

5 Women's Family Status: A Comparison of the Family Power Structure in Taiwan and China

CHIN-CHUN YI, YU-HSIA LU, YUN-KANG PAN

Taiwan is a typical patriarchal society that has experienced tremendous social changes in recent years. One of the consequent changes is in family values and practices (Tsai and Yi, 1997). Among family related issues, gender equality—particularly women's domestic status—has aroused great attention. Numerous studies report the emerging egalitarian relationship at home, while at the same time an opposite argument points to the overwhelming normative effect which endows men with unquestionable dominance within the domestic sphere (Yi and Tsai, 1989; Yi and Yang, 1995; Lai, 1997; Lu and Yi, 1998; Tang, 1998). Objective indicators such as female labour force participation rates tend to show the increase in women's social status over the years (Chien and Hsueh, 1996). With the prevalence of better educational background as well as the active involvement in the service sector and in industry, Taiwanese women have demonstrated their important contribution to the economic success of the country (Yi, 1993). However, social status is composed of public and private spheres. Whether women also enjoy similar opportunities and privileges as men at home or whether women have enhanced their roles and status in the family remain to be ascertained. It is clear that only when women achieve equal status at home can we observe real egalitarian relationship between the genders.

For centuries, Chinese women have always been confined to the domestic compound. Nevertheless, women's domestic status is determined by factors beyond a familial boundary. In recent decades, there are at least four Chinese societies in Asia that can be identified, namely, China, Taiwan,

Hong Kong, Singapore, each with distinct political systems but similar cultural heritages. Family researchers have long been interested in the comparative studies of these four loci (Yi and Chu, 1993). Since family has always been the major social organisation in China, the impact of social changes on family systems is thus an important issue.

Recent research reports of Taiwanese families have documented significant changes in family composition, women's work status, and the domestic power structure (Yi, Lu and Chen, 1998). It is suspected that a homogeneous cultural tradition and social norms are likely to result in similar changes in family structure as well as familial decision-making patterns across Chinese communities. On the other hand, the institutional heterogeneity of political and social systems may produce structural variation in the job market, which in turn may affect women's work status. Therefore, in order to delineate the interplay of cultural similarity and institutional difference as well as its possible effect on families, research design needs to incorporate various comparable settings so as to strengthen empirical findings.

Tianjin, a northern metropolis in China, is an appropriate site for our study purposes. While China is undergoing drastic changes, Tianjin may be viewed as a typical example of these changes on a local level, with its booming economy and a population of eight million. While political influence from Beijing is still evident in every aspect of social organisation, economic progress is divided between public and private sectors. Women's employment patterns are inevitably conditioned by the existing political economy. As a consequence, whether women's domestic status is affected by work status becomes a significant research issue deserving further analysis.

Previous studies in Taiwan have shown the advancement of a wife's status as expressed by her decision-making power (Yi, Lu and Chen., 1998). Employment patterns, family life cycle, and other relevant factors are also found to affect the domestic power structure—or specifically, the family status of women. It is meaningful to compare women's family status in Taiwan and Tianjin to delineate the structural, cultural, and personal resources which account for differences in labour force participation.

Women's Family Status: An Overview of Marital Power Studies in Taiwan and China

Taiwan

Among the few studies on marital power in Taiwan, reports based on the dynamic model of a resource-process-outcome framework seem to be the most interesting. With the basic assumption of social exchange theory, we first focused on the resource-outcome linkage and showed that different factors are significantly associated with husband and wife samples. In addition, the wife's present employment status and stage of family life cycles are important to her greater involvement in familial decisions (Yi and Tsai, 1989).

Second we used conflict management patterns as the indicator of family process and tried to explain the resource aspect of this complex marital power phenomenon (Yi, Yang and Tsai, 1992). Physical resources such as education or work status proved to be more significant than non-physical resources (e.g., marital commitment or sex role attitudes) in explaining family power processes. However, stronger marital commitment was found to be positively related to a positive conflict management pattern. Therefore, both patriarchal power as well as personal resources are important to be included in the study of marital processes in Taiwan.

Third, we studied the resource-process-outcome model (Yi and Yang, 1995). It was shown that both physical (wife's employment) and non-physical (satisfaction with the couple relations) variables were significant for the husband's decision-making power at home. However, only the context-process association, not the process-outcome, was significant in the wife's model. Family life cycle was again proved to be important to account for various conflict management patterns.

In short, our first wave of exploration on the domestic power structure showed that marital power among Taiwanese couples appears to have two influences. On the one hand, the patriarchal rule which prescribes husbands with the ultimate power at home is supported, especially among respondents with more traditional characteristics. On the other hand, couples with higher socio-economic resources tend to practice egalitarian interaction patterns which suggest that the resource model is applicable. The dual effect of both traditional patriarchy and modern power rules shed light on the complex nature of marital power in Taiwan.

The second wave of research on the domestic power structure in Taiwan with a comparable framework was conducted in 1995. Five hundred married couples plus an additional five hundred married women randomly selected from an island-wide sampling procedure constituted our interview sample. Six focus group interviews including both urban and rural samples, and fifty couple in-depth interviews were also conducted in order to substantiate specific research issues. The main purpose of the research was to investigate how family structure and women's employment patterns influence the power structure at home, especially under the rapid social and economic changing environment (Yi and Lu, 1996).

Preliminary findings suggest the following: (1) Subjective family composition is important as it is clearly delineated by marital status and lineage so that both husband and wife tend to include own parents as high priority close family members (Yi and Lu, 1996). (2) Women's employment is indeed affected by education, age, rural-urban background and decreases with the progressive family life cycle, especially among those with formal employment and stable salaries (Lu and Yi, 1998). (3) Elderly parents' support has adopted a flexible mechanism in that co-residence with a married son is one arrangement favoured mostly by rural samples and usually reaches a final settlement after a formal family division (Yi, 1997; Yi and Chen, 1998). (4) The decision-making power indicated by household expense records reveals that the family life cycle, formal employment type, and mainland ethnic stage in the background of the husband are positively related to wives more active involvement at home (Yi, et al., 1998).

