The Middle Class Family Model in Taiwan: Woman's Place is in the Home
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THE MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY MODEL IN TAIWAN:
WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE HOME

/ Norma Diamond

The People’s Republic of China takes justifiable pride in the changes that have effected the status of women, both within the family setting and in the larger world of schooling, work, social activity and political engagement. Though by no means complacent that equality between the sexes has been fully achieved, the PRC’s example demonstrates how rapidly and far-reaching change can occur when backed by government sanction.

Starting in the late 1940s with a similar, if not identical, cultural base, the Kuomintang-ruled island of Taiwan provides an interesting vantage point from which to observe changes and continuities in the roles of Chinese women under a very different program for modernization and development. Taiwan of course shares in the broad heritage of Chinese civilization and the “little traditions” of southeast China from which some 12,000,000 of its 14,000,000 population are derived. Modernization for Taiwan began at the turn of the century and has been greatly accelerated in the past 25 years. Under Japanese colonial rule, Taiwan first developed modern business enterprises and industry and the personnel to staff them through a westernized educational system up through university level. In the past two decades there has been a diversification and growth of the economy, paralleled by rapid expansion of educational facilities. Between 1950 and 1970, the number of schools at the secondary level increased from 213 to 847, and the number of colleges, junior colleges and higher technical schools rose from 7 to 91.\(^1\) Women can be found in jobs at all levels of society, but despite the growing presence of educated women, both numerically and proportionately, they are clearly under-represented in those sectors of the economy for which their education would qualify them. Women are now one third of all college and technical school graduates, and also one third of all senior middle school graduates. But they are only 8% of all administrative, executive or managerial workers. That they are slightly over one third of all professional workers reflects their large numbers in nursing and elementary school teaching; relatively few are in the more prestigious profes-

sions such as medicine, law, engineering or university teaching. Indeed, in the last-named, they are but 10% of the total instructional staff at all levels of higher education, with more than half of them teaching in junior colleges of nursing, home-economics, and secretarial skills.

While less in evidence in the more lucrative or prestigious jobs, women do appear in relatively large numbers in other sectors of the work force. Industries such as textiles, electronic assemblage and garment production rely heavily on a semi-skilled or unskilled female work force which is literate as a result of six years of compulsory primary schooling. In 1971, women workers constituted 38% of all factory workers. Half of them were between 15 and 19 years of age. They are also in demand for what government statistics politely list as "service, sport and recreation" jobs: here, they are 46% of the work force. Included in this category are prostitutes, bar-girls, dance-hall girls, wine house hostesses, hot-springs attendants, massage parlor attendants, etc. A recent study estimates that in 1966 there were between 75,000 and 100,000 women working in these or closely allied jobs. At that time the total of women "service, sports and recreation" workers did not exceed 110,000. Women have also entered the work force in large numbers as sales persons (34% of the total) and clerical staff (32% of the total). Officially, women are 31.46% of Taiwan's work force, a figure which does not seem to include all unpaid women workers in agriculture or family businesses. However, most of the jobs open to women require little education, low level of skills, and are designed for short-term employment. Of the women in the work force, only 5 in 100 are in professional, technical, administrative or managerial positions and many of these are jobs in the lower ranks. Most of the jobs available to women are neither suitable nor appealing to women who define themselves as educated or as middle-class or higher in social status.

The official position on the status of women in Taiwan is that women enjoy full equality with men, both socially and legally. There is no doubt that the status of women is high, if compared with traditional China; the rise, in fact, goes back at least as far as Japanese colonial rule which banned foot binding and child marriages, opened schools to women, and granted them the rights to divorce, remarriage and property ownership. The earlier pre-colonial situation may have had something to do with the ease with which these legal changes were actualized. Taiwan customary law in the 19th century already gave married women the right to own land, sell it or will it to their children, and it is interesting to note that when the Japanese began staffing the modern schools in the late 1890s they were able to hire 29 educated Taiwanese women

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3Quarterly Report, op. cit.
5Quarterly Report, p. 7.
as teachers. Moreover, 19th century Taiwan had high rates of widow remarriage and of matrilocally marriages due to shortage of women in the frontier-like situation.8 Women already had a higher status than in China proper.

Under Kuomintang rule, the civil law promises equality in the economic, political, educational and domestic spheres, though in practice principles of male dominance often take precedence.7 Both under the Japanese and under current rule, women able to take advantage of the new educational and economic opportunities, through their own struggle or with family backing, have entered into areas of endeavor beyond the domestic sphere. After 1949, the Taiwanese women were joined by some of those women who had been influenced by the May Fourth Movement on the mainland of China, or who had come through the difficulties of the war years where women, of necessity, had to play more than a simple domestic role. Most of the educated women among the older mainland refugees to Taiwan tended to combine life-long careers with marriage, and to see themselves as an important force in society. Their presence should have strengthened the aspirations of Taiwanese women for greater equality and participation.

But what is intriguing about Taiwan over the past two decades is that despite the legal possibilities for sexual equality, and the presence of numerous role models, there has been a retreat from feminism. In its place, there is the counter-development of a peculiar nostalgia for the past in romanticized form. This stance, which supports a return to domesticity, glorifies woman’s role as a mother and paints a picture of domestic life as essentially a life of desirable leisure. Here, the woman can devote her spare energies to embroidery, sewing, painting, flower arranging, music, reading, and other arts of self cultivation. With only minimal mention of household chores and housekeeping routines, it is more a description of upper class life or perhaps the life of a pampered concubine. The realities are something else again.

