



---

Fresh Winds in Beijing: Chinese Feminists Speak Out on the One-Child Policy and Women's Lives

Author(s): Susan Greenhalgh

Source: *Signs*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Spring, 2001), pp. 847-886

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175541>

Accessed: 01/05/2013 12:54

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Signs*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## Fresh Winds in Beijing: Chinese Feminists Speak Out on the One-Child Policy and Women's Lives

Since its inception twenty years ago, China's one-child-per-family policy has been a vexed issue for Western feminism.<sup>1</sup> Although the gender violence perpetrated in the name of urgent demographic goals marks the one-child policy as an important focus for feminist critique, the contradictory, highly ideological discourses circulating around the policy complicate and discourage feminist engagements with it. Wedged between an antitotalitarian, China-demonizing discourse emerging from conservative forces in the United States and an anti-Western, U.S.-demonizing discourse emanating from some elements of the party in China, most Western feminists and China specialists have avoided the topic, perhaps deeming it too politically sensitive and ideologically troubling to touch.<sup>2</sup> Chinese government restrictions on field research on the policy have only added to the perils of entering this political minefield. To be sure, important research has been done on the policy's evolution and its social, demographic, and health consequences. Yet most of this work is framed in the discourses of

The field trip from which this article derives was supported by a fellowship from the Open Society Institute. I wish to thank Joan Kaufman and Eve Wen-Jing Lee for their help in connecting me to some of the feminist scholar-activists whose voices are reflected here. My biggest thanks go to the women and men who took time out of their busy schedules to meet with me in Beijing in late 1999. All were gracious hosts who tolerated my probing, occasionally politically (in)sensitive questions with understanding and generosity. This article has benefited tremendously from the comments of Mary Ann Burriss, Hu Ying, Joan Kaufman, Jonathan Polansky, Wang Zheng, Edwin A. Winckler, Zhu Chuzhu, and a reviewer for this journal, as well as from discussions with Edwin A. Winckler about the larger political context in which the "one-child policy" has been carried out.

<sup>1</sup> The "one-child policy" is something of a misnomer, for many couples are allowed two children. Because the policy continues to encourage single-child families, however, and because use of this term facilitates communication, I employ the conventional formulation here. Useful overviews of the policy and its implementation are Banister 1987, 147–226; and Winckler 1999a.

<sup>2</sup> While many Western feminists have criticized the one-child policy and birth control program, few have done sustained research on them. Those who have will be introduced below.

[*Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2001, vol. 26, no. 3]

© 2001 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved. 0097-9740/2001/2603-0007\$02.00

demography, family planning, or reproductive health, none of which fully exploits the potential of contemporary political and feminist theories. In the absence of a robust counternarrative to the orientalist conservative account, current understandings of China's birth control program reflect media stereotypes of a monolithic and coercive party-state, a restrictive and unchanging policy on births, and a mute population cowed into submission by the repressive apparatuses of a still Communist state.

Although there is some truth to these cold-waresque images, today they are being disrupted as never before. Sparked by the 1994 Cairo conference on population and development and the 1995 Beijing conference on women, new developments in the global and local Chinese politics of population have transformed the conversations about population policy taking place at the political center. After being silenced for forty years, Chinese feminists are beginning to find their voices and to speak out on the impact of state birth planning on women's bodies and lives. Faint though their voices are, this is a big and important change.

In November 1999, the State Birth Planning Commission, the inter-ministerial agency in charge of population policy formulation and implementation, held an international symposium on recent, "client-centered" innovations in the birth control program. Eager to learn what was happening, I attended the Beijing symposium as an outside observer. An anthropologist and China scholar, I have been studying for fifteen years the gendered policy and politics of reproduction in China. In an American environment characterized by vicious condemnation of "Chinese coercion" and a Chinese context marked, until recently, by official silence about the gender consequences of the one-child policy, it has been an ongoing challenge to develop a politically and ethically comfortable position from which to write. For this reason, the emergence of Chinese feminist voices speaking out on China's population control project was a matter of intense professional and personal interest to me. After the seminar ended, I stayed on in Beijing to meet with some of China's best-known feminists and reproductive health advocates to learn their views of the gender implications of the birth program and of the new, apparently woman-oriented experiments being undertaken by the commission.<sup>3</sup>

Drawing on these interviews, in this article I hope to capture this exciting moment in the history of Chinese feminism by tracing the emergence of these new, feminist views on the one-child policy and by locating them

<sup>3</sup> The interviews ranged from two to three hours in length. All but one were conducted in Chinese.

in relation to an emerging public sphere of women's discourse and a politics of reproduction being played out in discursive struggle over core narratives of nation. A new wave of research on a women's "public sphere" in China suggests that such a space of public debate and cultural and ideological production by women-identified subjects began to take shape in China's major cities in the 1990s (Yang 1999c).<sup>4</sup> One of the first projects of China's newly self-conscious feminists has been to articulate a critique of the gender discourses of the state feminism of the Maoist era.<sup>5</sup> In the Maoist years (1949–76), the state drowned out women's independent voices in a hegemonic state feminist discourse. The central narrative of that discourse was the women's liberation narrative, which credited socialism with emancipating Chinese women, in turn, liberating the nation from its humiliating weakness in the world (Rofel 1999b; Wang 1999, 1–32). This new wave of research suggests that, although feminist consciousness and visions are now being shaped, this incipient sphere of discourse on women's identities and women's issues is exceedingly fragile. Unlike women's public spheres of the West, it appears to be operating in conjunction with the state rather than in opposition to it. Whether it will lead to the emergence of a civil society independent from the state remains to be seen.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Mayfair Yang describes the women's public sphere as "a collective body of women-identified subjects, voices, and visions" (1999b, 3).

<sup>5</sup> Since the early twentieth century, when they first entered public discourse in China, *feminism* and *feminist* have been contested terms in that country. In the party discourse of the Maoist era (1949–76), *feminism* (*nüquanzhuyi*, or movement for women's rights) was endowed with a host of negative meanings. Invariably preceded by *bourgeois* and *Western*, it was portrayed as a self-evidently failed project. The party's representation, which was essential to its claim to be the sole liberator of Chinese women, erased a history of independent feminist activism in the May Fourth era (1915–25), which Wang Zheng (1999) has recently reclaimed. In the post-Mao era, a new generation of Chinese feminists is dismantling the Maoist discourse on women. Many are pursuing this project under the banner *nüxingzhuyi* (literally, feminine-ism), understood variously as "feminism" or "the new study of femininity" (Wang 1999, esp. 1–32).

In her reaction to a first draft of this article, Zhu Chuzhu, one of my interviewees, wrote that she was neither a "feminist" (using the politically suspect term *nüquanzhuyizhe*) nor particularly knowledgeable about feminist theory. Rather, she explained, she was "concerned about girl children from the vantage point of population studies" (Zhu 2000). While the other four interviewees all self-identified as feminists, Zhu's long history of writing on problems faced by women and girls marks her as a feminist in the sense of one actively committed to improving the position of females in Chinese society.

<sup>6</sup> See Cornue 1999; Dai 1999; and Yang 1999a, 1999b. Recent research on the prospects for the development of a civil society in the Habermasian sense (namely, a sphere of free social organization and interaction with the potential to limit the exercise of state power) concludes that the liberal European model does not apply to China. Post-1978 China has

In this article I examine women's efforts to establish a public space of feminist discourses on the state's population policy and birth control program. Focusing on the work of five scholar-activists, I chart the forces enabling their emergence, sketch the narratives they are constructing, and trace the gender politics shaping their attempts to plot new, woman-centered paths to birth control. The ferocious grip of the one-child policy on women's bodies makes population a critical arena for the emergence of Chinese feminist voices. At the same time, the state's deep investment in the one-child policy makes population a space of great danger for women wishing to articulate feminist alternatives. The stakes in these struggles are exceedingly high.

In mapping out these voices, I want to outline a new approach to the politics of reproduction in China of which the feminist voices are now (happily) a part. Much of the gender-sensitive work on Chinese population politics has focused on struggles over policy rules, program implementation, and gender discourse at the local level.<sup>7</sup> Such conflicts map the place where power connects up to actual bodies and lives. While this site remains a critically important arena for reproductive negotiations, these struggles represent only one dimension of power, the material or practical dimension. An influential body of feminist literature suggests that the ultimate power of the Chinese state over Chinese women lies elsewhere, in the discursive domain (Barlow 1993; Gilmartin et al. 1994; Zito and Barlow 1994). The feminist work on China ties the discourse of "women's liberation" to that of "national emancipation" (Meng 1993; Larson 1998); these writings link up to a larger body of comparative research that shows how in China, as in many third-world countries, the feminist movement for women's liberation first arose in conjunction with the nationalist movement against colonialism and imperialism, only to be subordinated once political power was reconsolidated (Jayawardena 1986). Largely missing from the feminist account of contemporary (i.e., post-1949) China, however, are the discursive links connecting "woman" and "nation" to "popula-

---

witnessed the decline of party-state power and the proliferation of new social groups, but this new associational realm tends to be embryonic and fragmented and to exist in symbiotic relationship to the state. The state retains the right to supervise and intervene in this organizational realm, and it continues to forbid public discussion of sensitive political issues. On the prospects for civil society in contemporary China, see Goodman and Hooper 1994; Davis et al. 1995; White, Howell, and Shang 1996; and Goldman and MacFarquhar 1999b. Good briefings on the extent of political liberalization in China today are Goldman and MacFarquhar 1999b; and Tien and Chu 2000.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., White 1987; Greenhalgh 1994; Handwerker 1998; and Zhang 1999.

tion.”<sup>8</sup> These three figures of discourse are bound together by women’s roles as reproducers of the population that constitutes the nation. As Nira Yuval-Davis argues, women’s roles as biological reproducers of the nation play a central part in most nationalist discourses, for the obvious (if rarely noted) reasons that origin myths are central to the construction of national collectivities and that most people join a national collectivity through birth (1997, 26–27). Nationalist discourse is then translated into population policy, subjecting women to pressures not only from nationalist biopolitical (often population control) projects but also from the institutions of the state charged with surveilling and regulating women’s reproduction (see Heng 1997). The nexus of woman/nation/population, then, is not only discursive but also material or corporeal.

