LUND UNIVERSITY

Rethinking Son Preference

Gender, Population Dynamics and Social Change in the People's Republic of China

Eklund, Lisa

2011

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Eklund, L. (2011). *Rethinking Son Preference: Gender, Population Dynamics and Social Change in the People's Republic of China*. [Doctoral Thesis (compilation), Sociology]. Lund University Publication.

Total number of authors:
1

General rights
Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.
• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Download date: 18. May. 2025

Rethinking Son Preference

Lisa Eklund

Rethinking Son Preference –

Gender, Population Dynamics and Social Change in the People's Republic of China

Lund Dissertations in Sociology 96

A complete list of publications from the Department of Sociology, Lund University, can be found at the end of the book and at www.soc.lu.se/info/publ.

Copyright ©
Lisa Eklund 2011

Typesetting
Jonas Palm

Cover design
Lisa Eklund

Cover photo
Lisa Eklund

Printed by
Media-Tryck, Lunds universitet 2011

ISBN 978-91-7473-108-8
ISSN 1102-4712

Contents

List of abbreviations **5**
List of papers **7**
Preface **9**
Acknowledgements **11**
1. Introduction **13**
Purpose of the study 14
Structure of the dissertation 16
2. Methodology **17**
Studying son preference 17
The empirical study 20
Secondary sources 27
Positioning myself 27
3. Theoretical perspectives on son preference **29**
Conceptualising son preference 29
Son preference as a gendered institution 30
Preliminary conclusions 41
4. The demographic tale of son preference **43**
Prenatal daughter de-selection 43
Postnatal daughter discrimination 50
Consequences of skewed sex ratios 54
The limitations of demographic indicators 55
Preliminary conclusions 56

5. Son preference in the PRC 57

The Mao era 57

Dismantling the communes 63

The population policy 67

Rural-urban labour migration 71

The Care for Girls Campaign 77

Preliminary conclusions 78

6. Summary of papers 81

Paper 1: Cadres as gatekeepers – the art of opening the right doors? 81

Paper 2: Modelling prenatal son preference: some new perspectives from China 82

Paper 3: Deconstructing notions of son preference – migration and social change in four Chinese villages 83

Paper 4: 'Good citizens prefer daughters': gender, rurality and the Care for Girls Campaign 84

7. Concluding discussion 87

Studying son preference in the PRC 87

The narrative of son compulsion 88

Gender reasoning revisited 91

Filial daughters? 92

Son preference in an ageing society 93

Transformations in the marriage institution 94

Policy and programmatic implications 95

Some methodological concerns and future areas of study 96

Concluding remarks 97

Glossary 99

Bibliography 101

List of abbreviations

CGC	Care for Girls Campaign
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FP	Family Planning
GDI	Gender-related Development Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HRS	Household Responsibility System
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IVF	In Vitro Fertilisation
IUD	Intra-uterine Device
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOH	Ministry of Health
NPFPC	National Population and Family Planning Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRC	People's Republic of China
RH	Reproductive Health
SRB	Sex Ratio at Birth
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TVE	Township and Village Enterprises
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

List of papers

This dissertation is based on the following papers:

Paper 1: Eklund, Lisa (2010) "Cadres as gatekeepers – the art of opening the right doors?" in G. Szarycz (ed.) *Research Realities in the Social Sciences: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas*, Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, pp. 129-147.

Paper 2: Eklund, Lisa (under review) "Modelling prenatal son preference: Some new perspectives from China", Submitted to *Population Review*, 14 February 2011.

Paper 3: Eklund, Lisa (under revision) "Deconstructing notions of son preference – migration and social change in four Chinese villages", Submitted to *Rural Sociology*.

Paper 4: Eklund, Lisa (forthcoming 2011) "'Good citizens prefer daughters': gender, rurality and the Care for Girls Campaign", in T. Jacka and S. Sargeson (eds.) *Women, Gender And Rural Development In China.* London: Edward Elgar, pp. 124-142.

Papers 1 and 4 are reprinted with kind permission from the publishers.

Preface

My interest in the issue of son preference and discrimination against girls was triggered and intensified by two personal encounters that I had during the course of the seven years I lived in China. The first incident happened in 1997, and became a real eye-opener for me. While studying at Peking University I had become friends with a young man called Lai who was a migrant working at the campus, and who had left his baby daughter and wife in his home village. During my studies at Peking University, I visited Lai's home village in Hebei Province three times. The second time I visited his family I asked if I could meet his older sister. I was then told that it was not possible because she had given birth to her second daughter just before I arrived. However, the reason she could not meet with me was not that she was busy caring for her new-born baby girl, but that the baby had died. To say the least, I was shocked to hear that and wanted to show my concern and empathy to the family. However, Lai told me not to bring up the issue with any of the family members as it was a very sensitive topic. He also explained to me that it was very common in his home village that baby girls died after birth. One of his neighbours had given birth to five baby girls, and four of them had died. It remains unclear to me if the baby girl, who effectively was his niece, had been murdered or whether she had been left without care and died from neglect, which would be an equally dreadful crime. What shocked me was not just the fact that a child had died. I was also astonished by the way Lai talked about it, how natural he seemed to think it was, and how little value he and his fellow villagers seemed to attach to the life of a newborn girl. He said his sister was very upset, but made it sound as the death of the baby girl was a necessary evil.

The second incident happened in 2003 and was less traumatic, but nevertheless gave me new insights into the issue of son preference. I had the privilege of engaging with a prominent and dynamic women's rights activist. In between working sessions she mentioned to me that when she was pregnant she had been hoping to have a son. At first I thought this sounded appalling – how can someone who advocates gender equality prefer to have a son? However, she later explained that the reason she wanted to have a son was not that she had a personal preference for a son, but that she believed that the society in which she lived was so patriarchal and geared towards men's interest that she thought a daughter would have to struggle and suffer too much. In other words, she did not prefer a son for the social and economic functions he would perform as a son, but for the potential discrimination a daughter would face as a woman in her social, economic and political life outside the family.

The two accounts are very different, but each story provides hints at what son preference is and how it manifests itself. Later on, I had the opportunity to work with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in China, where one task was to work with national counterparts to raise awareness among policy-makers, practitioners and media about the causes and consequences of sex ratio at birth imbalance. During this time it became clear to me that there are many myths and stereotypes surrounding son preference. Moreover, it is often talked about as something static and little attention is paid to what factors actually contribute to changing notions of son preference. All in all, these experiences induced me to take a deeper look into the issue of son preference in today's China.

Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation has been like a long journey, which started back in 2002, and which would not have been possible without the support of a great many of people to whom I am grateful and indebted.

The first one I would like to mention is my supervisor Göran Djurfeldt who has always been supportive and enthusiastic about the research project and whose wholeheartedness has been essential at times when there was not so much clarity with regard to in which direction the journey was taking me. Even though I have been abroad for extensive periods of time, he has always been able to provide timely feedback and advice. I would also like to thank Rachel Murphy for being my external supervisor in 2008, and for her insightful comments on earlier versions of Papers 1, 2 and 3.

Du Peng and Duan Chengrong at Renmin University also deserve many special thanks for welcoming me as a visiting scholar and for going out of their way to facilitate my fieldwork, including travelling with me to the field. Without them this dissertation would not have been possible. Zhang Wenjuan and Zhu Fuyan, my two "field assistants", also deserve big thanks for assisting during the fieldwork and for sharing exciting and frustrating times. I learnt a lot from you. I would also like to thank Zhang Qing at Anhui Population and Family Planning Commission for being open to my research idea and for trusting me.

I am also deeply grateful to the women and men whom I interviewed in the four fieldsites. Without exception they were welcoming and ready to share their personal and family lives even if time was sometimes short and privacy not always guaranteed. Without their participation this dissertation would certainly not have been possible. I wish I could make up for the time and energy they spent on me.

Others deserving acknowledgement are Christophe Guilmoto, Kristina Göransson, Tamara Jacka, Johan Sandberg, Sally Sargeson, Katarina Sjöberg, Gregory Szarycz and Siri Tellier for providing expert advice and comments on different parts of this dissertation. Cecilia Milwertz needs to be mentioned separately and deserves an extra big thank you for reading my entire manuscript and for providing detailed and thoughtful comments. Although joining the journey at a late stage she definitely contributed to identifying the end station and I am happy to have shared the last bit of the journey with her. I am also much appreciative of my friends and colleagues at the Centre for Asian Studies at the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies in Geneva who have provided much needed support and inspiration.

Generous financial support from the Swedish School of Advanced Asia-Pacific Studies (SSAAPS) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) is also gratefully acknowledged.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family. Writing this dissertation has for sure strengthened the intergenerational contract and has proven that elements of the "corporate family" also exist in the Netherlands and Sweden. Not only have family members taken annual leave and travelled far to look after my children (special thanks to Mona, Bosse, Hanny and Emma), they have also spent hours and hours patiently and carefully reading my manuscript (huge thanks to Mona, Ralf and Bosse). I would finally like to express my deep gratefulness to Hans, who happens to be not only a super dad and husband, but whose intellectual capacity and critical mind have benefitted me greatly. Together with our children Hanna and Max, who have ensured much needed interruption and distraction, he makes sure that the bigger journey of life is full of love and adventure.

Lisa Eklund
Geneva, 27 April 2011

1. Introduction

To introduce China and its recent development in just a few sentences seems like a hopeless task. Nevertheless, it is done almost on a daily basis as China occupies an increasingly prominent place in both international media and scholarly debates. The most widely cited aspect of China's dramatic development since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949 is the unprecedented growth in economic terms since the Reform era started in 1978. However, as many have pointed out, economic development is not always matched by social development, something which the Chinese government has become increasingly aware of, and concerned with, in recent years.

Still, although critics emphasise that economic growth has not been matched by development in the social and political spheres, China has exposed great improvements in the four major areas of concern for human development, as defined by the United Nations Development Fund through its Human Development Index (HDI).[1] China ranked 92 in the HDI by 2007 and the HDI value increased from 0.533 in 1980 to 0.772 in 2007 (UNDP 2009: 187), which means that China went from being close to a "low human development" country in 1980 to being close to a "high human development" country in 2007, [2] albeit with large and increasing disparities between rich and poor people, costal and inland regions, as well as urban and rural areas. When looking at the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets, China exposes similar progress. In fact, China alone is making sure that the MDG Target 1 "To halve by 2015 the number of people living of less than 1 US$ per day" is achieved globally. Between 1990 and 2005, 475 million people in China were lifted out of poverty, defined as living from less than 1.25 US$ per day (World Bank 2010).[3]

One area of concern for human development is the advancement of women and gender equality, recognized as both an end in itself and a means to promote

[1] The four major areas of concern to measure human development are: 1) life expectancy at birth, 2) adult literacy rate, 3) gross enrolment ratios in education, and 4) gross domestic product per capita.

[2] Although China's label as a country with "medium human development" did not change over this period, China advanced from being close to "low human development" (defined as HDI <0.5) to being close to "high human development" (defined as HDI >0.8) (UNDP 2009).

[3] Despite these improvements, the Chinese government itself has recognised the need for boosting social development. In fact, the Chinese 12th five-year plan, which covers 2011-2015, sets goals that are more ambitious than the MDGs.

development in other areas. In 2007, China ranked 75 in the Gender-related Development Index (GDI), suggesting that China is doing better in terms of gender equality compared to human development in general.[4] However, despite the relative high score on GDI, China faces challenges of gender discrimination and disparities. One such challenge is the existence of son preference which manifests itself, among other things, as skewed sex ratio at birth in favour of boys and disproportionately high mortality rates for infant girls.

In recent years son preference has become a "hot topic" and has received much attention in media, in academia and among policy-makers alike. A recent sign of this is that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) includes son preference as an indicator related to gender and development, and as of 2009 China is ranked the highest, together with Afghanistan (OECD 2009), in that respect.[5] SRB imbalance and the persistence of son preference despite progress in so many areas of concern for girls' and women's status and well-being, such as education, health and women's labour force participation, has puzzled scholars who follow the demographic and social development of many Asian countries, including China (see e.g. Croll 2000). The fact that discrimination of girls still exists, both before they are born and shortly after, despite economic growth and development in many social areas, has led to government action in many countries. In 2002, the Chinese government identified SRB imbalance as a "development issue" (SFPC 2002: 1) and the year after the Chinese government launched a Campaign to enhance the value of girl children, called the Care for Girls Campaign (CGC 2006a).

Purpose of the study

Recent writings on son preference tend to have several shortcomings. One set of writings, which is common in media, use sensational wording such as "the war on baby girls" and "gendercide" (Anonymous 2010). Such polemics tends to agitate and polarise the discussion about son preference rather than to further the understanding of it. Other texts describe son preference and prenatal sex-selective abortion as issues of human rights and as gender-based violence (e.g. UNFPA 2010), partly playing into the hands of anti-abortionist groups. Another set of writings tend to describe son preference in static terms, as something that is inherent in the Chinese and Asian culture. For example, a recent publication suggests that "son preference and the introduction of sex-selective abortion (…) led to a 'merger of Eastern philosophy and Western technology'" (Ebenstein and Sharygin 2009: 400). Chinese official documents tend to have yet another characteristic, representing the official discourse on son preference, namely to depict son preference in stereotypical and generalising

[4] However, as pointed out by Chen (2008), between 1995 and 2002, China's ranking in the HDI based on women's political participation fell from 23 to 96.

[5] According to OECD staff as communicated via email 23 March 2011, the ranking is based on gender bias in mortality as calculated by Klasen and Wink (2002).

terms, where emphasis is put on son preference as something traditional and a remnant from "feudal" times (CGC 2006; CGC 2006b). Another set of literature devotes much attention to the demographic outcomes of son preference, i.e. the missing girls phenomenon, as captured through sex ratio at birth (SRB) imbalance, without investigating son preference as such (see e.g. Zeng, Tu et al. 1993; Attané 2006; Wu, Viisainen et al. 2006; Guilmoto 2010). Few studies take an approach where they aim at exploring how son preference becomes renegotiated.

The point of departure of the present dissertation is that son preference is nothing static; both its causes and consequences take new forms with the process of social change in China. The overall aim of the dissertation is to explore what son preference is and how it changes with socioeconomic development. More specifically, there are four sub-aims, each of which is illuminated in a separate paper, which are all part of the dissertation.

The first aim is to explore some of the methodological challenges involved when conducting research on a sensitive topic such as son preference in a society where freedom of speech and expression is limited. The purpose of Paper 1 is to illuminate the importance of situating fieldwork in a broader socio-political context when studying social change in China.

The second aim is to challenge the notion that an increase in the number of "missing girls" implies that son preference is widely prevailing or intensifying. It also attempts to expose the limitations of SRB as a proxy indicator for son preference. In order to do so, a model to estimate "son compulsion"[6] is proposed in Paper 2.

The third aim is to explore the impact of rural-urban migration on the institution of son preference in rural sending areas of China. Rural-urban migration is a major cause as well as a consequence of social change. Investigating how it influences institutions that are known for upholding son preference is therefore one way of understanding how son preference becomes renegotiated with social change. This is the focus of Paper 3.

Lastly, in Paper 4 the aim is to analyse the official response to the issue of SRB imbalance and son preference through the Care for Girls Campaign, in relation to representations of son preference among rural women and men. A critical analysis of the Campaign can further the understanding of how representations of son preference are reproduced and renegotiated.

By discussing the results of the four papers, and by contrasting them to each other, it is hoped that the dissertation will make a contribution to furthering the understanding of what son preference is and how it changes with socioeconomic development.

[6] In Paper 2, son compulsion is referred to as "prenatal son preference".

Structure of the dissertation

The structure of the dissertation is as follows: First some methodological issues when studying son preference, as well as the methods used to generate data through the empirical part of the study, will be discussed and accounted for in Chapter Two. I will propose that there are two different approaches to studying son preference; the outcome approach and the causal approach. Thereafter some theoretical perspectives on son preference will be outlined in Chapter Three. More specifically, the chapter will discuss son preference from a conceptual point of view, and it will be argued that son preference needs to be understood as a gendered institution with clear intergenerational dimensions. Different institutions known for upholding son preference will also be elaborated on. In Chapter Four I will account for some of the outcomes of son preference in China, with reference to other countries when appropriate. Most notably, I will discuss sex ratio at birth imbalance and excess female infant mortality. In Chapter Five I will adopt a causal approach to explore how the literature to date has interpreted the socioeconomic development in China since 1949 with regard to changes in the institution of son preference.

The mentioned chapters will provide background information and a theoretical framework essential for situating the four papers in a broader perspective. Summaries of the four dissertation papers will be provided in Chapter Six. In the last Chapter Seven, a concluding discussion will be held where the main results of the four papers will be compared to each other and discussed in relation to existing literature. Some concluding remarks will be made at the end of Chapter Seven.

Since this is a compilation dissertation, the research results will mainly be presented in Papers 1-4, which are attached as annexes, and only occasionally appear in Chapters Two-Five.

2. Methodology

Before describing the methods used for generating and analysing data for this dissertation, a few words will be said about the nature of son preference, as well as the methodological challenges that are associated with studying son preference. I believe these are important to keep in mind when taking part of both secondary sources about son preference and the empirical material which I will present throughout this dissertation.

Studying son preference

Broadly speaking there are two types of son preference, or *nanhai pianhao*[7] as it is called in Chinese. One type of son preference remains at an attitudinal level, and can be called *latent son preference*. For example, a mother who hopes to have a son and who is disappointed when she has a girl but does not adopt any behaviour to deselect or discriminate against the daughter has latent son preference. In a survey where women are asked what sex composition of their children they prefer, she would have been categorised as a woman with son preference (assuming that she had given an honest answer).[8] However, in a survey where women are asked about their abortion history the same woman would not have been "suspected" of having son preference unless she had had several abortions after giving birth to a baby girl. In populations where women with only daughters have more abortions than those with only sons, it is often assumed that the population has son preference, which is activated by a certain mechanism (in this case not having a son) and presumably results in behaviour of disfavouring daughters (in this case sex-selective abortion) (see e.g. Löfstedt, Luo et

[7] The Chinese equivalent of son preference is a direct translation from English, and it appeared in the Chinese academic literature around the time when sex imbalance in demographic rates in China became an area of concern in the mid 1980s. In Chinese, a term that is often used in relation to son preference is *zhongnan qingnü*, which according to the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary means to "regard men as superior to women". A more literal translation would be "exalting males and demeaning females" (translation by Milwertz 1997: 63).

[8] Son preference that remains at the attitudinal level is as a term often used on par with the terms sex preference and gender preference. Studies which use these terms often focus on preferred number and sex composition of children without paying attention to whether or not such preference would result in any particular behaviour (Leung 1991; Brockmann 2001; Lavely, Li et al. 2001, Rahman and DaVanzo 1993; Hank and Kohler 2000, Fuse 2010). In this context, daughter preference has also been observed (Fuse 2010), although the term is not widely used in academic texts.

al. 2004). Here, sex-selective abortion would be an expression of *manifest son preference*, meaning that attitudes of parents get translated into practices which favour boys and/or discriminate girls. Both latent and manifest son preference exist at the micro level, i.e. the family and the individual levels, but are maintained and reproduced by the institution of son preference, which I will elaborate on in Chapter Three.

Manifest son preference can affect boys and girls at different stages in life. For boys, it may lead to preferential treatment with regard to access to resources, care and opportunities, and for girls denial of the same. Whereas manifest son preference in principle can be observed (i.e. pre- and postnatal sex-deselection, food intake, frequency of vaccinations, school enrolment rates, etc.), other realizations of manifest son preference can not so easily be captured, but relate to taboos, morality, and what is considered acceptable behaviour of girls and boys in a given setting, i.e. the moral and symbolic aspects of a child's everyday life. These manifestations of son preference can be expressed through language or silence), tone of voice, body language, restrictions on mobility etc. and can hardly be captured in an interview, let alone in a survey, but require refined participation and observation methods. Studying son preference that manifests itself through symbolic interaction favouring boys and discriminating girls is difficult and hence there are few studies on this aspect of son preference (see Rydstrom [2003] for an example of the use of participation and observation methods in studying rural girls and boys growing up in rural Northern Vietnam).

Another difficulty in studying manifest son preference is conceptual. When does discriminatory behaviour against girls and preferential treatment of boys stop being an expression of son preference and start being an expression of gender structures where women and girls are put in a subordinate position to men and boys? Such a question may be rhetoric and I am inclined to think that making such a distinction is not possible and also not very meaningful.

Methodologically, it can also be hard to study son preference because people tend to rationalise their behaviours and attitudes and adjust their stories with time and with changes in value systems. Therefore, persons who may have had son preference in the past may not describe their previous attitudes and behaviours in those terms (cf. Paper 1). Yan (2003) noted the effect of memory and time in his longitudinal study of a Chinese village. For instance, a woman who in the 1970s fell madly in love with a man, whom she later married based on "free love", did not describe her relationship with her husband at that time as a romantic one when Yan interviewed her in the 1990s (Yan 2003: 11). Likewise, it can be expected that parents can be selective in their memorising when asked about whether they had any sex preference before their child was born. However, since my study is not a longitudinal one I have no way of checking selectivity in memory.

Different approaches to studying son preference

In addition to asking parents about preferred number of and sex composition of children, the literature to date adopts mainly two different approaches to studying son preference. One approach is to study consequences of manifest son preference, such as the practice of sex-selective abortion, and the neglect, abandonment and killing of girls. Such an approach can be called an *outcome approach,* and can focus on outcomes of son preference at the individual (micro) level or at the aggregate level where outcomes of human behaviour can be quantified. Studies adopting an outcome approach are often quantitative in nature and conducted by demographers, economists and public health researchers. These studies pay less attention to causes of son preference, although they sometimes analyse socio-demographic indicators in relation to for instance sex ratio at birth (SRB) imbalance. Other than that they do not tend to go any deeper into explaining son preference beyond what Purewal describes as "common sense" or "'quick-fix' demographic explanations" (Purewal 2010: 14).

Another approach to studying son preference is to explore its causes, i.e. to scrutinise why people have a preference for sons. Such studies are often carried out by anthropologists, sociologists and – in the context of China – sinologists, and focus on institutions that are known for upholding son preference. I refer to this approach as the *causal approach* to studying son preference.

Whereas several studies adopt both approaches in a systematic way, one of the most comprehensive examples being Croll's book *Endangered Daughters* (2000), the only study I found of son preference that does not fit into any of these approaches is Purewal's book about son preference in South Asia (2010). Her approach is to examine son preference from a sociology-of-knowledge perspective, focusing on the epistemology and political dimensions of the concept.

Important to note is that since measuring son preference is a delicate matter for conceptual and methodological reasons, as discussed above, certain issues are hard to address in a methodologically adequate way. For example, claims that son preference changes over time can only be speculative, since no proper method for investigating that is at hand. Purewal even suggests that it is not possible to establish why an individual or a couple holds notions of son preference. Instead, she proposes an approach where stories and narratives about son preference are the most meaningful way of studying the phenomenon. Wang and Pan (2006) also point out that couples may not always know why they prefer sons, and when asked about it they may state an answer they believe fits the person who asks.

In order to explore why son preference exists in contemporary China and how son preference is renegotiated with social change, I have adopted both the "outcome approach" and the "causal approach", but with an emphasis on the causal approach. Initially, I wanted to adopt an outcome approach to study son preference at the individual level, i.e. to explore how son preference manifested itself differently for girls and boys and women and men. However, as I will explain below, given the

restrictions related to my fieldwork that proved hard to accomplish. I have also been inspired by Purewal's approach to studying different stories and narratives on son preference.

The empirical study

At the outset of this study, my intention was to undertake an ethnographic study and spend two months in a village where I could study how old and new institutions upholding son preference were renegotiated in light of social change, including the effects of out-migration and return-migration in rural China. As it turned out, however, gaining access to the field and to interviewees proved more difficult than I had anticipated.

Access to the field

Challenges in accessing the field existed at several levels. The first one was to access the field from Beijing, where I was a visiting scholar (*fangwen xuezhe*) at the School of Sociology and Population at Renmin University. The professors there helped me indentify Wade County in Anhui Province. Anhui was regarded a suitable province for several reasons. Not only is it one of the provinces with the highest SRB imbalance, which is one of the manifestations or outcomes of son preference, it is also one of the main sending provinces in terms of labour migrants. An additional reason for selecting Anhui was that the local dialect in Anhui is not too hard to understand for someone trained in Mandarin. Even though the study was carried out with the help of field assistants who occasionally acted as interpreters, for me it was important to be able to understand the main part of what the interviewees said without an intermediary.

The professors at Renmin University facilitated my contact with the provincial level government officials, who needed to approve of my research plan. Since the focus of my research fell into the "population" category, Anhui Population and Family Planning Commission (APFPC) was the government unit to facilitate and monitor my research. My first encounter with the officials of the APFPC was at a provincial level conference on population management, held in Huangshan in May 2007. During the conference I was introduced to several county level officials and after discussions it was decided that I should go to two separate counties and conduct fieldwork in two villages in each county. Hence, rather than conducting my study in one village, as initially planned, I interviewed women and men in four villages.

Bird County (which had recently been re-categorised as a city district) was a county where the Ford Foundation had sponsored a programme in collaboration with Xi'an Jiaotong University and the local government to enhance the living environment of girls. This project was a fore-runner to the Care for Girls Campaign, the government-led nation-wide initiative to reduce sex ratio at birth imbalance and improve the value of girls. This meant that local cadres were well tuned in on the issue of son preference, and the local government had already launched different

support programmes and conducted awareness-raising activities to increase the perceived value of girls among the local residents (for more details see CGC 2008). It was also a UNFPA project county, which meant that the local government in Bird County (district) was used to receiving foreigners. Hence, conducting half of my interviews there was good for both me and the local government officials. Moreover, since local government officials often want to accompany researchers to facilitate and monitor the research process, the fact that I divided my study between two counties meant that the burden to "host" me was shared. Clearly, there was also a security concern, which extended beyond my personal well-being and which was related to political risk. If my fieldwork would lead to any political difficulties for the county that received me they would share that difficulty with another county. Because the local gatekeepers[9] were concerned with potential problems that could arise from my fieldwork I promised them that I would not reveal any geographical names, let alone the names of local cadres and the people that were interviewed. Hence, all names in this dissertation are fictive.

Another difficulty I had was related to time. As mentioned, I wanted to spend three months in one village. Four villages meant spending just three weeks in each of them. However, I had little support in this regard from my colleagues at Renmin University, who expressed limited appreciation for qualitative research methods and thought that a couple of days per village would be enough. Since I was a visiting scholar at the University, the professors there were accountable for me in relation to the local government officials. As further explained in Paper 1, my Renmin University colleagues thought that I would waste everybody's time by "lingering on" in the villages for a long time. This was of course at least partly true if the idea was to have someone accompany me all the time. To stick to my idea of how fieldwork should be conducted, I tried in various ways to argue for an extended stay as well as freedom of movement in the villages. In the end, I stayed in the four villages for a total duration of 22 days. This was considerably shorter than the about 60 days I had envisioned, but also substantially longer than the eight days proposed by my colleagues in Beijing.

Selection procedures

Although the nature of qualitative data does not allow or aim for findings that are representative for a whole population, many qualitatively oriented researchers try to fit the rationale of statistical sampling methods. I believe this was the view of the gatekeepers involved in my fieldwork, as they insisted that I used purposive sampling rather than snow-ball sampling, which initially was my intention (but which would have had required me to be able to move about freely).

I have not attempted to apply any statistical sampling methods in my qualitative research, but have been inspired by the concept of "corpus construction", proposed by Bauer and Aarts (2000). According to them, "…corpus construction maintains the

[9] The local gatekeepers were all cadres in different ways, including government officials at the county and township levels, village leaders, and village level women's representatives and family planning cadres. The majority of them were also members of the CCP.

efficiency that is gained from selecting some material to characterize the whole. In this sense, corpus construction and representative sampling are functionally equivalent, but they are structurally different" (Bauer and Aarts 2000: 20). The term corpus is borrowed from linguistics, which, just as social interaction, is a field without boundaries and with endless combinations of words and actions, which makes it impossible to extract a representative sample. Rather, the purpose of sampling is to generate as much internal variety as possible. This is done by selecting one sample, analysing the data generated from it, and then expanding the sample until no new variation is achieved, or when saturation is met. A corpus is constructed when adding new cases no longer adds new value.

Based on relevant theories of son preference, the main criteria and sub-criteria (in brackets) on which variation was sought when selecting the households were: 1) type of marriage (virilocal, uxorilocal, spouses of different provinces), 2) migration status (one or several members were return-migrants, one or several adults were migrants, no one in the household had migrated), 3) fertility history (only daughters, parents had breached the population policy to have a son, parents had given birth while migrating), and 4) farming status (actively farming own land, farming others' land, not farming land). In reality, many of the households fit one or several criteria at the same time. Moreover, in some villages some of the criteria were not met. For example, in two villages there were no households that were uxorilocal. Other criteria that were hard to find were "spouses of different provinces" and "parents had given birth while migrating". As the fieldwork proceeded, an additional relevant criterion emerged, namely households where both parents were migrating and the grandchildren were living with the maternal grandparents.

