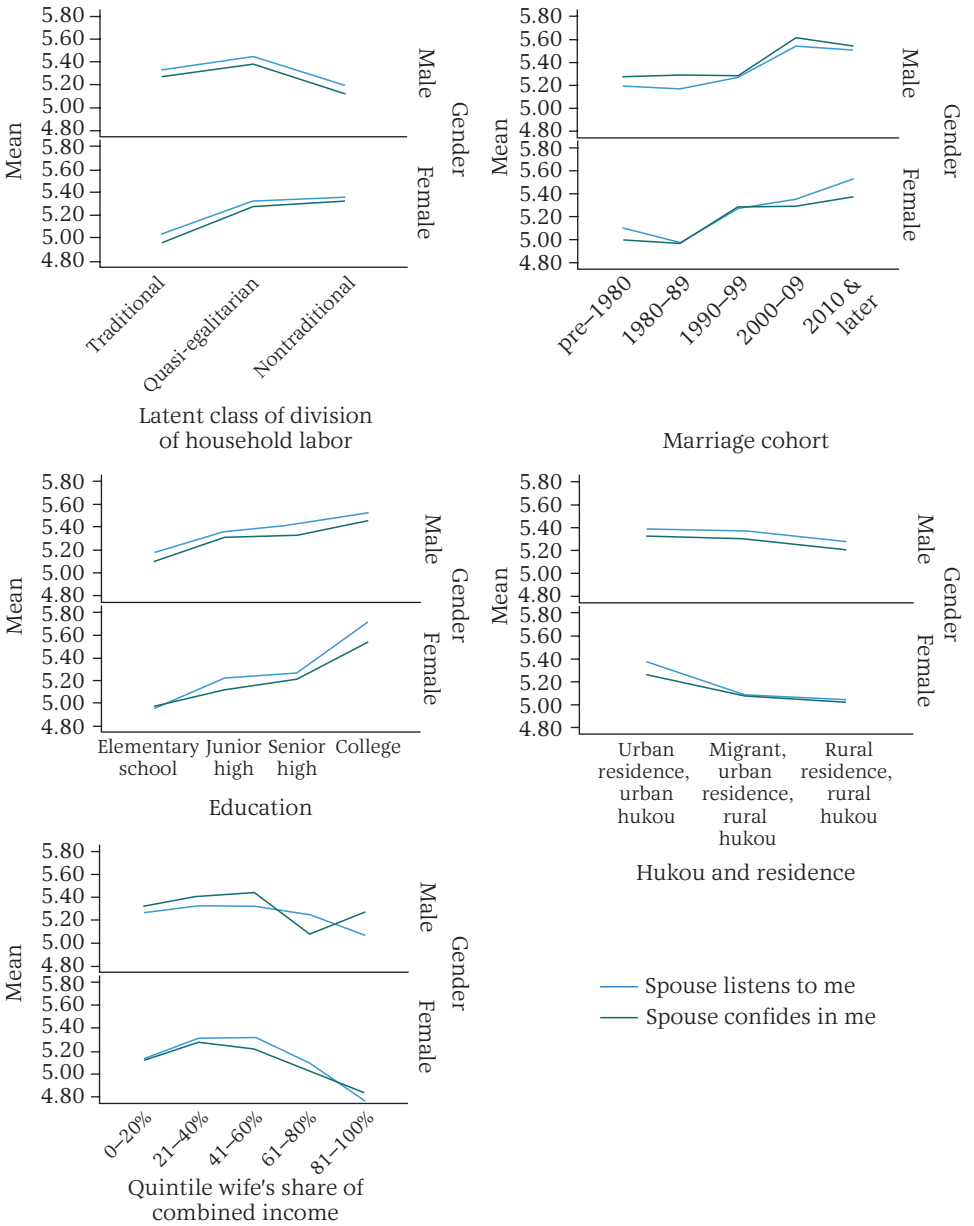


FIGURE 7.5 Marital interaction by division of household labor, marital cohort, education, and hukou and residence

housework but also leads to an increase in their share of domestic labor and a decrease in their husband's housework. When women make 60 percent and higher of the joint income, they not only continue to do more mundane housework of cooking, doing laundry, and cleaning than their husbands do but also do cooking and cleaning more frequently than wives who contribute 40–60 percent of the household income. Spouses in marriages with reversed gender roles use division of housework to make up for that norm violation (Brines 1994). Wives who are primary wage earners do more housework to compensate for and emphasize their traditional feminine qualities as caring wives and mothers, while dependent husbands do less housework to affirm their traditional masculine traits.

