China’s One Child Policy

By Ruru (Hoong Juan Ru)
"One child policy to make better of glorious China."

Notes on ‘Dying Rooms’

- Rumors that in state-run orphanages in China, they are understaffed and unable to take care of babies, and some just leave sick baby girls in a room to die- ‘dying rooms’
- Babies are abandoned- dumped on the street and brought to orphanages by police
- 21 million babies are born every year in China (1 baby/1.5s- over 1.2 billion people living in china)
- Not enough resources, has to control population
- 1979: Deng Xiao Ping agreed that population must be controlled. ‘Use whatever means you must to control China’s population. Just do it. With the support of the central committee of the Chinese communist party, you have nothing to fear.’
  - One child policy- every family can only have one baby
  - Led to vast number of babies being dumped at state orphanages
  - This law has brought state condemnation
  - Internationally sensitive matter- very contentious, but Chinese interviewees felt against the policy so strongly, they spoke out
  - Forced abortion for pregnancy without permission
    - Killed baby, sterilized her
  - Stories of human rights abuse in the policy

Notes on ‘Propaganda BBC news report - Should we have a one child policy?’

- UK and Wales: Environmental disaster- growing population
  - Have to look at attitude of people
    - Teach children to recycle, take care of environment
- Two children most common in UK, and total fertility rate 2006: 1.84 children/ woman
- 2/3 children born every second
- Not go with one child policy, but give parents incentives for smaller families?
- According to Liberal Democrat Chris Davies, limiting families to no more than one child is the most important thing that young British couples can do to curb global warming
  - In favor of population control, because we’ll swamp the world and devour its resources

**What is China’s One Child Policy?**

*How does the policy work? How does it encourage families to have only one child?*

China’s One-Child Policy was set up in 1979, and it officially restricts couples to have more than one child, with few exceptions (the policy excludes ethnic minorities, parents that have no siblings, and some rural couples). It was put in place to control the rapid population growth for the limited resources China has. It doesn’t exactly encourage families to have only one child- it’s mandatory. If a family has more than one child, they’d have to pay large sums of money or someone would be sent to ‘convince’ them to abort the baby. There have been stories of human rights abuse, where women have been forced to abort their baby through unorthodox ways like imprisonment or secretly sterilizing them without their knowledge. The policy is very stringent, and it prevented an estimated 400 million births from the day it was implemented to 2008.
Geography Homework: China’s One-Child Policy

Ruru (Hoong Juan Ru)

Notes on ‘Missing Girls- Family Planning in China’

- Sons are needed for farming, carry family name, support parents in old age
  - Limited family size
  - Some learn of the sex of fetuses and illegally abort them
- Boys outnumber girls across China
  - Hainan- highest imbalance: 135 males to every 100 females born in 2000
  - Preference for sons has been around for years- cannot be changed overnight
- Starting 2004, Hainan officials suspended the requirement that people have to wait four years after their first birth to have a second child
  - Led to decline in abortions
  - Increase girls being born
- Economic incentives to couples with only girls: eg. higher old-age pensions, subsidies, extra land for farming, and funds to rebuild homes
- To prevent sex-selective abortions, they’re not allowed to reveal sex of fetuses to parents
- Improvements in Hainan resulted in more balanced sex ratio, improvements in maternal and child healthcare, less abortions, and has given couples more control over reproductive decisions

Notes on ‘Secret experimental city challenges China one-child policy “success”’

- Yicheng, China
  - Hub for surrounding farming community
  - Exception for one-child policy- ‘control’ group to see what would happen without the policy
  - Despite families being able to have more than one child here, actually grown at a rate below the national average: better at controlling population growth
  - Doesn’t have gender imbalances like rest of country
- People want to have two children to share in the task of taking care of them when they grow old
- China claims that the policy has prevented births of 400 million people- 1.7 bil now instead of 1.3 billion without policy
  - Yicheng challenges claim
- Companionship and love between siblings reap great rewards
- ‘If you let people have children, they start thinking more, and they decide not to have as many. In places that restrict reproduction, they want what they can’t have.’
  - People feel less strongly about having a boy or a girl
    - Instilled in town-wide education campaigns by same policy makers that set up experiment
- Nationwide change to family planning policy will take years, and officials say that policy deserve amendment, but nothing comes of it

Notes on ‘China's one-child policy creates massive gender imbalance’

- Single men are concerned by gender imbalance
  - Have nothing to do: listless, hopeless
  - Women high-tail it out of this economically depressed region, to go to cities
    - Marry men there and don’t come back
- Ratio of boys to girls can be as bad as 170:100
  - More men vying for fewer women, a lot of men don’t have wives
    - Worse off have little to offer
- Gender imbalance the worst unintended consequence
  - Limitation meant only one child to have a boy
- Ultrasounds, sex-selective abortions illegal, but it’s easy to work way around it: doctors and nurses offer help
- Boys and girls are equal: ‘Women hold up half the sky’
**When was the policy introduced?**

