

# Marriage family sexuality in contemporary china



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Family and marriage life in contemporary China has changed following the conservative structure of the old traditional ways.

In pre-industrial times where rural China dominated, the family adhered to strict moral conduct standards that were based on religion and law. Now, a more democratic family system is established and men and women are free and equal in the decisions they make involving family planning, marriage, and expressing sexuality. China has 267 million families and every year about 10 million newlywed couples add onto that number. The Chinese government has constantly tried to protect marriages and the families, stress the equality between husband and wife, and foster the Chinese state tradition of respect for the elderly, love for the young and pleasant relations in the family. Presently, the divorce rate in China is 1.54 per 1,000 residents.

This is due in part that Chinese families are essentially stable, family roles, living arrangements, child nurturing and unlimited support for the elderly, are clearly visible. Recently, matchmaking services have been offered to help foster the ideal marriage and are supported by the government because they are nonprofit organizations. Family structure is an important aspect in the lives of the Chinese. All members are equal in a modern Chinese family.

There is social disapproval to the mistreatment of women especially wives and daughter-in-laws. Women are given the opportunity to be educated, pursue their own dreams and aspirations and are respected by their husbands if she chooses to do so. Women have the same rights of possession and inheritance of family property as men do. In traditional

China, family assets could only be possessed and inherited by men. If a woman married a second time, she was not allowed to take anything and a married daughter did not have the right to inherit anything from her mother or father.

Nowadays, in the vast majority of families, husband and wife jointly own family property and they have equal access to its use and distribution. It has become a commonality for husband and wife to enjoy the same rights and for sons and daughters to have equal rights as heirs. In China today, there is a population problem that involves the survival and development of the Chinese nation, the success or failure of China's modernization initiative as well as the corresponding and continual development among the population up against the economy, society, resources and environment. There have been attempts to assist the Chinese in making responsible reproductive decisions and spacing children to minimize the population overcrowding. There is a less desire to have large families in China due to the different topographies of the country leading to overcrowding of cities and available land space.

In traditional China, large families were extremely common to gain more income in which rural China obviously had more room for a higher population. China's need for space in urban settings is a critical importance for families nowadays and is taking desperate measures and sacrifices for the sake of China and its population. The one child policy was issued in the early 1980s to ensue that China will be able to feed its entire population. Throughout the twentieth century, population has progressively grown to an ultimate number of citizens.

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Jobs and food have become scarce in China and overpopulation is the reason for this. From the one child policy, it restrains men and women from having sex after their first born. Not everyone has abided by the rule and has led to abortions and abandonment and killing of babies. Contraceptives and other such birth control methods are socially unaccepted in China. But for women who produce a second child are intrinsically forced to abort them, kill them or abandon them. This goes to show that the one child policy is not a success because of the fact that women are outwardly killing their own children for the sake of going against the law.

Just recently under the new rules for this policy, “ Farmers who have only one child or two girls are awarded with cash annually from the age of 60. The material reward, varying from 600 yuan (\$80) to more than 1, 000 (\$133. 3) according to a location’s economic position, is a comfort to aging rural couples and an encouragement for others to follow suit voluntarily” (China Daily). This is one incentive for the Chinese to limit their children and decelerate the birth rate to relieve the population epidemic. An ideal marriage in traditional China was an arranged one by parents, elders, or qualified matchmakers.

Now, a marriage is based on mutual love and is under both man and woman’s consent to wed. In 1980, there was a marriage law issuing the freedom of choice of spouse with forbidding any arrangement of unwilling partners. Although there is a trend toward freedom of spouses, there are still arranged marriages that exist today in some parts of rural China where residents are still rather traditional in customs and are unwilling to change to modernized social beliefs. Some traditionalists still go to the extreme of

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kidnapping and selling women as brides for peasants in rural areas of the country but however, this is not common. Bride price payments are common in China and consist of the family of the son whom wishes to marry a woman pays the bride and her family to wed their son. Dowries are minimizing in China aside from bride price payments.

Without a dowry to equalize expenses of the wedding, the bride price payments can be very costly. As stated, “ Some families go into debt to finance a marriage, but the fact that marriage brings another worker and wage earner into the family helps to reduce the burden” (Engel). Despite the given freedom of marriages in the new China, both men and women were free to express their own sexuality but are also restrained because of the one child policy. China has witnessed a sexual liberation in more recent past years. Images and information about sex are ubiquitous in new China unlike old traditional China where sexuality was an obscure and unspoken topic. Urban Chinese are more open to public about sexuality than rural Chinese.

For example, a person could walk down the street in Hong Kong and see a half naked women advertised for a company on a billboard. As for rural China, a person would never see a billboard such as that or in that case, a billboard at all. This is where capitalism comes into play when mentioning sexuality among the Chinese, “ Yet, like it or not, the expansion of capitalism in the Chinese culture has already incorporated sexuality into the day-to-day production and consumption of commodities. Likewise, various sexual subjects have found some means of representation and some forms of resistance strategy from among the proliferation of leisure culture, media and advertising, changes in gender roles, the popularization of sexology, the <https://assignbuster.com/marriagefamilysexuality-in-contemporary-china/>

philosophy of sexual enjoyment as promoted by consumption-oriented ethics, the actively sexual subculture of teenagers, etc” (Ho 7). Western culture has definitely influenced Chinese culture by means of sexuality and the capitalistic nature of it.

Younger, unmarried men and women are more into sexual endeavors than married men and women due to the one child policy. In the policy, it states that it is directed toward married couples, not single men or women.

Sexuality is therefore more restrained in married couples’ lives. Marriage, family, and sexuality are all interrelated. Restrictions and issues have stemmed from these every day aspects of life in contemporary China that still live on today. China is a country where everyone mostly follows a pattern, a pattern that is not always socially acceptable to the outward population.

China is still, today, trying to manage the population, and improve family structures and marriages and has surpassed its own shackled traditional past. Bibliography China Daily. [http://www.npfpc.](http://www.npfpc.gov.cn/en/en2007-12/news20071204-3.htm)

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