

## Mixed families in China: international migration, partner, and children\*

### Familias mixtas en China: migración internacional, parejas e hijos

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**Abstract: Objective.** This study is part of an exploratory and descriptive research on mixed families in China, in which one of the spouses is a Chinese citizen and the other one is a native of a Latin American country. **Methodology.** The methodology chosen is a qualitative approach; the data compilation was made through interviews conducted in 2021 at different cities around China. **Results.** Among the main results of the fieldwork, we may highlight the different migrant profiles based on the participants' city of origin, residence, and journey, two types of Latino-Chinese intermarriages, and the fact that the couples who participated in the research expect to stay in China. In terms of family arrangements, we focus on parenting decisions and the nationality that the parents elect for their children. **Conclusions.** These families develop marital and family systems in which the characteristics inherent in their culture of origin and the specific circumstances of present life in China are in negotiation and tension.

**Keywords:** family, China, intermarriages, children, international migration.

**Resumen: Objetivo.** Este estudio parte de una investigación exploratoria y descriptiva sobre familias mixtas en China donde uno de los conyugues es local y el otro proviene de un país latinoamericano. **Metodología.** La metodología responde a un abordaje cualitativo y la recolección de datos se realizó con entrevistas en diferentes ciudades chinas durante 2021. **Resultados.** Entre los principales resultados que surgen del campo podemos destacar diferentes perfiles de migrantes según las ciudades de origen, residencia y trayectoria, dos tipos de matrimonios mixtos latino-chinos y que la proyección de las parejas que fueron parte de la investigación es la de quedarse a vivir en China. Al mismo tiempo, entre los arreglos familiares nos detenemos en los hijos y puntualmente sobre las decisiones de la crianza y la nacionalidad que eligen para ellos. **Conclusiones.** Estas familias desarrollan sistemas matrimoniales y familiares en las que negocian y tensionan las características propias de sus culturas y de la especificidad de vivir en China en la actualidad.

**Palabras clave:** familia, China, matrimonios mixtos, hijos, migración internacional.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper studies mixed families formed by Latin American and Chinese individuals, who have children and currently live in China; it has a focus on family arrangements, the decisions on migration, the tensions, and the cultural challenges faced by these couples with children. Intermarriages are an increasingly diverse and varied phenomenon that shows the importance of observing the regional heterogeneity of couples in China. Social, economic, and political issues converge in this phenomenon in the state-of-affairs in China, i.e., a context where the migratory status is changing and unstable for the foreign citizens who currently live and work in this country.

The Chinese market reform introduced since the 1980s has also affected the family, given that government policies have lowered the collective responsibility of individuals. Although marriage and family remain stable, research shows an increase in divorce and new marriage rates, and a higher tolerance for premarital sex and homosexuality (Ji & Yeung, 2014).

Some of the characteristics of the marriage market are the higher ratio of men to women because of the single-child policy<sup>1</sup>; and the women that are known as “leftovers” because of their social status tied to higher education levels.

China has become an international migration destination due to the work opportunities, the political stability, and the prosperity of the country. This has led to the creation of foreigner communities in cities such as Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing. In terms of its economic development, Chinese diversity may be divided into the status of the Eastern area of the country—which is highly urbanized, with higher education levels, and a more developed economy than central provinces—and the status of the West, where individuals are more conservative of traditions. The economic internationalization plays a key role, with the authorization of trade to direct foreign markets, the implementation of special trade zones at different cities and ports, and international loans. Lastly, within the international migration landscape, there is a trend in which individuals from Chinese communities abroad have returned and settled in the main cities of the country, regardless of the government’s efforts to integrate these populations into the modernization of China (Pieke, 2012; Barabantseva, 2011; Leonard & Lehmann, 2019).

From the everyday-life family perspective, we explore the migration journey, how couples met, their social networks and the decisions regarding their children, their place of residence (which has a direct effect on their access to certain social services), the family members’ separation and reunification processes due to work or education.

Our fieldwork was motivated by the gap noted in literature, while still a minority phenomenon, it has become more visible in the last ten years, and Latin American communities are less studied than other communities—e.g., African or Middle East communities—because of their residence backgrounds and the number of migrants.

This paper first discusses the family backgrounds and the history of their migration to China, and then reflects on methodological decisions and results, with focus on two types of intermarriages and on the family arrangements and the decisions on their children’s upbringing.

