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Patrilocal, Matrilocal or Neolocal?

Intergenerational Proximity of Married Couples in China

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Abstract

Objective: The study describes current patterns of intergenerational proximity in China, and analyzes the structural conditions that are associated with couples' proximity to the husband's and the wife's parents.

Background: Patrilocality is a core aspect of the traditional Chinese kinship system, and is deeply rooted in Confucian beliefs. In recent decades, however, this custom has been challenged by internal migration as well changes in family values and preferences.

Method: We model the effect of each spouse's household registration (*hukou*) origin, education level, and sibling structure on intergenerational proximity, using a nationally representative sample of 4,256 couples derived from the 2010 China Family Panel Studies.

Results: Almost 75% of married Chinese couples live with or in close proximity to the husband's parents. There is, however, a strong social gradient in intergenerational proximity, and patrilocality is particularly pronounced among rural-origin and less educated couples. Matrilocal residence remains unusual, although it is more likely when the wife has no brothers.

Conclusion: The custom of patrilocal residence demonstrates a remarkable resilience, even as other patriarchal traditions have crumbled in the face of China's 'Great Transformation'.

Implications: We provide explanations for the persistence of patrilocality and discuss implications for intergenerational support, gender inequality and son preference.

Key words: Asian/Pacific Islander Families, Families in middle and later life, Gender, Intergenerational relations, Living Arrangements

Introduction

In China's traditional family system, women are expected to move in with their husband's family after marriage, either sharing a household or living in the immediate vicinity. Patrilocality fosters lifelong bonds and support relationships between parents and sons, reinforcing the dominance of male over female kinship ties (Greenhalgh, 1985; Whyte, 2003). In doing so, it contributes to the problem of 'son preference', which has led to a highly imbalanced sex ratio at birth (Lai, 2005). Moreover, the geographic separation from her natal family places women at a social and economic disadvantage relative to their spouses, exacerbating gender inequality within the household (J. Yu & Xie, 2017).

In recent decades, however, a number of structural changes have challenged China's patriarchal family traditions. First, uneven economic development has led to a surge in internal migration, particularly from rural to urban areas. Second, rapid fertility decline reduced the availability of sons to rely on in old age, and elevated the status of daughters as potential providers of social and economic support (Lei, 2013; Wu, Ye, & He, 2014). Finally, individualization and women's economic empowerment have weakened adherence to traditional customs and gender role beliefs (Whyte, 2003; Yan, 2003).

Against this background, this study describes current patterns of intergenerational proximity in China, and looks at the factors that are associated with couples' proximity to the husband's and the wife's parents. In the first stage, we analyze the determinants of proximity to each set of parents separately, focusing in particular on the role of education, sibling structure, household registration and support needs. In the second stage, we look at relative proximity to the husband's and wife's parents, using a fourfold typology: close to the husband's parents only (*patrilocal*); close to the wife's parents only (*matrilocal*); close to both parents (*bilocal*); and

close to neither the husband nor the wife's parents (*neolocal*). We use a newly available, nationally representative dataset that provides detailed information on couples as well as their parents.

To our knowledge, this is the first study to provide such a comprehensive overview of intergenerational proximity in the Chinese context. Contrary to recent reports of increasing gender equality in other aspects of intergenerational solidarity (Gruijters, 2017, 2018; A. Hu, 2017; Xie & Zhu, 2009), we find that residential decisions of Chinese couples continue to exhibit a strong bias towards the husband's parents. There is, however, a social gradient in patrilocality, and neolocal residence is the modal arrangement among high-status couples. Matrilocal residence remains unusual, and is often associated with the wife not having any brothers.

Intergenerational Proximity in the Chinese Context

Bengtson & Roberts (1991) suggest that the strength of intergenerational solidarity depends on six interrelated elements of parent-child interaction: affection, social contact, consensus, functional exchange, filial norms and geographic proximity. Proximity is a precondition for the provision of care and other forms of time-intensive support between generations, and has therefore been studied quite extensively, although generally in a Western context. Existing studies have mainly looked at proximity in individual child-parents dyads, highlighting for example the role of social class (Greenwell & Bengtson, 1997), family culture (Hank, 2007) and education (Kalmijn, 2006).

A number of recent studies have gone beyond this approach by looking at the relative proximity of couples to both sets of parents. This approach is based on the notion that residential decisions of couples depend on the respective needs and preferences of both partners, as well as those of

their parents. Couples' proximity to each set of parents is thus determined by a complex interplay in which marriage markets, cultural norms, practical considerations and intra-household bargaining power all play an important role (Chan & Ermisch, 2015a). Thus far, these studies have been based on data from Western countries, notably the Netherlands (Blaauboer, Mulder, & Zorlu, 2011), Norway (Løken, Lommerud, & Lundberg, 2013), the UK (Chan & Ermisch, 2015a) and the US (Compton & Pollak, 2015).

We seek to extend this approach to China, a country with a distinctly patrilineal kinship system and a unique social, economic and political environment. In particular, we are interested in the association of education, sibling structure and rural/urban origin with (relative) proximity to the husband's and the wife's parents. We will discuss these factors in more detail below, and derive hypotheses about their effects in the Chinese context. Before doing so, however, we would like to provide a short introduction to Chinese family norms and customs. Although many of these are no longer fully adhered to in practice, they provide a useful backdrop against which to compare current patterns of intergenerational proximity.

Tradition and Change in Chinese families

With the exception of a number of minority ethnic groups, the Chinese have traditionally adhered to a strictly patrilineal and patriarchal kinship structure (Li, Feldman, & Li, 2001; Whyte, 2003). In pre-Communist China, Confucian values such as filial piety informed a distinctive family structure that is an emblematic example of Parsons's 'classic extended family' (1943): parents would typically share a household with one or more sons and their families, and older males remained the head of household until their death. Hierarchical relations existed not only between generations, but also between the sexes (Greenhalgh, 1985). In the traditional model, sons are considered permanent members of their native families, while daughters

'transition' to their husband's family after marriage and would be expected to move in with their in-laws. The custom of village or lineage exogamy implied that this would generally be outside their native village (Parish & Whyte, 1978). This resulted in strongly patrilocal residence pattern, which ensured that parents could rely on the support of their sons (and daughters-in-law) in old age.

Under Mao's Communist regime (1949-1976), traditional Confucian practices such as arranged marriages were banned, which somewhat reduced parental influence over their children's marital choices and residential decisions (Xu & Whyte, 1990; Yan, 2002). It has been observed though that many aspects of the traditional model—including geographic proximity—remained relatively intact during this period. For example, the centralized job and housing allocation system in urban areas led to a situation in which adult children generally "ended up not simply living in the same city, but working and usually living in the same work-unit complex as their parents" (Whyte, 2005, p. 15). In rural areas, Communist policies such as collective farming and the *hukou* system of household registration had a similar effect. Even in the Maoist era, however, a number of notable changes in post-marital residence patterns emerged, often related to a desire for increased conjugal autonomy. For example, Yu (1977) observed that instead of sharing a household—and often a room—with their parents and brothers, newly married sons would often construct their own houses within or close to the parental compound; thereby creating more privacy for both generations. This kind of 'quasi-coresidence' is still highly common in China, particularly in rural areas (Chen, 2005).

