

# Marital Power Structure in Two Chinese Societies: Measurement and Mechanisms

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## INTRODUCTION

The changing conjugal relationship has become a focal issue in family research in East Asia. Despite a complicated cultural and normative background, marital power as the conventional concept remains salient, and is shown to capture the core component of conjugal relations (Yi & Tsai, 1989; Chen, Yi, & Lu, 2000; Chu & Yu, 2010). Previous studies have documented the important effect of ideational shift, the enhancement of personal resources, and changing structural opportunities for women, including a decrease in co-residence with elderly parents and increase of paid employment, in the region (Xu, 2006; Lin & Yi, 2013; Xie & Zhu, 2009; Pimentel & Liu, 2004). Those who exercise greater power in the conjugal relationship are regarded as having higher family status (Yi, Lu, & Pan, 2000).

This paper intends to address this issue by focusing on changes in women's domestic status from a comparative perspective. Taiwan and Shanghai are chosen as the loci of the study because of their cultural homogeneity and political heterogeneity. It is expected that certain family universals may continue to dominate in the family process, while others may appear to fluctuate due to various constraints from the social system. The findings will allow us to delineate the relative impact of cultural norms and personal resources in conjugal relations.

### Measuring Marital Power

It should be pointed out that the traditional measurement of the marital power structure has confronted several drawbacks, and significant bias may be caused. In brief, application of the same weight to different marital power indicators and the lack of conjugal data are two noted shortcomings. Reliance on one domain of conjugal dynamics is another clear disadvantage. This paper thus aims to provide a better measurement of marital power and to use a multilevel model to analyze dyadic couple data so that meaningful comparative findings may be achieved.

### *Problem of One Single Dimension*

It is well documented that the concept of marital power has been variously defined. The final

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outcome of family decision-making, patterns of tension and conflict management, or types of prevailing division of household labor are used to reflect women's family status (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; McDonald, 1980). Although there is consensus that the division of household labor and family decision-making patterns can be seen as substitute indicators of marital power, the relative importance of these two aspects of conjugal relations pertaining to the essence of marital power is seldom discussed. Take Taiwan for example. The division of household labor in Taiwan is extremely traditional: household labor is mainly performed by wives only (Lee, Yang, & Yi, 2000). In contrast, major pattern of family decision-making is somewhat more balanced—both husband and wife take part in the process (Yi & Yang, 1995). Under such circumstances, it is imperative to simultaneously consider both family decisions and household division of labor so as to attain a more comprehensive understanding of the marital power structure (Chen et al., 2000; Lu & Yi, 2005).

### *Problem of Equal Weight*

To further reiterate, the problem in measuring marital power arises from the fact that power is not one-dimensional. Having greater power in one area of family decision-making does not necessarily mean having the same power in another domain. In an attempt to integrate more than two indicators to carry out the analysis, most studies have been criticized for using a scoring system that lacks a theoretical basis. In other words, when multiple indicators are collected, the most common practice is to assign equal weight to each indicator, then sum up the total score as the final index of conjugal power (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Burr, Ahern, & Knowles, 1977; Chen & Li, 2004; Lu & Yi 2005; Lee et al., 2000; Tang, 2003). The logic of the “equal weight scoring method” implies that different decision-making items or household labor division items have the same importance. Thus, the scoring method has been confronted with serious criticisms (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Heer, 1963).

### *Problem of Report from One Spouse Only*

Another serious problem is the difference between couple's reports of marital reality. Spouses differ substantially even in their answers to objective questions (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Ochs & Binik, 1999; Pimentel, 2000; Chien & Yi, 2004). Hence, the failure to treat family or family subgroups rather than individuals as the unit of analysis continues to be criticized (Szinovacz, 1983; Yi, 1991). For example, when comparing Taiwanese husbands and wives, more than 30% of couples report inconsistent decision-making, which makes it necessary to use the “dyad” as the unit of analysis instead of the “individual” (Chien and Yi, 2004). As contended by Kenny and others, analyzing husbands and wives separately as if they are two samples or combining husbands' and wives' data as if couples are independent samples are both considered flawed strategies (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Hence, an attempt is made to use an appropriate method to generate more reliable power scores in studying the marital power structure in the family.

### **Mechanisms Accounting for Marital Power Structure: Norms and Resources**

Ever since Blood and Wolf (1960) introduced the resource theory to explain marital relations in the family, personal resources—at an absolute or relative level—have become the key to explain the conjugal power structure. While earlier studies have noticed the pitfall of relying on resources only and thus proposed taking into account the cultural context or normative expectations (Scanzoni, 1979; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; McDonald, 1980), much less effort has been made on the explication of normative effects. Since cultural norms remain dominant in Chinese societies, it is particularly meaningful to delineate the relative

importance of normative and resource effects in shaping the marital power among couples.

Previous studies repeatedly confirm that patriarchy maintains its function in the Chinese family system (Zuo, 2009; Cong & Silverstein, 2008; Yi & Lin, 2009). Patrilocal co-residence is the most prevalent form of family type across the strait (Zhang, 2004; Chu, Xie, & Yu, 2011) which results in a general decrease of women's domestic status (Yi, 2001). On the other hand, greater resources produce the expected positive effect in the enhancement of women's decision power. Not only are married daughters with a higher education and income more likely to provide financial support to their own parents (Xie & Zhu, 2009), they also tend to co-reside with their own parents (Pimentel & Liu, 2004). Take intergenerational support for example. It has been shown that parental demand, children's resources, and filial norms all interact in the outcome of support patterns in Chinese societies as well as in East Asia (Yeh, Yi, Tsao, & Wan, 2013; Lin & Yi, 2013). In other words, despite the fact that personal resources facilitate the non-conventional practice, cultural expectations maintain their strong influence in family's daily operation.

