

Intercultural Marriage and Its Impact on Fertility in Taiwan

(Draft)

Yu-Hua Chen

yuhuac@ntu.edu.tw

Mei-Lin Huang

D93630002@ntu.edu.tw

Department of Agricultural Extension
Center of Population and Gender Studies
National Taiwan University

Abstract

Although spousal resemblance on educations and occupations has increased in Taiwanese society, the official statistics do show a delay in the age at first marriage and fewer marriages among women in particular. Many blue-collar male workers and farmers have been suffered more from these changes in the marriage market. With stronger demands to form family, to have descendants and to support elders, these men are more likely to adopt intercultural marriages of which most wives come from mainland China and Southeast Asia. The first part of this paper describes major changes in marital behaviors and attitudes among Taiwanese, following by a discussion on their direct and indirect influence on fertility. Then, the reasons accounting for the emergence of intercultural marriages will be delineated on the basis of the latest survey of foreign and mainlander spouses' living condition. A comparison regarding reproduction outcomes between Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese women is provided in the final part of this paper. Our findings show the average birth rate of foreign spouses from Southeast Asia is higher than their Taiwanese counterparts, while the data have evidenced more spouses from mainland China who are more likely to be childless. In addition, the traditional preference for son is particularly widespread among couples of intercultural marriages.

Introduction

Only a few decades ago, families were viewed as the primary societal units in Taiwan, and the interests of individuals were generally secondary to those of the family. To extend the family line into the future through childbearing, early and universal marriage was regarded to as a typical feature in the process of family formation. Within the intergenerational co-residing unit, elders were accorded great respect and exercised extensive authority over younger family members and grown up children had the duty to support and help their parents. Undergoing a large-scale social and economic transformation, however, major characteristics starting from family formation to dissolution throughout the life course have changed tremendously. Of these changes, it is obvious that changing marital behavior has alarmed most people and attracted attention from both policy makers and scholars because of its lasting effect on fertility and age structure of the population in the future.

The Western scholars argue that individuals expect a great deal of personal fulfillment from marriage and are willing to forego marriage unless such expectations are met. People who hold this view often believe that other relationships such as cohabitation are acceptable alternatives to marriage (Popenoe, 1993). Still others contend that we are witnessing a temporary retreat from marriage due to changes related to expectations regarding equality between men and women. They think that marriages will make a come back as young people adjust to egalitarian expectations of marriage (Nock, 2001). Despite a propensity for nuptiality revealed by most Taiwanese adults constantly, there appears to be a wide-spread rejection of marriage among younger women in their twenties and early thirties, or at least many individuals are delaying marriages. This social phenomenon to some extent demonstrates the meaning of marriage is changing in the Taiwanese society.

One question that remains from this emerging social issue is whether the women with higher educational attainment and career aspirations will eventually enter marriage. A recent study targeting Hong Kong women suggests that, if women are able to negotiate an adequate division of labor in the household and to combine career and family well, both economic potentials and expectations have led women to postpone but not abandon marriage (Wong, 2003). While women are still likely to enter marriage, Taiwanese men who are prepare to marry earlier and who are socio-economically less favorable are encountering the difficulty to search for potential partners. As a result, intercultural marriages become another alternative available for these men. In this paper, I first introduce major changes in marital behaviors and attitudes among Taiwanese and current demographic indicators. Next, in terms of marital and educational homogamy, the reasons accounting for the emergence of intercultural marriages are delineated. The significant change in marriage and its implication on fertility and aging are discussed in the final part.

The Changing Practices and Attitudes of Union Formation

The traditional Taiwanese marriage system was characterized by the overwhelming power of parents. The compatibility between two marrying families in terms of socioeconomic status, cultural background and the implied value system has been the top priority in marriage match (Yi & Hsung, 1994). Hence, marriage was a process of agreements and rituals rather than an event, and a family-based decision rather than a personal choice. Due to these concerns, most parents arranged and directed marriages for their children and the idea that prospective partners should come from similar backgrounds has been maintained for decades. However, the rapid increase in educational attainment, more pre-marital employment and off-family living experiences of young people together have changed their relationships and interactions with parents and peers. Undoubtedly, these changes should have an effect on the way to form a union and the marriage itself.

According to the series of KAP survey data, the percentage of parent-arranged marriages declined from over 60% for the birth cohort of 1933-34 to slightly more than 10% for the birth cohort of 1960-64 (Thornton & Lin, 1994). The latest survey conducted in 1998 showed, for 1970-80 birth cohort, only 3.2% of marriages were arranged and decided by Taiwanese parents (BHP, 2005). The 2001 *Taiwan Social Change Survey*, a nation-wide representative data set, indicated that more than 50% of all marriages are now decided entirely by couples themselves only (Chang & Fu, 2002). While young people get involved in the mate selection process by their own social networks, parents continue to have a crucial role in the marriage process. At least, a great majority of young people marry those with parental approval.

The prevalence and timing of marriage in Taiwan have also been greatly changed during the past century. In 1905, 47.3% of Taiwanese women aged 15-19 had married and most men married by their middle twenties. At age 30 and above, the number of women who had been married was 99% or greater (Thornton & Lin, 1994). Marriage was nearly universal among Taiwanese in the first half of the twentieth century. Following an influx of mainlanders in the late 1940s, this universal trend began to be disturbed. Among this wave of immigrants there were a substantial number of unmarried young men in the military. The imbalanced sex ratio at this period produced a marriage squeeze, making it uneasy for men, in particular for veterans, to find a potential partner.

