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## China's One Child Policy

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### Introduction

For centuries, China has had the world's largest population, although it will soon lose that title to India. When Mao Zedong and his colleagues seized national power in 1949, they were not sure how many Chinese there were (the first modern census was not conducted until 1953), and Mao initially argued that having a large and rapidly increasing population was a blessing for China, rather than a curse. However, the challenges of managing such a large and poor country soon changed the official view, and during some intervals in the 1950s and 1960s, China carried out voluntary family planning campaigns to try to reduce the birth rate. However, those campaigns were largely ineffective, with the only notable decline in fertility during those decades produced by the Great Leap Forward–induced mass famine of 1959–1961, not family planning efforts. As of 1970 the projected number of babies the average Chinese mother would have in her lifetime (termed the total fertility rate [TFR]) was still close to six. (China's cities, where less than 20 percent of the population lived at the time, is an exception to these generalizations, with the 1960s family planning campaign playing some role in reducing the urban TFR in 1970 to 3.2.) Early in the 1970s, when Mao was still in charge (he died in 1976), China made a dramatic shift from voluntary family planning to mandatory birth limits under the slogan, “later (marriage ages), longer (birth intervals), and fewer” (births—no more than two babies for urban families and three for rural families). The “later, longer, fewer” campaign was enforced very strictly, using many of the coercive measures that later became notorious during the one-child campaign, and China's fertility rate fell dramatically, to less than three per mother by the end of the decade. Despite this success, in 1980 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched an even more demanding and coercive campaign that attempted for the next thirty-five years to limit Chinese families to having only one child. The fertility rate actually went up in the early 1980s but then began to decline again, reaching subreplacement fertility (TFR = 2.1) by the early 1990s. Most experts estimate that China's TFR fluctuated in the 1.4 to 1.6 range between 2000 and 2015, although some analysts have calculated higher figures, and others lower. The CCP in late 2015 decided to end the one-child limit, with Chinese families since January 1, 2016 allowed to have two children (but no more, at least as of 2019). Debates about the controversial one-child policy have spawned a large literature that examines many issues, including the reasons the CCP launched this campaign, how effective it was in reducing birth rates further, what human rights abuses resulted, how child-rearing and children have been affected, and in what ways Chinese society and the people of China have benefited or have been harmed by the demographic distortions produced by mandatory, state-enforced birth limits.

### Historical and Cultural Roots of China's Population, Family, and Child-Rearing

The backdrop for China's unprecedented effort to enforce a one-child policy after 1980 is a strong set of family and child-rearing traditions stretching back millennia as well as debates about that country's population dynamics and trends over the centuries. Baker 1979 presents a good summary of the literature on patterns of Chinese family life and kinship relations prior to 1949. Thornton and Lin 1994 provides an overview of family change patterns in Taiwan that can be compared with the literature on family change in mainland China. Ikels 2004 contains a series of essays focusing on the role of the central Chinese child-rearing value of filial piety in contemporary East Asian societies. Saari 1990 uses historical sources to convey how rising Western influence was challenging traditional child-rearing patterns and family authority relations in China around the turn of the 20th century. Kessen 1975 is a trip report made by a delegation of American child psychologists who visited China in 1973, prior to the start of the one-child policy. Whyte 2003 presents analyses based upon a survey of parent–adult child relations in a middle range Chinese city in 1994. Lau 1996 is a collection of essays on contemporary patterns of child-rearing in the People's Republic of China and in the Chinese diaspora. Taken together, these studies convey a picture of China's traditional family patterns having changed in substantial ways prior to the launching of the one-child policy, but with families still displaying distinctive patterns even today compared with their counterparts in Western societies (e.g., with higher likelihood of living with parents after marriage).

In terms of historical trends in China's population size, Ho 1958 is an early account by a historian of patterns of growth of the Chinese population over many centuries prior to the 20th century. Hajnal 1982 presents data and theorizes in support of the conventional view that in premodern times families in northwestern Europe were distinctive compared to families in Asia, particularly by more rationally adjusting their fertility levels to prevailing economic conditions. More recently, Lee and Wang 1999 uses historical demographic records from Qing Dynasty China to challenge the Malthusian view of Chinese families advanced by Hajnal and others.

**Baker, Hugh. *Chinese Family and Kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.**

This is a wide-ranging overview by an experienced anthropological fieldworker of patterns of family life and kinship relations in China prior to 1949 and how they compare and contrast with family patterns in Western societies.

**Hajnal, John. "Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System." *Population and Development Review* 8 (1982): 449–494.**

In this influential article, Hajnal presents data comparing premodern family patterns in England and other countries in northwestern Europe with their counterparts in Asia, including China, leading him to conclude that in Europe changing economic conditions led families to adjust their marriage rate, age at marriage, and fertility, whereas in Asian societies pronatal values and institutions did not promote such "rational" adjustments, thus encouraging more rapid population growth in the East than in the West.

**Ho Ping-Ti. *Studies on the Population of China, 1368–1958*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958.**

In this early study, a distinguished historian assembles such estimates as were available at the time to present an overview of when and why China's population grew from less than 100 million at the start of the Ming Dynasty to about 600 million by the 1950s. More recent and accurate data have largely superseded this work.

**Ikels, Charlotte, ed. *Filial Piety: Practice and Discourse in Contemporary East Asia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.**

A set of essays, mostly by sociologists and anthropologists, detailing their investigations into what role the central Confucian value of filial piety (basically, the cultivation of extraordinary obligation and subordination by children even as adults to their parents and other elders) plays in contemporary East Asian societies, including China.

**Kessen, William, ed. *Childhood in China*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975.**

In 1973 a delegation of a dozen distinguished American child psychologists visited China and provided this report on their observations in the preschools and primary and secondary schools they visited, although they were unsuccessful in their efforts to meet Chinese child psychologists with whom they could discuss their observations.

**Lau Sing, ed. *Growing Up the Chinese Way: Chinese Child and Adolescent Development*. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1996.**

This collection of essays, mainly by child and social psychologists, presents recent research studies on many different aspects of child-rearing, parent-child relations, and school performance in China. Two of the essays in this volume deal specifically with comparing only children and children reared with siblings, and those essays are cited later in this review (Falbo, et al. 1996; Wu 1996, both cited under The Advantages and Disadvantages of Being a Chinese Singleton).

**Lee, James, and Wang Feng. *One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Realities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.**

This prize-winning volume, by a historian and a demographer, analyzes data on Chinese family patterns and demographic behavior in the 19th century, leading to a revisionist view that even in premodern times, contra Hajnal and others, Chinese were as much or more “rational” in adjusting their childbearing to economic conditions than Western families and not more pronatal. The authors also contend that the share of the world’s population that is Chinese today is not any larger than it was 2000 years ago.

**Saari, Jon. *Legacies of Childhood: Growing Up Chinese in a Time of Crisis, 1890–1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 1990.**

A historian of China uses documentary and literary sources to examine the tensions and strains as Chinese parents and their children tried to adjust to rapid social change and Western influence at the turn of the 20th century.

**Thornton, Arland, and Hui-Sheng Lin. *Social Change and the Family in Taiwan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.**

The authors rely on multiple surveys conducted in Taiwan since the 1960s to present an overview of the patterns of change and continuity in Chinese family patterns on that island.

**Whyte, Martin K., ed. *China's Revolutions and Intergenerational Relations*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 2003.**

A collection of essays based upon a survey conducted in the city of Baoding, Hebei Province, in 1994. In that survey a representative sample of older residents and one randomly selected grown child of each older respondent were both interviewed to examine current patterns of relations between older urban Chinese and their adult offspring. Some essays include comparisons with comparable surveys that had been conducted earlier in Taiwan.

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## General Works on Population Trends and Policies after 1949

A variety of works document trends in fertility and other demographic indicators, as well as changes in official Chinese population policies, after 1949. Although it is often claimed that the pronatal views of China’s post-1949 leader, Mao Zedong, prevented meaningful efforts to reduce that country’s birth rate until after his death in 1976, in fact, population policy in the Mao era swung back and forth between the state promoting family planning through voluntary campaigns (during the mid-1950s and again during the early 1960s) and abandoning state promotion of family planning (1958–1960 and 1965–1969). However, actual birth rates were almost totally out of step with official policies prior to 1970. Freeberne 1964 discusses the specifics of state family planning promotion during the 1950s and early 1960s. Tien 1973 provides a broader examination of population trends and changing population policies during the 1950s and 1960s. Banister 1987 presents an overview of the data on fertility and mortality trends and many other demographic indicators between 1949 and the early 1980s. Peng 1991 covers similar ground to Banister but is more narrowly focused on fertility trends. Riley 2017 is a more recent general overview of China’s population trends. Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005, Scharping 2003, and White 2006 all present good overviews of China’s changing population policies and population trends in both the Mao and post-Mao eras. Peng and Guo 2000 is a collection of essays by leading researchers on China’s population who discuss trends in both earlier and recent times. Poston, et al. 2006 is another edited collection focusing on variations in fertility across China.

**Banister, Judith. *China’s Changing Population*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987.**

This volume by a leading demographer presents the best overview of trends in a variety of demographic indicators in post-1949 China, although the data and analyses stop in the very early stages of implementing the one-child policy.