The market transition of 1979, which resulted in a rapid economic, cultural and demographic transformation, posed an even more profound challenge to the traditional model. The paragraphs below summarize these changes and their potential implications for intergenerational proximity.

First, the demand for labor in the booming urban economy and the loosening of *hukou* restrictions caused an unprecedented increase in migration; mainly by young individuals from rural areas who moved to urban areas in search of work. The total number of internal migrants increased from 21.6 million in 1990 to 221 million in 2010, or about 17% of the total population (Liang, Li, & Ma, 2014, p. 698). The vast majority of these are temporary or 'floating' migrants: Hu, Xu & Chen found that only 8% of rural-origin migrants had managed to convert their household registration or purchased housing in cities (F. Hu, Xu, & Chen, 2011). Because older parents face high barriers to move with their adult children, migration has increased the spatial distance between generations (K. Zhang, Wang, & Ma, 2017). Between 1990 and 2010, the coresidence rate declined from 60% to 33% for men aged 65 and older, and from 69% to 42% for women of these ages (Ren & Treiman, 2015, p. 256).

Moreover, the normative foundations of the traditional family model have been challenged directly by cultural change, which has reduced the power of the older generation over the young. The anthropologist Yunxiang Yan observed a shift towards 'intergenerational intimacy' in China: a more egalitarian parent-child relationship that emphasizes emotional bonds rather than filial obligations. As a result, he noticed that "an increasing number of newlyweds actually chose coresidence in a stem family so as to assume management of the family, benefit from the assistance of their elderly parents who were still working full-time, and enjoy conjugal intimacy and freedom of choice" (Yan, 2016, p. 5). Other studies have confirmed the rise in 'child-centered' coresidence, which has also been attributed to increasing housing prices and reduced family size (Q. F. Zhang, 2004). This type of coresidence is mainly related to the life course needs of the younger generation, and is often temporary in nature (Chen, 2005).

A further modification to the traditional model is the increasing importance of daughters as providers of intergenerational support. A number of studies show that daughters often provide higher levels of practical, financial and social support to parents than sons, which runs counter

to traditional expectations (Gruijters, 2017; Lei, 2013). The strengthening of parent-daughter ties has been linked to declining birth rates, which increased the number of families without sons. Moreover, educational expansion and increasing female labor force participation have improved women's economic status in the household (Wu et al., 2014).

The implications of these socio-economic and demographic changes for couples' (relative) proximity to each set of parents remains unclear. The following section outlines some of the factors that have been identified as key determinants of proximity in other contexts, and hypothesizes about their effect in contemporary China.

Conceptual Framework

In patrilineal societies such as China, couples' close proximity to the husband's parents and close proximity to the wife's parents are the outcomes of two fundamentally different processes. Patrilocal couples conform to a culturally prescribed norm, whereas matrilocality—and particularly coresidence with the wife's parents—is still considered unusual and non-normative (Pimentel & Liu, 2004).

The modernization hypothesis (Goode, 1963) suggests that traditional norms, such as patrilocality, will be weakened by the liberating forces of urbanization, economic development and educational expansion, while non-normative behaviors become more acceptable. This implies that matrilocality, as well as neolocality, should be more prevalent among urban elites. Existing research confirms that coresidence with the wife's parents is indeed more common among high-SES urban couples (Chu, Xie, & Yu, 2011). Matrilocal coresidence may also be driven by practical considerations, however, and is particularly likely when the wife's parents have no 'normative alternative' in the form of a son (Li et al., 2001; Pimentel & Liu, 2004).

Coresidence with the husband's parents, on the other hand, is often associated with lower socio-economic status. Because parents generally live with one married child only, selection into coresidence can be thought of as a bargaining process between (male) siblings (Ma & Wen, 2016). A number of other studies observed that high-status sons preferred to provide financial support in lieu of sharing a household with parents, thereby maintaining their privacy and independence. Less successful sons, on the other hand, may stay with parents as a way of saving money on housing (Xie & Zhu, 2009; Q. F. Zhang, 2004). Having small children is another important reason for patrilocal coresidence, because the paternal grandparents are considered the default provider of grandchild care in China (Chen, Liu, & Mair, 2011).

It can be assumed that in many cases, the husband's and wife's residential preferences are not aligned. Men derive more benefits from patrilocal residence, including fulfilling their filial duties, maintaining close social and economic ties to their family and location of origin and obtaining practical support from their parents. Women, on the other hand, lose a degree of autonomy and independence when living with or near their in-laws, and conflicts between wives and their mothers-in-law are a well-known theme in the Chinese literature (Judd, 1989; W. Zhang, 2009). A recent study showed that women suffer particularly large motherhood wage penalties when living with their husband's parents, but none when living with their own parents (J. Yu & Xie, 2017). Matrilocal residence, on the other hand, carries a particular stigma for men (Lui, 2016).

The male dominance hypothesis suggests that couples' residential decisions are most likely to follow the man's interests and preferences (Blaauboer et al., 2011; Chan & Ermisch, 2015a). Male dominance may result from cultural norms as well as differences in bargaining power, both of which are likely to play a role in China. Traditional gender role beliefs—which assign the major responsibility for taking family decisions to men—continue to be prevalent in China, especially among older generations (Shu, Zhu, & Zhang, 2012). The power imbalance between

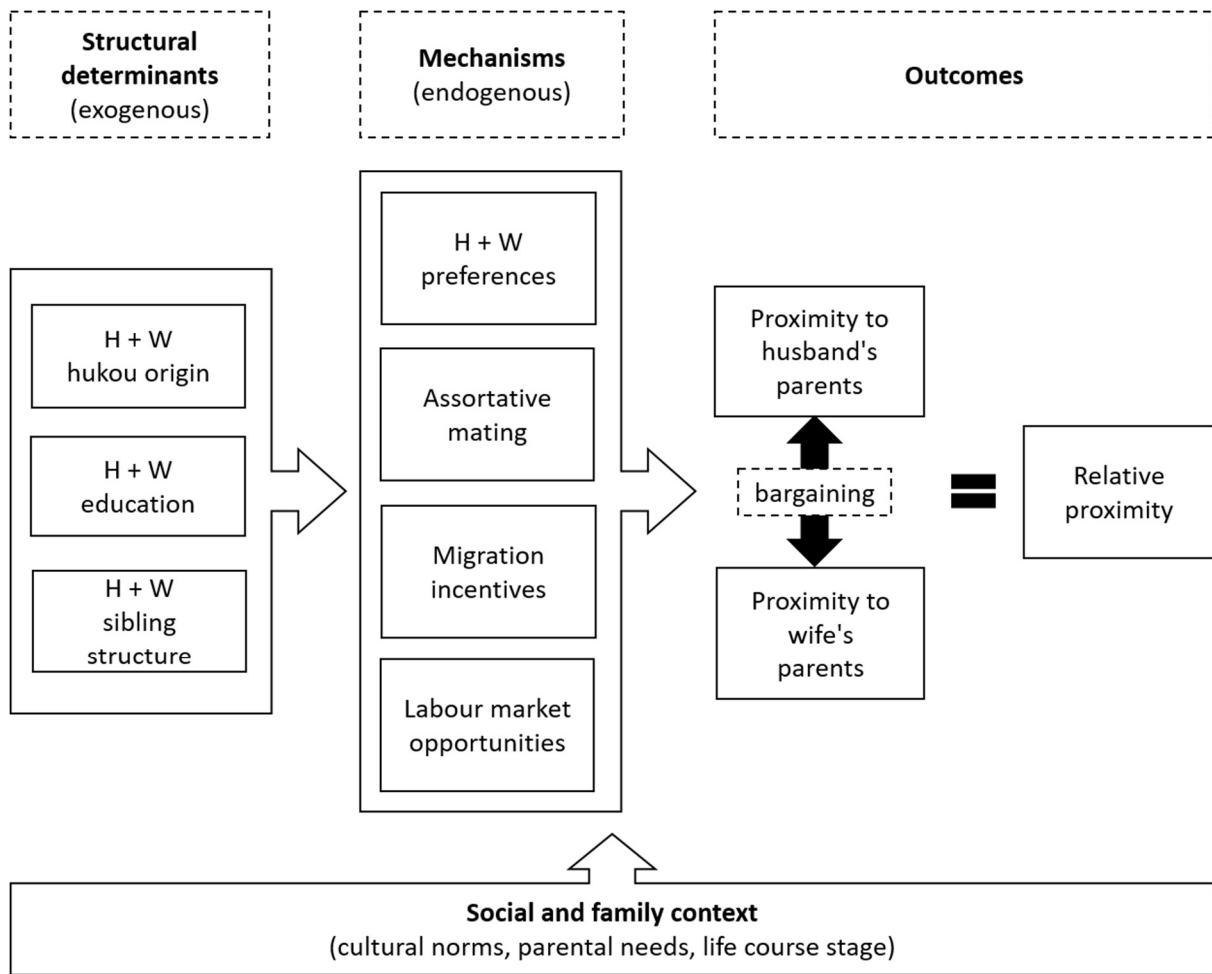
spouses is reinforced by the Chinese tradition of status hypergamy, which ensures that men tend to be older and have higher economic resources than their wives (Mu & Xie, 2014).