As shown in Table 1, there were 42.5 % of single men in 1976, with only 31.2 % of single women. In contrast, the marriage was still prevalent among women who were thirty years old and above at the same period. This substantial gap between genders has been narrowed down in recent years because of the natural replacement of population itself and the adoption of foreign spouses, a newly emerging social phenomenon which I will discuss later. These data also reveal

another noteworthy change in the composition among single population. Although the proportion of single men have decreased continuously, a turning point related to a slight increment in single women annually can be traced back to the beginning of the 1990s.

Table 1. The Marital Status of 15 Years Old and Above by Sex: 1956-2004

	Single		Married		Divorced		Widowed	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1956 ^a	40.1	29.5	55.1	58.3	1.0	0.9	3.7	11.3
1966 ^a	47.7	33.6	48.0	56.4	1.7	1.2	2.6	8.8
1976	42.5	31.2	54.3	60.7	0.9	0.9	2.3	7.2
1981	40.6	30.4	56.0	61.5	1.2	1.1	2.2	6.9
1986	39.0	27.7	57.0	61.7	1.7	1.6	2.3	6.9
1991	38.0	29.6	57.2	61.0	2.4	2.4	2.5	7.1
1996	38.3	30.0	56.4	58.9	3.1	3.3	2.2	7.8
2001	37.4	30.4	56.0	56.3	4.3	4.8	2.3	8.6
2004	37.3	30.9	55.2	54.3	5.2	5.8	2.3	9.0

Note: ^aData of 1956 and 1966 referring to Taiwanese people who were 12 years and older.

Source: Statistics of Household Registration, Department of Civil Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Executive Yuan, Taiwan, ROC.

Although it has been argued that women's economic independence gives working women more freedom to reject dysfunctional marriages in most industrial countries (Bianchi, Subaiya, & Kahn, 1999), there is a lack of direct evidence to support this association in Taiwan due to a relatively low labor force participation of married women. Statistics released by the government indicate the crude divorce rate has increased more than six times in the last 30 years, from 0.9 couples per thousand persons in 1976 to 5.5 in 2004. The crude marriage rate shows a tendency of decrease after reaching an all-time high of 9.6 couples per thousand persons in 1981 due to most baby boomers arriving at marriage ages, and then the rate has fallen to 5.7 in 2004.

The economic and social changes have led to late marriage in Taiwanese society. By the end of 2004, the median age of first marriage reaches 27 years for women and 30 years for men. The official statistics also show that a growing number of men and women in their 30s have never married (Table 2). The single population being an unconventional choice has caught much attention. A closer scrutiny from the earlier and latest demographic data shows the proportion of women in their early 30s who had never married increased from 12.3% in 1976 to 41.2% in 2004. While this may only be a continuation of the shift toward late marriage, it may also represent the beginning of a trend toward lifelong singleness. Will Taiwanese eventually enter marriage or abandon marriage? Table 3 presents the other indirect evidence. Until 1996, the

marriage was still prevalent and no significant gender difference across age groups. Yet, the beginning of the twenty-first century has been marked by an unusual change that men become more likely to hold married status following the increase in age. On the contrary, the proportion of married Taiwanese women is decreasing dramatically with aging in recent years.

Table 2. Single Population by Sex and Age Groups, 1971-2004

Age group	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2004
Men							
25-29	39.9	41.1	48.7	57.6	64.6	71.3	76.8
30-34	12.3	13.7	17.3	24.4	31.7	36.5	41.2
35-39	7.2	7.1	8.2	11.3	15.8	18.7	21.0
40-44	7.1	5.4	5.7	7.0	8.9	11.3	12.7
Women							
25-29	17.1	19.7	24.6	33.1	40.5	50.7	59.1
30-34	5.2	8.1	9.8	12.9	16.4	22.2	26.9
35-39	3.0	4.0	6.0	7.7	9.1	12.1	14.8
40-44	2.3	2.8	3.6	5.6	6.6	7.9	9.5

Source: 1976-2004 Taiwan-Fuchien Demographic Fact Book Republic of China.

Table 3. Married Population by Sex and Age Groups, 1971-2004

Age group	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2004
Men							
25-29	59.5	58.0	50.1	41.2	33.9	26.5	20.9
30-34	86.4	84.5	80.2	72.3	64.8	58.7	53.2
35-39	90.9	90.5	88.4	83.9	78.8	74.5	70.9
40-44	90.1	91.9	90.4	87.6	84.4	80.4	77.8
45-49	82.7	90.0	90.8	88.5	87.3	83.8	81.3
50-54	75.2	76.4	78.4	79.3	88.8	86.4	84.2
55-59					89.1	87.9	86.4
Women							
25-29	81.5	78.5	73.1	64.5	56.7	45.4	36.6
30-34	92.6	89.0	86.4	82.4	78.2	71.1	65.4
35-39	93.8	92.2	88.9	85.9	83.0	78.5	74.8
40-44	92.9	92.1	90.2	86.4	83.3	80.1	77.3
45-49	89.6	90.2	89.2	86.4	83.1	79.8	77.7
50-54	64.1	66.9	68.6	69.6	83.0	79.0	76.9
55-59					80.2	77.7	75.4

Source: 1976-2004 Taiwan-Fuchien Demographic Fact Book Republic of China.

