The One-child Policy and Gender Bias in China: A Review of Recent Literature

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Abstract
The one-child policy, according to Andrew Mullen, China’s one-child policy requires most couples to have only one child. China’s one-child policy was rolled out in 1980 by Deng Xiaoping and was strictly enforced after the population had increased to 969 million in 1980 from around 540 million in 1949. The policy is implemented by the National Health and Family Planning Commission. Violators will be fined and usually forced abortion. People and historians have been mixed about the impact of this policy on China. According to Vanessa L. Fong in his book Only Hope: Coming of Age Under China’s One-Child Policy, China’s total fertility rate was 5.8 births per woman in 1980, China’s total fertility rate was down to 2.3 births of the one-child policy. Rosemary and Jiali investigated the implementation of the effect of the policy in Hebei province, according to his research, we can know that only 22.1% of the women accepted the “one child” certificate, which reflects the couple’s intention to comply with the “one child” policy, which is quite low in view of the numerous incentives for accepting the certificate and the negative sanctions for unauthorized second births. In this paper, I read many literatures about the one-child policy, and found something I deem important changes under the policy implementation, at the same time, to express some opinions from it.

Keywords
The one-child policy, Influence, Benefits

1. Introduction
The research constructed by Tsui, M and Rich, L. (2002) shows that the policy has been more successful in urban areas. In 1970, urban fertility was 3.27, and in 1980, one year after the implementation of the policy, it dropped to 1.15 (Beijing Review, 1995; Goldstein, 1996). In major cities such as Shanghai, Tianjin, and Beijing, the one-child rates (the percentage of all births that are first-parity births) ranged between 86 and 96 percent in 1990. This paper will analyze the cause and estimate the extent of the impact of the one-child policy on Chinese gender equality through the current literature review. All the papers are listed chronologically.

2. Summary
As can be seen from the table in the Findings part, the impact of the implementation of the one-child policy was different according to the development degree of the region. Also, researchers always have different opinions about the one-child policy on gender issues, which were displayed in No.1,2,3,4,5,6,8,9,10. And the following is my own perspective on the one-child policy after the review:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Main finding</th>
<th>Impact (negative/positive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.1</td>
<td>LUCY C. YU, YANJU YU, PHYLLIS KERNOFF MANSFIELD</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>The one-child policy is related to the improved status of women in creating an economic situation</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.2</td>
<td>Terence H. Hull</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>The three explanations for missing girls both illustrate that the policy cannot achieve its purpose</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.3</td>
<td>JOHN R. LOGAN, FUQIN BIAN, YANJIE BIAN</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>When all children are only children there is much greater pressure for every child to live with a parent.</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.4</td>
<td>Susan E. Short, Zhai-Fengying, Xu Siyuan, and Yang Mingliang</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>There are indeed effects of the one-child policy on girls’ well-being</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.5</td>
<td>Vanessa L. Fong</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>The effects of China’s one-child policy on mothers are equivocal</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.6</td>
<td>Ming Tsui and Lynne Rich</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>At least under the current social and economic conditions in big Chinese cities, the one-child policy is beneficial to the education of girls</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.7</td>
<td>Yilin Nie and Robert J. Wyman</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The policy was implemented smoothly and thoroughly in Shanghai</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.8</td>
<td>Fuhua Zhai and Zhai Gao</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The findings clearly showed that children without siblings (i.e., only children) were more likely to receive center-based care than their peers who had siblings</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.9</td>
<td>Sung-won Kim and Vanessa L. Fong</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>The findings clearly showed that children without siblings were more likely to receive center-based care than their peers who had siblings</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.10</td>
<td>Zhihe Wang, Ming Yang, Jiaming Zhang, and Jiang Chang</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>The one-child policy was far from a panacea, it is time to end this policy.</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.11</td>
<td>Juhua Yang</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Husbands’ greater involvement in housework and childcare are both positively associated with a higher risk of wanting another child</td>
<td>Cause of the policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.12</td>
<td>Xiaoying Qi</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>The one-child policy disrupts the practice of providing to a child his/her father’s surname. So daughter-only families increasingly adopt Zhao-xu (uxorilocal marriage) to prevent the loss of property from their family line through inheritance</td>
<td>Indeterminate (complex)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The one-child policy benefits Chinese females and reduces gender inequality since only children especially females exhibit significantly higher creativity than children with siblings and it can help achieve gender equality in education although it may have some limitations such as uneven distribution of implementation, imbalance gender ratio, and the exacerbation of gender discrimination, there can be method and evidence to mitigate or eliminate them.

The one-child policy not only changes the family size but also influences family interactions, which increases the creative abilities of the OCP generation (Yang et al., 2017). One specific focus of sibling research was the comparison between only children and children with siblings. By using 5 DT tests as creativity measures, Runco and Bahleda (1987) found that only children produced the highest scores when compared to other birth order counterparts. In addition, Lichtenwalner and Maxwell (1969) tested the creativity of kindergarten children and found that only children and eldest children showed higher and stronger creativity than their later siblings. As more and more people investigated the topic, people found a negative relationship between the creativity level and the number of children a family has. Based on the previous data, Jiajun Guo, Shengjie Lin and Yawei Guo constructed a one-sample test and generated the hypothesis that in China, only daughters generally score higher in tests of creative potential than daughters in sibling families. Differences were found between only daughters and later daughters, as hypothesized, but not between only daughters and first daughters (ranges from .673 to 1.939, with p > .05). Finally, the results yielded an unexpected finding that the only daughters also scored significantly higher than the first sons on the DT task. Thus, the study suggests that the one-child advantage may be more pronounced among only daughters. The reason behind this is that: only daughters are in a position to enjoy all the resources from their four grandparents and two parents, and such abundant resources may promote creativity, which does not apply to later daughters. Based on all the data shown above, there is no doubt that girls benefit more from the one-child policy.

