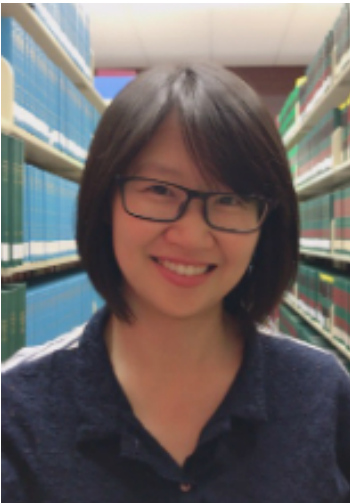


CFLS LECTURE CO-PRESENTED WITH THE CENTRE FOR
ASIAN LEGAL STUDIES

REVISITING FEMINIST IDEALS OF AUTONOMY IN MARRIAGE THROUGH AN ASIAN LENS

Feminist legal scholars have criticized the traditional notion of individual autonomy, putting forward a model of “relational autonomy” that takes into account the impact of wider relationships on women’s choices. However, this model still does not fully capture non-western ideas of kinship relations and interpersonal relationships.

Drawing on interviews and focus groups with 72 “leftover” women and critical literature on familial and interpersonal relations in China, this paper aims to challenge feminist relational theorists’ continued strong attachment to autonomy. It explains “leftover” women’s refusal to embrace autonomy in marriage by looking at how networks of relationships create an informal system of rules and punishment to govern women’s choices; and how state law lies behind and affects their choices without being noticed.



Qian Liu is a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Law, University of Victoria. Her doctoral research examines how state law, social expectations, and parental expectations interact to shape leftover women’s choices in marriage and childbearing from the theoretical lens of legal pluralism, feminist legal theory, postcolonial legal theory, and critical literature on gender relations in China. Qian’s fieldwork in China was supported by the International Development Research Center. Her articles have been published in the *Asian Journal of Law and Society* and *Asian Journal of*

Women’s Studies and her research was featured by BBC World News.



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