Educational homogamy

The overall educational attainment of women has reached a record high in the past ten years. At the end of 2004, almost 60% of college students and 50.6% of university students were women, while the sex ratio of those aged 15 to 24 years old Taiwanese was 106 in the same year. Two decades earlier, the figures were only 37.3% and 36.4%, respectively. As shown in Figure1, nowadays there are even more women studying in the advanced education following another wave of expansion in graduate programs. Correspondent to the advancement of women’s education, a large number of women have been entering the labor force (Yi, 2002). The female labor force participation rate rises from 40.4% in 1984 to 47.7% in 2004. For married women, the increase is even more evident from 35.5% to 47.8%.

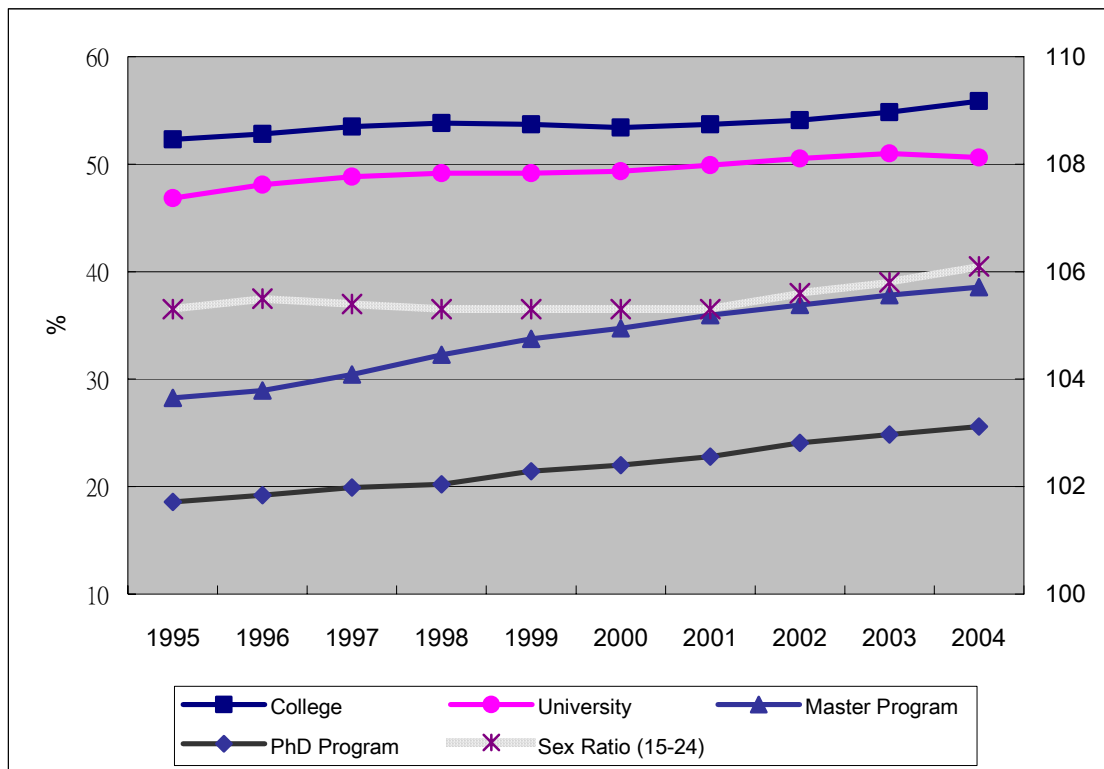


Figure 1. The Proportion of Female Students in Higher Education and Sex Ratio of Aged 15-24 Taiwanese, 1995-2004.

The extent of difficulty to cross social strata to marriage between people with different levels of educational attainments has been taken as an indicator of societal openness (Ultee & Luijkx, 1990). In this regard, it is suspected that the traditional Chinese norm of family compatibility in the marriage match may lose its importance in the modern Taiwanese society. Comparing the 1975 and 1990 data, Raymo and Xie (2000) suggest there was an overall trend toward increased educational heterogamy in Taiwan. With more educational opportunities available for women, scholars also find that marriage becomes less frequent as distance in

schooling increases (Tsai, 1996; Tsay, 1996). With speedy increment in education especially for women, the cross tabulation analysis of husband's and wife's education (in Table 4) shows that 28% of wives have higher education than that of their husbands in 2003, while 20 years ago this figure was only 22%. It should be pointed out that although the strength of ethnic homogamy has decreased overtime (Tsai, 1996), a positive association between husband's and wife's social classes is still found (Tsay, 1996).