Most Chinese couples reside with neither the husband's nor the wife's parents, however. It is unusual for parents to share a household with more than one married child at a time, and most children—particularly those belonging to older cohorts—have multiple siblings. Moreover, an increasing number of older parents lives alone or with a spouse only. A number of qualitative studies have observed that "the aged do not necessarily prefer or benefit from co-residence with their children" (Miller, 2007, p. 32). Both generations' preferences for privacy and independence as well as frequent interaction may be better served by living in close proximity rather than in the same household (Croll, 2006).

Few studies focus on the determinants of proximity in China, however, and none analyze the relative proximity of couples to the husband's and the wife's parents. As discussed previously, the determinants of relative proximity to each set of parents may be quite different from those of individual child-parent dyads. In particular, it is important to take into account the specific background and resources of each spouse, as well as the cultural norms and preferences that govern post-marital residence.

A graphical representation of our conceptual framework is provided in Figure 1. We seek to establish the effect of three structural determinants: hukou origin, education level and sibling structure, measured separately for the husband and the wife. They are assumed to affect intergenerational proximity through a variety of interrelated pathways, including assortative mating, migration incentives and preference formation.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Hypotheses

Our first set of hypotheses relates to the role of education. Obtaining (advanced) education may require a move away from the parental home, particularly for rural children. Education also provides access to skilled jobs that are concentrated in specific—usually urban—areas, whereas less educated children tend to have working-class jobs that are more readily available in the location of origin (Chan & Ermisch, 2015a; Kalmijn, 2006). Analyses of internal migration flows in China show that skilled migrants (defined as those with a tertiary degree) tend to move over longer distances than less-skilled migrants (Liu & Shen, 2017). Less

educated children may also be more reliant on parents to provide various services, such as child care (Smith, 1998).

Looking at education from a couple's perspective, we therefore expect a positive relationship between education and neolocal residence. Moreover, the modernization perspective suggests that education reduces attachment to traditional norms and customs, including those that dictate patrilocal residence. In line with the bargaining power hypothesis, we assume that the latter effect will be mainly driven by the woman's education. Education increases a woman social status and earning capacity, and therewith her leverage in selecting a spouse and negotiating residential decisions. For similar reasons, we expect the woman's education to be positively associated with matrilocal residence.

Our second variable of interest is sibling structure. Chinese parents continue to play an important role in their children's partner selection and residential decisions (H. Zhang, 2005). It can be assumed that parents prefer to have at least one child living nearby, for example to help in the family farm or business, for companionship, or to provide care and support. Even in the absence of direct parental guidance, it is likely that consideration for the extended family's well-being plays an important role in children's residential decision-making. Families with several sons have been observed to behave like 'corporate groups', in which at least one son stays close to parents, while others may become migrants (Cong & Silverstein, 2010; Ma & Wen, 2016). Such a division of labor is not possible when there is only one son, suggesting that men without brothers live closer to parents.

Although daughters are traditionally excluded from such considerations, the situation is different when the family has no sons. Sonless parents have no 'normative' option for social support and exchange, and are thus more likely to rely on daughters (Pimentel & Liu, 2004). Ethnographic literature has shown that sonless parents may arrange or encourage bilocal or

matrilocal (*shangmen*) marriages for their daughters, even though the latter arrangement is often considered embarrassing for the husband (Judd, 2010; Li et al., 2001; H. Zhang, 2005; W. Zhang, 2009).

Thirdly, we consider differences in (relative) proximity to parents between couples of rural and urban origins. Rural-urban distinctions in China are shaped by the system of household registration or *hukou*, which governs access to land, housing, education, and even fertility. It is generally assumed that the *hukou* system contributed to the separation of rural families by restricting the mobility of older adults in particular, creating the well-known phenomenon of 'left behind' rural elders (Biao, 2007). Most of the Chinese migrant population consists of young rural adults, and it is increasingly common for women as well as men to engage in migrant work. Urban residents can generally access jobs and education locally, and may thus be less inclined to migrate. Moreover, urban housing prices have skyrocketed in recent decades, forcing an increasing number of urban couples to reside with parents, at least until they have accumulated enough money to afford their own apartment (Chen, 2005). This suggests a higher level of neolocal residence among couples of rural origins. Furthermore, modernization theory predicts a higher prevalence of matrilocal residence in urban China, where adherence to traditional gender values is less pronounced (Y. Hu & Scott, 2016). A particular situation arises in the case of urban/rural intermarriage. In China, urban *hukou* carries a status premium that may give the urban spouse an advantage in intra-household power dynamics (Lui, 2017). In such couples, the rural spouse is likely to acquire an urban household registration and settle in the city permanently, increasing the distance to their rural parents.

Finally, we test the male dominance hypothesis by looking at the extent to which support needs affect proximity to the husband's and the wife's parents. Providing or receiving hands-on support, such as caregiving and assistance with housework, is an important motivation for intergenerational coresidence and proximity (Greenwell & Bengtson, 1997). For example, it is

very common for Chinese grandparents to take care of young children, enabling the parents to engage in full-time work (Chen et al., 2011). Traditionally such support was mainly provided by the paternal grandparents, in keeping with the predominance of male kinship ties. There are indications that this is changing, however, and maternal grandparents now also play a substantial role. Zhang even observed that "some mothers feel more at ease leaving their young children with the maternal grandmother" (2009, p. 270). While the presence of small children may thus be an important determinant of intergenerational proximity for relatively young couples, later in the life course couples may want to live close to parents in order to provide care for them. Research has shown that intergenerational living arrangements are responsive to parental needs (e.g. Korinek, Zimmer, & Gu, 2011). In line with the gendered demands of filial piety, we expect couples' residential arrangements to be more responsive to the needs of the husband's parents than to those of the wife's.

