Women and population control in China

Sarah Stumme
University of Northern Iowa

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pst

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pst/145

This Open Access Presidential Scholars Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University Honors Program at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presidential Scholars Theses (1990 – 2006) by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
In 1954, China began its first population program. One of the first countries in the world to instigate such a massive fertility-control program, the Chinese have met with both failure and success. Compared to previous growth rates, China has succeeded in controlling her population. However, the programs were not always successful, and in 1975, the PRC Family Planning Program became the One Child Policy. The combination of Agriculture Reforms and the One Child Policy have had many effects on Chinese women. The following paper will look at the progression of China's population program and how these programs have affected the status of Chinese women, specifically after 1975.

The Make-Up of China

The most populous country in the world, China hosts 1,133,682,501 people or 1/5 of the world's population.1 With an area of 3,695,500 square miles, China's population density averages about 280 people per square mile.2 Her largest cities are Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, and Shenyang. Shanghai has a population of 7,780,00 and compares to Los Angelos.3 In 1982, 20.6% of the population lived in urban areas. This is a low figure compared to the world average of 37%.4 When percentages are converted into whole numbers, over 800 million of China's citizens live in rural areas.

2 Europa 740.
3 Europa 742.
Thus, China is clearly an agriculturally based country. Due to differences in available products, standard of living, and occupations, the cities and rural areas can almost be conceived of as two different cultures. In addition to rural urban differences, China has over fifty-six nationalities. Han make up 91.96% of the population, Zhuang 1.37%, and Manch.6

Population Characteristics Prior to the PRC

Most of China’s early population growth could be attributed to natural increases in birth rate and to the conquering of new peoples under various Chinese dynasties. During the dynastic periods, the population of China oscillated between 37 and 60 million people. Natural disasters, war, famine, and disease kept population in balance. In the late 14th century, however, China began to experience rapid growth in her population. This growth continued for six centuries. From 1749 to 1851, China doubled in population. Also during this time period, land cultivation increased five times, high yield rice and other new crops were developed, grain storage systems were created, and irrigation systems were expanded. Although China experienced a surge in population, agriculture was

5 Li Muzhen 18
6 Europa 740
8 Poston 47
sufficiently progressive to keep up with the demands of the expanding population.

Civil war, invasion, and dynastic conflict aided in a decline in the growth rate from 1851-1949. Although fertility was still high, mortality rates increased. A general survey was conducted in 1929 by the Guomindang government. This survey found life expectancy to be about age 24 in rural areas. This corresponds to a life expectancy of 45 in the United States during the same time period. Women had an average of five to six children, and 99% of the population was married. Women were married at about age 17.5 and men were married when they were 21.3 years of age. The birth-rate was about 41/1000. The survey recorded birth-control practices such as delayed breast-feeding, menstrual taboos, the taboo against the remarrying of widows, and long separations between husband and wife. The recorded infant mortality was about 30%.

During this time, China was ruled by a Nationalist Government. Although abortion was not a new practice in China, there were certain restrictions placed on abortion procedures. Even though the restrictions may not have been rigidly enforced, they were most likely put into place

---

10 Poston 48.  
11 Poston 48.  
12 Banister 54.  
13 Banister 55.  
14 Banister 55.
because China was at war and needed to secure a population for the army.15

In 1949, Mao came to control and brought with him a pro-natalist view towards population control.16 A Marxist, Mao stated that population growth was acceptable.17 He believed Malthous was merely a bougious economist, and that China needed a large population for production and industrialization.18 Furthermore, Mao believed "People are the most precious of all thing."19

Under Mao's government at this time, contraception was legal and abortions were available in hospitals.20 Typhoid, small pox, TB, and scarlet fever were adequately severe enough to play a part in natural population control.21

1953 brought Mao's first five year plan. In an attempt to modernize China, Mao and the communist government developed a series of five year plans with specific programs and development goals for the country. In the first five year plan, sanitation and rural health conditions improved remarkably.22 Redistribution of the land also helped to

