

Female Deficit in Asia

Conference synthesis

prepared by CZG

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What have we learnt during this conference ?

- ❑ Facts and figures we weren't aware of
- ❑ Methods we never paid attention to
- ❑ Concepts we had never heard before
- ❑ Criticisms nobody dared to voice
- ❑ Causal links we never noticed so far
- ❑ Policy implications we didn't think about
- ❑ Forecasts that hadn't been attempted earlier
- ❑ Comparisons we would not have drawn
- ❑ Data we should have known about previously
- ❑ Colleagues we should have met before
- ❑ Etc.

Issues of sources

- ❑ Missing data (civil registration, abortion statistics, local data, etc.)
- ❑ Deficient data (underreporting, misreported, etc.)
- ❑ Alternative data source (maps, other surveys on old age or migration, etc)
- ❑ Underutilized data (hospital, etc.)

Issues of methods

- ❑ Usual tools of demographic analysis are not always adequate nor sufficient to capture phenomena related to female deficit
- ❑ New indices and concepts have to be devised
- ❑ New estimation techniques are needed
- ❑ New specifically designed surveys are required
- ❑ Demographers have to go through a lot of experimentation and risky research tests with new tools, hypotheses and data

The need for multidisciplinary

- ❑ Beyond demography, research on female deficit issues will flourish thanks to the inputs of anthropology, sociology, geography, migration studies, history, public health, etc.
- ❑ Demographic analysis requires quantitative and local validation through other disciplinary approaches as data *per se* are not enough. We need more narratives and stories to understand our charts and tables
- ❑ Demography has after all no theory on female deficit and it will have to borrow insights, concepts and explanatory frameworks from economics, history, anthropology etc.

Female deficit: intermediate variables (1)

- ❑ The social intermediate variables
 - Preconception selection techniques
 - Sex selective abortion
 - Infanticide
 - Excess infant and child mortality
 - Abandonment and adoption
 - Sex selective underreporting
- ❑ The biological intermediate variables
 - Ethnic group
 - Age of the mother
 - Parity
 - Hepatitis and other dark horses.

Intermediate variables (2)

- ❑ Identification of all intermediate variables leading to masculinization
- ❑ Measurement issues : estimation, comparability, benchmark values, etc.
- ❑ The need for a comprehensive framework bringing together all intermediate factors

One thing we know about female deficit: it is uneven and changing

- ❑ It is unstable in time and always increasing or at times decreasing, but remains (almost) constant only at "standard biological levels"
- ❑ It is geographically concentrated in regional or national clusters
- ❑ It is never evenly distributed across social groups and rarely universal in a given locality
- ❑ Discrimination strategies differ also widely in space and time as well as within society
- ❑ Will the observed heterogeneity of discriminatory modes across areas and social groups allow us to track the mechanisms at work and the ultimate determinants of gender discrimination?

Causes for gender discrimination (1)

- ❑ Demographic factors and the sex selection situation: parity and sex composition of the offspring
- ❑ Contexts: fertility decline, economic development, social modernization, coercive family planning
- ❑ The identified correlates (demand factors):
 - Ethnic, religious and cultural entities
 - Social and economic groups
 - Urbanization
 - Education levels
 - Female autonomy and women's status
 - Kinship systems, agricultural systems
- ❑ Supply factors
 - Sex selection technology: availability, costs and accessibility
 - Legal regulations

Son preference

The ultimate cause for gender discrimination: son preference and sexual hierarchy

- ❑ How and why does it vary across regions and social groups?
- ❑ Is son preference of social, cultural, religious or economic nature?
- ❑ How is it transmitted ?
 - Through the family from generation to generation?
 - Through the reference group (lineage, castes, sects, village, etc.)?
 - Through weak ties (social interaction, networks, etc.)?
 - Through innovation and diffusion processes?
- ❑ How is it contained and curbed?
 - Through repressive legislation?
 - Through public awareness?
 - Through compensatory benefits?
 - Through social change?
- ❑ Why doesn't it exist where we would expect to find it?

