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CHANGING PARADIGMS OF THE ONE-CHILD POLICY:
UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL MODEL OF REPRODUCTION AND
FAMILY ROLES AMONG CHINESE IMMIGRANT WOMEN

By
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AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

In

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this work to my grandparents, Jeannie and Jim Wehrman, who have continuously supported me through the struggles and triumphs of life; to Dan Asen, whose drive and intellectual curiosity have inspired me and whose unwavering support has meant the world to me. Tian chang di jiu.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Fran Barg, whose guidance and support allowed me to complete this work and expand my horizons. As a professor and friend, she is truly an inspiration who has positively impacted my life, work, and future. I would also like to acknowledge the respondents in this study, who graciously allowed me into their thoughts and lives.
ABSTRACT

CHANGING PARADIGMS OF THE ONE-CHILD POLICY: UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL MODEL OF REPRODUCTION AND FAMILY ROLES AMONG CHINESE IMMIGRANT WOMEN

-Tiffany Star Behringer-

Objective:
To examine the cultural model of reproduction and the family role of Chinese women studying in the United States.

Rationale:
In 1979, China instituted the One-Child Policy in order to control population growth and further the goals of the State. In doing so, it limited women to having one child and created steep penalties for women who did not obey. Furthermore, the reproductive body was reconstructed as a machine of the State which could be controlled in order to advance State economic interests. Thus, the One-Child Policy altered gender norms and family dynamics within mainland China and had a lasting effect on Chinese women’s conceptualization of the body.

Cognitive anthropology, defined by D’Andrade as the study of the ways in which individuals and populations make sense of their world, is an excellent theoretical framework for examining culture and the decisions and values people place on particular issues. By interviewing 15 Chinese women studying in the United States, this study defined the cultural schema of marriage, examined beliefs surrounding the One-Child Policy, and explored the reproductive needs and desires of the respondents, desires that are often contradictory to the One-Child Policy and the changing family relationship brought on by the shifting market system in China. This exploration is important given the restrictive climate of reproduction in China, the differing reproductive and familial circumstances of the United States, and the lack of qualitative research currently available on this topic. Because cultural models tend to be shared among relatively homogenous populations, the data received from this study can be extrapolated to the greater population of educated Chinese women.

Methodology:
Research Aims:
In this study, I pursued the following three areas of inquiry:

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1. Are Chinese women’s reproductive goals in line with the goals of the One-Child Policy? If not, how do women account for this difference?

2. How do Chinese gender roles and the idea of gender preference affect understandings and acceptance of differing American ideas about gender?

3. Do the values embraced by the One-Child Policy in China surrounding reproduction and gender roles continue to be salient when Chinese women immigrate to the United States, a country with different reproductive polices and issues? If not, how do they change as these women become acculturated?

Recruitment of Respondents:

In order to reach this population, I contacted several student organizations at the University of Pennsylvania by email. I also contacted the Office of International Programs, the office responsible for training international teaching assistants, professors across several disciplines, and the Assistant Director for the Center for East Asian Studies. Respondents then emailed me to schedule a 45 minute interview. The women interviewed were mainly PhD level students in their 20s studying a variety of subjects. Respondents moved to the United States mostly alone and varied in their time here from six months since the move to 12 years for older respondents. All respondents were also English speakers with varying levels of fluency. Thus, these women are among the most privileged and educated women of China.

Procedures:

Each subject was asked to consent to one semi-structured qualitative interview. Interviews were voluntary and consent was obtained before the interviews took place. Approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Pennsylvania was obtained before interviews began. All components of the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Once information was received, I coded it in order to isolate important themes. Because individuals with relatively homogenous backgrounds tend to hold similar cultural schemas, a set of 15 qualitative interviews allowed me to analyze the individual reality of Chinese immigrant women’s lives and extrapolate this information in order to understand the greater population.

Data Analysis:

Once themes were identified, I then went back and coded again line by line in order to explore subcategories and decisions within each topic. This analytical method has been explored and utilized by several researchers and is most appropriately called the constant comparative method, given its insistence on continuously creating and evaluating theories based on “patterns, themes, and common categories discovered in the observational data.” Finally, I reviewed the outline created by the second coding process in order to make comparisons across the respondents. This final step allows for elaboration on important issues, which eventually leads to themes and examples given in the final report. This process also allows for the introduction of demographic information,

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which in turn allows for the evaluation of theme salience based on respondent characteristics.

Results:

Aim #1:
The respondents in this study affirmed the need for the One-Child Policy. However, most women wanted to have children and, upon further questioning, felt that having one child would be emotionally harmful for the only child. Thus, the goals of the One-Child Policy are incongruent to the individual reproductive goals of Chinese women.

Aim #2:
Most respondents stated that American relationships were not as serious and were far more independent than Chinese relationships. In coming to this conclusion, they discussed the importance of independence in their own relationships and also found that this independence sometimes goes against the traditional role of Chinese women in the family. This incongruence causes some conflict for these women as they begin to develop their careers and accommodate for differences in culture. Several respondents also stated that American women become homemakers after marriage and therefore do not have the same burden of the dual role between career-woman and wife that Chinese women do.

Aim #3:
As seen for Aim #1, the societal level values inherent in the One-Child Policy continue to be salient for the respondents. However, individual goals are often in conflict with the policy. Furthermore, of the three respondents who spoke out against the One-Child Policy, all three had been in the United States for greater than three years. While this may not support a direct correlation between years in the United States and beliefs surrounding the One-Child Policy, when one includes discussion of the conflict between the State and individual procreative liberty, surrounding the One-Child Policy and penalties associated with the policy, respondents who had been in the United States for a longer period of time voiced concern more than those who had only been in the United States for a short period of time (less than two years.) Thus, there appears to be a connection between length of time in the United States and concern surrounding the One-Child Policy, but not necessarily outright disagreement with the policy. Given the variety of ages, locations, and family structures of women who had concerns surrounding the One-Child Policy and the consistency of years in the United States, this appears to be the most salient variable. Therefore, these women long for something that the One-Child Policy does not allow.

Conclusions:
The women in this study varied in their level of acculturation and ideas about reproduction. While many women confessed a need for the One-Child Policy, some criticized its neglect of individual autonomy. Furthermore, the women felt a need for the One-Child Policy but also desired two children. This reaffirms the notion that the goals of the Chinese State are not in line with the reproductive goals of the most privileged of Chinese women, women who do not depend on their children for survival. Finally, these women stressed the importance of the family and noted the contradictions in their roles as
Chinese women as they grappled with the issues of working towards a career and a family. Thus, these women must make decisions about reproduction and their role in the family while struggling to adapt the most important elements of their culture to the new culture that they find themselves in.
CHANGING PARADIGMS OF THE ONE-CHILD POLICY: UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL MODEL OF REPRODUCTION AND FAMILY ROLES AMONG CHINESE IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Tiffany Star Behringer

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Women routinely suffer due to their subordinate position in patriarchal society. They have limited access to resources, regularly experience ill health, and must continuously struggle to control their bodies. In China, this is especially true given the social policies of the Chinese government, policies that prey on the vulnerability of women, a vulnerability that is created by their subordination to men and their biological capacity to reproduce. Women’s reproduction has become a political and economic issue due to the overpopulation concerns of the Chinese government and the faltering position of China in the global economy. In order to control population growth, the government instituted the One-Child Policy in 1979, calling for all couples to have only one child and forcefully “encouraging” women to be sterilized. While the government regularly speaks out against coercion and forced abortions, women are sometimes forced to undergo abortion and sterilization procedures in order to meet the population quotas of local government authorities. Thus, women in China live in fear of government punishment if they fail to comply with family planning regulations. In addition, many women receive direct monetary incentives from the government for their cooperation with the One-Child Policy, incentives they can hardly afford to refuse given their lower socioeconomic status and subsequent dependence on the government for basic life necessities. Therefore, while the implementation of the One-Child Policy has effectively reduced China’s rate of population growth, it has ultimately impaired women’s ability to control their bodies, reinforced their subordinate position in society, and constructed women’s bodies as tools to promote economic and political reform in China.
Because the United States has differing reproductive policies and social norms surrounding equality, sexuality, and individual autonomy, it is impossible to assume that Chinese women currently living in the United States would have the exact same cultural model of Chinese women living in China surrounding these important issues. Therefore, in order to understand the current reality of these women, I completed a study that examined their cultural model of reproduction, beliefs surrounding marriage, perceptions of the One-Child Policy, and their process of acculturation. However, before I set out to interview my eventual respondents, it was imperative to examine current literature on these important issues.

In this literature review, I first focus on the history of population control in 20th century China. Next, I discuss the burden placed on women by the One-Child Policy. In this section, I point to the control over Chinese women’s bodies by physical, emotional, and medical means and then relate this control to women’s low status in traditional Chinese society. Then, I turn to the position of women in Chinese society by discussing the family unit, the gender role of women, and son preference. After this, I discuss current research on immigration and acculturation among Chinese women in the United States. Finally, I provide a background to the theoretical framework of this study, cognitive anthropology.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

**Historical Precedence: Population Control since 1949 in China**

Greenhalgh argues that “by world-historical standards, China’s birth control program has been exceptional in its hostility towards women.” Greenhalgh goes on to argue that “individual childbearing is a matter to be decided by the state for the good of society as a whole.” Therefore, in Chinese society, the female body and reproductive self are constructed as tools for the government’s personal use, a reality which undermines individual autonomy and negatively impacts the well-being of millions of Chinese women. However, this construction is not new and instead has evolved over several decades into its current identity as the One-Child Policy.

After years of rapid population growth, China was faced with enormous famine and economic collapse unless reproduction was controlled. However, as Poston states, “when Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communists assumed control of the country in 1949, little attention was given to the size and growth of the population.” Instead, the government actually encouraged procreation in order to enhance China’s place in the world economy through industrialization. By placing strict control over induced abortion, prohibiting sterilization, stressing the patriotic importance of reproduction, and reducing the death rate through social programs, China experienced an unprecedented increase in population between 1949 and 1952. With the release of the 1953 census, however, concerns about population growth quickly began to surface. Suddenly the policies that encouraged women to reproduce and made it difficult to control their reproductive bodies were harming the social state and economy of China, a situation that would

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2 ibid
5 Poston, Dudley. “Patterns of Contraceptive...”
not be tolerated. As Xinzhourg\textsuperscript{6} states, in 1956 Zhou Enlai, an important leader in the Communist government, declared that the Chinese government needed to “implement a limitation on births in order to protect our women and children; to better educate our future generations; and to benefit the nation’s health and prosperity.” Ironically, concerns for the health of women and children quickly evaporated, as the Chinese government attempted to control the growth of the population through stricter and coercive reproductive policies.

After the first population control movement failed to make a solid impact on China’s population growth rate, tension began to rise among party officials. According to Poston\textsuperscript{7}, China suffered an economic crisis in 1959 which led to increased pressure to limit family size and prohibit women from having more than two children. This second population control campaign lasted from 1962 to 1966. In their White Papers on family planning, the Chinese Government\textsuperscript{8} labels this period as the beginning of a legitimate concern surrounding “the contradiction between the population on the one hand, and the economy, society, resources, and environment on the other.” Ultimately, this policy soon passed as China became increasingly focused on its conflicts with Russia and experienced the Cultural Revolution, a time of great political turmoil and social upheaval.

