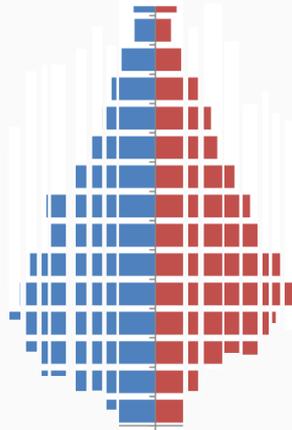




DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES,
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
DELHI

IN COLLABORATION WITH
INDRAPRASTHA INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY DELHI (IIITD) AND
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY HYDERABAD (IITH)



REPRODUCTION, DEMOGRAPHY, AND
CULTURAL ANXIETIES
IN INDIA AND CHINA IN THE 21ST
CENTURY

20-21 FEBRUARY 2020
IRD CONFERENCE ROOM,
IIT DELHI
HAUZ KHAS



As the most populous countries in the world, India and China have come to mark our collective conscience in significant ways. Recent research suggests that reproduction continues to be a national obsession in both countries. The stance has, however, shifted considerably from fears of overpopulation and high fertility rates, to policies encouraging childbearing and addressing infertility through assisted reproduction. As a superpower, China is interested in facilitating birth amongst a chosen few; while India continues with its ambivalent posture on the domestic use of in-vitro fertilization and other reproductive technologies, prohibiting the transnational traffic of ‘unsuitable foreigners’ and ‘non-heteronormative families’ to avail of the same. Most importantly, by aggressively participating in regulating the use of these technologies, the Indian and Chinese states are also keenly redefining the intimate lives of their citizenry. This is seen most pointedly in the recent change in the shifts in the one-child policy of the Chinese state, and the newly drafted Indian Surrogacy Bill (soon to be an Act). In the late 20th century, both countries woke up to the need to manage the fallout of their population policies. These policies, combined with new sex determination technologies and widely prevalent culture of son-preference have exacerbated gender inequality in the form of skewed sex ratios. The resulting bride shortages have led to a marriage crisis and stoked local as well as global social anxieties. In China, there are fears of environmental and industrial pollution leading to a diminution in sperm quality; in India, ethnically varying fertility transitions are deployed to further religious and political agendas; globally there is the specter of ‘surplus’ men and ‘scarce’ women in rising Asia. Additionally, with crucial generational shifts posing a threat to the earlier stability of marriage and child-centeredness, reproduction and reproductive processes are provoking yet newer moral and cultural anxieties. Resulting familial, kinship and policy shifts are paramount in the ways in which China and India are approaching reproductive technologies and demographic transformation. Here, cultural peculiarities are beginning to provide new forms of engagement with the decades-long state, research, and policy obsessions with population. There is little doubt that we need newer and more nuanced research paradigms than the ones informed by earlier understandings of population rhetoric. We need to understand the emerging familial configurations of third-party donor families facilitated through IVF, commercial surrogacy and bride-shortage related marriage migration and inter-generational care deficit among the many other social phenomena that are resulting from newer demographic trends. Managing the quality, quantity and variety of population remains a key imperative of modern societies, with the state engaging with individual reproductive desires and new technologies through laws and policies. India and China are at the centre of such new desires and changes. Thus, this conference aims to bring together academics from the fields of anthropology, sociology and demography researching on the linkages between reproduction and cultural processes in India and China, that focus on shared issues and problems—and particular manifestations. The papers that form part of this collection reflect the emerging demographic and reproductive anxieties in India and China in the 21st century. The contemporary concerns that the papers deal with include the impact of sex selective abortions, age-related markers in demographic forecasting, and the ways in which reproductive technologies impact the culture of demography and reproduction in India and China.

