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**Running head:** Globalization and International Adoption from China

# **GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION from CHINA**

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## **Abstract**

Since the mid 1990's China has become one of the major countries from which children are adopted overseas. This paper examines ways in which globalization has contributed to the development of international adoption from China and explores cultural and historical attitudes to population growth, child abandonment and adoption. How China's social, economic and welfare policies have affected adoption policies and practices are discussed, with reference to ethnographic fieldwork undertaken by the authors between 2001–2007. Interviews and group discussions were conducted with UK, Chinese and American adoptive parents, Directors of Social Welfare Institutes, Chinese welfare officials and staff of Non Government Organisations working in the area of adoption and fostering in China. While globalization has, and continues to affect inter-country adoption, its influence in China is analysed using Masson's (2001) value positions on international adoption – abolitionists, promoters and pragmatists. China's pragmatic approach to international adoption is considered in relation to policies which reflect the best interests of children in China and overseas.

## **Key Words**

China – Globalization – One-child policy – Inter-country Adoption – Disabled children – International Adoption

## **Globalization, welfare and inter-country adoption**

This introduction defines globalization in the context of adoption from China and demonstrates how globalization affects, and is affected by, inter-country adoption. Globalization has had a significant impact on the world-wide transfer of goods and services with both negative and positive results for populations and individual consumers. As Giddens (1998, p. 31) comments:

‘Globalization is not only or even primarily about economic interdependence, but about the transformation of time and space in our lives. Distant events whether economic or not, affect us more directly and immediately than ever before. Conversely, decisions we take as individuals are often global in their implications.’

Applying this concept to international adoption, it would have been unthinkable for an earlier generation to routinely adopt from a country the other side of the world. Bureaucracies have now developed, with both national and international standards, to regulate and enable these adoptions to take place.

George and Wilding (2002) have identified the following main features of globalization, which are linked here to features associated with international adoption from China:

- *‘Closer links between different countries particularly in relation to culture.’*  
Many overseas adoptive families and friends visit China for the first time resulting in an understanding of a new culture. Adoptive parents have also developed internet, national and local support groups to enable their children to gain an appreciation of their country of origin. This includes learning Chinese, inviting Chinese students into their homes and celebrating Chinese festivals. Adoptive families often contribute to

international Non Government Organisations (NGOs) based in China that support children in orphanages and foster care. 'Half the Sky', for example, a large international American NGO, emailed an appeal to all its supporters for financial help for orphanages, day care centres and foster homes affected by the 2008 earthquake disaster. They then emailed feedback on a daily basis commenting on how and where they were able to provide supplies and resources.

- *'Organisations that transcend national boundaries and support or replace national government organisations'*. International NGOs and the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, signed by nation states, have been influential in supporting governments to ensure that the welfare of the child is paramount. For example, 'Care for Children', a UK/Chinese NGO, which is developing foster care programmes in 30 out of 33 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities in China, has been welcomed and supported by the China Social Work Association and the Ministry for Civil Affairs (Glover 2006).
- *"Economic growth is frequently accompanied by widening economic inequalities"*. China has developed its trade with the world and moved towards a market economy. At the same time, rural poverty and mass migration from rural to urban areas has resulted in loss of family structures and insufficient welfare support for children in the poorest families (Croll 1981; Wong 1998; Evans 2000; Dorow 2006). Discussions with Chinese parents confirm that girls and disabled children tend to be abandoned when the family has limited income and the one-child per family policy is enforced.

George and Wilding's (2002) policy analysis of globalization is important for this paper. However, a key aspect of our analysis is that factors such as economic

inequalities, worldwide communication, and the influence of international organisations contribute to the further effects of globalization in relation to inter-country adoption. These further effects include, a greater potential for child trafficking (Smolin 2005), a greatly expanded network of online adoption communication services, international rather than national regulation and the emergence of mixed race families in many countries in the world where such families did not previously exist (Tessler *et al.* 1999).

Worldwide communication also includes a global media that targets welfare 'issues'. Since the Second World War, images of children from countries at war and those suffering in environmental disasters and from severe economic hardship have been shown around the world. This worldwide media attention has resulted in humanitarian responses from people in economically advantaged countries offering homes to such children. In 1995, a report by Human Rights Watch and a controversial documentary, 'The Dying Rooms', screened by Channel Four in the UK, drew the world's attention to the plight of abandoned children in China and the conditions under which some were living in welfare institutions. Although there were concerns by some academics that particular orphanages had been unfairly targeted by the media (Johnson 2004), the attention highlighted the important role that a global audience can play in establishing whether children's rights are upheld or violated. Inter-country adoption from China became a particular focus for prospective adopters from the West (Selman 2009) and China responded by developing a centrally organised and controlled international adoption system, which has been generally welcomed by potential adopters and adoption agencies.