However, in 1971, Mao Zedong advocated that the “population be put under control”\textsuperscript{9}, renewing interest in containing population growth. The third family planning campaign, referred to as \textit{Wan Xi Shao}, called for late marriage, birth spacing, and fewer children. This campaign remained an important part of social control for several years and was supported by the World

\textsuperscript{9} Xinzhourg, Qian. “China’s Population Policy...”
Population Plan of Action which stated that "individual reproductive behavior and the needs and aspirations of society should be reconciled." Thus, the reproductive body continued to be used to advance State interests. Furthermore, China’s increased reliance on coercive practices and its focus on domination over women’s bodies was condemned by several human rights groups and governments. Nevertheless, there was no reversal for China. As Bernman argues, "widespread poverty threatened to undermine China’s goal of becoming ‘a first world power’, and [therefore], the government adopted the now infamous One-Child Policy." With the adoption of this policy in 1979, women’s lower standing in society was reinforced and the needs and desires of the political economy of China superseded all procreative liberty of individual women in China.

The Burden Placed on Women

The main goal of the One-Child Policy was to limit the number of children couples were allowed to have to two. Most families were encouraged to have only one child, especially in urban areas and, in the later stages of the policy, families who had more than one were penalized for their noncompliance. The policy also sought to limit the total population of China to 1.2 billion by the year 2000, with a replacement ratio of one. As the policy evolved, the Chinese Government began to rely more heavily on invasive and coercive procedures. According to Greenhalgh, birth control in China became "virtually synonymous with what the Chinese called the ‘four operations’ IUD insertion, tubectomy, vasectomy, and induced abortion." Then, in

September of 1980, the government suddenly shifted to a policy that insisted on one child per family and demanded sterilization and abortion procedures in instances of noncompliance, especially in the rural areas. Greenhalgh goes on to explore the increasing hostility of the policy. She states that "individual control over contraceptive decisions was greatly narrowed in late 1982, when, in preparation for the 1983 sterilization campaign, the state mandated IUD insertion for all women with one child and sterilization (male or female) for couples with two or more [children]." Subsequently, in 1983, over 20 million women were sterilized in order to adhere to the One-Child Policy. Since men were worried about their libido and because, according to Bernman, the Chinese believe that "vasectomy renders men weak", women received the burden of sterilization in most cases. This burden decreased the strength of their voice, placed countless women at risk for health complications related to poorly managed tubal ligation, and led to feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, and depression.

The low status of women in China and the burden caused by unequal responsibilities in following the One-Child Policy creates difficulties in the lives of Chinese women. These difficulties may lead to high rates of depression and ill health among Chinese women. In a report by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor in the United States, officials concluded that China has a suicide rate that is five times the global average. The report goes on to say that "the low status of women, the rapid shift to the market economy, and the availability of highly toxic pesticides in rural areas are among the leading causes" of the high suicide rate. Policies such as the One-Child Policy reinforce women’s inferior position in society and

therefore lead to situations that increase the risk for depression and subsequent self-inflicted harm. Ultimately, “with 21 percent of the world’s women, China has 56 percent of the world’s female suicides according to the World Health Organization.” And, with the massive sterilization campaigns that the One-Child Policy promotes, the high incidence of suicide among Chinese women is not expected to evaporate given the finding by Lin, et al. that “depression symptoms and anxiety emerge more frequently in sterilized populations than nonsterilized populations.” In addition, the Boston Women’s Health Collective found in a different population that “as many as 25 percent of women who are sterilized regret the decision later.” One might expect this rate to be even higher in China, given the government’s propensity to perform sterilization procedures on the unwilling. Furthermore, even if no emotional damage occurs, women who are sterilized may experience post-tubal sterilization syndrome, which consists of irregular menstrual cycles, painful periods, and midcycle bleeding, which “may create the need for repeated dilation and curettages, or, in some cases, complete hysterectomies.” These effects may also be particularly devastating for a population that has little access to sound medical care, poor nutritional habits, and an overall lack of resources, a situation that is regularly attested to in literature discussing the rural life in China, where more coercive practices continue to occur.

In 1995, there were over 340 million women of childbearing age in China. Because of this policy, over half had been sterilized, many involuntarily. While the Chinese government placed protection clauses into the policy, these were ultimately not passed down to local

13 Ibid
government officials. As Bongaarts\textsuperscript{24} states, "population growth targets are devised at the political center and then handed down, level by administrative level, until they reach the point of implementation. There, township and village birth-planning cadres are expected to place the achievement of state-assigned goals above the concerns for self-defined reproductive desires of individual women and families." With this disconnect in leadership, Tyler\textsuperscript{25} argues that the Communist Party can insist that the enforcement of population control is not coercive while residents of rural China continue to suffer at the hands of coercive birth officials. Tyler goes on to quote a rural Chinese woman who stated "I was suffering from high blood pressure, but still they did the sterilization' with what seemed to be too little anesthetic. 'And when I complained to the doctor that he was hurting me, he told me to shut up and quit making deliberate noise' she added. ‘Two months later, all of us [women who were forcefully sterilized in her village] still have pain from the operation.'” Because of the quotas placed on local government officials, enforcing the policy is dependent on coercion tactics that negatively affect women. Bouabid\textsuperscript{26} shows that “failure to ensure the number of births within set quotas results in demotion or loss of bonuses [among local officials.] Likewise, individuals and families who break the population planning rules encounter loss of jobs, confiscated property, and even demolition of their houses.” In Tyler’s\textsuperscript{27} report, one woman told of women in her village being lined up and ordered to report to a clinic for sterilization. Those who refused would have their houses blown up. Thus, millions of women live in constant fear and are forced to have abortions, IUD placement, and be sterilized in order to satisfy the political and economic needs of the Chinese government.


\textsuperscript{27} Tyler, Patrick. "Birth Control in China..."
Furthermore, some women fear the Chinese government and therefore submit to population control measures because they are afraid of the consequences of their refusal. Greenhalgh\textsuperscript{28} states that “women in their fifties, long past the risk of pregnancy, continued to carry IUDs that had been inserted a decade or more earlier because they were afraid of the medical ordeal they would have to endure to have them removed.” Therefore, women are continuing to be controlled by the government long past their ‘dangerous’ childbearing years. In addition, particular tactics that the government employs in order to stress the importance of family planning in China, such “as public tracking of menstrual cycles on village chalkboards [increase] social pressure that reinforces the birth control laws”\textsuperscript{29} and also construct women as inanimate objects, devices to be controlled, conquered, and regularly displayed for public definition.

As previously seen, even when women are not actively forced to participate in birth planning activities, many continue to have abortions and sterilizations procedures performed voluntarily. For some, they may be worried about losing their jobs if they experience an unplanned pregnancy. Because women are seen as unequal contributors in the workforce because of their reproductive capacity, women must gain permits from the local government and their employer before pregnancy will be allowed.\textsuperscript{30} Not only does this policy lead to conflict between women and their employers and create a potential for unemployment, but is also places the goals of the market economy over women’s autonomy. Yet, for women in the rural areas, outside jobs are not of significant concern or relevance. Instead, women are often fighting to support their

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families. While these women may consent to sterilization and abortion procedures, the financial incentives that the Chinese government gives to women who comply with their requests call into question the legitimacy of this consent. As the Population Control Council\textsuperscript{31} stated in 2002, “impoverished households that practice birth planning shall be given priority treatment in the area of poverty relief loans, work relief, poverty relief items, or social relief.” Given these incentives, one must wonder about what will occur in the instance of limited resources and what effects this policy will have on women who cannot afford to be penalized by not adhering to the population control policy. Furthermore, many women, exhausted and overworked, welcome the ‘resting period’ entitlements that China provides for sterilized people. As Xinzhong\textsuperscript{32} shows, “the entitlements range from seven days for vasectomy to 21 for simple tubal ligation, 35 for tubal ligation following induced abortion (14 days but concurrent with the rest period for tubal ligation), 51 for tubal ligation following mid-trimester induced abortion (30 days but concurrent with the former), and 21 days in addition to the regular maternity leave (56 days) for tubal ligation following delivery. By comparison, women receive only 3 days following IUD insertion.” Thus, for procedures that are more permanent (and therefore better from the standpoint of population control), women receive more days off. Therefore, by necessity, women are enduring potentially dangerous procedures in order to provide for themselves and their families and are unequally compensated for more praised (and aggressive) methods of birth control.

Finally, medical advances have themselves limited women’s autonomy and reproductive self determination. Medical advances have expanded women’s ability to decide if and when they


want to become pregnant but, as Greenhalgh\textsuperscript{33} shows, "because access to and the use of these technologies tend to be dominated by the medical profession, their development has increased the potential for others to control women's lives." Because of devices such as the IUD, Norplant, and the prescription Pill, women are required to seek outside care in order to effectively control their bodies. Furthermore, in China, "the supply of oral pills, the one highly effective means of contraception that allows an individual to change her mind without getting state permission has been limited, especially in rural areas.\textsuperscript{34}\textsuperscript{35} While this analysis fails to incorporate the role of condoms in family planning, the fact that women, who are often subordinate to men, must depend on their sexual partners to use condoms greatly decreases the effectiveness and reliability of this method. In addition, the reproductive technologies specifically developed for China have made it even more difficult for women to control their reproductive selves. "The IUDs developed in China were deliberately designed to be tamperproof. Until the early 1990s, the most commonly used IUD was stainless steel and had no string, making it difficult for the wearer to check its location and physically dangerous for her to attempt nonclinical removal."\textsuperscript{35} Therefore, once again, the government in China has effectively limited women's control and authority over their bodies. In the next section, I will discuss the current reality of Chinese population control. In the subsequent sections, I will evaluate the contradictions inherent in women's lives when compared to social reform propaganda and further discuss the social and economic position of women in China.

\textsuperscript{34} ibid
\textsuperscript{35} ibid

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State of China’s Population Control & the Status of Women in the 21st Century

Even with the restrictive birth control policies of the Chinese government and the successful sterilization campaign, the People’s Republic of China reached a population of 1.2 billion by 1995, five years before the target of 1.2 billion in 2000. However, at this point, the Chinese government had begun reforming the policy, based on the reassessment by Chinese demographers that during the 1990s China achieved a below replacement fertility rate. With this assessment, the Chinese government lifted some restrictions placed on women, making the policy more open by allowing for two children in some cases. Yet, by analyzing the statistics concerning reproduction and family planning in China in the 1990s, one notices that population growth and contraception use had already been dramatically influenced by the time the Chinese government reevaluated their policy. By this time, “85 percent of women used an IUD after the birth of their first child (76 percent urban, 91 percent rural.) Also, as the program prescribed, 66 percent turned to female sterilization after the birth of a second child (52 percent urban, 68 percent rural.) Cumulatively, about 49 percent of couples had one partner sterilized (40 percent women and 9 percent of their husbands.)” Because of unequal power relations between the sexes, women continue to receive the majority of the family planning burden.

In the 21st century, China’s policy has been dramatically revamped but it continues to emphasis one child per couple and two at the most. As seen above, the policy shifted in the 1990s. “During the 1990s, sterilizations declined drastically from 9.1 million and 24 percent of birth planning clinical procedures in 1991 to 2.0 million and 11 percent in 2000.” However,

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37 Ibid
38 Ibid

this amount still represents a significant portion of Chinese of childbearing age and, as Attane\textsuperscript{39} shows, this policy is likely to remain in effect until 2030 when "the population is expected to reach about 1.5 billion before starting to decrease." While the Chinese government is attempting to provide new guidelines for local government officials, women will continue to suffer, especially in rural areas where local officials continue to be evaluated by quotas on reproduction. Furthermore, in order to encourage sterilization, the government continues to provide incentives, thus reinforcing the vulnerability of the poor and their dependence on the government for basic life necessities, and ultimately negatively impacting the lives and health of millions of women.

