

## **International Adoption and the Case of China: Implications of Policy, Theory, and Research for Psychoeducation and Counseling**

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This article addresses issues related to international adoption, with China as an illustrative case. It describes the context of international adoption and how China has come to be a leading source of transnational adoption especially for the West. Policy, theory, and research related to transnational and transracial adoption are examined in relation to Chinese adoptees and their adoptive families. Based on the theoretical and research literature as well as clinical experience, a framework for psychoeducation is presented together with resources that can serve adoptive families and professionals who work with mental health, child development, and family issues related to adoption. Further implications for counseling training and practice as well as systemic issues of policy, social justice, and cultural pluralism are discussed.

International adoption has become a widespread practice, with 34,000 children adopted in 2001 from Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. It can be understood in terms of the economic disparities between developed countries and the developing world where there are an estimated 9.5 million children in orphanages, and more expected abandonment of children as a result of poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Kapstein, 2003). Geopolitics and the policies related to adoption have also played a role in international adoption. Following major wars such as World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the end of the Cold War, there have been waves of adoption of children from Asia and certain parts of Europe. Being largely unregulated until the 1990s, intercountry adoption had been under varying degrees of national legal oversight by different states. Regulation by international law became necessary because of the illegal trafficking and sale of babies as well as corruption on the part of intermediaries handling adoption. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989/1997) was an attempt to address this problem, followed by Parra-Aranguren (1994). Since 54 countries have ratified the rules drafted in the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption, individual countries are expected to improve on their child welfare system and to prohibit illegal adoption practices. Meanwhile, varying kinds of bilateral and multilateral arrangements exist between countries involved in transnational adoption.

This phenomenon of international adoption has both global significance and local significance for the countries concerned. The movement of children from their home countries means a loss of human resources and a shifting of responsibility for child welfare to other countries. Due to the fact that it often involves families and adopted children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, there are cultural issues in the adoptee's identity development and with the psychological

adjustment of the adoptive family (Wilkinson, 1995). For the societies and communities concerned, it also brings sociological change with consequences for family forms and the institutions that serve children and families. Counseling professionals and psychologists can contribute to the understanding of international adoption and its implications for practice.

In this article, the case of China is used as an illustration of the contextual factors leading to the prevalence of international adoption. Policies and political, economic and social factors related to the adoption of Chinese children, especially girls, are described. Research on the psychology of adoption is reviewed as it pertains to the international adoption of children from China by developed nations. In addition to the implications for psychoeducation and counseling training, broader issues of policy, social justice, and cultural pluralism are briefly discussed.

### **China as a Source of International and Transracial Adoption**

China has become the world's leading source of international adoption, with 13,630 registered cases from 1981 to 1990 (Shi, 2002), and 5,053 children adopted in 2002 according to UNICEF. Its one-child policy of 1979 and the cultural preference for male children have resulted in the abandonment of girls since the 1980s, who made up 98% of the over 100,000 abandoned children (K. Johnson, Huang, & Wang, 1998). Poverty and disability also contributed to the continuing placement of children in orphanages. Globally, the banning of illegal adoption practices in other countries such as Cambodia and Romania further shifted the demand to China and Russia. After the Cold War, China renewed relationships with the West as it embarked on increased economic transactions with developed nations. International adoption became a positive feature of its international policy whereby bilateral treaties on adoption with fourteen other countries were considered

a gesture of friendship (K. Johnson, 2002). This group included the United States (U.S.), Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and several other European countries.

The U.S., France, Italy, Germany, and Sweden lead the world as receiving countries of international adoption, with the great majority (over 44,000) of Chinese children adopted by families in the U.S. where there were 20,443 transnational adoptions in 2003 alone (Tessler, Gamache, & Liu, 1999; U.S. Department of State, 2003; Zamostny, O'Brien, Baden, & Wiley, 2003). Vonk, Simms, and Nackerud (1999) described the social and political conditions that have contributed to the intercountry adoption of Chinese children by couples in the U.S. Due to the limited availability of children for domestic adoption, childless couples have viewed international adoption as a way of forming a family. For some, the altruistic desire to care for orphaned children, especially girls abandoned by Chinese families, has taken on the character of a social movement. Sociologically, interracial adoptive families constitute one of the alternative family forms found in the U.S. in recent years, with increasing numbers of single parents and gay couples also adopting children (Schwartz & Kaslow, 2003). Half of the intercountry adoptions worldwide have involved Americans who adopted 16,396 foreign children in 1999 and over 100,000 foreign-born children in the past two and a half decades (Stelzner, 2003). The adoption of children from China represents part of this larger trend, and has become a model of intercountry adoption.

Concomitant with this global phenomenon is the emergence of the field of adoption medicine (Miller, 2005; Narad & Mason, 2004; Nicholson, 2002) and the involvement of other specialties concerned with the development of adopted children (Goldberg & Marcovitch, 1997; D. E. Johnson & Dole, 1999; Roberts, Pollock, & Krakow, 2005). Although historically social workers have been responsible for home

study and counseling for adoptions, it is now an area that calls for the involvement of psychological practitioners (Janus, 1997; O'Brien & Zamostny, 2003). From a legal and policy standpoint as well, international adoption has become a reality that requires appropriate regulation (Stelzner, 2003). Critics have viewed international adoption as a human rights issue with implications for social justice, especially when it resulted from gender bias in the case of Chinese girls who constitute the great percentage of abandoned children available for adoption from China (Evans, 2000; Hollingsworth, 2003). Supporters, on the other hand, consider international adoption as a humanitarian effort to deal with global inequities in terms of resources for taking care of children. The controversies surrounding international adoption with China can be viewed as a case study of what can happen in other developing countries. Much depends on the local policies of the country of origin and the receiving countries, as well as public attitudes.

### **Implications of Policies and Social Context for Adoption**

China's population control policy, adoption policy, immigration law, and foreign policy have combined implications for domestic versus international adoption. Under the one-child policy, there were penalties for having more than one child (except in certain rural regions) and few incentives for domestic adoption. Though it appears that the latter is being liberalized in recent years, such that adopted children are not counted as part of the family quota, there appears to be no substantial impact on international adoption. There have been some recent public education and incentive programs in rural China that encourage families to have female children. The impact of such programs remains to be seen. Even if effective, it will take a long time for China to regain a balanced ratio of male and female children.

