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## ABORTION: THE DOWNFALL OF CHINA

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## Introduction: the story of many

As a villager looked onward to the riverbank in northeast China, he noticed two men throwing a sack into the river. The villager grew curious and went to retrieve the sack from the water. To his astonishment, he found a drowning little girl inside with a weight tied to her feet! The purpose of the weight was to prevent her from being able to swim ashore. The girl's family left her for dead based on the sole fact that she was a girl and the family wanted a boy instead.

### China's One-Child Policy

- Implementation resulted in shocking and true stories like the one above
- Articles on these tragedies are informative and necessary -- shed light on the dark side of this policy

This presentation covers the One-Child Policy in relation to China's:

- Abortion rates
- Women rights
- Population and society as a whole
- Future of China's economy for years to come

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### China in the Early 1970's:

- Officials determined that its land could no longer sustain its growing population
- Family of six was now impeding on the nation's progress.
- China began to heavily promote the use of birth control and family planning
- However the population continued to grow at a steady rate

### "Wan, Xi, Shao" Campaign:

- China's first attempt to conquer the population problem
  - Stood for "Later, Longer, Fewer,"
  - Ordered couples to wait later in life to marry
  - Wait longer between births
  - Cap the number of children per family to two
- Yet population specialists determined that a two-child policy would not help China reduce their population growth

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## Population history

### Mao Zedong (1936-1976):

- China was seen as unstoppable
- Mao was known for saying "there could never be too many Chinese."
- Great, revolutionary leader
- Unrealistically about China's future
- Envisioned a nation with a mighty army and multitudes of workers
- Promoted large families and despised birth control
- Population grew by 50 percent in two decades



### China in the Late 1970's:

- China's population approached one billion
- In the past the number of children in Chinese households correlated to a family's wealth
  - Was not to be any more -- times had changed
- The rapid population increase compelled leader Deng Xiaoping to introduce a plan
  - Further limited the number of children per family

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#### September 25, 1980:

- A governmental consensus was made
- Mandated the number of children in each household to one
- Mandate created by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
- Called the "One-Child Policy"

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The One-Child Policy was strict but there were few exceptions

#### One-Child Policy Exceptions:

- Multiple births, such as twins, did not violate the policy
- Ethnic minority groups (non-Chinese) allowed to have more than one child if their first born was handicapped
- If a family's first child was a girl, permission may be granted to have another child but a fine would be imposed.
- Although this policy was globally known, many people were unaware of its connectivity and reliance on abortion

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## Abortion

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- Very controversial in today's society
  - Pro-choice advocates contend that choosing abortion is a woman's right that should not be limited by governmental or religious authority
  - Opponents believe that life begins at conception, and therefore, abortion is the immoral killing of an innocent human being
- Abortion and China's One-Child Policy go hand in hand
  - China's abortion rate skyrocketed after the enactment of the Policy
- Though many countries around the world give women the option to choose between having a child or aborting it, China left women little to no choice.

#### Early Days of the One-Child Policy

(after Yuan Ren Beijing):

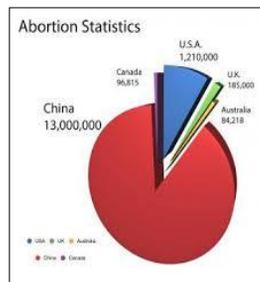
- China was very strict
- Couples who already had one child, and had unexpected pregnancy were required to have an abortion
- Family planning bureaus monitored:
  - Hired older local women
  - Watched over communities for any signs of growing bellies or anyone trying to hide their pregnancy
- Many women ran away and went into hiding to escape the authorities
- Stories of pregnant fugitives were aplenty, some successful, many not

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## Abortion Statistics

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- Though numerous abortions were taking place at this time, many were not aware of the statistics
- In 1993, a survey was taken in Zhejiang Province which showed that 68 out of 74 aborted fetuses were female
- These statistics showed that abortions were on the rise, mainly for female fetuses



#### China's National Health & Family Planning Commission Statistics:

- Over 13 million abortions conducted every year
- Rate of abortions is roughly 1 in 100 people
  - Well above global averages
  - Shocking compared to the U.S. rate of 1 in 500 people
- Abortion statistics drawn from procedures done in licensed hospitals
- Do not account for procedures done in unlicensed clinics

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## Battle of the sexes

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- By limiting the number of children to one, most families desired to have that one child be a male.
- Most couples would abort the child if they were not satisfied with its sex, i.e., female
- If the child is a boy the couple would be overjoyed
  - Male heir
  - Nuclear family financially stable after the marriage



- If the child is a girl, the couple may opt to abort the child
- Many Chinese families believe that a girl would be bad for the family's livelihood
  - Seen as submissive and domestic
  - A daughter will marry into another family and help out with that family's obligations
  - Nuclear family neglected after marriage