Academics and policy makers who consider globalization an economic issue can ignore the implications for welfare policies and practice. Yeates (2001) discussion of global welfare markets points out that the volume of trade in education, health

and social services is significant if modest, while Scholte (2001) notes that globalization has brought shifts if not transformations of community structures. Globalised societies have a much greater mobility and mixture of ethnic groups than in previous generations. International adoptees and their families contribute to this mobility and mix. 'Global tribes' such as the Armenians, Chinese, Indians, Irish, Jews, Palestinians and Sikhs have settled across several continents and people's identities are no longer bound up with being born, living and working in the same area for all of their lives (Ohmae 1996; Tam 2001). Adoptive parents in group discussions identified with the concept of being part of a 'global tribe'. For example, a Chinese adoptive parent, living in the UK, compared the situation of his Chinese adopted children to those of his sister's birth children, who have an English father, seeing all the children as part of a 'Chinese global tribe'. Increased hybridity in many personal identities is common in interpersonal relationships and this has an effect on local communities, nation state relationships and international organisations.

### **China's Population Policy**

Recent economic and social changes are considered here in order to understand how international adoption has developed and why primarily female and disabled children are available for adoption. In the last hundred years China has experienced great changes, politically, socially and economically. These include the end of Imperial Rule, Warlordism, invasion by the Japanese and a long civil war culminating in the 1949 foundation of the People's Republic of China by the Chinese Communist Party.

Although, initially, there was rapid economic development under the Communists, this was not sustained. When Deng Xiaoping assumed power in 1977, he set in train many economic reforms, modernising agriculture, industry, defence and

science and technology. The philosophy underlying these reforms was: - 'to the outside, adopt openness; to the inside, enliven the economy' (MacPherson 1995, p. 3). In the 1950's there had been concern about the growth in population and a birth control programme was introduced but Mao Zedong reversed this policy during the Cultural Revolution, seeing it as Western propaganda to make China weak believing that a large population would make it strong. However, in 1973 a one child per family policy was introduced, with punishments and inducements to ensure its success. The intention of the one-child policy was to limit the population to 1.25 billion people by 2000 (World Bank 1985). Without these family planning policies, it is estimated that the Chinese population today would be more than 1.5 billion rather than 1.31 billion (Knapp 2006; United Nations Children's Fund 2008).

At its peak, in Mao Zedong's era, the fertility rate was 5.8 children for each woman of childbearing age. This dropped to 2.9 when his successors made contraception and abortion widely available and the one-child policy cut it further to 1.8, which is below the replacement rate of 2.1 (Branigan 2008a).

The one-child policy is successful because it includes inducements such as improved housing, education and health care and increased salary for those who sign and keep a one-child pledge. Penalties for having more than one child include the removal of these privileges and demotion or loss of jobs. Parents in one child families today confirmed that they could not afford to have more than one child partly because of the educational incentives for their child in school and at university and partly because, especially for those working in the public sector, parents could lose their jobs if they had more than one child.

In rural areas the one-child policy has been less successful, primarily because agriculture is still dependent on labour, culturally large families are the norm, and work groups as part of population control are not wholly effective in rural areas.



There are also wide variations in the way in which the policy is implemented by local officials. In some areas there have been stories of forced abortions and sterilizations, confiscation of property and imprisonment while in other areas there is little interference (Croll 1981; Reed 1998; Wong 1998; Branigan 2008a).

Whether in rural or urban areas, wealthier families are able to make choices regarding the size of their families by paying 'compensation fines' for further children. They can afford ultrasound to identify the sex of their unborn child and can then choose to have an abortion. Poorer families, including these who have migrated from the country to the cities to seek work, may have no civic rights or financial security. With no state support, and little job security, they are unable to afford the fines that additional births would bring, and with no opportunity to give up their children for adoption legally, many abandon their babies or go to a local adoption 'broker' who organises the transfer of the child to a childless family, despite this being illegal and carrying heavy penalties. A Chinese adoptive parent described in the fieldwork how his teenage daughter's birth mother had avoided abandoning her child by giving up her baby to him and his wife. The adoption was brokered by the adoptive couple's doctor. The birth mother, who had travelled with her mother-in-law to Beijing from the country, had told the adoptive couple that she and her husband already had one girl, and would have kept her second child if the baby had been a boy. Johnson's (2004) research indicates that abandoned female children tend to be second daughters.