Finally, in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, women continue to be defined by their place in society and within larger groups, not as individuals capable of making decisions based on their own preferences. Even if the government did not control women's reproductive lives directly, their families would soon fill this gap. As Greenhalgh\textsuperscript{40} states, "although women and their bodies were on the battle line in the struggle for reproductive control, just behind them, were their husbands and other powerful family members, supporting, prodding, and at times, probably pressuring them to resist [the One-Child Policy.]" Thus, while the macro level conditions of the One-Child Policy and its history are important, it is also necessary to understand the place of women within marriage and the family structure.

\textit{Family Dynamics, Gender Roles, and the Place of Sons}

The family is an extremely important entity in Chinese culture. All reproductive decisions are made within the structure of the family and women's role in society is reinforced

by their positions as wives, mothers, daughters, and granddaughters. Therefore, in order to understand the reality of Chinese women’s lives and their reproductive selves, it is important to examine the family structure as well as the roles of husband and wife within the marital structure. It is also important to recognize the inherent hierarchy and hypocrisy in the Chinese system where women are said to be equal but fail to obtain equal rights and representation in meeting their reproductive goals. In this section, I first turn to the family structure in China. Then, I go on to discuss gender roles and the contradictions present in women’s lives in relation to Chinese propaganda and women’s reality. Understanding these contradictions is especially important given the fact that, according to Hom\(^{41}\), “it is only by understanding the contradictions inherent in women’s location within various structures that effective political action and challenges can be devised.” Finally, I conclude by discussing son preference and the role of the One-Child Policy in reinforcing women’s subordinate position in society.

The family unit is one of the most important components of Chinese society and has been evolving for several decades. According to Le Jieqiong\(^{42}\), the President of the Society for Research on Marriage and Family in China, family sizes have decreased due to the changing economy of China and population control programs. In the past, economic productivity relied almost exclusively on the family unit. While this is still the case in many rural areas of China, the role of the family in the market economy of urban China has diminished. However, the family still holds particular value for population control programs and government efficiency. As Sigley\(^{43}\) argues, “the family is understood as the ‘basic cell of society’ in which practices of


marriage, sexual relations, child rearing, and social welfare take place.” With this strong correlation between the family unit and social well-being, it becomes self-evident that deficiencies in the family structure lead to social instability and dis-ease with the government. Sigley goes on to show, that in the case of family planning, the link between the family unit and the social system is especially important. Sigley states that “family management and social development should be harmonious. Thus, if on a national level authorities perceive that China is facing a crisis of overpopulation, then families should be willing to respond to the call to have only one child.” The problem, of course, is that the overarching goals of the family are not always in line with those of the State. Furthermore, in order to recreate harmony within the family structure and the social system, the government must utilize the social body of women given their role in reproduction. This focus on women, however, fails to take important structural inequalities into account that prevent women from controlling their bodies.

While women are supposed to be equal in China given the doctrine of Mao, this equality rarely occurs. In urban areas, job discrimination and shortages in pay are regularly experienced by women. As Gallagher\(^44\) shows:

Women each earn on average 71.7 percent of what men earn. Women face open discrimination in job hunting and must have higher test scores and more education to be hired over men. Women are perceived of as less desirable workers because of their ‘special conditions’ – pregnancy, maternity leave, nursing, and taking time off when children are sick or for babysitting emergencies. Women are generally thought of as less intelligent and less clever than men.

What is interesting about this is not so much the fact that women experience discrimination, but instead the contradictions inherent in China’s gendered policies. As Thakur\(^45\) argues, the basis of the discrimination problem lies in the “contradiction between women’s reproductive roles and


their participation in wage labour [sic.] The Chinese Communist Party has been conditional on women’s specific interest not conflicting with the overall interests of the Party.” Thus, because women can birth more than one child, gender discrimination remains a key element in Chinese society given the government’s desire to control any disobedience. However, even women who do not have children and are passed childbearing age continue to experience discrimination in the workplace, albeit for another reason.

The family unit reinforces the gender role of women. Within the family, the value placed on children must be considered in order to provide a holistic view of women’s role in society. There is implicit agreement that being a childless woman is against contemporary and traditional gender roles in China. While one might suppose that, in a country where reproduction is highly regulated and concerns continue to flourish around the trends of population growth, women and men who did not reproduce would be received graciously, this is not the case. While men without children do not experience discrimination, women who are infertile or decide that they do not want children experience high levels of intolerance. These childless women are seen as disobedient and nonconformist. In a qualitative exploration of infertility in China, Handwerker46 found that women who do not have children are left out of many benefit programs. “Childless women observe women with one child receiving such benefits as better housing with more bedrooms, monetary bonuses, childcare support, and a vacation on Children’s Day, while they receive no special rewards.” Handwerker goes on to argue that these women are unable to fill their gendered role in China, given the “significant role of mother assigned to women in normative culture.” Handwerker shows that this contradiction causes great angst among her

respondents. Finally, Handwerker shows that the significance of infertility from the standpoint of
the Chinese government is dramatically affected by the woman’s social position:

In China it appears that different classes of women, assumed to have
different intellectual capacities, are called upon to serve the Chinese
nation in distinct ways. While a poor female peasant or worker has the
duty to restrict her fertility, a female intellectual or cadre is now
encouraged to fulfill her one-child quota. Normative procreative values are
reinforced to the extent that if individuals are educated and do not have
children, it is assumed that they are not good socialists, that they aren’t
contributing to the (re)production of the modern Chinese nation-state.
Furthermore, non-reproductive female sexuality registers a suspicion of
sexual practices as non-economic and driven by pleasure. Female
sexuality for its own sake, unproductive of babies, is considered
unproductive of social and economic efficiency.

Thus, while rural women are tightly controlled through the One-Child Policy and are constructed
as anti-socialist if they have more than one child, urban women are penalized and anti-socialist
for being childless. This creates impossible contradictions for urban women who must navigate
between their careers, the demands of the government, and their womanhood.

Within the family unit, women are also defined and controlled through marriage. In 1981,
China altered its Marriage Law in order to reflect changes in society; to further implement its
population control program; and in recognition of the primary influence of the family unit on
development goals. Within the Marriage Law, the importance of family planning is mentioned
four times, explicitly in Article 12 which states that “husband and wife are in duty bound to
practise [sic] family planning.”

47 The Marriage Law of 1981 also increased the minimum age for
marriage to 22 years for men and 20 years of age for women. Given the importance of abstinence
before marriage in Chinese culture, this restriction effectively increased the age of both men and
women at first childbirth. Finally, the Marriage Law included a lengthy article that discussed the
duty of parents to provide for their children and the duty of adult children to provide for their

parents in old age. Thus, the Chinese government utilized family law in order to advance the mission of the One-Child Policy by delaying births and enforcing the use of family planning.

In addition to the legal construction of marriage and its influence on the definition of motherhood, social and cultural factors also influence women's lives. Sigley argues that marriage helps govern the population and ensures that family (re)production will be in line with the goals of the State. He states that “the act of marriage has thus become a valuable government technology in the policing of reproductive conduct in modern China.” By controlling marriage, Sigley argues that societal reproductive behavior becomes transparent. Thus, examining the marital structure allows the Chinese government to examine reproductive behavior and reprimand couples that deviate from social norms. Furthermore, marriage provides an effective tracking system for the detection of reproductive disorders. “Since the 1990s, semi-annual gynecological exams have been required for some married women of reproductive age. These examinations are designed to assist in the discovery of sexually transmitted and reproductive diseases, in the insertion of IUD’s for women designated to use them, and in the detection of unplanned pregnancies.” Thus, marriage is yet another reproductive control tool of the Chinese government, conveniently situated within the gender defining grips of the family structure.

Finally, the structural inequalities that women experience in the family, through marriage, in the workplace, and within greater society contribute to the ongoing problem of son preference. While an improvement in the standing of women and a decreased reliance on manual labor in urban centers has reduced sex discrimination, the traditional notions of male superiority, which

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have been previously elaborated on, continue to exist throughout China. Furthermore, in the rural areas, outright discrimination towards females continues to be particularly strong given the reliance on manual labor and the lack of adequate support systems that do not rely on physical aptitude for older individuals. According to Attane, \(^5\) "a child has a calculable economic value based on its ability to help work in the fields, tend the cattle, and improve the farm’s output and the family income." Therefore, because men are likely to stay home upon marriage and are capable of doing more work outside of the household than women (due to gender roles and issues of physical strength), there is an overwhelming preference for sons in China. The preference for sons is also "motivated by a concern to ensure care of parents in later life, because no universal old-age pension or social security system exists." \(^5\) However, this preference supports women's subordinate position in society and leads to decreased well-being for young girls.

In addition, son preference makes women more willing to revolt against the restrictive population control policies in order to have more sons. However, this resistance has led to deaths and further difficulties for women. Greenhalgh \(^5\) states that "the more women contested the policy, the greater the risks to their bodies from tubal ligations, repeated IUD insertions and extractions, frequent abortions, late-term abortions, and botched operations performed in haste during mass birth control campaigns." Therefore, while resistance may grant women the permission to have more children, especially sons, many women are placed in even more precarious situations because of their resistance. In addition, "resistance to the policy also reinforced women's social subordination. By pressing so hard for sons, women succeeded in

\(^5\) ibid.
biasing the policy toward males...Acting as agents for the patriarchal family and themselves, women etched their own inferiority into the birth policy. Son preference also creates dangerous situations for women when they fail to produce sons (ironic given the male determination of sex) and encourages women to obtain late term abortions for female fetuses, thus requiring them to incur additional risks. In addition, by insisting that they be allowed to have sons, women place their unborn and infant daughters in a dangerous position. Many female infants have been killed or abandoned by couples who continue trying for a son and reach their "reproductive limit." "A 1997 World Health Organization paper reported that the national ratio of male to female births in 1994 was 117 to 100 (the worldwide statistical norm is 106 to 100.) Part of the statistical gap may be attributable to female infanticide, sex-selective termination of pregnancies, and abandonment or neglect of girls." Therefore, in addition to women of childbearing age, young girls and the unborn are being negatively affected by policies that reinforce their subordinate position yet preach equality. As Hom argues:

The killing of girl infants is a form of violence against the infant herself, the mother, and all women in the society in which the practice occurs. Female infanticide is no less than a gender-biased discriminatory judgment about who will survive. At the familial and societal level at which the mother is subjected to enormous pressure to bear a son or face the consequences of abuse and humiliation, female infanticide is a form of policing and terrorist practice of control over women to keep them in their prescribed reproductive role as the bearers of sons.

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While this declaration seems a bit harsh, I argue that it is appropriate given the situation of women in China; their lack of control surrounding reproduction; and their subordinate place in society as females. This subordination forces some to kill for lack of “proper” gender status.