Table 4. Crosstabulations of Husband's and Wife's Education, 1983 and 2003

1983		Grooms					
Brides	College	Senior high	Junior high	Elementary	Illiteracy	subtotal	
College	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.09	
Senior high	0.07	0.13	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.29	
Junior high	0.02	0.09	0.11	0.06	0.01	0.29	
Elementary	0.01	0.05	0.09	0.10	0.02	0.27	
Illiteracy	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.06	
subtotal	0.15	0.30	0.28	0.22	0.05	1.00	
2003		Grooms					
Brides	University	College	Senior high	Junior high	Elementary	subtotal	
University	0.09	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.15	
College	0.04	0.06	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.17	
Senior high	0.03	0.05	0.15	0.08	0.03	0.34	
Junior high	0.01	0.02	0.08	0.09	0.04	0.23	
Elementary	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.11	
subtotal	0.18	0.16	0.34	0.23	0.10	1.00	

Source: 1983 and 2003 Taiwan-Fuchien Demographic Fact Book Republic of China.

Changing attitudes toward marriage and gender roles

Unlike older women who were more likely to act upon social and cultural norms, younger generations are making every endeavor to pursue higher education and to commit themselves in the labor force as their male counterparts. However, it is far from obvious that how the majority of Taiwanese view women's productive and reproductive roles. According to three waves of *The Taiwan Social Change Survey* (Chang & Fu, 2002), Table 5 represents the attitudinal change on gender roles in the past decade. As can be seen, while there is still substantial uncertainty about women being a breadwinner rather than a homemaker, women's employment is actually encouraged and its possible negative consequence to family life has been somewhat devalued. Specifically, as most of other countries, 64.0% agree that employed mother is harmful to her pre-school children (a 9% increase in 10 years). But regarding woman herself, 51.0% reports

full-time job will interfere women's family life (a 9.7% drop in 10 years), and 76.3% agrees that having a job is the best way to become independent for women (a 11.2% rise in 10 years). It is clear that by 2001, the public has accepted a young mother with employment, although only half will endorse her job as a major role for her as well as for the family.

Table 5. Change of Attitudes on Gender Roles among Taiwanese: 1991, 1996 and 2001

	Agreement (%)		
	1991	1996	2001
▪ If a mother were employed outside the household, it would have negative impact on her pre-schooling kids.	54.8	71.6	64.0
▪ The family life of working woman will always be interfered by her full-time job.	60.7	60.4	51.0
▪ For women, it is more meaningful to be a breadwinner than a homemaker.	37.8	43.1	49.9
▪ For women, the best way becoming independent is to have a job.	65.1	71.8	76.3
▪ Husband's major role is a breadwinner and wife, a care-giver.	54.6	56.1	50.7

Source: Taiwan Social Change Survey, Office of Survey Research, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

Late marriage and fertility

The beginning of significant fertility decline in Taiwan occurred in the late 1950s, but this demographic trend actually accelerated after the introduction of the family planning program in the early 1960s (Figure 2). While the program was appraised as a success because it considered the receptivity of population to family planning as well as the importance of diffusion of new ideas within society since formally launched in 1964, both officials and scholars are evaluating its long-lasting impact on adults' reproductive attitudes and practices which may be attributed to Taiwan's low fertility rates in recent years.