**Freeberne, Michael. “Birth Control in China.” *Population Studies* 18 (1964): 5–16.**

In this brief article a British observer who resided in China describes the early and voluntary efforts to reduce birth rates during the Mao era, observations that contradict claims that Mao and his colleagues neglected state family planning promotion.

**Greenhalgh, Susan, and Edwin Winckler. *Governing China's Population: From Leninist to Neoliberal Geopolitics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.**

This volume presents an overview of changing population policies and demographic trends in China. The authors claim that after the turn of the millennium, the substantial reductions in fertility rates that had occurred had several important consequences. The fact that most families were only having one or two children led to a shift from overriding state concern with restricting the number of births to more concern about enhancing the quality of births. Lower fertility levels also meant that less coercion was required to enforce mandatory birth limits.

**Peng Xizhe. *Demographic Transition in China: Fertility Trends since the 1950s*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.**

This volume, by a Western-trained demographer now at Fudan University in Shanghai, examines the details of fertility trends in China since the 1950s. The work is particularly strong in examining regional and rural–urban variations in fertility rates.

**Peng Xizhe, and Zhigang Guo, eds. *The Changing Population of China*. New York: Wiley, 2000.**

This collection of essays by leading Chinese demographers presents analyses on a wide range of topics beyond narrow demographic concerns, including urbanization trends, education, changing family patterns, and the roles of women.

**Poston, Dudley, Che-Fu Lee, Chiung-Fang Chang, Sherry McKibben, and Carol Walther, eds. *Fertility, Family Planning, and Population Policy in China*. London: Routledge, 2006.**

This edited collection contains demographic analyses that focus on how fertility rates in China vary by ethnicity, rural versus urban status, and other social background traits.

**Riley, Nancy. *Population in China*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017.**

This is a very readable, general overview of many aspects of population trends in China, up to and including the ending of the one-child policy. Many other topics besides fertility policy and trends are discussed, including migration, public health and mortality, and the intersection of gender with population.

**Scharping, Thomas. *Birth Control in China, 1949–2000: Population Policy and Demographic Development*. New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003.**

This volume by a German China scholar covers similar ground to the volumes by Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005 and by White 2006. It is particularly strong on tracking changing population policies through examining Chinese language documentary evidence, but it is less well grounded in the demographic literature.

**Tien, H. Yuan. *China's Population Struggle: Demographic Decisions of the People's Republic, 1949–1969*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973.**

Demographer H. Yuan Tien presents a broad overview of how China's population was changing during the 1950s and 1960s and of the shifting policies adopted by the government to try to manage those changes.

**White, Tyrene. *China's Longest Campaign: Birth Planning in the People's Republic, 1949–2005*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006.**

This volume by a political scientist and China scholar is another solid account of China's changing population policies in the Mao and post-Mao eras, but like Scharping 2003, it is more grounded in the China studies field than in the general social sciences.

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## **Prelude to the One-Child Policy: The 1970s and the “Later, Longer, Fewer” Campaign**

Mandatory birth limits and their coercive enforcement did not begin in 1980 with the one-child policy, but almost a decade earlier, with the “later, longer, and fewer” campaign. That campaign has received less attention and much less research than the even more coercively enforced one-child policy that followed, but arguably it was much more consequential in limiting birth rates, with at least 70 percent of the reduction in fertility from 1970 to the present occurring during the 1970s, prior to the start of the one-child policy. The chapters in the edited volumes Parish and Whyte 1978 and Whyte and Parish 1984 present details on how the “later, longer, fewer” campaign was being implemented in rural (1978) and urban (1984) areas during the 1970s. Chen and Kols 1982 provides a comprehensive overview of how state family planning programs were being carried out just prior to the start of the one-child policy. Tien 1991 provides another overview of state family planning efforts during the 1970s and in the early stages of the one-child policy. Mosher 1983 provides dramatic evidence about the coercion being used in one village in Guangdong Province in the late 1970s in the effort to force women to abort “over the limit” pregnancies. Lavelly 1984 presents evidence on the decline in fertility already occurring in one county in Sichuan Province prior to the launching of the one-child policy. Lavelly and Freedman 1990 uses data from a Chinese fertility survey to show the pattern of decline in fertility was already underway more generally prior to the one-child policy. Bongaarts and Greenhalgh 1985 presents a strong case that further minor changes in the “later, longer, fewer” campaign could have allowed China to reach its planned population targets by the end of the 20th century without the substantial increase in coercion and human rights abuses that resulted from the one-child campaign. Croll, et al. 1985 is a collection of essays by leading China scholars examining the transition from the “later, longer, fewer” campaign to the one-child policy and how the latter campaign was being implemented in its very early stages.

**Bongaarts, John, and Susan Greenhalgh. “An Alternative to the One-Child Policy in China.” *Population and Development Review* 11 (1985): 585–617.**

The authors, researchers then affiliated with the Population Council in the United States, present projections based upon slight modifications of the “later, longer, fewer” targets of the 1970s that lead them to conclude that the escalation to a one-child limit was not necessary for China to meet its official population targets.

**Chen Pi-Chao, and Adrienne Kols. “Population and Birth Planning in the People's Republic of China.” *Population Reports J: Family Planning Programs* 25 (1982): 577–619.**

This is perhaps the most comprehensive examination available of China's family planning program and its implementation in the 1970s and earlier. Although it was published in 1982 and makes note of the impact of the newly launched one-child campaign, the report mainly documents the extensive organization building and intensive enforcement efforts devoted to reducing the birth rate during the “later, longer, fewer” campaign.

**Croll, E., D. Davin, and P. Kane, eds. *China's One-Child Policy*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.**

This edited collection is an early effort to examine the background of the one-child policy and how it was being launched in rural and urban China in the early 1980s.

**Lavelly, William. “The Rural Chinese Fertility Transition: A Report from Shifang Xian, Sichuan.” *Population Studies* 38 (1984): 365–384.**

Demographer William Lively was one of the first Americans able to conduct fieldwork in China. He carried out a fertility and fertility desire survey in a rural county in Sichuan Province in 1981 that showed how birth rates and family size desires were already declining after 1970, a decade prior to the imposition of the one-child limit.

**Lively, William, and Ronald Freedman. "The Origins of the Chinese Fertility Decline." *Demography* 27 (1990): 357–367.**

The authors of this study use data from a 1982 Chinese fertility survey to examine the trends and predictors of fertility rates prior to and as the one-child policy was being launched. Their analyses show that earlier in the 1970s Chinese birth rates were negatively associated with educational levels and urban residence, as in other societies, but as the coercive enforcement of birth limits escalated, such individual background factors played less of a role in predicting individual fertility.

**Mosher, Steven. "Birth Control: A Grim Game of Numbers." In *Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese*. By Steven Mosher, 224–261. New York: Free Press, 1983.**

This is an ethnography of a village in Guangdong just prior to the one-child policy. Stanford University, where Mosher was a doctoral student, claimed he committed unethical acts during his fieldwork, and they expelled him without his degree. However, his observations on how birth limits were being enforced in his field site are dramatic, including village women pregnant "over the limit" being ordered into confinement in the brigade headquarters to be harangued into submitting to abortions and photographic evidence of a case of a coerced "third trimester Caesarian abortion."

**Parish, William, and Martin K. Whyte. *Village and Family in Contemporary China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.**

In 1972–1974 the authors interviewed refugees in Hong Kong who had left villages in neighboring Guangdong Province, and they used their accounts to examine patterns of rural change and continuity. Chapter 9 details the new 1970s targets for late marriage, birth limits, and birth spacing and how they were being enforced in villages in that province. These accounts clearly reveal the shift then underway from voluntary family planning to mandatory birth limits.

**Tien, H. Yuan. *China's Strategic Demographic Initiative*. New York: Praeger, 1991.**

This work by demographer H. Yuan Tien is in effect a sequel to his 1973 book cited earlier, *China's Population Struggle* (Tien 1973, cited under General Works on Population Trends and Policies after 1949). The author presents a broad analysis of how the shift to mandatory family planning was being carried out during the 1970s and then in the early stages of the one-child policy.

**Whyte, Martin K., and William Parish. *Urban Life in Contemporary China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.**

In 1977–1978 the authors interviewed refugees who had formerly lived in cities scattered across China to present an overview of changes and continuities in patterns of urban social life. Chapter 6 describes how the "later, longer, fewer" campaign was being carried out and enforced. Even though the birth limits for urbanites in that campaign were lower than for villagers (a two-birth limit, rather than three), the nature of urban control institutions made it easier than in villages to enforce campaign targets with less coercion.

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## Overviews of the One-Child Policy

A number of accounts present broad overviews of the one-child policy, its implementation, and debates about its impact and long-term consequences. Fong 2016 is a recent and wide-ranging overview of the campaign. Whyte, et al. 2015 debunks a series of widely believed but erroneous views on the history of the one-child policy and on its consequences. They conclude that there was no rational justification for launching the one-child policy in 1980 and that the net impact of the campaign on lowering fertility pales in comparison with the massive human rights abuses that resulted. Zhang 2017 is a recent effort to summarize the origins, evolution, and impact of the one-child campaign.

