



# The Family in Contemporary China: Lessons from the Past

## About the Webinar

I will present a selection of findings from quantitative historical research on the Chinese family that provide context for studying contemporary trends and patterns. Over the last three decades, analysis of large, individual-level longitudinal databases constructed from population registers like the China Multigenerational Panel Datasets (CMGPD), genealogies, and other sources have transformed the study of the family in historical China in the same way that longitudinal surveys are now transforming the study of the family in contemporary China. Quantitative studies in past times have confirmed, contradicted, or complicated previous understandings of the traditional Chinese family based on classic ethnographic studies from the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. They have been especially important for moving beyond the analysis of norms and modal behaviors to map variation by social and economic status, and household, kin, and community context. Findings from historical studies of the determinants of timing and prevalence of marriage and remarriage, assortative mating and reproduction are especially relevant for understanding contemporary trends and patterns. Despite this, there has been little integration of historical and contemporary research on the Chinese family beyond assessments of the implications of historical reproductive behaviors for understanding contemporary fertility trends by James Lee, Wang Feng, myself, and others. Thus, in addition to identifying specific findings relevant for interpreting contemporary patterns and trends, I will lay out ideas for reintegrating historical and contemporary family studies in China, emphasizing the prospects for use of publicly available historical data by contemporary researchers.

## About the Speaker



Cameron Campbell is a Chair Professor in the Division of Social Science at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. His research focuses on demography, stratification and inequality in historical China and in comparative perspective. With other members of the Lee-Campbell Group (LCG), he currently studies official, educational, and professional elites in China from the middle of the 18th century to the present. To this end, he and other members of the LCG pursue a variety of interrelated 'big data' studies of specific categories of Qing, Republican, and contemporary elites using datasets they have constructed from archival sources. Professor Campbell continues to conduct research on kinship, inequality, and demographic behavior in historical China and in comparative perspective using large

multi-generational population databases that he and his collaborators have publicly released, most notably the China Multigenerational Panel Datasets (CMGPD). He has published on a variety of topics including economic, family and social influences on demographic outcomes such as birth, marriage, migration, and death, fertility limitation in historical China, and the role of kin networks in shaping social mobility. His papers have appeared in such journals as *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, *Demography*, *Population Studies*, and *Demographic Research*. A 2004 Guggenheim Fellow and 2017 Changjiang Scholar, he is spending 2022-23 as a Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University.



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Webinar  
Via Zoom

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