

Life Span Human Development in China: An Ecological Perspective

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Project Overview

This project will use Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory to examine issues related to life span human development in China. It will examine historical, cultural and political forces on the contexts and processes of human development from early childhood through adulthood and into the aging population.

Target Student Population

The target student population for this project is undergraduate students enrolled in courses that examine human development from a cross-cultural perspective. These courses may be in areas such as Human Development, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology and Ethnic Studies.

Objectives of the Curriculum Project

Upon the completion of this unit students will:

- 1) Understand the role of history and culture on human development in China.
- 2) Examine the relationships between the various systems that influence human development in China (family system, political institutions, schools, economic system)
- 3) Compare and contrast the various contexts of human development prior to and after the 1949 revolution.
- 4) Identify the major social policies that have influenced human development in China since 1949.
- 5) Analyze the role of religious and philosophical systems on human development in China.
- 6) Examine the changing influence of the extended family on human development in China.

- 7) Analyze the relationship between current educational policies and China's objectives in the area of human development in the 21st century.

Understanding Ecological Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory suggests that there are five environmental systems that influence human development that range from fine-grained inputs of direct interactions with social agents to broad-based inputs of culture. These systems are 1) the microsystem, 2) the mesosystem, 3) the exosystem, 4) the macrosystem and 5) the chronosystem

Assessment Tasks

1. **Reflection papers** (2-3 pages) on topics covered in instructional objectives. These papers will be evaluated using a rubric that indicates to the learner an acceptable level of performance.
2. **An Annotated Bibliography** (10 annotations) that includes articles related to the various stages of life span development in China. Annotations should include a brief (100 word) summary of the article and an indication of which of the five ecological systems (microsystem, macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and chronosystem) to which the summary refers.
3. **Summary descriptions** (100 words) of ten websites that focus on issues related to the various stages of life span development in China. These summaries should include two websites each for the five ecological systems.
4. **Term Paper Assignment** - Using the Worden, Savada and Dolan publication *China: A Country Study* as your primary reference discuss the major factors influencing each of the five interrelated systems proposed by Bronfenbrenner. Choose one system and contrast it with the same system in the United States. This paper should be 18-20 pages typed, double space using the University of Chicago style.

Discussion Questions – The Microsystem

1. What are the major factors affecting childrearing in China today?
2. How has schooling in China changed since the Communist Revolution in 1949?
3. What are the implications of a "male preference" for the rearing of young girls in China?

Discussion Questions – The Mesosystem

1. What factors influence parental involvement in the education of Chinese children?
2. What are the roles of parents over time in preparing their children for university entrance examinations?

3. How are institutions focusing on traditional culture and religion affecting the development of Chinese children?

Discussion Questions – The Exosystem

1. What is the impact of urbanization on the development of children in today's China?
2. How does China's One Child policy affect identity development in Chinese adolescents?
3. How will the elderly in China be affected by housing patterns that cater to nuclear families?

Discussion Questions – The Macrosystem

1. How is the re-emergence of religious freedom affecting relationships between cultural and ethnic groups in China?
2. Are future generations of Chinese likely to see communist political rule as compatible with a free market economy? Why or why not?
3. What values promoted in modern Chinese society are most compatible with American values?

Discussion Questions – The Chronosystem

1. What are the most critical human development issues that have been addressed by the Chinese government since 1949?
2. What are the major historical trends or events that have had the most impact on Chinese attitudes toward the West?
3. How is the infusion of major elements of American culture (e.g. music, products, movies) likely to affect the development of Chinese children in the coming decades?

Video Resources

Children in China

“Children Left Behind” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4o0Vx6rSLk>) chronicles the phenomenon of parents in rural areas leaving their children behind in the villages with grandparents and other relatives so that they can go to the cities to work. The driving force is the need to earn money so that the children may go to school. The children are disheartened by this experience. Many children report having to be surrogate parents to younger siblings, feeling that their childhood is somehow being taken. School teachers have also been asked by schools to serve as surrogate parents to adolescents. Some adolescents report feelings of abandonment and have stated that they would rather have their parents with them than to have the new clothes, etc. that they can afford because they are away. Documentary has English subtitles and is in 3 parts.