To address the problems of children in orphanages, China revised its marriage law in 1980 that defined more clearly the rights and

responsibilities of adopter and adoptee. China signed the Children's Rights Declaration of the United Nations in 1991, and further established the new Adoption Law of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) in 1992 to fulfill the obligations under this declaration. The latter was later revised in 1998 and implemented in 1999. This current Adoption Law has six chapters and 34 articles (Shi, 2002). The six chapters include general and supplementary provisions for the establishment and termination of adoptive relationship, and definition of validity of adoption and legal responsibility. The current Adoption Law in China is governed by the following general principles: to protect the lawful adoptive relationship and the legitimate rights of the adoptee and adopter, to ensure that adoption shall be in the interest of the upbringing and growth of adopted minors, to conform with the principle of equality and voluntariness, and to ensure no contravention of social morality or laws and regulations on family planning. The revised law of 1998 added articles to protect the legal rights of both the adopter and adoptee, calling for tougher penalty on human trafficking under the disguise of adoption.

Amendments to China's adoption law have cleared the way for a centralized system of international adoption (Wei, 1999). In 1993, China released the Implementation Measures on the Adoption of Children by Foreigners in the People's Republic of China, regulating international adoption in China. The China Center of Adoption Affairs was established in 1996 to centralize the management of international adoption. In 1999, the Measures for Registration of Adoption of Children by Foreigners were implemented in the P.R.C., with agreement and notarization also regulated by Article 21 of the 1999 Adoption Law. Currently, adoption policy in the P.R.C. favors foreign parents who are over 35 years of age, who can afford the cost of international adoption (averaging USD15,000–20,000), and who have the resources for taking care of the adopted child. Part of the expense involved is for the legal

documentation, visas, and cost of travel to the U.S. Consulate in South China before visiting the orphanages in the country. Part of the expense (averaging USD3,500) goes to the orphanage that has been taking care of the adoptee, presumably toward improvements. Thus, there is much to be gained by the Chinese system. In view of the fact that international adoptions and domestic adoptions are both centrally controlled in the P.R.C., and intertwined with political and economic factors, it will take major efforts to enable a gradual shift to policies supporting more domestic adoptions.

One may ask why there have not been more adoptions of Chinese orphans by families in Chinese communities. There are four different legal systems in the four Chinese communities of the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, Macao, and Hong Kong. The situation of Hong Kong in relation to the Chinese mainland is illustrative. The adoption law of Hong Kong is based on the British common law system while the adoption law of China is based on the new Chinese family law of 1950, and later the 1991 and 1998 revisions. Whereas in China adoption is managed by the China Center of Adoption Affairs, as a single state authority, in Hong Kong adoption agreements are approved by the courts. While the Chinese system may be more efficient in adoption placement and management, the Hong Kong judicial system has a monitoring mechanism toward the administrative authority (Shi, 2002). There are also differences in the legal rights of the adopters and adoptees; for example, biological parents of the adoptee in Hong Kong have visiting rights to the adoptee, and the adopters in Hong Kong have a six-month trial period to try out the new relationship. Adoptive parents in Hong Kong also need court approval before taking adopted children out of Hong Kong while adopters in the Chinese mainland need to go through exit formalities with the public security organization. In the Chinese mainland, a male person without spouse is allowed to adopt a female child, with the age difference between the adopter and adoptee

being no less than 40 years, whereas in Hong Kong, this is not allowed except under special permission by the courts.

The Hong Kong Immigration Authority currently allows less than a hundred children from the Chinese mainland per year to join parents in Hong Kong, with 130,000 children waiting for reunification with their biological parents and legal guardians (Xin, 2004). Added to this reality are the problems faced by the Chinese authorities with the ongoing abduction and trafficking of thousands of male children for illegal domestic adoption, and female children for the sex industry in countries such as Thailand (Xin, 2004). Due to these other concerns of the state, the current immigration laws in the P.R.C., as well as the different legal systems between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, there is no special allowance for in-country adoption by Hong Kong families. Couples from Hong Kong have to show proof of overseas citizenship and to ask international adoption agencies to facilitate the adoption of children from the Chinese mainland. This is in spite of the cultural affinity of Hong Kong families with the children in China, and the fact that many Hong Kong couples have the financial means and resources for such adoption.

Each year the Social Welfare Department in Hong Kong places more than a hundred children in adoptive families locally. There is a surplus of families seeking adoption of healthy children. Overseas adoption, such as handled by Mother's Choice in Hong Kong, tends to involve children with special needs being placed with American families. Due to social and cultural reasons, Chinese couples faced with infertility feel some degree of shame (Ko, 2001), and are reluctant to adopt children from unfavorable backgrounds such as mental or physical handicaps or having birth parents with a history of addiction (O'Brian, 1994). Support services and subsidies for children with special needs are also limited. For both the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, public



attitudes toward adoption and the legal constraints and institutional support for adoption will determine the future role of Chinese families in adopting children from the orphanages in the Chinese mainland. Luo and Bergquist (2004) reported that a survey of 180 Chinese officials and welfare administrators showed 94% being favorable toward international adoption, with a minority expressing shame and concern about the children losing their cultural roots or being socially rejected. While not opposed to foreign adoption of abandoned or orphaned Chinese children, many Chinese citizens have cultural difficulties in understanding the motives of foreign adoptive parents. This is because in China adoption practices have historically served familial and communal purposes rather than individual needs (Shi, 2002). In the Chinese context, adopting a child from one's kin (*li si*, 立嗣) used to be a way of preserving the family lineage. Care is also extended to children of relatives and friends (*ji yang*, 寄養) who are unable to raise their children.

International treaties on transnational adoption, and U.S. family law and legal parameters for international adoption also have played a role in the international adoption of children from China. The Inter-country Adoption Act approved by the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption (Stelzner, 2003), with the intention of discouraging illegal practices (Kapstein, 2003), is part of the current context of international adoption. Practitioners should be familiar also with the local policies affecting adoption, such as the Childhood Citizenship Act of 2001 in the U.S. that expedites the granting of citizenship to internationally adopted children.

Beyond public attitudes toward both international and domestic adoption, it is helpful to consider the various stakeholders of adoption and their social organizing. In China, government agencies such as the China Center of Adoption Affairs ([www.China-ccaa.org](http://www.China-ccaa.org)) and the Social

Welfare Department in Hong Kong ([www.swd.gov.hk](http://www.swd.gov.hk)) play a major role, though agencies such as Mother's Choice and International Social Services in Hong Kong may have an increasing role in the future. The development of groups in support of adoptive parents on this end, however, is dwarfed by the extensive networking and organizing in receiving countries. The Families with Children from China is a large network in the U.S. ([www.fwcc.org](http://www.fwcc.org)) and Canada ([www.fccbc.ca](http://www.fccbc.ca)). Other organizations supporting adoption from China include the Foundation for Chinese Orphanages, China Care, the Amity Foundation, Half the Sky Foundation, and Our Chinese Daughters Foundation, as well as human services organizations (e.g., [www.pactadopt.org](http://www.pactadopt.org)). These organizations have provided support for adoptive families in addition to medical and financial support for Chinese orphans. Medical and psychological research related to international adoption from China have been conducted with adopted children and adoptive parents, and made available on the Web. Adoption clinics and research centers are found at many American universities. On the China end, smaller-scale studies have been reported from the Anhui Academy of Social Sciences in Hefei, though it appears that few China-based and Hong Kong-based researchers have focused on adoption issues. To the extent that policies are formed by people in leadership and supported by the public, as informed by research and practice, a psychological understanding of issues related to adoption is critical.

