

## AP HG Ch. 2 K12

### Population Problems in China

**Assignment:** Review “Population Problems in China” and “Missing Asian Girls” articles and then compose an essay that explains the gender problem (missing girls & stolen boys) in Asia, to include a minimum of three factors (Cultural, Economic, Social, Political, etc) that have contributed to the problem and ways in which the Governments are trying to solve the problem.

China is known for its incredibly large growth rate (meaning that a lot of people are being born at a rapid pace). To combat overpopulation, the communist Chinese government started the “one-child policy” in the 1970’s. The one-child policy limits a family to having only one child. If a family has more than one child then they must pay a large fine—an amount greater than most farming families can pay. Read the following articles to learn more about the population problems.

#### Environments Limits:

It's starting to feel like China is reaching its environmental limits. If it doesn't radically change to "greener," more sustainable modes of transportation, production, and power generation, the China miracle will turn into an eco-nightmare. For some three decades, China's economy has grown at around 10 percent per year, based on low-cost labor and little regard for the waste it pumps into its rivers and the air. But China can't grow now and clean up later: The pace and scale of its growth will make later too late.—*Thomas L. Friedman*

#### China's Stolen Sons

An age-old preference for sons is fueling the kidnapping of young boys, who are sold to families desperate for sons of their own

*By Andrew Jacobs in Shenzhen, China*



The thieves often strike at dusk, when children are playing outside and their parents are distracted. Deng Huidong lost her 9-month-old son in the blink of an eye as a man driving by yanked him from the grip of his 7-year-old sister near the doorway of their home. The car didn't even stop as a pair of arms reached out and grabbed the boy.

He is one of thousands of Chinese boys who have been stolen from their families. Although some are sold to buyers in Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam, most are bought in China by families desperate for a male heir. Demand is especially strong in rural areas of south China, where the sale of stolen children has become big business.

Su Qingcai, a tea farmer from Fujian Province with a 14-year-old daughter, explains why he spent \$3,500 last year on a 5-year-old boy.

"A girl is just not as good as a son," he says. "It doesn't matter how much money you have. If you don't have a son, you are not as good as other people who have one."

The centuries-old Chinese preference for boys—and the custom that a woman leaves her family when she gets married and moves in with her husband's family—is reinforced by a modern reality: Without a real social-safety net like that in the U.S. and other countries, many Chinese parents fear that without a son, they'll be left to fend for themselves in old age. With daughters, there's also the issue of a dowry, a financial burden which falls to the family of the bride.

In a number of Asian and third-world countries, there has long been a cultural preference for boys. In China, the situation has been aggravated by the country's strict one-child policy, which is designed to control the growth of its population of 1.3 billion.

The extent of the kidnapping problem in China is a matter of dispute. The Chinese government insists there are fewer than 2,500 cases of human trafficking each year, including both women and children. But advocates for abducted children say there may be hundreds of thousands.

Sun Haiyang, whose son disappeared in 2007, has collected a list of 2,000 children in and around Shenzhen who have disappeared in the past two years. He says none have been recovered. "It's like fishing a needle out of the sea," he says.

Desperate families say they get almost no help from the local police. They say the police insist on waiting 24 hours before taking action and then claim that too much time has passed to mount an effective investigation. Many parents take matters into their own hands. They post flyers in places where children are known to be sold, and travel the country to stand in front of kindergartens as they let out. A few shop owners have turned their storefronts into missing person displays.

"We spend our life savings, we borrow money, we will do anything to find our children," says Peng Gaofeng, who formed a group for parents of stolen children after his 4-year-old son was kidnapped. "There is a hole in our hearts that will never heal."

Peng and others have been agitating for the establishment of a DNA database for children and for stronger anti-trafficking laws that would penalize people who buy stolen children, as well as the kidnappers. "If the government can launch satellites and catch spies, they can figure out how to find stolen children," he says.

## **Age-Old Attitudes**

About 300 miles away in Anxi, a county in Fujian Province where some of Shenzhen's stolen boys are thought to have been sold, people focus more on the pain of the families without sons.