The function of this mythic view of Chinese wifehood, which is projected as the reality of middle class life, is to encourage women to stay at home after marriage. It is a viewpoint which validates the demands of the present in terms of the past, manipulating the factor of economically productive work as a crucial variable in determining a family’s social status. To be respectable middle class in Taiwan today means that status derives solely from the husband’s income and occupation, that the household can forego the wife’s potential earning power and present to the outside world an emulation of traditional upper class life in which women were completely separated from the work-a-day world. In the final analysis, what is crucial to status is not what the woman does, but what she does not do... she does not hold an outside job. That she performs a series of domestic chores that are never

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performed by upper class women is irrelevant; these are done in privacy and can be disregarded.

Work before marriage is encouraged, particularly in factory production, clerical and sales jobs and the entertainment world. Certainly, some forms of work attract educated, middle class oriented women, but it would be safe to say that in most jobs for women, youth has priority. Neither factories nor private offices and business concerns seem to be interested in retaining their women workers more than a few years. Many of the new department stores, for example, expect the sales girls to leave at the end of a three-year contract and give them a severance bonus for doing so. Other enterprises expect women to resign when they marry, and relatively few make it possible for women to take maternity leaves or temporary leaves-of-absence. Meantime, the media reflect the idea that with marriage women leave the working world for the privilege of enacting an upper class style of life, no matter what sort of job their husband holds. After three or four years of low paid and unrewarded work in a factory, an office, a crowded elementary school or whatever, it is not surprising that women wish to believe this. It is a form of upward mobility, in their eyes.

That an exclusive domestic role should be equated with upward mobility is also not surprising, given the fact that the areas of the traditional society where women have been most active economically are those which are now defined not only as lower-class but also as somewhat “backward.” In the peasant sector, and among the traditional business class of small shopkeepers, women are still active workers throughout their lives. Such work is done within the framework of the household as the basic economic unit, with no salary attached. These women, often listed simply as housewives by the police registration, spend a great deal of their time in such tasks as transplanting rice, weeding, harvesting, caring for vegetable gardens and livestock, peddling of produce, or even hiring out as day labor to their neighbors. In business families, the women spend much of their day in the shop serving customers, keeping up good public relations, supervising apprentices, or serving as loan agents. This expanded domestic role is ignored in the media: since such women can simultaneously be defined as housewives, the public is assured that in the ideal/typical Chinese family, woman’s work is “inside” and man’s work is “outside.” The upward mobile daughters or grand daughters of these families, remembering the work load of older women in their household, cope with the contradiction between myth and perception by deciding that their own families were somehow unusual, or forced by poverty into non-ideal behavior. They see the traditional woman’s work load as degrading, which is not necessarily the way the “lower classes” saw it themselves. My own research in a peasant community led me to the conclusion that there was real pride taken in women’s work activities and their ability to add to household income. Indeed, these were criteria for selecting a bride
or evaluating the character of an adult woman.8

Be that as it may, the non-working wife is rapidly becoming the ideal for the new and growing urban middle class. The men in this group are employed in government and private enterprises or in the professions; they are in jobs removed from the family scene where there is little that wives can do to assist them in their work. Moreover, they are a spatially mobile group, flowing into the larger cities from out of Taiwan’s towns and rural countryside, with many of their kinsmen left behind or scattered to still other locations. The role of the wife in these families is to be a loving and devoted mother, selflessly engaged in making a comfortable home for her small family, wherever it may move.

With this introduction, let us turn our attention to a consideration of some of the characteristics of middle class families. The data are drawn from a study of urban middle class families conducted in 1970 and 1971.9 The location was Tainan City, a commercial-industrial-educational center of almost 400,000 population. Our samples were drawn from the household registration records of several neighborhoods, and divided between housewives and working wives. In both sub-groups, the women were married to men with educations at the level of senior middle school or higher who were employed as professionals, white collar and civil-service workers, or in military-officer level jobs. The women themselves had at least junior middle school educations, and ranged in age from 25 to 60. All of the working wives had at least one child, as did 98% of the housewives. In our final sample, which will be discussed here, there are 112 full-time working wives, 108 full-time housewives, and 20 women working part-time. Most of those in this last group were employed by their husbands and not salaried. Because of the small size of this third sub-group it will not be discussed separately in our comparisons of life-styles of working wives and housewives.

While some of these families were still living in the large houses left behind by the Japanese, most were living in smaller modern apartments or town-houses. Such surroundings seemed to require European furniture, with prestige consumer items such as television, stereo sets, upright piano, glass-and-liquor cabinet or even a refrigerator displayed in the living room. It is an approximation of America or modern Japan, even though actual income and over-all standard of living still fall considerably below that found in either country. The salaries of those in our sample ranged between U.S. $75 and U.S. $200 per month per wage earner.

