

Decision Making and the Adoption Process for American Families of Chinese Children: An
Application of Rational Choice Theory

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(ABSTRACT)

Interviews were conducted with 20 parents in the US who have adopted one or more children from China. The study focuses on the motivation to adopt, decision making regarding adoption and the process in relation to rational choice theory. The interviews also inquired about their required adoption trip to China and the post-adoption adjustment phase including bonding and developmental delays, as well as about why families chose to adopt from China, how they learned about the adoption agency they used and whether or not they knew families that had adopted internationally and more specifically from China. This information provided insight into the way that families obtained information that helped them reach important decisions throughout the adoption process.

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Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgments iii

Table of Contents iv

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

 Statement of the Problem 2

 Rational Choice Theory 3

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

 Motivation 6

 Adoption 6

 Intercountry Adoption 7

 China History and One Child Policy 8

 Chinese Adoption Process 9

 U.S. Policies Impacting Intercountry Adoption 10

 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect
 of Intercountry Adoption 12

 Adjustment 13

 Formation of Objectives 14

Chapter 3: METHODS

 Qualitative Research 15

 Development of the Survey Instrument 16

 Families with Children from China 17

 Obtaining a Two Stage Sample 18

 Survey Administration 19

 Sample 19

 Analytic Strategy 20

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

 Decision to Adopt 21

 Choosing China 23

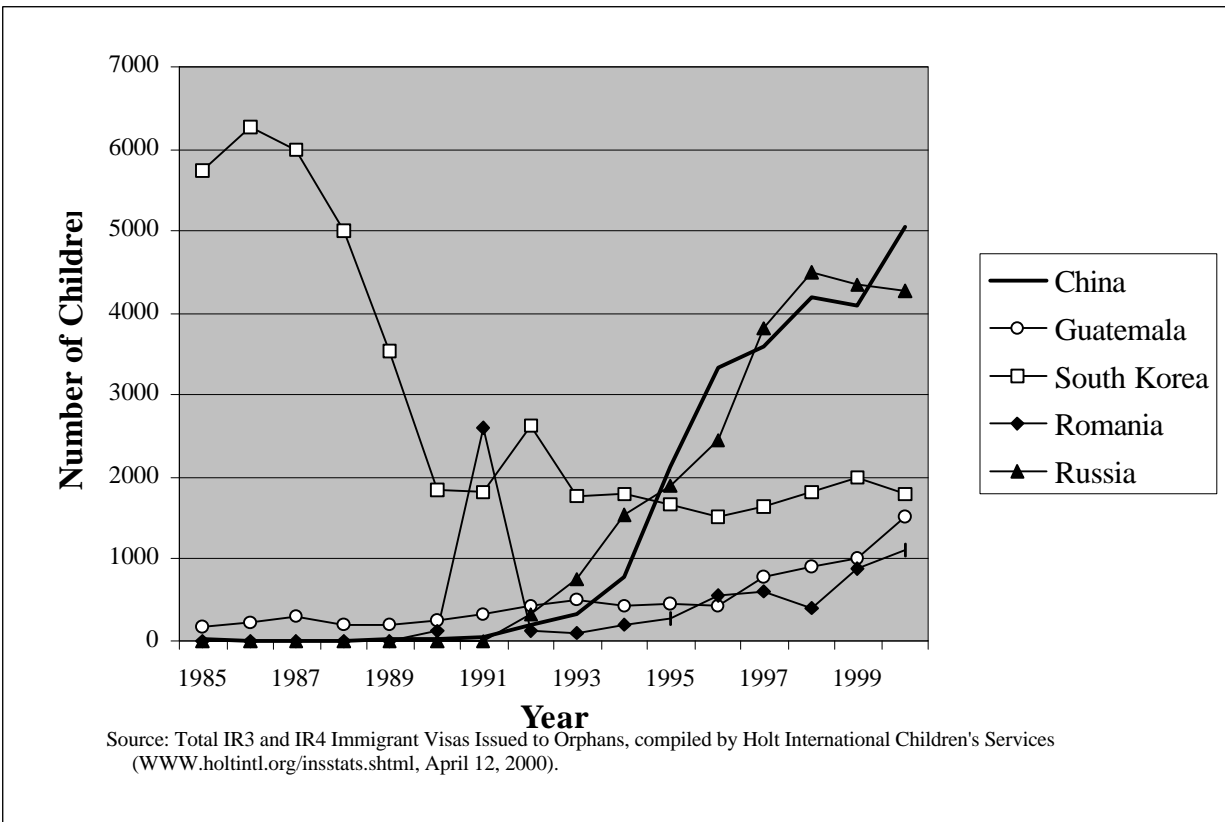
Know Other Families That Have Adopted from China	26
Reaction of Family, Friends, and Community	27
Choosing an Agency and Agency Experience	28
The Cost of Adoption and Methods for Financing Adoption	30
Type of Child Requested by the Adopting Family	31
Length of the Adoption Process	32
Trip to China	34
US Citizenship	35
Travel Group	36
Family Adjustment and Bonding	36
Developmental Delays	38
Maintaining Cultural Heritage	39
Social Outcome	40
Summary	40
 Chapter 5: CONCLUSIONS	
Findings	42
Limitations	45
Suggestions for Further Research	47
Conclusions	48
Rational Choice Theory	49
Practical Applications	49
 References and Selected Bibliography	
	52
 APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Interview Schedule	55
Appendix B: Short E-Mail Questionnaire	59
Appendix C: E-Mail Requesting Mailing Address	61
Appendix D: Explanation of Study	63
Appendix E: Informed Consent	66
Appendix F: Cover Letter	69

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Falling birth rates, availability of abortion services and changing social acceptance of single parenthood in the US resulted in a decline in infants available for domestic adoption during recent decades, thus leading infertile and other couples to have an increased interest in intercountry or international adoption. Intercountry adoption has become much more common over the past 30 years. It has almost doubled over the past 15 years. From 1985 to 2000 the number of “immigrant orphans” coming to the United States increased from 9,417 to 18,537, a 97 percent increase (<http://www.holtus.com/insstats.html>, March 30, 2001). During this period there have been substantial increases in the number of children adopted from various countries but the most significant increases have been in the adoption of children from China, Guatemala, Romania, and Russia by families from the United States (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Number of Children Adopted from the Five Most Popular Countries by Year



Although the number of children adopted from South Korea has decreased over the past 15 years, it is still one of the major sources of children adopted by families in the US. The largest adoption rate increase is seen in China. The number of children adopted from China went from 20 in 1985 to 5,053 in 2000 (<http://www.holtus.com/insstats.html>, March 30, 2001). In 2000 there were more children adopted by families in the US from China than any other country.

This study will expand upon current research related to intercountry adoption and will incorporate robust sociological theory as an interpretive lens. The theoretical focus is rational choice theory and the research will explore the motivation behind the decision to adopt internationally and the post adoption period of adaptation. The focus of this study is on families adopting from China, as this has grown to be the country now providing the largest number of adoptees to the US.

Statement of the Problem

This thesis will concentrate on families in the US who have adopted children from China. I will explore the motivation to adopt, the decision to adopt from China and the adoption process in relation to rational choice theory. Both the adoption process and the post-adoption transition will vary from family to family. The adoption process, including waiting periods, will be central to this thesis. I will also look at the post-adoption transition of both the family and the child.

One of the major considerations of this thesis will be the individual experiences of families adopting Chinese children. This thesis will strive to analyze the differences in the process, the variation in information provided to families, the individual outcomes and the overall satisfaction of the adoptive families. At present, I will assume that all of the adoptive families interviewed in this study will have different experiences, feelings regarding the experience and varying levels of satisfaction. I do predict that they will all be happy and find the overall experience gratifying despite the levels of frustration and anxiety that they felt throughout their adoption process.

I will focus on the participation of adoptive parents in Families with Children from China (FCC). This organization provides information and guidance to parents waiting to adopt a child(ren) from China. The members of the various FCC chapters also work to support each other and to

familiarize themselves as well as their adopted children with the Chinese culture. The members of this organization take an active role as advocates for children still in orphanages in China.

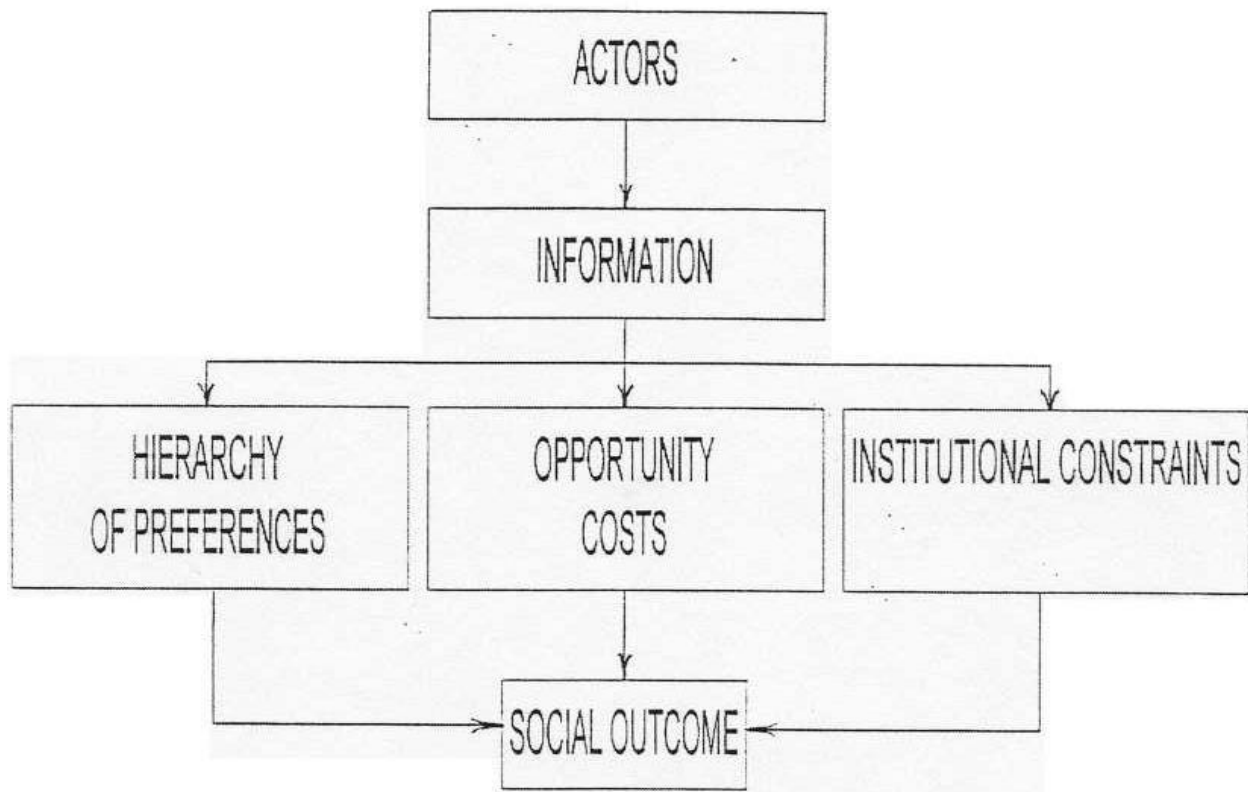
Rational Choice Theory

This section overviews the general perspective of rational choice theory. It then employs this perspective and its constructs to adoption in general and, more specifically, to intercountry adoption.