The interviewees

Because of the restrictions placed on my fieldwork, both in terms of freedom in selecting informants and in terms of the time I was allowed to spend in the villages, I was not able to fully apply the concept of "corpus construction". A total of 48 households in four different villages were included in the empirical study. This number was artificial in the sense that it did not represent a natural "saturation" process, where the number of households was decided by whether or not adding new households to the study generated new information. There were in total 85 informants interviewed during the household interviews.

Given the fact that men migrated to a greater extent than women, and those men who were still living in the village more often than the women had wage labour outside of the house and farm, it was easier to find time to talk to the women informants. Hence the final proportion of men was 39 percent. With regards to age, the adults were over-represented at 60 percent and the older persons constituted 32 percent of all interviewees. Since young people were either in school or had migrated, only 8 percent of the interviewees participating in the household and individual interviews were youth. In order to be able to get the views of more young people, six focus group discussions (FGDs) were held separately – three with boys and three with

girls – after school hours, covering a total of 25 additional informants. Members from all households but three, as well as the youth participating in the FGDs, were photographed with their consent.

The interviews

The interviews lasted on average just over one hour and were conducted by me and a field assistant. Each interview session started with a household interview, where all household members willing to participate were interviewed together. The interviews were semi-structured, and guided by an interview guide. In addition, given the limited time and the fact that no follow-up interviews were made possible except for five cases, a "household fact sheet" was constructed and used to collect basic information about each household member, in order to make sure that no essential information about the household was left out. The data recorded in the household fact sheet concerned socio-demographic information such as sex, age, education, marital status, number of children, information on land etc.

Employing the household fact sheet made it possible to let the semi-structured interviews be purely qualitative in nature. In addition to gathering information on issues related to sexual and generational divisions of labour, the household interviews focused primarily on the composition of the family, land usage, financial flows, local customs of childbearing and marriage, family traditions, customs related to major holidays and religious ceremonies, and the migration history of family members. During most of the household interviews local cadres were present, a slightly awkward fact that I will return to below.

When the household interview was over, one or several household members were asked if they wanted to be interviewed separately. The in-depth interviews with individual household members focused on the previous themes, but with more emphasis on personal experiences and attitudes. However, not all household interviews were followed by individual in-depth interviews. There were several factors which decided whether or not individual in-depth interviews took place. First of all, I made a judgement based on the household interview whether I thought an in-depth interview would add new value. For example, if I felt the household interview had been straightforward and the participants had talked freely and in a personal way about the questions the field assistant and I had raised, we did not proceed with the individual interview. Secondly, if the local cadres insisted on attending the individual interview we did not proceed with it as privacy and confidentiality were considered key to a successful in-depth interview (although some interviewees did not seem bothered by the presence of the local cadres during the household interview). Thirdly, in some cases the household interview took place with only one person and then it was hard to motivate an in-depth interview on similar topics immediately afterwards. Lastly, in a few cases there was simply no time to proceed to the individual household interviews.

As a complement to the household and individual interviews, a time-use table was used in order to assess gender and generational disparities in the divisions of

labour during an ordinary day. However, the time-use table was only used when informants of different generations or sexes within the same household were interviewed. It was completed retrospectively, based on the interviewees' recall of time use during a typical day.

Due to the time restrictions, in cases where two household members were interviewed separately, the field assistant and I conducted one interview each, simultaneously but in different venues. All interviews were audio-taped, except for one where the interviewee did not want the interview to be recorded. Because of illness I was not able to interview members of four of the 48 households. Instead the field assistant conducted those interviews on my behalf, including completing the household fact sheet and the time use table. The field assistant also facilitated the FGDs with boys while I facilitated the FGDs with girls. Since all but very few of the interviews and FGDs were recorded and later transcribed, I was able to use also the interviews that had been conducted by the field assistant only.

Working with field assistants

During the course of the fieldwork I had two different field assistants. One accompanied me to Wade County and the other one to Bird County. Both were affiliated to Renmin University and in addition to conducting a few of the interviews independent from me, they helped me with practical arrangements as well as with interpretation during interviews when needed. In reality, they were both more experienced than me, one being in the final stage of his PhD studies and one having recently completed her PhD. However, they were both mainly trained in quantitative research methods. Their limited experience of qualitative interviewing sometimes meant that they formulated questions in a leading way and omitted to probe into certain issues. The fact that I speak Mandarin helped correct this potential source of interview bias, at least to some degree. Although the local Anhui dialect was hard for me to understand at first, I quickly picked up enough to be able to understand most of what was being said. Another function of one of the field assistants was to cross-check the interview transcripts to ensure that there were no mistakes and misunderstandings in the transcription process, as discussed below.

Key informant interviews

Whereas the household and individual interviews were conducted by the field assistant and myself, I conducted interviews with key informants without the involvement of any field assistants. Interviews were carried out with three different types of key informants, the first type being senior researchers belonging to the disciplines of demography, sociology, migration studies and gender studies. These interviews were carried out exclusively in Beijing. The second type of key informants refers to senior government officials active in the field of family planning and reproductive health. They were working with the National Population and Family Planning Commission, (NPFPC), the China Population Information and Research Centre (CPIRC), and the Anhui Population and Family Planning Commission (APFPC). The third type of key informants refers to local government officials,

including those in charge of family planning at the township and village levels, as well as village committee members. The key informant interviews did not follow any particular pattern, but focused on the area of expertise and main function of the key informant in question. For example, in case the informant was a member of the expert group of the Care for Girls Campaign, the Campaign was the main focus of the discussion.

Gatekeeper interference

During most of the household interviews, one or several local cadres were present. Consequently, and as I describe in Paper 1, some interviews were subject to "gatekeeper interference", meaning that local cadres sometimes intervened in the interview. By this they either changed the direction of the interview or simply made a discussion come to an end by intimidating the interviewee (and me). Also in cases where the cadres stayed passive, monitoring the interviews from the back of the room, their mere presence constituted some kind of interference.

Moreover, even though I was able to talk to some women and men in private during the individual in-depth interviews, the interviewees most likely perceived me as associated with the local cadres. Hansen (2006) has argued that doing fieldwork in China is like "walking in the footsteps of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)" and although the independent status of the research may be explained to the interviewees, they may still perceive the research as being part of the CCP's agenda.

As a consequence of gatekeeper interference my research focus was partly changing in two ways. One effect of the monitoring of my fieldwork was that I was not able to discuss personal issues with the interviewees as much as I wanted. Consequently, I was not able to adopt an "outcome approach" to studying son preference to the extent I had intended. This was particularly evident with regard to questions pertaining to reproductive behaviour, including abortion, and whether the interviewees had had a foetus sex identification test while pregnant. The interviewees often said that they did not remember much about when and how they had undergone an induced abortion. Moreover, although one couple explained that they had had a B ultrasound scan to identify the sex of their foetus, none of the informants talked about sex-selective abortions, neither in terms of their own experience nor in terms of relatives' and acquaintances' experiences. It is of course plausible that the interviewees had been told in advance not to discuss these topics with me. In order to manage political risk, stifling information can be a strategy on behalf of gatekeepers (Crang and Cook 2007). Because of the limited possibility to adopt an outcome approach to studying son preference at the individual level, I decided to look at aggregate data on sex ratio at birth since I was interested in knowing whether variation in SRB reflected variation in some facet of son preference. However, in order to manage that, I needed to develop a new method, which I present in Paper 2.

Another effect of the monitoring of my fieldwork was that I became alerted to the issues of power and knowledge and the dynamics between the interviewees and

the gatekeepers who were cadres, and as such "agents" of the Party-state[10], with certain political motives. This in turn drew my attention to the official discourse on son preference as spelled out through the Care for Girls Campaign, and how the government's discourse on son preference to some extent is built on stereotypes which are based on certain assumptions about gender and "rurality". This explains why in Paper 4 I focus on the Care for Girls Campaign, implemented by the government as a means to encourage social change that eases son preference.

Analysing the empirical material

As mentioned, with a few exceptions, all the household and individual interviews were audio-taped and the recorded material was subsequently transcribed into Chinese. The work of analysing these interviews started already during the interviews. Under ideal circumstances, I would have transcribed each interview before undertaking the next one, but due to the time restrictions placed on my fieldwork that was not possible. However, the fact that the fieldwork was broken up in three different periods meant that I had sufficient time in Beijing to go through the interviews and see what the main themes were and if the interview guide needed any modification. Some of the interviews were transcribed by me but most of them were transcribed by students at Renmin University in Beijing.

I also used the time between the three rounds of fieldwork to interview government officials and researchers in Beijing. During these interviews with key informants, I shared my preliminary findings to seek their reaction and additional perspectives on the causes and outcomes of son preference.

Once all the interview material was transcribed into Chinese it was reviewed several times. As different themes and issues emerged, the material was coded while notes were taken. The coding and the notes were written down in English and particular quotes were translated into English. In the final data analysis stage, the different themes and issues were compared for the purpose of looking for different patterns, differences and similarities. This was done manually, as the data analysis software NVivo initially used was proven too rigid.

[10] Party-state is used to denote that the line between the government and the Chinese Communist Party is blurred.

Secondary sources

The results of this dissertation are based on two different types of secondary sources. The first type has been used as references and constitute of academic literature from the fields of demography, gender and migration studies, sociology and public health. I have used academic literature in both English and Chinese. However, as English language sources in general provided more detailed accounts with regard to understanding causes of son preference, I have referred to sources mostly written in English. Chinese sources tended to focus more on the demographic outcomes of son preference, most notably sex ratio at birth imbalance.

The second type of sources are official documents from the Chinese government and the National Expert Group of the Care for Girls Campaign. These documents have not only been used as references but have also been analysed to discern the official discourse on son preference (cf. Paper 4). However, some of these sources were hard to access, either due to them being classified or out of print. For example, the *2005 Action Plan to Expand and Unfold the Care for Girls Campaign to Comprehensively Manage the Problem of the High Sex Ratio at Birth Imbalance* (Guanyu guangfan zhankai guan'ai nühai xingdong zonghe zhili chusheng renkou xingbiebi piangao wenti de xingdong jihua), issued by the State Council, is a classified document. Moreover, a key publication that I would have liked to access is *Chaohu Experimental Zone Improving Girl Child Survival: Project Design, Implementation and Evaluation. Beijing: China Population Press* (Chaohu gaishang nühai shenghuo huanjing shixianqu: xiangmu sheji, zhixing yu pinggu). However, the book is out of print and the authors do not have an electronic version of it. The inaccessibility of some of the Chinese sources also explains why there was a predominance of sources in English.

In Paper 2, which is exclusively based on secondary sources, I have in addition to other academic literature used official statistics from the population censuses and the one percent sample censuses. Chinese official statistics are also presented in Chapter Three.

Positioning myself

The task of interpreting a text or an interview can never be detached from the context in which the interview took place. Nor can it be detached from the position of the "interpreter" (Kvale 1997: 49-51). Being a woman from a Western country with a (relatively speaking) well-developed social welfare system, and where women's control over their own fertility is considered as basic human right, certainly shapes the way I understand the family as an institution, as well as gender and intergenerational relations.

Moreover, it was of course blatantly clear to them that I come from an affluent and well-developed part of the world and that my educational attainment is remarkably higher than many of the interviewees, some of them even being illiterate. This may have contributed to interview bias where the interviewees distanced themselves from me and the interview, without sharing their true personal feelings, experiences and motives for fear of being perceived as "backward". However, the effect could also be the opposite – that the interviewees felt that the distance between them and me was large enough to make it unneeded to keep up appearances and to make them willing to share an honest account of themselves and their lives. The fact that the field assistants were affiliated to Renmin University in Beijing may from this point of view have been an advantage. Had they been from the local community they may have had a restricting impact with regard to the openness of the interviewees.

My previous position as an employee of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) affected the way in which the local cadres in Bird County, which as mentioned was one of the UNFPA project counties, regarded me. On the one hand they were eager to facilitate my fieldwork, but on the other hand they were unsure of my status. Despite explaining several times that my sole purpose was to generate data for my PhD dissertation, I got the feeling that they sometimes thought that I had a second agenda and that I was monitoring their work and was going to report back to the National Population and Family Planning Commission and UNFPA. However, I dare to say that the way the interviewees perceived me was not affected by my previous status as a UNFPA staff, partly because they were not informed about it, and partly because they did not seem to be greatly involved in the UNFPA project activities.

3. Theoretical perspectives on son preference

This chapter will draw upon some of the theoretical perspectives on son preference available in the literature to discuss questions related to what son preference is and why it exists. It will start out by conceptualising the term son preference itself. Thereafter, son preference in relation to some of the key debates within gender theory will be discussed, followed by a discussion about son preference as a subject of sociological study.

Conceptualising son preference

As this chapter will reveal, son preference is much more than an attitude and pertains to more than fertility behaviour. A broader understanding of son preference is shared by several authors (e.g. Croll 2000; Purewal 2010), but surprisingly few studies discuss son preference in terms of gender in any greater detail (Croll 2002: 31). Moreover, a more detailed definition of what son preference implies is not readily available. Rather, son preference is often mentioned as a given fact. For example, the literature on SRB typically attributes SRB imbalance to "strong values of son preference", without defining or discussing son preference (see e.g. Zeng et al 1993). Wang and Pan (2006) suggested that studies focusing on fertility behaviour in China tend to either zoom in on individual factors or structural factors, and thereby fail to pay attention to how these two levels interact. In order to overcome this binary understanding of human behaviour in the context of son preference, I believe it is useful to conceptualise son preference as an institution. Turner (1997: 6) defines an institution as "a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organising relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources". Defining a social institution in relation to the production of life-sustaining resources is not typical for how social institutions are understood in general, but is of relevance when framing son preference as an institution. However, regarding son preference as an institution does not mean that son preference is a "structure" which "imposes" itself on human beings and thereby determines what happens at the micro level. According to the structuration theory (Giddens 1984), human agency is conditioned by structural factors, such as norms, institution and laws etc. However, human beings

are also agents who are part of an ongoing process of renegotiating, challenging and sometimes resisting structural factors. This enables human beings to alter their position in the social structure as well as to alter the social structure itself, which leads to social change. Adopting an agency-structure perspective can help move away from simplistic and conventional understandings of son preference, which view structural factors predominantly as tradition and culture, and as something constant. According to such an understanding of son preference, individuals are implicitly regarded as passive "bearers" of culture. Inspired by Turner's definition and Giddens structuration theory, I view son preference as an institution which is based on a set of values and norms that are produced and reproduced in a complex interaction between social, economic, political and cultural factors, and which does not remain at the attitudinal level but realises itself through behaviour that favours boys and disfavours girls.

As argued by Liu Shuang (2006) in her article *Rethinking Social Factors Influencing Son Preference in China* son preference is an organising principle for social, economic and cultural aspects of everyday life. As an organising principle, I wil further argue that son preference can not be understood without looking at it from a gender perspective. Moreover, just as the institution of son preference is gendered, another integral characteristic is its close relationship to real and anticipated transfers between generations.

Son preference as a gendered institution

Although rarely discussed in relation to theoretical debates within the field of gender studies, son preference is clearly a gendered institution. Moreover, it is difficult to deepen the understanding of son preference without situating it in relation to some of the key discussions within gender theory.

The "gender" versus "sex" debate

The main idea behind the concept of gender is that being a man or being a woman is not something fixed, but something that one becomes socialized into.[11] This was articulated already by the French philosopher de Beauvoir who coined the famous expression: "One is not born, but one becomes a woman" (de Beauvoir 1997). Often mentioned in relation to sex, gender is understood as a social construction of what is male and female, whereas sex is taken as a natural given, referring to biological differences between women and men. However, the dichotomized conception of sex being "biological" and gender being "socially constructed" has been criticised for missing the point that sex too has a history (Butler 1993). The phenomenon of son preference illustrates this well. Croll suggests that "in discussions about the value of

[11] Son preference is fundamentally a heteronormative institution, presupposing that people identify themselves as women or men, and form relationships with – and have children (biologically or through adoption) with – the "opposite" sex.

children before and after conception and before and after birth, ideas about sexual identity and preference are as socially constructed as gender" (Croll 2000: 133). Rydstrom (2002) develops this notion further in her article *Sexed Bodies, Gendered Bodies: Children and the Body in Vietnam*, where she shows how sons in a commune in Northern Vietnam are born with certain symbolic values, which derive from their important function to maintain the patriline. Daughters, who are believed to be outside the lineage, have no inborn symbolic value and need to be socialised into being respectable and honourable. Because girls' and boys' bodies are rendered meaningful both in terms of their sex and their gender, and since both sex and gender have a history, Rydstrom argues that sex and gender are two analytical categories that are overlapping and "address similar kinds of problems" (Rydstrom 2002: 361; Rydstrom 2003). I believe that the definition of gender by Connell (2002) manages to partly bridge the imagined dichotomy between sex and gender. Connell defines gender as "the structure of social relations that centre on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes" (Connell 2002: 10).

Gender reasoning

Connell's definition of gender just quoted suggests that gender needs to be regarded as a structure of social relations. However, gender is often understood as relations between women and men and in terms of differences between what is male and female. Such an understanding is problematic for the obvious reason that not all people define themselves as men or women. Moreover, understanding gender in a relational way misses the point that gender structures are produced and reproduced also within groups of the same sex and that there are very different gendered norms and values for different groups of the same sexual identity (ibid). Adding to the critique of understanding gender as differences between women and men, Purewal (2010), who has studied son preference in South Asia, suggests that academic and popular discourses on son preference are using reductionist understanding of male equalising "masculine" and female equalising "feminine" (ibid 2010: 49). However, according to Croll, much of the ethnographic evidence from Asia suggests that son preference is reproduced in what can be called a "difference discourse", where daughters and sons are believed to have different qualities, functions and capacities. As proposed by Croll (2000; 2002), son preference is reproduced in a culture of "gender reasoning", meaning that children are not only gendered, but also that "practically and cogitatively daughters are reasoned to be secondary and a supplement, but rarely a substitute for sons" (Croll 2000: 132, see also Liu 2006). From this follows that sons are considered "primary" and "unsubstitutable". Gender reasoning presupposes that parents (and grandparents) have an essentialist understanding of what sons and daughters can be and do, and this understanding is socially constructed. Hence, even if approaching gender in terms of relations and difference has been criticised for certain shortcomings, in the context of

understanding son preference, I believe it can be a useful approach to exploring son preference as a gendered/sexed institution.

Intrinsic to the concept of gender reasoning is that daughters and sons are ascribed different values related to the perceived economic and social contributions they make to their families. Croll (2000) notes that daughters may contribute much in terms of performing household chores and caring for family members, but that this work is not valued as highly as sons' labour, which typically takes place outside the household and generates income and enhances the status of the family. Hence, the process of attaching different values to sons and daughters is also related to representation and recognition, where daughters' and women's work often takes place without being fully recognised. This in turn relates to interpretation, where gender reasoning influences the way in which behaviour is interpreted. For example, I found when interviewing villagers in rural Anhui that daughters who had married patrilocally sometimes provided care and support to their own ageing parents, but that this was not always interpreted as daughters being "filial". Rather they were regarded by the older generation as "polite".

Confucianism and gender complementarity

Croll has argued that the culture of gender reasoning, and viewing women and men as different, is upheld by the notion of "gender complementarity" in Asian cosmologies and philosophies (Croll 2000; 2002). As pointed out by Ebrey (1990), different roles and capacities of women and men were often discussed in *yin* and *yang* terms. *Yang* symbolised masculinity and was useful for its toughness and was described as having moral power over *yin*, the female element, which was useful for its gentleness. Ebrey points out that by understanding the differences between the sexes through *yin* and *yang,* the natural order of the universe is set in focus and the gender differences that social institutions reinforce are obscured. Moreover, even if yin and yang are complementary, they are by no means equal, and "virtually all who used *yin-yang* ideas to discuss male-female differentiation used them to explain that the proper social role of men was to lead and of women to follow" (Ebrey 1990: 204).

When looking for historical explanations why son preference emerged in China, Confucianism has been credited for many of the norms and rules that organised social life, and which placed the value of sons higher than the value of daughters. Some authors explicitly mention son preference as a typical Confucian trait, and for example Milwertz (1997) talks about "Confucian son preference".

Established as a school of thought during the fifth century BC, Confucianism centres around the notions of social stability and harmony. Essential to a harmonious society – both in the private and public spheres – are the concepts of morality, dignity, righteousness and loyalty (Tu 1998). The most relevant legacies of Confucianism from the point of view of understanding son preference are the Three

Bonds and the Five Relationships. These concepts were not promoted by Confucius himself, but were added to Confucianism later on.[12]

The virtues of the Five Relationships were advocated by Mencius, a philosopher who lived about two centuries after Confucius. The five relationships consist of: ruler-minister, father-son, husband-wife, old-young and friend-friend. Although some of the five relationships have clear hierarchical characteristics, there was also an idea of mutuality built into them. Particularly, the relationship between two friends was characterised by equality. When observed and honoured, these relationships were believed to constitute the basis for a harmonious society (Hsü 1970-1971).

The Three Bonds are based on the Five relationships but have a narrower focus and refer to the absolute right of the rulers over their subjects, parents over their children, and husbands over their wives (Spencer 1990: 60). The three bonds first emerged as an idea during the Han dynasty, and according to Tu (1998) they represent a politicisation of the Five relationships, serving to exercise symbolic power rather than to achieve a harmonious society.

Clearly, all three bonds are based on hierarchy. Moreover, from the point of view of understanding son preference it is important to note the subordinate position the bonds give to the woman, regardless of the stage of the life cycle a woman is in. Tu (1998) argues that:

> (…) as the male-centred perspective becomes pervasive, position and age can both be subsumed under the category of gender: since the female under no circumstances should assume a dominating role, she must practice the art of "following" – as a daughter she follows her father; as a wife, she follows her husband; as a mother, she follows her son (Tu 1998: 123).

Moreover, the Book of Rites, which is one of the five classics ascribed to Confucius, stressed the different roles and obligations of women and men in the household. The Book of Rites also points out that women and men have hierarchical but complementary roles (Ebrey 1990: 203). This is an additional example of what Croll's called gender complementarily.

Louie (2002) has argued that Confucianism is clearly male-centred in a male-exclusive way. Confucius was never portrayed with women, but lived in a "homosociality", surrounded by male disciples and associates (Louie 2002: 45-47). The very few times Confucius himself is known for having referred to women, he categorised women as common folk (*xiaoren*), to be shunned as they create trouble. Other than that hardly any reference was made to women.

[12] It should be noted that the label Confucianism does not have a corresponding term in the Chinese language. Rather *rujia* (family of scholars) is used in Chinese to denote the scholarly tradition where Confucius was one (but by no means the first) of many scholars who were preoccupied with issues of governance, social stability and harmony (see further Tu 1998: 3-36). Throughout history, Confucianism as a school of thought has been developed, reinterpreted and modified through numerous scholars and movements.

Filial piety

Filial piety is another key concept which characterises the bond and relationship between father and son from the point of view that the younger generation is expected to show respect and reverence to their elders. Yan suggests that in traditional China the primacy of filial piety was "sustained institutionally by imperial law, public opinion, patrilineal kinship, the religious system, and family ownership and property (Yan 2003: 189). Confucius saw filial piety as the first step towards moral excellence (Tu 1990: 116; Tu 1998: 13). According to Ebrey, filial piety "came to provide an explicit ideology of the proper basis for family life" (Ebrey 1990: 202). Filial piety encompasses not only the relationship between the younger and older generation, but also within generations, and younger brothers were expected to practice deference towards their older brother, who in turn would look after them. As pointed out by Ebrey, although many concepts of Confucius were challenged by later philosophers, filial pity was an element that survived and was praised. Mencius even went so far as to declare that failing to reproduce descendents (i.e. sons) was the worst form of unfilial acts (ibid 1990: 201). If a woman did not produce a son her husband would have enough ground to divorce her (Hillier 1988: 104).

As mentioned, during the Han dynasty, Confucian values became interpreted in a most authoritarian way (Hsü 1970-1971), as evident by the formation of the Three Bonds. Consequently, filial piety was highly esteemed and became regarded as a political virtue. Ebrey (1990) suggests that extreme manifestations of filial piety were even considered a merit when government officials were recruited. She further points out that the Han dynasty version of filial piety was described in the book *Classic of Filial Piety*. The book only referred to filial piety in the context of sons. However, filiality of daughters was covered in two other texts, the *Biographies of Great Women* and *Admonitions for Women*. Still, although filial piety was something that could be practiced by daughters, their filiality was always described as secondary to sons,[13] and can as such also be conceptualised as a realisation of gender complimentarity.

It should be noted that filial piety as described above differs greatly from how filial piety is understood and practiced in contemporary societies. As pointed out by Ikels (2004), "the actual practice of filial piety, both its delivery and its receipt, is situationally dependent and shaped by local circumstances of history, economics, social organization, and demography and by personal circumstances of wealth, gender and family configuration" (Ikels 2004: 2). Based on the interviews I conducted in rural Anhui, I noted that the understanding of filial piety differed quite markedly from how it is described in the literature in historical terms. For example, for many older persons, the emotional and moral support they received from their children was minimal compared to the economic support. Moreover, filial piety was sometimes talked about in terms of "absence of negatives" rather than in terms of "positives". For

[13] The term filial (*xiao*) in Chinese consists of the character for "old" and the character for "son" (zi), where old is on top of son (Ikels 2004).

example, one older woman said that as long as children and grandchildren do not yell at you then they are fine (*bu ma ni jiu xing*).

The intergenerational contract

In addition to showing respect to elders, one concrete and practical way of practicing filial piety was, and still is today, to provide care and support for aging parents. However, filial piety is not to be understood as a unidirectional phenomenon, but is based on reciprocity and mutual benefits between and over generations. The social, economic and moral exchanges between generations can be said to be regulated within the intergenerational "contract" (Croll 2000; Göransson 2006).

With regard to the intergenerational contract, there are two characteristics which reinforce the institution of son preference. The first is that the contract does not end with children growing up. This aspect of the Chinese family is according to Fei Xiaotong a major difference from the "Western" family, where the family "ceases to exist" once the children have moved out of the home (Fei 1947: 82).

The second characteristic is that the contract has mainly been between sons and their parents. Due to the fact that the sons (and their wives) would live with the sons' parents according to patrilocal marriage patterns (as discussed further below), the son became the main person to provide old age care and support (Croll 2000). In this context it is useful to use Nussbaum's notion of "human capabilities", which is a concept that connotes that possessing certain capabilities decides "what people are actually able to do and to be" (Nussbaum 2000: 222). Since the intergenerational contract contained obligations and expectations, sons were expected by their parents to be and do certain things, such as practicing ancestor worship and providing support for aging parents. In order to be able to develop capabilities which would enable them to fulfil these expectations they were given various forms of preferential treatment. As Croll put it: "Within the peasant family then, sons, positioned between ancestors and descendents of past and future and bonded permanently into the chain of generations and the sources of support in old age, continued to receive messages denoting privilege and preference" (Croll 1995: 95). Based on the notion of reciprocity, parents would support and invest in the son(s) throughout life in terms of education, nutrition, increasing responsibility of family affairs, and transfer of family resources such as land and properties. Presumably, the son then paid back by living with the parents and providing care and social and economic support throughout old age.

Caldwell (1976) suggested that in less developed societies the main direction of intergenerational transfers was from children to parents. As countries progress, this contract is transformed and becomes reversed. Consequently, in more developed societies, the main flow of intergenerational exchanges is from parents to children (Caldwell 1976). Kristina Göransson (2006) found in her study of Chinese people in modern Singapore, that the intergenerational contract did not change with economic development the way Caldwell predicted, but that the mutual flow between parents and children, remained strong, giving rise to the expression "the sandwich

generation", as the middle generation was expected to support both older parents and children in various ways.

However, the way the intergenerational contract is being renegotiated in contemporary China and other parts of Asia grants daughters a more active part in the intergenerational transfer of money, goods and services (Göransson 2006: 153-54). The renegotiation of the intergenerational contract in the People's Republic of China will be further discussed in the Chapter Five.

Patrilineality

The US-based anthropologist Ong, who has studied gender in an Asian context, reminds us that "gender domination is never a thing in and of itself, and […] it intersects with and is in a very basic sense constituted by other hierarchized domains like the body, the family, civil society, the nation and the transnational area, each of which is variously gendered" (Ong and Peletz 1995: 4). The way gender intersects with the family in producing and reproducing sentiments of son preference exemplifies well that gender is not "a thing in and of itself".