In other words, the domestic status of married women depends not only on personal resources, demand of the family organisation, and external work conditions, but it is also conditioned to a great extent by the social environment. With drastic social changes, the interactive pattern of the family inevitably produces various adaptive mechanisms deserving further examination.

China

From recent survey reports on families in Shanghai and Tianjin, it can be seen that family structure in China is similar to Taiwan's, especially the proportion of nuclear family (approximately 60%) and stem family (30%) (Wong and Pan, 1994; Hsu, 1997). However, there are underlying factors which account for family arrangements that are different. The well-known

one-child policy results in the increase of nuclear families. Recent city renovation movement also leads to the division of large families (Yi and Lu, 1996). Specifically, living independently or living apart from elderly parents brings fundamental changes in the attitudes toward living arrangements. For those who do not yet live in separate residences, but have divided family money from the extended family, are often counted as separate households. Hence, it is argued the actual living arrangements, although they may not be accurately shown in the official statistics, should be taken as the realistic picture in the study of family structure changes in China.

With regard to women's employment, a 1996 family survey of Shanghai indicated that the wife's average income is about 69% of the husband's (Hsu and Yeh, 1996; 1998). Income inequality is of course not atypical in other places; however, for a society with prevalent dual-earner families and with an emphasis on gender egalitarianism, serious discrepancy between husband's and wife's income is important. This difference can be analysed from employment patterns as well as from the actual work content.

In addition, there is a high unemployment rate of middle-age women. Women constitute 42% of working population in Shanghai, but their unemployed rate is 55%. Thus, women, especially older workers, seem to be put in a disadvantaged position in the process of economic development. They may be encouraged to join the labour force at the beginning of economic movement in China, but, nevertheless, they are also the first group to be forced to retire from the work when the situation changes. It is important to see if different employment patterns lead to different consequences for women's work status in China.

As to women's domestic status, previous studies in China are centred around two indicators: decision-making patterns and household division of labour. For the power structure at home, it is shown that joint decision is the most common pattern practised, and is followed by the pro-wife power exertion. However, due to the prevalence of women's employment out of home, their domestic economic roles may be influenced by the political context. Since traditional patriarchy remains strong in China, the above pattern may represent a compromise between cultural tradition and external environment, or it may imply a particular structural background worth closer scrutiny.

The information on household division of labour shows that the wife is still the member responsible for the housework (58%). Shared work is approximately 27% and "husband mainly" is 15%. It is clear that no matter

what the social system is, patterns of household division of labour have largely maintained a traditional mode and women assume major responsibility in the housework. Due to the inconsistency between actual division of labour at home and attitudinal preference, recent studies often include the subjective concept of fairness explain its possible association with couple relations. The Shanghai survey reports that the above pattern receives majority endorsement among samples (82%), indicating agreement to the wife should take the most responsibility with regard to housework.

It should be noted that most domestic power studies in Taiwan and in China utilise familial decision-making patterns as the operational indicator. In other words, the power outcome has been the focus of attention. If the power context (or power resources) as well as the power process are incorporated in the research model, a dynamic research framework can be established and meaningful comparative analyses may be conducted. Therefore, two research loci—Taiwan and Tianjin—were selected with an intention to compare women's domestic status to their employment patterns.

As stated earlier, Taiwan and China (here Tianjin is used as a token representative locus) are viewed as possessing similar cultural traditions but different political social systems. The influence of the cultural homogeneity and political heterogeneity on family interaction may shed light on the search of the universality as well as the particularity of Chinese family patterns. This investigation of women's domestic status in these two Chinese societies is such an endeavour. We also will delineate underlying factors which accounted for the linkage between family and work systems.

Methods: Sample and Variables

Sample

The proposed sample was 500 married couples aged 20-64 randomly stratified from the household registration data of Taiwan. A two-stage random sampling procedure was taken. At the first stage, 321 administrative units (Hsian/Tsen/Shi) of Taiwan area served as the primary selection unit and were classified into nine strata. According to the population proportion of each stratum relative to the total population of the island, 47 units were randomly selected. In the second stage, Tsun/Li became the selection unit and was ranked by its proportion of the population

with high school education or above. Then using probability proportional to sizes, 92 Tsun/Li were chosen and 516 couples became our final sample. Face to face interviews were conducted in the summer of 1995.

For the sampling procedure in Tianjin, two urban areas and one rural area were pre-selected. Jieh was selected as the sampling unit and four Jieh were randomly chosen from each area. Within each Jieh, two lower administrative units were again randomly chosen. Last, 12 couples, selected randomly from each unit became our final sample. The field survey was administered by the local women's association in the winter of 1996, and 299 couples completed interviews.

Variables

Decision-Making Pattern on the Most Important Issue Reported The family decision-making pattern is measured by the conventional five ordinal answers ranging from "husband always" to "wife always" as well as ten other categories, including parents, parents-in-law, children, daughter-in-law, paternal relatives, family together, and does not need to be decided. Some (18%) of Taiwanese sample chose the latter answer for the question on living with elderly parents. The original intention was to explore the extent of other family member's participation in familial decision-making. However, except the above mentioned item and children's school and children's marriage where children themselves have strong involvement (21% and 22%), most decisions are made within couples. Hence, the following analyses will focus on the decision outcome between partners only.

Among 13 different family decisions listed, respondents were asked to select the most important item to be decided. Our final sample, who all replied with exact answers to the decision questions, included 456 Taiwanese wives and 454 Taiwanese husbands, 260 Tianjin wives and 256 Tianjin husbands.

The subjective report of both Taiwanese couples and Tianjin couples reveals a substantial consensus on the most important familial decision identified (See Appendix 1). Answers may be grouped into three categories: family economy, child rearing, and others (Table 5.1 and 5.2). For Taiwanese couples, a total of 54.2% of husbands and 55.5% of wives report that family economy (household expenses, amount of gift money in weddings and funerals, savings and investments, and real estate transactions) is the most important family decision. Child discipline was the most important

decision to 28.4% of husbands and 30.3% of wives. Table 5.1 shows that joint decision-making is the most common pattern for Taiwanese couples with respect to family economy and child rearing. The "other" category, whose main component was husband's occupational decision, husbands dominate in the decision-making outcome as expected.

