Gender imbalance in China and examples of its thematization in Chinese media

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1. Introduction

My paper is a research about gender imbalance. Gender inequality has always been a hot topic that sociologists focus on. This is also one reason why I chose this topic. Another major reason is that I am a Chinese, living in China can see a variety of inequalities. We all know that China has long history. 2000 years ago, China had already a masculine society, and this patriarchal system has been passed down from generation to generation, gradually led to today's situation. The gender inequality has always been a social issue of great concern to the Chinese government. It is seen everywhere in various regions of China to promote gender equality. Although the government put forward a series of measures to prevent gender discrimination, but still cannot change the feudal ideas inherited from the previous generations. I hope that my paper will let people pay more attention to the gender inequality, be able to recognize the root of the problem and the evolution of the results that lead to a better solution to the problem through the evolution of social issues.

My thesis studies gender imbalance, a social problem both before and after the introduction of one-child policy. My thesis also focuses on the subjective process of the uncoordinated proportion of male and female population, the unequal proportion of these two. In my opinion, the imbalance is a consequence of social inequalities between men and women, especially in China. My purpose is to study interpretations of gender imbalance in China as well as the government’s concerns about and solutions to it. To call people’s attention or make people concerned about a social problem, the media is the best way to spread, so I chose to analyze the media and through the media to discuss the thematization of China’s gender imbalance.

In the selection of research method, the following logic has been adopted. I found that interviewing a person or investigating a group does not allow me versatility to study the subjective process of uncoordinated male and female populations, and may be more biased towards some of the causes and consequences of the problem. Analysis of some of the media articles focusing on general side of the problem can be more
The causes of gender inequality are greatly complex and diverse, thus I do not intend to completely explore factors leading to gender inequality. If I focus on studying reasons, it could make my thesis biased or stereotyped. Gender inequality is a hot topic that we are witnessing social concern about, and the number of relevant papers is countless. If I do not have a special or novel perspective to analyze gender inequality, then my paper will not be distinguished from other related papers. Hence I chose to analyze gender inequality from the perspective of sex ratio.

2. Literature Review
Under natural conditions, the birth rate of males is slightly higher than for females, while females have a higher average life expectancy in comparison to males. This is a feature of the laws of nature to maintain a balance in the male to female proportions in the population. In China, the general preference for male children resulted in a higher male birth rate. Additionally, China has not been involved in any major foreign wars and therefore, the proportion of males who died on the battlefield is minimal in relation to the overall population. The highest prevalence of gender imbalance can be observed in Vietnam. At present, the sudden death rate of males is higher than that of females, while the gap in the average life expectancy between males and females is continuously widening – effectively contributing to the uneven proportion of the male to female ratio in the population.

While there are several theories explaining gender imbalance, I focused on conducting an in-depth study into a selected set of theories. In presenting the relevant literature, I focused on two theories, namely the missing women theory and China’s one child policy. However, other theories such as Fisher’s sex ratio theory, the theory of social change and gender inequality will also be discussed subsequently.

2.1 Fisher’s Sex Ratio Theory (1935): The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection
"...the total reproductive value of the males in [a generation of offspring] is exactly equal to the total value of all the females, because each sex must supply half the ancestry of all future generations of the species. From this it follows that the sex ratio will so adjust itself, under the influence of Natural Selection, which the total parental expenditure incurred in respect of children of each sex, shall be equal." (Fisher, 1935, p. 142). Fisher bases this theory on the premise that the sex ratio of males to females is equal, and seeks to explain how this occurs – “He gave a prediction that selection will lead to equal investment in male and female offspring” (Neal, 2010, para2). A brief explanation of Fisher’s argument is - since there is one father and one mother, there is an equal possibility of producing offspring of either gender by sexual reproduction and thus the fitness of each gender is equal. This process is based on a biological theory backed by scientific methods and thus proposes that the ratio of males to females in the population should be equal.

2.2 Social Change

As we are already aware, everything is in a continuous process of change. Social change is a universal phenomenon - it occurs in all societies through changes in populations, attitudes as well as structural changes in institutions (Shah, 2012). For instance, in China, prior to 1962, there was a sharp decline in birth rates and a significant increase in mortality rates, caused by natural disasters. However, for the first time in 1963, there was an abnormal rate of growth in population, and by 1970 the total population of the country was nearly 800 million. However, after the implementation of the one-child policy by the Chinese government, the overall fertility rate dropped from 5.8 percent in 1970 to 2.7 percent in 1979. This policy continued to operate until 2016, when there was a change with the implementation of the two-child policy. The aim of my thesis is to study the context in which gender imbalance exists within the Chinese population, and analyze the progress in people understanding whether the imbalance is created by nature or policies. The paper explores the change in people and society, in the context of their backgrounds and
Gender inequality has always been a social issue of significant concern to the Chinese government. There have been efforts on the part of the Chinese government to promote gender equality in various regions of China. However, despite the government putting forward a variety of measures to prevent gender discrimination, it is difficult to change feudal ideas inherited from older generations. Given that gender discriminatory practices have led to a serious imbalance in the male to female ratio in the population, the Chinese government has begun to take more robust and stringent actions to address this issue. Through this paper, I hope to contribute to the discussion on gender inequality in China, so as to assist in recognizing the root of the problem and evaluating the interventions that can lead to an effective solution to this social issue.