**Changing Paradigms: Immigration and Acculturation**

While much research has examined gender and marriage in China and their relationship to the One-Child Policy, little research has been done on the One-Child Policy’s permanence in populations that emigrate from China. Furthermore, what research is available on Chinese women either fails to take recent ideological and economic shifts into account that have occurred thanks to globalization and the increasing commercialization of China or is published directly by the Chinese government, thereby decreasing its absolute validity. However, one independent study⁵⁷, completed in 1997, examined the postmigration birth rate of Chinese women. The study found that women adopted and then exceeded the average birth rate of the United States once they immigrated. The authors went on to say that this trend shows that the One-Child Policy is “incongruent with the reproductive ideals of most Chinese people. The decline in fertility observed in the People’s Republic of China is likely to reflect reluctant compliance with the One-Child Policy.” While this conclusion seems perfectly feasible given the situation of reproduction, the status of women, and the traditional Chinese value placed on children, the authors did not qualitatively explore women’s understanding of their situations and instead based their results on the 1990 US Census Survey. Because the United States has very different reproductive policies and social norms, it is appropriate to explore the contradictions that Chinese women experience when they immigrate to the U.S. For instance, while premarital sex

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has become more acceptable in the United States, Chinese discourse on the family continues to discourage premarital sex.\textsuperscript{58} Furthermore, the United States does not have a policy discouraging the general public from reaching their individual reproductive goals. These differences alone may allow Chinese women to reevaluate their reproductive goals and opinions in a country that allows for individual decision and dissent. In order to explore these contradictions and the immigration experience of Chinese women in the United States and in order to understand the influence that the One-Child Policy continues to have on their cultural model of reproduction and marriage outside of the restrictive environment of the People’s Republic of China, I have qualitatively examined their decisions, values, emotions, and motivations surrounding reproduction and relationships. Given the taboo nature of reproductive decisions and beliefs in China and the censorship of ideas against the Communist government, it was important to remain cultural sensitivity in this study. By using cognitive anthropology, I obtained this sensitivity while also exploring the deep underlying beliefs of women surrounding gender roles and reproductive situations.

\textit{Cognitive Anthropology as a Research Framework}

Cognitive anthropology, defined by D’Andrade\textsuperscript{59} as the study of the ways in which individuals and populations make sense of their world, is an excellent theoretical framework for examining culture and the decisions and values that people place on particular issues. By investigating cultural knowledge and the way it is transmitted, D’Andrade argues that cognitive anthropology allows researchers to study “how people in social groups conceive of and think


about the objects and events in their world.” Numerous studies have shown that cognitive anthropology is especially helpful for examining health issues due to its cultural sensitivity and the complex nature of health decisions. Furthermore, cognitive anthropology contains several methods that allow researchers to construct cultural schemas for a variety of health concerns and issues.

Ward Goodenough, an Emeritus professor at the University of Pennsylvania, defined culture as “what you need to know to get along in a group of people.” Thus, culture shapes our perception of the world and analyzing the influence of culture on decisions and understandings of reality helps researchers create more effective programs that have real impacts on the health of communities. D’Andrade goes further and shows that culture is shared through social rules and shared mental constructs. These constructs, known as schemas, have powerful effects on rationality, emotions, motivation, and perception.

D’Andrade states that humans construct reality by filling in slots within a cognitive model known as a cultural schema. According to Strauss and Quinn, cultural schemas organize knowledge into meaningful structures which allow individuals to process knowledge in a culturally appropriate manner, mostly unconsciously. These cultural schemas, in turn, help reinforce the meaning of objects in reality. Cultural schemas reconstruct reality by “alter[ing] our memories of past events, determin[ing] the meanings we impart on ongoing experience, and giv[ing] us expectations for the future.” When these schemas become more complete and complex, they are known as cultural models.

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62 ibid
64 ibid
Cultural models influence memory, perception, and reasoning. D’Andrade argues that cultural models influence these factors of human-existence to a point that makes it difficult for individuals to interact with their world in a nonbiased manner. Thus, studying the cultural model of reproduction is extremely valuable given cognitive anthropology’s ability to understand underlying influences on perceptions that shape women’s views of the restrictions placed on their lives by the One-Child Policy and their decision-making process as they navigate between two cultures with very different reproductive policies and social structures. Naomi Quinn, in an influential article about marriage, shows that individuals make decisions based on the level of their goals. Quinn shows that married women want to satisfy upper level goals of equality and womanhood, but also hope to satisfy lower level goals that allow them to appeal to their husbands and avoid marital conflict. In China, I postulate that women have upper level goals surrounding culturally appropriate reproductive decisions and gender interactions and lower level goals about their desires to lead productive lives and make individual decisions about sexuality and their families. By examining upper-level and lower-level goals, researchers can understand motivational factors and also analyze why individuals make the decisions they do, since, as Quinn argues, schemas propel individuals into action.

D’Andrade furthers the notion of hierarchies of cultural schemas and discusses master motives, which he believes affect all action and perception and trickle down to middle level and lower level schemas that influence decisions and perceptions. In addition, D’Andrade adds a fourth component, emotional schemas. Emotional schemas, according to D’Andrade, influence

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67 D’Andrade, Roy. The Development of...
68 ibid
behavior by motivating the recall of certain schemas, shaping those schemas according to experience, and making cultural models much stronger. Worthman\textsuperscript{69} also finds that emotional schemas influence decisions and perceptions of the world and states that emotions affect the way we learn about the world around us, the way we categorize memories, and the way we think and react. Thus, Worthman believes that culture influences emotions and thus influences all of the thinking processes that rely on emotions for information. Given the importance of emotions, using methods that would allow respondents to discuss their emotional responses to certain situations would enhance the construction of a cultural model and allow for better understanding surrounding respondents' perceptions and motivations.

In addition to impacting cultural schemas, emotions also serve as social control. They allow someone to feel guilty, for instance, in order to prevent them from stealing. However, other influences allow for social control over decision making. According to Mellers\textsuperscript{70}, et al. these include the social context (the idea that the mere presence of others influences decisions), social networks, social learning, and group decision-making. Thus, exploring Chinese women's social networks and their source for information about sexuality allowed me to better explore their reproductive decisions and cultural schema. Overall, it appears that cultural schemas influence action through "linkages with emotion and motivation.\textsuperscript{71}" In addition, appraisals that allow for decision-maxing and understanding of the world are modified by early experiences and culturally prescribed moral and ethical judgments that are internalized\textsuperscript{72}. In conclusion, cultural models are, according to D'Andrade, "important motivational forces that allow individuals to

\textsuperscript{72} ibid
strive for the attainment of goals, goals that lean on actual reality according to Lakoff and Koveces.\footnote{D'Andrade, Roy. The Development of Cognitive Anthropology. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1995.}

In order to understand the ways that people understand their world, \textquotedblleft anthropologists had to create tools to further comprehension of seemingly abstract ideas and foreign cultural models.\footnote{Lakoff, G. and Z. Koveces. "The Cognitive Model of Anger in American English." In Cultural Models in Language and Thought. Eds. D Holland and N. Quinn. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1987.} For example, Elisa Gordon\footnote{D'Andrade, Roy. The Development of...} shows that cognitive anthropologists can also use semi-structured interviews to examine cultural domains. Because cultural domains are shared among members of a relatively homogenous group, interviewing Chinese women at the University of Pennsylvania allowed me to explore the cultural model of reproduction and gender roles of Chinese women who are educated, middle to upper class, and mostly from urban areas in China. Examining this population allowed me to understand how the One-Child Policy influences women from the most privileged sector of Chinese society. One imagines that they are the least affected by this policy. Thus, their difficulties and conflicts can be seen as the most basic core of the One-Child Policy. I postulate that poor women are worse off then the respondents studied here given the Chinese poor's overall lack of resources, conflicted beliefs surrounding gender and family size that are not in line with the One-Child Policy, and the burden of coercive population control practices placed on poor and rural women in China.

Cognitive anthropology provides several tools that allow researchers to analyze health behavior and outcomes in a way that has the potential to improve lives. Cognitive anthropology also allows researchers to be culturally sensitive and examine overarching beliefs within an individual context through a variety of methods that accommodate different populations. Thus, in

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\footnote{D'Andrade, Roy. The Development of...}
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order to study the cultural model of reproduction and the gender and the family roles of Chinese women, I used cognitive anthropology methods.
Statement of the Problem:

In 1979, China instituted the One-Child Policy in order to control population growth and further the economic goals of the State. In doing so, it limited women to having one child and created steep penalties for women who did not obey. For some women, disobedience led to lost job opportunities or fines. Others, especially in rural areas, were threatened with demolition of their houses and forced sterilizations and abortions. Furthermore, the reproductive body was reconstructed as a machine for the State which could be controlled in order to advance State economic interests. As Greenhalgh\textsuperscript{77} argues, individual childbearing was brought away from the family and into the arena of economic productivity. This shift has caused many problems for women who must manage their conflicting roles as driven career-women and nurturing wives and mothers within a system that preaches equality and then directly controls their independence and self-determination. Thus, the One-Child Policy altered gender norms and family dynamics within Mainland China and had a lasting effect on Chinese women’s conceptualization of reproduction and their views of themselves.

In order to examine the cultural model of reproduction and the social reality of Chinese women studying in the United States, a country with very different reproductive policies and family structures, I completed a study using the framework of cognitive anthropology. This study is especially relevant today given the dearth of research on acculturation and shifting contradictions apparent in this population.

Cognitive anthropology, defined by D’Andrade\textsuperscript{78} as the study of the ways in which individuals and populations make sense of their world, is an excellent theoretical framework for examining culture and the decisions and values people place on particular issues. By

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interviewing 15 Chinese women studying in the United States, this study defined the cultural model of reproduction, examined beliefs about the One-Child Policy, and explored the marital needs and desires of the respondents, desires that are often contradictory to the changing family relationship brought on by the shifting market system in China. Because cultural models tend to be shared among relatively homogenous populations, the data received from this study can be extrapolated to the greater population of educated Chinese women.

*Research Aims:*
In this study, I pursued the following three areas of inquiry:

1. Are Chinese women’s reproductive goals in line with the goals of the One-Child Policy? If not, how do women account for this difference?
2. What are the appropriate roles of males and females in this population? How do these roles reflect their position in society?
3. Do the values embraced by the One-Child Policy in China surrounding reproduction and gender roles continue to be salient when Chinese women immigrate to the United States, a country with different reproductive policies and issues? If not, how do they change as these women become acculturated?

*Hypotheses:*
Based on information presented in the literature review, I hypothesized the following results corresponding on the research aims presented above:

1. Chinese women will not agree with all aspects of the One-Child Policy, but they will agree that having one child is appropriate for them given their background as educated women.
2. Chinese women will be subordinate to their male partners and male counterparts in the greater society.

3. The value of having one child (if hypothesis #1 is correct) will continue to be salient for the respondents. However, for women who have been in the United States longer within the respondent group, individual autonomy will become more important given American ideas surrounding autonomy and procreative liberty.
Chapter III: Methods
Cognitive anthropology is an excellent theoretical framework for examining culture and the decisions and values people place on particular issues. By interviewing 15 Chinese women studying in the United States, this study examined beliefs about the One-Child Policy and explored the reproductive needs and desires of the respondents, desires that are often contradictory to the One-Child Policy and the changing family structure of China, a shift brought on by the market system in China. Because cultural models tend to be shared among relatively homogenous populations, the data received from this study can be extrapolated to the greater population of educated Chinese women.