There are differences beyond income which are important to note, particularly in the area of family roles, extra-household activities, and the

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9For funding of the research over a period of 16 months, I am grateful to the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Philosophical Society, the Rackham Graduate School of the University of Michigan, and the University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies whose financial support of two field trips made the study possible.
husband-wife relationship itself. The modern middle class family in Taiwan is not simply a duplication of American or Japanese life styles, just as it is not really a duplication of traditional upper class life. Let us start by looking at household organization: the proportion of households that are simple nuclear families composed of a couple and their unmarried children, those where the nuclear unit is joined to the parents of one of the couple, and those that are more complex units.

TABLE I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSEHOLD ORGANIZATION IN THE MIDDLE CLASS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nuceral Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife (N=108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Wives (N=112)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table I indicates, most of the middle-class families are nuclear families, with relatively few living in complex households. But it is the working wives of this middle class who are more likely to be living with their in-laws or to have their own parents in residence. In this sense, they are more "traditional" than the housewife sample. But of course, it is the presence of these other adults in the household which facilitates their moving out of the housewife role. They are not playing the role of the traditional daughter-in-law who waits on the elders and attends their needs. On the contrary, they expect and receive assistance in domestic tasks from the older women of the household, while at the same time their income makes it possible to lighten these tasks. Of the working wives, 12% had full time servants, compared to 6.5% of the housewives. In the past, when servants were more easily obtained, 45% of the working wives had full time servants, at least during the children's preschool years, as compared to only 20% of the housewives. 37% of them hired someone to do the laundry, whereas only 24% of the housewives did so, and 23% of them had washing machines while only 16% of the housewives owned one.

Where servants are not available, the working wives of the middle class are better able to recruit assistance from mothers-in-law or their own mothers in a range of tasks, including care of infants and pre-schoolers during part of the day even if living in nuclear families (Table II). In some cases, the women of the working group reported that their mother or mother-in-law had come to live with them for a year or two after each child so that they could continue work, whereas in contrast some of the housewives felt they received no help at all even from permanently resident mothers-in-law.
TABLE II
PERCENTAGE REPORTING ASSISTANCE IN HOUSEHOLD TASKS FROM MOTHERS-IN-LAW OR OWN MOTHER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Care of</th>
<th>Daily Shopping</th>
<th>Cooking</th>
<th>Cleaning</th>
<th>Laundry</th>
<th>Infant</th>
<th>Pre-Schooler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housewives (N=108)</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Wives (N=112)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the absence of servants or other female household members, there is some pressure on husbands to share in the household and child-care tasks, but little enthusiasm for it, particularly in the area of child care. It appears that husbands are not very willing to act as baby-sitters and regard most household tasks as degrading. This is less true for the mainland refugee husbands, and it is possible that these attitudes are a continuation of Japanese tradition as well as Chinese feelings on the matter. Whatever the reason, few of the households in the sample can be described as "equalitarian" (Table III). Husbands of working wives are more likely to pitch in with the daily chores, but are markedly less involved with the care of the children since they see no need to give the wife a chance to "get out of the house" and since they are more likely to have servants or other women around to take over.

Having servants is rapidly becoming an academic question for many middle class families as more and more young women are recruited into the factories and shops or the burgeoning entertainment world rather than into domestic service. Though wages have risen to at least US $20 a month plus room and board for domestic service, earnings are still better in other kinds of employment which in addition have the advantage of shorter working hours and greater social freedom. The housewives rationalize the problem by rejecting the idea of having servants; they speak of the harm that can come to the children at the hands of some semi-literate country girl who is ignorant...
of sanitation, speaks badly, is ignorant of child psychology, and is more interested in the money than the well being of the children. Lack of education and unfamiliarity with modern ideas are also the reasons proffered for living separately from one's in-laws or parents, not only for the well being of the young children but also on the grounds that mother-in-law would feel more comfortable psychologically residing with one of her less-educated, less modern offspring.

The result, however, is a style of family living that puts the housewife into a social isolation which far exceeds that of upper class women even in traditional times and is in marked contrast to the social activities of women in the peasant and small business class. For a significant number, there are not even kinsmen nearby: 25% of our sample had no kinsmen in Tainan or its environs on either side of the family.

Nor does the neighborhood ease the isolation. Despite the proverbial saying that it is better to have a good neighbor than a distant relative, it is difficult to meet neighbors. The high walls, topped with barbed wire and spikes of jagged glass, which surround houses and apartment entryways not only keep out thieves but also cut down the chances for informal meetings and conversations with one's similarly besieged neighbors. A front yard is a walled enclosure, not an extension of property that merges with those next door. Apartment blocs and entire neighborhoods are built without provision for play areas or open spaces where people might gather. In the peasant villages, houses are unwalled and unlocked: people move freely in and out of neighboring homes. In the cities, and particularly in middle-class areas, there is anonymity and distance. One can live in the same place for years with nothing more than a nodding acquaintance with other residents, and sometimes not even that. On a scale ranging from total disregard of neighbors to close friendship, we found that almost half of the housewives, and even more of the working wives were limited to impersonal exchange of greetings (Table IV).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL OF RELATIONSHIP WITH NEIGHBORHOOD WOMEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives (N=108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Wives (N=112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some reported that they stopped to chat with neighbors or walked with them to morning market, somewhat fewer would exchange brief visits or watch
TV together or keep an eye on each other's children, but very few felt that they had real friends among their neighbors.