16 Paul Sachdev 100.
17 Poston 280.
19 Banister 165
21 Banister 165
22 Banister 169
level poverty. In addition, warfare declined during this time period. As a result of these factors, infant mortality dropped 71% and the crude death rate fell 69%.\textsuperscript{23} Despite the continuance of small pox, scarlet fever, and typhoid, mortality rates fell drastically while fertility rates remained high.\textsuperscript{24}

Despite Mao's reservations toward population control, birth control was being discussed in both the government and in the press. The abortion laws of the Nationalist Government were relaxed.\textsuperscript{25} In reaction to the government's consideration of family planning policies, The Peoples Daily printed an article in 1952 that stated "Birth Control is a way of murdering Chinese people without drawing blood." For a society that did not believe sexuality was to be discussed, let alone in public dialogue, China was beginning to come to terms with her people's sexuality and population.

As a part of the first five year plan, China conducted its first census in 1953\textsuperscript{26}. The results of the census would alarm the government in 1954\textsuperscript{27}. Until the census was conducted, the government had no idea of how large China was. In response to fears the country would not be able to feed itself if the population was not controlled, the first population program was put forth in 1954\textsuperscript{28}. Shoa Lizi, a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Poston 161.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Banister 169
\item \textsuperscript{25} Lee-Jay Cho 61
\item \textsuperscript{26} Poston 280.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Poston 280
\item \textsuperscript{28} Lee-Jay Cho 61.
\end{itemize}
non-communist, announced the first public birth control plan. The birth-control plan was based on propaganda and educating the Chinese about basic reproductive information and family planning.\(^{29}\) It is important to note a noncommunist announced the first population program, because the central government was split about population control. Many officials believed a large population was needed for industrialization and others feared that a large population would be detrimental due to the inability of the country to keep up in agricultural production.

The 1954 family planning program was completely voluntary\(^ {30}\) and had many limitations. The family planning program was based on concern for the mother’s health. Conventional wisdom stated that too many and early births could be detrimental to a woman’s health. Her growth was not complete until her late twenties.\(^ {31}\) A woman could only have a sterilization only if thirty, studying, and financially hard off\(^ {32}\). Abortions were only legal for couples who had three to four children. However, in 1957, abortions were no longer limited to family size. Once abortions laws were relaxed, people began to question whether abortions should be funded by the government when the health care system was already taxed by efforts to get infectious diseases and epidemics under control. Zhou

\(^{29}\) 
\(^{30}\) 
\(^{31}\) 
\(^{32}\)
Enlai's, a moderate in favor of family planning, voice was the loudest and he was able to keep population programs fairly strong.\textsuperscript{33} Generally, the program was unorganized.

The Great Leap Forward

In an attempt to double production within one year, the government embarked on a plan called the Great Leap Forward. Created by Mao, the plan called for household production units to join together to form communes. The communes varied in size, and many of them averaged 5,000.\textsuperscript{34} The government also encouraged the construction of small production units such as steel plants on the communes.

The PRC also instituted a system of household registration. The registration system identified every citizen and their status. The registration system was used to distribute rations and the control the population. In an attempt to control the size of cities, the registration system was also used to keep people in rural areas only where they would receive their grain, education, and medical rations.\textsuperscript{35} If a person was born in a rural area, he or she could not move to the city unless he or she served in the military.

\textsuperscript{33} Poston 280
\textsuperscript{34} Ashton, Hill, Pitzer, and Zaitse 240.
The Famine

Between 1958 and 1962, China faced the greatest famine of her history. In fact, it may have been the largest famine in world history. Estimates of the total death toll range from 13 million to 30 million deaths due to starvation and other famine-related complications. Most scholars consider 22.5 million as the average death toll for the famine. Many parents did not register their children when they died, because parents could still receive rations for their kids until the death was discovered. Thus, the actual records are poor. Many factors lead to the devastating effects of the famine. The communes were held responsible for reaching certain production quotas. Wanting to meet the quotas, many communes lied about their inability to meet production limits. Thinking production quotas were being met, the government raised the quotas. Eventually, China had no real concept of what was being produced.