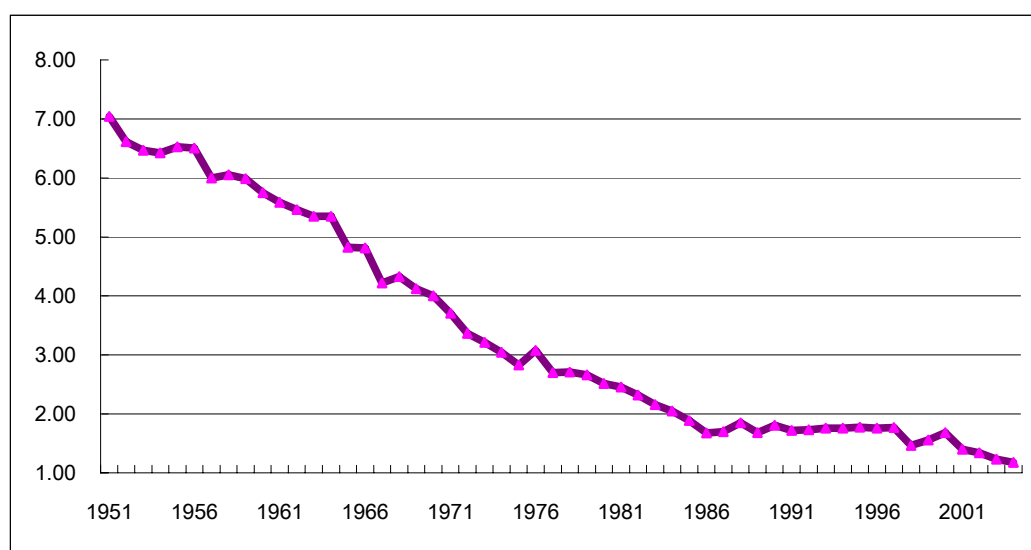


Figure 2. Declining Total Fertility Rates of Taiwan Population, 1951-2004

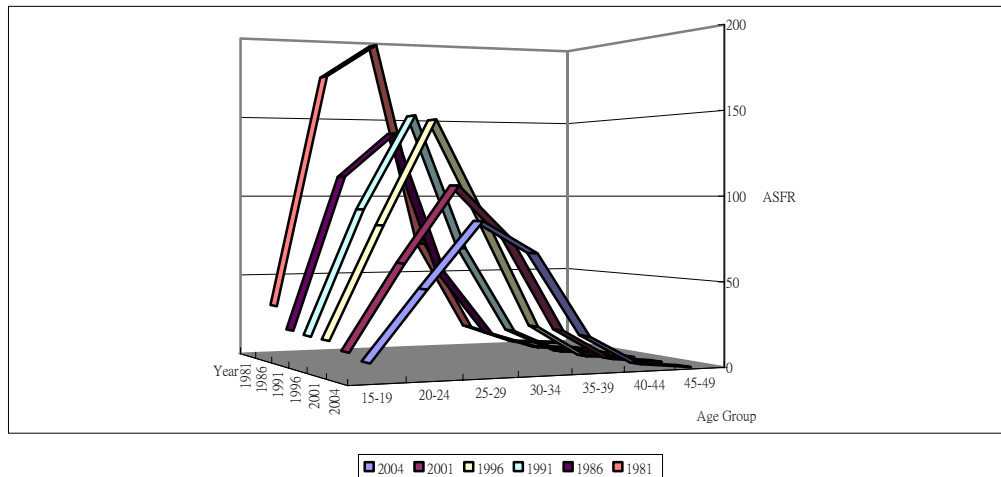


Figure 3. Age Specific Fertility Rates Per Thousand Childbearing Women Aged 15-49, 1981-2004

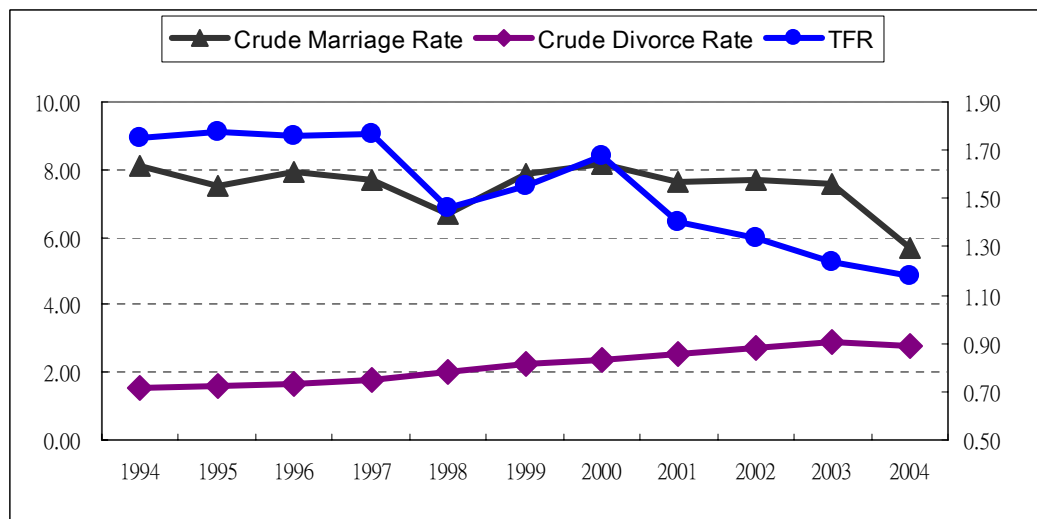


Figure 4. Total Fertility Rates, Crude Marriage Rates and Crude Divorce Rates of Taiwan Population, 1994-2004

In 1994, the official statistics show there were a total of 322,938 newborns, but ten years later there were only 216,419 babies. Referring to the total fertility rate of year 2004, each Taiwanese woman at childbearing ages was estimated to give births to 1.18 babies on average. Longer education, delayed marriages, and relatively fewer potential mothers between ages of 20 and 34 together have led to a reducing birth rate (Figure 3). Additionally, Figure 4 shows an interesting relationship of total fertility rates, crude marriage and divorce rates of Taiwan population. Fluctuations in total fertility rates are significantly correlated to crude marriage rates in recent years with a sharp decline in 1998 (the year of Tiger of the Chinese Zodiac—a year earmarked for disasters, particularly a bad year for marriage) and a sudden increase in 2000 (the year of Dragon—a desirable year for marriage and birth in the family). While total fertility rates

continued declining afterwards, the marriage rates resumed to relatively normal range except year 2004. The divorce rates, on the contrary, have revealed a stable increase since 1994.

According to the KAP surveys, the mean preferred number of children of married women was 4.0 in 1965, while the latest survey conducted in 2002 found the figure has decreased to an average of 2.0. Despite a decrease in the preference for sons ever recorded (Thornton & Lin, 1994), the preference of male descendant is recurrent again as young newlyweds favor only one child for economic and lifestyle concerns. Among the 216,419 births registered in 2004, there were 110 baby boys for every 100 girls. This figure tells a clear story that strong son preference is still existent among Taiwanese parents and may result in an unnatural gender imbalance in the near future. With the advancement in new reproductive technologies, a very low fertility rate is theoretically compatible with the strong son preference. However, the social cost of the resultant imbalanced sex ratio deserves serious attention. Living in a context of patriarchal cultural norms, to have a male heir remains to be a prevailing family trajectory for Taiwanese families.