Table 5.1 Husband's and Wife's Perceived Decision-Making Pattern on the Most Important Issue Reported (Taiwan)

The Most Important Issue Reported	Decision-Making Pattern			%(N)
	Mostly Husband	Joint	Mostly Wife	
Husbands' Sample				
Child Rearing	12.4 (16)	72.1 (93)	15.5 (20)	100.0 (129)
Family Economy	20.7 (51)	53.9 (146)	19.9 (49)	100.0 (246)
Others	67.1 (53)	31.6 (25)	1.3 (1)	100.0 (79)
Total	26.4 (120)	58.1 (264)	15.4 (70)	100.0 (454)
Wives' Sample				
Child Rearing	11.6 (16)	71.7 (99)	16.7 (23)	100.0 (138)
Family Economy	20.2 (51)	62.5 (158)	17.4 (44)	100.0 (253)
Others	58.5 (38)	30.9 (24)	4.6 (3)	100.0 (65)
Total	23.0 (105)	61.6 (281)	15.4 (70)	100.0 (456)

With regard to Tianjin couples, a total of 24.7% (or 28.5% of husbands and 25% of wives) answered one of the four family economy items as the most important decision item at home, while 34% of all respondents (or 35.9% of husbands and 41.2% of wives) reported either child-discipline or child-education to be their most important family decision. Other answers include husband's occupation (21.8%), parental support patterns (4.7%) or child's marriage (3.5%). From Table 5.2, it can be seen that Tianjin couples reported similar power structures at home in that joint decision-making became the overwhelming pattern in child-rearing and family economy issues (all above 80%), while other decisions tended to exhibit a husband-dominant pattern. This pattern is also similar to their Taiwanese counterparts; except there is higher concentration of joint decisions being reported among Tianjin couples.

Table 5.2 Husband's and Wife's Perceived Decision-Making Pattern on the Most Important Issue Reported (Tianjin)

The Most Important Issue Reported	Decision-Making Pattern			% (N)
	Mostly Husband	Joint	Mostly Wife	
Husbands' Sample				
Child Rearing	5.4 (5)	84.8 (78)	9.8 (9)	100.0 (92)
Family Economy	6.9 (5)	86.3 (63)	6.9 (5)	100.0 (73)
Others	50.5 (46)	40.7 (37)	8.8 (8)	100.0 (91)
Total	21.9 (56)	69.5 (178)	8.6 (22)	100.0 (256)
Wives' Sample				
Child Rearing	4.7 (5)	84.1 (90)	11.2 (12)	100.0 (107)
Family Economy	6.2 (4)	80.0 (52)	13.8 (9)	100.0 (65)
Others	54.5 (48)	39.8 (35)	5.7 (5)	100.0 (88)
Total	21.9 (57)	68.1 (177)	10.0 (26)	100.0 (260)

Since this paper is intended to study possible effects of the importance of various decision-making issues on the domestic power structure, family economy and child rearing are therefore distinguished from other decisions in the analysis. Those who answered either one as the most important issue at home will be compared with the rest who choose another decision as their most important familial decision.

The Conflict Management Pattern In the process of making the most important familial decision, there is a possibility that different opinions may arise between partners. When conflict does occur, there are three basic ways to resolve the problem as derived from the open-ended pretest questions. The first is to discuss or to look for reasonable solutions acceptable to both parties. This pattern is called "conflict with communication". The second type is to seriously argue or quarrel, not to talk about it at all, to insist on one's opinion and to decide by oneself, or even to ask for outside arbitrator to settle the matter. It is considered a pattern of "conflict without positive communication". Of course, there are always couples reporting no conflict existent in making the important decision just previously identified and this type will be directly classified as "no conflict".

In our sample, when we asked respondents about conjugal disagreement in making the most important decision at home (Table 5.3), there were 35.2% Taiwanese husbands and 36.4% Taiwanese wives indicating no conflict. These people are hypothesised to be using pro-husband decision-making patterns, consistent with their possible traditional characteristics. For the rest who admit conflict does occur, 33.3% of husbands and 35.1% of wives choose conflict with communication. They are considered more likely to adopt a joint decision-making pattern as well. For those (31.5% of husbands and 28.5% of wives) who reported various negative ways to resolve the conflict, non-joint decision outcomes was presumed to happen.

Table 5.3 Husband's and Wife's Perceived Conflict Management Pattern on the Most Important Issue Reported

Conflict Management Pattern	% (N)			
	Taiwan		Tianjin	
	Husbands' Sample	Wives' Sample	Husbands' Sample	Wives' Sample
Conflict without Communication	31.5 (143)	28.5 (130)	5.9 (15)	5.8 (15)
Conflict with Communication	33.3 (151)	35.1 (160)	33.6 (86)	33.1 (86)
No Conflict	35.2 (160)	36.4 (160)	60.5 (155)	61.2 (159)
Total	100.0 (454)	100.0 (456)	100.0 (256)	100.0 (260)

As to the Tianjin counterpart, a noticeable difference was observed. More than half—specifically, 60.5% husbands and 61.2% wives—perceived no conflict between self and the spouse in the process of making the most important decision at home. For those who admit conflict does occur, a positive resolution pattern became the major answer in that 33.6% husbands and 33.1% wives in contrast to 5.9% husbands and 5.8% wives report there are various ways of communication to solve the conflict.

Women's Employment Patterns Women's work has always been a focal concern for family researchers. Recent studies in Taiwan have progressed from the earlier simple yes/no answers to developing an occupational hierarchy, with an attempt to distinguish various contents of women's work.

One significant characteristic of Taiwanese women's employment is a substantial proportion falling into informal work. The importance of female's informal employment to the economic development in Taiwan has been documented (Lu, 1994). Women's various employment patterns remind the public that a substantial proportion of women who work at home is actually participating in economic-gaining activities. In other words, all females work, and for many Taiwanese females, working at home is also a direct economic contribution to the family. It is our intention to distinguish formal versus informal work of women and to explore how this employment pattern may affect the power structure between partners.

In this study, Taiwanese wives who were employed in private business, public business, school or educational organisations, and the government are grouped into formal employment. On the other hand, informal employment included working for oneself with or without employees, working for the family with or without salaries, and part-time work at home. Using this definition, 30.2% of women respondents had formal employment, 27.1% had informal employment, and 42.8% were not employed.

