

Chinese Intellectual Female Facing Marriage Dilemma

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Abstract: With boom of the urban celibacy, the marital status of the highly educated women has received widespread attention. According to related reports, the single senior intellectual females generally shows the phenomenon of getting married later or not getting married. This article uses the philology theory to analyze the well-educated single female from the four levels of social public opinion, fertility issues, the structure of male-female ratio, and economic independence. In the end, we found that social media's excessive rendering of highly educated women caused the group to be "stigmatized." At the same time, because they are generally economically independent, they cannot balance the relationship between career and family. In addition, there is a certain imbalance in the sex ratio under the same educational level. For the above reasons, highly educated women are facing a dilemma that it is difficult to be married.

1. Introduction

In China, the traditional ideals imposed on educated women remain obstinate. How Chinese conceive an ideal female can be reflected from the literature of Mo Yan, the 2012 Nobel Prize literature winner in China. According to his most famous book *Big Breast and Wide Hips*, an "ideal" wife and mother is described as someone who is lenient, kind, and never complain about toughness in life [1]. Even worse, the discriminations got reinforced in the modern literature and TV shows. However, educated women in today's China are actively fighting for their rights and they are more willing to express their feelings than ever throughout the history. The critical differences between literacy figures and increased population of educated women lead to several economic and cultural variables that they have to face in society.

Female identity is consistently constructed through emancipation of suppression. Clinical Psychologist Toshio Kawai, in his research paper *Postmodern consciousness in the novels of Haruki Murakami*, describes three stages of consciousness in society: premodern consciousness, modern consciousness, and postmodern consciousness [2]. In the pre-modern society, the id of humans is consistently suppressed, and the self-tightly connected to one's group, whether that is a class or a tribe [3]. Taking women's rights for example, in the past few centuries, ideas coming from women were severely suppressed. If there were any woman who were willing to step up, she would be ignored if not despised by the society. There are dozens of examples of feminists fighting for their rights yet failed because few supported them.

However, when the society enters modern consciousness, the id and desire for rights that are suppressed for so long will eventually break through[2]. Individualization starts to form and is gained from fighting the majority. Women in the late 19th century and 20th century own much more rights compared to those in previous centuries. Women started to appear in politics, medical, and educational fields. Because of the radical feminist and their supporters, women for the first time can vote in the United States. However, the isolation from majority inevitability causes loneliness. No

one arounds you can truly understand you. People share their experiences without in-person communication. Thus characteristics of postmodern consciousness started to appear [2]. Given the basic concepts of three stages of consciousness, the suffering of educated women in today's world might seem reasonable. By fighting the majority in their modern conscious stage, they isolate themselves from the traditional women values that have existed since the 1980s. If they don't, they will be stuck in the unfair treatments forever. But if they do, they will be drawn to the unstoppable loneliness in postmodern consciousness. Therefore, educated women will never leave the loop, unless the complete destruction of traditional values.

The main focus of this article are women who are pursuing a master's or doctoral degree. We intend to explore what kind of marriage market this group of women are in in China. The marriage market is defined as the tangible or intangible place where unmarried or divorced people negotiate marriage. In the current paper, we will discuss the dilemma they face due to pressure from all sides in such an environment. These dilemmas include the shackles of the traditional marriage model for a long time on women and the resulting bias in self-cognition of intellectual women when choosing a spouse.

With being single becoming the trend, marriage squeeze is becoming one of the huge problems facing by contemporary Chinese society. Therefore, the research on the marriage problem of singless is becoming more and more important. Among single groups, high intellectual female pay more attention to marriage and love issues. This article summarizes the research on the marriage issues encountered by intellectual female single groups in the past ten years, and explains the difficulty of marriage in intellectual single women groups from a sociological perspective.

2. Issues Faced by Interllectual Women in China

2.1. Distorted Description by Social Media

Social media's excessive reporting of higher intellectual women contains bias and mislead the public [3]. It stigmatized higher intellectual women, labeling them as masculine, powerful, unyielding,decisive and nothing related to delicacy, elegance, and grace (description) [4]

According to the mate selection gradient theory [5], men, when choosing a partner, tend to choose women who are on the lower level in terms of education and income. Similarly, due to the traditional concept that men are strong and women weak, intellectual women prefer the men who were more attractive when choosing a spouse. This is one of the reasons why many intellectual women are unable to find a match in China. By contrast, in Europe and America, the marriage rate of women with high education is not low, and they don't mind looking for men who are weaker than themselves [6].

2.2. Work-Family Conflict

The seeming contradiction between raising a baby and career pursuit leave intellectual women a either-or difficulty. If they want to continue their career, they may delay or decide not to have children at all. However, Child-free is unacceptable in traditional Chinese culture, because the absence of children means that the family is incomplete. That is why men are more inclined to choose young women with strong fertility when choosing a spouse. As a result, highly intellectual women can't find a suitable mate.