The patrilineal family is an institution where, in a culture of gender reasoning, women – as daughters and as wives – are unable to substitute men, or even be a supplement to them. Being one of the main foundations of son preference in Asia (Greenhalgh 1985; Bossen forthcoming 2011), patrilineality refers to a complex set of practices and rituals that differ depending on time and space.[14]

According to Ebrey, who has studied the Chinese family in a historical context, the most common features that characterise patrilineality are the use of patrilineal surnames, the belief in the need of a male heir, and the worship of patrilineal ancestors (Ebrey 1990: 200). It is hence interdependent with the concepts of filial piety and the intergenerational contract. Not being unique to China, the notion of patrilineality is particularly strong in areas where there are religious beliefs relating to ancestor worship, based on the idea that the respect towards the older generation does not stop with death but continues and is practiced as ancestor worship by the son towards his father and grand-father (Miller 1987: 100). Crucial in the practices related to worship of patrilineal ancestors is the first-born son, who is expected to assume the spiritual and political leadership of the descent group. Therefore, in order to fulfil the duty of ancestor worship, to have at least one son is considered essential (Greenhalgh 1985). Bélanger showed in her study of contemporary Vietnam that if a wife was unable to conceive, a male heir would be secured through adoption, or a nephew who could take on the responsibilities of a son would be identified. Alternatively, the husband would take a second wife (being ignorant that the male gamete determines the sex of the offspring) (Bélanger 2002: 326). Realising any one of these strategies was deemed more appropriate than allowing a person with the "wrong" sex, or the "other" sex, to take the role of the son (Croll 2000; Bélanger

[14] In Chinese, the idea of patrilineality is also reflected in language, where names to denote kin on the women's side often begin with the word *wai* (outside), to denote that they are outside the lineage (cf Paper 3).

2002). As mentioned above, Rydstrom has in her study of contemporary Vietnam found that the idea of patrilineality means that boys' bodies are inscribed with symbolic meaning, giving them a special position in the family and community. She suggests that the male body is "turned into a materialization of patrilineal history" (Rydstrom 2002: 361).

However, patrilineality should not be taken as something absolute or something uniquely Asian. For example, people in most countries today practice patrilineality when it comes to passing on the surname from one generation to another. Moreover, in Ancient China, surnames had not been used systematically until the Qin dynasty, when efforts were made to register the entire population as part of the unification process.[15] This imposition of surnames facilitated the spread of a patrilineal ideology (Ebrey 1990; Scott, 1998). Moreover, Scott suggested that "both the establishment of permanent patronyms and the creation of the patrilineal family itself can be attributed to early state simplification", implying that the strengthening of patrilineality was an unintended consequence of the standardisation of surnames and administrative procedures (Scott 1998: 65).

Ancestor worship, being an important part of patrilineality, was in itself not only a matter of religion. Keightley (1990) argued that ancestral worship started in the royal and noble families as a means to preserve their standing and power, and was hence to a large degree used as a political resource. It was believed that ancestors possessed powers to help their descendents in various ways and by the time of the late classical period (Han) elaborate ancestral rites had spread also to the "common" farmers (Keightley 1990).

Moreover, within the patrilineal family system there were alternative organisations formed through the women's blood relatives. Based on a study of Taiwan in the 1950s and 1960s, Margery Wolf observed the phenomenon of the "uterine family". The uterine family centred around a woman, her children and her uterine relatives. As opposed to the patrilineal family, the uterine family did not constitute a lineage, continuing over generations, but was a contemporary group existing for the purpose of advancing the interest of the woman and her uterine family in relation to her husband's family and it existed as long as a woman had the capacity and the need to hold it together (Wolf 1972). However, given that the uterine family mainly centred around the male children of the woman rather than the female children, the uterine family did not challenge the institution of son preference. Rather, it suggests that son preference was not only something imposed by the in-laws on women, but also something that women pursued actively, presumably because they relied on their sons for support.

[15] The unification process refers to the reforms undertaken by the emperor Qin Shihuang, who unified China in 221 BC and who as part of this process standardised different administrative and measuring systems.

Patrilocality

Being closely linked to patrilineality, there is wide consensus in the literature that patrilocality is an important institution that upholds notions of son preference (see e.g. Croll 2000; Nussbaum 2000; das Gupta, Jiang et al. 2003). The concept of patrilocality implies that upon or soon after getting married, a couple moves to or nearby the natal family of the husband. The concept of patrilocal is similar to virilocal, in the sense that they both denote that residence after marriage is in or close by the home of the husband's parents. However, whereas patrilocal refers to the fact that the husband's family constitutes a lineage, virilocal implies that there is no lineage to consider.[16] Even though far from all Chinese families belong to a lineage, and hence are in fact virilocal (or uxorilocal) (Watson 1982), patrilocal and virilocal are terms that will be used interchangeably in this dissertation since they both underpin the institution of son preference, even though patrilocality may enforce son preference more forcefully than virilocality.

Patrilocal marriages can either be endogamous, where the wife marries within the same community or social group, or exogamous, where the wife moves away from her community and lives far from her natal home. However, as explained by Duan, a middle-aged man whom I interview in rural Anhui, patrilocality is not only about the spatial dimension of settlement. His second daughter had married a man and settled in the same village, and even though the daughter did not live in the same household as her parents-in-law, Duan had a strong feeling that she "belonged" to her husband's family (*shi renjia de*). This attitude was common among several of the informants. A recent study of rural Anhui showed that even daughters who marry within the village tend to provide little emotional and practical support to their own parents compared to their brothers (Zhang and Li 2005: 76).

Patrilocal marriage arrangements mean that parents of daughters often perceive that raising a daughter is to raise someone else's daughter-in-law (Nussbaum 2000: 220) Greenhalgh 1985; Ikels 1993: 309). This perception has given rise to numerous proverbs in different countries.[17] In India, the practice of patrilocal marriages in combination with dowry has been listed as a major factor reinforcing son preference (Purewal 2010). Croll (2000) even argued that bringing up daughters in China and India is perceived as a "double loss", as both bringing them up and marrying them off put a strain on the household resources without longer-term benefits (Croll 2000: 121-27), and after the introduction of the population control policy in China, having a daughter often meant a lost opportunity to have a son (ibid. p. 80).

Patrilocal residence which also is exogamous amplifies the notion that raising daughters is to raise someone else's daughter-in-law, as distance is believed to have a

[16] The corresponding terms, to denote that residence after marriage is in or close by the home of the wife's parents, are matrilocal and uxorilocal, where matrilocal indicates a lineage and uxorilocal the absence of a lineage. Another form of residence after marriage is neolocality, which denotes that the newly wed couple settles in a place different from both the bride's and the groom's family.

[17] An Indian proverb on this theme is "A daughter born, To husband or death, She's already gone" (Nussbaum 2000: 220).

negative impact on a daughter's contact and contribution to her natal family (Davis-Friedmann 1985: 153; Li, Feldman et al. 2000). Even though daughters retain lose ties to their natal families, as demonstrated by several authors (see e.g. Judd 1992; Watson 1982; Bossler 2010),[18] patrilocality has led to parents not regarding raising daughters as equally rewarding as raising sons.[19]

As discussed above, in a patrilineal society women are not seen as capable of passing on the lineage and therefore do not have inborn morality, honour or respect. Rather, women in many countries are seen as a means to an end, which in the context of patrilineality refers to their reproductive capacity and ensuring the continuation of the lineage (Nussbaum 2000). Similarly, Rozario found among Bengali women in Bangladesh that the only approved status for women is to be mothers and wives (Rozario 2002). The importance of producing a male progeny to ensure the continuation of the lineage means that bearing a son is essential for the status and well-being of women, particularly for those who have married patrilocally (Rydstrom 2002: 362).

The victimisation of daughters?

One question that arises when probing into the characteristics of the patrilocal family is the status and well-being of daughters in those families. Purewal argues that, in order to be able to explore son preference in a dynamic way, another binary – in addition to sex-gender and male-female – to be moved beyond is the "privileged son" versus the "victimised daughter". Purewal maintains that son preference does not by default mean that daughters are discriminated against (Purewal 2010: 47):[20]

In fact, the notion that family resources only benefit sons in patrilineal societies has been contested in a historical perspective. For example, according to Siu, Jack Goody, suggested that a process of "diverging devolution" characterised much of Eurasia, where daughters gained access to the resources of her natal family through dowry. In China, a phenomenon that strengthened adult daughters' relationship to

[18] However, some literature suggests that dowry was in fact a means to improve the status of daughters in her husband's family, as well as to maintain ties between a married daughter's natal family and her in-laws (Siu 1993).

[19] The perception that daughters lose their belonging to their natal families upon marriage is also reflected in language surrounding the act of getting married. In Chinese, the term to denote that a woman gets married is *jia*. The character *jia* is built up by the character for home with a woman in front of it. Moreover, when a woman gets married to a man, the term *jia* is followed by the verb complement *gei*, which means "to give", i.e. the woman gives herself away in marriage to her husband and, according to patrilocality, by extension to her husband's family. The Chinese term for when a man gets married is *qu*. *Qu* is synophone with another character *qu*, which means "get; collect; gain" (XHC 2002), and which together with the character for woman forms the basis for the character *qu* – getting married. In addition to *jiehun*, which is the general and gender neutral term for getting married, *jia* and *qu* are still commonly used in contemporary Chinese language even though the marriage may not be typically patrilocal.

[20] In China, the fact that son preference does not necessarily lead to daughter discrimination is obvious due to the simple fact that many families have only sons; hence no daughters to disfavour (Fong 2004; Zhang 2007; Yan 2003).

her natal family was the practice of *buluojia*, which meant that a daughter stayed in her natal home even after marriage. Often she did so until her first child was born (Siu 1993: 173).

The critique of the binary understanding of favoured sons and disfavoured daughters also raises the question of what counts as being favoured and disfavoured. To be the only son may result in a great deal of investment from the parents' side, but also in many expectations, which may limit the son's life choices. This was the case in one of the families that I interviewed in rural Anhui Province. When talking to the parents, a middle-aged couple that had had a deliberate strategy to give birth to a son, they explained how after two daughters they continued with a third pregnancy in defiance of the population policy. They were "lucky" enough to have a son, but as a repercussion, their house was torn down by the local cadres in charge of family planning, and the husband had to work outside the village for many years to earn enough money to be able to build a new house. The son, who was 16 years old when I interviewed him, was exceedingly aware of the hardship his parents had endured to have him, and the expectations that were placed on him to form a family patrilocally and to support his parents at old age.

Women's status and the value of girls

Historically and generally, the Chinese family was not only patrilineal and patrilocal in nature, it was also corporate, meaning that all important matters related to production and reproduction were managed and performed within the family. Yan (2003) proposes that such a family can be described as the "corporate family". Within a patrilineal society characterised by the corporate family, there were few opportunities for women to engage in social and economic activities outside of the family, i.e. there were few possibilities for women to alter their status beyond the family. However, urbanisation and industrialisation have offered a range of opportunities for women to enhance their status, both in the family and in society at large.

Following this development, observers of China and other Asian countries have made the point that son preference can not only be understood in relation to gender relations in the family, but needs to be understood as a reflection of unequal gender relations in society at large. In other words, being an indicator of gender stratification, son preference is related to women's status in society (Knodel and Vos 1980; Caldwell, Reddy et al. 1983; Mason 1987; Milwertz 1997; Croll 2000). As the Expert Group of the Care for Girls Campaign proposed:

> … gender equality has not been given enough consideration in the formulation and implementation of economic and social policies [in China]; all these have resulted in an inferior status of women in political, economic, social and family life. These factors have altogether constituted the practical conditions for Chinese families to prefer sons (CGC 2008: 8).

I will come back to this in Chapter Five, where I will move on to discuss the more specific aspects of the institution of son preference in the People's Republic of China.

Education and income are two major ways of measuring women's status, as evidenced by several instruments to capture gender equality and women's empowerment (e.g. the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index and the UNDP Gender-related Development Index). Consequently, improvements in education and income are viewed as improving women's status. These improvements have been juxtaposed to the existence of son preference in Asia, i.e. there has been a perceived contradiction between the enhancement in women's status and the persistence or even intensification of son preference. However, as pointed out by Croll, "When gender hierarchies are added to those of generation, then daughters are not only devalued in comparison to sons but additionally are devalued in relation to grown up women, be they daughters-in-law, wives or mothers" (Croll 2000: 152). From this follows that an increase in the status of women does not by necessity lead to an enhancement of the value of girls.

To return to Nussbaum's concept of human capabilities, since daughters are not expected to be and do the same things as their brothers, such as form a family patrilocally, perform ancestral rites, provide old age support, etc., daughters are not given the same access to resources and opportunities as their brothers. Therefore, daughters' capabilities never reach full potential. Here structural gender inequalities also play a role. For example, gender discrimination in the labour market hampers the potential for grown-up daughters to be breadwinners and to do the filial act of supporting their biological parents. In circumstances where sons' capabilities are enabled and daughters' capabilities are disabled, notions of son preference become reproduced and preferring sons over daughters becomes a rational choice for parents (Davis 1993; Greenhalgh 1993).

Preliminary conclusions

As the literature reveals, there are no "grand theories" about son preference that provide a credible explanation for why it exists, unless the proposition that son preference exists due to "gender reasoning" – which in turn is influenced by gender discourses at the societal level – is considered a grand theory. However, such a proposition is too broad to be meaningful.

In this chapter, I have argued that son preference can effectively be conceptualised as a social institution. Typical for a social institution is its interconnectedness with other institutions. As the literature demonstrates, there are several institutions which are interconnected with son preference, such as patrilineality, patrilocality and filial piety. However, there are several limitations in understanding son preference through its interconnectedness with these institutions. Firstly, these institutions are often discussed as "traditional" and part of a "cultural heritage". Such a view omits the fact that they also have important social, economic

and political foundations. Nevertheless, because son preference is often explained by referring to these institutions, it easily becomes understood as something inherent in the "culture" and "tradition" of rural China (see e.g. Wang and Pan 2006). Secondly, the extent to which these institutions are active in a particular society or community is an empirical question. Williamson (1976) suggested that these institutions constitute the "traditional" family, which can be regarded as an "ideal type" rather than as a reflection of the social structure of the average family. While such an ideal type provides useful tentative explanations for why the institution of son preference exists, it is less successful in explaining how son preference is renegotiated along lines of gender, generation, class, residency, religion etc. Hence, in a way, referring to these contingent institutions in understanding son preference offers a static understanding of son preference without taking into account how everyday practices deviate from the ideal types described.

Moreover, understanding son preference through the mentioned contingent institutions draws the attention to the family and parents' and grandparents' norms, values and behaviours without relating the institution of son preference to other structural factors contingent on e.g. state policies and economic restructuring. Structuration theory, as discussed in the chapter, enables a shift in focus from individual (parental) agency to structured agency, meaning that parental son preference can not be regarded to be a phenomenon in isolation from structural factors that influence the everyday lives of families and individual women and men. The structuration theory also reminds us that structures are not immutable but constantly being renegotiated through the agency of the people who live their lives within these structures. For example, "gender reasoning" of parents is likely to contribute to shaping gender discourses at the societal level. These gender discourses in turn do not only influence the lives of daughters, but also the lives of women in general. Structuration theory therefore helps to conceptualise the link between the value of daughters and the position of women in society. Another benefit of the structuration theory is that it helps explain how social institutions reproduce themselves.

In sum, rather than viewing son preference as something static, I conceptualise son preference as an institution, which is both gendered/sexed and characterised by intergenerational transfers and expectations. The process of gendering evolves in a dynamic relationship between different individual (agency) and structural factors, as well as between spheres of the family and public life. In order to understand son preference as a contemporary institution, there appears to be a need to re-identify the social institutions with which son preference is interconnected, and which are grounded in the everyday lives of contemporary women and men.

4. The demographic tale of son preference

As noted by Purewal (2010), the merits of statistics in mapping son preference are limited, as there are many manifestations of son preference that do not translate into demographic rates and therefore are not captured in most surveys and registers. Nevertheless, it is useful to look at statistics and to examine demographic data, as they can be indicative of *some* type of son preference. There are at least two demographic indicators revealing son preference, or any sex preference for that matter, depending on towards which sex the data are biased. The first indicator is sex ratio at birth (SRB), i.e. the number of boys born per 100 girls in a specific period of time, often within a given year. When imbalanced, SRB indicates that prenatal sex-selection may be taking place.[21] The other indicator is infant mortality rate (IMR) by sex, which, when skewed, can be suggestive of postnatal discrimination.[22] Obviously, there are additional indicators of son preference and daughter discrimination that can be quantified, such as access to preventive and curative health care, and access to food and nutrition, including breastfeeding (Graham, Larsen et al. 1998; das Gupta and Li 1999; Yount 2001; Li, Zhu et al. 2004; Mishra, Roy et al. 2004). However, that will not be the focus of this dissertation.

Prenatal daughter de-selection

One outcome of son preference is prenatal daughter de-selection, which gives rise to SRB imbalance. Being a relatively recent phenomenon, SRB imbalance only exists where fertility rates are low,[23] where reproductive technology and services are available, enabling prenatal sex-selection, and where son preference exists (Zeng, Tu

[21] Some studies have revealed that living conditions, such as nutrition of mothers, socioeconomic status (Teitelbaum and Mantel 1971), as well as burden of disease can have an impact on SRB. For instance, Emily Oster found that mothers with Hepatitis B are more likely to give birth to boys (Oster 2005), although subsequent analyses showed that such a factor would have only negligible impact on skewed SRB since the prevalence in Hepatitis B does not correspond in time with the increase in SRB (das Gupta 2005).

[22] Where girls and boys receive equal amount of care and nutrition, infant girls in general have lower mortality than infant boys (Waldron 1983).

[23] Where there is no limitation on fertility, couples often apply the "stopping rule", meaning that they continue childbearing until the preferred number of sons and daughters is achieved.

et al. 1993; Banister and Harbaugh 1994; das Gupta and Bhat 1997; Banister 2004).[24]

As has been noted by many, the one child per couple norm, advocated through the population policy since 1979, has been widely accepted in China since the late 1990s (Milwertz 1997; Yan 2003; Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005), even though many couples still prefer two children (Hermalin and Xian 1990; Chen 2006). In fact, the total fertility rate in China was 1.55 in 2000 and if all couples would have followed the population policy by the late 1990s, the total fertility rate (TFR) would have been 1.47 (Gu, Wang et al. 2007: 138). However, of those who believe that one or two children are enough, not all believe that *any* one child is enough, and many couples still prefer sons (Li 1995). In order to accommodate to the state's limitations on number of births, while not compromising with regard to the wish to have a son, the practice of prenatal sex-selection has led to an increase in SRB imbalance (Zeng, Tu et al. 1993; Goodkind 1996; Chu 2001; Banister 2004; Hesketh and Zhu 2006; Greenhalgh 2008; Attané 2009; Zhu, Lu et al. 2009).[25]

In China, when the skewed SRB first became visible in the late 1980s, many demographers and policy makers attributed the imbalance to underreporting of girls (Zeng, Tu et al. 1993; Yu, Zheng et al. 2004; Chen 2006).[26] However, as the imbalance continued to worsen in subsequent surveys, it became clear that the skewed SRB was rather due to an underlying preference for sons, which made couples resort to prenatal sex-deselection to ensure a male offspring.

[24] Prenatal sex-selection can take place before conception through in vitro fertilisation (IVF), either by selecting embryos based on sex before implantation, or by selecting sperms based on sex through sperm sorting before fertilisation (Dickens, Serour, et al. 2005). Prenatal sex-selection can also take place after conception, through sex-selective abortion. The latter requires technology to determine the sex of the foetus, which to date is most commonly done by amniocentesis or through ultrasound. Ultrasound became available in the late 1970s, and in China by the mid 1980s, whereas amniocentesis to determine the sex of the foetus has been available since the 1950s. Chu notes that high quality colour ultrasound B machines are widely available in both township hospitals and family planning service delivery points. They are also available in many private clinics (Chu 2001). However, as one of the couples interviewed in this study explained, the control of the use of ultrasound B machines is very tight at the township and county levels. Therefore they had travelled to the municipality city (*shi*) to identify the sex of their child when the woman was pregnant (and the results confirmed a boy).

[25] Important to note is that prenatal sex-selection has been and is prevalent also in countries where there is no state-imposed fertility reduction policy (Chai Bin and Nam-Hoon 1995; Oomman and Ganatra 2002; Ganatra 2008), and more recently, SRB imbalance has been documented in some European countries and former Soviet republics (Guilmoto 2009).

[26] Ethnographic studies find that it is very difficult for rural women to give birth to a child without it being registered by the local family planning cadres. For example, Bossen found no evidence that baby girls were under-reported in her study of Lu Village in Yunnan (Bossen 2002: 289).

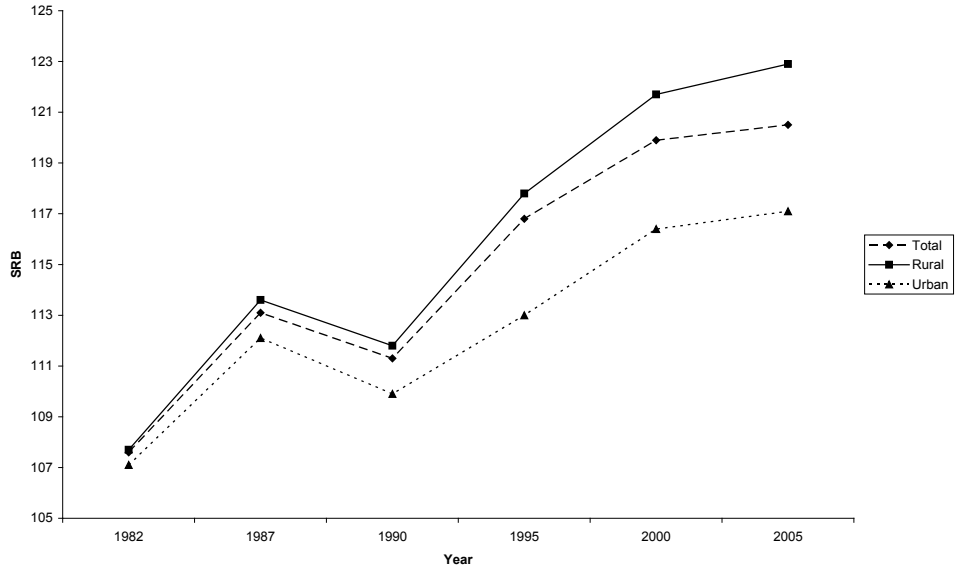

Figure 1.

Sex ratio at birth, by rural and urban areas in China, 1982-2005 Sources: NBS (1985; 1988; 1993; 1997; 2002; 2007)

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, SRB has continued to increase since the early 1980s, from 107.6 in 1982, to 111.3 in 1990, to 119.6 in 2000, and to 120.5 in 2005. Moreover, high SRB is prevalent in both rural and urban areas, but higher in rural areas. By 2005, SRB was 122.9 in rural China, and 117.1 in urban China (NBS 2007). However, Goodkind found that when adjusting for under-reporting, SRB actually fell between 2000 and 2005, and that SRB was higher in urban than in rural China both in 2000 and in 2005 (Goodkind 2011: 305-306).

Sex ratio at birth by parity

Difference in sex ratio at birth also changes with parity, i.e. with birth order. Among the first parity, SRB has remained close to normal at around 107 ever since the third census in 1982. Since then, SRB by parity continued to rise for the second and third parity until 2000, when census data reported that SRB for the second parity was 151.9 and for the third parity 160.3, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

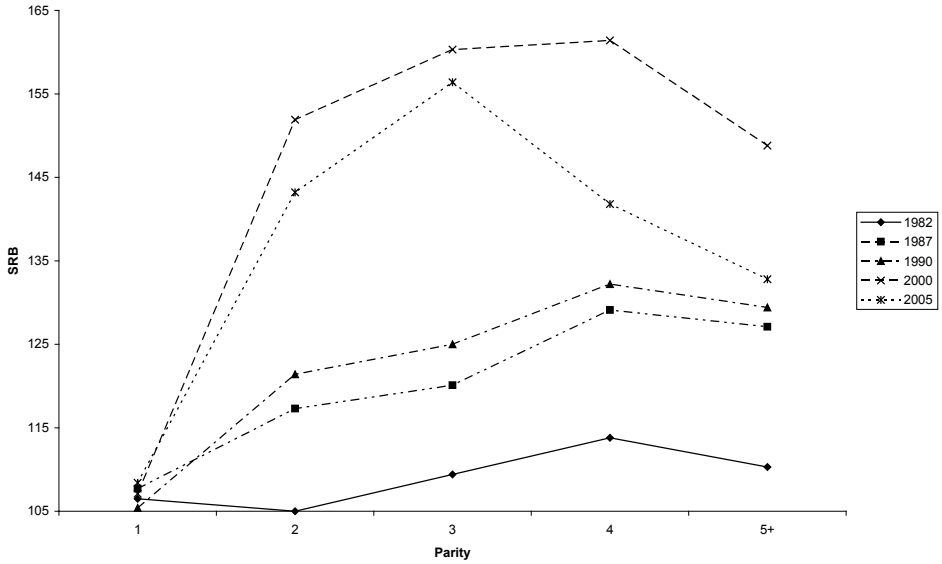

Figure 2.

Sex ratio at birth by parity in China 1982-2005 Sources: NBS (1985; 1988; 1993; 2002; 2007)

As shown in the figure, in the 2005 1% sample survey, SRB for the second and third parities came down but remained high at 143.2 and 156.4, respectively. The increase in SRB with parity has also been found in other low fertility countries with son preference (Chai Bin and Nam-Hoon 1995).[27] This means that sex-deselection took place mostly among women who already had one child. This observation is supported by other research demonstrating that women with one or several daughters are more likely to have had an abortion (Lofstedt, Luo et al. 2004).[28] Moreover, SRB for the first, second and third parity was higher in urban than in rural areas in 2000, at 109.4, 151 and 176 in urban areas compared to 105.7, 152.1 and 157 in rural areas (NBS 2004: 19).[29]

[27] Higher SRB among higher parities have also been observed in other countries where fertility is low and son preference exists (see e.g. in Vietnam (Khuat Thi Hai, Liu et al. 2003).

[28] The higher abortion rate among women with daughters can also be explained by the fact that long-term contraceptive use is not advocated so forcefully for women with one girl. Hence, contraceptive failure is likely to be higher among daughters-only women than among son-only women, who are encouraged to used long-term contraceptive methods.

[29] It should be noted that the sample size of second and higher parity births is small in urban China. This means that the average SRB for urban China is still lower than in rural China if the census data is used as reference. However, if Goodkind's (2011) estimates are correct, the higher SRB by birth order in urban China reflects that SRB in urban China was higher than in rural China in 2000 and 2005. .

Sex ratio at birth by region

In addition to rural and urban differences, there are large regional disparities in SRB. As illustrated in Table 1 below, by 1990, nine provinces recorded SRB higher than 110 and the highest SRB was recorded in Shandong Province (114.4). Of the nine provinces, six were coastal provinces in eastern and southern China (NBS 1993).

By 2000, SRB had increased markedly in all provinces except those with a high proportion of minorities (such as Guizhou, Neimenggu, Ningxia, Tibet, Xinjiang and Yunnan) and two provinces in Northeast China (Jilin and Heilongjiang). In 2000, the provinces with the highest SRB were Jiangxi (138), followed by Guangdong (137.8), Hainan (135), Anhui (130.8) and Henan (130.3).

At the time of the 2005 1% sample survey, a new pattern had emerged. Even though several provinces reported SRB higher than 130, all of the provinces with the most skewed SRB were landlocked provinces where the agricultural sector constitutes a relatively large proportion of the economy (Anhui, Guizhou, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi and Shaanxi) (NBS 2007). As indicated in the table, in 2005, Tibet was the only region to report normal SRB.

Table 1.

Sex ratio at birth by province 1990, 2000 and 2005

Province	SRB 1990	SRB 2000	SRB 2005	Province	SRB 1990	SRB 2000	SRB 2005
Anhui	109.1	130.8	132.2	Jiangxi	110.7	138.0	137.3
Beijing	106.6	114.6	117.8	Jilin	106.0	109.9	109.3
Chongqing	n/a	115.8	111.2	Liaoning	106.1	112.2	109.5
Fujian	112.0	120.3	125.9	Ningxia	108.5	108.0	111.1
Gansu	108.9	119.4	116.2	Qinghai	107.1	103.5	116.9
Guangdong	113.0	137.8	119.9	Shaanxi	110.4	125.2	132.1
Guangxi	112.1	128.8	119.8	Shandong	114.4	113.5	113.4
Guizhou	101.3	105.4	127.7	Shanghai	105.4	115.5	120.1
Hainan	110.2	135.0	122.0	Shanxi	109.3	112.8	116.7
Hebei	107.9	118.5	119.4	Sichuan	107.9	116.4	116.3
Heilongjiang	105.8	107.5	110.7	Tianjin	105.6	113.0	119.8
Henan	112.8	130.3	125.8	Tibet	102.8	97.4*	105.2
Hubei	109.0	128.0	128.0	Xinjiang	105.5	106.7	109.4
Hunan	107.5	126.9	127.8	Yunnan	104.4	110.6	113.2
Inner Mongolia	108.6	108.5	117.1	Zhejiang	106.9	113.1	113.4
Jiangsu	111.9	120.2	126.5				

Sources: NBS (1993, 2002, 2007)

* The low SRB in Tibet in 2000 is likely to be attributed to the small sample size rather than to prenatal sex-selection in favour of girls.