Indeed, when it came to a question of close friendships, there was no significant difference between working women and those who spent the entire day in the neighborhood, although the housewives were generally on closer terms with neighbors. But then only a fourth of the housewives could claim anything more than superficial relations with neighborhood women beyond the chance encounter and the exchange of a few words.

In an urban setting, one might seek friends outside of the immediate neighborhood, but this also presents difficulties. Because of fear of robbery, town dwellers are reluctant to leave the house unoccupied for more than a brief period, even during the day. Nor are friends always visitable. At most, 40% of the women were from Tainan and its environs, and this, coupled with geographical mobility generally, meant that it was only a happy coincidence when they could locate former school friends and work colleagues living in Tainan. This would not matter so much if marriage introduced one to a new circle of friends, but it does not. To a great extent, male and female social worlds are kept separate in this class, though in peasant and small business families the wives tend to know their husband's friends and work associates, their wives, and people of the community generally. In the middle class, the husband's world of work associates and old school mates is his own. He sees his friends in the evenings, often at a restaurant or other place of entertainment where his wife would not be welcome. The patronage of coffee-houses, restaurants, and of course bars and wine-houses is predominantly, if not exclusively, male. Closer friends in the husband's social network occasionally call at the house without their respective wives. The hostess is not expected to entertain them beyond serving some refreshments. At New Years, or on specific invitation, they may bring their wives along. Once a year, most government and business organizations give a banquet to which wives are invited.

Under these circumstances, the wife has little opportunity for initiating new friendships through her husband’s network of friends. Here again, there may be some carry-over of Japanese traditions.10 Whatever the cause, only 5% of our entire sample regarded wives of their husband's friends as their friends, 15% had never even seen them, and 54% claimed they saw them only once a year, usually under formal circumstances. They were the equivalent of neighborhood “nodding acquaintances.”

The women who are employed can of course build up a network of new friends parallel to that of their husbands, though they do not usually have the social freedom of the evenings in which to pursue these friendships. The housewives, in turn, make use of one potential source of friends that is ig-

10 There are interesting sub-sample differences if we separate Taiwanese from mainland refugees in our sample. Wives of husband's friends are complete strangers to 22.5% of the Taiwanese but to only 4% of the Mainlanders. Conversely 8% of the Mainlanders claim close friends among them, compared to 2.8% of the Taiwanese.
nored by the working women, namely church activity. A few of the women had in fact joined fundamentalist Protestant sects which held almost nightly prayer meetings, and counted the participants as their close friends. Alto-

TABLE V
NUMBER OF GOOD FRIENDS IN THE TAINAN AREA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>None</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-4</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>7 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=108)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Wives</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=112)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

gather, some 9% of the housewives cited the church as their main source of friends. This probably balances out some of the working wives claiming large numbers of their work associates as friends. But as Table V indicates, most of the women claim only a small number of friends available to them, and the working women, despite the press on their time, seem to lead more active social lives. This is evident also in the amount of time that is spent visiting and socializing with friends during the week.

Relatively few, whether housewives or employed, are involved in any sort of club or organized activity. This contrasts not only with the American scene but even with middle class life as described for Tokyo suburbia. A handful belong to the Kuomintang because their job requires it, a few are members of professional organizations connected with their job, a few others are active in the Provincial Women's Association. The largest group were those who regarded themselves as active in church affairs (12%), but this is probably a reflection of sample bias since one of our neighborhoods turned out to include houses belonging to a large theological college. Most women claimed no outside activity of any sort.

Some of the housewives feel the isolation more keenly than others. Three-fourths of them had worked a year or more before marriage. Like their employed counterparts they had been teachers, nurses, civil-service employees, accountants, and white collar workers in private companies. Of those who had worked, 22% felt under pressure to resign when they married, 6% resigned because their husbands insisted, and a third did not resign until

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11 Out of the total sample of 240, 30 belonged to the Catholic Church and 58 to a variety of Protestant denominations. Eighty-nine identified themselves as Buddhist. Fifty-three denied any religious affiliation or belief. The rest said they were Confucianist or Taoist.

12 Mainlander refugees were more likely to give dinners and parties at home, to socialize with neighbors and husband's friends, and to claim a wide circle of friendships. For example, 21% claimed to have 7 or more good friends, while only 8% of Taiwanese women did.

13 Ezra Vogel, Japan's New Middle Class (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 110ff.
their first pregnancy. In the entire housewife sample, one third expressed
open discontent with the life style, expressing a preference for outside em-
ployment. Almost 40% said they hoped to be able to return to work once the
children were older.

Their malaise was not matched by the working women. Only 11% of them
expressed dissatisfaction with their life style and a desire to stay at home, and
these tended to be women who saw themselves as working because of
their husband’s low salary. Most of the working women in our sample could
easily have given up their jobs without the loss of income seriously lowering
the family’s standard of living. They worked not just for the income involved
but also for the social gratifications and the self-esteem they gained from
outside employment, or for the feeling that they were serving society and
putting their educations to use. At the same time, they had complaints about
the increasing discrimination they met at work. Even in government jobs,
where legal protections are supposed to be enforced, they saw themselves
paid on a lower scale and shunted into dead-end positions. They felt that men
with lesser education and experience were promoted ahead of them. And
disturbingly, they felt the psychological pressure of the Taiwan scene trying
to force them into a domestic role.