### **Conceptual Issues in Understanding Transnational and Transracial Adoption**

Transnational adoption in the case of the large-scale adoption of girls from China has been conceptualized as a special form of diaspora (Miller-Loessi & Kilic, 2001). Because it reflected gender oppression, it is considered a human rights issue by those who applied a social

justice framework to international adoption (e.g., Hollingsworth, 2003). Movement of children and human resources from the developing world to developed countries in the West further raises issues of cultural socialization and concerns about cultural imperialism. Supporters of international adoption have countered with the view that transracial adoption can be justified when the adoptive parents are committed to providing a bicultural socialization that will further enable the adopted child to be culturally competent in a multicultural society. The hopeful assumption is that cultural pluralism will become a global reality.

Within psychology and the counseling profession, transracial adoption has been conceptualized in terms of the development of ethnic identity and cultural competence and the overall effects on adjustment. Zuniga (1991) recommends assessing adoptive parents' attitudes, knowledge, and consciousness of ethnoracial diversity, as well as the adoptive family's integration with other systems such as schools, neighborhoods, and reference group communities. This ecological perspective is to be recommended over a narrow focus on the adoptive family. Baden and Steward (2000) focused on the presence of at least two different racial identities and two different cultural identities in the Cultural-Racial Identity Model they developed for transracial adoption. Racial and ethnic identities are conceptualized as separate, though found to be intercorrelated (Baden, 2002). The model further distinguishes identification by adoptees with their birth culture from their identification with the adoptive parents' culture and multiple cultures. For the sample of 51 transracial adult adoptees studied by Baden (2002), a wide range of racial and cultural identities was found, suggesting variability in identity outcomes. It remains to be empirically determined as to how identification with the adoptive parents' race and culture, as opposed to identification with one's own race and birth culture, is related to psychological adjustment.

With respect to children adopted from China, Tessler and his associates (Tessler & Gamache, 2003; Tessler, Gamache, & Liu, 1999) considered the choices made by adoptive families in the cultural socialization of the adopted child to be critical. The development of bicultural identity and bicultural competence depends on the adoptive parents' efforts to keep alive the adoptee's birth culture. In the case of Americans adopting children from China, the requirement that adoptive parents visit China has reinforced American parents' interest in Chinese culture and their adopted child's connection with her cultural roots. Ethnic identification also depends on public attitudes toward racial minorities and the extent to which society is receptive to cultural pluralism. Parental efforts in providing bicultural socialization are constrained by their limited knowledge of Chinese culture in this case, and further complicated when the adopted child reaches preadolescence and adolescence.

Lee (2003) provides a conceptual framework for the continuum of choices by transracial adoptive families. He identified four possible strategies of cultural socialization — cultural assimilation, enculturation, racial inculcation, and child choice. Parents who expect the adopted child to learn the culture of the adoptive family and to be integrated into the adoptive country tend to allow cultural assimilation without an emphasis on the child's own racial identity and ethnic roots. Parents who make an effort to teach the adopted child about her birth culture through educational, social, and cultural activities are engaged in enculturation. Parents who consciously teach the adopted child ways of coping with racial discrimination are considered to be involved in racial inculcation. Finally, parents who believe in child choice initially would introduce the adopted child to the birth culture, but gradually adjust such efforts to the child's interest. Lee pointed out that these strategies are not mutually exclusive or exhaustive. This framework represents a

useful way of conceptualizing what could happen with the cultural socialization of adopted children in transracial families. It remains both a value question and an empirical question as to which strategy may serve best the children, their families, and society. How such strategies impact the development of children through adolescence and young adulthood, and when a given strategy may seem appropriate at a given point in a given case, has to be understood contextually.

Rojewski and Rojewski (2001) examined cultural heritage and other post-adoption issues in intercountry adoption from China. Underlying the concerns about the adjustment of adopted children is that their pre-adoption history may result in difficulties in bonding with the new parents, in addition to causing developmental delays. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982; Herring & Kaslow, 2002) and developmental psychology (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) can provide conceptual support for the clinical assessment and research evaluation of adopted children. The interactions between the adopted child and the adoptive parents may be especially sensitive around issues of self-perception and attachment (Cassidy, Ziv, Mehta, & Feeney, 2003). Due to the multiplicity of environmental and biological factors involved, however, it is not sufficient to focus on a single aspect of adoption outcome. As will be apparent in the subsequent discussion of research, the measurement-driven approach can yield only a partial picture.

In the case of transracial international adoption, cultural issues are paramount (McRoy, 1994; Simon & Altstein, 1987). The extent to which adoptees can develop a satisfactory identity that connects their upbringing, physical appearance, and ethnoracial heritage is a function of the sociocultural environment of the adoptive country and the adoptee's experiences. A recent study (Berman, You, & Michizuki, 2005) found that young people in the U.S. show greater identity

diffusion and distress than those from the Chinese mainland and Taiwan. Adopted Chinese children growing up in the U.S. can be expected to have more identity issues than their Chinese peers in Chinese societies, beyond adoption-related identity issues. More conceptual and empirical work will be needed in exploring the identity development of adoptees as a function of the societal context. Models of cultural identity development can be combined with narrative psychology (Hoshmand, 2000; McAdams & Janis, 2004; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006) in understanding the cultural appropriation of identity and its implications for counseling. This narrative conception of identity that is associated with cultural psychology points to a new direction for theory and research in adoption.

From the standpoint of practice, the various conceptual dimensions mentioned can be further accommodated in a resilience model that comes from a proactive stance. O'Brien and Zamostny (2003) concluded from their review of 38 adoption studies that counseling psychology should focus on both sociocultural factors and resilience for adoptive families. There is a growing literature on risk and resilience in children and adolescents (Prevatt, 2003; Rutter, 1987). The conceptual distinction between risk factors and protective factors can be applied to adopted children in their adoptive environment, taking into account not only the sociocultural milieu, but also other biopsychosocial factors in the child's pre-adoption history. Given the increasingly globalized environment of cultural pluralism and the multiplicity of identity choices, an emphasis on multicultural competence and an adaptive process of identity development seems appropriate to include in psycho-educational programs intended for building resilience. Before presenting possible applications to practice, research related to the international adoption of Chinese children is considered next.