To understand the freighted politics flowing from this knotting of woman/nation/population, we need to examine what I call the official *narratives of population* and their relation to official narratives of women’s liberation and the nation. Population narratives — stories describing the nature of “the population problem,” its origin, and solution — have received little systematic attention in any national context. In the Chinese case, Tyrene White has laid the institutional groundwork for a focused attention to policy narratives with her important work on the political economy of population policy making at the political center (1992, 1994a, 1994b). Others have described the population narratives that circulate in popular culture (Anagnost 1997, 117–38). Yet the official, party-produced narratives on population, which for more than twenty years have provided the rationale for a policy limiting virtually all couples to one or two children, remain largely hidden from scholarly view. Close study of these narratives, undertaken below, reveals them to be variants of two foundational narratives of nation — the narrative of national crisis and salvation and the narrative of women’s liberation — that serve to legitimate the continued rule of the Chinese Communist Party. A close examination of these narratives, and of the politics of silencing and voice by which the state’s formulations have become hegemonic while women’s perspectives have been made unspeakable, will help us understand how the Chinese state succeeded in expanding “population” into a gigantic terrain of power over women’s bodies, subjectivities, and lives. A grasp of these narratives will also clarify why China’s

<sup>8</sup> Frank Dikotter (1995, 1998) creatively illuminates some of these discursive connections in Republican China (1911–49). For the post-1949 period, Ann Anagnost (1997, 117–37) covers some of this territory, but her main concern is how official constructions of China as “excessively populous” are experienced in everyday life.

leaders remain deeply committed to a policy that largely achieved its demographic goals almost a decade ago and produced gendered social problems that by all accounts are frightful in nature and proportion.<sup>9</sup>

### **Feminist scholar-activists find their voices:**

#### **Global and local dynamics of change**

Since the mid-1980s, women's health advocates around the world have been developing a feminist critique of conventional family planning practice. In their view, family-planning-as-usual was dominated by demographic concerns and implemented by top-down methods that treated women as objects of control rather than subjects with needs of their own, with deleterious consequences for their reproductive health and lives at large (Dixon-Mueller 1993; Correa 1994; Hartmann 1995). At the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994, feminist activists succeeded in essentially rewriting the script for international population policy, transforming the agenda from the achievement of demographic targets to the enhancement of women's sexual and reproductive health, choice, and rights (Cohen and Richards 1994; McIntosh and Finkle 1995).

China presents the world's most conspicuous and consequential case of a top-down, demographic-targeting approach to population control. Since the mid-1950s, when top policy makers declared population a key concern of the party and state, women have been effectively silenced (White 1994a). Pushed out of the public arena of policy debate, women outside the state policy-making apparatus have been forbidden to challenge the state's narratives, policies, and programs on this issue that so deeply affects their lives. From the early 1970s China's government has sought forceful control over population growth. Within a few years it had installed a state birth planning program that was operative in every nook and cranny of the country. Unlike the more familiar *family planning program*, in which the individual couple is enjoined to plan its family, China has created a *state birth planning program*, in which social engineers in the state planning apparatus effectively plan the birth(s) of every couple in the nation (Wang and Hull 1991). Planners at the political center establish population con-

<sup>9</sup> Although the fertility goal was reached by late 1992 or early 1993, concerns about population momentum—the continued growth in numbers due to the large cohorts of the past—provide a demographic rationale for the continuation of strict population control. Chinese demographers project that an additional 400 million persons will eventually be added to the current population of 1.3 billion and that it will take fifty years before China reaches zero population growth (Gu 2000).

trol targets that are then sent down the administrative hierarchy to the community, where they are enforced, at times harshly.

***Official narratives of women's liberation and national salvation***

In the revolutionary decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the policies and programs of the state were justified by a narrative of women's health and liberation. A variant of the core narrative of state feminism, this narrative held that, by delaying marriage and limiting childbearing, the state's population policy both improved the health of mothers and children and liberated women to participate in education and work, thereby lifting their social status and enhancing their contribution to socialist development (see Orleans 1978). The women's health and liberation narrative thus amounted to a narrative of salvation of oppressed women (see Lu 1993, 2–4; Wang 1999, 1–32). Such narratives have preoccupied Chinese intellectuals and the Chinese Communist Party throughout the twentieth century. In the population version, the party, through its promotion of state birth planning, emerged as the hero that saved women from the oppressive bonds of the traditional patriarchal family. Women's liberation was inextricably linked to national liberation: in emancipating women, the party was also liberating the nation from a semicolonial, semifeudal past, transforming it into a modern, powerful nation able to reclaim its rightful place in the world. Nothing short of the party's place in Chinese history — and its right to rule — were at stake.

The Chinese socialist state's dramatic late 1970s makeover from Marxist revolutionary to marketist reformer called for new narratives and new policies on population. In a compelling narrative of national crisis and party salvation, in the post-Mao era of "reform and opening to the outside world," "excessive population growth" constituted an urgent national crisis that was sabotaging the nation's chance of attaining its rightful place of wealth and power in the world. "The most effective solution," later refigured as "[the] only choice," was a one-child policy in which, under the leadership of the party, a whole generation would sacrifice its freedom of reproductive choice for the benefit of "the nation as a whole" and "future generations to come" (Central Committee 1980, 1982). The population narrative of a nation in demographic crisis saved by the party's one-child policy fitted into a longstanding narrative of the nation in which the party repeatedly rescued the country from major threats — feudalism, poverty, corruption — again and again earning the right to rule (Apter and Saich 1994; Kluver 1996). As Alan R. Kluver argues, retelling the national myth serves to legitimize both specific party policies and the central role of the party in society in terms of their historical necessity in the nation's



trajectory (1996). Spinning out new versions of that narrative serves the same function. The demographic variant of the national narrative was critical to the legitimacy of the post-Mao party, whose foundational narrative, articulated at the historic Third Plenum of December 1978, made rapid improvements in per-capita living standards the new agenda for the nation and the party itself the agent of that economic miracle (Kluver 1996). Because of its promise to rapidly reduce the population part of the income-over-population equation, the one-child policy announced in 1979 became a crucial element of the party's discursive and political-economic strategy to justify its continued rule. Much was at stake in keeping the narrative and policy intact. In 1982 strict birth planning was designated a "basic state policy" (*jiben guocce*), marking it as a top priority of the state — thus beyond debate or challenge (Hu 1982). Although the number of two-child exceptions to the one-child rule was expanded in the mid- to late 1980s, the policy continued to limit virtually all couples of the Han Chinese ethnic majority (91 percent of the population) to one or at most two children.

With issues of economic modernization, global integration, and Chinese nationalism all hanging in the balance, women's concerns were deemed secondary, and policies to promote the women's liberation agenda were largely abandoned. During the 1980s and early 1990s the women's health and liberation narrative remained the official line, but, in fact, women's interests were radically subordinated to those of the nation. As many Chinese both outside and inside the state now acknowledge, women's bodies became mere objects of state contraceptive control, vehicles for the achievement of urgent demographic targets. Western scholars have documented some of the gendered consequences of this objectification: damaged reproductive health, lives made socially unlivable by the inability to bear a son, missing baby girls, and much more.<sup>10</sup> Chinese scholars living in China, however, were politically constrained from openly studying these problems or raising them in public forums.<sup>11</sup> In this tense political environ-

<sup>10</sup> Johnson 1993, 1996; Kaufman 1993; Coale and Banister 1994; Greenhalgh and Li 1995; Johnson, Huang, and Wang 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Chinese scholars based outside China were freer to write about the gender violence produced by the policy. See especially the work of the legal scholars Sharon Hom (1991–92) and Li Xiaorong (1996). Their pursuit of human rights issues came at a cost, however. Li Xiaorong, now a research scholar at the University of Maryland, is banned from returning to China (Li Xiaorong 1999). As for China-based researchers, the experience of the demographers who discovered the rising sex ratios at birth is telling. Confidential interviews conducted in 1993 revealed that, in order to bring this disturbing trend to the attention of top policy makers, they had to draw heavily on personal connections and confine their communications to closed meetings. In part because of their political savvy, they were able to get the issue placed on the policy agenda.

ment, challenging the official narratives of national crisis and women's liberation was too perilous to venture.

### ***A critique from within the state***

In the mid-1990s the climate for critique began to change. In the early 1990s the commission had overseen the use of harsh administrative measures to reach stringent demographic targets (Greenhalgh, Zhu, and Li 1994; Winckler 1999a). By early 1993, those in charge realized that fertility had fallen below the "replacement level" of 2.1 children per woman, exceeding their most optimistic expectations. With the pressure to produce results off, in 1993–94 commission leaders began to grow concerned about the social, physical, and political price that had been paid for pushing the numbers down so fast (IF, ZEL, 11/23/99; Zhang, Gu, and Xie 1999, esp. 1).<sup>12</sup> Larger reform-era transformations in Chinese society—in particular, the spread of an increasingly globalized market economy, the development of "socialist legality," and limited political reform in the form of local elections—may also have stimulated growing concern at the commission with the human costs of population control.

These concerns, which had grown out of China's own experience of population control, were supported by China's growing involvement with the international movement for women's reproductive health associated with the 1994 Cairo conference. The Cairo process gave supporters of change a vocabulary of reform that dovetailed neatly with concerns that were developing domestically. In the wake of the conference, contacts and collaborations with foreign organizations advancing reproductive health agendas multiplied as never before (Wong 1995).<sup>13</sup> From international organizations the commission received crucial financial resources and organizational and technical know-how to pursue more woman-centered, health-oriented approaches to the state planning of births.

<sup>12</sup> At the staff level, generational turnover began to produce a younger, better educated, more reform-minded professional staff who probably encouraged a shift away from exclusive concern with numbers (IF, JK, 3/24/00).

<sup>13</sup> In the 1990s the major foreign organizations supporting reproductive health projects in China were the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Ford Foundation. Both have long had resident officers in Beijing (UNFPA since 1980, Ford since 1991) and have maintained dedicated portfolios in reproductive health for China. The Rockefeller Foundation supported one major project in the early 1990s that was managed from New York. Other foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), in particular, the Population Council and the Public Media Center, have been implementers of projects funded by donor organizations. One bilateral agency, the Australian aid agency (AUSAID), works on birth planning in China. I am grateful to Joan Kaufman for providing me with a current institutional map to the donor community in China.

Responding to multiple pressures, in 1993–94 the State Birth Planning Commission began to take steps to soften its approach. In 1995 it established a small pilot project to test the feasibility of innovations to improve the “quality of care” (*youzhi fuwu*; literally, “quality service”) in the birth control program. These projects, and a few others launched under the commission’s auspices, were aimed at giving women’s health and choice greater weight while retaining control of population growth (Zhang, Gu, and Xie 1999).<sup>14</sup> As the continued emphasis on demographic control suggests, the state sought to improve the delivery of services in the birth control program while retaining the basic narrative of a nation in demographic crisis saved by the one-child policy.

***Feminist voices from without: The makings of a women’s public sphere?***

At the same time that these reforms were germinating within the commission, another dynamic of change was developing outside the state. Since the mid-1990s, a loosely defined group of feminist scholar-activists has begun to speak out about the harmful effects of the one-child policy and program on women’s health and well-being. While drawing on the larger discursive world of women’s studies (*feminism*), which had been actively developing since the mid-1980s,<sup>15</sup> these feminist voices on population were brought to life by two more specific developments in population discourse and practice, one global, the other local.

