Governmental Control and Cultural Adaptation:
A Comparison Between Rural and Urban Reactions to China's Fertility Control Policies.

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For the last forty years there has been mounting concern about the "overpopulation problem."

China, which is home to roughly on fifth of the world's population, has always been a focus for those concerned with the pressure placed on the earth's limited resources by excessive population. The leadership of the People's Republic of China has taken a wide range of stances concerning the population issue in the last fifty years, ranging from a complete denial of the idea that over-population posed a problem, to the implementation of the "one-child" policy, the strictest population control policy in history. The policies of the PRC have had a profound impact on the culture and demographics of the world's most populous nation.

In this paper I will examine how Chinese families experience the one-child policy, and the impact of this policy on their fertility behaviors and preferences, especially their preferences regarding the sex of their children. I will examine these issues with an awareness of the main factors, which determine the way in which the policy is applied and the reactions to it. To do this, I will focus on two broad sub-sets of the Chinese population: urban dwellers with worker registration, rural residents with agricultural registration. These two groups, while they do not begin to encompass the diversity of the Chinese population, do provide a useful means of comparison in order to explore the way fertility preferences and behaviors under the policy are affected by: socio-cultural factors, the degree of governmental control, and socio-economic considerations.

During the early years of the PRC, over-population was not considered to be a problem. Chairman Mao asserted that: "Of all things in the world, people are the most precious." When confronted with Malthusian arguments asserting that the population
would outpace the country's resources, Mao responded: "It is a very good thing that China has a large population. Even if China's population multiplies many times, she is fully capable of finding a solution; the solution is production." However, in 1970, after the population had grown by 273 percent in just twenty years (from 300 million to 820 million), the PRC changed its stance on population and initiated China's first governmental campaign to limit fertility. This campaign, known by its slogan, "later-sparser-fewer" (wan-xi-shao) urged couples to marry later, increase the interval between births, and to have fewer children. This policy was extremely successful; during the 1970s the total fertility rate dropped from 5.82 to 2.75 in just nine years.

The exact mechanisms of the sharp decline in fertility during the 1970s are still under discussion. It appears that many of the coercive measures that characterize the current one-child policy, such as birth quotas, were initiated under the wan-xi-shao campaign. Some attribute the fertility decline to these stringent policies. However, other scholars cite the increase in the status, socio-economic stature, and education of women as the primary factor behind the fertility decline. According to Freedman, the increased status of women along with the decrease in child mortality probably resulted in a reduction in the desired number of children. Whatever the case, it is clear that the wan-xi-shao policy was a period of transition from the pre-1970 pattern of high, self determined fertility to the pattern of low, governmentally controlled fertility of the one-child policy.

Despite the great reduction of fertility during the 70s, the government feared that their gains might be lost due to the large portion of the population approaching

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1. The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of children each woman is expected to give birth to in her lifetime.
childbearing age. As a result, the much stricter one-child family policy was instituted in 1979. Under this policy, families are restricted from having more than one child. After a couple gave birth to a child they are compelled to accept a certificate signifying that they agree to have no more children. In return for accepting the one-child certificate, families receive certain monetary, educational, and healthcare benefits. Should the family break the terms of the agreement and give birth to another child, they would be required to repay the cost of the benefits they collected, in addition to other penalties. The one-child policy is administered on state, regional, and local levels. Each administrative unit and subunit is allocated a quota for the maximum number of births permitted in a given year. It is the job of the birth planning workers to select the families who will be permitted to give birth in a given year and to issue them official permission. Fines and other penalties are levied against families who violate the policy by giving birth without permission, giving birth too soon after marriage, marrying before the mandatory age, or attempting to conceal an out-of-plan birth from officials.

As with the wan-xi-shao campaign, propaganda, education, and ready access to contraception and abortion are key components of the one-child policy. However, the one-child policy also relies heavily on coercion to achieve the desired number of births. Under the marriage law of 1980, women are required to submit proof of contraceptive use (usually in the form of an IUD, the presence of which was verified twice a year through mandatory medical examinations) and abortion became the mandatory form of "remediation" for unplanned pregnancies. Great personal pressure is exerted on individuals by birth planning cadres who visit women to enquire about them, to educate them as to the policy and its importance to the country, and to implore them to practice
birth control or to abort an out of plan pregnancy. Other means of group pressure are used to ensure compliance with the policy, such as penalizing an entire collective or work unit for an out-of-plan birth. Some more forceful methods of inducing compliance with the policy have also been documented including forced abortions and sterilizations.9

While, in theory the one-child policy remains today, it has undergone a series of revisions over the course of its existence. The biggest revision of policy occurred around 1986 when the government expanded the qualifications allowing a couple to legally give birth to a second child. At the outset of the policy only a small number of families qualified to have a second child-these included ethnic minorities, those whose first child had died or become disabled, and those who had worked in certain industries. However, as a result of the great resistance to the policy in the countryside, these exceptions were expanded over time to include people who were the only surviving male in family line and whose first child was a girl, and then eventually any peasant family whose first child was a girl. Thus, for the majority of the Chinese population, the one-child policy evolved into a one-son-or-two-children policy by the later part of the 1980s.9

