

China's One Child Policy: The good, the bad, and the ugly

China's present population is approximately 1.2 billion, which is about one fifth of the earth's entire population. China has to feed 22% of the world's people on 7% of the world's land, which is a considerable task.

China's one child policy was established by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in 1979 to limit communist China's population growth. The one-child policy means that couples are only allowed one child in rural and urban areas. Parents with multiple births aren't given the same benefits as parents of one child. Many times the parents have to pay money to the government in order to get permission to have another child.

The aims of the policy were to reduce the population rate of China. In the mid-twentieth century the population rate was 55 million (about the same as the UK's total population) every three years. To do this, families were restricted to 1 per family and the marriageable age was raised to 22 for men and 20 for women.

Couples have to apply to be married and to have a child. Parents who have only one child get a "one-child glory certificate," which entitles them to economic benefits such as an extra month's salary every year until the child is 14, free education, priority housing and family benefits. Among the other benefits for one child families are higher wages, interest-free loans, retirement funds, cheap fertilizer and better health care. Women who delay marriage until after they are 25 receive benefits such as an extended maternity leave when they finally get pregnant. These privileges are taken away if the couple decides to have an extra child.

Parents with extra children can be fined. If the fine is not paid sometimes the couples' land is taken away, their house is destroyed, they lose their jobs or the child is not allowed to attend school. Sometimes the punishments seem more than a little over the top. In the 1980s a woman from Shanghai named Mao Hengfeng, who got pregnant with her second child, was fired from her job, forced to undergo an abortion and was sent to a psychiatric hospital and was still in a labor camp the early 2000s, There were reports that she had been tortured.

This resulted in female infanticide which is the intentional killing of baby girls due to the preference for male babies. The Chinese tradition implied that there must be a boy among the children in order to continue the family. They felt that the males carried the name of their ancestors and they needed to carry the name for the next generation. Therefore, whenever a couple had a female child they reverted to infanticide.

They would either abandon the child or even worse, kill it. This way they have another chance at getting a boy. As technologies are advancing, they are able to determine the gender of the child before birth and use abortion as a means to eliminate a female birth. These wide uses of infanticide obviously bring new issues for example the sex ratio was totally unbalanced and the infant mortality rate is horrible.

Males are completely dominant in China. They do most of the work and are the head of the household. The one concept that the Chinese people are not considering is that in the future there will be far too many males and far too less females. Sure, the one-child policy will reduce the population growth rate, but it might lower to a point where reproduction occurs very rarely. It is understandable though, because the family name is such a big concept to the Chinese and for it to be carried on is very important. They take their cultural beliefs very seriously and will do anything to keep their ancestors happy. The fact of carrying their family name on to the next generation cannot be the only reason to kill off their female babies.

There are always those women that do not really care whether they have a boy or girl, but it is their husbands who force them to abort the child. There have been several cases where a wife has been brutally beaten by her husband just so she would abort her child. The men take having a male child a lot more seriously than the women. In some cases the husband forces the wife to go into hiding when she is about to give birth. This way no one knows that she gave birth. Then if she has a girl, she can simply abandon it without anyone knowing. A lot of women have decided to apply for refugee status in other countries for fear that they will be forcibly aborted, sterilized and discriminated against. This always does not work because a lot of these countries in the surrounding area of the country are hesitant in allowing Chinese refugees onto their land.

On the plus side, the policy has worked as the population has become manageable. If every couple in China had two children, instead of one, from the time the one child policy was introduced, then China would have been in poverty now. The one child policy ensures that China's citizens have a good standard of living in the future.

Overall in my opinion, one child policy has been successful as it has lowered the population. It has ensured that there will be no immediate poverty in China and has bettered the living standards. However, it has been highly distressful for millions of Chinese. I do not agree with the policy, because I believed it is highly immoral to kill children and deny people some of their basic human rights. There is evidence that suggests that if the policy continues, the death rate will be considerably higher than the birth rate. This will result in not enough people for labor and not enough women for marriage.