The aging trend in Taiwan

Within the private sphere, despite the strong preference for the ideal of extended family, in 1990s approximately 60% and 27% of Taiwanese households were categorized as nuclear family and stem family respectively (Yi & Lu, 1999). From elderly parents’ standpoint, Yi and Chen (1998) found that co-residence between elderly parents and one or more married children (64%) has been the dominant mode in Taiwan. Although more people express the preference for and expectation of economic independence at old age, children’s support as a major financial source for the elderly (61%) remain to be the prevailing practice (Ibid.).

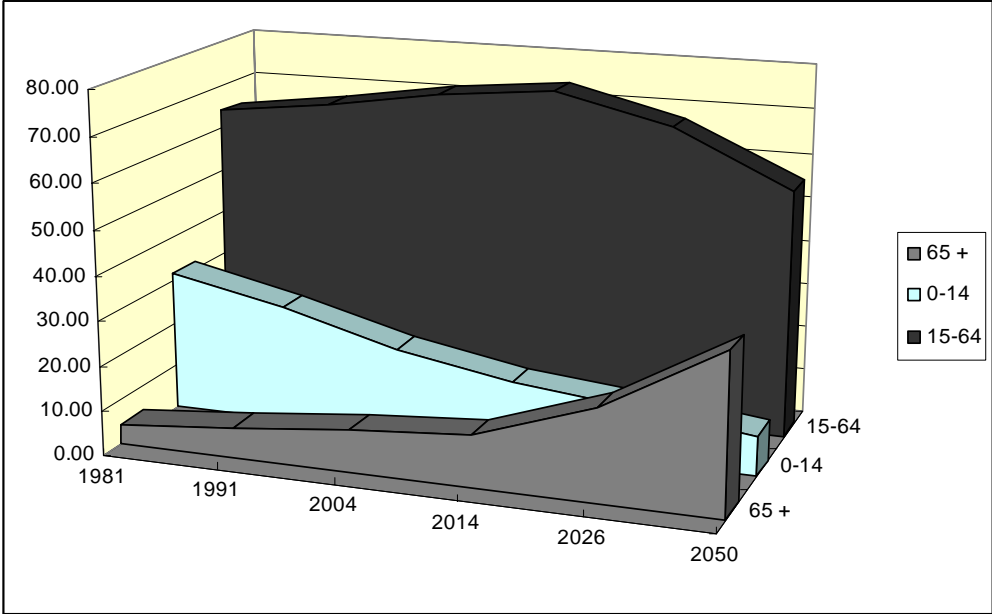


Figure 5. Age Structure of Taiwan Population and Furture Projection, 1981-2050

If fewer and fewer babies are born each year, Taiwan will soon become a graying society. The average life expectancy in Taiwan is rising. According to the official statistics, the average life expectancy at birth was 73.6 years for men and 79.4 years for women in 2004. Population over the age of 65 exceeded 9 percent and the increasing trend still continues (Figure 5). The index of aging, calculated by dividing the number of people over 65 years old by the number under the age of 15, was 48.7 percent. It is clear that Taiwan has entered the aging society and has encountered various problems a typical aging society confronts, such as labor shortage, a high ratio of elderly to workers, and increasing national expenditure on the health care. As a result, the national population policy and policy guidelines on Taiwan's aging problems were revised by the Ministry of the Interior and approved in 1992. Contrary to the past family planning program that aimed at curtailing population growth, the revised policy proposes a moderate increase of population. To decelerate the increase of older population, "two are just right" has revived to be the current family planning slogan.

The Emergence of Intercultural Marriage

The intercultural marriage is by no means an important social phenomenon in Taiwan. Before 1980s, most intercultural marriages were mainly unions between Taiwanese women and Americans or Japanese husbands. After the 1980s, the situation reversed. With the economic take-off and the massive internal migration from rural to urban areas, the socioeconomic position of Taiwanese women was quickly improved. Two groups of Taiwanese men suffered from the marriage market from this development. Many blue-collar male workers or farmers who remain in the countryside had a harder time finding marriage partners. In addition, older veterans who migrated to Taiwan from China in the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War were single and were relatively less marriageable owing to the lack of property and of family support. Both groups have the demand to form marriage and to have descendants. Hence, rural men started to look for their spouses from less developed countries in South East Asia (Hsia, 2000). And for veterans, once the travel permission across the Taiwan Strait was granted in the 1980s, mainland China became the most suitable provider of their marriage partners (Chao, 2002).

While mixed marriages across racial groups have been in Taiwanese society for decades, this type of marriage hardly raised social debate due to a relatively small number. Since 1990s, the so-called brokered marriage and foreign brides accompanying with their newborns began to frequently occupy the headlines of mass media. A major worry for policy-makers is the fact that about 8 percent of Taiwan's newborns are mothered by Southeast Asian and 4 percent by Chinese in 2002 (Liu, 2003). This wave of immigrants consisted of women from mainland China and from Southeast Asia (especially from Vietnam and Indonesia). In 1998, marriages between Taiwanese men and foreign women accounted for only 16 percent of all new marriages,

and the figure soared to approximately 32 percent in 2003.