Hence, we suspect that both the patriarchal norm and individual resources interact in the conjugal interaction outcomes. Numerous studies have focused on the influence of wives' increased resources on her domestic status (Yi & Chien, 2002; Dong, Sanchez, & Price, 2004; Hu, Zeng, Zheng, & Flatt, 2010). In contrast, ideological changes or normative effects on conjugal relations have been inadequately investigated. Among the few such studies, conjugal relations are shown to be affected either by the egalitarian division at home (Pimentel, 2000), or by a deviation from the normative prescription, in that the wife's higher income tends to produce negative marital quality (Zhang, Tsang, Chin, Cheung, Zhang, & Yip, 2012; Dong, et al., 2004; Lin, 2005). Clearly missing is an exploration of the relative effect of cultural norms in relation to individual (or relative) resources on couple's marital power. An attempt is thus made to address this significant issue in the present study.

Therefore, two major research aims are intended: to first develop a feasible multilevel index of the marital power structure in different Chinese societies; and to use couple data to delineate mechanisms accounting for various marital power patterns in Taiwan and Shanghai. It is expected that the method utilized in developing the multilevel index of the marital power structure will have the potential to generalize to other East Asian families in the future.

## METHOD

### Samples

This paper uses data from from "The Economic Development and Women's Family Status in Different Chinese Societies." Using similar research framework and questionnaires, Taiwan and Shanghai study were conducted in 1995-1996 and 1999 with 516 and 500 couples being interviewed respectively. The datasets are so far the only corresponding survey with dyadic couple samples in different Chinese societies. The Taiwan sample was randomly chosen from married couples aged 20-64 island-wide. A three-stage random sampling procedure was applied and 516 couples were randomly selected by using the probability proportion to sizes (Yi & Chen, 2006). For the Shanghai sample, 6 urban areas and 3 rural areas were pre-selected, and the application of the probability proportional to sizes resulted in 500 couples, with 333 urban couples and 167 rural couples as the final sample (Ibid.). The field survey was conducted by trained interviewers to administer face-to-face interviews at respondents' homes.

## Major Variables

*Family Decision-Making:* Five domains of family decisions constituted by 17 items are included in the survey: major economic issues, daily expenses management, family norms, child-related issues and occupation-related issues (Table 1). Respondents are asked to answer each item from five ordinal categories ranging from “husband always” to “wife always”. Each family decision item is scored 0 (husband always), 0.25 (mostly husband), 0.5 (joint or other categories), 0.75 (mostly wife) or 1 (wife always).

Table 1.

### The AHP Framework of Measuring Marital Power in Taiwan and Shanghai

Level-1 Dimension	Level-2 sub-dimension (Category)	Level-3 items (Indicator)
Family Decision Making Pattern	Major Economic Issues	1. Housing purchase 2. Decision to move 3. Saving & investment
	Daily Expenses Management	1. Household expenses 2. Amount of gift money at weddings and funerals
	Family Norms	1. Co-residence with elders 2. Parental support 3. Childbirth decision
	Child-related Issues	1. Children's discipline 2. Children's schooling 3. Children's marriage
	Occupation-related Issues	1. Husband's job 2. Wife's job
Division of Household Labor		1. Preparing meals 2. Household cleaning 3. Shopping for commodities 4. Minor repairs around the house

*Division of Household Labor:* Four items are included in the analysis: preparing meals, household cleaning, shopping for commodities and minor repairs around the house. Each item is measured by three answers, “mostly husband”, “joint” and “mostly wife”. Again, only conjugal categories will be focused on. Each item is scored 1 (mostly husband), 0.5 (joint or other categories) or 0 (mostly wife).

*Sex-role Attitudes:* Sex-role attitude is composed of nine conventional items, e.g., a mother's employment is harmful to preschool children; men's responsibility is earning a living while women's is taking care of the home; most important familial issues should be decided by men, etc. A five-point ordinal scale was constructed, with a higher score implying a more modern attitude toward gender roles.

*Family-related variables:* Five family factors are included: family structure, years of marriage, number of children, family life cycle and wife's employment. With regard to family structure, co-residence with parents or not is the main concern. Age of the youngest child is used to distinguish three family stages (under 6, aged 6-20 and aged 20+). Wife's employment is indicated by her employment patterns across the three consecutive family life

cycles. To be specific, in Taiwan, since marriage and childbearing are two major stages which affect women's labor force continuity, four categories are thus created (continuous employment, quit at marriage or at child-birth, has worked after marriage only, and has never worked). For Shanghai women, only two categories—continuous and non-continuous employment—are created.

*Individual Background Variables:* Five individual variables indicating personal resources are age, years of education, occupation, rural/urban background and ethnic origins. Occupational status is classified into professionals/clerks, service and labor workers and not employed; rural/urban background reports the place the respondent resided the longest before the age of 15, which is categorized into urban and rural. As to ethnic background, three major Taiwanese ethnic groups, Fukienese, Hakka, and mainlander are distinguished. In Shanghai, this variable is replaced by the birth place: Shanghai and outside of Shanghai.

### Developing an Integrated Marital Power Score

Our first goal is to establish an integrated marital power score with different weights applying to each different indicator. In order to do so, the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) proposed by Saaty (1980) is chosen as the suitable method because it takes into account variations in dimensions and items existing in different societies through the subjective ranking system. In other words, rather than based on correlations among indicators, AHP utilizes substantive expert knowledge to construct a more comprehensive weights.

