

Adoptions from china
confucianism and
humanity sociology
essay



Children are often cherished in the United States. Parents all over the country eagerly wait for the day when they know what gender their child is, and what color to paint the baby's room. Organizations provide social services to ensure a safe upbringing of American children. Each child is seen as a gift to families across this nation, so much that families commonly adopt children. Unfortunately our western societal views are not shared by other countries such as China; where thousands of girls are aborted, hidden, or abandoned. Although the United States allows the adoption of Chinese girls, the media rarely reports on Confucianism and lack of humanity resulting in the disregard of these children.

China has more than four thousand years of history and culture; a culture that typically favors boys rather than girls. Chinese culture emphasizes having a large family, but because of the rapid population growth, resulting in a ten year famine, restrictions of one child per family were implemented in 1979. Leaving an astounding number of disregarded girls. Due to this one-child policy, China has accepted international adoptions. According to the Washington Journal of Modern China, more than 63, 000 Chinese orphans now have a permanent residence in the United States, but one lingering question remains (qtd. in Gann 79). How can an entire country disregard a gender?

China's culture has always maintained a Confucian structure of society. Confucianism can be defined as a preference for male authority, but also an emphasis on producing a large family. When implementing this ideology into a society, women should always hold a role less than that of a man. As a result, the pressure on women to produce a male heir in their families is

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emphasized in China. If no male heir is produced it is seen as a betrayal to the ancestors. According to Greenhalgh and Li and their (1995) findings in the villages of Shaanxi Province, more girls than boys are being given up for adoptions when the one-child policy was put into effect. These numbers are continuing to grow as well (qtd. in Jihong, Larsen, and Wyshak 23). This discrimination is a result of China being an agricultural society. Rural families often own farms that require hard labor in order to be successful. Because men are viewed as stronger workers when compared to women, a male child is typically preferred. Also the difference in wages between males and females in China are growing, with women normally making little over fifty percent of that of a male's income (Gann 73).

In 1949 the Chinese government tried to promote the new social place of women; unfortunately this effort conflicts with a tradition lasting over twenty-two centuries. Discrimination of women are still prevalent, and even more so in rural areas. In 135 BC Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty implemented the Confucianism as an orthodox state ideology in China. It is probably safe to say that Confucianism is not leaving China for centuries to come (Gann 80).

It should be noted that China has a unique way of dealing with social security. Typically the female children marry and leave the household, whereas male children stay to take care of the parents in elderly years. For thousands of years the Chinese culture has practiced this tradition.

Therefore, the parents are ensuring their wellbeing by having a son instead of a daughter. It is a driving motivation normally not discussed in the media (Gann 79).

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Currently the population in China has reached an astounding 1.32 billion. In the 1970's China provided a solution for population control, known as the one-child policy. This policy is enforced on the dominant Han ethnicity to have only one child. The rules on other populations in China vary depending on minority and the region. According to this policy, if the first child is a boy, then the family can have no more children. In some rural areas families are permitted to have two children. If the first child is a girl, then they can have a second child. This policy implies that boys are preferred, more so than girls. The parents must pay thousands of dollars in order to keep a second child that is a girl. If these families have another child that is a boy, the girl, which has been in the family for quite some time, is usually put up for adoption. Orphaned boys are handled a little differently. Although Confucianism teaches about the importance of maintaining a bloodline, boys are more likely to be adopted and raised in secret as an offspring (Gann 73-79).

The one-child policy has had one major back-lash. Today the population has 13 million more males than females. In the schools the girls are completely outnumbered by the boys. The ratios of gender in births are increasingly uneven; so much that there are currently 40 million girls that are "missing" from the overall population, either due to abortion, female infanticide, or unreported births. Therefore, it is predicted that in the next decade 40 million men are expected to not have a woman to marry. This issue is prevalent today in China, where cases of women being abducted and sold as wives, forced marriages are common, and prostitution is growing. In rural

areas female infanticide is common. The numbers of these cases are expected to increase in future years (Weiguo 66).

The one-child policy has its pros and cons. In China it is praised for solving an economic crisis, because the population was exceeding and the country could not support so many children. The opposing argument is that it is supporting female infanticide. Also, the orphanages are overwhelmed with babies with no home. The Chinese welfare system does not have enough money to maintain these orphanages. For example, ' the Wuhan Orphanage in southern China that noticed a great increase in the number of female orphans' (qtd. in Gann 77).