2.3. Structural Imbalance of Gender

The traditional view of marriage advocates a well-matched social and economic status for marriage. For intellectual women, usually they are unwilling to choose a partner who is intellectually inferior to them because they make a large investment on their academic qualifications. Normally, it takes 3 to 4 years and at least 300,000 RMB to achieve a postgraduate degree [7]. Meanwhile females have to give up other opportunities in order to maintain their study. Faced with such high sunk costs, standard for choosing a spouse is increased.

Furthermore, the expansion of the educational population has increased the number of women

able to attend school. As modern higher education shifts from elitism to civilianization, the difference in education levels between men and women has gradually narrowed. Different from the state of serious imbalance between men and women in the country, there has been a gender reversal imbalance in the field of higher education, that is, the proportion of women with high education gradually exceeds that of men. Women's relatively strict mate selection standards and the structural imbalance of gender present an irreconcilable contradiction.

Report on Chinese Marriage and Love (2009) clearly pointed out that women's mate selection standards are the main lever for the balance of supply and demand in the marriage market. Although women admit that they have high standards for choosing a spouse, they generally do not make adjustments. The report shows that if they can't find an ideal partner: only 6.9% of women will lower their mate selection requirements, and more than 44.1% of women insist on quality before quantity. Therefore, highly educated women may have difficulties in finding a desired partner.

2.4. Economic Independence

Individuals will choose to get married only if they evaluate and confirm that the actual value of spouses exceeds that of single. In other words, individuals will remain single until they find one partner who meets or exceeds the standards they set for the minimally acceptable match. That is because based on job-search theory in economics, the possessed resources can affect the timing that they get married [9]. After estimating the costs and benefits of two alternative choices, individuals choose whether they should get married. Sometimes individuals have to adjust their standard to the uncertain conditions in marriage markets. Yet, better-educated men and women with greater economic independence are able to set and stick to a higher standard for the minimally acceptable match and spend longer time in marital search in marriage markets. Thus, both education and age have impact on individuals' entry into marriage and the partners they finally marry.

At the same time, relative to poorly-educated women, highly-educated women invest more in market-oriented human capital, and thus have higher earning potential and greater economic independence. In addition to the fact that women do most of the housework and childcare even if they also work outside the home, highly-educated women may choose to forgo marriage due to the reduced gains from marriage.

3. Suggestions to Address the Problems

3.1. Social Media

On the one hand, the media should fairly and objectively report on the higher intellectual female group so as to correctly guide the value orientation of the public. At the same time, social media should help guide the general public to change their deep-rooted traditional concepts and accept more open concepts of marriage and love. On the other hand, highly intellectual women should maintain a clear understanding of themselves, so as to avoid being single due to excessive inferiority and self-arrogance.

3.2. Relevant Protective Policy and Regulation

In the face of policy changes and the actual **needs** of young females with higher education degrees, colleges and universities should establish a sound humanized management method, provide necessary premarital education on the concept of marriage, love, and childbirth, and provide female students with the necessary material conditions. Meanwhile, enterprises and work units should also improve the corresponding maternity protection system to ensure that the reproductive rights of higher intellectual women can be effectively protected after they enter the workplace.

Furthermore, highly educated women tend to be relatively introverted and self-sufficient in their mate-choosing attitudes, making it difficult to be found or to find others in open social platforms. Because of career or other reasons, they have few opportunities to participate in social activities, so they lack sufficient skills and judgment, which makes it difficult for them to have a good

impression with each other in the process of intercourse. And in the absence of directional guidance, they often find it hard to find the opposite sex who has a common language or can make up for their own communication barriers. The government should encourage and improve the standardization of various types of marriage agencies and matchmaking companies. Try to design a guiding hierarchical information database of the opposite sex for highly educated women, so as to reduce the dilemma of choosing a spouse for highly educated women caused by structural differences.

3.3. Self Enhancing

Highly educated women should change their self-perception to be more social. They should be able to recognize that their own rational marriage resources are ascendant, that is, the number of men who can match their own social status is very small. In addition, they should fully understand their weakness in emotional marriage resources. It should be clear that men at the same level do not take women with high knowledge as the preferred group, and they themselves are at a disadvantage among the remaining groups in love and marriage. Therefore, highly educated women, on the one hand, need to understand their own shortcomings, and on the other hand, they need to lower their mate selection standards. Only in this way can they directly alleviate the phenomenon of marriage gradient squeeze, so as to obtain more mate selection opportunities and more powerful marriage conditions.

4. Conclusion

The article illustrates marriage circumstances in China, specific to highly-educated women. Educated women typically are separated into two groups: women who do not want to get married, and women who want but unable to due to social, economic, and cultural reasons. Furthermore, authors develop several solutions to this critical problem. Public opinion media's over-reporting of the highly educated female group and the deviation of the self-recognition of highly educated women have made them unable to find a suitable partner. Financial independence makes it harder for highly educated women to decide to marry, and the huge cost of higher education makes it harder for them to accept less-qualified partners which means individuals will remain single until they find one partner who meets or exceeds the standards they set for the minimally acceptable match.

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