In 2007, social science scholars with specialty area in family and gender studies in Taiwan and China were asked to rank the relative importance of each dimension as well as of each marital power item listed in Table 1. Different weights given are then calculated and transformed by applying AHP analysis to integrate subjective ranking provided by expert respondents. The formula used for calculating an integrated marital power score is as follows:

$$Y = [\sum \alpha_i X_i] * 100$$

where  $\alpha_i$  and  $X_i$  are the weight and score of each dimension or indicator. With scores ranging from 0 to 100 points, the higher scores indicate higher wife's family status. A score of 100 indicates that the wife has absolute power in the family; a score of 50 shows an equal distribution of marital power; and a score of 0 represents the husband having absolute marital power. A final three sets of weights are calculated and are shown in the result section. The specific procedure which involves three steps in the estimation of different weights is explained in Appendix 1.

### The Dyadic Data Analysis

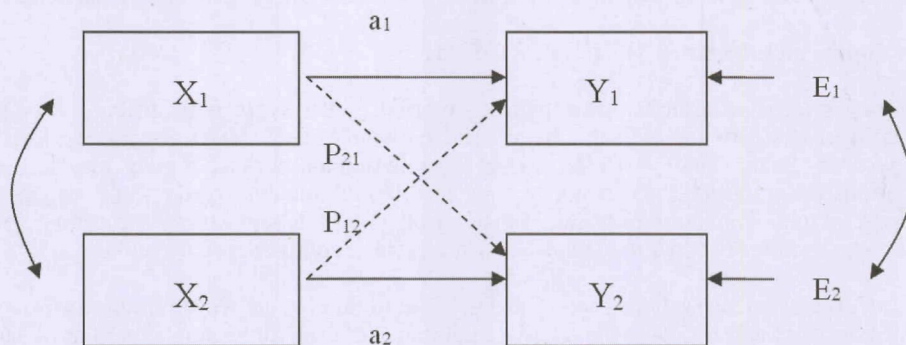
It is common that various degrees of discrepancy exist among couples' answers. Since multilevel modeling is useful for the analysis of dyadic data, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) was utilized to analyze women's domestic status in this study (Kenny et al., 2006).

Figure 1 depicts the basic APIM multilevel model. As can be seen, there are two dyad members and two variables,  $X_i$  and  $Y_i$  for each dyad member. Within the APIM model, "a" is the actor effect occurring when a person's score on a predictor variable affects that same person's score on an outcome variable; and "p" is the partner effect occurring when a person's score on a predictor variable affects his or her partner's on an outcome variable. Regarding

<sup>1</sup> The invitation lists of Mainland China were recommended by co-project leader of *The Economic Development and Female's Family Status in Tianjin and Shanghai*.

the study of women's domestic status, it may be that wives' personal resources (actor effect) and/or their husbands' personal resources (partner effect) influence women's domestic status. Specific combinations of actor and partner effects are relevant to the study of couples. When actor effects exist and partner effects equal 0, it means the relationship is dominated by the actor; when actor effects are equal to 0 and partner effects exist, the relationship is partner dominated. If actor and partner effects both exist, the relationship is mutual. By studying only actor effects, researchers focus on the individual level of analysis. However, only when partner effects are considered do identifying relational phenomena become a possibility (Kenny et al., 2006). In Figure 1, the correlated errors represent unmeasured common characteristics between a couple. For specific procedures used for APIM model, please refer to Appendix 2.

Figure 1. The Basic APIM Model



## RESULTS

### Marital Power with Weighted Composite

#### *Family Decision Making and the Division of Household Labor*

Family decision-making and the household labor division are two substitute concepts that are most frequently used to study the marital power structure in the family. Perhaps owing to the dominant influence of the traditional patriarchal rule, it is clear that family decision-making receives overwhelming support by scholars in Taiwan and Mainland China as a more important aspect in the marital power structure. Take Taiwan for example. The importance of the family decision-making as an indicator of women's family status is weighted at 71.4 out of 100, in contrast with the household labor division, which receives a weight of 28.6 (see Table 2).

With regard to the relative importance of specific decision categories, scholars unanimously gave daily expenses management the lowest weight, followed by child-related issues (see Table 2). The latter ranking is opposite to previous reports which document child-related decision being chosen as one of the most important family decisions (Yi & Tsai, 1989; Yi & Yang, 1995; Chen et al., 2002). It appears that "the most important decision" is not necessarily equivalent to "the most powerful decision" at home. Moreover, having these two domains ranked with the lowest weight in marital power suggest that the conventional women's power exertion does not equip them with real power in the conjugal relations.

As to the remaining decision categories, Taiwan and China reveal different patterns. In *Taiwan*, whether a wife is able to say no to family norms—indicated by co-residence with

Table 2.

**Weight Schemes of Family Decision-Making and Household Labor Division**

			Relative importance(A/B)	
	Taiwan China	Mainland	Taiwan China	Mainland
<b>Family Decision Making(A)</b>	<b>71.4</b>	<b>67.7</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2</b>
Major Economic Issues	25	26.8		
Daily Expense Management	4.7	5.2		
Family Norms	29	19.8		
Child-Related Issues	17	11.3		
Occupation-Related Issues	24.3	36.9		
Total	100	100		
<b>Division of Household Labor (B)</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>32.3</b>		
Preparing Meals	38.1	50.1		
Household Cleaning	36.3	22.7		
Shopping for Commodities	14	11.2		
House Repairs	11.6	16		
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>		

elders, ways of parental support, and decision on childbirth—is considered to best capture the real marital power (a weight of 29.0), followed by major economic issues (a weight of 25) and occupation-related issues (a weight of 24.3). For *China*, the occupation-related issues received the highest weight of 36.9. Whether women can choose their own profession and whether they have influence on their husbands' job selection are considered the most pronounced aspect in women's real power in China. Major economic issues are ranked the second with a weight of 26.8. But unlike their Taiwanese counterpart, family norms drop considerably with a weight of 19.8. A possible explanation of the difference may be owing to the one-child policy and the housing policy which create barriers to practice filial norms in China (Yeh et al., 2013; Lin & Yi, 2013).