Method

Data

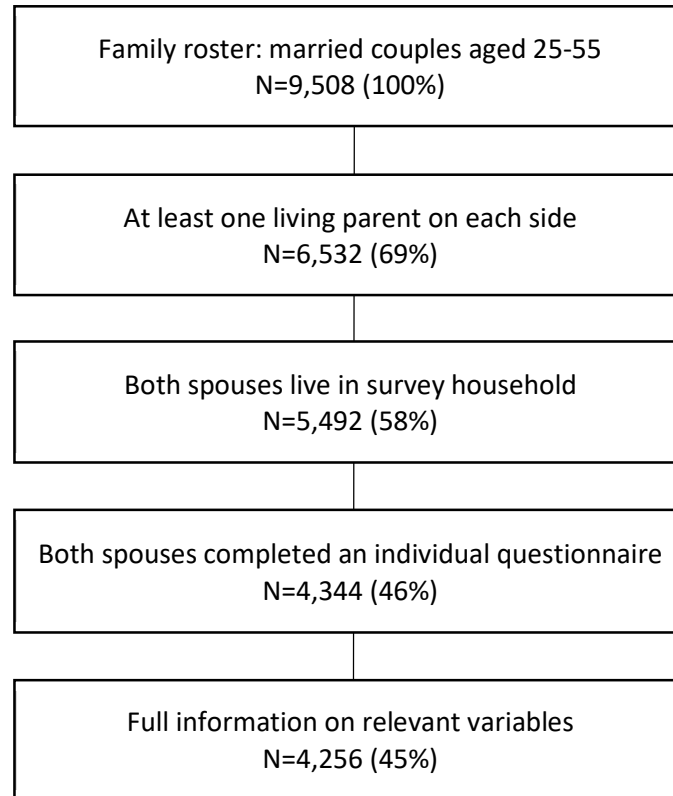
All analyses are based on Wave 1 (2010) of the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), a high-quality, nationally representative survey managed by Peking University (see <http://www.issp.pku.edu.cn/cfps/EN/>). Data were collected using computer-assisted personal interviews, with extensive quality checks both during and after the interview. The CFPS employed a multi-stage probability sample. The primary sampling unit consisted of urban districts and rural counties, from which a set of neighborhoods or villages were selected. In the final stage, households were randomly selected based on a map of the sampled localities drawn up by CFPS researchers. A 'household' in the CFPS survey refers to an economically independent dwelling unit with at least one member of Chinese nationality. It is not uncommon

for Chinese households to live apart temporarily, for example to engage in migrant work. The household roster therefore included individuals that lived elsewhere at the time of the survey, as long as they maintained close economic ties with the survey household. In 2010, the CFPS covered 33,600 adults in 14,960 households in 25 provinces. The response rate was 81% at the household level (for more information on sampling procedures and representativeness, see Xie & Hu, 2014; Xie & Lu, 2015).

We derived our measure of intergenerational proximity from the family roster, which collects basic demographic information on each family member as well as their immediate relatives. Further information on the husband's and the wife's personal background was derived from the individual questionnaires, which were administered to each adult family member. The individual response rate was 84%.

Because we are interested in relative proximity to the husband's and the wife's parents, our unit of analysis is the couple. Figure 2 shows the process we followed in obtaining our final sample of 4,256 couples. We started from the family roster, selecting all married couples where the oldest spouse was aged between 25 and 55 ($N=9,508$). We then restricted the sample to couples in which both the husband and the wife had at least one living parent. We also excluded couples in which one of the spouses was temporarily living elsewhere. For such couples our main outcome measure (the relative proximity to both sets of parents) cannot be defined, because it would be different for each spouse. Moreover, in most cases the absent spouse would not have completed an individual questionnaire. Finally, we restricted our sample to couples in which both spouses completed an individual questionnaire, and excluded 88 couples because of missing data. All models and descriptive statistics are weighted to account for sampling design as well as non-response.

Figure 2: Selection of the analytical sample



Measures and Descriptives

The first dependent variable, *distance*, is defined by the location of the parent(s)' household relative to that of the couple's (1=coresident, 2=next door, 3=in the same community, 4=in a different community in the same district, 5=in a different district in the same region, 6=in a different region in the same province, 7=in a different province or abroad). 'Region' here refers to prefectures, relatively large sub-provincial units that generally contain several million inhabitants. Descriptive statistics (Table 1) show large differences in distance to the husband's and the wife's parents: more than a third of the sampled couples lived with the husband's parents (38.7%), with an additional 35.6% living either next door or in the same community. The corresponding figures for the wife's parents were 4.6% and 18.0%.

Table 1: Summary statistics (dependent variables)

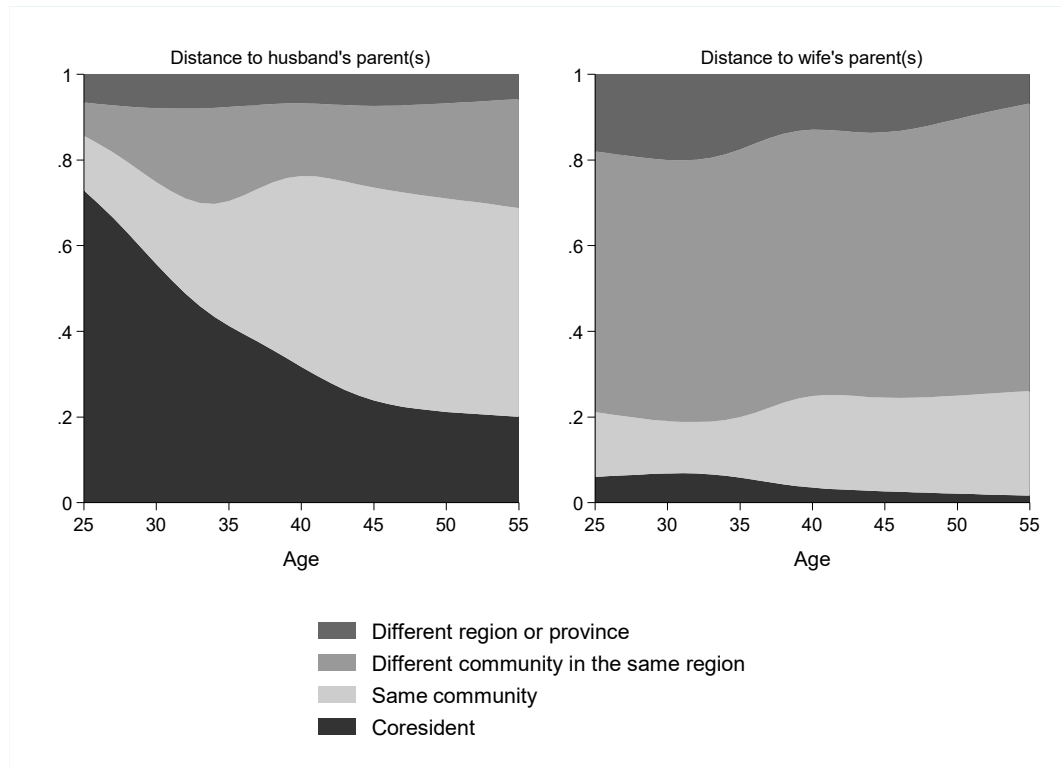
	Weighted %	Unweighted N
Distance to the husband's parents		
Coresident	38.7	1,602
Next door	10.6	413
Same community	25.0	1,152
Same district	12.4	525
Same region	6.0	252
Same province	3.9	129
Different province / abroad	3.3	183
Distance to the wife's parents		
Coresident	4.5	175
Next door	1.5	60
Same community	16.5	690
Same district	48.1	2,072
Same region	14.1	592
Same province	7.7	316
Different province / abroad	7.7	351
Relative proximity		
Patrilocal	57.9	2,490
Matrilocal	6.0	248
Bilocal	16.4	677
Neolocal	19.7	841
Observations	100	4,256