## **Research on Transracial Adoption and Chinese Adoptees Overseas**

Due to the presence of misconceptions and cultural myths about the meaning and effects of adoption, both professionals and the public should be informed by research on the experience and outcome of adoption. Psychoeducation based on research findings and developmental knowledge can be a positive contribution of psychologists and counseling practitioners. The general conclusion from the research literature on adoption is that there is variability of experience and outcome, and that with the exception of those with severe pre-adoption conditions and prolonged histories of institutionalization, adoptees adjust well for the most part (Friedlander, 2003; O'Brien & Zamostny, 2003).

Tessler, Gamache, and Liu (1999) reported the first major study conducted in 1996 on the adoption of children from China. Through the network of Families with Children from China, questionnaires were sent to 587 American parents in 373 adoptive families, and completed by 526 parents from 361 families across 38 states in the U.S. The researchers obtained descriptive information on the adopted Chinese children (mostly girls), their adoptive families, and the reasons for adopting from China. Furthermore, they asked about the American parents' adoption experience in China and their attitudes toward bicultural socialization. The report also provided insights into the historical context and evolving practices by the P.R.C. with respect to international adoption. Tessler and his associates take the view that public reactions in addition to parental attitudes toward transnationally adopted children will determine the future of adopted individuals, their adoptive families, as well as the cultural makeup of society. They stated that "International adoptions represent naturally occurring experiments that document the power of culture to socially construct identity" (p. 134). These naturalistic

psychological and sociological experiments can yield lessons for the world.

Research on international adoption can include the host country's environment and the degree of acceptance of ethnic minorities and immigrants. One large-scale study involved comparisons of the adjustment of adoptees as young adults with the adjustment of similar age immigrants in Sweden, which has a more ethnically homogenous society than the U.S. (Hjern, Lindblad, & Vinnerljung, 2002). The results suggest that the societal context of adoption and transracial assimilation are important factors in the adjustment of adoptees who in this case manifested more psychiatric and health problems.

Tan and Yang (2005) studied language development in 186 Chinese adoptees aged 18–35 months, adopted before age 2 years, reporting that the children have caught up in their development and exceeded their age peers. Tan and Marfo (2006) obtained 581 parental ratings of behavioral adjustment in 695 adopted Chinese girls from 46 states and the largest Canadian province. In comparison with American normative data, the Chinese adoptees were found to have better adjustment scores than comparable American samples, with preschool-age adoptees showing better adjustment than school-age adoptees. As with other research findings, pre-adoption neglect and post-adoption rejection behaviors were predictive of behavioral adjustment.

Other than the above reports, the literature on transracial and intercountry adoption shows few studies of Chinese adoptees. One study conducted in Great Britain in 1981 involved 50 Chinese girls in their mid-teens and early twenties who had been adopted by British parents from an orphanage in Hong Kong (Bagley & Young, 1981). It found them to have become Anglicized, including the few adopted by Anglo-Chinese couples. In spite of the effort by some of the parents to



encourage an interest in their Chinese birth culture, these adoptees all tended to self-identify as English. They appeared to have adjusted well in their adoptive country and formed positive relationships with the parents. Nine years later, another follow-up was conducted with 44 of the original group (Bagley, 1993), which found three adoptees to have anxiety problems. These 44 young women as a group, however, showed a high level of educational and occupational achievement, and satisfaction with their adopted life. The researchers attributed the positive adjustment partly to the fact that these women did not experience significant racial discrimination such as experienced by Native Indian (aboriginal) adoptees in Canada (Bagley, 1991). It should be noted that while still identifying themselves as English, half of these young women maintained an emotional or intellectual interest in Chinese culture. In spite of this observation, Bagley (1993) predicted that cultural assimilation and integration into the adoptive society would lessen the need for learning about one's birth culture.

Westhues and Cohen (1998) conducted interviews with 155 adolescents and young adults in Canada who were internationally adopted during the 1970s and 1980s. They found that 51% of the males and 40% of the females self-identify as Canadian or Quebecois. Nearly half of the group considered ethnicity and race to be important, with the rest varying in degree. The great majority (83% male and 71% female) reported that comfort with race is a key factor in adjustment, while acknowledging the presence of racial discrimination. The authors felt that in spite of the adequate adjustment of the adoptees studied, their rights to connection with their birth culture as conferred by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption had not been adequately maintained. Although the sample included only two adoptees from Hong Kong and one from

China, many had Asian background, such that their responses could be relevant to the case of international adoption from China.

Huh and Reid (2000) examined the question of ethnic identity development in transracial and transnational adoption by studying Korean children adopted in the U.S. Using parents' and children's reports on problems as indicators of adjustment, they were unable to find a clear connection between strong identification with the birth culture and level of adjustment. They did find parents to have a crucial role in the children's cultural socialization, and that beginning about the age of 7, children began to develop their sense of ethnic identification, with increasing integration as they became 12–14 years of age. As conceptualized by Lee (2003), adoptive families showed a range of preferences as far as the ethnic and cultural socialization of their adopted child. High degrees of participation in the birth culture-related activities were related to stronger identification as Korean. Similar to the study of Tessler, Gamache, and Liu (1999) about Chinese adoptees in the U.S., their study indicated that parents' efforts in enculturation is a key factor in the children's identification with their birth culture.

Due to the limited research on adopted children from China and their adoptive families, professionals have relied on knowledge extrapolated from studies of other transnational adoption by Americans and Europeans (Bimmel, Juffer, van IJzendoorn, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2003; Kim, 1977; Tizard, 1991; Verhulst & Versluis-den Bieman, 1995; Wickes & Slate, 1996; Yoon, 2001). These studies point to the role of acculturation in adjustment, with some degree of variability in outcome. Lee (2003) provided one of the most comprehensive reviews of research on transracial adoption that included both domestic and international adoptions in which the development of ethnic identity and cultural competence is a focal issue. It should be noted that due to the historical context of adoption from Korea, the

parental emphasis and societal expectation in the U.S. were in favor of assimilation into American culture. This is in contrast with the experience of the Chinese cohort in the study of Tessler, Gamache, and Liu (1999), whose adoptive parents have been more favorable toward a bicultural mode of socialization, and have continued their commitment to provide the children with some knowledge of Chinese culture (Tessler & Gamache, 2003).

