

EDITORIAL

Love, Marriage, and Intimate Citizenship in Contemporary China and India: An introduction

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Theorists of globalization as well as activists' writing from a range of positions have argued that intimate practices are taking centre stage and becoming part of global discourses in the process. This holds true for the institution of marriage and the associated ideas about appropriate family forms, but also more generally for the ways in which ideas about 'modern selves' are realized in relationships based on reflexivity and self-knowledge through engagement with an intimate other.¹

Recent ethnographic accounts suggest that the emergence of romantic courtship, companionate marriage, and gay identity politics

¹ See, for example, A. Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy. Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992 and *Runaway World. How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives*, Profile Books, London, 1999; L. Jamieson, *Intimacy. Personal Relationships in Modern Societies*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998; K. Plummer, *Intimate Citizenship. Private Decisions and Public Dialogues*, Washington University Press, Seattle, 2003; E. Povinelli, *The Empire of Love. Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2006; E. Illouz, *Cold Intimacies. The Making of Emotional Capitalism*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007 and *Why Love Hurts? A Sociological Explanation*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2012.

in contexts as varied as Papua New Guinea,² Mexico,³ Nepal,⁴ and Nigeria⁵ represent instances of local transformations that draw on such global discourses and idioms of romance, free partner choice, and coupledness. However, it is not clear to what extent these local developments are connected to one another as part of a more general process of global transformation which is both linear and homogeneous. Generally speaking, the emergence of comparable policies and legal frameworks of marriage, family, and sexuality in different parts of the world does seem to support the idea of a global convergence under conditions of increasing economic and cultural integration. However, as anthropologists and historians have shown, the genealogies of phenomena such as love marriage, companionate marriage, lower birth rates, and politicized sexualities are very diverse and subject to significant local and regional variations.⁶ This heterogeneity is not just historical and cultural; it is also profoundly

² H. Wardlow, *Wayward Women: Sexuality and Agency in New Guinea Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006.

³ J. Hirsch, *Courtship after Marriage: Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003.

⁴ L. Ahearn, *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2001.

⁵ D. Smith, 'Love and the risk of HIV: courtship, marriage, and infidelity in Southeastern Nigeria', in J. Hirsch and H. Wardlow (eds), *Modern Loves. The Anthropology of Romantic Courtship and Companionate Marriage*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2006, pp. 127–47.

⁶ See, for example, Hirsch and Wardlow, *Modern Loves*; M. Godelier, *The Metamorphoses of Kinship*, Verso, London, 2011; J. Stacey, *Unhitched. Love, Marriage, and Family Values from West Hollywood to Western China*, New York University Press, New York, 2012; H. Donner, 'Love and marriage globally', in *Anthropology of this Century*, 4, 2012, <http://aotcpress.com/articles/love-marriage-globally/>, [accessed 18 February 2016] and 'One's own marriage. Love marriages in a Calcutta neighbourhood', *South Asia Research*, vol. 22, January 2002, pp. 79–94; F. Orsini (ed.), *Love in South Asia. A Cultural History*, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, 2006; M. Marsden, 'Love and elopement in northern Pakistan', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 13, March 2007, pp. 91–108; P. Moody, *The Intimate State. Love-Marriage and the Law in Delhi*, Routledge, Delhi, 2007; Ahearn, *Invitations to Love*; S. Friedman, *Intimate Politics. Marriage, the Market and State Power in Southeastern China*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2006; Y. Yan, *Private Life under Socialism. Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village 1949–1999*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003; H. Lee, *Revolution of the Heart. A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900–1950*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006; S. Brandtstädter and G. Santos (eds), *Chinese Kinship. Contemporary Anthropological Perspectives*, Routledge, London, 2009; D. Davis and S. Friedman (eds), *Wives, Husbands and Lovers. Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Urban China*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2014; and G. Santos and S. Harrell (eds), *Transforming Patriarchy. Chinese Families in the 21st Century*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, in press.

personal and political. Whatever shifts are occurring globally across North–South, East–West divides, they are taking place in the context of increasingly entangled intersections between private negotiations and public dialogues at various levels in law, state policy, science, technology, and the media.

In this special issue, we approach these private–public intersections from an ethnographically grounded comparative perspective. In contrast to other qualitative approaches focused primarily on individual experiences and discourses, we emphasize the importance of collectivities and ties of sociality, insisting that any engagement with universal bases for subjectivity can only become effective within a specific social and cultural world.⁷ This ethnographic approach to global transformations is not just focused on macro-level changes in discourses and/or policies, but analyses these changes in the context of everyday life practices and processes of negotiation. Ethnography is uniquely positioned to open up crucial debates on how seemingly related ‘global forms’⁸ of love and marriage are emerging across the globe, and how such global transformations allow plenty of room for processes of heterogenization at the local level.⁹ But the approach promoted here is not just ethnographic; it is also comparative.

The six articles included in this issue offer insights on the changing realities of love and marriage in two distinct but not entirely dissimilar Asian contexts: China and India. As nation-states they were both established in the mid twentieth century in reaction to Western colonialism, but they have very different political, economic, and cultural histories. Both countries experienced state-led economic development on the back of nationalist mobilizations from the 1950s onwards. But these developments led to very different claims to ‘alternative modernities’:¹⁰ one based on electoral democracy and a multi-party system, the other based on socialist political ideologies and a single-party system of authoritarian rule. In the 1980s both nations liberalized their economies. Since then there has been a significant convergence that provides ample room for

⁷ See H. Moore, *The Subject of Anthropology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007.

⁸ S. J. Collier and A. Ong, ‘Global assemblages: anthropological problems’, in S.J. Collier and A. Ong (eds), *Global Assemblages. Technology, Ethics, and Politics as Anthropological Problem*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005, pp. 11–14.

⁹ See A. L. Tsing, ‘The global situation’, *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 15, January 2000, pp. 327–60 and *Friction. An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005.

¹⁰ D. P. Gaonkar (ed.), *Alternative Modernities*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2001.

direct comparisons, which have so far mostly focused on large-scale social, economic, and political transformations.¹¹ This special issue recognizes the importance of such macro developments, but gives analytical priority to changes in the sphere of marriage and intimate life.¹² This focus on the intimate dimensions of modern transformations—what could be called ‘intimate modernities’¹³—provides new insights, while highlighting important differences. These differences—as the articles demonstrate—take the form of structural constraints and processes, of everyday practices and discursive flows, often stemming from diverse long-term historical trajectories.