Consequences of gender disequilibria and their policy implications

The marriage market and its flexibility

- Measuring the marriage squeeze
- Assessing the possible adjustments of marriage systems to it: regional and social exogamy, trafficking in women, new marital or family arrangements, the rise of celibacy, out-migration, etc.

More unexplored outcomes:

- On future number of births
- On masculine migration trends (both internal and international)
- On men's health and sexual behavior, and mortality
- On female education and employment
- On family structures and household economics
- On social and political equilibrium

When you have no explanatory theory...

... find some chronological regularity in your data with potentially predictive abilities...

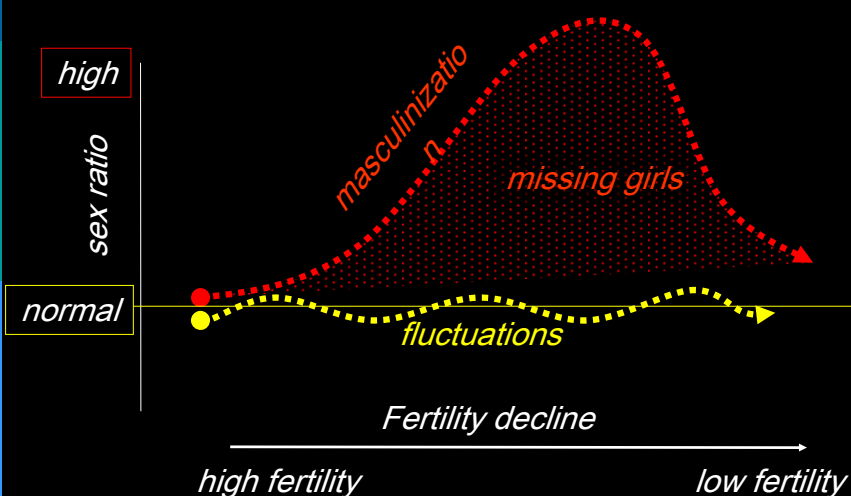
... label it as a “transition”...

... and market it as an indisputable societal “law” to other social sciences.

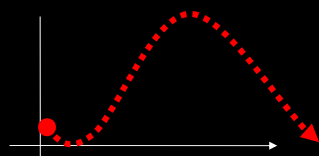
Masculinization: Transition or cycle ?

- ❑ Is masculinization a short-term transition bound to eventually recede for good ?
- ❑ Or is masculinization a cyclical outburst likely to come back?
 - The case for transition: Korea, Taiwan, historical experience of Japan
 - The case for cycle: Singapore and the chaotic fluctuations observed in the West
- ❑ The big unknown: Is there an upper limit for masculinization processes in China and India for the next decades?
 - What levels of masculinity are demographically sustainable in the short- or in the long run?

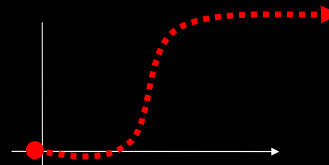
Sex ratio deterioration (and fertility decline)



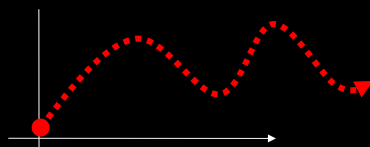
Scenarios of future sex ratio



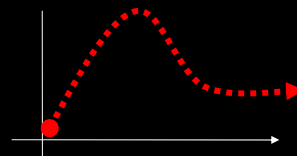
One-time Transition



Long-term increase



Cycles



Transition with final increase

Lessons and recipes

- ❑ Tomorrow's consequences will be severe and unpredictable : let's get the message across now
- ❑ Global problems call for global thinking: international comparison and collaboration have become compulsory
- ❑ Standard demographic methods won't be enough for such a unique phenomenon: let's be inventive
- ❑ Demography won't tell the whole story of gender discrimination without other social sciences and without better biological understanding
- ❑ And never forget to look back at historical data to understand the contemporary situation

Good bye!