Research on Chinese adoptees overseas is taking on a new importance, not only because of the continuing large-scale adoption of children from China, but also because the children adopted in the 1990s are approaching adolescence when issues of identity are critical. Tessler and Gamache (2003) reported a five-year follow-up study in 2001 of the Chinese adoptees and their American families who were the subjects of their 1996 study. This follow-up study involved surveys of 467 parents from 328 families, and projective mini-booklet responses from 324 children, as well as comparison of community and school data with national data and data on the adjustment of similar aged children from Romania. The study found that the adopted Chinese children (aged 5 to 13, averaging 7 years old) have adjusted well to American life and are doing as well as the national sample and better than the Romanian sample in psychological adjustment. However, they experienced distress with the adoptive parents' disclosure of the circumstances of their adoption. Although the adoptive parents have made an effort to expose these children to Chinese culture such as language and cultural events, there is a general lack of contact with Chinese Americans whose immigration experience were different from those of the adoptees. This fact may have significant implications as researchers have suggested that a cultural mediator or role model is essential to ethnoracial awareness and identification (Carstens & Julia, 2000; McRoy, 1981). The lack of contact with Chinese Americans may limit the degree of ethnic and cultural socialization for the Chinese adoptees in this case.

What this means in the long run becomes an empirical question as more groups of these children from China come of age in American society.

Tessler and his associates have acknowledged the qualified success and sustainability of bicultural socialization despite the best intentions of American adoptive parents (Tessler & Gamache, 2003; Tessler, Gamache, & Liu, 1999). Their 2001 study sheds further light on the complexities of ethnic identification and intercultural relations (Tessler & Gamache, 2003). When asked to respond to 12 sets of four photos of adults who were Caucasian, Hispanic, Afro-American, and Chinese, in terms of “who would understand them best,” the adopted children from China picked the Chinese adult males and females instead of Caucasian adults similar to their adoptive parents. In responding to photos of children from these ethnic backgrounds, the children showed a range of choices, in terms of who they thought have positive traits, evenly distributed among the four ethnic groups. In spite of being in affluent adoptive homes, the adopted children appeared to be sensitive to social class differences in public schools that have a high proportion of economically disadvantaged minorities. The fact that the adopted children attending ethnically diverse schools also showed more identification with the white majority suggests that cultural attitudes and ethnic identification are influenced by the power structure and racial dominance in a given society.

Tan and Nakkula (2004) provided more in-depth information on ethnic identity development from their post-adoption qualitative study of 11 Caucasian families with adopted Chinese daughters. The adoptive parents’ perceptions of their daughters’ ethnic identity were influenced by the dominant culture, the parents’ own ethnicity and minority experiences, and their cultural knowledge and awareness. The parents viewed their daughters as American and, at the same time, affirmed the importance of a connection to the Chinese culture both for their

daughters and for themselves. They sought cultural mediators and surrogate models as well as culturally sensitive schools for the children. They also felt personal limitations in not being an insider of Chinese culture, and frustration with not being able to control the dominant culture and societal reactions to adopted Chinese children. Tan and Nakkula also expressed doubt that these adopted Chinese children would develop a real sense of belonging to the Chinese American community or become highly similar to children raised by Chinese Americans. This reflects the concern raised earlier about the constraints on cultural socialization.

Tessler, Han, and Hong (2005) completed a comparative study between 84 Chinese adoptees in the U.S. and 73 children raised in China, aged 8 to 11, in terms of racial attitudes. Using a similar methodology as reported by Tessler and Gamache (2003), they found that Chinese adoptees are just as comfortable in their ethnic minority identity as children in China are in their ethnic majority identity. The adopted Chinese children tend to be more comfortable with other ethnic minority groups than their birth country peers, given the greater racial diversity in the U.S. than in China. Of concern is that within-group analyses of the adoptees indicated that their Chinese preferences declined with age. These preliminary results suggest the influence of dominant culture and peers on the children's racial attitudes and ethnic identification.

Though tending to be less of a research focus, there have been some studies of birth parents in adoption. O'Leary Wiley and Baden (2005) reviewed the research and clinical literature on birth parents, pointing to unresolved grief, trauma, social isolation, and long-term psychological effects. There is limited research, however, on the large numbers of birth parents in China who relinquished their daughters and disabled sons. The effect on Chinese birth parents of giving up their children is an area for future research and professional as well as public attention. One

indirect source (Evans, 2000) cited a rural study of 237 Chinese families that indicates that decisions on abandonment of daughters were made jointly by parents 40% of the time, by father alone 50%, and by mother 10%. The parents in this case, who were in their mid-twenties and early thirties, felt shame and left letters asking for forgiveness from their infant daughters. Another critical aspect deserving attention concerns the decisions that couples in the Chinese mainland continue to make with the aid of ultrasound technology that identifies the gender of the fetus before birth. The disproportionately skewed ratio of preference for male as opposed to female births will continue to shape the human ecology of the P.R.C., with serious long-term effects on child and family development and the future of Chinese society.

Lee (2003) pointed to methodological limitations in some of the earlier adoption studies in his review, though not on Chinese adoptees in particular. They include limited or less than random samples, and reliance on surveys or measurement instruments that require further validation. We propose more use of qualitative research, especially narrative studies of identity development (Hoshmand, 2005). Examples of fruitful studies are reported by Grotevant (2003) and in Dunbar and Grotevant (2004). Using interviews with individual adoptive parents and adopted adolescents, Dunbar and Grotevant coded the interview narratives for depth of adoptive identity exploration, degree of positive and negative affect toward the adoptive identity, and the salience of identity issues. Through narrative analysis, they were able to cluster the adolescents into the four groupings of “unexamined,” “limited,” “unsettled,” and “integrated” identity. The profiles of identity types provide helpful qualitative descriptions, moving away from ethnic identity choice as a one-time, categorical choice to a developmental process of varying degrees of identity commitment.

Comparison of adoptees with non-adopted children must also take into account the children's race and the sociocultural environment in which they grow up. In this respect, studies that include non-adopted immigrant populations from racial and ethnic backgrounds similar to international adoptees for comparison with adoptees may shed light on the contextual factors in adjustment. In view of studies reported earlier by Berman et al. (2005) and Tessler, Han, and Hong's (2005), more research is needed to determine: (a) if Chinese adoptees will be perceived differently than Chinese immigrant children in the U.S. and other non-Chinese countries; and (b) to what extent they will be similar to their non-adopted peers in the adoptive countries as compared with Chinese peers in Chinese societies in terms of identity diffusion and distress. In the scenario where children from the Chinese mainland are adopted by families in other Chinese communities, such as Hong Kong, research on identity process and experience will be illustrative of the effects on identity diffusion and commitment as a function of greater degrees of globalization. Development of instruments for assessing parental and public attitudes is needed in the case of international versus domestic adoption in China. Other work on protocols for long-term outcome studies and the evaluation of psychoeducational training for adoptive parents and counseling practitioners can be helpful to researchers and practitioners.

### **A Framework for Psychoeducation and Counseling**

A developmental and resilience framework for preventive psychoeducation and counseling is presented here, as informed by clinical and consultative practice with international adoptees and the agencies that serve them and their families. It will address cultural issues relevant to international adoptive families and the professionals who work with mental health, child development, and adoption. Given that the majority of adoptees adapt well to their adoptive families, theory and research in

prevention suggest that maximum attention must be given to creating optimal social and educational environments for positive identity development of all children. Moderate focused and supportive resources should be available for the developmental needs of international adoptees and their families, with some intensive psychoeducation and counseling for those children and families who face significant adaptive challenges that persist over time.