Some data also indicate that SRB is highest in provinces where couples are allowed to have a second child if the first one is a daughter (i.e. where the "1.5-children policy" is prevalent) (Zhu, Lu et al. 2009). However, a recent study suggests that under reporting of girls is most severe in those provinces (Goodkind 2011).

SRB and socioeconomic status

There are relatively few studies which disaggregate variation in SRB by social and economic characteristics and the ones that exist show no conclusive pattern in terms of the relationship between SRB and different socioeconomic factors, such as income and education. According to a comprehensive review by Banister (2004), the factor that was most clearly associated with SRB imbalance in China was ethnicity, where the Han ethnicity expose higher SRB than minorities. Attané's (2009) study at the provincial level concludes that there is no linear relationship between poverty (measured as income) and SRB imbalance in China. With regard to education, results from the 1990 census revealed that SRB was lowest among women with less than five years of education and highest among women with nine or more years of education (Edlund 1999). Moreover, a recent study analysing SRB based on the 2000 census and the 2005 1% sample survey data showed that SRB was highest among people who belong to medium and medium high socioeconomic groups (Guilmoto and Ren forthcoming).

In India, the evidence is also not conclusive. Some studies suggest that SRB is higher among women with higher education (Bhat and Zavier 2007) and with higher incomes (Bhat and Sharma 2006). However, there is also evidence of the opposite, suggesting that SRB is highest among women with low educational attainment (Pande 2007).

SRB among the migrant population

In China, a new area of concern among government officials is the skewed SRB among temporary migrants[30] residing in the cities, as evident by the 2000 census (Wu, Li et al. 2005). This issue has been brought up in several conferences over the past years, but little comprehensive research has been conducted on the subject. To my knowledge, there is only one study that has systematically examined son preference and SRB among rural-urban migrants. This study was conducted by Li, Wu et al. (2006) in Shenzhen and it revealed that SRB was very high among rural migrants, at 152.0 for the first parity, 180.0 for the second parity, and 194.4 for the third parity. The results further indicated that son preference among migrants was positively correlated with whether or not they belonged to social networks where other members held notions of son preference, whether their social network was confined to fellow rural migrants only, and whether they experienced discrimination due to their rural origin.

[30] As defined by the census, temporary migrants refer to persons who have resided for more than 6 months in a place other than the place where they are registered.

Sex-selective abortion

Chu (2001) found that, by far, the most widely used method for prenatal sex-selection in China is sex-selective abortion (Chu 2001), which in fact is a matter of *de*selecting daughters rather than selecting sons. The fact that sex-selective abortions take place in China has contributed to the conception internationally that abortion is used as a family planning method, rather than as a last resort when contraceptive methods fail (Scharping 2003). Moreover, Nie in his study of abortion in China noted an assumption among both western observers and the Chinese themselves that "life is cheap" and that Chinese do not value life as much as Westerners do (Nie 2006: 91). Nie further suggested that such an assumption is based on the idea that people in China believe that personhood starts at birth and therefore abortions are associated less with moral concerns than among Westerners (Nie 2006).[31] However, data show that it is misleading to think that Chinese women are more prone to resort to abortion than women of many other countries. For example, abortion rates in China are about the same as in the US (Rigdon 1996, UN Data 2011).[32] Moreover, Nie demonstrated that, according to experiences of Chinese women, abortion is far from a mechanical procedure and is very much associated with physical and psychological pain and moral considerations. These aspects of experiences of abortion are rarely discussed in China due to beliefs that women should be "stoic" and be able to endure pain, and due to fear that sharing the negative experiences of abortion will be perceived as indirect criticism of the population policy (Nie 1996).

However, even though Chinese women's experiences of abortion may be similar to the experiences of women in the "West", abortion patterns in China have certain characteristics that differ from e.g. the USA. One difference is that, whereas in the USA and other western countries abortion is more frequent among young and unmarried women, in China married women constitute the largest proportion of women who have an abortion. Another difference is that in China late-term abortions are more common than in most other countries. Indeed, China is one of the few

[31] Both Nie (2006) and Luk (1977) discuss the right to life and personhood in a historical context. Nie notes that the Confucian master Xun Xi (286-238 BC) thought that human life begins with birth and ends with death (Nie 2006: 68). Because of this belief it has been assumed that Chinese have little moral objections to abortion and even infanticide. Luc discusses the "Confucianisation" of Chinese law and the institutionalisation of filial piety, where matters of life and death became increasingly managed by the family and the lineage since the Han period. Luc suggests that there was a "gradual erosion of homicide laws covering infanticide and the murder by a father of his child. From the late 13th to the 19th centuries these acts were no longer crimes" (Luc 1977: 381). Abortion then became prohibited in the republic era (1911-1949), largely because it was perceived as a threat to social stability. It was then legalised in the late 1950s mostly because it was viewed as a women's health issue, suggesting that driving women to resort to abortion underground would endanger their health (Rigdon 1996: 544-545).

[32] The abortion rate, i.e. the number of abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age (15-44) varies greatly between countries. According to UN statistics, abortion rates in the following countries were (years in brackets): China 24.2 (1998), France 16.9 (2002), India 3.1 (2001), Russia 53.7 (2004), Sweden 20.2 (2005), Vietnam 35.2 (2000) and the USA 20.8 (2003) (UN Data 2011).

countries in the world not regulating abortion by law,[33] and abortion can take place at any stage of the pregnancy without any prosecution (Rigdon 1996). However, there are recommendations stipulated in the Standard Service Delivery Protocol, which restrict abortion to week 27 of gestation unless medically motivated (SSDP no date).[34]

The fact that SRB is skewed in favour of boys, and that women with daughters are more likely to have an abortion than women with sons, suggests that sex-selective[35] abortion is a frequently used method to prevent the birth of a daughter. For example, Rigdon quoted a report by a hospital where, out of the 30 women that had had the sex of their foetus identified and who subsequently had an abortion, 29 aborted a female foetus and one aborted a male foetus (Rigdon 1996: 551).

Postnatal daughter discrimination

There are mainly four ways to rid oneself of an unwanted daughter who has been born. In addition to abandonment and adoption, historically, some families sold or gave their daughters to other families where they worked as maids and sometimes were raised to become future daughters-in-law. This was the case of on older woman whom I interviewed in rural Anhui. Granny Liu was born in 1925, and later the same year, at the age of five months, she was given to her mother's cousin to be raised as a future daughter-in-law (*tongyangxi*). Hence she grew up together with her future husband who was the youngest son in his family, and they got married when Granny Liu was 20 years old, in 1945.

Other families would kill unwanted daughters when they were born (Parish and Whyte 1980: 184). Harris (1977) makes a distinction between outright infanticide and passive infanticide, where the former refers to immediate and direct means that lead to death, and the latter refers to indirect means, such as nutrition deprivation (Harris 1978: 5). When a child dies as a consequence of direct or indirect means, but at an older age, the term pedicide has been used. Whether or not gender bias in infant and child mortality exists and whether or not any such bias changes as societies develop and fertility drops has been the focus of demographers and social scientists for a long time.

In their study of fertility decline and increased manifestation of sex bias, das Gupta and Bhat (1997) suggested that where fertility falls and son preference exists

[33] Canada is another example (Almond, Edlund et al. 2009).

[34] It should be noted that the sex of the foetus becomes detectable through ultrasound B from about week 16.

[35] The act of sex-selective abortion as a means to secure a male offspring has in some circles been described as a violation of human rights, and the term "foeticide" is frequently used, especially in India (Purewal 2010). However, regarding sex-selective abortion as a human rights issue raises questions of when life begins and the issue of personhood. Such questions obviously fit right into the anti-abortion debate and put into question the very right to abortion itself, a right which according to many countries is an integral part of sexual and reproductive rights (e.g. Sweden).

there are two possible effects with regard to discrimination against girls, as measured in excess female mortality. One effect is the "parity effect", suggesting that as the proportion of higher parities declines, discrimination against girls will decrease. This scenario is based on the observation that girls at higher parity experience excess mortality, which was the case in India in the 1980s. The other effect is the "intensification effect", implying that with falling fertility, discrimination against girls will increase at each parity, as the desired number of children drops faster than the desired number of sons (das Gupta and Bhat 1997: 307). The authors concluded that the intensification effect exceeds the parity effect and that prenatal discrimination against female foetuses, as evident in skewed SRB as accounted for above, is the main factor contributing to an increase in the number of missing girls in India, China and South Korea (ibid).

Banister and Coale (1994), when analysing population data based on Chinese fertility surveys and censuses from 1930s to 1990, found that mortality patterns for girls and women have changed drastically over the years. They conclude that in the 1930s and 1940s, excess in female mortality was largely due to infanticide, which became less prevalent after 1949 (Banister and Coale 1994).[36] Excess female mortality dropped steadily after the foundation of the PRC, except during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) when high mortality rates hit young females harder than males. For example, one of the women I interviewed in this study had given birth to eight children, six girls and two boys, and four of them had died during the Great Leap Forward, all of them girls. During the 1960s and 1970s the proportion of girls missing was the lowest, at two percent, but still indicating that infanticide and neglect of the girl child with deadly outcome persisted even during this period (Banister and Coale 1994: 477-78). The low sex ratio of infant mortality in the 1970s suggests that there was a phase where falling fertility rates, which dropped from 5.81 in 1970 to 2.75 in 1978 (Guo and Chen 2007: 55), had a "parity effect" on the discrimination of girls.

Since the 1980s, although infant and child mortality rates have fallen in China, the decline has not been as drastic for girls as for boys, suggesting that the intensification effect has become stronger than the "parity effect". As shown in Table 2 below, by 1990, female infant mortality rate (IMR)[37] exceeded male IMR. This shows that postnatal sex-deselection is still important. It also puts into question the *substitution theory*, as put forward by Goodkind, which suggests that with the availability of reproductive technologies to practice prenatal sex-deselection, postnatal sex-deselection (i.e. outright infanticide and maltreatment with deadly outcomes), will increasingly be replaced by prenatal sex-selection (Goodkind 1996: 112).

[36] Infanticide is likely to have contributed to child sex ratio imbalance in the early years after 1949, but as it was outlawed, other forms of discrimination, such as neglect and abandonment with deathly outcomes, are more likely to explain excess female mortality (Zeng, Tu et al. 1993).

[37] Infant mortality rate refers to number of deaths among 0-11 months old infants per 1,000 live births in a given year.

When analysing variation in SRB with IMR, Lai Dejian found that prenatal sex-selection is indeed an additional means to deselect daughters and not a way of substituting postnatal discrimination against girls. Lai found that between 1982 and 2000, abnormal SRB had strong associations with excess female IMR (Lai 2005: 323). Similar findings have been reported by Attané (2009: 90). However, it is impossible to know what IMR by sex would have been had prenatal sex-deselection not taken place. The changes in IMR by sex are indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Infant mortality rate in China by sex and by rural and urban areas

	1982			1990			2000		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
National	38	39	37	33	32	33	28	24	34
Urban	24	25	23				13	12	15
Rural	40	41	39				36	30	43

Source: ADB 2006 (page 32).

The table shows that despite the fact that IMR dropped markedly between 1982 and 2000, skewed sex ratio of IMR increased over the same period of time. The disproportionately high levels of mortality among girls since 1990 was particularly common in rural areas, where census data show that there was an *increase* in female IMR between 1982 and 2000 from 39 to 43 in rural China, whereas the male IMR in rural China dropped from 41 to 30 over the same period of time (ADB 2006).[38] By 2005, the gender gap in infant mortality had decreased somewhat, but remained substantial. On a national level, infant girls had a mortality rate of 27, compared to 22 for boys (NBS 2007). However, data on sex by rural and urban areas are not available in the 2005 1% sample survey.

In China, research has found that, similar to India, female excessive mortality is not primarily caused by less access of female babies to preventive care and food and nutrition, but by lack of access to health care services in cases of illness, i.e. curative health care. Focusing on China, it has also been found that lack of curative health care is not equally common for all girls, but particularly common for girls who had an older sister (Li, Zhu et al. 2004). Generally, the literature discusses infanticide in the context of poverty and scarcity of resources (Wasserstrom 1984; Miller 1987), although Goodkind suggests that, historically, female infanticide was common also in the noble class of the Qing dynasty (Goodkind 1996: 112).

[38] Worth noting is that although China is on target to achieve the Millennium Development Goal to reduce IMR by 2/3 by 2015 at a national level, severe gender and regional disparities exist.

Sex ratio in child mortality

Excess female mortality can also be measured through sex ratio in mortality, i.e. number of male deaths per 100 female deaths, where sex ratio in child mortality below 100 is an indicator of excess female mortality. As indicated in Figure 3 below, excess female mortality exists beyond infancy. However, whereas in the 1950s, females had excess mortality up till early teenage years (Banister 2004), excess female mortality is becoming increasingly concentrated in the first few years of life.

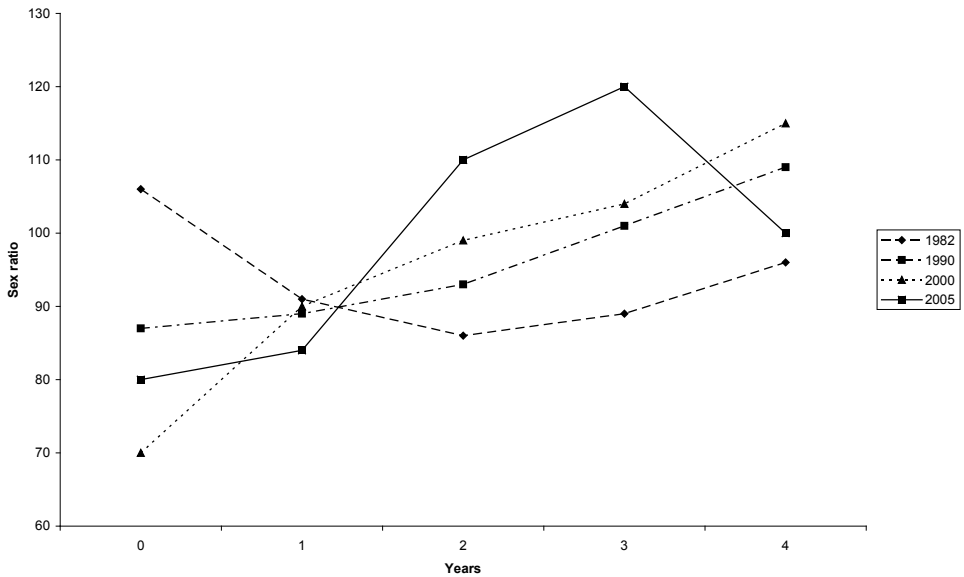

Figure 3.

Sex ratio of under five mortality in China, 1982-2005 Sources: NBS (1985; 1993; 2002; 2007)

Figure 3 shows that in 1982, girls aged one to four suffered from excess mortality, while infant girls (indicated as age zero in the table) did not. By 1990, girls experienced excessive deaths from infancy until the age of three. By 2000, the sex ratio among children aged 0-11 months had dropped even further, signifying an increase in excess female mortality for newborns. The same year girls suffer from excessive deaths until the age of two, suggesting that excess female mortality had become concentrated among girls aged 0-24 months. The increase over time in excess female infant mortality between 1982 and 2000 is also indicated in Table 2 above.[39]

[39] In fact, mortality rates for children beyond 12 months are substantially lower than for infants. For example, in 2000, IMR was 28, whereas morality rates for ages two to five were below 5

Consequences of skewed sex ratios

It is indubitable that the main problem of son preference is its adverse effects on daughters, ranging from prenatal daughter de-selection, to neglect and maltreatment, to death of daughters. However, it may be less clear what the consequences of abnormal sex ratios as such actually are.

The literature identifies several scenarios which may develop due to sex ratio imbalance in the adult population, and, in particular, in the age cohorts that are of marriageable age. In populations where sex ratios among women and men of marriageable age are skewed, the phenomenon of "marriage squeeze" may appear (Hesketh and Zhu 2006). The term was first coined by Guttentag and Secord who in 1983 published a book about variations in sex ratios and how such variations have impacted on a variety of norms and behaviours since the ancient times (Guttentag and Secord 1983).[40] They pointed out the obvious fact that, given that people marry the opposite sex and that sex ratio is imbalanced, some people will be left without a marriage partner. In countries where there are more men than women,[41] and where women practise hypergamy, the ones left without a marriage partner are men at the lower end of the socioeconomic strata (Crow 2010: 74).

Another and related problem is that of social disorder. The argument goes as follows: when there are large numbers of unmarried men with low education and no or sporadic employment, there is an increasing risk of social unrest and violence. Such violence can either take the shape of unorganised violence, or of organised violence against a common enemy, such as the ruling elite or a foreign country, i.e. inter-state violence (Hudson and den Boer 2005: 263). This view is also shared among observers of China, where links have been made between rebellions in imperial China and criminality in republican China and the large numbers of unmarried men, i.e. the so called "bare branches" (*guanggun*) (Billingsley 1981; Ownby 2002; Perry 2002; Hudson and den Boer 2005; Crow 2010).[42]

[40] Guttentag and Secord (1983) found that in populations where sex ratio was high in favour of males women had low status. This contradicts the notion that where there is a limited "supply" of women, women will be more in "demand" and therefore valued higher.

[41] As long as registration records have been available and censuses undertaken, there have been more men than women in China. The first census in 1953 revealed that the sex ratio was 107.6 in the general population. By 1982, sex ratio in the general population had dropped to 106.3 and has remained fairly stable since then (UNFPA 2007b). Although not unique to China, this deviates from the situation of most populations in the world, where sex ratio in the general population in the year 2010 was projected to be under 100 (e.g. Brazil 97.0, France 94.7, Sweden 98.6, USA 97.5) with a few exceptions in China and South Asia (e.g. Afghanistan 107.4, India 106.8) (UNDESA 2008).

[42] Crow notes that the bare branches (or sticks) have played an important role as "agents of violence" in major revolts including the White Lotus Uprisings of 1796–1804 and the Nian and Taiping Rebellions of the mid-19th century Crow 2010: 72).

The literature also identifies a rise in prostitution, trafficking in women and the selling of wives as potential consequence of sex ratio imbalance (CEDAW 1999). These issues can also be viewed as violence and they have clear implications for health in general and for sexual and reproductive health in particular. For example, an increase in the number of sex workers has been shown to predict an increase in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (Merli and Hertog 2010).

The limitations of demographic indicators

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the extent to which demographic rates can capture son preference is limited. Another problem with demographic rates in relation to son preference is how they are used and interpreted.

The fact that many people in Asia wish to have a son rather than a daughter, as evident by increasing SRB imbalance and excess female mortality, has by some demographers and social scientists been interpreted as an *increase* in son preference (Croll 2000: 6; Bélanger 2002: 321).[43] This understanding is problematic for at least two reasons. First of all, it reduces son preference to sex-selective behaviour, but fails to acknowledge other expressions of son preference, such as daughters' and sons' unequal access to resources and opportunities. Secondly, it omits the fact that in high fertility populations, son preference may be equally strong, or stronger, than for example in contemporary China. This is because, in high fertility populations, the chance that a couple has its demand met to have a son is higher than in a low fertility population. Thus, it is possible that son preference has decreased in a low fertility country like China, despite the fact that the proportion of couples who resort to prenatal sex-selection has increased, as evident from the rising SRB imbalance. However, the literature to date does not make a clear distinction in this regard due to the fact that there is no model available that illustrates the relationship between son preference and SRB imbalance.

There is also unclarity as to what constitutes SRB imbalance. Chu for example suggests that there are three factors leading to reported SRB imbalance: 1) under-reporting of girls, 2) excess female infant mortality and 3) prenatal sex-selection (Chu 2001: 259). However, excess female infant mortality can not be said to contribute to SRB imbalance since infant mortality takes place after birth.

Another problem is that SRB and IMR are often mentioned in the same breath and interpreted within the same framework, even though the factors triggering prenatal and postnatal daughter de-selection and discrimination are believed to be different. For example, infanticide has been associated with poverty, whereas there is no proven link between prenatal sex-selection and poverty.

[43] Das Gupta and Bhat (1997) have been referred to as also supporting this view (see e.g. Bélanger 2002). However, I believe that this is a misrepresentation of their arguments.

Another dimension of demographics is that it is a "tool for the powerful". This may be particularly true for the indicators SRB and IMR by sex, which both reflect practices that according to official discourses are deemed unethical – if not criminal – and may hence require government policies and action. As pointed out by Purewal in her book about son preference, "the state is both a source of knowledge and an agent of policy" (Purewal 2010: 37).

Preliminary conclusions

To sum up, sex ratio imbalance in the general population is nothing new in China, nor is it unique to China. Hence, the marriage squeeze problem, although not discussed by many authors in recent years, is not an entirely new phenomenon. What is new is that, more recently, daughter de-selection takes place before birth and shortly after, whereas in the 1950s female excess mortality continued into the teenage years.

The literature on SRB and IMR by sex, which are both manifestations of son preference in cases where they are biased against girls, is rich in its analysis of variation over time and between regions. However, one aspect that remains unclear in the literature is to what extent an increase in SRB reflects an intensification of son preference. As noted, increasing SRB has sometimes been interpreted as an increase in son preference, without taking into account variation in fertility rates (cf. Paper 2).

Moreover, the literature that focuses on the demographic manifestations of son preference has been accused of providing "common sense" explanations of why son preference exists (Purewal 2010). Purewal further suggests that the debate about son preference suffers from a "foeticide fatigue", suggesting that there is an urgent need to move beyond the discussion about sex-selective abortion (of which SRB is a result) as a "problem", and to examine son preference "as a foundational ideology of social relations and social reproduction" (Purewal 2010: iv). In the coming chapter, an attempt will be made to go beyond common sense explanations of son preference and provide a more nuanced understanding of the fundaments of the phenomenon in the People's Republic of China.

5. Son preference in the PRC

In this chapter I will discuss important changes in the social, economic and cultural landscape of the People's Republic of China (PRC) since the foundation in 1949 and how these changes relate to son preference. I will not elaborate in detail on the different policies and reforms carried out by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as such, as that is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Rather, I will focus on the aspects which in the literature have been linked to son preference. More specifically, first I will account for how the institution of son preference is believed to have changed during the first three decades of the PRC, a period referred to as the "Mao era". Thereafter I will discuss son preference in relation to specific reforms and policies implemented after the Reform era started in 1978.

The Mao era

After the PRC was founded, the CCP embarked on social engineering programmes on a massive scale. Broadly speaking, the countryside went through an initial land reform, where land was confiscated and redistributed, and by 1958 it was collectivised (Yang 1959). Urban China embarked on an industrialisation path where many of the services and industries were organised in work units (*danwei*).[44] There were several aspects of these reforms that had direct and profound impact on institutions known for upholding son preference, which I will return to below.

Women's emancipation through wage labour?

As discussed in Chapter Three, son preference needs to be understood both in the context of gender and intergenerational relations in the family, and in relation to women's status in society at large. Guided by Engels' theory, which suggested that women's liberation could only be achieved through labour force participation, the CCP encouraged women to leave the household and take up work in rural collectives and urban work units, assuming that social productive labour as opposed to private domestic labour would emancipate women (Davin 1976: 189; Rai 1992).

[44] Set up in the 1950s, the *danwei* system is a system of state-owned workplace units, which provide its employees with subsidised housing, education and health services and other benefits. Lü and Perry define the danwei system as "a hierarchy of state-owned workplace units (schools, factories, hospitals, government agencies, and the like) whose employees were guaranteed (…) secure jobs, affordable housing, inexpensive medical care, a range of subsidies for everything from transportation to nutrition, and generous retirement pensions" (Lü and Perry 1997: 3).

However, despite its emphasis on the emancipation of women reflected in slogans such as "Women hold up half the sky" and "Times have changed, whatever male comrades can do women comrades can do too", commonly used during the Mao era (Johnson 1983: 167), there is effectively consensus in the feminist literature on China that not only did the CCP fail to deliver on its promise to liberate women, they also created new forms of gender inequities (Johnson 1983; Stacey 1983; Wolf 1985; Edwards 2000).[45] This was particularly true in rural China. In urban China, the status of women improved considerably, although urban women certainly did not have a position equal to that of men (Davin 1976; Whyte and Parish 1985). Still, Whyte and Parish concluded that the improvement in urban women's status was remarkable given the patriarchal nature of the Chinese society and the low level of economic development during the Mao era (Whyte and Parish 1985: ch 7).

Nevertheless, there were numerous instances where women were not able to join the labour market on equal terms with men, in urban and rural China alike. Firstly, women were still expected to do most of the work at home, even though the older generation was encouraged to take on an increasing share in the work of looking after grand-children. Particularly in rural areas, the promise of welfare to all did not materialise into childcare and other social support units. Except for a short period in the 1950s when nurseries, canteens and other communal services were set up in the collectives (Croll 1985a: 41), rural residents had to rely on the family as the basic unit for providing socioeconomic security and social support, including child and old age care (Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005).[46]

Secondly, when the industrial sector experienced unemployment in the 1950s, women were often the ones who would leave their jobs first, or they were asked not to join the workforce at all (Yang 1959: 210).[47] In order to solve the problems of housewives not being and feeling part of the revolution, the CCP tried to organise women to do voluntary work at the community level and to shift the ideology in order to attach importance to the family as a main unit to foster members of the revolution (Davin 1976).[48] Hence, while Engels has been criticised for providing too simple a solution for the emancipation of women, the CCP diluted the strategy for

[45] Whereas Stacey (1983) questions the motives the CCP had when advocating for gender equality, Wolf believes that the intentions were genuine, but that the feminist revolution failed because the CCP did not realise its own gender blindness and were hence unable to implement reform effectively (Wolf 1985: 260-61).

[46] Those without close relatives and who were too old or ill to work were entitled to the "five guarantees" (food, clothing, shelter, help with bringing up children, and burial). However, the five guarantees constituted a bare minimum and receiving them was often associated with loss of face (Davin 1985: 61).

[47] When unemployment became a problem in urban areas in the mid-1950s, propaganda, such as the article series called "How Housewives Can Serve Socialism", encouraged women to withdraw from or stay outside the workforce (Andors 1983: 37).

[48] According to the Maoist ideology, the revolution did not end with the takeover of power by the CCP in 1949, but was a constant process which continued to challenge right-wing and contra-revolutionary elements in the Chinese society (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 290).

empowerment even further by compromising on the principle of participation in social production, i.e. wage labour.

Thirdly, women often ended up in low-paid jobs and were not able to reap the benefits of equal pay for equal work. For example, in the rural collectives, the work point arrangement was gendered in several ways. Men were rewarded with more work points than women for agricultural work (Parish and Whyte 1980: 189; Croll 1985a: 37-41). Domestic work, which was largely carried out by women, did not generate any work points. Moreover, since patrilocal marriage patterns were left intact in rural China (Li and Lavely 2003), sons would upon marriage contribute with an additional family member, who could earn work points and thereby contribute to the welfare of the family, whereas a daughter would leave her natal family upon marriage and thereby stop contributing to the welfare of that family. Still, during the Commune era,[49] as noted by Zhang Weiguo in his study of a northern Chinese village, unmarried daughters were valuable compared to married women with children, since they could earn more work points (Zhang 2000: 61). However, compared to their brothers, daughters could not compete in earning work points for the family (Zhang 2007: 682). Johnson argued that collectivisation eliminated older persons' possibility to rent out land to sustain themselves, and that the labour capacity of sons became the most important guarantee for old age support (Johnson 1983: 218). In addition, since private property was effectively abolished during the Commune era, there were few opportunities for rural families to own assets, let alone to increase the few assets they had. However, residential land was allocated based on number of family members, and therefore having many sons was one of the few ways in which a rural family could expand its resources. Hence, during the commune era, the social and economic organisation of everyday life continued to grant higher value to sons than daughters (Croll 1985a: 43).

The popularisation of patrilocality

The CCP also intended to improve the status of women in the family. The main instrument to achieve this ambition was the 1950 Marriage Law, which amongst other things banned prostitution, the practice of concubines, and child marriage. The Law further granted the right to divorce and the freedom to choose a marriage partner (Evans 1992; Rai 1992; Edwards 2000).[50] [51]

However, except for a short period just after the promulgation of the Marriage Law in 1950, when activists were vocal in advocating for reform in the patriarchal and

[49] The Commune era refers to the period 1958 to the mid 1980s when rural China was divided into communes (which in turn were divided into production brigades and production teams). Hence, the term Commune era overlaps with the Mao era (1949-1976), but with about 10 years delay.

[50] It was believed that in socialist societies, marriage was fundamentally different from in capitalist societies, since it was not based on economic considerations. Therefore, concerns that marriage was an institution upholding men's power and sense of ownership over women, and reinforcing private property in the hands of men, was dismissed as "characteristics of a bourgeois marriage system" (Evans 1992: 151).