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Subjects:
Fifteen Chinese women were interviewed in this study. The women interviewed were mainly PhD level students studying a variety of subjects. All respondents were also English speakers with varying levels of fluency. Thus these women are among the most privileged and educated women of China. One woman was from Hong Kong but the rest came from Mainland China. Two-thirds of the women came from urban areas of China, mostly Beijing and Shanghai. The other third were from small towns within the countryside of China. Twelve women attended college in China, with seven attending in Beijing. The respondents ranged in age from 21 to 32 and had been in the United States varying from 5 months to 12 years. Three respondents were married and all married respondents had one young child. In addition, half of the respondents had one sibling and the rest were only children. Finally, thirteen respondents had parents with siblings. Parents had between two and ten siblings each. One respondent had no siblings because
her grandmother was ill and therefore was unable to bear more children. Finally, one respondent is missing data about her parents. Please see Table 1 in Appendix B for more information.

Setting:
All interviews were performed at the University of Pennsylvania. Ten interviews were given in Van Pelt Library and the rest were scattered throughout campus at the request of the various respondents. The University of Pennsylvania has a thriving Asian student population and a multitude of cultural resources.

Procedures:

Recruitment of Respondents:
In order to reach these women, I contacted over 70 student organizations at the University of Pennsylvania by email. I also contacted the Office of International Programs, professors across several disciplines, the office responsible for training international teaching assistants, and the Assistant Director for the Center for East Asian Studies. In addition, I put up flyers in the ESL section of Bennett Hall, but did not get any respondents from this method of recruitment. Respondents then emailed me to schedule a 45 minute interview.

Consent:
Each respondent was asked to consent to one semi-structured qualitative interview. Interviews were voluntary and respondents were told at the beginning of the interview that they were allowed to decline at any point and also that they had a right to refuse to answer any questions. Furthermore, when respondents were emailed, they were told that in the interview they would be asked to discuss marriage, the One-Child Policy, family life, and reproduction. Thus they were aware of the interview topics prior to agreeing to be interviewed. This study
received ethical evaluation and approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Pennsylvania on December 8, 2003. Interviews commenced in January 2004.

Confidentiality:
Interview responses were confidential and were not linked to particular respondents in any manner. Subjects are referred to only by their initials.

Semi-Structured Interviews: A Rationale
I decided to construct a semi-structured interview in order to further explore the respondents' cultural model of reproduction and beliefs surrounding the One-Child Policy and marriage. By using a semi-structured model, I was able to explore individual components of women’s lives more carefully while also collecting basic information in a semi-systematic way that allowed me to make comparisons across respondents.\(^79\)

In constructing questions for the interviews, I attempted to avoid the common pitfalls of researchers that are highlighted in Weller’s\(^80\) discussion of interviewing and questionnaire construction and were further discussed by Dr. Fran Barg\(^81\) on December 1, 2003 during her cognitive anthropology course. I attempted to avoid ambiguous, long, hypothetical, and leading questions that show a particular agenda. I also avoided questions that contained overlapping intervals or ambiguous accuracy requests. Finally, I tried to create questions that would not embarrass the respondents and I attempted to save sensitive questions until the end of the interview.

Each question attempted to explore the three research aims of this study (The questions are included in Appendix A.) The interview began with basic demographic questions in order to

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\(^80\) ibid

\(^81\) Barg, Fran. Lecture at the University of Pennsylvania. Anth 437: Cultural Models and Health.
examine trends surrounding childbearing and the former geographical location of respondents, given the sharp contrasts between rural and urban life in China. The next set of questions explored gender roles and preferences surrounding marriage. These questions also explored perceptions of the United States in order to gauge respondents’ level of comfort surrounding gender, reproduction, and sexuality in their new home. Finally, the last section of questions explored women’s views of the One-Child Policy, experiences with the One-Child Policy, and information-seeking behavior and resources surrounding sexual health. Women who had children were asked slightly different questions in this last section, in order to explore their experiences with pregnancy. After the interview, general comments were written down discussing the respondent and any problems that may have arisen during the interview process.

_Data Analysis:_

All interviews were transcribed and then coded in order to elicit the main themes found in the data. Twelve main subject areas were identified before coding began:

1. Role of the wife
2. Role of the husband
3. Marriage expectations and reality
4. Gender characteristics, differences, and conflicts
5. Gender role conflicts (U.S.-China) and Changes
6. Family life (including traditional day, relationship with, and expectations of)
7. Sexual education
8. Pregnancy experience (including differences between China and the U.S.)
9. One-Child Policy: gender and opinion *also opinion on childbearing
10. Rural/urban divide
11. Son preference
12. Immigration/Acculturation

These themes were selected based on the questions asked in the semi-structured interview as well as the respondent’s answers. The rural/urban divide and son preference categories were less explicitly explored in the questions of the interviews, but were deeply intertwined with the responses given for questions about pregnancy, marriage, sexuality, and the One-Child Policy. In
order to explore gender roles, perceptions of the One-Child Policy, and the cultural models of marriage and reproduction within this population, categorizing in this way is effective. Issues of sexual education allow for a better understanding of social norms surrounding reproductive behavior. Furthermore, the roles within marriage and of the genders more generally allow for an understanding of female agency and also have effects on perceptions of pregnancy. In addition, given the more coercive nature of the One-Child Policy in rural areas, understanding the rural/urban dichotomy and then relating this dichotomy back to the demographics of the respondents is appropriate. Finally, perceptions of the United States, the One-Child Policy, and the immigration experience all influence women's definition of womanhood and their plans for the future.

Once the interviews were coded based on these twelve general themes, I then went back and coded again line by line in order to explore subcategories and decisions within each topic. For instance, in the category “Role of Wife”, the subcategories were “tasks of wife”, “dual role”, “western wife”, “role within family”, “atypical wife”, and “tradition.” This analytical method has been explored and utilized by several researchers and is most appropriately called the constant comparative method, given its insistence on continuously creating and evaluating theories based on “patterns, themes, and common categories discovered in the observational data.”

In this method, “categories [coded for] may be in vivo [emphasis in original] codes that you take directly from your respondents’ discourse or they may represent your theoretical or substantive definition of what is happening in the data.” Thus, this method allows for detailed analysis of the actual data while also allowing researchers to begin developing theories based on the responses in a systematic manner. Finally, I reviewed the outline created by the second coding

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process in order to make comparisons across the respondents. Neuman\(^{84}\) refers to this step as selective coding in that, at this point “researchers look selectively for cases that illustrate themes and make comparisons and contrasts after most or all data collection is complete.” Thus, this final step allows for elaboration that eventually leads to themes and examples given in the final report. This process also allows for the introduction of demographic information, which in turn allows for the evaluation of theme salience based on respondent characteristics. While cognitive anthropology argues that cultural schemas are comparable across relatively homogenous groups, individual differences will still be present. Coding by demographics allows for a greater understanding of variables that decrease sample cohesion. Variables such as year immigrated, rural-urban location, and childbearing have effects on the perceptions and values attested to in the responses given during interviews.

Chapter IV: Results

My position:

I am an American white female with two and a half years of college education. I am currently working on a B.A. in anthropology and health & societies and have thus studied numerous issues in women’s health. I believe that women have a right to control their reproductive capacity as they see fit. I do not agree with the One-Child Policy’s coercive nature but instead would like to see women making their own decisions about their reproductive health and childbearing that consider their own situations, not the goals of their government. However, in this study, I attempted to be value neutral and did not introduce negative viewpoints surrounding China or the One-Child Policy into the interviews, a condition which is attested to in the interview questions shown in Appendix A. Yet, given my status as an American female and the repeated notion that America is against the One-Child Policy, some respondents may have felt uncomfortable discussing the policy and their affirmative views with me. However, the majority of respondents discussed their approval of the policy while also recognizing that the United States and other Western countries are against anti-natalist reproductive policies. Furthermore, by continuously redefining the themes of the data and relying on the data itself in order to make conclusions, I have reduced my level of bias. While I found that most women are against having only one child, the fact that my results show women’s support for the policy (while my own viewpoint is against it), reaffirms objectivity.

Main themes:

The Notion of Equality:

Many women discussed the societal importance of gender equality in their responses surrounding the roles of men and women in society and more specifically in marriage. One respondent stated that “when I was in China it was like, we were told that women should be
equal as men, not only at home but also outside in the workplace.” (CL, age 29, urban.) Thus, from a very early age women are surrounded by social decrees that proclaim their partnership in the future of China. Furthermore, in defining womanhood, women take the notion of equality further. These women discussed the importance of balancing both a career and a family. In fact, many women stated that, without either, they would be constructed as unproductive or unfit women. Some women even openly questioned the overall contribution of women who remain in the home to take care of children and their husbands. However, while these women noted the importance of having a career, family and the role of wife are nonetheless extremely important.

*Tasks of the Wife, Help from the Husband:*

Respondents felt that wives had important responsibilities within the home. For instance, LY (22, urban) stated that, as a wife, “you do the housework and support your husband on a mature level...you do the cooking and clean the house and do all the stuff he wants you to do. That would be an excellent wife.” Furthermore, these women also stated that the role of the wife is extremely important in the family unit. JT (25, urban) declared “I think if you are going to be a wife that means you are going to have a family so you must be responsible to your family and take care of the household and later your sons or daughters and of course you need to treat your parents and your husband’s parents well...” Thus, the wife must not only do the work of the house, she must also mold the family together and provide emotional support. While these are no doubt great responsibilities, women did discuss the importance of the husband’s role and reinforced the idea of equality in the tasks of marriage. For example, according to CL (29, urban) “when I mentioned that the wife should do the housework, I’m also expecting my husband to help out with some of the laundry, some of the cleaning, taking care of the child. It’s not just the wife.” Thus, the husband also has an important role in the household. Furthermore, the husband
should also help with some things that the wife can’t do, such as lifting heavy things. However, the picture of equality is far more complicated.

*When Equality Doesn’t Actually Occur:*

While these women felt that husbands should offer a helping hand and equally contribute to running the household, small inconsistencies in their answers lead to greater themes of inequality. JT (25, urban) stated that “Yea, I think they should be equal because most of the time I think the husband and the wife have their own job and their own things to do. I think also they should make the family so I think for the housework or something that needs to be done in the family, the wife should take this responsibility and *the husband should help equally if he has time* [emphasis added].” This statement does not show equality and in fact constructs the husband’s time as more valuable than the wife’s. Furthermore, many women discussed how the notion of equality was actually just an idealized view of marriage that doesn’t actually occur. “For the ideal they should share a lot of talk and their feelings and they can confess to each other about what happens in their work and their friends, they can share friends and they understand each other, like their shortcomings and that thing. But, actually what happen probably is not so.” (JW, 27, urban.) Furthermore, while WQ (21, rural) discussed the importance of equality in marriage, at the end of the discussion she stated that men and women are “almost equal. But you know, always men can earn more and they spend more time on working.” This ultimate inequality leads to undue stress on women who must deal with the importance of a dual role in Chinese society coupled with notions of equality and the latent reality of social hierarchies.

