CHINA'S ONE-CHILD POLICY AND ITS UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES ON CHINESE SOCIETY AND GENDER RATIO

BY

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Abstract

Since 1978, China’s One-Child Policy has been decreasing the nation’s population numbers to make way for China’s economic reform and modernization. Today, China boasts that with the help of this policy, the government has prevented over 300 million births. Though this has positively affected China’s economy in the short term, there is a myriad of consequences only beginning to manifest, including a highly imbalanced gender ratio, a progressively older population base, and a decrease in the work force numbers. If China hopes to lessen the fallout from these imminent situations and the consequences they carry, it needs to abandon the one-child policy and continue with social campaigns promoting the benefits of having daughters.
Modern China is an economic miracle. At the start of a new era beginning in 1979, Deng Xiaoping ignited China’s transformation from a starving, economically-failing attempt in communism to its modern and current form as a powerful, emerging middle-class society based in socialist-capitalism, a term the Chinese government likes to call “socialism with Chinese characteristics” (Scharping 2003). This economic reform has fuelled the country’s enviable growth and productivity while patriotically calling for strict limits to population growth. The call was codified as a mandate known as “the one-child policy,” sanctioning the State to impose very personal interference and control in citizens’ reproductive lives.

China’s One-Child Policy (OCP) was originally intended as a temporary solution to the country’s burgeoning “over-population” problem (White). Since its implementation in 1979, unanticipated consequences have arisen beyond the expected decrease in population size and increase in economic growth. This paper aims to understand the fallout of China’s demographic control policy, with particular focus on the gradual disappearance of daughters born in hospitals, and the associated discrepancy in the Chinese male-female ratio. Part one of this inquiry addresses the politics behind the OCP and political consequences now facing the government and the people. It examines the policies the Chinese government has undertaken to stop the abortion of females amidst its promotion of abortion as a method of population control. Part two turns toward economic consequences of the OCP. Aside from exceptional economic growth as a nation, this inquiry examines how the finances of the nation and Chinese people have been individually affected. Part three examines the social ramifications and demographic
statistics resulting from the OCP, which will includes an overview of the societal values and government policies that continue to promote the desire for boys, as well as clandestine medical methods being used to ensure the birth of males. The final arena of consideration examines some possible futures facing China’s population, health, and social welfare, resulting from an unsustainable and ever-increasing gender ratio imbalance.

**PART 1: Demographic Politics in the Mouth of the Dragon**

**Creation of the one-child policy**

Counter to many students’ expectation, the one-child policy was originally designed by a ballistic missiles specialist, who earned his PhD at Moscow University (White). Song Jian was among the very few scientists remaining in China during the Maoist era, since Mao openly believed that intellectuals, apart from weapons specialists, were a threat, and part of the class problem oppressing the working peasants. In the 1970s, Song met with the author of a paper he had recently read, entitled “Population Planning: A Distributed Time Optimal Control Problem” (Mosher). The Scandinavian author, Geert Jan Olsder, posited that population was a mathematical constraint issue—a sentiment that Song Jian adopted as his own. Armed with these mathematical theories as well as the Malthusian catastrophic novel entitled *The Limits to Growth* (Ehrlich), Song developed a formula and policy that he hoped would be applied to the Chinese population (Mosher). By 1979, he had presented his theory about finite resources for the country’s rapidly growing population and predicted deepening poverty to China’s leaders and Premier
Deng Xiaoping. It was in this year that his demographic control policy was instated across the country: One family, one child.

Western civilians often seem offended when asked about the idea of a one-child policy being enforced in a “free democracy;” whereas many Chinese civilians publicly comply and support it. This may be a result of the nationalism instilled under Mao’s rule, but some younger Chinese have been noted in media interviews explaining that they feel it is an honor and a duty to help their nation succeed and thrive by limiting their number of offspring to one (Ding, Jian, and Hesketh). This is indeed how the one-child policy was first packaged for the Chinese population.

In 1979, Deng Xiaoping’s government instituted the one-child policy to curb the giant increase in population that occurred under Mao. The creator of the socialist nation had advocated large family sizes as a way to increase the number of workers to support his ambition for a rurally self-sufficient China (Mosher). Between 1949 and 1979, China’s population roared from 540 million to 800 million (Chan and Stankovick), an increase that seems to have manifested with little government anticipation for critical basic accommodations. This insufficient planning was further exacerbated by growing seasons beset by droughts rendering failed crops, and misguided deployment of labor initiatives (such as melting steel) ordered so China might compete with the western nations in raw steel production (Mosher). China’s inability to support the growing population plunged the nation into survival. Song Jian was convinced that a logical, mathematical control of the population was the only way to avoid increased starvation. Although many of the deaths from starvation were not recorded, demographers have estimated that anywhere
from 16.5 million to 40 million people perished during the Great Leap Forward (1957-1961) (Harms 1996).

The CIA World Factbook reports China’s population to be approximately 1.34 billion as of July 2011, making China the most populous nation in the world, followed closely by India at 1.20 billion people. China’s public officials refer to their nation’s population rank when asked about the necessity of the one-child policy as proof why the policy is vital to the stability of the nation. In 2000, the Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China released an article about the future of China’s development in the 21st century, which remains a central piece to the National Population and Family Planning Foundation’s website today:

In line with the strategic goal of the nation's modernization drive and proceeding from national conditions, the Chinese Government has formulated and implemented a population policy which conforms to China’s reality and has greatly contributed to the stabilization of the national and the world population and to the promotion of human development and progress. (NPFPC)

**The Inner Workings of the One-Child Policy**

The OCP requires different things from different citizens of its population. Each province enforces the OCP differently, with some provinces being more lenient in enforcement than others. In most urban cities, families were originally allowed to have one child without penalty. Today, that law has been altered to allow for a second child should the first child be a girl or disabled, or if both parents are themselves only-children (NPFPC). Rural inhabitants are allowed to have two children; and if they are of a minority ethnicity (i.e. not Han), they may often be permitted to have more than two
children. This exception to the OCP in rural areas has resulted from the prevailing belief among agricultural communities that more children, specifically sons, are better for labor and production: “children eventually provide…. economic support [which] refers to financial transfers parents receive from their children” (Bachrach, King and Yuan, 184). Because minorities compose only 3% of the Chinese population, the Chinese government has yet to establish a one, two, or three child cap (NPFPC). Many minorities also live in rural areas, so they are not likely to be responsible for limiting themselves to one child anytime soon.