2.3 Gender Inequality
The concept of male superiority and female inferiority has existed in China all through its history over the past 5,000 years, and still continues to exist even to this day. Although there has been considerable progress in modern China, gender inequality continues to be a serious social problem in China. In the ancient times, the distribution of male and female labour determined their status - men were responsible for hunting, while women were responsible for housework and childcare. Women were considered to be best suited to perform such tasks based on biological reasons. Further, socialisation also contributed to gender differences by drawing distinctions into what should be done by males and females (Giddens, 1989).

2.4 Missing Women Theory
I developed my understanding of the ‘missing women theory’, after reading an article titled More Than 100 million Women Are Missing (Sen, 1990). All thematic units of the article are meaningful for my thesis, so I will use the author’s logical structure to explain it. Firstly, Sen discusses the status of sex ratios across the world, by explaining that “boys outnumber girls everywhere in the world, by much the same proportion---there are around 105 or 106 male children for every 100 female
Sen also mentioned that some research studies have demonstrated that if men and women receive similar health care, women tend to live noticeably longer than men. Women outnumber men in places such as Europe, US, and Japan - the main reason for this phenomenon is that while women receive the same health care as men, the death rate among men is higher as a result of men being more likely to engage in violent activities and adopting bad habits such as smoking. However, there is a difference in this issue between people in Europe and those living in Asia and North Africa. In Asia and North Africa, women do not receive the same medical and social care as men, and the death rate of women is higher than that of men. Sen’s theory is based on an estimation of ratios in this context. For instance, it is possible to estimate the number of ‘missing women’ in a country such as China. If we expect the sex ratio of males to females to be 1:1, but the reality is 1:0.94, the missing six percent are the females who would have been in China. When this figure is added to the figures from South Asia, West Asia and North Africa, more than 100 million women are calculated to be ‘missing’.

The author further points out that culture is also another significant reason which contributing to gender imbalance. While there may be elements of truth in each of these explanations, none of them are very convincing as a general thesis. Sen argued that it is necessary to take economic and social conditions into consideration as well. When comparing western society to eastern society, there is no obvious discrepancy in Culture. This suggests that at least on the face of it, economic conditions play a crucial role, regardless of whether society is western or eastern. Sen provided some examples to disprove the idea that culture is the main reason contributing to gender imbalance. Drawing on examples of South Asian countries such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka which have been ruled by female leaders, Sen uses data to justify his reasoning to explain that ‘economic development does not invariably reduce women’s disadvantages in mortality. The deterioration in women’s position results largely from their unequal sharing in the advantages of medical and social progress’ (Sen, 1990, part2, para 10). Thus, economic conditions can have both, a positive and a negative
impact on sex ratios.

The next factor analysed in the ‘missing women’ theory is the level of influence by the family. Sen argues that women’s power and status is strongly related to their economic role and level of independence. An example used to demonstrate this was the case of seeking employment outside the home. Sen tried to use family economics to analyse the nature of cooperative conflicts, and realised that gainful employment can increase survival prospects for women. Other factors also have an effect in this regard. China was a significant example in the study on missing women. There was a sharp decline in female death rates in the period between 1958 and 1961, despite China facing severe economic problems during this time. After 1979, China implemented reforms to improve its economic growth rate, however, female death rates increased as well. This was because in that period, while the government addressed population control, it failed to reform feudal ideas which are deeply entrenched in people’s minds. Other factors contributing to this status was the extremely backward state of health services in China during that period and the ‘responsibility system’ through which the government reduced women seeking gainful employment in agriculture. In conclusion, the author believes that it is not sufficient to just focus attention to conflicts between the East and the West. Employment and education levels of women are also a means of analysing the economic power of women, which in turn has an impact on women’s status in society and their chances of survival. However, it is important to note that we cannot ignore social and cultural factors. The ‘missing women’ theory mainly studies the reasons that can be attributed to ‘missing women’ and strives to disprove the inherent ways of thinking.

However, it is possible to study different aspects of the theory in order to develop a different point of view. When revising the debate on missing women, the author retained the basis of the original theory, and investigated determinants of current trends in gender bias and death rates. For instance, in areas such as South Asia and
Middle East, there has been a decline in sex-selective abortion. The author lists out different areas, and analyses population data and backgrounds in each of these countries. The author’s final results revealed that the number of ‘missing women’ had increased in absolute terms to over 100 million (Klasen& Wink, 2003). China, by itself, was the most responsible for the global increase in ‘missing woman’. The author attributed this situation to the one-child policy. Lastly, it is also not possible to ignore discrimination against the female child, particularly through sex-selective abortion.

The ‘missing women theory’ refutes the aspect of cultural differences between the male and female population in eastern and western societies. This is clearly the case in China as well, as with the passage of time, factors causing imbalance between men and women are increasing in number and complexity. Therefore, it is not possible to simply focus on just one factor. The article explained that it is necessary to analyse the impact caused by the combination of economic and cultural factors, rather than just focusing on the impact of employment and income by itself, which would be an extremely narrow view. It is necessary to explain this situation in terms of economic reasons as well as through other social and cultural factors. It is not possible to refer to an exact or specific factor being the sole influence on the state of sex ratios, as different countries and different areas would have their own circumstances and features. It is necessary to integrate culture together with the religion and backgrounds of the respective regions. The failure on the part of the government to allocate adequate attention to this issue is also a contributing factor to the issue of ‘missing women’.