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## AUTHOR NOTES

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## Family in China

In the last 30 years, the socio-economic development of China has caused employment-related migration, and the change in structure and size of the marriage market, which has increased chances of intermarriages (Lui, 2016; Hu, 2017). Both getting married and having children are still important in China, even with the family size reduction. It is necessary to be married to have children and register them as legitimate. Since 2004, in parks of Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Xiamen, during the weekends, it is possible to find the so-called “blind-date corners” in which marriage agencies, parents, and friends post messages with the profiles of single individuals who want to find a partner.<sup>2</sup> This highlights the role that parents still play as middlepersons in the search of a partner for their children (Botton Beja, 2017).

Although the transformation of the Chinese marriage system has focused on placing the responsibility for the election of spouses on the individual instead of on their parents (by promoting the values of affection and companionship), the influence of parents’ approval continues to be important in the election of partners, and on the quality of the married life—which prioritizes male children in Chinese families (Pimentel, 2004).

The quality of married life depends on the approval of the members of both families, especially bearing in mind that the duties of care of elderly parents and of newborns foster parental relations—with parents sometimes living on the same household. Carin and sharing care duties may be considered some sort of social capital that is unequally distributed among families, subject to cultural notions of gender and other roles (Baldassar et al., 2014). At the same time, this influences the transit and migration journey of intermarriages when one of the spouses is Chinese. Based on the hukou system categorization (Wang & Schwartz, 2018)—which is the household registry that issues IDs and confers legal status since birth—the access of each individual to social security resources is established based on the place of origin. The hukou is hereditary and is conveyed from parents to children irrespective of their place of residence.

The second generation of young migrants from rural to city areas is still denied the urban-residence status, it does not have access to higher-education opportunities afforded by the government either. While the access to basic public and free education for migrant students has increased, they are not entitled to sit for the admission examination for higher secondary education. Only certain courses of study are available for migrant students—many of them in the manufacturing and service sectors, such as mechanics, cooking, hairdressing, logistics, health care, and car repairing—which seek to produce a new generation of blue-collar workers (Ling, 2015). Regarding marriage preferences and opportunities, the survey data show that the owners of an urban hukou have significantly less probabilities of supporting marriages with a foreign spouse than those having a rural hukou (Yang, 2017).

In the present “Chinese-style socialism”, the family model retains traditional characteristics, with marriage as an institution, and strong family ties. Besides, family behaviors are balanced against the present expectations on gender roles and the redefinition of the economics of family since the 1980s. With the collapse of the Danwei (单位) system—which was the work unit during the Maoist era, whose influence regulated different life spheres and the change in the social arrangement of the Chinese family system—individuals were left devoid of government protection, with services and benefits that were gradually privatized. It is necessary to note here that, with the urbanization of large cities, the number of single-membered households doubled between 2000 and 2010, that is why the family has the social responsibility for financial aid and care of the present generation of Chinese young men and women (Ji, 2020).

## Intermarriages

The success of couples in traditional China was based on the principle of “a door matches another door”, i.e., that the two families should have a similar socio-economic standing (Zang & Zhao, 2017). Before 1949,

the vast majority of Chinese individuals married without having met their partners until the day of the wedding, and the groom's family had to pay a dowry to the bride's family. After the People's Republic, the minimum marital age was raised from 20 to 22 years old for men, and from 18 to 22 years for women. With the incorporation of women to productive work, the foundations of the family structure based on the couple changed to promote late pregnancies, while keeping the duties of care of parents and grandparents on their respective children<sup>3</sup> (Botton Beja, 2017).

By 1980, the second Marriage Act and the 2011 Revised Marriage Act were associated with an understanding of marriage that contributes to the privatization of intimacy, with possibilities of sexual experimentation, especially among the younger generations, further to the increasing socio-cultural relevance of romantic love, and of partner and companionship relations (Wang & Nehring 2014).

"Intermarriage" is defined as intimate shared-living relations in which the members of the couple belong to different national origins, religious affiliations and/or ethnicities and races (Osanami Törngren et al., 2016). We especially highlight the cultural and social aspects —such as consensus on the children's religion and education— because they play a key role and shape the relation between the spouses, with their families, and with their social networks (Zhou, 2017). Intermarriages are a rising phenomenon in Asia, mainly in countries such as Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, where local men marry Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Chinese women. In Singapore, for instance, 40% of all marriages per year involve a foreigner (Yeung and Mu, 2019).