The major reason given for women not working is that they are needed
at home to care for the children until they are at least in senior middle school.
It was the reason most frequently given by housewives in explaining why
married women should not seek outside employment, and it received guilty
support from over a third of the working women as well. It is an argument
found with increasing frequency in the mass media, which is rapidly elevat-
ing motherhood into something approaching sainthood.

It is also a realistic argument, given nuclear family living and absence of
servants. Taiwan has done little to provide alternatives for child care for
working mothers. Institutionalized facilities are few: kindergartens, public
or private, which serve children from four to six, have space for only one in
ten potential applicants. Moreover, most of these are located in urban areas
and are more accessible to the middle class. There are even fewer resources
for children under four, most of them dismal places providing what can only
be described as “custodial care.” Children attending kindergarten and the
early grades of elementary school are often on half-day shifts which do not
mesh with business working hours, and after-school play centers are rare ex-
cept in private schools.

In earlier times, as in the peasant sector and poorer urban classes today,
mothers had the chief responsibility but not the entire burden for child care.
They were aided by in-laws, by their own older children, and by neighbors.
In the peasant villages, women exchange child care services to free each other
for work tasks that cannot be done conveniently with a child on one’s back.
Youngsters barely in school carry their infant sibling on their back as they
wander around the village. Wrinkled grandfathers sit patiently tending a
toddler. And the children old enough to fend for themselves play everywhere in groups.

The middle class life style precludes much of this. If not in school, children are home being cared for by the mothers. They play in the house or the walled yard, not on the street, accompanied by siblings, a visiting cousin, or a carefully screened child of equivalent family status, and most often by the mother who is expected to be the constant nurturer, companion and instructor through childhood. Older siblings take little of the burden for child care: they are expected to be involved in their studies. Indeed, children in the middle class have few chores to perform, either for themselves or for the general household. Such a pattern made more sense in the traditional wealthy families, where there were a host of cousins to play with, where chores were done by servants, and children cared for by amahs, maids, and tutors.

Over and beyond the realities of the demands placed on the middle class mother, there is the ideological shift in viewing the purpose of higher education for women. Put briefly, it is a viewpoint which holds that women are educated for the purpose of being better mothers. Many women have been convinced that their educations serve the primary purpose of teaching and shaping their own children. It is their tutelage and care which will build moral fiber, their inputs of learning which will steer the children successfully thru the school system. To take an outside job while the children are young is tantamount to abandonment of one’s real responsibilities. The older educated women were more likely to see themselves as a privileged avant-garde putting their skills and training to use in the wider society, and they found it acceptable to have servants or kin taking over household tasks, including child care. Women now in their late 20s and 30s are more likely to feel that their place is at home, beside their children.

Since education is the key to a good position, it is highly valued by the middle class. This is not a reverence for learning per se; most parents, when pressed about career hopes for their offspring, seemed to have their hearts set on sons becoming engineers and going abroad to study, and their daughters marrying a returned Ph.D. in engineering. But at least the middle class expects its sons and daughters to go to college.

Competition in the school system is keen. The quota examinations for junior middle schools were abolished a few years ago but still exist for admission to senior middle school, college, and technical schools, and for permission to go abroad for advanced study. In the late 1950s, one out of ten primary school students survived in the system to graduate from a senior middle school, and only one in a hundred managed to enter a university or technical college. The situation is only slightly more relaxed now: about 20% of primary school students will eventually enter senior middle schools, and about 4% will enter some form of college.

Taking advantage of the competitive situation, some teachers reserve their best efforts for extra-curricular tutorial sessions or cram schools (pu-hsi-
in order to supplement their low salaries. Among Taiwanese families, there is the added concern that the children will be disadvantaged by coming from homes where standard Mandarin, the only language permitted in the classrooms, is not in every-day use and perhaps not even spoken by older members of the household. To offset these difficulties, maternal duty includes intensive tutoring of the children. In 38% of our sample families, only the mother performed this task. In another 20% of the families, she was assisted by her husband. Average tutoring time was estimated as an hour a day per child, running higher before examination times. Tutoring responsibility declines after admission to junior high school when it is taken over by private tutors, cram-schools, or fathers. But though the men in our sample tend to have a few more years education than the women, they are less likely to see tutoring children as their responsibility. They remain uninvolved during the elementary school period, just as they did during the pre-school years. In part, this is due to their social obligations outside of the home: they are not there regularly enough in the evenings or on weekends to assume the task. Indeed, they may have important social commitments just at the time the children most need assistance with their schoolwork. Tutoring becomes an evening routine for mothers. Others, who do not see themselves as actively tutoring, still feel they need to be there to keep an eye on the children and answer occasional questions.