Decision-making power is also gendered. Women consistently have more say in female-typed domains of daily expenses and children's education, while men have more say in male-typed areas of large expenses and parental care. Resources, domain knowledge, and their impact on power are also gendered. Women are bestowed more say than men in female-typed decisions as an extension of their overwhelming share in routine housework and childcare, while men who invest more in these areas have increased power but it never surpasses that of women. Men dominate in major financial decisions in almost all marriages. Income as a gendered resource does not increase women's power in financial decisions until their income accounts for more than 80 percent of the joint income.

Gendered norms and practices define men's and women's perceptions of marital interaction and communication, which are some of the most important indicators of marital quality. Providing for the family is consistent with the male role of breadwinning, and doing housework confirms the expectation of women being caring wives and mothers. Trespassing on this gender norm can bring strain to marriage and lead to a breakdown of marital communication. Husbands who engage in a nontraditional model of housework division and do more work than their wives report lower marital communication than do men in traditional or quasi-egalitarian models of housework division who do less than their wives. Both husbands and wives in marriages in which wives outearn their husbands report the least marital communication. These spouses listen to and confide in each other the least.

Gender attitudes are changing under the influences of modernization forces such as education, younger cohort, and urban residence. As a result, patterns of housework division, decision-making power, wives' contribution to household income, marital satisfaction, and marital interaction are also shifting. Despite these changes, the persistent and powerful influences of gender norms of male providers and female caretakers continue to shape how marriages form, function, survive, thrive, evolve, or dissolve.

Conclusion

Convergence, Contradictions, and Changes in the Future

Over the past few decades, there have been profound transitions in family and marriage globally. The central change in these transformations is a deinstitutionalization of marriage that includes cohabitation, delayed marriage, nonmarriage, divorce, and nonmarital births. Such demographic transitions are seen as outcomes of a broad range of societal changes that have impacted the relationship between men and women. One such driving force is women's participation in paid employment. Employed women marry later in life, have fewer children, spend less time on housework, and are more likely to experience marital dissolution (Andersson and Scott 2007; Aguiar and Hurst 2009; Sayer and Bianchi 2000; Ruggles 1997). The second impetus of change is value transformation. In more developed societies, people prioritize the pursuit of individualistic and expressive fulfillment over family relationships (Lesthaeghe 2010; Amato 2009). In particular, the rise of individualism that encompasses the pursuit of personal freedom and fulfillment has weakened commitment to marital relationships and led people to minimize or avoid parenthood.

Conditions of Transition in Gender, Marriage, and the Family

These trends in gender relations in the labor market, marriage, and family originated in the more advanced societies of northeastern Europe, spread to the rest of the developed countries in Europe and North America, and further moved beyond industrialized countries to Asia and Latin America (Lesthaeghe 2010; Esteve, Lesthaeghe, and Lopez-Gay 2012). Gender equality is part of a set of beliefs that govern the goals and processes of economic, social, and political development. This cultural model was initiated among the elites of northwestern Europe and has spread to a broad range of ordinary people throughout the world (Thornton, Dorius, and Swindle, 2015). The ideal social order such as gender relations

and family relations is exemplified by northwestern Europe as the standard of a desirable good life. Acceptance of this developmental idealism regarding gender and family is said to be widespread even in some of the least developed societies, though the transition is often uneven (Thornton, Dorius, and Swindle, 2015). Although it is widely accepted that human history does not follow a linear development pathway as defined by the West and to be followed by non-Western countries (Thornton 2012), it remains customary to evaluate transformations in less developed societies based on the developmental trajectories of the West. The transitions in gender, marriage, and family values and behaviors that Western countries have experienced, resulting from higher gender equity in education and the labor market, are often regarded as the direction of change in non-Western societies.

Such transformations are shaped by two conditions. One is the tension between increasing opportunities in the public sphere and the persistent restrictions of traditional family expectations and obligations (McDonald 2000a, 2000b). Two cases exemplify the power of this mechanism. Scandinavian women enjoy more egalitarian opportunities, status, and institutional support in both work and family and thus have relatively higher fertility rates. On the other hand, women in East Asian (S. Korea, Japan, and Taiwan) and Mediterranean societies have encountered the strong constraints of traditional family obligations while institutions and policies provide little support. Given the opportunity cost of childbearing and childrearing, a large number of women in these societies forgo childbirth and/or marriage altogether. This public–private conflict may be mediated by the economic resources at disposal. High socioeconomic people may be better equipped in handling work-family conflict since they can afford to outsource housework and childcare and can navigate these issues with better skills. For lower-income groups, marriage and family may be unattainable.