According to the 2008 General Social Survey of China and the 2009 China Statistics Yearbook, Hu (2017) maintains that transnational distinction, socio-economic development at different countries, and cultural consumption specific of each region positively predicts their exclusive support to intermarriages with individuals of those regions. In this case, intermarriages are an indicator of the social distance among ethnic-racial groups and among the different countries.

Singapore has an extremely high proportion of transnational marriages when compared to China; its hukou system hugely restrains the family formation behaviors of domestic migrants. Statistics on Chinese-foreigner intermarriages recorded in continental China in 1979 report 8,500 couples per year, 79,000 in 2001, and 49,000 in 2010 —with marriage information only available for citizens of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao, and no information on marriages with individuals of other nationalities. The spouses coming from continental China are mainly women, and most Chinese-foreigner intermarriages were recorded at the main cities in the provinces of Guangdong (approximately 370,000 total marriages), Fujian (approximately 227,000 marriages), and Zhejiang (approximately 57,000 marriages), and in the city of Shanghai (almost 63,000 marriages) (Jeffreys & Pan, 2013).

Given the diversity of the Chinese population, it is necessary to establish a difference between intermarriages that are "internal" among people from rural or urban areas (which are product of worker migration within a same province (Chen, 2019), interethnic marriages, among individuals of the 55 recognized ethnic minorities, and transnational marriages, with foreign citizens. In this country, people from the West and the East converge and form couples that develop marital and family systems with the characteristics of their own cultures and the particularities of present life in China. Since the 1990s we may note a new pattern of transborder migration and intimacy with Western expatriates who work in Shanghai and who are integrated into the networks and resources of the Chinese spouse (Farrer, 2008). Furthermore, the age gap between the spouses and the high levels of education were also noteworthy, so much that foreign marriages belonged to the highest cultural class (Ding et al, 2004), which gave rise to gender discourses and binary constructs regarding the foreign spouses of Chinese citizens in mass media (Zang & Zhao, 2017).

Studies on intermarriages articulate different dimensions and perspectives, such as the marriage market, socio-economic integration, and migration. Theoretical debates on the migration experience include family and gender-based practices that are transnational due to the expanding and diversified mobility of individuals (Brettell, 2017; Osanami Törngren et al, 2016). Some of the cases presented in the available literature describe African undocumented migrants that marry Chinese women, and their difficulties to register their

marriage in China —with their children technically undocumented and without rights to the benefits afforded to Chinese citizens. Marrying a Chinese citizen does not provide access to permanent residence but it is a requirement to register the birth of their children (Lan, 2017).

Other papers have studied the assimilation to the receiving society in the relationship between marriage and migration in search of a better life quality, which includes finding a partner, starting a family, and permanently settling in the destination society (Wei-Jun & Zheng, 2020). From a demographic and gender-based standpoint, the attitudes towards Asian-foreigner intermarriages showed that Asian women born abroad had higher probabilities of marrying a man of a different race (Yang & Bohm-Jordan, 2018). On intermarriages of Asian women in the United States, based on the data of the National Latino and Asian-American Study (NLAAS), Chen y Takeuchi (2011) found that intermarriages are associated with educational and occupational endogamy, and that it is more important than social mobility.

Additionally, couples made up of middle-class Chinese professionals married to Western partners in Beijing register a lower divorce rate than Chinese marriages. Based on 28 life-experience interviews, the study shows how parenting may be an issue that triggers inter-generational conflicts, and that Chinese spouses may mediate between their Western spouses and their parents, with an ambivalent role (Nehring & Wang, 2016).

In the province of Zhejiang, the marriages between Chinese women and Arabian merchants impact on trading networks, but the settlement of the family is uncertain due to the structural limitations that arise from permanent migration, such as the statutory requirements for visa and for the access to education of the children of these couples, among others. Furthermore, they play a significant role in the anchoring of trading networks for merchants, and grant them certain advantages, such as the linguistic aid of their wives, access to resources, and to their social networks. Lastly, among the challenges they face, we may note conflicting approaches to parenting and to gender roles in childcare duties (Sha, 2020). Finding a partner emerges as an emotional anchorage for migrant men because it enables them to form a family abroad (Marsden & Ibañez-Tirado, 2015).

