

Union History and Midlife Health Outcomes



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(ZOOM)

Session chaired by: Dr Zheng Mu
(CFPR Steering Committee Member &
Department of Sociology and Anthropology)

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Married individuals enjoy better health than unmarried people. Yet marriage may represent only one stage over an individual's life course, and health benefits of marriage may depend on marital age and duration. Furthermore, cohabitation before marriage and union status after marriage may also contribute to health outcomes later in life. In this paper, we offer a life course perspective and posit that union history (including timing, duration, and sequencing of singlehood, marriage, cohabitation, dissolution, and/or widowhood) in earlier life influences midlife health outcomes. Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, we apply sequence analysis to capture the complete structure of union history. Using prototypical union history trajectories through measures of timing, duration, and sequencing of individuals' union events, we investigate how union history trajectory influences midlife health outcomes, and how the relationships between union history trajectory and midlife health outcomes vary by gender, race/ethnicity, and social class.

THE SPEAKER

Professor
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Zhenchao Qian is Professor of Sociology and faculty associate of Population Studies and Training Center at Brown University. His research explores partner availabilities, assortative mating, patterns and trends of marital and cohabiting unions among diverse populations. He studies ethnoracial boundaries with a focus on changes in interracial and interethnic unions, multiracial populations, and immigration. His other work includes immigrants' wellbeing, divergent patterns of American families, and social and family change in China.