The Population and Family Planning Law of the People’s Republic of China vaguely outlines the laws, requirements, and reprimands surrounding the OCP. According to Article 36 of Chapter VI, “using ultrasonography or other techniques to identify the fetal gender for non-medical purposes or to bring about sex-selective pregnancy termination for non-medical purposes for another person” is strictly prohibited. The Article states that anyone who experiences “unlawful gains” shall have those gains confiscated, and if those gains are financial and exceed 10,000 Yuan, the perpetrator will be fined between 2 and 6 times the amount. The OCP’s language is ambiguous enough to blunt international upset, but the possibilities for interpretation of its language could cause one to question what qualifies as “unlawful gains.” Since the policy is addressing the birth of children, does the child of an unintended pregnancy fall into this category of “unlawful gain” to the parents? If so, the policy condones the “revoking” of the unintended child by the authorities of the state—classifying children as material goods rather than people.

Article 41 specifies that citizens who “give birth to babies not in compliance with the provisions of Article 18 of this Law [with a birth certificate showing that the couple has
received permission from the local government to have the child] shall pay a social maintenance fee prescribed by law.” In terms of contraception, condoms and contraceptive devices (e.g. the IUD) are advocated by the state as the primary methods of birth control, as well as the encouragement of “late marriages and childbearing and advocating one child per couple” (Article 18). The law itself seems to address much and little simultaneously, with scant notice of the state’s coercive remedy for non-compliance: forced sterilization and abortion.

**Sons Prevailing**

Since its implementation, the population control policy has unintentionally encouraged couples to use the medical technology at their disposal to ensure that the child they have is of the desired sex. Unfortunately for the China’s gender ratio, that sex is most often male. The favoritism of sons in China is deeply rooted in the people’s history, culture, and social practices. Two thousand five hundred years ago, Confucianism spread broadly across the Asian continent, dictating rules of societal relationships to the people. In the early 200s BC, the Han Dynasty adopted it as the official ideology of the state (Zhu). Women were required to be subservient to men in the “five relationships,” with their primary duty being to care for males in the family before women, particularly their husband and his family. This obligation explains one of the major social problems with having a girl: parents were raising girls to go off and take care of another family. By having a boy, parents ensured themselves a retirement plan with the wife their son would marry (White). This practice and mindset of having the
daughter live with her husband’s family, although not widely practiced today in urban parts of China, still carries resonance with the rural population.

The 2008 economic crisis in the United States unleashed a chain reaction of economic dislocation in international supply and demand. With the consequent belt-tightening, China has revived the practice of cross-generational housing, with children moving in with their parents even after marriage, and the tradition of the wife living with the husband’s family is becoming more common once again (The People’s Daily).

In its developing years, the Communist Party pulled away from Confucianism in an attempt to eliminate competition to its power as the primary ruler of the people’s ethics and conscience. The 2008 economic crisis left much of China in search of a Confucian solution to its corrupt politics and lack of a “guiding ideology” (Zhu). Although this search for a non-corrupt ethical doctrine seems positive, the re-adherence to Confucian principles may be reinforcing the preference for sons. According to Neo-Confucian thought, “A woman’s greatest duty is to produce a son” (Zhu).

Hu Jintao has claimed that Confucianism is a doctrine of suppressing desires and adhering to morals that are impractical for these modern times that rely on capitalism (Zhu). Under Hu’s leadership, the Communist Party continues to publicly separate itself from Confucian edicts, including idealization of sons. Article 22 of the OCP explicitly states, “Discrimination against and maltreatment of women who give birth to baby girls or who suffer from infertility are prohibited. Discrimination against, maltreatment, and abandonment of baby girls are prohibited.” Hu’s stance remains that complete acceptance of the Confucian doctrine (including its denigration of women) is detrimental not only to the strong capitalist Chinese economy, but also to the safety and happiness of the Chinese
society. In this way, the government has divorced itself from Confucian beliefs, including its expressed inferiority of women.

Coercion’s Role in the Enforcement of the One-Child Policy

There is a significant division between the principles and orders given by the Central Government, and the actual application and carrying out of those orders by the local governments. Reports since the 1980s have, and continue to, leak about women being forcibly assaulted by local officials and forced to terminate unplanned pregnancies. On November 5, 2011, NBC World News presented the story of Yeqing Ji. This Shanghai woman testified at three US Congressional hearings concerning human rights violations in China with reference to her own two coerced abortions. The first abortion occurred in 2003 upon insistence of the local family planning commission in Xiaomiao village when members threatened a fine of 31,000 US dollars should Yeqing have that second child. She aborted the baby because the fine was more than three times her husband’s and her own salary combined. In 2006, Yeqing became pregnant again at the request of her in-laws who deeply wanted a grandson and promised to pay the subsequent fines. What followed was more of a nightmare than reality:

“This time, the authorities refused payment in fines and ‘dragged’ her outside and beat her husband. Ji said she was sedated and the abortion was performed while she was unconscious. They had also installed an intrauterine device into her uterus after the abortion and told her she was responsible for its cost.”

The article goes on to explain:

“Statistics on the number of forced abortions are not readily available, though China has said the one-child policy has prevented 400 million births after its implementation in 1978. The country
also said it has about 13 million abortions each year, averaging 35,000 abortions a day.”

In Karin Evans’ book *The Lost Daughters of China*, the author explains the toll this trend of aborting daughters has had on the Chinese populace. “By broad estimates, thirty million females in China--a number equivalent to the entire population of Mexico City, say, or a full 5 percent of China’s population—are missing. Gone…. By 2008, China’s gender gap was wider than ever, with a surplus of some forty million males” (Evans, 121).

Several of the undergraduate Chinese students I interviewed at the University of Arizona acknowledged having more than one sibling. Aaron, a young man from the Hubei province, mentioned his siblings almost as an after thought when discussing his family life: “Yes, I have two older sisters, and one younger brother. But that is not so uncommon. Today in China, a family just needs to pay a little bit extra to make up for having another child, and with so many Chinese getting wealthier, this is not so difficult.” I was surprised to hear such a casual take on the consequences of having more than one child in an urban area. Aaron went on to explain that he had many friends with siblings, and that he was also unaware of there being “a serious female deficit” in China.

I wanted to explore Aaron’s understanding of the OCP, and find out if his viewpoint was pervasive among young Chinese men. Two other young men I interviewed from different provinces (Guangxi and Beijing) also had siblings, and although they said they knew women who had had abortions, they did not seem to think that abortion is a popular method of birth control, but that contraceptive birth control is most common. When I asked how they had learned about proper contraceptive usage, they both acknowledged that their high school friends taught them about condoms, because classroom time was meant for exam preparations, and the schools did not
have time to educate students in sexual education (although that facet is required by the official OCP). Both boys relayed seeing billboards and spray-painted signs in and around their cities conveying messages such as: “It [abortion] does not hurt”; “Better to have more pigs than more children”; and “Better to let the blood of a fetus flow than have the whole country suffer.”