Rational choice models are often built on constraints, conditions external to individuals which attach consequences to courses of actions; and values, internal states that allow people to evaluate consequences. In analyzing intercountry adoption there are many constraints and values that impact the decision to adopt, to adopt internationally, and to participate in organizations that provide adoption and cultural information. Rational choice theory provides analytical tools for relating aggregate events and processes to the microworlds of personal interaction and individual decision making (Rule, 1997).

As seen in Figure 2, there are many factors involved in rational choice. This figure begins with the actor, the adoptive family, and concludes with the social outcome, the successful adoption of a child from China. In this model the arrows demonstrate the direction of rational choice theory as it pertains to intercountry adoption with the solid lines representing the explanatory paths of this theory (Friedman and Hechter, 1988). Motivation is another concept directly related to rational choice theory. In this study motivation cross-cuts both the hierarchy of preferences and opportunity costs in that it helps the actor to develop their hierarchy of preferences and to make decisions related to opportunity costs. In this research the actors are people wanting to adopt children from China. The information provided to the actors comes from many sources including individuals, books and articles, adoption agencies, and other organizations (e.g., Families with Children from China). This thesis will recognize that the actors being studied will have different quantities and quality of information available to them. I will inquire about the adequacy and accuracy of the information provided to the adoptive family prior to and during the

Figure 2
Rational Choice Model



Source: Modification of figure from Friedman, D. and Hechter, M. 1988. *The Contribution of Rational Choice Theory to Macrosociological Research*. *Sociological Theory* Vol. 6: 201-283

adoption process. Variations in social outcomes are due to a hierarchy of preferences, opportunity costs, and institutional constraints. The hierarchy of preferences is specific to each adopting family and their preferences that mold their adoption experience. Opportunity costs are costs associated with reaping maximum benefits related to foregoing certain courses of action. Institutional constraints refer to norms, laws, or other organizational structures that provide negative and positive sanctions related to the benefit of a course of action. The hierarchy of preferences, opportunity costs and institutional constraints come together to determine the social outcome.

Rational Choice theory will be employed in the examination of the adoptive family, the adoption process and the outcome. I will look at the information provided to the adoptive family through the adoption agency, support organizations, individuals, and the family's own research. I will also inquire about the family's hierarchical preference which will vary among adoptive families and may include their decisions regarding adoption, intercountry adoption, source country, age of the child and whether or not to consider a child with one or more disabilities. Opportunity costs will vary from family to family and will also be central to this study. Institutional constraints will be somewhat static in that they will consist of Chinese policies pertaining to the adoption of Chinese children by parents residing outside of China, US Immigration and Naturalization Service regulations, individual state regulations, and the policies and procedures of the adoption agency. All of these components come together to result in the successful adoption of a child from China.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

This section of the thesis explores rational choice theory as it relates to a family's decision to adopt. It also addresses literature that pertains to domestic adoption as well as intercountry adoption. The popularity of China as a source for adoptable children and the One Child Policy is reviewed. Both U.S. Policies and Chinese policies related to adoption and immigration is covered in this section.

Motivation

There are different motivations to adopt. According to most literature on adoption the most common motivation is infertility. Infertility is a major motivator for couples but there are other factors including altruism that lead couples to adopt children. There are also single individuals wanting to become parents who are motivated to adopt. "[C]ountries with readily available birth control and legal abortion, late age at marriage, social acceptance of single and unwed motherhood, and a stable economy tend to have a large demand for adoptable children" (Tessler, Gamache, and Lui, 1999: 7). Some of these factors contributing to the demand for adoptable children also motivate parents to adopt, including late age at marriage, social acceptance of single and unwed mothers, and a stable economy.

Adoption

This section addresses the various reasons for adopting children as disclosed in extant research literature. These include infertility, single parents wanting children, adoption of family members and foster children. Some of the factors involved in the decision to adopt will include motivation, cost, and process including home visits and court procedures.

Many publications trace the need for adoption and the policies that have regulated it. Some researchers have been able to trace adoption all the way back to stories and characters in the Bible. Many of these earliest incidents of adoption were of family members, such as children left

orphaned by parents' death legally adopted by an aunt and uncle. However, non-family adoption emerged as a result of immigration and industrialization in the mid 19th century (Hoksbergen, 1986). There is no question that over the last several decades adoption has become much more popular and policies have been adapted accordingly. Within the U.S. there has been a shift from the more traditional adoption in which infants are adopted by parents of the same racial/ethnic and religious background. Today domestic adoption often includes transracial adoption, the adoption of older children, special needs adoptions, foster-adoption (or legal risk), adoption by family members (or kinship care) and adoption by single parents and homosexual couples (Moe, 1998).

There are a significant number of families in the U.S. wanting to adopt -- two million couples and one million single individuals in 1989 (Alstein and Simon, 1991). A steady decline in birth rates in the industrialized world in conjunction with population growth in developing countries, growing infertility rates in western regions (which may be related to marrying at later ages), and available methods of birth control and abortion are all factors leading to increased pressures for childless families to find additional sources of adoptable children (Alstein and Simon, 1991).

Intercountry Adoption

“International adoption is a phenomenon that began on a large scale during the decades after World War II. During the 1940s and 1950s, many children were orphaned or abandoned, as a result of international conflicts and civil wars” (Serbin, 1997). The first legislation related to orphan immigrants was the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 (Weil, 1984; Alstein and Simon, 1991). Subsequently, families from wealthier nations, in an effort to "rescue" these children, adopted them. Intercountry or international adoption has become much more common over the past 30 years. Better economic situations, culture change and population policies have all led to the increased availability of adoptable children and the increased interest in these often abandoned children. This coupled with the decline of children eligible for domestic adoption due to lower birth rates, greater access to contraception and abortion, and the fact that it has become more socially acceptable and economically feasible for single mothers to keep their babies, has led to a

significant increase in the desire for families to adopt children from outside of their home country (Rois-Kohn, 1998).

Intercountry adoption, particularly in China, is on the rise. With over 3,500 children adopted from China each of the last three years, it is now a readily acceptable alternative to domestic adoption (<http://www.holtus.com/insstats.html>, September 20, 2000). Families want to adopt children internationally because of the shorter waits, the availability of younger children, and the assurance that the birth parent(s) won't appear to reclaim their child.

China History and One Child Policy

The People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. At this time health care began to improve and infant mortality rates decreased, resulting in a rapidly expanding population (Vonk, Simms, & Nackerud, 1999). The increasing population strained the economy, resources and environment. Limited space suitable for living and the uneven population distribution compounded the impacts of this rapid growth. The growth in population was recognized as being problematic and national policies were implemented to help curb this growth.

The "Later-Longer-Fewer" policy enacted in 1971 was the first national population policy. This policy encouraged couples to marry later, have fewer children and increase spacing between children. In 1973, China acknowledged the importance of family planning and began to promote it throughout the country (Information Office of the State Council, P.R. China, 1995). Family planning was promoted to change the attitudes of people regarding marriage, birth and fertility. Couples are urged to select contraceptive methods with guidance from the state. The "One Child Policy" replaced the "Later-Longer-Fewer" policy in 1979. "The policy was intended to stabilize population at 1.1 or 1.2 billion by the year 2000" (Choi & Kane, 1999). This policy stipulated that couples, especially those residing in urban areas, have only one child. The policy is more lenient with couples residing in rural areas and allows some of these couples to have a second child a few years after the first (Information Office of the State Council, P.R. China, 1995).

The current situation is much better than anticipated but there are still a considerable number of problems. Seventy million of those living in China live below the poverty level, most of whom are living in the western region of China where the geographic environment is more harsh. Another problem is the unemployment rate -- the rural labor surplus was estimated to reach 200 million by 2000 (Information Office of the State Council, P.R. China, 1995).

Although the steps taken by China seem to have helped reduce the population growth rate, it has led to a number of pregnancies that result in unwanted children. Families that have more than the allotted one child are often penalized. These penalties vary depending on where the couple lives. "Penalties in rural areas include a deduction of 20% of the couple's income when a second pregnancy is discovered" and "in urban areas, employment units can deduct between 5% and 10% of the couple's total income for ten to sixteen years after a second birth with percentages rising with subsequent births" (Vonk, Simms, & Nackerud, 1999). These penalties often lead to couples having unregistered births, in which case they are forced to abandon these children. These penalties might lead couples to consider placing their children for adoption but there is no legal procedure available to families in China that wish to do so. The alternative is abandoning their child in hopes that someone will find the child and take it to an orphanage. As a result of China's One Child Policy coupled with a cultural preference for boys, together with the pressures of rural poverty, many parents abandon their female children who are commonly given up for adoption abroad, or left in orphanages (Munro, 1996, also See CRC: Concluding Observations, China, 1996; Rois-Kohn, 1998). "A specific provision of the 1992 Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests forbids "forsaking" baby girls, although no one has reported any substantial pattern of prosecution" (Evans, 2000: 79). Despite the lack of policy for the Chinese families wanting to place their children for adoption, there are a number of policies related to the adoption of these children by families in other countries.

Chinese Adoption Process

There are many organizations involved in the adoption of Chinese children. The governmental authorities include: The China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA), Department of Civil Affairs,

Children's Welfare Institute, Notarial Offices, and Public Security Bureau (http://travel.state.gov/adoption_china.html, August 2000). The China Center for Adoption Affairs in Beijing arranges all adoptions. The CCAA is responsible for receiving and reviewing adoption applications that are traditionally submitted by U.S. approved adoption agencies. The CCAA also receives "certifying documents of the persons placing out children for adoption and that of the adoptees" (<http://www.china-ccaa.org/lyzxjje.htm>, August 25, 2000). The children are then located and assigned to foreign adopters who have met the provisions of Chinese law. These families are notified by the agencies in the U.S. and given the opportunity to accept the child or to wait for another child to be located and assigned. Once the parent(s) accept a child they are then issued a Notice of Coming to China and a Notice of Consent to the Placement by The Peoples Republic of China. The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs administers both the Department of Civil Affairs and the Children's Welfare Institute. The Department of Civil Affairs is the governmental agency responsible for the children waiting to be adopted, often either orphaned or abandoned. The Children's Welfare Institutes are the government-operated orphanages, which house children whose parents have either died or abandoned them. The Notarial Office and the Public Security Bureau are responsible for issuing the paperwork necessary to complete the adoption process in China and to then issue a Chinese passport.

