

TRANSFORMATION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN URBAN SARAWAK

Globalisation, a mobile work-force, increasing educational attainment for women and rapid urbanisation have all led to the transformation of marriage and family structure. Although the divorce rate in Sarawak is low by global standards, delayed marriage, children born out of wedlock, increased cohabitation and ambivalence as to the value of marriage and children are all indications of shifts in people's perception and expectations of marriage and the family. It is therefore important to investigate the changing nature of marriage and examine family processes as these are the bedrock of not only individual well-being but has wider implications in terms of public policy for the support of fragile families and vulnerable children. In this study, the ways in which women's and men's perceptions and expectations of marriage are changing and their gendered experiences of marriage are investigated. Statistical data on various aspects of marriage and divorce are easily available but what is lacking are more nuance studies of other more complex issues surrounding the institution of marriage which can only be studied using a more ethnographic approach. A major part of this study will be qualitative in nature but there will be some descriptive quantitative elements in the data. This study also includes a generational dimension in that respondents are asked to recall what their parents taught them/said about choice of a spouse and what they are telling their children now. This study is still on-going.



Researchers

Associate Professor Dr Hew Cheng Sim, Goy Siew Ching

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