**Fong Mei. *One Child: The Story of China's Most Radical Experiment*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016.**

Fong, a journalist, presents an overview of the one-child campaign intended for a general audience. While covering many aspects that are dealt with in other sources, it contains some distinctive segments, including an account of a visit to Sichuan to observe the emotional devastation of families who had lost their only child when shoddily built schoolhouses collapsed in an earthquake and the author's decision to seek fertility treatments in the land of the one-child policy.

**Whyte, Martin K., Wang Feng, and Yong Cai. "Challenging Myths about China's One-Child Policy." *The China Journal* 74 (2015): 144–159.**

The authors challenge widely held beliefs about the one-child policy. They demonstrate that Mao Zedong was not consistently opposed to state efforts to limit births, that the "later, longer, fewer" campaign was quite coercively enforced, that China's population was not growing rapidly prior to 1980, that initially the policy was not very effective in reducing fertility levels further, that the policy did not prevent the births of at least 400 million more babies, and that the main reason that China has had subreplacement fertility since the early 1990s is China's rapid economic growth, not state limits on births.

**Zhang Junsen. "The Evolution of China's One-Child Policy and Its Effects on Family Outcomes." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31 (2017): 141–160.**

The author, an economist, discusses the launch and later changes in the one-child policy, but the bulk of this article is concerned with efforts to empirically assess how important the one-child policy was compared with other forces (such as rapid economic development) not only in reducing fertility, but also in other realms, such as child educational attainment, marital relations, and labor migration. In general the net effects of state enforcement of birth limits, while statistically detectable, were modest at best, with other forces more important.

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## How and Why the One-Child Policy Was Launched

Unfortunately, the secretive nature of decision-making within the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has prevented researchers from developing a definitive account of what led to the launching of the one-child policy in 1980. As noted earlier, China was already enforcing strict birth limits before Mao Zedong died in 1976, and birth rates had declined substantially by the end of that decade. The best we can do is note that there was a succession conflict at the top of the CCP after Mao died (with Mao's designated successor, Hua Guofeng, eventually losing out for de facto leadership after 1978 to Deng Xiaoping). And during that conflict and competition, CCP leaders were debating a variety of dramatic reforms designed to jump-start the economy, improve living standards, and help restore the authority of the CCP (which had been severely damaged by the decade of turmoil unleashed by the Cultural Revolution Mao launched in 1966). In their secretive deliberations, one dramatic reform those leaders eventually decided on was to lower the birth limits even further, to only one child per family, in the belief that this would help accelerate economic growth. While this more draconian birth limit was not formally launched nationwide until 1980, it was already being signaled in leader statements and press articles in 1978–1979. Wang, et al. 2013 provides the authors' thoughts on the factors that led China's leaders to launch the campaign. Once it became clear that the CCP was intent on this audacious and unprecedented policy, the proposed one-child limit received influential and scientific-sounding support from a politically prominent rocket scientist, Song Jian, and a group of researchers he had assembled. Song had traveled to Europe earlier in the 1970s and made contact with the researchers of the Malthusian 1972 "Club of Rome" report, which predicted global catastrophes from unchecked population growth. Impressed, when he returned home, Song made computer projections of what China's population would be a century into the future if each family had 1, 1.5, 2, 3, etc. babies. Arguing that China's optimal population in the year 2080 was under 700 million (at a time when the total was approaching 1 billion), Song urged a strict one-child birth limit. Thanks to the research of anthropologist Susan Greenhalgh, including her interviews with Song Jian, we now have a detailed account of the background leading up to and explaining the prominent supporting role Song Jian played in justifying the national one-child policy as it was being launched. She summarizes this bizarre tale in Greenhalgh 2003, and in more detail in her book, Greenhalgh 2008.

**Greenhalgh, Susan. "Science, Modernity, and the Making of China's One-Child Policy." *Population and Development Review* 29 (2003): 163–196.**

Greenhalgh examines the debates among China's population specialists in the late 1970s about what population policy China should adopt for the future. Song Jian and his group eventually came to dominate those debates. Based in part on her interviews with Song Jian, Greenhalgh explains how his computer projections helped justify the new one-child birth limit. Even as critics in the West mostly rejected the doomsday "Club of Rome" predictions, the projections and advocacy of Song and his colleagues provided pseudo-scientific justification for China's one-child policy for the next thirty-five years.

**Greenhalgh, Susan. *Just One Child: Science and Policy in Deng's China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.**

Greenhalgh presents here a fuller picture of her research on debates among Chinese population specialists in the late 1970s and the eventual dominance of Song Jian. Even at the time, there were many population specialists who opposed the imposition of a one-child birth limit. These critics predicted a variety of serious problems that would result from state intervention into family fertility decisions, but their criticisms were brushed aside as the new campaign was launched.

**Wang Feng, Yong Cai, and Baochang Gu. "Population, Policy, and Politics: How Will History Judge China's One-Child Policy?" *Population and Development Review* 38 Supp. (2013): 115–129.**

Although much of this paper is concerned with the likely historical legacy of the one-child policy, which explains why it is also cited in the final section of this review, the authors start by providing their assessment of the factors that led the CCP to launch the one-child policy. They also make clear that the CCP decision to impose the one-child limit had already been made prior to the interventions of Song Jian justifying the newly launched campaign.

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## Changing Policies and Enforcement in the One-Child Era

Although many discussions of China's one-child policy treat the campaign as if it were uniform in space and time, the reality is more complicated. Not all families were required to have only one child. Minority nationalities could have two children or even more. From 1980 onward, if two only-children married, they were allowed to have two children. (Other minor exceptions existed: for example, if a first child was disabled.) After a high tide of coercive enforcement of the one-child limit in 1983, leading to fierce resistance in rural areas, in most villages a "one and a half child policy" was enforced starting in 1984. Families that gave birth to a son were expected to stop and undergo either IUD insertion or sterilization. If the first child was a girl they were allowed to try one more time to have a son (but then to stop even if the second child was also a girl). In 2013 a further minor relaxation of the policy occurred; if either the husband or wife had been an only child (but not both), they were allowed to have two children. Provinces and localities also varied in how strictly and coercively they enforced birth limits, and the tempo of enforcement also varied over time, with recurring high tides of enforcement followed by periods of less pressure. The methods of enforcement varied over time and space as well, with a wide range of sanctions for violations employed, ranging from concentrated persuasion and threats through substantial monetary fines, demotion or loss of jobs for parents, and denial of household registration for over-quota babies to chasing after pregnant women in hiding, confiscating family furniture and destroying housing, and detaining pregnant women and forcing them to undergo abortions. At the end of the 1980s enforcement was strengthened by making reaching low birth target numbers one of the core success indicators used in rating, promoting, or demoting local (mostly male) officials. Greenhalgh 1986, Greenhalgh 1990, and Hardee-Cleaveland and Banister 1988 focus on how national and local policies and enforcement changed during the first decade of the campaign, and particularly on the modest loosening that followed the high tide of coercive enforcement in 1983. Short and Zhai 1998 presents data on local variations in exceptions to the one-child limit, which indicate some tightening of the regulations after the mid-1980s. Gu, et al. 2007 examines the variation across China circa 2000 in provincial and prefectural regulations on who could have a second child. Basten and Jiang 2014 examines the reasons for, and significance of, the minor change in 2013 to allow second children when only one parent was a singleton.



**Basten, Stuart, and Quanbao Jiang. "China's Family Planning Policies: Recent Reforms and Future Prospects." *Studies in Family Planning* 45 (2014): 493–509.**

This article discusses the 2013 change to allow second children if only one parent was an only child. The authors see the context as one in which criticisms of the one-child policy had been growing for more than a decade, but with political support within the CCP for the policy still too strong to allow a decision to finally end the campaign (which eventually occurred in 2015).

**Greenhalgh, Susan. "Shifts in China's Population Policy, 1984–86: Views from the Central, Provincial, and Local Levels." *Population and Development Review* 12 (1986): 491–515.**

The author stresses that implementation and enforcement of the one-child policy during the 1980s were characterized by variation across localities, adjustment to local conditions, and gradual if partial relaxation of some of the stricter aspects of the policy employed at the beginning of the 1980s (rather than by a simple top-down, Beijing-dominated dynamic).

**Greenhalgh, Susan. "The Evolution of the One-Child Policy in Shaanxi, 1979–1988." *The China Quarterly* 122 (1990): 191–229.**

The author reinforces the views expressed in her 1986 paper by relying on policy documents she collected and interviews she conducted in the field in one locality in Shaanxi Province in the mid-1980s. She conveys a picture not of cyclical oscillation between state tightening of demands for enforcement and intervals of relative relaxation, but of gradual adjustment and modification (and modest loosening) of the rules and their enforcement locally after 1984.

**Gu Baochang, Wang Feng, Guo Zhigang, and Zhang Erli. "China's Local and National Fertility Policies at the End of the Twentieth Century." *Population and Development Review* 33 (2007): 129–147.**

The authors carried out an extensive review of official family planning regulations across provinces, and across prefectures within provinces, during the 1990s. While they emphasize the substantial variation in those regulations from place to place, they also conclude that if every family were to strictly follow the regulations that applied in the places where they lived, more than 60 percent of all families would end up with only one child.

**Hardee-Cleaveland, Karen, and Judith Banister. "Fertility Policy and Implementation in China, 1986–88." *Population and Development Review* 14 (1988): 245–286.**

The authors examine the launching of the one-child campaign nationally after 1980, the widespread resistance that developed, and the details on how the policy was modified (particularly the acceptance of a "one and a half child rule" in rural areas) after 1984.