In India, nineteenth-century reforms initiated by elite men reshaped earlier forms of domesticity and kin relations in favour of exclusive, and to a degree irresolvable, arranged marriages in accordance with elite notions of community and custom.¹⁴ Among the Hindu majority, dowry and patrilocality became the norm against which the multiplicity of existing arrangements was measured. Notions like ‘Hindu custom’ and ‘Muslim tradition’ came to be legally enshrined in separate personal laws, which linked marriage, household form, sexuality, gender, and inheritance to fixed definitions of communal belonging and allowed legitimate forms of marriage to be defined in terms of high-caste and high-status group ‘cultures’. Thus,

¹¹ See, for example, S. Muthucumaraswamy and J. Wang (eds), *China, India and the International Economic Order*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010; S. D. Sharma, *China and India in the Age of Globalization*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009; C. Dahlgren, *The World under Pressure. How China and India are Influencing the Global Economy and Environment*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2009; C. Jaffrelot and P. van der Veer (eds), *Patterns of Middle Class Consumption in India and China*, Sage Publications, Delhi, 2008; D. Davin, and B. Harriss-White (eds), *China–India. Pathways of Economic and Social Development*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014; P. van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia. The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2014.

¹² For a critique of the tendency to analyse the transformations associated with kinship in an age of globalization with reference to macro-level developments see, for example, S. McKinnon and F. Cannell (eds), *Vital Relations. Modernity and the Persistent Life of Kinship*, SAR Press, Santa Fe, 2013; Godelier, *The Metamorphoses of Kinship*; and J. Carsten, *After Kinship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014.

¹³ This concept is explored as part of a research project G. Santos is conducting at the Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Hong Kong (Project title: ‘Intimate Modernities. Love, Money, and Everyday Ethics in the Hills of Guangdong, 1976–2014’, Code: 201411159201).

¹⁴ For earlier forms and an account of change during the colonial period, see I. Chatterjee, *Unfamiliar Relations. Family and History in South Asia*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2004; R. Sturman, *The Government of Social Life in Colonial India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012.

(middle-class) domesticity and the ideal of the joint family emerged in conjunction with nationalist discourses on reform and modernity and the characteristic ideology of separate spheres based on the distinction of private and public domains.¹⁵ The public sphere was imagined and institutionalized in terms of liberal values and a politics of emancipatory action and liberal subjects.¹⁶ And while this discourse shaped the way ‘love’ and conjugality came to be configured in the context of a concern about being modern, the private sphere was marked by conservatism.¹⁷ In the decades after independence, the state took on the role of the diverse nationalist organizations; and although the rights of the individual were enshrined in the constitution, the multiplicity of personal codes governing inheritance, marriage, guardianship, and property remained anchored in notions of community.

In China, kinship and family have long been key sites for the production of ‘civilized’ subjects, but it was only in the first decades of the twentieth century that earlier imperial efforts to regulate local practices and forms of domesticity were incorporated into a more comprehensive project of national modernization.¹⁸ The May Fourth Movement played an important role in this process. May Fourth intellectuals challenged long-held Confucian ideals about family and social relations, arguing that these ‘traditional’ ideals were an obstacle to the creation of a new, modern national culture

¹⁵ Examples for the extensive amount of literature on these domesticities are K. Sangari, *The Politics of the Possible. Essays on Gender, History, Politics, Colonial English*, Tulika, Delhi, 2002; J. E. Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India. What Women Learned when Men Gave Them Advice*, Rowan and Littlefield, London, 2004.

¹⁶ See, for example, P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989.

¹⁷ See, for example, R. K. Ray, (ed.), *Mind, Body and Society. Life and Mentality in Colonial Bengal*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996; T. Raychaudhuri (ed.), *Perceptions, Emotions, Sensibilities. Essays on India's Colonial and Post-colonial Experiences*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999; R. Majumdar, *Marriage and Modernity. Family Values in Colonial Bengal*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2009; M. Sreenivas, *Wives, Widows, Concubines. The Conjugal Family Ideal in Colonial India*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2008; K. Kapila, ‘Conjugating marriage: state legislation and Gaddi kinship’, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. 38, Autumn 2004, pp. 379–409; and M. Liechty, *Suitably Modern. Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2002.

¹⁸ See for instance P. Ebrey and J. L. Watson (eds), *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986; R. Watson and P. Ebrey (eds), *Marriage and Inequality in Late Imperial China*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995; G. Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2007.

based on global and Western standards. These criticisms did not translate into far-reaching social reforms, but they would inspire subsequent developments, in the course of first nationalist and later communist mobilizations.¹⁹ In 1950, the new Communist government promulgated a Marriage Law which criticized the ‘traditional’ Confucian order for encouraging ‘domestic tyranny’ by sanctioning hierarchies in terms of gender and age. The new law sought to eradicate ‘arranged marriages’ (meaning forced marriages) and to promote gender equality in the domestic sphere. This law was successful in pushing for a new model of ‘modern marriage’—that is, free, monogamous (heterosexual) marriage between partners of a legally prescribed minimum age—but the implementation of this new standard faced significant obstacles.²⁰ Unlike in India, these public stipulations were meant to apply to the whole of China, allowing limited differentiation in terms of region, class, or ethnic affiliation.

Starting from the 1980s and 1990s, both countries implemented important reforms which led to the liberalization of markets and increased the speed and impact of globalization. These reforms gave rise to unprecedented industrial development, urbanization, and economic growth, prompting the emergence of a consumer-oriented culture and a growing middle class whose values are shaped by ideas about modernity, individual choice, and personal autonomy circulating beyond national boundaries.²¹ Today, China and India are seen as pinnacles of Asian modernity and are increasingly described as major players in the newly emergent world order centred on the

¹⁹ See, for example, S. Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State, 1915–1953*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003; G. Hershatler, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2007; E. Croll, *The Politics of Marriage in Contemporary China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981; J. Stacey, *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in China*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983.

²⁰ See in addition to some of the above, H. Evans, *Women and Sexuality in China. Dominant Discourses of Female Sexuality and Gender since 1949*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007; G. Hershatler, *The Gender of Memory. Rural Women and China’s Collective Past*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2007; Yan, *Private Life under Socialism*; and S. Harrell and G. Santos, ‘Introduction’, in Santos and Harrell, *Transforming Patriarchy*.