If this involvement with children’s school achievement sounds reminiscent of Vogel’s description of Japanese suburbia it may well be that it springs from similar causes which yield similar results. The Taiwan middle class and the Japanese middle class share not only the competition of the school system but also the phenomenon of the work-involved, absent husband. The nuclear family does not automatically create family “togetherness” and emotional closeness between spouses. In traditional China, the importance of the tie between husband and wife was downplayed: in modern Taiwan it is still downplayed despite the romantic pop songs, the fictional love stories, and the assurances on all sides that the traditional loveless arranged marriages are a thing of the past. Some marriages are of course generated and sustained by love and respect between spouses. But in our sample, where 71% of the husbands received college educations, a little less than half of the marriages were traditionally arranged. In 25% of the sample, the couple did not meet face to face until the wedding day. Others were allowed a few meetings with a parentally-selected potential partner, and were allowed to express some opinion before the engagement was formally set.

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14 If one considers housewives separately, 63% were involved in tutoring of children, either alone or with assistance from husband, while the figure falls to 51.7% of the working wives.

15 Housewives tended to have more children than working wives. Sixteen per cent had five or more children, but only 4% of the working wives had this many. Conversely, 50% of the working women had only one or two children, while only 27% of the housewives had this few. The remainder had three or four.
As was pointed out earlier, social patterns in Taiwan do not involve couples, and after marriage one cannot assume that spouses rely on each other for companionship and recreation. Some do, of course: 20% of the women in the sample stated that once a week or more they went with their husband to a movie, or shopping, or to visit kinsmen. On the other hand, roughly a third stated that they accompanied their husband for recreation only two or three times a year at the most. This includes the 13% who said they never went anywhere with their husband, who might have been exaggerating the case somewhat. There is no stigma attached to a man spending his evenings and free time with friends rather than with his family. On the contrary, he is open to teasing and ridicule from his peers if he professes a preference for spending free time at home or if his wife frequently accompanies him wherever he goes.

Similarly, the Taiwan scene discourages dating by young unmarried people, especially during middle school and college years when they are expected to be concentrating on their studies. As a result, engagements are agreed to after what Westerners would regard as very short acquaintance or very superficial knowledge of the other person's ideas and values. Though many young people would like to choose their own spouse, they are uncomfortable in dealing with the opposite sex. This may be due in part to the separation of the sexes through childhood and adolescence. In elementary school, the boys and girls are usually seated on opposite sides of the classroom and are separated on the play-ground. In middle school, they are in separate schools entirely, or at best in separate classrooms in the new junior middle schools. Even in college there is separation, perpetuated by sex differences influencing what field the applicant chooses to study or is eventually assigned to study. For example, some 20% of all boys in college are in schools or departments of engineering, where the ratio to girls is 40 to 1. Conversely, in fields like sociology and anthropology one finds the professors bemoaning the fact that almost all the students assigned to their department are women. One hastens to add that students rarely take courses outside their department.

Given this separation, and the pressures against dating which define those who date as close to juvenile delinquents, the educated children of the middle class are usually willing, in the end, to let their parents select a suitable partner and introduce them. They do not feel they are themselves qualified to make such a serious decision. The basis for parental decision, unfortunately, is often family standing and formal education, rather than consideration of similarities or differences in emotional makeup, intellect or interests of the young people.

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16 For some of the women interviewed, the sessions were not only a break in isolation and daily monotony but also a chance to let off steam. We occasionally had more trouble extricating ourselves from the interview than in initiating it.

17 In one case brought to my attention, the pre-marriage meetings of a couple in a family arranged marriage of this sort were so brief and non-communicative that not until after the wedding did the girl (and her family) discover that the young man not only
A cool relationship between spouses may be endurable if set within the context of a village where one has a network of friends and kinsmen for companionship and emotional support, or within the neighborly hustle and bustle of the business world in the more traditional neighborhoods of the city, or in the context of a large extended household. The women in these settings do not expect a warm and close relationship with their spouse, though very often one develops because of the day-to-day cooperation in work, and the common interest of advancing the family’s livelihood or the well being of one’s small nuclear unit. In the peasant villages, husband and wife may have been strangers on the wedding day, but unless there are sharp personality conflicts they grow closer and closer with time.

The modern urban context does not produce such cooperation and joint endeavor. At best, women may have a career of their own, their own circle of friends, some small role to play socially in connection with their husband’s lives, and the occasional companionship of their husband. At worst, they are isolated at home all day with no one but the children to turn to, and totally cut off from any participation in the husband’s life save that of providing children to carry on his name, and providing a clean house and meals for him. The smoothness and ease with which Taiwan is reportedly carrying out a program of rapid urbanization takes account only of the adjustment of men to this new life, and says little of what is happening to the women.

In moving from countryside, small town, or even a large city to some new location connected with the husband’s job, the women face far greater problems of adjustment. Often, the husband is willing to make the move because he already has friends there or kinsmen; it is perhaps they who have arranged the job for him. Once at work, he can create a new social life for himself. But while Taiwan’s growing cities have all the surface amenities of cities anywhere in the industrialized world, they have little or nothing in the way of institutions to integrate the housewives. Large Japanese factories and corporations organize clubs and classes for the wives of their employees, arrange group excursions and vacation trips, so that the women can also sink roots in a new community. Taiwan has none of this.

For example, one of our interviewees lived in a block of houses that was reserved for people employed at high levels in a government organization. Despite this, she knew almost none of the other women after some 14 years of residence there. Nothing was organized for them, and they organized nothing for themselves. I asked if those of longer residence ever called on new arrivals to welcome them and was told that unless the new arrival was a former schoolmate or carried a letter of introduction from someone close to the respondent she would neither call nor issue an invitation. It might be several years before she even had occasion to say a few words to the “newcomer” at

carried a bogus college diploma but was actually mentally retarded. However, he did come from a distinguished and respectable family.
the yearly banquet, although the husbands might have become close friends at work.