SCHEDULE

20 FEBRUARY 2020

- 1000 WELCOME
Prof Purnima Singh (Head of the Department, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IITD)
- 1015-1100 INAUGURAL PANEL: *Demographic, Anthropological and Medical Perspectives*
Chair: Ravinder Kaur, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IITD
Panelists: Patricia Uberoi, Chairperson and Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), P.M. Kulkarni, Retired Professor, JNU, and Dr. Vinod Paul, Member, Niti Aayog
- 1130-1300 Panel 1 DECLINING DEMOGRAPHICS
Chair and Discussant: Rajni Palriwala, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics
- Ayo Wahlberg, University of Copenhagen
Restrained Natalism: From Family Planning to Family Making in 'Low Fertility' China
 - Gu Xiaorong, National University of Singapore
'You're not young anymore!': Chinese Professional Women Negotiating Parenthood, Cultural Norms and Selfhood
 - Sharmila Rudrappa, University of Texas Austin
Indian Software Workers and ARTs: How Labor Markets Shape Fertility Decision-Making
- 1300-1400 Lunch
- 1400-1600 Panel 2 NEW DEMOGRAPHICS
Chair and Discussant: Naveen Thayyil, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Delhi
- Bronwyn Parry, King's College London
CRISPR Assisted Reproduction in India and China: Selective Reproduction in the Age of Gene Editing
 - Christina Weis, De Montfort University, UK
New Fertility Chains between China, Russia and Kazakhstan: Exploring Reproductive Routes and Reproductive Hubs for Surrogacy in the Former Soviet Union
 - Khushboo Srivastava, TISS Mumbai
Renting the Womb: Empowering or Subjugating? Understanding Assisted Reproductive Technologies, Contract and Law in India
- 1630-1800 Panel 3 BIRTHING CULTURES
Chair and Discussant: Janaki Abraham, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics
- Asmita Verma, IIT Delhi
Women's Experience of Post-Natal Care: A Study from Uttarakhand, India
 - Sreya Majumdar, IITH
The Positive Birth: Emergence of Professional Midwifery in India
 - Pronoti Baglary, JNU
Stories we Hear; Stories we Tell: Exploring 'Fertility' and Embodiment in the City of Delhi

SCHEDULE

21 FEBRUARY 2020

0930-1130

Panel 4 REPRODUCTIVE STRATEGIES

Chair and Discussant: Farhana Ibrahim, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IITD

- Mary John, Centre for Women's Development Studies Delhi
The Daughter-only Family in the Era of Sex-Selection Challenges for a Cultural Economy of Gender

- Rajani Bhatia, University of Albany, SUNY

Figuring India and China in the Constitution of Lifestyle Sex Selection

- Anindita Majumdar, IITH

Exploring the Biological Clock: Assisted Reproduction and the Identification of the Declining Body in Contemporary India

- Swayamshree Mishra, IITD

Menstrual Anxieties, Late Marriage and Reproductive Ageing

1130-1330

Panel 5 DEBATING DAUGHTERS

Chair and Discussant: Patricia Jeffery, University of Edinburgh

- Christophe Guilmoto, IRD-CEPD, Paris

Is the Fertility Bias Against Daughters Reducing in India? A Look at Recent Evidence

- Ravinder Kaur, IIT Delhi and Taanya Kapoor, University of Oxford

Reversing Gender Inequality at Birth: Can Education and Girls' Agency be Crucial Factors?

- Charumita Vasudev, IITD

Changing Family Dynamics and Son Preference: A Comparative Study of Villages from Jammu

Lunch

1330-1430

1400-1600

Panel 6 MARRIAGE ANXIETIES IN INDIA AND CHINA

Chair and Discussant: Mahuya Bandyopadhyay, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IITD

- Shuzhuo Li, Institute for Population and Development Studies, China
Poverty, Marriage and Old-age Support: Risk and Governance of Family Development of Rural Involuntary Bachelors in Contemporary China

- Paro Mishra, IITD

North Indian Rural Husbands in Cross-Regional Marriages: Negotiating Emotions, Desire and Identity in the Context of Skewed Sex Ratio

- Clemence Julien, University of Zurich

Getting Married at all Costs: Matrimonial Strategies in Rural Punjab

1630-1800

POLICY ROUNDTABLE

Moderator – Ravinder Kaur (IITD)

Panelists: Shuzhuo Li (IPD), Poonam Muttreja (PFI), Ena Singh (UNFPA), Ravi Verma (ICRW India)

Next Steps and Vote of Thanks (Anindita Majumdar (IITH), Paro Mishra (IITD))

Abstracts

Ayo Wahlberg, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

Restrained Natalism: From Family Planning to Family Making in 'Low Fertility' China

In 2015, the Chinese Communist Party announced that it was relaxing its family planning policies to allow all couples the possibility of having a second child. And while it is early days, the first indications are that far from all married couples are keen to take up the possibility to enlarge their families. Indeed, 2 million less babies were born in 2018 compared to 2017. In this paper, I explore a remarkable about-face in China's reproductive politics in the face of what might be thought of as restrained natalism. If pronatalism amounts to encouragement by the State to have a large family, and anti-natalism its opposite, then 'restrained natalism' indexes structural constraints to and/or unease with the practice of having a (large) family. After 40 years of comprehensive efforts to prevent birth, state authorities in China are now seeking to promote birth, urgently. Family planning officials are grappling with the many unintended consequences of their infamous 'one-child policy': rising infertility rates (due to infections, iatrogenic effects of multiple abortions, reproductive deferral and exposure to pollution), skewed sex ratios and a resulting generation of single men or so-called 'bare branches' (*guang gun*), a growing demographic of so-called 'leftover women' (*sheng nu*) who are educated, in jobs and not marrying, and finally, now also below-replacement-level fertility rates. Through an analysis of expert statements, government policy documents and media stories in the past three years (2015-2018) I show how demographic anxieties are being reconfigured away from concerns about overpopulation and towards worries about below-replacement-level fertility resulting from 1) a 'marriage squeeze' exacerbated by 'bare branches' and 'leftover women', and 2) reproductive deferral and increasing infertility among married couples. Are we witnessing a reconfiguration of China's restrictive reproductive complex from family planning to family making? If so, what form might this new reproductive complex take in coming decades? Will fertility clinics replace abortion clinics as one of the most important family planning institutions? Will single women as well as gay and lesbian couples be given access to reproductive technologies? How will state agencies incentivize, or perhaps even enforce an augmentation of reproductive desires? How will 'singlehood' be addressed as a national and social problem in coming decades?