[51] The 1950 Marriage Law also made children legally responsible for providing support to aging parents.

patrilocal family as a means for women's emancipation, the CCP did little to challenge patriarchal and kinship-based structures that largely formed women's status in the family (Yang 1959: 209-10). It was believed that the Law had led to too much suffering and to family and marital instability.[52] Therefore, the CCP started to promote the "virtuous woman" as a caring wife and efficient domestic manager, who would not complain about her lot in life (Evans 1992: 151-52, 161). In fact, the CCP was in many ways reliant on the loyalty of already existing kin-based organisations in order to implement reform in rural areas. Empowering women was considered less of a priority in relation to keeping the male peasantry committed to the cause of the revolution. Johnson argues that "the state began to develop a real, if indirect and barely acknowledged, stake in the maintenance of the rooted, traditional patrilineal bonds that reinforced and strengthened the stability of the rural family and community" (Johnson 1983: 151). Croll (1995) add to the critique of the implementation of the 1950 Marriage Law and suggests that patrilocal marriage patterns were never challenged in any systematic way. Moreover, the policies and reform implemented by the CCP had several unintended effects (Johnson 1983; Wolf 1985; Croll 1987; Davis and Harrell 1993). Investment in public health, more equitable distribution of food and the training of midwives lead to mortality rates dropping (Banister 1984: 717), meaning that more children survived to adulthood and older persons lived longer. This had the effect that multigenerational households expanded both in absolute numbers and in terms of their complexity; as more and more children survived, joint families became increasingly common.

Another unintended effect, which can be understood as another "state simplification" to use James Scott's term (Scott 1998), was the impact of the imposition of the household registration (*hukou*) system.[53] The *hukou* system drew a strict line between rural and urban residents and restricted the movement of people from one place of registration to another.[54] This meant that families became increasingly rooted in their place of birth, further strengthening the notion of patrilocality (Croll 1985b: 17; Davis and Harrell 1993: 1-2).

Perhaps more importantly, through the land reform, land and other resources became more equally distributed. This meant that more people could afford to get married and have a multigenerational stem or joint family. Indeed, before 1949, only

[52] The Law was so successful it got the nickname "divorce law" (Edwards 2000: 61).

[53] In a Chinese context, the division between rural and urban has special historical, political and administrative ramifications through the *hukou* system, which is the household registration system, introduced in the late 1950s. The *hukou* system divides the citizens into agricultural (*nongye*) and non-agricultural (*feinongye*), which largely coincide with "rural" and "urban". The *hukou* system has three functions according to Wang Feiling (2004): to control rural-urban migration flows, reallocate resources between different regions and rural and urban areas, and to keep track of "targeted people", which refers to people who might be a risk to national security and prone to crime and conflict. The *hukou* system has contributed to "objectifying and cementing" a clear divide between rural and urban residents in China (Jacka and Gaetano 2004: 15).

[54] Despite the restrictions placed on migration, migration did not cease to exist altogether, but remained a survival strategy for especially poor rural residents (Macfarquhar and Schoenhals 2006)

the affluent families with large land holdings were rich enough to be able to afford to live in a patrilineal multigenerational joint family (Yang 1959: 9; Croll 1985b: 6-8).[55] In this context, Stacey has introduced the concept of "new democratic patriarchy[56]", which is a "patriarchal system whose gender and generational relationships were reformed substantially at the same time that patriarchy was made more democratically available to masses of peasant men" (Stacey 1983: 116).

Patriarchy in demise?

Several analyses of China during the Mao era suggest that the fact that patrilocal families became more common during the Mao era did not mean that patriarchal power – understood in a Confucian way as senior men's power over younger family members, and men's domination over women – became stronger. To the contrary, patriarchal power was challenged in both ideological and practical terms by the CCP (Davin 1976; Yan 2003). The stance of the CCP was that fathers should not "dominate and oppress" sons or wives (Parish and Whyte 1980: 133).

One development which eroded patriarchal power was the disintegration of lineage organisations, which previously had managed much of the political, economic and religious life of the countryside (Yang 1959; Li and Lavely 2003: 88). As the lineages were stripped of all formal power, the patriarchal power hierarchy that was upheld by the lineages was substantially undermined.

Moreover, since the collective (and the *danwei* in the cities) replaced many of the functions of the family, many social and economic aspects of everyday life were under the authority of peasant and party organisations rather than under patriarchal authority (Li and Lavely 2003).

The demise of intergenerational transfer of property from the older to the younger generation further weakened patriarchal and parental power. Because generous dowries and wedding feasts were labelled "feudal extravagance" and brideprice was viewed as "buying and selling in marriage" (Siu 1993: 176), most couples married without any major support from their elders.

In addition, as the knowledge and experience gap between youth and their parents widened due to the fact that young people were more receptive to new ideologies and political knowledge, youth were more likely to challenge parental authority during the Mao years (Yan 2003: 230). Yang describes how youth in the early years of the Mao era were indoctrinated to disregard kinship ties and age

[55] Poorer families seldom consisted of more than two generations due to the simple fact that mortality rates were high and older parents often died before they became grandparents (Croll: 1985: 8). Yang (1959: 9) has compared the Chinese family to a balloon, ready to expand in size as soon as there were resources to do so, meaning keeping sons in the household and, if resources allowed, arranging concubines for them.

[56] According to Brownell and Wasserstrom (2002: 6), patriarchy as a term originally refers to a system where the older men of a household have authority over other household members, but it is often used in a "catchall" manner to denote a social system where women are subordinate to men. The term has been criticised for providing a static understanding of gender relations and for failing to draw attention to ways in which women and men contest gender hierarchies.

hierarchies (Yang 1959: 100-4). Another practice which undermined patriarchal power was that work points accumulated by each family member while working in the collective were posted annually in the village in a public space (Yan 2003: 157-159). Consequently, fathers could not deny the contribution made by other family members and the contribution by the father was not always the biggest as young family members easily got accustomed to the new modes of production of the collective and to new skills and techniques.[57]

Undermining the institution of son preference?

It is important to emphasise that failing to emancipate women during the Mao era did not mean that women did not experience remarkable improvements, both in their general well-being and in their status in the family compared to pre-1949 China. The Marriage Law of 1950, despite flaws in its implementation, granted women rights they had not had before.[58] Moreover, access to health services and education was greatly improved.[59] The improvement in educational status among women was evident from the interviews I conducted with men and women in rural Anhui. Among the older generation all women had lower education than their spouses, and many of them were illiterate. Among the women born in the 1950s and 1960s, all but one went to at least primary school and many had an educational attainment on par with their husbands. Similarly, among those born during the first two decades of the PRC, the educational level was often comparable for siblings, although in some cases the oldest daughter had been pulled out of school in order to look after her younger siblings. Even if sending girls to school was not associated with any cost, it was associated with loss of household labour. Hence, the notion that investing in daughters means investing in someone else's daughter-in-law was not eliminated during the Commune era.

Moreover, in the early years of the PRC, and again during the Cultural Revolution, there were several explicit attacks on traditional ideas and practices (Yang 1959; Siu 1993). Political campaigns and movements typically criticised Confucian values and practices closely associated with son preference, such as ancestor worship (Johnson 1983; Davis and Harrell 1993; Li and Lavely 2003). Shrines and temples belonging to lineage groups were either destroyed or confiscated and taken over by peasant organisations to be used as e.g. workshops, administrative offices or public schools (Yang 1959: 196) and lineage genealogies were destroyed or hidden away as they were not ideologically appropriate (Johnson 1993: 131). Yang refers to the

[57] It should be noted that not all studies conclude that patriarchy became weakened during the Commune era. For example, Wong suggests that patriarchy was partially strengthened during the Commune era since grain and cash were turned over to the household head, which was often the most senior male of the family (Wong 1998: 163).

[58] Yan (2003) suggests that the fact that women were able to threat with divorce improved their position markedly, since men were afraid of a divorce and the costs associated with remarrying.

[59] The proportion of female students in primary and secondary school and in higher education increased steadily from 1949 to the mid 1970s. For example, in 1951, 28 percent of students were girls, and by 1976 the proportion had risen to 45.5 percent (see Rai 1992 for further details).

process of questioning the religious and symbolic attributes of the family as "secularisation of the family institution" (Yang 1959: ch 10).

Although it is not possible to establish the extent to which the institution of son preference was challenged, and despite a popularisation of patrilocality, it is reasonable to assume that with the enhancement of women's status, along with the attacks on Confucian values including ancestor worship, the institution of son preference became weakened. Li and Lavely suggest that son preference "probably" diminished during the Commune era (Li and Lavely 2003: 88). The decrease in excess female child mortality during the Mao era supports the assumption that son preference became weakened. However, such an assumption can only be speculative as the trend was coupled with an emphasis by Mao to increase fertility to make a stronger China. During the Mao era, the old saying "more sons, more happiness" was translated into "more people, more power" (Yan 2003: 209). This effectively meant that there was no contradiction between the state's desire to increase the population and the family's desire to continue child bearing until the preferred number and sex composition of children was desired. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Four, improvements in living standards meant that mortality dropped, which seems to have benefitted young girls (Banister and Coale 1994).

Dismantling the communes

As argued by Davis and Harrell, and as supported by e.g. Yan (2003) in his study of the rise of the "private family" since 1949, in China "State power and policies have been the creators, not the creations, of a transformed society" (Davis and Harrell 1993: 5). However, as opposed to the Mao era, the so called Reform era[60] has been characterised by the withdrawal of the state in many aspects of people's life. The withdrawal of the state started with the dismantling of the communes in rural areas in the 1980s, and the welfare system and the weakening of the *danwei* system in cities and towns beginning in the 1990s.

The Household Responsibility System

A link between contemporary institutions and son preference is often made in relation to the Household Responsibility System (HRS)[61] (see e.g. Davin 1988; Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005; Bossen 2007), which was introduced in rural China in 1983 in response to a stagnating agricultural sector, and which is still the dominant

[60] The Reform era started in 1978 when Deng Xiaoping became the leader of the country. Deng's policies were based on pragmatism and on boosting economic growth. Economic reforms were further intensified after Deng's famous Southern Tour in 1992, when he made the well-known statement: "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice". Deng's reform programme was based on the launch of the "Four Modernisations" of agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology.

[61] There are different terms for the "Household Responsibility System". Some call it the "contract responsibility system" and others "individual and family responsibility system" (e.g. Rai 1992).

system through which farmers contract their land.[62] Under the HRS, land was no longer cultivated collectively, but distributed among rural households and individual farmers were allowed to farm their own plots of land (Wong 1998). Implicit in the HRS was that farmers did not only look after their own land, they would also look after themselves, and could no longer rely on social and health services being provided by the communes, which were abolished with the introduction of the HRS.

In 1986, shortly after the HRS had been applied all over China, a process of relocation of land was initiated to distribute land equally among rural households. Depending on quality and location, land was divided into different types, and in the name of equity, households were allocated different pieces of land, some located with considerable distances in between (Judd 1992). The redistribution of land was meant to stay constant over a 30-year period, which was the duration of the land use contracts that were set up between households and local governments.

The HRS was implemented parallel to other reforms in the rural economy, such as a reduction in agricultural taxes and the abolishment of the state monopoly on grain purchase (Wong 1998: 63).[63] Moreover, domestic sideline production and off-farm income generating activities were encouraged. These reforms were proven to be effective. Between 1978 and 1985, farming experienced a dramatic increase in productivity, and more than 150 million people were lifted above the national poverty line (Zhang 1993). Paradoxically, the HRS, credited with lifting millions of people out of poverty, still seems to have reinforced son preference. The literature proposes three main factors that underpinned son preference in rural China and which I discuss in the following.

Land as an asset

Under the HRS, land use rights were granted to farmers on a household basis, and hence rural households were effectively given a new asset,[64] which needed to be maintained and managed. It has been argued that the right to individual land holdings has led peasant families to desire more sons, in order to enrich the family further (Chan 1995: 207). Although the land use rights were set for 30 years, adjustment of landholdings was made possible (PRC 1986).[65] Consequently, land was

[62] Several factors had contributed to the fall in production. By the late 1970s, the "egalitarian" work point system (albeit with clear gender differences), restrictions on the use of individual farm land as well as rural markets and off-farm activities meant that incentives were low and means limited for farmers to increase productivity. In order to boost productivity, several small-scale experiments with individual land holding rights were introduced in 1978 in the provinces of Anhui and Sichuan.

[63] The state monopoly on grain purchase was replaced by a buying on contract system (Wong 1998: 64).

[64] It should be emphasised that asset here is understood as a land tenure right, and not as land ownership.

[65] According to Article 14 of The Law of Land Administration of the People's Republic of China, adopted in 1986, "within the validity term of a contract, the adjustment of land contracted by individual contractors should get the consent from over two-thirds majority vote of the villagers' congress or over two-thirds of villagers' representatives and then be submitted to land administrative departments of the township (town) people's government and county level people's government for approval" (PRC 1985).

regarded as an asset that could be accumulated and expanded further, but also as one that could be reduced. Indeed, not all areas kept land allocations as they were distributed in 1986. In some places, village committees allowed for readjustments to be made with the loss and addition of family members. A recent study by Bossen has demonstrated that areas where land was reallocated regularly since 1986 have higher child sex ratio than areas where land distribution remained as it was in 1986. However, she concludes that the reason for this is not the adjustment of land as such, but "the relative strength of local patrilineal institutions and the resistance to treating village daughters as heirs" (Bossen forthcoming 2011: 115). Sargeson and Song in a recent study argue, in the context of land development, that "village organizations have harnessed democratic institutions to legitimate their conversion of virilocal marital custom into gender-specific citizenship criteria. The androcentric structuring of village polities and households is being preserved, by making women's citizenship contingent on their affiliation with village men" (Sargeson and Song forthcoming 2011: 42). The quotation implies that although the Chinese Succession Law (PRC 1985) grants equal rights to women and men (and thereby daughters and sons), land use rights are managed and regulated through village organisations, which not always grant land use rights to women when they marry or get divorced (Judd 1992). Consequently, women's access to land is mainly through their fathers and husbands (Tinker 1999; Sargeson and Song forthcoming 2011), whereas before the introduction of the HRS, it was through the communes. In their comparative study of China and Vietnam, Bélanger and Xu found that women's individual land right is linked to empowerment and well-being, while negatively correlated with patrilocal, patrilineal and exogamous marriage patterns (Belanger and Li 2009: 46). Hence, land is important for the institution of son preference, as it may strengthen both patrilineality and patrilocality.

The heavy labour argument

Many studies have come to the conclusion that with the introduction of the HRS, the importance of male labour increased (Davin 1988; Croll 1987, 2000: Dalsimer and Nisonoff 1987; Thorborg 2005; Bossen 2007; Zhang 2007).[66] As land was cultivated privately, man-power became a decisive factor in generating high yields, compared to the commune era, when fields were cultivated collectively and yields shared among households, albeit in accordance with the work point system. In this respect sons' capabilities were valued higher than daughters' due to men's greater physical strength. The understanding that sons are preferred for their physical strength and manual labour in agriculture is also common in government publications on the issue of son preference and the missing girls syndrome (CGC 2006a; CGC 2006b).

[66] There are local variations with regard to the importance of sons in agriculture. In Guangdong province, according to tradition, men who turned sixty went through the ceremony of "entering the ancestral hall", and officially retired from agricultural work. However, whether or not he retired was dependent on whether or not he had sons (Mosher 1982: 359).

During my interviews with village women and men, the heavy labour argument was by far the most common reason the interviewees stated for wanting sons. In this context it is also worth noting that the Chinese character for "man" (*nan*) is composed of the two separate characters "field" (*tian*) and "power" (*li*), suggesting that the association between masculinity and working on the land is deeply imbedded in Chinese culture.[67]

The security argument

As noted by several authors, the dismantling of the communes and the withdrawal of the state from many areas of rural residents' lives has had a significant impact on the social security situation in the countryside (see e.g. Wong 1998; Chan, Ngok et al. 2008). With the introduction of the HRS, the basic social and health benefits provided by the communes – albeit on a basic level – collapsed. This meant that the family became the main unit for providing social and economic welfare to its members, and that families in rural areas were made more vulnerable (Wong 1998: 71).[68] This in turn strengthened the notion of "familism" in the Chinese countryside. Thus, whereas virilocal marriage patterns were already upholding notions of son preference, the absolute reliance on the family in providing old age support and other social services strengthened the son-centred character of the family in patrilocal settings. The lack of central funds for providing old age pension has reinforced the increase in the reliance on sons. For example, in the early 2000s, the central government had allocated 50 billion RMB to urban pension schemes, while not contributing anything to the pension scheme in rural areas. In 2000, 56.2 percent of persons living in urban areas received old age pension, compared to 8.2 percent in rural areas (Chan, Ngok et al. 2008: 78). However, it should be noted that the Chinese government has launched a new plan to expand social insurance to both rural and urban areas by 2020. By the end of 2008, 11.7 million rural residents had joined the scheme (Global Times 2009).[69]

Old age security is related to economic security in general. Davis-Friedmann suggested in her study on old age security in the early 1980s that since women in general earned less than men in both rural and urban China, sons were in general believed to be better placed to provide economic security to family members (Davis-Friedmann 1985: 153-56).

Another effect of the dismantling of the communes was that families were left to fend for themselves with regard to safeguarding their rights and interests. This was

[67] The character for woman (*nü*) does not consist of different characters with separate meanings, but is one single character based on the shape of a woman's body.

[68] Some scholars have made the link between an increase in excess female infant mortality and the dismantling of the welfare system in the 1980s when more and more people lost their basic health insurance (Lai 2005: 324).

[69] This new scheme involves funding from the central government, which will provide 80 percent of the funds in Western China, 60 percent in Central China and 20 percent in Eastern China (Global Times 2009). The rest will be funded by local governments and participants in the scheme.

related to the fact that local cadres became less powerful in implementing and managing village affairs and in some cases failed to carry out state policies (Mosher 1982; Davin 1985; Zhang 2000).[70] Moreover, corruption at the local levels has been endemic in many areas (Chen and Wu 2006). Zhang suggests that "peasant households needed to rely on themselves to take up the newly available opportunities and to accommodate the increasing risk and uncertainties" (Zhang 2000: 68). In this situation, sons were regarded important as spokesmen and having no son meant little say in village affairs (Mosher 1982: 359).

One result of the increase in family self-reliance in safeguarding family interests was the use of marriage to form strategic unions. This is believed to help explain why the age of marriage dropped in the 1980s, after the Marriage Law was revised in 1980.[71] In her study of a market town in the Pearl River delta, Siu moreover found that dowry, which had been common in pre-1949 China, began to reappear in the 1980s as families used a daughter's marriage to forge alliances in an era where the political and legal system became weaker (Siu 1993). There is some evidence from the early 1990s that kinship groups started to assume functions of family welfare in Guangdong. Johnson documented that in the Pearl River delta, graves and ancestor halls were repaired, and lineage members started to undertake rituals and feasts, and employed officers, who worked as agents on behalf of the lineage organisation (Johnson 1993: 132).

The population policy

Another major reform, which has been debated in relation to the institution of son preference, is the population policy and changes in family size. By the late 1970s, consensus among the Chinese leadership had started to develop with regard to the need to limit population growth.[72] There were two main concerns that led to this consensus. Firstly, it was believed that as long as China did not manage to feed its population, any development strategy would fail. Hence, the population policy was effectively a development policy. Secondly, the baby-boom generation of the early

[70] With the introduction of contracted land anti-cadre feelings seem to have emerged as some peasants did not appreciate the role of the cadres. Moreover, cadres were not always granted a stipend, but instead allocated land. This undermined their commitment to managing official duties (Davin 1985: 59).

[71] The 1980 marriage law set the minimum age for women to marry at 20 and for men at 22. Quoting official statistics, Davis and Harrell report that in 1978 the marriage age was 22.4 for rural women and 25.1 for urban women, and by 1987 the average age of marriage had dropped to 21.0 years for both rural and urban women (Davis and Harrell 1993: 10)

[72] It should be noted that a massive reduction in fertility occurred before the official population policy was launched in 1979. Already in 1971 did the Chinese government launch the "later, longer, fewer" (*wan xi shao*) campaign to reduce fertility , and during the 1970s the total fertility rate (TFR) dropped from 5.81 to 2.75 (Banister 1984: 719).

1960s was expected to start childbearing in the early 1980s, and reducing fertility was therefore seen as an urgent matter (Croll 1985: 23-4).

Being relatively ignorant of the needs and wishes with regard to the preferred family size of the Chinese population (Greenhalgh 2008), the government launched its population policy, also known as the one-child policy, in 1979.[73] When the official population policy was first launched, there were few exceptions allowed to the one-child-per-couple rule. The target was to slow down China's population growth so that it would not exceed 1.2 billion by the year 2000 (Greenhalgh and Winckler 2006). In order to accomplish that, a strict administrative system was established which allotted targets and quotas to different areas. Those targets and quotas decided how many couples could give birth to a child in what year, contraceptive use, etc. and are founding principles of the "administrative approach" to family planning.[74]

Not surprisingly, the policy was met with much resistance despite massive propaganda, education and incentives for couples to adopt the one child per couple norm (Croll 1985b). In the early years of implementation, accepting one child was particularly difficult for couples with a daughter (for reasons explained above), especially in rural areas (Mosher 1982; Davin 1985: 41; Yan 2003). However, with time, the popular view of the population policy has changed. Drawing on perspectives of Michel Foucault and his concept of governmentality,[75] Greenhalgh and Winckler have argued that the average Chinese has accepted and adopted the population policy and many are convinced that having one child is in the best interest of the child, the family, the nation, and even the world (Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005). Also, fieldwork on fertility behaviour in rural China has shown that the economic reforms since 1978 have brought about significant change in terms of number of children preferred, as parents consider the cost of raising children more carefully (Zhang 1999).

Moreover, important to note is that the Population and Family Planning Law of the PRC grants the right to childbearing to married couples, but not to unmarried

[73] The Policy remained a policy until 2002 when it was written into law through the Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China. The law stipulates general rights and responsibilities in relation to family planning, and advocates the one-child-per-couple norm. However, the exact rule and regulations governing fertility in China is stated in the individual provincial regulations (Gu, Wang et al. 2007). As the law is still often referred to as a policy, I use the term "population policy" even though the policy in fact is a law since 2002.

[74] Davin notes that although coercion was prohibited, the state must bear some responsibility for its occurrence since the state imposed targets and quotas for which local cadres were held responsible. In cases where they succeeded they were rewarded, else they were punished (Davin 1992: 98). Consequently, in practice, the state created incentives for coercion, despite banning it. The target and quota system was not removed until 1998.

[75] A cornerstone of the concept of governmentality is that state power is exercised through means other than direct state intervention, such as the "disciplining of conduct of non-state social institutions and the cultivation by individuals themselves of the capacity to regulate their own behaviour" (Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005: 4).

couples and single women.[76] In this way, heteronormativity is institutionalised by law and childbearing is something that takes place within the marriage institution.

Competing interests: son preference and low fertility

Even though the general trend for Chinese couples has been to embrace the idea of one or two children, the idea that daughters and sons are equally worthy does not seem to be as widely supported. Couples may be satisfied with one or two children, but only as long as one of them is a son. Consequently, in order to combine low fertility and son preference, couples have resorted to prenatal sex-selection and in some cases the abandonment, adoption and killing of baby girls, as discussed in Chapter Two. This has led some critics to suggest that the government effectively created a "one-son policy" (Chan, Blyth et al. 2006: 610).

However, whereas there is consensus that the population policy has exacerbated sex ratio imbalance, because of the existence of son preference, the academic community disagrees with regard to whether or not the policy has strengthened the institution of son preference.

The 1.5-child policy

The discussions on whether the population policy has strengthened son preference focus mostly on the so called 1.5-child policy. Beginning in 1984, many areas introduced an amendment to the one-child policy, stating that rural families with only one girl could have a second child (Zeng 2007).[77] This was what Greenhalgh's (1993) calls a "peasantisation" of the policy, implying that the state gave in to the idea that sons' labour is essential for agriculture, effectively sanctioning the "heavy labour argument". The amendment to the policy has not only been interpreted as "giving in" to peasant demands for a son, but also to reinforcing the notion that sons are more valuable than daughters (Greenhalgh 1993; Yan 2003: 199; Lin 2006). For the same reason, Li (1995) criticises the 1.5-child policy, which she suggests "represents the government's concession to patrilineal tradition and the cultural norm favouring sons." She further argues that the 1.5-child policy "opens a door for people to have more children while approving and encouraging the customary preference for sons" (Li 1995: 569).

However, the view that the 1.5-child policy has reinforced son preference is not shared by everyone. Short and Zhai et al. (2001) show that in areas where the 1.5-child policy is in place (areas which they refer to as "daughter-exception

[76] In 2002, Lioning province gave single women the right to get pregnant via assisted reproductive technology. However, regulations issued by the Ministry of Health in 2003 banned medical doctors from assisting single women in this regards, overruling the Liaoning regulations (Döring 2008: 299).

[77] Other exceptions to the one-child norm relate to parents belonging to the same ethnic minority, and couples who have been residing abroad. A recent development is also that a two-child norm applies to couples where both parties are singleton children (Gu, Wang et al. 2007). (Gu, Wang et al. 2007). This is only marginally lower than the estimated TFR in 2000, which was 1.55 (Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005).

communities"), daughters are likely to receive more parental care than in areas where there is a strict one-child policy and in areas where two or more children are permitted. They suggest that one possible explanation for this is that many couples prefer two children and that having a daughter is therefore warmly welcomed by parents who then are allowed to have a second child. Another explanation they put forward is that daughter-exception de-stigmatises daughters: "Though the policy itself is born of son preference, it may serve to equalize the value of girls and boys, rather than reinforce girls' disadvantage – at least in this regard" (Short, Zhai et al. 2001: 936).[78]

Daughter empowerment?

Ethnographic studies from as early as the mid 1980s found that some parents in the cities preferred daughters (Croll 1984; Wolf 1985). Although it would be too hasty to conclude that the population policy contributed to this shift in the "traditional" preference for sons, as early as the mid 1980s, more recent studies have suggested that by limiting the number of children to one or sometimes two, the population policy has limited the expression of son preference simply by preventing some couples from having sons (Short, Zhai et al. 2001). Fong has even argued for a "daughter empowerment" effect of the one-child policy in the cities, as daughters in the absence of brothers experience unprecedented access to family resources and engagement (Fong 2004). Zhang has also shown that low fertility is benefiting rural daughters who do not have to compete with more than one sibling over parental resources. This strengthens the daughter-parents contract and parents are becoming increasingly aware that daughters too will be able to provide support in old age (Zhang 2007).

There are also studies which point to the fact that the population policy has the effect of challenging patrilocal living arrangements. Since the number of only-daughter households is increasing, the demand for uxorilocal son-in-laws is increasing. Li, Feldman et al. (2003) discuss uxorilocal marriage patterns and suggest that there are two different types: the "contingent type" caused by demographic factors, e.g. that there is no son in the family to form a virilocal marriage, and the "institutional type" caused by practical economic factors. The authors suggest that contingent uxorilocal marriages are more likely to take place (due to the effects of the population policy), but less likely to transmit within the household, while the institutional uxorilocal marriage is more likely to be transmitted, i.e. that other family members adopt the same behaviour (Li, Feldman et al. 2003). Another study confirmed that uxorilocal marriages have a negatively effect on son preference, but not in all cases. In less developed areas women of higher education tended to have stronger son preference (Jin, Li et al. 2007).

Among the households included in the empirical part of this study, six consisted of uxorilocal marriages. In four of the cases it was the grand-parent generation which

[78] Short, Zhai et al. (2001) do acknowledge that it could be that the unwanted daughters have been aborted, adopted or abandoned, and that the daughters who are living with their families are the ones who are truly wanted.

had formed an uxorilocal union, and in all those cases the type of uxorilocal marriage was institutional. For example, in one family, the husband came from the city and was one out of three brothers. Due to urban housing shortage, he married into the village of his wife, as they were able to receive land there. In the two other cases the uxorilocal marriage was among the adult generation, and was of the contingent kind, i.e. the wife had no brother. Importantly, in all those families the uxorilocal sons-in-law had brothers, meaning that the sons-in-law were "freed" of the expected obligation to form a patrilocal union. In fact, among the households interviewed in this study, several couples who had children in the 1980s and early 1990s had two sons, suggesting that people defied the population policy not only because they wanted *one* son.

Rural-urban labour migration

Along with the introduction of the HRS and the population policy, another reform considered to have had an impact on the institution of son preference is the relaxation of restrictions on the movement of people. As of the late 1980s, labour migration became an important means for livelihood diversification of rural households.[79] It also became a development path, used both as a household strategy and as a tactic for individual migrants to attain personal goals (Zhang 2001; Murphy 2002). Remittances from migrants have been crucial for reducing poverty (and in preventing rural households from falling back into poverty) and it has been reported that sometimes the amount of remittance exceeds the rural annual incomes several times (Huang and Zhan 2005). The flow of rural migrants has continued to increase. According to the 2000 census, there were an estimated 144 million[80] people counted as migrants, and the majority of them moved from rural to urban areas, although urban-urban migration constituted a significant and often ignored proportion of migrants (Zai and Zhongdong 2004).[81] At the national level, out of migrants who moved outside their county of residence without transferring their *hukou* (i.e. the so called floating population), 46 percent were women. In Anhui Province, where fieldwork was conducted for this study, 43 percent of all migrants were women according the 2000 census count (ABS 2005).