Note: CFPS 2010, sample consists of married couples aged 25-55 (oldest spouse) with at least one living parent on each side.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of couples' distance to husband's and the wife's parents (condensed into four categories), over age. It is particularly striking how many young couples coresided with the husband's parents. With respect to the wife's parents, living in a different community in the same region was the modal category for all age groups. In the CFPS, individuals that have temporarily left the household for reasons such as work are still considered part of the same family. The proximity question refers to the 'permanent' household rather than the current place of residence, and may therefore overestimate actual geographic

proximity to a certain extent. In most cases these temporary migrants would not have completed an individual questionnaire, however, and would therefore be excluded from the sample.

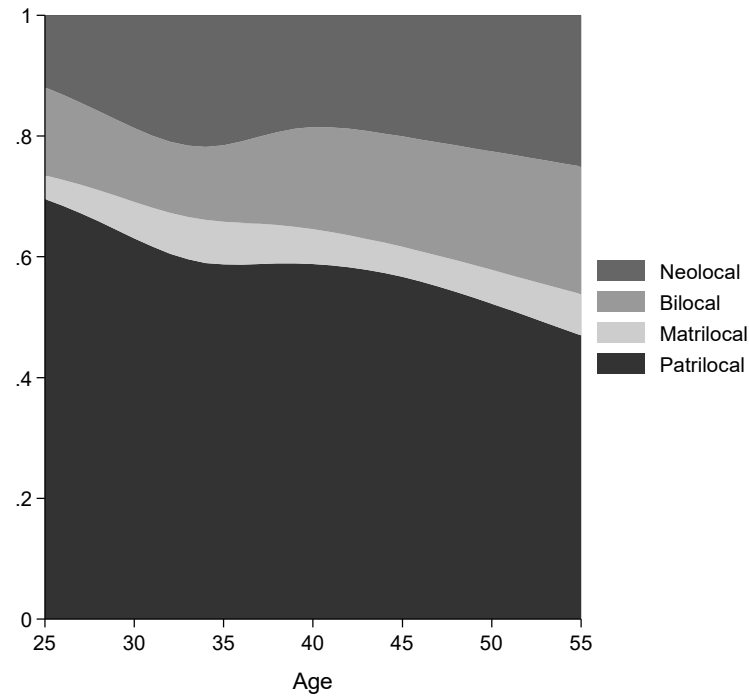
Figure 3: Couples' distance to the husband's and wife's parents (4 categories), by age



Note: Stacked plots using restricted cubic spline smoothing of proportions.
Based on the analytical sample (N=4,256)

Our second dependent variable distinguishes between four types of *relative proximity*: patrilocality (living close to the husband's parent(s), but not the wife's); matrilocality (living close to the wife's parent(s), but not the husband's); bilocality (living close to both sets of parents) and neolocality (living close to neither set of parents). 'Close' is hereby defined as coresident, next door or in the same village / neighborhood (proximity categories 5 to 7). Patrilocality was the most common category (57.9%), followed by neolocality (19.7%) and bilocality (16.4%), while matrilocality remained rare (6.0%). Figure 4 shows that relative proximity was relatively similar for all age groups.

Figure 4: Couples' relative proximity to the husband's and wife's parents, by age



Note: Stacked plot using restricted cubic spline smoothing of proportions.
Based on the analytical sample (N=4,256)

Education is measured using three categories, reflecting the highest level of education completed (1=primary or below, 2=junior or senior high school and 3=college. We include the education level of each spouse separately. Men had somewhat higher levels of education than women (see Table 2).

Hukou origin refers to the respondent's household registration status (rural or urban) at age 12. Household registration is passed on from parents to children, and a rural hukou can only be converted to urban in certain circumstances (for example, by obtaining a university degree or by marrying an urban resident). By using hukou origin (rather than current hukou) we ensure that we capture the full effect of hukou on intergenerational proximity, including those that are mediated by marriage, migration and other factors (see Figure 1).

Table 2: Summary statistics (independent variables)

	Weighted %	Unweighted N
Husband's education		
Up to primary	30.7	1,389
(Junior) high school	57.6	2,424
College	11.7	443
Wife's education		
Up to primary	41.2	1,885
(Junior) high school	49.1	2,004
College	9.7	367
Hukou origin (age 12)		
Both urban	11.3	454
Husband urban, wife rural	6.0	240
Husband rural, wife urban	4.4	164
Both rural	78.3	3,398
Sibling structure		
Both have brother(s)	52.7	2,377
Only husband no brother(s)	25.6	1,016
Only wife no brother(s)	10.1	428
Neither has brother(s)	11.6	435
Has young child (aged 0-6)	35.7	1,346
Any spouse is ethnic minority	13.8	464
Income quartile		
First (lowest)	25.0	1,162
Second	26.3	1,092
Third	23.6	946
Fourth (Highest)	25.1	1,056
Age cohort (oldest spouse)		
25 - 34	35.0	1,252
35 - 44	43.3	1,876
45 - 55	21.7	1,128
Husband's parents		
Both parents alive	63.3	2,568
Only mother alive	26.1	1,197
Only father alive	10.6	491
Wife's parents		
Both parents alive	63.4	2,638
Only mother alive	23.4	1,031
Only father alive	13.2	587
Observations	100	4,256

Note: CFPS 2010, sample: Married couples aged 25-55 (oldest spouse) with at least one living parent on each side

We combined the hukou origin of both spouses, leading to a four-way classification (1=both urban, 2=urban husband, rural wife, 3=rural husband, urban wife, 4=both rural). Table 2 shows that the urban husband / rural wife combination was more common than its inverse, although most couples had the same hukou origin.

Sibling structure describes whether either of the spouses had no brothers. It has four categories: 1=both have brothers, 2=only the husband has no brother(s), 3=only the wife has no brother(s), and 4=neither have brothers. Women were less likely to be without brothers, since Chinese families generally prefer to have at least one son.

Finally, we included two covariates related to each generation's *support needs*. The first is a dummy variable indicating whether the couple has a young child (up to six years old) as a proxy for childcare needs. The second relates to survival status of each set of parents (both alive, widowed mother or widowed father) as a proxy for their need for care and companionship.

All models control for ethnic minority status and the couple's age cohort. Ethnic minorities in China often have different family traditions, and some adhere to a matrilineal kinship system. The cohort variable is based on the oldest spouse's age (25-34, 35-44 or 45-55). Most couples (43.4%) belong to the 35-44 age cohort. We also control for the couples' income quartile. Low income may be one of the reasons to coreside with parents, as discussed in the previous section.

