Marriage change in Taiwan: Is gender inequality or education driving the change?

Background

Two distinct marriage trends in Taiwan over the past 20 years

Rising mean age at first marriage



Increased proportion single throughout the reproductive ages



- The increase in proportion single has been particularly dramatic at ages 25-29, the peak childbearing years
- The 2006 trend line suggests that we will continue to see increasing proportions never married at ages 35-39, 40-44 and 45-49 in the near term
- Trends for men are similar to the trends for women shown here

Competing Explanations

Gender inequality

- Focus on family gender roles
- Disjuncture between growing gender equality in individual-oriented institutions and inequality in family-oriented institutions
- Declining attractiveness of marriage with traditional gender roles

Education

- Focus on the dramatic changes in educational opportunities and changing distribution of educational attainment for women
- Relationship between these changes and the operation of the marriage market
- Not modeled on a change in the attractiveness of marriage

Hypotheses

Marriage market entry effect

The effect of longer time in education is simply to delay entry into the marriage market, but increased education has no effect on lifetime probability of marriage. In this case we should see the effect of education decrease with age.

Marriage market matching effect

In a marriage market characterized by hypergamy, unequal shifts in the educational distribution by gender creates imbalances in the marriage market. In this case we should see differential effects of education by gender. Specifically, we should observe the lowest odds of marriage for women with the highest education and men with the lowest education.

Gender Inequality effect

Exposure to individual-oriented institution is linked to marital change through attitudes towards traditional gender roles. Where traditional marital gender roles prevail, the effect of non-traditional attitudes towards family gender roles should have a differential impact by gender. For women, non-traditional attitudes should lower the odds of marriage while men with non-traditional attitudes should be equally likely to marry as other men.

Data and Methods

- The above hypotheses are tested using logisitic regression and the Taiwan 2002 Social Change Survey, Family and Gender Module, Institute of Sociology and Center for Survey Research
- Part of the ISSP: Family and Changing Gender Roles, 2002
- The dataset contains 1,217 respondents aged 25-54; analysis is restricted to 25-54 years olds to control for large cohort differences in educational opportunities
- Dependent variable: ever married, based on respondents' reported current marital status
- Key independent variables: education, age, gender, attitudes towards traditional family gender roles

Results

The education-marriage association is only statistically significant for the youngest age group, with 73% lower odds of marriage among college-educated 25-34 year olds. This finding suggests that education shifts marriage but does not reduce the likelihood of marriage.

For women, the education-marriage association is strong, with 3 times higher odds of marriage for women with less than high school education but 70% lower odds of marriage for women with a college degree. For men the association is weak. As with education, non-traditional attitudes have a strong and significant effect on odds of marriage for women, reducing odds of marriage by 65% compared to women with traditional attitudes, but there is no association for men

For women, the association between non-traditional attitudes and marriage attenuates when education is controlled, while the education-marriage association remains strong and significant. This is evidence against the gender inequality hypothesis.

Odds of marriage by age group

	25-34	35-44	45-54
Less than high	1.97	1.30	1.15
school	(0.79)	(0.57)	(0.83)
High school diploma (ref)	1.00	1.00	1.00
More than high school	0.53*	0.50	0.32
	(0.14)	(0.21)	(0.25)
College graduate	0.27***	0.81	0.40
	(0.07)	(0.43)	(0.34)
Female	2.31***	0.81	1.22
	(0.50)	(0.27)	(0.64)
Ν	403	406	387
Log likelihood	-252	-132	-64
df	4	4	4
LR chi2	52.31	5.26	4.94

* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%; *** significant at .01%

Odds of marriage by sex

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
-	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
ess than high chool	0.75	2.94*			0.74	3.35*
	(0.27)	(1.41)			(0.28)	(1.74)
ligh school liploma (ref)	1.00	1.00			1.00	1.00
Aore than high school	0.59	0.46*			0.58	0.47*
	(0.19)	(0.14)			(0.20)	(0.15)
College graduate	0.47*	0.29***			0.50*	0.34**
	(0.15)	(0.09)			(0.17)	(0.12)
raditional attitudes			1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Neutral attitudes			1.15	0.43*	1.18	0.61
			(0.48)	(0.15)	(0.51)	(0.23)
Non-traditional attitudes			0.80	0.35**	0.85	0.46*
			(0.32)	(0.12)	(0.34)	(0.16)
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* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%; *** significant at .01%

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Limitations: It is important to bear in mind that the relationships estimated here are cross-sectional. Marriage outcomes in the older age groups may not adequately represent the future trajectories of the youngest age groups if these relationships are changing. To investigate this possibility requires longitudinal data.