**Short, Susan, and Zhai Fengying. "Looking Locally at China's One-Child Policy." *Studies in Family Planning* 29 (1998): 373–387.**

This study uses data from interviews with local family planning officials in three rounds of the China Health and Nutrition Survey (in 1989, 1991, and 1993), to systematically examine how regulations allowing exceptions to the one-child limit varied locally and over time. In contrast to the studies of mid-1980s changes previously listed, the authors find signs of some increasing tightness of restrictions and enforcement after 1990.

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## One-Child Policy Enforcement and Human Rights Abuses

At the time the one-child policy was launched, most Chinese families no longer wanted to have a large number of children, with one son and one daughter the most popular preference. But in the countryside where about 80 percent of Chinese lived at that time, the one-child limit faced particularly stiff resistance because of customary family patterns. At marriage, daughters were expected to move into their husband's family, and once wed their support obligations were owed to their in-laws, not their own parents. No meaningful rural pension

system existed, so a village family that did not have at least one son would be left with nobody to support them in old age. (Urban parents, in contrast, mostly had pension coverage, and married daughters could and did contribute to their care in old age, so it was not so imperative to have a son.) Efforts to impose a one-child limit on the rural population ran up against this hard economic reality. Forceful pressure by Chinese elites to get local enforcers to strictly apply mandatory birth limits led to massive amounts of coercion and abuse. Women who became pregnant beyond the limit were particularly vulnerable to harassment, and desperate women who wanted to avoid submitting to an abortion sometimes bound their bodies or fled into hiding. Unborn and newborn daughters were also vulnerable, with many abandoned or subjected to abuse or even infanticide by parents who wanted to try again for a son, or after prenatal sex determination became possible, eliminated through sex-selective abortions. Children born over the limit were often denied household registrations if their families were unable or unwilling to pay substantial fines, and many grew into adulthood without being able to attend school or secure employment. However, over time and as most Chinese families adjusted, however grudgingly, to having only one or two children (due to some combination of the influence of official birth limits as well as concerns about the rising costs of educating, marrying, and finding housing for children), the state did not have to use coercion so widely to enforce the one-child limit, and some families decided not to have an allowed second birth. Whyte and Gu 1987 reviews local surveys conducted during the early 1980s that reveal that the most common desired family size was one son and one daughter. Aird 1990 is a particularly grim cataloguing of the multiple kinds of abuses that arose during the first decade of enforcement of the one-child policy. Greenhalgh 1994 uses fieldwork in a village in north China to describe local women as both enforcers and victims of mandatory birth limits. Osnos 2012 describes a coerced late-term abortion case that became notorious in 2012. VanderKlippe 2015 describes the stunted lives of children denied household registrations and life opportunities because they were born in violation of the policy. Chen 2015 is an autobiographical account of a "barefoot lawyer" who ran afoul of Chinese authorities by protesting coercive enforcement of birth limits. Whyte 1998 ponders the disjunction between trends in other human rights realms (e.g., freedom of speech, freedom of religion) and reproductive rights in post-1978 China. Zhang 2007 describes one rural locale where some families with only a daughter have not been taking advantage of the policy allowing them to have a second child.

**Aird, John. *Slaughter of the Innocents: Coercive Birth Control in China*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute Press, 1990.**

The author, a longtime population specialist at the US Library of Congress, presents a bitter critique of the massive human rights abuses unleashed by the mandatory birth limits enforced in China.

**Chen, Guangcheng. *The Barefoot Lawyer: A Blind Man's Fight for Justice and Freedom in China*. New York: Henry Holt, 2015.**

This is an autobiography of a self-trained rural Chinese lawyer who was confined to house arrest, later imprisoned, and then subjected to renewed house arrest in his native village in eastern China as punishment for his advocacy for villager rights, particularly the right to be protected from coercive enforcement of mandatory birth limits. He escaped and went into exile in the United States in 2012.

**Greenhalgh, Susan. "Controlling Births and Bodies in Village China." *American Ethnologist* 21 (1994): 1–30.**

This article is based upon the fieldwork the author conducted in a rural area of Shaanxi Province in the mid-1980s. Here she describes the multiple abusive ways in which village women were treated to enforce birth limits, but she shows that the picture is more complicated, since women family planning workers were the main enforcers of that abuse.

**Osnos, Evan. "Abortion and Politics in China." *The New Yorker*, 15 June 2012.**

Journalist Osnos recounts here a coerced abortion case that became a sensation in China in 2012. Feng Jianmei, a twenty-three-year-old woman then seven months pregnant, was grabbed by local family planning workers, blindfolded, shoved into a van, and driven off to undergo a forced abortion. After an injection, what would have been her baby daughter was stillborn, and the body was then placed on the bed beside Feng, where her sister took the devastating photo of mother and dead daughter that, when posted online, went viral in China and around the world.

**VanderKlippe, Nathan. "The Ghost Children: In the Wake of China's One-Child Policy, a Generation Is Lost." *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 13 March 2015.**

Journalist VanderKlippe provides an in-depth account of the lives of what he terms "ghost children" (referred to in Chinese as *heiren heihu*, black person, black household), those who were born over mandatory birth limits and whose parents couldn't or didn't pay the substantial fines needed to obtain household registrations. Given the centrality of the *hukou* (household registration) system for gaining access to schooling, jobs, and much else in contemporary China, millions of such children and their families endured stunted lives.

**Whyte, Martin K. "Human Rights Trends and Coercive Family Planning in the PRC." *Issues and Studies* 34 (1998): 1–29.**

Sociologist Whyte considers the paradoxical situation in which human rights conditions in the realms that are most often emphasized in the West, particularly in regard to freedom of speech and freedom of religion, had improved markedly in the years after the death of Mao Zedong, but in regard to reproductive rights, the situation had deteriorated dramatically.

**Whyte, Martin K., and S. Z. Gu. "Popular Response to China's Fertility Transition." *Population and Development Review* 13 (1987): 471–493.**

The authors review results of local surveys conducted in the early 1980s that asked the politically sensitive question of how many babies families would like to have if there were no one-child policy. In almost all locales surveyed, the preferred family size was two, one son and one daughter, with few respondents expressing traditional desires for three or more children or for multiple sons. However, relatively few respondents expressed a preference to have only one child, the official limit.

**Zhang Hong. "From Resisting to 'Embracing?' The One-Child Rule: Understanding New Fertility Trends in a Central China Village." *The China Quarterly* 192 (2007): 855–875.**

Anthropologist Hong Zhang uses ethnographic data from a village in Hubei to show the sharp decline in fertility in that locale since 1970. Zhang notes a newly emerging pattern in which couples who married after 1990 mostly have had only one child, even if that child is a daughter and they would be allowed to have a second child. She describes the variety of factors that explain why the imperative to bear a son has sharply weakened in that village.

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## The Advantages and Disadvantages of Being a Chinese Singleton

Given the increasing share of Chinese children who are singletons in recent decades, debates have arisen about whether being raised as an only child is an advantage or is problematic, compared with being reared with siblings. In popular discussions, there are two types of fears about being a singleton that are emphasized. One is the "little emperor" syndrome, the idea that only children will be so spoiled by their parents that they will grow up with weak and selfish characters. The second, and somewhat contradictory, worry is that with only one child, parents will put on so much pressure to succeed that singletons may be prone to emotional distress, depression, or even suicide. Critics of these concerns argue that singletons on balance are likely to benefit and become more successful because of the concentration of parental attention and resources that the absence of siblings makes possible. Empirical research to test these competing claims is difficult because enforcement of the one-child limit has changed over time and varies from place to place and because the social backgrounds of only children tend to differ systematically from those with siblings. Jiao, et al. 1986 and Cameron, et al. 2013 are two studies that present data the authors interpret as supporting popular fears about the negative consequences of being raised without siblings. In contrast, research published by Toni Falbo and colleagues (Falbo, et al. 1996; Falbo and Hooper 2015), as well as Wu 1996 and Short, et al. 2013, come to very different conclusions. The latter studies find no significant differences between only children and children with siblings on many measures, but also some specific net advantages of being raised as a singleton. Fong 2004 is more focused on heavy family pressure and high expectations than on the coddling and spoiling of only children. On balance, Fong also sees more advantages than disadvantages of only children, particularly for urban only daughters who don't have to compete with, and sacrifice for, brothers. Some other studies focus on the implications of the one-child policy for daughters versus sons. Short, et al. 2001 reports that parental care provided to preschooler daughters is better in rural areas where a second child is allowed. Tsui and Rich 2002 studies

students in an urban lower middle school and finds no differences in performance or parental educational aspirations between only-daughter and only-son students. Xu 2017 reports research carried out in a preschool in Shanghai recently that focuses on parental concerns about how to provide only children with a moral compass to prepare them for life in a competitive and often amoral society.

**Cameron, L., N. Erkal, L. Gangadharan, and X. Meng. "Little Emperors: Behavioral Impacts of China's One-Child Policy." *Science* 339 (2013): 953–957.**

The authors tested Beijing youths born in several birth cohorts just before, and just after, the launch of the one-child policy using several games designed to detect differences in altruism, trust, competitiveness, and other desirable social behaviors. They interpret their results to indicate that Beijing youths born after the one-child policy was launched displayed less desirable social behaviors than those born before and that this effect was magnified if they ended up being an only child.