The PRC's population control policies have evolved over the last thirty years; they have undergone many modifications and periods of greater and lesser enforcement--but the results are clear: population growth has slowed dramatically. These policies, particularly the one-child policy instituted in 1979, have had a profound impact on Chinese demographics. According to the Chinese Bureau of Statistics the crude birth rate and the rate of natural increase have fallen precipitously from the 1963 peak of 43.37% and 33.33% to the 1998 level of 16.03% and 9.53% respectively." In essence, the government's family planning policies have caused China to go through what
demographers call "demographic transition" (the transition from high death rates and high birth rates, to low death rates and low birth rates) in a few short decades rather than over the course of centuries as has been the case elsewhere in the world. 2 Clearly, such rapid and dramatic demographic transition is bound to have and equally dramatic impact on the country's social and cultural systems—particularly the family.

Traditionally, Chinese fertility has been characterized by a preference for large, complex extended families. Due to the high rates of infant and child mortality occurring amongst the peasant population, which composed the vast majority of the Chinese population, few families (usually, only the wealthiest families) were able to achieve this ideal. This meant that there was a certain status attached to large families. After 1949, child mortality diminished and it became possible for more rural families to achieve this ideal. 13 As a result of this decrease in mortality, China's population grew very rapidly, increasing from 300 to 820 million between 1950 and 1970. However, in the same time fertility rates within cities began to fall, as a result of the greater education and opportunities available to women, and the practical considerations of urban life. Thus, at the time of the introduction of China's fertility control policies, the fertility of urban Chinese had begun a downward trend from 4.9 in 1950 to 3.3 in 1970 and rural China's fertility increased gradually over the period going from 5.7 in 1950 to 6.3 in 1970.'

In Chinese culture there is a long tradition of son-preference. The roots of son-preference in china are tied to the patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal Confucian family structure. It was very important for families to produce an heir to continue the family line and to worship the family's ancestors. Of course, if a family could not produce an heir one could always be adopted, however,
not nearly as useful to their parents because they would eventually leave home to live with their husbands' families. Daughters' dual membership in both their natal and marital families had the effect of reducing their status in both. While both sons and daughter's commonly cared and provided for parents in their old-age, it was considered to be primarily the son's responsibility because daughters had other responsibilities in their marital household, such as caring for her husbands parents. Sons were also valued because of their ability to contribute to the family economy. Although, both sons and daughters often contributed to the family economy, sons were preferable because they would do so for more years and because their contributions were valued more highly than that of daughters. (The work of women continues to be differentially valued in China today, which is demonstrated by the fact that women receive less pay than men for the same work). Son-preference was also strengthened by a pervasive cultural bias against women. Women had to endure bound feet, and first a marginal role in their natal family and then a marginal role in their marital family. It was often only through giving birth to and rearing sons that women could acquire status and influence. Ironically, this too perpetuates son-preference.

The persistence of son-preference even in modern times is visible when we examine the difference in mortality between male and female children during the famine that occurred during "The Great Leap Foreword" of 1959-1961. During these years, female children, who have a statistically greater survival rate compared with male children of the same ages, were more likely to die than male children. According to Coale and Banister: "This finding suggests that a strong pattern of selective neglect of girls in childhood occurred between 1953 and 1964." Clearly, when resources became
scarce Chinese families were more likely to attempt to preserve the life of their male children than their female children.

Prior to the initiation of China's fertility control policies, families had the option of managing their fertility according to their needs and desires, without governmental interference. Indeed, it appears that Chinese families did commonly manipulate their fertility according to their preferences throughout this century and even earlier. However, with the advent of governmental fertility control, Chinese families lost the exclusive right to manage their own fertility. Clearly, the fertility behaviors mandated by the one-child policy represent a profound departure from both recent and traditional fertility preferences and behaviors. This raises several questions. How Chinese families have reacted to this policy, which essentially repudiates traditional fertility ideals? Has the policy been effective in reshaping people's fertility goals and behaviors to match the government's population goals? And, if not, how do families manage their fertility goals in the context of this restrictive policy?

The evidence indicates that after twenty years, the one-child policy has not been successful in altering the fertility preferences and behaviors of the majority of the Chinese population to match policy goals. While fertility has declined dramatically, it has still fallen short of the PRC leadership's goal of one child per couple. Since around 1985 the total fertility rate has remained near replacement level (2.2). While this is a striking reduction in fertility, it is far from the policy's target of one child per woman. According to Zeng Yi, the TRF for 1990 was 2.43 (adjusted for under-reporting). Approximately 80% of China's population is rural or agricultural and would therefore qualify to have a second child if the first were a girl. Assuming that around half of first
births were girls, that means only 40% of women should be having more than one child. This would equal a TFR of 1.40. This means that for every childbearing woman there is approximately one out-of-plan birth. This is a rather low level of compliance with such a strict policy indicates the strength of the resistance that exists towards the policy.