Gu Xiaorong, Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore

'You're Not Young Anymore!': Chinese Professional Women Negotiating Parenthood, Cultural Norms and Selfhood

Recent statistics indicate that China's anticipated baby boom after abolishing the draconian and controversial One-child Policy in 2016 has yet to come. In combination with a general trend of young adults' smooth and almost universal transition to first marriage among the post-reform cohort, the cohort in their prime reproductive ages, it suggests an intriguing pattern: while young adults in China today do not systematically delay nor flee away from marriage, voluntarily or under pressure, they seem to be more cautious in assuming parenthood and expanding their family composition. In other words, if marriage is considered as the inevitable path to adulthood, reproductive priorities and decisions seem to be more negotiable. There is much to unpack here: in a society which has witnessed tremendous and complex economic and social transformations, and which were under an aggressive anti-natalist policy regime for decades, what prompts young adult to enter into parenthood? What challenges do they face in this process? What are the attendant implications for China's future demographic trends? To answer these questions, the current study explores the experiences of Chinese professional women in their late 20s and early 30s in their negotiation of parenthood and selfhood. I focus on the study of professional women, because 1) the age-related cultural anxieties and social discourses of reproduction are directly targeted at women's "biological clocks"; and 2) women in the professional class are under greater pressure to negotiate their multiple and conflicting roles in life. The empirical data used in this analysis comprise interviews with 15 professional women, a TV reality show, and news items, reports and blogs, which attempt to present a holistic picture of the topic under study. This study contributes to a contextualized understanding of China's changing gender and family dynamics in a neoliberal society.

Abstracts

Sharmila Rudrappa, Department of Sociology, University of Texas at Austin

Indian Software Workers and ARTs: How Labor Markets Shape Fertility Decision-Making

Narratives on falling fertility rates and the burgeoning demand for assisted reproductive technologies are rife with tales of professional women who delay fertility at the altar of a career. Yet preliminary research in Bangalore, southern India suggests a far more complicated account of fertility decision-making among heterosexual married couples working in the information technology sector. Highly skilled/ waged men, just as much as women, show preferences for delaying fertility. A large part of these delays have to do with labor markets in high wage/ highly skilled work. Rather than women's desires to build careers, quick project turn-overs, contractual rather than permanent work, contingent employment, work cycles synched to workplace rhythms in the U.S., the U.K., or Singapore, and other expectations, couples—both men and women—prefer to delay pregnancy and childbirth. Such delays are accompanied by the lack of time for each other, that is, the lack of social intimacy among husbands and wives, leading to decreasing sexual intimacy, thus affecting fertility negatively. Preliminary research suggests that the usage of assisted reproductive technologies among high wage/ skilled workers in the IT sector has more to do with workplace expectations, rather than just medically indicated infertility alone.

Bronwyn Parry, School of Global Affairs, King's College London & Sayani Mitra, The Open University

UK

CRISPR Assisted Reproduction in India and China: Selective Reproduction in the Age of Gene Editing

The unlicensed use of CRISPR or gene editing technologies in assisted reproduction was brought to global attention in March, 2019 with the announcement that Chinese scientist He Jianku and his team had successfully modified the genomes of twin girls Lulu and Nana following application of the technique. Although the stated intent was to make the children immune to infection by HIV, further research by the MIT Review suggests that similar alterations in mice (delivered through deletion of the CCR5 gene) improved brain recovery after stroke, intelligence and learning capacity. The brains of the two genetically edited girls may, therefore, have been changed in ways that enhance cognitive ability and memory. Recent fieldwork in Shanghai has revealed huge interest in CRISPR technologies from Indian ART corporates, a need now serviced by growing sales of CRISPR full sequencing kits. The promotion of CRISPR in fertility provision in both the Indian and Chinese markets should come as little surprise, given both countries' historical embrace of sex selection, son preferencing and population control. However, the arrival of this new selective reproductive technology has become even more desirous as environmental and cultural threats compromise fertility and increase demands to produce 'perfect' children. In this paper we begin to chart the contours of this new market in CRISPR assisted reproduction in India and China, examining the terms and conditions of its expansion. Despite the international consternation that attended He Jianku's controversial gene editing activities, Chinese companies are now freely selling CRISPR technologies into the Indian market. The destinations of these kits, their clinical availability for human gene editing, likely consumers, and ethical and legal oversight remain, as yet, unknown, but are prospectively examined in this paper, which sets out the emergent ethical and legal landscape of CRISPR assisted human reproduction in the global south.