Perhaps the most important immediate stimuli to these voices were the multiplying connections to the world outside, forged at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 and through multiplying links to transnational agencies and feminist and reproductive health networks. The international women’s conference and associated NGO Forum gave the women’s movement in China, which had been moribund during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, fresh energy and life.<sup>16</sup> Since the conference, a number of concerned feminist scholar-activists have begun to work in various ways to raise consciousness about the deleterious effects of state birth planning on women and girls and to promote changes in the policy and program that will enhance the well-being of women and girls. Reform-minded feminists must exercise extreme caution in criticizing what, after all, remains a “basic state policy” of the

<sup>14</sup> The United Nations Fund for Population Activities, in collaboration with the Chinese government, initiated a project to fulfill the targets set forth by the Cairo conference. Its achievements are reported in Li Bohua 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Barlow 1994; Wang 1997; Hershatler et al. 1998; Li Xiaojiang 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Howell 1997; Wang 1997; for personal testimony see Wong 1995; Wang 1996.

party and government. In this restrictive political climate, transnational links were critical, for they gave these women (and some men) new concepts, political support, and external resources to pursue their agendas. Despite the qualms of Western postcolonial theorists, only one of the Chinese feminists I talked to worried about dependence on the West. That was Li Xiaojiang, who, unlike the great majority of Chinese feminists, now rejects key aspects of Western feminism as irrelevant, in some ways even harmful, in the Chinese context (Li 1999; for more, see Wang 1997; Rofel 1999a). To the others, Western and global feminisms appeared as sources of inspiration and of intellectual and political resources they could draw upon to create new openings in the politics of gender at home. As the China born, U.S.-trained historian Wang Zheng has written of Chinese women scholars generally, "Their interaction with feminists from outside of China has taught them that Chinese women will not lose their own cultural identity by learning from others, but, rather, they will be empowered politically and intellectually in their pursuit of gender justice" (1997, 148, also 1999, 361–64).

Changes in the domestic politics of population were also important to the entry of feminist voices into the public space of population policy debate. The state's openness to new ideas about how its work might be improved created some space for certain individuals outside the commission, in particular those with impeccable political reputations, to add their voices to the official discussions and debates.<sup>17</sup> Interviews with many scholars and officials over the years make it clear that Peng Peiyun, Minister-in-Charge of the commission from 1988–98, played a key role in fostering a climate of open discussion and debate of population policy issues. She created advisory committees (Zeng 1989) and expanded the number of institutional channels (such as conferences and invited seminars) through which scholars outside the state bureaucracy could make their views known. Yet the role offered the scholar was not that of independent critic but of "establishment intellectual" (Cheek and Hamrin 1986), one who works with the bureaucracies of the party-state to effect change from within. For most of the post-1949 period and certainly during the 1990s, serving the state as an establishment intellectual has been virtually the only safe and effective way for Chinese intellectuals to participate in the political and policy debates shaping the nation's future (Goldman 1981, 1994; Hamrin and Zhao 1995). In the population domain, it is clear that the state's interest in, or at least tolerance of, feminist voices was an essential prerequisite to

<sup>17</sup> According to my interviewees, recent regulations requiring government officials to have degrees have also made state officials more responsive to the suggestions of intellectuals.

their public articulation; without it, these voices would have been quashed. We will see below how this dependence on the state shaped the topics these scholar-activists addressed, the projects they undertook, and the audience to whom they directed their findings and suggestions. In population, as in other domains of feminist discourse, then, feminist intellectuals did not (and could not safely) challenge the state. Instead, they served as establishment scholar-activists who pursued their agendas in varying degrees of closeness to the state.

Although they remain few in number, unorganized, and dependent on a fragile tolerance by the state, these feminists represent a new voice on population, with the potential to question and perhaps destabilize the narratives and policies that have guided population work for the past twenty years. What are these brave scholars and activists saying? To date their voices have not been recorded, either within China or without.

Drawing on the Beijing interviews and on other materials gathered in recent years, in this article I record their voices and describe their projects on behalf of women and girls. To the extent possible, I try to allow my subjects to speak for themselves. In some places I include parts of our exchanges in order to bring out differences of political perspective between myself, an academic Western feminist, and my interviewees. To enrich the account, I have supplemented the conversations with materials written by my interlocutors. Given the sensitivity of this topic, however, such publications are exceedingly scarce. As my interviewees repeatedly reminded me, in China today everything can be discussed in private, but nothing sensitive can safely be written down.

Three questions guide the following inquiry. First, how have these new feminist voices emerged? More specifically, how have the broad global and national political forces outlined above worked themselves out in the lives of the individuals I talked to? Second, to what extent have they challenged the state narratives? What new narrative(s) have they been articulating? Third, what are the obstacles to the emergence of an independent feminist voice on population? What strategies are these feminists pursuing to overcome them, and what are the prospects for the future?

### **Reluctant critics of state practice: Divergent histories of engagement**

Given the political dangers attached to challenging the one-child policy, it is not surprising that the people I talked to were all reluctant critics of the state's population control program. None set out deliberately to become a specialist on, or spokesperson about, this set of problems. Each of the five

individuals I profile here fell into this role in a different way.<sup>18</sup> One came to these issues from population studies, another from bioethics, a third through an interest in feminist movements, a fourth through investigative journalism, and a fifth by way of unexpected encounters with foreign critics of the birth program. These divergent paths to political consciousness are interesting in themselves, for they reveal something of the process by which change in China's population discourse and practice has been taking place and some of the political hurdles that would-be feminist reformers have encountered. For this reason I devote some space to briefly sketching these histories of engagement, a project that gives me an opportunity also to introduce my interviewees.

The people I met with were all prominent professionals with substantial reputations in their respective fields. Although the line between research and activism is fuzzy in China, one might describe four as scholar-researchers with varying degrees of interest in promoting sociopolitical change and one as an activist-writer with strong interests in social research. Three were essentially government employees who worked for state-run organizations (a university, the All-China Women's Federation, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences). A fourth headed an NGO, while a fifth was unemployed at the time of the interview. Four were women. All were urban-based intellectuals (four lived in Beijing, one in Xi'an), though three had personal knowledge of the problems faced by rural women gained from social science field research or journalistic investigations. Between their late forties and late sixties, all had lived through the turbulent Maoist period to see the incredible improvements in living standards and personal freedom brought about by the past twenty years of reform. This was precisely the time during which the one-child policy was enforced, creating an indelible association in their minds between drastic population control and marked improvements in material well-being.

The connections between population control and women's lives are most central to the work of the population specialist Zhu Chuzhu, professor and director of the Population Research Institute at Xi'an Jiaotong University. Although she had been doing field research on rural social and economic problems for almost twenty years, Zhu noted that she became aware of the harmful effects of the birth program only in the early 1990s, when she observed them firsthand while studying work-fertility links in the

<sup>18</sup> I also talked at length with Tan Lin (Nankai University) and Wang Xingzhan (Beijing Women's Hotline) and more briefly with Zheng Zhenzhen (Peking University), all of whom provided important insights that shaped the discussion that follows.

lives of poor rural women (Zhu and Peng 1996). The results of her research on the gender effects of birth planning countrywide are contained in *The Dual Effects of the Family Planning Program on Chinese Women* (Zhu et al. 1997). With the official line stating that birth planning was an unmitigated good for women, arguing in print that the program also had deleterious effects was politically risky. Tellingly, it took Zhu and her colleagues two full years and considerable political maneuvering to get the book published. Although reactions to the study have been mixed, it reportedly has opened up space for people to talk about the negative as well as the positive impacts on women (IF, JK, 11/15/99; Burriss 2000). Because of the continued riskiness of the topic, however, Zhu remains virtually alone in her willingness to broach these issues directly with the population control establishment.

Liu Bohong, assistant director of the Women's Studies Institute in the Women's Federation, came to issues of reproductive health from her interests in feminisms and women's movements. In the early 1990s she joined a group of women who the Ford Foundation's representative on women's health brought together. Through linkages to the Boston Women's Health Collective, the group took on the Chinese translation of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.<sup>19</sup> A superlative organizer, Liu was in charge of that project (Burriss 2000). Liu has had the unusual opportunity of extensive contact with foreign feminists.<sup>20</sup> This international experience has given her feminist vocabulary and politics a rare cosmopolitan character. Although she has not yet written on birth planning and women's health — a project she considers too risky at this point — Liu is a vocal if publicly gentle critic of the birth planning establishment. At the same time, she plays a very constructive role as external advisor to the commission's reform projects. In addition to promoting gender sensitivity in the Birth Commission, she has been working to encourage the Women's Federation to expand its interest in women's reproductive health, a topic it has approached with ambivalence (on which, see more below).

Qiu Renzong is a philosopher and ethicist in the Institute of Philosophy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In the early 1990s he brought his work on AIDS to the attention of a Ford Foundation officer who was looking for ways to promote multidisciplinary dialogues on reproductive health. With Ford support, Qiu has organized six international workshops on selected topics in the field of population and reproductive health, publishing conference volumes of short abstracts and papers (Qiu 1996b). By

<sup>19</sup> For details, see Yanco 1996.

<sup>20</sup> For details, see Liu 1995.

taking on highly sensitive issues—from sex work to ethical issues in birth planning, domestic violence, marital rape, and more—Qiu has been pushing the limits of what is publicly discussable. The topics of the seminars are “selected,” Qiu told me, because certain issues, such as the one-child policy, are not yet publicly debatable. Although Qiu is the most academically inclined of the five, he tries to influence state policy by preparing ethical guidelines and action recommendations at the end of each seminar and sending them to the relevant ministries. Qiu’s personal experiences and observations of gender disparities in both precommunist and reform-era China make him a strong advocate of gender equality. He is keenly aware of the irony in the fact that he, a man, is playing such a key role in raising consciousness about women’s sexual and reproductive health and in developing feminist perspectives on sensitive issues in women’s lives.

Li Xiaojiang, one of China’s most influential and controversial feminist scholars, was for many years professor of Western literature and director of the Women’s Studies Center at Zhengzhou University in Henan.<sup>21</sup> In the late 1980s she edited a pathbreaking series of books on Chinese women. At the time of the interview she was living in Beijing and working independently. Li told me that she never intended to speak out or even think much about the impact of birth planning on women’s lives. It was simply not an important issue for her. But every time she lectured to foreign audiences, she found herself fielding hostile questions about the one-child policy and human rights. Persistent foreign attention to the matter forced Li to formulate a position on it, one that defended China’s approach against Western critics who, in her opinion, failed to appreciate the seriousness of China’s population and developmental problems. Li’s views are set out in a short piece with a title that reflects her impatience with foreigners’ questions: “How Many Articles on Human Rights Can ‘Birth Planning’ Produce? On ‘Reproductive Rights’” (Li 1997a). A strong supporter of official policy, Li was the only one of my interviewees who had not tried to persuade the government to alter its population policy or practice.

