

Gendercide: Where have all the girls gone?

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One of the most shocking global trends I have encountered in travels to over 54 countries on all continents in the past five years is the practice of gendercide. This massive “disappearance” of girls in the last few decades is an underreported international scandal.¹ Undisputed evidence exists that over 100 million women have been killed for the “crime” of being female since the 1970s and 1980s and the problem is only growing worse.² Where are the protests and outrage at the United Nations (UN) and among organizations that self-identify themselves as defending or representing women? Only a few voices have recently called for action and even described the situation as “the slaughter of Eve, a systematic gendercide of tragic proportions.”³ There is certainly no outcry in proportion to the worldwide catastrophe taking place. More typical is the UN Secretary General’s global study of violence against children released in October 2006 which makes no mention whatsoever of abortion.⁴

It is a sad fact that abortion has become so sacrosanct in certain circles that many consider it taboo to put in place any measures that would go counter to an absolutely unfettered “right to abortion.”⁵ The greatest instance of deadly discrimination against women in recorded history is being ignored or even defended by radical feminists and others because they rank the freedom to abort higher than the right to life of girls that are selectively aborted. A staff working paper for the President’s Council on Bioethics points out the cruel irony of pro-abortion feminists refusing to restrict the “right” to abort girls because of son-preference. “The abortion right, which was grounded in the principle of equality for women, could now be used, rightly or wrongly, as a pretext for aborting female fetuses. And the slogan of pro-choice advocates of ‘every child a wanted child’ could now be invoked, again rightly or wrongly, to defend the abortion of unwanted female fetuses.”⁶ Such positions are contributing to an escalating international crisis.

¹ I would like to acknowledge my important debt to Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute for his excellent study of the widespread and growing crisis of international prenatal sex-control.

² One exception to this deafening silence was the speech by European Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou in May 2000 in which she said; “The United Nations estimate that 200 million females are missing in the world; women who should have been born or grown up, but were killed by infanticide or selective abortion.” http://www.eurowrc.org/13.institutions/1.ec/ec-en/05.ec_en.htm

³ Theodor Winkler, director of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF) in the Executive Summary to “Women in an Insecure World; Violence against Women Facts, Figures and Analysis” p. 6 http://www.dcaf.ch/women/pb_women_ex_sum.pdf

The Interim also raised the alarm in Canada. <http://www.theinterim.com/2006/july/03canadian.html>

⁴ <http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2006/oct/06101302.html>

For the full text of the report: <http://www.violencestudy.org/r25>

⁵ Sherry Colb is representative of many liberal and feminist scholars in this *FindLaw*® piece.

<http://writ.news.findlaw.com/colb/20050126.html>

⁶ Staff Working Paper, President’s Council on Bioethics 2003, p. 6.

http://bioethicsprint.bioethics.gov/background/sex_control.html

It is a curious biological fact that a slightly higher percentage of boys at birth appears to be a natural phenomenon. Demographers noticed early on that, with variations due to ethnicity, the normal ratio of boys to girls is in the range of 103-106 males for every 100 females at birth. An example of this from 1984 is the sex ratio at birth for the United States as divided by racial/national groups; National Average 105.0 boys to 100 girls (White 105.4, Black 103.1, Chinese 104.6 and Japanese 102.6).⁷ One suggested biological reason for this imbalance is the naturally higher infant mortality of boys. Sex ratios at birth everywhere were remarkably stable until the advent of widely available sex detection technology in the 1970s. Amniocentesis genetic tests and later ultrasound machines opened a Pandora's Box. Professor Jérôme Lejeune, the geneticist who developed the amniocentesis test, proved prophetic when he predicted that when given a choice people would overwhelmingly opt for a boy. He realized the catastrophic cultural and societal ramifications that would result if sex-selection became prevalent. After only three decades, preborn sex determination and easy recourse to abortion in cultures with historic son-preference has led to historically unprecedented declines in female birth rates.

Many readers will be aware that systematic and deadly discrimination against preborn girls is "a problem in China." The modern and growing Chinese sex-imbalance was one of the first gendercide problems discussed in many news reports and in the scientific literature. Statistics such as a projected 70 million more boys than girls in China certainly make for striking headlines in the press.⁸ Census figures showing radically skewed birthrates as high as 130 or 135 boys for every 100 girls in the Chinese provinces of Guangdong and Hainan are world records. This only became possible after the widespread practice of using ultrasound technology to abort unwanted girls. The infamous One Child Policy for population control, enforced by the Communist government of China, aggravated the crisis. Despite government acknowledgements of the problem, in 2006 the Chinese National People's Congress defeated a measure to criminalize sex-selection abortion. Family planning officials were reduced to claiming they will fight the practice despite this legislative setback.⁹ Overwhelming social bias in favor of male offspring, draconian population control restrictions on the number of children allowed, widely available sex determination technology, and unrestricted abortion have made China the poster-child of gendercide. What many fail to appreciate, however, is the fact that the problem, with varying levels of severity, exists around the world.

Sex control abortion in India has also started to receive widespread publicity. The Lancet, Britain's leading medical journal, published a study concluding that as many as 10 million girls were selectively aborted in India over the last twenty years.¹⁰ I recall seeing first-hand this bias against girl children during my trip to India in late 2004. One

⁷ Nicholas Eberstadt, "The Global War Against Baby Girls: An Update," study paper, p. 2. Source: Derived from U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States*, 1984 edition (1988), Volume I, table 1-53.

⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,714412,00.html>

⁹ http://english.people.com.cn/200608/02/eng20060802_289040.html

¹⁰ <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=35880>

aggravating cultural problem in India is the traditional Hindu burden of providing a marriage dowry for daughters. In the early 1990s those who sold sex detection tests advertised on thousands of billboards around the country; "Pay five hundred rupees [US\$14.00] now rather than five lakhs [Rs500,000 or \$14,000] later."¹¹ The passage of the Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act in 1994 banning sex determination had no discernable impact on the selective abortion of girls in India. It is only in recent years that a significant number of clinics and doctors have police faced investigation or fines for revealing the sex of the preborn child to parents. One hero in this fight is Baljit Singh Dahiya of Haryana, India. He heads a taskforce which employs pregnant women to test the compliance of the numerous ultrasound centers with the anti-sex selection law and prosecutes offenders.¹²

Something that came as a shock to India was the statistical evidence that aborting girls is much more frequent in cities and among wealthy and highly educated social groups than in "backward" rural areas. One common reason given for aborting girls in India, China and other Asian nations with low levels of fertility due to population control, is the traditional folk religion teaching that only a son can perform the funerary rites for his parents and ancestors. These beliefs cut across social classes, but data from the 2001 Indian census revealed that only 85 girls were born for every 100 boys in the capital Delhi, down from 90.4 girls for every 100 boys in 1991 and far worse than the already low national average of 92.7 girls to 100 boys.¹³ This pattern of the educated and financially advantaged classes practicing sex control abortion in greater numbers holds true for China and other nations as well.

Several other Asian countries follow this pattern of pre-natal gendercide, but not all. Taiwan and South Korea also have highly skewed sex ratios at birth that favor boys. In fact, at an international symposium on sex-preference in Seoul it was observed that "public concern about the 'missing girl' problem in Asia focuses on the plight of the men who will be unable to find brides 20 years hence. This focus itself is male-oriented and reflects high valuation of males and disregard of the needs of females. Meanwhile, the fate of the abandoned, aborted, murdered, or maltreated girls is barely seen as a problem."¹⁴ Some Asian countries like Japan and Indonesia have a normal ratio of boys to girls, but they are exceptions in their region.

Sex control before birth, however, is definitely not confined to the Far East. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have reached the dizzying heights of between 115-120 boys for every 100 girls at birth.¹⁵ Furthermore, birth ratios in such European countries as Macedonia 110.7, Bulgaria 108, Estonia 107.8 and Greece 107.2 show clear signs of eliminating unwanted females. No continent is exempt from this plague that also affects Africa--Egypt 108.7, Libya 108.5 and Tunisia 107.3 and the Americas--Cuba 109.4,

¹¹ <http://www.futurepundit.com/archives/000938.html>

¹² Shefalee Vasudev and Ramesh Vinayak, "Female Foeticide," *India Today*, November 10, 2003, p. 20.

¹³ *Ibid*; pp. 14 and 16-17.

¹⁴ <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/ebSpr96a.html>

¹⁵ Eberstadt, *op cit.* p. 16.

Venezuela 107.5 and El Salvador 107.1.¹⁶ Son-preference in Latin America is evidently a part of *machismo*, or aggressive male dominance. It is particularly shocking to see abnormal birth ratios in El Salvador since abortion is illegal there under all circumstances.

An alarming perspective is the fact that sex control technology is becoming increasingly more advanced and accessible. *In vitro* fertilization centers in the USA and other countries now advertise the ability to allow the couple to choose the sex of the child they will have.¹⁷ In a very short time the last remaining regions in Africa and Latin America that do not have many sex-determination devices will be getting them. This is part of the modern process of globalization. The worldwide slaughter of preborn girls is another facet of the silent massacre of a generation.

There are some frightening scenarios concerning the future if sex control against women in China continues to produce 2 million more men than women a year.¹⁸ The authors of *Bare Branches: The Security Implications Of Asia's Surplus Male Population* (“bare branches” is a Chinese term for men who cannot find wives) come to the conclusion that military adventurism and internal violence are predictable outcomes for societies with disproportionate numbers of unmarried young men.¹⁹ These and other ominous consequences of sex selection, which were also foreseen by Dr. Lejeune, are based on the past and present history of China and other countries where sex ratios remain heavily tilted towards men. This is yet another illustration of the truism that when man plays God with the laws of nature, he invariably causes disasters.

In the literature discussing the implications of gendercide, the most astonishing texts are those that express a kind of perverse pleasure that the growing global scarcity of women will make them more “valuable” or appreciated as a group. It is patently absurd to seek consolation in the hope that mass murder could have the happy result of increasing the social status of the victims. Those writers are disproved by the facts. In societies where killing females before birth has the most acceptability, young women are treated even less humanely as they become fewer. The current lack of young women in some countries has in fact led to increased trafficking of girls for sale as sex-slaves. In Taiwan I was told that men who cannot find a wife frequently “buy” a bride from other less prosperous Asian countries through marriage brokers. Such a state of affairs anywhere is unacceptable. The absence of effective action against gendercide by the international community reveals a shocking lack of will.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that acceptance of the killing of innocent preborn children saps the moral strength of many who would otherwise be expected to defend girls and women from sex-selection abortion. Redress for the incredible damage done to the fabric of society by sex control and gendercide will have to come from those who are principled enough to stand up for the human rights of every person from the moment of

¹⁶ *Ibid*; pp. 16-18.

¹⁷ <http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/1998/sep/98091001.html>

¹⁸ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/3933485.stm

¹⁹ <http://chronicle.com/free/v50/i34/34a01401.htm>

conception to their natural death, including the present US administration. We must point out the hypocrisy of those who only concern themselves with a narrow range of “politically correct” human rights and causes or who “discover” a right to abortion as Amnesty International did. Protecting all human life in its earliest moments from cloning and other attacks is undoubtedly the human rights and social challenge of our age. As Dr. Lejeune said, “what is at stake is not merely the life of the baby present here and now, but rather the life of the soul of our civilization.”²⁰

²⁰ <http://www.all.org/abac/lejeune.htm>