Why abandoned babies tend to be female, can be understood by considering the cultural position of women in China. Historically, women suffered discrimination and were subordinate to men. Women had no property rights and little education and male children were valued more highly (Johansson & Nygren 1991; Johnson et al. 1998; Evans 200; Buchanan 2005). Sons carry the family name and are traditionally expected to take responsibility for their parents in old age, while

daughters have been expected to care for their husband's parents. 'A daughter married is like water poured out of the door' is a Chinese saying that illustrates an attitude to women which still exists in rural areas (Gillan 2002).

The one-child policy has thus resulted in abortions of female foetuses and female infanticide. In some areas the desire for a male child is resulting in a serious imbalance of the sexes. In Shanxi Province, for example, for every 100 female babies born there were 145 male babies (Lim 2004; Gendercide Watch 2006). To address these gender inequalities, the Chinese government is expanding a pilot scheme that introduces special social and economic benefits for female children. Family planning workers are also being trained to promote birth control policies from an equal opportunities framework and selective abortions will be banned (Branigan 2008a).

While attitudes to girls in China are changing, particularly in urban areas, changing attitudes to disabled children will require concerted government effort and international support. A Social Welfare Institute (SWI) in the south of China visited three times between 2003 – 2007 originally had over 250 abandoned female children, most of whom, would be adopted overseas. In 2006 the orphanage only had 42 disabled children and in 2007 45 disabled children with severe and moderate learning disabilities and impairments such as cleft palate and chronic skin conditions. The Director of the SWI reported in 2006 and 2007 that there was a waiting list of local prospective parents who wanted to adopt healthy male or female infants, but not disabled children. Public attitudes to disability in China, particularly in rural areas, are based on the traditional view that having a disabled child in the family is punishment for past wrong doings. Disabled children tend not to be seen in public and are generally hidden away (Johnson 2004).

In December 2002, a number of revisions were made to the one-child policy.

These include allowing:

- Rural families to have a second child if their first born is a girl.
- Minority groups with populations under 100,000 not to be subject to the one-child policy.
- An only child marrying an only child to have two children.
- An infertile couple to raise a second child from the husband's brother as their own.

A major study of China's population policy (Gu *et al.* 2007) found that efforts to reduce population growth have been very successful with 63% of Chinese couples restricting their families to one child. The researchers considered that there are consequences for the birth rate continuing to be below the replacement rate, particularly in relation to the increased proportion of older people, a reduced workforce and the numbers of females compared to males (Gu *et al.* 2007).

Although the Chinese Government sees population control as essential to economic growth, they are considering a relaxation of the one-child policy to two children per family in order to eliminate the divisiveness of a system which currently has 'complex exemptions, enforcement inconsistencies and financial penalties' (Branigan 2008a, p. 10).

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Globalization and International Adoption**

Masson (2001) in 'Inter-country Adoption: A global problem or a global solution?', has identified three value positions in relation to inter-country adoption – abolitionists, pragmatists and promoters, which will be discussed in relation to adoption from China.

Abolitionists focus on the negative impact that inter-country adoption may have on child welfare systems in countries from which children are adopted. They argue

that: inter-country adoptions divert professional resources (social workers, lawyers, and courts) from the needs of many children to service the few; that if the money spent on adopted children was applied to children's services in these countries, the lives of larger numbers of children could be improved. They are concerned about the neo-colonialism and ethnocentricity inherent in decisions whereby children are adopted in their best interests from emerging states into rich, powerful countries (Hoksbergen 1991). They question whether the export of children is a solution to a country's child care problems and whether inter-country adoption is affecting the development of domestic adoption and fostering. They are particularly concerned about whether child abduction, coercion and child trafficking are increasing to meet the demands for children and that accepted practices such as requiring donations to orphanages could develop into corruption (Saclier 1999, 2000; Smolin 2004). Some abolitionists also argue that mainly middle class, white couples adopting from overseas are no longer available to adopt children in their own countries and that mixed race families, with generally no relational link to the developing country of the child's origin, may create identity difficulties for the child as she gets older (Kirton 2000; Hubinette 2005; Post 2007; Trenka 2007). Others see adoptions from China creating 'Chinese immigrants' who could over-burden education, health and welfare structures in their adopted country.