“China’s Kidnapped Children”

(<http://video.nytimes.com/video/2009/04/04/world/1194839161724/china-s-kidnapped-children.html>) explores the kidnapping of thousands of children in urban areas like Shenzhen. The children are then sold for \$3,000-4,000 to families in more rural areas. Primarily male children are kidnapped. This is largely fueled by China’s one-child policy. Very traditionally-minded families who feel that they must have a male child are willing to pay child-traffickers. A website has been set up to help parents network and help one another find missing children. The government has not responded adequately to cries for help.

“Millions of Chinese rural migrants denied education for their children” (found at the site

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/15/china-migrant-workers-children-education>) outlines the experience of many migrant children who moved from rural areas to cities, like Beijing, and are denied free, public education because of a registration system, called hukou, that gives preference to children and families born in that particular city over those who migrate from elsewhere in terms of city services. These migrant children must attend private schools, which struggle to survive. The migrant children are more likely to stop their education at an earlier age than the city children.

“China’ Lost Girls” (<http://www.hulu.com/watch/80238/explorer-chinas-lost-girls>)

explores the large number of US adoptions of Chinese children. 25% of all US foreign adoptions involve Chinese children. The majority are of Chinese girls. Boy children are preferred in China, so many female babies are abandoned, aborted or killed. Boy

children traditionally continue the family name and work the family farm/business, so they are preferred. Today young Chinese boys greatly outnumber Chinese girls in China. This documentary is about 45 minutes.

China's One Child Policy

China: Rethinking the One Child Policy

(http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xa5x2e_china-rethinking-the-one-child-poli_news) focuses on growing exceptions to the one child policy in China due to a growing elderly population. 22% of all residents of Shanghai are over 60. Now couples where both husband and wife are only children are allowed to have a second child. The government will likely next allow those couples where only one spouse is an only child to have a second child. Then it will extend this to everyone. The aging population will put a great strain on care for the elderly.

“China's one child policy relaxed”

(<http://www.abc.net.au/news/video/2009/07/31/2641887.htm>) gives a little historical background to the policy, stating that it began in 1979/1980 as the government's way of achieving population control. The target population is 700 million for the nation according to social engineering professionals. Longer life expectancy and higher cost of living in cities is making the cost of caring for elderly people very high, which has resulted in some relax of the policy. Some families are allowed to legally have a second child.

This is an interview with the author of *The Coming Collapse of China*

(<http://video.foxbusiness.com/v/4334164/china-considers-lifting-one-child-policy/>), who writes about China's declining workforce and how this will push the nation to abandon the one child policy. The interviewee (Gordon Chang) sees the rise of India and the growth of its workforce as the primary impetus that will push China to abandon the policy.

“China to relax one child policy” (<http://video.au.msn.com/watch/video/china-to-relax-one-child-policy/xbdj2ud>) outlines the lifting of the policy to accommodate communities that have suffered great loss of life due to recent earthquake activity in the nation.

Urbanization in China

“A Chinese City’s Boom”

(<http://video.nytimes.com/video/2006/12/01/world/asia/1194817113603/a-chinese-city-s-boom-part-1.html>) takes the viewer into Shenzhen, a newer city on the SE coast which sprang up in the last 25 years. Many migrant workers who went there for opportunity are feeling frustrated. The steady flow of workers from rural areas is starting to slow because of the difficulties of making a life. For many wages are too low to have a decent standard of living and to enjoy adequate quality of life.

“Chinese Megacities and Transport”

(<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=2390286883844064208#>) examines two Chinese cities’ approaches to keeping transportation in line with growth. The presentation explores the disadvantages to increased automobile usage while highlighting the environmental advantages to encouraging bicycle use and saving green space in the cities. Chinese cities are faced with the challenge of increasing road space at a very rapid rate.

“Violent Home Demolitions in Hebei, China”

(<http://www.videopediaworld.com/video/34732/cuttlefish-are-awesome>) captures the government’s violent seizure of residential property to make way for new urban structures. Families have not been compensated properly. Some property owners have been killed or assaulted while protesting.

“China urbanization address rural issues” reveals the challenges to drawing rural farmers to work in more urban areas to increase the food supply in those areas. Efforts must be made to make sure these farmers are adequately compensated and can adjust to city life. The cities’ well being is dependent upon having steady food supply (<http://english.cctv.com/program/bizchina/20100201/101075.shtml>).

