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Association of Divorce with Socio-Demographic Covariates in China, 1955-1985 Event History Analysis Based on Data Collected in Shanghai, Hebei, and Shaanxi

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VOLUME 7 - ARTICLE 11

Date Received: 25 May 2001

PAGES 407 - 432

Date Published: 29 Aug 2002

<http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol7/11/>

doi:10.4054/DemRes.2002.7.11



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Abstract

Based on a unique data set on the event history of marriage and divorce collected in the In-Depth Fertility Surveys conducted in Shanghai, Shaanxi, and Hebei in 1985 and a multivariate hazards model, this paper investigates the association between divorce risk and socio-demographic factors in China. Controlling for several other socio-demographic factors, we demonstrate that the risk of divorce for women who married before age 18 is twice as high as that of those married after age 20; the risk of divorce of arranged marriages is about 2.6 times as high as that of not-arranged ones. The number of children is highly and negatively correlated with risk of divorce; the traditional son preference does not seem having substantial effects on divorce among women who have one or two children; but the risk of divorce of women who have three or more daughters without a son was 2.2 times as high as that of those women who have three or more children with at least one son. The divorce level in urban areas is higher than that in rural areas. The greater proportion of arranged and early marriages plus some other special factors in a less developed region (Shaanxi) contributes to its higher general divorce rate before 1985, in comparison with the advanced region (Shanghai). The divorce level in Shanghai after 1985 has become higher than that in Shaanxi. It seems that education level is positively related to divorce and labor force participation is negatively related to divorce, but the estimates are not statistically significant. Some explanations of these findings are also discussed in this paper.

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Keywords

arranged marriage, China, divorce, divorce risk, early marriage,
socio-demographic factors of divorce






Word count (Main text)

7047

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