**The Politics of Care:**

**State, Institutions, and the Re-moralization of Social Welfare in China**

**Abstract**

After four decades of neoliberal reform, China’s rising economic power comes with the cost of high inequality with a large amount of population living in precarity. The Chinese government has since sought to re-introduce social welfare programs but their efficacy remains to be seen in the longer term. This paper examines one of the root causes of state welfare transformation in China, which is the construction of discourse for citizens’ need of care provision over the reform periods. Drawing on the state welfare policy making and government implementation, it shows that underpinning the justification of welfare policy shifts is the changing ethics and morality behind. The paper argues that neoliberal moralization of social welfare has reconstructed the discourse of care and need to produce a new state-citizen relationship that prioritizes individual self-reliance and self-responsibility.

Keyword: China, state welfare, care, ethics, precarity, neoliberal

Possible thematic panel: The “welfare” state

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