Of the five specialists I talked to, Xie Lihua was perhaps the least engaged with questions of the population policy’s impact on women. Xie heads a women’s nongovernmental organization and is editor-in-chief of the monthly magazine, *Nongjianü Baishitong*, rendered into English as *Rural Women Knowing All*.<sup>22</sup> She is also deputy editor of *China Women’s News*. At one time, Xie told me, she was like many other members of the urban

<sup>21</sup> For more on her work and the controversy it has provoked, see Barlow 1994, 1997; Wang 1997; Rofel 1999a.

<sup>22</sup> For more on this magazine, see Xie 1995.



elite, who consider rural women “backward” and thus of little interest in a forward-looking era of reform and opening up. Since she began investigating the lives of rural women for her magazine, however, she became aware of the grinding, sometimes life-threatening, problems faced by village women. Now she is one of their biggest advocates and spokespersons. Although for Xie birth planning ranks low on the list of problems rural women face, her magazine has run discussions of a number of issues loosely related to population control. With Ford support, the magazine features a regular column called “childbearing and health” (*shengyu yu jiankang*). Xie’s organization has also published a book on the rising rates of suicide among rural women, which some have tied to the pressures of the one-child policy (Small Group 1999); another book on birth planning is in the works. Xie has a personal interest in these issues. Her mother’s mother, unable to bear a son, saw her husband take a second wife. The second wife, failing to produce a son, committed suicide. This was obviously a painful and pivotal experience in Xie’s life. She told me that her commitment to improving women’s lives is rooted in this terrible memory.

As these personal histories suggest, critics of state birth planning practice have been emerging from widely differing social spaces. It should not go unnoticed that these critical voices arose only in the mid- to late 1990s, long after the problems they focus on developed. Their articulation at this time reflects the impact of the Cairo and Beijing conferences as well as the growing role of foreign NGOs in China’s social development. In all five cases, feminist consciousness of the unhealthy connections between population and gender was kindled not by a theoretical interest in the relationship but by some combination of personal experiences of gender discrimination in the lives of people they knew and encouragement by foreign organizations seeking to support work on women’s reproductive health and the women’s movement more generally. Importantly, every one of my interviewees had received support from the Ford Foundation, which since the early 1990s has maintained a Beijing office with a program officer in reproductive health.<sup>23</sup> All those I talked to credited the financial, intellectual, and political support of Ford and, to a lesser extent, other foreign organizations with playing a crucial role in enabling them to do critical feminist work on reproductive health and gender issues. While U.S.-based foundations have their own agendas in promoting “international femi-

<sup>23</sup> Ford has supported the reproductive health agenda in a variety of ways, from working with the emerging women’s movement to establishing nodes of feminist research and activism, to promoting change within the SBPC. The foundation’s two program officers in reproductive health — Mary Ann Burriss in the early 1990s and Joan Kaufman in the late 1990s — have had immeasurable influence on the developments described here.

nism” and “reproductive health,” my interviewees were not critical of these larger agendas in our meetings. Discussions with the Chinese and with program officers at Ford suggest that the issues to be tackled were not defined by the foundations but were mutually negotiated by the foundation staff and Chinese researcher-activists in full knowledge of the constraints imposed on all actors by sensitivities of the party-state (IF, JK, 11/15/99; Burriss 2000).

### **The national crisis and salvation narrative:**

#### **Still unchallenged and unchallengeable**

Since the early 1980s, the official narrative on population has contended that the country suffers from a crisis of overpopulation so severe that only the party-state’s one-child policy and birth planning program can save the nation from otherwise certain doom. This account of the extent of China’s population problem and the correct solution to it serves as the major legitimating narrative for the one-child policy. As such, it has the status of official, unquestionable dogma.

Widespread public acceptance of this basic crisis-salvation narrative helps to explain why few Chinese have publicly challenged the state’s muscular approach to population control. At certain times over the last two decades, some courageous individuals have openly questioned the necessity of the harsh one-child limit (Tien 1991, 133–39). Many others have pointed out problems in population control practice or worrying sociodemographic consequences of the one-child restriction, both fully legitimate topics for political discussion. Yet few if any have publicly challenged the government’s overarching assessment of the population problem and its correct solution. A crucial question, therefore, is whether the feminist voices that are now emerging are challenging these fundamentals.

All of those I conversed with in late 1999 overtly supported the official narrative about the seriousness of the population problem and the correctness of the state birth planning solution. Whether they expounded the official position because they agreed with it or because they were too politically savvy to openly disagree with it is a question of considerable political importance. The range of positions on these matters suggests that the answer is some of both. My interlocutors outlined three positions, each entailing a different relation to the state.

#### **Position 1: Actively supporting the official narrative**

The first response was actively to support the government’s narrative. The most ardent advocate of the official view, and thus the closest to the state,

was Li Xiaojiang.<sup>24</sup> Although she disagreed with the government on many issues, Li said, she completely concurred with its position on population. She maintained that the population problem simply cannot be seen from an individual perspective, as Westerners are wont to do, because it is a national problem. Marring every aspect of life in China—from development to living standards, the environment, and much more—China’s “population bomb” is everyone’s problem (Li 1997b, 162). “If you lived here in China as the Chinese people do,” she argued vehemently, underscoring the self-evident nature of the problem, “you would understand the seriousness of China’s population problem.” Moreover, she argued, “most people in most walks of life basically accept the policy.” In recent years that acceptance has grown, as the rising costs of raising children have lowered people’s desires for them. Although large numbers of people, rural and urban alike, would prefer to have two children, she said, that is only a vague hope, not a realistic expectation, let alone a popular demand.

As for the government’s approach to the problem, Li strongly supported the designation of birth planning as a basic national policy. The state planning of births, she said, is important, necessary, and unavoidable; certainly, birth planning must not be abandoned just because of the problems it has generated. This strong support for state practice was rooted in a fear of what would happen if population growth were not restrained. The goal of the one-child policy was to reduce fertility and population growth rates at the fastest possible speed, she explained, hinting at the terrible consequences that would have befallen the nation if that gargantuan population had been allowed to keep growing rapidly. While acknowledging the costs to women’s health and rights (on which, see more below), she argued that from an overall demographic and developmental perspective the one-child policy was the right policy for China. In all, then, Li was a vociferous defender of state policy.

### ***Position 2: Placing the official narrative off the agenda***

A second way of dealing with these questions about the nation and its demographic welfare was essentially to place them off the agenda by simply asserting the official narrative and going on to discuss other matters. In their book on the gender costs of the one-child program, the population specialist Zhu and her colleagues adopted such a strategy. The book began with the following statement: “Because of the serious contradictions be-

<sup>24</sup> The views Li articulated in our meeting are somewhat at odds with those she advanced in the early 1990s, when she spoke ardently about human rights issues. Political considerations may well have played a role in the shift in perspective.

tween population and arable land, environment, and resources, China has no choice but to carry out birth planning in order to control population growth. This is the historical and contemporary background against which we discuss the dual effects of birth planning on women” (Zhu et al. 1997, 1). Although lines like these will read like standard boilerplate to readers familiar with official rhetoric on population control, such formulations should not be dismissed as unthinking acceptance of the official line. Instead, the inclusion of such passages should be seen as a politically strategic move. In a book advancing a very controversial position (described below), these formulations help to protect the authors from charges that they are disagreeing with overall policy, in turn gaining them support for their more controversial arguments. In using such tactics, the authors place themselves in a relation to the state that is publicly subordinate but privately ambiguous.

**Position 3: Overtly supporting the official narrative while quietly questioning parts of it**

A third, more provocative, response emerged from the discussions with Qiu and Liu. No doubt because of their extensive foreign travel and contact with researchers outside of China, both were able to view China’s population policy and program with some critical (albeit, of course, ultimately supportive) distance. On the question of the seriousness of the population problem, the ethicist Qiu maintained that China faced a “population explosion,” even a “population bomb,” that was sabotaging the country’s chances for development (Qiu 1996a, 165). Echoing the official, intensely nationalistic view, he insisted that China could not wait for socioeconomic development to bring fertility down; if it waited, its prospects for catching up with the West would forever be lost.

Qiu’s assessment of the direness of the nation’s plight was important because it affected his view of the government’s intervention in reproduction. In what seemed to me an extremely courageous position, Qiu explained that, as a political philosopher, he believes that marriage and reproduction should be private matters. This is a startling statement in a country where the state’s right to reach into the bedroom has the status of self-evident truth. Yet Qiu promptly went on to qualify his position, saying that the government should not intervene *except* in special circumstances, and then only temporarily. One such special circumstance is a population explosion. Only in this situation, he maintained, is government intervention legitimate and are “emergency measures” warranted (Qiu 1996c, 307). Having characterized China’s population situation as a crisis, Qiu supported the government’s response to it, even if he did not particularly

like that response. In his view, at the beginning of the reform era, China faced two unpleasant choices: a policy that restricted individual rights but was effective or a policy that respected individual rights but was less effective. The one-child policy, he said, was not a good policy, but it was the lesser of two evils. By the end of this discussion, Qiu had brought his views back into closer line with those of the state.

Trying to define for me the limits of acceptable political discourse, Qiu kept gently reminding me that “these are very sensitive questions” and that “government leaders are very concerned about population size.” He was telling me both that I should not press too far and that there were some issues that it was not profitable for him to talk about or even reflect upon. Although he generously answered my questions about them, the seriousness of the nation’s population problem and the correctness of the official solution to it were two issues that clearly fell on the other side of that line (see Qiu 1996c). Yet, unlike Li, Qiu felt that the very success of the policy had generated problems so serious that the policy itself required reengineering. I return to this issue below.

The women’s studies researcher Liu Bohong was also able to place herself beyond the borders of China and describe for me how the state had represented Chinese demographic reality and why that official picture was never questioned. The government uses a simple dollar-over-population equation to convince people that there is a big population problem, she explained, without, of course, challenging the representation. Subject to intensive government propaganda for a quarter of a century, many women truly believe that the population *is* a big problem. To understand why, she continued, you need to appreciate that Chinese traditions lead us to think that “the state is a big thing, the individual woman a small thing.” In the Chinese way of thinking, personal problems are by definition trivial ones. “People simply would not think to question the government’s assessment of the size and seriousness of the population problem.”

Liu also suggested that people accept the government’s position on the population problem because it makes sense in terms of their own family experiences. The more people in the family, the lower the per-capita consumption. In response to my questions about the political and institutional sources of problems now attributed to “population,” she replied that people do not and would never trace problems of, say, economic development or environmental pollution to the political system or government policy. It is politically risky to think in such ways, she cautioned. Although some women have “contrary opinions” about the birth planning policy, she explained, no one dares to oppose it. In any case, people *cannot* challenge the government on this. Birth planning is the most important of

China's "basic policies." To openly challenge the government on this issue is to oppose the government, which obviously is impermissible. In their separate ways, both Qiu and Liu managed to define for themselves an intriguing position vis-à-vis the state. Neither challenging nor endorsing the official line, they remained implicitly critical while explicitly supportive of the party-state's fundamental narrative of nation.