The Chinese city of Guangzhou —which is one of the most developed cities— attracts foreigners and leads to intermarriages among Chinese women and African men, with practices that clash against Chinese traditions and against the stereotypes around African men that prevail in China. The support of religious groups and social networks in African communities, groups, associations, and trading partnerships grant these migrants a sense of social belonging in their places of residence (Zhou, 2017). However, the available literature highlights racial hate and local intolerance to Africans expressed by legal and economic precarization that influence their personal, family, and community lives (Jordan et al., 2020).

## METHODS

At the methodological level, the research design is initially qualitative, with a combination of different methodological strategies, including interviews, observations of participants at family, and social events, and the participation at 6 WeChat<sup>4</sup> groups of foreigners on the Internet.

Our study population includes Latin American migrants married to a Chinese citizen with children. The study population was created with snowball sampling. Twenty-six interviews were conducted in Shanghai, Yiwu (Zhejiang province), and in Fuzhou and Xiamen (Fujian province) between February and November 2021. A total of 26 in-person interviews was conducted with 32 individuals (9 women and 18 men), from Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela, and China. Five interviews were conducted online (in-person interviews were not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic), and 4 privileged testimonies were taken in Spain, Italy, and the United States (Table 1).



TABLE 1  
Interviewed's profile

Name	Gender	Age	National Origin	Children	Profession/ Occupation	Years living in China
María Clara	female	42	Colombian	no children	homemaker	5
Fabiano	male	33	Brazilian	1 daughter	trader	8
Pablo	male	34	Argentinean	2 children	trader	13
Julio	male	30	Colombian	2 children	trader	9
Esteban	male	35	Colombian	1 son	trader	12
Pedro	male	35	Venezuelan	1 son	trader	11
Ricardo	male	40	Colombian	2 children	trader	10
Analía	female	31	Colombian	2 children	professional	5
Mauro	male	37	Argentinean	no children	professional	3
Alejandra	female	47	Argentinean	2 children	self-employed	23
Martín	male	41	Argentinean	2 children	employee	10
Luis	male	35	Peruvian	2 children	employee	5
Mariana	female	46	Argentinean	3 children	employee	14
José	male	41	Argentinean	1 son	trader	14
Eleonora	female	40	Chinese	1 son	employee	2
Belén	female	30	Argentinean	1 son	homemaker	2
Romina	female	37	Argentinean	1 son	employee	4
Carlos	male	52	Colombian	2 children	employee	21
Julieta	female	31	Argentinean	2 children	homemaker	6
Eugenia	female	26	Argentinean	1 son	self-employed	7
Ramiro	male	41	Argentinean	1 son	self-employed	10
Lautaro	male	34	Colombian	2 children	employee	9
Andrés	male	40	Argentinean	1 son	employee	5
Luis	male	35	Spaniard	2 children	employee	6
Santiago	male	67	Spaniard	2 children	self-employed	22
Marco	male	54	Italian	1 son	employee	10
Matías	male	42	American	2 children	employee	9

Source: Own elaboration

The method initially proposed for interviews was to have both spouses together at the same time due to the interest in observing the interaction between them for decision making. However, most of the interviews were individual because of language barriers, e.g., when spouses do not speak Spanish or English, and due to logistics and availability issues, the meeting with the Latin American spouse was generally more accessible. Interviews were conducted in Spanish, Portuguese, and English, in bars, restaurants, and at the participants' homes, and each meeting took approximately one hour.

The fieldwork was located at multiple sites as participants got in contact with other couples based on different Chinese cities. I attended "popular" venues, such as bars and restaurants, that are meeting points in the cities, in order to examine who went to such venues. However, interviews were suggested by the key informants and their respective networks.

Also, because I am a foreign researcher, some factors facilitate the creation of networks and the access to the communities and, at the same time, demand a reconstruction of the Chinese context in order to respect its complexity and avoid widespread reductionisms.

The indirect observation instrument (Arias-Pujol and Anguera 2020) set the study parameters according to the existing literature. Migration, couple, marriage, nationality of children, work, religious beliefs, network, and free time were selected to understand the daily life of study participants in the Chinese context. Based on a transcription of the interviews, textual units were coded (Krippendorff, 2018; Laitila et al., 2019) using the ATLAS.ti software, and they were subsequently exported manually for their management and analysis.