Abstracts

Christina Weis, School of Applied Social Sciences, De Montfort University

New Fertility Chains between China, Russia and Kazakhstan: Exploring Reproductive Routes and Reproductive Hubs for Surrogacy in the Former Soviet Union

Surrogacy is the arrangement whereby a woman, the 'surrogate mother', gestates a child for another person to raise. Surrogacy arrangements are prohibited in some countries, and permitted and regulated in others. In China, surrogacy regulations are vague and have resulted in underground markets. The relaxation of the one-child policy in 2014, and the growing economic power of the upper-middle class has shaped the surrogacy industry in Asia. While some Chinese intending parents still opt for surrogacy in the US for an 'anchor-baby' with US-American citizenship, Chinese intending parents increasingly are seeking (cheaper) surrogacy arrangements in closer proximity. Russia and Kazakhstan are two countries that offer such services on a commercial basis. In Russia, commercial, gestational surrogacy for the local clientele and increasingly for foreigners has been long established and proven to work well for foreigners. In Kazakhstan, surrogacy services are a more recent development – however, Kazakhstan's surrogacy market from its beginnings honed in on providing services to Chinese clientele, and Kazakhstan's benefit of geographic proximity and available linguistic infrastructure as the younger generation is preferring Chinese over English, is further enhanced with clinics' offer of an ethnic diverse gene pool of available gamete donors. Under this backdrop, this presentation scrutinizes the newly emerging reproductive travels of Chinese intending parents to Russia and Kazakhstan, the entrepreneurship of private fertility clinic, agencies and fertility brokers in Russia, Kazakhstan and third countries, who are catering for this new trend, or are exploring their opportunities to enter and partake in these reproductive flow for surrogacy arrangements, and resulting new reproductive stratifications and precarities. This presentation is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Russia (2014/2015) and current, ongoing research into reproductive entrepreneurship of private fertility clinics, agencies and brokers in the former Soviet Union to expand the local market to new transnational clientele.

Khushboo Srivastava, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Mumbai

Renting the Womb: Empowering or Subjugating? Understanding Assisted Reproductive Technologies, Contract and Law in India

Reproduction conventionally is seen as a duty that women are born with and is hence associated with the ethos of love and care. What is particular to reproduction and procreation in 'culturally driven' societies like India is its association with societally recognized contracts or 'marriages between heterosexual couples.' The coming in of 'new enclosures' in the form of biotechnology, have however blurred this once intrinsic relation between marriage, procreation and reproduction. One such assisted reproductive technology that has become a subject of intense deliberation and contestation is Surrogacy. From the abolitionist stand adopted by radical feminists to the liberal's call for regulation, surrogacy has posed stringent challenges for academia, law and the state. It has thus emerged as a significant field of research more so in context of neo-liberalism whereby the extent of state intervention is being debated by liberals and neo-liberals. Interestingly, both these perspectives are critiqued by feminists who argue that professions like sex work and surrogacy are beyond the scope of repair by law. This contention becomes evident through an analysis of surrogacy laws in India namely ICMR guidelines, Draft ART (Regulation) Bill 2008, 2010, 2013 and Surrogacy Regulation Bill 2016 all of which are complex and unsettled. The prerogative of this paper hence is to critically engage with these guidelines so as to understand the state's bid to regulate population and reproduction in the neo-liberal era. Additionally, this paper would seek to grapple with surrogacy in context of non-heteronormative couples or the LGBT community, who consider the state and its lawspatriarchal and homophobic. In pursuit of these ends, this paper would conclude by deliberating on, is renting the womb empowering or subjugating; do laws/contracts uphold the rights of women working as surrogates or do they strengthen the surveillance regime of the state; and lastly, considering that surrogacy juxtaposes empowerment with oppression, what is the most viable way of dealing with it: abolition or regulation?