These discussions with some of China's most original population thinkers suggest that, by the turn of the century, there was still little questioning of the official narrative of a nation in demographic crisis rescued by party policy. All of my interlocutors saw the population crisis story as demographic reality, not a narrative representation of reality. In the absence of serious analysis of the complex relations between economic growth and population growth, both the specialists I talked to and ordinary Chinese people I have met over the years relied on evidence from their own lives that suggested a simple equation between more people, fewer resources, and lower living standards. Two of my interlocutors did push the envelope a little. In their separate ways, both made it clear that the single biggest obstacle to open discussion of these issues was political: it was simply too dangerous to question the core state narrative on a policy accorded so much emphasis by the top leadership. Yet if challenge to fundamentals was impossible, critical reflection on smaller matters — especially on topics the state itself had already opened up for discussion — was permissible. It was here, on such issues as the gender costs of the one-child policy, that my interlocutors had done their most original thinking.

### **The gender critique: Challenging the women's health and liberation narrative**

Since the state planning of births was launched nationwide, the official narrative has held that birth planning has been good for Chinese women. In this cheerful story, birth planning has reduced the burden of reproduction on women, in the process enhancing their health and allowing them to participate more fully in education and social production. Because of a strong son preference rooted in China's ancient "feudal culture," the state planning of births has led occasionally to the abandonment and even infanticide of girl babies, but those have been localized problems caused by overzealous grassroots officials.

After many years of silent acquiescence to this story, today contrary, self-consciously feminist voices are beginning to make themselves heard. Clearly, the preexisting official discourse has defined the terms of discussion, for the major issue these feminists have addressed has been the

consequences of the policy for women and infant girls, the central plotline in the women's liberation narrative. Following the relative emphases given the two age groups by the state, the negative effects on adult women were thoroughly analyzed, while the consequences for infant girls were hardly recognized. Problems such as the gendered nature of the program or the gendered character of the discourse itself—questions Mayfair Yang (1999a, 45) usefully poses as “What gender is the state?”—have not been raised or even formulated by anyone I talked to.

All of my interlocutors concurred that the one-child policy and birth control program have had huge and still largely unexamined effects on women's lives. They also agreed that those effects have been not exclusively good, as the state has insisted, but contradictory, with harmful consequences mixed in with the beneficial ones. Where they disagreed was on whether the good outweighed the bad. In one narrative the one-child policy has brought about a great liberation for Chinese women. In another the negative effects have overwhelmed the positive.

***Birth planning and adult women: A great liberation for (educated urban) women***

In an animated two-hour-plus conversation, the feminist scholar Li Xiaojiang outlined the most vigorous defense of the one-child policy from women's point of view that I have ever heard—in China or anywhere. To me, her narrative of women's liberation was stronger even than the government's, which, to this Western observer, comes across as empty, sloganistic, and unconvincing. Li's defense of the one-child policy began with the recognition that, from the vantage point of women—their rights, health, and lives—the policy has produced immeasurable harm. “Women have been treated no better than animals,” she contended, “that is a fact!” But their suffering and sacrifices will be worth it in the long run because the next generation of women will not be treated like animals. Raised in an era of market reform and opening to the outside world, they will enjoy a very different standard of living. The next generation will have choices, Li stressed. Asked how she could be sure that today's young women would have reproductive choices when the policy still limits most women to one child, she replied that the policy has been changing all along and will continue to be modified as the needs of society change. Sanguine that the government would liberalize the policy when the time was ripe, Li saw a much brighter—a richer and freer—future around the corner.

Although Li did not clearly differentiate between rural and urban women, her description of women being treated like animals presumably referred primarily to rural women. For women such as herself—urbanites

with substantial education, rewarding work, and meaningful alternatives to children as sources of social status and personal pleasure — the one-child policy has brought anything but degradation. To the contrary, Li argued, the state's sharp restrictions on fertility have brought about a huge liberation for Chinese women. To understand this emancipatory effect, one needs to jettison the "Western myth" that, if the government did not control women's childbearing, women themselves would have ownership rights to their bodies and reproductivity. In fact, she pointed out, those rights belong to their husbands' families. Before the state intervened in reproduction, women were subjected to intense demands from their communities, families, and husbands to have many children and many sons. Women with professional ambitions were not able to fulfill their desires because they had no choice but to bear and raise children, tasks that ate up the best years of their lives. When a woman has only one child, she continued, not only does she have more time for work and study but conflicts with her husband (presumably over child care and housework) are greatly reduced. The government's promotion of the one-child family has given women a way to talk back to their husbands, limit their fertility, and develop their intellectual potential. What Li's recounting of the liberation narrative makes clear is that, although ostensibly about "Chinese women," the narrative is actually about a select group of relatively privileged Chinese women. In Chinese feminist discourse, issues of class/ethnic/rural-urban difference within the category "women" have only recently begun to be theorized (Wang 2000).

***Birth planning and adult women: New narratives of harm***

The other four interviewees noted the positive but emphasized the negative effects. They also sharply differentiated between the rural and urban situations, pointing out that while urban women have not been hurt and have in some ways even benefited from the one-child policy, rural women, especially those living in poor, remote areas, have in many ways been harmed by the sharp restrictions on their reproduction.

On the positive side of the ledger, women have enjoyed a greatly reduced reproductive burden. They can choose to "stop being a baby machine" who "has one baby after the other." Echoing the official liberation narrative, this narrative also recognizes that birth planning has facilitated women's personal development, enabling them to acquire skills and education and to devote themselves to work and income acquisition as never before. Indeed, data presented by Zhu and her colleagues show that state-fostered changes in the reproductive cycle have altered the whole course of a woman's life, such that most women today complete their fertility before



age thirty. With the average period of childbearing (in the rural areas) shrinking from thirteen to five years, Zhu and her colleagues write, Chinese women have enjoyed more colorful lives, improved social and economic status, and, in turn, enhanced autonomy and self-respect (1997, 83, 138). (Unfortunately, they present no systematic data to support these latter claims.)

Interestingly, every one of my interlocutors lauded the one-child policy for multiplying women's options, but none noted that the same or similar freedoms could have been won with a less drastic policy. It seems that in this narrative there are but two possibilities, the one-child policy and no policy. This limited view of the options mirrors the official discourse, which designates the one-child policy the "only option" for China, contrasting it not with alternative policies but with having no fertility policy. The official bifurcation of the policy possibilities left its imprint on the counternarratives of the feminists.

In this second narrative, however, the harm caused by the population control program greatly outweighs the benefits. The underlying problem, my interlocutors agreed, was that the birth control program starts from the needs and interests not of women but of the state. The notion that the individual should subordinate herself to larger collective, societal, or national goals has deep roots in Chinese culture, my interlocutors noted, as well as in Marxian theory. As the feminist researcher Liu put it, women are treated not as subjects but as objects, tools to be managed and used in the achievement of state plans and goals. The deleterious effects of this objectification extend from women's health to their psychological well-being and socioeconomic security.

The bodily costs stem from the fact that women have borne the burden of contraception, something everyone I talked to decried as grossly unfair. Statistics show that over 90 percent of couples of reproductive age use contraceptives, and fully 86–87 percent of that contraceptive use is by women (Zhu et al. 1997, 81; SBPC 1997, 504). Women are five times more likely to be sterilized than men, even though vasectomy is simpler and poses fewer risks than tubal ligation (SBPC 1998). Since the great bulk of contraceptive use involves a surgical procedure—*intrauterine device* (IUD) insertion, sterilization, and abortion—women suffer the risks and complications of surgery as well. These are far from negligible in a country where contraceptive counselling is poor and birth control operations have too often been performed in rushed, high pressure campaigns (Kaufman et al. 1992; Li Bohua 1999; Zhang, Gu, and Xie 1999, 15–65). They also face the risk of abortion due to contraceptive failure (Kaufman 1993) and, increasingly, sex-selection of fetuses. As if these bodily risks

were not enough, my interviewees continued, contraceptive choice has been minimal, especially in the rural areas. Abortion of unauthorized pregnancies has been and remains mandatory. Fear of these methods, especially sterilization, is widespread, adding a psychological burden to the physiological ones (Zhu et al. 1997, 162). Women have also been subject to coercive birth control surgery, a point several of my interviewees brought up spontaneously in order to condemn it. While noting that campaigns have been decreasing in frequency and intensity since the early 1990s and the incidence of coercion with them, they took pains to denounce the occasional use of high-pressure tactics. Meanwhile, with programmatic attention focused on the prime “target” — married women of reproductive age — the reproductive needs of unmarried women and of older women go unmet.<sup>25</sup> Although problems of reproductive health began to get some attention in the late 1990s, the dominant attitude, Liu contended, was that women’s health was “unimportant.” Certainly, the health of women has been deemed less worthy of concern than the health of single children, and both have been considered trivial concerns relative to the achievement of population control targets.

Although reproductive health has begun to get attention, the psychological and socioeconomic problems of women subject to the one-child policy have remained hidden from view. Yet, according to the feminists I talked to, these burdens, especially the psychological ones, are enormous. Gender bias coupled with ignorance of reproductive biology have resulted in the scapegoating of women, who are blamed for their failure to produce a son and made to feel they have made a terrible mistake. While daughters are accepted and even increasingly welcomed in the cities, both Liu and Zhu emphasized the psychological trauma and social isolation suffered by village women whose first two children are girls.

***Missing in feminist discourse: A shared narrative on birth planning and infant girls***

If the majority of those I spoke with agreed on the problems faced by adult women, there was much less consensus on, or even interest in, the consequences of the one-child policy for baby girls. Statistics available to Chinese and foreign population specialists show that the sex ratio at birth has risen markedly since the early 1980s, signaling the disappearance — from

<sup>25</sup> Unmarried women account for a large number of all abortions. Older women suffer from side effects from IUDs that have been in their bodies for decades. For more, see Zhu et al. 1997, 163.

the statistics if not from the social landscape—of hundreds of thousands of little girls.<sup>26</sup> Curiously, only one of my interviewees, the population specialist Zhu, attached much importance to the distorted sex ratio and the related issue of “excess female mortality”—that is, the higher than biologically normal death rate among infant girls (Li and Zhu 1999). Moving beyond the existing demographic literature to examine the broader causes of the rise in female infant mortality, she argued that “traditional reproductive culture”—in other words, son preference—is the fundamental cause, but the highly restrictive birth policy is an important exacerbating factor (Zhu et al. 1997, 86–87; Li and Zhu 1999). In the Chinese political climate, which continues officially to deny that the policy contributes to the disappearance of baby girls, this was a very brave point to press. While voicing the popular worry that in the near future one million men a year would not be able to find brides, she argued in a new, more humanitarian register that the real victims of the restrictive policy are women, who face kidnapping and sales by wifeless men, and infant girls, who face abandonment and possible death (Tuljapurkar, Li, and Feldman 1995; Zhu et al. 1997, 188–99; on the sales of women, see Zhuang 1993).