According to the latest official statistics revealed by the Ministry of the Interior, until 2005 summer, there were 118,023 Southeast Asian and 217,221 Chinese immigrant spouses currently living in Taiwan, and 90% of them are females. According to the residential distribution shown in Table 6, mainlander spouses are more likely to settle down in major metropolitan areas including Taipei, Taichung and Kaoshiung and adjacent locations. In particular, the data show that mainlander spouses are highly concentrated in cities where more residents who migrated from China after the Civil War have stronger preference to get marry with Chinese origin. In contrast, spouses from Southeastern Asian countries are more likely to marry people in rural areas in which most residents are so-called Fukienese and Hakka who were settled in Taiwan for more than hundred years.

Table 6. Total Number and Percentage of Residential Foreign and Mainlander Spouses by Nationality and Selected County/City, 1987-2005

	All spouses	SE Asian	Mainlander	HK & Macau	Others
Taiwan	356,648	33.09	60.91	2.91	3.09
Taipei county	66,794	28.76	61.30	5.78	4.16
Taipei city	38,156	16.02	67.72	7.86	8.39
Taoyuan county	35,832	36.01	58.71	2.46	2.82
Kaoshiung city	23,537	23.22	72.09	2.03	2.66
Taichung county	21,079	38.37	58.29	1.97	1.37
Kaoshiung county	20,659	32.51	65.66	0.70	1.14
Taichung city	15,221	20.43	72.39	2.48	4.70

Note: SE Asian includes spouses' from Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippine, and Cambodia.

Source: "Distribution of Foreign and Mainlander Spouses in Taiwan, 1987-2005." Department of Statistics, Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan, ROC. Data retrieved from <http://www.moi.gov.tw/stat/>

Due to the heavy demand for foreign brides, many commercialized marriage brokerages specializing in matchmaking foreign women and Taiwan men flourished in most small towns and rural areas. However, existing differences in culture and values between the couple have resulted in less stable marriages and high divorce rates among these commercialized marital arrangements. According to a survey targeting foreign brides who ever asked for assistance from social workers and policemen (BSA, 2002), it is shown that foreign brides are much more likely to be the victims of domestic violence than their Taiwanese counterparts. In most cases, these victims are economically disadvantageous homemakers and they lack citizenship or other resourceful information in Taiwan. The same survey also found that proficiency in Chinese appears to be a prerequisite for foreign brides to report domestic violence to seek help.

In addition to the issue of domestic violence, other major concerns regarding the influx of foreign spouses centers on their children's educational problems. Since most foreign brides are lower educated with elementary-school education and are not equipped with Chinese-language abilities, they are unable to monitor their children's school work as most Taiwanese parents do. As a consequence, these children not only have poor language skills, they often exhibit general maladjustment at school too (Hsia, 2000). The problem is even exacerbated by the inferior socioeconomic status of fathers because they are not capable to compensate the expected parental role in education either. By being away from home for extended periods of working time, children's school problem can not be solved from the inadequate family resources (Liu, 2003).

Facing related problems caused by the substantial proportion of foreign brides, the government is finally reacting and is planning to implement several new programs to help foreign spouses and their children to adjust their lives in Taiwan. Since to form marriage is a fundamental family value in Taiwan, unless the difficulty of finding spouses can be solved for the lower social classes, foreign brides will continue to have its market. It is therefore more practical to alleviate potential social problems by actively initiating various resourceful programs to these needy families than to wait until the difficulty becomes a insurmountable social problem in the future.

A possible solution for low fertility?

While many people concern the "quality" of children from foreign and mainlander mothers, it is obvious these "new Taiwanese kids" have made an important contribution to retain the total fertility rates in recent years. Despite a popular belief that more children were reproduced from foreign brides, the average number of children came from these women is still lower than the replacement level (Table 7) because some spouses from China who marry to older Taiwanese (i.e. veterans) actually did not give birth after all. It is clear the intercultural marriage can only be adopted as temporal and partial solution for low fertility.

In addition to the fertility rate, the public should pay attention on the other unexpected result. Based on 2003 *Survey of Residential Foreign and Mainlander Spouses' Living Conditions* conducted by the Ministry of the Interior, a seriously imbalance sex ratio has been found among newborns from this type of marriages. In year 2004, the overall sex ratio in Taiwan was 110 with the highest one in Kinmen and Matsu (two small islands geographically close to the mainland). The figure for births from non-Taiwanese mothers was as high as 122. Again, the highest one was found in two islands. Since there is no adequate answer for this uneven result, more studies are needed to investigate this abnormal reproduction behavior.

Table 7. Sex Ratio at Birth by Geographic Regions and Mother's Origins in 2003, and Average Number of Children of Non-Taiwanese Mothers by Regions

	Non-Taiwanese mothers ^a		Sex ratio of all births ^b
	Sex ratio at first birth	Mean births	
Taiwan	122	1.478	110
Northern region	124	1.456	110
Central region	118	1.513	110
Southern region	123	1.471	109
Eastern region	115	1.474	111
Kinmen & Matsu	161	1.738	117

Source: ^a 2003 Taiwan-Fuchien Demographic Fact Book Republic of China.

^b 2003 Survey of Residential Foreign and Mainlander Spouses' Living Conditions.