Another glaring indication of the policy's inability to change people's fertility preferences is the persistence of son-preference. According to Milwertz:

The major problem in implementing the one-child family policy can be traced to this enduring traditional Confucian son-preference. Young parents are unlikely to accept only one child if the child is female. The reasons are socio-economic, just as they have historical and cultural roots in the traditional Confucian patriarchal family system. 19

Indeed the one-child policy has caused an intensification of son-preference. One indication that China's birth reduction campaign has increased son-preference is the marked increase in male to female sex ratio among recorded births. Sex ratios at birth reflect the number of male births for every hundred female births; they are relatively stable at approximately 106 male births per hundred female births. 20 The sex-ratios in China have increased in recent years from 106.4 in the pre birth-regulation days of 1962-1966, to 108.3 at the beginning of the one-child policy in 1978-1982, and finally to 113.8 in 1989—a figure that is significantly higher than the expected figure of 106. 21 This figure means that there were 500,000 to one million fewer recorded female births in 1989 than one would expect to occur without intervention of some sort. The difference between the expected number of female births recorded each year and the recorded number is referred to as the problem of China's "missing girls."22

Studies show that the number of missing girls has grown throughout the 1980s and into the 1990’s ii

ii The majority of the data cited in this paper pertains to the first decade of the policy, 1979-1989. There is limited data available from the 1990s. Scholars are likely still analyzing the data from the 1990s. Also, interest in the topic may have diminished as the one-child policy enters its twenty-second year.
It is important to recognize that this resistance to the one child policy—indicated by out-of-plan births, abnormal sex ratios, and general resentment toward the policy—does not express itself equally in different subsets of the Chinese population. The most striking difference is between rural and urban populations, particularly rural people with peasant registration and urban people with worker registration. Urban people appear to have an extremely high level of compliance with the policy; they typically give birth only to the permissible number of children and the sex ratio at birth appears to be closer to the expected ratio than elsewhere in China. However, in contrast, the rural population tends to have a high level of resistance to the policy. Rural families frequently have more than the permissible number of births and a significantly higher ratio of boys to girls. This marked difference in fertility behaviors and preferences is the result of three factors: differences in the level of governmental control, cultural tendencies, and socio-economic considerations.

**The One-Child Policy In The Urban Context**

The one-child policy has been most effective in urban areas among people with worker registration. Within this group, compliance with the policy is nearly universal and the sex ratio at birth is much closer to the expected ratio. According to Li, in 1991 approximately 91 percent of mothers with worker registration had only one child, while only 59 percent of those with agricultural registration did so. Similarly, 87% of mothers with worker registration accepted the one-child certificate as compared with 13% of mothers with agricultural registration. Furthermore, sex ratios for urban residents
appear to be much lower than those of rural residents and residents of towns. According to Hull, the sex ratio in 1987 was 108.73 in cities, compared with 111.20 in towns, and 111.35 in rural areas (for a total of 110.94 for all of China). There are several reasons for this correlation between urban residence/worker registration and compliance with the policy: high levels of government control, practical constraints of urban life, higher levels of education, and changing social and cultural norms.

Government control plays a large role in compliance with the one-policy. Those living in urban areas with worker registration are subject to extensive government control of many aspects of their lives. They rely on the government (usually through their work unit) for most of the necessities of daily life. They receive a salary, housing, an old-age pension, food allocation, healthcare, educational benefits, vacations and leaves from work, all through the government. If they violate government policy they are subject to the loss of part or all of their salary and benefits; they may also lose their job or be prevented from advancing within their work place. Any fines levied against them can be deducted directly from their pay. Another form of control exerted by the government is the ability to penalize an entire work unit if one person fails to comply with the one-child policy. This places a great deal of pressure on families to comply with the policy, so as not to harm the entire group. Thus, workers have a vested interest in remaining in the good graces of the government; indeed for many workers the ramifications of violating the one-child policy would be disastrous.

Birth-planning work is conducted both through a woman's workplace (very little of the birth-planning work is directed at men) and within their area of residence. This

iii Here I am going to examine type two registration and urban residency together as they are strongly correlated: the majority of those with worker registration live in the cities and the majority of those living
overlap ensures that no urban resident with worker registration is capable of slipping through the cracks of the birth-planning system. 27 This makes it impossible for a woman to conceal an out-of-plan pregnancy from officials. (And, as I will discuss below, contributes to the lower sex-ratios seen in cities because it makes it impossible for families to hide or dispose of unwanted female babies.) Administration of the policy through work units also aids birth-planning workers in their efforts to ideologically educate workers, as they can hold birth-planning lectures during work hours and mandate attendance. Anyone who is perceived to be resisting the policy, or at risk of violating the policy, is visited and closely monitored by the birth-planning cadre in her district. According to urban birth-planning cadres, the one-child policy is nearly universally accepted; the only people who resist are those under pressure from older generations to produce a son, or those who remarry after one of the parties has already had a child. 28 In these cases both residential and work unit birth-planning cadres work together to persuade the couple to behave within the plan or, if the woman is already pregnant, to terminate the pregnancy immediately. Birth-planning workers also deal with registering marriages, determining when a woman may receive permission to give birth, and providing and monitoring the use of contraceptives.