When areas of China were affected by crop failure due to harsh weather, some communes hoarded their produce and refused to ship it across the country. In some areas the Chinese had simply not produced enough to feed themselves.

Weather also played an important part in the famine. A series of droughts, floods, and storms destroyed many of the crops and lowered crop yields. In addition, China

---

36 Poston 161.
37 Poston 161
38 Ashton, Hill, Piazza, and Zeitz 239
39 Ranister 172.
could have requested world relief. However, at this time, US and Chinese relations were poor, and China promptly refused to ask for or accept any relief from the first world. Even though there were many factors leading to the famine such as ineffective central government, poor weather, and refusal to ask for foreign aid—the Chinese population began to see the 30 million deaths as being directly related to their large population.

During the famine, general public health was neglected, and disease spread. So due to general chaos, it is difficult to get a clear estimate of the famine conditions. This general neglect in public health care programs also means that birth control programs were laid aside.

The Second Campaign

The second population campaign took place in 1962 as the country was recovering from the famine. Like the last campaign, this one was based on propaganda. Much of the propaganda was aimed at kindergartens, and it taught the positive aspects of having limited families for both the mother's health and for the needs of the nation. Abortions were completely legalized. With the invention of the fire-powered vacuum aspirator, abortions were easily obtained in rural areas. Sterilization and other forms of contraception were promoted.

40 Ashton, Hill, Piazza, Zeit ; 225
41 Ranister 172
42 Poston 280
43 Lee-Tay Cho 61.
In 1964, the Birth Planning Office of the State Council was officially opened. Although, due to the Cultural revolution, it would be short lived. Birth control programs were more strongly supported because the country was seeing the results of a baby-boom. The PRC had been working so diligently against death via its barefoot doctor programs, that mortality rates were decreasing enough to create a resurgence in the birth rate.

The Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1969 interrupted the population control campaigns. Most of the state record keeping system fell apart, and so it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of population statistics. Demographers do know, however, the slack in population programs did result in an increase of births. Because education was interrupted, an entire generation grew up without intensive family planning education and propaganda. The result in the slack of planning resulted in another baby-boom that would be felt in the 1970s.

China conducted another census in 1964 and found that cultivable land had decreased by 6.7 million hectares due to

---

44 Lee-Tay Cho 61
45 Poston 271
46 Poston 170
47 Poston 179
48 Lee-Tay Cho 59
49 Poston 230
industrial and urban growth, and the population was up by 300 million. 50

Third Population Program

"Later, longer, and fewer," became the slogan for the third population program. 51 On a surface level the third campaign worked and fertility dropped from 5.4 to 2.7 by 1979. 52 With the natural growth rates at 25.53% in 1970, the PRC realized a new program was necessary. Still on a voluntary basis, the central government issued the programs "Wax, Xi, Shoa" or "later marriage, longer spacing between children, and fewer children" program. The birth rate fell only .86% from 1971 to 1972 and fell only another two percent from 1972 to 1973. Finally, in 1974 the PRC began to set specific quotas for the nation and provinces of China. By 1975, Population targets became firmly set and were considered national program. The Third population program was still voluntary, but more pressure was being placed on local leaders to keep within the target goals.

The collectivization and commune system was now being fully utilized in the population programme. Cadre leaders at the brigade level were responsible for interpreting the central government’s population policy at the local level. Since all member of the Chinese society are theoretically registered with their commune, it is fairly easy for cadre leaders to keep track of their members sexual/physical

50 Ashton, Hill, Piazza, and Zeitz 251
51 Poston 281
52 Poston 280
lives. The cadres leaders were responsible for educating their people about birth control, providing for contraception and birth control at clinics, and for "enforcing" population policies through persuasion and education. In 1975 abortion rates went up in China.\textsuperscript{53} Abortions were being used to keep family size within the two-child quota. The main thrust of the population program turned away from women's health care issues to that of curbing population so China could continue as a state. With a growth rate still above 20\%\textsuperscript{54}, China needed a stricter policy if it was going to be serious about checking its population growth.