Analytical Approach

In line with our conceptual framework (Figure 1), we are interested in establishing the total effect of our variables of interest (hukou origin, education level and sibling structure), including any effects that operate through mechanisms such as migration and assortative mating. The idea is that these variables reflect the origins and relative resources of each partner, and their

overall effect on proximity tells us something about the ways in which structural conditions shape gendered kinship structures and opportunities for intergenerational support.

In the first set of analyses we examine proximity to each set of parents separately, using an ordinal regression model. It is sometimes argued that coresidence should be treated as a qualitatively distinct family arrangement, rather than as the highest level of proximity (Compton & Pollak, 2015; Silverstein, 1995). Sharing a household with parents has implications for costs and privacy that may have their own specific determinants. Simply excluding coresident children from the proximity equation may introduce selection bias, however, because selection into coresidence is non-random and may be correlated with unobserved characteristics, such as emotional attachment to parents. To allow for this possibility we employ a sample selection model, using the *heckoprobit* command in Stata 14 (StataCorp, 2015), using parents' widowhood as an exclusion restriction. This model provides two sets of coefficients: one for the likelihood of coresiding with parents (the selection equation) and one for the distance of non-coresident children, corrected for selection effects.

The second analysis looks at relative proximity to both sets of parents, using a multinomial logit model. For ease of interpretation, we present the results from this model as predicted probabilities and average marginal effects (AMEs), rather than as odds ratios.

Results

First we analyzed coresidence and distance to each set of parents separately, using the ordered probit model with sample selection (Table 3). Only in the model for the husband's parents did the correlation coefficient between the error terms in the two equations (*rho*) differ significantly from 0, suggesting that sample selection bias may have been a concern. Thereafter we examined the determinants of relative proximity, using the four-category classification

described previously (Table 4). Results from this multinomial regression model are presented as average marginal effects (AMEs). For categorical predictors, AMEs can be interpreted as the change in the predicted probability of belonging to the respective proximity type, relative to the baseline category. By definition, the AMEs add up to 0 for each category.

Following modernization theory, we expected lower levels of patrilocal and higher levels of matrilocality and neolocality among high-status couples. These hypotheses were largely supported: Table 4 shows that both education and income level were consistently associated with an increased probability of neolocal residence, at the expense of patrilocal residence. Table 3 shows that this effect was driven by a reduced propensity to coreside with the husband's parents as well as increased distance of non-coresident couples. In terms of predicted probabilities, only 29% of couples in which both spouses had a college degree lived with the husband's parents, compared to 41% of couples with at most a primary school degree. In line with the bargaining power hypothesis, matrilocal residence became somewhat more likely when the wife had at least a high school education, while the effect of husband's education level was not significant.

Second, we hypothesized that couples in which one partner had no brother(s) would be more likely to live with or near that partner's parents. This hypothesis was confirmed for men as well as women: compared to couples in which both have brothers, patrilocality increased by 12 percentage points ($p < 0.001$) when only the husband had no brothers, and matrilocality increased by 13 percentage points ($p < 0.001$) when only the wife had no brothers. Table 3 shows that this finding was driven primarily by an increased probability of coresidence, rather than by increased proximity of non-coresident couples. Moreover, when only the wife had no brothers couples tended to live farther away from the husband's parents. This suggests that matrilocal (co)residence is often driven by practical concerns, such as the need for male labor or support in old age. Li et al. report that it is not uncommon for sonless parents to 'adopt' a

son-in-law, who will continue the family lineage and take over the duties that are traditionally assigned to a son (2001). This coping strategy is likely to become more common as fertility decline reduces the availability of sons. The question of relative proximity is particularly urgent for couples in which neither the husband nor the wife has any brother: they may face pressure to live close to both sets of parents, which is often a practical impossibility. Interestingly, when neither partner has brothers, only the likelihood of matrilocality increases (by 5 percentage points) at the expense of neolocality (−8 points). In terms of predicted probabilities, however, these couples are still more likely to be patrilocal than matrilocal (58% vs 10%).

Third, we are interested in differences between urban and rural couples. Table 3 shows that compared to couples of urban origin, couples in which both spouses are of rural origin lived closer to the husband's parent(s) ($B = -0.35, p < 0.001$) and were more likely to coreside with them. As a result, their relative proximity type was more likely to be patrilocal ($AME = 0.16, p < 0.001$), and less likely to be neolocal ($AME = -0.17, p < 0.001$). This is a large effect, and highlights the cultural and economic differences between couples of rural and urban origins. It also challenges the commonly held perception that rural people are more likely to 'leave their parents behind' in order to become migrant workers. In fact, couples of rural origin lived closer to both the husband's and the wife's parents (Table 3), a finding that is in line with previous research (Chu et al., 2011). It is important to remember, however, that our analysis focuses on married children only. Rural migrant workers are often young, unmarried people, many of whom return to their region of origin upon marriage, especially if they are female (Fan, 2009). Moreover, urban residents may also have reasons to migrate, for example from smaller townships to large cities.

Table 3: Results from the ordered probit models with sample selection
(probit coefficients, weighted)

	Husband's parents		Wife's parents	
	Coresidence	Distance	Coresidence	Distance
H: Up to primary (ref.)				
H: (Junior) high school	-0.038	0.044	0.010	0.008
H: College	-0.322*	0.427***	-0.068	0.215*
W: Up to primary (ref.)				
W: (Junior) high school	0.005	0.248***	0.095	-0.058
W: College	-0.064	0.328*	0.113	-0.141
Both urban hukou origin (ref.)				
H urban, W rural	0.268	-0.002	-0.389	0.410***
H rural, W urban	0.164	0.378***	0.027	-0.082
Both rural	0.401***	-0.347***	-0.232	-0.245**
Both have brother(s) (ref.)				
Only H no brother(s)	1.118***	-0.298*	-0.211	0.046
Only W no brother(s)	-0.037	0.212**	1.409***	-0.095
Neither has brother(s)	0.796***	0.036	0.728***	0.024
Has child between 0-6	0.113	-0.080	0.307*	0.040
Ethnic minority	0.263**	-0.222*	0.264	-0.054
Lowest income quartile (ref.)				
Second	-0.131	0.115	-0.055	0.052
Third	-0.063	0.336***	0.143	0.065
Highest	-0.320***	0.515***	0.234	0.223**
Aged 25-34 (ref.)				
Aged 35-49	-0.336***	-0.201*	0.038	-0.238***
Aged 50-60	-0.663***	-0.163	-0.156	-0.355***
H: Both parents alive (ref.)				
H: Only mother alive	0.431***			
H: Only father alive	0.114			
W: Both parents alive (ref.)				
W: Only mother alive			0.079	
W: Only father alive			0.036	
Rho [C. I.]	0.453 [0.082 0.715]		0.058 [-.193 0.301]	
Observations (couples)	4,256		4,256	

Abbreviations: H.: Husband. W.: Wife. Ref.: Reference category. C.I.: Confidence interval.
Note: Sample consists of married couples aged 25-55 (oldest spouse) with at least one living parent on each side. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4: Results from the multinomial regression model for relative proximity
(Average Marginal Effects, weighted)