A second condition encompasses resources and support for reducing the work-family conflict through policies, workplace and communities, and extended family. With the market transition and the rise of the new neoliberal ideology of market reliance, many of the services, facilities, and safety nets that were formerly provided by the state and workplace have been reduced, canceled, or replaced by market mechanisms. These neoliberalism practices have undercut resources and support for women's labor market participation. The intensified market and global competition further exacerbate work demand for both men and women in the form of rising overwork. These forces compel women to choose between full participation in the labor force while delaying or abstaining from marriage and family, and returning to the family as wives and mothers while relinquishing paid employment. Women who wrestle with this dilemma often rely on extended family, particularly grandparents, for childcare and housework support to replace the support that used to be provided by the state and workplace.

In addition to fading state support in urban China, ideological justification for women's paid work is also waning owing to a new discourse that encourages women to return home. This discourse is jointly enforced by two very different ideologies: Confucian traditionalism and neogender traditionalism from the West. Both perspectives advocate that women should return home to care for the family since they are biologically and socially more suitable for housework and caring for family members and less fit for work outside the home. However, they differ in their justifications for this advocacy. The Confucianism tradition emphasizes women's duty and sacrifices as idealized virtuous women, while the Western gender essentialists advocate caring for the family full time as a form of personal freedom and choice.

Transitions in Behaviors and Values

We have analyzed gender, marriage, family, and sexual behaviors and values in Chinese society and have evaluated the overall patterns, changes over time, and variations by gender, education, cohort, and residence. We summarize these findings in Table 8.1.

Gender Ideology

The prevailing gender ideology in China is flexible traditionalist, which treats women as inferior to men in their right to educational, occupational, and political opportunities while expecting them to share breadwinning and childrearing responsibilities. This ideological pattern is a joint product of the Confucian patriarchy and socialist policy. The traditional Chinese gender system devalues women and considers them inferior to men in intelligence, ability, traits, and strength. Although modernization forces have eroded some of these beliefs of male supremacy, the essence of this traditional ideology persists and illustrates the relatively lower support for women's rights and status in the public domains of education, work, and politics. Many still believe in the ideas that regard men as superior to women in their natural ability, intelligence, and leadership. On the other hand, the female labor force participation rate in China has been one of the highest in the world, and Chinese women remain in full-time employment even in their childbearing and childrearing years. If this widespread support for women's dual roles of worker and mother persists in Chinese society, the socialist belief that women should be economically self-reliant will remain popular, and endorsement of full-time homemakers will stay low. Women face either remaining unmarried and wrestling with the societal pressure for universal marriage or entering into a married life in which they work full time as well as perform the bulk of housework and childrearing.

Women have become more egalitarian over time and cohorts while men's gender attitudes have stagnated or even reversed to a more conservative direction.

TABLE 8.1

Patterns of Gender, Marriage, and Family Behaviors and Attitudes

	<i>Overall pattern</i>	<i>Change over time</i>	<i>Gender difference</i>	<i>Education difference</i>	<i>Cohort difference</i>	<i>Rural/urban difference</i>
Gender ideology	Flexible traditionalist: women regarded as inferior but expected to do both breadwinning & childrearing	Stagnated with some decline on some attitudes	Females more liberal; gender gap is enlarged over time	College educated most liberal	More liberal among women; stagnates among men	Urbanites more liberal
Marriage	Universal; rural men with the least education, urban men, women with college education are least likely to be married	Unchanged	Men less likely to marry at 35; gender gap enlarged over birth cohorts	More educated less likely to marry by 35	Youngest cohort less likely to marry at 35	Rural men least likely to marry at 35

	Overall pattern	Change over time	Gender difference	Education difference	Cohort difference	Rural/urban difference
Age at first marriage	Young; women in early 20s and men in mid-20s	Little change	Women 2–4 years younger	College educated marry at older age	Increased among those married in the 1960s and 1970s but declined among younger cohorts	
Cohabitation	Very rare among older cohorts; 10% among the second-youngest cohort; 20% among the youngest cohort	Rapidly increasing	No difference	No difference	Rare among older cohorts; growing rapidly among the two youngest cohorts	No difference
Divorce	Moderately high, 2%–4% on average	Rising	Men have higher rates due to rural women's reluctance to report divorce	Highest among college- and senior high-educated women and men who married in the 1990s	Highest among those married in the 1990s	Higher among urbanites

(continued)

Table 8.1. (continued)