The Chinese adoption process and policies seems to be constantly changing. An example of this is the revised regulation regarding dossiers that went into effect on February 1, 2001. This revision was directed toward adoption agencies and involved the documents to be provided to China. Another example is the Notice of Standardization of Post Placement Report of the Adopted Children dated September 25, 2000. This notice is regarding the two follow-up reports to be written by a licensed social worker that are required during the year after adoption (<http://www.china-ccaa.org/zxwje.htm>, April 2001). An important development, in terms of the adoption of Children from China, was China's signing of The Hague Convention on Protection of Children on November 30, 2000 and their announcement to move towards ratification (<http://fwcc.org/news.htm>, April 2001). "Frequently changing political situations increase the

uncertainties inherent to intercountry adoption, and countries may open or close without notice" (Adoptive Families of America, Inc. 1999: 12).

U.S. Policies Impacting Intercountry Adoption

There are many U.S. policies regulating the adoption of a child from other countries. Parents must obtain approval through the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). This approval is based on the submission of certain forms which cannot be completed until adopting families or individuals fulfill some mandatory pre-requisites including a home visit or family assessment.

The United States requires that families adopting a foreign born orphan -- a child that has been orphaned or abandoned -- must gain immigration benefits for the child. A petition must be filed before the child's 16th birthday. A petition can be filed by a U.S. citizen above the age of 25. Through the Immigration and Naturalization Service a family can file an INS Form I-600A (Application for Advanced Processing of Orphan Petition) to be pre-approved as being a suitable parent and being able to provide a proper home environment. In many cases the INS as well as the family's home state will require a home study by a licensed agency. This must be complete before the I-600A can be filed with the INS. This process can be completed before a child is selected and will help to speed up the process. When the INS has processed the I-600A and is satisfied that the family meets US requirements to adopt a child from another country they are sent an I-171H (Approval Notice from INS). When the family has selected a child, they need to file INS Form I-600 (Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative) on behalf of the child. According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, "a favorable determination on the advanced processing application does not guarantee that the orphan petition will be approved" (<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/>, September 20, 2000). The processing of both of these forms makes the adopted child a permanent resident of the U.S. but not a citizen. A child must obtain a visa from the U.S. Consular Office abroad, which requires a medical examination by an approved physician. Each state may have additional requirements. Most international adoptions occur first in the child's county of origin and then later in the U.S. in the state where the family resides.

On February 27, 2001 the Child Citizenship Act (Public Law No. 106-395) was enacted. This legislation grants automatic citizenship to foreign-born children under 18 years old who have been admitted to the US as lawful permanent residents and who are also in the legal and physical custody of at least one parent who is a US citizen. This new law eliminates a step that families must go through to obtain citizenship for their adopted child(ren) following their return from their adoption trip. Families no longer have to file for citizenship; it is automatically granted. Those children without citizenship but already in the US prior to the passage of this law also received automatic citizenship.

Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption

The goal of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption was to establish guidelines to prevent abuses of children in regards to improper financial gains. The abuses covered by the convention include exploitation of children from both birth parents and adoptive parents as well as the abduction, sale of or trafficking of children. An agreement ensuring the child's best interests between the countries of origin of children in need of adoption and their receiving countries was reached by 66 countries in May 1993. The agreement set minimum international standards and procedures for adoptions between countries which have implemented the Convention. Some of the signatory countries have yet to implement the agreement. (<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov>, April 11, 2001).

As mentioned in earlier sections, the US and China have signed the convention. Neither country has yet to ratify the Convention but both are moving in that direction. The US has enacted the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000. This act provides implementing legislation for the Convention (<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov>, April 11, 2001). This implementation will lead to additional safeguards and controls on the adoption of Chinese children by US families.

Adjustment

The period of adjustment is not necessarily as smooth as is often believed. The arrival of a child - - be it a biological child or an adopted child -- brings about changes that require adjustment before equilibrium can be reestablished (Samuels, 1990). Adoptive families often have a difficult time forming bonds that in the case of biological children are formed during pregnancy and immediately after the child is born. In many cases, adoptive parents have to justify their decisions to family members, thereby complicating the adjustment period.

When the parents finally meet their adopted child it is not uncommon for the child to be colicky and sick. The illness of the child(ren) can lead to togetherness between parent(s) and the child as well as tremendous strain caused by demands on the parent(s) (Gilman, 1992). Another factor that contributes to the post-adoption adjustment is the age of the child. Families adopting older children also have to deal with behavior related to previous hardships that the adopted child faced prior to adoption. The children and parents must overcome initial difficulties before they can successfully bond. In a recent summary of a study published last year, it is reported that "...75 percent of children adopted from China had significant developmental delays" (Clark and Shute, 2001: 66). Despite the adjustment and developmental difficulties that families created through intercountry adoption may face, "Studies show that most children do well, often overcoming early malnutrition and deprivation to become happy, emotionally healthy adults" (Adoptive Families of America, Inc 1999: 12).

Another area of consideration in the adjustment of children adopted from China is the cultural socialization. Is the child going to be comfortable with his or her ethnic identity and how will it impact socialization? Bi-culture socialization, the process by which norms, attitudes and behaviors of both the child's ethnic group and the ethnic group of their parents are acquired, is something that parents need to consider. (Tessler, Gamache, and Lui, 1999). Some parents may view bi-culture socialization as crucial to the adjustment process while others may not agree. This is important for Chinese children who have been adopted and brought to live in the US. These

children don't look like their parents which may raise questions. These children need to develop an identity that allows them to fit in and have a comfortable sense of self.

Formation of Objectives

Within the context of this existing literature and present legal framework this thesis will entail the following objectives:

- To document the motivation to adopt;
- To contrast and compare the experiences of families adopting from China;
- To become more familiar with the hierarchy of preferences, opportunity costs and institutional constraints as viewed by adoptive families;
- To assess post-adoption adjustment and adaptation including difficulties and strategies used;
- To determine what stage of the adoption process the family became involved with the organization;
- To ascertain if participation in FCC facilitates the adoption process;
- To determine what benefits there are to the adoptive parents and the adoptee through involvement in the FCC.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

In this chapter I address my use of qualitative research. Families with Children from China (FCC), its focus, and its role in sample development will be discussed. Another focus of this chapter is the variables to be analyzed and their use in the development of the interview schedule. I will also describe sample selection, confidentiality, and survey administration.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research gives researchers the opportunity to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In this case, the phenomenon being studied is the adoption of children from China. This study employed qualitative research because it allowed me to obtain a deeper level of information from the parents who participated in my study. I developed an interview schedule that allowed the respondent the freedom to give descriptive answers and explanations. Through my use of in-depth interviews, I was able to access unquantifiable information. According to Berg:

"[Q]ualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives. Researchers using qualitative techniques examine how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others" (Berg, 2001:7).

I learned about each family's adoption experience as well as their feelings about the experience. Respondents had the opportunity to elaborate and go into great detail when talking about the various aspects of the adoption process and experience.

The use of qualitative research employing in-depth interviews also gave me the opportunity to develop a rapport with the respondents. This rapport made it more likely that each respondent would provide more personal and intimate information and details about their experiences.

Development of the Survey Instrument

In developing the survey instrument I worked to incorporate the following variables -- drawing upon prior adoption literature on the conceptual framework employed for this study -- in order to gain an understanding of both the individuals adopting and the adoption process:

Participation in FCC, an organization related to the adoption of Chinese children

Type and degree of participation

Motivation to adopt

Motivation to adopt from China

Sources of adoption information

Length of adoption process (From home study until child arrives in the US)

Degree of difficulty in completing adoption process

Type of adoption agency used

Age of child at time of adoption

Age of child now

Type of family (single parent, married couple, siblings present)

Process of adapting to new situation (strategies used)

General demographics

I worked on drafting an interview schedule with feedback from my thesis committee. In developing the interview schedule I felt that it was more logical to ask the demographic questions at the beginning of the interview in order to increase my understanding of the respondent's situation and the information that they provided. The interview schedule began with some demographic information and then explored the family's motivation to adopt, their decision to adopt from China and information about the agency they used. The questions continued, investigating the adoption process, their trip to China, and post-adoption adjustment. I included questions about FCC and participation because of their role in developing my sample. I also asked parents about their feelings on maintaining some level of cultural heritage.

After the first couple of interviews were completed I made minor modifications to the interview schedule (see Appendix A). One of the modifications was the addition of a question about how each child obtained citizenship. This question was added because of a new law that went into effect on February 27, 2001. Another question was added based on a suggestion from a respondent. This question inquired about the bonding process. I added a question about developmental delays because I felt that a common theme was developing and that respondents were consistently providing information about motor skill delays and the lack of muscle tone. I also added a probe regarding adjustment that inquired about sleep difficulties which seemed to be another commonality.

Families with Children from China (FCC)

Families with Children from China is a support organization that unites families who have adopted children from China. It is a network of parent support groups with over 100 chapters and sub-chapters in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The structure of the organization varies from chapter to chapter; some chapters are more organized and have more formal guidelines and governing structures in place while others are made up of families who support each other through a variety of activities. The FCC describes itself as follows:

Virtually all FCC chapters share the following three goals: (1) To support families who've adopted in China through post-adoption and Chinese culture programs; (2) To encourage adoption from China and support waiting families; (3) To advocate for and support children remaining in orphanages in China (<http://fwcc.org/fccinfo.htm>, August 2000).

The FCC chapters organize a wide variety of activities that may include: newsletters, directories, picnics, Chinese holiday celebrations, playgroups, language and culture classes and pre-adoption information sessions.

The FCC web site provides information that many families find extremely useful. It includes information regarding health, travel, recent news and pending legislation. It also has contact information and links to local chapters. There is a section of the web page devoted to book reviews and recommendations on recently released materials.

Obtaining a Two Stage Sample

I obtained authorization from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) December 19, 2000 to use human subjects. Following IRB approval I began work on developing a two stage sample that was derived from various FCC groups. The first stage was to contact FCC chapter heads or FCC contact people. My original idea was to interview single parents. I sent an e-mail to a contact person in the Nashville, TN chapter, a rather large chapter, and asked that it be forwarded to single members of the group who might be interested in participating in my study. I received only one response to my request for single parents. I realized that this sampling constraint was unworkable and decided that I would ask for volunteers and interview all adoptive parents who responded. I then e-mailed the person listed on the national FCC web site as the chapter contact for the Washington DC chapter, and chapters in North Carolina, Virginia and South Carolina, eight chapters in all. The contact persons for these groups, as far as I know, then forwarded the e-mail on to the members of their chapter.