The Fourth Campaign

Known as the One-Child policy, China embarked on its fourth population program in 1979. The goal of the policy according to Vice Premier Chen Nuhua was to eliminate all births above three and to encourage families to limit themselves to one child. The policy was specifically aimed at urban areas, and there were many exceptions to the program. The population of China would be held to 1.2 Billion by the year 2000.\textsuperscript{55}

Mostly in the urban areas, one-child certificates were issued to families. If couples accepted these certificates they would receive higher wages, an annual bonus, higher priority in jobs, and their child would receive higher

\textsuperscript{53} Sachdev 101.
\textsuperscript{54} Poston 15.
\textsuperscript{55} Poston 281.
priority education and medical care. If couples signed a certificate and had more than one child they would face many penalties including a cut in wages and possible expulsion from their housing.

In rural areas the cadre leaders were expected to interpret the policy for their brigades. Most cadre leaders allowed families to have more than one child, especially if the first child was a boy. If cadre leaders themselves had more than two children, they lost their positions and jobs.

There were also many exceptions to the one child policy. If parents had a child who was disabled, they were allowed to have another. If the parents worked in high risk occupations such as mining or fishing, they were allowed to have more children. Moreover, if parents were of a minority of less than 100,000, they were allowed to have more than one child. Since all minorities are less than 100,000 in China, all but the Han or Chinese were allowed to have more than one child. Fertility rates did drop to 2.04. However, by the 1984 and 1985, the policy had become so lax in its exceptions that fertility was again increasing. One factor that may have lead to the increase of fertility was a lowering of the marriage age. Though this factor may have contributed just a small amount because marriage registration was only a formality in the rural areas and may have occurred years after the actual

56 Potter 246.
57 Potter 246.
58 Potter 246.
ceremony. Nonetheless, no matter what type of education model China tried to implant, the country still had 250,000 reproductive women and curbing the fertility of a quarter of a million women was a difficult task.

By 1984, some regions began to follow a stricter population control policy. In Guangdong district for instance, stricter economic penalties were applied. However, 19% of the births were still third child. Many couples also hurried had their second or third child knowing that population policy would soon become more inflexible. Document 7 was issued in 1984. Document 7 acknowledged the Chinese were having more than one child and allowed the people to have two, especially if they had not signed a one child certificate or if they had a daughter. In 1985 the population target was changed from 1.2 Billion by the year 2000 to about 1.2 Billion by the year 2000. This reprieve was short lived however, and by 1986 Zhao Ziyang issued Document 13. Fertility rates were too high and China would go back to a stricter one-child policy.

Family Planning and its Impact on Chinese Women

It is difficult to ascertain exactly how the Family Planning programs have affected women's lives in China. On the most obvious level, women are freed from the physical

59 Potter 244.
60 Potter 244.
61 Poston 281.
bondage of continuous pregnancy. They are less hampered with child-rearing, and a smaller family size helps to limit household tasks. A woman in from the Jingang brigade of Sichuan Province, spoke directly about this fact to anthropologist Mary Sheridan in 1983.

"If I had had only one child, think of the schooling an other interesting work I could have done. But in those days, the policy encouraged us to have children. What a mistake." Xiuyin had wanted to be a cadre leader, but her husband insisted that she stay home to raise the children and do the farm work. Because she had her children previous to the one-child policy, Xiuyin did not benefit from limited child bearing. 62

On the other hand, the Family Planning Policies have lead to coercive abortions and other medical practices that endanger a women's life. The following section will look at the implications of the family policy programs for women.

Patrilineage: Before the Reforms of 1978-79

A basic tenant of Chinese society is the patrilineage. According to Ruth Sidel, the perfect family consisted of the following six male kinship relations: 1) husband and wife; 2) husband and children; 3) brothers; 4) brothers' children; 5) brothers' grandchildren; and 6) brothers' greatgrandchildren. 63 A woman was obliged to produce sons.