Women are not absolutely equal in Chinese society according to several respondents. For instance, in a passionate discussion of her work environment and the demands placed on women in Chinese society, ZW (26, urban) stated the following:
You know, after our liberation, women told “Oh you are equal with men. You can do everything.” So women do everything. We work, we have a tough job, and at the same time we spend very much time with family. So women overloaded. Now in China, women realize we are equal with men but we are not men. But now I think it is not equal because the society established the same requirements to a successful man to a successful woman, but if we have the same characteristics in a company, the boy will have a better opportunity for promotion. If a girl got a same promotion, the boy’s promotion would be even better. At the same time, like I and another man, a top manager in the company, but I have no successful family. They say “She is a loser. She doesn’t have a successful family.” But the boy have not got that. They say “Oh, he’s good... he gives all his attention to work.”

Thus, while women and are supposed to be equal in society and balance successful families and careers, women are ultimately penalized when they fail to achieve both. This reality is ironic given the unequal responsibilities placed on women within the confines of marriage and within their role as parents. Therefore, as CL (29, urban) stated, “although we were taught that women should be equal... and also you see this, everywhere in, um I don’t know what the word for that... propaganda, but in reality, women are still in a lower position. They’re supposed to respect men’s ideas and listen to them, more than having the men to listen to the women.”

*Atypical Wives and Husbands:*

In addition to the shaky reality of equality, women also discussed atypical wives and husbands within their own lives. These atypical individuals were generally said to embody Western notions surrounding marriage and gender. For instance, while M (21, urban) stated that Chinese women are equal and should hold both a career and a successful family, she went on to say that her mother was an atypical Chinese wife because “she’s really career minded and she makes more money.” Thus, once again there seems to be some disconnect between the overarching theme of equality and its underpinnings. Furthermore, LM (25, rural) and others showed that there are also atypical husband figures in their lives. “I think my father does more
housework than most of husbands. He likes to do the homework. Every morning he gets up early so he can clean, but he seldom cooks. Most of the time my mother cooks.” Thus, helping in the home can be seen as atypical for a man even though the respondents felt that the role of a man in marriage is to equally contribute to running the household.

_Sacrifice and the Role of Support in Marriage:_

There are other gender differences in the lives of the respondents. Although women are equal, the notion of sacrifice regularly appeared. “I believe the role of women and, uh, men different, are different, because G-d made us that way. So, if my husband wants me to sacrifice sometimes, maybe for a career I’d do that.” (YC, 30, rural.) Furthermore, LY (22, urban) stated that “in China, women sacrifice a lot for the family.” There is no mention of an equal sacrifice on the part of men, even though men are supposedly not superior to women.

However, if men do not sacrifice, they do continue to hold an important role within the marital system. Ironically, a few women felt that, although the marriage was supposedly equal, men should support the entire family. For instance, KL (26, rural) stated that “I think if I were a male I think I should support the whole family, though I hope my wife can be somehow independent but I hope I can protect her.” Thus, once again, there seems to be a disconnect between the societal ideal of equality, something Quinn⁸⁵ would call an upper level goal, with that of women’s real circumstances within the workplace and the family unit. CL (29, urban) also echoes this notion of support and furthers it by stating that the husband should provide “I think more support for me than I can provide for him. He’s a man and I guess, sometimes I think it’s harder for women to be both wives and have a full-time job. Um, I feel like emotionally I probably need more support from him than he needs from me, emotionally.” Thus, some

inequality is seen as normal and functionally necessary in these women’s lives, even though society dictates equality.

_Perceptions of the United States: Intersecting Cultures:_

When asked to compare relationships between men and women in the United States with those in China, the respondents tended to discuss the importance of independence and equality within the American system. They felt that, although they were supposed to be equal and independent, American women were even more independent and equal to their male counterparts. However, interestingly, several women (approximately half of the respondents) stated that American women stayed home after getting married and therefore did not fit the dual role commonly held by Chinese women. While respondents like TZ (24, urban) stated that “in the United States, um, men respect women more than men respect women in China” and “men and women are a lot more equal [in the United States]”, YC (30, rural) furthered this perception by stating that “since I came here, many American women just stay at home and the society, the husband respect her. But in China, if a woman stay home, just to do housework it is a real shame. And so we don’t want to stay home so the society put more, more duty, more obligation. We feel more pressure.” Thus, there appears to be a double-standard of equality within these two distinct cultures according to the respondents. While American women are equal to their male counterparts and can be respected for choosing to stay at home after marriage, Chinese women must fill the roles of career woman and wife/mother in order to be successful and respectable.

_Lack of Congruency and Conflicted Roles:_

This lack of congruency between the roles of Chinese women studying in the United States and those of their American counterparts and the conflicting construction of equality
causes turmoil for some respondents. When asked if there was anything she wished she would have been told before becoming an adult woman, CL (29, urban) replied:

I wish I would have known better about how important it is to know family-life. I mean we always know that family life is good, but somehow, we got this, I got this wrong impression that, for women to be someone that can be respected, we cannot just stay home being a wife... we have to go out and have a good career.... The bad side [of this issue] is, sometimes you forget that the reality is, and also I think for women, for women, it’s harder if you want to achieve the same as men, just because, um, you talk about having an equal responsibility in the family, but there are some things that men cannot do that you just have to do, to do it. That is something I wish I could have known earlier.

CL went on to say that:

Sometimes I feel like I was a little bit misled in terms of how important women’s role is at home. So, we’re not really focusing on being a good wife as long at home. So, after coming here and having a career like that, I need to focus more on family. So instead of putting all my effort on my work, I’m trying to spend more time with my family. Um, I guess it’s the opposite of what one would expect.

Thus, as a woman with her own family who has been in the United States for several years, CL felt frustrated by the conflicts between the Chinese notion of successful womanhood and that of the United States and the real demands placed on her as a mother, wife, and PhD candidate. However, CL was not alone.

Another respondent, XL (32, rural), who also has a child and has been in the United States for several years, sent her daughter back to China in order to complete her studies, something that is apparently rather common in the educated Chinese community according to my respondents. When trying to interact with her fellow coworkers during a summer internship, XL experienced great conflict given the different notions of womanhood between Chinese culture and her perception of American culture. When discussing the differences between women and men in the United States and China, XL stated “In the States actually a lot of, hmm, a lot of
woman, after getting married and have children they stop working. And like, I think, um, a Chinese woman still wants their careers. For example, during summer, the group I work with all of them, most of them are guys. Their wives are all housewives so I was, like, you know, my child is in China and they all look like “What kind of mom you are?” Thus, XL experienced conflict when trying to navigate within her “equal” roles of mother and career-woman within two very different cultures.

**Importance of Marriage and the Functionality of Children**

As previously seen, the role of wife is extremely important in defining womanhood. In order to be a successful woman, Chinese females must have careers and families. Thus, in this way, marriage can be seen as a necessity in Chinese society.

**Marriage as a Necessity:**

According to the respondents, marriage is vital. Once again, this core notion of Chinese society goes against the ideals perceived by Chinese women studying in the United States. For example, when asked about the differences in relationships between men and women in the United States with those in China, WQ (21, rural) stated that “In my country, I feel that to marry is just a responsibility. If you are over 30 and you are not yet married all of your friends and your relatives will be worried about you and tell you that you must get married.” WQ went on to explain, however, that marriage is not a necessity in the United States. “But in America, a lot of people don’t get married until they are over 40. So I feel in China, maybe, it’s part of the environment so you must get married and you get married for marriage, sometimes. But in America, people marry for love, for I don’t know, but they have many choice. But in China, women over 40, if they want to get married, it’s very hard.” Thus, once again, marriage seems to be an area of cultural difference. However, regardless of how long a woman has been in the
United States, marriage appears to be important. Furthermore, all respondents close to the age of 30 or over were married and had a child. Thus, acculturation does not seem to affect this ideal.

**The Role of Children:**
Children play a key role in Chinese society and within the microcosm of marriage. When discussing their plans for the future concerning marriage and childbearing, the 15 respondents in this study came up with dozens of considerations surrounding the issue of having children. The most salient are discussed below.

**More Children Equals Greater Happiness:**
Several respondents discussed the important role of children within the family structure and went on to say that having additional children makes the family happier. They also used this idea when discussing the One-Child Policy and possible reasons that women, mainly in the rural areas, decide to have additional children. JT (25, urban) summed this up when she stated that “People in small towns, in the rural places want to have more children because they probably think if they have more children their family looks very big, very large so they think ‘I will have a lot of grandsons, granddaughters, and this will make me happy.’”

**Kids are Functional:**
In addition to the functionality of children within rural areas (which will be further explored in a later section), kids were seen as generally functional throughout Chinese society and within the family. For example, according to LY (22, urban) “everything in China should be functional or kind of distinct...appropriate for a goal. You have the children and you want them to become a famous person.” Thus, the success of parents is proven in the lives of their children. Furthermore, children can also be seen as elderly support, especially in the rural areas. Therefore, having more children may be appropriate in order to guarantee support in old age.
Kids Relate to Women's Health:

Only a handful of respondents discussed the relation of having children to women's health. Most women focused on the importance of having children at a younger age in order to prevent problems for both the mother and the infant. However, one woman, TZ (24, urban), interestingly stated that having only one child is bad for a woman's health. "I heard from my mom that, she think that one child is not good for women's health – I don't know why but she said that the number of children that a woman should have is decided by her physical condition so too many children is not good for her health but only one child is also not good for her health." This belief, if held by more individuals within China, sharply contradicts the doctrine of the One-Child Policy.

Premarital Sex is Immoral:

Finally, in addition to the importance of children within marriage, the respondents also regularly stated that premarital sex and having children out of wedlock is extremely taboo in China. For instance, according to M (21, urban) "at least when I was back in China there was definitely no random hook-ups. If there is something like that, both of the females and the males would have to give a name to it, like find a reason for it." Thus, premarital sex is constructed as immoral, which makes it difficult to deal with issues of sexuality and childbearing. In the next two sections, I will discuss the respondents' perceptions of pregnancy, acknowledging the important role of children within marriage. I will then discuss sexual health education within this population, given the taboo nature of sexuality in China.

The Experience of Pregnancy: Social Considerations

Only three women in this society had ever been pregnant and many were uncomfortable discussing sexual issues. However, a few did discuss their experiences or perceptions of pregnancy when asked "What is pregnancy like/what do you think pregnancy is like?" For some
women, pregnancy was seen as a necessary burden on women. KL (26, rural) stated that “sometimes I think that’s [pregnancy] a huge pressure on girls and young women, so especially in relationships. Males can really enjoy every part of the relationship but I think female have, have to, you know, you care share everything but if anything come up, you can only, you know settle the problem by yourself. That’s hard.” This answer points to both the difficulty some respondents experienced when discussing sexuality and also the contradictions inherent in the previous discussion of equality.

Other women discussed the happiness involved with pregnancy and the role of pregnancy in the family. CL (29, urban), who has a child, stated that “pregnancy is also considered something very happy and very good for the whole family.” However, overall pregnancy appeared to be a difficult responsibility for this group of “inexperienced” women. Pregnancy is “a lot of work for the mother and I would think that pregnancy is a responsibility” (RC, 25, rural.) Thus, cultural factors frame pregnancy as both a burden and a wonderful, necessary experience of womanhood within the roles of career-woman and wife.

