Christiane Brosius ⓘ, Jeroen de Kloet ⓘ,
and Laila Abu-Er-Rub

Introduction: On Being Single in Urban Asia

There is something tainted about the single female body. Popular descriptions of women as "leftover," "off-the-shelf ladies," "vamps," and "spinsters" (or "old maids")[1] abound, while cultural icons such as the Indian movie star Helen Jairag Richardson, the late Hong Kong pop diva Anita Mui 梅艳芳, or Bridget Jones *(Bridget Jones' Diary)*, Carrie Bradshaw *(Sex and the City)*, and Jodie Comer *(Killing Eve)* portray the single woman as remarkably self-reflexive, unmoored and unprotected, standing outside what Bella DePaulo and Wendy Morris describe as the "cult of the couple."[2] This cult, in conjunction with social and national concerns that are mapped out on the female body, results in a proliferation of ambiguous discourses surrounding single women from across the social strata (men are hardly considered in this field): from the subaltern migrant woman to the high-end professional, from the widowed wife to the divorced homemaker. There is an ambivalent fascination with the single woman as a new type of empowered, pleasure-seeking, competent lifestyle-surfer, and dedicated career-maker. And yet, the single woman is, at times, also stigmatized and isolated, discriminated against (through "singlism"[3]), or stereotyped as an odd, if not provocative person who deviates from or challenges social norms.

New social types do not emerge out of the blue, of course, and this book will trace how place matters in the context of new social formations. The contributions in the volume focus on the urban fabric of Asia, India, mainland China, and Hong Kong, in particular, for it is here that social, economic, cultural, and political transformations manifest and new possibilities of living are tested and vividly contested. As explored by the authors in this book, urban transformation is enabling the formation of new cultural

---

1 Ranjay Vardhan, *Single Women: A Study of Spinsters* (Delhi: Indian Publishers' Distributors, 2008).
2 Bella M. DePaulo and Wendy L. Morris, "Singles in Society and in Science." *Psychological Inquiry* 16, no. 2–3 (2005).
3 The term "singlism" was coined by Bella M. DePaulo and Wendy L. Morris to underline the discrimination against singles (male and female) as self-centered, anti-social, and socially unproductive. See Bella DePaulo and Wendy Morris, "The Unrecognized Stereotyping and Discrimination Against Singles," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 15, no. 5 (2006).

geographies, spaces, and biographies for single women. Through explorations of urban imaginaries, experiences, and everyday lives, these essays highlight different notions of the public and private at work, references to "world-class cityness," and concerns with safety, smartness, diversity, informality, order, and well–being, all of which impact how single women are perceived and how they access the city.

In our research initiative "Creating the 'New' Asian Woman: Entanglements of Urban Space, Cultural Encounters, and Gendered Identities in Shanghai and Delhi," the findings of which inspired this book, we addressed the emerging visibility of the urban single woman by zooming in on the booming cities of Shanghai and Delhi. For this volume, we also extend our focus to Kolkata, Mumbai, Beijing, and Hong Kong.[4] Our approach takes the importance of studying transcultural entanglements in their embedded, local contexts seriously. We see in this transcultural, localized approach, a possibility to capture the dynamics and fluidity of relationalities without the compartmentalization that often results from national and culturalist reductionism.

Surprisingly, there is still a scarcity of research about single women in the "Global South" (with some notable exceptions),[5] even though, as we would propose, economic liberalization in China and India has facilitated a broader spectrum of singlehood, adding to that of the pre-liberalization eras. China, as Xiangming Chen underlines in a special issue on Chinese and Indian megacities, "has a clear policy of urban acceleration,"[6] while India has long pursued urbanization as part of its nation-building project,

---

4   We acknowledge, however, that much interesting research on singles in con-temporary Asia has taken place—for instance, in Japan (e.g., Kumiko Endo, "Singlehood in 'Precarious Japan': Examining New Gender Tropes and Inter-Gender Communication in a Culture of Uncertainty," *Japan Forum* 31, no. 2 [2019]; Richard Ronald, Oana Druta, and Maren Godzik, "Japan's Urban Singles: Negotiating Alternatives to Family Households and Standard Housing Path-ways," *Urban Geography* 39, no. 7 [2018]), Cambodia (Heidi Hoefinger, "'PROFES-SIONAL GIRLFRIENDS'. An Ethnography of Sexuality, Solidarity and Subculture in Cambodia," *Cultural Studies* 25, no. 2 [2011]), Indonesia (Karel K. Himawan, Matthew Bambling, and Sisira Edirippulige, "The Asian Single Profiles: Discov-ering Many Faces of Never Married Adults in Asia," *Journal of Family Issues* 39, no. 14 [2018]), and Malaysia (Rozita Ibrahim and Zaharah Hassan, "Understand-ing Singlehood from the Experiences of Never-Married Malay Muslim Women in Malaysia: Some Preliminary Findings," *European Journal of Social Sciences* 8, no. 3 [2009]). However, due to the project's goals, this research remained outside our remit.
5   See Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan, and Shilpa Ranade, *Why Loiter: Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2011); Jyothsna L. Belliappa, *Gender, Class and Reflexive Modernity in India* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Sarah Lamb, *Being Single in India: Stories of Gender, Exclusion, and Possibility* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022); E. Kay Trimberger, "Single Women in India: Rarer, Riskier, and Happier Than in the U.S. (2008)," *Unmarried Equality*, Acessed August 15, 2022, https://www.unmarried.org/single-women-in-india/; Chowkhani, Ketaki and Craig Wynne (eds.). *Singular Selves: An Introduction to Sin-gles Studies* (London: Routledge, 2011).
6   Xiangming Chen, "Introduction: Why Chinese and Indian Megacities?" special issue, *City & Community* 8, no. 4 (December 2009):364.

which now includes a smart city agenda.[7] In China, the number of single women aged thirty and above has almost tripled within a decade (from 0.92 % in 2000 to 2.47 % in 2010 according to the national census).[8] In 2018, Wang Feng, a Brookings Institution demographer, estimated that there were seven million women who had never married, aged between twenty-five and thirty-four, residing primarily in China's urban centers of Beijing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai. These estimates suggest that the proportion of urban single women in China is approaching 30 %, compared to less than 5 % in 1982.[9] In 2011, there were approximately seventy-four million single women in India (ca. thirty million were widowed, while ca. fourteen million never married). This indicates a growth of 40 % within ten years, with the number of urban single women rising from 17.1 million in 2001 to 27 million in 2011.[10] A government survey found that the proportion of unmarried women increased from 13.5 % in 2011 to 19.9 % in 2019.[11] The survey also indicated an increasing age of first marriage for women: in 2005–2006, 72.4 % of women were married by the age of twenty, while that number dropped to 52.8 % in the years 2019–2021.[12] Other Census data show that the percentage of females remaining single in different age groups has been rising steadily (though not evenly across India).[13]

Cities such as Shanghai and Delhi form the backdrop to changing family patterns and the unraveling of "traditional" social contracts as a result of migration, new work opportunities, delayed marriage, divorce, open homosexuality, and a growing leisure and consumer society. As a result, single women are becoming increasingly visible in public, be it through (social) media representations, or everyday practices, and mobilities. Indicative of this is a 2017 headline in China proclaiming, "The single society has

---

7 See Melissa Butcher and Srilata Sircar, "Localizing India's Smart Cities: A Multi-Scalar Analysis of Cities Yet-to-Come," *Urban Geographies* (forthcoming); Jennifer Robinson, "Cities in a World of Cities: The Comparative Gesture," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 1 (January 2011).

8 Wanning Sun, "'My Parents Say Hurry up and Find a Girl': China's Millions of Lonely 'Leftover Men.'" *The Guardian*, September, 28, 2017. Accessed October 2, 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/sep/28/my-parents-say-hurry-up-and-find-a-girl-chinas-millions-of-lonely-leftover-men?CMP=share_btn_url; see also Wei-Jun Jean Yeung and Adam Ka-Lok Cheung, "Living Alone: One-Person Households in Asia," *Demographic Research*, no. 32 (June 2015).

9 Roseann Lake, *Leftover in China: The Women Shaping the World's Next Superpower* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018).

10 Prachi Salve, "71 Million Single Women, 39 % Rise Over A Decade," *The Wire*, November 14, 2015. Accessed September 5, 2020. https://thewire.in/gender/71-million-single-women-39-rise-over-a-decade.

11 *Livemint*, "More Indians Prefer to Stay Unmarried, Finds Survey," *Livemint*, July 14, 2022. Accessed November 1, 2022. https://www.livemint.com/news/more-indians-prefer-to-stay-unmarried-finds-survey-11657809573372.html.

12 Livemint, "More Indians Prefer to Stay Unmarried."

13 While in 1961, 6 percent of women in India in the age group of 20–24 remained single, the numbers were 23 percent in 2001 and 37.3 percent in 2011. In the group of women aged 25–29, the number of singles rose from 6 percent in 1961 to 12.2 percent in 2011. The study does not differentiate between urban and rural settings. See K. Srinivasan and K. S. James, "The Golden Cage: Stability of the Institution of Marriage in India," *Economic & Political Weekly* 50, no. 13 (2015).

come!"[14] There is also a market logic behind this focus on single women: The Chinese online retail store Alibaba used Singles' Day (*guanggun jie* 光棍节), observed on November 11 ("1111" looks like four bare sticks, that is, single men), for a "crazy sale" similar to Black Friday in the US, promoting the acceptability of being single and a desire for single people to reward themselves.[15] Books, magazines, television and films, advertising, and online social media reflect as well as influence the single woman as an "independent entity," serving as a soundboard and repository to "make" and discuss this "new" Asian woman and the potential lifestyles that come along with her.[16] This increasing presence has made the phenomenon more visible, and "graspable," or "bespeakable," as Lisa Lau argues.[17] In the Indian context, this material includes essayistic reflections on singledom among urban middle-class women,[18] film and media studies scholarship on single women,[19] as well as (still scarce) sociological studies with

---

14 Chow Yiu Fai, *Caring in Times of Precarity: A Study of Single Women Doing Creative Work in Shanghai* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

15 Jeremy Berke, "How Alibaba Turned an Obscure, Made-up Chinese Holiday into a $14.3 Billion Shopping Extravaganza That's Bigger than Black Friday," *Business Insider*, November 14, 2015. https://www.businessinsider.com/how-alibaba-made-143-billion-on-singles-day-2015-11.

16 See Kinneret Lahad, "Singlehood, Waiting, and the Sociology of Time," *Sociological Forum* 27, no. 1 (2012); Kinneret Lahad, "'Am I Asking for Too Much?' The Selective Single Woman as a New Social Problem," *Women's Studies International Forum* no. 40 (2013); Kinneret Lahad, "The Single Woman's Choice as a Zero-Sum Game." *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 2 (2014); Lisa Lau, "Literary Representations of the 'New Indian Woman': The Single, Working, Urban, Middle Class Indian Woman Seeking Personal Autonomy," *Journal of South Asian Development* 5, no. 2 (2010); Fritzi-Marie Titzmann, "The Imagery of Indian Matchmaking: Representations of Community, Class and Gender in a Transnational Online Matrimonial Market," in *India and its Visual Cultures: Community, Class and Gender in a Symbolic Landscape*, ed. Uwe Skoda and Birgit Lettmann (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2018); Runa Chakraborty Paunksnis and Šarūnas Paunksnis, "Masculine Anxiety and 'New Indian Woman' in the Films of Anurag Kashyap," *South Asian Popular Culture* 18, no. 2 (2020).

17 Lau, "Literary Representations." Here, we take note of, but have not focused on, the very interesting genre of "chick-lit" (or "bobo-bourgeois-bohemian–pop-culture"), that is, the growing number of predominantly romantic and often light-hearted novels on singlehood that proliferated in the US in the 1990s and arrived in the Indian and Chinese societies after 2000 (for example, the works of Wei Hui and Mian Mian). Another interesting field of research that we have not been able to include is that of documentary films being made on topics such as single motherhood etc. (for example, Savita Oberoi's film *Single in the City* [Delhi: Public Service Broadcasting Trust, 2008], with which this book shares the title).