2.5 One-child policy

2.5.1 Future of the one-child policy

Sociologists focus on the one-child policy as it is the main reason causing gender imbalance. This was also established in the study conducted by Therese Hesketh, Li
Lu, and Zhu Wei Xing (2005), which analysed ‘the effect of China’s one-child family policy after 25 years’. In this study, the authors examined the extent to which the intended goal of the policy had been achieved and implications for the future of the policy. Lu and Xing explain the reason for the introduction of the policy and describe its present implementation. The consequences of policy are examined in relation to population growth, sex ratios and the ratio of adult children to dependent elderly parents (the ratio of old-age dependency). Lu and Xing further examine the relevance of this policy in contemporary China, assessing whether the time has come to relax the policy and discuss the future of this policy in this context. Hesketh et al. (2005) mainly focuses on the sex ratio, utilising detailed data to analyse the existing state of sex ratios in the population and briefly discusses the future of this state of affairs. In terms of the future of this policy, these studies predict that given existing evidence of slowing population growth, increasing imbalance in sex ratios, rising number of elderly people, and high risks associated with women with unapproved pregnancies avoiding medical care, it would be desirable to relax the one-child policy. (Hesketh, Li, & Zhu, 2005). The researchers adopt a positive outlook based on their analysis of the situation in China. At the same time, researchers also draw attention to negative consequences such as the abnormal sex ratio in the population (Hesketh, &Zhu, 2006), which is still a critical problem in the country. Hesketh and Zhu pointed out that in the period during the war and after it, there were reports of a minor increase in the male birth rate. Gender imbalance was attributed to the feudal values embodied in Asia and North Africa, as was the case in the ‘missing women’ theory adopted in the early 1990s where almost 100 million women were calculated to be missing across the developing world. It was argued that improved health care and related conditions were not the main factor affecting female mortality rates, as other factors such as sex-selective abortion were also prevalent and need to be taken into account. Presently, there are almost 80 million females missing in China and India. The situation is not optimistic.

In connection to the topic of thesis, I reviewed reports and press material along the
theme of the attitudes of Chinese people towards this issue. Reports indicated that China has identified its gender imbalance to be the 'most serious' in the world, suggesting that Chinese people have realised this situation to be a serious social issue (Macfie, 2015). The reports mainly indicated that Chinese health authorities described gender imbalance among newborns to be ‘the most serious and prolonged’ in the world - a direct ramification of the country's strict one-child policy. Such statements add to increasing appeals for the government to scrap all family planning restrictions in the world’s most populated nation, which according to several scholars is in the midst of a demographic crisis. The article in the Chinese newspaper referred to a statement by the National Health and Family Planning Commission in its website - ‘our country has the most serious gender imbalance that is the most prolonged and affecting the most number of people’ (Macfie, 2015, Para4). Finally, the reports referred to results provided by state media which stated ‘earlier this month, a year after China eased its one-child policy, fewer people than expected have applied for permission to have a second child’ (Macfie, 2015, Para9). The imbalance in sex ratios has become a worldwide issue with international media channels such as BBC News reporting that China faces a growing gender imbalance. The BBC article starts by quoting the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences which stated that ‘more than 24 million Chinese men of marriageable age could find themselves without spouses by 2020’. This can be identified as a consequence of the increasing imbalance in sex ratios in the population. According to the news, from the point of view of male and female marriages over the next 10 years, there is increasing likelihood of marriages between older men and younger women by 2020, which also results in gender inequality. Another problem in China is that, if the first child is a female, they prefer not to register information about their child to the authorities, in order to have a second child in the hopes that it would be a male child. Such actions make it significantly difficult to maintain statistics for population data. (BBC News, 2010)

2.5.2 Economic performance

In modern China, it is not possible to simply attribute imbalances in the male to female
ratios to ingrained ideas of the older generations, as economic factors are also starting to play an increasingly important role as the times change, as well as the new policies put forward by the Chinese government. For instance, one of the articles reviewed for this thesis drew a connection between China’s gender imbalance and its economic performance, by explaining that growth of China’s GDP faces challenges such as the slowdown and eventual contraction of its labour force, which is a complication of the increasing imbalance in sex ratios in the population (Golley, & Tyers, 2010). The uncoordinated labour force is an effect of the increasing imbalance in male to female ratios in the population. The article points out that although the one child-policy slows down the growth rate of the population thereby contributing to a positive impact on per capita income; the resulting gender imbalance can have a wide range of adverse consequences. Golley and Tyers explain that low-skilled men are unable to find spouses due to a reduction in the number of women in the population, resulting in these men increasingly taking out their frustration by committing crimes to overcome the situation. The authors also explained the need for China to further relax the 'one child' policy to help restore the gender balance. In the present context, we cannot just focus on the causes of gender imbalance, but also need to study its consequences. A direct consequence of imbalance in male to female ratio in China is its impact on marriage. Males seeking to start a family are unable to find a suitable partner, as there are fewer females in comparison to males in the population. Females, however, have more options and would prefer to marry men of better economic conditions, even if these men are much older. This is now a commonly occurring phenomenon in China, and effectively increases pressure on single low-skilled males in the country to improve their financial situation. Such pressure from the marriage market, in turn, results in a higher propensity of such males being more likely to commit financially rewarding crimes (Cameron, Xin, & Zhang, 2016). The imbalance in male to female ratio within the population has destroyed marriage patterns, resulting in a phenomenon referred to as ‘marriage squeeze’. Such a phenomenon does not only impact men, but also places a higher price on women in the marriage market. At the same time, survival of women is also under threat. Since the society now comprises of a large number of single adult
men, they are unable to satisfy their minimum physiological needs, which could potentially lead to more violent and criminal tendencies on their part, resulting in more sexual crimes, sexual assault and sexual violence, thereby giving rise to serious problems within the community. For the monogamous family, there is an external impact, and even may result in polygamous relationships with unmarried people and other possibilities.