Table 2 also shows the relative importance of household division indicators. It should be noted that household work indicators are analyzed by degrees of husband's participation in each item, not the wife's. Since household work in China has always been dominated by wives, to use husband's involvement in the household labor division is considered a better research strategy for the present study. The result points out that in both Taiwan and Mainland China, husband's involvement in shopping for household commodities and in repairing plumbing or fixing electrical problems are of limited value in the judgment of marital power (weight ranges from 11.2 to 16). In contrast, women's status in a society can be judged by looking at husband's involvement in activities that are both time- and labor-consuming, such as preparing meals and doing household cleaning. In fact, while preparing meals (38.1) is weighted similarly to household cleaning (36.3) in *Taiwan*, preparing meals is of absolute importance (50.1), much more so than household cleaning (22.7) in *Shanghai*. Therefore, with regard to the division of household labor, Taiwan and China share consensus

in judging the relative importance of various tasks incorporated in the measurement of marital power. But they vary in weights allocated to specific tasks.

### *Comparing Wives Marital Power Scores in Taiwan and Shanghai*

Weighing the relative importance of each indicator based on the AHP analysis allows us to derive the final weight scheme of marital power indicators for these two Chinese societies. In other words, after each item is given a specific score, a final composite score of marital power incorporating both family decision and household labor division dimensions can be calculated.

Table 3 presents the final marital power scores for Taiwan and Shanghai. Irrespective of husbands' or wives' answers, scores derived from husbands and wives are actually not very different between them. *Taiwanese* women's family status score is approximately 39 and men's score is around 61. *Shanghai* women's marital power score is about 43—higher than their Taiwanese counterparts—and men's score is approximately 57. While both Chinese societies appear to lean toward male dominance, Taiwanese families tend to be slightly more so than their Shanghai counterparts (see Table 3).

Undoubtedly, family decision making assumes more importance than household work, and the difference is greater among Taiwanese couples. For *Taiwanese* wives, the score of 28.4 suggests that men's participation in household labor in Taiwan is quite low, and the division of household labor appears extremely unbalanced. As to *Shanghai* couples, although Shanghai husbands are more likely to do housework, women's score in household labor division (38.8) remains lower than men's (41.4), indicating that women still do more household work than men.

Further analyses on various family decision categories point out that married women in *Taiwan* score variably depending on specific decision domains. The highest scores are assigned to management of daily expenses (52.9) and to child-related issues (51.1), thus accurately reflecting the normative expectation of conjugal roles. But occupation-related issues receive below average scores of 32.2. Taiwanese women not only have little influence

Table 3.

**Women's Family Status Score in Taiwan and Shanghai**

Dimension	Taiwan		Shanghai	
	Wife's Answer	Husband's Answer	Wife's Answer	Husband's Answer
Total	39.2	39.7	42.7	42.8
Family Decision Making	43.6	43.8	44.5	43.5
Major Economic Issues	45.2	46.9	44.5	42.4
Daily Expense management	52.9	54.9	63.8	61.2
Family Norms	45.8	44.6	54.6	53.3
Child-related Issues	51.1	51.1	51.4	50.1
Occupation- related Issues	32.2	32.6	34.3	34.5
Household Labor Division	28.4	29.4	38.8	41.4

in their spouses' occupational choice, they do not have control over their own job selection either. As to major economic decisions and family norms, their respective scores of 45.2 and 45.8 indicate that Taiwanese families remain male dominated.

In *Shanghai*, slightly different patterns are found. Married women, similar to their Taiwanese counterparts, have the real power in daily expenses management, with a score higher than 61. With respect to family norms and child-related issues (with scores ranging from 50-55), patterns are characterized by equal status leaning toward wives being dominant. As to major economic issues in the family, husbands enjoy more power in the decisions (43-44). But the lowest score of 34 on occupation-related issues indicates that Shanghai wives do not obtain important power on this significant family decision.

Overall, marital power scores for Taiwan and Shanghai point out that male dominance continues in the family system. Although wives have higher scores in the traditional role performance, in both general domains of family decision making and household division of labor, wives still score lower.

### **Mechanisms Affecting the Marital Power Structure in Two Chinese Societies: The Analysis of Dyadic Couple Data**

Using the total multidimensional weighted score developed above, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) is applied to investigate mechanisms accounting for women's family status in Taiwan and in Shanghai. As delineated in the previous section, APIM allows us to utilize dyadic data in the analysis and will enable us to analyze conjugal relations from the dyadic level, instead of the individual level.

#### *Taiwan Couples*

Table 4 shows results of APIM analysis on the Taiwan data. Findings are composed of two parts: Level 1 estimates the influence of individual characteristics and resources on women's family status; Level 2 estimates the effect of dyadic and family factors on the marital power.

As can be seen, Level 2 is constituted by family-related factors and the relative resources between the couple dyad. Analyses show that only family structure and number of children reach statistical significance. Co-residence with paternal parents and having more children are likely to reduce wives' marital power. The realistic constraint embedded in the patriarchal context is clearly illustrated. With respect to the relative resources between the conjugal dyad, only economic resources bring greater marital power for married women. The more important a woman's income is to her family, the higher family status she enjoys.