One of the biggest surprises of the interviews was the discovery that the plight of the infant girls did not loom large in the minds of the other feminist commentators on the birth program. Those I spoke to largely accepted the official narrative that depicts the problem as minor and attributes it to traditional culture, with no consideration of the role of state policy. None of them brought up the issue of the missing girls on their own. When queried about it, Li indicated that, compared to the early 1980s, the problem was “not so important now.” In Qiu’s view: “The one-child policy is not an important factor in the sex ratio at birth.” He attributed it instead to traditional culture, which has been revived in the wake of the economic reforms. He then went on to list some of the other problems women face in the reform era—blatant discrimination in the labor market, alarming levels of prostitution, widespread kidnapping and sales of brides-to-

<sup>26</sup> Between 1982 and 1989, the number of boys born per 100 girls born rose from 107 to 114, well above the biologically normal level of 105 to 106. The sex ratio reached 121 in 1994 before falling to 116 in 1995. Although the causes of the high sex ratios at birth are multiple and poorly understood, some of the best estimates available suggest that in 1995, 9.6 percent of infant girls were missing. Of these, 15 percent were absent due to female mortality in excess of the normal level. According to the 1990 census, in 1989–90, the year of the last full census, 979,943 infant girls were missing, an estimated 191,089 of these because of unexpectedly high levels of mortality (Lavelly 1997). Useful entries into this literature are Johansson and Nygren 1991; Zeng et al. 1993; and Coale and Banister 1994.

be—implying, perhaps, that the missing daughters was a small issue by comparison.

A principle reason for the lack of concern, it turns out, is a shortage of information. And this is rooted in an acutely gendered politics of numbers. The State Birth Planning Commission does not widely publicize the rise in the sex ratio, a trend the party leadership had denied would occur when it formally launched the one-child policy in 1980 (Central Committee 1980). Apparently none of my interviewees who considered the problem minor had seen data showing the dramatic rise in the sex ratio at birth following the initiation of the one-child policy. The ethicist Qiu, who is institutionally located at the very center of statist social science and professionally placed at the forefront of pathbreaking work on sexually transmitted diseases, marital rape, and a host of other controversial issues, concluded his comments about the missing girl problem by saying, “But, of course, I have no figures.”

Pressed on why this life-and-death gender issue has been essentially hidden from the view of those one might expect to be most concerned about it, Liu provided a critically important piece of the puzzle. She prefaced her remarks by observing that the high sex ratio at birth was one of the best indicators available of the low status of Chinese women. Yet it is an extremely sensitive problem, she continued, one that few are willing to talk about. This reluctance is rooted not only in a fear of stirring up political trouble but also in the virtual impossibility of addressing it through government policy. Really, to solve the infant girl problem, she maintained, would entail nothing less than changing the entire economic and social structure, including the family and inheritance system. Liu’s reflections made it clear that the absence of a shared feminist narrative about the missing girls reflected more than just the hegemony of the official narrative and the commission’s politics of secrecy around embarrassing data; it also reflected the entrenched nature of the problem and the real difficulties of ameliorating it in a cultural and institutional environment that is growing ever more masculine as global capital penetrates deeper into the Chinese economy. For whatever combination of reasons—national pride, political savvy, strategic delay, lack of information, difficulty of solution, or yet other reasons I have not identified—none of these committed feminists suggested lifting the one-child policy to save the little girls.

Despite the absence of a shared narrative on the infant girls, the feminists’ critique of the women’s health and liberation narrative is highly significant, for it suggests the emergence of a distinctively feminist consciousness and discourse on population that departs from the state feminism of

the population establishment. Although these feminist commentators *followed* rather than *led* the state in interrogating the benefits of birth planning to women, and although their critique remained confined to questions already raised by the state, they have moved much further than the state has in dismantling the women's liberation narrative of birth planning. Their assessments of the psychological and socioeconomic costs of birth planning to women and of the deadly effects of state birth planning, in the context of traditional culture, on infant girls have staked out new discursive space in the still highly charged politics of reproduction in China. Quiet and unorganized though they are, these feminist voices represent an important challenge to the "monologue of state propaganda" (see Yang 1999a, 21) on birth planning and women's well-being. If the support they depend upon continues, these voices may well constitute the fragile beginnings of a feminist sphere of public discussion and debate on population.

**The state's "quality of care" initiative: "A superficial change containing hidden possibilities for real change"**

As noted above, in the mid-1990s the State Birth Planning Commission introduced a set of pilot projects designed to give women's reproductive health and choice greater weight while maintaining low population growth rates (Zhang, Gu, and Xie 1999; Gu 2000). Asked how fundamental these changes are, the feminists I talked to agreed that something new is happening; that whatever it is, it is good; but that real changes for women will come not from the Birth Planning Commission but from women themselves.

**"Good slogans that remain, for now, just slogans"**

All of my interlocutors knew that change was in the air and felt that it would ultimately be good for women. "Things are better now," Li submitted, "at least the Birth Planning Commission talks about women. Ten years ago the concept [of women's needs] did not even exist (*meiyou zhege zi*)."<sup>1</sup> The others were encouraged by the new slogans "women as subjects not objects," "people as the core," and "informed choice." But they had strong doubts about the government's ability to turn these slogans into meaningful reality. Liu pointed out the limits of change: "informed choice," for example, means only expanded choice of contraceptive method, not more choice of marriage age, number of children, or anything else. Xie worried that, after twenty years of relying on top-down, cadre-implemented administrative methods, government birth planning workers simply had no idea how to listen to women's voices, let alone how to switch to a bottom-

up, client-focused service orientation. And, although they felt that the attitude of the commission's leaders was relatively "open" and "enlightened" (*kaifang, kaiming*), these close observers of the population scene had no doubt that the agency's bottom line is still keeping population numbers down. If the numbers rise, "quality of care" and, with it, attention to women's needs, will evaporate.

***"Weapons women can use to pry open some space for real choice"***

The most hopeful reading of the situation came from Liu, who had a vision of how women could take advantage of the changes under way to become active creators of their own reproductive lives. Although the government of China uses the language of Cairo, she said, it does not understand, let alone support, the empowerment perspective that was fundamental to Cairo. People in the commission understand the gender issue as male-female equality. (This, I might add, is a basic tenet of Maoist state feminism.) Moreover, she added, they believe the party line that Chinese women and men today are equal: "only specialists know this is not true." In this context, she noted wryly, the quality of care initiative may just empower the government, not women! Yet, she hastened to add, a small change is better than no change. And the quality of care project, although so far little different from conventional birth planning, may well stimulate other, much bigger changes, changes the government neither intends nor understands. Terms such as "informed choice," she suggested, encompass different understandings. By introducing such terms, the government has given women "weapons" they can use to reinterpret and expand their meanings, slowly opening up more space in which real choice can eventually be achieved. Although still a feminist fantasy, such imaginings of how women-initiated political change might take place constitute critical components of an emergent feminist sphere of discourse and practice on population.

**Challenges ahead**

While these scholar-activists possess promising visions, this fragile sphere of feminist discourse and practice is being nurtured into existence in a larger environment that is challenging at best. Although it failed to fulfill its promises to women, Maoism at least championed the goal of gender equality. In the post-Mao era, the advance of global capitalism coupled with the retreat of the state from direct intervention in many areas of life have been accompanied by a backlash against (state) feminism. Although economic and political reforms have had contradictory effects on the lives

of urban women, it is the losses — of job security, formal political position, and much more — that have received the most attention (Riley 1997; Yang 1999c). A new consumer culture has commodified the bodies, sexualities, and identities of women and promoted the image of the “virtuous wife and good mother” who has left the public sphere of production and politics to men and taken up residence in the private sphere of child rearing and domesticity (Honig and Hershatter 1988; Notar 1994; Hooper 1998). The cultural celebration of motherhood would seem to discourage efforts to advance notions of women taking control of their reproductive destinies. Since the mid-1980s, a new field of women’s studies has been created to reconstruct women’s identity (Wang 1997). Yet in trying to extract feminism from Maoist state feminist discourse, which overemphasized gender *similarity*, women’s studies scholars have found themselves stressing gender *difference*. In theorizing difference, they have reconstructed a biologically based, essentialistic gender binary that sees women as inherently (physiologically and psychologically) different from men (Evans 1997; Yang 1999c). This theoretical thrust in Chinese feminism, which sees women as tethered to their reproductive physiologies and destined to give birth, would also seem to discourage the development of critical perspectives on reproduction.

These, then, are some of the larger cultural and economic forces that are complicating feminists’ efforts to construct a critical discourse on population. Perhaps because these larger changes in women’s lives in the reform era were simply too big for them to tackle, those I talked to did not raise these issues in our discussions. Instead, they stressed three other, more concrete factors that made the creation of feminist narratives and projects on population difficult: the need to remake feminist theory; tensions between the bureaucracies in charge of women and birth planning; and official limits on political critique.

### **Remaking feminist theory**

Although a feminist consciousness about reproductive health has been developing, the theoretical tools with which to shape it into a potent critique of state practice are still being fashioned. As the scholars I spoke with kept reminding me, feminist theory remains weakly developed in China. Until very recently, they explained, all women’s issues were viewed through the lens of Marxian women’s theory, which started from the perspective not of women but of the party, state, or “society as a whole.”<sup>27</sup> Since the Beijing women’s conference, a gender consciousness has been developing, but

<sup>27</sup> For more, see Wang 1997, 129–32.

now, Liu stressed, everything must be rethought from a feminist or gender perspective. To date there has been little explicit theorizing, either among those I talked to or in Chinese intellectual circles more generally, about the discursive or material connections between gender, population, economy, and the state. In any case, finding solutions to serious practical problems in women's lives was the top concern of most of those I talked to; the development of theory was a distinctly secondary concern.