²¹ See, for example, Liechty, *Suitably Modern*; Jaffrelot and van der Veer, *Patterns of Middle Class Consumption in India and China*; S. Greenhalgh, *Cultivating Global Citizens. Population in the Rise of China*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2010; L. Zhang, *In Search of Paradise. Middle-Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2010; H. Donner (ed.), *Being Middle-Class in India. A Way of Life*, Routledge, London, 2011; A. Baviskar and R. Ray (eds), *Elite and Everyman. The Cultural Politics of the Indian Middle Classes*, Routledge, Delhi, 2011; and J. Osburg, *Anxious Wealth. Money and Morality among China’s New Rich*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2013.

Asia-Pacific region. This global orientation is strongly embraced by local elites, including the growing middle classes, but rapid socio-economic change has also revived debates around ‘tradition’, which continue to play an important role in these developments. As was the case in earlier phases, when ‘tradition’ became central to the formation of nationalist discourses, these debates often have a homogenising effect and highlight elite notions and practices often to the exclusion of local or more marginal ways of belonging. The discourse of ‘traditional’ marriage patterns, sexual relations, family forms, and associated rights figures prominently in the nationalist imageries of both countries and has long been subject to various forms of contestation. The articles in this special issue highlight how ‘tradition’ has been understood, regulated, and contested in the last few decades of economic integration and globalization, but also how the notion of what constitutes ‘tradition’ itself has been transformed in the process.

Our comparative focus on China and India represents a challenge to dominant Eurocentric approaches in the humanities and the social sciences to the globalization of love, marriage, and intimate life, but it does not imply a straightforward ‘provincialization of Europe’,²² since Euro-American, or Western imageries and genealogies loom large in the formation of early twenty-first century Indian and Chinese modernities. Dominant models of intimacy, modernity, and globalization point to a large-scale process of macro-structural individualization which leads to the rise of affective individualism and the weakening of extended family and community ties, relegated to the micro-level.²³ These models have proved very influential, but they are largely based on Western normative discourses with limited

²² See D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2011.

²³ See W. Goode, ‘Theoretical importance of love’, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 24, February 1959, pp. 38–47. Later theorizations of intimacy, modernity, and globalization include for example A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1991; Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*; A. Giddens, *Runaway World. How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives*, Profile Books, London, 1999; U. Beck, A. Giddens, and S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1994; and U. Beck and E. Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization. Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, Sage, London, 2002.

analytical value.²⁴ In this special issue, we use ethnographic materials from China and India to develop an alternative conceptualization. Our model highlights the increasing centrality of individual choice, confessional and affective modes, and personal autonomy, but it does so without overstating the extent to which individuals have become unmoored from broader moral and normative structures, including the institution of the family, larger kin groups, neighbourhoods, caste, and other associational identities. Modernity, we argue, does not entail a breakdown of broader moral and normative structures, but a reconfiguration of these structures and the way they are implied in marriage, love lives, and other close relationships. But just as modernity can take many different forms depending on the social and cultural context, so this process of reconfiguration can take place in many different ways.

In this special issue, we explore the complexities of this process of social, material, and political reconfiguration from a comparative Chinese and Indian perspective. This comparative perspective attempts to overcome the limitations of conventional, nationalist approaches to modernity in Asian studies based on Eurocentric East/West comparisons and impact/response dichotomies. Thus, this issue promotes conversations that address intersections across Asian contexts. This requires attention to macro-level developments, but we continue to place a strong emphasis on nuanced, place-based knowledge. This privileging of fine-grained analyses attentive to social and cultural context complements broader trends in the humanities and social sciences to counter overly economic approaches to marriage and intimate life,²⁵ even though most scholarly research undertaken along these lines focuses rather narrowly on institutions and canonical discourses (political, literary, legal) that comprise a 'great tradition'.²⁶ The present special issue contributes to a growing body of work that moves beyond these top-down approaches by focusing on the interplay between everyday practices and broader

²⁴ See R. Firth, J. Hubert, and A. Forge, *Families and Their Relatives. Kinship in a Middle-Class Sector of London: An Anthropological Study*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1970; and D. M. Schneider and R. T. Smith, *Class Differences in American Kinship*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1978.

²⁵ For example G. Becker, *A Treatise on the Family*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

²⁶ An example for India is Orsini, *Love in South Asia*. For China, see, for example, T. Barlow, 'Theorizing woman. *Funiu, Guojia, Jiating*', *Genders*, vol. 10, March 1991, pp. 132–60; and Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*.

historical processes.²⁷ This bottom-up approach to the globalization of love, marriage, and intimate life is critical of conventional theories of modernization and globalization not just because of their excessive emphasis on macro-level processes of individualization, but also because of their overly homogenous and linear model of social change.²⁸ In this special issue, we show for example that the construction of modernities in relation to intimate lives in China and India should not be conceptualized as a clear-cut process of nuclearization of family structures—both in ideology and in practice.²⁹ In both settings, conjugality and emotional ties between spouses are becoming increasingly important, but intergenerational ties and co-residence remain strong factors, and the ideal of the patrilineal joint family with its attending ideology continues to frame what is otherwise a diverse range of changing experiences and practices.

The special issue is primarily concerned with the role played by the idiom of ‘love’ and the institution of marriage in these transformations.³⁰ China and India are often cited as classic examples of societies in which individualism is downplayed and marriage is a matter of broader family ties and the interest of the community. While both regions boast long-standing distinctive traditions of romantic

²⁷ For China see, for example, S. Potter, ‘The cultural construction of emotion in rural Chinese social life’, *Ethnos*, vol. 16, June 1988, pp. 181–208; Yan, *Private Life under Socialism*; V. Fong, *Only Hope. Coming of Age under China’s One-child Policy*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2004; H. Evans, *The Subject of Gender. Daughters and Mothers in Urban China*, Rowman and Littlefield, London, 2004; Friedman, *Intimate Politics*; Tiantian Zheng, *Red Lights. The Lives of Sex Workers in Post-socialist China*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2009; C. Freeman, *Making and Faking Kinship. Marriage and Labor Migration between China and South Korea*, Cornell University Press, New York, 2011; and Santos and Harrell, *Transforming Patriarchy*. For South Asia see, for example, S. Vatuk, *Kinship and Urbanization. White Collar Migrants in North India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972; S. C. Seymour, *Women, Family, and Child Care in India. A World in Transition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999; M. Trawick, *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992; P. Jeffery and R. Jeffery, *Don’t Marry Me to a Plowman. Women’s Everyday Lives in North India*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1996; G. G. Rajeha and A. Gold, *Listen to the Heron’s Words. Reimagining Gender and Kinship in South Asia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994; Ahearn, *Invitations to Love*; H. Donner, *Domestic Goddesses. Maternity, Globalisation and Middle-class Identity in Contemporary Urban India*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008; K. Twambley, *Love, Marriage and Intimacy among Gujarati Indians. A Suitable Match*, Palgrave, London, 2014.