Level-1 analysis is composed of respondents' own actor effect, spouse or partner effect, and the gender-actor as well as the gender-partner interaction effect. As shown in Table 4, a woman's marital power is enhanced when she has a modern sex-role attitude and is not from the Hakka ethnic origin. The same pattern holds true for the partner effects, in that the modern sex-role attitude and the non-Hakka origin of the spouse are likely to contribute to gender equality at home.

Since the actor can be wife or husband, in order to delineate the potential difference of the actor and partner effects for wife and husband, we further convert the level-1 model into a two-intercept model to directly test the gender effects. For Taiwanese wives<sup>2</sup>, Table 4.1

<sup>2</sup>  $\gamma_{00}$  are deleted in the two-intercept model; level-2 coefficients remain unchanged and are omitted.

Table 4.

## APIM Results of Mechanisms Accounting for Marital Power in Taiwan

Variable	Estimate	Variable	Estimate
Constant			22.73**
<b>Actor Effect (respondent)</b>			
Age	-0.02	<b>Family Factors</b>	
Years of schooling	0.12	Family structure	
Occupation		Co-Residence with Parents of husband	-1.32*
Service and Labor workers	0.38	Co-Residence with Parents of wife	-1.37
Not Employed	-1.98	(vs. nuclear family and other)	
(vs. Professionals/Clerks)		Year of Marriage	
Rural / Urban Background		1971-1980	-0.06
Urban	-0.05	1981-1995	0.54
(vs. Rural)		(vs. before 1970)	
Ethnic background		Number of children	-0.70**
Hakka	-1.86**	Family life cycle	
Mainlander	0.17	Youngest child aged under 6	1.61
(vs. Fukienese)		Youngest child aged 6-20	0.82
Sex-Role Attitude <sup>3</sup>	0.27***	(vs. Youngest child aged 20+)	
<b>Partner Effect (spouse)</b>			
Age	0.03	Employment pattern	
Years of schooling	0.05	Quit at marriage or childbirth	-1.58
Occupation		Work after marriage only	-1.03
Service and Labor workers	1.01	Never work	-0.46
Not Employed	-0.07	(vs. Continuous employment)	
(Professionals/Clerks)		<b>Couple Relative Resources</b>	
Rural / Urban Background		Income	0.49*
Urban	0.87	Age	
(vs. Rural)		Equal	0.57
Ethnic Origins		Wife older than Husband	-1.70
Hakka	-1.52**	(Husband older than wife)	
Mainlander	1.24	Years of schooling	
(Fukienese)		Equal	1.07
Sex-Role Attitude	0.20***	Wife higher than Husband	-0.65
<b>Gender Effect<sup>4</sup></b>			
Constant	2.13	(Husband higher than wife)	
<b>Gender-Actor Interaction Effect</b>			
Age	-0.08	Occupation	
Years of Schooling	0.23*	Equal	1.16
Service and Labor workers	1.88**	Wife better than Husband	0.23
Not Employed	2.74	(Husband better than wife)	
Urban Background	1.22*	Marriage Type	
Hakka Ethnic Origins	0.64	Arranged Marriage	0.58
		(vs. Voluntary Marriage)	
		Similarity of Sex-Role Attitude	-0.07
		Conflict Management Pattern	
		Conflict With Communication	1.63

<sup>3</sup> Sex-role attitude is composed of nine typical items, i.e. Mother's employment is harmful to preschool children; Men's responsibility is earning a living while women's is taking care of homes; Most important familial issues should be decided by men; Generally speaking, men are more suitable than women to be the boss at work. A five-point scale was constructed, with a higher score implying more modern attitudes toward gender roles.

<sup>4</sup> gender is coded as 1 for wife and -1 for husband.

Mainlander Ethnic Origins	-2.18**	Conflict Without Communication (No conflict)	0.60
Sex-Role Attitude	0.06		
<b>Gender-Partner Interaction Effect</b>			
Age	0.05		
Years of Schooling	-0.26**		
Service and Labor workers	-1.46*		
Not Employed	-1.38		
Urban Background	-0.75		
Hakka Ethnic Origins	-1.36		
Mainlander Ethnic Origins	0.83		
Sex-Role Attitude	-0.11		
-2 Restricted LLdf		6945(55)	
Compound Symmetry ( $\delta_{0j}$ )		45.75***	
Residual ( $e_{ij}$ )		23.30***	
Intraclass Correlation $\delta_{0j}/(\delta_{0j} + e_{ij})$		0.66	

(The variables in the model are non-centered.)

shows that higher education and a modern sex-role attitude significantly enhance a wife's family status. Women who are in the service or labor sector report higher family status too. The reason may be owing to the greater likelihood of continuing working after marriage in these professions, especially when the family encounters economic difficulties. As to partner effects, only husband's ethnic background is significant, in that marrying a Hakka decreases women's marital power, while marrying a mainlander improves her status at home. It is evident that the gender inequality in the Taiwanese family is ordered by Hakka, Fukienese and Mainlander families.

As shown in the right column of Table 4.1, Taiwanese husbands report similar patterns.

