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The Gendered Pursuit of Individualism: Fertility Intentions in Contemporary Urban China

Online talk by

Dr. Yun Zhou

Assistant Professor of Sociology and Chinese Studies
University of Michigan

10 a.m. Tuesday, April 6, 2021



Dr. Yun Zhou is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan. Her research examines social inequality and state-market-family relations through the lens of gender, marriage, and reproduction. With a focus on gender equity and authoritarian reproductive governance, Dr. Zhou's current project investigates the intended and unintended consequences of China's recent shift toward a universal two-child policy.

Abstract: Reproduction links the personal and the political. Through policies that promote or limit births, the state attempts to regulate individuals' reproductive behavior. At the same time, individuals make reproductive decisions guided by their own fertility intentions and the meaning they attach to children and parenthood. A puzzle remains: Why does active pro-natalist state policy fail to achieve fertility recovery? This talk centers on urban Chinese individuals' fertility decision-making under the 2016 universal two-child policy. By examining the meaning of children, Dr. Zhou highlights how a gendered pursuit of individualism underlies women's and men's fertility aspiration and behavior. In turn, Dr. Zhou sheds light on the question of why state policies promoting births may not resonate on the individual level.

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