One interesting outcome of the way in which the policy is administered in urban areas is that becoming pregnant can be an extremely bureaucratic process. In order to legally get pregnant a woman must meet the minimum age requirement of 24 years old, be married, and get permission from both the residential officials and work unit officials. 29 This can be difficult because both work units and residential units have quotas, and both must give a woman priority in order for her to qualify for a birth permit.

in rural areas have peasant registration.
(Women are typically prioritized for birth permits according to their age, with the oldest receiving permits first.) In the work units Milwertz studied, the process was usually stream-lined if a woman was over twenty-four and pregnant for the first time; in this situation birth cadres would do their best to fit her into the quota and provide her with a birth permit for the pregnancy. However, this was not always the case—under the one-child policy a woman's fertility can be controlled according to the whims of the birth-planning cadres, even when their decisions don't serve any productive end.

A forty year-old woman, who had married a divorcee with two children, became pregnant. The two birth-planning workers at her work unit disagreed as to whether she should have an abortion or not. However, as she did not have a birth permit, the birth planning cadres eventually compromised. The woman said they made her have an abortion otherwise her bonus would be deducted. Then following the abortion, they helped her obtain a birth permit so she could become pregnant again.

This rather disturbing story shows just how little control urban Chinese women have over their own fertility.

While the high level of government control does give urban people substantial reason to comply with the one-child policy, and limits their ability to maneuver around the system, there are other factors, which contribute to the low birth rate. Urban women tend to have lower overall fertility preferences than do other Chinese women. As mentioned above the fertility rates of urban women had already started to fall prior to the introduction of China's fertility limitation policies. A female graduate student from Beijing, born under the policy, demonstrated the rapid decrease in fertility preferences within urban areas when she explained, "My mother had thirteen brothers and sisters, but my parents only wanted one: me!"

Mother reason urban residents tend to comply with the one-child policy is because it is not incompatible with their needs or their living situation. As Whyte and Gu
observed: "Everything we know about urban life in China suggests that it presents an environment
decidedly favorable to low fertility and even to the one-child family." 33 Urban people live in
incredibly cramped quarters. In Deborah Davis' 1987 survey of 99 representative Shanghai families,
she found that the average space per person in a home was 5.5 square meters. 34 This is roughly the
same area as a king sized bed. Urban parents also have less of a need for children than rural parents
do because most urban children do not contribute to the family economy as they do in rural China.
Workers are also guaranteed pensions from their place of employment, so they do not need many
children to ensure their financial security in old age.

Another cause of urban people's low fertility preferences is the success of education and
propaganda in altering fertility views. Urban women tend to be better educated than rural women. In
general, women with more education are more likely to accept the "one-child" certificate and less
likely to have a second child.35 Population education, in particular, has been very effective in
altering the fertility preferences of urban Chinese. According to Milwertz's survey of women in
Beijing and Shenyang, while between 26 and 82 percent of women said that they would prefer more
than one child, the majority also agreed that some sort of population control measures were necessary
in China. Also, the vast majority (85%) stated the "The individual must voluntarily submit to the
policy of the nation."36 In Milwert's study she found that few urban women resented the one-child
policy, in fact, the primary resentment that existed was towards those (such a rural to urban migrants)
who managed to skirt the regulations. This is because urban workers accept the policy as a fact of
life. They do not question the policy, or find the policy to be distasteful, so long as it is evenly and
fairly applied.
According to Milwertz, this acceptance of the nation's policies is part of reciprocal relationship between workers and the state. The state provides the necessities of life and in return workers submit to the authority of the state. Urban woman do not consider even the coercive or invasive aspects of the policy, such as the monitoring of their contraceptive use, to be objectionable. On the contrary, they see the coercive behaviors of birth-planning cadres to be a form of caring. Take for instance a birth-planning worker urging a woman to accept an IUD. Women feel that this worker is only trying to help them because if they don't use contraceptives and they become pregnant then they will have to get an abortion—which is a very painful procedure in China because doctors perform abortions without any form of anesthetic. Women see the birth planning workers as helping them avoid to negative consequences that accompany noncompliance with the policy. They accept the policy as a fact of life, and see the birth planning workers as helping them manage this reality. 37

Another factor that contributes to urban women's low fertility preferences is a change in the culture of parenting that has followed the introduction of the one-child policy, which is sometimes referred to as "the cult of the perfect only-child." The one-child policy has become such part of life for urban families that it has gradually influenced the culture. In a society where only one child is permitted per family, parents have come to place a tremendous emphasis on the accomplishments of that one child. Parents only have one child focus their attention on and to encourage to fulfill their ambitions for the next generation. Also, with only one child, parents must rely solely on that child for their care in old age. Thus, the future of that child is very important to parents. Consequently, parents devote a substantial portion of their time and resources to
insuring the future of their only child. Parents have even become quite competitive about providing their child with all the things that other parents provide their children—music lessons, tutors, educational activities, and even "Baby Mozart" tapes. Many parents feel they must do all these things not only so their children will be successful, but also so that their children will feel love and gratitude towards their parents and thus provide better care for their parents in their old-age. This has had the effect of reducing the fertility preferences of many women because the requirements of parenting have become so intense that the idea of maintaining one-child parenting standards for multiple children seems unmanageable to most parents. 38