Table 4.1

**Estimates of Gender Interaction Effects in Taiwan: Wife's and Husband's Answers**

	Wife	Wife	Husband	Husband
	Estimate	Sig.	Estimate	Sig.
Constant	24.87	**	20.60	***
Age of Wife	-0.10		-0.02	
Years of Schooling of Wife	0.36	**	0.31	*
Wife is Service or Labor worker	2.26	**	2.48	**
Wife Not Employed	0.77		1.31	
Wife has Urban Background	1.16		1.61	*
Wife has Hakka Ethnic Origins	-1.21		-0.16	
Wife has Mainlander Ethnic Origins	-2.00		0.41	
Wife's Sex-Role Attitude	0.33	**	0.31	***
Age of Husband	0.08		0.06	
Years of Schooling of Husband	-0.21		-0.11	
Husband is Service or Labor worker	-0.45		-1.50	
Husband Not Employed	-1.45		-4.72	
Husband has Urban Background	0.12		-1.27	
Husband has Hakka Ethnic Origins	-2.88	**	-2.50	**
Husband has Mainlander Ethnic Origins	2.07	*	2.35	*
Husband's Sex-Role Attitude	0.09		0.21	**

Husband with Hakka background and modern sex-role attitude both contribute to wife's power. Wives who have higher education and a modern sex-role attitude, work in labor or service professions and are from urban areas enjoys higher domestic status. It appears that level-1 mechanisms are simultaneously verified in both wives' and husbands' responses. The consistent result between Taiwanese couples suggests that the traditional dominance husbands enjoy is largely owing to his ethnic tradition as well as the partner effect that prevents wives from developing their own marital power.

### *Shanghai Couples*

Contrary to the Taiwan finding, Table 5 points out that among Level-2 variables analyzed, none of the family factors is significant. This implies that while the traditional patriarchal norm (e.g., co-residence pattern, number of children) prevents wives from having greater marital power in Taiwan, the normative constraint is not as important in China. But in terms of relative conjugal resources, wives with higher income enjoy higher family status in both societies. For Shanghai women, having education equal to or higher than husbands significantly enhances marital power at home.

The Level-1 analyses show the significant effect of modern gender-role attitude of both partners on Shanghai wife's domestic status. Since the interaction effect point out the importance of unemployment on the outcome variable, but with opposite direction, a direct test of the gender interaction effect with a two-intercept model is performed. Results from Table 5.1 confirm that both Shanghai husbands and wives agree that while wife having modern gender role ideology contribute to her family status, wife (not husband) who is unemployed in the labor market significantly decrease her family power (see Tables 5.1). The result in general indicates that both non-physical resources (i.e., gender role attitudes) as well as physical resources (higher income, higher education, job employment) interact in the enhancement of women's domestic status in Shanghai.

To compare with Taiwanese couples, wife's family status as reported by Shanghai couples reveals similar and different mechanisms for the marital power structure. In both Taiwan and Shanghai, actor and partner effects are found to be important, as are dyadic level factors. But for Shanghai couples, personal attitudes as well as relative conjugal resources significantly affect the wife's marital power. Unlike her Taiwanese counterpart, normative factors which tend to exert negative effects to wife's family status are not salient. In accordance with findings on occupation-related decisions having the highest weight in Shanghai, individual resources are found to be the most pronounced mechanism for the wife's domestic status in China. Overall, our analysis suggests that the marital power structure among Shanghai couples leans toward the resources theory proposed in the West.

## CONCLUSION

Taiwan and Mainland China share similar cultural heritage. But different political systems and the disparity in economic development over the last five decades have propelled family scholars to engage in comparative studies of the contemporary family dynamics. The basic assumption of this study is that the family is the core social organization in Chinese societies. With cultural homogeneity and political heterogeneity, conjugal relations, which are considered secondary to the parent-child bond historically, may experience drastic change in the social process. Hence, exploring similarities as well as differences of the marital power structure in Taiwan and China will allow us to ascertain the influence of socio-cultural forces on women's domestic status.

Table 5.

## APIM Results of Mechanisms Accounting for Marital Power in Shanghai

Variable	Estimate	Variable	Estimate
Constant			17.34**
<b>Level 1</b>		<b>Level 2</b>	
<b>Actor Effect (respondent)</b>		<b>Family Factors</b>	
Age	0.15**	Family structure	
Years of schooling	0.01	Co-Residence with Parents of husband	
husband	-0.23	Co-Residence with Parents of wife	0.78
Occupation		(vs. nuclear family and other)	
Service and Labor workers		Year of Marriage	
Not Employed	-1.12	1971-1980	2.32
(vs. Employed)		1981-1995	3.75
Rural / Urban Background		(vs. before 1970)	
Urban	1.13	Number of children	-0.16
(vs. Rural)		Family life cycle	
Place of Birth		Youngest child aged under 6	-0.11
Shanghai	-0.21	Youngest child aged 6-20	-0.17
(vs. non-Shanghai)		(vs. Youngest child aged 20+)	
Sex-Role Attitude	0.18***	Employment pattern	
<b>Partner Effect (spouse)</b>		Discontinuous employment	1.77
Age	0.02	(vs. Continuous employment)	
Years of schooling	0.09	<b>Couple Relative Resources</b>	
Occupation		Income	1.27**
Not Employed	-0.75	Age	
(vs. Employed)		Equal	-0.98
Rural / Urban Background		Wife older than Husband	-0.43
Urban	1.49**	(Husband older than wife)	
(vs. Rural)		Years of schooling	
Place of Birth		Equal	5.07***
Shanghai	-0.98	Wife higher than Husband	7.48***
(vs. non-Shanghai)		(Husband higher than wife)	
Sex-Role Attitude	0.15***	Occupation	
<b>Gender Effect</b>		Equal	0.34
Constant	3.09	Wife better than Husband	
<b>Gender-Actor Interaction Effect</b>		(Husband better than wife)	
Age	-0.08	Marriage Type	
Years of Schooling	-0.47	Arranged Marriage	-0.83
Not Employed	-2.41***	(vs. Voluntary Marriage)	
Urban Background	0.50	Similarity of Sex-Role Attitude	-0.13
Shanghai Background	-0.05	Conflict Management Pattern	
Sex-Role Attitude	0.02	Conflict With Communication	0.43
<b>Gender-Partner Interaction Effect</b>		Conflict Without Communication	0.38
Age	0.06	(No conflict)	
Years of Schooling	0.46		
Not Employed	1.83**		
Urban Background	-0.44		
Shanghai Background	-0.59		
Sex-Role Attitude	-0.06		

Table 5.