Abstracts

Asmita Verma, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD)

Women's Experience of Post-Natal Care: A Study from Uttarakhand, India

Although significant strides have been achieved in improving the situation of maternal and child health following the millennium development goals, India's progress has been slow as reflected in the relatively high maternal and child mortality rates. Subsequently, this calls for an investigation into the quality of care that is offered to women (supply aspects) and experienced by them (demand aspects) at pregnancy and childbirth. This study focuses on the latter since a positive experience of care provided is as important as provision of the care itself and has a direct effect not only on the women and their babies, but also on the rest of the family. Specifically, we try to understand the factors that affect the women's rating and assessment of the care she receives during the post-natal period. The study was conducted in two districts viz Nainital and Tehri Garhwal in the hill state of Uttarakhand in India between October 2018 and April 2019. Women whose most recent child was between the age of 2 months and 12 months were included. The total sample size that forms the basis of this study is 200 women. Data on various aspects of pregnancy, labour, childbirth and post-natal care was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. Data analysis is done by employing both bivariate and multivariate statistical methods. Preliminary results show that over two-thirds of women report being satisfied with the post-natal care they received. Factors such as literacy, behaviour of the health attendant and number of check-ups are important in influencing the ratings. This study adds to the small body of literature in India aimed at understanding quality of care from the perspective of the women and may help shape policy which could be tailored towards bridging the supply-demand gap in quality of care framework.

Sreya Majumdar, Department of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IITH)

The Positive Birth: Emergence of Professional Midwifery in India

In the beginning of the last decade, alternative birth activism in India gained its visibility promoting professional midwifery in India. It came as a result of the invasive medical procedures of obstetrics and biomedicine and extreme rise in the C-section births. Professional midwifery claims to be comprised of women-centered birth practices supporting the birthing women's choices and consent thereby providing a positive and liberating birth experience. The institutionalized birthing procedures have been implemented by the State policies and programs leading to marginalization of traditional midwifery. The professional midwives working in India have been trained and certified in the Western countries as India does not have a program training professional midwives or an organization certifying them. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore: first, the birth advocacy in India in relation to propagating the need for professional midwifery and second, the transnational character of professional midwifery practices. It will also provide glimpses into the historical antecedents of birthing practices.

Abstracts

Pronoti Baglary, Department of Sociology, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)

Stories we Hear; Stories we Tell: Exploring 'Fertility' and Embodiment in the City of Delhi

This paper is based on my doctoral project on involuntary childlessness and the navigation of multiple medical realities by women, in the city of Delhi. The main attempt of my work is the ethnographic exploration of embodied living of a certain kind within a space such as Delhi, located amidst globalization and neo-liberal political economy, and perhaps ask, if there is a shift in the nature of embodiments. And I am attempting to do this by examining what 'fertility' or fertile bodies have to come mean in light of the stories of reproductive challenges that women recount or access through encounters in various spaces such as media, fertility clinic waiting rooms, patient support groups, events for fertility awareness etc. For the purpose of this paper, I would engage with narratives of three of my research participants, who belonging to three different cohorts that have emerged, and been signified from among my research participants: first are women over the age of 30 who are working and without children, with no immediate plans of conceiving but who suffer from conditions that are expected to raise reproductive challenges (eg. PCOD); second, women between 25-40 who are currently undergoing treatment/ therapies in order to be able to conceive; and lastly, women above 40 who have concluded their reproductive journeys, either through conception, adoption or being voluntarily childless. Taking these three very different narratives, the attempt is to put them in conversation with one another and create a dialogue that could provide some understanding on what "fertility" and "fertile bodies" have come to mean in context of urban life today, against the backdrop of the economic, social and technological changes, where bodies inhabits a space or time seemingly rich with the notion of "risk", whether from cell phone radiations, toxins in pesticides or the ill effects of stress.

Mary John, Centre for Women's Development Studies, Delhi

The Daughter-only Family in the Era of Sex-Selection Challenges for a Cultural Economy of Gender