	<i>Overall pattern</i>	<i>Change over time</i>	<i>Gender difference</i>	<i>Education difference</i>	<i>Cohort difference</i>	<i>Rural/urban difference</i>
Remarriage	Very low, 1%–3% on average	Unchanged	Men in the two oldest cohorts and women in the middle cohorts have the highest rates	Urban men with senior high and college education have the highest rates	Men in the two oldest cohorts and women in the middle cohorts have the highest rates	Urban men with senior high and college education have the highest rates
Fertility	Average number of children declined from 3 to 1.6–1.7 among those ages 34–58	Declined rapidly; average number of children declined from 3 to 1.6–1.7 among those ages 34–58	NA	Declines with education	Decline in younger cohorts	

	Overall pattern	Change over time	Gender difference	Education difference	Cohort difference	Rural/urban difference
Sibling structure	Consistent son preference; dramatic changes in both number and structure	Decline in size and change in composition; ≥ 3 children with boys the mode among those born pre- 1961; 1 or 2 children with a boy is the mode among those born 1962–77	Sibling structures with boys outnumber those with only girls in every sibling size		Smaller sibling size in younger cohorts	
Premarital birth	4% among pre-1977 cohorts; 9% among 1977– cohort	Increased	NA	Positively related to education in rural China; no relation in urban China—college-educated urbanites have lowest rate	Youngest cohort has double the rate of the older cohorts	Higher in rural areas than in urban areas

(continued)

Table 8.1. (continued)

	<i>Overall pattern</i>	<i>Change over time</i>	<i>Gender difference</i>	<i>Education difference</i>	<i>Cohort difference</i>	<i>Rural/urban difference</i>
Gender values	Slightly nontraditional	Becoming more liberal	Female more liberal	Strong association	Youngest cohort most liberal	Urbanites and migrants more liberal than rural residents
Patrilineality values	Moderately nontraditional	No change	Female more liberal	Strong association	No association	Urbanites more nontraditional than migrants and rural residents
Filial piety values	Traditional	No change	No difference	No association	No association	Migrants more nontraditional than urban and rural residents

	<i>Overall pattern</i>	<i>Change over time</i>	<i>Gender difference</i>	<i>Education difference</i>	<i>Cohort difference</i>	<i>Rural/urban difference</i>
Family responsibility values	Traditional	Becoming more traditional	No difference	More education associated with more traditional view	Younger cohorts are more traditional	Urbanites more nontraditional than migrants and rural residents
Marriage values	Slightly nontraditional	No clear change	No difference	More education associated with more liberal attitude	Cohort 1967–83 is the most liberal of all	No difference
Divorce, cohabitation, and childless values	Moderate	Becoming more nontraditional	No difference	More education associated with more nontraditional attitude	Cohorts younger than 1967 are more nontraditional than older cohorts	Urbanites are more nontraditional than migrants and rural residents

(continued)

Table 8.1. (continued)

	<i>Overall pattern</i>	<i>Change over time</i>	<i>Gender difference</i>	<i>Education difference</i>	<i>Cohort difference</i>	<i>Rural/urban difference</i>
Sexuality values	Traditional	No change	No difference	No association	No difference	No difference
Division of domestic labor	Unequal		Wives do more	Gender gap declines with education	Smallest among the youngest (married after 2010) and the oldest cohorts (married before 1980)	Largest gender gap among rural residents
Decision-making power	Gender typed and shared		Husband makes major economic decisions	College-educated women enjoy most equitable power		Rural women have the least power

Urban, college-educated, and younger women have become more egalitarian toward their status and roles in society, while men resist these forces and remain unchanged despite their increased education. The Chinese economic development has taken place with a toll of overwork, an ethic that forms a patriarchal closure to reinforce the notion of separate spheres, reaffirming men's domination in paid work, and excluding women from prestigious and high-paying jobs. This norm of overwork shifts gender ideology toward a conservative direction.

Marriage and Family Behaviors

Marriage and family behaviors have also experienced substantial variation both over time and across different subpopulations. College-educated women and the least educated men are the most likely to delay marriage or remain unmarried. The increasing practice of cohabitation is marriage oriented and is more common among men, particularly highly educated men. Marriage as an institution remains strong among Chinese women since women outside of marriage (single, divorced, or widowed) face more stigma and discrimination than single, divorced, or widowed men. However, college-educated women are the least likely to enter and remain in the marriage. They enter first marriages at an older age than all the other groups, are the most likely to divorce, and are the least likely to remarry. In contrast, college-educated men are the most likely to stay married. They are the least likely to divorce and the most likely to remarry in urban areas. A greater majority of women now have only one or two children. There are marked changes over cohorts, with the youngest cohort having higher rates of never married, an increasing divorce rate, more cohabitation, an increasing remarriage rate, and a declining fertility rate. Despite these transitions, marriage in China remains a strong and central institution in society: entry into the first marriage is early in life (early to mid-twenties) and largely universal; cohabitation is a precursor of marriage and a sign of intent to marry; once married, people tend to stay married; and childbirth is almost always linked with marriage.