²⁸ See, for example, Goode, ‘Theoretical importance of love’; and Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*.

²⁹ See Donner, *Domestic Goddesses*; and Santos and Harrell, *Transforming Patriarchy*.

³⁰ See Hirsch and Wardlow, *Modern Loves*.

love,³¹ these did not carry much weight in social science literature, which reflects the importance of arranged marriage. In both contexts, it was only in the first half of the twentieth century that marital relationships started to become more explicitly tied to the language of romantic love. More recently, the idiom of love and mutual attraction as basis for marriage has also become firmly entangled with neoliberal vocabulary. Thus, choice, self-realization, and rights form part of desirable, suitably modern subjectivities. An important source for this new vocabulary of love is the proliferation of media, which includes newspapers, journals, television serials, films, and more recently, internet forums.³² These private–public intersections are very visible in the contemporary period, but they are not necessarily of recent origin, even though their impact and reach has increased dramatically. As early as the late nineteenth century, better-off women in India and China were increasingly exposed to new, ‘modern’ ideas about love, marriage, and the family. This exposure often took the form of advice literature, journals, pamphlets, and novels promoting specific domesticities. Aimed at educating the emerging urban middle class, these materials dealt with the reform of the minutiae of everyday life,

³¹ On Chinese (great and little) traditions of romantic love see, for example, Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*; Yan, *Private Life under Socialism*; W. Jankowiak, ‘Romantic passion in the People’s Republic of China’, in W. Jankowiak (ed.), *Romantic Passion. A Universal Experience?*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 166–83; S. Du, “‘With one word and one strength’: Intimacy among the Lahu in Southwest China”, in W. Jankowiak (ed.), *Intimacies: Love and Sex across Cultures*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, pp. 95–121; and C. Shih, *Quest for Harmony. The Moso Traditions of Sexual Union and Family Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2010. On South Asian traditions of romantic love see, for example, Orsini, *Love in South Asia*; L. Harlan and Paul B. Courtright (eds), *From the Margins of Hindu Marriage. Essays on Gender, Religion and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995; J. Stratton Hawley and D. M. Wulff (eds), *The Divine Consort. Radha and the Goddesses of India*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1987; J. P. Parry, ‘Ankalu’s errant wife. Sex, marriage and industry in contemporary Chhattisgarh’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 35, December 2001, pp. 783–820; G. Tiwari, ‘Interplay of love, sex and marriage in a polyandrous society in the high Himalayas of India’, in W. Jankowiak (ed.), *Intimacies: Love and Sex across Cultures*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, pp. 122–147;

³² For China see, for example, W. Pan, *Love and Marriage in Globalizing China*, Routledge, London, 2015; and Y. Zhu, *Television in Post-Reform China. Serial Dramas, Confucian Leadership, and the Global Television Market*, Routledge, London, 2008. For India see, for example, R. Dwyer, ‘Kiss or tell? Declaring love in Hindi films’, in Orsini (ed.), *Love in South Asia*, pp. 289–302; and C. Brosius, ‘Love in the age of Valentine and pink underwear. Media and politics of intimacy in South Asia’, in C. Brosius and R. Wenzlhuemer (eds), *Transcultural Turbulences. Interdisciplinary Explorations of Flows of Images and Media*, Springer Verlag, Wien, 2011, pp. 27–66.

including conjugal relations.³³ Today, a newfound fascination with the making of modern selves contributes to a similar but more intense and far-reaching flow of media imagery focusing on the conduct of personal and family life.

In China and India, the language of 'love' has clearly become an important component of everyday practices of courtship, marriage, and intimate life, but in this special issue, we argue that the question of how this transformation has occurred and what follows in its wake needs rethinking. For most theorists of modernity, including classic convergence theorists and more recent theorists of globalization, love is a kind of universal force that has the potential to challenge hierarchies and forms of solidarity based on family and local community. This intellectual tradition accepts the universality of heightened affective states and desires,³⁴ but maintains that romantic attachment is institutionalized in the form of coupledom, nuclear families, and confessional modes in modern industrial societies. This view was first put forward by theorists of modernization writing in the post-war period³⁵ and was subsequently taken up by a number of historians as well as by second-wave feminism and, more recently, by work on LGBT movements across the globe. Implicit in such work is the belief that modernity as expressed in discourses on love and marriage found in Western Europe from the late eighteenth century onwards will spread to other parts of the world under the influence of colonial and post-colonial processes. Such a perspective was further refined by theories of modernization and globalization that focus on the rise of romantic love and affective individualism in both Western and non-Western contexts. Giddens, for example, cites the notion of 'companionate marriage' and the ideal of 'pure relationships' as a major signifier of global modernity.³⁶ No doubt, the process by which 'love' and the institution of marriage have become linked is crucial for

³³ See, for example, Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India*; M. Dong and J. L. Goldstein (eds), *Everyday Modernity in China*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2006; Sangari, *The Politics of the Possible*.

³⁴ This is the approach favoured by Jankowiak for example; see W. Jankowiak (ed.), *Romantic Passion. A Universal Experience?*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997.

³⁵ See Goode, 'Theoretical importance of love'.

³⁶ In this new paradigm, emotional communication has become the basis of intimacy, and the couple its exclusive site, see, for example, A. Giddens, *Runaway World. How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives*, Profile Books, London, 1999. However, as Jamieson points out, the idea of intimacy and confessional selves is not exclusively focused on the couple, but includes the important redefinition of parent-child

the making of many cultural aspects of globalization. However, we feel that most research on these matters is based on a rather homogeneous and unilinear model of global transformation that centres on Western discourses and thus fails to acknowledge the variations in discursive constructions of 'love' in a wide range of contexts.