**Falbo, Toni, and S. Y. Hooper. "China's Only Children and Psychopathology: A Quantitative Synthesis." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 85 (2015): 259–274.**

This is a meta-analysis of twenty-two previously published studies that aimed to compare the mental health of only children with children raised with siblings. The authors conclude that, on balance, only children displayed small but significant advantages in terms of absence of depression and anxiety, in comparison with children raised with siblings. However, they caution that the underlying studies they are examining tend to use small convenience samples and may not accurately capture the experience of the overall youth population.

**Falbo, T., D. L. Poston, and X. Feng. "The Academic, Personality, and Physical Outcomes of Chinese Only Children: A Review." In *Growing Up the Chinese Way*. Edited by S. Lau, 265–286. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1996.**

This is a literature review of studies available at the time that compared only children with children with siblings. The authors critically examine prior studies that support the "little emperor" syndrome, and they note that in most studies, and on many different kinds of measures, there are not statistically significant differences between only children and children with siblings, while in some studies and on specific measures, only children score better. They conclude that popular fears of the "little emperor" syndrome are unwarranted.

**Fong, Vanessa. *Only Hope: Coming of Age under China's One-Child Policy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.**

This is a revision of the doctoral dissertation by Fong, which was based on months of living with families in Dalian City in northeastern China and tutoring their children in English. Fong used that fieldwork to vividly convey the results when parents have to invest all their hopes and dreams in one child, regardless of the child's gender. She particularly stresses the empowerment of daughters she attributes to the one-child policy, but she fails to acknowledge the gains urban girls had already made under socialism after the 1950s.

**Jiao, S. L., Q. P. Ji, and Q. C. Jing. "Comparative Study of Behavioral Qualities of Only Children and Sibling Children." *Child Development* 57 (1986): 357–361.**

This study is perhaps the one that provides the most support for the "little emperor" syndrome view of singletons. The authors compared children between the ages of four and ten from urban and suburban areas of Beijing using peer ratings of cooperativeness, leadership, and other desirable traits. When they analyzed a matched sample of only children and children with siblings from similar backgrounds, they reported consistent patterns in which the only children were rated less positively.

**Short, Susan, Zhai Fengying, Xu Siyuan, and Yang Mingliang. "China's One-Child Policy and the Care of Children: An Analysis of Qualitative and Quantitative Data." *Social Forces* 79 (2001): 913–943.**

The authors use data from the 1993 China Health and Nutrition Survey to compare the quality of parental care provided to preschooler sons versus to daughters. The measure of high-quality care they use is involvement of the father as well as the mother in providing care for

a particular child. They find that while the quality of parental care for sons does not vary depending upon local birth limits, daughters are more likely to get high-quality care in locales that allow a second birth if the firstborn is a daughter.

**Short, Susan, Hongwei Xu, and Ying Liu. "Little Emperors? Growing Up in China after the One-Child Policy." In *Whither the Child? Causes and Consequences of Low Fertility*. Edited by Eric Kaufmann and W. Bradford Wilcox, 95–112. Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2013.**

The authors use data from the China Health and Nutrition Survey in 2004 to compare only children and children with siblings on a wide variety of physical, health, family relationship, and other measures. They find that only children and children with siblings are similar on most of the measures they examine and that on a few measures singletons may be advantaged.

**Tsui Ming, and Lynne Rich. "The Only Child and Educational Opportunities for Girls in Urban China." *Gender and Society* 16 (2002): 74–92.**

The authors report results of a survey conducted in 1988–1989 among eighth-grade students in Wuhan who were only children. They conclude that in terms of both performance in school and parental educational aspirations, there were no significant differences between only sons and only daughters. As with Fong 2004, they interpret this equality as a product of the one-child policy while ignoring the progress made toward equal treatment of daughters and sons in the Mao era.

**Wu, David, "Parental Control: Psychocultural Interpretations of Chinese Patterns of Socialization." In *Growing Up the Chinese Way*. Edited by S. Lau, 1–28. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1996.**

Anthropologist Wu discusses research designed to compare Chinese only children with children raised with siblings. His results lead him to conclude that only children do not differ significantly from children raised with siblings on most measures. While Wu concludes that fears about the "little emperor" syndrome are unwarranted, Chinese parents mostly continue to display quite traditional Confucian patterns of child socialization emphasizing strict demands for obedience and high expectations, suggesting that the "only hope" syndrome focused on in Vanessa Fong's work may be more applicable to this study.

**Xu Jing. *The Good Child: Moral Development in a Chinese Preschool*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017.**

Anthropologist Jing Xu spent months doing fieldwork in a private preschool that her son attended in a middle-class neighborhood in Shanghai. This is an account focusing on concerns about how to provide moral training to preschoolers, almost all of them only children. Although the primary focus is on the dilemmas of moral training in a highly competitive and often amoral society, rather than on debates about being an only child, Xu's account clearly echoes the "only hope" syndrome stressed by Fong.

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## The Role of the One-Child Policy in China's Dramatic Fertility Decline

While it might seem obvious that the official campaign after 1980 to restrict Chinese families to only one child and to reinforce that lower limit with ramped up coercion would powerfully drive further fertility decline, the reality is more complex. Official government claims that the one-child campaign was responsible for averting at least 400 million births, claims often repeated by Western media, are highly exaggerated. Weighed against claims of the efficacy of the one-child campaign as the driver of China's decline to subreplacement fertility since are several realities: As noted earlier, most of the decline in China's fertility after 1970 occurred prior to the launching of the one-child policy; fertility rates actually rose rather than fell during the first half of the 1980s; and many countries in East Asia and elsewhere have experienced somewhat comparable fertility declines as a result of rapid economic development, without mandatory birth limits reinforced by state coercion. Some of the works listed in earlier sections of this review (especially Whyte, et al. 2015; Zhang 2017, both cited under Overviews of the One-Child Policy) present evidence on the relatively modest net role of the one-child campaign in explaining China's fertility reduction, but the sources listed here make the debate on this question their primary focus. Wolf 1986 argues that for many different aspects of Chinese family life, changes have been driven by state policies and their enforcement, rather than simply by economic and other institutional changes. Feeney and Wang 1993 uses data on marriage ages, birth spacing, and progression to higher birth parities to

compare the impact of the 1970s “later, longer, fewer” campaign and the one-child campaign. Chen, et al. 2009 uses provincial level data to compare the role of economic development versus one-child policy enforcement in explaining variations in when provinces reached subreplacement fertility. Cai 2010 is perhaps the most systematic examination of the relative roles of mandatory birth limits versus socioeconomic development in explaining the pattern of Chinese fertility decline since the 1970s. Hvistendahl 2017 discusses the controversy and widespread criticism generated by the publication of an article claiming that the one-child policy should be credited with averting an even larger number of additional births than the 400 million claimed in Chinese official accounts.

**Cai Yong. “China’s Below-Replacement Fertility: Government Policy or Socioeconomic Development?” *Population and Development Review* 36 (2010): 419–440.**

Demographer Yong Cai examines the patterns of fertility decline in China since the 1970s in comparison with the fertility trends in other countries, and he also compares fertility patterns across Chinese provinces. He concludes that while government birth policies were perhaps the primary driver of the dramatic decline in fertility that occurred during the 1970s, since then socioeconomic development has been the main cause of that country’s further fertility decline.

**Chen Jiajian, Robert Retherford, Minja Kim Choe, Li Xiru, and Hu Ying. “Province-Level Variation in the Achievement of Below-Replacement Fertility in China.” *Asian Population Studies* 5 (2009): 309–328.**

In this study the authors use the timing of when various Chinese provinces achieved sub-replacement level fertility (i.e., below total fertility rate = 2.1) and provincial fertility levels in 2000 to conclude that relative socioeconomic development is more important than variations in enforcement of the one-child policy in explaining patterns of fertility decline.

**Feeney, Griffith, and Wang Feng. “Parity Progression and Birth Intervals in China: The Influence of Policy in Hastening Fertility Decline.” *Population and Development Review* 19 (1993): 61–101.**

The authors use annual data on ages of marriage, birth intervals, and progression to higher birth parities since the 1970s, for China as a whole and for four specific provinces, to conclude that the “later, longer, fewer” campaign of the 1970s was more effective in changing marital and fertility behaviors than the later one-child policy was, thus reinforcing the conclusion of the declining role over time of official birth limits in reducing China’s fertility rate.

**Hvistendahl, Mara. “Analysis of China’s One-Child Policy Sparks Uproar.” *Science* 358 (2017): 283–284.**

Science journalist Mara Hvistendahl describes the controversy generated by the publication in 2017 in the journal *Demography* of an article by Daniel Goodkind claiming that the one-child policy should be credited with averting even more than 400 million extra births. Hvistendahl describes the angry criticisms this article generated, criticisms that include charges that Goodkind committed academic fraud and employed unrealistic but hidden statistical assumptions to arrive at his inflated estimates. Some of those criticisms, and Goodkind’s response, were published in a subsequent issue of *Demography*. (Because of the academic dishonesty charges, Goodkind’s article is not listed separately in this review.)