Zhen Zibao, a shopkeeper, says buying a son is widely accepted and that stolen children could be found in most towns and villages. "If you have only girls, you don't feel right inside," says Zhen, who has one child, an 11-year-old son. "You feel your status is lower than everyone else."

China's government has worked hard to ease age-old attitudes about gender, and in major cities—where one-child families have become the norm and many parents say they are happy to have a daughter or a son—it seems to have succeeded.

But in many rural areas, the preference for boys remains strong. In Anxi County, a resident whose first child is a daughter is allowed to have a second child. Having a third, however, can mean fines as high as \$5,800 and other penalties that include the loss of a breadwinner's job.

A boy, by contrast, can often be bought for half that amount, and authorities sometimes turn a blind eye if the child does not need to be registered as a new birth for that region.

For the parents of missing children, the heartbreak and frustration with the authorities have turned into anger. Last September, about 40 families traveled to Beijing to call attention to the problem. They staged a protest at the headquarters of the national television network, but within minutes, dozens of police officers arrived to haul them away.

"They dragged us by our hair and said, 'How dare you question the government,' " says Peng Dongying, who lost her 4-year-old son. "I hate myself for my child's disappearance, but I hate society more for not caring. All of us have this pain in common, and we will do anything to get back our children."

### **Asia's missing girls**

*A traditional preference for boys, combined with technology that allows pregnant women to know the sex of their babies, has led to a huge gender imbalance in China and India.*

*Link/Page Citation*

*Yang Xiaowei, a 35-year-old chicken farmer from a village in eastern China, has three children: two older daughters and a long-awaited baby boy.*

*Having a son is so important, Yang explains, that he and his wife were willing to risk the large fine that could result from violating the government's one-child policy.*

*"If you don't have a son, people will condescend to you," he says. "It's always been this way. If you have a son, your family will be given a certain social status. You can ask 10 people in the village, and they'll all tell you the same thing."*

*This kind of thinking is at the heart of a massive demographic problem facing China. Until recently, there wasn't much that anyone could do about having sons or daughters. But in the 1980s, ultrasound scanners--which were intended for checking the health of developing fetuses but also can show their sex--became widely available across Asia.*

*Suddenly it became easy for women to find out if they were going to have a boy or a girl. And in countries like China and India, women began deciding not to have their baby if it was going to be a girl. The result is a serious gender imbalance in both countries.*

*China now has the world's highest gender disparity among newborns: 119 boys are born for every 100 girls. That's well above the natural ratio of 105 boys for every 100 girls (which is also the ratio in the United States). In some parts of China and India, the imbalance is close to three boys for every two girls. Across Asia, the gender imbalance translates into millions of "missing" girls.*

*Within a decade, that will mean millions of young men unable to find wives. And experts fear that could lead to an increase in the trafficking of women and an overall spike in crime.*

*"It's a humongous problem," says Valerie Hudson, a professor at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and coauthor of a book on the topic. "Without a balanced sex ratio in a society, you're courting disaster."*

### *Beyond Asia*

*Worldwide, demographers say, the number of missing girls has risen to more than 160 million. The problem is most severe in China, India, and the Caucasus region, which includes Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia (see chart). But sex ratios are also out of balance in other places, including parts of Europe and Asian-American communities in the United States.*

*"We've seen sex selection spread from South and East Asia to new countries, and that's alarming," says Mara Hvistendahl, author of *Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys Over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men*.*

*"The preference for sons is very widespread," she adds.*

*In China, the problem is partially a result of the country's tough one-child policy. It was introduced in 1979 as an attempt to stem the growth of China's population, which is now 1.3 billion. But limiting couples to one child, which has helped to slow population growth, has had unintended consequences: In addition to the gender imbalance, it's contributed to a surge in the number of girls given up for adoption. (See *Voices* in the Jan. 2, 2012, issue of *Upfront*.)*

*Underlying the gender imbalance are centuries-old Asian attitudes about women. Until well into the 20th century many Asian women weren't allowed to work outside their homes, go to school, or decide who they would marry. While sons were cherished, girls were often neglected, poorly cared for when they got sick, and sometimes abandoned. (Some of these same attitudes are at work in the non-Asian countries with gender imbalances.)*