The proportion of women in the floating population varies greatly depending on the age, civil status, destination and motive for migration in the samples studied. For

[79] Because land was contracted for a limited period of time and each family's land was scattered into several plots, many rural households were reluctant to make long-term investments in agriculture, which affected productively negatively.

[80] It should be noted that this includes migration within counties. If migration is defined as taking place between counties and between provinces, the figure was 79 million people in 2000 (Zai and Ma 2004: 483).

[81] Unofficial estimates suggest the figure is closer to 200 million, which would be similar to the total number of international migrants (Fan 2008).

example, research shows that migrant women in general are younger and more likely to be unmarried than their male counterparts. Moreover, whereas migrants in general are both younger and more educated than the average rural population, women migrants tend to be less educated than men migrants (Jacka and Gaetano 2004: 23-24). Women are also over-represented among migrants who move to the export-driven industries in the coastal provinces, while men dominate in the construction sector.

The feminisation of agriculture

A puzzling and perhaps paradoxical trend in rural China is that whereas the importance of sons is believed to have increased with the introduction of the HRS, sons are to a large degree absent from the countryside, as they tend to migrate to the cities for long periods of time.

With the out-migration of adult men from rural areas, family-based farming has become increasingly dominated by women. Whereas national-level data on the gender division of labour in agriculture are scarce in China, several smaller studies suggest that there is a process of feminisation of agriculture ongoing (see e.g. Judd 1994; Jacka 1997; Rawski and Mead 1998; Summerfield 2006). Other research has questioned the extent of feminisation of agriculture in China and proposes that it only occurs among some age groups of women (de Brauw, Li et al. 2008). The literature has discussed feminisation of agriculture not only in relation to the agricultural tasks that women perform, but also with regard to the social and economic consequences feminisation of agriculture brings about. The results are diverse and sometimes conflicting. Some studies have found more negative consequences of feminisation of agriculture, such as women being trapped in relative poverty and concentrated in a low-income sector (e.g. Summerfield 2006).[82] It has also been documented that male dominated decision-making patterns are hard to alter (Ye and Wu 2008a). Others have found more positive outcomes. For example, some suggest that an increase in women farmers is positive for productivity and income (de Brauw, Li et al. 2008). Matthews and Nee (2000) concur and suggest that men's role in farming and looking after and managing family land and property tends to decrease with migration, and as agriculture has become largely feminised, the position of the rural women in the household and community has improved (Matthews and Nee 2000). Judd found that women preferred to work in household based production as they had more power there, while men had more power outside the household (Judd 1994: 236).

Hence, rural-urban male migration has potentially a double effect on the institution of son preference. Firstly, in cases where it leads to a feminisation of

[82] Similar patterns have been reported from India, where women in agricultural work tend to be poorly paid and work under unfree labour conditions (da Corta and Venkateshwarlu 1999: 116-17). Garikipati found that feminisation of agriculture rarely leads to empowerment of women in the sense that they can negotiate better outcomes for themselves, but that owning assets significantly improved their domestic power (Garikipati 2009: 540).

agriculture, women may experience more decision-making power and enhance their status in the family. Secondly, the out-migration of men undermines the "heavy labour argument", i.e. that parents prefer sons due to men's physical strength, needed in agriculture.

Migration as a means of emancipation

Many of the traditional theories on migration have been criticized for concealing gender aspects in migration, due to the fact that these theories have used male migrants as a frame of reference (Chant & Radcliff 1992). However, despite the concealment of women's experiences of migration, many scholars have argued that migration is a highly gendered process, which reflects the different positions of women and men in society, as well as in the household (Bjerén 1997: 224-225).

Earlier studies often understood female labour migration through the "household strategy model", suggesting that decisions regarding women's migration were shaped within the household to serve the interest of the family more than the interest of the individual woman (Rodenburg 1997). As discussed by Jacka (2006), Kwung, who studied factory workers in Taiwan in the 1980s, took this standpoint to the extreme, putting forward the "filial daughter model". According to Kwung's model, rural women migrate mostly to repay their families for bringing them up and educating them before they get married and leave their natal home (Quoted in Jacka 2006: 166).

However, more recent studies have shown that the "household strategy model" is not sufficient to explain why, where, for how long and for what purpose women migrate as it pays too little attention to the agency of migrant women. Some studies suggest that traditional customs related to marriage and childbearing in the rural areas, as well as lack of opportunities in general, were a force behind female labour migration in the sense that young women wanted to broaden their horizon and gain life experience beyond the village (Eklund 2000; Jacka 2006). In her study of members of the Migrant Women's Club in Beijing, Jacka found that "develop oneself", "broaden horizon", "exercise independence" and "education" were the four main reasons for rural migrant women to leave home (Jacka 2006: 135). The same survey revealed that nearly 90 percent of the women saw themselves as migrant decision makers (ibid: 167). This suggests that rural migrant women are active agents who migrate on their own initiative and in order to achieve goals that they themselves have identified.[83] This confirms Pun's point that it would be misleading to think of rural migrant women as "passive objects of the Chinese patriarchal family" (Pun 2005: 55).

[83] These findings question the extent to which the "household strategy model", which proposes that power relations and decision-making structures in the family mould the aspiring female migrant, can explain why, where, for how long and for what purpose women migrate. The results also stand in sharp contrast to the "filial daughter" model proposed by Kwung, who studied factory workers in Taiwan in the 1980s. According to Kwung's model, rural women migrate mostly to repay their families for bringing them up and educating them before they get married and leave their natal home (Quoted in Jacka 2006: 166).

To what extent can migration improve the value of rural daughters? One facet is that it contributes to revaluating different capabilities of women and men. For example, female labour is sought after in some sectors, such as in the manufacturing and textile industries (Pun 2005; Zhang 2001; Fan 2008). Clearly, the fact that women migrants take an active role in the labour force and earn their own incomes also improves their self-esteem and their bargaining power within their families (Yan 2003; Zhang 2007). The value of rural daughters is further enhanced by the economic contributions they make to their natal families through remittances.

Indeed, the most obvious way in which daughters contributed to the welfare of their natal families in the villages I studied in rural Anhui was as unmarried migrant workers. In one household, Duan, a man in his mid 50s, spoke with great emotion about the fact that his second daughter had foregone on the opportunity to continue her studies at the senior high school level despite the fact that she had passed the entrance exam. Instead, she has taken the initiative to migrate so that she could help pay the tuition fees of her brother who was only one year younger. During the four years the second daughter had worked as a migrant she had remitted about 30,000-40,000 yuan. This sum should be put in relation to the new house in which Duan lived, and which had cost about 20,000 yuan to build. Duan spoke warmly about his second daughter and her son, who live in the same village as Duan, and that he often plays with his grandson.

However, there are also obstacles to the extent to which migration is a means of enhancing the value of rural daughters. One such obstacle is the fact that the gender wage gap in the urban labour market deprives migrant women of gaining the same economic opportunities as migrant men (Fan 2003).

In addition to gender inequalities with regard to income, research identifies other examples where gender disparities and gender structures condition the outcomes of migration. Some studies have shown that women do not get equal opportunities compared to men in terms of careers and independence (Zhang 2001; Fan 2003). Women migrants are also disadvantages on the labour market because they tend to be younger, less educated and less experienced than men, and their career span tends to be shorter as marriage often puts an end to migration (Fan 2003).[84] Men, on the other hand, seem to gain more opportunities on the labour market after they get married (Fan 2003). Hence, the employment prospects for rural migrant women are relatively short-lived and career paths and promotion opportunities restricted. This helps explain why women have been confined mainly within low-skilled, labour-intensive and low-security jobs (Fan 1999). However, others have found that it is becoming increasingly common that women return to the cities after they have given birth and cared for their infant babies (Lou, Zheng et al. 2004: 239).

[84] Gender discrimination in the labour market affecting urban women is also often rooted in notions that women are more "expensive" due to maternal leave and health care costs (Summerfield and Aslanbeigui 1999).

This may allow women migrants to "catch up" with their male counterparts in terms of income and career.[85]

Studies of female labour migration have also shown that, although migration brings about certain freedoms and independence compared to male-dominated structures in the family and place of origin, other structures take over in the place of destination, which prevent women from enjoying equal rights and opportunities as compared with men. Zhang Li found that "…the labour discipline in Wenzhou migrants' garment industry exerts parent-like controls that conceal gender and class exploitations" (Zhang 2001: 129). Moreover, based on her analysis of women migrant workers in Shenzhen, Pun added the role of the state as one of three factors that underpin oppression of migrant women. She proposes that migrant women workers are subject to "triple oppression", i.e. global capitalism, state socialism and familial patriarchy. All these three oppressions reinforce each other and produce inequalities based on class, gender and rural-urban disparities (Pun 2005: 4).

However, based on the experiences of migrants from a village located in Hubei Province, Zhang found that the segmented labour market in the costal provinces is based on residency along the rural/urban *hukou* status more than gender. Zhang proposes that "rural daughters" (in this case rural migrant women workers) benefit from the export industry in a way that their male counterparts do not. This gives rural daughters an advantage in terms of income and provides rural daughters with opportunities to transform their social and economic roles vis-à-vis their parents (Zhang 2007; Zhang 2007b). The proposition that wage labour as well as experiencing the world outside the village contributes to easing notions of son preference was confirmed in a study by Li and Lavely (2003) in rural China.

The empowerment effect of labour migration on daughters has also been documented in other Asian countries. Kabeer found that Bangladeshi women who have entered wage-labour in the non-agricultural sector "away from patriarchal control of kinship and community" (2005: 19) insist on their right to support their aging parents (Kabeer 2005).

Yan has shown that the experiences of migrants seem to make them more progressive towards having daughters only (Yan 2003). He found that daughters-only households shared several characteristics; the parents were born in the 1960s or 1970s, they had established conjugal homes shortly after marriage, their economic status, consumption of food, leisure and entertainment was just above average. Moreover, very few of the parents contracted land, and most of them were relying on migration as a livelihood strategy (Yan 2003: 202-203). Among the rural women and men interviewed in the empirical study on which this dissertation is based, I did not find a pattern confirming Yan's observation with regard to migration. There were several daughters-only families, and many of them were non-migrants, working in the

[85] Migrating and leaving children back home is a common strategy for labour migrants all over the world, but comes with high costs for both women and men who lose the daily contact with their children.

local industries. However, the parents of daughters-only interviewed in this study shared one characteristic of the parents in Yan's study of 2003, namely that daughters-only households were less likely to contract land.

Hence, migration challenges several of the institutions on which son preference is based. Female rural-urban labour migration enhances rural women's economic status and facilitates transfer of resources from daughters to their natal families. This implies that the idea that women have to rely on a son to get by, as discussed in Chapter Three, slowly gets eroded. Male rural-urban migration also challenges son preference in the sense that it gives rise to feminisation of agriculture, which undermines the heavy-labour arguments for son preference, and which has the potential to improve the status of women. Moreover, if we are to believe the literature which argues that patrilocality was strengthened during the Commune era because of restrictions on mobility, as discussed above, male migration has weakened the institution of patrilocality.

The Care for Girls Campaign

Even though there are many examples of social change that challenge the institution of son preference, there are several aspects of social and economic life in China that reinforce it. The institution seems to be strong enough to be regarded as a problem, not least with regard to the adverse outcomes of son preference such as daughter de-selection and discrimination. In 2002, the Chinese government identified one of the demographic outcomes of son preference, SRB imbalance, as a "development issue" (SFPC 2002: 1). By then, the Chinese government had already pilot tested a programme to boost the development of young girls in Anhui Province, as mentioned in Chapter Two. Built on that experience, the government embarked on an ambitious programme to alter the value of girl children and to promote gender equality. This programme, referred to as the Care for Girls Campaign (CGC), was launched in 2003 to address son preference and normalise SRB (Li, Wei et al. 2007).

Although SRB imbalance was the initial concern, more specifically to normalise the imbalanced SRB by the year 2020, the objectives of the CGC were set much broader, to include the improvement of the value of the girl child and to promote gender equality. In order to reach these objectives, the programme has adopted several approaches (CGC 2006b):

1. Undertaking awareness raising and advocacy campaigns to promote "new marriage and childbearing customs"
2. Strengthening reproductive health services and management
3. Launching beneficial socioeconomic policies for one child or two daughter families
4. Strengthening management of sex determination and sex selective abortions
5. Improving statistical and reporting systems

The first phase of the CGC was implemented in 11 counties in 11 provinces[86] and the second phase in 13 counties in 13 provinces[87], mostly in rural China. Since 2005, the project has been launched at a national level (CGC 2008). It is hard to estimate the resources allocated to the CGC, as many of its components were operational before the campaign started. One estimate places the amount of funds allocated at 300 million RMB (Li, Wei et al. 2007).

[86] The first phase of the Care for Girls Campaign was implemented in Jiangsu, Anhui, Fujian, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, and Shaanxi.

[87] The second phase of the Care for Girls Campaign was implemented in Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Liaoning, Jilin, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Shandong, Chongqing, Sichuan, Yunnan, and Gansu.

The literature on the CGC is either focusing on the demographic aspect of sex-selective abortion or has a "call for action" approach to it, which means there is limited literature analysing the design and implementation of the CGC. However, the few analyses that exist tend to either portray the campaign in favourable terms, pointing to the multi-ministerial character of the CGC and the leading role of the government as "champions" of gender equality (Tan 2008), or criticise the campaign for not being gender sensitive enough (Liu 2004; Li 2007). There is, however, little understanding of how gender norms and understandings have shaped the Campaign's objectives and design.

Preliminary conclusions

In this chapter I have in line with the "causal approach" to studying son preference elaborated on how institutions which reinforce son preference have become renegotiated in light of social change in the People's Republic of China since 1949.

There is an assumption that cultural preferences and traditional values were held back during the Mao era and that they came back in the 1980s when the state withdrew from many sectors of society (see e.g. Davis and Harrell 1993: 6). However, Siu (1993) argues that it is naïve to think that the concerns of continuing the family and inheritance – factors that are associated with son preference – would have eased during the Mao era. Is it equally naïve to think that son preference was suppressed during the Mao era and then resurfaced during the Reform era? Answering this question is problematic for several reasons.

First of all, understanding social change by contrasting the Mao era with the Reform era is a simplification as many of the seeds of social change in the Reform era were planted during the Mao era. Hence understanding social and economic life during the Mao era is crucial for understanding the same during the Reform era (Yan 2003). Still, much of the literature discusses son preference in relation to either the Mao or the Reform era, and writings focusing on the Reform era rarely make reference to the Mao era.

Secondly, during both the Mao era and the Reform era parallel and contradictory trends with regard to son preference have emerged, some reinforcing it, others challenging it. Often, factors that contributed to strengthening the institution of son preference were results of state simplification, as Scott (1998) termed state interventions which are designed and implemented without taking into account local knowledge and as such often have unintended effects. However, state simplifications do not always have negative effects judging from the "daughter empowerment" effect, which some authors have identified as being a result of the population policy.

Moreover, it does also not seem right to disregard the social and economic restructuring of everyday life during the first three decades of the PRC and their potential in challenging "traditional values". Indeed, in her study of three villages in rural Shandong, Judd (1994) found that gender relations in the Reform era may at

first glance appear to be conditioned by pre-1949 ideas and practices. However, she concluded that new socioeconomic circumstances, such as the increase in off-farm work and falling fertility, constitute different parameters for how gender structures evolve. Furthermore, in his longitudinal study of a Chinese village, Yan (2003) concluded that changes in the family institution formed one of the most fundamental changes during the Reform era, thanks to the foundations laid during the Mao era.

From reviewing the literature, I found at least two new factors underpinning the institution of son preference: the heavy labour argument and the security argument which relate to both economic and old age security, as well as rule of law (or the lack thereof). These are example of how causes for son preference are re-identified, which – building on the preliminary conclusions of Chapter Three – is an important undertaking since understanding son preference through patrilocality, patrilocality and filial piety run the risk of diverting attention away from contemporary institutions outside of the family that reinforce son preference.

The academic narrative on son preference in the PRC since 1949 can also be interpreted in terms of what it does *not* say, i.e. what it leaves out, or only touches upon briefly. There are several observations to be made in this regard. First of all, the academic narrative on son preference focuses almost exclusively on rural China and is effectively silent on how institutions known for upholding son preference have changed with economic reform and the dismantling of the *danwei* system and social welfare institutions in urban China. An exception to this is Davis (1985, 1993) who has investigated support for old age in urban areas from a gender perspective. Secondly, hardly any voice is given to religious life, including ancestor worship, and how it is becoming renegotiated in terms of sons' and daughters' functions. Thirdly, the academic narrative too often presents son preference as something constant. For example, the heavy labour argument, which was first formulated in the 1980s, is often presented in later texts without any empirical data supporting its continuous relevance. Lastly, there is often lack of an agency perspective in the literature, meaning that accounts of flesh-and-bone people are largely absent.

6. Summary of papers

Paper 1: Cadres as gatekeepers – the art of opening the right doors?

This paper addresses challenges associated with conducting fieldwork when gatekeepers have an active role in the process of generating data. As opposed to most methodological writings on gatekeepers in social research, which deal with situations researching socially excluded people, this paper focuses on the challenges and dilemmas that arise when gatekeepers are used to access persons whose inaccessibility derives from limited freedom of speech and expression. The paper uses empirical examples based on personal experiences and participant observation from fieldwork in China, fieldwork that primarily has concerned topics related to son preference, which in China is regarded as a sensitive topic. The paper suggests that although the empirical examples derive from China and situations where gatekeepers are also cadres, the challenges accounted for are not uniquely Chinese. Nor are they uniquely related to more totalitarian societies. The challenges that arise when gatekeepers have political interests is just one set of examples of gatekeeper bias and interference.

The paper shows how gatekeepers rarely are "neutral" to the research process and that their interests and motivations can cause challenges to the fieldwork process. These challenges have mainly three origins. The first set of challenges emanates from the gatekeepers' understanding of the field. Important to note is that their understanding is subjective and based on individual experiences, norms and values. The second set stems from how gatekeepers perceive the fieldwork will alter their situation, be it personal or professional, including career opportunities, standing in the community, relation to fellow citizens etc. This is closely associated to the notion of political risk, which may lead gatekeepers to keep some doors close or invisible. The third set pertains to gatekeepers' perception of their own capacities in facilitating fieldwork. The paper further proposes different strategies that can be used to deal with these challenges.

The chapter concludes that even gatekeepers who may seem biased can provide access to relevant persons and resource. In fact, viewing gatekeeper bias and gatekeeper interference as a sign that the fieldwork has failed reflects a belief that an objective reality, which can be observed by use of strict scientific methods, exists. Taking a more social constructivist approach to social science, this chapter concludes that there are in fact "no right doors". Rather, qualitative research resembles a journey where the researcher explores new grounds, and gatekeepers play an integral part in

that journey. In this connection, of vital importance for the researcher is to account for the role of gatekeepers in selecting informants and in the data gathering process. Only if fieldwork challenges and mitigation strategies are accounted for in a transparent way can the research results be done full justice to.

Paper 2: Modelling prenatal son preference: some new perspectives from China

China has since the mid 1980s witnessed an increasing trend in sex ratio at birth (SRB) imbalance. While the literature agrees that SRB is caused by parents' need to have a son, it is not clear if an increase in SRB reflects an increase in son preference. This study aims at providing further insights into this issue by developing a model to estimate "prenatal son preference", i.e. the proportion of couples who wants and makes sure that they give birth to at least one son, based on SRB and total fertility rates (TFR). Data on SRB and TFR from China are applied to the model.

The results show that while SRB based on three-year averages has increased steadily at a national level since the mid 1980s, prenatal son preference has fluctuated, The main increase in prenatal son preference took place in the 1980s, with a peak around 1990, when almost 10 percent of the population had prenatal son preference. It then dropped in the early 1990s to around 8 percent and increased again in the early 2000s to about 11 percent. Another result is that trends in SRB and prenatal son preference by province sometimes diverge and the provinces with the highest level of SRB imbalance are not always the ones with the highest prevalence of prenatal son preference. The results also point to differences in trends between SRB and prenatal son preference between rural, township and urban areas, suggesting that prenatal son preference did not increase in rural China in the 1990s even though SRB increased from 111.7 in 1990 to 121.7 in 2000. In order to interpret these results, changing trends in son preference are discussed in relation to social change in China.

The study draws conclusions at two levels. First of all, theoretically, it concludes that increased SRB does not have to signify increasing prenatal son preference when fertility rates fall. Secondly, it concludes that an increase in prenatal son preference concurred in time with the introduction of the household responsibility system in rural areas in the 1980s and the deepening of economic reform in urban areas in the 1990s. Moreover, modelling prenatal son preference as suggested is useful for posing relevant questions with regard to how and why prenatal son preference changes. It also has important implications for where, if and how interventions that address skewed SRB should be planned.

Paper 3: Deconstructing notions of son preference – migration and social change in four Chinese villages

According to official and popular discourses on son preference, one factor that contributes to upholding son preference is the importance of and reliance on male manual labour in farm work. This paper explores the impact of rural-urban migration on gender divisions of labour in agriculture and to what extent such impacts may alter notions of son preference. It attempts to address what seems to be a paradox, namely that agriculture is believed to be feminised at the same time as son preference is believed to have increased in rural China.

The paper introduces a new term – "demasculinisation of agriculture" – and argues that from the point of view of understanding son preference and other phenomena which are contingent on gendered power relations within the household, "demasculinisation of agriculture" captures the transformations in the political economy of rural China better than the term "feminisation of agriculture" does. There are several reasons for this. First of all, women also migrate and the paper shows that the withdrawal of adult men from agriculture does not necessarily mean that women engage more, but rather that men engage less. Moreover, older persons contribute to filling the gap created when male farm labour recedes. Secondly, out-migration generates remittances and contributes to transferring new ideas which enable the mechanisation of certain tasks in the production cycle, making male labour less indispensable. Thirdly, the expansion of local industries, infrastructure projects and private housing have reduced arable land of many rural households. This means that farm work has become less intense and heavy, making male manual farm labour more redundant. Lastly, there is a transition of values, which means that the younger generation is not interested in farm work. This undermines the supply of future male farm labour. However, the demasculinisation of agriculture does not only mean that men are de facto less engaged in agriculture. It also means that the relative importance of family-based farming as a rural livelihood strategy has been weakened and replaced by other means of income-earning, where off-farm work and migration have become essential livelihood strategies.

The paper also finds that, as a consequence of rural-urban migration, households are formed in new ways that deviate from the patrilocal joint family, which is one institution underpinning son preference. For example, in many cases both the man and the woman migrate, resulting in the formation of "older persons households" or "older peasants households", and sometimes the adult women migrate alone, leaving their husbands and in-laws in the village. However, the study also identifies a potentially negative effect for young girls in "older peasants households" as they sometimes are expected to work in the household to free up time for their grandparents to work in the fields, which gives the girls less time for own developments, for example in terms of school work.

The paper concludes that although demasculinisation of agriculture undermines the argument that the urge to have a son is based on the need to secure male manual labour in farm work, it may not challenge the vital role of male labour in rural livelihood strategies. Rather, the paper concludes that it is the reliance on male labour for securing livelihoods that reinforces son preference, regardless of whether or not male labour refers to farm or off-farm work.

Paper 4: 'Good citizens prefer daughters': gender, rurality and the Care for Girls Campaign

The paper examines the Care for Girls Campaign (referred to as the Campaign), which was launched by the Chinese government in 2003 to 1) reduce sex ratio at birth (SRB) imbalance, 2) enhance the value of girl children and 3) promote gender equality. Based on analysis of official documents related to the Campaign, as well as interviews with rural women and men, it analyses the particular ways in which certain gender norms and understandings have shaped the campaign's objectives and design and the relationship between the gendering of the Campaign and gender norms and practices prevailing in rural China.

The paper shows that there is a complex set of relationships between the gendering of the Campaign, as manifested both in its awareness raising component and in its constituent socioeconomic polices, and rural gender norms and institutions. First of all, in the formulation and illustration of messages that aim at raising awareness about the value of girls, the Campaign capitalises on prevailing gender norms, such as the understanding that women are loving and caring, and closer to their parents' emotionally. The paper suggests that capitalising on such gender norms may attract attention and sympathy for girls in the short term. However, in the long run, it may contribute to the reinforcement of popular gender stereotypes which may, in turn, contribute to the maintenance of son preference. Moreover, paradoxically, son preference has become politically incorrect as a result of the Campaign, but daughter preference is considered "progressive". Secondly, the campaign's preferential socioeconomic policies targeting one-child and daughters-only families are partially based on the assumption that having daughters creates vulnerability. These policies risk further contributing to gender inequalities, as they convey the message that daughters are not as valuable as sons, and that families with only daughters are in need of financial support. Thirdly, the official discourse on son preference – "the State narrative" – which underpins the Campaign, partly formulates its arguments in relation to rural gender institutions, but does not challenge them. A key example of this is the lack of a systematic approach within the Campaign to addressing virilocal marriage patterns as a factor contributing to son preference. Fourthly, both the State narrative on son preference and popular conceptions of son preference tend to frame and explain it in stereotypical terms, where rurality, the old, and the past are understood as forming *one* institution which underpins son preference. Lastly, this

paper shows that missing from the State narrative is also an acknowledgment of the role of the FP policy, both in underpinning the notion of son preference and in providing conducive circumstances for undertaking sex-selective abortions. The paper concludes that the Campaign pays too little attention to different institutions that reinforce son preference and to women's and men's agency and experiences of development and transformation of these institutions. Hence, there is a risk that the Campaign will cement a rigid perception of son preference and thus prevent a deeper understanding of how changing social and economic institutions may contribute to altering son preference, with or without direct state intervention.

7. Concluding discussion

Whereas the previous chapter summarised Papers 1-4, including their main findings, this chapter I will discuss the main findings of the four papers *in relation* to each other and to existing literature as accounted for in Chapters Three to Five. The discussion will focus on different methodological, conceptual, theoretical and empirical perspectives and issues that are important to take into consideration when exploring the institution of son preference and how it is renegotiated in light of social change.

Given that son preference manifests itself at the micro level but is largely shaped by structural factors at the macro level, some of the discussion will focus on different indirect implications of the results, and will as such at times be hypothetical in nature.

Studying son preference in the PRC

Until recently, generally speaking, son preference in China was not a topic that deviated from mainstream norms and values. Even if people may have thought that son preference was "wrong" and that girls and boys were worth the same, there was in general considerable understanding for those who desire sons. As suggested in Paper 4, such an understanding was implicitly also prevalent among medical staff and among local cadres. In fact, the very introduction of the 1.5-child policy in rural areas signified that the state too shared that understanding.

However, one effect of the Care for Girls Campaign is that son preference has become politically incorrect (Paper 4). This means that studying son preference at the micro level by adopting an outcome approach, i.e. to explore how son preference manifests itself at the individual and family levels, is often met with challenges that resemble those which arise when the topic under study is taboo.

Moreover, even though the official discourse, or what I call the State narrative, on son preference does not explicitly touch upon the role of the population policy in reinforcing son preference (Paper 4), the launch of the Care for Girls Campaign can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the fact that the exacerbates sex ratio at birth imbalance (SRB), and perhaps even excess female infant mortality. However, the extension of such an argument leads to questions with regards to the legitimacy of the population policy. Therefore, son preference is often perceived by local cadres as a political issue, which easily feeds into the criticism of the population policy for violating women's and men's reproductive rights (Paper 1). This, in combination with the fact that having son preference at the individual level is regarded as

politically incorrect, means that, in China, son preference is a "double sensitive" topic to study.

The challenges mentioned above mean that studying son preference at the micro level is difficult in China, particularly from an outcome perspective. This finding is in line with Purewal's proposition that it is not possible to find out why a person or a couple prefers sons over daughters. It also adds to Purewal's argument that son preference is best examined by studying different stories, narratives and discourses about son preference (Purewal 2010), as discussed in Chapter Two.

The narrative of son compulsion

One narrative of son preference in China is founded on sex ratio at birth (SRB), where SRB is used as a proxy indicator of son preference. According to this narrative, son preference is high where SRB is high.

However, as has been pointed out several times already, SRB only partly reflects manifest son preference, since – in addition to being selected or deselected before birth – there are many other ways in which sons are favoured and daughters are discriminated. In order to make this point, I introduce a new term called son compulsion,[88] which denotes that couples (or individuals) want to *give birth* to at least one son and that they adopt behaviour, including prenatal sex-selection if need be, to reach that goal. The model presented in Paper 2, where son compulsion[89] is estimated based on data on SRB and total fertility rate, offers clarification and specification both empirically and conceptually to the theory of the "intensification effect", proposed by das Gupta and Bhat (1997). That theory stipulates that discrimination against daughters intensifies when the desired number of children drops faster than the desired number of sons, as discussed in Chapter Four.

The results of Paper 2 modify the narrative about son preference based on SRB in three ways by presenting the "narrative of son compulsion". First of all, when analysing son compulsion at the national level based on three year averages of SRB and total fertility rate, it is evident that just like SRB it has increased at a national level since the 1980s. However, unlike SRB, the main increase took place in the

[88] The word "compulsion" should not be associated with "compulsive", which means obsessive, neurotic and irrational. Rather it should be understood as an absolute need to give birth to a son. Such a need can be internal to the individual or couple and be an urge for survival reasons or an urge for reasons related to desire or taste. It can also stem from external pressure, obligation and sometimes coercion, expressed and exercised by other family members and the community in which the individual or couple lives. Important to emphasise is that son compulsion rooted in both internal and external factors is shaped and reinforced within structural factors.

