

"She has two sons:" Reproducing State Discourses in Rural China

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This talk examines the influence of state family planning discourse and the legacy of Maoism on the moral economy of reproduction in rural China. Caught between competing moral frameworks of traditional son preference versus state policies that both limit total number of offspring and that rhetorically promote having daughters, I look at women's linguistic uptake and repurposing of family planning rhetoric to contest traditional concepts of family and to define themselves as certain sort of citizens. Through a logic that translates the quantity of offspring into moral and social "quality," this talk shows how the developmentalist calculus of the current government as well as the legacies of Maoist morality has created a moral framework where a woman with two sons is greedy, a woman with one daughter is modern, and a woman with multiple daughters and a son is traditional. Ultimately, I demonstrate how state discourses and their circulation in everyday life in rural China affords women with avenues of discourse and culturally recognizable moral categories with which to reimagine gender and family roles in rural China, yet this comes at a cost to the relationships between mothers and daughters.

Friday, November 5th, 2021
2 – 3:30 PM, via Zoom

Zoom info will be emailed to registered participants

Register: <https://bit.ly/2VshPi8>

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