In this special issue, we draw on contemporary Chinese and Indian materials to develop a more complex, less homogenizing narrative. First, we agree that the language of love and individual partner choice is strongly institutionalized in modern societies and has become an important marker of modern selves and subjectivities. Where this differs from conventional sociological theorizations of love and modernity is that we think different models and genealogies of love marriage can coexist even in present-day globalizing contexts. Standard accounts of courtship and marriage in modern contexts tend to emphasize the importance of feelings of individual mutual affection, desire, and emotional attachment. In this special issue, we provide evidence suggesting that this model of marriage is becoming increasingly salient globally, but we also point to alternative conceptualizations and show how they allow us to make more sense of contemporary Chinese and Indian realities. In these contexts, we argue, marriage is not just based on romantic ties and desires; it is also about individual and collective acts of mutual assistance—practices which are simultaneously material, emotional, and meaningful (even if not necessarily verbalized) and which are expected to continue in the long term. This emphasis on acts of mutual assistance requires that more analytical attention be given to group-based identities and their contemporary transformations, as well as tensions between individual and collective interests. Some aspects of these tensions come out most poignantly in ethnographies of inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and transnational relationships, and in ethnographies of marginalized sexualities, which challenge the subordination of individual affect to collective choice.³⁷

relationships and friendships; see Jamieson, *Intimacy. Personal Relationships in Modern Societies*.

³⁷ For South Asia see, for example, G. Reddy, *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2005; P. Shahani, *Gay Bombay: Globalization, Love and (Be)longing in Contemporary India*, Sage, Delhi, 2005. For China see, for example, T. Kong, *Chinese Male Homosexualities: Memba, Tongzhi and Golden Boy*, Routledge, London, 2011; E. Engebretsen, *Queer Women in Urban China: An Ethnography*, Routledge, New York, 2013; and T. Zheng, *Tongzhi Living: Men Attracted to Men in Post-socialist China*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2015. The

This discussion introduces yet another qualification to conventional theorizations of love, marriage, and modernity. As the example of Giddens shows, globalization theory tends to assume that the language of romantic love takes centre stage because it favours ‘individualism’ associated with modernity.³⁸ In common with such an approach, some anthropologists have drawn on the history of identity politics to argue that the triumph of the individualized subject is no longer limited to ‘Western’ contexts, but goes hand in hand with the decline of earlier collective identities. Such attention to ‘affective individualism’ serves here as a politicized and transcendent critique of the supremacy of marriage in its contractual dimension, over-determined by rules and normative structural aspects. Thus, Povinelli, for example, has argued that in the case of Aboriginal communities she worked with, arranged marriages have given way to self-chosen matches, and that stranger (self-chosen) marriage has become a norm.³⁹ Here as elsewhere, more rigidly controlled alliances and the influence of family and wider kin groups on partner choice are criticized as outdated, while individual preference becomes emblematic of affirmative notions of agency and modern subjectivities. Such an emphasis on the individual’s point of view and on kinship as metaphor has also been put forward in more recent approaches to kinship studies in anthropology.⁴⁰ Both of these new directions—the idea that intimate lives have become less confined by institutions like marriage and the family, and the idea that kinship is not given but negotiated—resonate with the general orientation of this special issue. We agree that earlier work placed too much emphasis on normative structures and the hegemonic discourses of dominant classes. However, as Miller points out, the emphasis on ‘chosen’ relationships has led to the neglect of ‘formalisation, normativity and fixity in turn’.⁴¹ We therefore advocate that attention to individual relationships and emerging subjectivities

fact that we could not elicit an article on these issues indicates the extent to which such scholarship has moved from the margins into the mainstream of knowledge production.

³⁸ See, for example, Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, pp. 37–48.

³⁹ See Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*. Along the same lines Weston argued that chosen ‘families’ as found in gay and lesbian networks of support she studied in the United States mark a new stage of emancipatory social life. See K. Weston, *Families We Choose. Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997.

⁴⁰ See for instance J. Carsten, *After Kinship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

⁴¹ See D. Miller, ‘What is a relationship? Is kinship negotiated experience?’, *Ethnos*, vol. 72, December 2007, pp. 535–54.

should be accompanied by an analysis of the way ‘affective economies’ are situated within structurally constrained social fields, for example in the context of class relations and social policy. This last point is particularly important because public debates on love and marriage in India as well as in China are informed by narratives of progress, rapid transformation, and new beginnings, often closely linked to the operations of the state.

The more sociological literature on the globalization of romantic love and affective individualism tends to oppose sentiment and reason, passion and interest, love and marriage.⁴² Recent research by anthropologists and historians working on African post-colonial contexts has done much to expose the religious connotations of such distinctively Western discourses, which link notions of humility and self-sacrifice with conceptual oppositions between instrumental and non-instrumental forms of spiritual love.⁴³ Thus, Cole has shown how Western missionaries struggled to introduce the notion of ‘selfless love’ in Madagascar under French colonial rule, and how their efforts to disseminate a conceptual framework which separated affection from material interest were not very successful because they clashed with indigenous notions of reciprocity as the basis of affectionate bonds created through gift exchange.⁴⁴ This conceptual resistance to separating affection from material interest is not particular to Madagascar, but can be found in different forms in a wide range of contexts. Anthropologists working with a more processual, practice-oriented approach to marriage and intimate life in contemporary Western societies have shown, for example, how ‘love’ in the context of divorce is clearly conceived in terms of blurred material and symbolic boundaries between self-interest and the idealized pure relationship.⁴⁵

⁴² The notion that emotions form the basis of a civilizing mission in the course of which earlier forms of interaction, affect, mutuality, and recognition are superseded by autonomous choice, increased agency, and transformative internal states is not new. In fact, countering the narrative of ‘universal love’ and the biological basis of ‘desire’ is the work of scholars who unearth the history of emotions. As it turns out, China and India figure prominently in debates about ‘civility’, progress through civilizing the self, based on Western philosophy from early on. See, for example, M. Pernau et al. *Civilizing Emotions. Concepts in Nineteenth Century Asia and Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015.

⁴³ See, for example, J. Cole and L. Thomas (eds), *Love in Africa*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009.