## RESULTS

The fieldwork shows the existence of two types of intermarriages: Latino- Chinese couples who met in China (male partner is Argentinean and female partner is Chinese), with Argentinean or Chinese children; and couples who met abroad (male partner is Chinese and female partner is Argentinean or Colombian), with Argentinian and Chinese children, all of them living in China.

There is also a different migrant profile in cities, with a higher educational level in cities such as Shanghai when compared to Yiwu, Fuzhou, and Xiamen with fewer university graduates. Fourteen out of 23 participants were Latin American males. Eight out of 27 participants met abroad, while 19 met in China.

Shanghai is an emerging cosmopolitan center in Asia and has experienced both rural migration and city growth with the attachment of rural areas at the margins of the city, which were absorbed by the urban landscape. Yiwu is a city located in the central Zhejiang that two decades ago became an extraordinarily developed and structured area (Ganne & Lu, 2011). This city is deemed the largest commodity sale market worldwide, with concentration of products manufactured in different areas of China that are distributed around the world. Since 1998, there has been a flow of migrants mainly from Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore, followed by waves from Yemen, Palestine, and Egypt. Four thousand of the migrants living in the city are from Northern Africa and Middle East and are engaged in trade. The city also attracts migrant workers from other Chinese provinces, with a greater affluence since 2000 (Pieke, 2012).

Five out of the 6 male participants living in Yiwu work as traders with their wives and have a work visa. Among the male participants interviewed in Shanghai and Xiamen, 8 had completed tertiary or university studies, and work as employees or self-employed. Out of the 8 female participants married to Chinese men, 6 live in Shanghai, 2 live in Fuzhou, 2 completed university studies, and only 1 of them worked in the field of her profession in China, while another female participant was completing her university studies. Only 1 of the female participants has a work visa; the rest have family visas.

Participants arrived in China for work, study or family reasons between 1998 and 2019. Three of the participants migrated more than 20 years ago, 9 migrated more than 10 years ago, 11 migrated 5 or more

years ago, and 4 migrated less than 5 years ago. Sixteen participants have work visa, 10 have family visas that need to be renewed annually, and 1 is Chinese<sup>5</sup>.

Among the reasons promoting the return of Chinese citizens to their country, they mentioned the prevailing economic situation and the age of the parents, tied to their duty of care. Those who had migrated to Argentina in the 1990s from the Province of Fujian —mainly its capital city, Fuzhou— returned to China (Denardi, 2020).

With respect to the issues arising in mixed families regarding parenting, the first aspect concerns the reasons to elect the nationality of the children. Thirteen of the children of the participants had Chinese nationality.

Pedro (35 years, Venezuelan): “The quality of life in China is extraordinary regarding personal growth. Furthermore, you can feel safe, knowing that your children are out, and you don’t have any reasons to worry... That is unheard of in Latin America [...]. I prefer my daughter to be Chinese because I believe that the family environment here in China is better than in my country of origin, Venezuela”.

Esteban (34 years, Colombian): “I see that, over time, when my kids are 12, 15 years, or when they come of age... All parents wish that their children have stability, better opportunities, better roots... My roots are still tied to Colombia but theirs will be in China, with their families, acquaintances, and friends they will make at school. Eventually, if we can afford studying abroad, we will do that. To me, they will be Chinese, with Chinese passport, and Chinese nationality.”

Among the factors that determine the election of nationality of the children, participants mention the present circumstances in their countries of origin (financial and social crisis in Latin America), the expectation to live in China in the long run, and the migrant status (not having the duty to renew visas for their children).

Pablo (34 years, Argentinian): “My daughter is Chinese because she was born in China. It is easier, with the American visa she may travel to other countries.”

Fabiano (33 years, Brazilian): “The reason why she is Chinese is because we do not intend to leave the country until my parents-in-law pass away, in 10 or 15 years. If we had registered her as foreigner, she would need a visa that would have to be renewed every two years, [and she would have to] attend private school... She may opt for the Brazilian nationality when she turns 18 at the Brazilian Embassy.”