The above accounts illustrate some of China’s promotion of abortion as a suitable method of birth control (or should one say birth prevention). Aside from enacting the OCP and making it law, the government has used a combination of carrots and sticks to have people across the vast Chinese nation comply with its requirements. These criteria are discussed in Article 28 of the policy and include requiring a child certificate, thereby giving two parents permission to try for a child and having a minimum age requirement of marriage for citizens (22 for men, 20 for women); benefits include wage increases, loans, prizes, priority in job hiring, and a “Certificate of Honor for Single-Child Parents.” The government typically covers the financial cost of abortions (ASAP). Until 2001, forced abortions and forced sterilizations were accepted as common practice in China, but under pressure from the international community and growing middle class, the government passed a law protecting (to a higher degree) its citizens’ freedom to control what happens to their bodies (Lim). This law has not eliminated the use of forced abortions, however, but rather buried them from international sight. In one interview discussed on NPR (National Public Radio) in April of 2007, He Caigan (near the city Baise in western Guangxi Province) told of the early morning that family-planning officers forcibly took her from her home to an abortion clinic. The surprising part of her story is that she was 9 months pregnant, and this would have been her first child. The family planning committee told her the abortion was for her own good because she was not of marriageable age at 19, and she did not have a child certificate. When
NPR journalists contacted the Chinese State Commission for Population and Family Planning, the officials denied any knowledge of such practices, and requested details about the occurrence.

Urban elites and higher middle-class are able to pay the fines for a second child relatively easily, and without much need to choose between their family’s financial survival and the survival of their unborn child (Mong). This might explain why the majority of Chinese students I interviewed at the University of Arizona had siblings. The privileged status that allowed them to study abroad in America as representatives of China was the same economic privilege that afforded their families the freedom of mind and finances to have a second, third, fourth, etc child. For the majority of Chinese citizens, this reality is not within reach, and not following the OCP is a financially destructive decision.

**Technology’s Part and Social Unrest in the One-Child Policy**

China’s government openly supports abortions required for “necessary” reasons in the first and second trimesters of a woman’s pregnancy. The policy itself emphasizes the assurance of a woman’s health and safety as a top priority in cases of abortion. It also outlaws the use of ultrasound machines to determine the sex of a fetus. Still, many doctors feel pressured to perform sex-determinative ultrasounds for their clients for fear of losing patients to competing doctors (Hvistendahl); and although they do this at the risk of losing their license, many doctors report feeling that there is no other option if they want to retain clients.

There is no definitive way to know how many of the abortions in China have been of female fetuses, but by comparing the long accepted standard for the human population’s gender ratio (105 males to 100 females) to government issued birth statistics, demographers have been able to approximate that hundreds of thousands of female fetuses have been terminated in China.
(Gendercide Watch), leaving 24 million “extra” men without female Chinese counterparts. Some calculations speculate that in 2020, there will be 40 million eligible but unpaired Chinese bachelors (Stankovick and Chan). On average, China as a nation now has 119 men for every 100 females (a number that varies slightly depending on the reporting source), and over 130:100 in rural areas like Anhui province (UNICEF).

Many of the political consequences of the OCP in China have yet to be seen. Although the middle-class is growing and demanding more rights from its government, the majority of citizens are still wary of the consequences of political protest (Mong). In late May 2007, the town of Shapi in southwestern Guanxi province erupted in violent protests against the taxes imposed on policy violators under the OCP. According to the World Socialist Website, over 10,000 protesters violently acted to tear down a wall, light cars afire, and beat and chase off members of the Family Planning Department, all to the avail of being confronted by hundreds of Chinese Police armed with guns and cattle prods. Protests spread across the county of Baobai, and although there was no confirmation of any fatalities, witnesses and cooperating protesters told the Washington Post that a number of participants were killed during the protests (Chan and Stankovick). Two years prior to the riots in Guanxi, the lawyer Chen Guangchen was called, along with activists, to investigate local policies in Linyi City in Shangdong Province regarding coercive measures taken to enforce local birth targets. Reports arose claiming that over 7,000 abortions and sterilizations had occurred in the spring of 2005, following notice from the provincial authorities that local officials were not doing an adequate job of meeting the birth quota limits (White, 198). Local Chinese authorities detained Chen after he contacted the foreign news bureaus; he was beaten and placed under house arrest. Tyrene White, author of *China’s Longest Campaign: Birth Planning in the People’s Republic, 1949-2005*, believes that although this case did not conclude in a
successful prosecution of local authorities, “collective legal action that challenges the use of
coercion is an important new strategy for resisting the enforcement of birth planning policy”
(White, 199).

**Part II: Economic Life in the Nation of Men**

The OCP has had positive short-term effects on the Chinese economy, particularly by
decreasing the birth rate and thereby allowing a greater measure of resources to benefit its
population. The OCP also contributes to reducing family expenditures on multiple children,
allowing redirection of funds towards education, housing, savings, etc. Long-term effects,
however, are not as optimistic as the majority of the Chinese population ages past 60, and the
fertility rate at 1.8 falls short of the replacement rate at 2.1 (United Nations Population Division).

One of the leading socioeconomic policies affecting China today is Hu Jintao’s “Harmonious
Society,” announced in 2006. Within this framework, the governmental focus was officially
changed from economic growth to overall societal contentment and peace, with the policy’s end
goal being to dissolve the widening economic gap between the poor and the rich, eventually
leading to the creation of an overall middle-class society. In the spirit of this policy, China has
utilized censorship of both the media and published information, as well as suppression of dissent,
to maintain this imagined “social harmony” (Mosher). Ironically, the income distribution gap has
continued to widen since the formulation of the Harmonious Society. Hu Jintao has justified this
trend by claiming, “some must get rich first.” On March 14th of 2012, Wen Jiabao resolved that
China would develop a plan to increase the number of people in the middle-income strata while
simultaneously raising the threshold of lower-income citizens (The People’s Daily and Reuters).
This will be accomplished partly, Hu explained, with an increase in income tax on the wealthy,
accompanied by an adjustment of China’s targeted economic growth rate: from 8% to 7.5% this year (The People’s Daily).

China’s manufacturing sector is facing a labor shortage as the currently employed population ages, and there are not enough “cheap laborers” to replace them (Morgan). According to data from the UN, the Chinese working-population is expected to peak in 2015, as can be seen in the graph below.

The nation has invested the majority of its developmental money in creating factories and industry in its urban cities. With this increase in industry and development there has also been an increase in the cost of living, thereby compelling many rural citizens to migrate illegally to the cities in search of jobs. As of 2011, 49% of China’s 1.3 billion people live in cities, though a large
number are returning to their home provinces in hopes of finding work in newly built factories in Central China (Mong and the Economist). Nevertheless, demographers expect the density of people in the cities to continue growing, and by 2030 cities will hold 70% of the Chinese population (The Economist). While increased population of urban cities presents some positive possibilities (such as an increased salary and standard of living for many Chinese able to find urban jobs), the risks from over-population in the cities are more daunting, including heightened pollution, competition for housing and space, infrastructure issues, increased water demand and concomitant depletion, trash build up and soaring sanitation needs (Shan and Qian).