Psychoeducation is the application of psychosocial knowledge in structured educational formats. Psychoeducation usually includes a time-limited predetermined course of study for a group, with a topic for each session explored through lecture material, experiential exercises, role play, and teaching tools such as audio-visual aids and handouts. While these groups focus on topics that address common concerns, individual emotions or problems can emerge in discussion and sharing that may require the practitioner to use group counseling knowledge for appropriate facilitation.

An overall goal of all preventive, psychoeducational work is strengthening and utilizing existing resources by fostering family and community pride and strength. Increasing the sense of competence (Lachariete & Daigneaut, 1997), emphasizing strengths (Gilgun, 2004; Zippel & Spaniol, 1987), and helping people to feel better about themselves (Alessi, 1987) are all goals of psychoeducation and preventive counseling. Psychoeducational work is especially empowering for people who suffer from some form of social stigma (Thomas, 1992) and who can benefit from education and social support about their experience. Psychoeducational groups can enhance a sense of skillfulness, resilience, and positive coping in the face of unfamiliar and stressful situations (Patterson & Garwick, 1998). For international children and their adoptive families, social support and the promotion of a sense of commonality, belonging, and unique strengths are crucial.



For young adopted Chinese children and their families, play groups that explore common themes of early racial awareness, family support, culturally informative toys and books, and outings can create a sense of community. School age girls and their families may learn Chinese language and customs, including counting, practicing simple Chinese phrases, and painting Chinese characters (Laidler, 2005). Young adolescent girls and their mothers may explore issues of gender and ethnic identity through mother-daughter book groups, focused study of language, culture and history, and exploration of clothing, social skills, and women's roles in the U.S. and in China. This form of social interaction supports family relationships and helps develop the multicultural competence of parents (Vonk & Angaran, 2001).

By respecting the birthright of the girls to know and explore their heritage (Hollingsworth, 2003), these structured group activities can help them begin to construct a complex personal identity narrative that includes both their adoption and their ethnic origins (Grotevant, 2003). Developing a coherent sense of self involves factual knowledge about one's origins, familial and social connections, and making sense of life experience. A child's personal identity story evolves both privately and through conversation with significant others. A young adoptee's play can include references to missing birth parents. Culturally and emotionally competent adoptive families can reflect together and validate their children's early attempts to create the missing family and their place in it while building here and now family experience. Ideally, adoptees work toward building as accurate and complete a self-narrative as they can, given the practical limitations of international adoption. Even though this work can be painful for adoptive families, they should be supported in welcoming their children's complex identity stories.

Knowledge of their roots and cultural continuity with their culture and country of origin throughout their upbringing may also help the

adoptees cope with the multiple psychological losses involved in international adoption. Tools such as “life books” that depict visually and in narrative form a thematic and chronological account of a child’s factual life experience support the active exploration of identity issues and provide a bridge to further integration of identity in adolescence. For families with adolescents, multi-family discussion groups, travel to China and their orphanage of origin, and further education in Chinese language, culture and history can all help with identity consolidation.

Resilience research that has focused on the adaptation of international immigrants notes that positive racial identity is central to the development of resilient capacities in childhood through adulthood. Identity formation is a central developmental task for all children and adolescents that can be complicated by adoption and the multiple associated challenges and stresses. In general, coping with adoption is a lifelong process for birth families, adoptees, and adoptive parents, all of whom face “losses and finds” (Janus, 1997). Birth families face the greatest losses and, particularly in the case of international adoption, are unlikely to be found by their biological children. Adoptive families may already have faced loss and stress associated with single adult status, alternative family configurations and/or infertility in addition to the long, difficult and, often, expensive adoption process. In the case of Caucasian American families adopting Chinese children, a conscious decision has been made to cross cultures and national boundaries to form or expand their families. This decision by no means assures that adoptive parents are, in fact, culturally competent to raise these children, that a “good enough” temperamental match will follow, or that their home communities will welcome them and their children. Furthermore, many of the adoptive parents are first-time parents with untried and unmodified parenting skills and expectations of what children are actually like. The notion of identity confusion may begin with adoptive parents whose own identity as parents, and possibly as individuals, may

be relatively unformed. Communities vary widely in their sensitivity to and acceptance of non-biologically based families in all forms and non-Caucasian children specifically. Since social support is so central to the development of resilient self-identities, both family and community cultural competence are crucial to healthy racial identity development.

Identity commitment is a progressive process that ideally begins in the pre-adoption phase for parents and continues thematically and developmentally through all the phases of family life. Maximizing cross-national adoptive family resilience and resources, and developing functional personal and family identity then could be conceptualized as unfolding at multiple levels — individual, family, school and community.

### ***Individual Interventions***

Crucial components of psychoeducational and counseling support for Chinese adoptees relate to cultural identity struggles (Myer & James, 1989) and culturally situated gender issues. Since virtually all Chinese adoptees are female, many of the challenges they face will be similar to those of the identity development of girls in their adoptive societies. It is possible that Chinese adopted girls raised by economically and educationally privileged parents are advantaged in certain respects. Girls in the U.S., however, in general face challenges in the development of what has been called “voice” in the developmental literature. Though we do not yet have data on Chinese girls in particular, studies have concluded that pre-adolescent American girls, for example, experience significant freedom and affirmation in voicing their opinions and feelings as they are encouraged to do so at home and at school. The trend seems to be reversed in the adolescent years and girls begin showing more signs of distress, more eating disorders, depression, and self-harming behaviors (Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 1991).

While certainly cultural differences are influential and what works for girls from one background may not work with other girls, it may be that middle-class American mothers of Chinese adopted girls are more likely to expect strong identities and competence from their daughters. In fact, the education and support of mothers and mother/daughter pairs could be seen as central to positive identity development of their daughters. Maternal affection and secure early attachment serves as the foundation of a sense of self and as a buffer against depression later in life. Mothers serve as role models for how to act like a woman within cultural constraints. Mothers also model how to enter and belong to groups in early and later childhood, demonstrating the importance of friendship and cooperation with other girls and how to cope with bullying. While all adults certainly affect girls' achievement ideals and competences, mothers and female teachers in elementary schools serve as role models in helping girls develop verbal and social skills in school and in activities. Mothers also serve as confidants about body image, changing bodies, leadership roles, and racial self-image as well as buffers against self-doubt and depression in their daughters (Rice & Meyer, 1994).