Stage two of the sample selection began with interested members e-mailing me to let me know that they were interested or had questions about the study. I received responses from a total of 27 adoptive families (including one volunteer from the Nashville chapter) and 3 responses from families in the process of adopting. I sent e-mails to these three latter families thanking them for volunteering and explaining to them that they didn't fit the profile of the study design.

At this stage, I decided that I needed more information about each family. I sent all of them a short questionnaire via e-mail (see Appendix B) and received responses from all 27 families. I then sent follow-up e-mails asking participants to let me know when might be a good time for me to interview them over the telephone. I followed up with an e-mail asking for their addresses so

that I could send them an explanation of the study which included information about confidentiality (see Appendix C). If the participants didn't feel comfortable giving me their address, I told them that we would work something else out but I never encountered this. Twenty-two participants e-mailed their mailing addresses to me. The project description (see Appendix D) and informed consent forms (see Appendix E) along with a short cover letter (see Appendix F) and a stamped return envelope were sent. They were returned by 21 families.

Survey Administration

The first interview was completed on February 20, 2001. Interviews were completed with 20 of the 21 families that returned the informed consent form. I was unable to schedule an interview time that was convenient for the other volunteer. The last interview was completed on March 26, 2001. All interviews were conducted via telephone and ranged in length from 36 minutes to 105 minutes (1 ¾ hours).

The families lived in North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee; there were no volunteers from the Washington DC chapter. In some instances the families were still on the listserv for a FCC chapter even though they had moved out of the area or out of the state. Those that chose to contact me despite their relocation were included in the sample.

Sample

The 20 families had a total of 38 children. There were 11 biological children and 27 adopted children. Of the 27 adopted children, 23 were from China; three of the families had adopted two daughters from China. Of the 4 children that were adopted but not from China, two were adopted domestically, with one of those born to Chinese parents, and the other two were adopted internationally. The children adopted from China were adopted between 1991 and 2000. The age of the adopted Chinese children at the time of adoption ranged from 2.5 months to 3 years with the average age at adoption being 10.8 months old. The children adopted from China are now between 17 months and 9 years old. The average age of the adopted Chinese children at the time of this study was 3 years 5 months.

Seventeen of the 20 parents interviewed were married at the time of the adoption and were still married to each other at the time of the interview. Two were single mothers at the time of the adoption and have remained single. One mother was married when she adopted her first child, divorced and adopted a second child as a single parent. At the time of the adoption parents ranged in age from 34 to 50 years of age with an average age of 41.4 years old.

Analytic Strategy

In analyzing the data collected in the interviews, I looked for commonalities and similarities. While this thesis work is largely exploratory and qualitative, some of the questions were close-ended questions or questions that produce similar responses that can be recoded and analyzed as if the questions were close-ended. This strategy allowed me to recognize constraints and values that led families and individuals to adopt as well as those that were evident in their ability to adjust to new family dynamics. This type of analysis also enabled me to recognize similarities and differences in the adoption experience as well as in the demographic information provided by the respondents. These analyzes are reported in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the decision to adopt and the subsequent decisions including source country, agency, type of child and other related findings. These findings show a remarkable diversity, as well as substantial similarities in experiences. The major topics in this study are motivation and experience. The interviews traced each family's experience from their decision to adopt to their adjustment period.

Motivation is one of the main components of the rational choice model employed in this study. The actors, the starting point of the rational choice model, have different motivators that lead them to investigate adoption, influence their pursuit of adoption, and result in the addition of a child from China to each family.

The actors, in this case, are the family members that were interviewed as part of this study. All of these actors have been motivated to adopt a child from China by different factors, some of which were common among the parents interviewed. Their decision to adopt and their subsequent decisions regarding adoption were based on the information that they collected. This information was a result of research. Some of the actors conducted research on fertility treatments and alternatives. The actors did research about adoption, domestic versus intercountry adoption and the differences in adoption procedures and requirements between countries. They also investigated agencies using a variety of resources.

Decision to adopt

Family members used the information that they obtained to form a hierarchy of preferences that influence the decision to adopt, the reasons for choosing China and the type of child to request. The hierarchy of preferences /motivations that led the parents in my study to adopt included infertility and the lack of success with fertility treatments or the lack of desire to undergo or

continue fertility treatments. When asked what motivated you to adopt, one parent gave the following response:

"Well, infertility was the primary reason. And then my husband and I are both adopted so there were really no psychological hurdles to overcome. We knew that there isn't any difference, there isn't any difference in love between an adopted child and a birth child, you are loved no matter what. And so that was fine. And we'd been married 16 years when (family 10 first child) was born, so I guess 15 years when we started the process. We were financially stable, we were emotionally stable, and we were ready to share that with a child" (10).

The desire to have a child, or in the case of 15, to have more children were also given as reasons to adopt.

"We wanted to have more children. And one thing after another, my husband had cancer, I ended up with cancer, we both couldn't have any more children. And we tried to adopt domestically but we were too old and had too many children. And so we went international" (15).

Other reasons given by parents were that they had always wanted to adopt or felt somehow spiritually motivated to adopt. The desire or ability to provide a home for a child was also noted as a motivator to adopt. Another parent reported that her motivation to adopt was her desire to have children. This single mother reported that a personal conflict related to her values and religious convictions led her to adopt a child rather than to have one out of wedlock. This may also be viewed as an institutional constraint that influenced her hierarchy of preferences.

"I just always wanted children. I mean from when I was a little girl, my goal in life was to grow up and be a mommy. I never intended to have a career, I didn't even want to go to college, my parents sort of forced the issue. Never expected to have

an advanced degree. I just wanted to grow up, get married and have babies, that's all I wanted to do. And because I was single, my cultural background, I was raised in a fairly strict Lutheran Church and you just don't have children out of wedlock, its just not done. So I went the adoption route as opposed to artificial insemination. And the other thing about birthing a baby, I mean I was already, 36 was like my top limit of birthing a baby. So once I got past 36 I was like I'm not birthing a baby, looks like we're going the adoption route. So it wasn't infertility.... I wanted to be a mommy and I wasn't willing to birth a baby" (17).

Choosing China

Preferences for China over other countries ranged from the health of the children to the ease of the process. More than half of the families chose China because of its reputation for healthy children and the healthy lifestyle of the Chinese people. "Because we wanted a girl and we wanted to go there. Also because we had heard, and the reading I had done, I am a nurse practitioner, and they tended to be healthy" (16). The cost of the process of adopting from China versus other some countries was another reason that families chose to adopt from China. In response to my question about the decision to adopt from China this parent replied:

"[Adopting] Domestically was awful. The agency [used for the China adoption] had just opened up. We talked to her, we really liked her a lot, the woman that runs the agency. One of her main ones [source countries] was China. And with her, both my husband and I did not have to travel, only one of us had to travel. Which financially made it easier for us because the other agencies both people had to travel. With her she didn't have that. And so that made it financially better for us to do. There're a lot of the agencies you go through where both people have to travel and for us that wasn't feasible financially. Plus my husband has his own business and it's not feasible for him to have left for two weeks and with our son here too, you know, that just wasn't an option. We had checked into it before and the other agencies stipulated that both parents had to travel.

We wanted another child plus we wanted to adopt a child that actually, this sounds ugly and I don't mean it the way it sounds, but that actually needed a family whereas we were finding out that here in the States that wasn't the case. And we weren't wanting to attribute to someone else having a baby just so they could make some money, you know that type of deal. China, the children are so much healthier, that was one of the main reasons. Don't get me wrong, we didn't have any problem with kids that had health problems, our concerns were more HIV and alcohol syndrome, we wouldn't have done Russia at all because of that, I know so many people that have adopted from Russia and countries like that and their kids have got all kinds of problems" (13).

Institutional constraints include the laws of the U.S., the child's country of origin, and the state of residence. These constraints guide the process of adoption and change from time to time. Some of these constraints influencing the choices of the families interviewed for my study include the ease of the process of adopting from China. The process of adopting from China and the institutional constraints involved was often a factor influencing the hierarchy of preferences developed by the adopting parent(s). Another parent gave the following as their reasons for choosing to adopt from China.

"Well there were various reasons. Um, one of the reasons was because they let older parents adopt infants and we wanted to get a young child. One reason was because we didn't want to adopt incountry. [Interviewer prompt: Why?] Mostly because of the hassle. Just in our limited knowledge of everything it looked like unless you really had an in, like at hospitals or something, it was going to be hard to do without, and we, I guess without having to have our name and story out there and wait for somebody to choose us to be the parents for their child and then pay expenses and then they have the ability to change their mind and all those kinds of things. We wanted to adopt without worrying about all that kind of stuff.

We chose China partly because I've always had a love for the country and its people." "I've always wanted to go to China. China is very bureaucratic and so we knew that the process was pretty sure even if we didn't know exactly how long it was going to take. It wasn't like they were going to change the rules every other day like some places" (01).

At the time that some of these families adopted, there were more guidelines or constraints imposed by China related to the age of the adopting parents and the presence of children already in the family. For these reasons, some of the families interviewed were only eligible to adopt special needs children. The policies restricting the adoption of healthy children to younger parents and those with no other children in the household have since changed and are now rather lenient. As of 1999 the law requires parents to be over 30 years of age, in reasonably good health and to have an income sufficient to support the child (<http://fwcc.org/fccinfo.htm>, April 11, 2001). Another institutional constraint is a country temporarily closing its doors for the adoption of orphans by parents in other parts of the world. Family 18 had originally planned to adopt from Korea. Their agency held a meeting explaining that Korea had temporarily closed its doors and that they had a newly established contact in China. 18 had to look at the opportunity costs and, as a result, changed their minds about adopting from Korea and went with China. They made this decision because the referral time was shorter and they liked the idea of travel, in Korean adoptions you don't travel, they bring the child to you. Institutional constraints in other countries also influenced the decision of the single parents interviewed in this study to adopt from China, some countries don't allow single parents to adopt.

Other motivations of adopting parents are family connection, the fear of adopting domestically or a bad experience with a previous domestic adoption. Respondent 07 gave the following response to the question, Why did you decide to adopt from China.

"We already had a family connection to China. When my husband went to a workshop that was offered at Lutheran, no, no, no, he went to a foster care workshop, I guess it was, and they said well you have to do a home study if you are going to do fostering or adoption. So we went to Lutheran Family services and they said ooh over 35, no kids, you're the perfect profile for China and as soon as they said that, it just, you know, remembering the family connection and all, you know, it just made perfect sense and so we didn't look back after that" (07).

Families who already had adopted children from China reported choosing China because they wanted their children to have siblings from the same country or to have siblings that looked like them. "I really didn't want (10 first child) to be an only child and because she was Chinese and since (10 dad) said no we're not going to do this domestic thing again, I said great let's go to China"(10).