[89] During the course of writing the discussion chapter of this dissertation, it has occurred to me that "son compulsion" is a more accurate term than "prenatal son preference", which is used in Paper 2. Since Paper 2 is currently under review I have not modified it to replace prenatal son preference with son compulsion, but hope to be able to do so once I get feedback from the reviewers.

1980s, with a peak around 1990. These are new findings, when comparing with existing literature.

Secondly, with regard to regional variance in China, the provinces which have the highest SRB are not necessarily the ones with the highest proportion of son compulsion and vice versa. Some provinces with very high SRB, at 130 or more, have reported a fall in SRB in recent times, most notably between 2000 and 2005, and are as such seen as indicators that a "sex ratio transition" is in the making, as proposed by Guilmoto (2009). However, the model in Paper 2 demonstrates that, theoretically, a sex ratio transition can take place without a reduction in the proportion of couples with son compulsion, and in such a case the long-term prospect of the continuation of the sex ratio transition is meagre. However, the results also illuminate that the argument can be reversed and, as a matter of fact, in the case of China, several provinces experience a "son compulsion" transition without experiencing a sex ratio transition (Paper 2).

Thirdly, if SRB is used as a proxy indicator for the strength of the institution of son preference, son preference is not only higher in rural than urban areas, it also increased in those areas in the 1990s. However, when looking at trends in son compulsion over the same period, it is obvious that the proportion of couples with son compulsion remained effectively the same. This trend departs from urban China, where, during the same period, an increase in SRB was accompanied with an increase in son compulsion. These results indicate that during the 1990s there were processes in rural China which interrupted the trend of increasing son compulsion, whereas in urban China there were processes that prompted more couples to wanting and ensuring that they gave birth to at least one son (Paper 2).

Son compulsion: The tip of the iceberg?

However, the extent to which variation in son compulsion can be regarded as a sign that the institution of son preference has become strengthened or weakened is by no means obvious. There are mainly three possible ways in which son compulsion relates to the institution of son preference.

Firstly, when adhering to the "substitution theory" (Goodkind 1996), variation in son compulsion does not necessarily reflect variation with regard to the strength of the institution of son preference, but rather that the institution has undergone change in terms of what is morally and socially acceptable concerning the treatment of baby girls and boys. According to this theory an increase in son compulsion as modelled in Paper 2 should not be interpreted as a strengthening of the institution of son preference, but rather as a transformation of it.

Secondly and relatedly, it is possible that son compulsion remains or increases despite a weakening of the institution of son preference. In such a situation son compulsion is boosted by couples becoming more aware of the option and possibility of practicing prenatal sex-selection, and by such practices becoming more affordable and more socially and morally acceptable. In a way, son compulsion in such a situation is driven by an increase in "supply", i.e. the possibility to ensure the birth of

a son through prenatal sex-selection and deselection (or through continuous childbearing for that matter), rather than an increase in "demand", i.e. that parents need sons for perceived survival needs or obligations. In this context it is useful to imagine son compulsion as a phenomenon that exists in different degrees, varying from urge, and sometimes coercion, to desire and liking. In cases where son preference is based on liking, it would have remained latent had means of sex-selection not been widely available, affordable and socially and morally acceptable. This may explain why son preference is observed in many Western countries (see e.g. van Balen 2006) without resulting in prenatal sex-selection. Moreover, the population policy, which was marked by an administrative approach to women's bodies until the late 1990s – where abortion was used as a means to achieve administratively set goals of low fertility, and not primarily as a way for women to exercise their reproductive rights – has left a legacy of abortion being used as a family planning method (Paper 4). This may have contributed to sex-selective abortions being more socially and morally acceptable than if there were for example religious factors contributing to anti-abortion sentiments, as has been observed in recent times in South Korea (Chung 2007). Without undervaluing the suffering Chinese women experience when undergoing induced abortion (Nie 2003), it is possible that an increase in son compulsion does not signify that the institution of son preference has become more resilient, but that people's awareness of and access to sex-selection, including sperm and egg sorting, has increased. However, if an increase in son compulsion would depend on the "supply-factor", son compulsion would expectedly decrease with the introduction of different laws and regulations banning prenatal sex-determination for non-medical purposes, launched in China since the 1990s. However, the results of Paper 2 did not indicate any such correlations in time.

If an increase in son compulsion can not be explained by a shift in the institution of son preference with regard to what is morally and socially accepted treatment of baby girls and boys, or with regard to the supply of services that enables sex-selection, then a third possible relationship between son compulsion and the institution of son preference seems plausible, namely, that the former is the tip of the iceberg of the latter. This would mean that an increase in the proportion of couples with son compulsion reflects the strengthening of the institution of son preference.

Hence, no firm conclusions can be made regarding whether or not fluctuations in son compulsion reflect a change in the institution of son preference. However, approaching the issue of son preference by examining how factors underpinning son preference are changing may shed some further light on the issue.

Gender reasoning revisited

As mentioned in Paper 3, the transformation of the gender division of labour in agriculture is an example that gender reasoning is being eroded in some aspects of everyday life in rural China. Acknowledging the argument by Yan (2003) that the seeds of social change in the Reform era was to an important extent planted during the Collective era, the emphasis on women working in the fields during the Collective era has probably laid the foundation for the ongoing transformation.

However, it seems that where gender reasoning is challenged there is a parallel process in "status reasoning", where certain tasks and functions lose their status at the same time as women take a more active role. Women's role in agriculture seems to be an example of this. However, the transformation in "reasoning" does not stop with gender and class, but also has important generational aspects, and as older persons perform an increasing share of agricultural work, such work seems to lose status even further. Hence, gender reasoning needs to be put in the context of status and generation.

Moreover, the findings of Paper 4 suggest that gender reasoning does not mean that women or girls always end up as secondary and "substitutable" compared to men and boys. This is an important observation, as it signifies that the way gender reasoning is practiced has been modified. This points at a weakness of gender as a concept, as well as gender reasoning as a conceptual tool for understanding son preference, as these concepts tend to be utilised to identify and understand instances where females are disadvantaged and males advantaged, but not the other way around. This in turn feeds into the argument made by Purewal (2010) that there is a tendency to view daughters as victims in the son preference debate without acknowledging that son preference gives rise to contradictory processes which not always harm daughters and which can be negative for boys.

The results further show that women are active agents in challenging the gender difference discourse that reinforces the reliance on sons for social, economic and symbolic reasons. In addition to forming institutional uxorilocal marriages, as will be discussed below, the informants interviewed in Anhui told of daughters-in-law who migrated to the cities without their husbands (Paper 3). This departs from the idea that sons are "primary" and "unsubstitutable" when it comes to earning an income for the family, and despite the fact that those daughters-in-law had married patrilocally, the practical living arrangements defied patrilocality and undermined the notion that daughters belong to someone else. However, women can also actively pursue son preference (Papers 3 and 4), pointing to the fact that women's agency does not always result in norms and practices that challenge patriarchal structures.

Filial daughters?

An example of gender reasoning practiced in such a way that daughters are placed in a "primary" and "unsubstitutable" position is that daughters sometimes are appreciated and "preferred" over their brothers because of their caring and supportive nature. Preference for daughters in this regard was documented in China already in the 1980s (Croll 1984; Wolf 1985) and has been documented in other Asian countries like Singapore (Göransson 2010). In fact, drawing on the findings of Rydstrom's (2003) study of Vietnam, Göransson suggested that caring for the elderly is a way for daughters in a patrilineal society to prove their worth to their families, since they as daughters are not born with symbolic value and need to prove their filiality through deeds (Göransson 2010: 209). In this way, daughter preference evolves within the context of son preference.

The results of this dissertation also point in this direction, albeit not in the context of old age support. As mentioned, the notion of filiality among the informants in rural Anhui was quite different from how it is described as a Confucian deed and older persons defined filiality more in terms of "absence of negatives" (Chapter Three). Providing emotional and practical care, such as helping out with the household chores, was not described as being filial. Moreover, when asked if they were given support by their daughters, older persons often said that daughters belong to their husband's family (in cases where they were married), or that daughters were too poor to give them anything. In addition, daughters' contributions to their native families were not always interpreted as filial.

Rather, the most obvious and recognised way in which daughters were being filial to their own parents was through migration remittances, as indicated in Chapter Five. From this perspective, daughters earned their appreciation through the economic contribution they made to their natal families, and not through old age care and support. The fact that unmarried women migrants remit money to their native families can be viewed through the "filial daughters model" (Kwung 1976 quoted in Jacka 2006), mentioned in Chapter Five. However, although the migration literature gives little credit to the explanatory potential of the filial daughters model, for reasons related to migrant women showing a great deal of agency, the model can also be criticised for omitting to acknowledge that daughters do not only "repay" their parents before getting married by sending migrant remittances. Remittances also greatly alter the intergenerational contract, and strengthen the emotional bond between daughters and their natal parents. Hence, both the filial daughters model and critics of it seem to pay too little attention to how young women in rural China exercise their agency within the family and the rural community, as if they assume that patriarchal structures in rural China are immutable and that rural women are uninterested in or incapable of altering them, except by leaving them altogether through migration.

Son preference in an ageing society

The role of older persons in challenging or underpinning notions of son preference has mostly focused on their "traditional" values which place importance on sons for old age support and the survival of the lineage. According to such a perspective, older persons are "bearers" of son preference and are main actors ensuring that the institution of son preference persists (Paper 4).

However, the findings from Paper 3 showed that in rural areas older persons play a great role in managing the household and caring for grandchildren, as well as sometimes undertaking the main bulk of agricultural work, when both sons and daughters and their spouses migrate. The fact that older persons take over the functions of managing the household and sometimes the land – functions, which otherwise to a large extent would have been considered women's work – allows women to take up wage-labour as labour migrants in urban areas (Paper 3). This greatly improves the economic status of adult women. This is also an example of how the intergenerational contract is being renegotiated. Rather than the young catering to the needs of the old, transfers between generations seem to benefit the younger generations more. In this context, Yan even suggested that there is a "collapse" of filial piety in rural China (Yan 2003). If this holds true, Caldwell's prediction that the direction of intergenerational flows would become reversed with development is applicable, even though most parts of rural China are far from "developed" by most standards. Moreover, the intergenerational transfers seem to go from the grandparent generation to the adult *and* the child generation. This differs from the "sandwich generation" where the direction of intergenerational transfers is from the adult generation to the grandparent as well as the child generations (Göransson 2006).

Hence, from the perspective of older persons replacing women's domestic roles, an ageing society may contribute to undermining the institution of son preference in so far as it facilitates the engagement of women in wage labour. However, in families where the adult generation consists of a woman and a man with several siblings, the competition for grandparents who can look after grandchildren means that some women have to stand back and forgo the opportunity to migrate or engage in off-farm work, since they need to look after the children at home (Paper 3).

The extent to which the older generation is capable of transferring resources to the younger generation, including emotional and practical support, is dependent on both their health situation and life expectancy. Overall, in China, the health status of older persons and life expectancy at birth is high.[90] The fact that China has a relatively healthy older population can also help explain why demasculinisation rather than feminisation of agriculture has taken place.

[90] According to the World Population Prospects, life expectancy at birth for the period 2005-2010 was estimated at 73.0 years on average, 71.3 years for men and 74.8 years for women (UNDESA 2008).

However, as the population continues to grow older and the proportion of "old old" people increases, the burden of disease is also becoming heavier. Hence, the extent to which an ageing society can facilitate women's wage labour depends not only on the supply of jobs, but also on care and support systems for the elderly. In absence of public or private non-family based support services, there is a risk that women are expected to stay at home and provide for the elderly as they fall ill or become frail. In China, the government has concluded that, given the aging population and the disease burden associated with it, the government is not able to provide care and support, but needs to facilitate family support (Croll 2006: 260-61). This is in line with the neo-Confucian ideology emphasising family values, which has also been observed in Singapore (Göransson 2006) and could strengthen androcentric familism, and by extension the institution of son preference.

Transformations in the marriage institution

As mentioned in Chapter Three, patrilocality is a factor that contributes to underpinning the institution of son preference. Although the marriage institution is one of the subjects of the Care for Girls Campaign, through its discussion of the marriage squeeze problem, which refers to the fact that there is and will be a continued growing shortage of women of marriageable age, patrilocality as an institution was not challenged by the Campaign in the four villages under study (Paper 4).

Nevertheless, the institution of marriage is being transformed, not least through the flow of rural-urban migration. For example, in some cases, the fact that men migrate means that their sisters can stay with their native parents and form a family with uxorilocal residency. Another trend is the effect of the population policy where daughters-only households are "recruiting" husbands and forming contingent uxorilocal marriages. However, as both Paper 3 and Paper 4 showed, there is still a great deal of resistance to uxorilocal marriages.

One of the strategies of the Campaign is to emphasize the adverse effects of the marriage squeeze phenomenon and point to the fact that there will be an increasing number of so called "bare branches" (unmarried men). Even though the marriage squeeze may increase the competition among men to find a wife, one might ask if there will be a supply and demand effect, where women's value will increase due to their being in short supply. Another question pertains to whether a potential increased value of women of marriage age would spill over to affect the value of daughters. The analysis in Paper 4 suggests that the marriage squeeze problem will not increase the value of daughters as such, but may decrease the value of sons, due to the potential risk that a son will become a "bare branch" and stay unmarried. Moreover, the fact that future generations of Chinese women may have more potential marriage partners to chose from does not automatically mean that their

position on the labour market, access to resources and inheritance, and their potential of being filial daughters will improve.

With regard to prospects for the future, since coming Chinese generations will largely be single children and male dominated (in demographic terms), uxorilocal marriages may become increasingly difficult to form, as parents with only one son will be reluctant to "give away" their son. Hence, although never an explicit goal of the population policy, its longer-term potential to alter patrilocality is questionable. At the same time, daughters-only families may also become increasingly reluctant to "give away" their daughter in patrilocal marriage, and perhaps an intensification of neolocality is to be expected.

Policy and programmatic implications

The results generated have several policy and programmatic implications in societies with son preference and where there are projects and programmes to address it. The model to estimate son compulsion can – if regarded as a reflection of the institution of son preference – be used to estimate son preference before excessively skewed SRB starts to draw the attention of policy makers and activists (Paper 2). Moreover, when monitoring impact of programmes that aim at reducing SRB imbalance, it is useful to monitor son compulsion as modelled in Paper 2 to get a better grasp of the sustainability of the results achieved. This relates to the sustainability of the sex ratio transition (Guilmoto 2009), as discussed above. Likewise, stagnation in SRB does not have to imply a programmatic failure as long as son compulsion continues to decrease.

However, the results show that even small proportions of couples with son compulsion may result in high SRB if fertility levels are low. This implies that both son compulsion, as modelled here, and SRB are indicators with limitations when it comes to identifying programme areas that aim at reducing SRB and son preference. The target population one can identify through these two indicators is very broad and interventions need to permeate all layers of society to be efficient.

The results of both Papers 2 and 4 call for programmes and policies that address the institution of son preference, i.e. the underlying causes, rather than the outcomes, such as prenatal sex-selection. In fact, trying to weaken the "supply-factor" may not be very efficient in China given the large private health care sector, weak monitoring mechanisms and the fact that the poorly financed health care system gives incentives for medical staff to perform extra curricula tasks for extra payment. Moreover, restricting access to abortion runs the risk of driving second semester abortions underground, which would constitute a great health hazard for women.

Some methodological concerns and future areas of study

Some methodological considerations with regard to the empirical part of this study need to be made. First of all, the empirical study is qualitative in nature and has generated data which build on the accounts of women and men in rural China, who belong to 48 households in four villages in rural Anhui. Hence, these are neither representative of the communities they live in nor of rural China in general.

Moreover, there are some limitations to this study, as accounted for in Chapter Two and Paper 1. First of all, the time spent in the four villages was limited and this also affected the duration of each interview. Had I been able to stay in the villages and talk to the villagers for longer, my results would most probably have looked different, and would have been more detailed, more personal, and have more of an agency perspective than what is the case. Secondly, the fact that there were local cadres involved in monitoring and facilitating the fieldwork also most likely had an impact on how personal the interviewees were in their accounts. However, whereas it can be argued that gatekeeper interference limited the empirical foundation of this dissertation, I believe that it should be regarded as an integral part of the empirical study as it brought into light the relationship between local cadres and rural women and men, as well as the role of the state in formulating a State narrative and the impact of the State narrative on popular discourses about son preference (Paper 4). Thirdly, I have used Chinese official statistics both in Chapter Three and in Paper 2, and as shown by Goodkind (2011) there is an important degree of under-reporting which affects the statistics regarding SRB imbalance. The discussion of Paper 2 have not taken this new information into account for the simple reason that it was not available at the time Paper 2 was submitted for review.

The findings from this dissertation point at new areas that require further study. One area of concern is how the institution of son preference is being renegotiated in urban areas. What also deserves attention is the symbolic and religious value of sons and how that changes with socioeconomic development. Yet another concern is how the "supply-factor" evolves and develops as new technology to practice prenatal sex-selection becomes available and affordable. Applying data from other countries known for son preference and SRB imbalance to the model for estimating son compulsion would also help create a comparative narrative that may alter the rating by the OECD of China as the country with the highest son preference. There is also a need to compare son compulsion in relation to other socio-demographic factors in China to see to what extent it challenges the story about son preference founded on variation in SRB.

On a general level, more ethnographic studies are needed of both rural and urban China. With the rapid social and economic change taking place, there are constantly new stories being formulated that are waiting to be told.

Concluding remarks

I have throughout this dissertation made several conclusions and observations and in order not to repeat myself too much, my concluding remarks will focus on one main theme, namely how the construction of different narratives about the institution of son preference can be understood. First I would like to situate son preference in the context of "Internal Orientalism", which according to Jacka marks much of the development discourse in China (Jacka 2004: 14). Internal Orientalism has its roots in the later imperial and republican period when intellectuals and reformists were looking for answers as to why China was lagging behind the rest of the world in development. According to Internal Orientalism, the answer to China's under-development was to a large extent to be found in the vast rural population, which was considered ignorant and blinded by tradition. The findings of the present dissertation suggest that there are still elements of Internal Orientalism in understanding son preference as something intrinsically rural, even though there are many signs that such an understanding is too simplistic.

Moreover, despite the fact that when adopting a causal approach to studying son preference, there are many indicators suggesting that the institution has become weaker, there is a stubborn tendency to think that the institution of son preference has remained intact (see e.g. Wang and Pan 2006). For example, Yan (2003) gives numerous examples of how the institution of son preference has become weakened both from an outcome and a causal perspective, but still concludes that whereas fertility culture has changed with regard to the number of children, there "have not yet been obvious changes (…) in the sex of children" (ibid: 214). I conclude that there are two reasons for this stubbornness. Firstly, the narrative about son preference is largely coloured by the story of SRB. Even if the narrative of son compulsion challenges that story to some extent, the son compulsion narrative also fuels the idea that the institution of son preference has grown stronger. This is because son compulsion is often understood as the "tip of the iceberg" of the institution of son preference, even though that – as I have argued – is not necessarily the case. Secondly, the idea that son preference remains strong is related to the fact that son preference has become part of both official and public discourses of "modernity", where son preference is understood as something "feudal", "backward" and "old-fashioned". It is as such constructed as the anti-thesis of modernity and its "strength" helps motivate Party-state intervention and the need for the state to discipline social order to secure the development of a modern nation state, where members of the Party-state are forerunners in the modernisation project.

Another factor that influences the way official and public discourses on son preference are constructed in China is the population policy and its status as a basic state policy. This influences the interpretation of son preference in two ways. Firstly, the failure to acknowledge the role of the population policy in reinforcing son preference has contributed to the State narrative on son preference zooming in on what it refers to as "cultural" factors and paying less attention to son preference as a

product of contemporary structural factors. The official position that 50 years of CCP rule has failed to change feudal thoughts exemplifies the notion that son preference is rooted in a feudal society and not something which is reinforced through the policies of the CCP. Secondly, the focus on cultural factors has prevented a dynamic understanding of the changes in the institution of son preference and the way in which women and men in both rural and urban China exercise their agency to underpin, challenge or sometimes resist structures which uphold the institution of son preference.

Avoiding to acknowledge structural factors rooted in CCP policies and laws and failing to allow new narratives on son preference to evolve can explain why the popular discourse on son preference emphasising the "heavy labour argument" persists despite the fact that most rural adult sons are migrating. The heavy labour argument focuses the attention onto the family and omits to acknowledge other factors such as land distribution and inheritance of land. Hence, I argue that the heavy labour argument should not be interpreted as the fundamental reason why an individual or a couple has son preference, but rather as a narrative, which is partly sustained by the State narrative on son preference. However, the State narrative is also influenced by popular discourses on son preference, and as such different narratives on son preference are entangled and mutually constitutive of each other.

Glossary

Buluojia	不落家	Delayed-transfer marriage
Danwei	单位	Work unit
Daochamen	倒插门	Uxorilocal son-in-law [pejorative]
Fangwen xuezhe	访问学者	Visiting scholar
Fenjia	分家	Household division
Ganbu	干部	Cadre
Guan'ai nühai xingdong	关爱女孩行动	Care for Girls Campaign
Guang'gun	光棍	Bare branch
Hu	户	Household
Hukou	户口	Household registration
Jia	家	Family
Jia	嫁	Give [oneself] in marriage (as bride)
Nan	男	Man
Nanhai pianhao	男孩偏好	Son preference
Nü	女	Woman
Nühai pianhao	女孩偏好	Daughter preference
Qu	娶	Take [someone] in marriage (as groom)
Shangmen nüxü	上门女婿	Uxorilocal son-in-law
Sunnü	孙女	Granddaughter (son's daughter)
Sunzi	孙子	Grandson (son's son)
Tongyangxi	童养媳	Adopting a girl to be raised as a future daughter-in-law
Waipo	外婆	Maternal grand-mother
Waisun	外孙	Grandson (daughter's son)
Waisunnü	外孙女	Granddaughter (daughter's daughter)
Xiao	孝	Filial piety
Zhongnan qingnü	重男轻女	Value the male, disdain the female

Bibliography

ABS. (2005). *Anhui Statistical Yearbook: Anhui Bureau of Statistics,* China Statistics Press.

ADB. (2006). *Country Gender Assessment - People's Republic of China,* Asian Development Bank. Retrieved 12 February 2009 from http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/-Country-Gender-Assessments/cga-prc.pdf.

Almond, D., Edlund, L., & Milligan, K. (2009). O sister, where art thou? The role of culture for son preference and sex choice: evidence from immigrants to Canada. *NBER Working Paper Series, Working Paper 15391,* 1-39.

Andors, P. (1983). *The Unfinished Liberation of Chinese Women, 1949-1980.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Anonymous. (2010). The worldwide war on baby girls. *The Economist*, 4 March 2010.

Attané, I. (2006). The demographic impact of a female deficit in China, 2000-2050. *Population and Development Review,* 32(4), 755-770.

Attané, I. (2009). The determinants of discrimination against daughters in China: Evidence from a provincial-level analysis. *Population Studies*, 63(1), 87-103.

Banister, J. (1984). Population policy and trends in China, 1978-83. *China Quarterly*, 100, 717-741.

Banister, J. (1987). *China's Changing Population*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Banister, J. (2004). Shortage of girls in China today. *Journal of Population Research*, 21(2), 189-202.

Banister, J., & Coale, A. J. (1994). Five decades of missing females in China. *Demography*, 31(3), 459–479.

Banister, J., & Harbaugh, C. W. (1994). *China's Family Planning Program: Inputs and Outcomes.* Center for International Research, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. CIR Staff Paper No. 73 June 1994.

Bauer, M. W., & Aarts, B. (2000). Corpus construction: a principle for qualitative data collection. In M. W. Bauer & G. Gaskell (Eds.), *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound- a Practical Handbook* (pp. 19-37). London: Sage Publications.

Bélanger, D. (2002). Son preference in a rural village in North Vietnam. *Studies in Family Planning*, 33(4), 321-334.

Bélanger, D., & Li, X. U. (2009). Agricultural land, gender and kinship in Rural China and Vietnam: A comparison of two villages. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 9(2), 204-230.

Bhat, M. P. N., & Zavier, F. A. J. (2007). Factors influencing the use of sex selection technologies and sex ratio at birth in India. In I. Attané & G. Z. Christophe (Eds.), *Watering the Neighbours Garden: The Growing Demographic Deficit in Asia* (pp. 131-160). Paris: CICRED.

Bhat, R. L., & Sharma, N. (2006). Missing girls. Evidence from some North Indian states. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies,* 13(3), 351-374.

Billingsley, P. (1981). Bandits, bosses, and bare sticks: beneath the surface of local control in early Republican China. *Modern China*, 7(3), 235-288.

Bjerén, G. (1997). Migration and reproduction. In G. Bochmann, T. Hammar & K. Tamas (Ed.), *International Migration, Immobility and Development: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (pp. 219-246). Oxford: Berg.

Bossen, L. (2002). *Chinese Women and Rural development: Sixty Years of Change in Lu Village, Yunnan.* Lanham; Boulder; New York; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher.

Bossen, L. (2007). Missing girls, land and population controls in rural China. In C. Z. Guilmoto & I. Attané (Eds.), *Watering the Neighbour's Garden* (pp. 207-228). Paris: Committee for International Cooperation in National Research in Demography.

Bossen, L. (forthcoming 2011). Reproduction and real property in rural China: three decades of development and discrimination. In T. Jacka & S. Sargeson (Eds.), *Women, Gender and Development in Rural China* (pp. 97-123). London: Edward Elgar.

Bossler, B. J. (2000). "A daughter is a daughter all her life": Affinal relations and women's networks in song and late Imperial China. *Late Imperial China*, 21(1), 77-106.

Brockmann, H. (2001). Girls preferred? Changing patterns of sex preferences in the two German states. *European Sociological Review*, 17(2), 189-202.

Brownell, S., & Wasserstrom, J. (2002). Introduction: Theorizing femininities and masculinities. In S. Brownell & J. Wasserstrom (Eds.), *Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities* (pp.1-42). University of California Press.

Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* New York: Routledge.

Caldwell, J. C. (1976). Toward a restatement of demographic transition theory. *Population and Development Review*, 2(3-4), 321-366.

Caldwell, J. C., Reddy, P. H., & Caldwell, P. (1983). The social component of mortality decline: An investigation in South India employing alternative methodologies. *Population Studies*, 37(2), 185-205.

CEDAW. (1999). *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: China* (No. 03/02/99, CEDAW/C/1999-/I/L.1/Add.7). New York: CEDAW.

CGC. (2006a). *Guanai nühai xingdong – zhishi jingsai tiku* [Care for Girl Campaign - A resource of knowledge]. The office of the Leading Group of the National Care for Girls Campaign, China Population House.

CGC. (2006b). *Guanai nühai xingdong – gongzuo zhinan* [Operational guidelines for the Care for Girls Campaign]. Beijing: China Population House.

CGC. (2008). *"Care for Girls" Campaign in China*. The Expert Group of the State "Care for Girls" Campaign Office.

Chan, C. K., Ngok, K. L., & Phillips, D. (2008). Social Policy in China - Development and Well-being. Bristol: The Policy press.

Chan, C. L.-W. (1995). Gender issues in market socialism. In L. Wong & S. MacPherson (Eds.), *Social Change and Social Policy in Contemporary China* (pp. 188-215). Aldershot: Avebury.

Chan, C. L.-W., Blyth, E., & Chan, C. H.-Y. (2006). Attitudes to and practices regarding sex selection in China. *Prenatal Diagnosis*, 26(7), 610-613.

Chant, S., & Radcliffe, S. A. (1992). Migration and development: the importance of gender. In S. Chant (Ed.), *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries* (pp. 1-29). London and New York: Belhaven Press.

Chen, G., & Wu, C. (2006). *Will the Boat Sink the Water? The Life of China's Peasants.* New York: Public Affairs.

Chen, L. (2008). *Gender and Chinese Development: Towards an Equitable Society.* New York: Routledge.

Chen, S. (2006). *Nühai shenghuo huanjing yanjiu -- guan'ai nühai xingdong jixian diaocha yanjiu baogao* [Research on living conditions of girl children - report of the baseline survey of the Care for Girls Campaign]. China Population House.

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

Chung, W. (2007). The relation of son preference and religion to induced abortion: The case of South Korea. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 39(5), 707-719.

Connell, R. W. (2002). Gender: Polity Press.

Crang, M., & Cook, I. (2007). *Doing Ethnographies.* London: Sage Publications.

Croll, E. (1984). *Chinese Women Since Mao*. London and Armonk: Zed Books and M.E. Sharpe.

Croll, E. (1985a). *Women and Development in China: Production and Reproduction.* International Labour Organisation.

