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Emerging Social Issues Division

Social Policy and Population Section

Asia-Pacific Population Journal

Article **Reproducing the Asian Family Across the Generations: "Tradition", Gender and Expectations in Singapore**

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Abstract Trends in fertility and the future of the "Asian family" are important topics of current debate in Singapore where the Government has been more proactive than its European counterparts in trying to ensure the future reproduction of its population. Yet, the changing role and status of women in Singaporean society appear to have dampened the effect of pronatalist policies. Over the last decade, fertility concerns have become embedded in a wider public discourse about "traditional Asian values". The paper focuses on how ordinary Singaporean women are interpreting the Government's message by examining understandings of "tradition" in relation to the family. The discussion draws on data from in-depth interviews with a group of Chinese Singaporean women; eight graduates of reproductive age (the parent generation) and their mothers (the grandparent generation). It explores variation and ambiguity in constructions of "tradition" in the narratives of these women and traces subtle intergenerational differences in expectations and experiences of gender in relation to understandings of "family" and its reproduction. The analysis exposes the active agency of women within an enduring but changing patriarchal conception of the family. The paper concludes by drawing out implications for the impact of the Government's promotion of "Asian" values on family reproduction.

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