“China’s Male Prostitutes” (http://current.com/news-and-politics/89175613_chinas-male-prostitutes.htm) treats the growth of the sex industry in urban areas. Many young boys, called moneyboys, work out of brothels that advertise themselves as massage parlors. These young men usually have come from rural areas to the cities to earn money for themselves and their families. It is estimated that there are 10 million sex industry workers in China.

Social Policies in China

“China-Death Row Documentary” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgjlC3uZIVM>) documents misguided justice in China resulting in the execution of many Chinese citizens who later were found to be innocent. Torture to extract confessions in prisons is common. 3,500-10,000 people are put to death each year. There is evidence that China’s organ transplant program is related to the high number of executions. There is also evidence that there are fleets of “execution vans,” equipped so that executions may take place inside these mobile units.

“Combating HIV/-AIDS on the big screen in China” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5eNOT3VzFQ>) discusses the challenges throughout China of lifting the stigma against those with HIV and launching successful information campaigns to combat its spread. Domestic migrant workers are at high risk because of lack of information and because they often feel isolated and alone while working for large periods of time far away from home.

“Courage to Home: Responding to AIDS in Rural China” (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=2465497741425719343#>) recounts the experience of a small, rural village in Henan Province, China, where 1 in 3 villagers is HIV positive. This came about because many villagers at one time sold their blood to an outside blood bank company to make money for survival. At the time the company used the same needle multiple times and spread the virus. Many children are HIV positive. Some have been orphaned because both parents have died. Many children are taking care of sick parents or younger siblings. This video is produced through Global Ministries child sponsorship program to generate sponsors, so the content should be filtered through that lens.

“China’s Blood Sellers” (http://current.com/shows/vanguard/77493251_chinas-blood-sellers.htm) reveals that in the early 1990s, villagers around central China were organized by local governments to sell their blood. But some of these village blood selling businesses were not hygienic and many villagers contracted HIV/AIDS. In a village in Henan Province where 20% of the residents contracted HIV/AIDS, many of the women sold their blood to make money while the men were away working.

“China mulls immigration changes” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKXBQT5yI0s>) discusses the ease with which immigrants from other countries are able to move to China and obtain legal status. Due to the sudden economic rise that China has enjoyed, many people from different countries have started to move to China for opportunities. Immigration law has not caught up with this trend yet.

“Sec. Clinton Repeats Her Strong Opposition to Forced Abortion and Sterilization in China” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDnpl6qo8vo>) –Secretary of State Hillary Clinton condemns the practice of government forced abortions and sterilizations in China as a way to enforce the one child policy.

Adolescents in China

Excessive Use of Internet Doubles Risk of Depression

(http://www.insidermedicine.com/archives/Excessive_Use_of_Internet_Doubles_Risk_of_Depression_Video_4523.aspx) reports research that says that adolescents in a study done in China showed to experience depression due to excessive, pathological use of the internet.

China Youth Speak Out-Olympics 2008

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ctt3YTPbD0>) consists of discussion among Beijing college students about the atmosphere during the 2008 Olympics. They are very proud about new openness in China and about the openness and respect to the international community seen at the Olympics. The Olympics was a sign for them of the new optimism in China.

“Our Youth, Our China” (http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5jic2_our-youth-our-china_news) is a still-photo and video presentation of Chinese youth engaging in political activism in a new China where the government is growing increasingly more open to being challenged.

“Paul Merton’s China”

(http://www.metacafe.com/watch/652914/paul_mertons_china_35/) is a short interview with a 23 year old Chinese women in reference to her ideas about dating and marriage. She admits that her mother and grandmother try to play match maker for her; she and most Chinese young people resent this when it is too aggressive. She would rather wait until she is around 30 years of age to marry, but her family would prefer she do it sooner.

Schools in China

“Look Inside a Grade School in China”

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOJ1Cbqf_h4) shows children attending classes in a school for grades 1-4.

“Truth of China—School Life”

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwl9kP0p4iI&feature=related>) focuses on the values that underlie Chinese education, such as the teaching of teamwork and collaboration, by showing Chinese adolescents participating in team sports in their school.

“School Lunch In China”

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZZw2MaTiXk&feature=related>) illustrates a typical lunch for a student in a more urban school in China. The lunch is nutritionally very healthy.

“Stunning Morning Exercises at Chinese School”

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKXZ8QTLqEM&feature=related>) gives video footage of students doing military exercises in the school yard before classes begin.