Gender gaps in resource allocation can have an unexpected impact on the long-term development of human capital in Chinese males. It is clear that the economic situation of parents, does not just slow down economic pressure brought about by their children's marriage, but can also to a large extent affect the proportion of males and females in the population. Prior to conducting research on ratios of males to females in the population, I was under the impression that the higher the income of parents, the more balanced the proportion of males and females in future generations, while the lower income of the parents results in an increasing imbalance in proportions of males to females. In China, people have come to realize that the uncoordinated proportion of males to females in the population has led to several irreversible consequences. The government has made great progress in changing people's inherent thinking. Promoting gender equality through a variety of channels is extremely important, especially through measures such as higher education. Engaging in higher education leads to higher income levels among people as well as a broader and open outlook and thinking. However, people with low incomes and lower education levels tend to base their ideas on those inherited from the older generations and such ideas are not easy to change. However, in the course of my research, I have reviewed several sources of information suggesting that this view is somewhat arbitrary. Income levels cannot be considered to absolutely have an impact on the proportion of males and females in the population. In this sample, surviving children of higher-income parents are not more or less likely to be males, in comparison to surviving children of lower-income parents(Secondi, &Giorgio . 2002).
2.5.3 Rural-urban discrepancies

Along with the decline in family ethics, the stability of traditional families is also threatened. Selective abortion is a major contributory factor to the imbalance in sex ratios, and is a social problem that has plagued China for several years. Even though the Chinese government has strictly forbidden doctors disclosing the sex the baby to pregnant women and their families, this order on prohibition of speech is almost ineffective. Pregnant women and their families can usually get these results through other channels. In addition to the reasons for the abortion in addition to the inherent patriarchal ideology, divorce rate should also be included. Sun Ang and Zhao Yaohui focus on the impact of divorce reform in China and the connections between abortions and sex ratios. The authors point out that the 2001 reform and opening up of restrictions on women's right to divorce has greatly improved women's property rights. A study of ratios of male to female children in the population revealed that the possibility of females producing a male child after divorce reduced by 8.1 percentage points, which was 11.7 percentage points lower than the possibility of having a male child before divorce (Sun, & Zhao, 2016). Reform to restrictions on divorce allows women to avoid gender-sensitive miscarriages which is harmful to health, and also empowers women with the right to choose. China has 56 ethnic groups, and the Chinese government adopts different policies for different ethnic minorities, especially in relation to family planning, where the policy is only applied on the majority ethnic group. This unique strategy allows us to determine the impact of the one-child policy on the gender balance within the population through differences-in-differences. The 1990 census data revealed that the strict implementation of the one-child policy in the 1980s led to 4.4 more boys per 100 girls, or about 94 per cent of the total sex increase in the period. Data on births in the period from 1991-2005 revealed that there were seven more boys for every 100 girls (Li, Yi, & Zhang, 2012).

There are important differences between rural areas and cities in China. The scale of immigration from rural areas to cities is increasing. Household registration regulations
prevent rural-dwellers from settling in urban cities for a long period of time and these restrictions can only be overcome through marriage. As a result, a majority of rural women migrate to the city (Zhou, Wang, Li, & Hesketh, 2011). Interviews with single men left behind in the countryside reveal that they believed it is a great disgrace to obtain a city residence permit by marrying women in the city. For these men, such actions convey a deep sense of failure, and so they choose to stay behind in the countryside. Most of the women from rural areas believe that this is the easiest way to progress, and that men living in the city are better than those living in rural areas. The author of the study predicts that the resulting imbalance will last at least for one generation. China's rural population accounts for half of the total national population, and if the government continues to ignore this issue, it will further contribute to gender inequality within the society. There is a reason for women to use marriage as an easy platform from which to improve their situation. Chinese society dictates that before marriage, men should pay a sum of at least 100,000 yuan (15000 euro) to the woman's family, and after marriage it is the responsibility of the man to buy the house for them to live in. It is not possible for men who have just started working and want to start a family, to be able to afford this extent of economic demands and so a large portion of these demands are met by the man's parents. Therefore, parents dedicate less resources to their children's education and instead would spend more on their children's marriage and buying the house and durable goods to meet the demands of Chinese society (Li & Yi, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1 Methodology and aim: Analyzing the content of regional/city newspaper person unequal sex ratios and gender imbalance.

My thesis studies gender imbalances a social problem both before and after the introduction of one-child policy. My thesis also focuses on the subjective process of the uncoordinated proportion of male and female population, the unequal proportion of these two. In my opinion, the imbalance is a consequence of social inequalities
between men and women, especially in China. My purpose is to study interpretations of gender imbalance in China as well as the government’s concerns about and solutions to it. To call people’s attention or make people concerned about a social problem, the media is the best way to spread, so I chose to analyze the media and through the media to discuss the thematization of China’s gender imbalance.