The absence of "welcome wagons" and the difficulties of finding a pretext for visiting the woman next door may explain the disproportionate number of women in our middle class group who have become Christians, often without their husband joining them. The traditional Chinese temples are patronized by some of the women in the middle class, but they go only to pray as individuals; the group activities in these institutions are carried out by men. But some of the Christian churches have co-op nursery schools, classes and clubs for women, charity activities, small prayer meetings, and the like.

Even so, given the social institutions of present day Taiwan, working outside of the home is the most effective way for women to break out of isolation. Yet despite the growing number of educated women qualified to hold reasonably interesting middle-class-level jobs, the trends are such that an increasing proportion of these women will have little or no work experience before marriage and will be limited to a housewife role after marriage. In my interviewing, I was often struck by the change in spirit and attitude of the younger women. In comparison to the older women in the sample, they were much more ambivalent about their role if they were working. One of our sampling problems, in fact, was locating educated women in the 50 to 60 age group who were not employed. These women, who received their educations at a time when women were 10% or less of all college students, usually had unbroken career lines except for reasons of health or involuntary unemployment. Women in their 40s showed more disruption in career patterns, and women in their 30s and late 20s were the most likely to have had no work experience at all or to have little interest in working after marriage.

This is not meant to imply that the decline of feminist aspirations and the retreat into domesticity is the "fault" of the women. On the contrary, it reflects the social pressures of the time and official attitudes. Expansion of senior middle school facilities for women continue to lag behind those provided for men; women are half of the primary school enrollment but space considerations hold them at one-third of senior middle school enrollment. In the past few years, as female admissions to colleges via the competitive exams has crept past the one-third level, there has been talk of setting fixed quotas for women. At the same time, there has been expansion of home economics programs as the major course of study in senior middle schools and junior colleges. This effectively shuts the door to university study and trains for marriage rather than for careers. And combined with this are suggestions for

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18Protestants and Catholics together comprise 36.6% of our sample, but are at most 5% in the total Taiwan population. See China Yearbook 1969-1970 (Taipei: China Publishing Company, no date), pp. 77-80.

19The most recent suggestion was that female college enrollment be cut by almost two-thirds of its present level, in effect turning women's enrollment back to the pre-1949 level of 10%. See T. K. Tsui, et al, "Women Workers in Taiwan," paper prepared for the Sino-American Conference on Manpower in Taiwan, June 25-July 2, 1972, Taipei.
reducing the number of vocational and commercial senior middle school facilities for women in order to reduce competition for many white collar jobs.\textsuperscript{20}

To sweeten the pill, the mass media (and here one includes everything from school texts to magazines, movies, newspaper articles and TV) define the good adult woman as a housewife and mother. Mother’s Day has been elevated to a national holiday, publicizing women whose children have attained success. The local women’s organizations such as the Women’s Department of the Kuomintang, the Provincial Women’s Association, and the Chinese Women’s Anti-Aggression League led by Mme. Chiang Kai-shek herself cannot be considered feminist organizations. The brunt of their efforts is directed toward teaching handicrafts so that housewives can pass the time or earn a little pocket money, toward public health and maternity programs, charity activities, and assistance to the military.

One might think that a developing nation would want to make use of all available talent, male and female, on purely practical grounds if not on idealistic equalitarian grounds. As Boserup has pointed out, one cannot dismiss involvement of women in the work force as having only the negative effect of creating unemployment for men. On the other side of the coin are a number of positive advantages. For one, it puts a brake on rural-urban migration, keeping some educated people in the countryside and small towns to spearhead progress and increase agricultural production both for export and for meeting the needs of the growing cities. Secondly, it relieves the pressure on public investment in the growing cities: expenditures for housing, electricity, water, sanitation, schools, hospitals, and similar social services. These are more easily provided by creating two-income families who contribute proportionately more in taxes, are better able to engage in consumer spending or put money into savings, and who generally have a lower birth rate.\textsuperscript{21} Urbanization may proceed a bit more slowly under such a scheme, but with the advantage of avoiding a lop-sided development in which the countryside is depleted of talent, in which many urban families undergo a loss in real income due to increasing expenses of urban living (including rising food prices and high rentals), and in which there is a widening gap between men and women as the latter are absorbed into the modern sector at all levels while the former are relegated to a restricted and declining domestic sphere or assigned perpetually to unskilled and semi-skilled work.