Croll, E. (1985b). Introduction: fertility norms and family size in China. In E. Croll, D. Davin & P. Kane (Eds.), *China's One-Child Family Policy* (pp. 1-36). London: MacMillan Press.

Croll, E. (1987). New peasant family forms in rural China. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 14, 469–499.

Croll, E. (1995). *Changing Identities of Chinese Women - Rhetoric, Experience and Self-perception in Twentieth-century China.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Croll, E. (2000). *Endangered Daughters: Discrimination and Development in Asia.* London, New York: Routledge.

Croll, E. (2002). Fertility decline, family size and female discrimination: a study of reproductive management in East and South Asia. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, 17(2), 11-38.

Croll, E. (2006). *China's New Consumers: Social Development and Domestic Demand.* London: Routledge.

Crow, B. L. (2010). Bare-sticks and rebellion: The drivers and implications of Chinas reemerging sex imbalance. *Technology in Society*, 32(2), 72-80.

da Corta, L., & Venkateshwarlu, D. (1999). Unfree relations and the feminisation of agricultural labour in Andhra Pradesh, 1970-95. *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 26(2&3), 71-139.

Dalsimer, M., & Nisonoff, L. (1987). The implications of the new agricultural and one-child family policies for rural Chinese women. *Feminist Studies*, 13(3), 583-607.

das Gupta, M. (2005). Explaining Asia's "missing women": a new look at the data. *Population and Development Review*, 31(3), 529-535.

das Gupta, M., & Bhat, M. P. N. (1997). Fertility decline and increased manifestation of sex bias in India. *Population Studies*, 51(3), 307-315.

das Gupta, M., Jiang, Z., Li, B., Xie, Z., Chung, W., & Bae, H.-O. (2003). Why is son preference so persistent in East and South Asia? A cross-country study of China, India and the Republic of Korea. *Policy Research Working Paper 2942*, The World Bank Development Research Group.

das Gupta, M., & Li, S. (1999). Gender bias in China, South Korea and India 1920-1990: Effects of war, famine and fertility decline. *Development and Change,* 30(3), 619-652.

Davin, D. (1976). *Woman-work: Women and the Party in Revolutionary China.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Davin, D. (1985). The single-child family policy in the countryside. In E. Croll, D. Davin & P. Kane (Eds.), *China's One-Child Family Policy* (pp. 37-82). London: MacMillan press.

Davin, D. (1988). The implications of contract agriculture for the employment and status of Chinese peasant women. In S. Feuchtwang & A. Hussain (Eds.), *Transforming China's Economy in the Eighties* (pp. 137-146). London: Zed books.

Davin, D. (1992). Population policy and reform: The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China. In S. Rai, H. Pilkington & A. Phizacklea (Eds.), *Women in the Face of Change - The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China* (pp. 79-104). London: Routledge.

Davis-Friedmann, D. (1985). Old age security and the one-child campaign. In E. Croll, D. Davin & P. Kane (Eds.), *China's One-Child Family Policy* (pp. 149-161). London: MacMillan Press.

Davis, D., & Harrell, S. (1993). Introduction: The impact of Post-Mao reforms on family life. In D. Davis & S. Harrell (Eds.), *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era* (pp. 1-22). Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

de Beauvoir, S. (1997). The Second Sex. London: Vintage.

de Brauw, A., Li, Q., Liu, C., Rozelle, S., & Zhang, L. (2008). Feminization of Agriculture in China? Myths Surrounding Women's Participation in Farming. *China Quarterly* 194, 327-348.

Dickens, B. M., Serour, G. I., Cook, R. J., & Qiu, R. Z. (2005). Sex selection: Treating different cases differently. *International Journal of Gynaecology and Obstetrics,* 90(2), 171-177.

Döring, O. (2008). Limits of human existence according to China's bioethics: reproductive medicine and human embryo research. In M. Düwell, D. Mieth & C. Rehmann-Sutter (Eds.), *The Contingent Nature of Life: Bioethics and Limits of Human Existence* (pp. 289-303). Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media.

Ebenstein, A. Y., & Sharygin, E. J. (2009). The consequences of the "Missing Girls" of China. *World Bank Economic Review*, 23(3), 399-426.

Ebrey, P. (1990). Women, marriage, and the family in Chinese history. In P. S. Ropp (Ed.), *Heritage of China - Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization* (pp.197-223). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Edlund, L. (1999). Son preference, sex ratios, and marriage patterns. *Journal of Political Economy*, 107(6), 1275-1304.

Edwards, L. (2000). Women in the People's Republic of China: new challenges to the grand gender narrative. In L. Edwards & M. Roces (Eds.), *Women in Asia: Tradition, Modernity and Globalisation* (pp. 59-84). St Leonards: Allen & Unwin.

Eklund, L. (2000). *Gender Roles and Female Labour Migration —A Qualitative Field Study of Female Migrant Workers in Beijing.* PROP Report No. 29, Master's thesis, Department of Sociology, Lund University, Sweden.

Evans, H. (1992). Monogamy and female sexuality in the People's Republic of China. In S. Rai, H. Pilkington & A. Phizacklea (Eds.), *Women in the Face of Change - The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China* (pp. 147-166). London: Routledge.

Fan, C. C. (1999). Migration in a socialist transitional economy: Heterogeneity, socioeconomic and spatial characteristics of migrants in China and Guangdong Province. *International Migration Review*, 33(4), 954-987.

Fan, C. C. (2003). Rural-urban migration and gender division of labor in transitional China. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27 (1), 24-47.

Fan, C. C. (2008). *China on the Move: Migration, the State, and the Household.* London: Routledge.

Fei, X. (1947/1992). *From the Soil: the Foundations of Chinese Society.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fong, V. L. (2004). China's one-child policy and the empowerment of urban daughters. *American Anthropologist*, 104(4), 1098 - 1109.

Fuse, K. (2010). Variations in attitudinal gender preferences for children across 50 less-developed countries. *Demographic Research*, 23(36), 1031-1048.

Ganatra, B. (2008). Maintaining access to safe abortion and reducing sex ratio imbalances in Asia. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 16(31), 90-98.

Garikipati, S. (2009). Landless but not assetless: Female agricultural labour on the road to better status, evidence from India. *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 36(3), 517-545.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Global Times. (2009). *Countryside Pension Scheme Set for Launch.* Retrieved 28 April from http://china.globaltimes.cn/chinanews/2009-06/440049.html. Global Times.

Goodkind, D. (1996). On substituting sex preference strategies in East Asia: Does prenatal sex selection reduce postnatal discrimination? *Population and Development Review*, 22(1), 111-125.

Goodkind, D. (2011). Child underreporting, fertility, and sex ratio imbalance in China. *Demography*, 48(1), 291-316.

Graham, M. J., Larsen, U., & Xu, X. (1998). Son preference in Anhui Province, China. *International Family Planning Perspectives,* 24(2), 72-77.

Greenhalgh, S. (1985). Sexual stratification: The other side of "Growth with Equity" in East Asia. *Population and Development Review*, 11(2), 265-314.

Greenhalgh, S. (1993). The peasantization of the one-child policy in Shaanxi. In D. Davis & S. Harrell (Eds.), *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Greenhalgh, S. (2008). *Just One Child - Science and Policy in Deng's China.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Greenhalgh, S., & Winckler, E. A. (2005). *Governing China's Population: From Leninist to Neoliberal Biopolitics.* Stanford University Press.

Gu, B., Wang, F., Guo, Z., & Zhang, E. (2007). China's local and national fertility policies at the end of the twentieth century. *Population and Development Review*, 33(1), 129-148.

Guilmoto, C. Z. (2010). Longer-term disruptions to demographic structures in China and India resulting from skewed sex ratios at birth. *Asian Population Studies*, 6(1), 3-25.

Guilmoto, C. Z., & Ren, Q. (forthcoming). Birth masculinity in China. Socioeconomic differentials and transition processes.

Guo, Z., & Chen, W. (2007). Below replacement level in mainland China. In Z. Zhao & F. Guo (Eds.), *Transition and Challenge - China's Population at the Beginning of the 21st Century* (pp. 54-70). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guttentag, M., & Secord, P. F. (1983). *Too Many Women? The Sex Ratio Question.* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Göransson, K. (2006). *Conflicts and Contracts: Chinese Intergenerational Relations in Modern Singapore.* Doctoral dissertation, Lund University, Department of Sociology/Social Anthropology.

Göransson, K. (2010). Gendered expectations and intergenerational support among Chinese Singaporeans. In H. Rydstrom (Ed.), *Gender Inequalities in Asia: Configuring, Contesting and Recognizing Women and Men* (pp. 191-222). Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Hank, K., & Kohler, H.-P. (2000). Gender preferences for children in Europe. *Demographic Research*, 2, 1.

Hansen, M. H. (2006). In the footsteps of the Communist Party: Dilemmas and strategies. In M. Heimer & S. Thøgersen (Eds.), *Doing Fieldwork in China.* (pp. 81-95). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Harris, M. (1978). *Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Cultures.* London and New York: Fontana.

Hermalin, A. I., & Xian, L. (1990). Gauging the validity of responses to questions on family size preferences in China. *Population and Development Review,* 16(2), 337-354.

Hesketh, T., & Zhu, W. (2006). Abnormal sex ratios in human populations: Causes and consequences. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America,* 103(36), 13271-13275.

Hillier, S. (1988). Women and population control in China: Issues of sexuality, power and control. *Feminist Review,* 29, 101-113.

Hsü, D.-L. (1970-1971). The myth of the "Five Human Relations" of Confucius. *Monumenta Serica*, 29, 27-37.

Huang, P., & Zhan, S. (2005). *Internal Migration in China: Linking it with Development.* Lanzhou: Presented at the regional conference on migration and development in Asia, 14-16 March 2005.

Hudson, V., & den Boer, A. (2005). *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population.* MIT Press.

Ikels, C. (1993). Settling accounts: The intergenerational contract in an age of reform. In D. Davis & S. Harrell (Eds.), *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era.* (pp. 307-333). Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Ikels, C. (2004). Introduction. In C. Ikels (Ed.), *Filial Piety: Practice and Discourse in Contemporary East Asia* (pp. 1-15). Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Jacka, T. (1997). *Women's Work in Rural China: Change and Continuity in an Era of Reform.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jacka, T. (2006). *Rural Women in Urban China: Gender, Migration and Social Change.* Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe.

Jacka, T., & Gaetano, A. M. (2004). Introduction: Focusing on migrant women. In A. M. Gaetano & T. Jacka (Eds.), *On the Move: Women and Rural-to-urban Migration in Contemporary China* (pp. 1-38). New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.

Jin, X., Li, S., & Feldman, M. W. (2007). Marriage form and son preference in rural China: An investigation in three counties. *Rural Sociology*, 72(4), 511-536.

Johnson, K. A. (1983). Women, the Family and Peasant Revolution in China. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Judd, E. R. (1992). Land divided, land united. *China Quarterly*, 130, 338-356.

Judd, E. R. (1994). *Gender and Power in Rural North China.* Stanford, California and London: Stanford University Press.

Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender equality and women's empowerment: a critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1. *Gender and Development*, 13(1), 13-24.

Keightley, D. N. (1990). Early civilization in China: Reflections on how it became Chinese. In P. S. Ropp (Ed.), *Heritage of China - Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization* (pp. 15-54). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Khuat Thi Hai, O., Liu, J., Le Thanh, T., & Pham Viet, T. (2003). Are sex ratios at birth increasing in Vietnam? *Population (English Edition),* 58(2), 231-250.

Klasen, S., & Wink, C. (2002). A turning point in gender bias in mortality? An update on the number of missing women. *Population and Development Review*, 28(2), 285-312.

Knodel, J., & Vos, S. D. (1980). Preferences for the sex of offspring and demographic behavior in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany: An examination of evidence from village genealogies. *Journal of Family History*, 5, 145-166.

Kvale, S. (1997). *Den Kvalitativa Forskningsintervjun* [The Qualitative Research Interview]. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Lai, D. (2005). Sex ratio at birth and infant mortality rate in China: An empirical study. *Social Indicators Research*, 70(3), 313-326.

Lavely, W., Li, J., & Li, J. (2001). Sex preference for children in a Meifu Li community in Hainan, China. *Population Studies*, 55(3), 319-329.

Li, J. (1995). China's one-child policy: How and how well has it worked? A case study of Hebei Province, 1979-88. *Population and Development Review*, 21(3), 563-585.

Li, J., & Lavely, W. (2003). Village context, women's status, and son preference among rural Chinese women. *Rural Sociology*, 68(1), 87-106.

Li, S. (2007). *Imbalanced Sex Ratio at Birth and Comprehensive Intervention in China,* 4th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights. Hyderabad, India, Retrieved 12 February 2009 from at http://www.unfpa.org/gender-/docs/studies/china.pdf.

Li, S., Feldman Marcus, W., & Li, N. (2003). Acceptance of two types of uxorilocal marriage in contemporary rural China: The case of Lueyang. *Journal of Family History*, 28(2), 314-333.

Li, S., Feldman, M. W., & Li, N. (2000). Cultural transmission of uxorilocal marriage in Lueyang, China. *Journal of Family History*, 25(2), 158-177.

Li, S., Wei, Y., Jiang, Q., & Feldman, M. W. (2007). Imbalanced sex ratio at birth and female child survival in China: Issues and prospects. In I. Attané & C. Z. Guilmoto (Eds.), *Watering the Neighbour's Garden: the Growing Demographic Female Deficit in Asia* (pp. 25-48). Paris: Committee for International Cooperation in National Research in Demography.

Li, S., Wu, H., Xiaoyi, J., & Feldman, M. W. (2006). Social network and son preference among rural-urban migrants in China: A study in Shenzhen [Zhongguo nongmingong de shehui wangluo yu xingbie pianhao – jiyu Shenzhen diaocha de yanjiu]. *Population Research*, 30(6), 5-13.

Li, S., Zhu, C., & Feldman, M. W. (2004). Gender differences in child survival in contemporary rural China: A county study. *Journal of Biosocial Sciences*, 36, 83-109.

Lin, M. (2006). Cong xingbie pingdeng shijiao kan "guan'ai nühai" xingdong [The Care for Girls Campaign from the view of gender equality]. *Journal of China Women's University,* 18(6), 28-33.

Liu, S. (2006). Dui zhongguo shengyu "nanhai pianhao" shehui dongyin de zai kaolü [Rethinking social factors influencing son preference in China]. *Population Research,* 30(3), 1-9.

Liu, S. (2004). Where have all the young girls gone? *China Rights Forum*, 4, 50-55.

Lofstedt, P., Luo, S., & Johansson, A. (2004). Abortion patterns and reported sex ratios at birth in rural Yunnan, China. *Reproductive Health Matters,* 12(24), 86-95.

Lou, B., Zheng, Z., Connelly, R., & Roberts, K. D. (2004). Young women from four counties in Sichuan and Anhui. In A. G. a. T. Jacka (Ed.), *On the Move: Women and Rural-to-urban Migration in Contemporary China* (pp. 207-242). New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.

Louie, K. (2002). *Theorising Chinese Masculinity - Society and Gender in China.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luk, B. H.-k. (1977). Abortion in Chinese law. *The American Journal of Comparative Law,* 25(2), 372-392.

Lü, X., & Perry, E. (1997). Introduction: The changing Chinese workplace in historical and comparative perspective. In X. Lü & E. Perry (Eds.), *Danwei: The Changing Chinese Workplace in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (pp. 3-20). New York: M. E. Sharpe.

MacFarquhar, R., & Schoenhals, M. (2006). *Mao's Last Revolution.* Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Mason, K. O. (1987). The impact of women's social position on fertility in developing countries. *Sociological Forum*, 2(4), 718-741.

Matthews, R., & Nee, V. (2000). Gender inequality and economic growth in rural China. *Social Science Research*, 29(4), 606-632.

Merli, M. G., & Hertog, S. (2010). Masculine sex ratios, population age structure and the potential spread of HIV in China. *Demographic Research,* 22(3), 63-94.

Miller, B. (1987). Female infanticide and female child neglect in rural North India. In N. Scheper-Hughes (Ed.), *Child Survival: Anthropological Perspectives on the Treatment and Maltreatment of Children* (pp. 95-112). Boston:D. Reidel.

Milwertz, C. (1997). *Accepting Population Control: Urban Chinese Women and the One-child Family Policy.* Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series, Vol. 74. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.

Mishra, V., Roy, T. K., & Retherford, R. D. (2004). Sex differentials in childhood feeding, health care, and nutritional status in India. *Population and Development Review,* 30(2), 269-295.

Mosher, S. W. (1982). Birth control: A view from a Chinese village. *Asian Survey*, 22(4), 356-368.

Murphy, R. (2002). *How Migrant Labour is Changing Rural China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NBS. (1985). *Zhongguo 1982 nian renkou pucha ziliao* [Tabulation on the China 1982 Population Census]: Population Census Office under the State Council, Department of Population Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), China Statistical Publishing House.

NBS. (1988). *Zhongguo 1987 nian 1% renkou chouyang diaocha ziliao* [Tabulation on China's 1% Population Sample Survey in 1987]: Population Census Office under the State Council, Department of Population Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), China Statistical Publishing House.

NBS. (1993). *Zhongguo 1990 nian renkou pucha ziliao* [Tabulation on the 1990 Population Census]: Population Census Office under the State Council, Department of Population Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), China Statistical Publishing House.

NBS. (1997). *1995 nian quanguo 1% renkou chouyang diaocha ziliao* [Tabulation on the 1995 National 1% Population Sample Survey]: China National Sample Survey Office, China Statistical Publishing House.

NBS. (2002). *Zhongguo 2000 nian renkou pucha ziliao* [Tabulation on the 2000 China Population Census]: Population Census Office under the State Council, Department of Population, Social Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics, China Statistics Press.

NBS. (2004). *Women and Men in China - Facts and Figures 2004.* National Bureau of Statistics, China Statistics Press.

NBS. (2007a). 2005 *nian quanguo 1% renkou chouyang diaocha ziliao* [Tabulation on the China 2005 National 1% Population Sample Survey]: National 1 % Sample Survey Leading Office under the State Council, Department of Population and Employment Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics, China Statistics Press.

NBS. (2007b). *Women and Men in China - Facts and Figures 2007.* National Bureau of Statistics, China Statistics Press.

Nie, J.-B. (2006). *Behind the Silence: Chinese Voices on Abortion*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Nussbaum, M. (2000). Women's capabilities and social justice. *Journal of Human Development,* 1(2), 219-247.

OECD. (2009). *Gender, Institutions and Development Database 2009 (GID-DB).* Retrieved 30 March 2010 from http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=GID2.

Ong, A., & Peletz, M. G. (1995). Introduction. In A. Ong & M. G. Peletz (Eds.), *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia* (pp. 1-18). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Oomman, N., & Ganatra, B. R. (2002). Sex selection: The systematic elimination of girls. *Reproductive Health Matters,* 10(19), 184-188.

Oster, E. (2005). Hepatitis B and the case of the missing women. *Journal of Political Economy,* 113(6), 1163-1216.

Ownby, D. (2002). Approximation of Chinese bandits. In S. Brownell & J. Wasserstrom (Eds.), *Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities* (pp. 226-250): University of California Press.

Pande, R. P., & Astone, N. M. (2007). Explaining son preference in rural India: The independent role of structural versus individual factors. *Population Research and Policy Review,* 26(1), 1-29.

Parish, W. L., & Whyte, M. K. (1980). *Village and Family in Contemporary China.* University of Chicago Press.

Park, C. B. and N.-H. Cho (1995). Consequences of son preference in a low-fertility society: imbalance of the sex ratio at birth in Korea. *Population and Development Review,* 21(1), 59-84.

Perry, E. J. (2002). *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China.* New York and London: M.E. Sharpe.

PRC. (1985). *The Law of Succession of The People's Republic of China.* Adopted at the Third Session of the Sixth National People's Congress, promulgated by Order No. 24 of the President of the People's Republic of China on April 10, 1985.

PRC. (1986). *The Law of Land Administration of the People's Republic of China.* Adopted at the 16th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Sixth National People's Congress on June 25, 1986.

Pun, N. (2005). *Made in China - Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Purewal, N. K. (2010). *Son Preference - Sex Selection, Gender and Culture in South Asia.* Oxford, New York: Berg.

Rai, S. (1992). 'Watering another man's garden': Gender, employment and educational reforms in China. In S. Rai, H. Pilkington & A. Phizacklea (Eds.), *Women in the Face of Change - The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China,* (pp. 20-40). London: Routledge.

Rawski, T., G., & Mead, R., W. (1998). On the trail of China's phantom farmers. *World Development*, 26(5), 767-781.

Rigdon, S. M. (1996). Abortion law and practice in China: an overview with comparisons to the United States. *Social Science and Medicine,* 42(4), 543-560.

Rodenburg, J. (1993). *Emancipation or Subordination? Consequences of Female Migration for Migrants and their Family.* New York: United Nations Secretariat.

Rozario, S. (2002). Poor and 'dark': What is my future? Identity construction and adolescent women in Bangladesh. In L. Manderson & P. L. Rice (Eds.), *Coming of Age in South and Southeast Asia: Youth, Courtship and Sexuality,* (pp. 42-57). Richmond: Curzon.

Rydstrom, H. (2002). Sexed bodies, gendered bodies: children and the body in Vietnam. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 25(3), 359-372.

Rydstrom, H. (2003). *Embodying Morality; Growing Up in Rural Northern Vietnam.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Sargeson, S., & Song Y. (Forthcoming 2011). Gender, citizenship and agency in land development. In S. Sargeson & T. Jacka (Eds.), *Women, Gender and Rural Development in China* (pp. 25-48). London: Edward Elgar.

Scharping, T. (2003). *Birth Control in China, 1949-2000: Population Policy and Demographic Development.* London, UK: Routledge.

Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State - How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

SFPC. (2002). *Guanyu zonghe zhili chusheng renkou xingbiebi shenggao wenti de jianyi* [Opinions on issues of managing increased sex ratio at birth imbalance]: State Family Planning Commission.

Short, S. E., Zhai, F., Xu, S., & Yang, M. (2001). China's one-child policy and the care of children: An analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. *Social Forces*, 79(3), 913-943.

Siu, H. F. (1993). Reconstructing dowry and brideprice in South China. In D. Davis & S. Harrell (Eds.), *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era*, (pp. 165-188). Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Spencer, J. D. (1990). *The Search for Modern China.* New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.

SSDP. (no date). *Standard Service Delivery Protocol on Family Planning.*

Stacey, J. (1983). *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Summerfield, G. (2006). Gender equity and land reform in rural China. In J. Jaquette & G. Summerfield (Eds.), *Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice: Institutions, Resources and Mobilization.* (pp. 137-158). Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Summerfield, G., & Aslanbeigui, N. (1999). Housing reform in Urban China. In I. Tinker & G. Summerfield (Eds.), *Women's Rights to House and Land: China, Laos, Vietnam,* (pp. 179-194). Lynne Rienner.

Tan, L. Y. (2008). Changing Mindsets: How China's abnormal sex ratio is turning its government into a champion of gender equality. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, 3(1), Article 2.

Teitelbaum, M. S., & Mantel, N. (1971). Socio-economic factors and the sex ratio at birth. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 3, 23-42.

Thorborg, M. (2005). Where have all the young girls gone? Fatal discrimination of daughters - regional comparison. *China Perspectives*, 57(1), 1-13.

Tinker, I. (1999). Women's empowerment through rights to house and land. In I. Tinker & G. Summerfield (Eds.), *Women's Rights to House and Land: China, Laos, Vietnam,* (pp. 9-26): Lynne Rienner.

Tu, W.-M. (1990). The Confucian tradition in Chinese history. In P. S. Ropp (Ed.), *Heritage of China - Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization,* (pp. 112-137). Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Tu, W.-M. (1998). Confucius and Confucianism. In W. H. Slote & G. A. De Vos (Eds.), *Confucianism and the Family,* (pp. 3-36). Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Turner, J. (1997). *The Institutional Order: Economy, Kinship, Religion, Polity, Law, and Education in Evolutionary and Comparative Perspective.* New York: Longman.

UN data. (2011). *UN data - abortion.* Retrieved 15 March 2011 from http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=GenderStat&f=inID%3A12.

UNDESA. (2008). *World Population Prospects, the 2008 Revision:* United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

UNDP. (2009). *Human Development Report 2009 - Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development.* United Nations Development Programme.

UNFPA. (2010). *Ending Widespread Violence Against Women. United Nations Population Fund,* Retrieved 1 November 2009 from http://www.unfpa.org/gender-/violence.htm.

Waldron, I. (1983). Sex differences in human mortality: The role of genetic factors. *Social Science and Medicine*, 17(6), 321-333.

van Balen, F. (2006). Attitudes towards sex selection in the Western world. *Prenatal Diagnosis,* 26(7), 614-618.

Wang, W., & Pan, S. (2006). *Nanhai pianhao de zai kaolii* [Rethinking son preference]. Economic Review, 1-8 9 February 2006, Accessed 11 June 2010 http://www.gjmy.com/Item/5233.aspx

Wasserstrom, J. (1984). Resistance to the one-child family. *Modern China*, 10(3), 345-374.

Watson, J. L. (1982). Chinese kinship reconsidered: Anthropological perspectives on historical research. *China Quarterly,* 92, 589-622.

Whyte, M. K., & Parish, W. L. (1985). *Urban Life in Contemporary China.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Williamson, N. E. (1976). *Sons or Daughters: A Cross-cultural Survey of Parental Preferences.* Beverly Hills; London: Sage Publications.

Wolf, M. (1972). *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan.* Stanford: University of California Press.

Wolf, M. (1985). *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wong, L. (1998). *Marginalization and Social Welfare in China.* London and New York: Routledge.

World Bank. (2010). *Global monitoring report 2010 - The MDGs after the crisis: Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger:* Retrieved 10 March 2011 from http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTGLOBALMONITOR/EXTGLOMONREP2010/0,,contentMDK:22522919~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:6911226,00.html.

Wu, H., S. Li, et al. (2005). "Zhongguo xiangcheng renkou liudong yu chengzhen chusheng renkou xingbiebi - jiyu "wupu" shuju de fenxi [Rural-urban migration and sex ratio at birth in urban regions of China - analysis based on the 5th census]." *Population and Economics,* (6), 11-18.

Wu, Z., Viisainen, K., & Hemminki, E. (2006). Determinants of high sex ratio among newborns: A cohort study from rural Anhui province, China. *Reproductive Health Matters,* 14(27), 172-180.

XHC. (2002). *Xiandai hanyu cidian* [The contemporary Chinese dictionary]. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Yan, Y. (2003). *Private Life Under Socialism: Love, Intimacy and Family Change in a Chinese Village 1949-1999.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Yang, C. i.-k. u. (1959). *The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Ye, J., & Wu, H. (2008a). *Qianmo duwu: zhongguo nongcun liushou funü* [Dancing solo: women left behind in rural China]. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe [Social Science Academic Press (China)].

Yount, K. M. (2001). Excess mortality of girls in the Middle East in the 1970s and 1980s: Patterns, correlates, and gaps in research. *Population Studies,* 55(3), 291-308.

Yu, Y. C., Zheng, X., & Pang, L. (2004, 27-29 April 2004). *The High Sex Ratio at Birth of China in 2000.* Paper presented at the International Seminar on China's 2000 Population and Housing Census, Beijing.

Zai, L., & Zhongdong, M. (2004). China's floating population: New evidence from the 2000 census. *Population and Development Review,* 30(3), 467-488.

Zeng, Y. (2007). Options for fertility policy transition in China. Population and Development Review, 33(2), 215-246.

Zeng, Y., Tu, P., Gu, B., Xu, Y., Li, B., & Li, Y. (1993). Causes and implications of the recent increase in the reported sex ratio at birth in China. *Population and Development Review,* 19(2), 283-302.

Zhang, A. (1993). *Poverty Alleviation In China: Commitment, Policies and Expenditures.* Retrieved 31 March 2010 from http://hdr.undp.org/docs/publications-/ocational_papers/oc27.htm.

Zhang, H. (2007a). China's new rural daughters coming of age: Downsizing the family and firing up cash-earning power in the new Economy. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society,* 32(3), 671-699.

Zhang, H. (2007b). From resisting to "embracing" the one-child rule: Understanding new fertility trends in a central China village. *China Quarterly*, 192, 855-875.

Zhang, L. (2001). Strangers in the City: *Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China's Floating Population.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Zhang, W. (1999). Economic reforms and fertility behaviour in rural China: An anthropological and demographic inquiry. *European Journal of Population,* 15(4), 317-348.

Zhang, W. (2000). Dynamics of marriage change in Chinese rural society in transition: A study of a Northern Chinese Village. *Population Studies,* 54(1), 57-69.

Zhang, W., & Li, S. (2005). Zinü de daiji zhichi xingwei dui nongcun laonianren shenghuo manyidu de yinxiang [Supportive behaviour of children and its impact on the life satisfaction of rural older persons]. *Population Research*, 29(5), 73-80.

Zhu, W., Lu, L., & Hesketh, T. (2009). China's excess males, sex selective abortion, and one child policy: analysis of data from 2005 national intercensus survey. *British Medical Journal,* 338(b1211).