Urban parents are also more compliant with the one-child policy because son-preference is much less pronounced. This is a result of the higher education levels in the cities, and the greater level of equality between urban men and women. In Milwertz's study of urban mothers 27.5% of women said they hoped that their baby would be a boy when they were pregnant, 16.1% said that they hoped that their baby would be a girl, and 52.3% said they were unconcerned with the sex of their child.39 Generally, the ideal for most women is to have both a boy and a girl.40 Many women showed a preference for girls because they felt that girls are nicer and more concerned with their parents. This idea was summed up with the phrase "girl is close." Many parents felt that a daughter would be more sensitive to their needs and take better care of them in their old age. However, this is not to say that son-preference is absent in urban China. Many parents still wish to have a son to perpetuate the family line. And, while the figures cited by Milwertz show rather low rates of son-preference, these figures only reflect to opinions of urban women of childbearing age. Men and members of the older generation
(particularly the husbands parents) also tend to have a say in fertility decisions, and it is likely that they might have a greater preference for sons because it is their family line which needs perpetuation, not the woman's. This is reflected in the statement of one of Milwertz's informants: "I hoped for a girl. My husband hoped for a boy. I think most men want a son. I suppose the reason is the tradition of exalting males and demeaning females, which is still very prevalent is society. Boys can continue the family line." The sex ratios among urban Chinese families are less skewed than they are for other segments of the Chinese population, however, they are still high enough to require some explanation. I will deal with the causes of the differences between expected and actual sex ratios in a later section.

**The One-Child Policy In The Rural Context**

In rural China, where the majority of the population lives, there has been substantial resistance to the one-child policy. The TFR for all of China was 2.4 in 1988 and the TFR for those living in urban areas was 1.3. This shows a disparity between the nearly universal acceptance of the policy in urban areas and the low levels of acceptance in rural areas. Also, in 1988 the distribution by parity of all Chinese births was: 52% first births, 32% second births, and 15% third or higher parity births. Given the low total fertility rates in cities, it is clear that the majority of all second and higher parity births occurred outside of the urban areas. This is confirmed by various rural case studies which show that fewer than half of all couples had only one child and many had more than two (which is always in violation of the policy, as the numerous exceptions to the one-child policy only pertain to second births). For instance, Jiali Li found that of a
sample of 13,631 births to peasant parents in Hebei province from 1980 to 1988 only 43.3 were born with permits. 44 The low level of acceptance of the one-child policy amongst China's peasantry is the result of the inability of the government to control the rural population, the persistence of son-preference, and the economic need of rural parents for more children.

Since the decollectivization of agriculture in the late 1970s, the Chinese government has lost a great deal of its ability to control the peasantry and ensure compliance with government policies. Most peasants are economically independent of the Chinese government. They farm family plots, market their own produce, and also participate in outside wage labor. The government provides them with few social services. This has created a situation in which the government has very little leverage over peasants. Unlike urban people, whom the government can directly punish in numerous ways for violating the one-child policy, the rural population can typically only be punished through fines. Fines have proven to be a rather ineffective form of punishment because peasants merely pay them if they can afford them, or ignore them if they cannot. The government has little recourse if peasants do not comply. Many local cadres bargain with peasants in order to get them to pay even part of their fines or try to get violators to trade sterilization or insertion of IUDs in lieu of fines. In Greenhalgh's study, she found that around 1987, many cadres had given up on trying to fine peasants at all for violating the policy. 45

In spite of the government's diminished ability to control the peasantry through economic means, government control is not completely absent. The government has been trying to devise new ways of forcing compliance with their policies. In the late
eighties (shortly after the time period dealt with in Greenhalgh's study) the government placed a renewed emphasis on population control in rural areas. They revised the law to allow families whose first child was a girl to apply for an exemption, allowing them to have another child after a certain number of years. At the same time, they redoubled their efforts to crack down on violators of the policy. They referred to this revised policy as "Opening a small hole to close a large one." According to Johnson, Huang and Wang:

In the countryside enforcement can involve monitoring households' reproductive behavior, 'persuasion,' at times spilling over into direct coercion, stiff, escalating fines, and sterilization for 'over-quota births.46 These efforts appear to be successful in causing peasants to desire to avoid being caught violating the policy, as the marked increases in abandoned children at local aid agencies that accompanies these efforts demonstrates. 47

Another reason that rural parents have such a low level of compliance with the one-child policy is the economic and social structure of family farming. With the family as the primary unit of production, parents have an added incentive to have children in order to acquire more labor. Also, rural parents must rely solely on their children for their support in old age. This makes having one child very risky because if that child were to die the parents would have no one to rely on. Also, the policy of later marriage and childbearing is completely contradictory to the ambitions of peasant parents. For most parents, once their children marry and become parents, they are able to retire from hard agricultural work and move on to their roles as grandparents-minding the grandchildren and the home of their children. The progression from the role of parents to grandparents is a very favorable one to rural people. They receive greater status within the family as the senior generation and they also are able to lead easier lives.48 For this reason many families do not wish to postpone childbearing, as the policy encourages.