***Working around bureaucratic antipathies***

The institutional climate for the emergence of feminist perspectives on population also presents challenges. My interviews revealed that, its pro-woman propaganda notwithstanding, the State Birth Planning Commission has a serious image problem among urban intellectual women (and, as we shall see, among rural farm women as well). The commission is widely perceived as an organization that has treated population targets as a blind obsession, often harming women's rights and interests in the process. While the commission's Cairo-ization movement is warmly welcomed, the individuals spearheading it are not considered especially sympathetic to or knowledgeable about feminist concerns. Moreover, the All-China Women's Federation, the official promoter of women's interests and itself a party-led organization, reportedly is unwilling to cooperate with the Birth Planning Commission. It also resists working on reproductive health (except at the level of research), which, it says, falls within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Health. As Xie explained, the Women's Federation knows women's interests and is not willing to help an agency that violates them by using coercion against women. The federation must and does support the government, she insisted, but it is also a women's organization that must and does support women's interests. The federation deeply resents the problems the commission has thrust upon it. At the same time, she suggested, it does not want to implicate itself in a policy that harms its constituents. In this situation, the best the federation can do is to distance itself from the commission, a move that, I would add, leaves women's reproductive health with no solid organizational protector. Such are the complicated interbureaucratic politics of reproduction in China.

The antipathy of the federation toward the commission has deep historical roots; I can only touch on them here. One source of ill will may be that, when the federation was brought back to life in the late 1970s and early 1980s, one of its first assignments was to solve a life-and-death gender problem created by the one-child policy: violence against infant girls. Another, more deeply felt reason for the unpopularity of the Birth Commission with the Women's Federation is that, at the rural grassroots level,



it is the village women's affairs heads, who are women's federation cadres, who have been charged with enforcing the population policy. This has been a politically difficult and sometimes personally anguishing task. Having to compel their neighbors to undergo unwanted abortions and sterilizations has left many women's affairs workers with emotional scars that may last a lifetime. Moreover, birth planning work has led to widespread antagonism toward local enforcers — manifested in social ostracism, physical violence, and more — leaving many with deep-seated hostility toward the birth policy. Over the past twenty years, then, the gender politics of reproduction has produced an exceptionally strained bureaucratic relationship that has made it difficult for the major organizational supporter of women's interests to work in this domain of policy that so deeply affects women. The recent move of Peng Peiyun, former head of the Birth Commission, to the top post at the Women's Federation, might help to ease the tension, but, given the depth of the personal and organizational pain over the issue, change is likely to be slow.

### ***Living with limits on political critique and reform***

While these limits on feminist voices are serious, the scholar-activists I talked to hinted repeatedly that the major impediments to the development of a feminist critique of state birth planning lie in the basic facts of political life in China. The women's movement, like every other social movement, has been allowed to develop only under official sponsorship. The task of the Women's Federation has been not to foster an independent women's voice but to propagandize and implement party policy among the broad masses of women. Still in place at century's end, these political controls sharply limit the role that organized women's groups can play in promoting policy change.

In the reform era political opening has lagged far behind economic liberalization (Goldman and MacFarquhar 1999a; Winckler 1999b; Tien and Chu 2000). "The four cardinal principles," forbidding criticism of party leadership, socialism, the existing state structure, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, clearly established the limits to political reform. Although oppositional voices were occasionally expressed in public during the 1980s, after the Tiananmen crackdown of June 4, 1989, dissidents were decisively silenced (Goldman 1994). Today public critics of the regime are likely to be imprisoned (Goldman and MacFarquhar 1999a). This larger context of political repression means that, even if they approved of my overtly political analysis of the narratives legitimating population control and party legitimacy, Chinese feminists living in China would not be free to develop such a critique. The people I talked to stressed again and

again the importance of couching critiques of state policy—especially top-priority policies—in careful language and avoiding touching on fundamentals of the political system. For good reason, the Chinese feminists I met with were political pragmatists who took it as axiomatic that open disagreement with the official population narrative was out of the question. They stressed the strategic necessity of looking forward not backward, of emphasizing the positive instead of the negative, of acknowledging the progress made to date rather than worrying about the distance to be traveled before anything like true gender equality and reproductive choice might be achieved. While their optimism is inspiring, my outsider's perspective leads me to think that, without fundamental political reform, the energies this optimism has so evidently mobilized can produce only limited change. It is hard to see how women will be able to articulate their own needs and take charge of their own reproductive lives—that is, how a feminist public sphere of population discourse and practice can come into its own—until the sharp limits on political discourse and reform are relaxed.

This is not to say that important changes have not been made within the current political setup. The intellectual and political initiatives documented above—both those undertaken by the State Birth Planning Commission and those originating outside the state—may well contain the seeds of reproductive liberalization. In some places far from Beijing, the seeds of real change were planted some years ago and are now bearing fruit (Zhao et al. 1995). The decline in state control over resources, the development of “socialist legality,” the globalization of economic, social, and cultural life—these and other forces are producing fundamental transformations in China's society and polity whose implications for feminism and birth planning no one can predict.

**The way forward: Speak softly and work with—  
never against—the government**

Despite the many obstacles faced by women and women-centered initiatives in China today, the feminist scholar-activists I met with in late 1999 were optimistic about the outlook for improving women's reproductive health and freedom. While I viewed the lack of official support for women's empowerment perspectives as discouraging, my Chinese colleagues read the evidence differently: for them, the very fact that these perspectives have not (yet) been officially repudiated presents an exciting opportunity to push the agenda forward. Seeing the possibility of meaningful change after so many bleak years, they had created visions of what could be done, and

they exuded a palpable energy and infectious enthusiasm for transforming those visions into practice.

Those who were personally involved in population work shared the goals of broadening the discourse on population policy and promoting concrete measures to enhance the well-being of women and girls. Yet for reasons of training and personal style each sought to advance these objectives in a different way. The strategies they were deploying merit our attention, for they contain clues to some of the pathways by which feminist projects and politics will unfold in the years ahead. Qiu's route was the traditional scholarly one of introducing new ideas from abroad through international seminars and training sessions. He hoped to foster a process of "fermentation" in which ideas about feminism and democracy would gradually find their way into China's political culture. Zhu chose to leave theory and policy alone and devoted her efforts to the practical task of building a new, less male-centered reproductive culture at the community level (Zhu and Li 1994). Liu's project was to expand the meanings of the already legitimated Cairo language as a means of gradually changing the official population control policy and program.

While the climate for reworking the narratives and practices of state birth planning is more promising than it has been in decades, one must not overstate the prospects for the expansion of a feminist public sphere of population discourse in the near future. For the real barriers to change are political, and the political system and the national narratives that both constitute and support it appear to be changing at a glacial pace. It is not without reason that all those I talked to emphasized that political change comes slowly in China and must be nudged along with utmost caution and care. One of them took this system apart for me, explaining the most effective ways to work within it. Today, she said, the time is not yet ripe for the emergence of different voices on population. Marxism remains the dominant ideology, and, of course, one cannot challenge the system or its underlying theory. Instead, people talk about concrete problems, asking what additional theories from abroad might be used to explain them. In general, she continued, one cannot be openly critical of the government or its policies. If you are too critical, if you move too fast or push too hard, the government will close you down and deprive you of a voice. The most productive approach, she suggested, is to propose ways to help the government, offering formulas it can accept. Given the continued power of the party and state, today one must work with the government, not against it. Tomorrow things might be different.

## References

- Anagnost, Ann. 1997. *National Past-times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Apter, David E., and Tony Saich. 1994. *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Banister, Judith. 1987. *China's Changing Population*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Barlow, Tani E., ed. 1993. *Gender Politics in Modern China: Writing and Feminism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- . 1994. "Politics and Protocols of Funu: (Un)making National Woman." In Gilmartin et al. 1994, 339–59.
- . 1997. "Woman at the Close of the Maoist Era in the Polemics of Li Xiaojiang and Her Associates." In *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, 506–43. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Burriss, Mary Ann. 2000. Letter (e-mail) to author, June 28.
- Central Committee. 1980. "Open Letter from the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to All Members of the Party and the Communist Youth League Concerning the Problem of Controlling the Country's Population Growth." In *Population Yearbook of China, 1985*, ed. Population Research Center, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 27–29 (in Chinese). Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.
- . 1982. "Central Committee and State Council Targets on Doing a Better Job in Birth Planning Work." In *Population Yearbook of China, 1985*, ed. Population Research Center, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 45–48 (in Chinese). Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.
- Cheek, Timothy, and Carol Lee Hamrin. 1986. "Introduction: Collaboration and Conflict in the Search for a New Order." In *China's Establishment Intellectuals*, ed. Carol Lee Hamrin and Timothy Cheek, 3–20. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.
- Coale, Ansley J., and Judith Banister. 1994. "Five Decades of Missing Females in China." *Demography* 31(3):459–79.
- Cohen, Susan, and Cory Richards. 1994. "The Cairo Consensus: Population, Development and Women." *Family Planning Perspectives* 26(6):272–77.
- Cornue, Virginia. 1999. "Practicing NGOness and Relating Women's Space Publicly: The Women's Hotline and the State." In Yang 1999c, 68–91.
- Correa, Sonia. 1994. *Population and Reproductive Rights: Feminist Perspectives from the South*. London: Zed.
- Dai Jinhua. 1999. "Rewriting Chinese Women: Gender Production and Cultural Space in the Eighties and Nineties." In Yang 1999c, 191–206.
- Davis, Deborah S., Richard Kraus, Barry Naughton, and Elizabeth J. Perry, eds. 1995. *Urban Space in Contemporary China: The Potential for Autonomy and Community in Post-Mao China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Woodrow Wilson Center Press.
- Dikotter, Frank. 1995. *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China: Medical Science and the*

- Construction of Sexual Identities in the Early Republican Period*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- . 1998. *Imperfect Conceptions: Medical Knowledge, Birth Defects, and Eugenics in China*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dixon-Mueller, Ruth. 1993. *Population Policy and Women's Rights: Transforming Reproductive Choice*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Evans, Harriet. 1997. *Women and Sexuality in China: Dominant Discourses of Female Sexuality and Gender since 1949*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gilmartin, Christina K., Gail Hershatter, Lisa Rofel, and Tyrene White, eds. 1994. *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Goldman, Merle. 1981. *China's Intellectuals: Advise and Dissent*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- . 1994. *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China: Political Reform in the Deng Xiaoping Era*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Goldman, Merle, and Roderick MacFarquhar. 1999a. "Dynamic Economy, Declining Party-State." In Goldman and MacFarquhar 1999b, 3–29.
- , eds. 1999b. *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Goodman, David S. G., and Beverley Hooper, eds. 1994. *China's Quiet Revolution: New Interactions between State and Society*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.
- Greenhalgh, Susan. 1994. "Controlling Births and Bodies in Village China." *American Ethnologist* 21(1):3–30.
- Greenhalgh, Susan, and Jiali Li. 1995. "Engendering Reproductive Policy and Practice in Peasant China: For a Feminist Demography of Reproduction." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20(3):601–41.
- Greenhalgh, Susan, Zhu Chuzhu, and Li Nan. 1994. "Restraining Population Growth in Three Chinese Villages, 1988–93." *Population and Development Review* 20(2):365–95.
- Gu Baochang. 2000. "Reorienting China's Family Planning Program: An Experiment on Quality of Care since 1995." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, March 23–25, Los Angeles.
- Hamrin, Carol Lee, and Suisheng Zhao, eds. 1995. *Decision-Making in Deng's China: Perspectives from Insiders*. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.
- Handwerker, Lisa. 1998. "The Consequences of Modernity for Childless Women in China: Medicalization and Resistance." In *Pragmatic Women and Body Politics*, ed. Margaret Lock and Patricia A. Kaufert, 178–205. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hartmann, Betsy. 1995. *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: The Global Politics of Population Control*. Rev. ed. Boston: South End Press.
- Heng, Geraldine. 1997. "'A Great Way to Fly': Nationalism, the State, and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism." In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 30–45. New York: Routledge.