Because inheritance is passed through the patrilineage, sons are needed to inherit land, to provide the economic security of older parents, and to continue ancestor worship.

Although the Great Leap Forward and collectivization weakened the patrilineage in terms of land inheritance, the patrilineage was still responsible for the care of older parents. Because daughters marry out of the lineage, they were still not valuable in terms of securing the "retirement" of parents. In rural areas where there is no pension system, older parents are totally dependent on their children for support. Even though the state has provided some relief, child policy has been beneficial for life overall, the family planning programs have been a benefit to women. Relieved from the burden of bearing many sons, Chinese women are freed from the physical bondage of pregnancy, many years of child-rearing, and housework.

In terms of public opportunities, the population programs have created opportunities for public work by easing the "mother-hood" role. Because of these programs, it has been easier for women to assume leadership positions, especially as cadre leaders. However, this position is a double-edged sword. While enabling women to obtain public influence, it has also put them under public surveillance. If a cadre leader has more than two children or if the first is born a son, the cadre leader will lose her position if she tries for another child.64 In terms of overall

64 Potter 241.
political activity, Chinese women hold only about percent of the political positions. Though there are some high level offices, most women are politically active at the brigade lever and are the cadre leaders in charge of family planning.

Despite lessened family responsibilities, women are still controlled by the family head. Needed for work at home, they are encouraged by family members to stay home. Alone, the family planning programs have done little to change to patriarchal system. A woman is born or adopted into the partrilineage and later marries out of it. Because women are not a part of their own lineage, they become subordinate to other family members who will insure continuance of the lineage. A daughter is an economic loss to the family. While a member of her natal family, a daughter may also receive less health care, education, and other support. Although the educational opportunities have greatly increased for women, literacy rates for women are only 56% compared to that of men, 81%, creating a difference of 26 points. Three times as men men have college degrees than women, and 70% more males have high school education in China.

With collectivization program in 1958-78 and the workpoints system, daughters began to contribute to their

66 Arnold and Zhaoxiang 496.
families' income. Because there workpoints were transferable into goods and other services, they have value to the family. Despite legal claims of equality, women receive fewer workpoints than men for their labor. 67

Collectivization enhanced women's positions within their economic family, but did not break the yoke of cultural inequality. Even though women now had a source of income, it was forwarded to the family head. Also, women did not yet earn enough to fulfill the filial obligation of caring for elderly parents.

The family planning programs of 1960-1975 were concerned about women's health care. Even if the actual reasoning of the state was population control and women's health care was just a front, women's health care did improve. Through education and clinics, women were able to begin to control their own reproductive systems through sanitary means with professional or semi-professional help.

According to Chinese Family Planning propaganda written in the late 1960's and early 70's, Early Childbirth Would have the following harmful effects:

"A. It will affect the growth, development, and health of the bodies of young women.
B. Because the genital organs, the pelvis, and the muscles and the flesh under the pelvis have not yet fully developed, the chances are greater that difficult labor will occur during childbirth.
C. The mother's body is not fully developed and this can directly affect the development and

From 1958 to 1978, women's employment increased, literacy rates increased, and women began to enter into political positions. While these are not total markers of the quality of life, they do indicate that women were rising in value to the society.

Family Responsibility System: 1978-79

The four modernizations program was implemented in 1978. Because China is an agriculturally based country, agricultural development was seen as a primary target for development. Linked closely with agricultural production is population control. Agricultural production had to be raised above the basic consumption needs of the people. Population had to be stagnated enough for allow for increases in agricultural production to over-ride consumption. The Responsibility System was implemented in 1979. The Responsibility system basically set up a system of micro-capitalism in the rural areas. Families were again made responsible for the profits and losses in production. The PRC hoped that personal interest in productivity would increase output.