Know other families who had adopted internationally

Many of the families that I interviewed, 12, did not know families who had adopted internationally or from China prior to their own adoption. During the adoption process six of the twelve families got to know other families who had adopted from China. One family knew of others that had adopted internationally but didn't know them personally. Three of the families knew other families that had adopted internationally but did not know anyone who had adopted from China. Knowing other families who have been through the process of adopting internationally, especially from China can impact the amount and quality of information that a respondent had regarding the adoption process and post-adoption adjustment. These families that reported knowing other families who had adopted prior to their own adoption were able to get information that may have influenced their choice of source country and their agency choice. Four families reported knowing families that had adopted internationally including families who had adopted from China. When asked, Did you know other families who had adopted internationally the respondent said:

"Yes I did. My pediatrician actually had gone to China and adopted not that much earlier than I started the adoption process. I am also a teacher and I've taught a number of students of Asian descent with Caucasian parents. So, I teach high school and right now I have a couple of girls from Korea" (11).

Reaction of family, friends and the community

Although experiences varied there were commonalities. Most of the families interviewed agreed that the response of family, friends, and the community was, for the most part, positive. The most common response to this question was a lot like that by respondent 13, "They've been great. Actually, everybody's been really good". Parents of those interviewed were most likely to express doubts or negativity. These doubts were often because of uncertainty regarding the child that would be adopted. Some families reported parents questioning the appearance of the child, "When I first told my mother what I had in mind, she was taken aback and her question was, don't you want a baby that looks like you" (11). Other respondents said that their parents were more concerned with what type of child they would get, "My parents were a little concerned about the type of child I would be getting, not knowing the birth parents" (09). The only other concern that was brought to the attention of the adoptive parents by family, friends or the community was their age. Some of the adoptive parents reported being pleasantly surprised by the level of acceptance. The following response was provided when asked, What was the reaction of your family, friends and the community.

"Um, very positive. My parents really concerned us initially because they're, you know, they're not people who have thought about international issues or thought about bringing a child from a different culture into their family. They have been just, they just adore her, so even the family members we were a little concerned about, she's just won them over. We haven't had any problems or anything, the community is always positive. I get strange questions but I guess, you know, you'd expect that. But overall, very positive" (20).

Choosing an agency and agency experience

Opportunity costs are consequences that can be evaluated based on constraints and values. A family's choice regarding the adoption agency that they use is based on opportunity costs. When making this decision families have to look at individual agencies that are both for profit and not for profit. Some of the agencies that families may consider are affiliated with different organizations that may be religiously backed or centered around humanitarian efforts. Families have to form decisions based on costs, process, and locality.

The parents were asked whether or not their agency was local, how they found it and about their experience with the agency. Families used a variety of strategies to find an adoption agency that was right for them. The most common way that families found the agency that they used to adopt from China was a recommendation from a social services agency, social worker or physician. Some families found out about agencies by word of mouth, either by someone who had adopted or by someone who knew someone who had adopted. Other families reported using a listing of agencies that is put out annually by *Adoptive Families* magazine.

"I found my agency through *Adoptive Families of America*. They publish a guide to adoption which has got all the licensed agencies in the United States. They've made a list of them and the programs they offer and things like that. I went through it carefully and I called about a dozen that had China programs. After I got their packets of information it was real easy to sift through and decide which ones were definitely on the up and up more so than others. Some of them, their information was so vague, I was like, they must not think we're serious about adopting, they're not giving us very much information. But WACAPS was wonderful and they have always been wonderful. I can call them anytime, I just have to remember to call between 12:00 and 7:00" (03).

Another resource used to gain information about adoption agencies was the Internet. Some families that used one of the above mentioned methods for finding an agency also called references before making a decision.

The family members that I spoke with seemed to have had positive experiences with the agencies that they used. Most reported that the agencies were good, there were no problems and that they would or they are using the agency again. The agencies used by the parents that I spoke with not only helped with the adoption process in the U.S., they also had facilitators and/or translators to work with and guide the adoptive families while in China. When asked about their agency experience this following responses were given.

"For the most part, very good. I don't know if you know how they work. They have, they basically contract with a facilitator out of New York who also runs an agency in Pennsylvania called Adoptions from the Heart. All of the China part is pretty much travel and arrangements for sending things to China and are done through them up in New York. Let's see, the only problems I've had with them, I guess I would say, the person they use as their China program leader in North Carolina, I felt she didn't have good interpersonal skills and wasn't extremely helpful. But the facilitators who ran the trip in China, even though they're very rigid on travel and every thing. Just the trip in China went so smoothly and like clock work and you could tell that they really cared about the people and the children and most of the people were crying when they had to leave the facilitators because they had such a good experience with them in China" (12).

"Very good. I guess I have to say the experience in this country was like on a scale of 1-10 maybe a seven. But the people they had in China, which I think is the most important piece of it were excellent. So overall I'd rank them really high. But, you know, we had social worker turnover, we probably had three social workers in a year. We had those kinds of problems. They have a woman, Mrs.

Lee, in China and she is just, she just gets the job done and takes really good care of you. So that was like worth any frustration we had here" (20).

When choosing an agency, families had to decide how they felt about the location of the agency which might factor in to their hierarchy of preferences and would likely influence their decision. Twenty-one of the 23 children adopted were adopted through an agency. Of the adoptions that involved an agency, eight used a local agency and 13 used an agency that was not local (out of state). One family chose to use an agency that was within driving distance and gave this as their reasoning.

"We could go face to face. The first adoption we didn't do that a lot but with (18 child two)'s, it was so long and we had so many things go wrong that I drove to Washington a bunch of times. I wanted to use an agency where I could go sit down face-to-face with a person if I had a concern. And it's a great agency" (18).

The two adoptions that bypassed the agency involved other sources of help. One of them used a facilitator and the other got in touch with someone in China that shared information about the process of adopting from China.

The cost of adoption and methods for financing adoption

Another consideration when adopting is cost. In this case cost was defined as the total expense of the adoption process from start to finish including travel. If a respondent reported a price range for the cost of the adoption from China the midpoint was used. The cost of adopting can vary from agency to agency and may be considered when deciding on an agency. The cost ranged from \$12,000 to \$26,500 with the average being \$18,217. In eleven of the adoptions, families were able to use savings to pay for the entire process. "We were lucky, we were able to just pay for it, we had a lot of savings. Over the period of a year, we didn't have to pay it out all at once, we were both working and were able to take care of it that way" (01). Opportunity costs played a role in financing the adoption of the Chinese child. Parents that did not have enough savings to

finance their adoption had to weigh their options in choosing how they would finance the adoption. Four of the adoptions were financed by families refinancing their homes, obtaining either 2nd mortgages or home equity loans. This was the method used by 016.

"We really did pretty well for the first \$9,000, \$10,000. It was kind of at the end when we fell apart. So we paid it as we went. The nice thing about it was it came in little pieces, \$900 here, \$1,400 there. But at the end it's about \$8,000 and we wound up putting that on our equity line, which we're still paying for" (16).

Three of the adoptions were financed using loans. Other methods of payment included borrowing against a 401K or the sale of personal property. In three of the cases, the adoptions were financed using two or more of these methods. "We paid as we went for the most part and we took out a loan against our 401K to make sure we were going to be ok. Wound up being about ½ and ½, half paying as we went and about half that we used the loan for" (14).

Type of child requested by the adopting family

Most families requested a healthy infant. In some cases the family said that they would also be willing to accept a child with minor problems. "We wanted a healthy child. We did allow for really minor things, allergies and you never know if they are going to have hepatitis or some other stuff, but we didn't want a child that needed surgery right away" (01). A couple of the families were willing to take children that were a little older, up to one and a half or two.

Another actually requested a child that was not an infant, one that was a little older.

"I thought about an infant about one week and (02 friend) told me, one thing you need to think about is you're going to be by yourself raising this child and if you get an infant, you have to work the next day and there's not anybody to swap out midnight feedings and whatever. Why make it difficult on yourself? So the longer I thought about it, and the social worker who did my home study also told me that

the older children were easier to not only get a referral for but they were easier to adapt to the environment really because they want to be adopted. The older kids want out of the institution and so they are more appreciative in a lot of ways so they adapt easier than an infant. And that is so true. The couple that I was with in China adopted an 18 month old and she cried for three solid days" (02).

Due to institutional constraints, some of the families that already had children were only eligible for special needs children. In all of these cases, the special needs were correctable problems or things that aren't considered special needs to most people. "At that time anybody who had a child was only eligible for a special needs child. She qualified as special needs because she was really small and because she had a herniated abdomen which turns out to be a belly button that goes out instead of in. An outtie." (04). Even though all of the families interviewed had daughters adopted from China, less than half reported requesting a girl.

Length of the adoption process

The length of the adoption process varied quite a bit. The length of the process was defined as the length of time between filling out the agency application to the time of the actual adoption in China. In instances when an agency wasn't used the date of the home study application and the filing of the INS forms are used as the start of the adoption process. The length of the process was regulated by institutional regulations or constraints related to the INS or regulatory authorities in China. In a couple of instances parents said that they were responsible for delaying the adoption process, one because of policies in her work place related to leave and insurance and the other because of an unexpected pregnancy. When asked how long the adoption process took from the time this parent filled out their agency application until the time of the adoption in China, she gave the following explanation of institutional constraints imposed by her place of employment rather than a government agency or the adoption agency.

"20 months. And part of the reason for that was I changed jobs. I had worked for the state before and I was entitled to Federal Family Leave after you work for a

year but in order to finish my graduate degree I quit working for a year, quit working for the state for a year to finish school. I came back to a different position, also with the state and I asked the question at the interview, I said do I have to work a year or does my previous service count and can I qualify for family leave because I told them at the interview I was adopting. And they said yes, your previous time counts. The day, the day that I dropped my dossier in the mail to (17 agency), I came to work and found a note on my chair that said, by the way you have to work a year before you qualify for Federal Family Leave. So, I called (17 agency employee) at the agency in tears and said I just got this note, now I have to wait a year and my home study is going to expire and I'm going to have to have it all done again. She said, calm down. She said, we'll put you on the bottom of the list, we'll hold on to your stuff and about six months before your year is up we'll put you in the mill, we'll put you in the pipe line. So my stuff would go to China before the year was out and by the time (17 child) got here I would qualify for Federal Family Leave. It worked out fine. I qualified in January, I'd been here a year and she came home in September so I still had plenty of time. It would not have taken that long had I not had to wait to qualify for Federal Family Leave and I didn't have enough vacation to like take 6 weeks off. I had to be able to qualify for Federal Family Leave so that they would pay my insurance while I was gone" (17).

"Once (11 first child/biological child) was born, I sort of took a break from things and then picked things up again, which is why my papers expired in China. It was probably 2 years but that is only because of my delaying things, not because that's usually how long it takes. I think it usually takes, I guess it takes maybe 6-8 months to get your paper work ready and another 8 months or so to get your referral, referrals are going slow right now" (11).