The work situation in Tianjin is very different from Taiwan. It has been argued that one's work unit is likely to determine future career routes. This implies that the influence of the public sector remains very strong. However, with recent economic reform, the privatisation of various enterprises is emerging which may produce more opportunities of informal employment than earlier. Therefore, it is contended that women's employment in these two Chinese societies may take different forms, but in essence, it is possible to differentiate formal versus informal employment.

The formal employment of Tianjin's female sample is basically constituted by stable or fixed employment and contracted employment, which mostly falls into the public sector. This is very different from Taiwan where almost 70% of the formal employment belongs to the private sector. At least six different kinds of work are considered in the informal sector: any job of temporary nature, occasional employment, family farm workers, non-farm family businesses, individual private ownership, and partnership of a co-operative business. Obviously, there are more varieties of informal employment's in Tianjin than in Taiwan. Women in our Tianjin sample work at formal employment, 43.1%, while 32.3% are in informal employment, and 24.6% are unemployed.

Sex Role Attitudes This is a scale composed of six items: "Most important matters at home should be decided by men"; "There are jobs for men and jobs for women in the family life and one should not interfere with the other"; "Pre-school children are harmed by mother's employment"; "The husband's responsibility is to make money while the wife's is to take care of the family"; "A women's job after marriage should be decided by her parents-in-law or her husband"; "If the family can afford it, the wife should not take out-of-home employment".

These questions describe traditional sex role attitudes toward family roles and they form a reliable scale. With a range of five answers from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", each question is scored 1 to 5 which is summed for a total score for each respondent. A higher score implies more non-traditional or modern attitudes and lower score indicates traditional attitudes. The result showed that Tianjin couples have more modern sex role attitudes than Taiwanese couples, and wives are generally more modern than husbands as well. The average score for Taiwanese husbands is 18.33; Taiwanese wives scored 19.54. The Tianjin counterpart was 21.7 and 22.4 respectively.

Individual and Family Variables Two individual variables indicating tangible resources are years of education and rural/urban background. Mean educational years for Taiwanese husbands was 9.56 and 8.71 years for wives; for Tianjin husbands it was 10.49 years and 9.28 years for wives. The rural/urban background was measured by the place the respondent resided the longest before the age of 15, and was classified into two categories for both samples. In Taiwan, urban denoted city residence and rural background comprised township, countryside, and rural areas. For Tianjin couples, the sampling scheme took into consideration two urban areas and one rural area. Over thirty-two percent of Taiwanese husbands and 33.1% of Taiwanese wives lived in urban areas; the percentage of Tianjin counterpart was 52.7% for both husbands and wives.

With regard to family structure, the two societies showed a strong resemblance in that nuclear family was the major type (Taiwan 57.9%, Tianjin 71.9%), followed by the stem family (Taiwan 28.5%, Tianjin 24.2%), and extended family (Taiwan 10.5%; Tianjin 3.1%). Single person households as well as other types only constituted a minimal percentage. However, the average person per household does appear to be significantly different in that the average 3.58 persons in Tianjin is far smaller than their

counterparts of Taiwan (5.49 person per household). Due to the considerable discrepancy in the proportion among various family types, stem and extended family types are combined into the complex family structure, in contrast with the nuclear family structure. Although no strong evidence ever has shown the relationship between family structure and decision-making power at home (Yi and Yang, 1995), the nuclear family was still hypothesised to facilitate the joint decision pattern.

As to family life cycles, age of the youngest child is used to distinguish three different stages. The pre-school child cycle was defined by the youngest child aged 6 and under (27% and 9.6%); the school-age child by those aged 6-15 (32.6% and 43.8%); the last cycle by the youngest child aged 15 and above (40.4% and 46.6%). We suspect that the family life cycle is positively related to wife's participation or the non-joint pattern in family affairs as documented previously (Yi, 1991; Yi and Yang, 1995). In other words, as children grow older, either wife takes heavier role in the decision-making or husband dominates in the family power structure.

Results

Table 5.4 to Table 5.7 report results of the logistic regression model which have two sets of coefficients in each equation: The first shows the percentage change in the log odds of husbands making decisions relative to joint decisions; the second is the percentage change in the log odds of wives making decisions relative to joint decisions. The coefficient of the four tables shows the contrast for each sample with all the exogenous variables included as predictors. The contrast will allow us to evaluate the relative odds of respondent's perceived decision-making pattern by husband or wife as compared to a joint pattern.

Table 5.4 shows the result of Taiwanese husbands. As can be seen, lower education, urban background, modern sex role attitudes, child rearing or family economy as the most important familial decision and conflict with communication are all significantly related to the husband's report of joint decisions at home as compared to his power alone. As to the contrast between wife dominance versus joint decisions, it is shown that while the wife's unemployment contributes to her decision power, child rearing or family economy were identified as the most important items. No conflict or

Table 5.4 Multinomial Logit Coefficients and Estimated Standard Errors of Husband's Perceived Family Status: Familial Decision-Making Patterns (Taiwan)

Variables	Ln(P_h/P_j)		Ln(P_w/P_j)	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Education	0.0578*	0.0341	0.0386	0.0376
Urban Background (vs. Rural Background)	-0.5151*	0.2948	0.3353	0.3014
Female's Employment				
Informal (vs. Formal)	-0.3430	0.3499	-0.2469	0.4231
Not Employed (vs. Formal)	-0.1505	0.3240	0.6494*	0.3503
Modern Sex-Role Attitudes (vs. Traditional Attitudes)	-0.1108***	0.0288	0.0204	0.0334
Family Structure				
Nuclear Family (vs. Complex Family)	-0.3725	0.2659	-0.4290	0.2939
Family Life Cycle				
Stage1 (vs. Stage3)	-0.5293	0.3691	-0.4408	0.3960
Stage2 (vs. Stage3)	0.0775	0.3260	-0.1038	0.3561
The Most Important Item Reported				
Child Rearing (vs. Others)	-2.7222***	0.4014	1.8125*	1.0610
Family Economy (vs. Others)	-2.0302***	0.3258	2.2691**	1.0430
Process (Conflict Management Pattern)				
Conflict With Communication (vs. Conflict without Communication)	-0.8124**	0.3238	-0.7804**	0.3506
No Conflict (vs. Conflict without Communication)	-0.3084	0.3037	-0.5872*	0.3386
Constant	3.3530***	0.7249	-3.6088***	1.2900
Log-Likelihood			-365.5714	
χ^2			136.2010	
N			454	

