

*Tradition and Transition: Hukou-Based Urbanization Status and Co-Residence with Elderly Parents in Contemporary China**

Xiangmei Li, Zheng Su, and Haijing Dai

Abstract

Urbanization in China is a progressive process that is rapid in speed, massive in scale, multiple in pathways, and unique in the institutional scheme. The country's urban population includes heterogeneous groups of temporary migrants, merit-based converters, policy-based converters, and urban natives, depending upon their respective hukou status and hukou conversion. In this study, we used pooled cross-sectional data from four waves of the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2015) to examine variations in household composition across different groups of urban residents. Our sample included married respondents aged 18-59 years ($N = 26,930$), with rural non-migratory residents serving as the reference group. Logistic regression results

Xiangmei Li is Lecturer in the School of Politics and Public Administration, Guangxi Normal University.

Zheng Su is Associate Professor in the School of International and Public Affairs, Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Correspondence should be sent to zhengsu@sjtu.edu.cn.

Haijing Dai is Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

* This research was supported by the National Social Science Fund of China (No. 19CZZ009), the Ministry of Education of China Youth Foundation Project of Humanities and Social Sciences (No. 18YJC810010) and the Shanghai Pujiang Program (No. 18PJC077).

revealed that (1) policy-based converters presented no notable changes in patrilocality and matrilocality; (2) temporary migrants and merit-based migrants had lower odds of patrilocality but showed no differences in the likelihood of matrilocality; and (3) urban natives had a lower likelihood of patrilocality and a slightly higher probability of matrilocality. These findings indicate that urban groups of varying hukou-status experienced asymmetric deviations from traditional extended households. These shifts reflect a landscape of gradient individualization of the urban family composition in transitional China.

Multi-generational co-residence is a crucial indicator of the sociopolitical organization and the organization of production.¹ In traditional China, the ideal of the large family and the centrality of the patriarchal relationship constituted core cultural elements.² The co-residence of parents and married sons was historically a significant feature of household formation, which exhibited both practical and symbolic implications for the members of the household. The patrilocal household not only facilitated collective family labor for agricultural production, but more importantly, embodied a couple's filial piety (孝 *xiao*) to the husband's parents.³ In the post-reform period, social forces such as economic development, rapid urbanization, and the rise of individualism have ushered in a new modern familial culture. The modernity of the Chinese family lies in the pursuit of individual choices and personal happiness.⁴ Today, co-residence is typically a means to facilitate the reciprocal exchange of goods and services between members of two different generations.⁵ In this context, the number of patriarchal extended families is on the decline, and the nuclear family is gradually becoming accepted as a standard type of family structure.⁶

Chinese families are moving toward nuclearization alongside China's transition to an industrial society, despite the continued prevalence of extended households. However, there are at least two considerations necessary for a more nuanced understanding of how the extended family has disintegrated into the nuclear form in the process of urbanization. First, urbanization in China is rapid in speed, massive in scale, multiple in pathways, and unique in the institutionalized scheme of the household registration (户口 *hukou*) system. From 1979 to 2018, the number of individuals living in urban areas increased from about 98 million to around 831 million as the proportion of urban residents increased from