The Lack of Sexual Health Education as a Social Concern

The Lack of Sex Ed in Schools and Family Dinner Conversations:

Respondents were explicitly asked about their sexual health education and reported a great lack of information from teachers and their parents. If respondents did have any formal education, it consisted of a class in middle school where one day was devoted to a discussion of puberty. However, no discussions occurred. Instead, students were told to read silently from their textbooks. Furthermore, while many respondents were helped through their first periods by their mothers or grandmothers, almost none talked about sexuality. Those who did discussed it long after their teen and college years, instead waiting until marriage to breach the subject. However,
not all respondents desired having this conversation. In fact, respondents like LY (22, urban) stated “I would rather my parents not talk to me about these things. If they talk about these things, they might think there is something wrong – like they worry about me or something.” Thus, sexuality does not enter into the cultural model of femininity among this population outside of the confines of marriage. The lack of recognition concerning issues of sexuality has negative social consequences, especially given the generational changes concerning premarital sex that are currently being seen in some urban areas of China according to the respondents.

The One-Child Policy
Discussion of the One-Child Policy took up a considerable amount of interview time even though there were only two questions pertaining to the subject. Most respondents felt very passionate about the policy and its consequences. However, most interestingly, while hardly anyone spoke out against the policy, many women had conflicting notions about childbearing given their beliefs about the One-Child Policy and their desires to return to China.

The Policy is Fine, But I Want Two Children:
Women supported the One-Child Policy yet desired more children than the policy allows. Twelve out of fifteen respondents wanted two or more children. For these women, having only one child would be cruel for both the child and its parents. “I think it’s a little cruel for children if you have only one children. They can be very lonely” (KL, 26, rural.) Thus, having no siblings was seen as very lonesome. Furthermore, being an only child encouraged dependence, disobedience, and the spoiling of children. For example, LY (22, urban) stated that “if you are a single child in your family, you are totally spoiled…you don’t care about others.” In addition, JK (26, urban) explained that “because being a one-child, you’re definitely used to having your way, so a lot of times I don’t get along with a certain line of dependence or entitlement.” Thus, JK, a
respondent with a sister who has a lot of only-child friends felt that only children were not as approachable, friendly, or easy going. Thus, these respondents support the One-Child Policy while also holding very different views surrounding their reproductive desires and futures.

*Good for Society, Bad for Me:*  
While eighty percent of the women supported the One-Child Policy, many of these women felt that it was a good thing for society as a whole but bad in their own lives. This may explain some of the incongruence discussed above surrounding reproductive goals and the doctrine of One-Child Policy. For example, TZ (24, urban) stated that “it is from my point of view that, for the individual family it is not good on the large part but for the whole country... actually it has some advantages, that is to control the population.” Thus, there appears to be a disconnect between the personal reproductive goals of the respondents and those of the State. As KL (26, rural) stated, “so I know that for the nation it’s necessary. But, if I can choose, you know, if there is no policy, I will choose to have two children.” However, three respondents were not supportive of the One-Child Policy. One, CL (29, urban) stated that “I would prefer, if I lived in Beijing or Shanghai to have the freedom to have two children... I can choose on my own to have just one. I would think that would be perfect. But I don’t know whether you can just tell people, um, from the countryside or even from the city, that, how many people they have can, because it’s a personal matter. But, a lot of things are not personal back in China. It’s all part of the common interest of the country.” Interestingly, CL has been in the United States for several years and even became married and had a child a few years ago. Thus, her perceptions of the One-Child Policy may be related to acculturation and American perceptions, views I will discuss in a later section.
Personal Stories:
In addition to their thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions, respondents shared a variety of personal stories surrounding their experiences with the restrictions of the One-Child Policy. Given the age range of the respondents, approximately half of the respondents were born around the institution of the One-Child Policy in 1979. For these respondents, the One-Child Policy sharply controlled the actions of their parents and affected their possibility for future siblings or even experiencing their own life. RC (25, rural) shared a particularly moving story:

I was born on the last day of 1978. At first, when my mother was pregnant with me, my parents, they were kind of nervous cause they know that they going to enforce that policy sometime so at that time if you violated this kind of rule, you can be in big trouble. Yea, for my parents they can lose their jobs so my parents struggled for a long time and at last they agree on that my mother will have abortion, but she was already in the hospital and then my grandma heard of it and she was extremely angry so she just rushed to the hospital and told my mother “If she enter the operating room and have the abortion, you are not my daughter anymore.” My mother was scared and she respects my grandmother very much so she just come back home. And uh, I was born on the last day of 1978 and they began to enforce the policy in 1979.

These women were all intimately affected by the One-Child Policy, its restrictions and its effects on social norms. This intimate experience is reflected in the respondents’ understanding and reinforcement of the literature on the One-Child Policy written by the Chinese government and Chinese scholars worldwide.

Reinforcement of the Literature:
Women continuously reinforced the literature associated with the One-Child Policy. They were especially detailed in their discussion of the rural/urban dichotomy of China. In discussing this dichotomy, they questioned the motives of child-seeking women who were not educated or
wealthy. Some women felt that the actions of these women were inappropriate and inconsiderate for the common good. However, others tried to understand. According to CL (29, urban):

I just feel like people who are well, better educated and have better jobs and living in the city, they tend not to, um, be too willing to have too many children or even not to have children at all. And people from rural areas try to have more. I’m not saying that people in the city are superior, but from their resources, access to education – It’s like the opposite then you’d think, like they have less access to good education, better resources, but they have more children. For people who do have access to more, they choose not to have too many.

Thus, these women reinforce the arguments surrounding rural and urban models of appropriate childbearing. These women also discussed the importance of sons in rural life.

Without direct questioning about son preference, nine respondents openly discussed it. Most women saw it as a natural part of the culture in rural areas. They felt that it was connected to the inheritance patterns of China and the passing down of the husband’s name. Respondents also pointed to the reliance on manual labor in rural areas, a factor which is readily seen in the literature surrounding son preference in China. For example “I think this is also the culture of China. They think a boy inherit the family, um, heritage down the road because the last name will be the men’s name... so your family tree will be passing down. Besides, boys can contribute much more labor to the family” (XL, 32, rural.) Yet, most respondents distanced themselves from the problem, even those from rural areas. Finally, only one woman connected son preference with the position of women and the fate of fetuses and infants who are discriminated against. “For example, sometimes they have in the hospital, there was a baby girl who was just born and nobody claimed that she was their children... the parents just left because they don’t want the child. And then sometimes, like after the mother, the woman was pregnant for several months they’ll go to the hospital and if they find that it’s a girl, they’ll just have an abortion.”
The lack of discussion surrounding son preference and its effects on women is interesting given the focus of the literature on discrimination against females. Perhaps these respondents were not directly affected by son preference given their privileged status. Another possibility is denial. Unfortunately, it is difficult to tell either way and there may be a host of other explanations that are beyond the scope of this study.

**Perception of the One-Child Policy in the United States:**

The respondents' role as Chinese women studying in the United States may affect their perceptions of the One-Child Policy and their interactions with their American peers. While there is not a readily apparent trend towards dislike of the One-Child Policy for women who have been in the United States longer, the only women (3) who spoke out against the One-Child Policy had all been in the United States for more than three years. If there is a trend towards greater dislike of the One-Child Policy as women acculturate, it would correlate to general American disdain for the policy. According to several respondents, Americans do not think highly of the One-Child Policy. These respondents felt that Americans must not understand, given the relatively low population of the United States. Yet, the lack of disdain for the policy and the weak correlation between acculturation and a negative attitude towards the One-Child Policy may relate to the fact that “not many Chinese people publicly say it’s a really bad policy” (JW, 27, urban.) Therefore, women may not like the policy, but may nonetheless remain quiet. This makes sense when considering the incongruence between the reproductive goals of these respondents and their self-proclaimed agreement with the doctrine of the One-Child Policy.

While there is not a certifiable link between disdain for the policy and greater years of residence in the United States, when one includes discussion of the conflict between the State and individual procreative liberty surrounding the One-Child Policy and penalties associated
with the policy, respondents who had been in the United States for a longer period of time voiced concern more than those who had only been in the United States for a short period of time (less than two years.) Thus, there appears to be a connection between length of time in the United States and concern surrounding the One-Child Policy, but not necessarily outright disagreement with the policy. Given the variety of ages, locations, and family structures of women who had concerns surrounding the One-Child Policy and the consistency of years in the United States, this appears to be the most salient variable. Thus, these women long for something that the One-Child Policy does not allow.

Finally, respondents did not feel that the United States needed to control births in any way, given the lack of a population problem, the idea that American wives are homemakers and therefore can support the emotional and household needs of their families. Instead, the respondents felt that the resources of American families should determine the number of children they have.

*Improvements to the One-Child Policy:* A few women discussed the possibility of improving the One-Child Policy in order to make it more effective and less detrimental to women. Most recommendations centered on the importance of education, not only about the policy, but also in order to improve the position of women in rural areas who rely on additional children for support. In addition, respondents recommended changing inheritance patterns and allowing mother’s surnames to be passed along in the family. Finally, respondents continued to discuss their desire for more than one child and hopes for reform.
Immigration and Acculturation

Lack of a Certifiable Change in Attitudes:
A lack of definite shift in attitudes towards the One-Child Policy may be directly related to the isolation of respondents. Most respondents discussed their difficult transition into American life and their inability to interact with Americans, even American-born Chinese. For instance, HZ (25, urban) stated the following:

It was difficult at first cause mostly the language and, uh, the habits and so I get used to the life here after having a year like kind of start and then I came back and when I came back here I'm still not used to it again. So it's kind of hard for us, if you are a teenager or a child you can used to it very quickly but we have already formed some, like, deep opinion about something else and it's just hard for you to understand people around you or something like that. And sometimes you can be very timid. For people my age, it's not so easy if you don't understand what is this what is that, you can't ask.

Thus, some respondents are extremely isolated in the United States and therefore may not have ample exposure to the ideologies of the United States.

The Difficulties of Immigration:
The respondents mentioned several difficulties in addition to the isolation they experience within American society. Many respondents continue to struggle with language barriers and also experience problems with family support, visa issues, and shortages of basic resources. Overall, these difficulties may affect the acculturation process and the changing ideologies of Chinese women, a situation that is beyond the scope of this study.
Concluding Remarks on the Results of this Study
In this study, I sought to explore the following three areas of inquiry:

1. Are Chinese women’s reproductive goals in line with the goals of the One-Child Policy? If not, how do women account for this difference?

2. How do Chinese gender roles and the idea of gender preference affect understandings and acceptance of differing American ideas about gender?

3. Do the values embraced by the One-Child Policy in China surrounding reproduction and gender roles continue to be salient when Chinese women immigrate to the United States, a country with different reproductive polices and issues? If not, how do they change as these women become acculturated?

Based on the literature review, I hypothesized the following:

1. Chinese women will not agree with all aspects of the One-Child Policy, but they will agree that having one child is appropriate for them given their background as educated women.

2. Chinese women will be subordinate to their male partners and male counterparts in the greater society.

3. The value of having one child (if hypothesis #1 is correct) will continue to be salient for the respondents. However, for women who have been in the United States longer within the respondent group, individual autonomy will become more important given American ideas surrounding autonomy and procreative liberty.

The results pertaining to each research aim and hypothesis are listed on the next page.
**Research Aim #1:**

The respondents in this study affirmed the need for the One-Child Policy and, in a few cases, supported all components and consequences of the policy. However, most women wanted to have children and, upon further questioning, felt that having one child would be emotionally harmful for the only child. Thus, the goals of One-Child Policy are not in line with the individual reproductive goals of Chinese women.

This finding does not support the hypothesis that the respondents will only desire one child given their background as educated women.