Where h = Mainly Husband ; w = Mainly Wife; j = Joint

*P < 0.1 ** P < 0.05 *** P < 0.01

Table 5.5 Multinomial Logit Coefficients and Estimated Standard Errors of Wife's Perceived Family Status: Familial Decision-Making Patterns (Taiwan)

Variables	Ln(P _h /P _j)		Ln(P _w /P _j)	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Education	0.0124	0.0378	-0.0601	0.0413
Urban Background (vs. Rural Background)	0.2516	0.2973	0.4921*	0.3057
Female's Employment				
Informal (vs. Formal)	-0.4503	0.3718	-0.8362*	0.4425
Not Employed (vs. Formal)	-0.2015	0.3334	0.2356	0.3430
Modern Sex-Role Attitudes (vs. Traditional Attitudes)	-0.8917***	0.1895	0.1802	0.2144
Family Structure				
Nuclear Family (vs. Complex Family)	-0.3204	0.2710	0.0733	0.2936
Family Life Cycle				
Stage1 (vs. Stage3)	-0.3790	0.4038	-0.3576	0.4276
Stage2 (vs. Stage3)	0.1485	0.3465	-0.4735	0.3845
The Most Important Item Reported				
Child Rearing (vs. Others)	-2.3917***	0.4079	0.6262	0.6681
Family Economy (vs. Others)	-1.7881***	0.3410	0.6926	0.6497
Process (Conflict Management Pattern)				
Conflict With Communication (vs. Conflict without Communication)	-0.2803	0.3358	-0.6224*	0.3458
No Conflict (vs. Conflict without Communication)	-0.4679	0.3122	-0.6540*	0.3407
Constant	3.8971***	0.7450	-1.6016	0.9875
Log-Likelihood		-364.9999		
χ^2		112.8372		
N		456		

Where h = Mainly Husband ; w = Mainly Wife; j = Joint

* P < 0.1 ** P < 0.05 *** P < 0.01

positive communication in the decision process were significant in explaining the joint pattern.

With regard to Taiwanese wives (Table 5.5), the estimated coefficients yielded in husband versus joint patterns indicated that modern sex role attitudes and child rearing or family economy as the most important issue at home were statistically significant in explaining the joint pattern. Regarding sex role attitudes and the most important decision, exactly the same pattern of effects was demonstrated here as in their counterpart. The contrast between wife versus joint pattern shows that the wife's informal employment and no conflict or conflict with communication as resolution were reported by wives to be significant for the joint decision-making at home, while urban background appeared to facilitate a wife's dominant pattern.

The results from Taiwanese couples revealed four aspects that should be noted. (1) The conflict management pattern was clearly important in accounting for joint decisions at home as compared with pro-husband and pro-wife patterns. In other words, couples who reported positive conflict management patterns, especially conflict with communication in the decision-making process, were more likely to report joint outcomes than decisions by husband or by wife alone. (2) Child-rearing or family economy identified to be the most important decision proved to be a salient factor for the joint pattern practiced at home. (3) Family structure, however, was not as significant as expected, although the general direction pointed to the nuclear family as conducive to a joint pattern practiced at home.

Another important finding concerned the wife's employment patterns. Wife's employment, when contrasting pro-wife versus joint patterns, produced different results. For Taiwanese husbands, wife's unemployment (vs. formal employment) was reported to enhance her dominance in familial decisions; for Taiwanese wives, their informal employment (vs. formal employment) contributed to the joint pattern exercised at home. The former may be attributed to the husband's allocation of the family power to his unemployed wife at home, especially to manage important matters such as child rearing or family economy. The latter may be due to the fact that informal work denotes family enterprise as well as family farm work which combines both family life and work life at the same location and at the same time span. Thus, wives who share life together with their husbands were likely to report a joint decision pattern (Yi and Chen, 1998). Consequently, wives who were informally employed or worked with husbands in the family business actually experienced egalitarian interaction between genders.

Table 5.6 Multinomial Logit Coefficients and Estimated Standard Errors of Husband's Perceived Family Status: Familial Decision-Making Patterns (Tianjin)

Variables	Ln(P _h /P _j)		Ln(P _w /P _j)	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Education	0.0041	0.0783	-0.0796	0.1026
Urban Background (vs. Rural Background)	0.0782	0.4592	-0.7441	0.5517
Female's Employment				
Informal (vs. Formal)	-0.5578	0.5409	-1.3303*	0.8298
Not Employed (vs. Formal)	-0.0391	0.4997	1.1821**	0.5965
Modern Sex-Role Attitudes (vs. Traditional Attitudes)	-0.0848**	0.0344	-0.0062	0.0437
Family Structure				
Nuclear Family (vs. Complex Family)	-0.1759	0.4390	0.2752	0.5773
Family Life Cycle				
Stage1 (vs. Stage3)	-0.0499	0.6641	0.7702	0.8010
Stage2 (vs. Stage3)	0.5841	0.4330	-0.2148	0.5621
The Most Important Item Reported				
Child Rearing (vs. Others)	-3.0538***	0.5322	-0.2826	0.5679
Family Economy (vs. Others)	-2.6995***	0.5435	-1.0396	0.6601
Process (Conflict Management Pattern)				
Conflict With Communication (vs. Conflict without Communication)	0.7121	0.7845	1.1923	1.2080
No Conflict (vs. Conflict without Communication)	0.0636	0.7863	0.9989	1.1780
Constant	1.6145	1.3090	-1.6754	1.7500
Log-Likelihood		-154.2505		
χ^2		99.0697		
N		256		

Where h = Mainly Husband ; w = Mainly Wife; j = Joint
 * P < 0.1 ** P < 0.05 *** P < 0.01

Table 5.7 Multinomial Logit Coefficients and Estimated Standard Errors of Wife's Perceived Family Status: Familial Decision-Making Patterns (Tianjin)