3.2 Research methods

Media activities can be conducted over various mediums, such as newspaper publications, television and radio broadcasting, and the Internet. Newspaper and magazines for the study were selected on the basis of availability of information and credibility of this information. In the course of reviewing the various media products, I came across ‘regional newspapers’, which I found to be a more innovative media platform containing more information. Regional newspapers are a relatively current development within the media framework, and function as an official news website referred to as a ‘media network’. These networks provide more extensive information thereby providing greater scope to find relevant articles. Further, given that this is an official website, it can be inferred that these articles were reviewed by professionals in the field, and thus ensures accuracy of the information. The order in which these various mediums emerged within the media field is as follows – firstly, it was newspaper publications; secondly, radio broadcasts; third, television broadcasts; and finally, the Internet (The division of the media, 2013)¹. However, if these mediums are ordered in terms of importance, suitability and effectiveness, it is clear that the place occupied by radio broadcasts has gradually been replaced by the television; and the Internet is now the most popular form of media, effectively holding the first place in this list. While the social problem of the unequal and uncoordinated proportion of males to females in the population has gained significant attention within the government, it has failed to receive the same level of interest from the public. Therefore, I chose to conduct this analysis, by studying media articles, instead

of collecting data through interviews or questionnaires. Interviewing a person or investigating a group would not help me study the subjective process of uncoordinated male and female proportions within the population, and can potentially be more biased in relation to certain causes and consequences of the problem. It would be more useful to analyse academic articles to achieve these aims.

3.3 Newspapers involved in the analysis

In China, each province has its own official newspaper, reflecting the problems faced specifically by that province. The news also represents the culture prevalent in the different regions. For the purposes of my thesis, China is divided into two main areas, namely Southern China and Northern China. The climate, geography and culture between the Southern and Northern regions are completely different, and thus attitudes towards problems of this nature also vary based on the region. I narrowed down my analysis to research in two cities in each region, i.e. Beijing and Xi’an from the North; and Shanghai and Guangdong, from the South. The four media sources selected from these regions are as follows: Table 1
Table 1 Selected and analysed media products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>North China</th>
<th>South China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Xian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>Beijing New Vision Network</td>
<td>Shanxi Media Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group/Format</td>
<td>Belongs to the Beijing Daily Newspaper Group</td>
<td>New format of the Shanxi Daily Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment (year)</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>the most credible newspaper in Beijing</td>
<td>super public opinion guidance, enhance communication, to achieve newspaper and network integration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Beijing New Vision Network, under the ownership of the Beijing Daily
Newspaper Group, hosts an online news programme known as the ‘Beijing Evening News’. The website was registered in February 2009 and officially launched in January 2010. It was subsequently revised to a new format in December 2010 where users could interact with each other and exchange information on an online platform. Beijing New Vision Network established the Beijing Evening News in order to launch their new media brand. The ‘Beijing Daily’ is produced by the Beijing Municipal Party Committee Propaganda Department, and is under the Beijing Daily Newspaper Group. The director of this newspaper group belongs to the Communist Party of China (CPC). Beijing Evening News, founded on 15th March, 1958, is one of the oldest municipal newspapers in Beijing. It has a long history and has strengthened its brand image over the many years. It is the most credible newspaper in Beijing.

The Xinmin Network was established in March 2006, and this network launched the The ‘Xinmin Evening News’ strives to deliver its services based on the principle ‘Shanghai information, fast and comprehensive’. It provides strong resources, covering topics such as financial news and celebrity interviews in the digital newspaper. The Xinmin Evening News launched on 09th September, 1929 in Nanjing, is the most authoritative official newspaper in Shanghai. The competent unit is the Shanghai Municipal Committee who are the organizers of the Shanghai Newspaper Group.

Shanxi Media Network is a national news website, the authority of the Shanxi media network. Shaanxi media network is the new media platform of Shanxi Daily News. These measures, as was reported by Provincial Committee, was for the Shanxi Daily Media Group to further enhance means for transmission of the party newspaper, increase its influence, build credibility and establish new media sources. The State Council Information Office, approved the Shanxi media network on 14th March, 2013, to provide new information services on the Internet. The initiative by the Shaanxi Provincial News Media Group was a means to further enhance the visibility of public opinion and enhance communication in Shanxi province; and
effectively integrate newspaper and networks in order to create a new form of media.

The CPC Guangdong Provincial Committee approved the construction of the Southern Network, as a news publicity website. The news website is sponsored by the provincial party committee propaganda department, as is a member of the Southern Media Group. Following approval for the publication of the news website by the State Council Information Office, the website was officially opened on 13th December 2001, and since then has been identified as one of the key news websites nationally. Southern Network merged other well-known domestic media institutions, namely the Southern Newspaper Media Group; Yangcheng Evening News Newspaper Group; Guangzhou Daily Newspaper Group; Shenzhen Special Zone Newspaper Group and Guangdong TV; Southern TV; and Guangdong Radio, along with other media information resources.

3.4 Analysis and researching findings
3.4.1 Quantitative of research result

The unequal sex ratios is a social issue and is a fundamental problem in the Chinese population. Over the years, the Chinese government implemented various policies in order to control the population. For this thesis, the policies are introduced within three major time periods, namely, (i) population growth period (from 1962 to 1970); (ii) family planning period- one-child policy period (from 1971 to 2015); (iii) the second child policy period (from 2016). I studied literature relating to these policies based on these four periods.

In order to study data relating to this issue, I initially checked the four networks discussed above, to obtain information on the ratios of men to women in China. As expected, there were several articles on this social problem. The data found is provided in the table 2. Precise data are in the form below. Thereafter, I sought information based on the four policy periods, and the data obtained is provided in the table below. As the key words are available in the title of the article, and the article
links can be easily found through search engines, it makes it easier to access the information.