The value position of promoters is that individual children (particularly those with disabilities) can be helped by inter-country adoption (Luo & Bergquist 2004).

Parents with homes, love and care to offer, adopt children from China who may otherwise be institutionalised, have deteriorating disabilities or even die (Bartholet 2006; United Nations Children's Fund 2005). The increasing number of studies on the outcome of international adoptions have so far shown that such children do as well as children in general and as well as same race adoptions (Haugaard *et al.*, 2000a,b; Simon & Altstein 2000; Van Ijzendoorn & Juffer 2006). Promoters argue

that the numbers of children adopted from overseas is small compared to the numbers born in most developing countries.

Selman (2000) comments that the number of international adoptions from China, even if they were to rise to 10,000 per annum would be barely significant when set alongside the total number of births (17 million in 2005 – UNICEF 2008). In 2005, the adoption ratio of children in China, per 1,000 live births was 0.85 as compared to 8.8 per 1,000 live births in Guatemala, 4.9 per 1,000 live births in Russia and 0.03 per 1,000 live births in India (Selman 2009).

The value position of pragmatists is that they accept that the international demand and supply of children exists and debate the best ways to achieve high standards in the practice and regulation of inter-country adoption. They believe that it can be regulated through a range of unilateral, bilateral and international statements.

Pragmatists agree that legislation alone cannot raise standards and that new practices will have to replace existing ones. This may challenge the thinking of governments, applicants, agencies, and the judiciary and immigration services.

Professor William Duncan, Deputy Secretary of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-Operation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption (1993), has stressed that the Hague Convention is only a “secure framework” and a detailed and lengthy process will be required to make it work effectively (Selman 2000).

Masson’s (2001) pragmatic value stance is one that fits well with the approach of the Chinese authorities. China has encouraged couples and individuals in richer countries to adopt children from state care, providing the children with a better quality of life than an orphanage could offer. However, in May 2007, the Chinese government introduced more stringent eligibility criteria for international adoptions, believing that this was necessary to assure high standards in adoptive parenting (Belluck & Yardley 2006; Hilborn 2007).

Globalization, through access to television, films, advertisements and the internet, has provided many Chinese people with a view that richer countries offer greater opportunities and material wealth. Children adopted by families in these countries are seen as fortunate and the loss of culture and country is considered necessary for such opportunities. Directors of SWIs and orphanage staff interviewed by the authors thought that the internationally adopted child would have a better life, and, that the orphanage would receive much needed financial support for those children remaining. Luo and Berquist (2004, pp. 21-22) found that Chinese government and welfare institution personnel viewed international adoption as “an appropriate response to an overburdened system”. This pragmatic approach is one that the authors encountered in many interviews with Chinese families, students and interpreters, who knew very little about inter-country adoption, prior to their involvement in this research project.

### **Adoption in China – A Cultural Perspective**

Having considered the context for China’s population policy and value positions in relation to inter-country adoption, a cultural perspective can contribute to our understanding of welfare and its role in relation to political and social structures (Rojewski & Rojewski 2001).

Historically Chinese society was patriarchal and based on Confucianism, emphasising the importance of the blood line and male children. However, Waltner (1990) studied adoption during the Ming and Qing dynasties and found that there was a cultural tradition of adopting children of strangers who were not of the blood-line which has continued to evolve. Johnson (2004) studied 800 adoptive families in China and concluded that ‘Many families were willing to adopt the abandoned female children of strangers’ (Johnson 2004, p. 139). These researchers found that boys were seen as important in continuing the family line

and supporting parents financially in their old age but that girls were valued for 'their emotional care, loyalty and closeness to parents' (Johnson 2004, p. 141). Adoption legislation passed in 1991 limited domestic adoption of abandoned children to childless couples over the age of thirty five. At this time there was concern that unless the one-child policy was rigorously enforced, parents might use adoption to hide the birth of a daughter in order to try again for a son. However, in 1999 Chinese domestic adoption law was revised to encourage adoption of orphans and disabled children (Adoption Law of the Peoples Republic of China 1998). This enables couples, over the age of thirty years (reduced from 35 years) who may already have a child, to adopt an orphaned, abandoned or disabled child. This age requirement is now the same as for international adopters. Foster care and day care schemes are also being developed, promoted and funded by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and The Chinese Centre for Adoption Affairs (CCAA). Charitable international organisations such as 'Care for Children', 'Half the Sky', 'The Good Rock Foundation', 'Love without Boundaries', 'The Mothers' Bridge of Love' and 'Our Chinese Daughters Foundation' (OCDF) have been involved in developing these new initiatives for children in institutions. Since 2005, the CCAA has been charged with overseeing both fostering and domestic adoptions, as well as international adoptions. The Chinese government is thus developing a responsive approach towards domestic adoption and fostering (Glover, 2006), while placing some restrictions on the numbers of children available for international adoption.