Gender, Marriage, Family, and Sexual Values

Value transitions in gender, family, marriage, and sexual attitudes in China are uneven. The Chinese population holds firmly to the traditional notion of filial piety with persistent obedience to and respect for parents, strong acceptance of family codependence, and responsibility for the care of its young and elderly. It also maintains a stout belief in marital sex by rejecting premarital, extramarital, and homosexual sex. However, among these traditional ideas of persistent familism, people are becoming more accepting of declining gender role differentiation, seeing less value in legal marriage, and placing less emphasis on the patrilineal family line. There is also an increase in the tolerance of modern family forms of divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness.

Better-educated individuals hold more nontraditional ideas regarding women's status and role in the family and society; are less supportive of fathers' authority and the male line of family inheritance and continuity; are less likely to endorse the value and importance of marriage even at a cost of enduring unhappiness; and are more likely to accept divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness. Members of the younger cohorts are also more likely to reject the traditional gendered role and status of men and women and are more accepting of new novel family forms of divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness. This delinks a function of the family that traditional family values emphasize: marital procreation to ensure the continuation of the male family line. Urbanization encourages egalitarian gender attitudes; a shift away from the patrilineal arrangement; acceptance of nonmarital forms of family arrangements of divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness; and a shift in the caretaking responsibilities of the young and elderly from families to the government. Some traditional familism values show no signs of budging, however. Better education and being a member of the younger cohorts do not impact orientations toward filial piety, family responsibilities, and nontraditional sexual behaviors. Women are most likely to reject traditional ideas of gender differentiation, patrilineality, and the value of marriage, reflecting their awareness of their interests. Members of the oldest cohort are more likely to endorse governmental sharing of family responsibilities. Rural-urban migrants who have moved away from villages and parents are less supportive of filial piety.

Marital Dynamics: Division of Labor and Decision-Making Power

Women's economic power reduces the gender gap in housework only before they become primary breadwinners. Beyond that point, wives' higher financial contribution not only fails to reduce their housework but also leads to an increase in their share of domestic labor and a decrease in their husband's housework. When women become primary wage earners, they not only continue to do more mundane housework of cooking, laundry, and cleaning than their husbands but also cook and clean more frequently than wives who share breadwinning responsibilities. Wives who are primary wage earners do more housework to compensate and to emphasize their traditional feminine qualities as caring wives and mothers, while dependent husbands do less housework to affirm their traditional muscular traits.

Decision-making power is also gendered. Women consistently have more say in female-typed domains of daily expenses and children's education, while men do in male-typed areas of large expenses and parental care. Resources, domain knowledge, and their impact on power are also gendered. Women are bestowed more say than men in female-typed decisions as an extension of their overwhelming share of routine housework and childcare, while men who invest more in these areas have increased power but it never surpasses that of women.

Men dominate in major financial decisions in almost all marriages. Income as a gendered resource does not increase women's power in financial decisions until their income accounts for more than 80 percent of the joint income.

Gender attitudes are changing under the influences of modernization forces such as education, younger cohort, and urban residence. As a result, patterns of housework division, decision-making power, wives' contribution to household income, marital satisfaction, and marital interaction are also shifting.

Changes in the Future

The marriage and family institution is strong and shows little sign of decline in China. The population displays a strong belief in filial piety toward parents, even at the cost of their own benefit. The traditional value of family codependence also remains resilient, with people insisting that the family rather than the government is responsible for their old and young. The marriage institution remains strong with people marrying at young ages, in their mid-twenties on average, reaching high marriage rates by the age of thirty-five, usually progressing to marriage after cohabitating, and rarely having children out of wedlock. These indicators of the stronghold of family and marriage are contrary to the transitional trajectory of the second demographic transition (SDT) of declining marriage, declining fertility, and the delinking of childbirth from marriage.

To predict the direction of future change, we focus on the values and behaviors of college-educated women. College-educated women are the trendsetters, leading the changes in marriage and the family. The notion of marriage, a contract to a series of obligations including childbearing, household management and labor, elderly care, and emotional labor, is gradually falling out of favor among these women. These highly educated women stand to lose the most in personal autonomy, career prospects, professional development, and individual fulfillment. Many delay marriage or forgo it completely, resulting in lower marriage rates. They are more likely to cohabit, enter into their first marriage at an older age, divorce, and are less likely to remarry. These changes in family behaviors resemble those in developed Western countries. This group also leads in the most progressive gender attitude. They stand out in their liberal attitude toward nontraditional marriage and family in divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness, but they remain identical to their male counterparts in all the remaining attitudes, especially the insistence on the traditional familial values of filial piety and family codependence.

