Wang Feng

Wang Feng is a senior fellow at Brookings and the director of the Brookings-Tsinghua Center for Public Policy. He joined the Brookings Institution in 2010 after decades of teaching and research at several American and international institutions.

Dr. Wang is considered one of the world’s leading experts on demographic and social changes in China. His research has ranged from studies of historical societies in Asia and Europe, to contemporary family change, migration, inequality, poverty and population policy in China. He is an author and editor of six books, and of numerous articles in academic journals, including Science, the Journal of Asian Studies, Population and Development Review, Demography, and International Migration Review. His work has been covered by many news media outlets and he has been quoted in major news outlets, including the Beijing Review, Los Angeles Times, Time magazine, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, China Radio International, APF, BBC, CNN and NPR.

Wang Feng’s first book, One Quarter of Humanity, Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Reality, 1700-2000 (co-authored with James Lee, Harvard University Press, 1999) was a landmark study of China’s population and society. In contrast to the long-held Malthusian view that China belonged to a group of societies in which population growth was checked by involuntary mortality and misery, the authors of this book, relying on their own firsthand research, reveal for the first time a complex behavioral system of the Chinese population. Such a behavioral system included male celibacy, female infanticide, suppressed marital fertility and fictive kinship, and it acted to balance population growth with economic conditions. Founded on the collective Chinese family system, such a behavior system demonstrates a different but nevertheless equally rational behavior pattern as those in historical European societies, and it explains the rapid demographic transition in China in the second half of the twentieth century. Its broad and fresh theoretical arguments, as well as its use of rich historical and contemporary data, made the book the winner of the Allan Sharlin Memorial Award for Best Book in Social Science History of the Social Science History Association in 2000, and the Otis Dudley Duncan Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Social Demography of the American Sociological Association in 2000.

In two subsequent books, Life Under Pressure: Mortality and Living Standards in Europe and Asia, 1700-1900 (for which he is a research team member and a co-author, MIT Press, 2004) and Prudence and Pressure: Reproduction and Human Agency in Europe and Asia, 1700-1900 (for which he is a research team leader and a lead author, MIT Press, 2009), Wang Feng and his multi-disciplinary and international collaborators continued and expanded the comparative research of human behavior and social organizations to historical communities in five Eurasian countries. Relying on comparable data and similar methodology, these studies are the first to reveal sharply different demographic behavior and social organizations, in births, deaths, household formation and living arrangements. Yet they also uncover important similarities in human rationality and social adaptation across historical populations on these two continents.
continents. The first of these two volumes, *Life Under Pressure*, was recognized by the Asia and Asian American Section of the American Sociological Association with its book award in 2005.

In two recent books, *Boundaries and Categories: Rising Inequality in Post-Socialist Urban China* (Stanford University Press, 2008) and *Creating Wealth and Poverty in Post-Socialist China* (co-editor, Stanford University Press, 2009), Wang Feng and his colleagues trace the trends and analyze patterns of China's rising economic and social inequalities in recent decades. *Boundaries and Categories*, which was a winner of book award from the Asia and Asian American Section of the American Sociological Association in 2009, highlights the importance of institutional sources – China’s property rights regime, its politically driven regional system, and work organizations – in driving the rising inequality trend and defining inequality pattern in urban China. It is a book that combines economic and sociological analysis and contains important policy implications for understanding and addressing social and economic disparities in China. *Creating Wealth and Poverty*, a collection of studies by leading scholars across several disciplines, including economics, history and sociology, offers the latest analysis of social inequality in China and examines topics ranging from income equality, gender inequity, educational and health disparities, local governments, social mobility and public perceptions and reactions to rising inequality.

In addition to these books, Wang Feng has been conducting extensive research on the economic and social implications of China’s recent demographic change, in particular on the causes of China’s current low fertility, and has been a major voice in arguing for phasing out China’s three-decade long one child per couple policy in light of its negative consequences and of China’s new demographic and economic realities.

Prior to his current position, Dr. Wang conducted research at the East West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, where he received the Distinguished Service Award, and taught at the University of Hawaii and the University of California, Irvine, where he received the Distinguished Assistant Professor for Research Award, and served as a member on the executive board of the Center for Asian Studies and the Center for the Study of Democracy, and the chair of the Department of Sociology. Since 2007, Dr. Wang has also been an invited professor in the School of Social Development and Public Policy at Fudan University in Shanghai, China.