Nevertheless, inter-country adoption from China continues (although with 4,000 fewer children adopted from China worldwide in 2006 than 2005). In 1991, less than 100 children were adopted internationally (Kane 1993, cited in Selman 2009) compared with 7,725 in 2001, 14,493 in 2005 and 10,743 in 2006 (Selman 2009). International adoption involves a mandatory payment by adopters to the

orphanage of 3,000 US dollars and a further payment in fees and expenses of 2,000 – 3,000 US dollars per child. Johnson (2004) argues that although this money does assist the welfare system and the individual orphanages it does not provide enough income to explain the Chinese government's support for inter-country adoption. However resources to individual Social Welfare Institutes (SWIs) are only a small part of the benefit to China of inter-country adoptions. Many international NGOs are led and supported by those who have adopted children from China and individual adopters also continue to provide financial, voluntary and professional support to SWIs after the completion of their adoption. The reduction in the number of children in SWIs, the increased resources for medical and social care, an improvement in the quality of residential and fostering care and the increased tourism and positive public relations through international adoption, are attractive to China as it develops its welfare infrastructure and global reputation.

### **Future Developments in Adoption and Fostering**

Although the new population policies and the development of domestic adoption and fostering may reduce the need for international adoption, there is little evidence so far that there has been a decline in the numbers of children left in hospitals, at roadsides and in public places. There is also little evidence on whether the proportion of abandoned children, that are disabled, has increased. Furthermore, it has to be established whether the recent decline in the number of inter-country adoptions is linked to a possible rise in domestic adoption and fostering.

Inter-country adoptions from China could be reduced because of the CCAA restrictions now in place around adoptions by single and gay adopters, older



prospective parents, divorced and re-married couples and adopters who have physical or mental health histories.

A recent communication sent to the French adoption authorities from the China Center of Adoption Affairs (CCAA), states that 'the Chinese Peoples Republic will henceforth favour national adoption to the disadvantage of international adoption.' According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), an estimated 30 million Chinese couples would like to adopt one of the 52,700 children who are, at this time, available for adoption through the Chinese welfare services. The MCA explains this move towards domestic adoption in terms of: 'a strong growth in living standards for Chinese people; a cultural change and the application of the Hague Convention of 29 May 1993' (*Children Adopted from China Magazine* 2008, p. 17).

In achieving the best interests of the child in inter-country adoption, the 1993 Hague Convention recognises that:

- Children should grow up in a family environment;
- Permanency is preferable to temporary measures;
- Inter-country adoption may offer the advantage of a permanent family to a child for whom a suitable family cannot be found in his or her state of origin.

The principle of subsidiarity, which is highlighted in the pre-amble and in Article 4b (Hague Convention 1993), provides that:

'An adoption within the scope of the Convention shall take place only if the competent authorities of the State of origin [...] have determined, after possibilities for placement of the child within the State of origin have been given due consideration, that an inter-country adoption is in the child's best interests.'

The recent Guide to Good Practice under the Hague Convention (2008 draft, pp 22) explains this principle in more detail by noting that:

'The subsidiarity principle is central to the success of the Convention. It implies that efforts should be made to [...] ensure that a child has the opportunity to be

adopted or cared for nationally. It implies also that inter-country adoption procedures should be set within an integrated child protection and care system, which maintains these priorities. However, States should also ensure that efforts to achieve this goal do not unintentionally harm children by delaying unduly a permanent solution through inter-country adoption. States should guarantee permanency planning in the shortest possible time for each child deprived of his/her parents. Policies should work to promote family preservation and national solutions, rather than to hinder inter-country adoption.'

China is developing its childcare and welfare infrastructure. However, the Convention refers to 'possibilities' for permanent placement of a child in the State of origin. A domestic adoption policy in China has been delayed because of an adherence to the one-child policy and the lack of public awareness that could have made such adoptions possible.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), stresses that children should have the opportunity for a family life. The current situation in China is that the Chinese care system provides institutional care for large numbers of children throughout China who are abandoned because of the one-child policy.