The primary reason that rural people violate the one-child policy is to achieve both the
preference for a family composed of both one boy and one girl, but especially one boy. Parents feel that having a daughter is important because they feel that "daughters provide crucial emotional support." According to Greenhalgh: "The image that recurred was one of an elderly couple, unable to get around much any more, whose married daughter comes home to cook the meals, do the laundry, and generally keep them company." While the idea of having a daughter is quite appealing to many rural parents, to them having a son was mandatory. This is because the patrilineal family system is still the primary organizing principle of rural China. Parents expect to live with their son or sons in their old age, and to have that son(s) provide them with economic support. It is by perpetuating the family line that parents gain status in a family. Compliance with the one-child policy places this ascension within the familial hierarchy in jeopardy. If a family were only to have daughters, then the parents would never be able to rise to the position of status and authority that accompanies becoming the eldest generation of a family line. The position of a daughter's parents within the daughter's marital home is bound to be a marginal one, as their son-in-law's parents would already fill the role of the eldest generation. Also, because their daughter, the wife within the marital family, already exists within a traditionally marginal position within her marital family, it is not a certainty that her husband's family would be willing to care for them, regardless of their daughter's feelings. This makes having no sons a very risky proposition for most rural parents.

As a result of the perceived necessity of having at least one son, many rural families are willing to go to great lengths to ensure that they achieve this goal. Consequently, the sex ratios at birth have risen significantly over the course of the
fertility limitation campaign. While sex ratios in China have been higher than normal at many times in history, by the middle of the last century, the sex ratios had become very normal (106.5, 1961-67). However, with the advent of China's fertility limitation campaign, the sex ratios began to rise to their current high levels (113.8 in 1989). Even more alarming than the overall high sex ratio, is the sex ratios according to parity." In 1989 the ratio was 104.9 for first births, 120.9 for second births, 124.6 for third births, and 131.7 for fourth and higher births. These numbers far exceed normal levels and indicate that whatever is causing the disparity is much more prevalent amongst those choosing to violate the one-child policy. The obvious explanation for this is that people who go on to have higher order births are doing so for the expressed purpose of giving birth to a much-desired son. This hypothesis is confirmed by studies of the relationship between the sex of previous children and the sex of following children. For instance, in one study of two primarily agricultural counties of Anhui Province, where the overall sex ratio was 122.0 for 1987 to 1993, Graham et al. found that the sex ratios for second children were 121.0 if the first child was a boy and 394.0 if the first child was a girl. Similarly, they found that if the first two children were boys then the sex ratio for the third child was 122.0, but if the first two children were girls then the sex ratio for the third child was 379.0. These numbers are incredibly far removed from the expected ratio of 106.0 and show that parents were certainly doing something out of the ordinary to insure that they had at least one boy.

The Fate of China's Missing Girls

There is no evidence to indicate that sex ratios increase with parity, if anything they decrease slightly.
There has been much discussion and speculation as to the fate of China's missing girls. Many Westerners are familiar with stories of crowded unsanitary orphanages teeming with unwanted female babies. Clearly, given the limited number of facilities operating in China to care for unwanted children, only a fraction of the estimated millions of girls who have gone missing since the implementation of the one-child policy could reside in such facilities. What has become of the rest? The missing girls can be divided into three categories: those who are not born due to pre-birth sex-selection, those who die before they are recorded, and those who are living but do not make it into the statistics. One partial explanation of the increase in the sex ratio at birth, since that advent of the one-child policy, is the practice of sex-selective abortion. Sex-selective abortion is facilitated by the use of ultrasound imaging machines, which make it possible for expectant parents to ascertain the sex of the fetus. This practice is enough of a concern for the Chinese government that they have made it illegal for ultrasound technicians to tell parents the sex of a fetus.

Identification of a child's sex is strictly forbidden by the government authorities, but when the technician (typically a local resident) observes the sex on his machine, he can let the parents (usually his friends) know by a simple quiet, gesture. 52

In the past, Western demographers have been skeptical about the assertion that ultrasound technology may have been responsible for the increasingly uneven sex ratio during the 1980's. They questioned whether the technology was available widely enough to have made a significant impact. Current information indicates that ultrasound technology is very widely available in China and has been since the 1980's.53 The practice of using ultrasound to identify and terminate female fetuses is not a novel concept; the practice has been widely documented in other countries where son-preference also exists, such as India.
Sex-selective abortion is the most probable explanation for abnormal sex ratios in urban areas because the technology is definitely available there and because officials there monitor both pregnancies and births, which makes it difficult for parents to abandon, kill, or conceal unwanted female children without arousing suspicion. Ansley and Banister support the theory that sex selection prior to birth contributes to elevated sex ratios. They cite recent studies from a representative sample of hospitals (an environment in which underreporting is not a possibility), which show the existence of a skewed sex ratio at birth (109.7). These figures of course do not indicate that the missing girls can all be accounted for by sex-selective abortion—the primary means of manipulating sex ratios at birth—because hospital births are not universal in China. However, hospital births are much more common in urban areas, and these figures go a long way towards accounting for the urban sex ratio of 108.7. Also, these figures do verify that some sort of pre-birth sex selection is taking place, at least among the segment of the population that gives birth in the hospital setting.