Moreover, the one-child policy can help achieve gender equality for females in education. Throughout Chinese history, females always received fewer educational opportunities than men. Having a brother will reduce the likelihood of a girl enrolling in senior high school and college, which indicates gender inequality in education (Bauer et al.). Zhou, Moen & Brandon Tuma found an increasing gender gap in senior high shock and college enrollments. Ming Tsui and Lynne Rich (2002) collected 1040 data from three different high schools in Wuhan and constructed several hypotheses and tests using two dependent variables (math scores and students’ educational aspirations). The results show that more than 80% of parents want their only child to have a college degree or higher. Table 1 shows that parents of female-only children spend more on education (M=3.9) than do parents of male-only children (M=3.7). The one-child policy helped raise the status of daughters in the family and encouraged parents to have higher expectations for their children’s education, regardless of their gender. If there are more children in the household, household spending will be less generous and spending on girls will drop dramatically.

However, people will still argue about the limitations the one-child policy contains, researchers have found data and evidence to show it is not the situation and the one-child policy still brings more benefits than disadvantages to China. Some people may argue that the one-child policy was not implemented evenly and that only certain areas in China have adopted the policy smoothly. Jiali Li said in his study that the one-child policy was highly effective only among women with a worker registration, who had higher status and were under greater government control. The majority of Chinese women were members of households registered as peasants and may have more than one baby without a birth permit. Nonetheless, according to L. Remez (1991), although the vast majority of rural women in Jilin province who took part in the survey thought that having two children was the ideal scenario, they considered it less than they had previously thought and the total fertility rate in that province was only 1.02 children per woman. And about 84% of women with one child in the area will consider contraceptive behavior. Considering the results from L. Remez’s research, the uneven implementation of the one-child policy is not the true situation in China. And there was also an update about the one-child policy that allows urban residents to have one child and rural residents to have a second if the first was a girl. After the revision, the implementation of the one-child policy was highly efficient and accepted by all families in China, where the publisher of the policy: The Communist Party held absolute power among workers and farmers.

Some people mention the uneven gender ratio after the implementation of the one-child policy. Many economists and demographers argue that the one-child policy has been the major reason for the increase in sex ratios in China (Ebenstein, 2009; Li, 2002; Das Gupta, 2005; Zeng et al., 1993). The drop in fertility caused by the one-child policy, due to a preference for boys and sex-selection techniques, will itself lead to an increase in the sex ratio. Using the 1990 census, we find that strict enforcement of the one-child policy during the 1980s resulted in 4.4 additional
boys per 100 girls, about 94 percent of the increase in the total sex ratio during this period (Li, H., Yi, J., & Zhang, J., 2010). This imbalance may lead to social issues such as the decrease in the labor force, acceleration of the speed of aging, women becoming vulnerable groups, and so on (Avraham Ebenstein). But on the other side, this phenomenon will give girls more power for their role in their families and society, which will decrease the gender inequality in China at that time. Male-dominated demographic patterns may contribute to women’s status as “rare” resources in the social sphere (such as in the marriage market) (Greenhalgh, 2012). If there are more men than women, it is expected that the tables would turn and it would be women’s turn to pick and choose. Women might use their scarcity as leverage to negotiate for an uxorilocal marriage. According to Lawrence K. Hong, if there are more men than women, then it’s the women’s turn to pick and select. Women may use their material scarcity as a bargaining chip. Moreover, according to Lawrence K. Hong, there are more potential benefits for women under the one-child policy such as more time and opportunity to search for jobs and education. Therefore, an important consequence of the one-child policy is that it would reduce gender inequality and improve women's social status.

The one-child policy fits China from different perspectives; this is because China has certain conditions. Due to the historical background (Tien, 1991), its demographic impact (Feeney & Wang, 1993), the relative effect of policy and economic development (Poston & Gu, 1987); The promotion of family control mechanisms (Cooney & Li, 1994), economic disincentives (Kaufman et al., 1989) and other more persuasive methods (Mosher 1983; railings 1987); And the ability of cadres to implement policies were weakened under the free market reform in the post-Mao era (Greenhalgh, 1993). However, when other countries tried to implement similar policies, they met obstacles. For example, Vietnam’s government once introduced a plan to ask most parents to limit themselves to one or two children (Daniel M. Goodkind). Results show that available data sources are limited and access to rural areas is restricted. Vietnam’s recent free-market reforms have given farmers greater independence from state control and weakened the authority of local cadres, both of which have made it harder to enforce the state’s fertility policy. It is important to understand that the centralized government and large population base have made China suitable for this specific policy, if other countries want to accomplish the same effect or use similar policies, they must be aware of that and consider furthermore standards they need to meet before implementing the policy.

3. Conclusion

To sum up, the one-child policy benefits Chinese females and reduces gender inequality since only children especially females exhibit significantly higher creativity than children with siblings and it can help achieve gender equality in education although it may have some limitations such as uneven distribution of implementation, imbalance gender ratio, and the exacerbation of gender discrimination, there can be method and evidence to mitigate or eliminate them. And it is worth it for people to get deeper investigations into the effect of the one-child policy on China and for other countries to find the essential elements to implement the policy and gain considerable results.

References

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