In 1975, population programs began to become more aggressive. As stated earlier, quotas were set for brigades and rates in abortion increased. Although abortion rates are not a specific indicator of coercive birth-control measures, they are generally seen as a last means or back up.
he health of the fetus is at risk. Because abortions are considered dangerous and do not involve intrusive surgery, abortions can be viewed as a birth control measure detrimental to women's health. Not only are abortions physically dangerous, but they can also lead to emotional trauma. A resort to "last means" birth control indicates that population planning is over-riding the wishes of families to have more children and women's health concerns. In their accounts of the Zwingbu Brigade, Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack Potter recount the story of a woman who was forced to have an abortion just days before she was to give birth. If she would have carried the child to full term, her family's (including brother-in-laws) hopes raised above the basic consumption needs of the people would have had their housing confiscated. The abortion was carried out, and the child was left to die.69

The official One Child Policy was implemented in 1979. Although there were many exceptions to the rule, and each level of government could interpret the law, population planning programs were serious about making targets. As a part of the four modernization program the One Child Policy was intended to lower the birth-rate to allow agricultural production over come the food needs of the population. The one child policy was a strengthen of the earlier recommendations of 1975 family planning programs.

The modernization of agriculture restructured the rural production system. Because the collectives were thought to be inefficient, an Agriculture Reform was announced in 1978.

69 Potter 242
Basically, agricultural production was taken away from the collective level and given back to the families. Even though the people did not directly own the land, families were responsible for their own production. Under the "Family Responsibility System," family heads contract to work certain plots. Family gardens plots also increased at this time, so families could grow vegetables and other produce near their home.

Because families were responsible for their own profits and losses, families wanted/needed more laborers. Thus, the agricultural policy encourage families to have more than one child. The desire to have sons also increased. A son could work more land and was needed to take on production responsibilities. Daughters work the fields, but they were also encouraged to partake in handcraft production that would later be exported. The handicrafts brought in finances to the family, but were not as valuable as the main product enterprise of the family.70

Sons were still preferred by most couples. A son fulfilled the Confucian obligation, a son guaranteed care for the elderly, and a son would stay within the family. In an attempt to further increase rural productivity, Thus, rural people were inclined to want more than one child.71

If one son could plow a field in one day, then two sons

71 Potter 238.
Could plow two fields in one day. Also in rural areas, the fine for a second child was minimal compared to the income the second child would bring to the family. In Zhengbu brigade, traditional value was so highly placed on sons, that couple were allowed to have four children in attempt to have one son.  

Despite its apparent strictness, the One Child Policy had many exceptions. Minorities were allowed to have more than one child, especially if the first was a girl. High risk occupational groups were allowed to have more than one child, and if the first child was handicapped, families could have more than one child. Rural areas with a majority population were put under the most pressure to conform to the one-child policy. Because cadre leaders could interpret the laws, there were some exceptions and women were allowed to have children until they had sons.

However, the cadre leaders were also put into a tight position. They were told to not use force, and yet to meet the population quotas.

The affects of the conflicting agricultural and one-child policy are many, especially in the areas under the tightest control. First, in an effort to meet production demands, many daughters were pulled out of school. Because they will eventually marry out of the family, it is not a priority of the family to educate them. Any investment in a

72 Potter 253.
73 Dalsimer and Nisonoff 583.
daughter is a lost cause. Second, the desire and "need" to have sons has increased. Because production has moved back within the family structure, sons are needed to work the fields. Even though the government has established the five guaranteed program (providing food, clothing, health care, housing and burial) the support is minimal and below the poverty level. Pension programs are nonexistent in rural areas, and sons are needed to support their parents in old age, and China is an ageing population.

Sex Ratios: The Missing Daughters

There are some indications that the desire and need for sons because of the combines agriculture-one child policy that female infanticide is on the rise. Statistically, it is difficult to assess. A normal sex ratio is considered to be 106 males for every 100 females. In pre-liberation days, sex ratios were drastic: Female infanticide was so common, that the daughters killed were called "Water Babies," after the preferred method of killing them. Throughout the People's Republic, sex ratios have declined and become more even until the 1980's. In certain provinces, those heavily based on agriculture and of a majority population reveal the most obvious increase in sex-ratios. (see transparencies)