**The One Child Policy’s Effects on Rural Poor and Migrant Populations**

Labor has an important role to play in the people’s preference for males in an OCP nation. Many of the migrant laborers are daughters of rural households, since popular opinion holds that female skills are utilized more efficiently in a factory than on a farm performing stressful labor. Thus, males provide the needed hands to tend family fields, and sons are the traditional inheritors of family plots, according to traditional Chinese values (Fang, Yang, and Wang).

The economic state of the nation has a direct effect on the economic state of the people. The people’s economic status has a direct effect on their family lives, as well as their loyalty and happiness with the government. Poor rural families face an uncomfortable dilemma: to restrict themselves to the maximum number of children allowed by the OCP (which was raised to two for most rural areas), fearing so few helping hands will result in failure or a back-breaking future; or to break the law and have enough children to help them work the family plot efficiently, at the risk of falling into crushing debt due to the government’s OCP tax. For many rural Chinese couples, this has led to small families and not enough labor power to provide well for their family,
with over 128 million rural workers making less than $1.25 USD per day (UNICEF “Population in China”). Nevertheless, the rural population continues to have more than one child per family, on average, and has created China’s “sibling generation,” in contrast to the “little emperor generation” of the urbanites (White, 265). White explains in her book that though this generation of Chinese children lacks the large number of brothers and sisters of their ancestors’ generations, “this rural generation… will carry forward for Chinese society as a whole the more traditional, complex set of family bonds” (White, 265). In other words, the traditional values of a large Chinese family will prevail in the rural sector alone. The urban sector, which is held more strictly to the OCP, holds some contempt for their rural counterparts for bearing more than one child and being “responsible for overpopulating China.” As a result, there is an ongoing tension between China’s economic classes; retrospectively, such animosity was the driving impetus behind Mao’s successful campaign in the 1940s (White, 265).

For his last year in office (2012), Premier Wen is striving to make headway in lessening the economic divide between China’s rural poor and urban middle and upper classes. China’s national poverty line was raised to 2,300 yuan ($365 USD) per year from its previous 1,274 yuan in 2010 (china.org.cn). By raising the recognized poverty income level to nearly $1 per day, the government is adjusting for the nation’s higher standards of living, and thereby providing [more] economic assistance to a greater number of the nation’s poor who do not have income equal to the new standard (although China still determines eligibility for assistance poverty at a compensatory rate below the World Bank’s poverty line standard of $1.25/day) (china.org.cn).

The province of Guizhou alone has approximately 15 million people (45% of the Guizhou population) living in poverty, and is one of many Chinese provinces dealing with poverty rates of such magnitude (Liu). According to “The Guardian” British news agency, working in partnership
with the Associated Press in Beijing, China’s rural poverty number has now increased to 128 million from the previous 100 million under the old poverty standards, which is why the funding for the poverty relief project has been raised by 20% (China Daily). Unfortunately, this number does not account for the numerous urban poor. Considering both the rural and urban poor, as of 2008 China’s poor population comprised 13.1% of the total population or 169 million people (WHO). Yet still, there is a migrant class of peasants not counted in these statistics. The urban Chinese refer to this group as “guerilla birth corps,” as they will travel to lenient provinces like Hong Kong to have more children than allotted by the PRC government’s policy. Migrants also have been known to travel to cities in search of work, and supply the factories with cheap, often undocumented, labor (White, 265). It is these same migrants who are looking more frequently for factory work near their hometowns, and abandoning illegal factory work in urban cities.

The Economic Observer, an independent Chinese newspaper that is also translated into English, explained the tedious five-step process villagers in Shizuizi (Hebei province) must complete before being recognized as “poor” to receive financial assistance from the provincial and Central Government, charities, and non-profit organizations. They include: completing the application explaining the family’s economic needs; having officials come to the applicant’s home and having the applicant participate in an in-person survey about their income, which for a family household may not exceed 1,500 yuan per month ($237.8 USD) (Liu); democratic appraisal by one’s village officers and representatives; public announcement of results; and “audit and final approval.”

Once these steps are completed, if one should qualify, there is still uncertainty about whether or not they will receive the assistance promised them. This is primarily because “provincial level funds depend on the financial situation in each year's provincial budget; if the
fiscal revenue is looking good, then the money will be provided, if revenues are down, then perhaps no payments will be made” (Liu).

**The Policy’s Impact on Children**

In 2008, reports circulated through the media about poor Chinese parents selling their daughters and sometimes sons, for money. This is often done in secrecy, and there are few ways to confirm many of the accounts. Nevertheless, journalist sources such as The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism, the Washington Post, Xinhua in Beijing, and ABC news have all reported testimonies claiming that some Chinese orphanages offer suppliers $300 per child for inventory “to sell” in their orphanages. Between 2002 and 2005, Hunan and Guangdong, two of China’s poorest provinces, were said to have had officials abduct or purchase over 1,000 rural babies who were then sold to international and domestic adoption agencies (Schuster Institute).

Several orphanage directors contacted by ABC News reported their agencies did not accept boys, since they were likely to have been stolen and trafficked. The Chinese government changed its international adoption laws for Chinese children in 2007, ordering that prospective parents must fulfill a list of personal requirements as well as pay a base $3,000 fee to the orphanage (Kim). This decision was made in light of the popularity of Chinese babies in the foreign adoption market, along with the prospect of economic gains that would be made for the country when the cost per adoption was increased. Nevertheless, foreign demand for Chinese children continues, as does local demand for sons from couples experiencing infertility.

In sum, the OCP has had two polar opposite effects on female babies: 1) it has made them unwanted as the only child, and thus face being aborted or unregistered at birth (a phenomenon that will be discussed in the following section); or conversely 2) it has increased their economic
value, turning some daughters from poorer households into commodities for sale: sell a daughter in the black market, receive one year’s salary in one transaction. Families in China’s poorest villages have also been known to sell their daughters to unknown men as mail-order brides (Hvistendahl).

**The Policy’s Impact on Women**

The recent increase in human trafficking of females as wives or sex slaves is not unique to China. Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and other poor countries have created markets for selling their women to lonely men (or groups of men), often for a measly price (CIA). Mara Hvistendahl describes first-hand encounters with trafficked women from rural parts of China, like Yunnan province, as well as Vietnam, in her book *Unnatural Selection*. According to Hvistendahl, these women’s families often sell them when they are teenagers to make ends meet. One woman she interviewed was sold as a young bride from Yunnan province to a middle-class Chinese man, over 20 years her senior. Together, they had a son, and when they had a second child who was born female, her husband insisted they could not afford to keep her; he had the baby sent back to poor Yunnan province to be raised by his wife’s family. Stories like this are apparently the more fortunate ones to be told. Other women sold into marriages are often met by their unknown husbands with metaphorical handcuffs. The unfortunate truth is that the decrease in eligible (or merely available) females has led to an increase in bride purchasing; and although it may seem like this would increase men’s value of women, it often has the opposite effect, as men feel more possessive of the women they *paid* to marry. It is almost inevitable that the men acquire a feeling of ownership over their wives, even in this modern world, and that feeling unfortunately shows itself in domestic abuse when men fear losing their “expensive investments” (Hvistendahl 181).
Orphanages and marriage are not the only fates for sold daughters in China. As the number of marriageable women decreases due to the OCP and China’s preference for sons, the demand for prostitutes increases. In 2008, Mark Lagon, the head of the US department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, expressed his belief that “The lack of women contributes to greater demand for prostituted women and girls… fueling the demand for victims of trafficking” (Hvistendahl, 185). Sex trafficking has reached new heights in China since the 1980’s economic reform, with over 13% of Chinese men between the ages of 21 and 30 admitting they have been with a prostitute at some point in their lives (Hvistendahl, 185).