18 Sunny Singh, *Single in the City: The Independent Woman's Handbook* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2000); Bhaichand Patel, *Chasing the Good Life: On Being Single* (Delhi: Penguin, 2006).

19 Anupama Arora, "Nobody Puts Rani in a Corner: Making of the New Indian Woman in Queen (2014)," *South Asian Popular Culture* 17, no. 2 (2019); Sampada Karandikar, Hansika Kapoor, Saloni Diwakar, and Feryl Badiani, "She Did It Her Way: An Analysis of Female Rebellion in Contemporary Bollywood Movies," *South Asian Popular Culture* 19, no. 2 (2021); Surbhi Malik, "The Provincial Flâneuse: Reimagining Provincial Space and Narratives of Womanhood in Bollywood," *South Asian Popular Culture* 19, no. 1 (2021).

a focus on urban socio-economic agents more broadly.[20] In China, studies on single women centered around urban-dwelling and middle-class categories largely report a similar level of marginalization to that found in Western contexts, though this is ascribed to resilient discourses articulating Confucian values, state propaganda, and parental pressure.[21]

This increased visibility of unmarried women is informed by repertoires of cultural change, globalized media landscapes, and aspirations to ideals of urban cosmopolitanism. Urban spaces offer opportunities for autonomy, and yet the resulting subjectivities of singleness are precarious, marked by asymmetrical power relations.[22] Gendered imaginaries of emancipation are contested through a variety of cultural practices that constrain women's choices and impact their multiple lifeworlds. In this introduction, we posit that single women in urban Asia must strike a balance between neoliberal opportunities, and aspirations for autonomy, and cultural norms that dictate women's respectability. Highlighting the tight rope that single women walk between autonomy and respectability, we draw attention not only to the resultant precarity that these women face, but also to the new urban world they create and shape.

In order to explore these tensions and shifts in practice and discourse, this introduction first outlines our understanding of the notion of singleness, clarifying our focus on middle–class, urban women, and introducing the paradox of agency and respectability that single women must navigate. In the second section, we connect our notion of singleness to being single in the city. In this section, we explain our choice of a transcultural approach and its significance for understanding how single women shape and are shaped by the city. We demonstrate the role of the city in creating the paradox that single women negotiate between autonomy and respectability. In the third section, we explore how single women navigate this paradox, how they learn to "be urban" in both formal and informal ways, and thus create new urban socialities. We conclude by presenting an overview of the chapters in the volume.

Studying singleness

In this volume, we argue that singleness is a complicated process rather than a fixed category. We reject binaries such as choice–no choice, agency–oppression,[23] or modern–traditional, instead emphasizing the multiplicity of single women's experiences in urban Asia and the complexities of this emerging subjectivity.

---

20 Vardhan, *Single Women*.
21 Leta Hong Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence of Gender Inequality in China* (London: Zed Books, 2014).
22 Paula Banerjee, *Debates over Women's Autonomy* (Kolkata: Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, 2005).
23 Lahad, "Single Woman's Choice."

We use a broad definition of singleness to include women who are not in a long-term relationship, maybe due to being divorced,[24] or widowed,[25] separated from family for long periods of time (as is the case of migrant workers), or due to performing singleness to facilitate a queer lifestyle. We understand singleness to involve both voluntary and involuntary choices and conditions,[26] and to signal both temporary and long-term lifestyles, as some single women may decide not to get married, while others may see singleness as a temporary condition until marriage, and others still may seek to delay their marriage.[27] We acknowledge that "being single" is a nuanced identity that different women use to signal varying developments in their subjectivities. They may even be in and out of relationships, if "being single" helps to frame singleness as part of the formation of new biographies for women—a subjectivity emplaced in aspiration towards, or experiences of an independent life, a career, or an educational path in a new city or abroad, for instance. Singleness can be the sign of changing family patterns, of open homosexuality, of having a partner but not sharing the same household, or of being a single mother.

For this volume, we have predominantly assembled authors who focus on professional urban women belonging to the middle classes[28] or seeking

---

24 Kirti Singh, *Separated and Divorced Women in India: Economic Rights and Entitlements* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2013).

25 Sarah Lamb, *White Saris and Sweet Mangoes: Aging, Gender, and Body in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

26 P. J. Stein categorized states of being single based on an element of choice (voluntary and involuntary) and permanence (temporary and stable). Voluntary temporary singles refer to single people who are open to marriage but place a lower priority on searching for mates than on other activities, such as education, career, politics, and self-development. Voluntary stable singles are single people who are satisfied with their choice and do not intend to marry or remarry. Involuntary temporary singles are those who would like to be married and are actively seeking mates. Involuntary stable singles are primarily older singles who wanted to marry or remarry but did not find a mate and have now accepted their single status. P. J. Stein, "Understanding Single Adulthood," in *Single Life: Unmarried Adults in Social Context*, ed. P. J. Stein (New York: St Martin's Press, 1981), 11, quoted in Augustina Situmorang, "Staying Single in a Married World: Never-Married Women in Yogyakarta and Medan," *Asian Population Studies* 3, no. 3 (2007): 288–289.

27 Singh, *Separated and Divorced*; see also Shilpa Phadke's work in this volume.

28 The authors acknowledge that "middle class" is not a homogenous category. This term is used in the context of this book as a means of highlighting the role of class in the formation of discourses of respectability. Despite their seeming growth in numbers and influence, empirical descriptions of India's middle class are vague, and sound ethnographic work is sparse. See Amita Baviskar and Raka Ray, ed., *Elite and Everyman: The Cultural Politics of the Indian Middle Classes* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011); Christiane Brosius, *India's Middle Class: New Forms of Urban Leisure, Consumption and Prosperity* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014); John Harriss, "Middle-Class Activism and the Politics of the Informal Working Class: A Perspective on Class Relations and Civil Society in Indian Cities," *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no. 4 (2006); Anne Waldrop, "Grandmother, Mother and Daughter: Changing Agency of Indian, Middle-Class Women, 1908–2008," *Modern Asian Studies* 46, no. 3 (2012). For scholarship on gender and class aspirations in urban India, including how middle-class women navigate tradition and modernity, see Jaita Talukdar and Annulla Linders, "Gender, Class Aspirations, and Emerging

the affective dimension of aspirational "middle-classness" (desiring the feeling of belonging to the middle class). There are historical single figures in both the Indian and Chinese contexts, such as the courtesan *(tawaif)*,[29] the figure of the seductive vamp, the stigmatized widow, or the unmarried "spinster" whose presence still impact present-day conceptions of single women.[30] However, in this study, we focus on a type of singlehood that has emerged in the context of urban transformation and economic liberalization in two of the most rapidly growing economies in what can arguably be called the Global South: India and China. The spatial aspect of the city that we have chosen in this book and that we discuss in the next section is relevant because the multiple lifeworlds that enable new biographies for women are often possible particularly in metropolitan contexts—and yet these lifeworlds differ in every city.

We emphasize the gendered aspect of "being single," for it is the single woman, more so than the single man, who is perceived as—or perceives herself as—different from the "normal mainstream," that is, from those participating in heteronormative marriage and the foundation of a nuclear family, or integration into a joint family. From a feminist perspective, the idea of "singlehood" is not solely connected to whether a woman is in or out of an intimate relationship with a partner.[31] Singleness also relates to queer theory, insofar as singlehood allows for a questioning of conventional heteronormative relations.[32] We recognize the significance of alternative social networks that single women form and maintain in contrast to, or in addition to, heteronormative family structures. Tandace McDill, Sharon K. Hall, and Susan C. Turell note that single women form their own "family" structures with extended social networks.[33] According to Augustina Situmorang, women in Indonesia are not necessarily alone in the same way that women in Europe or the US are.[34] Extended family relationships can be weaker, but there can be closer ties to immediate family, for example.

While singleness holds the potential to reject heteronormativity and foster women's agency and even empowerment, we also recognize the

Fields of Body Work in Urban India," *Qualitative Sociology* 36, no. 1 (2013); Liz Mount, "Saris and Contemporary Indian Womanhood: How Middle-Class Women Navigate the Tradition/Modernity Split," *Contemporary South Asia* 25, no. 2 (2017).

29 All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are our own.

30 Vardhan, *Single Women*.

31 Nivedita Menon. *Seeing like a Feminist* (Delhi: Penguin, 2012).

32 Rekha Pappu, "Reconsidering Romance and Intimacy: The Case of the Single Unmarried Woman," in *Intimate Others: Marriage and Sexualities in India*, ed. Samita Sen, Ranjita Biswas, and Nandita Dhawan (Kolkata: Stree, 2011); Sohini Chatterjee, "The 'Good Indian Queer Woman' and the Family: Politics of Normativity and Travails of (Queer) Representation," *South Asian Popular Culture* 19, no. 2 (2021).

33 Tandace McDill, Sharon K. Hall, and Susan C. Turell, "Aging and Creating Families: Never-Married Heterosexual Women Over Forty," *Journal of Women & Aging* 18, no. 3 (2006).

34 Situmorang, "Staying Single."

intense vulnerability and precarity of single women, who face challenges ranging from symbolic to structural stigmatization, from exclusion to physical and psychological violence—despite legal reforms, or critical media reports, and civil debates.[35] As several of the sparse studies on singleness suggest,[36] this is a stigmatized subjectivity that is seen as disreputable when the person is young and as something to be pitied when she is older. Kinneret Lahad further argues that "it is still quite socially acceptable to treat singlehood as a legitimate target for suspicion, mockery, or even public humiliation."[37]

Thus, while the notion of agency is embedded in much of the existing literature on single women, related to the ability to choose a state of singleness as an integral part of the modern, reflexive self,[38] we follow Lahad's critique that this focus on choice can adopt a celebratory tone that is not always reflected in reality.[39] The notion of choice may seem overly optimistic for the single women in Situmorang's study, for example, who still see marriage as the norm but have no choice but to remain single.[40] The idea of choice is complex, too, for the women Jesook Song studied in South Korea, who choose marriage in order to escape overcrowded natal homes, and gain greater independence and privacy.[41] McDill, Hall, and Turell find that, despite expressing satisfaction with their lives, more than half the women in their study would marry for companionship, intimacy, or financial security.[42] Structural, social, and biographical variables can impact the decision to be single; these variables include, as McDill, Hall, and Turell note, "the influence of family values, the importance of work, the valuing of independence, and the importance of social support."[43] Choices, then,

---

35 See Maribel Casas-Cortés, "A Genealogy of Precarity: A Toolbox for Rearticulating Fragmented Social Realities in and out of the Workplace," *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture and Society* 26, no. 2 (2014); Singh, *Separated and Divorced*.

36 Kanchan Gandhi, Harsh Mander, Agrima Bhasin, Radhika Jha, and Sejal Dand, "Living Single: Being A Single Woman in India," in *India Exclusion Report II* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2016); Penn Tsz Ting Ip and Esther Peeren, "Exploiting the Distance between Conflicting Norms: Female Rural-to-Urban Migrant Workers in Shanghai Negotiating Stigma around Singlehood and Marriage," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 22, no. 5–6 (2019); Situmorang, "Staying Single"; DePaulo and Morris, "Unrecognized Stereotyping."

37 Kinneret Lahad, *A Table for One: A Critical Reading of Singlehood, Gender and Time* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 50.

38 Penny Gurstein and Silvia Vilches, "The Just City for Whom? Re-Conceiving Active Citizenship for Lone Mothers in Canada," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 17, no. 4 (2010); McDill, Hall, and Turell, "Aging and Creating Families."

39 Lahad, "Singlehood"; Lahad, "Single Woman's Choice."

40 Situmorang, "Staying Single."

41 Jesook Song, "'A Room of One's Own': The Meaning of Spatial Autonomy for Unmarried Women in Neoliberal South Korea," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 17, no. 2 (2010).