Variables	Ln(P_h/P_j)		Ln(P_w/P_j)	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
Education	-0.1069	0.0833	0.0389	0.0937
Urban Background (vs. Rural Background)	0.5551	0.5150	0.2840	0.5898
Female's Employment				
Informal (vs. Formal)	-0.4828	0.5978	-0.1276	0.7145
Not Employed (vs. Formal)	-0.5912	0.5297	0.4763	0.5940
Traditional Sex-Role Attitudes (vs. Non-Traditional Attitudes)	-0.0396	0.0409	-0.1061**	0.0452
Family Structure				
Nuclear Family (vs. Complex Family)	0.6434	0.4484	-0.2292	0.5227
Family Life Cycle				
Stage1 (vs. Stage3)	-0.0725	0.7019	-1.1230	1.1250
Stage2 (vs. Stage3)	0.9983**	0.4669	-0.2828	0.4940
The Most Important Item Reported				
Child Rearing (vs. Others)	-3.4795***	0.3902	0.0367	0.5569
Family Economy (vs. Others)	-2.9785***	0.6044	0.4493	0.6648
Process (Conflict Management Pattern)				
Conflict With Communication (vs. Conflict without Communication)	-0.1840	0.8505	0.1956	0.9302
No Conflict (vs. Conflict without Communication)	-0.5383	0.8344	-0.4476	0.9284
Constant	1.6991	1.5890	0.1203	1.7350
Log-Likelihood			-158.7412	
χ^2			111.3862	
N			260	

Where h = Mainly Husband ; w = Mainly Wife; j = Joint

* P < 0.1 ** P < 0.05 *** P < 0.01

(4) Family structure, however, was not significant as expected, although the general direction pointed to the nuclear family as conducive to the joint pattern practiced at home.

For Chinese samples, Tianjin husbands were found to have similar decision-making patterns as Taiwanese couples from Table 5.1 and 5.2. Results of the logistic regression model with the comparison set of husband versus joint patterns showed additional evidence of similarity of these husbands. According to Tianjin husbands' reports, modern sex-role attitudes and child-rearing or family economy being identified as the most important familial decision were significantly related to the power structure at home (Table 5.6). As to the comparison between wife versus joint patterns, coefficients yielded indicated that only women's employment patterns were significant. To be specific, Tianjin husbands considered wife's informal employment (versus formal employment) contributed to the joint decision-making pattern; while unemployment of the wife means higher wife dominant power at home. These findings happened to be exactly the same direction as Taiwanese husbands and wives, as appeared in Table 5.4 and 5.5.

Results with regard to Tianjin wives revealed more diverse patterns. The contrast between husband versus joint decision-making showed that only child rearing or family economy as the most important issue was significantly related to the joint pattern, but those wives with the youngest children aged 6-15 tended to report husbands having more dominant power at home (Table 5.7). On the other hand, the comparison between wife versus joint patterns resulted in one single significant association among all factors examined—modern sex role attitudes of wives were likely to result in joint pattern. It is observed that the factors that accounted for the power pattern reported by Tianjin wives was somewhat different from Tianjin husbands' reports, results were also different from the Taiwanese couples. Only issue salience was found to be significant in explaining the joint decision-making pattern at home.

Conclusion

This chapter examined women's domestic status, with emphases on the effect of their employment patterns and other possible resource factors among couples in two Chinese societies. The research was characterized by

two foci: the social resource perspective was assumed and comparative analyses were conducted. Five hundred Taiwanese married couples randomly selected from the island were one of our samples. Their counterpart in China was 300 married couples from Tianjin area. In order to extend the previous findings on family power structure of the Taipei Metropolitan area, a comparable research framework was used and the dynamic model of power basis, process, and outcome was applied.

In this chapter, women's domestic status was operationalized by the decision-making pattern or the power outcome at home with the conventional classification of mostly husband, joint, and mostly wife patterns. Taking into consideration the special occupational structure of these two societies, women's employment patterns were categorized into formal work, informal work, and unemployment for both samples. In addition, the salience of the decision item, measured by the most important issue to be decided, was regarded significant in understanding possible conflicts in the decision-making process. Child-rearing and family economy which were important decision areas by both samples were distinguished from other decisions in the analysis. Hence, the following discussion is centered on the most important decision perceived by the respondent.

The results indicated that for both Taiwanese and Tianjin husbands and wives, joint decision-making was the most common pattern in terms of child rearing and family economy. In fact, the power pattern of Tianjin couples did resemble Taiwanese pattern, except Tianjin had an even higher proportion of joint patterns at home. Since joint pattern was usually interpreted with having egalitarian conjugal relations, given the political ideology of China, high joint outcomes may imply that Tianjin couples possess stronger concept of gender egalitarianism.

However, this argument is challenged from the report of perceived conflict management pattern among Tianjin respondents. As shown in Table 5.2, over 60% of Tianjin husbands as well as wives indicated there was no conflict between partners in the process of deciding the most important issue at home. This finding, along with the overall answer of Tianjin couples (1/3 positive communication and much lower proportion of negative communication) appeared to be more similar as patterns documented in Taiwan a decade ago (Yi, et al., 1992) than their present Taiwanese counterpart. On the other hand, when Taiwanese couples of this study were compared to the above Taipei couples with an interview lag of ten years apart, a changing pattern in the process of conflict management was

observed. Specifically, the conflict resolution pattern among Taiwanese couples is changing toward less "no conflict" and more "conflict without communication". For Taiwanese samples, those who admit having no conflict occurred in the process have decreased from more than half to one third; those who state having negative communication in the conflict management have increased to one third. Since respondents with more traditional characteristics (older, less educated, rural background) are more likely to report no conflict in the decision process, it was argued that patriarchal influence dominates among them (Yi and Yang, 1995).

This is exactly what we found among our Tianjin samples. Regardless of gender, respondents who were older, lower educated, and rural background (now and when growing up) tended to report no conflict occurred in the process of making the most important familial decision. In contrast, Tianjin couples who were from urban areas, younger, with higher education, were more likely to indicate the existence of conflict, but resolved it with positive communication patterns. In other words, Tianjin couples with traditional characteristics may be more responsive to the patriarchal rule; consequently, the possibility of conflict between partners was not accepted.