**APIM Results of Mechanisms Accounting for Marital Power in Shanghai**

Variable	Estimate	Variable	Estimate
Constant			17.34**

**Level 1****Level 2**

Table 5.1

**Estimates of Gender Interaction Effects in Shanghai:  
Wife's and Husband's Answers**

	Wife		Husband	
	Estimate	Sig.	Estimate	Sig.
Constant	20.41	***	14.23	**
Age of Wife	0.07		-0.04	
Years of Schooling of Wife	-0.46		-0.37	
Wife Not Employed	-3.54	***	-2.60	**
Wife has Urban Background	1.64		1.93	
Wife has Shanghai Origins	-0.25		-0.38	
Wife's Sex-Role Attitude	2.00	***	0.21	***
Age of Husband	0.07		0.23	
Years of Schooling of Husband	0.55		0.48	
Husband Not Employed	1.08		1.29	
Husband has Urban Background	1.05		0.63	
Husband has Shanghai Origins	-1.57		-0.16	
Husband's Sex-Role Attitude	0.09		0.17	**

In order to conduct proper comparative study, we first develop a feasible multilevel index of marital power measurement, which is then used in analyzing mechanisms affecting the marital power structure in these two Chinese societies. Data are taken from "The Economic Development and Women's Domestic Status. in Taiwan and Shanghai" with 516 and 500 conjugal dyads as samples. In the construction of marital power measurement, both family decision-making and household division of labor are simultaneously incorporated. Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process method, three levels of the marital power structure are ascertained, and appropriate weights for various conventional items which constitute the marital power index are derived.

Regarding the relative importance between two basic domains of marital power measurement, the result shows that family decision-making is far more important than household division of labor in Taiwan and Shanghai. But the weight allocated to different categories under each domain reveals interesting differences. In Taiwan, the most important decision item that reflects a wife's power is whether she can say no to family norms, followed by whether the wife can participate in the decisions on major economic and occupation-related issues. In Mainland China, occupational decisions outweigh all other categories. With regard to division of labor, both Taiwanese and Shanghai couples concur that a husband's participation in time- and energy-consuming housework such as cooking and cleaning are more suitable indicators of females' domestic status. After the three-level final weight scheme is ascertained, we calculate wife's marital power score (or family status score) out of 100 points (i.e., the wife has absolute power at home). Taiwanese wives' family status score is approximately 39 versus Shanghai's score of 43. It appears that Chinese wives

tend to bear more responsibilities in lower-weighted items such as child issues and daily expenses. Hence, irrespective of the husband's or wife's answers, when a similar research framework is applied and indigenous perspectives are taken into account, it is evident that the marital power structure in Taiwan and in Shanghai tends to be male dominant.

The second part of the analysis utilizes the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model to perform the dyadic data analysis, and the findings basically support the validity of the relative weight derived in measuring marital power. In Taiwan, the husband's power is mostly attributed to the traditional patriarchal norms. Major factors that inhibit egalitarian marital relationships are co-residence with elderly paternal parents, Hakka ethnic background, and the immediate constraint of children. In addition, the wife's personal resources (e.g., higher education, and being in the labor market), normative resources (modern sex-role attitudes), as well as greater economic resources are crucial for the enhancement of her domestic status, in that they make it easier for the wife to break the traditional norm and release her from the culturally prescribed male dominance.

It is worth noting that co-residing elderly parents in Taiwan often exert the normative power to make demands on and give instructions to daughters-in-law. With more children born, greater dependence on the marriage is developed for women. Under the family's paternal pressure, it is not uncommon for Taiwanese women to repeatedly give birth until a male descendant is born. The interplay of these contextual and cultural factors produces unfavorable outcomes for women's family status. Moreover, insignificant effects of years of marriage, family life cycle and women's employment patterns indicate that women's family status in Taiwan does not improve as time moves on, not even if they remain in the job market.

Hence, the wife's domestic status in Taiwan is an outcome of the interplay between paternal norms and individual resources. While a wife may challenge the tradition by ideational shift and by her economic contribution, the husband continues enjoying more marital power due to the normative protection embedded in the patriarchal society. Therefore, for a Taiwanese woman to enhance her marital power, she is advised not to have direct confrontation with her husband, but to effectively utilize her resources in resisting the patriarchal umbrella that protects her husband's dominance in the conjugal dyad.

Among *Shanghai* couples, slightly different patterns are shown. Specifically, decisions regarding conjugal occupational choices are ranked with the utmost importance (in contrast with the family norm in Taiwan). Echoed by APIM analysis results, a *Shanghai* wife's domestic status is significantly affected by her individual resources (employment, and modern gender role) as well as by the relative conjugal resources (relative income and equal or better education). Some resemblance to the Western pattern of marital power structure seems to be documented.

In brief, our study on marital power structure in Taiwan and Shanghai suggests it is imperative to develop a multidimensional measure which considers both patterns of family decision-making and the division of household labor. Analyses also support the necessity to use dyadic data in the conjugal studies (Chen & Yi, 2006). Although general similarities are found, the fact that personal resources and normative resources produce different salient effects among Taiwan and Shanghai couples requires further investigation. The impact from decades of political separation is delineated from the different weights in the constructing marital power indexes, as well as from the diverse mechanisms explaining wives' family status. Married females' family status in these two Chinese societies is indeed formed and shaped by both their own resources and their immediate social-cultural context.