**Research Aim #2:**

Most respondents stated that American relationships were not as serious and were far more independent than Chinese relationships. In coming to this conclusion, they discussed the importance of independence in their own relationships and also found that this independence sometimes goes against the traditional role of Chinese women in the family. This incongruence causes some conflict for these women as they begin to develop their careers and accommodate for differences in culture. Several respondents also stated that American women become homemakers after marriage and therefore do not have the same burden of the dual role between career-woman and wife that Chinese women do.

The findings for this research aim support the hypothesis that women will be subordinate to their male counterparts. However, the findings go further to show that women have conflicting opinions surrounding their position in society and within their relationships with men.

**Research Aim #3:**

As seen for Aim #1, the societal level values inherent in the One-Child Policy continue to be salient for the respondents. However, individual goals are often in conflict with the policy. Furthermore, of the three respondents who spoke out against the One-Child Policy, all three had
been in the United States for greater than three years. While this may not support a direct correlation between years in the United States and beliefs surrounding the One-Child Policy, when one includes discussion of the conflict between the State and individual procreative liberty surrounding the One-Child Policy and penalties associated with the policy, respondents who had been in the United States for a longer period of time voiced concern more than those who had only been in the United States for a short period of time (less than two years.) Thus, there appears to be a connection between length of time in the United States and concern surrounding the One-Child Policy, but not necessarily outright disagreement with the policy. Given the variety of ages, locations, and family structures of women who had concerns surrounding the One-Child Policy and the consistency of years in the United States, this appears to be the most salient variable. Thus, these women long for something that the One-Child Policy does not allow.
Chapter V: Discussion

Although Mao announced women's equality decades ago, women continue to suffer inequalities given their capacity to reproduce and the value placed on children in China's culture. As seen in this study, the respondents felt that they had to nurture both their careers and families in order to be seen as successful, contributing members of an equal society. This perception causes conflict for this population because of constraints on their time and energy, the underlying inequality of their relationships with men, and because they see American women as significantly less burdened. As women trying to function in a society that prides itself on its pro-natalist and individualistic ideas, a shift in attitudes seems necessary. However, in this study, only 20 percent of respondents condemned the One-Child Policy. Yet, many more discussed the fact that the policy is necessary or good for the State, but bad for their individual lives. This incongruence is also seen in the childbearing futures of the respondents, with eighty percent wanting two or more children. While one might have hoped for even more candid revelations concerning the conflicts within the reproductive goals of the State and individual women, the sensitive nature of sexuality in China and the fact that speaking against the Chinese government is considered, at best, inappropriate, may have hindered some discussion. However, overall the respondents provided a wealth of information and personal insight into their world as women who must adapt to a very different culture.

The respondents appear to have a very similar cultural model of reproduction. While there are individual variations in some responses and beliefs surrounding the One-Child Policy, several key themes were nonetheless present throughout the interviews. These variations no doubt have several causes, including the interaction between the experience and demographic characteristics of the respondents. However, the variations do not rule out the presence of a concrete cultural model. The sensitive nature of reproduction, censorship by the Chinese
government, and beliefs surrounding the One-Child Policy, childbearing, and common experience help construct a cultural model that exhibits great conflict given the variety of layers of thought and perception that women work through in order to make sense of their world. As D’Andrade\(^{86}\) discusses, cultural models can have several layers. While the master motives for these respondents appear to contain hopes for both appeasement of the Chinese government and adherence to rules surrounding the taboo nature of sexuality, lower level schemas point to the importance of having children within the family structure and desires for self-determination over reproduction, at least to the point of being able to choose two children instead of one.

As previously mentioned, the responses in this study exhibit a wide variety of variation. At the same time, there are several congruencies. These congruencies point to the relatively homogenous characteristics of this population. The majority of respondents were educated in China. Only two respondents did not attend college in China, given the fact that they were already in the United States by their college years. Furthermore, in order to attend college, respondents had to come from relatively well-to-do families. Finally, by attending graduate school in the United States, these respondents exhibit an even higher level of education, resources, and independence. Thus, the responses given in this study are applicable for Chinese women with ample resources, education, and exposure to the Western world given the fact that cultural models are shared among members of a relatively homogenous population. This is not to say that all individuals fitting this description share the exact same cultural model given the influence of individual perceptions, emotions, motives, experiences, and attitudes on individual cultural schemas. However, the most salient themes should be shared. Thus, in this population conflicts between reproductive goals and the goals of the State, turmoil surrounding the dual role of women given their underlying subordination, the importance of marriage and children,

disparities in sexual education, and a strong understanding surrounding the One-Child Policy are all present.
Chapter VI: Conclusions
The Chinese government instituted the One-Child Policy in 1979 after several reproductive policies failed to bring childbearing in line with the economic development goals of China. In doing so, the Chinese government reconstructed the body and reproductive self into tools for the government’s personal use, thereby undermining individual autonomy and negatively impacting the well-being of millions of Chinese women.

The most recent version of the policy seeks to limit the number of children women could have to one. While attainment of this goal gradually became easier in the urban areas of China, the traditional importance of children in the family continues to undermine the efforts of the State to completely control the population in rural areas. Because children are seen as functional, important for women’s health, a source of happiness, and a necessary component of marriage, the Chinese government has had to resort to coercive methods of control, especially in rural areas. Reports of forced sterilizations and abortions are common in literature coming out of China, even today. Furthermore, several respondents in this study shared their personal experiences with the One-Child Policy. In one case, a respondent narrowly missed being aborted by her parents (as their effort to adhere to the shifting reproductive climate of China in the late 1970s.) Thus, the One-Child Policy continues to hold much meaning and significance in the lives of Chinese women, even women from highly privileged backgrounds.

In addition, while women are openly said to be equal in Chinese society, reality falls far from this ideal given the construction of womanhood as a state where women have both a career and a family (including children), the conflicting goals of the One-Child Policy, and women’s innate ability to bear children. Furthermore, in this study, women were required to handle not only the conflicts inherent in their own culture, but also notions of equality and independence in the drastically different culture that they currently find themselves in. Thus, the respondents in
this study experience turmoil as they navigate between conflicts in their dual role as career-women and future/current wives.

Overall, these respondents exhibit a cultural model of reproduction with numerous conflicting motives. While these women hope to adhere to social norms that construct sexuality as taboo and support the doctrine of the Chinese government, they ultimately find that their individual goals and beliefs also influence their motivations and actions. This situation is not dissimilar to a study by Naomi Quinn on the beliefs and coping of married American women.\textsuperscript{87} Given the influence of memory, perception, experiences, and beliefs on cultural models and individual schemas, this matrix of ideas is perfectly reasonable. However, this reasonability does not make coping any easier for these women, especially given their relative isolation in American society and the enormous importance of children and marriage on their construction of themselves.

\textit{Limitations:}

Several limitations for this study have already been discussed. For one, respondents may have been uncomfortable discussing issues of sexuality and voicing disdain for the One-Child Policy given the social norms of Chinese society. In addition, I initially held concerns surrounding my role in the interviews as an American white female given the respondents' perceptions of Americans as against the One-Child Policy and more specifically of American women as homemakers. However, given the respondents' overall support for the basic components of the One-Child Policy and the fact that a few spoke openly about American women in a way that could be construed as criticism from my viewpoint, I do not believe that my role in this narrative supersedes accuracy. Finally, while cognitive anthropology hopes to obtain

objectivity in semi-structured interviews, tone, individual analysis, and chance occurrences may influence results. When analyzing the results of this study, I attempted to point out the overall salience of themes in order to avoid constructing an ecological fallacy. I also provided numerous quotes directly from respondents in order to allow the reader to agree or disagree with my findings and assertions.

**Future Research:**

It is my hope to continue research in this area. However, given the conflicts of the respondents and the difficulties I had in determining which variables precisely altered ideas, further exploration on this subject is key. Furthermore, additional studies in the adaptation of Chinese women more specifically to the United States is important given their self-reported isolation in America, an isolation caused by language barriers and cultural differences.
Appendix A:

Details of the Semi-Structured Interviews:
The following questions were asked. Additional questions were included in each interview in order to clarify information or to explore further areas of interest that were brought up by respondents in answering these set questions.

Demographics:
1. How old are you?
2. How old were you when you moved to the United States from China?
3. What family members came with you?
4. Where did you live in China?
5. What kind of differences do you see between the rural and urban areas of China?
6. Do you have any children?
   a. If so:
      i. How many?
      ii. Age and gender of children?
7. How many siblings do you have? How many did your father and mother have?
8. Who lived at home with you in China?
9. Who lives in the same household with you now?

Gender Roles, Preferences, and Relationships:
1. Wives
   a. What does it mean to be a wife?
   b. What should wives do in the home?
   c. How should they treat their husbands?
2. Husbands
   a. What does it mean to be a husband?
   b. What should husbands do in the home?
   c. How should they treat their wives?
3. How has your opinion surrounding these questions (if at all) changed since you’ve been in the United States?
4. How do relationships between men and women in the United States compare to those in China?
5. Family Life
   a. What was your family life like in China?
   b. How (if at all) has it changed since you’ve been in the United States?
   c. How do you feel about these changes?

Values of the One-Child Policy & Conceptualization of the Body:
1. As you may or may not be aware, China instituted the One-Child Policy in 1979, limiting couples to one child. Were you aware of this policy while you were in China?
   a. If so, how did it affect you? What do you think about it?
   b. If not, why do you think you didn’t hear about it?
2. To your knowledge, are there any differences in the way the One-Child Policy is applied in China? (Probe: Among certain groups of women, regions of China, etcetera?)

3. If respondent has child(ren):
   a. How did your family regard pregnancy? What did you know about it before your first child from your parents? School? What were you surprised by?
   b. Have you known anyone who has been pregnant in the United States? Who?
   c. Do you think being pregnant feels differently here? How? How do you know?
   d. What is an appropriate number of children to have in the United States? How did you come up with that number? Is it different in the United States than in China? If so, why?
   e. Is there something you wished you’d known about being a woman that your family did not teach you? If so, what? Why do you think it was not discussed?

4. If respondent does not have child(ren):
   a. Looking ahead, do you want to have children? If so, how many?
   b. What is an appropriate number of children to have in the United States? How did you come up with that number? Is it different in the United States than in China? If so, why?
   c. What have you been told about pregnancy or reproduction in general in school? What do you think about what you’ve been told? Do you think what you were told was different than what American women learn? How?
   d. What have you been told about pregnancy or reproduction in general by your family? What do you think about what you’ve been told? Do you think what you were told was different than what American women learn? How?
   e. What do you think pregnancy is like?
## Appendix B: Demographic Table

### Table 1 of 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics of Subjects (n=15)</th>
<th>% of n</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>% of n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-23</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-26</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-29</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>Some graduate school</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Long Ago Immigrated to U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than six months</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>Mainland China</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six months to less than 1 year</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>6.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year to 2 years, 11 months</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years to 4 years, 11 months</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years to 6 years, 11 months</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>Home Location in China</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years to 8 years, 11 months</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years to 10 years, 11 months</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years to 12 years, 11 months</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1 child</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>No children</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Siblings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Siblings: Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td># of Siblings: Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - Two</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>0 - Two</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three - Five</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>Three - Five</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six - Eight</td>
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<td>Six - Eight</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine - Eleven</td>
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<td>Nine - Eleven</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources:


Barg, Fran. Lecture at the University of Pennsylvania. Anth 437: Cultural Models and Health.