This latter couple changed their hukou —for which it was necessary to meet a series of requirements— from the native city of the wife to Yiwu, so that their daughter could attend school in this city. As mentioned above, the hukou system that requires the registration of birth according to the country government, is also a conditioning factor because it affords the children access to the educational and health care systems based on the city and province to which the family belongs. This is true both for intermarriages and for migrants within China.

The second noteworthy issue are family arrangements that include the possibility of living apart from the children, who are raised by their grandparents —which is part of the family arrangements in China—. The participants mention the characteristics of parenting based on cultural categories that are in tension, e.g., the role of paternal grandparents in the duties of care (with whom they often share housing), the dedication to work by the Chinese partner, and the time shared with their children. In these regards, I transcribe excerpts of the interviews with Argentinean and Colombian female participants married to Chinese men.

Mariana (46 years, Argentinean): “In Chinese families, the woman works side-by-side with the man and leaves the kids to go to work [...] When they have kids, Chinese women do not come back to China; they send their kids away with their mothers-in-law. I would never do that with my kids. My husband proposed it to me. There was no deal: I would go with my children, they would never go alone.”

Belén (30 years, Argentinian): “My husband is Chinese; however, because he lived many years in Argentina, he is also used to spending time with his daughter and does not leave her with the grandparents



while we work. He has the idea that she is our daughter, and she belongs with us. I think: 'I wouldn't had given birth to the girl to be apart from her all the time.' I have never been away from her."

Analía (31 years, Colombian): "[...] the idea of family is different here. He comes home and I must insist that he should play with our son. He has changed a little bit, but he doesn't like me insisting on this [...] in his mindset, he'd rather that I was willing, or maybe not that much now... to give my son away and would have continued working full-time. Or maybe that someone else took care of the boy, so that I worked."

Regarding family relations, the influence of the extended family is mentioned as a factor in the decisions of mixed families, as well as the notions of motherhood with respect to parenting, the ways of showing love between parents and children, and spending quality time with the children.

## DISCUSSION

At the methodological level, the fieldwork was built at different locations based on the characteristics of the different Chinese cities, also because of a migration that grew and diversified at several urban centers. The ethnic and cultural background of the researcher allowed her to access to migrant participants.

The cases under analysis are in line with the available literature on intermarriages at Guangzhou, Yiwu, Beijing, and Shanghai, with a majority of Chinese women married to foreign men. However, our study identified cases of Argentinian and Colombian women married to Chinese men, most of whom had met their husbands abroad and had migrated to the city of birth of their husbands.

In the case of mixed families, the present place of abode and residence is China, and they have no expectations of moving to other countries —although they do not rule out the possibility of moving to another country, more specifically, not the Latin American country where the spouse was born but countries such as Spain or the United States.

With some exceptions, in most of the study cases, the children have the nationality of their mothers, and the election of nationality was negotiated within the families with consideration of the migratory, educational, and health status of the children.

Cultural background appears as an adaptation and tension factor at different times throughout the family history, such as the election of partner, the duties of care, and the possibility to move to another continent.

Among the study limitations, we note the scarcity of data on the countries and regions of origin of intermarriages, particularly those areas less socio-economically favored, which leads to the difficulty to link cases to the macro-social aspects of this phenomenon at the region and country levels. In other words, the challenge is to understand the different dimensions of intermarriages based on the data compiled, how they were shaped and how they articulate with the macroeconomics of the province of Zhejiang, Fujian, and the city of Shanghai, and with the migration and social policies of both cities.

Most of the children of participants are too small to explore into their socialization spaces for this first generation of children, but this is an interesting line of research to continue exploring the issues around this reality, and further research into generational and gender issues, the divorce rate among intermarriages, the education of the offspring of these marriages (including university studies), as well as their religious beliefs.

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## NOTES

\*This paper is the outcome of a post-doctoral research entitled “Family, Memory, and Generations in China”, developed at Shanghai University between 2019 and 2021.

1 Since 1979, the enforcement of the single-child policy varied across the different provinces. In rural areas, couples were allowed to have a second child if the first-born was a female, as were individuals belonging to minority ethnic groups. In January 2016, the government announced that all couples were authorized to have two children, and as of 2021, up to three.

2 Fieldwork, Shanghai, November 2021.

3 2001 Marriage Act.

4 Internet messaging system.

5 “Family” visas do not allow the beneficiary to work in China.

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