Table 2 Search results and search expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of all searching results/media network</th>
<th>Beijing New Vision Network</th>
<th>Shanxi Media Network</th>
<th>Xinmin Network</th>
<th>Southern Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unbalanced sex ratio</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population growth period (from 1962 to 1970)</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family planning period (from 1971 to 2015)</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>505</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second child policy period (from 2016)</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>606</td>
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While there are several articles on the topics, with mostly accurate data, it is still difficult to find articles with analysis relevant to my topic. However, I was able to find useful information through the North New Vision Network, such as information relating to population increase "The population of the whole country: 13.7349 billion five years increased by 33.77 million people". The contents of these reports are meaningful and informative. In this specific report, the author proposed lists of the exact population growth data, as well as population data based on specific categories.
such as population based on university education, people over 65 years of age, and population based on type of location.

I was also able to come across different social problems, during my study of the one-child policy period. For instance, one article stated that "China's 150 million single childface multiple risks." This article explained that the only child was subject to huge economic pressure and various difficulties. This article provided a useful basis from which to study people’s perceptions of drawbacks of such policies. Furthermore, the unequal proportions of male and female in the population are not the only focus of the studies. A typical report refers to issues such as ‘The imbalance in the ratio of men and women in China's population: More than 30 million men are unable to get married; increasing patriarchy in China’. Articles mainly discuss this problem through the marriage of men and women. With regard to this social problem, I will place more attention to investigate articles leading to this phenomenon.

The second child policy is the latest policy which was introduced to China in 2016. It is an increasingly popular topic today, as this policy was introduced to address the growing imbalance in ratios and deal with the problem of an increasingly ageing population. The move towards such a policy suggests that China has a deep understanding and analysis of the imbalance between the male and female population. However, it is still necessary to analyze the gender imbalance for this paper.

4. Analysis
As has been outlined in the methodology, since news media are a large extent a propaganda platform, they mainly report on social problems that arouse people's attention. As times change, people focus on new and different things; the dissemination of information by the media changes accordingly. While the media base their materials on people's interests at the given time, they can also take people's attention to a certain direction, which is, in effect, one of their roles. It is because of this function of the media that I chose to analyze a newspaper article, rather than
interviews or questionnaires, in order to examine the issue of gender imbalance in China. By contrast, analysis of academic articles can be more convincing. When filtering all the data that I have obtained, I want to only draw upon articles which contain critical analysis and provide detailed data.

4.1 Population growth period (from 1962 to 1970)

Beijing is the capital of China, so it is first on focus in my research analysis. The first report I found was called 'Beijing: Over the past 10 years Beijing's population grew by 6 million, the speed is the first in the world'. This social phenomenon is characteristic of Beijing. The rationale behind it is that Beijing, being the capital of China, provides many more opportunities for development compared to other second and third tier cities. Consequently, it led to the influx of a large number of foreign people. The article lists some economic issues that will arise if the population of Beijing continues to grow. For example, an increase of 5 million people would require nearly 500 square kilometers of land. This means that the government would need to increase the housing of 130 million square meters, as well as build 167 secondary schools and 208 primary schools. It would also need to put forward some additional policies to mitigate this problem. I think cities in every country will encounter a similar problem, however its scope will be largest in China due to the high population density there. This article was published in 2014 when the Chinese society had just begun to focus on population, migration, urbanization, and other similar issues. This is also the result of China's population density being too large. It can clearly be seen that such a social phenomenon will result in many social problems, even if people do not notice them immediately. Like the above article in Beijing, the population growth rate ranks first in the world. This phenomenon has not been discovered by people at first. After the reform and opening up Beijing and Shanghai and other cities in the rapid development, especially in Beijing, as the administrative center, has more than other cities in the development opportunities. This also led to a large influx of the population. And the explosive growth of the population also led to Beijing had to build more public facilities, to strengthen the safety of citizens.
The second article I selected is called the population of the whole country: 13.7349 billion five years increased by 33.77 million people and it provides some accurate data about the Chinese population. I decided to use this article not only because of the accurate data, but also because it categorizes data according to social needs. In the article, the author points out that the sex ratio is reduced to 105.02; people above 65 years old live in town, especially sex ratio, compared with 2010 fell from 105.20 to 105.02. (Long, 2016). From this report can easily be established that the media not only reported a general overall number, but also began to monitor the community and focus on aging, education, popularity, urbanization, and other similar issues. It also proves that nowadays, with the passage of time, demography has become more than the spelling out of a simple figure representing the total population of the entire country, it has transformed into a whole discipline that requires slow and gradual learning. When solving the problem of population increase, the focus should not only fall on reducing the population, but also on the proportion of men and women and the factor of aging. It would be better to concentrate on the proportion of men and women and on controlling the aging of the population within a reasonable range of the premise, and only after to begin solving the problem of population growth. The Chinese government began to implement family planning in 1970 and introduced period of one-child policy without taking into account what problems the population would undergo as a result. This article provides a good account of the 40 years when the Chinese people went through the social issues arising from this new policy.

