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Tiantian Chen

# Reproductive uncertainty

*Understanding the regulations on assisted reproductive technologies in China*

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL SCIENCE

## About the author

**Tiantian Chen** holds a PhD degree in Sociology from the University of Cambridge. She has extensive research experience in gender and public policies. Her oral history project on matchmaking in China between 1943 and 2013 received the Johns Hopkins University Women Gender and Sexuality Research Fellowship Prize. She is now a chair of Global Health 50/50, a charity advancing gender mainstreaming in public health policies.

Between 2016 and 2017, Tiantian Chen conducted fieldwork in Beijing, interviewing policymakers from China's Ministry of Health and clinicians from the Ethics Committee of China Reproductive Medicine Society. She visited both public and private fertility clinics, fertility agencies, and feminist organizations while also collecting policy documents related to assisted reproductive technologies. The fieldwork provided her with first-hand experience in the policy-making of reproductive technologies. Her research received interviews with newspapers such as 'BBC,' 'China Minutes,' and 'China Youth Daily.'

## Summary

This book provides the first sustained account of intense debates in China over the ban on single women's access to assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs). Drawing on the author's fieldwork in clinics and government agencies in Beijing, it mainly explains Chinese policymakers' and clinicians' rationale for restricting single women's use of ARTs even if they celebrate ARTs as a success of Chinese modernization strategies. The main concept explored in this book is uncertainty. ARTs become a source of discomfort for the Chinese government and clinics because they reveal the uncontrollability of human destiny; they introduce ambiguities into genetic and legal paternity; and they undermine clinical and bureaucratic authority.

This book uses ARTs as a lens on broader social changes in China. The uncertainty of ARTs reflects the limits of Chairman Deng Xiaoping's reform. It also informs that the Chinese government has reversed policies by repackaging tradition and tightening party control. The book's interpretation of uncertainty challenges the linear and progressive paradigm of modernization. China's development path is distinct from the sequential logic of Western, modernist conceptions of history

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