42 McDill, Hall, and Turell, "Aging and Creating Families."

43 McDill, Hall, and Turell, "Aging and Creating Families," 39.

are still circumscribed by socio-economic status,[44] and, we would add, age, ethnicity, gender, and the regulation of cultural norms.

Even when women do choose to be single, they face repercussions that force them to navigate a paradox between autonomy and respectability. If a woman is single by choice, possibly permanently, then her body quickly becomes pathologized and deviant. We argue that it is this depiction of singleness as disrespectful and anti-normative that generates a moral governance which requires single women to navigate censure and codes of respectability in order to access and move through public space. For women who choose to be single, their agency and power are often undermined: their satisfaction with their lives is viewed as fake; they are merely "pretending" to be happy and hiding their "true" desire to be centered within a family with a heteronormative partner. There is thus an expectation for singleness to be temporary. Society often robs single women of agency by claiming that those women who choose to be single permanently merely have bad luck and are pretending to choose singleness. Through this negation of the single woman's agency, as Lahad argues, "terms such as 'chronic singlehood' or 'the single woman's short shelf-life' come to designate *a loss of agency* and a vastly diminished capacity to act and determine one's life trajectory."[45]

The expectation for singleness to be a temporary phase before marriage points to the importance of addressing temporality when studying single women. From the dominant standpoint, singleness is most often portrayed as a temporary or transitory phase, reflecting "a partial and incomplete subjectivity"[46] that is only made complete with marriage.[47] Studies on singlehood stress this ideological gravitation towards heteronormative relationships grounded in family and reproduction which reinforces gender stereotypes.[48] However, singlehood can be prolonged,

---

44 Gurstein and Vilches, "Just City."

45 Lahad, *Table for One*, 79; emphasis original.

46 Lahad, "Single Woman's Choice," 240.

47 Leela Fernandes, *India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform* (Michigan: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Meenakshi Thapan, "Embodiment and Identity in Contemporary Society: Femina and the 'New' Indian Woman," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 38, no. 3 (2004).

48 See Yue Qian and Zhenchao Qian, "Work, Family, and Gendered Happiness among Married People in Urban China," *Social Indicators Research* 121, no. 1 (2015); Waldrop, "Grandmother, Mother and Daughter." Attention is also paid to how the social type of the single woman relates to gender equality, patriarchy, and nation-building. See Himawan, Bambling, and Edirippulige, "The Asian Single Profiles"; Yingchun Ji, Xiaogang Wu, Shengwei Sun, and Guangye He, "Unequal Care, Unequal Work: Toward a More Comprehensive Understanding of Gender Inequality in Post-Reform Urban China," *Sex Roles* 77, no. 11–12 (2017). Other studies would connect this to changing work patterns, including sex work (Eileen Yuk-ha Tsang, "Neither 'Bad' nor 'Dirty': High-End Sex Work and Intimate Relationships in Urban China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 230 [2017]), and labor migration (Susanne Y. P. Choi, "Gendered Pragmatism and Subaltern Masculinity in China: Peasant Men's Responses to Their Wives' Labor Migration," *American Behavioral Scientist* 60, no. 5–6 [2016]), to structural poverty and violence (Padmini Iyer, "'Due to All This Fear, We're Getting Less Freedom': Young People's

permanent, or clustered across the lifeline and distributed (for instance, if a woman lives independently in a work migration context but also has a husband or partner elsewhere). Temporalities are relevant, too, in relation to intergenerational differences in attitudes towards singleness and marriage and age-related changes in the lives of single women, including changing social and familial pressures, and the changing potentials of women's lifestyle choices as they age.

In relation to the temporalities of singleness, we take seriously the time before marriage and the careful choreographies women shape "before" getting married, seeing this phase as more than "just" liminal and to be coped with. In this regard, choosing to be single is not mutually exclusive with the desire to be married. Marriage is now reconceptualized as an "option" instead of a "must." In this way, an apparent erosion of traditional family patterns does not necessarily lead to a decline in the importance of family relationships, but instead restructures them. We observe that, even though much attention has been paid to the "new Asian woman," most studies produced in this context still attend to married women—with marriage as the key narrative and force that shapes lives—as if this is the "natural" way for a woman to live. Though we do not reject the power of the marriage norm, the questions for us are: What kinds of lives are possible, shaped, and contested by single women in relation to, and sometimes also independently of, marriage? What alternative possibilities are ignored, silenced, or rendered invisible when the "unattached," pathologized single woman is viewed simply as the individual in the waiting room en route to married life (or out of it)?

Focusing on the Indian context, we note that many fears and moral panics are linked to the single woman. These include the fears that filial piety might surrender to individualism, that gerontocracy may be discredited, and most of all, that caste boundary transgression will ultimately lead

Understandings of Gender and Sexual Violence in New Delhi, India," *Gender and Education* 31, no. 2 [2019]; Yichao Wu and Qi Di, "A Gender-Based Analysis of Multidimensional Poverty in China," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 23, no. 1 [2017]) or to leisure practices and media use (Xiaoxu Chen and Chadwick Wang, "Migrant Gaming Girls in Beijing: Urban Solitude, Play, and Attempts to Integrate," *Ethnography* 22, no. 1 [2019]; Soma Sengupta, Urna Sarkar Dutta, and Anjan Sen, "Re-Inventing Household Shopping Patterns and Buying Roles: Exploring the 'New Women' in Urban India," *Akademos* [2018]). Limited research has been conducted on single mothers in Asia. Research on changing gender models, pre-marital sexuality, feminism, and homosexuality is slowly growing (see Kabita Chakraborty, "Unmarried Muslim Youth and Sex Education in the *Bustees* of Kolkata," *South Asian History and Culture* 1, no. 2 [2010]; Fincher, *Leftover Women*; Shuaishuai Wang, "Living with Censorship: The Political Economy and Cultural Politics of Chinese Gay Dating Apps" [PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2019]) as well as, studies on placemaking and mobilities (Mallika Gupta, "I (Don't) Walk a Lonely Road: A Study of Women Seeking Leisure in a Public Park" [PhD diss., CEPT University, 2020]; Hilda Rømer Christensen, "Gendering Mobilities and (In)Equalities in Post-Socialist China," in *Integrating Gender into Transport Planning: From One to Many Tracks*, ed. Christina Lindkvist Scholten and Tanja Joelsson [Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019]).

to the weakening of high-caste monopolies, patriarchy, and caste-based and male-based laws of inheritance. This field of tensions underlines the idea that singlehood is not only about love and marriage but, at least in the Indian context, about the rules and claimed rights of access and restriction beyond the relationship of two people. One good example of how single-ness can be used to claim rights surfaces in Sarah Lamb's work,[49] which describes a social movement formed by marginalized, low-class women who used the term *Ekal Nari* ("single or solo woman") to help women gain access to land, property, and respectability in a way which is different from the respectability defined under patriarchal rule.[50]

Lamb further explores numerous iterations of the single woman in India, including her remarkable work on elderly women and the widow as forms of spatially and socially outlawed single women, and more recent and diverse conceptions of the single woman "as a means to illuminate emerging possibilities and constraints of selfhood for women in contemporary India."[51] She stresses the importance of an intersectional approach towards studying single women in relation to class, caste, and kinship.[52] She further mentions that there are different historical phases to be considered when speaking of single women and points to the study of Indian feminist and lesbian activists who, in the 1990s, used the subjectivity of the single woman to organize lesbianism and to challenge patriarchal and state-based discrimination against unmarried women.[53]

In the Chinese context, single women (*danshen nüxing* 单身女性) share many of the concerns and struggles mentioned earlier. However, in China, it is not so much caste, or rather class, but Confucianism (*rujia sixiang* 儒家思想), in particular its family-oriented values, in conjunction with the party-state apparatus and ideology, that poses further challenges for single women. Family ideology is not only articulated through patriarchy—the rows of men during a Party congress testify to this—but also, if not more so, through the demand to produce offspring. This puts single women, more so than men, under enormous pressure. Many women dread the family gathering occasioned by the Chinese New Year reunion, when their marital future is inquired about and their single lives interrogated. The possibility to rent a boyfriend to pass the challenge testifies to the burden of familial pressure.[54] Similarly, for queer people (*kuer* 酷儿), special websites

49 Lamb, "Being Single in India: Gendered Identities, Class Mobilities, and Person-hoods in Flux," *Ethos* 46, no. 1 (2018).
50 See also Ketaki Chowkhani, "Mobilising Single Women in India: The Case of Majlis and Ekal Nari Shakti Sanghatan," *Single Women in India, Organizing and Supporting One Another(Blog): Guest Post by Ketaki Chowkhani*, November 19, 2019. Accessed June 22, 2024. https://www.academia.edu/41533245/Mobilising_Single_Women_in_India_The_Case_of_Majlis_and_Ekal_Nari_Shakti_Sanghatan; Menon, *Seeing like a Feminist*.
51 Lamb, "Being Single in India: Gendered Identities," 49–51.
52 Lamb, "Being Single in India: Gendered Identities," 49–50.
53 Lamb, "Being Single in India: Gendered Identities," 51.
54 Chow, *Caring in Times of Precarity*.

and applications help to connect them for a marriage of convenience, ideally aiming at producing offspring, so as to pacify both families.[55] The one-child policy (*yihai zhengce*一孩政策) that was in place between 1979 and 2015 further intensified this pressure, as many single women do not have siblings and bear the reproductive burden squarely on their single pair of shoulders.

The one-child policy is just one example indicating the omnipresence of the State and the Party in everyday life. Especially since Xi Jinping 习近平 came to power in 2012, the space for public activism or other possibilities to express discontent has decreased. The slapstick photo-blocs by supporters of the Feminist Five (*nüquan wujiemei* 女权五姐妹) in Chinese cities are hardly conceivable now, not to mention the high-profile protests against sexual harassment in public transport before the Feminist Five. Allegedly, the leaders of the protests were arrested in 2015.[56] Similarly, the performance of the "Vagina Monologues"—that took place in quasi-public venues under the slightly different title of "V Monologues" in 2009—is unthinkable under the current regime. What is more striking in the Chinese context is this paradox: officially sanctioned feminism is replacing activist and feminist practices, as can be identified in other geocultural contexts. The Women's Federation of China introduced the term "leftover women" (*shengnü* 剩女) in 2007 as a discursive tool to drive young single Chinese women towards marriage and reproduction. More recently, in 2017, it sought to banish "feminism" (*nüquan zhuyi* 女权主义) from China with the argument that feminism is promoted by the "hostile West".

While activist practices may find their way discreetly into society, popular culture is probably the realm where gender politics in general, and single womanhood in particular, may play out and present contestations in the Chinese context. The 2016 hit series *Ode to Joy* (*HuanLe Song* 欢乐颂), featuring five single women in Shanghai, unsettled representations of single womanhood.[57] In 2022, a Chinese retirement game sparked off heated debates on gender stereotypes and sexualized womanhood between male and female gamers.[58] The increasing official attention to and interference with popular culture attests to its growing impact on gender politics. A recent instance is that the state has cracked down on boy bands and related celebrity fan cultures for being unruly and chaotic; specifically, "effeminate men"（*niangpao* 娘炮）are deemed part of an "abnormal

55 Shuzhen Huang and Daniel C. Brouwer, "Negotiating Performances of 'Real' Marriage in Chinese Queer *Xinghun*," *Women's Studies in Communication* 41, no. 2 (2018).