In short, with regard to power process at home, Taiwanese couples seem to change from more patriarchal attitudes to a more diverse interaction pattern over the last decade. It signifies the enhancement of women's domestic status, with more freedom to express their perception concerning the most important familial decision-making. Therefore, more people admit conflict does occur in the decision process, and for those who recognize the conflict issue, a negative resolution pattern is also more likely to be reported. On the contrary, Tianjin couples resembled the "old" Taiwanese pattern and revealed a much higher percentage who indicated no conflict ever existed between partners in the process of deciding the most important family issue. It appears that while Tianjin couples tend to endorse the egalitarian interaction as expressed in the joint outcome, those who have traditional backgrounds are also prone to obey the patriarchal power rule at home.

When examining that factors accounted for various power patterns at home, Table 5.4-5.7 clearly shows that modern sex role attitudes as well as child-rearing or family economy as the most important familial decision were consistently related to the joint decision-making reported by both husbands and wives in Taiwan and Tianjin. Besides the non-physical resource variables of sex role attitudes and issue salience, another noteworthy finding concerns the importance of power process—i.e., conflict management

patterns. It turned out this factor was significant among Taiwanese couples only. In comparison with the negative resolution pattern, either positive communication or report of no conflict contributed to the joint pattern exercised at home. This is consistent with the previous Taiwanese document that supports the linkage between power process and outcome among husbands (Yi and Yang, 1995). This present research further specified the importance of process in the outcome analysis and extended the linkage to the Taiwanese wife sample as well. But for Tianjin couples, the effect of process in the model failed to show its significance.

The last interesting finding that deserves attention is about wife's employment patterns. First of all, the husband/joint comparison set did not yield any significant association. The contrast between wife versus joint pattern revealed similar results among Taiwanese couples and Tianjin husbands. Whether wife was formally employed, took informal job, or stayed home unemployed did not make significant difference in the explanation of Tianjin wife's report of the decision-making patterns. For the remaining three sets of samples, (1) unemployment or the housewife status is considered to facilitate wife's dominance over the most important familial decisions, as indicated by Taiwanese and Tianjin husbands, and (2) informal employment was conducive to the joint pattern at home, as reported by Taiwanese wives and Tianjin husbands.

It has been contended that when husbands dominated over familial resources and are endowed with the final power at home by cultural tradition, it is likely that those husbands with higher education and thus with stronger access to the Western egalitarian ideology are inclined to allocate familial decisions to their wives (Rodman, 1972). However, this is not the case in our research. Both Taiwanese and Tianjin husbands who reported their unemployed wives having dominant power over the family decisions were not the typical elite of their societies. Tianjin husbands actually had lower education and were mainly from the rural background. Taiwanese husbands were not significantly distinguished by any modernity indicator either. It is evident that resources in the cultural context proposed by Rodman and documented by others are not supported in these two Chinese societies. We need to search for more qualitative accounts to delineate the underlying interplay of the above pattern. One possible explanation would be attributed to the traditional rule, which separates the public sphere to males and confines all females to the private domain.

With regard to the effect of informal employment on joint decision-making patterns, it was argued that couples who share business and daily life together are likely to decide important familial decisions together (Yi, et al., 1998). The combination of work and family is probably best demonstrated among these couples, and, therefore, they tend to reveal the same decision patterns at home in both Taiwan and Tianjin.

In short, this chapter has shown that married women's family status in Taiwan and Tianjin shows a high proportion of joint familial decision-making patterns. The extent that women actively participate in the domestic power structure can be expressed by the joint pattern as well as the wife-dominant pattern. Obviously, our data appear to support the joint pattern more than pro-wife pattern. With regard to possible factors to account for the power pattern reported, it was demonstrated that modern sex-role attitudes, salience of decision issues (i.e., child rearing or family economy), as well as the wife's employment patterns are significant. In particular, wives who are informally employed tended to adopt joint decision pattern with their spouses. Wives who are unemployed may be influenced by cultural tradition or by their husbands to have more dominance over the child rearing or family economy issues.

Due to the lack of convincing evidence at hand, it is not clear if we can ascertain the applicability of resources in cultural context in these two Chinese societies. However, the economic structure in this area has resulted in a substantial proportion of wives who participate in the informal sector and informal employment is shown to contribute to the joint pattern practiced at home. In addition, the similar domestic power patterns imply that political heterogeneity does not appear to be a strong factor accounting for the family power structure in Taiwan and Tianjin. Cultural homogeneity, instead, is suspected to influence the direction of change concerning the conflict management patterns as well as sex role attitudes. Needless to say, the interplay between political and cultural effects, as well as the change of family interaction now and before, are complex processes and require further inquiries. This chapter has tried to show how these processes may be expressed in the domestic power structure between two Chinese societies.