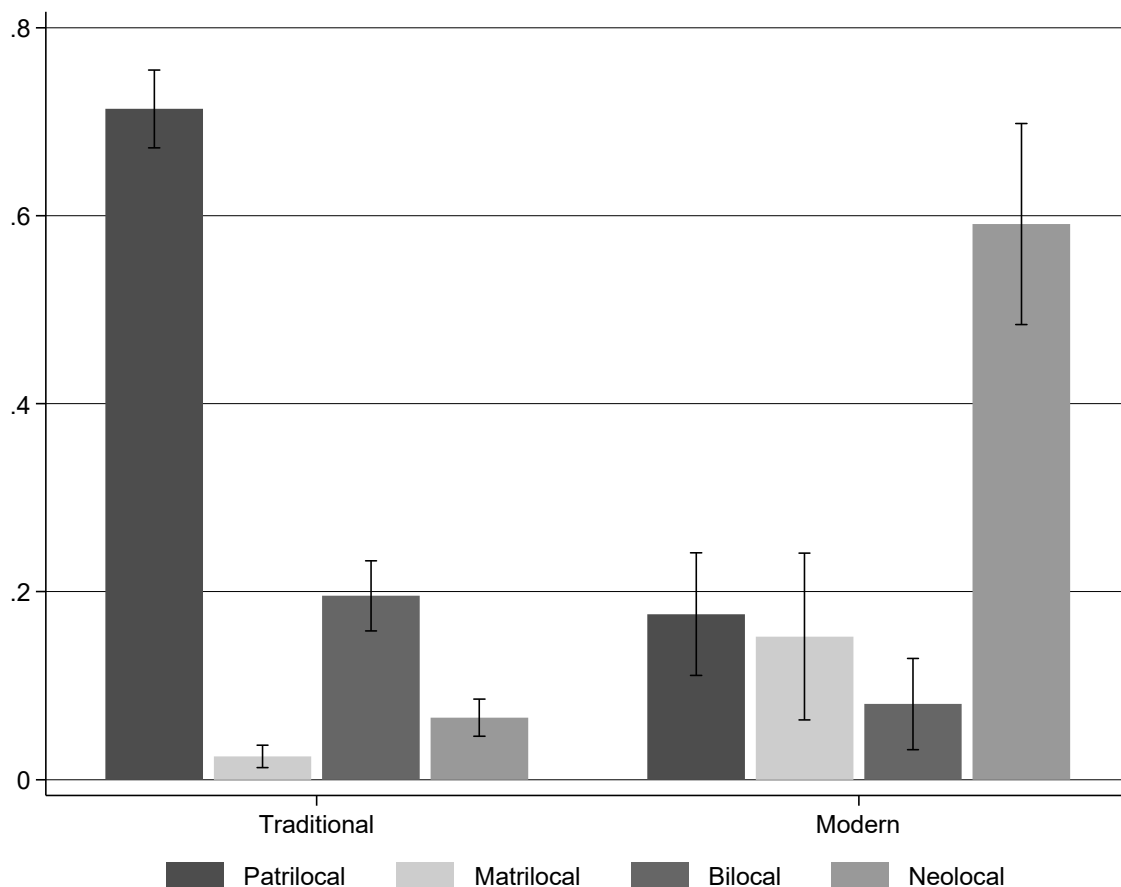
	Patrilocal	Matrilocal	Bilocal	Neolocal
H: Up to primary (ref.)				
H: (Junior) high school	0.000	-0.012	-0.002	0.014
H: College	-0.094*	-0.001	-0.051	0.147***
W: Up to primary (ref.)				
W: (Junior) high school	-0.065**	0.035***	-0.017	0.046**
W: College	-0.133**	0.035	0.021	0.077*
Both urban hukou origin (ref.)				
H urban, W rural	0.144**	-0.036*	-0.122***	0.013
H rural, W urban	-0.037	0.032	-0.029	0.035
Both rural	0.163***	-0.006	0.010	-0.168***
Both have brother(s) (ref.)				
Only H no brother(s)	0.115***	-0.021*	0.020	-0.114***
Only W no brother(s)	-0.168***	0.132***	0.082**	-0.046*
Neither has brother(s)	0.021	0.050**	0.009	-0.081***
Has child between 0-6	0.038	0.006	-0.011	-0.033
Ethnic minority	0.016	0.025	0.012	-0.053*
Lowest income quartile (ref.)				
Second	-0.039	-0.006	-0.022	0.067***
Third	-0.073**	0.024	-0.032	0.081***
Highest	-0.138***	0.028	-0.039	0.149***
Aged 25-34 (ref.)				
Aged 35-49	-0.016	0.017	0.032	-0.032
Aged 50-60	-0.059	0.005	0.055*	-0.002
H: Both parents alive (ref.)				
H: Only mother alive	0.002	0.010	0.007	-0.019
H: Only father alive	-0.081**	0.027	0.037	0.016
W: Both parents alive (ref.)				
W: Only mother alive	0.001	0.007	-0.009	0.001
W: Only father alive	0.055*	-0.005	-0.050**	-0.000
Observations (couples)	4,256			

Abbreviations: H.: Husband. W.: Wife. Ref.: Reference category.

Note: Sample consists of married couples aged 25-55 (oldest spouse) with at least one living parent on each side. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In interpreting these results, it is important to remember that AMEs are a relative measure, and the baseline probability of patrilocal residence is high. To assist in the interpretation of our findings, we therefore present the predicted relative proximity of two couples with distinct attributes. The first of these prototypical couples combines a number of 'traditional' characteristics: a low-income couple in which both spouses have rural *hukou* origins, primary education or less, and both have brothers. The second represents a combination of 'modern' attributes: a high-income couple in which both spouses have urban *hukou* origins, a college degree and high income.

Figure 5: Average predicted probabilities: typical couples



Note: Average predicted probabilities based on the multinomial model presented in Table 4. Capped spikes represent 95% confidence intervals. 'Traditional': both spouses rural *hukou*, education up to primary school, have brothers, first income quintile. 'Modern': both spouses urban *hukou*, college education, no brothers, fourth income quintile.

When comparing their predicted relative proximity (Figure 5), we can see that the cumulative effect of income, education, sibling structure and household registration is substantial. Whereas the 'traditional' couple is predominantly patrilocal (71%), neolocal residence is the modal category for the 'modern' couple (59%). Matrilocal residence is also much more likely in the modern couple (15% versus 2.4%). Although the second type currently represents only a small proportion of the Chinese population, it reflects features that will become increasingly common as the 'one child' cohorts enter middle age. It would thus be reasonable to expect an increase in neolocal as well as matrilocal residence in the upcoming years, at the expense of patrilocality.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify patterns and determinants of intergenerational proximity in China, which has recently experienced a surge in internal migration and a rapid decline of intergenerational coresidence. In particular, we sought to assess how and to what extent gendered customs related to China's patrilineal kinship system continue to affect couples' proximity to the husband's and the wife's parents.

Similar to what has been observed in Western settings (Chan & Ermisch, 2015b; Hank, 2007), we found that most married Chinese couples live in (relatively) close proximity to their parents. Whereas in Western countries there is generally no strong tendency to live closer to either the husband's or the wife's parents (Blaauboer et al., 2011; Chan & Ermisch, 2015a), in China the man's parents are clearly in a privileged position. More than half of the couples in our sample could be described as strictly patrilocal, while only 6% were classified as strictly matrilocal. Patrilocality was particularly pronounced among rural-origin couples with little education, and when there was a young child.