⁴⁴ See J. Cole. ‘Love, money, and economies of intimacy in Tamatave, Madagascar’, in Cole and Thomas, *Love in Africa*, pp. 109–34.

⁴⁵ See B. Simpson, *Changing Families. An Ethnographic Approach to Divorce and Separation*, Bloomsbury, London, 1998.

A similar argument could be made about the contrast between individual desires and collective interests, and how supposedly opposed priorities are continuously negotiated in practice.

In this special issue, we show in a similar manner how the increasing salience of the language of romantic love and 'affective individualism' in China and India draws on a conceptual framework that does not separate individuals from collectives or affection from material and self-interest. This is not to say that such possible conceptual oppositions are unknown,⁴⁶ but we argue that the dominant language of love and affective individualism in the two contexts is constantly blurring boundaries and agencies. Arranged marriages in India tend to accommodate family interests, but this does not automatically limit the relevance of affective ties. Not only are those in arranged marriages expected to ideally 'fall in love' after the wedding, companionate marriage has become deeply intertwined with middle-class subjectivities.⁴⁷ This last point also applies to China, but here young people seem to have more control over the process of spouse selection, even though they continue to be strongly concerned with parental consent and kinship networks. In both contexts, romantic love as the basis for marriage has clearly become an important discursive component of the construction of local and national ideologies associated with modernity, but the emphasis on individualism has not led to a radical questioning of the institution of marriage, or the patrilineal joint family ideal. Where marriage is not narrowly constructed as a matter of individual emotional attachment and coupledness, a multiplicity of negotiations, often involving more than one couple, emerge. There is, however, an important difference between the two contexts. In China, (heteronormative) 'love marriages' today are neither publicly devalued nor discursively opposed to (heteronormative) 'arranged marriages', and ties of marriage are increasingly described in

⁴⁶ In China, for example, when young people choose not to marry a particular person in order to accommodate the demands of their parents they often describe the decision in terms of a similar binary opposition. As for India, the discursive contrast between 'love marriages' and 'arranged marriages' demonstrates just how powerful the ideas of romance, self-sacrifice, and devotion, drawing on ideals of pure love, can be.

⁴⁷ See, for example, the detailed discussion of ideal middle-class lifestyles among software engineers provided in C. J. Fuller and H. Narasimhan, 'Companionate marriage in India: The changing marriage system in a middle-class Brahman subcaste', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 14, December 2008, pp. 736–54.

individualistic, affective terms.⁴⁸ In India, love marriage is considered to be potentially threatening, and such marriages are deemed transgressive. However, in practice they are incorporated into existing families and households, sometimes even by allowing self-chosen matches as second marriages following a ‘traditional’ arranged one. Love is also increasingly seen as the basis of modern conjugal relations in the case of middle-class families.⁴⁹

The above discussion leads us to a further important point regarding the notion of ‘affective individualism’. In much scholarly work on intimate relations, and especially work on global notions of romance, choosing one’s spouse, or ‘love marriage’ is elevated to the status of both a means and signifier of social change or modernity. In this context, scholars have referred to processes of ‘deinstitutionalization’ where intimacy is linked to discourses of ‘relationships’, choice, and emotional attachment.⁵⁰ Thus, where we find a decrease in the emphasis on marriage, or the pressure to act in the interest of elders, kin, and the collective, relationships may be depicted as constructed as separate from ‘mere’ reproductive purposes and marriage. However, we see at the same time how emotional affective ties and sexual relations are used to seek public recognition within normative frameworks, including marriage. The growing importance of love and individual partner choice in narratives of modernity should therefore not be read as evidence of the weakening of institutions, but rather as a reworking of such wider frameworks. These processes have been described by Collier and Ong in terms of ‘decontextualization’ and ‘recontextualization’ of global forms—in this case life-long, formalized marriage, the importance of lavish weddings, and romantic attachment as a basis for partner choice.⁵¹ The dynamics indicated here are relevant for our understanding of social change in China and India, and more generally across the globe.

⁴⁸ See Yan, *Private Life under Socialism*; and D. Davis, ‘The privatization of marriage in post-socialist China’, *Modern China*, vol. 40, November 2014, pp. 551–77.

⁴⁹ See Parry, ‘Ankalu’s errant wife’; and H. Donner, ‘One’s own marriage: Love marriages in a Calcutta neighbourhood’, *South Asia Research*, vol. 22, January 2002, pp. 79–94.

⁵⁰ The term ‘deinstitutionalization’ is especially popular among sociologists working on North American and Western European contexts. See, for example, A. Cherlin, ‘The deinstitutionalization of American marriage’, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 66, November 2004, pp. 848–61.

⁵¹ See Collier and Ong, ‘Global assemblages, anthropological problems’.

With regard to China, Davis and Friedman recently presented a comparison of ethnographic materials from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and urban China that highlights what they refer to as ‘marital deinstitutionalization’ signified by trends such as higher age at first marriage, fewer barriers to divorce, declining marital fertility, and greater social acceptance of premarital relationships.⁵² The authors situate these trends in the context of a more general global dynamic of individualization which is emphasising conjugal bonds and sexual satisfaction, but they also draw attention to strong continuities in terms of family formation, especially ‘the insistence that marriage precede childbearing’ and ‘the norm of lifelong reciprocity between generations’.⁵³ While this argument is useful in the given context, we think that the term ‘deinstitutionalization’ is somewhat misleading because it conveys the sense that marriage as an institution has weakened or become less significant, which is not really borne out by the empirical material.⁵⁴ With reference to India, sociologists argue that marital age is rising in most sections of the population, divorce has become more institutionalized, and some sections indicate much lower birth rates, though these processes seem to be more gradual than in the cases mentioned above.⁵⁵ Moreover, phenomena such as the greater social acceptance of premarital relationships or the growth of divorce rates are still embedded in the context of marriage prospects, including those of extended family members. So while scholarly accounts sometimes describe these transformations in terms of a second demographic transition, this naturalizes the process as part of linear developments modelled on Western discourses without much room for nuances. Clearly, while some aspects of Western modernity travel well and are often associated with a notion of intimate modernity more broadly conceived, work on new genealogies, trajectories, and potential outcomes highlights different models of transformation.