The length of the adoption process ranged from 5 months to 24 months. On average the process took between 15 and 16 months.

Trip to China

The length of the trip varied quite a bit, seven-21 days. The average length was 13 days. One parent had this to say about the length of the trip.

"It just makes me sick in a way, although I've read a lot of books about it, the Chinese see this as a business. A business transaction to them, you know, they're getting rid of what they don't want and the 14 days over in China are completely unnecessary. Really you could do it in 2 or 3 but they want you to spend money there"(09).

During their required time in China, the families spent time getting to know their children, completing the adoption process and sight seeing. In some instances the family got a chance to visit the orphanage that their child had been living in. About half of the families got the opportunity to visit the orphanage.

"When we were there, I went with a couple from Knoxville, and we were followed through our entire adoption process by a television station that was doing a story. And me and this couple from Knoxville, it was their second child to get out of this orphanage, and so the television station followed us through this whole thing. They went to adoption court with us, they went with us to the orphanage, on the last day before we left to go get the visas, they followed us through the whole thing. You know, they may have spiffed up or whatever because of all the publicity but it was clean, I could not have asked for a better environment for her. Now, you've got to remember China is way, way, way below our standards. But for China's standards, it was way above average, I mean it was exceptional."

"Their institutions were like, they had one building that was orphans and then they had another building for, you know what we call assisted living here and it was just older people in a nursing home environment. They had like the older people could come and do things with the children or they take the children" (02).

In many of these cases, the children were delivered to their new parents. Of those families that visited the orphanage six were restricted only to a meeting room. Five families were permitted to look around and had the opportunity to look at the rooms where their children spent most if not all of their time.

Citizenship

On February 27, 2001, the US Child Citizenship Act (Public Law No. 106-395) went into effect. This law gives automatic citizenship to all children under 18 years old that have been admitted to the U.S. as lawful permanent residents. Prior to this law, families got approval through the INS to bring their adopted children into the country as lawful permanent residents but later had to apply for citizenship. The new law gives citizenship to those in the U.S. and those that will enter the U.S. in the future (update from Christian World Adoptions). Twelve of the 23 children in my study had citizenship prior to the new law and the remaining eleven became citizens as a result of the new law. This family obtained citizenship before the new law giving the following account:

"In any case, we obtained (15 child)'s citizenship courtesy of the Democratic 2000 campaign (they stepped up immigration and INS decreased the rolls by 80% prior to the November election). We went to Charlotte in October 2000 to swear her in (actually she was in the ladies room when we signed the papers...) What a relief that we don't have to wait another two years, spend several hundred dollars and drive seven hours for our next daughter's INS approval..." (15).

Travel Group

Adopting from China requires that at least one parent travel to China to complete the adoption process and to pick up the child. There were some choices that the families could make but, for the most part, the adoption agency made travel arrangements related to travel to and from China, as well as planned sightseeing activities while in China. On 20 of the 23 trips, the adopting family traveled with at least one other family or were part of a group of adopting families. In 9 instances, the families met their travel group before the trip to China. "We met the group at an informational meeting prior to travel in Pennsylvania. I think it was about a month before or so, yes, it was in June and we traveled in July, about five or six weeks" (06). On 11 of the trips, the groups met en route to or in China. Of those that met either en route or in China, 9 of those trips were prefaced by a phone call.

Family Adjustment and Bonding

In nine of the families, the parents worked full-time at the time of the adoption and still work full-time. This includes two-parent families as well as families consisting of one or more children and a single parent. In five of the families, one parent worked full-time while the other parent was a stay at home parent. Also in five of the families one parent worked full-time and the other worked part-time. When asked about attachment and child care arrangements, this parent reported:

"I believe (child 20) has a very healthy attachment. She goes to daycare without a fuss but is always happy to see us at the end of the day. She is appropriately fearful of strangers but will warm up to people after a while. This took about three months to develop. Prior to that she would go to a couple of women besides me (my mother for one) and when she was upset she really wanted me although her daddy could eventually calm her. That was the main reason I took extra time before going back to work. I was home for over 10 months with her until we felt she was secure enough to be left with someone else" (20).

When asked about adjustment and bonding the answers varied. Many parents felt an immediate bond with their children while some thought that it took some time. For the most part both parents and children had bonded before heading back to the U.S. The major adjustment factor reported was adjusting to the time change. Once everyone caught up on their sleep things seemed to work themselves out.

The most frequently reported problem was nightmares or night terrors. Half of the parents reported problems with sleep, children that had either nightmares or night terrors. I asked the following parent if her child had sleep difficulties and she replied:

"Yes, she did. She would wake up about anywhere from an hour to two hours after she went to sleep. And wake up with, what in an older child could have been night terrors. We couldn't comfort her, she would cry and cry and cry. And then show no signs of remembering it or it having any real impact the next day. The only thing I could do to snap her out of it was to show her the cat. I would take her to the cat and for some reason it would make her stop crying" (19).

Of those parents who reported the length of time that their child has been experiencing these nightmares or night terrors, the majority said that it had been going on for about a year or more.

"Oh God yeah. I was up with her almost every night for the first year. She would have nightmares and just wake up screaming. I mean it took a long time, I think it took a long time for her to trust that we'd get her out of that crib. Now she loves her crib, she won't get out of it. She doesn't want to go to a big girl bed. It took a long time. The first year I was probably up with her five nights a week, at least. And the second year I was probably up with her three nights a week, for most of the second year. Now rarely do I have to get up with her" (16).

Some said that it went on for a few months. Some of the children who had experienced these sleep disturbances commonly sleep with another family member, like the situation described in the following response.

"And when she was two years old suddenly she would wake up hysterical, screaming, couldn't even breathe if she was alone in her bed. It has not gone away. Now it's like 50 % of the time. She sleeps with her brothers or she sleeps with us. If she has a friend sleeping over that's fine" (15).

Developmental Delays

The majority of the Chinese children in this study had some developmental delays at the time of adoption. For the most part, parents reported delays in motor skills, some children couldn't hold their heads up, some didn't sit up or walk. Some of the children were small and had nutritional deficiencies. The children generally caught up quickly, often reaching mile stones rapidly. When I asked one parent, did your daughter have developmental delays she responded:

"Um, teeth were slow. I just read something about vitamin D deficiencies in Chinese babies and I wondered why her teeth wouldn't come in and her hair was very scant too and she sweated a lot and she had a lot of flexibility in her legs, she looked like a gymnast, you could bend her leg around anyway you wanted to. In fact, the pediatrician even noted, she said she has poor muscle tone and she's very flexible. Well, I had read that one physician theorized that all those symptoms are early stages of rickets which is a vitamin D deficiency. I would say she probably had a very mild nutritional deficiency but she caught up. She's there now, other than being a little small. You know, she's a little smaller than the American kids" (06).

A couple of the families reported their children having no developmental delays and attributed this to foster care. When asked about developmental delays this parent reported that her child did not.

"No she didn't and she's an exception to the rule. (03 Child) was in foster care for four months, something we didn't find out until we were ready to leave Hefei, and we were really surprised. She is developmentally on track. In fact her motor skills are probably above average for this age. We had no troubles at all, she was on target and I know that was because of the foster care. The people we traveled with had numerous delays to contend with and a lot of them had occupational therapy. So no, she's the exception but that's probably because she had foster care" (03).

Maintaining Cultural Heritage

For the most part parents wanted their children to be familiar with the Chinese culture, with some parents viewing it as more important than others. "We feel like its important but we don't want to shove it down her throat" (05). Language seemed to be the aspect of the culture viewed as more important than others, "The one thing I will do, at some point, is encourage her to go to Chinese school so that she's introduced to language, if nothing else, so that she can be exposed to the culture at a later date" (09). Parent 03 reported that maintaining her daughter's cultural heritage is

"Extremely important. I am pretty much, in my mind, in my head I've been planning what to do with her. I am very much interested in sending her to schools that have a large Asian population. I plan, I want her to learn Mandrin, in fact I'm going to learn it with her. We've been house hunting in Maryland and I am looking for things like (03 new city) has an international middle school so I immediately give that a gold star, we're going to look in that area. I don't want her to grow up to be a regular American kid, she's not. She looks in the mirror and she knows she's not. It is very important for me that she is comfortable with Asian as well as American and I am going to do every thing I possibly can to make that happen. I am already accumulating quite a library for her. My husband is like how much money... Every time I go to a book store, if there's anything about China, and actually I've found, why limit it to China so if there's anything about any Asian

country. I am buying children's books, young adult books. And I read them, I read them myself to see if they're going to be worthwhile. I've got quite a library" (03).

"On a scale of 1-10, seven or eight. It is important but its not very important. Again, we're raising her as an Italian. She's been to Italy two weeks this summer, two weeks last summer. Eats spaghetti every Sunday and three other nights a week. She's being raised as an Itallian, she's Itallian Chinese" (08).

Social Outcome

The social outcome is the successful adoption of a child from China. This outcome is dependent on the information obtained by the adoptive parent(s) and the influence of their hierarchy of preferences, opportunity costs and institutional constraints. In my study I determined that all of these adoptions have resulted in a positive social outcome. Families feel more complete and have had positive experiences overall. "Its hard for me to remember the bad things that happened when we came home because it's just so wonderful now. She's a blessing to everybody that comes in contact with her" (15). In her book, The Lost Daughters of China, Karin Evans quotes one of the facilitators on her adoption as saying "We have a saying in China. We say that maybe these babies grew in the wrong stomachs, but now they have found the right parents" (p. 156). After talking with the parents in my study, I see that the facilitator's statement is true. One parent that I spoke with said, "We couldn't have had better children ourselves" and that seems to be the general consensus (12).

Summary

In making the decision to adopt from China parents took cost, travel stipulations, money, the health of the child and many other factors into consideration. In making their final decision to adopt from China, in many cases, families had to prioritize and weigh the pros and cons. Developing this hierarchy enabled them to make a decision that they were comfortable with and that would have the best possible outcome for them.

The findings reported in this chapter are concepts used to demonstrate the relationship between rational choice theory and the adoption of Chinese children by families in the US. The families provided insight into how they choose an adoption agency. The description of Adoptive Families of America's Guide to Adoption is given as one resource used to find information. The information was used to narrow the choice down to a few agencies and then request additional information. In this case the decision of whether the parents wanted to use a local agency had to be made. In this instance the decision was to use an agency on the west coast, three time zones away. The parent(s) weighed their options and decided that it was in their best interest to give up face-to-face contact for an agency that they felt comfortable with and that they felt met their needs. This is an example of opportunity costs.

