

Example of report on chinas one-child policy

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



During the mid to late 1970s, China faced a big problem: there were too many children being born in the country. In the wake of Mao's Cultural Revolution, the entire country was focused on changing the path that China was on. The people in the government were worried that if the population growth continued at the rate that it was going, that China would become immensely overpopulated and would face problems like famine, sickness, and widespread economic downturn. China's "one child" policy is actually a "family planning" policy according to the Chinese government, as there are certain types of families who are allowed more than one child; however, by and large, the average Chinese family faces significant economic hardship if they choose to have more than one child (Greenhalgh, 2008). The one-child policy, as it will be referred to in this discussion, has been widely considered by human rights activists to be inhumane and unfair, but there are certainly two very significant sides to the discussion that must be considered before making a decision on the legitimacy of the policy.

As previously stated, China was facing a very serious overpopulation problem in the 1970s. Even today, China faces severe overpopulation, pollution, and widespread poverty as a result of the large population (Greenhalgh, 2008). The rise in birth rates during the Cultural Revolution and afterwards is partially the result of a better understanding of medical care-- although many people still receive poor medical care in China to this day-- and a significant reduction in infant mortality (Greenhalgh, 2008). The history of the one-child policy actually dates back to the early 1970s, in which Chinese people were encouraged to marry at older ages and limit themselves and their families to only two children (Greenhalgh, 2008). This

was not an enforced policy in the same way that China's current family planning policy is enforced, but it was still strongly suggested as ideal practice by the Chinese government (Greenhalgh, 2008). The current one-child policy went into effect in 1979, and it dictates that all families have only one child (Greenhalgh, 2008). The penalty for failing to comply with this policy is a very significant fine (Greenhalgh, 2008).

Of course, if the Chinese government had not acted to ensure that the population in China did not explode, then China would be facing an even worse population problem than they are today. However, one wonders if there is not a better option insofar as population control is concerned. The one-child policy did, however, significantly reduce the Chinese population growth, and ensure that China did not face the population explosion that was feared during the Cultural Revolution (Greenhalgh, 2008). As Hesketh, Lu and Xing (2005) write, " When the one-child policy was introduced, the government set a target population of 1. 2 billion by the year 2000. The census of 2000 put the population at 1. 27 billion, although some demographers regard this number as an underestimate Chinese authorities claim that the policy has prevented 250 to 300 million births. The total fertility rate, which is defined as the mean number of children born per woman, decreased from 2. 9 in 1979 to 1. 7 in 2004 This trend has created a distinct demographic pattern of urban families with predominantly one child and rural families with predominantly two children" (Hesketh, Lu, and Xing, 2005). So whether the policy was advisable or ethical, it was undoubtedly effective, overall-- the Chinese government, if it is to be trusted to report numbers regarding birth rates, has almost met its targets set forth at the

beginning of the one-child policy.

However, there have been unintended consequences for the one-child policy, as well. China has long been a country that prefers male children to female children; while this preference is abating, it is still a very real preference for many people in China. In the past, when the one child policy was more strictly enforced, families sometimes resorted to infanticide if they did not manage to produce a male child on their first try (Hesketh, Lu, and Xing, 2005). This infanticide and male-child preference has led to a problem for men in China today: there are too few women, and too many men. Men who are looking for spouses, particularly in the western, more rural parts of the country may have difficulty finding women to build families with, because of the unintended consequences of the one-child policy (Hesketh, Lu and Xing, 2005). The gender imbalance indicates that there may be a skewing in the other direction for China-- perhaps in the near future, the number of births will drop to a point where China's growth will be unsustainable and will eventually begin to fall, similar to the way Japan's population growth looks like an inverted pyramid, with the elderly as the largest proportion of the population and young people at the bottom (Greenhalgh, 2008).

Another strange result of the one child policy is the obsession with multiple births. Multiple births are a way for the Chinese to bypass the one child policy-- a policy that approximately 75% of the country supports-- and still have more than one child (Greenhalgh, 2008). According to Greenhalgh (2008), in recent years the number of twins born in China has skyrocketed due to the use of fertility medications (Greenhalgh, 2008). Overall, the one child policy has achieved what it set out to achieve-- the slowing of the birth

rate in China. However, calling the policy a success when it is so clearly linked to horrendous human rights abuses is, frankly, unethical and irresponsible.

References

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