56 Margaret Hillenbrand, *Negative Exposures: Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

57 Chow, *Caring in Times of Precarity*.

58 See for instance this media report: Youxizixun Bot, "Zhizao Xingbie Duili? Guochanyouxi 'Tuixiu Moniqi' Zao Chaping Paohong" 制造性别对立?国产游戏《退休模拟器》遭差评炮轰 [Creating Gender Hostility? China-Made Game "Retirement Simulator" Receives Strong Critique], *Xiaoheihe,* 2022. Accessed June 22, 2024. https://api.xiaoheihe.cn/maxnews/app/share/detail/2564917.

aesthetics" (*jixing shenmei* 畸形审美). Consequently, earrings worn by male celebrities were pixelized in entertainment shows.[59] In short, what we have observed is this distinction between China and India in terms of the possibilities for an overt expression of a feminist politics. In China, feminism has gradually moved from the public towards the private space, and from the political towards the cultural realm. As we discuss further subsequently, women connect with one another through cultural means, like *kunqu* (昆曲) opera. Also, dating shows are platforms to negotiate gender norms, just as idol shows are domains to experiment with gender fluidity.

As Lahad writes, "singlehood is a contingent notion."[60] This prompts her to argue for the inclusion of relationship status and singleness in feminist discussions of intersectionality. In addition, this book argues that context, or place, also needs to be taken into account when discussing the contingency and subjectivity of singleness. In the following section, we flesh out the importance of studying urban space in relation to single women, noting that urban imaginaries create the conditions both for single women's agency and for their restrictions, and that single women's navigation of these conditions then, in turn, impacts urban life.

The urban single

This book explores everyday, urban lifeworlds, asking how the single woman shapes and reflects transcultural placemaking in the city.[61] The positionality of the single woman helps us to think about how we learn to be urban and how we navigate the city from a position of difference, often in affective ways, both in terms of pleasure and fear. A transcultural approach, taking account of the particular experiences and situated knowledge of single women, is especially important with respect to the often heightened presence of cultural diversity and social transformation in urban environments related to gendered (im)mobilities—to migration and dwelling, displacement and patterns of belonging.[62] Cities offer what Ulf Hannerz has referred to as diversity of access and access to diversity;[63]

---

59 Geng Song, "'Little Fresh Meat': The Politics of Sissiness and Sissyphobia in Contemporary China," *Men and Masculinities* 25, no. 1 (2022).
60 Lahad, *Table for One*, 3.
61 See also Melissa Butcher and Kate Maclean, "Gendering the City: The Lived Experience of Transforming Cities, Urban Cultures and Spaces of Belonging," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 25, no. 5 (2018); Vinnarasan Aruldoss and Sevasti-Melissa Nolas, "Tracing Indian Girls' Embodied Orientations towards Public Life," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 26, no. 11 (November 2019).
62 Butcher and Maclean, "Gendering the City"; Saraswati Raju ed., *Gendered Geographies: Space and Place in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011).
63 Ulf Hannerz, *Exploring the City: Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

they can be intense "contact zones"[64] of transcultural entanglement and relationality that impact, and are impacted by, the different forms of being single in the city. We ask to what extent the single woman is involved in the shaping of an urban habitus and habitat. We map new urban topographies of encounters with strangers and potential friends, new work opportunities, and leisure that pave the way for the aspirations and anxieties, strategies, and tactics of being single in the city, and of having or claiming a right to the city.[65]

Arguing that aspirations and practices shape places and allow for new communities and groups to form, architect Jeffrey Hou asks, "how can we re-envision the process of placemaking in the context of shifting cultural terrains?"[66] We proceed from this question—with a focus on single women's role in these "shifting cultural terrains," their aspirations and anxieties, freedoms and limitations—to examine how single women shape new urban socialities and explore new ways of living a good life.

In taking a transcultural approach, we are reluctant to use a framework of "container cultures" (e.g., South Asia, East Asia, India, China, "Indian," "Chinese") because they are often based on reified notions of identities nested in methodological nationalist frameworks that sideline dynamic entanglements and relationalities. Similarly, we take a critical stance towards the concept of "hybridity" as something that is an arbitrary mixture of these container cultures (local and global, West and East, modern and traditional), thus still insisting on something of "pure origin" and "more authenticity."[67] Therefore, in the context of rapidly transforming, increasingly diverse cities such as Shanghai and Delhi, a transcultural lens has proven to be productive, addressing dynamic processes of cultural encounter and exchange with respect to gender, class, ethnicity, and urban space.[68] As Hou has argued, a focus on transcultural placemaking "recognizes the instability of culture(s) and the emergent nature of cultural formation,"[69] encouraging a focus on the strategic and scalar uses of cultural practice.[70]

As we trace these new cultural formations in the city, we argue that a complex mixing of cultural change—including emergent neoliberal ideals—with

64 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation,* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2007).
65 David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 4 (2003); Reena Patel, *Working the Night Shift. Women in India's Call Center Industry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
66 Jeffrey Hou, "Your Place and / or My Place?" in *Transcultural Cities: Border-Crossing and Placemaking*, ed. Jeffrey Hou (London: Routledge, 2013), 13.
67 Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, and Susan Richter, ed., *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies* (London: Routledge, 2019).
68 Nina Glick Schiller and Ayşe Cağlar, ed., *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).
69 Hou, "Your Place," 7.
70 Schiller and Cağlar, *Locating Migration*.

extant traditional norms impacts single women's role and place in the city.[71] In China, even the Maoist years did not constitute a rupture in the discourse of respectability as centered on the bodies of women; rather women were positioned "as the guardians of reproductive health, family stability, and marital harmony."[72] Single women must balance aspirations to autonomy, that is, independence from former social relations such as family, with the pressures of respectability, that is, collective social norms that attempt to govern the presence of women in the city. Single women seek to navigate the demands of these aspects of subjectivity within contexts of precarity, both material and cultural. For example, autonomy can come with insecurity in terms of labor as well as in terms of love, just as the demand to be respectable makes single women walk a precarious moral tightrope between desire and threat. This book traces the ways in which single women navigate this autonomy–respectability balance and the resultant precarity, and how that navigation creates new ways of inhabiting the city and new urban lifeworlds.

We contend that urban spaces—in particular, Asian cities—are fundamental to the balance that single women try to strike between autonomy and respectability because they foster neoliberal and middle-class aspirations. This shapes the desire for agency under the specter of traditional, familial (and gendered) expectations, which create the burden of respectability. These interconnected themes of neoliberalism, autonomy, respectability, and precarity combine in nuanced ways, according to local particularities, to shape the rhizomatic social networks and complex place-making that single women create in the city.

In the city, we argue, there is a conflation of ideals of greater autonomy and neoliberal models of freedom of choice. Neoliberalism situates agency and choice as not only an ideal to strive for but also a moral imperative to achieve. Indeed, the burden of happiness seems particularly heavy for single women, who face pressure to uphold neoliberal, urban ideals of independence and selectivity in lifestyle and choice of partner. As Lahad discusses in her study of social media for singles,[73] the choice to be single legitimizes women who resist traditions and family norms but simultaneously generates constraints by placing the burden of the "wrong choice" on their shoulders, following the idea that self-management is the foundation of a "good life" in a neoliberal context.[74] For Lahad, this constitutes the myth of liberty within the freedom of choice that underlines the concept of singlehood, particularly for urban singles.

---

71 For literature on how these cultural norms, emanating from and reinforced within the home and family, continue to shape the everyday experiences of women in urban space, see Aparna Parikh, "Politics of Presence: Women's Safety and Respectability at Night in Mumbai, India," *Gender, Place & Culture. A Journal of Feminist Geography* 25, no. 5 (2018).
72 Harriet Evans, "Sexed Bodies, Sexualized Identities, and the Limits of Gender," *China Information* 22, no. 2 (2008).
73 Lahad, "Single Woman's Choice."
74 Lahad, "Selective Single Woman," 24.

Yet, even as middle-class ideals influence single women's aspirations for autonomy, it is within the cultural discourse and practices of the middle classes that the boundaries of respectability are maintained. Thus, this notion of respectability is not only gendered but also intersects with class.[75] While it is recognized that the middle class needs to be examined as a heterogeneous formation with different degrees of agency, researchers have argued that this cultural cohort has taken on the task of ordering cities, resulting in class and gendered segregation.[76] The discourse of respectability continues a trajectory of circumscribing the use of public space by women, a practice designed not only to protect the "worth" of a woman, but also in some circumstances to delineate the gendered image of the nation itself. Urban space generates contradictions and tensions as the presence of the independent, single woman in public becomes part of legitimizing a city's claim to modernity and cosmopolitanism, even as women's rights to the city are controlled to construct a patriarchal image of the nation. The continuous force exerted on these extant cultural frames of reference is concentrated in the urban as a space that enhances intergenerational disjunction and that values the body of the woman as a liberalized commodity and as a projection of "culture" and "tradition."[77]

This book demonstrates, and moves forward from, the idea that the impact of neoliberalization in China and India must be differentiated from neoliberalism in the West, as evident from the seemingly contradictory impact of neoliberalism on autonomy and tradition outlined earlier.[78] While neoliberalism has impacted both India and China profoundly, unlike the West this has not always resulted in a waning role of the nation state. In the case of China, the nation state remains deeply implicated in processes of economic reform, resulting in its re-emergence rather than retreat. In India, the enmeshment of political leadership with business interests similarly binds economic reform to the state, though perhaps not as formally as in China's case. As Peter van der Veer asserts, "[i]t is unclear to me what is exactly 'neoliberal' in India and China, except for the fact that at the governmental level one finds a global managerial language that is primarily

---

75 Smitha Radhakrishnan, *Appropriately Indian: Gender and Culture in a New Transnational Class* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); see also Rachel Heiman, Carla Freeman, and Mark Liechty, ed., *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing Through Ethnography* (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012).

76 For their work on urban transformation, see Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong, ed., *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011); Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria, "Guardians of the Bourgeois City: Citizenship, Public Space, and Middle-Class Activism in Mumbai," *City & Community* 8, no. 4 (2009).

77 Melissa Butcher, *Transnational Television, Cultural Identity and Change: When STAR Came to India* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2003).

78 For more scholarship on the impact of neoliberalism on urban women in India, see Ipsita Chatterjee, "Feminism, the False Consciousness of Neoliberal Capitalism? Informalization, Fundamentalism, and Women in an Indian City," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 19, no. 6 (2012); Srijani Ghosh, "The New 'New Liberal Indian Woman': The Glocalization of Chick Lit," *South Asian Popular Culture* 20, no. 2 (2022).

produced in the United States."[79] The importance of caste in India and of friendship and family in both India and China are, in his view, social factors that are hard to fit within the rubric of neoliberalism. Yet, as this book demonstrates, in both China and India, neoliberal ideas converge with traditional moral pressures in middle-class imaginaries. We explore the impact of neoliberalism outside of a Western context to understand how liberalization has created new ideals, even as it extends traditional ones. It is important, then, not to be overly celebratory of kinship networks such as family as standing in opposition to individualistic models of neo-liberalism. As we have shown earlier, these collectivities are also complicit in reproducing cultural tropes, such as respectability, that limit agency.