In Typical Primary School in China

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccT2T37pNXc&feature=related>), a teacher does his own documentary of an elementary school operated by a Petroleum Company primarily for the students of its employees.

Life in a Western University in China

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ms5TjZmHmNc&feature=related>

Healthcare in China

In Healthcare: China, CNN looks into the healthcare system in China. While increasing numbers of Chinese people have some type of healthcare coverage, the services available to them are few. Qualifications for doctors and other healthcare workers do not match Western standards. There is also the challenge of removing corruption from hospital systems and billing systems.

(<http://www.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/us/2009/08/18/ldt.pilgrim.china.healthcare.cn.n.html>)

In 2009 the Chinese government committed itself to a three year plan to provide universal health care to all Chinese. Each county will have at least 1 hospital that meets national standards. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slxfn1FZOew>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9bEydB-AOc>

Marriage and family life in China

China's New Faces Marrying into Her Family-Pt 1

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvSfTS4-RDA>) depicts a new family trend that has begun as a result of the one child policy. Many families only have one daughter, but they want someone to carry on the family name. If these families have some resources and perhaps own a business, they may try to attract men of lesser means to marry their daughters and take on their family names. Children then take on the wives' family names. The men would then work in and eventually take over business, a goal they might not otherwise achieve. Many see it as a win-win situation for both sides.

Matchmaking agencies have sprung up in various places to facilitate this. Critics of this practice are concerned that such marriages, based on finances rather than love, will be short-lived. Parts 2 and 3 are found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YifiHacKY&feature=related> and at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxoPZ1obMIU&NR=1>.

“Take My Daughter Please: China's Modern Matchmakers” takes the viewer to a place called Matchmaking Corner in Shanghai, where parents gather on Fridays and Saturdays to try to recruit spouses for their children. Urban life can be so intense and demanding in terms of work that young people may not be able to socialize enough to find spouses.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5x17F6IglXA&feature=related>

“China's Second Wives”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYs8hIuskfI&feature=related> uncovers the practice of many Chinese men of having another woman on the side. Polygamy was just abolished in China in 1950. These “second wives” are not legally recognized. Often the women do not realize that the men are already married. In recent years many “second wives” have taken legal action against the men for themselves and their children.

Elderly in China

“Redefining China's Family: Elderly”

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MkBk0rU8Ec>) captures the declining commitment to filial piety in China, i.e. value of respecting and caring for one's parents and grandparents. More elderly Chinese are going to live in nursing homes. However, there is no equivalent of Social Security in China, and very few people retire with pensions. The government has launched a campaign to promote filial piety. Some have said this is the government's way of getting around starting some type of Social Security program.

“China’s Elderly Orphans”

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue23TQg3RDc&feature=related>) exposes the viewer to the abandonment of many Chinese senior citizens after recent earthquake activity in China. Their grown children survived the quakes but left the area without them. The senior citizens are left living in tents with no one to care for them. While many people are eager to adopt children orphaned by quakes, no one is eager to adopt elderly people.

Employment Issues in China

“Unemployment Casts Growing Shadow on China”

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSSwWSG5uTc>) discusses how the global economic crisis has shrunk the need for Chinese goods, which has caused many factories to lay off workers. Unemployment rate in urban areas was 4.2% by the end of 2008. This has affected recent college graduates as well as seasoned workers. Many college graduates are taking menial jobs just to have employment.

“China: Rising unemployment hits migrant workers”

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_PtbHV0V3U&feature=fvw) –migrant workers who typically move to the urban areas from rural villages at various times during the year are deciding to stay in their villages more and more because the work in the cities is too unpredictable. An estimated 20 million migrant workers are unemployed.

Minority Groups in China

56 Minorities in China (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70bcMv3GLkQ>) is a powerpoint presentation of photos of the 56 recognized minority groups in China in its 34 provinces.

Islam in China http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6o43j_islam-in-china_people a powerpoint presentation of photos and textual slides chronicling the history of Islam in China.

“Hui—a Muslim Community from China”

(http://tv.muslim.com/video/9cH_NrRZf7Y/Hui-a-Muslim-community-from-China/) – the Hui are largely Muslim and report in being able to practice Islam rather freely in Communist China. In many places the imams are appointed by the local government.

The Hui have achieved an interesting marriage of Chinese and Middle Eastern customs. Many of the Hui attend Arabic-language schools so that they have access to the Q'uran.