It is prevalent that there is a great shift in humanity between the United States and China; humanity meaning the human species, human nature, and the importance of the experience of life. Today in American culture we are conflicted about abortion, where in China children can be born and discarded without a second thought. Although illegal, some Chinese soon-to-be parents will get an ultrasound to determine the gender of the child, and then abort it if it is a girl.

Perhaps it is a result of these issues that China opened its doors to international adoptions in 1992. Since then thousands of Chinese children, mostly girls, were taken in by American families. Where in one country these girls are viewed as useless and burdens, in another they are loved and accepted as family. In the United States these young girls can grow up getting an education, choosing a career path, choosing their own spouse, and finding an appreciative role in our society. If adopted into the United

States, these children can thrive in a healthy environment (Jihong, Larsen, and Wyshak 21).

37. 3 percent of parents seeking to adopt from China are childless. Whereas it is more common in the United States to wait a few years after marriage to conceive a child, in China societal pressures to have children begin at the beginning of marriage. Within a year if a child is not produced then couples often seek medical opinions about reproducing. If medical advice does not lead to conception, these Chinese couples will typically adopt a daughter, because waiting for a son to adopt could take years. Chinese couples that do adopt a son pay a higher price for a boy than that of a girl. In most cases these families adopt a daughter in hopes of producing a son in later years, because they could be fined for having two sons (Weiguo 69).

According to the China Center of Adoption Affairs (CCAA), there are restrictions and a procedure to follow when adopting from China (qtd. in Gann 79). The parents must be 30 years old or older in order to adopt. An application must be sent to an American adoption agency. It then takes 14 to 15 months for the parents to get a medical record, picture, and the name of the child. After another two months the agency will gather a group together to travel to China for two weeks. There they finally meet their children and finish up the process. The whole procedure takes about two years (Gann 80).

In the past decade more restrictions were implemented for adoptive parents. There are now restrictions on the applicant's weight, no one considered obese can adopt, and also on unmarried applicants. As homosexual marriages are banned in the majority of the United States, the new

restrictions are preventing homosexuals from adopting. People with mental disorders, including depression and anxiety, cannot adopt from China. Also, the adopting family must have a net worth of \$80, 000. Informal adoptions are more common. In rural areas in China the adoption process is typically informal; which accounts for eighty percent of overall adoptions in China (Gann 79).

As a result of China being the number one place to adopt from, a globalization has occurred between the United States and China. There is now an apparent closer link between these different countries possibly due to the international adoptions. These adopted children are learning Chinese as a second language, cooking Chinese food, and some families are even celebrating Chinese festivals in order to keep their children's culture alive. One can only hope that this is a two-way street, meaning that China can in turn accept some of the western ideologies about humanity; although unlikely, due to China's resistance to western influence and their beliefs to keep their tradition and heritage alive (Dowling and Brown 352).

There are also cultural conflicts with international adoption. Chinese people find it hard to understand why American families adopt children and raise them as their own offspring. In some Chinese cultures stepchildren are seen as burdens on families. There is such a great emphasis on Confucianism and the family blood line that the Chinese rarely adopt. The American reasons for adoption are mainly based on religious and humanitarian reasons, which make it even more difficult for the Chinese to understand.

Because of the expenses involved with Chinese adoption, Americans are beginning to reflect something once seen as a good deed, as negative, by generalizing the Chinese adoption as exporting babies to make a profit. The average cost to adopt from China is about \$20, 000 dollars (Weiguo 70). It is argued that the money is not to make a profit, but instead help the welfare system in China. Nevertheless, conflicts are emerging between the United States and China about exporting goods, and now babies.

Perhaps these cultural conflicts could be resolved if the American and Chinese media would take more interest in reporting on these children. By broadcasting this growing issue across the United States, it is possible that more families would open their hearts and homes to these innocent children who are currently being raised in an orphanage due to blatant discrimination. With the increasing issue of prostitution, female infanticide, forced marriages, and abduction in China, American adoptions are certainly a better option for these young girls. As Americans adopt Chinese children, in turn the Chinese could adopt our views on humanity. With the growing popularity of In Vitro in the United States, fewer couples will adopt, leaving many children in China in orphanages. With more media coverage, the ignorance on this topic could be resolved and more families could take interest in adopting from China. And as we take home a piece of their culture, we could leave China a piece of ours; that every human life is valuable.

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