Scholarship on India and China highlights the contradictions and combinations of neoliberal promises with existing cultural norms. In her work on gender distinction and knowledge workers in the IT (information technology) sector in Bangalore, South India, Smitha Radhakrishnan argues that the supposed meritocracy of this sector, reflected by a discourse of equal and fair access in the professional workplace, is underlined by tensions of inequality centered on moral discourses of caste, religion, and gender, which female IT workers must somehow navigate.[80] The contradictions between the desire for agency and the reality of cultural constraint can be seen in Waldrop's account of women in urban India achieving increasing levels of agency over the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century, which takes into account social structures (such as education) as well as economic shifts (for example, employment in a globalized IT industry).[81] Yet such movement can be brought to a shuddering halt by the boundaries of respectability that still appear to lie at the heart of cultural legitimacy for women.[82]

In China, the trope of respectability revolves around safeguarding the domain of love and family life, "decent" public behavior, and a rejection of materialism—efforts that often clash with the aspirations of single, urban professionals. Moral discourses have included calls for "proper dressing,"[83] but in recent years they have also expressed an increasing anxiety around the category of *shengnü*, or "leftover women." This term refers to urban women, generally highly educated with professional jobs, who are older than twenty-seven and still unmarried. The state has initiated a campaign—using, among other strategies, cartoons, television shows, and newspaper columns—to pressure these women into giving up their

---

79 Peter van der Veer, *The Value of Comparison* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 151.
80 Radhakrishnan, *Appropriately Indian*; see also Lau, "Literary Representations," 272.
81 Waldrop, "Grandmother, Mother and Daughter."
82 Shilpa Phadke, "Unfriendly Bodies, Hostile Cities: Reflections on Loitering and Gendered Public Space," *Economic and Political Weekly* XLVIII, no. 39 (2013); Sanjay Srivastava, "Masculinity and Its Role in Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces," in *The Fear That Stalks: Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces*, ed. Sara Pilot and Lora Prabhu (New Delhi: Zubaan Books, 2012).
83 Fincher, *Leftover Women*.

career ambitions and marrying instead. Doing so often means forfeiting their savings, as the property they are expected to buy with their spouse will be in his name.[84] Harriet Zurndorfer writes in dismay that "young Chinese women are in a no-win situation. If they develop themselves and earn enough to live independently, they are condemned for their ambitions. In contrast, if they seek a successful man, they are labeled 'gray,'"[85] again breaching cultural boundaries of respectability. To illustrate this point, Zurndorfer refers to a scandal generated by the popular TV dating show *If You Are the One* (*Feicheng wurao* 非诚勿扰) in which a young female contestant publicly proclaimed that she would rather cry in a BMW car than laugh on the back of a bike. As Leta Hong Fincher reminds us, such sound bites are frequently quoted in news reports and academic studies, are clearly scripted, and are meant to provoke discussions with a view to circulating and promoting the program.[86] However, this articulation of a desire for wealth resulted in the intervention of government censors who deemed such content inappropriate and imposed a change in the show's format.[87]

Urban infrastructures in the cities studied in this book reflect the seemingly contradictory ideologies of autonomy and restriction for single women. On the one hand, cities offer new opportunities for single women. For example, cities provide a platform in the global restructuring of labor that has established new workspaces, which employ women across classes in areas such as leisure, hospitality, manufacturing, call centers, or business-process outsourcing. Such work not only contributes to household income but also to what these women want to "become." New infrastructures for work and leisure have both facilitated and responded to the growing presence of the single, independent woman as a social category. An increasing number of travel agents in India, for example, specialize in holiday packages for single women.[88] Similarly, single clubs have emerged in cities like Mumbai and Beijing to cater to professionals.[89] Besides new institutionalized forms of socialization, a host of new places are available for women aspiring to an independent, and purportedly world-class, lifestyle, be it gated communities, shopping malls, restaurants and cafes,[90] fitness centers, business districts, or theme parks. On the other hand, restrictions that stem from respectability tropes challenge women's place

---

84 Fincher, *Leftover Women*.
85 Harriet Zurndorfer, "Men, Women, Money, and Morality: The Development of China's Sexual Economy," *Feminist Economics* 22, no. 2 (2016): 16.
86 Fincher, *Leftover Women*.
87 Fincher, *Leftover Women*.
88 Sowmya Aji, "Single Indian Women of Today Can Do Without the Chivalry," *India Today*, April 9, 2012. Accessed October 1, 2020. https://www.indiatoday.in/mag azine/society-and-the-arts/story/20120409-single-indian-woman-of-today-can-do-without-the-chivalry-757912-2012-03-31.
89 Sanghamitra Chakraborty, Labonita Ghosh, Sugata Srinivasaraju, and Saumya Roy, "Two's a Crowd," *Outlook India*, February 2, 2022. Accessed April 4, 2024. https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/twos-a-crowd/226348.
90 Teresa K. Platz, "Café Culture: Socio-Historical Transformations of Space, Personhood and Middle Class in Pune, India." (PhD diss., Durham University, 2012).

in the city, especially through residential infrastructure for singles, which is poorly developed in many Asian cities.[91] Access to an independent apartment may be restricted by landlords or housing associations that enforce strict rules based on marital, as well as financial, social, ethnic, or religious criteria. Such restrictions suggest a politics of enclosure that governs how women access urban space. The body of the woman, especially the emancipated, single woman, has the capacity to generate subjective confusion, ambiguity, and threat in urban spaces when normative boundaries are breached.[92] To avoid this ambiguity, the body is enclosed through instrumental directive, for example, through curfews that forbid the presence of women in particular spaces at particular times. This is the case, for instance, with student hostels in cities like Delhi, where strict rules restrict female students' mobility after nightfall in order to "protect" them. Enclosure also occurs through affective responses, such as shame, that are collectively generated when respectability is breached.[93]

In Shanghai, the main restriction on living a good life lies in access to work and residential spaces, and manifests in battles around property market prices and high rent, making the choice to live alone and lead an independent life less feasible.[94] And, as already mentioned, state-encouraged discourses of "leftover women" further disparage urban single women seeking autonomous lifestyles. Yet, despite—or perhaps even because of—such restrictions, housing space in different cities across Asia is being reappropriated to suit the growing focus on independent lifestyles for young people, including singles. Also, in China, a discourse on home interior and living the good life is proliferating, resulting in a trend for candle-lit home dinners with friends, and the emergence of numerous magazines, websites, and shops devoted to home interior improvement, even if these homes must still be shared with friends rather than family due to a lack of affordability. Such endeavors reflect the new forms of sociality, belonging, and living in and with the city that are fostered by the amalgamation of opportunity and restriction that singleness in the city offers women.

In the case of Delhi, landlords appear reluctant to rent or lease apartments to single women and often rent out flats at substantially higher rates. Similarly, it remains difficult for single women to obtain loans to purchase homes. Younger women can access guest accommodation, which is usually a shared hostel-type arrangement or a room within a family home. Yet this type of accommodation can be highly restrictive, policing female students who must seek permission to leave the hostel at night, and thus

---

91 See also Song, 'A Room of One's Own.'
92 Melissa Butcher, "Defying Delhi's Enclosures: Strategies for Managing a Difficult City," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 25, no. 5 (2018).
93 See Sunalini Kumar, "Does Democracy Stop at the Doorstep of the Women's Hostel?" *Kafila: Collective Explorations since 2006*, March 24, 2012. Accessed September 6, 2014. https://kafila.online/tag/hostel-rules/.
94 Fincher, *Leftover Women*; for Singapore, see Karlien Strijbosch, "Single and the City: State Influences on Intimate Relationships of Young, Single, Well-Educated Women in Singapore," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 77, no. 5 (2015).

turning the pleasures of mobility in the city into an ongoing source of contestation and moral illegitimacy. Such mobility restrictions are connected to the discourse surrounding safety and violence (from so-called Eve teasing to rape, from the aesthetics of fear to the right to the city)[95] and related discussions of men's domination of public spaces. These discourses are much stronger in Delhi than in other cities discussed in this volume. In India, it has been argued that a moral panic underpins this approach to managing the tensions between sexual violence and the desire for greater autonomy among young women, related not only to issues of personal safety but also to national pride and male honor.[96]

As in Shanghai, the search for affordable housing for the single has created new spaces and forms of sociality in Delhi as well.[97] One such example is the reappropriation of the *barsātī* (rooftop apartment on bungalow-style houses). This architectural type of rooftop room on a bungalow that was designed in post-Partition India in the late 1950s and 1960s was once the preserve of servants, a "transit" room for male bachelors working away from their parental home, or an area to dry washing or enjoy the cool breeze during the monsoon season. Beginning in the 1970s, and especially since the liberalization of the 1990s, the *barsātī* gradually became both gentrified and diversified. It was affordable, compact, and independent from the main house. Artists, journalists, musicians, and, increasingly, single women would search for these spaces to retain autonomy and yet be emplaced in "respectable" middle-class neighborhoods.[98] Other new interstitial spaces have emerged to accommodate alternative creative lifestyles,[99] and thus, also for the single woman, in the increasingly popular habitats of urban villages in India. The urban village falls

---

95   See Christiane Brosius, "Regulating Access and Mobility of Single Women in a 'World Class'-City: Gender and Inequality in Delhi, India," in *Inequalities in Creative Cities: Issues, Approaches, Comparisons*, ed. Ulrike Gerhard, Michael Hoelscher, and David Wilson (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016); Ipshita Chanda, *Selfing the City: Single Women Migrants and Their Lives in Kolkata* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2017); Lipi Begum and Ravinder Barn, "Crossing Boundaries: Bras, Lingerie and Rape Myths in Postcolonial Urban Middle-Class India," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 26, no. 10 (2019).

96   See Shari Daya, "Embodying Modernity: Reading Narratives of Indian Women's Sexual Autonomy and Violation," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 16, no. 1 (2009).

97   See Anshul Dhamija and Shrabonti Bagchi, "Single Women in India Are Investing in Real Estate for Stability," *The Economic Times*, November 12, 2011. https://eco nomictimes.indiatimes.com/realty–trends/single–women–in–india–are–invest ing–in–real–estate–for–stability/articleshow/10702391.cms?from=mdr.

98   Butcher, "Defying Delhi's Enclosures"; Sangeeta Ojha, "Real estate trends: Will the sector witness a rise in women homebuyers in 2024?" *MINT*, December 5, 2023. Accessed April 4, 2024. https://www.livemint.com/industry/real-estate-trends-will-the-sector-witness-a-rise-in-women-homebuyers-in-2024-experts-decode-11701744685630.html.

99   See Christiane Brosius and Tina Schilbach, "'Mind the Gap': Thinking about in-between Spaces in Delhi and Shanghai," Introduction to the special issue, ed. Christiane Brosius and Tina Schilbach, *City, Culture and Society* 7, no. 4 (2016).

under different urban policies *(lal dhora)* that kept some of the real-estate pressure out for a while and allowed for more experimental forms of residential, commercial, and cultural life to take place (for example, start-ups, flat-sharing, alternative art galleries, and festivals). Such an environment also invites experiments with new gender roles or professions.[100]

Building on these shifting cultural frameworks of autonomy and respectability that are impacting women's lives in cities in India and China, this book explores the resulting precarity that single women face. Currently, literature often assumes a causal relationship between neoliberalization and precarization and connects the idea of precarity exclusively to work and labor conditions.[101] We extend the causality of precarization beyond economic factors to include social and cultural conditions like singleness. The precariat's association with post-Fordist flexible production and post-welfare states[102] is called into question when pushed beyond its Euro-American-Australian comfort zone and towards China and India.[103] We draw inspiration from Yiu Fai Chow's book *Caring in Times of Precarity*: *A Study of Single Women Doing Creative Work in Shanghai*.[104] Chow asks whether "for these Chinese women, precarity is a human condition known to them, suitable for them, and available to them? Perhaps 'precarity' is a male-centric and Western-centric notion?"[105] This inspires him to "argue for the limits of the politics of precarity, and to propose [instead] an ethics of care."[106] This line of questioning urges Chow, as it urges us, to unpack everyday life struggles and pleasures of single women through grounded case studies that defy victimization yet remain wary of an uncritical celebration of agency.

We do not only aspire to push the concept of precarity beyond its geographical Western comfort zone, but also beyond its primary articulation alongside labor insecurity, thus opening a space to see its intersections with wider changes in social life. The essays in this volume engage with precarity beyond the economic aspects of the availability of an apartment or the security of a job, asking where and how to love in times of precarity, as well as how precarious love itself is in twenty-first century urban living. As this book will show, precarity and singlehood can be understood as a place-specific balancing act between compliance and change, between autonomy and respectability, and between hope and despair.

---

100 Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996).
101 Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016); Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).
102 Nancy Ettlinger, "Precarity Unbound," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 32, no. 3 (2007).
103 Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
104 Chow, *Caring in Times of Precarity*.
105 Chow, *Caring in Times of Precarity*, 4.
106 Chow, *Caring in Times of Precarity*, 4.