Patrilocality is a core aspect of the traditional Chinese kinship system, and is deeply rooted in the Confucian belief system. Our findings show the remarkable robustness of this institution, which has remained largely intact even as other patriarchal traditions have crumbled in the face of unprecedented socio-economic, cultural and demographic change. There are a number of reasons for continued predominance of patrilocal residence in China. First, certain patriarchal customs that bind sons to their place of birth remain largely intact, and may have even strengthened during China's market transition and subsequent economic boom (Whyte, 2003). These include the expectation that the husband's parents will provide, build or finance accommodation for a newly married couple. Indeed, men who are unable to provide suitable accommodation may have difficulty finding a spouse (J. Yu & Xie, 2015). Moreover, under Chinese law each rural family is entitled to a plot of land, which cannot be sold and is typically passed on from parents to sons. Further analyses (see Online Appendix) suggest that 82% of patrilocal and 86% percent of bilocal couples live in the husband's region of birth, compared to 45% of neolocal couples.

A second explanation relates to the balance of power between spouses. In spite of women's status improvement in recent decades, men continue to hold an advantaged position in couples' decision-making, partially because of their superior socio-economic position (Shu et al., 2012). In most Chinese couples the husband's income exceeds that of the wife, both because of substantial gender pay gaps and because of the deeply rooted tradition of status hypergamy (Mu & Xie, 2014). This power imbalance is likely to translate into patrilocal residence, which provides various advantages to men, but is often disadvantageous to women (Chen, 2004; J. Yu & Xie, 2017). Our findings show that patrilocality is more likely in hypergamous couples, for example between urban husbands and rural wives.

Finally, patrilocal (co)residence is often driven by practical considerations. Particularly for young couples, the high cost of housing and the receipt of free childcare make (temporarily)

living with parents an attractive option (Chen, 2005). Nauck, Groepler and Yi (2017) found that young Chinese men were more likely to stay in the parental home than their Western counterparts, and that marriage reduced the likelihood of moving out. In China's patrilineal kinship system, it is common and even desirable for newly married sons—but not daughters—to stay in the parental home. Child-centered coresidence is facilitated by lower fertility, which reduces the number of siblings that 'compete' for space in the parental home, as well as by more egalitarian parent-child relations (Yan, 2016; Yi & Wang, 2003). Supplementary analyses (see Online Appendix) show that most coresident couples in our sample live in housing owned by the parents (55% when living with husband's parents and 63% when living with the wife's parents), suggesting that both patrilocal and matrilocal coresidence mainly serves the needs of the younger generation (see also Chu et al., 2011; Q. F. Zhang, 2004).

Although patrilocality thus remains deeply entrenched in China, we also observed major deviations from the dominant model. In line with the modernization paradigm, matrilocal and neolocal residence were more common among educated couples with urban household registration. Among such high-status couples, only a small proportion still adheres to patrilocal customs. Practical considerations also played an important role in breaking with the tradition: for example, matrilocality was much more likely when the wife did not have any brothers (see also Chu et al., 2011).

These findings have numerous implications for our understanding of family and gender relations in contemporary China. First, they highlight the persistence of gendered family norms and customs, even among the younger generation. The predominance of the patrilocal model may explain why Chinese parents continue to exhibit a preference for sons: they expect daughters to move away, and thus to be unavailable as providers of care and support in old age. For daughters, in turn, distance may be an impediment to maintaining close social and economic relations with their native family. That being said, our findings also demonstrate that

patrilocality is neither static nor immutable: living arrangement and kinship ties adapt and evolve as a result of changing structural conditions (Whyte, 2004; Yan, 2003). As the Chinese population becomes increasingly educated and urban, and more low-fertility cohorts reach marital age, it is likely that neolocal and matrilocal residence will become increasingly common.

In interpreting these findings, it is important to note that they are based on a snapshot of the Chinese population. By definition, a cross-sectional analysis such as the one presented here cannot fully capture the dynamic and fluid nature of residential mobility and household composition in China. Future research could assess how intergenerational proximity develops over the life course, and how it relates to specific events such as marriage, widowhood and job change.

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Replication

Replication materials are available on SocArXiv

Online Appendix

Figure 1: Proportion whose place of current household registration matches their region of birth

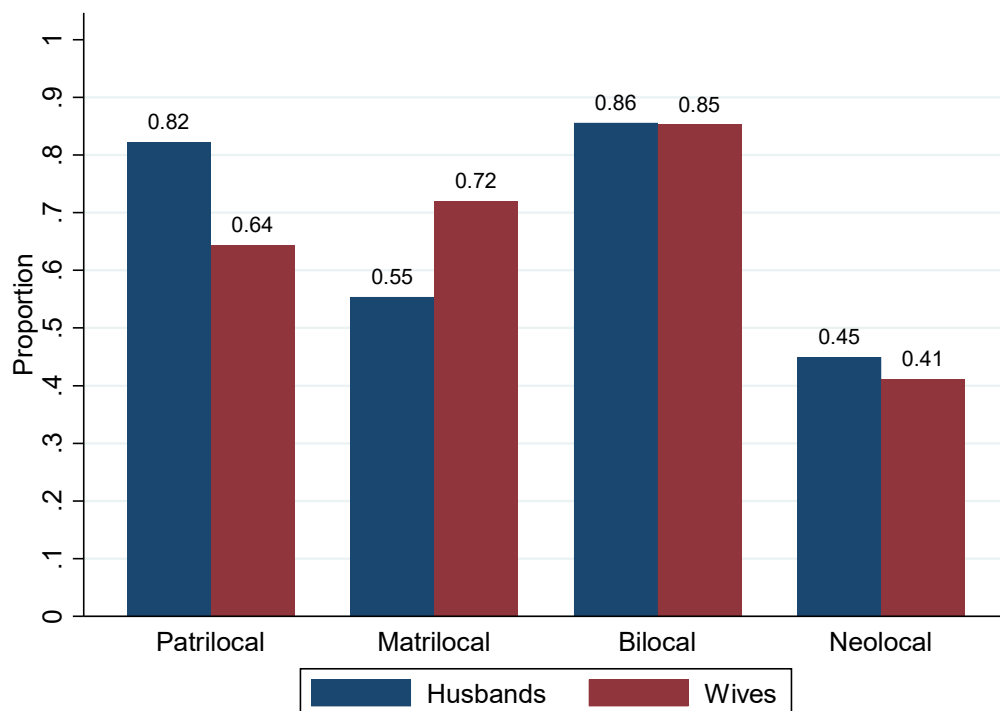


Table 1: Home ownership, by living arrangement (Freq / %)

Living arrangement	Home ownership					Total
	Husband	Wife	Husband & wife	Husband's parents	Wife's parents	
Independent	1,561	137	59	12	1	1,770
	88.19	7.74	3.33	0.68	0.06	100
With husband's parents	574	16	6	733	0	1,329
	43.19	1.2	0.45	55.15	0	100
With wife's parents	39	13	3	0	95	150
	26	8.67	2	0	63.33	100
Total	2,174	166	68	745	96	3,249
	66.91	5.11	2.09	22.93	2.95	100