The articles in this special issue provide further evidence of how recent global changes cannot be interpreted within such a

⁵² D. Davis and S. Friedman, ‘Deinstitutionalizing marriage and sexuality’, in D. Davis and S. Friedman (eds), *Wives, Husbands, Lovers. Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Urban China*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2014, p. 3.

⁵³ Davis and Friedman, *Wives, Husbands, Lovers*, pp. 26–27.

⁵⁴ See, for example, J. Zhang and P. Sun, “‘When are you going to get married?’ Parental matchmaking and middle-class women in contemporary urban China”, in Davis and Friedman (eds), *Wives, Husbands, and Lovers*, pp. 118–44.

⁵⁵ See, for example, J. Dreze and A. Sen, *An Uncertain Glory. India and its Contradictions*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2013.

Western-centric developmentalist framework. In both China and India, there is significant evidence for the growing importance of affective ties and partner choice, but a diminished centrality of (heteronormative) marriage in discourses about love or the decoupling of marriage from broader patrilineal family ideals cannot be assumed. Furthermore, while the increasing importance of choice and consent in spouse selection as well as a rise in nuclear residential patterns may fit the ideal of modern families put forward by globalization theorists, this does not eliminate the non-negotiable need to marry weighing heavily on the young, especially women. Indeed, the growth of an individualistic culture of dating among certain sections of Indian and Chinese society respectively does not foreclose the importance of elders, who wield power over the decision on a spouse. Last, while the role of daughters is changing across the board, and China and India have both seen a growth in single-child families, often centred around only daughters, the general pressure to reproduce within an acceptable time frame and at an acceptable rate, as well as son preference have not disappeared. In India in particular, sex ratios are still markedly skewed against daughters, and the increasing emphasis on the value of daughters documented in China does not foreclose prevailing son preference in many rural areas.

One way to move past these seemingly contradictory tendencies is to argue that we need to move beyond the trope of individualization, developing an approach to the construction of intimate modernities that focuses not just on the loosening of broader moral and normative structures but also on the continuing centrality of both the institution of marriage and the multi-generational family. In line with this argument, all articles included in this special issue focus on the transformations that narratives about the self and also institutional patterns like the 'joint family' and marriage are undergoing under conditions of increasing economic integration and cultural globalization. By doing so on the basis of ethnography, they highlight the often-contradictory nature of these transformations. Attention to context, as present in ethnography, highlights structural constraints and a wider set of relationships and emphasizes the collective nature of decision-making and the limits of individualized notions of self-realization. Thus, talk about affairs, about love and sexual relationships, provides the grounds for the development of new collective identities which in turn challenge conventional readings of individualization and their emphasis on unattached selves

presented in terms of neoliberal or late capitalist values like choice, consumerism, and a rhetoric of rights. These complexities point towards a whole new set of representations of the modern self in which marriage plays a central role, both as a discourse and as an experience. Marriage thus understood is no longer merely framed in terms of practical and filial duties, or reproductive lives, but becomes a site for the articulation of anxieties and desires, of selective networking and value production, embedded in complex affective economies and produced through specific kinds of labour. Often, stories about love and marriage show the way the new social worlds in which individuals find themselves pose personal challenges. And as elsewhere, decisions about relationships and 'loves' are increasingly bound up with 'intimate citizenship',⁵⁶ and the aligned vocabulary of choice, rights, and governance.⁵⁷

Finally we acknowledge differences in the thematic emphasis in studies of gender, kinship, marriage, and intimate citizenship in China and India respectively. In China, the dominant emphasis is on individualization and deinstitutionalization, based on the assumption that a radical historical shift has brought about the 'untying' of individuals from collectivities and institutions, including kinship groups and socialist work units.⁵⁸ With reference to India, the main focus of the literature is on the transformation of the joint family and reinvention of collective caste, regional, and religious identities, which are both persistent and malleable.⁵⁹ The China focus on processes of individualization is refreshing in light of previous orientalist research agendas emphasizing the importance of group-based identities. However, these earlier works should not be substituted by overly individual-centric theoretical understandings of

⁵⁶ See Plummer, *Intimate Citizenship*.

⁵⁷ See for a wider discussion W. Brown and J. Haley, *Left Legalism/Left Critique*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Yan, *Private Life under Socialism*; Zhang, *In Search of Paradise*; J. B. Farquhar, *Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002; and L. Rofel, *Desiring China. Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2007.

⁵⁹ See, for example, the proliferation of work on gender and law in India, such as F. Agnes, S. V. Ghosh, and Majlis (eds), *Legal Domains, Gender Concerns, and Community Constructs*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2012, or the analysis of contemporary representations and ideals associated with social change and consumerism, for example P. Uberoi, *Freedom and Destiny. Gender, Family, and Popular Culture in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2009; R. A. Lukose, *Liberalization's Children. Gender, Youths, and Consumer Citizenship in Globalising India*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2009.

the processes involved. These have been theorized more recently with reference to the disembedding of the individual from broader moral and normative structures such as the family.⁶⁰ However, we need to pay equal attention to the re-embedding of emerging practices in new collective frameworks, whether these are global forms, local narratives, or both. As the articles in this special issue suggest, individuals, individual experiences, and individual values are only one facet of these rapidly transforming landscapes. If looked at from the perspective of broader social and cultural architectures of care, the processes of reintegration and re-tying of individuals to collective institutions such as marriage and family come into view.⁶¹ The forces driving such processes of reinstitutionalization or recontextualization are not specific to China and India, but they are particularly visible in these contexts due to the continuing importance of values associated with the patriline, filial duty, patrilocality, and extended family ideals.

Contributions in this special issue

The articles included in this special issue were all presented as part of a panel entitled ‘Coping with uncertainty: Comparative perspectives on marriage and intimate citizenship in Asia’ organized as part of the 12th Biennial Conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists, held in Nanterre, 10–13 July 2012 and organized by Geert De Neve, Henrike Donner, and Gonçalo Santos. Not all papers presented at the panel are included in this volume, but the lively discussions that took place during the workshop helped us to clarify conceptual issues. Though the special issue does present a selective reading of the topic, with gaps that will have to be filled by others, in this last section, we explore some common themes that emerge from the articles.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*; and Weston, *Families We Choose*.