This paper will be drawing from recent research on adverse child sex ratios in India to argue for a new analysis of the persistence and spread of gender biased sex selection in contemporary India. Especially following Census 2001 and 2011 has come startling evidence of growing disparities in sex ratios at birth emanating to a greater extent from more developed states such as Haryana and Punjab, but also, to a lesser degree from other regions in the north and west. Moreover, the worst figures have been among the non-poor classes, those aspiring for some economic mobility under uncertain and limited developmental conditions. Parents are aspiring for a small family of one son and one daughter, a complex phenomenon that on the surface appears gender egalitarian. But it hides a contemporary form of daughter aversion, especially visible in the avoidance of being a girl only family by resorting to sex selection to ensure the birth of a son. These are families who in fact desire better futures for their daughters – to be brought up to adulthood, with higher ages of marriage and better levels of education. In other words, these are families who do not wish to marry off their daughters as children. These developments are accompanied by parental articulations of a new gender stereotype -- of caring daughters and failing sons – that are being reinforced by environments of economic uncertainty in both urban and rural contexts. The paper concludes with what may be a worrisome standoff. India is also held up in international and national circles for having the largest numbers of child marriages, if not quite the highest prevalence rates, and there is considerable pressure to "end child marriage". What if child marriage and sex selection were two sides of the same coin, or rather, two contrasting family strategies? We should not underestimate the pincer movement represented by the co-presence of early marriages in families who wish to be relieved of the burden of extra (unwanted) daughters (including other forms of discrimination and neglect), and the decision taken by others to sex select in the hope that the right kind of small family will in fact bring them closer to realising a better future for the daughter that they do want. Many worry that child marriage is not declining fast enough, including in some of the better off states, others fear the negative consequences of a growing gender imbalance. Could there be a negative relationship between decreasing trends in early marriage and growing gender imbalances, especially in those regions with no prior history of sex selection?

Abstracts

Rajani Bhatia, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Albany, State University of New York (SUNY)

Figuring India and China in the Constitution of Lifestyle Sex Selection

In this paper, I draw on my book *Gender before Birth: Sex Selection in a Transnational Context* (University of Washington Press, 2018) to explore the present absence of China and India in selective and transnational engagements with reproduction. In particular, I focus on their role in the co-constitution since the 1990s of a global form of stratified sex selection and new sex selection practices within "Fertility, Inc." Beginning with a local "western" and U.S. framed set of sex selective ART (assisted reproductive technology), I show how this seemingly discrete, bounded national practice configures via contrast to other biopolitical "sites" of sex selection, especially within contexts of population control in the global non-West. As such, I term and conceptualize lifestyle sex selection (imagining one's future self and family contingent upon the sex of offspring and trying to realize that dream using technoscientific means) as a continuously global site in a Saidian figurative sense of contrast to "other," wrongful forms/sites of sex selection. At the same time, the actual practices of lifestyle sex selection involve boundary-crossings to extend into the increasingly transnational reproductive economy of Fertility, Inc., quite literally practiced across geopolitical divides, involving not only multiple nation-states but also multiple, and enmeshed transnational consumer cultures. In addition to representational strategies, economic and political shifts create the structural conditions and mechanisms by which lifestyle sex selection operates. Dubbed "cross-border reproductive care," by the profession, the multi-nationally networked operations of fertility clinics and laboratories not only create mechanisms for market transactions across borders, they also make up the institutional means to decenter state authority in the governance of reproductive technologies. Decentering state authority is further reinforced by the increasing localization and retreat from the international sphere of women's health and reproductive justice movements as they face challenges from political right-wing elements at home.

Anindita Majumdar, Department of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad

Exploring the Biological Clock: Assisted Reproduction and the Identification of the Declining Body in Contemporary India

In this paper, I am interested in seeking out the meaning of age and ageing as it comes to be understood within reproduction in India. The focus is particularly on assisted conception, and the use of assisted reproductive technologies (ART) such as in-vitro fertilization to engage with the issue of reproductive temporality. In addition, the paper engages with existing field data on the process of becoming parents amongst couples of a particular age bracket in India, who are undergoing IVF treatment in North India. These couples are between the ages of 45-65 years, traditionally considered to be difficult for conception whether through sexual procreation, or artificial means such as assisted reproduction. However, the facilitation of pregnancy and birth amongst women, and their spouses within this age is being successfully conducted in some ART clinics in North India. This has meant that the idea of declining reproduction, most often represented with the moniker of the biological clock is under increasing scrutiny. To explore the imaginings of age, decline and reproduction, I study the ways in which: first, laws on reproduction, age of marriage, age of consent, assisted reproduction frame ageing and reproduction in India; second, the ways in which the demographic conversations on population and fertility are marked within popular discourse in India; and third, the relationship between menstruation and menopause within anthropological literature on India to understand age and reproduction. The paper is embedded both within a theoretical conceptualization that aims to help make sense of the meaning of age and ageing as they come undone within assisted reproduction. The purpose of seeking a wider theoretical gaze through laws, legalese, popular discourse, and ethnographic studies of menstruation and menopause as key markers of age and reproduction, is to support and understand the dynamic nature of the field data that has been collected from North India on ageing couples bearing children, as well as the increasing intervention of technology on our bodies.

