

One Child Too Many

Recently, Zhang Yimou, a Chinese film director and organizer of the 2008 Summer Olympics, was accused of violating China's One-Child Policy, allegedly fathering seven children with four different mothers. The One-Child Policy – enacted in 1979 to address China's social, economic, and environmental problems due to overpopulation – limits a couple to having only one child because there is not enough space, natural resources, and jobs to accommodate the booming population.¹

However, some consequences of enforcing this law include forced abortions, female infanticide, higher female suicide rates, and a gender imbalance ratio of 118 boys for every 100 girls. Journalist Ma Jian describes the policy as reducing "...women to numbers, objects, [and] a means of production; it has denied them control of their bodies and the basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children."² Furthermore, some feel that the policy is unfair because the rich can afford to pay the fine for violating the policy.

In contrast, the United States does not have such a policy, and its citizens enjoy the liberty of having as many children as they like. Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar have nineteen children; the family stars in the TLC's reality TV show *19 Kids and Counting*. With income from real estate investments and their TV show, and by living frugally, the Duggar family is able to support themselves without government assistance.³ Nadya Suleman, the famous "octomom," used reproductive technologies to have octuplets and six older children, totaling fourteen children. Suleman is currently under investigation for welfare fraud.⁴ Orlando Shaw has twenty-two children with fourteen different mothers, and has been sued for child support.⁵

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Under what conditions, if at all, should a government be allowed to limit the number of children parents can have or interfere with one's liberty to reproduce?
2. Should the government be allowed to limit or prohibit the use of reproductive technologies available that increase the chances of multiple births?
3. What is the media's responsibility in covering these stories?

¹ <http://aldossary-f.blogspot.com/2007/08/chinasoverpopulation.html>

² http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/22/opinion/chinas-brutal-one-child-policy.html?_r=0

³ <http://shine.yahoo.com/financially-fit/duggars-support-nineteen-kids-live-debt-free-180400323.html>

⁴ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/10/octomom-welfare-nadya-suleman_n_3415963.html

⁵ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/06/orlando-shaw-father-22-children-14-women_n_3397397.html