Navigating the city

To understand the single woman's place in the city without either victimizing or valorizing her, we must both appreciate the challenges and paradoxes she faces, as outlined in the previous section, and look beyond them to recognize the rich worlds that single women create and participate in, in the city. In doing so, we acknowledge the profound importance of women's rights to the city, particularly their right to be single when living in and moving through the city.[107] To appreciate these new urban lifeworlds, this volume also asks: How do single women navigate the forces and tensions of their urban lives? In the previous section, we have already hinted, through a discussion of housing infrastructure, that the autonomy–respectability balance leads single women to create new social networks. In this section, we mention some more examples of how urban women in India and China navigate the city through both formal and informal processes of contestation and skills development. We emphasize the socialities and affective geographies this navigation creates.

Young women in urban spaces are contesting social and economic constraints, both collectively and informally in their daily lives. In Delhi, young women (primarily middle- and upper-middle-class women) are engaging in new forms of protest, including adopting and adapting forms used in cities in the Global North, such as the "Take Back the Night," "Slut Walk," or "My Dress is Not a Yes" campaigns.[108] As mentioned before, China has hosted anti-sexual harassment campaigns such as "I Can be Slutty Yet You Cannot Harrass Me," and performances of the "V Monologues." But, perhaps more importantly, it is in everyday practices that such contestation is taking place. Designated places of consumption and leisure, for example, the mall or the nightclub, may limit access but also provide a space for "legitimate" displays of sexuality and desirability for young middle-class women.

The city then becomes a site of ambiguity, of opportunity and constraint that provides platforms for the performance of new subjectivities as well as the pain of not fitting in. The possibilities of the city require particular competences or skills, acquired formally through training in order to gain entry into the new economic arenas on offer (hospitality, retail, business-process outsourcing, creative industries), and informally by learning how to "be urban," including strategies of navigating the city and new cultural and social codes. There are clearly class implications inherent in these processes, as it is primarily women from lower classes and rural areas that are perceived as lacking the skills needed to be urban.[109]

---

107 Kalpana Viswanath and Renagh O'Leary, *Building Safe and Inclusive Cities for Women: a Practical Guide* (New Delhi: Jagori, 2011).
108 See Lucie Bernroider in this volume; Ratna Kapur, "Pink Chaddis and SlutWalk Couture: The Postcolonial Politics of Feminism Lite," *Feminist Legal Studies*, no. 20 (2012).
109 See Jeroen de Kloet and Penn Tsz Ting Ip in this volume.

However, women are also often willing to undertake formal training to gain access to economic advantages as well as an imagined desirable and cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Formal processes of learning are generally provided by employers and training centers in both Delhi and Shanghai, reproducing similar skill sets, appearances, and models of customer service that replicate a global model of emotional labor adapted for localized conditions. For example, in post-reform China, Confucian doctrines are used by Shanghai businesses as a tool to train rural migrant workers to be "good" employees. In Penn Tsz Ting Ip's study of the hospitality industry,[110] women are trained to learn respect, to work without complaint, and to submit to a subaltern role. Employers and management staff play the role of a father to train their employees to become obedient, affirming the neo-Confucian conception of public order in the workplace.[111] In Delhi, female taxi drivers from low-income or marginalized backgrounds are trained by a local NGO not only to drive (an important skill that opens up the possibility of accessing the city in ways impossible to women who must rely on public transport), but also to provide customer service. They are offered communication classes, an overview of women's rights, first aid, English, self-defense, basic computer training, and classes on how to deal with harassment or provocation. The aim of this coaching is to develop transferable life skills, including confidence building, to enable engagement with the city and its inhabitants.[112]

Chenying Pi's ethnography of the Shanghai-based Love Club, included in this book, offers another example of formal skills training for single women in the city. This example describes the forerunner of the emerging love training businesses in China's big cities. The Love Club offers a three-month training course, including consultation, therapies, lectures, and social activities, "to help single men and women who have difficulties in love improve their love intelligence, clear their misunderstandings of love, and strengthen their socializing capabilities," as noted in its brochure. Most of the clients are single professional women who experience social and familial pressures as a result of their single status. What the Love Club and its trainers provide is not just knowledge of relationships and sex, skills of interpersonal communication, and methods of self-reflection, but a vocabulary to talk about themselves, to elaborate on their discomforts, confusions, and fears, as well as their desires, determinations, and hopes.

---

110 Penn Tsz Ting Ip, "Desiring Singlehood? Rural Migrant Women and Affective Labour in the Shanghai Beauty Parlour Industry," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 18, no. 4 (2017).
111 Cara Wallis, "Technology and / as Governmentality: The Production of Young Rural Women as Low-Tech Laboring Subjects in China," *Communication and Critical / Cultural Studies* 10, no. 4 (2013).
112 Chiellini cited in Melissa Butcher and Laila Abu-Er-Rub comp., "Single Project Report November 2016," *SINGLE*, 2016. Accessed June 22, 2024. https://www.hera-single.de/project-report/.

Single women also learn how to navigate the city through informal means, that is, through friends and peers, and through face-to-face communication and social media. This kind of learning includes instrumental guidance: how to use public transport, where to shop, how to dress, how to carry themselves in public spaces, how to stay safe, where to socialize. A variety of technological means have been developed that aid women in navigating the city, including mobile apps (applications) for emergency calls, interactive maps, and cab services whose routes are traceable online. Social media is also used to share information both with an eye to security and to locating sites of leisure activities. In Ip's 2017 study of the beauty industry,[113] for example, workers learned from each other how to build trust with their clients through their own body modifications, and also how to manipulate their clients in order to bring in more business to the salon.

Single women's informal contestations for urban space, as well as the networks of mutual learning they develop in trying to "be urban," form affective geographies that highlight the sensory experiences of the city and the universality of embodied responses to encounters with others, the built environment, and shifting cultural frameworks. An example of the formation of affective community comes from Chow's case study of the followers of *kunqu* (昆曲), a regional form of opera in China.[114] As fans, as apprentices, as teachers, as organizers, or as promoters, the women create and share an intimate and exclusive space beyond work and love. Building on the category of community constructed and maintained by what Richard Sennett calls informal sociality,[115] this network of women evolves and revolves around the creative practice of *kunqu*. Originating in the late Yuan dynasty, *kunqu* is generally considered one of the oldest forms of operatic arts in China. Yet, as Chow discovers, single women in Shanghai's contemporary creative industries, often known to each other, are also active in the *kunqu* scene as part of creating a "good life" beyond work. *Kunqu* enables this community of informal sociality to come into being, engendering shared passion and friendship through creative practice.

Such communities, constructed and maintained by women, centering on particular shared activities, whether biking or opera, provide an antidote to the discomfort of being single in a family-centric context. Affective solidarities and sensory experiences of the city, in addition to the different forms of training noted above, are also examples of how thematic and relational points of comparison between cities can be generated. Both formal and informal strategies highlight why the dichotomy of victim versus empowered needs to be challenged, as it traps women into roles that do not capture the complex negotiations involved in constructing a life of one's own in these cities.

---

113 Ip, "Shanghai Beauty Parlour Industry."
114 Chow, *Caring in Times of Precarity*.
115 Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

About this book

Exploring the social worlds of urban single women in East and South Asia, the previous sections have argued for a conceptual framework that intertwines autonomy, respectability, and precarity, suggesting that women who have acquired a certain degree of independence may be framed as less respectable and simultaneously be forced to navigate both precarious jobs and social lives. In understanding the wider changes in which singleness is perceived and enacted, we never lose sight of the power relations embedded in these concepts that also act as forms of governance. Keeping this framework in mind, the following chapters address specific contexts from diverse disciplinary backgrounds to understand not only the lives of single women but also the wider contexts of urban change in which they live.

In the first chapter, Kinneret Lahad draws on her years of research on singlehood to show how "the continuous stigmatization of single women in terms of lack and excess produces an ongoing global moral panic about the growing population of single people." She expands on our conceptualization of society's tendency to pathologize single women, showing how women who remain unmarried past a certain age are deemed no longer respectable, and are thus pushed into social precarity. Lahad also argues that singlehood can help us develop new conceptual and political possibilities for thinking about women's life trajectories and alternative gendered orders.

Lucie Bernroider engages with what she calls "the productive tensions between singleness and interdependency" in the second chapter. She draws on her fieldwork in Delhi in the early teens of the new millennium, to give voice to single women and show how this label or stigma tends to ignore and erase their multiple interdependencies and sociabilities. She also reflects on the practice of anthropological fieldwork, remembering the intimacies and vulnerabilities she became entangled with as a researcher and which guided her into a humbler state of intimate proximity.

The third chapter sees Penn Tsz Ting Ip and Jeroen de Kloet focus on domestic helpers living in Shanghai who may be married or engaged, but lead, as the authors argue, a single life in the city. Through honesty, professionalism, and care, these domestic helpers negotiate trust with their employers and try to mitigate the risk of sexual harassment. This imbues their precarious position with a sense of agency.

Shilpa Phadke probes the pervasive and invasive nature of "marriage talk" in India in chapter four. In many cases in India, women are confronted with the narrative of desirability of the institution of marriage by family members or friends. Phadke subsequently engages with "the ways in which women push back against the tactics of shaming and the infantilizing of unmarried women," for example, through education and employment, or by being "a difficult daughter."

In chapter five, Chenying Pi studies how professional (middle-class) single women in Shanghai imagine the ideal man and negotiate femininity.

Transforming gender configurations, they continue to look for "Mr. Right," though more as a possible option now, than as a necessity. In this process, they work to reinvent, regulate, and discipline their femininities. Pi's work demonstrates that singleness does not preclude desires for partnership and marriage, thus expanding our notion of singleness within a localized context.

Chapter six brings us to the artwork of the Chinese contemporary feminist artist Guo Qingling. In this interview with Yiu Fai Chow, we come to understand why she often portrays single women in her paintings and why they are often painted from behind. Reflecting on *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, Guo Qingling explains how feminism has settled into a background force in her artwork, but also how she tries to avoid being labeled a female artist or a feminist artist. Instead, she aspires to draw our gaze to the work of migrant women and to the weaknesses we all face as human beings, namely our vulnerability and precarity.

Paromita Chakravarti, in chapter seven, explores the topography of eighteen women's hostels of varying fabric and origins across Kolkata to better understand how single women navigate the city and shape their careers and lifeworlds. This chapter shows how younger hostelites use the space and their time there to try out various life options, whereas the hostels' older inhabitants establish alternative forms of communities. In both cases, the hostels provide a safe space away from violence to balance the desire for autonomy and the demands of respectability.

Lucetta Kam, in chapter eight, interrogates definitions of singlehood and shows how transnational mobility allows for a queer single life away from the scrutinizing eyes of parents and peers, thus constituting a move from precarity to possibility and autonomy. The rubric of singlehood affords a queer lifestyle, as Kam argues, showing "how singleness can be a form of public (mis)recognition or representation for queer women in a heteronormative society."

In the ninth and final chapter of this book, Sanjay Srivastava returns our attention to the gendered city and mobilizes the concepts of postnationalism and moral consumption to analyze three different "technotopias": the idea of the smart city, the anonymized app he calls *citysafe*, and the *safe campus* initiative. All three of these involve a management and policing of space, "a new kind of urban spatial discipline," and are entangled with gendered narratives of postnational modernity and moral consumption.

The chapters in this book attest to the fact that this project, which began as a comparative study of single women in Shanghai and Delhi, has branched out to involve different forms of singlehood, ranging from queer mobilities to contemporary art. While most chapters focus on one locality, the logic behind this volume is very much a comparative and relational one. We do refrain from clear-cut comparisons between China and India, not just to steer away from a possible methodological nationalism, but also in order to account for more complex forms of entanglement involving local histories, national mythologies, and global mobilities, to name

but a few. However, we do insist on the comparative logic that underpins this book and that manifests not only in our juggling of different concepts at different localities, but also in the inclusion of different cases and different sites. This comparative, relational, and transcultural viewpoint helps us to move away from the nation state as the unit of analysis, which we hope will add to a "more fragmentary, but better, analysis of the societies that make up our contemporary world."[116] This is a world in which being single is not viewed as a state of waiting for "Mr. or Ms. Right," a world in which the cult of coupledom is at least approached from an ambiguous distance, a world in which alternative intimate modes of being are explored and played with.