A large group of men in China are neither wealthy enough to attract a women of her own free will, nor wealthy enough to buy one as a wife. These men comprise a large group of the Asian population, especially in rural China: one solution they have found is a collective group purchase of a wife. In this scenario, a woman from a poor province may be bought for $600 dollars or so, and be transported to a new province to be the wife of one man officially, but be required to perform wifely duties for other men as well, whose money helped to purchase her (Hvistendahl).

At its fundamental core, there are simply not enough Chinese women to marry China’s bachelors (Laogai). Scarcity of essential comforts lead to possessiveness and hoarding of that which becomes rare, and translated in terms of a spouse, married women become chattel to keep, control and confine. In 2010, the global news agency Inter Press Service (IPS) reported that a survey conducted by the “All-China Women’s Federation” showed that approximately 1/3 of China’s households “cope with domestic abuse,” which was experienced by 66 % of the 260 female suicides investigated that year (Moxley). IPS went on to explain that the cultural belief that domestic violence is a “private matter” makes it difficult for many women to seek help,
especially in rural areas. This reality has led to an average of 157,000 Chinese women taking their lives each year, making suicide the leading cause of death among young rural women in China (Moxley). In 1980, China signed “The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and [since 2001] has its own stand-alone laws that ban domestic violence against women and children” (Moxley and United Nations). Still, domestic abuse continues to plague the Chinese culture and contributes to China’s sole distinction for being the only nation in the world where suicide is more prevalent among women than men (Xinhua, “Federation Vows to Reduce Women’s Suicide: China”).

**Part III: The Health and Wellness of Chinese Society, and its Future**

Due to the clandestine nature of crimes against its female citizenry, the Chinese government has few avenues by which to implement and measure effective action to protect females. The goal to enhance the perceived value of women and women’s lives is critical for a balanced society, yet success must require the reformation of many longstanding [Confucian] cultural beliefs and traditions.

Confucian preference for sons still permeates the rural populations, and the government has primarily used fear tactics to convince its citizens to limit their number of children. Incentives for parents who have only one child include the “one-child-glory-certificate,” which ensures the family a raise worth an extra month’s salary every year until their child’s 14th birthday (NPFPC). Other rewards include access to inexpensive fertilizer, retirement funds, loans without interest, preferential housing, preferential health care options, and priority in school admissions.

Surprising statistics regarding sex preference show that parents are typically happy to have a daughter, *if they have a chance for a boy* in the second or third pregnancies. The Economist’s
2010 article addressing China’s “War on Baby Girls” explained that the preference for sons could be seen in the male-female ratios when looking at gender by birth-order. For first-born children in Guangdong, China (a province that allows second and occasional third births), the ratio of boys to girls is fairly close to the normal 105:100 as it stands at 108 boys to every 100 girls. When examining the second-born children ratios however, the number of males jumps to 146 boys to every 100 girls. For the exceptions where a third birth is permitted, the ratio skews even further to 167:100.

**Official Enforcement of the One-Child Policy**

China’s vast size requires that the Central Government rely on local government officials to enforce its population policies. In order to ensure that local officials have incentive to encourage citizens in their jurisdiction to have one, or sometimes two, offspring, the Central Government offers financial raises and promotions based on the success of local officials in maintaining birth rates within population targets. Thus, local officials award and deny birth permits to couples who
request to have their first or second child, and often force women to abort the fetus if it was conceived without permission or is the third child (Lim). Many couples are required to have one of the partners sterilized after the birth of a second child to prevent any further pregnancies. Peer pressure from neighbors also ensures a communal adherence to the OCP, as some towns only allot a set number of birth permits per year, meaning that a family that decides to have a second child could be taking away a birth permit from another couple that year (Mosher).

Families that have chosen not to abort “accidental” children frequently hide their children by shuffling them around to houses of family members. These children are often girls, and many go unregistered with the state for years. Being unregistered prevents such children from being able to attend school, obtain health insurance, and be hired when older. It is a socially crippling decision that many parents have made for these children, either for fear of forced abortion or fear of unpayable fines (UNICEF). The unregistered children are known as “black children” in the Chinese communities, and estimates place their numbers around 6 million today (UNICEF).

The Chinese government has further ensured that people maintain an interest and investment in the reproductive decisions of their countrymen by creating population targets for villages and towns, according to which both towns and officials are rewarded depending on the continuation of low birth rates (White). In order to adhere to the OCP and still have a son, many couples resort to the ultrasound machine for prenatal gender determination to be certain that the growing fetus is male. If it is not, many couples opt to terminate the pregnancy and try again (Lim).

**Methods of Ensuring Males**

The mass production of ultrasound machines began in 1982, two years after the initiation of the OCP in China (Hvistendahl, 21). By the early 1990’s, General Electric (GE) joined forces
with the Chinese government to set up ultrasound manufacturing factories for the local Chinese market, and the business took off. In 2007, GE had morphed the construction of ultrasounds to portable devices that could be hooked up to pc computers for one-sixth the cost of a traditional ultrasound machine. This became especially popular in rural areas where doctors often travel to see patients. Although the Chinese government illegalized the use of ultrasound machines for sex determination of fetuses, technicians could be bribed to disclose the gender for about $150 USD, which is less than one-tenth the fine for having “extra” children (Hvistendahl, 51).

The easiest and earliest point in the pregnancy to determine the sex of a fetus via ultrasound scan is the second trimester (or 20 weeks). While modern technology does allow for earlier sex determination beginning around 11 weeks, there is about a 50% error rate, which decreases as the weeks progress (Woo). By 20 weeks, the ultrasound can detect the fetus’s hands and fingers, feet and toes, little nose, eyelids, and heart beat.

One of the women I interviewed about this topic is a preemie specialist in the intensive care unit at the local university hospital in Tucson, Arizona. When I spoke with her about the health of prematurely born babies, she smiled and told me about one of her most recent patient additions.

“He is 23 weeks old, and was born too early. But he’s a strong one. He’s a fighter. I think he’ll make it.” The earliest reported baby to survive a premature birth was 21 weeks and 6 days old.