A survey of 2,000 girls administered by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Educational Foundation (1995) focused on 11 to 17-year-old girls' ideas about sexuality, school, and self-revealed concerns about sexual behavior, peer pressure, body image, search for identity, and the pain of exclusion. In encouraging confident and competent middle and high school girls, data from the AAUW study confirmed that "being listened to" is the girls' prominent wish; it makes them "feel special" and contributes to positive identity development. However, they are concerned about confidentiality, want adults to be fair, provide structure and limits, and create environments that protect them from ridicule by other youth. Protection from ridicule may be of profound importance to Chinese adoptees given that 83% of girls in the

AAUW survey (1995) had experienced bullying and harassment at school, and that racial intolerance is a feature of that harassment. The girls in the AAUW study want adults to believe in them, overlook their failures and celebrate their successes, and to have high expectations and convey a belief in their abilities and aspirations.

Although the waves of female Chinese adoptees are just entering adolescence and have not yet been sufficiently studied, their experience may be similar both to that of other girls in their majority cultures and to that of other transnational adoptees, as seen in counseling settings in the U.S. Educational and counseling groups that focus on body image, self-expression, and problems with parents, sexuality and social competence in addition to cultural identity-related workshops (Vonk & Angaran, 2001) are particularly useful when integrated into natural settings such as school and religious youth group curricula. Ideally, girls will have developed increasingly robust narrative identities and awareness of race and gender issues in their dominant cultures. They will feel supported in talking with their parents and siblings about their complex cross-cultural identities and posing factual questions about their pre-adoption experience. In addition, positive gender and cultural self-identity are crucial resilient capacities for adolescence and young adulthood. While negative self-narratives may lead to negative behavior, positive gender and ethnic self-narratives can lead to positive, realistic relationships with peers, teachers, and other adult members of society.

### ***Family Interventions***

Parents who have made the decision to adopt transnationally enter into an intensive psycho/spiritual/educational learning curve. While most of these families fare well, many benefit from psychoeducation and counseling, beginning with support in the pre-adoption phase in preparation for their travel to China or other countries, and continuing throughout the family life cycle. Pre-adoption education about the birth

cultures, the adoption process, and the early days with their adoptees help prepare parents for what lies ahead. Post-adoption support groups for parents of international adoptees and early intervention with babies/toddlers and their parents help ease the stress of new parents and help identify potential developmental difficulties of the children. Mental health and counseling professionals can help by sponsoring parent counseling groups and informal support groups. Many communities in the U.S. have formed networks of parents (almost all Caucasian) and Chinese children (almost all girls) that decrease the social isolation of the families. These networks help with problem solving and form foundational relationships for the children with other adopted Chinese girls. Such early intervention programs (D. E. Johnson & Dole, 1999) support families in the social development of adopted children, serving to identify and address significant developmental difficulties that arise.

Vonk and Angaran (2001) piloted training sessions to help adoptive parents develop racial awareness and what they call “multicultural planning.” This involved learning about the probable effects of racial prejudice on their adoptive children, the need for helping their children develop specific coping and survival strategies for dealing with prejudice, and acknowledging the complexity of cultural identity development for their children. As part of the pilot, parents were shown a documentary video (PhotoSynthesis Productions, 1998) about transracially adopted young adults. Vonk and Angaran concluded that it was not clear that early parent training ultimately had a positive effect on the cultural identity development of their adopted children because “cultural competence is a long term project” (p. 16). More program development and evaluation is needed.

Psychoeducation for older school-aged adopted Chinese girls and their families could parallel developmental educational curricula about nation of origin, native language skills, and cultural awareness. In the

U.S., classroom-based multicultural curricula in public schools and weekend Chinese language and culture schools have sprung up, serving biological Chinese families as well as Chinese adoptees and their families. These schools can also serve to expose Chinese adoptees to Chinese American adults, a social challenge of cultural integration that has been noted in the developing literature on Chinese adoptees (Tessler & Gamache, 2003). Caucasian parents of Chinese children can make good use of cultural awareness and Chinese language development themselves to parallel their children's development and minimize intergenerational stress and distancing. The emotional issues that arise for Caucasian parents as their Chinese American children differentiate and develop identities separate from them as parents, can cause significant sorrow and internal conflict (Friedlander, 1999). Psychoeducation and counseling support groups for adoptive parents serve to underscore common experience and develop emotional competence and resilience.

Adolescence is a stressful developmental stage for all families. As previously discussed, the development of identity narratives involves not only consolidating self-identity for the adolescent but also necessitating stronger support from parents in the process and enhancing parental resilience in the face of the psychological struggle and separation of their children. Since development of positive ethnic and racial identity in the girls involves deeper acknowledgment of the racial difference from their non-Chinese parents, a host of difficult emotions and reactions confront the parents. Constructive bonding experiences such as book groups focusing on cultural issues, travel to China (and perhaps the region and orphanage of the child's origin), and social action projects such as working and raising funds to aid the orphanages are all appropriate developmental activities for families with Chinese teenagers.

Another useful approach is the use of multi-family psycho-educational groups for families with Chinese adoptees. Multi-family groups present rich options at many levels (Stoiber, Ribar, & Waas, 2004). First, the presence of similar adoptive families, especially ethnically similar families such as in Hong Kong, can have a normalizing effect and naturally enhance the further development of ethnic pride for parents and children. Second, there are opportunities for parents and children to meet in separate groups attending to their own needs, free from concerns about the feelings of the other group. Third, children and parents can meet with other people's parents and other people's children. This supports a broadening and deepening of understanding and empathy which can be transferred to one's own family.

### ***School and Community Interventions***

Historical perspectives on child development place the child in a two-parent heterosexual genetic family progressing from the intimacy and identification with the family to gradual exposure to school and identification with peers and the surrounding community through adolescent differentiation, identity integration, and the assumption of adult roles in society. Newer family forms and pre- and post-adoption child-rearing experiences make this historical view seem overly simple. For example, international adoptees may have spent their first year in foster home and institutional settings instead of being with families. Young adoptees and their parents are exposed to the gaze and influence of community members in non-Chinese societies through early years of schooling, which can support or stigmatize transracial/transnational adoptees and their families. In addition, single parents and same-sex parents may face discrimination themselves that extends to their children. The racial and family composition of communities will send direct and indirect signals to families and children about their identities.



The child's identity will be further reinforced in schools and community activities such as music and sports where children and their parents interact and absorb cultural attitudes and may or may not find acceptance. Thus, psychoeducational approaches should be used as preventive interventions at the school and community levels. Since families in general and adoptive families in particular need affirming social support, school and community programs are crucial in providing psychoeducational interventions aiming to create positive environments for all children.