Family care, such as domestic adoption and fostering, continue to be developed but it will take considerable time and resources for schemes to be operational throughout China. The ratio of adoptions to 1,000 births is 0.85 and so the majority of Chinese children are being cared for in China. The worldwide organisation of volunteers and resources by families and supporters of Chinese adopted children have meant many children, who are cared for in China, have improved institutional, foster care, day care and welfare training than they would have done if China had not permitted international adoption. Permanent in-country family care is not at present available for the majority of children (particularly disabled children), who are living in institutions.

China, as a signatory to both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Hague Convention (1993), is developing family care for children within China but is also utilising the resources of families in developed countries to provide for a small percentage of Chinese children who would otherwise be living in institutions.

## **Conclusion**

The far reaching transformations globalization has on people's lives cannot be underestimated. Our constructions of our lives are altered by the realisation that we are part of a global world (Sykes *et al.* 2001). Globalization can result in greater power imbalance and inequality between the richer and poorer countries of the world and there is a risk that children adopted from poorer countries are treated as 'commodities' by adoption organisations and potential adopters in rich countries (Triseliotis 2000). However, globalization also holds the potential to improve quality of life and living standards. It offers opportunities for sharing ideas and understanding, exchanging of information, knowledge and expertise and raising awareness and commitment of those in richer countries to improve the plight of children in state care in poorer countries. It can put pressure on governments of poorer countries to improve conditions for these children.

Masson's (2001) abolitionist, promoter and pragmatic perspectives are reflected in wider social policy discussions around the advantages and disadvantages of globalization. However, China's pragmatic approach has enabled inter-country adoption of Chinese children to take place in 16 countries throughout the world and it has sent the most children for inter-country adoption since 1995, although this is a very small percentage of the children born in China (Selman 2006; 2009).

China has used inter-country adoption as a means of reducing the number of children in institutions, while also addressing the needs of children to have a family

life (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). With further restrictions on those who can adopt from overseas, the support of NGO's to develop fostering programmes, and the relaxation of China's one-child policy, international adoption from China may be reduced.

There has, however, been acknowledgment of the success of inter-country adoption from China with very few adoptive breakdowns in countries around the world despite the mixed race composition of these families (Bagley & Young 1980;, 1980; Triseliotis *et al.* 1997; Johnson 2004). In a globalised world, the increase in mixed race families is generally more possible and acceptable than it was 50 years ago.

The pragmatic approach to the welfare of China's children continues, in day care and foster care developments with international NGOs', medical interventions for disabled children and domestic adoption programmes which are taking place alongside China's international adoption programme. However, statistical monitoring will be extremely important to record possible reductions in child abandonment and, in particular, the numbers of disabled children abandoned (United Nations 2008).

The way that globalization has and will continue to affect international adoption does not clearly divide between market forces or ethical practice, nor can Masson's (2001) value stances be considered in isolation from one another. For example, it appears that international expertise and resources gained through inter-country adoption has aided, rather than hindered, the development of domestic adoption and fostering in China. Thus the abolitionists' argument that international adoption detracts from the development of a sustainable national child welfare system, is not generally supported.

China continues to face considerable social challenges in its transition to a market economy (Cheung 2001) and in its efforts to control its population, not least in

respect of children in care. There are positive indications that the Chinese Government recognizes the argument that a stronger welfare state could stimulate higher household consumption in China. As Mark Leonard (2008, p. 38) notes:

‘As long as there is no welfare state to protect Chinese citizens from illness, unemployment or old age, they will save their money for the future, rather than spending it as they earn it. The ‘New Left’ claim that only a revitalised central government can provide the social safety net which would give Chinese citizens the confidence to consume. Their words have not fallen on deaf ears. The percentage of central government tax revenue has been gradually increased since 1994, and – rhetorically at least – Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao have committed themselves to rebuild China’s welfare state.’

A strong welfare state would not only have positive benefits for all children in China (Branigan 2008b), but would support the training of welfare staff, who will be needed to ensure high quality care in the transition from institutions to domestic adoption and foster care.

The authors have considered how globalization, which has clearly contributed to China’s economic changes, has also been important in the development of international adoption, domestic adoption and fostering. China’s pragmatic approach has had positive benefits, not only for those adopted overseas but for those children remaining in institutions in China.

The Chinese Government and international NGO’s are developing foster care, day care and domestic adoption in collaboration with local communities. Further research will need to gather additional information on children in the Chinese public welfare system and evaluate the effectiveness of global/local partnerships so that international and national childcare policies reflect the best interests of the child in a variety of family settings.

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