

**Governing China's Population: From Leninist to Neoliberal Biopolitics.** *Susan Greenhalgh* and *Edwin A. Winckler*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005. 394 pp.

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As the most populated country in the world today, China presents one of the greatest challenges to modern government: the management of a large population in times of profound societal transformations. Although the Chinese government's policies of birth control have become highly controversial at times, it remains puzzling how the predicament of economic development vis-à-vis population control is negotiated on multiple levels in an increasingly globalized economic and political environment. *Governing China's Population* is a groundbreaking work that takes us deeply into various sites of contestation, from policy formulation to strategies of implementation, from urban to rural diverse responses and resistance. In this extremely informative and theoretically appealing study, Greenhalgh and Winckler provide numerous insights into the motivations, rationales, and practices of population control and management in modern China while offering a sophisticated, rich account of the complex, multidimensional social consequences. Inspired by Michel Foucault's analysis of biopower and governmentality, the authors skillfully trace the shifting modes of biopolitics under several different leaderships of the socialist regime and convincingly demonstrate how power dynamics is always configured through historically and culturally situated practices. In the introduction and subsequent chapter, the authors elaborate the analytical framework of "governmentalization of

population,” by which they examine how population has emerged as a key subject of intense knowledge production and object of governmental intervention in contemporary China.

Written by a cultural anthropologist (Greenhalgh) and a political scientist (Winckler), this book consists of two distinct parts that draw from two different sets of theories. Part 1 focuses on the formulation and implementation of population policy from a top-down perspective. It relies heavily on the concept of regime capacity that treats the state as a multilayered entity. The four chapters in this part provide an extensive, in-depth account of how birth planning policies were created, contested, experimented, and shifted over four different eras (of Mao, Deng, Jiang, and Hu). The very detailed analysis of policy making and the driving political forces behind gives readers a rare glimpse of the inside political dynamics that shaped some important decisions. Those readers who are less interested in the specifics of policy shifts however may find parts of this account, which is based on close reading of archival materials, somewhat tedious. Nevertheless, I find this empirical analysis valuable because it effectively dispels the misguided view of the Chinese state as a monolithic, static entity by highlighting the tensions, contradictories, and struggles among top leaders and between different levels of the bureaucracy. Further, it delineates several major temporal shifts in the policies and practices of population management adopted by the four different leaderships, from a largely Leninist politics to a mixed mode of governing that incorporates neoliberal strategies.

Part 2 is most fascinating and theoretically engaging. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork over a period of several years, the three chapters in this part tackle the troubling social and political consequences of the one-child policy and widespread social contestation ground-up. Through the analytical lens of biopower, the authors demonstrate that state power, albeit harsh as manifested in some coerced measures to reduce birth rates, is not merely repressive but also

productive in that it creates and reshapes citizens—subjects and desires. For example, contrasting the Deng era with the post-Deng era, the authors trace two fundamental shifts in population control: from quantity to quality, from state regulation to self-regulation. Rather than solely curbing birth rates, the new focus under neoliberal influences is on enhancing the quality (*suzhi*) of the population by producing the “quality singleton.” This trend is particularly strong in the cities and is altering the meaning of motherhood in a new urban consumer culture. Chapter 7 explores the rise and cultural logic of the self-regulating subjects and the obsession with “quality.” During this period, the logic of the market and the availability of new biomedical technologies have come to reshape the reproductive desires and strategies. Chapter 8 examines how the birth control policy has deepened the stratification of Chinese society along four lines: the rural–urban divide, gender inequality, female and male infants and fetuses, and unfair treatment of planned versus unplanned children. In particular, their study finds that the rural population has endured greater social suffering and trauma brought by harsher policy reinforcement. At the same time, not only women’s bodies and well-being are at higher risk than men’s but also female fetuses and infant girls are at placed at greater risk through such disturbing practices as infanticide, abandonment, and human trafficking. Further, children born out of unplanned births also become subject to discrimination and are deprived of citizenship. In the conclusion, the authors invite us to rethink Foucault’s theory of power and biopolitics and confront some difficult ethical and foreign policy issues facing a globalizing China.

*Governing China’s Population* is a piece of extraordinary scholarship that has a broad appeal to scholars, students, and policy makers of diverse disciplines. Its interdisciplinary approach is a welcome experiment even though part 1 and part 2 appear somewhat uneven in style and theoretical orientation. With their years of experiences in working on population policy

and Chinese politics, and with theoretical insights drawn from the studies on governmentality and neoliberalism, Greenhalgh and Winckler are best situated to produce this timely and ambitious work that will have a long-lasting value.