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**Appendix 1:**

**The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP).**

After attaining the expert's initial ranking, the second step in the AHP analysis involves the estimation of the weights of a set of marital power dimensions as well as items from a matrix of pairwise comparisons  $A=(a_{ij})$  which is positive and reciprocal. Given the matrix:

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & a_{12} & \dots & a_{1n} \\ a_{21} & 1 & \dots & a_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ a_{n1} & a_{n2} & \dots & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & a_{12} & \dots & a_{1n} \\ 1/a_{12} & 1 & \dots & a_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 1/a_{1n} & 1/a_{2n} & \dots & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} w_1/w_1 & w_1/w_2 & \dots & w_1/w_n \\ w_2/w_1 & w_2/w_2 & \dots & w_2/w_n \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ w_n/w_1 & w_n/w_2 & \dots & w_n/w_n \end{bmatrix}$$

$$a_{ij} = 1 / a_{ji}, i, j = 1,2,3 \dots n$$

The judgments are entered as pairwise comparisons of dimensions or items on a given level to each dimension or item on the next higher level of the hierarchy. This process requires decision makers to determine the importance of the selection criteria with respect to the goal (Golden, Wasil, & Harker, 1989). The same pairwise comparison procedure applies to all of the remaining sub-dimensions and to all items on a given level (see Appendix 1).

The final step in the AHP analysis measures the consistency of a decision maker's entries in a pairwise comparison matrix. If the judgments were perfectly consistent, then the entries of the matrix A would contain no errors and could be expressed as  $a_{ij} = w_i/w_j$ . In this case, simply normalize any column j of A to yield the final weight. However, errors in judgment are typically made. The traditional way to estimate the weights when errors in judgment exist is the eigenvector method (Saaty 1971). Saaty's method computes w as the principal right eigenvector of the matrix A:

$$Aw = \lambda_{max} w$$

Where  $\lambda_{max}$  is the maximum Eigen value of the matrix and is equal to n only if matrix A is a consistent matrix. Thus  $(\lambda_{max} - n)$  provides a useful measure of the degree of inconsistency, and the consistency index (C.I.) is defined as:

$$C.I. (\text{consistency index}) = (\lambda_{max} - n) / n - 1$$

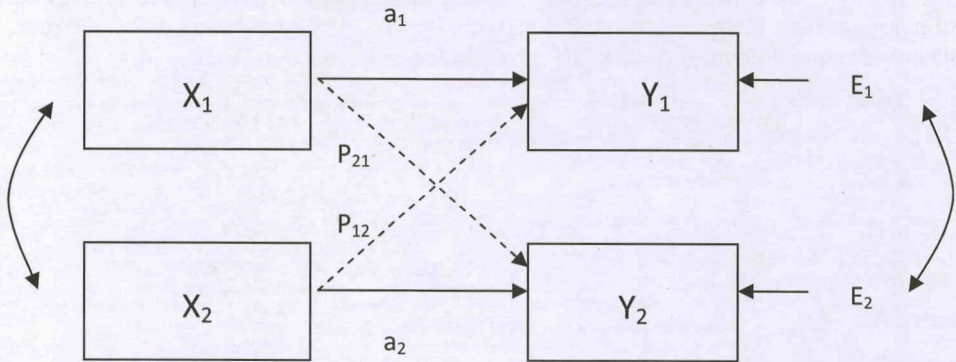
For each size of matrix n, random matrices were generated and their mean C.I. value, called the random index (R.I.), was computed.

$$C.R. (\text{consistency Ratio}) = C.I. / R.I.$$

A value of the C.R.  $\leq 0.1$  is typically considered acceptable; larger values require the decision maker to reduce the inconsistencies by revising judgments (Golden et al. 1989).

Appendix 2.

The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM)



In the formulas that follow,  $Y_{ij}$  is the weighted marital power score that is computed from the wife's and husband's answers, where  $i$  is the individual (wife=1 and husband=2) in dyad  $j$ .

Level 1 (individual)

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(ACT\_X_{ij}) + \beta_{2j}(Part\_X_{ij}) + \beta_{3j}(Gender) + \beta_{4j}(Gender * ACT\_X_{ij}) + \beta_{5j}(Gender * Part\_X_{ij}) + e_{ij} \quad (1)$$

Level 2 (the dyadic level)

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}W_j + \delta_{0j} \quad (2)$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} \quad (3)$$

$$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} \quad (4)$$

$$\beta_{3j} = \gamma_{30} \quad (5)$$

$$\beta_{4j} = \gamma_{40} \quad (6)$$

$$\beta_{5j} = \gamma_{50} \quad (7)$$

In the level-1 regression equation,  $\beta_{0j}$  is the average weighted marital power score for dyad  $j$ ,  $ACT\_X_{ij}$  and  $Part\_X_{ij}$  are the function of predictor variables,  $\beta_{1j}$  estimates actor effects, and  $\beta_{2j}$  estimates partner effects. Since there is no direct test of whether the actor or partner effects differ significantly for wife versus husband, gender and interaction variables  $Gender * ACT\_X_{ij}$  and  $Gender * Part\_X_{ij}$  are also included.

In the level-2 regression equation,  $\gamma_{00}$  is the average of  $\beta_{0j}$  and  $\beta_{0j}$ , and are assumed to be the function of dyad-level predictor variables  $W_j$ .  $\delta_{0j}$  is the compound symmetry covariance between dyads. The combined equation can be obtained by substituting the level-2 equation into the level-1 equation.

$$Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}W_j + \gamma_{10}(ACT\_X_{ij}) + \gamma_{20}(Part\_X_{ij}) + \gamma_{30}(Gender) + \gamma_{40}(Gender * ACT\_X_{ij}) + \gamma_{50}(Gender * Part\_X_{ij}) + \delta_{0j} + e_{ij}$$

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