The article 'The need for the specialization and refinement of China's demographics' can be regarded as an extension of the last article, which explains why demographic categorization should be applied. Such as by age to avoid some of the waste of resources, the rational construction of nursing homes, kindergartens and so on. Classification of education can be a reasonable use of human resources, to avoid waste of talent. When we identify problem stemming from a social phenomenon, we should try to consider the long-term development and consequences of this
phenomenon in order to solve that problem effectively not just for the present moment, but also for the next ten or twenty years. These articles were published in 2016, indicating that the Chinese people already looked at the problem from a mature standpoint.

The Shanxi Province is located in Northern China. Situated not too far from Beijing, the capital city of the province is Xian. Xian is divided into second-tier cities and has a rich cultural heritage. The first article I chose was published in 2013 and speculated that by 2015 the population of Xian’s cosmopolitan metropolis would have reached 8.8 million. This is a predictive article based on population growth in 2013; the population size was expected to reach 8.8 million after two years. And then with regards urban division, the article relied on the prediction that more areas would undergo our urbanization, thus increasing the urban population. I chose this article precisely because of its predictive nature. The emergence of predictive articles can result from the discovery of a social problem – based on the analysis of that problem from all angles, different forecasts are produced. I think that the most important thing in the study of a social problem is the discovery of that problem. Only a problem can be found to analyze and predict the problem in order to describe a problem in more detail.

Shanghai is situated in Southern China and is China's largest city, as well as the country’s economic, science and technology, financial, and trade center. This article shows Shanghai’s foreign resident population at a negative growth for the first time – 150,000 people left Shanghai during a period of population growth for the local population. Judging by the headline, the article should not be included in this paper, but I see the negative growth of the foreign population as a consequence of the growth in the total population. Because the status of Shanghai’s first-tier cities led to a large influx of foreign population, the Shanghai government had to take measures to 'drive away' part of the newcomers. Shanghai’s foreign population’s main direction of employment in the past was in manufacturing, wholesale and retail, and real estate.

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3 http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=Im3iFsFF4EyOwULe5PsXik7BQ0_jJE1F5aRE-k_qnXK3ozgZWyV9wvjASAgE_q24bQQnMKS1PyRGRbA0UR1kFuAYsH0Aupa9C7f85di-Mrn  Accessed: March 2017.
These three industries accounted for more than 70% of the overall employed population, so the government simply adjusted the industrial structure in a way to promote the partial alienation of foreign population. Solving the population problem in Shanghai is not as difficult as in Beijing, because the Beijing population’s employment direction is relatively diverse, so mere changes in the industrial structure will not have such good effect as in Shanghai. Moreover, Shanghai is surrounded by some affluent cities, while the region around Beijing is relatively poor. The biggest difference between Beijing and Shanghai is the economy, and because of economic problems, the solution to social issues such as population growth requires a completely different policy. Other factors that need to be considered in this respect are geographical condition and even climate changes. Therefore, it can be established that the discovery and analysis of a social problem are closely linked to a region’s objective conditions.

Guangdong is situated in a province in South China. The article titled '10999 people! Last year, Guangdong's natural population growth rate over the country' demonstrates the explosive growth of the Guangdong population. The direct cause of population growth is the development of Guangdong's economy. As mentioned in the analysis of the Shanghai population, because of the economic development and the rise in job opportunities, some part of the Shanghai population moved out of the first-tier cities. In the southern region, the nature of social problems and the policies aimed at their solution will not be very different.

4.2 Family planning period (one-child policy period) (from 1971 to 2015)
This period is the main cause of the high male-to-female sex ratio in China. A typical report on the topic refers to issues such as ‘the imbalance in the ratio of men and women in China's population: more than 30 million men are unable to get married; increasing patriarchy in China.‘ With regard to this social problem, I will give more attention to research articles focusing on the reasons behind this
phenomenon. This situation can be regarded as a social phenomenon, or it can be seen as the result of a high sex ratio. This article was published in 2015 and points out that China’s male-to-female ratio are the highest one in the world, resulting in 30 million men unable to get married. I do not know exactly when people identified this problem, but it is certain that through this phenomenon attention is drawn to the seriousness of the imbalanced sex ratio issue. In a report published in 2016, 'Chinese single person picks up the gospel: in 1% population sample survey, decreasing the sex ratio', it was pointed out that the index of proportion of men to women had dropped from 105.20 to 105.02 at the time of the sixth national census in 2010. Although the decline is not obvious, it is also a welcome development trend. In just a year's time, the imbalanced sex ratio was significantly improved, which happened for a particular reason. There were more than 400 reports concerning the high sex ratio in China on the Beijing New View Network in 2015. It is conceivable that the number of reports concerning the imbalanced sex ratio in the Chinese society in 2015 is considerable. The volume of reports and some in-depth analysis immediately made the community realize the seriousness of the problem.

I chose to analyze some very interesting reports from within the Shanxi Media Network. The first report was titled ‘Xi'an will add 361 public toilets in three years According to 1: 1.5 ratio to build men and women squatting’. This article was published in 2013 and there is not much concern about sex ratio in it. While there were many factors that needed to be considered for building public toilets, it is evident that in 2013 people had not yet begun to be sensitive about the problem of sex ratio. In 2013, the figures from the report on high sex ratio were less than half the figures from the 2015 report in the Shanxi Media Network. And since 2015, the imbalanced sex ratio issue gained popularity across the country, as evident from the article 'Five years after, the amount of people in Bachelor will come close to the total population of Australia.' This article only in the Shanxi Media Network found more than 300 data.

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This process is similar to the situation in Beijing – people neglected insignificant issues for a long time and the latter gradually developed into a big problem which cannot be ignored.