Abstracts

Swayamshree Mishra, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD)

Menstrual Anxieties, Late Marriage and Reproductive Ageing

Regular menstruation is seen as indicative of a fertile body. It is however restricted by age due to the declining ovarian reserve in a female. Thus, in the Indian context, a timely marriage but a late pregnancy or a late marriage leading to a late pregnancy can lead to social and gendered anxieties that stem not just from societal pressure but also from physiological changes. This is popularly referred to as reproductive ageing or ticking of the biological clock. In women's pursuit of higher education or career, such a delay might become inevitable. Difficulties in finding a suitable partner for marriage or financial constraints may also delay marriage leading to anxieties of infertility and complicated pregnancy despite having a regular menstruation. Thus, menstruation at a certain age is medically and socially construed as 'failed production' or 'failed opportunities of production' than just an indication of fertility. As Martin (2010) argues, in dominant medical discourses menstruation is often deemed as 'what occurs when an egg is not fertilised' thereby emphasising on the negativity attributed to a failed production every month. The paper examines the existing understanding of menstrual anxieties by shifting the focus from anxieties caused due to menstrual irregularities and aberration to menstrual anxieties caused due to late marriages despite regular menstruation. The paper analyses how social constructions of bodily processes and gendered societal expectations influence choices that women in their thirties make about career and marriage in the backdrop of expectations of marriage and motherhood. The paper is based on ethnographic data gathered through in-depth interviews with unmarried women in their mid and late thirties in Odisha.

Christophe Guilmoto, Institute de Recherche pour le Developpement, IRD-CEPED
Is the Fertility Bias against Daughters Reducing in India? A Look at Recent Evidence

Gender bias has long been rife in India, expressed notably through prenatal and postnatal sex selection. Yet, it has also been argued that family change, rising education levels and female employment tend to erode strict patriarchal norms and that son preference gradually weakens. In this study, we will examine recent evidence of gender bias in family formation by using fertility behavior as a powerful of revealed gender preferences. This type of discrimination tends to remain below the statistical radar as it has no impact on birth or mortality sex ratios. We will show in particular that the son preference remains extremely strong in India and sometimes conceals an outright inclination for a two-son family in North India. Using these metrics of son preference, we'll map the significant variations in gender fertility bias, distinguishing in particular the effects of regional origin, socioeconomic status, and caste and religion. Data used in this study derive from the latest National Family and Health Survey. They will be compared with previous demographic surveys of adequate sample size.

Abstracts

Ravinder Kaur, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD), and Taanya Kapoor, University of Oxford

Reversing Gender Inequality at Birth: Can Girls' Agency be a Crucial Factor?

India, along with China, has long been characterized by a female adverse sex ratio at birth. Deep seated structural and cultural patterns are seen to lie at the root of why girls are less wanted in these two patriarchal societies. Despite enormous socio-economic changes in both societies leading to high growth rates and neo-liberal development resulting in greater prosperity and rising middle classes, the sex ratio at birth has worsened rather than improved. The emergence of new sex selection technologies combined with steeply falling fertility rates has further intensified daughter aversion. Other complex social factors such as mobility desires of families have also contributed to fewer girls being born. Recognizing the immense challenges of reversing the adverse sex ratio, governments of both countries have banned sex selection and introduced financial incentives to encourage parents to not discriminate against girls. However, such steps have had limited effect on re-shaping preference for sons or daughters. This paper argues that rather than bans and girl child preservation policies, two modernizing forces are likely to re-shape gender preferences – education and girls' own agency. India has made tremendous strides in bridging the gap between male and female education with females being set to overtake and over-perform males in education; the potential disruptive effect of this change has not been sufficiently gauged by recent research in the social sciences. Mining through available literature, this paper will argue that we have crucial evidence that the spread of education is fuelling girls' desires to subvert constructions of structural vulnerability and restrictive, stereotypical gendered expectations. The paper will reflect on the potential of agency to transform extant social structures and hopes to contribute to the sociological debates on structure and agency by exploring constraints, resistance and negotiation as active elements in the process of social reproduction and change.

Charumita Vasudev, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD)

Changing Family Dynamics and Son Preference: A Comparative Study of Villages from Jammu and Leh

According to NITI Aayog (2018) the state of Jammu and Kashmir is making highest incremental improvements amongst all major states on a variety of health indicators. These include declining fertility rates, better health care service delivery and increased institutional deliveries. Besides this, female literacy rates have been improving in almost all the districts. However, given the diverse socio-cultural fabric of the state, it goes without saying that these indicators vary regionally, especially in terms of three distinct administrative regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. For example, at the district level, while Jammu has a sex ratio at birth (SRB) of 886, the corresponding figure is 912 females per thousand males for Leh. In this context, the paper looks at villages with very masculine child sex ratios (Census 2011) in two regions- Jammu and Ladakh and enquires into the nuances of son preference in the context of the diverse socio-cultural fabric of these two regions. The paper uses data from household surveys, participant observation and detailed interviews with the stakeholders from four villages situated in the districts of Jammu and Leh. While the villages of Jammu are located in the suburb of Jammu city and are dominated by Hindu, nuclear family households; the villages in Leh are relatively cut off from urban influence, have an almost equal Buddhist and Muslim population, polygamous marriage pattern and joint family households. The paper makes use of the comparative method to explore how son preference is shaped in varied socio-cultural contexts. Also, the paper explores how socio-economic developments like increasing literacy and declining fertility rates can have varied impacts on people's family building strategies depending upon the socio-economic and cultural relations they are situated in.