**Wolf, Arthur. “The Preeminent Role of Government Intervention in China’s Family Revolution.” *Population and Development Review* 12 (1986): 101–116.**

Anthropologist Arthur Wolf argues that the major changes that have taken place in Chinese family patterns since 1949 cannot be understood simply as occurring as citizens adjusted to the changing social and political order around them, and he concludes that state family policies and their enforcement must be central to that understanding.

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## Infant Abandonment, Orphanage Care, and Adoption of Abandoned Chinese Children

The one-child campaign led to a massive upsurge after the 1980s in the abandonment of Chinese infants, initially overwhelmingly baby girls. After 1984 most rural families were allowed two tries to bear a son, but for the roughly one-fourth of families whose two tries both produced daughters, this policy posed a cruel dilemma. If there was a third pregnancy they would at least be targeted with a substantial fine, if not coercive harassment or even a forced abortion. But if a daughter disappeared or died, perhaps they could try again for a son. This cruel dilemma led many families to abandon infant daughters. Most of the abandoned infants ended up in Chinese orphanages, which by the early 1990s were overwhelmed. This situation became a public scandal when a BBC documentary crew used hidden cameras to document the neglect and abuse of infants housed in Chinese orphanages and in 1995 aired a documentary provocatively entitled *The Dying Rooms*. Even prior to the controversy generated by that documentary, one way Chinese orphanages reduced the pressure on their facilities and raised funds was to allow foreigners to adopt Chinese orphans. Over time, more than 120,000 Chinese children, overwhelmingly girls, have been adopted abroad, and some loosening of regulations has produced much higher numbers of domestic adoptions in recent years. After the mid-1990s, Chinese orphanage conditions have improved due to increased government funding, staffing, and inspections as well as to private and even foreign funding and volunteering. However, the primary reason for the improvement has probably been the reduced intake pressures resulting from widespread resort to sex-selective abortions. In recent times, most Chinese orphanages house fewer abandoned children, have a more equal balance of boys and girls, and have a high proportion of children with cleft palates, club feet, or other health problems. Thurston 1996 relays observations the author made during visits to one orphanage that revealed conditions that echo *The Dying Rooms*. Johnson 2004 and Johnson 2016 use the author's years of fieldwork and interviewing to portray the cruel dilemmas faced by rural parents as well as the abusive treatment of Chinese families that take in and try to adopt a baby left on their doorstep. Zhang 2006 is an examination of what sort of Chinese families are most likely to adopt a daughter. Xinran 2010 presents the heartbreaking testimonies of women who had abandoned a daughter. Wang 2016 is an account of Chinese orphanages in recent times based upon fieldwork and volunteering in Chinese orphanages. Shang and Fisher 2014 is a more general study of the Chinese child welfare system and how the care for abandoned children in orphanages has improved over time. Evans 2000 is an account by an American journalist who adopted a Chinese daughter of the complexities of international adoptions and of the mixing of two cultures that results.

**Evans, Karin. *The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2000.**

Journalist Karin Evans uses her own personal experience adopting a daughter from China in 1997 as the narrative device for this treatment of the process and experience of adopting from China, the immersion of adoptees into American society and culture, and discussions and debates about how much and how to try to maintain Chinese cultural awareness in the lives of Chinese adopted daughters.

**Johnson, Kay Ann. *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son: Abandonment, Adoption, and Orphanage Care in China*. Minneapolis: Yeong and Yeong, 2004.**

Political scientist Kay Ann Johnson has spent many years and countless interviewing hours carrying out a unique and very difficult program of research. At the center of this research program is an effort to understand why and how rural families decided to abandon their infant daughters. As the title of this book suggests, her research indicates that rural families value their daughters as well as their sons, and when they decide to abandon a daughter it is due to hard economic realities, rather than gender bias. She also vividly conveys how village families agonize and grieve over this decision.

**Johnson, Kay Ann. *China's Hidden Children: Abandonment, Adoption, and the Human Costs of the One-Child Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.**

This book by Johnson continues the themes of her earlier work while also focusing on families who have found or had left on their doorstep an abandoned infant. She vividly conveys how arbitrary and coercive enforcement of the one-child policy impacts even domestic would-be adopting families, forcing them to pay large fines if they want to keep and adopt a child or even resulting in the seizing of their child, to be transported to an orphanage and prepared to be sent off into life with yet another new family, this one overseas.

**Shang Xiaoyuan, and Karen R. Fisher. *Caring for Orphaned Children in China*. New York: Lexington Books, 2014.**

Two social policy researchers based in Australia present a general overview of the structures and policies regarding the welfare of Chinese children and how these are translated into the practices of Chinese orphanages and alternative care institutions in recent years. The authors emphasize how much greater effort has been devoted in recent years to the welfare of orphans and how much the conditions in orphanages have improved since the scandal provoked by *The Dying Rooms* documentary.

**Thurston, Anne. "In a Chinese Orphanage." *The Atlantic Monthly* 277 (April 1996): 28–41.**

Political scientist and China scholar Anne Thurston presents an account of a series of visits she paid to one Chinese orphanage in 1994. By the time this article was published, the documentary *The Dying Rooms* had been aired, and the conditions Thurston reported were similar and disturbing. Her article notes that child abandonment and overcrowded orphanages were not uncommon in the early modern West, but she also ponders why the deplorable conditions she observed in one Chinese orphanage were allowed to continue.

**Wang, Leslie. *Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016.**

Sociologist Leslie Wang presents a picture of the conditions in Chinese orphanages in recent years and the preparation of abandoned children for adoption domestically as well as internationally, a picture based in part on extensive interviewing and the experiences of foreign and nongovernmental organization volunteer workers in several such orphanages.

**Xinran. *Message from an Unknown Chinese Mother: Stories of Loss and Love*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2010.**

This is a book by a Chinese journalist now living in London that contains the anguished accounts of the grief suffered by ten Chinese mothers who either abandoned a baby daughter, gave a daughter up for adoption, or had a newborn daughter seized and drowned. These are more extended and impassioned accounts of the same type of parental anguish described in Johnson 2004 and Johnson 2016.

**Zhang Weiguo. "Who Adopts Girls and Why? Domestic Adoption of Female Children in Contemporary Rural China." *The China Journal* 56 (2006): 63–82.**

The author used several stints of sociological fieldwork to investigate patterns of (mostly informal) adoption of daughters by rural Chinese families. The author's conclusion is that several kinds of families are quite willing to adopt girls, particularly families with no children and families with only a son.

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## **Distortion of Sex Ratios at Birth: Missing Girls and "Bare Sticks"**

In China during imperial times female infanticide was not uncommon. This practice produced a marriage imbalance, with virtually all women getting married, but with many men unable to find brides and derisively called "bare sticks." During the early decades of the People's Republic, China's sex ratios at birth (SRB) normalized to the ratios that are observed universally around the world—with 103 to 106 boys born for every 100 girls. However, with the imposition of mandatory birth limits, and particularly under the one-child policy, China's SRB climbed to as high as 115 to 120 boys per 100 girls, leading some analysts to estimate that by 2019 China had 30 million or more extra males, a new generation of "bare sticks." The dramatic increase in excess male births (or "missing girls") has given rise to two types of research questions. Some researchers are primarily concerned with examining variations in excess male births (or missing females). One particular debate is how much of the total number of missing girls can be accounted for by three different explanations: by female neglect and infanticide, by sex-selective abortions, or by "hidden girls"—daughters who were born and survive, but who were concealed by parents and not given household registrations. Johansson and Nygren 1991 is an early attempt to estimate and explain the reported number of "missing girls" generated by the first decade of the one-child campaign. Chu 2001 presents evidence on the primary explanation of China's missing girls in one rural area—sex-selective abortions. (The Chinese government as early as 1986 declared the use of modern technology for prenatal sex determination leading to sex-selective abortions to be illegal, but nonetheless this practice became widespread by the 1990s.) Coale and Banister 1994 presents data showing the normalization of China's SRB after 1949 and then the dramatic rise since the 1980s. Cai and Lavelly 2003 uses comparisons of data from the 1990 and 2000 censuses to estimate what proportion of the girls counted



as missing were truly missing and what proportion were alive but hidden. Cai 2014 updates the earlier analyses by Cai and Lavelly by using the 2010 census and other data to estimate the actual number of missing girls (or excess males) in 2010. Shi and Kennedy 2016 relies in part on rural fieldwork to argue that the majority of the reported missing girls are actually hidden and not truly missing. The second topic of scholarly analyses generated by China's gender imbalance is more concerned with the social consequences of the distortion of sex ratios at birth. Since this second strand of research involves more speculation about the future (except regarding the obvious marriage difficulties of the new generation of "bare sticks"), this strand of research receives less attention here. But Poston, et al. 1991 discusses the danger that millions of excess males will lead to social problems, such as abduction of women and increases in sexually transmitted diseases, as well as to the possibility that large numbers of unmarried men will foster aggressive and even militaristic behavior. Duflo 2008 discusses another potential problem that the large number of new "bare sticks" may contribute to: rising crime rates.

**Cai Yong. "China's Demographic Challenges: Gender Imbalance." In *China's Challenges*. Edited by Jacques DeLisle and Avery Goldstein, 60–82. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.**

Cai updates the earlier analyses by Cai and Lavelly 2003 using data from China's 2010 census and other sources to estimate that in that year there were at least 22 million girls in the cohorts born since 1980 who were truly missing, rather than hidden. His estimates are consistent with a projection of at least 30 million truly missing girls in China as of 2019, although he ends the paper by discussing hopeful signs that China's SRB may start declining in coming years.