ORCID®

Christiane Brosius ⓘ https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1942-5381
Jeroen de Kloet ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2314-5424

References

Abu-Er-Rub, Laila, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, and Susan Richter, ed. *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*. London: Routledge, 2019.

Aji, Sowmya. "Single Indian Women of Today Can Do Without the Chivalry." *India Today*, April 9, 2012. Accessed October 1, 2020. https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/society-and-the-arts/story/20120409-single-indian-woman-of-today-can-do-without-the-chivalry-757912-2012-03-31.

Anjaria, Jonathan Shapiro. "Guardians of the Bourgeois City: Citizenship, Public Space, and Middle-Class Activism in Mumbai." *City & Community* 8, no. 4 (2009): 391–406. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2009.01299.x.

Arora, Anupama. "Nobody Puts Rani in a Corner: Making of the New Indian Woman in Queen (2014)." *South Asian Popular Culture* 17, no. 2 (2019): 145–157. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2019.1613783.

Aruldoss, Vinnarasan, and Sevasti-Melissa Nolas. "Tracing Indian Girls' Embodied Orientations towards Public Life." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 26, no. 11 (November 2019): 1588–1608. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1586649.

Banerjee, Paula. *Debates over Women's Autonomy*. Kolkata: Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, 2005.

Baviskar, Amita, and Raka Ray, ed. *Elite and Everyman: The Cultural Politics of the Indian Middle Classes*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2011.

Begum, Lipi, and Ravinder Barn. "Crossing Boundaries: Bras, Lingerie and Rape Myths in Postcolonial Urban Middle-Class India." *Gender, Place & Culture:*

---

116   Van der Veer, *Value of Comparison*, 153.

A Journal of Feminist Geography 26, no. 10 (2019): 1324–1344. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1567470.

Belliappa, Jyothsna L. *Gender, Class and Reflexive Modernity in India*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Berke, Jeremy. "How Alibaba Turned an Obscure, Made-up Chinese Holiday into a $14.3 Billion Shopping Extravaganza That's Bigger than Black Friday." *Business Insider*, November 14, 2015. https://www.businessinsider.com/how–alibaba–made–143–billion–on–singles–day–2015–11.

Brosius, Christiane. *India's Middle Class: New Forms of Urban Leisure, Consumption and Prosperity*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2014.

Brosius, Christiane. "Regulating Access and Mobility of Single Women in a 'World Class'-City: Gender and Inequality in Delhi, India." In *Inequalities in Creative Cities: Issues, Approaches, Comparisons,* edited by Ulrike Gerhard, Michael Hoelscher, and David Wilson, 239–260. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.

Brosius, Christiane, and Tina Schilbach. "'Mind the Gap': Thinking about in-between Spaces in Delhi and Shanghai." Introduction to the Special Issue, edited by Christiane Brosius and Tina Schilbach, *City, Culture and Society* 7, no. 4 (2016): 221–226. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2016.03.003.

Butcher, Melissa. "Defying Delhi's Enclosures: Strategies for Managing a Difficult City." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 25, no. 5 (2018): 727–742. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1395823.

Butcher, Melissa. *Transnational Television, Cultural Identity and Change: When STAR Came to India*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2003.

Butcher, Melissa, and Laila Abu-Er-Rub comp. "Single Project Report November 2016." *SINGLE*, 2016. https://www.hera-single.de/project-report/.

Butcher, Melissa, and Kate Maclean. "Gendering the City: The Lived Experience of Transforming Cities, Urban Cultures and Spaces of Belonging." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 25, no. 5 (2018): 686–694. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1462773.

Butcher, Melissa, and Srilata Sircar."Localizing India's Global Smart Cities: A Multi-Scalar Analysis of Cities Yet-to-Come." *Urban Geographies*, forthcoming.

Casas-Cortés, Maribel. "A Genealogy of Precarity: A Toolbox for Rearticulating Frag-mented Social Realities in and out of the Workplace." *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture and Society* 26, no. 2 (2014): 206–226. https://doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2014.888849.

Chakraborty, Kabita. "Unmarried Muslim Youth and Sex Education in the Bustees of Kolkata." *South Asian History and Culture* 1, no. 2 (2010): 268–281. https://doi.org/10.1080/19472491003593001.

Chakraborty, Sanghamitra, Labonita Ghosh, Sugata Srinivasaraju, and Saumya Roy. "Two's a Crowd." *Outlook India*, January 2005. https://www.outlookindia.com/society/twos-a-crowd-news-226348.

Chanda, Ipshita. *Selfing the City: Single Women Migrants and Their Lives in Kolkata*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2017.

Chatterjee, Ipsita. "Feminism, the False Consciousness of Neoliberal Capitalism? Informalization, Fundamentalism, and Women in an Indian City." *Gender,*

Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography 19, no. 6 (2012): 790–809. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2011.649349.

Chatterjee, Sohini. "The 'Good Indian Queer Woman' and the Family: Politics of Normativity and Travails of (Queer) Representation." *South Asian Popular Culture* 19, no. 2 (2021): 177–192. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2021.1940549.

Chen, Xiangming. "Introduction: Why Chinese and Indian Megacities?" Special issue, *City & Community* 8, no. 4 (December 2009): 363–368. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2009.01297.x.

Chen, Xiaoxu, and Chadwick Wang. "Migrant Gaming Girls in Beijing: Urban Solitude, Play, and Attempts to Integrate." *Ethnography* 22, no. 1 (2019): 131–150. https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138119848024.

Choi, Susanne Y. P. "Gendered Pragmatism and Subaltern Masculinity in China: Peasant Men's Responses to Their Wives' Labor Migration." *American Behavioral Scientist* 60, no. 5–6 (2016): 565–582. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764216632832.

Chow, Yiu Fai. *Caring in Times of Precarity: A Study of Single Women Doing Creative Work in Shanghai*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Chowkhani, Ketaki. "Mobilising Single Women in India: The Case of Majlis and Ekal Nari Shakti Sanghatan." *Single Women in India, Organizing and Supporting One Another (Blog): Guest Post by Ketaki Chowkhani*, November 19, 2019. Accessed November 4, 2022. https://blogs.psychcentral.com/single-at-heart/2019/11/single-women-in-india-organizing-and-supporting-one-other-guest-post-by-ketaki-chowkhani.

Christensen, Hilda Rømer. "Gendering Mobilities and (In)Equalities in Post-Socialist China." In *Integrating Gender into Transport Planning: From One to Many Tracks*, edited by Christina Lindkvist Scholten and Tanja Joelsson, 249–269. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Daya, Shari. "Embodying Modernity: Reading Narratives of Indian Women's Sexual Autonomy and Violation." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 16, no. 1 (2009): 97–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/09663690802574878.

DePaulo, Bella M., and Wendy L. Morris. "Singles in Society and in Science." *Psychological Inquiry* 16, no. 2–3 (2005): 57–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2005.9682918.

DePaulo, Bella M., and Wendy L. Morris. "The Unrecognized Stereotyping and Discrimination Against Singles." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 15, no. 5 (2006): 251–254. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2006.00446.x.

Dhamija, Anshul, and Shrabonti Bagchi. "Single Women in India Are Investing in Real Estate for Stability." *The Economic Times*, November 12, 2011. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/realty-trends/single-women-in-india-are-investing-in-real-estate-for-stability/articleshow/10702391.cms?from=mdr.

Endo, Kumiko. "Singlehood in 'Precarious Japan': Examining New Gender Tropes and Inter-Gender Communication in a Culture of Uncertainty." *Japan Forum* 31, no. 2 (2019): 165–186. https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2018.1441167.

Ettlinger, Nancy. "Precarity Unbound." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 32, no. 3 (2007): 319–340. https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540703200303.

Evans, Harriet. "Sexed Bodies, Sexualized Identities, and the Limits of Gender." *China Information* 22, no. 2 (2008): 361–386. https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X08091550.

Fernandes, Leela. *India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform*. Michigan: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Fincher, Leta Hong. *Leftover Women: The Resurgence of Gender Inequality in China*. London: Zed Books, 2014.

Gandhi, Kanchan, Harsh Mander, Agrima Bhasin, Radhika Jha, and Sejal Dand. "Living Single: Being A Single Woman in India." In *India Exclusion Report II*, 165–188. New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2016.

Ghosh, Srijani. "The New 'New Liberal Indian Woman': The Glocalization of Chick Lit." *South Asian Popular Culture* 20, no. 2 (2022): 201–216. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2022.2090682.

Gupta, Mallika. "I (Don't) Walk a Lonely Road: A Study of Women Seeking Leisure in a Public Park." PhD diss., CEPT University, 2020. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12725/16198.

Gurstein, Penny, and Silvia Vilches. "The Just City for Whom? Re-Conceiving Active Citizenship for Lone Mothers in Canada." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 17, no. 4 (2010): 421–436. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2010.485829.

Hannerz, Ulf. *Exploring the City: Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

Harriss, John. "Middle-Class Activism and the Politics of the Informal Working Class: A Perspective on Class Relations and Civil Society in Indian Cities." *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no. 4 (2006): 445–465. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710601073002.

Harvey, David. "The Right to the City." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 4 (2003): 939–941. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2003.00492.x.

Heiman, Rachel, Carla Freeman, and Mark Liechty, ed. *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing Through Ethnography*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012.

Hesmondhalgh, David, and Sarah Baker. *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Hillenbrand, Margaret. *Negative Exposures: Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020.

Himawan, Karel K., Matthew Bambling, and Sisira Edirippulige. "The Asian Single Profiles: Discovering Many Faces of Never Married Adults in Asia." *Journal of Family Issues* 39, no. 14 (2018): 3667–3689. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18789205.

Hoefinger, Heidi. "'PROFESSIONAL GIRLFRIENDS'. An Ethnography of Sexuality, Solidarity and Subculture in Cambodia." *Cultural Studies* 25, no. 2 (2011): 244–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2011.535990.

Hou, Jeffrey. "Your Place and/or My Place?" In *Transcultural Cities: Border–Crossing and Placemaking*, edited by Jeffrey Hou, 1–16. London: Routledge, 2013.

Huang, Shuzhen, and Daniel C. Brouwer. "Negotiating Performances of 'Real' Marriage in Chinese Queer *Xinghun*." *Women's Studies in Communication* 41, no. 2 (2018): 140–158. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2018.1463581.

Ibrahim, Rozita, and Zaharah Hassan. "Understanding Singlehood from the Experiences of Never-Married Malay Muslim Women in Malaysia: Some Preliminary Findings." *European Journal of Social Sciences* 8, no. 3 (2009): 395–405. Accessed June 22, 2024.

Ip, Penn Tsz Ting. "Desiring Singlehood? Rural Migrant Women and Affective Labour in the Shanghai Beauty Parlour Industry." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 18, no. 4 (2017): 558–580. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2017.1387415.

Ip, Penn Tsz Ting, and Esther Peeren. "Exploiting the Distance between Conflicting Norms: Female Rural-to-Urban Migrant Workers in Shanghai Negotiating Stigma around Singlehood and Marriage." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 22, no. 5–6 (2019): 665–683. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549419847108.

Iyer, Padmini. "'Due to All This Fear, We're Getting Less Freedom': Young People's Understandings of Gender and Sexual Violence in New Delhi, India." *Gender and Education* 31, no. 2 (2019): 222–239. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1306029.

Ji, Yingchun, Xiaogang Wu, Shengwei Sun, and Guangye He. "Unequal Care, Unequal Work: Toward a More Comprehensive Understanding of Gender Inequality in Post-Reform Urban China." *Sex Roles* 77, no. 11–12 (2017): 765–778. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0751-1.