One possible direction of future change is a continuing weakening of the marital institution and persistent reliance on vertical kinship connections. If the values and behaviors of college-educated women trickle down first to other women in urban China, then to migrant women, and finally to rural women, we would expect a prevalence of ideology and behaviors of college-educated women

in the country. The entire country would then follow the pathway of the Western countries' transitions in marriage and family values and behaviors. The marriage institution would decline when people either delay marriage or never marry, cohabit, divorce, remain childless, or have children out of marriage.

However, such a transformation at the national level is unlikely in the near future. College-educated women have encountered substantial societal resistance against this transition. They are called leftover women and pressured to marry and have children. The gender attitudes of men have either become more conservative or stagnated, indicating that the move toward equal gender roles and the SDT is either delayed or taking an alternative form. Unless the remainder of the population starts to shift toward a nontraditional direction, transitions in attitudes toward gender equality, marriage, and family will remain limited to highly educated women. These pioneering women fight a lonely battle with no support from the rest of society. Pressured to sacrifice their job prospects for housework and childbearing, they will continue to delay or forgo marriage and childbirth.

The Chinese state has influenced the trajectory of this transition and will continue to do so. The loosening of the family planning policy in the face of the below-replacement fertility rate had a short-term boost in the birth rate in the years following the new policy. The recent mandate of a thirty-day cooling-off period for couples seeking divorce was designed to lower divorce rates. The government has effectively eliminated almost all nonmarital births. Laws and policies mandate the linkage between childbirth and marriage by prohibiting nonmarital children's hukou, setting barriers against access to health care and education, banning birth by surrogacy, and barring single women from sperm banks. Given the below-replacement fertility rate and the danger of depleting the labor supply to sustain economic development, the state will likely relax laws and policies that restrict nonmarital births to decouple childbirth from marriage. Such changes will allow for more people who are either single or in nonmarital relationships to have children.

Although it is unlikely in the short term, the transitions in behaviors and values initiated by college-educated women will slowly and eventually trickle down to the remainder of the population. This broad-based transformation of societal attitudes and behaviors will lead to changes in public opinions, practices, customs, policies, and legislatures governing gender, marriage, and family relations. With women receiving support from the state, employers, partners, and kin, some of the current trends in marriage and fertility may reverse their course. Men will change their behaviors to fit with the new gender norms of supporting their partners' paid employment and sharing housework and childrearing. Laws and policies will uphold gender equality in the workplace and minimize the toll of motherhood on female workers by providing generous paternity leave and protection of women's employment during pregnancy and childbearing times. These transformations will take place while the entire population remains

steadfast in its strong belief in filial piety to parents and family self-reliance and codependence.

Among these contradictions and evolutions, a form of new familism emerges. On the one hand, the horizontal marital relationship, although remaining strong, is starting to disintegrate among college-educated women. This change will likely permeate into the remainder of the population when people become more focused on self-fulfillment and self-interest. Alternative forms of the family such as living alone, cohabitation, divorce, or even nonmarital births may become more widespread. On the other hand, vertical cross-generational kinship relations remain strong and resilient. Young people remain obedient or even subservient to their parents, and families rely on each other to care for the young and old. One such example of a modern family arrangement is the new form of so-called two-sided marriage (两头婚), in which the husband and wife live separately, with each in their own parental family. Such marriages are the epitome of loosening marital connections and heightened kinship ties. The couples have two children; one receives the mother's last name, and the other bears the father's family name. This form of marriage breaks from the traditions of patrilineality and males as the head of the household. The husband and wife are equal and economically independent of each other. The wife does not need to sacrifice her job prospects to engage in housework and childrearing to help advance her husband's career. Both husband and wife have an equal claim of their own parental family lineage over their children. However, this arrangement is an old one and extends a long-standing practice of lineage preservation and family codependence. In place of patrilineality, the wife's father can now maintain the family lineage by having a grandchild who bears his family name. The contract between the parents and the children, both daughters and sons, is that the parents provide housing, financial support, and childcare while they are capable, and the children are expected to reciprocate with old-age care for the parents. This novel form of marriage and family formation is a product of the joint considerations of both parents and children. The parents achieve their traditional idea of preserving the family line and retaining old-age care from their children to navigate the consequences of the one-child policy, while the children obtain free housing, financial support, childcare, and reduced work-family conflict to mitigate the financial and time strains in the new competitive and globalized economy. Such innovation is indicative of the Chinese transitional path in its gender, marriage, and family system that deviates from the trajectory of north-west Europe.