An example of institutional constraints is the length of the trip. Respondent 09 reported that the length of the trip was unnecessary and that it could have been shortened significantly. The length of the trip is thought to be imposed by the Chinese government so that families will be forced to spend additional money in China, contributing further to the economy. Families know in advance about the length of the trip and many take that into consideration when choosing China. This institutional constraint is viewed by some as an imposition but by others as an opportunity to become familiar with their child's birth country.

The choices that families make regarding the adoption process mold their experience. The social outcome was the same for all of the parents that I interviewed. The process differed based on their preferences and priorities but the end result satisfied them all.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will give a summary of the findings. I will discuss the limitations of the study in terms of sample design, method, interview process and findings. I will also provide suggestions for further research based on the limitations of this study as well as the need for more in-depth knowledge on certain topics included in this study. I will relate rational choice theory to my research findings and to the adoption process for Chinese children by families in the US. Finally, I will address the practical implications of this research and its importance for families adopting from China in the future.

Findings

The motivations to adopt varied significantly. Some of those that I spoke with reported that they chose to adopt because of difficulties with fertility. Some of the parents said that they wanted a girl or wanted more children. China as the country of origin was an easy choice for most. They chose China because the children from China were, for the most part, healthy with low incidences of fetal alcohol syndrome and HIV. The costs of adopting from China were less than those of some other countries. The bureaucracy in China also made families feel confident that their adoption would happen and with relatively few delays.

The majority of families studied did not know other families that had adopted internationally or from China prior to their interest in Chinese adoption. These families often met other families that had adopted during their adoption process. After the adoption, the families tended to have a circle of friends with similar family composition.

The families all seemed to be satisfied with their choice of agency. Some of the families preferred to use a local agency so that they could have face-to-face contact with the people handling their adoption while others chose an agency that was not local. The agencies that were not local were

often very far away, including agencies in Washington, Colorado and Oregon. Those families that had little or no face-to-face contact with their agency seemed to be just as happy with the agency.

The cost of adopting internationally has been compared to buying a car, comparable in price. While the methods of payment varied, most of the families that I interviewed were able to pay for their adoption using savings. Other families refinanced their homes, borrowed from family members, took out loans or borrowed against their 401K.

When asked about the type of child that they requested, parents, for the most part, reported asking for healthy infants or infants with minor problems. (<http://fwcc.org/fccinfo.htm>, April 11, 2001) According to the FCC web site 95 percent of the children available for adoption in China are girls. I found that many of the adopting families did not specify gender in their request for a child. Most of the families assumed that they would be given a girl. This assumption was probably reached because of the value placed on males in the Chinese culture.

There were mixed emotions regarding the trip to China. Some enjoyed the opportunity to experience a place they had never been while others seemed bitter about the required length of their stay. All agreed that the facilitators and translators that were working in conjunction with the adoption agency were helpful and made the whole process in China run smoothly. There was a small group of families that visited the orphanages. These families gave mixed reports about the conditions inside the orphanages. Some said that the orphanage was large with about 5,000 children while others guessed that there were only about 60 children at the orphanage that they visited. Some said that the orphanage was bright and friendly while others said that the cribs were small and that the windows were broken. Those who met foster care givers reported a certain level of attachment between the foster parent and the child. They also said that there was an emotional good bye.

Some of the families said that their agency recommended that they bring gifts which ranged from clothes and baby supplies to cigarettes and liquor to facilitate the process. Some of the

orphanages provided a list of items that they needed; these items were often large and expensive. These gifts were in addition to the required \$3000 agency donation.

The vast majority of trips to China were group trips. Some of the parents met their travel group prior to travel, others met either en route or in China. Most of those that traveled in a group reported that they were still in contact with the group, some had minimal contact such as Christmas cards and email while others had scheduled reunions.

Developmental delays were common but, for the most part, all of the children had caught up and were, at the time of the interview, developmentally on target. In discussing adjustment some families said that the biggest adjustment was getting over jet lag. Other families reported sleep difficulties including nightmares and night terrors and a couple mentioned an oral aversion related to eating. Of the families reporting sleep difficulties, most reported that their children had been experiencing these disturbances for a year or more while others said that their child stopped having them after a few months. All of the families seemed to bond pretty quickly, most before the return flight home.

FCC participation varied a great deal. Those that became involved in FCC as waiting parents derived a certain degree of comfort in seeing other families that had successfully adopted. Seeing healthy, happy little girls was also comforting for those in the decision making process, waiting for a referral or waiting to travel.

Some families were still very active in FCC, attending potlucks and holiday celebrations. It was common for children and families to have developed playgroups outside of the regular FCC meetings. Other families, especially those with older children found it difficult to attend meetings because of other extracurricular activities. The majority of the families still had some sort of involvement with the group even if it was minimal.

As for maintaining cultural heritage, there were mixed views. In some cases the families were developing strategies to familiarize their children with the culture and to help them learn the language and in others, families said that they didn't want to force Chinese culture on their children and that they would let the children decide for themselves. The main concern was that the children feel comfortable with where they came from and develop a healthy identity.

All of the families were happy with the decision to adopt from China. There were three families that had adopted more than one child and there were several others that were in the process of adopting another daughter from China. One family responded to my initial request for willing families by writing, "We are awaiting news of our next daughter ("papers in, awaiting referral"). We hope to adopt three daughters in all" (15). The families also agreed that even though it took some longer than others to bond and adjust they had all done so successfully at the time of the interview.

Limitations

This study was limited in scope because of its focus on China as the country of origin of the adopted children. My concentration on China will make the findings of this study less applicable to the adoptions of children from other countries. There may be similarities between the adoption of children from China and the adoption of children from other countries but because of the differences in the Chinese adoption policies, the impact of the One Child Policy in China on adoption and variation in the treatment of orphaned children by country there are bound to be many differences.

E-mail was the only method that I employed in developing my sample. This form of communication limited participation to those with access to computers and who had e-mail accounts. This limitation could be avoided in future surveys by using other outlets to recruit respondents.

Another limitation of this study is the sample size. I interviewed 20 parents representing 20 different families. Interviewing a larger group of people would make the results stronger and more reliable. A larger sample could also raise more questions and bring different points of view to the study. In my experience it took a little while to notice common themes discussed by various respondents. Upon recognizing these themes I added probes in subsequent interviews. An increase in the number of respondents may result in new and unexpected information pertinent to this area of research.

The sample used in this study is a convenience sample of volunteers rather than a randomly chosen sample. A study using random sampling would likely involve a more heterogeneous sample resulting in more diverse findings.

The sample is also restricted to a small group of eastern states. A broader geographic distribution may also impact the findings of the study. In my opinion, area of residence is often related to differing views regarding lifestyle and fundamental beliefs resulting in a greater degree of diversity. Therefore motivation to adopt from China, the acceptance and attitudes toward interracial families will also vary from region to region. Another benefit of interviewing families in different regions would be the introduction of a significant number of adoption agencies used. In my study there was some variation in agencies used but those that chose to use local agencies were restricted to one or two agencies available in a particular area, resulting in the significant overlap of agencies.

The interviews were conducted over the phone, hence I did not have the benefit of observation. In-person interviews enable the researcher to develop a greater degree of rapport. It also gives the researcher the opportunity to observe the respondent in their natural setting and to possibly observe family interaction.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the above listed limitations I would suggest using a variety of methods, including US mail, telephone, flyers and newspaper/newsletter advertisements, to obtain a sample. I would also use a larger sample. This, of course, is hard to do with limited resources. Increasing the sample size requires more time and money. Another suggestion is for the researcher to obtain a more geographically diverse sample. This may enable the researcher to discover differences in findings from region to region. If possible, I would also recommend face-to-face interviews. This would give the opportunity to incorporate observations into the findings.

In my study, respondents consistently mentioned that their children had sleep difficulties. I found this to be interesting and would like to see further research on this. I would also be interested in a comparative study that examines the type and frequency of sleep difficulties experienced by biological children versus those experienced by adopted children controlling for age and pre-adoption situation. I suspect that these problems are related to sleeping conditions in an orphanage setting. I would be interested in research focusing on sleep patterns of orphaned children over time, beginning in the orphanage and continuing for at least a year after adoption. I would also like to see an additional study comparing sleep patterns of children adopted domestically, from China and from other countries.

Another finding that I would like to see additional research on is the use of foster parents. A child raised in a foster care setting rather than an orphanage setting receives more attention and stimulation, how much does this impact development? Does foster care significantly decrease developmental delays? It would also be beneficial to question more parents who had been able to view the orphanage first hand. One parent told me that there were 5,000 children in the orphanage and there were two to a crib (08). I would like to have more information about orphanage visits and what the orphanages were like. For this type of study the researcher would need to develop a sample of families that had adopted in recent years. Due to the release of "The Dying Rooms", a documentary on Chinese orphanages that reported horrible conditions and the eventual death of Mei Ming, a little girl who was the focus of the documentary, four days after the

film makers left she died, China did not allow orphanage visits for quite a while and some orphanages still don't allow the adopting parents to tour the orphanage (Evans 2000: 163). This type of study would increase the knowledge about the development of the children and may also impact post-adoption treatments.

My initial idea was to study single parents, I would still like to see this done. I would like to see a study that involved both single mothers and fathers. I am interested in their preferences related to age. I also think that their adjustment would be different from that of an adopting couple. The reactions of family, friends and the community might also be different because of their marital status. Along these same lines, I think that a study of homosexual parents would be interesting. The level of acceptance regarding single parents is increasing. People are becoming more educated about homosexuality and as a result there is an increase acceptance; does that carry over into the idea of homosexual couples as parents.

I would also like to see some research conducted on the type of children that are adopted. There was only one parent in my study that reported adopting a child over 16 months. This mother was a single parent who felt like an infant would be too much for her. Her child was three years old at the time she was adopted (02). How likely is it that an older child will be adopted? How often are boys adopted? In my study the parents that adopted special needs children all adopted children with correctable conditions. How about children with severe special needs?

Conclusions

Despite the limitations of this study and the need for further research I think that families and adoption professionals will find these findings useful. The role of rational choice theory in relation to adoption is very applicable. It helps to explain motivation as well as decision-making. The practical applications of this study are numerous. They range from financing the adoption to expectations regarding adjustment.

Relation to Rational Choice Theory

The components of rational choice theory are the actor, information, hierarchy of preferences, opportunity costs, institutional constraints. Figure 3 shows the core components of the rational choice theory and their relation to various illustrative decisions related to adoption and the adoption process. These components work together to result in the social outcome. The process starts with the adopting parent(s) and ends with the social outcome or successful adoption of a child from China. The actors obtain information ranging from the intercountry adoption process which includes information involving the requirements of both the US and China to child care and health insurance. The information that they obtain helps them to make the decision to adopt, to choose China, the type of child to request and the agency choice. In making these decisions the adoptive parent(s) develop a hierarchy of preferences in which they rank the importance of various factors involved in the adoption process. Institutional constraints are also analyzed. At this stage, the laws and policies inflicted by the US, China and the state of residence come in to play. Opportunity costs are decisions that have to be weighed by those adopting in order to reap the maximum benefits. This may mean that they have to forego certain preferences or avenues in order to focus on others that are more important. The end result is a family that has successfully adopted a child from China, the social outcome.