- Hershatter, Gail, Emily Honig, Susan Mann, and Lisa Rofel, comps. and eds. 1998. *Guide to Women's Studies in China*. Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, Institute of East Asian Studies.
- Hom, Sharon K. 1991-92. "Female Infanticide in China: The Human Rights Specter and Thoughts toward (An)other Vision." *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* 23:249-314.
- Honig, Emily, and Gail Hershatter. 1988. *Personal Voices: Chinese Women in the 1980s*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Hooper, Beverley. 1998. "Flower Vase and Housewife': Women and Consumerism in Post-Mao China." In *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*, ed. Krishna Sen and Maila Strivens, 167-93. London: Routledge.
- Howell, Jude. 1997. "Post-Beijing Reflections: Creating Ripples, but Not Waves in China." *Women's Studies International Forum* 20(2):235-52.
- Hu Yaobang. 1982. "Open a New Situation in Socialist Modernization." In *Population Yearbook of China, 1985*, ed. Population Research Center, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 51 (in Chinese). Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.
- IF, JK, 11/15/99. 1999. Interview with Joan Kaufman, November 15, Beijing.
- IF, JK, 3/24/00. 2000. Discussion with Joan Kaufman, March 24, Los Angeles.
- IF, ZEL, 11/23/99. 1999. Interview with Zhang Erli, November 23, Beijing.
- Jayawardena, Kumari. 1986. *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*. London: Zed.
- Johansson, Sten, and Ola Nygren. 1991. "The Missing Girls of China: A New Demographic Account." *Population and Development Review* 17(1):35-51.
- Johnson, Kay. 1993. "Chinese Orphanages: Saving China's Abandoned Girls." *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 30:61-87.
- . 1996. "The Politics of the Revival of Infant Abandonment in China, with Special Reference to Hunan." *Population and Development Review* 22(1):77-98.
- Johnson, Kay, Huang Banghan, and Wang Liyao. 1998. "Infant Abandonment and Adoption in China." *Population and Development Review* 24(3):469-510.
- Kaufman, Joan. 1993. "The Cost of IUD Failure in China." *Studies in Family Planning* 24(3):194-96.
- Kaufman, Joan, Zhang Zhirong, Qiao Xinjian, and Zhang Yang. 1992. "The Quality of Family Planning Services in Rural China." *Studies in Family Planning* 23(2):73-84.
- Kluver, Alan R. 1996. *Legitimizing the Chinese Economic Reforms: A Rhetoric of Myth and Orthodoxy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Larson, Wendy. 1998. *Women and Writing in Modern China*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Lavelly, William. 1997. "Unintended Consequences of China's Birth Planning Policy." Paper presented at the conference on Unintended Social Consequences of Chinese Economic Reform, May 24, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
- Li Bohua. 1999. "Report on Reproductive Health Survey." *China Population Today* 16(3):2-9.

- Li Shuzhuo, and Zhu Chuzhu. 1999. "Gender Differences in Child Survival in Rural China: A County Study." Unpublished manuscript, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an.
- Li Xiaojiang. 1997a. "How Many Articles on Human Rights Can 'Birth Planning' Produce? On 'Reproductive Rights.'" In Li 1997b, 162–74 (in Chinese).
- . 1997b. *On Women: Questions and Answers* (in Chinese). Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Press.
- . 1999. "With What Discourse Do We Reflect on Chinese Women? Thoughts on Transnational Feminism in China." In Yang 1999c, 261–77.
- Li Xiaorong. 1996. "License to Coerce: Violence against Women, State Responsibility, and Legal Failures in China's Family-Planning Program." *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 8:145–91.
- . 1999. "China's Warning to Scholars." *New York Times*, April 20, A23.
- Liu Bohong. 1995. "Our Country Is the Entire World." In Wong 1995, 150–57.
- Lu Tonglin, ed. 1993. *Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature and Society*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- McIntosh, C. Alison, and Jason L. Finkle. 1995. "The Cairo Conference on Population and Development: A New Paradigm?" *Population and Development Review* 21(2):223–60.
- Meng Yue. 1993. "Female Images and National Myth." In Barlow 1993, 118–36.
- Notar, Beth. 1994. "Of Labor and Liberation: Images of Women in Current Chinese Television Advertising." *Visual Anthropology Review* 10(2):29–44.
- Orleans, Leo, ed. 1978. *Chinese Approaches to Family Planning*. White Plains, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.
- Qiu Renzong. 1996a. "Ethical Issues in the Shift of Birth Planning to a Quality-of-Care-as-Core Approach." In Qiu 1996c, 304–7 (in Chinese).
- . 1996b. "Several Issues in Reproductive Health, Ethics, and Feminism." In Qiu 1996c, 162–65 (in Chinese).
- , ed. 1996c. *Reproductive Health and Ethics* (in Chinese). Beijing: Lianhe.
- Riley, Nancy. 1997. "Gender Equality in China: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back." In *China Briefing: The Contradictions of Change*, ed. William A. Joseph, 79–108. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.
- Rofel, Lisa. 1999a. "Museum as Women's Space: Displays of Gender in Post-Mao China." In Yang 1999c, 116–31.
- . 1999b. *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Social Problems Small Group of 'Rural Woman Knowing All' (Small Group). 1999. *Report on Suicide among Rural Chinese Women* (in Chinese). Guiyang: Guizhou People's Press.
- State Birth Planning Commission (SBPC). 1998 (1997). *Birth Planning Yearbook of China, 1997 [1996]*. Beijing: SBPC.
- Tien H. Yuan. 1991. *China's Strategic Demographic Initiative*. New York: Praeger.
- Tien Hung-mao, and Chu Yun-han, eds. 2000. *China under Jiang Zemin*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner.

- Tuljapurkar, Shripad, Li Nan, and Marcus W. Feldman. 1995. "High Sex Ratios in China's Future." *Science* 267:874–76.
- Wang Jiayang. 1996. "What Are Chinese Women Faced with after Beijing?" *Feminist Studies* 22(3):497–501.
- Wang Jiye, and Terence H. Hull, eds. 1991. *Population and Development Planning in China*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Wang Zheng. 1997. "Maoism, Feminism, and the UN Conference on Women: Women's Studies Research in Contemporary China." *Journal of Women's History* 8(4):126–52.
- . 1999. *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2000. Interview by author, March 11.
- White, Gordon, Jude Howell, and Shang Xiaoyuan. 1996. *In Search of Civil Society: Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- White, Tyrene. 1987. "Implementing the 'One-Child-Per-Couple' Population Program in Rural China: National Goals and Local Politics." In *Policy Implementation in Post-Mao China*, ed. David M. Lampton, 284–317. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1992. "The Population Factor: China's Family Planning Policy in the 1990s." In *China Briefing, 1991*, ed. William A. Joseph, 97–117. Boulder, Colo.: Westview.
- . 1994a. "The Origins of China's Birth Planning Policy." In Gilmartin et al. 1994, 250–78.
- . 1994b. "Two Kinds of Production: The Evolution of China's Family Planning Policy in the 1980s." In *The New Politics of Population: Conflict and Consensus in Family Planning*, ed. Jason L. Finkle and C. Alison McIntosh, 137–58. Supplement to *Population and Development Review* 20.
- Winckler, Edwin A. 1999a. "Re-enforcing State Birth Planning." In Winckler 1999b, 181–203.
- , ed. 1999b. *Transition from Communism in China: Institutional and Comparative Analysis*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner.
- Wong Yuen Ling, ed. 1995. *Reflections and Resonance: Stories of Chinese Women Involved in International Preparatory Activities for the 1995 NGO Forum on Women*. Beijing: Ford Foundation.
- Xie Lihua. 1995. "How Do We Face the World? Some Thoughts on Making Contacts." In Wong 1995, 66–72.
- Yanco, Jennifer J. 1996. "Our Bodies, Ourselves in Beijing: Breaking the Silences." *Feminist Studies* 22(3):511–17.
- Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui. 1999a. "From Gender Erasure to Gender Difference: State Feminism, Consumer Sexuality, and Women's Public Sphere in China." In Yang 1999c, 35–67.
- . 1999b. "Introduction." In Yang 1999c, 1–31.
- , ed. 1999c. *Spaces of Their Own: Women's Public Sphere in Transnational China*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.



- Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1997. *Gender and Nation*. London: Sage.
- Zeng Yi. 1989. "Is the Chinese Family Planning Program 'Tightening Up'?" *Population and Development Review* 15(2):333–37.
- Zeng Yi, Tu Ping, Gu Baochang, Xu Yi, Li Bohua, and Li Yongping. 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 Erli, Gu Baochang, and Xie Zhenming, eds. 1999. *Evaluations of the First Set of Quality of Care Pilot Projects Conducted by the State Birth Planning Commission, 1995–98* (in Chinese). Beijing: Zhongguo Renkou Chubanshe.
- Zhang Weiguo. 1999. "Implementation of State Family Planning Programmes in a Northern Chinese Village." *China Quarterly* 157:202–30.
- Zhao Jie, Zhang Kaining, Wen Yiqun, and Yang Guocai, eds. 1995. *Women-Centered Reproductive Health* (a publication of the Yunnan Reproductive Health Research Association). Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Zhu Chuzhu. 2000. Letter to author, March 10.
- Zhu Chuzhu, and Li Shuzhuo. 1994. "Community Development at the Center of Improving the Status of Women and Creating a Setting for Low Fertility." *Population Research* 18(3):10–13 (in Chinese).
- Zhu Chuzhu, and Peng Xizhe, eds. 1996. *The Path of Women's Labor Participation* (in Chinese). Beijing: Gaodeng Jiaoyu Chubanshe.
- Zhu Chuzhu, Li Shuzhuo, Qiu Changrong, Hu Ping, and Jin Anrong. 1997. *The Dual Effects of the Family Planning Program on Chinese Women* (in Chinese and English). Xi'an: Xi'an Jiaotong University Press.
- Zhuang Ping. 1993. "On the Social Phenomenon of Trafficking in Women in China." *Chinese Education and Society* 26(3):33–50.
- Zito, Angela, and Tani E. Barlow, eds. 1994. *Body, Subject, and Power in China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.