*Produce a timeline of the policies introduction and any changes made to it since. What is the future of the One Child Policy?*

(Timeline is attached)

There have been rumors that the policy will be overturned, but it isn’t certain. The view regarding the policy has changed—officials have occasionally mentioned that amendments to the policy should be made, but nothing has been done yet. The changing of the policy would be a very long process and could take decades. In Shanghai, where the fertility rate is at 0.88, way below the national average of 1.8, couples that are exempted from rules (e.g. parents that both have no siblings) are encouraged to have more than one child. The policy is damaging the economy, and Zhao Baige, the Vice Minister of the National Population and Family Planning Commission has revealed that officials are concerned about the policy and how it has affected society. China may be starting to plan to bring the policy to a close, but it probably won’t come into effect in recent years.
Why was the One Child Policy introduced?
What geographical situation caused the Chinese government to introduce the One Child Policy?

With the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, improved sanitation and medicine (healthcare: access to doctors, hospitals, vaccinations) sparked a rapid population growth. Mao Zedong first saw it as an advantage, and they further condemned population and birth control. They banned the use of contraceptives, saying that they could trump other countries through greater manpower. This was proved wrong as more farmers converted to steel production, resulting in even less people to produce food for the rapidly growing population. The nation’s food supply depleted, and officials became very concerned that the population would exceed the carrying capacity of China. The policy was imposed in 1979 to curb the skyrocketing population.

How Successful?
You must be able to evaluate the population policies that you study. How successful has China’s One Child Policy been? Don’t forget to look at the positive as well as the negative aspects.

China’s One Child Policy hasn’t been very successful. Although China reports that an impressive 400 million births have been prevented through the policy, there are grounds to doubt that it is so.

30 years ago, when the policy was first introduced, officials chose Yicheng as a ‘control’, an experimental city to see what would happen if the one child policy had not been imposed. Instead of following a one-child policy, Yicheng allows couples to have more than one child. Despite this, the population growth in this area is still below the national average. The mindset of people in Yicheng is probably less inclined to having more children than the rest of the country- because people want what they can’t have. If they are given more control over their reproductive decisions, people might start to think about the benefits of having less children.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to having a rigid population control- but I believe China has negated most of the advantages that the One Child Policy could’ve brought along. Firstly, there would be less people to feed- fewer resources are spent on consumption and it can be used in savings and investments to spur economic growth. However, China is littered with corrupt officials, and the resources are not fairly spread around, and in some cases manipulated by corrupt officials. Also, less people means less manpower to earn money, and less young working people to support the dependent. There is a rapidly aging population in China, and there are not as many young people to pay for their expenses. The country then has to try and support the elderly, which also depletes its national resources. How then, has the policy helped to conserve resources?

Of course, less people also means less overcrowding. I think the smaller population has helped reduce the occurrence of overcrowding, but in major cities like Shanghai and Beijing, it’s definitely overcrowded. Even though Shanghai’s fertility rate is at 0.88, way below the national average, it’s still crowded due to the fact that foreigners flock there because it’s an industrial and financial hub, and also because villagers move there in search for a better life.

It cannot be denied that population control is probably needed for the worry of food shortage, water shortage, health problems, environmental degradation, and other problems that might arise with a growing population. However, the harsh way that China has dealt with it has cast a shadow over the entire policy. The entire policy was set up because officials were worried for the people’s welfare- if there wasn’t enough food to go around, people would starve. But there have been stories of forced abortion, sterilization, and other grisly tales of human abuse surrounding the one child policy. If the policy was set up for the good of the people, then doesn’t it make the entire endeavor pointless if people are mistreated and unhappy?

In Hainan, the ratio of boys to girls was 135:100 in 2000. After the suspension of the policy in 2004, there has been a decline in abortions and an increase in girls. There has always been a preference for boys in China, especially in rural areas. Sons are wanted to carry on the family name, and to help out with work in the fields. The gender imbalance that comes as a result of the limitation of having one child has affected people throughout China. Single men now roam the streets, having given up hope in finding a wife. To try and rectify this, ultrasound scans and sex-selective abortions have been banned, but not enforced properly.
There are exceptions to the policy, and I think it’s good that the ethnic minority, rural areas, and parents with no siblings have permission to have more than one child. It helps preserve the culture (with ethnic minority) and supports poorer families.

China’s population is worrying, yes, but more effective population control measures should be put into place. The one-child policy was not successful— it caused many unseen problems that are hard to fix. Perhaps a two-child policy would be more effective, or giving out incentives for those who have fewer children is a better way of controlling population growth. The One-Child Policy was set up so that the limited resources could feed everyone. If the policy dealt with matters in a sensitive, less brutal way, then maybe it could’ve been successful. But right now, it remains that the policy has probably caused more harm than good in the past three decades.

What about people living in Sichuan?