To counter the possible argument that the position of women in the work force as described here for Taiwan is paralleled elsewhere in the developing world, it is useful to make comparison to the situation elsewhere in Asia.\textsuperscript{22} In the Philippines, for example, women are 53\% of all salaried profession and technical workers, 33\% of self-employed professional workers and 14\%\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{22}Boserup, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 128 ff. and pp. 245 ff.
of all administrative personnel. Careers continue after marriage; in the 35-44 age group, 49% of all professional/technical workers are women. In Hong Kong, women constitute 48% of all professional/technical workers on salary, 40% of self-employed professionals, and are 33% of all professionals in the 35-44 age group. In 1966, only 31% of Taiwan’s teachers were women, as compared to figures of 53% in Hong Kong and 67% in the Philippines. Figures for Malaya and Singapore are lower, but even there, Taiwan lags behind in employment of married women. In the 35-44 age group, women are 19% of Taiwan’s professionals, 22% of Malaya’s professionals, and 32% of all professionals in Singapore. Assuming that Boserup’s interpretation is correct, the pattern for employment of women in Taiwan affords less opportunity to educated women than any other nation in Asia except India and South Korea, and is lower even than Muslim countries such as Jordan and Syria or most of the nations of Latin America.

Governmental planning in Taiwan seems to equate development with rapid urban growth and decline of the rural sector. In the press and official government publications one senses a pride in the rapid growth of cities, even though it is admitted that the cities are under-equipped to serve the additional population, and even pride in some quarters over the need to import foodstuffs. The main demand for women workers is as part of a low paid, transient labor pool which draws foreign investment in industry and creates a spurious economic boom. Taiwan counts as development the presence of Japanese, American and Overseas Chinese companies whose profits flow out of the country, who receive tax benefits and import privileges, and whose low cost goods do not reach the Taiwan consumer market. The foreign companies are understandably attracted by the availability of a labor force whose salaries rarely need exceed $30 U.S. a month for a 48-hour week and which does not present the threat of strikes or labor union pressure. The growing presence helps keep wages down across the board and at the same time allows the Taiwan government to point with pride to the rapid industrialization of the island.

However, it is not the purpose of this paper to attempt a full critique of Taiwan’s strategy for modernization and development. We mean only to suggest that there is a connection between this strategy of rapid urbanization and attraction of foreign capital and the position of women, educated or semi-literate, in the work force. Obviously, one of the quickest ways to fill up the cities and empty the countryside is by restricting most job opportunities to married men. Thus, when jobs are available, one moves entire households, not working couples which would cut urban job opportunities by half, and reduce the number of new urban families accordingly. At the same time, one

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23In 1970-71, food prices on some items, such as meat, poultry and fruits matched U.S. prices although income was only ¼ to ½ of what paid for comparable jobs. Other items were markedly higher, for example coffee, tinned foodstuffs, dairy products, and all imported items (whether legally imported or procured via the black market). Rice, vegetables and fish were still in line with income.
encourages short-term low paid employment for women. With female labor thus defined as cheap labor because of its involvement in factory and service jobs, male resistance to hiring women in other sorts of work is stiffened. The presence of women in certain jobs becomes a threat to the potential wage levels of educated males. While a particular man may support the idea of his own wife working to increase the family income, he resents and opposes other people’s wives working in his organization because it may depress his salary. Good jobs are relatively scarce and jealously guarded. Increasingly, they are being reserved for men so that the opening of new opportunities will create the illusion of social mobility (or preservation of middle class status) for the greatest number of people. Put another way, the social status of the household derives from the husband’s employment, not from income in itself. By edging women out of the competition for the more prestigious and/or lucrative jobs the number of households moving into the middle class is maximized, and the men, already in competition with other men of their educational level, are at least spared the added burden of competing against qualified women.

Some political considerations are relevant here. Taiwan affords little in the way of political activity and involvement in government as we understand it. What most effectively leads people to support of the Kuomintang regime is the promise of economic well being and increasing opportunity. Native-born Taiwanese, who ten years ago might have opposed the government on nationalistic grounds, if not for ideological reasons, have become more supportive of the regime. Taiwanese membership in the ruling party itself is reported to be growing rapidly, and we can only assume that the bulk of these new members are men who have been enabled to “make it” in the system. Their chances of “making it” at the professional/technical/white collar level are enhanced if a third of the qualified competition is ruled out on the grounds of sex.

Secondly, there is the Kuomintang claim to being the only legitimate government of China and embodiment of the best of Chinese culture. The pseudo-Confucianism invoked to validate these claims may in part explain the romanticization of the housebound wife some 50 years after the May Fourth Movement and despite the important roles that educated women were allowed to play in the early days of the Republic. It must also be kept in mind that by the 1930s, the Kuomintang had come to view most of the women’s movements as radical and dangerous. Feminist leaders were jailed and even killed. The efforts of mainland China to put principles of sexual equality into practice must seem to the Kuomintang to validate their original suspicions about feminist activities. In the distorted picture of life in China that is presented to the Taiwan public one learns that under the Communists women are forced to work and toil—as compared to Taiwan, where they are free to remain at home, enjoying a life of leisurely motherhood.

In conclusion, we would say that in Taiwan a step backward has been taken as far as women’s status and participation is concerned. Women are
permitted low paid and rather uninteresting jobs before marriage, and defined as a source of domestic labor after marriage regardless of training, talents, or social class. Many, in the urban situation, are cut off from social participation of any sort, and forced into an isolation which has few, if any, precedents in the traditional society. This second-class status should not be mistaken for a simple continuity of tradition. In its working out and effects it is something quite new. The shrinking domestic role to which women are being assigned may be validated in part by reference to tradition, but it is created by the economic and political context of Taiwan of the past two decades, and presents a striking contrast to the status of women in China proper.

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