John, Mary E. "Women and Feminisms in Contemporary Asia." *International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 9, no. 2 (2007): 165–173.

Kapur, Ratna. "Pink Chaddis and SlutWalk Couture: The Postcolonial Politics of Feminism Lite." *Feminist Legal Studies*, no. 20 (2012): 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-012-9193-x.

Karandikar, Sampada, Hansika Kapoor, Saloni Diwakar, and Feryl Badiani. "She Did It Her Way: An Analysis of Female Rebellion in Contemporary Bollywood Movies." *South Asian Popular Culture* 19, no. 2 (2021): 149–163. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2021.1940548.

Kumar, Sunalini. "Does Democracy Stop at the Doorstep of the Women's Hostel?" *Kafila*, March 24, 2012. Accessed September 6, 2014. https://kafila.online/2012/03/24/does-democracy-stop-at-the-doorstep-of-the-womens-hostel-appeal-from-co-ordination-committee-for-womens-hostels-in-delhi-university/.

Lahad, Kinneret. *A Table for One: A Critical Reading of Singlehood, Gender and Time*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.

Lahad, Kinneret. "'Am I Asking for Too Much?' The Selective Single Woman as a New Social Problem." *Women's Studies International Forum*, no. 40 (2013): 23–32.

Lahad, Kinneret. "Singlehood, Waiting, and the Sociology of Time." *Sociological Forum* 27, no. 1 (2012): 163–186.

Lahad, Kinneret. "The Single Woman's Choice as a Zero–Sum Game." *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 2 (2014): 240–266.

Lake, Roseann. *Leftover in China*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2018.

Lamb, Sarah. *Being Single in India: Stories of Gender, Exclusion, and Possibility*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2022.

Lamb, Sarah. *White Saris and Sweet Mangoes: Aging, Gender, and Body in North India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Lau, Lisa. "Literary Representations of the 'New Indian Woman': The Single, Working, Urban, Middle Class Indian Woman Seeking Personal Autonomy." *Journal of South Asian Development* 5, no. 2 (2010): 272–292.

Lau, Lisa. "No Longer Good Girls: Sexual Transgression in Indian Women's Writings." *Gender, Place and CultureA Journal of Feminist Geography* 21, no. 3 (2013): 279–296.

Livemint. "More Indians Prefer to Stay Unmarried, Finds Survey." *Livemint*, July 14, 2022. Accessed November 1, 2022. https://www.livemint.com/news/more-indians-prefer-to-stay-unmarried-finds-survey-11657809573372.html.

Malik, Surbhi. "The Provincial Flâneuse: Reimagining Provincial Space and Narratives of Womanhood in Bollywood." *South Asian Popular Culture* 19, no. 1 (2021): 33–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2021.1880859.

McDill, Tandace, Sharon K. Hall, and Susan C. Turell. "Aging and Creating Families: Never-Married Heterosexual Women Over Forty." *Journal of Women & Aging* 18, no. 3 (2006): 37–50. https://doi.org/10.1300/J074v18n03_04.

McRobbie, Angela. *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016.

Menon, Nivedita. *Seeing like a Feminist.* Delhi: Penguin, 2012.

Mount, Liz. "Saris and Contemporary Indian Womanhood: How Middle-Class Women Navigate the Tradition / Modernity Split." *Contemporary South Asia* 25, no. 2 (2017): 167–181. https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2017.1321617.

Oberoi, Savita. *Single in the City*, Movie, Public Service Broadcasting Trust, Delhi (2008).

Ong, Aihwa. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

Pappu, Rekha. "Reconsidering Romance and Intimacy: The Case of the Single Unmarried Woman." In *Intimate Others: Marriage and Sexualities in India*, edited by Samita Sen, Ranjita Biswas, and Nandita Dhawan, 370–390. Kolkata: Stree, 2011.

Parikh, Aparna. "Politics of Presence: Women's Safety and Respectability at Night in Mumbai, India." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 25, no. 5 (2018): 695–710. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1400951.

Patel, Bhaichand. *Chasing the Good Life: On Being Single*. Delhi: Penguin, 2006.

Patel, Reena. *Working the Night Shift. Women in India's Call Center Industry*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Paunksnis, Runa Chakraborty, and Šarūnas Paunksnis. "Masculine Anxiety and 'New Indian Woman' in the Films of Anurag Kashyap." *South Asian Popular Culture* 18, no. 2 (2020): 149–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2020.1773656.

Phadke, Shilpa. "Unfriendly Bodies, Hostile Cities: Reflections on Loitering and Gendered Public Space." *Economic and Political Weekly* XLVIII, no. 39 (2013): 50–59. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23528480.

Phadke, Shilpa, Sameera Khan, and Shilpa Ranade. *Why Loiter: Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2011.

Platz, Teresa K. "Café Culture: Socio-Historical Transformations of Space, Personhood and Middle Class in Pune, India." PhD diss., Durham University, 2012.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2007.

Ojha, Sangeeta. "Real estate trends: Will the sector witness a rise in women homebuyers in 2024?" *MINT*, December 5, 2023. Accessed April 4, 2024. https://www.livemint.com/industry/real-estate-trends-will-the-sector-witness-a-rise-in-women-homebuyers-in-2024-experts-decode-11701744685630.html.

Qian, Yue, and Zhenchao Qian. "Work, Family, and Gendered Happiness among Married People in Urban China." *Social Indicators Research* 121, no. 1 (2015): 61–74. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-014-0623-9.

Radhakrishnan, Smitha. *Appropriately Indian: Gender and Culture in a New Transnational Class*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.

Raju, Saraswati, ed. *Gendered Geographies: Space and Place in South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Robinson, Jennifer. "Cities in a World of Cities: The Comparative Gesture." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 1 (January 2011): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00982.x.

Ronald, Richard, Oana Druta, and Maren Godzik. "Japan's Urban Singles: Negotiating Alternatives to Family Households and Standard Housing Pathways." *Urban Geography* 39, no. 7 (2018): 1018–1040. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2018.1433924.

Roy, Ananya, and Aihwa Ong, ed. *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011.

Salve, Prachi. "71 Million Single Women, 39 % Rise Over A Decade." *The Wire*, November 14, 2015. Accessed September 5, 2020. https://thewire.in/gender/71-million-single-women-39-rise-over-a-decade.

Schiller, Nina Glick, and Ayşe Cağlar, ed. *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Sengupta, Soma, Urna Sarkar Dutta, and Anjan Sen. "Re-Inventing Household Shopping Patterns and Buying Roles: Exploring the 'New Women' in Urban India." *Akademos* (2018): 263–284.

Sennett, Richard. *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Singh, Kirti. *Separated and Divorced Women in India: Economic Rights and Entitlements*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2013.

Singh, Sunny. *Single in the City: The Independent Woman's Handbook*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000.

Situmorang, Augustina. "Staying Single in a Married World: Never-Married Women in Yogyakarta and Medan." *Asian Population Studies* 3, no. 3 (2007): 287–304. https://doi.org/10.1080/17441730701746433.

Song, Geng. "'Little Fresh Meat': The Politics of Sissiness and Sissyphobia in Contemporary China." *Men and Masculinities* 25, no. 1 (2022): 68–86. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X211014939.

Song, Jesook. "'A Room of One's Own': The Meaning of Spatial Autonomy for Unmarried Women in Neoliberal South Korea." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 17, no. 2 (2010): 131–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/09663691003600264.

Srinivasan, K., and K.S. James. "The Golden Cage: Stability of the Institution of Marriage in India." *Economic & Political Weekly* 50, no. 13 (2015): 38–45. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24481745.

Srivastava, Sanjay. "Masculinity and Its Role in Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces." In *The Fear That Stalks: Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces*, edited by Sara Pilot and Lora Prabhu, 13–50. New Delhi: Zubaan Books, 2012.

Srivastava, Sanjay. "National Identity, Bedrooms, and Kitchens: Gated Communities and New Narratives of Space in India." In *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing through Ethnography*, edited by Rachel Heiman, Carla Freeman, and Mark Liechty, 57–84. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012.

Standing, Guy. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011.

Stein, P.J. "Understanding Single Adulthood." In *Single Life: Unmarried Adults in Social Context*, edited by P.J. Stein, 9–20. New York: St Martin's Press, 1981.

Strijbosch, Karlien. "Single and the City: State Influences on Intimate Relationships of Young, Single, Well-Educated Women in Singapore." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 77, no. 5 (2015): 1108–1125. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12221.

Sun, Wanning. "'My Parents Say Hurry up and Find a Girl': China's Millions of Lonely 'Leftover Men.'" *The Guardian*, September, 28, 2017. Accessed October 2, 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/sep/28/my-parents-say-hurry-up-and-find-a-girl-chinas-millions-of-lonely-leftover-men?CMP=share_btn_url.

Talukdar, Jaita, and Annulla Linders. "Gender, Class Aspirations, and Emerging Fields of Body Work in Urban India." *Qualitative Sociology* 36, no. 1 (2013): 101–123. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11133-012-9240-6.

Tarlo, Emma. *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India.* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996.

Thapan, Meenakshi. "Embodiment and Identity in Contemporary Society: Femina and the 'New' Indian Woman." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 38, no. 3 (2004): 411–444. https://doi.org/10.1177/006996670403800305.

Titzmann, Fritzi-Marie. "The Imagery of Indian Matchmaking: Representations of Community, Class and Gender in a Transnational Online Matrimonial Market." In *India and Its Visual Cultures: Community, Class and Gender in a Symbolic Landscape*, edited by Uwe Skoda and Birgit Lettmann, 225–252. New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2018.

Trimberger, E. Kay. "Single Women in India: Rarer, Riskier, and Happier Than in the U.S. (2008)." *Unmarried Equality*. Accessed August 15, 2022. https://www.unmarried.org/single-women-in-india/.

Tsang, Eileen Yuk-ha. "Neither 'Bad' nor 'Dirty': High-End Sex Work and Intimate Relationships in Urban China." *The China Quarterly*, no. 230 (2017): 444–463. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741017000649.

Vardhan, Ranjay. *Single Women: A Study of Spinsters*. Delhi: Indian Publishers' Distributors, 2008.

Van der Veer, Peter. *The Value of Comparison*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

Viswanath, Kalpana, and Renagh O'Leary. *Building Safe and Inclusive Cities for Women: a Practical Guide*. New Delhi: Jagori, 2011.

Waldrop, Anne. "Grandmother, Mother and Daughter: Changing Agency of Indian, Middle-Class Women, 1908–2008." *Modern Asian Studies* 46, no. 3 (2012): 601–638. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X11000448.

Wallis, Cara. "Technology and/as Governmentality: The Production of Young Rural Women as Low-Tech Laboring Subjects in China." *Communication and Critical / Cultural Studies* 10, no. 4 (2013): 341–358. https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2013.840386.

Wang, Shuaishuai. "Living with Censorship: The Political Economy and Cultural Politics of Chinese Gay Dating Apps." PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2019.

Wu, Yichao and Qi Di. "A Gender-Based Analysis of Multidimensional Poverty in China." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 23, no. 1 (2017): 66–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2017.1279886.

Yeung, Wei-Jun Jean, and Adam Ka-Lok Cheung. "Living Alone: One-Person Households in Asia." *Demographic Research*, no. 32 (June 2015): 1099–1112. http://dx.doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2015.32.40.

Youxizixun Bot. "Zhizao Xingbie Duili? Guochanyouxi 'Tuixiu Moniqi' Zao Chaping Paohong" 制造性别对立?国产游戏《退休模拟器》遭差评炮轰 [Creating Gender Hostility? China-Made Game "Retirement Simulator" Receives Strong Critique]. *Xiaoheihe*, 2022. Accessed June 22, 2024. https://api.xiaoheihe.cn/maxnews/app/share/detail/2564917.

Zurndorfer, Harriet. "Men, Women, Money, and Morality: The Development of China's Sexual Economy." *Feminist Economics* 22, no. 2 (2016): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2015.1026834.