Practical Implications

I think that this study will be beneficial to those adopting and to adoption professionals. The reflection of families that have been through the process can help others gain insight into the process, as well as, the difficulties and benefits.

Adopting parents can learn about the decision-making process and the motivators of other families which may give them the validation that they need to move forward with the adoption process. Once they have decided to adopt and are looking for an agency, they might look at the experiences of those in my study and their choice to use local or nonlocal agencies. If the adopting families are like me, they will learn about various methods for financing adoptions that they may have overlooked before. They will see that although the process is expensive there are

Figure 3

Illustrative Components of the Rational Choice Model
as it Relates to Decision Making Regarding the Adoption of Children from China

Hierarchy of Preferences

- Decision to adopt
Adopt, infertility treatment, family size remains the same
- China as source country
Health of children; adoption process; family connection; availability of children, especially girls
- Choosing an agency
Local vs. nonlocal (also included in opportunity cost), agency affiliation, both parents required to travel
- Maintaining cultural heritage
Cultural activities, language classes, no desire to emphasize Chinese ethnicity

Opportunity Costs

- China as a source country
China, other countries, domestic adoption
- Choosing an agency
Local vs. nonlocal (also included in hierarchy of preferences) , agency affiliation, both parents required to travel
- Financing adoption
Savings, 2nd mortgage, borrow against 401K, loans

Institutional Constraints

- China as a source country
Variability in adoption process
- Choosing an agency
Both parents required to travel
- Type of child requested
Age of child as stipulated by China, special needs child required because of parent(s) age and the presence of other children (prior to 1999)
- China trip
Length of stay mandated by China and agency, orphanage visit
- Citizenship
Applied for and received citizenship or waited for citizenship law to go into effect in February 2001

many alternatives to financing the adoption that don't require the parent(s) to have the money up front.

The adopting families will be able to see what the trip to China was like which may put their mind at ease. The role of the facilitator as the planner, organizer and tour guide helps to take some of the mystery out of the trip to China. Knowledge about the facilitator and their role may help diminish anxieties related to travel.

The most helpful information is the information regarding bonding, adjustment and developmental delays. It will be useful for parents to expect certain developmental delays and to know that other families report that their children overcame these delays very quickly. This information will also give families adopting from China an idea of what is to come. The information on sleep difficulties will let them know that this is a common issue and that their child is not the exception to the rule.

The findings of this study will provide adoption professionals with information regarding post adoption that they may not have considered previously. They will be able to answer questions about adjustment or provide information on adjustment prior to the adoption so that the families will be prepared. The families in my study that had or were experiencing sleep difficulties by their adopted child seemed to think that they were the only ones, when in fact, about half of the families that I studied were also experiencing the same sort of problem or had in the past.

I hope that this study will let families considering the adoption of a child from China know that all of the people that I spoke with reported being happy with their decision. Their children were healthy and had been successfully integrated into the family.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Last name
2. How old were you when you decided to adopt?
3. What was the date of the actual adoption (in China)?
4. How old were you at the time of adoption?
5. How old was the child(ren) when adopted? What was the date and location noted on the document of abandonment?
6. What is your marital status and has it changed since you began the adoption process?
7. At the time [child(ren)'s name] was adopted did you have any other children? Have you had any since she was adopted?
8. If yes to 7, Was that child(ren) adopted, stepchild or biological child?
9. If adopted, Was it a domestic or intercountry adoption? From what country? If from another country, how did the process and experiences compare?
10. What motivated you to adopt?
11. Did you know other families that adopted internationally? From China?
12. Why did you decide to adopt from China? Did you explore other countries? Did health and the relatively low incidence of HIV and fetal alcohol syndrome play a role?
13. Reaction of family, friends and the community.
14. Name of adoption agency used to adopt [child(ren)'s name]? Was this agency local?
15. How did you find this agency? How was your experience with this agency?

16. What was the approximate cost of the adoption? How did you finance this adoption?
17. What type of child did you request? (Boy/girl, handicap, etc...)
18. How long did the adoption process take from the time you filled out application to the time you actually got [child(ren)'s name] in China? Did your child get citizenship prior to the new law or as a result of it?
19. Describe the adoption process, including number of trips to China, paperwork and fees involved. Did you travel to China? How long were you there? Did you visit the foster home or orphanage?
20. Did you travel with a group? At what stage of the adoption process did you meet this group? Are you still in contact with this group?
21. Do you and/or your spouse, if married, work? Is this employment full-time or part-time?
22. How did you adjust after bringing [child(ren)'s name] in to your home? (What were the most difficult problems/issues? How did you handle these problems/issues?) How long did the adjustment period take? How long did it take to bond?
23. How did she adjust? (Was there a language barrier? Did she have attachment issues? What was your childcare arrangement?)
24. How did you learn about FCC?

25. At what stage of the adoption process did you get involved with FCC?
(How has your involvement in FCC changed throughout the various stages of adoption and adjustment?)
26. Was your participation in FCC helpful in the adoption process?
(How was it helpful? Why was it not helpful? How could it be more helpful)
27. What type of FCC activities does your family participate in?
(How often does your family participate in FCC activities? Are these activities for the entire family?)
28. Do you feel that your family benefits from its participation in FCC?
(How does your family benefit? Are there activities that FCC does not have that you would find helpful?)
29. How important is it to you that she is familiar with Chinese culture? Which aspects of the culture do you see as being most important?
30. Did she have any developmental delays?

APPENDIX B
SHORT E-MAIL QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you very much for your interest in my study of FCC families. Prior to my interview with you I would like to ask a few questions listed below. Please send me your responses via email at mobryant@vt.edu.

Your name:

Total number of Children:

Number of biological children:

Number of adopted children:

Number of children adopted from China:

Current age(s) of child(ren) adopted from China:

Year(s) that adoption(s) was/were complete:

Marital status at time of last adoption:

Current Marital status:

Preferred phone number:

Thank you for your help up to this point. I will be in touch soon to arrange an interview at a time that is convenient for you.

Monica

APPENDIX C

E-MAIL REQUESTING MAILING ADDRESS

Thank you so much for responding to the questionnaire I recently sent. Prior to the interview I need to get you to sign an informed consent form. Please send me your address so that I can send you the form and a pre addressed return envelope. If you don't feel comfortable providing this information let me know and we will work out another arrangement.

Thanks again.

Monica

APPENDIX D
EXPLANATION OF STUDY

Justification of the Project

This research will be conducted to gather data for my master's thesis. This thesis will concentrate on single parents in the US who have adopted children from China. I will explore parents' motivation for adoption and their decision to adopt from China rather than the US or another country. Both the adoption process and the post-adoption transition will vary from family to family. The adoption process including waiting periods will be central to this thesis. I will also look at the post-adoption transition process.

One of the major considerations of this thesis will be the individual experiences of single parents adopting Chinese children. This thesis will strive to analyze the differences in the process, the variation in information provided to families, the individual outcomes and the overall satisfaction of the adoptive families. At present, I will assume that all of the adoptive parents interviewed in this study will have different experiences, feelings regarding the experience and varying levels of satisfaction. I predict that they will all be happy and find the overall experience gratifying despite the levels of frustration and anxiety that they felt throughout their adoption process.

I will focus on the participation of adoptive parents in Families with Children from China (FCC). This organization provides information and guidance to parents waiting to adopt a child(ren) from China. The members of the various chapters also work to support each other and to familiarize themselves as well as their adopted children with the Chinese culture. The members of this organization take an active role as advocates for children still in orphanages in China.

Procedures

Families with Children from China (FCC) is a support organization that unites families who have adopted children from China. It is a network of parent support groups with over 100 chapters and sub-chapters in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. FCC will be contacted to find participants. Various FCC chapter heads will be contacted. This contact will be asked via email or phone if he or she will ask active single parents active in their chapter of FCC if they would be interested in participating in this study. In-depth interviews will be used to obtain data for this study. The sample will consist of 15-20 persons who have adopted children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old from China. These interviews will be conducted in person or over the telephone.

Risks and Benefits

There are no real risks to those who choose to participate in this study. I will offer a copy of the survey results to all of the participants. I feel that the participants will be interested in learning about the experiences of other families who have adopted children from China.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

No names will be used in my thesis and the subjects will in no way be publicly linked to the data that they provide. They will be assigned a record number that will only be known by me. I may also audio tape the interview, if given consent, so that I can score the data and compare the use of certain terminology by the participants.

Informed Consent

See attached copy

APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects

Title of Project: Rational Choice Theory as it Relates to Decision Making,
Adjustment and Group Participation for Adoptive Families

Investigator: Monica Bryant

I. The Purpose of this Research

This research will obtain data to be used in a masters thesis. It will look at the decisions that families make regarding intercountry adoption, specifically the decision to adopt, the reasons they chose China as a source country, and their degree of involvement in Families with Children from China. It will also probe families about adjustment periods, including difficulties experienced and coping strategies.

II. Procedures

FCC will be contacted to find participants. Various FCC chapter heads will be contacted. In most cases, this contact will be asked via email if he or she will participate and/or if they will ask others active in their organization if they would be interested. In-depth interviews will be used to obtain data for this study. The sample will consist of parents who have adopted children from China. These interviews will be conducted in person or over the telephone.

In order to obtain informed consent I will provide an explanation of the study, the informed consent form and a stamped return envelope to families who interested in participating. I will also offer and provide a summary of my thesis analyses to participants if they wish to provide their mailing address.

III. Risks

The only risks that may result from this study would be a result of remembering unpleasant experiences. Participants are encouraged to end the interview at any point if they feel uncomfortable. Participants may also skip any interview questions that would cause them to recount unpleasant and/or emotionally taxing events.

IV. Benefits of this Project

There are no tangible benefits to those who participate in this study. However, the data collected will provide insight into motivations to adopt, why families chose China, their experiences and how they compare to those of other families. Subjects may request a summary of the study results at the time of the interview or at a later date. In order to receive this summary subjects will need to elect to provide the address at which they would like to receive the information.

APPENDIX F
COVER LETTER

Monica Bryant
207 W. Roanoke Street
Blacksburg, VA 24061

February 21, 2001

Dear _____,

Enclosed is the copy of the informed consent form that I mentioned in my February 20 email to you. Please read it and sign it if you agree with the terms of the study. A stamped return address envelope is enclosed.

Thank you for your time and interest in my study. If you have any questions feel free to contact me via email (mobryant@vt.edu) or telephone (daytime (540) 231-3676, evenings (540) 951-3719).

Sincerely,

Monica