**Cai Yong, and William Lavelly. "China's Missing Girls: Numerical Estimates and Effects on Population Growth." *The China Review* 3 (2003): 13–29.**

Demographers Cai and Lavelly use comparisons of the counts in the 1990 and 2000 censuses in their effort to distinguish how many of the missing girls officially reported are truly missing, and how many are alive but hidden. They concluded that roughly two-thirds of the reported missing girls were truly missing, but perhaps as many as one-third were alive but hidden and not counted.

**Chu Junhong. "Prenatal Sex Determination and Sex-Selective Abortion in Rural Central China." *Population and Development Review* 27 (2001): 259–281.**

The author, who grew up in a farming family, did fieldwork and interviewing in 2000 in one rural locale in central China, and this article presents a descriptive overview of the awareness of villagers about how to arrange a sex-selective abortion and how prevalent this behavior had become in that locality.

**Coale, Ansley, and Judith Banister. "Five Decades of Missing Females in China." *Demography* 31 (1994): 459–479.**

Demographers Coale and Banister present systematic data on trends in the SRB in post-1949 China, data showing the normalization of sex ratios during the 1950s and then the rising imbalance in recent decades.

**Duflo, Esther. "Too Many Boys . . ." *VOX* 18 August 2008.**

Economist Esther Duflo in this brief article discusses the distorted sex ratios at birth in China in recent years and the possible social problems that this imbalance may lead to, with a particular focus on contributing to rising crime rates.

**Johansson, Sten, and Ola Nygren. "The Missing Girls of China: A New Demographic Account." *Population and Development Review* 17 (1991): 35–51.**

The authors present estimates of the number of "missing girls" in each birth year during the 1980s. They use reported figures on adoptions in each year in their effort to adjust for "hidden girls," but conclude that the sex ratios in the 1980s remained higher than normal. The reported sex ratios during the 1980s that they display are considerably below the distorted levels reported in the years since.

**Poston, Dudley, Eugenia Conde, and Bethany DeSalvo. "China's Unbalanced Sex Ratio at Birth, Millions of Excess Bachelors and Societal Implications." *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies* 6 (1991): 314–320.**

The authors provide their own estimates of the number of excess men in China in recent years, which they claim may be as many as 40 million. They also warn that such large numbers of unmarriageable men may foster several negative consequences, such as the increasing spread of sexually transmitted diseases and a rising national tendency for aggressive or even militaristic behavior. Other sources in this section suggest that their numerical estimate is too high, and that the dire implications drawn are questionable.

**Shi Yaojiang, and John James Kennedy. "Delayed Registration and Identifying the 'Missing Girls' in China." *The China Quarterly* 228 (2016): 1018–1038.**

The authors, relying both on rural fieldwork and their examination of Chinese census data, claim that estimates by others of the number of missing girls are inflated, and that probably more than 70 percent are living but hidden daughters. A subsequent issue *The China Quarterly* published a critique by Yong Cai of this article (Yong Cai, "Missing Girls or Hidden Girls? A Comment on Shi and Kennedy's 'Delayed Registration and Identifying the 'Missing Girls' in China,'" *The China Quarterly* 231 [2017]: 797–803, Cai contended that Shi and Kennedy's analysis of hidden girls was deeply flawed and that in recent years the proportion of hidden girls remains a minority of the missing girl totals, not a majority. Shi and Kennedy responded in the same issue of the journal (Shi Yaojiang and John James Kennedy, "Missing Girls, Indirect Measures and Critical Assumptions: A Response to Yong Cai's Comments," *The China Quarterly* 231 [2017]: 804–810).

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## **Looming Demographic Challenges: Rapid Population Aging and Young Worker Shortages**

Even as whether to impose a one-child birth limit was being debated in the late 1970s and then as the one-child campaign was being launched nationally in 1980, some Chinese demographers raised strong objections, particularly pointing to the future difficulties that would be caused by accelerated aging of the population and the difficult eldercare burdens that would fall on Chinese singletons. Champions of the one-child policy acknowledged these criticisms, but brushed them aside as problems that could be dealt with in the future. But the critics did not go away, and in the years from about 2000 onward, as evidence of the rapid aging of China and also the looming shrinking of the pool of new workers mounted, criticisms of the one-child policy revived and became more pronounced and visible, eventually helping to pressure the CCP to finally end the one-child limit after thirty-five years. The works listed in this section are a few of the English-language research reports that focus on the demographic distortions produced by the one-child limit (distortions that include the skewed sex ratios that were the focus of the previous section *Distortion of Sex Ratios at Birth: Missing Girls and "Bare Sticks"*). Yan 2003 presents a reminder that other trends were already threatening the tradition of relying on grown children for eldercare in rural China prior to the maturation of children born in the one-child era. Chen and Fan 2018 reports that for those born during the 1970s, the mandatory birth limits of the "later, longer, fewer" campaign have translated into higher rates of emotional distress of the elderly today in localities where that campaign was enforced most strictly. Zimmer and Kwong 2003 and Poston and Duan 2000 are both concerned with making projections of the future familial support problems that China's growing elderly population can expect to face. Zhang 2005 describes how parents in one rural locale are seeking strategies to enable them to survive even if they do not have a grown son to support them in old age. Pang, et al. 2004 presents survey data showing that increasingly rural parents feel they have to keep working and earning as long as they are able, given the unpredictability of support from grown children. Wang 2011 takes a wider view, focusing not only on problems of supporting the rapidly growing proportion of China's population who are elderly, but also the mounting challenges China is now facing as the number of new workers has begun to decline. Wang and Cai 2019 projects the crippling financial burden of welfare expenditures on the government in the future due to rapid population aging. Davis 2016 takes a still broader focus than Wang 2011, examining not only the problems associated with the rapid aging of the population and the decline in young workers, but also the marriage difficulties faced by millions of excess males, rising divorce rates, and rapid urbanization of the population.

**Chen Yi, and Hanming Fan. "How Family Planning Policies Reshape the Life of the Chinese Elderly" *VOX*, 2 October 2018.**

Economists Chen and Fan use data on variations in enforcement of the mandatory birth limits of the "later, longer, fewer" campaign during the 1970s to examine the impact on the physical and mental health of Chinese born during those years. They conclude that, while the vigor of birth limit enforcement in the 1970s is not associated with variations in physical health today, those most exposed to that campaign do report more symptoms of emotional distress currently.

**Davis, Deborah. "Demographic Challenges for a Rising China." *Daedalus* 143 (2016): 26–38.**

Sociologist Davis discusses the positive role in China's rapid economic development since 1978 played by favorable demography (particularly the "demographic dividend" produced prior to 2000 by increasing numbers of new workers each year while there were still relatively few elderly Chinese needing support) and then the post-2000 elimination of this favorable situation and the rising demographic challenges China now faces. Those challenges include rapid population aging, shrinkage in the numbers of new workers, many men who will not be able to marry, rising divorce rates, and the difficulties of absorbing large numbers of rural to urban migrants.

**Pang Lihua, Alan de Brauw, and Scott Rozelle. "Working until You Drop: The Elderly of Rural China." *The China Journal* 52 (2004): 73–84.**

The authors use survey data to emphasize that increasingly aging parents in rural China feel they have to keep working and being economically self-reliant as long as they are able because they cannot count on support in old age from a grown child or children.

**Poston, Dudley, and Chengrong Charles Duan. "The Current and Projected Distribution of the Elderly and Eldercare in China." *Journal of Family Issues* 21 (2000): 714–732.**

The authors examine figures on the proportion of the elderly in China in 1999, the proportion of elderly projected up to the year 2050, and similar estimates of the trend in the aged dependency ratio (ADR)—the number of people over age sixty compared with the number in the fifteen to fifty-nine age range. They conclude that by the middle of the 21st century China will have a significantly higher ADR than the United States and other rich countries.

**Wang Feng. "The Future of a Demographic Overachiever: Long-Term Implications of the Demographic Transition in China." *Population and Development Review* 37 Supp. (2011): 173–190.**

This article presents an overview of the favorable demographic trends of earlier decades. The article goes on, as Davis 2016 does, to stress the increasing difficulties China now faces, particularly from rapid population aging and the decline of new entrants into the labor force, as well as the need for China to devote more financial and organizational resources into public alternatives to eldercare provided by families, in a context in which increasing numbers of elderly Chinese may outlive their only child.

**Wang Feng, and Yong Cai. "China Isn't Having Enough Babies" *The New York Times* 26 February 2019.**

After summarizing the declines in Chinese births since the one-child policy was ended in 2016, the authors make projections of the cost of public spending on education, healthcare, and pensions in future years. They estimate that if current benefit levels are maintained, by 2050 China will have to spend 23 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on public welfare, and if benefit levels increase to the current levels of high income countries, public welfare expenditures would consume 32 percent of GDP by 2050—levels that are clearly unsustainable.