74 Poston 498.
75 Feter Lee Yao, Chinese Women Past and Present (Texas: Ide house, Inc. 1983) 90.
The Sex Ratios for China are the Following for the years 1970 to 1987: 76

- 1970: 105.9
- 1971: 105.5
- 1972: 107.0
- 1973: 106.2
- 1974: 106.7
- 1975: 106.4
- 1976: 107.4
- 1977: 106.7
- 1978: 105.9
- 1979: 105.8
- 1980: 107.4
- 1981: 107.1
- 1982: 107.2
- 1983: 107.9
- 1984: 108.5
- 1985: 111.4
- 1986: 112.3
- 1987: 111.0

As a crude indicator of the value of females, sex ratios indicate that the value of female babies has increased greatly since the pre-liberation days when girls did not even have the right to live. However, with the One Child Policy and Agricultural reform policies, there seems to be a resurgence of discrimination towards women, or at least daughters. Sex ratios have begun to increase in their difference with a negative effect for daughters. In Huaiyuan, for example there were 16.4% boys. This indicates that there are 10% missing daughters. 77


John S Aird argues that even with statistical alterations, there are "missing" daughters in Chinese demographics. Although the problems involved with statistical research are numerous—faulty records, lack of reporting excessive children, the illegality of infanticide, and the massive population—the statistics do indicate there is a resurgence of son preference in agricultural areas. In provinces that are mostly rural and have mostly majority population, sex ratios are skewed. The need to make female infanticide a crime, also suggests that female infanticide was once again becoming a social problem.

The One Child Policy also requires that a couple becomes sterilized after the birth of a second child. In many instances there a rewards and incentives to become sterilized after the birth of the first child. Despite work points for time off, and for having the procedure completed, women receive few benefits from sterilization. If the women does not have a son, there may be pressures from the patriarchal family for the son to divorce his wife in order to obtain a son. Even though the marriage laws of 1980 indicate that a man or women may inherit from the family and that matrilocal residences is equatable with patriarchal residences, the male line is preferred. More women than men are sterilized indicating that a preference exists for the male line. According to the 1

78 Dalsimer and Nisonoff 596.
1982, about 10% of men had vasectomies. In 1986, 25% of Chinese women between the ages of 14-49 had tubal ligations. Although these are only a few indicators of the impact of the policy on women, they do point to a trend. Upon a return trip to the village of where she did her field work in the Jingang Brigade in 1983, Mary Sheridan, discusses the changes she saw in the women. Previously the women worked together in the fields and had opportunities to share skills, friendship, and gossip. Now, the women work alone on their family plot and have a more difficult time convening together. Women are not bound directly to their lands or inside their household--this is not a system of purdah. However, women are responsible for both bringing money into the family and for all household and child-care chores. Their work load has increased as they care for the pigs, plots, household and children. And their public value has decreased or stayed the same.

The most obvious emancipation for rural Chinese women seems to be in handicraft production. Relatively free from the patriarchy agricultural system, women can engage in small crafting without the aid of their family. This income has raised women's earnings, and enables women to be single longer if they choose. Handicrafts also offer older and widowed women an option different from poverty if they have no sons. However, in order to have family members engages

79 Poston 312.
80 Salaff and Sheridan 233.
81 Salaff and Sheridan 235.
in small crafts, there must be more family members to work the fields. Thus, women sometimes partake in all three enterprises: field work, child care and handicraft.

Conclusion

The new trends in sex ratios, sterilization rates, and the removing of daughter from school indicates that the combines one child policy and agricultural reforms have had many negative effects on women. It seems as though their rights have moved from the family head to the government head and their reproductive decisions are not quite their own. There is a general trend to desire male children. As the PRC formulates its next policy it will most likely acknowledge that rural areas are having more than one child, and despite that fact marriage marks adulthood in Chinese society, later marriages do offer women economic freedom while theoretically holding down the birth rate. Thus the new programs should incorporate later marriages, level wages between men and women (not different wages for different work, but a raise in women's wages or a lower of men's), and incentives to keep female babies.