Many female children are born each year but their births are never recorded. For this group one possible fate is abandonment. While hard numbers are difficult to gather on the subject of child abandonment (due to the secrecy of the practice and official attempts to cover up the problem), it is clear that abandonment is a demographically significant problem resulting from the fertility control policies of the Chinese government. Johnson estimates that 100,000 to 160,000 young children, mostly girls, are abandoned each year. 54 Child and infant abandonment has a long history in China-
particularly in certain regions of the country, such as south-central China. In Hubei and Hunan provinces, starting as early as the later part of the 17th century, public measures were undertaken to attempt to reduce the incidence of child abandonment and to care for foundlings. Then, like today, the vast majority of the abandoned children were girls. According to Johnson, this practice was in decline in this region during the majority of the 20th century; however, this trend appears to have reversed itself with the advent of state mandated fertility limitation in the 1970's.

The resurgence of female infant abandonment appears to be directly tied to the confluence of traditional son-preference and the government's policies of strict population control. Before the advent of population control measures, parents presumably abandoned children that they were unable to care for—especially girls, who were seen as being less essential to the family. Under the population control regime, parents who abandon their female children, do so to circumvent the governmental restrictions on fertility in order to ensure that the family has a male child. However, in spite of many people's strong desire for a son, few families abandon female children, even over-quota children if there are no daughters in the family. According to Johnson:

Although many people abandon female infants in their quest to have a son, most do so only after they have reached of exceeded the limits imposed on them by birth planning. Girls are not readily abandoned.”

Infant abandonment is a much greater problem in rural areas than in urban areas. As I have already mentioned state birth planning officials monitor both pregnancies and births in urban areas. However, in rural areas this is not always the case. In rural areas,

Unfortunately, to my knowledge no data exists on whether other methods of manipulating sex ratios at birth are practiced in China—such as the ovulation-awareness/coital-frequency method. It is not
local officials must maintain a balance between pleasing their superiors and staying on good terms with their constituents (their friends and neighbors). As a result, many cadres may attempt to lessen the invasiveness of the one-child policy by monitoring births and ignoring pregnancies. This allows the local cadres to avoid prying into the personal business of their constituents—so long as their numbers add up to a figure that will be acceptable to their superiors. Some cadres are likely to want to avoid seeing probable violations of policy because that means that not only would the cadre have to deal with the problem, but also the cadre would have to enter the incident into his reports which would make him look bad. This situation is demonstrated by the stories of cadres who take abandoned infants from their districts and covertly transport them to other districts so as to avoid admitting that policy violations are occurring in their district. This may contribute to the problems of child abandonment and infanticide because in some regions there may exist a tacit understanding between cadres and the people that so long as the violation isn't blatant then some officials will simply avoid seeing it.

The fate of abandoned children is somewhat difficult to determine. It is estimated that only 20% of abandoned children make it into the state welfare system, and those who do have a very high mortality rate. Others may simply die, before they are found, the victims of intentional or unintentional infanticide. However, the most common fate of abandoned children is unofficial adoption. Often abandoning parents pick the family with whom they leave their child. About half of Johnson's informants, who had abandoned a child, said that they knew what had happened to the child they abandoned. Johnson's also interviewed adoptive parents, and found that 25% of the adoptive parents she interviewed had adopted a child that they found on their doorstep. Inconceivable that this form of selection at conception might play a small part in sex ratios as well.
abandon children often do so carefully, leaving them in places where they are sure to be cared for. Girls are often abandoned on the doorsteps of families who are either childless or daughterless. For many families abandonment is a means of evening out sex ratios within families: families with too many daughters try to pass their excess daughters on to families with too few daughters. 62

Both illegal adoption and abandonment are dealt with as violations of the birth planning policy. The penalties for both are about the same as the penalties for an over-quota birth. Very few legal adoptions are registered in China each year: between 8,000 and 10,000 in 1996. However, the number of illegal adoption is suspected to be much higher. According to Johansson and Nygren, in 1986 approximately 500,000 legal and illegal adoptions occurred. The reason so few legal adoptions are recorded is that the requirements are very stringent. In order to legally adopt the adoptive parents must be over 35 and childless, unless the child they wish to adopt is an orphan or disabled. This requirement exists to prevent people from bypassing the birth limitation requirements through adoption. The rights of abandoned children are not considered within the adoption and abandonment laws. If a family abandons a child it is not a criminal offense, it is a violation of the one-child policy, and if a family adopts a foundling they are also punished for violating the birth planning policy. In spite of the strict policies designed to prevent adoption, adoption appears to play a large role in the under-reporting of female births in China. Johansson and Nygren argue that the vast majority of China's missing girls can be accounted for through adoption. They add the number of adoptions to the number of live births and then calculated the sex ratios. Using this method, they found that the sex ratios, once adjusted for adoption, were relatively normal, and the number of
missing girls was reduced to approximately 177,000.63

In addition to sex-selective abortion and abandonment it is likely that many girls may simply be hidden from birth planning officials. Parents who do this may move to another region to avoid being detected, or they might secretly arrange an adoption for their child or send the child to live elsewhere until they feel like no penalties will be levied against them. Infanticide is also a possibility; infanticide has occurred in other periods of China's history. However, owing to the sensitive nature of the subject, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the extent of this phenomenon.