Many Chinese parents obtain ultrasounds at 20 weeks for the “fetal anatomy survey,” which is performed by medical doctors to examine the health and wellness of the fetus. Doctors are prohibited by law from telling the parents the sex of their fetus, but many drop hints as a method of client retention so as not to lose the parents to a more “forthcoming” obstetrician (Hvistendahl, 52). This means that most abortions performed in China are done when the fetus is 20 weeks or
older, making many a potentially viable human being, and so blurring the line between “abortion” and “infanticide.”

The option of abortion has greatly decreased the practice of infanticide in China, according to UNICEF; though as of 2004, there were 100,000-160,000 children abandoned per year (Roth, 149). Paul Ehrlich, the Stanford professor who wrote *The Population Bomb*, believes that abortions are saving females from a life of hardship: “It would be interesting to know how many females you’re keeping out of hideous situations—the ones who are not killed or infanticided but nonetheless not valued” (Hvistendahl, 109). Ehrlich is certainly discounting the effects abortion of females is having on the Chinese majority at large, which is creating “hideous situations” for millions of women. Although China has received international pressure from organizations like the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to “take the necessary measures to prevent infanticide, prenatal sex selection, [and] trafficking in girl children,” these were goals several countries (including China) agreed to embrace in the 1994 Cairo Population Conference (UNFPA). The UNFPA remains “one of the chief apologists and cheerleader[s] for China’s coercive one-child-per-couple policy” (United States.Cong.House).

The US Congressional Hearing regarding China’s human rights’ violations via the OCP (2005) openly accuses the UNFPA of supporting China’s use of abortions to control population numbers since 1979. The former executive director of the UNFPA, Nafis Sadik, was quoted as saying “‘China has every reason to feel proud and pleased with its remarkable achievements made in its family planning policy. The country could offer its experiences and special expert help to help other countries’” (United States.Cong.House). It is actually ironic that the United States Congress is now blaming China for its one-child policy, because it was the United States who encouraged China to adopt such a policy in the 1970’s when the concept of “zero population
“growth” was glorified and widespread among the US’s academic minds (Mosher). China has since taken steps to increase cultural acceptance of having a daughter as one’s only-child. This has included billboards portraying parents celebrating their daughter, with a Chinese title reading “daughters are good!”

Politically, China has instated several policies and campaigns to help protect the unborn sector of the population. First, women are no longer allowed to know the gender of their unborn child, and ultrasounds must be performed with at least two ultrasound technicians in the room to ensure the gender of the fetus remains unspoken. Secondly, the government has instated a pro-female campaign called Care for Girls. It was tested in Chaohu, a small city in Anhui province, and because of heightened birth monitoring, contraceptive handouts, and a microcredit loan of $31 to families having daughters, the sex ratio in Chaohu dropped from 125:100 in 1999, to 114:100 in 2002 (Hvistendahl, 227). The program was instituted on a national level in 2006, but there has yet to be a notable difference in sex ratio disparities. The graph below illustrates the number of abortions to number of live births from several countries around the world (including China), using data from 2009.
One active step the government has taken to show its dedication to decreasing the gender ratio is the enforced “crack-down” on doctors who illegally revealed a fetus’s sex to its parents (Hvistendahl, 52). Several doctors have publicly lost their licenses to practice medicine as a consequence. One of the East Asian gynecologists that Mara Hvistendahl interviewed about sex selection was Cho-Young-Youl. Though he is from South Korea, Cho thoroughly understands the dilemma that Chinese doctors now face: “Almost all the patients wanted to know the sex…. If you didn’t tell the mother, she would go elsewhere. Pregnant women were desperate enough to go around to different hospitals looking for places where they could find out” (Hvistendahl, 53). The law that prevents the use of ultrasounds for sex selection went into effect in 1995 (Economist), but since it is
impossible to prove that an ultrasound was used for the purposes of aborting a female or assuring a male, the practice remains widespread.

Many of the people choosing to abort their female fetuses are well-off members of the Han class, who have found ways around the illegality of sonograms to ensure the birth of a son. The first method is “back-alley sonograms” that are often orchestrated in the back of an ultrasound reader’s car for a very affordable price (often around $15) (Economist: Gendercide-- The Worldwide War on Baby Girls). A more recent trend for couples that can afford the option is centrifuging sperm at fertility clinics (Hvistendahl). Doctors at these clinics often willingly take bribes to centrifuge the sperm of couples, where the female sperm spin to the bottom of the flask due to their slightly higher density. The doctor is then able to extract sperm from the top of the centrifuged sample to ensure that only male-sperm might fertilize the woman’s egg. This method is fairly inexpensive for couples with moderate income, as well as a legal method of sex selection. The final alternative of son-seeking couples is chorionic-villi sampling. This option, although expensive, can be used to accurately determine the sex of the child along with other undesirable congenital defects (e.g. Downs Syndrome) as early as 11 weeks into the pregnancy.

Despite these small advances in protecting the lives of female fetuses, the Chinese government continues to promote the use of abortion. While conducting interviews for this paper with Chinese immigrants, I came across three young college students from China’s Guangdong province, Hunan province, and the suburbs of Beijing. All three of them validated the stories I had heard about billboard promotions for abortions. One of my interviewees from Guangdong province explained that he often saw signs or billboards that read “it [the abortion process] will not hurt, and it will be better for you in the future!”
Many of the observable social consequences of the OCP are in their incipiency. The unequal sex ratio is already beginning to create a smaller work force for the manufacturing sector. As the working population ages, the work force will steadily decline, forcing China to rethink its methods of generating capital, as well as how to care for its geriatric population. Statistically, the fertility rate is now between 1.4 and 1.6, which is well below the Replacement Fertility Rate of 2.0 (World Bank and WHO). In other words, the number of children a couple would need to have in order to replace themselves is not being met in China with the OCP in place (Morgan, Zhigang, and Hayford). The Chinese government maintains that the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of China is significantly higher than reported, due to the number of unauthorized “black children” remaining unregistered. The 2006 Chinese Family Planning Survey does not show an increase in fertility rate among women, and upon extensive data collection and analysis, scholars Morgan, Zhigang, and Hayford concluded that “the trajectories for birth cohorts now in their childbearing years suggest that these cohorts will not replace themselves; rather, completed fertility levels for the 1976–80 birth cohorts will likely be 1.7 births per woman.”

The One-Child Policy’s Effects on the Elderly Population

Adults in China are beginning to face a frightening question as they age: who will take care of us when we are old? One political theory speculates that sons are viewed as an insurance policy for parents in their old age, since traditionally women marry into the man’s family and care for his parents. In terms of health care, the government’s current system was revised in 2009 so that the government pays 55% of the total cost of medical treatments, making health care much more affordable for the Chinese population (Kaye).
The Chinese minister of health explained to PBS’s Jeffery Kaye that China realized that the capitalist style of health care was not working, but that the new system, which is heavily subsidized by the government, now takes care of 94% of the population (three times the number insured before 2009). Hospitals are receiving more funds from the government each year to buy improved equipment, and the government hopes to have a clinic in every village very soon. Currently, there are not enough doctors to see the many patients at an efficient rate in the large central hospitals, so installing local clinics is an important step in delivering healthcare to the Chinese population.