### *The Need for a Son*

*Asian women have made great strides in the last half-century. In China, for example, men and women are now equal under the law, arranged marriages have been banned, and women are getting good jobs.*

*So why, especially in rural areas, do many Asians still favor boys? It's largely about economics--particularly economics rooted in cultural traditions about women.*

*"Mostly, Chinese worry that if they don't have a son, no one will take care of them when they are too old to work," says Wu Shaoming, director of a women's studies institute in Chengdu, China. The Chinese government does not provide welfare or free medical care to peasants. What's more, Wu says it's common for a woman in the countryside to move to her husband's village after marriage, providing no support to her own family.*

*That's how Yang, the chicken farmer, sees it: "If you only have a daughter, after she gets older and gets married, she'll become somebody else's," he explains. "And then when you get old, you'll have nobody to take care of you. So every family needs to have a little boy."*

*These same attitudes are common in India, which is also struggling with a huge gender imbalance.*

*In a traditional Indian family, a son is expected to live with his parents, earn an income, inherit property, care for his parents in their old age, and--if they're Hindu--light their funeral pyre. When a daughter marries, the*

*bride's family pays the groom's family a dowry--a gift of money and presents--and she moves in with her husband's family, often leaving her parents with nothing or even in debt from her dowry.*

*India's gender imbalance is actually getting worse as the country's booming economy pulls millions out of poverty and into a growing middle class that can afford ultrasound tests.*

*Indian census data confirm that the problem has accelerated since 2001. The 2011 census found 7.1 million fewer girls than boys under the age of 6, compared with a gap of roughly 6 million girls a decade earlier.*

*For countries like India and China, this is a demographics problem with very real consequences.*

*"By the 2020s, 15 percent of men in China and 15 percent of men in northwest India won't have a female counterpart," says Hvistendahl. "There will be decades where a large chunk of men won't be able to marry."*

*And that could lead to an increase in instability in both places. Women in China and India are already being kidnapped and sold to men desperate for spouses. Crime rates could also spike, since single men are responsible for most crime.*

### *South Korea's Response*

*The governments of China and India have both banned the use of ultrasound to determine gender. But the laws are hard to enforce.*

*One country that has had success tackling this problem is South Korea. The ratio is currently 107 boys born for every 100 girls, still above normal, but way down from a peak of more than 116 boys born for every 100 girls in 1990.*

*The most important factor in changing attitudes toward girls was a radical shift in South Korea's economy that opened the doors to women in the workforce as never before. This has dismantled long-held traditions, which so devalued daughters that mothers would often apologize for giving birth to a girl.*

*The government also played a small role. Starting in the 1970s, South Korean officials launched campaigns to change people's attitudes. A typical slogan was, "One daughter raised well is worth 10 sons !"*

*The Chinese government is also addressing the problem. In the southern village of Hoayang, there are signs forbidding the use of ultrasound machines to determine a baby's sex. Fines for violations can be as high as \$315--a vast sum for a farmer in rural China. A slogan painted by the government on the side of a building reads, "Having a boy and having a girl are the same."*

*But it takes more than slogans to change long-held attitudes. The traditions that underlie the preference for sons go way back. A generation ago, Yang's parents had 10 daughters before he was finally born.*

*"There's a saying in Chinese: 'Raise a son to safeguard your old age,' " Yang says. "From thousands of years ago to the present, this hasn't changed at all."*

*With reporting by Jim Yardley and Ross Douthat of The New York Times; and by Jonathan Kaiman.*

### *WHERE ARE THE GIRLS?*

*Countries with the highest number of boys born for every 100 girls.*

*(The natural ratio is 105 boys for every 100 girls.)*

1. CHINA	119
2. AZERBAIJAN	117
3. ARMENIA	114
4. INDIA	111
5. GEORGIA	111
6. SOLOMON ISLANDS	109
7. TAIWAN	108
8. MACEDONIA	108
9. SERBIA	108
10. SOUTH KOREA	107
UNITED STATES	105

*SOURCE: CARL HAUB, POPULATION REFERENCE BUREAU. NUMBERS ARE MOST RECENT AVAILABLE FOR EACH COUNTRY.*