Although many girls who are missing at birth can be accounted for, many girls go missing after birth. According to Hull, the infant mortality rate for Chinese girls is three times greater than it is for males, (based on model mortality rates for male and female infants).64 Coale estimates that the combined difference in mortality and the differences in sex ratios at birth result in a figure of approximately 29 million missing females in China in 1990.65 The differential mortality between males and females indicates that intentional neglect of girls is occurring and very likely infanticide as well. Exact data is very difficult to gather on this subject, as few people will admit to killing or mortally neglecting their children. However, it seems likely that the cause of this phenomenon is similar to the cause of female infant abandonment-son-preference and the one-child policy.

Conclusion
China's fertility limitation campaign has had a profound impact on the childbearing and fertility strategies of Chinese families. Throughout China, families have struggled to adapt to the policy and to manage its consequences. For many families the policy is contradictory to what they would otherwise choose for themselves, if they were free to do so. However, for most Chinese families the state mandated fertility control regime has become a fact of everyday life. Consequently, the policy has begun to change the culture in China. One way the policy has changed the culture is by making childbearing a much more deliberate process than it was before; even those wishing to resist the policy must do so deliberately. As a result, families are forced to seriously consider their fertility goals and to determine how they wish to pursue them, in light of the situation within the country. Families have had to consider their preferences, not just regarding the number of children they wish to have, but also the gender of those children.

The one-child policy has caused parents throughout the country to reevaluate the place of both sons and daughters within the family. Although son-preference has grown over the course of the policy, this does not mean that daughters have been completely devalued. The majority of Chinese families desire a family composed of one son and one daughter. For many families while sons are seen as being necessary, daughters are seen as being a pleasant luxury. Daughters are thought to "increase the joy in life." And while the current situation in China for many girls is rather dismal-as they fall victim to their family's quest for a son-the future does not necessarily seem so dim. Even now, most families have a strong desire to have daughters. As time progresses, and more families are forced to find ways of managing without sons, the mechanisms for doing so are likely to be strengthened. This is likely to increase the value of daughters within the
family, as it becomes more normal for daughters to be only-children and to care for parents in their old age. This certainly appears to be the case in urban China. Here parents have less need for sons and accept their one child even if she is a girl. Many daughters in urban one-child families have been granted unprecedented levels of opportunity because they do not have to compete with their brothers for the resources of the family. If this pattern spreads, it is probable that in the future, women throughout China will receive better educations and greater opportunities.

While there may be positive outcomes to the one-child policy for some women, this does not mitigate the abhorrent situation that faces many Chinese women under the policy. The rights of children, particularly female children, have been sorely neglected by the state. The state is more concerned with effectively limiting population growth than with ensuring the its most vulnerable members are protected from desperate acts of abuse, neglect, abandonment, and even murder, often brought on by the state's population policies. Mother unfortunate outcome of the one-child policy is that virtually all women of childbearing age have had lost their basic human right to determine their own fertility. Many women are subjected to multiple abortions and to contraceptive practices, which may adversely affect their health. Also women are often forced to undergo involuntary abortions and sterilizations, which are also a blatant violation of their human rights. While the one-child policy may create an environment of opportunity for some women, it is likely that the legacy of state control of women's bodies will have a detrimental effect on the rights accorded to women in China for some time to come.
2. Milwertz, 38.
3. Milwertz, 49.
13. Milwertz, 44.
14. Whyte, 475.
15. Milwertz, 155.
19. Milwertz, 44. 20 Coale and Banister, 459.
23. Cooney and Li, 23.
25. Cooney and Li, 22.
26. Milwertz, 89.
27. Milwertz, 93.
28. Milwertz, 97.
29. Milwertz, 99.
30. Milwertz, 100.
31. Milwertz, 103-32
32. Whyte and Gu, 479.
33. Whyte and Gu, 479.
35. Cooney and Li, 23.
36. Milwertz, 79.
37. Milwertz, 112-120.
38. Milwertz, 121-148.
39. Milwertz, 139.
40. Whyte, 471.
41. Milwertz, 140.
43. Greenhalgh, 243.
44. Li, 567.
45. Greenhalgh, 219-250.
47. Johnson, Huang, and Wang, 473.
49. Greenhalgh, 231.
50. Coale and Banister, 465.
51. Zeng et al., 297.
52. Coale and Banister, 475. "
53. Coale and Banister, 475-476.
54. Coale and Banister, 471.
56. Johnson, Huang, and Wang, 476.
57. Johnson, Huang, and Wang, 478.
58. Greenhalgh, 220-221.
59. Johnson, 83-84.
60. Johnson, Huang, and Wang, 471, 483.
61. Johnson, Huang, and Wang, 491.
64. Hull, 78.