The downside of modern medicine in China is that hospitals use profits made from drug prescriptions to pay the salaries of doctors and hospital staff. As a critical component of cash flow, prices for medicines are high and out of reach for many patients. Chinese health care practitioners expressed their desire to focus on more preventative care, but as of 2010, Chinese hospitals were still making 60% of its revenue from prescription sales (Kaye), although the government has reduced the total revenue allowed from medications to 50%.

Most elderly are taken care of by their family members at home, but as modernization and urbanization grow, traditional family values are expected to shrink, meaning that many more elderly people will need to be institutionalized in their older years compared to the current 2% institutionalized today (Today’s Research on Aging). The economic drain posed by government-sponsored elderly maintenance will grow more and more significant as there will be fewer replacement workers of younger years to pay taxes and participate as a contributing member of Chinese society.
Sexual Health and the One-Child Policy

Socially, public health specialists are wary that there will be a large increase in STDs as more members of the male population turn to prostitutes and rape without women to marry. Since the 1980’s prostitution has exploded through China, as a byproduct of the freer intranational migration law instated with the “Reform and Open-Up” policy. The U.S. Department of State’s annual Trafficking in Persons Report explains that the decreasing numbers of Chinese women is a major factor contributing to sex trafficking across East Asia. Today, there are over ten million sex-workers within China’s borders, operating especially in the bustling cities where the potential for clientele is greatest (Hvistendahl, 185). The vast majority of prostitutes are women from poor Chinese rural areas, and female refugees from East Asian countries like Burma, Vietnam, and North Korea.

From a public health perspective, the primary concern with prostitution is the spread of the AIDS virus, with some scholars anticipating that China will become “the next Africa” for the AIDS epidemic. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) claimed that in 2007 it was the ethnic minorities, poor, and rural migrants of China who were most affected by the AIDS and HIV viruses. In 2005, the total rate of people with HIV/AIDS in Yunnan, Henan, and Xinjiang provinces exceeded 1%, thereby qualifying HIV/AIDS in China as a “generalized epidemic” under the United Nation’s Joint Program for HIV/AIDS guidelines (Gill, Huang, and Lu). One survey of two urban areas in China (cited by UNAIDS) concluded that as much as 3.4-3.6 % of the women in those areas were sex workers. The same UNAIDS report approximates that as many as 37 million men are clients to these women, greatly increasing the risk of transmission of the HIV virus since 60% of the interviewed female sex-workers in China do not consistently require their
clients to use condoms (Wang L et al).

That same year (2005), CSIS reported that sexual transmission and intravenous drug use (IDU) were the top two leading causes of the spread of the virus, with sexual transmission being the cause in 49.8% of the cases, and IDU following closely at 48.6% (Gill, Huang, and Lu). The government’s response has been mediocre in most cases, possibly because HIV/AIDS/STDs are perceived to be self-inflicted illnesses. CSIS claims that while the Ministry of Health allocated 1.5 billion RMB to the fight against HIV/AIDS,
“a lack of education and awareness about HIV continues to undermine efforts to stem the spread of the disease, coupled with continued high levels of risky behaviors, such as drug use and unprotected sex among the key at-risk groups.” As of 2009, China ranked 13th among the world’s nations for most HIV and/or AIDS infections, with a total of 740,000 people diagnosed (CIA worldfactbook), a number that CSIS believes will rise if China does not address the at-risk groups more directly. Over the next five years, the HIV epidemic in China will largely concentrate and grow in two main regions: (1) in southern and southwest Chinese provinces, where heroin use and commercial sex work are increasing; (2) in Xinjiang, where the epidemic is currently concentrated among ethnic minority IDUs, but will, with time, break out to affect commercial sex-workers (CSWs) and the larger population” (Gill, Huang, and Lu).

**Increasing Crime Rate in China**

China’s speedy industrialization and urbanization have inspired an increase in crime rates throughout China. Between 1992 and 2004, China’s crime rate double: a phenomenon that economists at the University of Hong Kong and Columbia found to be in strong correlation with increased male teens and crime rate. According to Hvistendahl, who cited a 2007 study by these economists, the connection is clear:

Chinese provinces where the sex ratio at birth spiked earlier also had earlier crime waves. By applying complex formulas to this finding, Edlund [one of the economists] and her colleagues found a clear link between a large share of males and unlawfulness, concluding a mere 1 percent increase in sex ratio at birth resulted in a five-to-six-point increase in an area’s crime rate. “The increasing maleness of the young adult population” in China, they wrote, “may account for as much as a third of the overall rise in crime” (Hvistendahl, 222).
While the connection between increase in surplus males and crime rates seems evident, Hvistendahl admits that historically the connection has not been so clear. During the grain shortages of the late 19th century, Chinese families in the northeastern rural communities were known to have killed one-fifth to one-fourth of all their daughters in an effort to conserve food for the parents and sons. In the 1850s, as adventurous Chinese men emigrated to the California coast in search of “the golden mountain,” many men remained in China. Women were frequently collected as concubines in rich men’s houses, with some wealthy lords hoarding dozens of women. During this time, 10 to 20 percent of men could not find wives, and the sex ratio in provinces like Jiangsu were 163:100 (1874 census). This vast number of surplus men allowed for charismatic leaders to inspire a number of insurrections against the Qing dynasty, with single men willing to be soldiers (Hvistendahl 208). If history serves as a map of the future, China’s government is right to be nervous about the increasing gender-ratio disparities, as a young male population is one ripe for challenging political order.

**Part IV: Looking into the Future**

A Chinese teacher once told me that the greatest fear of the Communist Party is loss of control. It is for this reason that China has maintained such tight constraints over media investigation and coverage within China itself; and likely explains why the young Chinese students I interviewed were not aware of Chinese officials ever enacting forced abortions on women, or aborting fetuses up to 8 months old. The international media has placed enough attention on human rights violations within OCP enforcement to encourage China to outlaw gender selection while simultaneously continuing to encourage abortions.
Internally, the Chinese government has performed small-scale trials (such as Care for Girls) that focus on relaxing the OCP in small villages, or financially rewarding parents for the birth of a daughter. Unfortunately, though these programs were able to lessen the sex ratio gap on a small scale, they have yet to affect the gender discrepancy for China at large.