Specific primary prevention approaches in parent and teacher education would include not only useful developmental dimensions but also foundations of cultural sensitivity and understanding of identity formation which includes linguistic and developmentally appropriate affirmation of cultural identity (Ramos, 1990). For host countries such as the U.S., educational curricula that emphasize cross-cultural tolerance and competence and anti-discrimination and inclusive behaviors are ideally implemented not only within individual schools, but also system-wide and throughout community activities (American Psychological Association, 2003; American School Counselor Association, 2003). Culturally specific toys and books, appropriate naming of cultural/racial features, sensitive use of visual and artistic classroom materials, and creating a positive welcoming environment for all children are vital and most effective if implemented broadly. It has been suggested that typical childhood education projects such as creating family pictures and family trees and talk about family history can be difficult for children in non-traditional families, children who are racially different, and children who do not have access to information about their birth families. Thus, sensitivity to these issues and revision of these commonly applied educational strategies are essential if Chinese and other international adoptees are to find their place in schools.

Childhood is a time when the identity is fragile and most vulnerable to negative shaming social experiences. Though many children are unable to verbalize experiences of marginalization, drawings, stories, and behavior such as withdrawal or aggression in educational settings can reveal confused and negative identity themes. Therefore, classroom-based psychoeducational strategies that give children and teachers opportunities for non-verbal as well as verbal expressions of identity formation and identity-related stress are helpful and consistent with known school counseling models such as the American School Counselor Association (2003) model in the U.S.

In general, multicultural education, education for social/emotional competence, and school and community commitment to anti-discrimination, anti-racist and inclusive behavior form the foundation of social environments that minimize social shaming and support positive racial identity development for all. Schools that provide educational opportunities for teachers and administrators support growth and development opportunities for all children and families. As life outside homogeneous suburbs becomes increasingly diverse in adoptive countries, all children need to acquire higher levels of cultural competence. In addition, children being raised with enhanced appreciation for others and more diverse friendships develop strong self-images in terms of personal competence. Myer, James, and Street (1987) presented a classroom-based anti-discrimination curriculum that recognized the tremendous importance of children's need to be accepted by peers. This eight-session group model was designed to raise consciousness about stereotyping in general without singling out individual children. Students explore their relationship to differentness, labeling of others based on limited knowledge, awareness and appreciation of personal heritage, adoption and cultural diversity, empathy for others and the positive qualities and strengths of all students. These types of classroom activities can help culturally different

students be respected for what they bring individually from their heritage and what they contribute to the group.

The literature on helping transnational adoptees suggests some tension between how much the adoptees themselves need professional intervention (Myer & James, 1989) and how much schools and communities need information and attitudinal shifts that allow the strengths of adoptive families to be acknowledged (Janus, 1997) and all children to find a positive place in society (Gilgun, 2004). Even though international adoptees and their families may need specific support, everyone in a society is better served when international adoptees are not perceived as problems but as a part of the multicultural fabric.

### **Implications for Counseling Training, Cultural Pluralism, and Social Justice**

Janus (1997) proposed roles for counselors in the pre-adoption, adoption, and post-adoption stages. As an alternative or addition to personal and family counseling, psychoeducational approaches such as proposed here can be offered by mental health and counseling practitioners. The focus should be on both the adopted children and the adoptive family unit, with emphasis on cultural competence as part of resilience. Whether it is in direct services or preventive education, there has not been a great deal of interest in adoption-related training as reflected in counseling coursework or practicum. Recent publications (e.g., O'Brien & Zamostny, 2003) that call attention to this area provide some recommendations for counseling practice, without specific discussions of training. Elective courses and continuing education workshops may be the more likely vehicles for such training, as would practicum at community agencies serving adoptees and their families.

Courses on psychoeducational approaches can involve students designing and evaluating curriculum materials for adoptive families and

adoption workers. In addition to a developmental emphasis, counseling practitioners should be aware of the legal and larger global context of international adoptions. Professional assumptions and biases concerning adoption need to be critically evaluated against research findings and for their value implications. This is best achieved with experiential workshops in which participants are encouraged to reflect on their attitudes and assumptions concerning adoption.

We live in an increasingly globalized world where ethnic identity and cultural competence are linked to survival and social harmony. International and transracial adoptions have implications for cultural pluralism in that such practices can result in multiple ethnic identifications and greater cultural understanding. To the extent that these non-traditional family forms and social arrangements can mediate the effects of the dominant culture, they may help to shape society. There are also concerns about international adoption such as illustrated in the case of China, including gender-related issues, loss of human resources, the well-being of birth parents, and the impact on the social makeup of China as a country. For those interested in advocacy work in relation to international adoption, social justice training (Goodman et al., 2004; Marsella, 2005; Palmer, 2004) provides a perspective that can guide such work. Psychologists and counseling professionals can help to educate the public about the psychological and social implications of adoption, translating research findings and practice knowledge into information that would improve public attitudes and interest in the human rights of adopted children and their birth parents.

### **Concluding Comments**

It is important to have a multi-layered understanding of the phenomenon of international adoption that takes into account the broader social and global context in addition to the local context and needs of children and families. International adoption not only

presents psychological, but also sociocultural, legal-political and moral challenges. Counseling professionals can have a role in psychoeducational work that builds resilience in adopted youth and their families, and fosters community understanding and socially responsible adoption of children from other countries. The issues raised by the case of China also suggest that interdisciplinary collaboration in research and policy recommendations would be helpful in the future.

There are value issues involved in adoption, as illustrated by the case of international adoption from China. The world community, especially Chinese communities in nearby Asian countries and regions, can be of help to the significant numbers of orphans. Policy changes and institutional support can shift the balance of international adoptions toward more domestic and regional adoptions. The human rights issues raised by the large-scale abandonment and exit of Chinese females deserve more attention, as does the extreme gender imbalance of Chinese children. The shaping of societal values toward gender equality is a critical step for the future. Where transracial adoptions are made, issues of cultural socialization must be taken into serious consideration, hopefully with the goal of developing resilient and culturally competent global citizens. Psychologists and counseling practitioners can contribute to research in understanding birth parents, adopted children, and the adoptive families as well as provide psychoeducation at the individual, family, and community levels.

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國際領養與中國領養個案：  
對心理教育及輔導政策、理論和研究的影響

本文探討國際領養問題，並以中國兒童被領養到國外的個案為例。文章描述國際領養的背景，並討論中國兒童成為其他國家——特別是西方社會——的主要領養對象的原因。文章亦詳細研究了在跨國界、跨種族領養的政策、理論和文獻中，與被領養的中國兒童和領養家庭有關的內容。作者根據過往的學說、研究及個人的臨床經驗，提出了一套心理教育模型及其不同的運用方法，讓領養家庭和從事有關心理健康、幼兒發展、領養家庭服務的專家應用。最後，作者討論了輔導訓練和應用、公共政策、社會公義，以及多元文化對國際領養的影響。