⁶¹ Importantly, care seen through idioms of ‘love’ plays a huge role in the way marriage is conceptualized in relation to the family, whether with a view of raising children or looking after ageing parents. In many contexts, love as partner choice and love and emotional attachment to others merge into a politics of affect. As Hochschild remarks wryly with reference to transnational care migrants, ‘if love is a resource, it is a renewable resource; it creates more of itself’, a sentiment which many individuals in present-day China and India would share with regards to marriage and partner choice. See A. R. Hochschild, ‘Love and gold’, in B. Ehrenreich and A. R. Hochschild (eds), *Global Women: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, Metropolitan Books, New York, p. 23.

Anxieties

Based on long-term fieldwork with Calcutta middle-class families, Henrike Donner discusses the assumption that under processes of globalization ‘coupledom’ and modern subjectivities expressed in the form of ‘freely chosen’ love marriages automatically substitute the more contractual morality of arranged marriages. Her article discusses the emergence of new discourses on love, sexual relations, and marriage in Calcutta middle-class families and critically debates the claim of globalization theory that the rise of identity politics in post-colonial settings leads to a demise of the institution of marriage. Whereas idioms of romantic love and courtship before marriage are embraced enthusiastically by young, middle-class women, the structural constraints of patrilocality and the ideological commitment to the joint family make self-chosen marriages a source of intra-household friction. Instead, arranged marriages that integrate courtship, consent, and elements of choice are increasingly seen as the perfect modern solution to solve the tension between middle-class *anxieties* about the reproduction of class and the desire for upward mobility. While companionate marriage is no doubt important, parenting rather than coupledom becomes the site for the fulfilment of individual desires and modern subjectivities in such aspirational middle-class contexts.

These *anxieties* about class and upward mobility are also present in the discursive practices of courtship and partner selection analysed by Roberta Zavoretti based on fieldwork in the city of Nanjing, the second largest city in East China. This article explores the idea that marriage should be based on feelings of ‘love’ and the increasing material demands that prospective grooms (and their parents) face in what women explicitly conceptualize as a marriage market. This tension is not just being played out in the context of private negotiations between individuals and families; it is also the stuff of public debates in law, media, and policy making, among other areas. Drawing attention to a controversy around the well-known matchmaking television programme *Feicheng Wurao* (*If you are the one*), Zavoretti shows how ongoing public debates about the reform era and its emphasis on wealth and conspicuous consumption are closely linked to moral discussions on ideals of marriage and partner choice, gendered performance, and class. In the article, these intersecting moral conversations are shown to reflect contemporary anxieties regarding

marriage and family responsibility as young Chinese people struggle to articulate newly reconfigured ideas of 'romantic love' and 'free choice' with gendered concerns over financial stability and parental approval.

Negotiations

This tension between emotional attachments and material interests, the desire for individual autonomy and the reality of intergenerational interdependencies is also present in India, but it generates different kinds of *negotiations*. Based on ethnographic data from Tiruppur, a booming garment export centre in South India, Geert de Neve explores how the increasing salience of 'love marriages' and the weakening of extended family ties among upwardly mobile entrepreneurs are deplored by locals as a sign of a more general degeneration of society. The article considers changing marriage practices, the ways in which these are talked about and evaluated, and the negotiations and compromises that surround them. In this context of rapid social change, money has become central to local marriage discourses, and financial support of kin a key trope. In the context of newly founded family businesses, 'love marriages' are denounced as irresponsible. Family support, necessary for business ventures in post-liberalization India, is a main criterion for success, and therefore carefully 'arranged' marriages are preferred to negotiate the vagaries of global markets.

Drawing on fieldwork in impoverished rural areas in Gansu province, Northwest China, Helena Obendiek takes us beyond the dichotomy between 'love marriages' and 'arranged marriages' which frames much of the South Asian material. In 1950, the Chinese Communists launched a series of nationwide reforms aimed at promoting a new model of (heterosexual, monogamous) marriage based on free choice. These changes paved the way for the growth of globally attuned ideals of romantic love and partner selection in the reform period. But among the college graduates from rural families interviewed by Obendiek, other equally important considerations are at play. More specifically, the author argues that feelings of indebtedness for financial and other support received from relatives during higher education entangle these graduates in webs of obligation, and these webs of obligation play an important role in decisions about marriage. This is not just because of feelings of social indebtedness towards family and kinship

networks; it is also because—as in De Neve’s example—graduates are acutely aware of the value of these networks when it comes to long-term support and emotional well-being.

Frictions

Finding a middle way between material and emotional, collective and individual interests does not always lead to smooth resolutions, even where family interests and individual futures are depicted as congruent. Frictions to do with character traits and strong romantic ties are particularly visible transgressions which may cause lasting rifts and expose the collective nature of intimate decisions beyond the family. These are explored by Carolyn Heitmeyer’s ethnography of romance and marriage across the Muslim and Hindu divide in an Indian small town. Given the local significance of communal violence in the state, social and spatial segregation are overcome by active work, which emphasizes the distinctiveness but also the interdependence of communities. As such, Heitmeyer locates the romantic involvement and possibility of inter-community marriage within a broader field of everyday peacemaking activities. The article demonstrates the importance of local intersections but also the multiplicity of often-contradictory meanings of romantic involvement and marriage. Instead of assuming that the spread of transgressive practices in places like Gujarat is determined mostly by external factors, the article suggests that local practices and global forces co-produce each other through *frictions* of various kinds.

This important theme is put forward in Gonçalo Santos’ account of love and marriage in rural South China from the 1980s onwards. Based on long-term fieldwork in Guangdong, the article discusses the role played by family planning policies in shaping local marriage practices and intimate relationships—and vice versa. Just as the economic reforms initiated in the late 1970s reinforced the state’s commitment to ‘free monogamous marriage’, so marriage was gradually redefined as a voluntary contractual relationship grounded in emotional satisfaction. But this legal turn towards the privatization of marriage occurred in conjunction with the rise of a state programme of birth planning and population control. Santos’ account of the private lives of two different generations of villagers documents a gradual shift toward a more sentimental and individualistic regime

of love, marriage, and family life, but it also makes clear how this shift continues to involve strong intergenerational interdependencies and—most importantly—strong state interference when it comes to reproductive practices. The article links personal stories to different forms of intimate citizenship with built-in inequalities and different kinds of frictions. These form the basis of the complex social, technical, and political negotiations through which local experiences of marriage and intimacy are linked to larger ‘civilizing’ chains of national and global inclusion.