

Junhong, Chu. 2001. "Prenatal Sex Determination and Sex-Selective Abortion in Rural Central China." *Population and Development Review* 27(2):259-281.

Research and Theoretical

The sex ratio of males to females in China has increased beyond the natural rates in the 1980s. There are three explanations for the changes in the sex ratios: there is an increase underreporting of female births, there is an excess of female infant mortality, and there is an increase of prenatal sex determination and sex-selective abortions of female fetuses. This study uses surveys and interviews in central rural China to gather data about the social phenomenon. The study shows that ultrasounds, amniocentesis, and chorionic villi sampling is mainly being used during the second pregnancy to determine the sex of the child, and then sex-selective abortions are taking place usually after the first born child was a girl. This study shows that prenatal sex selection is the main cause of the increase in the ratio of males to females in China. A son preference is strong in China because sons provide financial support to the family, and they are always viewed as part of the family; whereas, girls do not provide much financial support for the family because they do domestic work, and after they are married they are not considered as much of a part of their family as sons. Families usually use private clinics over public hospitals because if it is their second pregnancy the public hospital officials have been found to be lying about the sex of the fetus in order to protect the child against an abortion. Abortions in China are not viewed as killing a human being, because in their culture a fetus is not considered a human being.

Policy Implementations

The study reveals that ultrasound B-scanners are the main technology that is allowing the low birth rates of girls. Families view having abortions as being better than having many children, because the one child policy makes families pay fines if they go over their quote of children. With the decrease in women in the marriage market it is increasing the amount of women who are kidnapped, and sold as wives to single men. The trafficking of women for Chinese men to marry will probably increase with the increase in demand.

The government can decrease sex-selective abortions with the increase of regulation of hospitals, family planning centers, and private clinics that use the ultrasound B-scans. The public needs to become aware about how the imbalance of the sex ratio will effect China's population. The government could perform media advertising campaigns to increase the preference Chinese families have for girls. The government could give incentives to families that have girls in order to protect and increase the value of them.

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