The reports retrieved on the XinminNetwork are very similar to those discussed above, an example being this report which was published in 2014: ‘University in Hunan sex ratio released, Changsha Science and Technology 88:12’.

The relevant background for this report is that science and technology are usually subjects preferred by boys, whereas girls are more attracted by literary disciplines, so this phenomenon can also be seen as the performance of socialization. Although it cannot be established with certainty that the ratio is correct, on the premise of a high sex ratio, an 88:12 sex ratio in such a university is very likely to exist. Another report titled ‘How to solve high sex ratio – go find a wife from Chenndu’ also offers content worth noting. In China, only the sex ratio of Chengdu is more female than male and it is regrettable that there is no accurate analysis of this phenomenon on the Xinmin Network. There are only two reasons behind it given in the abovementioned article: one is that the inequality between men and women in Chengdu is less severe; and the other is because of body characteristics. The report published concerning college students' sex ratio considers the latter a social phenomenon. Due to the fact that students identified this phenomenon and put it on the Internet, it provoked resonance with society. Building awareness of the emergence of social phenomena is the first step to discovering potential social problems.

Similar to Beijing, Shanghai, and Xi'an, reports on the high male-to-female ratio in the Southern Network in 2013 were also few. Articles are also similar to ‘Guangzhou resident population of high sex ratio – more than 30 million people become "bachelor". China's imbalanced sex ratios expressed through the degree of marriage.

The new media are only a communication platform; they only describe a developing

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phenomenon at its beginning and will not do much evaluation of this phenomenon. This is also the reason why my data are almost all on a social phenomenon.

4.3 Second child policy period (from 2016)

The ‘two-child generation’ has just begun in China, so it is not yet possible to make an accurate analysis of this policy. Since the data I managed to find are very limited, I can only perform a general analysis. China has experienced rapid changes moving from high fertility to low fertility; the main contradiction of our population is no longer growing too fast, but close to the low fertility level, population aging, sex ratio imbalance, and other issues. The ‘two-child’ policy has been introduced to solve this series of problems. Because this policy has only been implemented a year ago, it is yet impossible to see the consequences and social issues it may lead to. But there are still some reports that reflect people’s first thoughts on the ‘two-child’ policy. As reported on the Beijing New View Network, if the ‘two-child’ policy has been successfully implemented for over a year, why not imagine more? The article points out that education and urbanization have reduced fertility and that the process of understanding and recognizing a phenomenon passes through judging whether it will lead to a social problem.

5. Conclusion

Analysis of media coverage in four different cities in China revealed that during the rapid explosion of China's population in 1960, media coverage focused mainly on the Chinese population figures and the rate of growth of population. The data available for this study was from 2013 onwards, which was narrow dataset, as by this stage, people already have a relatively mature understanding of prevailing issues relating to gender imbalance in the population. If China's population continues to grow, the country will be subject to economic and demographic problems. In the period of implementation of family planning measures, there were several reports by major media platforms on disproportionate male to female ratios within the population. There were more than 400 reports on this topic on the Beijing New Visual media platform; more than 600
reports on the Shanxi Media Network; almost 800 reports on Xinmin Network; and almost 500 reports on the Southern Network. These are figures of reports from just four Chinese cities alone. It is also possible to attribute social change emerging in the society to that media coverage on this topic. For instance, the one-child policy has been reformed with the implementation of the two-child policy. There is no accurate analysis of the two-child policy yet, and it is only possible to find certain predictive articles on the topic.

Based on the study of media reports in the three periods, i.e. the population growth period; family planning period- one-child policy period; and the second child policy period the factors contributing to gender imbalance are briefly divided into four steps of gender imbalance is briefly divided into four steps, namely (i) phenomenon discovery; (ii) phenomenon analysis; (iii) problem discovery; and (iv) problem solving. Phenomenon discovery in this context is identifying social issues which have arisen and spread through society, capturing the attention of the public and relevant government departments concerned about addressing these issues. For example, one data set focused on in this paper is on the inability of males to get married. This is a social phenomenon that has arisen as a result of an increasing imbalance in male to female ratios in the population and thus has generated public attention on the existing state of sex ratios in China. Phenomenon analysis is the process of analyzing and interpreting phenomenon which has been discovered. For example, referring to the report discussing China’s population growth, it was necessary to analyse from an economic point of view, the economic pressure brought by population growth. The Chinese government had to deal with such problems, in addition to other issues that emerged as a result of this phenomenon, such as the rapidly ageing population. This analysis provided a framework from which to determine social problems in the society, and put forward corresponding strategies for reform.

However, there were certain limitations in the data collected for this study. The population explosion that occurred in China began in 1962, and there are very few
newspapers from this year available on the Internet. My research is based on media sources from 2010 onwards, which is a limitation in the analysis of this issue. Given the long time period in which this issue has been taking place in China and the limitation in availability of older data sources online, the analysis had to be focused on the more recent data sources. Such data sources reflect media and society’s current understanding of these issues, which would be a more modern line of thinking than what would have been before. Thus, it is difficult to capture the full ambit of changes in thinking and attitudes to this problem over the past 60 years.

The study demonstrates progress in society by way of increasing awareness and analysis of issues by diversifying the various aspects of each problem and addressing each aspect. The identified issues are highly sensitive in society and thus taken seriously. Thus, by using media as a platform, society is able to promote development. Society through the media promotes a better trend towards development.

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