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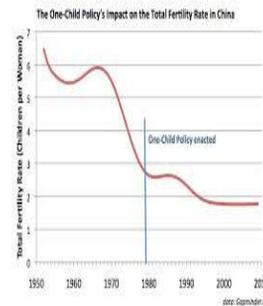
## Single parent homes and healthcare

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- Married couples suffer criticism for having a second child
- Single parents are criticized far worse for not being married
- If a child is conceived out of wedlock:
  - The child is considered illegal
  - The parents are fined -- amount fined varies from city to city
  - Fines up to the equivalent of \$7,000 US dollar for registry
- If unmarried parents are unable to pay the fine, their child:
  - Is denied access to the public health system
  - Would not be able to go to school
  - Would not be allowed to obtain a passport

- Many unmarried women travel to the USA to have their eggs froze
  - to save their eggs in the event that they do not get married but still want to become a mother
- Although, some Chinese hospitals allow single women to freeze their eggs,
  - they must provide a marriage certificate
  - and official permission to give birth when they return to claim their eggs
- This hospital protocol is seen as another way for the government to force citizens into marriage

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## Fertility



- The One-Child Policy requires couples to be married to receive fertility treatment
- By putting a restriction on fertility
  - The policy gives the government the right to choose a traditional married lifestyle for its citizens, and
  - Gives them no option of an alternative single lifestyle without being fined or discriminated against



Though the topics of forced and consenting abortions are very contentious, they embark on a bigger issue which has been ignored for many decades

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## Women's Rights

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  - This is the issue of human rights violations against women.
  - With regards to gender equality, there have been persistent and prevailing gender disparities in which women have been described as the "largest excluded group in the world."
  - Women's subordinate roles are accepted because most women are under the control of their cultural traditions.
  - Here, the cultural tradition and law in China is for married women to only have one child.
  - However, due to cultural preferences for male heirs, many families discriminate against having a female child.
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  - The problem is that women are not thought of when the rules are being crafted, and thus, the rules were not made by women, for women, or with women in mind
  - The invisibility of women as rule-makers has led to the inevitable struggle to assert that women are human beings too
  - To help bridge the gap, it has been proposed that countries use the Communication Theory, Legitimacy Theory, and Critical Feminist/Race Theory
  - By focusing on these three theories, law makers around the world will be more conscious of women's rights
  - Though abortions, fines, and discrimination have helped deter people from having more than one child; it has caused a dramatic shortfall for the nation

## Male and Female Ratio

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  - The repetitious use of abortions has created a visible gender imbalance in the Chinese society
  - The preference for sons, exacerbated by the One-Child Policy, has skewed the male-to-female population ratio in China
  - In an attempt to reduce this trend, the government outlawed the use of ultrasound technology for elective abortions based on gender in the mid-1990s
  - China also made forced abortions illegal
  - Yet, the birth imbalance has continued to grow
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  - This gender imbalance has resulted in a shortage of women which has caused rural villages without marriage-age women to face extinction
  - This shortage has also caused men from those villages to resort to the ancient practice of wife-buying
  - Interestingly enough, Chinese women saw this growing epidemic and decided to have their own opinion on the issue
    - Some Chinese women began actively participating in their own sale at bridal auctions
    - Bride prices can reach 15,000 yuan (\$1,800 USD)

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  - China's 1980 Marriage Law prohibits:
    - The exaction of monies or gifts for marriage
      - Either one makes a marriage illegal
  - If a child is born from illegal unions:
    - The child will be considered to have no legal identity
    - This will cause China to face the problem of having a large floating population unable to qualify for basic government services such as education and health care
  - This national problem has forced China to re-evaluate this policy or risk further societal drawbacks

## An Aging Effect of the Policy



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  - Though, population size was once China's only concern for the future development of the nation, times have changed.
  - Some main effects of the One-Child Policy are that China's population is now becoming more male and it is aging

- **China current challenge:**
  - Having a population with a median age of 44
  - Having too few replacement workers
  - This will be difficult for a nation of 1-1/2 billion people
- The United Nations estimates that China will lose around 67 million workers between 2010 and 2030 due to its rapidly aging population
- It is also estimated that China's elderly population will make up 25 percent of China's total population

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## In Conclusion

- China's One-Child Policy and its reliance on abortion has had a domino effect on their society.
- Though the policy succeeded in reducing China's population size in the past decades, it has resulted in the reduction of the country's morale, healthcare, human rights and more. In recent times citizens' adherence to this policy has reduced, but many are still tied to society's strong tradition of only having one child. It will be difficult to break this tradition.
- Though it is hopeful that this policy will cease to exist, the country will still face the same population growth issue it faced in the 1970's, which was the root for this policy.

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### Thursday, October 29th, 2015:

- Announcement ending the One-Child Policy
- Families are now allowed to have more than one child

### Some purposes of voiding the policy:

- China needs to balance out population
- China's fertility rate is drastically low

### Experts' Opinion:

- Repealing the One-Child Policy is positive
- Too little too late
- China's labor crisis is inevitable

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