

Marriage, Housing, and Gender among the post 80s generation of Urban Chinese men

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Abstract

This paper explores how the generation of post 80s urban Chinese in Beijing narrate their love and marital relationships within the rapid changing context of Chinese society. This paper is particularly concerned with how contemporary narratives of romantic love and marriage are transformed by the rising of housing price in post socialist Chinese cities. Based on the analyses of media representations and popular publications including films, tv dramas, novels, internet discussions and in-depth interviews with young people born after 1980s in Beijing who are facing the issues of getting married and finding a place to start a family, this paper argues that because of cultural practices and the need of economic security in facing increasing the increasing uncertain economic future of urban life, the ownership of housing has become a, if not the only defining factor in shaping contemporary urban Chinese women and men's love and marital relationships. Owning a place or at least having the capacity to own a place soon has become a basic criterion for Chinese men to be eligible as a marriageable bachelor. Narratives of love and marriage are deeply intertwined with the narratives of success and failure of owning a place and manhood. While the primary concern of this study will explore how the pressure of owning a place has shaped urban Chinese men's experiences and outlooks of romantic love and marriage and their gender identity, young Chinese women's experiences with this matter are important to the understanding of Chinese men's gendered experiences with the issues of ownership of housing and love relationships.

