

Changing norms in the dynamic of contemporary Chinese urban families: A case study on childcare support

LI Wenwen, author

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Abstrak

This study explores how multigenerational family members negotiate intergenerational relationships and reconfigure family norms through childcare practices in contemporary Chinese middle-class families. The study draws upon semi-structured interviews with seven young wives, all of whom are only daughters, from various cities in China. The study found that intergenerational relationships were significantly tilted in favor of the wives side, and the power of the maternal family was intensified by providing childcare support. In the wives narratives, tension and conflict with in-laws were the main reason alienating them from each other. Moreover, traditional family norms have gradually transformed. The husbands parents were more likely to hold traditional values, such as a preference for multiple children or boys, but their influence has been considerably diluted. On the other hand, the maternal family has selectively rejected, accepted, or modified traditional norms through their achieved power, and exploits traditional norms to further their advantage.