New Familism: Compressed Modernity and Welfare State

The transition to modern and postmodern societies has profound implications for gender and family. The transition to modern gender and family systems

brought about by industrialization and urbanization ushered in the predominance of the nuclear family (Goode 1963). The conjugal family unit includes the husband, wife, and children, who form a separate and independent intimate unit apart from a wider range of relatives. Such modern families are constructed under a norm of a gendered division of labor whereby the husbands specialized in going outside and earning incomes to support the families economically while the wives stayed behind in the home and are devoted to housework and childrearing. The Western experience of industrialization has shaped these structural and ideological characteristics of the modern family. It has been predicted that nuclear families will become globally predominant. The next phase of modernity is the transition to the postmodern gender and family system, indicative of the features of the SDT (Lesthaeghe 2010). These postmodern family values and practices are nonmarriage, cohabitation, late marriage, divorce, and non-marital childbearing and childrearing.

Some features of the postmodern changes in gender and family, manifested as features of the SDT, travel well in China. Rising age (but still relatively young) at first marriage, growing divorce rate, declining fertility, and increasing cohabitation are trends that have emerged in the context of a global rising individualization that emphasizes individual fulfillment, happiness, and satisfaction. The prevailing gender, marriage, family, and sexual values also reflect patterns consistent with arguments of the SDT that espouse declining gender role differentiation, decreasing value of legal marriage, less emphasis on patrilineality, growing acceptance of premarital sex, and more tolerance of modern family forms of divorce, cohabitation, and childlessness. These patterns support the marriage deinstitutionalization thesis (Davis and Friedman 2014) and the individualization perspective (Yan 2009).

Yet, these transitions to the modern nuclear family system have not unfolded systematically in the same manner in non-Western societies, including China. The nuclear family, as a hallmark of the modern family, is a historical construct of the family born from modernity (Stone 1979). Comparative studies of global family systems have challenged this Western-centric perspective on the globalization of marriage, family, and gender relations. Contrary to the primacy of the conjugal relation in modern families, Asian families retain strong support for filial piety in both values and behaviors evident both in residential patterns and values. In the early 2000s, about half of adult household heads in China and Taiwan, 40 percent in Japan, and a third in South Korea co-resided with a parent, while three-fourths of retired men and women in Vietnam lived with one of their children at the end of the last century (Therborn 2014). Such features and beliefs of “traditional” families remain resilient to changes in China. The norm of filial piety remains strong (Hu and Scott 2016; chapter 5), and cross-generational codependency in care for the young and old and vertical resource transfers continue to persist (Zhu and Xie 2017; chapter 5).

Neither is the same pattern in the transition to the postmodern family system of marriage deinstitutionalization and nonmarital fertility unfolding systematically in China as in Europe and North America. The Chinese marriage rate remains high, and the ages at first marriage are in the mid and high twenties. Rising cohabitations are precursors of marriage, and nonmarital childbearing is rare. The prevailing values reject extramarital and homosexual sex, although such behaviors are on the rise. Despite some decline in marriage rates and a rise in divorce, marriage remains a resilient and influential institution that regulates cohabitation, fertility, and sexual relations.

Such ideology and practice of Asian familism arose from the structural and institutional processes of Asian modernity as compressed modernity (Chang 2010). In compressed modernity, socioeconomic, political, and cultural changes occur in an extremely condensed manner. Such rapid changes in a compressed period of time result in the coexistence of mutually disparate historical and social elements. As a result, highly complex and fluid social systems consisting of features from various development periods are constructed and reconstructed jointly. The transition from a traditional patriarchal multigenerational family system to a modern nuclear family structure started in urban portions of China and trickled down to rural China when hundreds of millions of rural migrant workers moved away from ancestral villages to live apart from their parents. Despite these transitions, multigenerational co-residence, shared care of children and elders, and cross-generational resource transfers remain regular features of Chinese families.