Internationally, non-profit organizations have played a rather large role in encouraging Chinese women to have and keep their female children. One such example is All Girls Allowed (AGA): a Christian organization founded in 2010 that provides a year’s lump sum of money to rural families after a mother gives birth to a daughter. This organization’s philosophy is that the money will encourage women and their families to keep their daughter for at least a year, which AGA believes is the amount of time it typically takes for a family to become attached to its new child. Many Christian NGOs preach against the OCP because of its advocacy of abortion, rather than its resulting in sex-selection. The United Nations Family Planning Agency has also proposed several steps for China to take as a way to decrease the gender-ratio imbalance. For example, in its 2008-2013 strategic plan, the UNFPA proposed that sex-selection be discussed in the Millennium Development Goals, as well as in online forums. This would bring the issue of sex selection to the forefront of leaders’ minds, and spread awareness among the populous as well.

Groups like “International Planned Parenthood” support the OCP, claiming that it has increased medical care for mothers and their babies. Ted Turner, the billionaire-philanthropist, has himself advocated that the world adopt a one-child inspired policy to decrease the growing human population, and “save the environment” (Black). In the same spirit, Zhao Baige, China’s national planning official, noted that the policy has itself prevented over 400 million births (approximately Europe’s population number) since 1979,
and this lesser number has not only protected China and its environment from overpopulation, but it is also protecting the world. Although one camp of demographers agree with Zhao, another camp believes that the tendency toward having one child would have emerged regardless of the OCP, as a result of economic growth and migration of families into cities, where more than one child is costly rather than helpful (Bachrach).

The United States has received international pressure from human rights groups to encourage China to abandon its OCP, but nations themselves are mostly hesitant to speak out disagreement with China, since the Chinese nation is now the world’s major manufacturing supplier and holder of other nations’ debts. It seems to be up to Non-Governmental Organizations and unaffiliated groups like the United Nations to put pressure on China to officially conclude the OCP.

**Conclusion**

The consequences of China’s OCP have proven to be more troubling than initially anticipated by Song Jian and Deng Xiaoping those thirty years ago. The reason for this underestimation lies in China’s motivation for creating the policy: decreasing population numbers to ensure that there would be enough food and wealth for all. This description would indeed sound utopian to most people around the world. But the ballistics missile scientist who designed the policy forgot to account for societal preference for sons. To its credit, the OCP accomplished its goal of slowing and decreasing the population growth to make way for economic growth, and China is now stepping on the toes of the United States for its place as the world’s economic hegemon. The cost of this success, however, is cause for hesitation. The OCP has prevented the birth of some 400 million people, some
voluntarily, others by force. Women have borne the brunt of the consequences of the policy as East Asian preference for sons has driven many families: to abort female fetuses in order to ensure male heirs; to leave daughters unregistered and unable to participate in society fully so that their son(s) can be registered without exceeding the family’s birth quota; and to sell daughters as brides to unknown men for the price of a year’s salary. Young women (some as young as 10) have been seduced into prostitution, and increased domestic abuse against women is increasing as men fear losing their wives and therefore assume more ownership of their physical bodies as a result.

Due to the poor access of insurance and the shift in familial values from valuing the family unit to valuing the individual self and independence, many parents have chosen to ensure a male heir as a type of insurance policy in their old age, and as an economic asset in their youth to help with land and house work.

As the OCP ages, the dearth of females becomes more noticeable, and the sale and purchase of wives from poor rural areas or neighboring countries grows in popularity. Prostitution and sexually transmitted infections (including AIDS) increase yearly, as more and more men turn toward sex workers as a way to fulfill their sexual urges. Without women with whom to partner, men’s biological hormones remain arrested in development; testosterone levels remain high and unabated in the predominately unmarried young male population, and without women and children to increase their oxytocin levels and calm down impulsive urges, violent outbursts are foreseeable (Hvistendahl, 199). The combination of fewer women to marry China’s bachelors, and unmarried Chinese men without children (two conditions that biological scientists have found decrease men’s testosterone levels) will lead to a very unstable environment for the Chinese government.
and its ability to maintain civil control. Mara Hvistendahl phrased it best in her book

*Unnatural Selection* when she described the effect this could have on China in the coming years:

> The testosterone studies can tell us a bit about our current demographic quandary. They can tell us why an excess of 160 million men will look very different from an excess of 160 million women. They can tell us why it matters that the world’s surplus men are young. They give us specific indicators—crime, murder, delinquency—that suggest how the failure of one generation to marry can affect an entire society. What the testosterone studies cannot foretell is the effect of gathering tens of millions of young bachelors in one place for years on end. Nothing can predict that because it has never happened before (Hvistendahl, 201).

Earlier this year, Wen Jiabao issued a press release in the Report on the Work of the Government (2012) stating China’s plans for the “ensuring and improving people’s well-being.” Abstract as the plans were, they included the following:

We will comprehensively carry out work relating to population and family planning. We will continue to keep the birthrate low, redress gender imbalance through various means, and improve the health of infants. We will achieve full coverage of quality family planning services more quickly than planned and extend the trial program of free pre-pregnancy checkups to 60% of China's counties and county-level cities and districts. We will increase the rewards and special assistance to the rural families that observe the state's family planning policy. We will increase family planning services to the floating population and improve management of such services. We will do our work related to women and children well. We will extend free cervical cancer and breast cancer screening to more rural women, improve the well-being of women and children and better guarantee their rights and interests. We will further improve the social security system and the system of services for people with disabilities. We will actively develop programs for the elderly and accelerate development of a system of social services for urban and rural seniors so they can live their later years in contentment.
The plan mentioned above, as many of China’s political documents, is optimistic, powerful, and unsupported by details. Declaring that a set of goals will be reached “well” does not provide any confidence in the methodology that will be used, not the time frame in which it will happen. Wen’s words are, for the most part, open to interpretation. But how else can China be led as a capitalist and socialist society? There must be leeway in the leader’s promises so that the central government is not held directly accountable should local provinces not comply completely. It is wording like this that has kept the central government of the Communist Party in China safe from citizen’s ridicule.

Citizens are thus quick to accuse their local officials of poor leadership or bad governing, but the central government remains this untouched patriarchal figure that continues to want only the best for its citizens.

The question facing us now is: what might be changed, enhanced, or corrected today in order to ensure a better tomorrow, not only for the women of China, but for the entire world population? China is a leader for the world in how to achieve unprecedented economic growth following mass starvation, and the gender gap it is experiencing as a result of sex-selection has already carried over into India and parts of Eastern Europe, including Albania (Hvistendahl, 44). While China is making noble strides in promoting the worth of daughters, the gender gap cannot mend quickly enough to supply the young sons of today with wives for tomorrow. Parents must be encouraged to have daughters, without facing “Sophie’s Choice” and being forced to choose between having a daughter or a son. The preference for sons is so ingrained in human cultures around the world, that it will take generations of positive reinforcement and pro-daughter programs to make sons and daughters equal in the eyes of the world’s families. But
without abandoning the OCP, China’s daughters are being defeated before they ever have the
chance to show their worth.
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