Abstracts

Shuzhuo LI, Institute of Population and Development Studies, Xi'an Jiatong University, China
Poverty, Marriage and Old-age Support: Risk and Governance of Family Development of Rural Involuntary Bachelors in Contemporary China

Family development refers to meeting each family member's physiological, psychological, developmental and self-realization needs under certain social conditions, thereby promoting the improvement of family welfare and the overall development of family members. The gender imbalance in China has resulted in the accumulation and spread of many related consequences, including the steady increase in the number of rural forced or involuntary bachelors. Their families face the risk of family development due to difficulties achieving family functions and meeting family needs. Empirical studies and field surveys on gender imbalances indicate that, the family development of rural involuntary bachelors often face multiple overlapping poverties throughout the individual life course, family life cycle and generational relations. This reflects risks mainly in the fields of poverty, marriage and old-age support. Not only do these risks restrict the family development of the whole life cycle, but they are also potential major risks to social transformation and development. Therefore, the governance of family development of rural forced bachelors should aim to resolve risks and enhance the capacity of family development. Multi-governance bodies should be coordinated, including government, market, society, community and family. Through building paths that facilitate government support and self-capacity, governance can adopt formal social support and informal social support as tools, to empower family development of rural involuntary bachelors, to ensure long-term sustainable development.

Paro Mishra, Department of Social Science and Humanities, Indraprastha Institute of Information
Technology Delhi (IITD)

North Indian Rural Husbands in Cross-Regional Marriages: Negotiating Emotions, Desire and Identity in the Context of Skewed Sex Ratio

Cross-regional marriages between rural north Indian men and women from distant eastern, southern and north-eastern parts of the country are a striking social phenomenon. An outcome of regional demographic imbalance and resultant local bride shortage, these marriages have mostly been examined from the vantage point of migrant brides and their experiences. Given the fact that in these marriages, migrant brides, and not their husbands are on the 'move', research studies have accorded primacy to understanding their experiences, identity and adjustment. Consequently, men who marry cross-regionally remain understudied. The growing anxieties around these men are evidenced in their unchallenged stereotypes as 'abusers', 'sexually-starved beasts', 'heartless buyers' and 'exploiters' in popular discourse. Such negative clichés prevent us from understanding the complexity of gendered experiences of cross-cultural marriages. Drawing on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in north Indian state of Haryana, this paper adds depth to the lived reality of men in cross-cultural marriages. It examines their emotions, desires and experiences of cross-cultural unions and how they discursively construct their masculine identities in the context of cross-regional marriages. The paper illustrates how subaltern men, who have been rejected by north Indian women and their families due to socio-economic and other disadvantages, enact various aspects of local hegemonic masculinity through cross-regional marriages and the anxieties they confront and address in the process.

Abstracts

Clemence Jullien, Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies, University of Zurich
Getting Married at all Costs: Matrimonial Strategies in Rural Punjab

Both social scientists and popular culture show how central marriage is in India. Yet, according to a recent demographic analysis by the United Nations (2015), India has around 25,2 million 'excess' men under the age of twenty. Due to demographic imbalance, coupled with processes of land fragmentation and a growing use of drugs, rural Punjabis from underprivileged background are facing difficulties in getting married locally. Based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in several villages of the Malwa region, this paper's objectif is threefold. Firstly, on the basis of interviews with 35 couples who have had inter-state marriages, I will show to which extent hypergamy and rules of endogamy and exogamy (with their logics of caste and clan) can be negotiated among communities such as the Jatts that are known for their conservatism and their sense of honour. Secondly, I will explore how the status of forced bachelorhood (the so called shadaas in Punjab) is experienced in a country where the ideal of marriage is pervasive and where families discourage some sons to get married to avoid further land division. Finally, while marriage squeeze is largely considered by researchers and journalists as the cause of the problem, it remains unclear how demographic, economic and social factors are intertwined. Against this backdrop, this paper will show how Punjabi people perceive the issue and explore whether Bourdieu's concept of strategy as "a way of maximizing profits and/or minimizing the economic and symbolic costs of marriage" (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 1109) is fruitful to understand processes of spouse selection in the current Indian context. In doing so, I intend to give more consideration to the voice and the agency of the persons concerned.

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