References

- Chien, W. and Hsueh C. (1996), "The Employment of Married Women in Taiwan: Its Patterns and Causes", *Journal of Population Studies*, Number 17: 113-134. National Taiwan University.
- Hsu, A. and Yeh, W. (1996, 1998), "Research on the Marital Quality of Chinese Cities", presented at the 3rd Social Indicator Conference of Chinese Societies, the Hong Kong University, Hong Kong.
- Hsu, A. (1997), *The Chinese Love and Marriage at the Turn of the Century*, Chinese Social Science Publishing Company, China.
- Lai, E., (1997), "Family Status and Roles of Farm Women in Taiwan", *Review of Agricultural Extension Science*, Volume 13:55-81, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Lu, Y. (1994), "Economic Development and Married Women's Employment in Taiwan—A Study of Female Marginalization", *Journal of Population Studies*, 16: 107-133.
- Lu, Y. and Yi, C. (1998), "Females' Employment and Family Status in Social Change: An Example of the Household Division of Labor"(in Chinese), presented at the Conference of the Chinese Family and its Ethics, Sinology Research Center, Taipei.
- Pan, Y. and Ming, L. (eds) (1994), *The Great Change of the contemporary Family in China* Guan-Dong People's Publishing Co.
- Rodman, H. (1972), "Marital Power and the Theory of Resources in Cultural Context," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 3(1): 50-69.
- Tang, H. (1998), "Housework, Concept of Fairness, and Marital Satisfaction", Paper presented at the Sociological Project Progress Report of 1995-1997, National Science Council, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Tsai and Yi, C. (1997), "Persistence and Change of the Chinese Family Value: The Taiwanese Case" in *Taiwanese Society in 1990s: Taiwan Social Change Survey Symposium Series (part 2)* edited by Ly-Yun Chang, Yu-Hsia Lu, Fu-Chang Wang, pp. 123-139. Institute of Sociology, Academic Sinica, Taipei, R.O.C.
- Wong, H. and Pan, Y. (eds) (1994), *The Thousand Household Survey of Tianjin*, Tianjin Social Sciences Academy, Tianjin, China.
- Yi, C. (1991), "Some Findings on the Marital Adjustments in Taipei Metropolitan Area" *Proceedings of the National Science Council: Humanities & Social Sciences*, Vol. 1. No.2: 151-173.
- Yi, C. (1991), "Family Problems" in *Social Problems in Taiwan* (K. S. Yang & C.C. Yeh, eds). pp. 223-258. Chiu-Liu Publishing Co. Taipei.
- Yi, C. (1993), "Studying Social Change: The Case of Taiwanese Family Sociologists" in Stella R. Quah (ed.) *Asian Sociologists at Work: Experiences From Family Sociology*. *Current Sociology*, Vol. 41. No. 1. *Journal of The International Sociological Association*, U.K. pp. 41-67.
- Yi, C. (1997), "Parental Support in Taiwan: A Qualitative Analysis of The Intergenerational Obligation", presented at the conference on "Cultural Diversities in Family, Partnership and Generational Situations", organized by the Committee on Family Research of the International Sociological Association(Rc06), from September 22-26, in Strobl, Austria.

- Yi, C. and Chang, Y. (1994), "A Study of the Change of Family Structure and Marital Power in Taiwan", International Conference on Family, Human Resources and Social Development, National Chengchi University, Taipei, May, 1994. Also presented at the XII World Congress of Sociology, Research Committee 06 on "Gender, Families and Social Change" International Sociological Association, Bielefeld, Germany.
- Yi, C. and Chang, Y. (1996), "Change of Family Structure and Marital Power in Taiwan", in Families, Human Resources and Social Development, edited by Hsiao-Hung Nancy Chen, Yia-Ling and Mei-O Hsieh. pp. 135-156. The Department and Graduate Institute of Sociology National Chengchi University, Taipei, R.O.C.
- Yi, C. and Chen, Y. (1998), "Present Forms and Future Attitudes of the Elderly Parental Support in Taiwan" *Journal of Population Studies*, 19: 1-32, Population Studies Center, National Taiwan University, Taipei.
- Yi, C. and Chu, C. (1992), "The Changing Family Structures and Functions in the Chinese Family: The Comparative Study of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China and Singapore", The Transplants and Application of the Western Social Science Theory Conference, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.
- Yi, C. and Chu, C. (1993), "The Transition of Family Structure and Family Function in Chinese Societies: A Proposal of Comparisons of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Singapore", in Cross-cultural Transplants: Western Social Science Theories in Chinese Societies, Cho-Ye To (ed) pp. 79-82. the Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- Yi, C. and Lu, Y. (1996), "The Composition of Family: Subjective versus Objective Analysis." Conference on Asian Population History, The Institute of Economics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.
- Yi, C., Lu, Y., and Chen, Y. (1998), "A Study of the Family Status of Women: A Example of Family Decision-Making Pattern"(in Chinese), presented at the Conference of Reports of Sociological Projects Funded by National Science Council, the Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taipei.
- Yi, C. and Tsai, Y. (1989), "An Analysis of Marital Power in Taipei Metropolitan Area? An Example of Familial Decision-Making" (in Chinese) *Social Phenomena in Taiwan: An Analysis*, edited by Chin-Chun Yi and Cathy C. Chu, Sun Yat-Sen Institute for Social Sciences and Philosophy Monograph pp: 115-151.
- Yi, C., Yang, W. and Tsai, Y. (1992), "Factors Affect Husband and Wife Conflict Management Patterns: A Comparison Between Husband, Wife and Couple Samples" (in Chinese), *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, No. 16: pp. 25-54.
- Yi, C. and Yang, W. (1995), "The Perceived Conflict and Decision-Making Patterns among Husbands and Wives in Taiwan", Family formation & Dissolution: Perspectives from East and West, edited by Chin-Chun Yi. Sun Yat-Sen Institute for Social Science and Philosophy, Book Series (36). Academia Sinica. Taipei, Taiwan, R.O. C. pp. 29-168.

**Appendix 1 The Most Important Familial Decision Identified by
Taiwan and Tianjin Couples**

Decision Items	% (N)			
	Taiwan		Tianjin	
	Husbands' Sample	Wives' Sample	Husbands' Sample	Wives' Sample
Husband's Job	9.9 (45)	8.3 (38)	21.5 (55)	21.2 (55)
Wife's Job	0.4 (2)	1.1 (5)	1.6 (4)	1.5 (4)
Household Expenses	25.1 (114)	26.3 (120)	16.4 (42)	15.4 (40)
Saving & Investment	13.9 (63)	14.3 (65)	3.1 (8)	2.7 (7)
Amount of Money Gift	1.3 (6)	1.1 (5)	0.4 (1)	0.0 (0)
Housing Purchase	13.9 (63)	13.8 (63)	8.6 (22)	6.9 (18)
Decision of Moving	0.7 (3)	0.4 (2)	1.2 (3)	1.5 (4)
Co-Residence with Elders	0.4 (2)	0.9 (4)	2.3 (6)	1.2 (3)
Ways of Parental Support	4.2 (19)	1.1 (5)	6.3 (16)	3.0 (8)
Child-Birth Decision	0.2 (1)	0.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	1.9 (5)
Children Discipline	22.0 (100)	24.4 (111)	25.0 (64)	30.8 (80)
Children's Schooling	6.4 (29)	5.9 (27)	10.9 (28)	10.4 (27)
Children's Marriage	1.6 (7)	2.2 (10)	2.7 (7)	3.5 (9)
N	100.0 (454)	100.0 (456)	100.0 (256)	100.0 (234)