**Yan Yunxiang. *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949–1999*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.**

Anthropologist Yunxiang Yan summarizes his ethnographic fieldwork in a village in Heilongjiang Province in the 1990s. Chapter 7 emphasizes that even before the coming of age of the small birth cohorts of the one-child era, many rural elderly were already very anxious about how they would fare in their old age due to other trends. Particularly worrisome was the fact that they had emerged from decollectivization during the early 1980s without any meaningful property they could pass on to their children. Also, many young people began migrating into the cities to find work, leaving their parents living alone and dependent upon uncertain remittances from migrant offspring.

**Zhang Hong. "Bracing for an Uncertain Future: A Case Study of New Coping Strategies of Rural Parents under China's Birth Control Policy." *The China Journal* 54 (2005): 53–76.**

The author of this study, based upon fieldwork in a village in Hubei Province at the turn of the millennium, describes the anxious search of rural parents for alternatives to the traditional pattern of relying on support from grown sons in old age. The alternatives include relying on support from a co-resident daughter and son-in-law, investing heavily in any child they raise in the hope that this investment will be reciprocated later, and preparing to continue laboring and earning as long as they are physically able.

**Zimmer, Zachary, and Julia Kwong. "Family Size and Support for Older Adults in Urban and Rural China: Current Effects and Future Implications." *Demography* 40.1 (2003): 23–44.**

The authors use data from a survey conducted in 1993 to examine whether the amount of familial support aging parents receive increases in proportion to the number of their grown children and whether the support they receive from other sources correspondingly decreases. Their survey confirms these associations, although they caution that the associations are not linear, with elderly with three or more children not receiving that much more familial support than those with one or two.

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## **The Ending of the One-Child Policy in 2015**

As noted at the outset, the Chinese leadership announced in 2015 that the one-child policy would be ended, with families allowed to have two children starting in 2016. There are two kinds of writings stimulated by that decision. The first involves discussions of the history of the one-child campaign and details on what led up to, and prompted, the decision to finally end the one-child limit. The second type of writing involves discussions of whether the lifting of the one-child limit would lead to, or since 2016 has led to, increases in Chinese births (and if not, why not). Hvistendahl 2010 discusses the vigorous and sustained research efforts and lobbying by a group of about two dozen Chinese demographers, starting in 2000 (and not yet successful at that time this piece was published) to convince China's leadership to end the one-child policy. Scharping 2019 presents a historical overview of the one-child policy, and the author describes the criticisms by Chinese demographers of that campaign and the multiple and gradually more visible and publicized efforts of critics in later years that eventually helped influence the CCP's 2015 decision. Wang, et al. 2016 comments on the final ending of an unnecessary and harmful policy. Fincher 2018 discusses why many Chinese women are not all that eager to have a second child even though this is now allowed.

**Fincher, Leta Hong. "China Dropped its One-Child Policy. So Why Aren't Chinese Women Having More Babies?." *The New York Times* 20 February 2018.**

This is a brief op-ed piece by sociologist Leta Hong Fincher in which she describes the considerable reluctance of Chinese women in 2016 and 2017 regarding having a second child. Fincher also points to the irony that Chinese women may go from being abused to enforce the one-child limit to now being subjected to harassment and pressure to get them to have another baby.

**Hvistendahl, Mara. "Has China Outgrown the One-Child Policy?" *Science* 329 (2010): 1458–1461.**

Hvistendahl focuses on a group of about two dozen Chinese demographers who had been trying for years to get the one-child campaign ended. They had conducted research to demonstrate that if the one-child limit was eliminated, there would not be a new baby boom, and they also made projections of the growing problems of support for the elderly. Two appeals they had made to the Chinese leadership, in 2004 and 2009, were unsuccessful. (A third appeal in 2015 may have contributed to the ending of the program later that year.)

**Scharping, Thomas. "Abolishing the One-Child Policy: Stages, Issues, and the Political Process." *Journal of Contemporary China* 28 (2019): 327–347.**

This article, based mostly on Chinese documentary sources, discusses the origins of the one-child policy and criticisms raised from the outset about the future demographic distortions that such a drastic limit would lead to. The bulk of the article is then devoted to following

how these criticisms of the one-child limit were revived and became increasingly pointed and publicly aired after 2000—not only the criticisms raised by the group of demographers focused on by Hvistendahl 2010, but also by other influential critics.

**Wang Feng, Baochang Gu, and Yong Cai. “The End of China’s One-Child Policy.” *Studies in Family Planning* 47 (2016): 83–86.**

In this brief commentary, three distinguished demographers discuss the ending of the one-child limit and ponder why it took so long to end such a misguided and harmful policy.

**Zhao Zhongwei. “Closing a Sociodemographic Chapter of Chinese History.” *Population and Development Review* 41 (2015): 681–686.**

This is a very brief research note that covers the history of the one-child policy, the debates that contributed to the termination of that policy, and the likely impact on Chinese birth rates. Zhao joins other analysts in doubting that the lifting of the one-child limit will do much to increase China’s birth rate.

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## The Demographic, Historical, and Political Legacy of China’s One-Child Policy

Now that the one-child limit has been eliminated, analysts are pondering the impact of that policy change as well as the long-term legacy of China’s enforcement of mandatory birth limits. One set of debates concerns whether the lifting of the one-child limit will lead to an increase in China’s birth rate. While it is still early, the results as of 2019 have been disappointing for those who want fertility rates in China to rise. Zeng and Hesketh 2016 predicted that the ending of the policy would not lead to much of an increase in the birth rate but would have several other beneficial consequences. Liang and Huang 2019 notes that after a small increase in births in 2016, the number of babies declined in 2017 and fell even more sharply in 2018. Greenhalgh 2017 weighs the modest net impact of the one-child limit on reducing fertility in China since 1980 against the coercion and suffering that were involved, while also warning about some challenges and unresolved problems left over after the ending of the policy. Writing a few years before the one-child limit was ended, Wang, et al. 2013 demonstrates that the commonly stated claim that the campaign averted over 400 million births is greatly exaggerated, while the harm done to China by demographic distortions and human suffering has been enormous, leading the authors to conclude that the launching and continued enforcement of the one-child limit was an unnecessary and very costly blunder that history will judge harshly. Greenhalgh 2010 presents a forceful argument that by focusing mainly on state coercion and the harmful consequences of the one-child policy, we are ignoring a more important set of trends: how after 2000 and in the wake of lowered popular fertility rates, China’s rulers have emphasized new forms of population governance designed to enhance the quality of its citizenry and make China more able to compete on the global stage.

**Greenhalgh, Susan. *Cultivating Global Citizens: Population in the Rise of China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.**

In this volume Susan Greenhalgh argues that a focus on state coercion and the harmful effects of the one-child policy misses an important story. The population policies of China’s government have evolved as fertility rates and family size desires have declined. At least since 2000, much official effort has been devoted to promoting population quality rather than simply restricting quantity. Through increased investments in education, healthcare, and welfare, as well as through promotion of “good mothers” and “quality children,” these efforts have encouraged individuals and families to devote ever greater energy to producing offspring who will be well-equipped to compete on the global stage. These new forms of population governance, as much as market reforms and state economic guidance, help explain China’s growing role in the world.

**Greenhalgh, Susan. “Why Does the End of the One-Child Policy Matter?.” In *The China Questions: Critical Insights into a Rising Power*. Edited by Jennifer Rudolph and Michael Szonyi, 183–190. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.**

Susan Greenhalgh joins other analysts in arguing that the damages done to China by enforcement of the one-child limit outweigh the contribution of that campaign to producing a reduced but healthier and better educated population. She also observes that reproductive freedom has not improved much, with the state still intent on manipulating families and fertility, while serious problems generated by

campaign enforcement, such as over-quota “black children” who are denied access to schools and jobs and millions of excess males, have yet to be addressed.

**Liang Jianzhang, and Huang Wenzhang. “China’s Demographic Crisis is a Reality.” *The Sixth Tone* 15 February, 2019.**

The authors note that the number of Chinese births fell 3.5 percent between 2016 and 2017, and then by more than 11 percent between 2017 and 2018. The 2018 total of 15.23 million births was the lowest total since 1961, and they argue that never again will there be as many as 15 million births in China in any year.

**Wang Feng, Yong Cai, and Baochang Gu. “Population, Policy, and Politics: How Will History Judge China’s One-Child Policy?” *Population and Development Review* 38 Supp. (2013): 115–129.**

The authors present an overview of the legacy of the one-child policy. After noting how unprecedented was China’s effort to restrict families to one birth, they present data that demonstrate that the claim that the policy averted 400 million additional births is vastly inflated, and they show that many other countries in the same period experienced sharp fertility declines without coercive enforcement of mandatory birth limits. Their conclusion is that the launching of the one-child campaign was an unnecessary and very costly policy blunder, one that has saddled China with multiple serious demographic challenges.

**Zeng Yi, and Therese Hesketh. “The Effects of China’s Universal Two-Child Policy.” *The Lancet* 388 (2016): 1930–1938.**

As the two-child policy was going into effect, Zeng and Hesketh published this analysis of future trends. They argued that the lifting of the one-child limit was likely to have at most only a small effect in terms of increased births, but that it likely would have other beneficial consequences, such as a decline in forced abortions, a trend toward more normal sex ratios at birth, and a reduction in the numbers of unregistered children. They joined others in warning that China needs to take major steps to prepare to meet the needs of the country’s rapidly growing elderly population.

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