Conclusion and Discussion

In above description, I have represented major features of marriage, recent changes in the processes of union formation and their possible effects on fertility and aging in contemporary Taiwanese society. With a solid cultural heritage of familism, these marriage and family issues have long been regarded as most crucial topics in the academic circle. While the attitudes and practices toward elderly parental support and son preference remain constant, it is less likely to predict precisely the continuity and change in other features of the family life such as parenthood and marriage. Specifically, the trend of late marriage and the introduction of foreign brides to some extent have modified the timing and form of marriage. The former may eventually create a substantial increase in lifelong singleness and the latter has attracted plenty of attention and debates on its possible negative consequences on the family and the overall society. The low fertility rates in recent years also deserve serious attention. The Taiwanese Government is revising its population policy and reproductive measures, whereas it is expected that the total fertility rate would remain at low level if there is no significant improvement in the major socioeconomic indicators.

The primary goal of Taiwan's population policy is to maintain a reasonable population growth and particularly to encourage young men and women to get married and raise children at *suitable* ages. The intention is clearly to prevent the population from rapid degeneration and aging. Whether Taiwan's population will continue to decline has become a complex question. According to Freedman and his colleagues, "the question of whether fertility preferences will fall further probably depends for the most part on the extent to which traditional family

relationships are eroded. But even a further erosion need not carry fertility and fertility preferences to lower levels, since Taiwan's fertility is low at Western levels, which have leveled off near or below replacement levels now for some years (p. 304, Thornton & Lin, 1994)."

Another related factor is that in an age of individualism, many young people choose to be childless. Typical Chinese notions such as "producing a male heir to continue the family line," "suppressing oneself for the sake of the family" or "raising children as an insurance for old age" are no longer strong appeals to the younger generation. In response to possible population decline and aging, the government has re-adopted its old policy slogan, *Two Children Are Just Right*, and in recent years more positive measures such as birth paycheck and educational support have been proposed in order to encourage more births. Finally, at this stage, there is no sure answer for whether the women with higher educational attainment and career aspirations will eventually enter marriage. Therefore, further studies are needed to trace the process of union formation of younger cohorts.

References

- Bureau of Health Promotion, Department of Health (BHP). (2005). *Report on the 8th KAP survey*. Retrieved from <http://rds.bhp.doh.gov.tw/fileviewer?id=1473>
- Bureau of Social Affairs (BSA). (2002). *Survey report on foreign brides as victims of domestic violence in Kaohsiung County*. Kaohsiung County Government, Taiwan, ROC.
- Chang, Y.-H., & Fu, Y.-C. (Eds.) (2002). *Taiwan social change survey: Report on survey 4-2*. Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan. (in Chinese)
- Chao, A. (2002). Gender politics of cultural citizenship: A case study of marriage between mainland brides and glorious citizens in Taiwan. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting for Cultural Studies Association of Australia. January 3-5, 2003.
- Hsia, H.-C. (2000). Internationalization of capital and trade in Asian women: The case of foreign brides. *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, 39, 45-92. (in Chinese)
- Liu, L. (2003). Foreign spouse influx: Boon or bane? *Taipei Journal*, Oct 31-Nov07, 2003. Retrieved from <http://publish.gio.gov.tw/FCJ/past/03110771.html>
- Nock, S. (2001). The marriages of equally dependent spouses. *Journal of Family Issues*, 22, 756-777.
- Popenoe, D. (1993). American family decline 1960-1990: A review and appraisal. *Journal and Marriage and the Family*, 55, 527-556.
- Raymo, J. M., & Xie, Y. (2000). Temporal and regional variation in the strength of educational homogamy. *American Sociological Review*, 65, 773-781.
- Thornton, A., & Lin, H.-S. (1994). *Social change and the family in Taiwan*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Tsai, S.-L. (1996). The relative importance of ethnicity and education in Taiwan's changing marriage market. *Proceedings of the National Science Council, ROC, Part C: Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6, 301-315.
- Tsay, R.-M. (1996). Who marries who? The association between wives' and husbands' educational attainment and class in Taiwan. *Proceedings of the National Science Council, ROC, Part C: Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6, 258-277.
- Ultee, W. C., & Luijckx, R. (1990). Educational heterogamy and father-to-son occupational mobility in 23 industrial nations: General societal openness or compensatory strategies of reproduction? *European Sociological Review*, 6, 125-149.
- Wong, O. (2003). Are women postponing or abandoning marriage? Evidence from Hong Kong. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 34, 531-554.
- Yi, C.-C. (2002). Taiwan's modernization: Women's changing roles. In P. Chow (Ed.), *Taiwan's modernization in global perspective* (pp. 331-359). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Yi, C.-C., & Chen, Y.-H. (1998). Present forms and future attitudes of elderly parental support in Taiwan. *Journal of Population Studies*, 19, 1-27. (in Chinese)
- Yi, C.-C., & Hsung, R.-M. (1994). Mate selection networks and the educational assortative

mating in Taiwan: An analysis of introducer. In C.-C. Yi (Ed.), *The social image of Taiwan: Social science approaches* (pp. 135-178). Sun Yat-Sen ISSP Book Series (33), Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan. (in Chinese)

Yi, C.-C., & Lu, Y.-H. (1999). Who are my family members? Lineage and marital status in the Taiwanese family. *The American Journal of Chinese Studies*, 6, 249-278.