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The Effect of China's One-Child Policy on Male and Female Chinese Immigrant Earnings: Does it Pay to Be an Only Child?

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Oral Presentation O2.1

THE EFFECT OF CHINA'S ONE-CHILD POLICY ON MALE AND FEMALE CHINESE IMMIGRANT EARNINGS: DOES IT PAY TO BE AN ONLY CHILD?

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China's one-child policy is one of the most controversial population control measures implemented in modern society. While most research focuses on the effects this policy has had on China's population size and economic growth, very little research has been dedicated to analyzing how this policy has affected wage differentials between Chinese men and women. Research suggests that the one-child policy redirected more educational resources towards Chinese daughters than in the past. Human capital theory hypothesizes that equalization in educational attainment will correspond to an equalizing in relative earnings. This paper uses a unique sample of male and female Chinese immigrants from the American Community Survey to test the hypothesis that the one-child policy has advanced the relative earnings of Chinese immigrant women in the United States. A difference-in-differences methodology is used to answer two questions: first, to what extent is the one-child policy's positive effect on educational attainment for Chinese women reflected in the immigrant population? Second, if the one-child policy benefited the level of educational attainment for Chinese immigrant women, is this reflected in their wage-earning profile, relative to their Chinese male immigrant counterparts? The findings of this research suggest that Chinese immigrant women born after the one-child policy attain higher levels of education than those born before. The impacts of these findings are not presently reflected in the wage-earning profiles of Chinese female immigrants due to downward biases in wages for those still in school. However, these findings have the potential to positively impact wages of Chinese immigrant women born under the one-child policy as they leave educational institutions and enter the workforce in the near future.