One important feature of societies experiencing compressed modernity is the delay in or even lack of a welfare system. Societies that experienced compressed modernity are neither prosperous nor ready to develop an extensive and comprehensive welfare system to support families by providing subsidies for the young, social security for the elderly, and other safety nets for those who are unemployed or who have a disability. This is the case in China. The rapid pace of industrialization succeeded in part owing to the state policies of sparing social welfare to fund industrialization while affording only a tiny fraction of the population, urban officials and workers in the state sector, with comprehensive welfare benefits (Selden and You 1997). The great majority of the population, mostly in rural communities, relied on mostly self-help while the state offered only very low provisions for childless elderly individuals in extreme poverty (Whyte 2010). It was not until 2009 that the first non-employment-based pension insurance that required contribution to enroll for rural residents was implemented (Dalen 2022). As a result of the lack of a social safety net, the Chinese household savings rate is one of the highest in the world (Van Dullemen, Nagel, and Bruijn 2017). The old-age dependency rate is one of the main determinants of household savings rates (Mees and Ahmed 2012). Asian societies experiencing compressed modernity have adopted an industrial development strategy of export-oriented

manufacturing whereby domestic investments play a more important role than domestic consumption. Such high saving rates not only alleviate the state's responsibilities to the families but also provide substantial capital for industrial investment that sustains economic expansion.

It is thus no wonder that these states strongly promote "Asian family values" to shelve state responsibilities and reap the benefits of high saving rates for industrial reinvestment. These nation-states implemented policies based on Asian familism advocating family values that glorify the family as responsible for caring for both the children and the elderly and promoting cross-generational codependence. The high savings coupled with minimal state transfer for welfare expenses have sustained rapid economic expansion. Such reliance on family, instead of the state, in caring for the young and old, those who are ill, and those with disabilities has sustained multigenerational codependence, effectively delaying the transition from the traditional to the modern family.

Compressed modernity also generates demographical patterns that sustain multigenerational codependence. Rising living standards and improved medical care have led to improved life expectancy and rapid population aging that require increased old-age care and financial support (Luo, Su, and Zheng 2021). Reduced fertility and family planning policies have led to small sizes of offspring and a large number of only children, particularly only girls, who usually have a closer relationship with their parents than children from multiple-child families (Liu and Jiang 2021). Such demographic transitions have led to a gendered transformation in norms and practice of filial piety from centering on sons and marginalizing daughters to considering daughters as more filial or relying on only daughters (Shi 2009). Both the rise in the number of only children and the shift of filial duties to daughters have also sustained cross-generational connections.

These seemingly contradictory tendencies urge us to move beyond the notion that the process of individualization means the declining centrality of both the institution of marriage and the multigenerational family. Both of these new trends—in which individuals have become less confined by the institution of marriage but the multigenerational family codependence remains salient, representing different phases of modernity—are unfolding simultaneously. The Chinese experience of marriage and family transition has been shaped by its distinctive pathways of transformation in the cultural tradition, political legacy, economic transitions, social policy, and demographic patterns. These unique structural permutations have generated and regenerated patterns in marriage and family that are divergent from the experiences of Europe and North America.

We should not confine our understanding of the trajectories of human experiences to that of the developed societies of Europe and North America with less than one-fifth of the world population. Instead, we develop an alternative conceptualization without assuming that non-Western countries will experience the same processes as Western countries. Transitions that have taken place over

a long period in different historical eras in the West are unfolding rapidly and simultaneously in countries experiencing compressed modernity. On the one hand, individual choice and personal autonomy are becoming increasingly central. On the other hand, individuals remain embedded in the institutions of marriage and family. Modernity and postmodernity do not entail a breakdown of the existing social structures. Rather, they are both processes of reconfiguration of these structures as well as social, economic, political, and demographic transformations and their implications in marriage, family, and gender. This reconfiguration can take place in many different ways. Our research on these transitions in gender, marriage, and family in China provides insight into the trajectories and outcomes that highlight alternative models of transformation.

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NOTES

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

- I. Chongqing was considered a provincial-level city in the CGSS sampling.

CHAPTER 3 FLEXIBLE TRADITIONALISM IDEOLOGY

- I. We used confirmatory factor analysis to identify these latent constructs (Joreskog and Sorbom 1993). The model assumes that each indicator is a function of an underlying latent construct and an error that is independent of the latent construct (Joreskog and Sorbom 1993). Each of the five gender attitude items was treated as an indicator of only one underlying latent construct. To allow for the possibility that this measurement model varies between countries, we estimated two models separately and compared them: one allows coefficients to vary across countries and another constrain them to be identical. The results showed no statistical difference between the two, thus the measurement models are equal across countries.
2. We classified individual gender attitudes using these two latent constructs in two steps. We first used an unsupervised learning approach of clustering to assign instances of the training set into clusters (Shu 2020; Shu and Ye 2023). Cluster analysis aims to discover inherent groupings in the data, separating people into relatively homogeneous subgroups or clusters. To consider multidimensional traits that jointly shape groups of similar cases, it is useful to differentiate subjects into groups that share similar traits to simultaneously analyze a package of characteristics.

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