

ABSTRACT

China has experienced a series of institutional transformations particularly in the years after 1978 in which the economic reform pulled the curtain of societal transition from a more community, collectivism-oriented society to a more urban, individualism-oriented society. This intergenerational study explores the shifts in parental belief and attitudes about independence and autonomy faced with these societal changes in China. In-depth interviews were conducted with three generation of women, including 11 grandmothers, 15 mothers and 15 grown-up granddaughters, from urban China. Our findings revealed that independence is of much importance in the mind of all three generations while their attitudes about autonomy are more ambivalent. Among those value independence and autonomy, their reasons are also different across generations. The youngest generation cared about children's psychological well-being. Mothers encouraged the development of independence and autonomy more out of utilitarian reasons.. Grandmother demonstrated stronger tendency of relatedness by emphasizing the intergenerational independence and unfamiliarity with the concept of agency.