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**“THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD”: AN EXPLORATION OF THE  
SOCIOCULTURAL AGENDAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CARE OF  
ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN CHINA**

By

Dennis W. Feaster  
B.A., Purdue University, 1991  
M.S.W., Indiana University, 2000

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Raymond A. Kent School of Social Work  
at the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Kent School of Social Work  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May, 2012

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 16, 2012

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Marie Antoinette Sossou, PhD



## DEDICATION



This is dedicated to Xiao Ma and the children of China: you are all worthy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought,  
and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder. G.K. Chesterton

I would like to acknowledge the contributions and expertise of my committee members: Dr. Wanda Collins, Dr. Tom Lawson, Dr. Marie-Antoinette Sossou, and Dr. Pam Yankeelov; I greatly appreciate your knowledge, questions, and guidance. I would like to especially acknowledge my committee chair and mentor, Dr. Anna Faul, who taught me that academic rigor and compassion are not only compatible, but are necessarily interdependent; thank you for your grace, wisdom, and humor.

I would like to acknowledge those who welcomed me into their community in China: I won't use your names for obvious reasons, but you know who you are. Thank you for giving your lives for the good of children; you have taught me more than you will ever know.

Finally, my greatest thanks go to my family: Sarah, Emily, Benji, and Piper. Thank you for your patience, your sense of adventure, and your unfathomable love. You are the greatest teachers of all.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **“THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD”: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SOCIOCULTURAL AGENDAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CARE OF ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN CHINA**

Dennis Feaster

April 16, 2012

The purpose of this study is to explore the set of sociocultural agendas that emerge around the care of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in China. While there is general agreement among stakeholders about the need to work for “the best interests” of OVC, there is significant variance in how these best interests are constructed and defined. An ethnographic scan of attitudes and awareness of OVC and OVC care in Henan Province, China, provide the initial context for exploration. This context is the basis for the subsequent nested case study of a multi-party, intergovernmental cooperative project designed to develop and disseminate alternative non-institutional care systems for OVC in China. Central to this project was the proposed re-purposing of China’s Child Welfare Institutes (CWIs), the large state-run congregate orphan care institutions that represent the core of China’s OVC care strategies and policies. Organizations involved in the development, funding, and implementation efforts include both Chinese and US faith-based NGOs, and Chinese and US Governmental bodies. A case study analysis of the participating organizations and their interactions provide the basis for identifying the

behaviorally-expressed agendas advanced by these stakeholders in the context of OVC care. The results of this analysis illustrate that the essence of the debate around “the best interests of OVC” is not primarily a Chinese vs. Western set of sociocultural agendas, but rather is a conflict between traditional Western models of institutionally-based orphan care and a Progressive/Universalist model of family- and community-based OVC care.

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## **CHAPTER I: PROBLEM STATEMENT**

This dissertation represents a qualitative inquiry into the ways in which sociocultural agendas, some in conflict and some in harmony, implicitly and explicitly interact around orphan care in China. Stated differently, the main research questions guiding this study are: *1) Do China and the West have different sociocultural agendas regarding orphaned children in China?* and *2) If so, what are they and how do they interact?*

Because the chain of events that has led me to both ask these questions and seek their answers is highly personal, I will attempt to state my motivations and assumptions as clearly as I can throughout this dissertation, as well as making clear certain conventions of language that are used throughout this work.

### **The Origin of the Questions Asked in this Dissertation**

The perspective that a researcher brings to a qualitative inquiry is part of the findings. A human being is the instrument of qualitative methods. A real, live person makes observations, takes field notes, asks interview questions, and interprets responses. Self-awareness, then, can be an asset in both fieldwork and analysis. Developing appropriate self-awareness can be a form of “sharpening the instrument (Patton, 2002, p. 64).

My interest in the phenomenon of orphaned children in China is not abstract; indeed, it is deeply personal. The awareness of the experiences of these children came about through the adoption of my son, Benjamin. Benjamin was born in Hong Kong, and his biological parents are from Guangdong province (a southern province of mainland China that is immediately adjacent to Hong Kong). His birth mother happened to be residing for a brief period of time in Hong Kong when Benjamin was born. When the decision to give him up for adoption was made, this process consequently occurred under the Hong Kong social welfare system rather than that of the mainland.

This distinction, I would learn, was important, primarily because Benjamin has Down syndrome. In Hong Kong, Benjamin was placed in a private, non-profit orphanage while remaining a ward of Hong Kong's social service system, and became eligible for adoption (including international adoption); given Hong Kong's recent colonial past, this social service system is very compatible with that found in most modern Western societies. Because of his diagnosis, had Benjamin (or Benji as we call him) been born across the bay, he would not have been eligible for adoption, and would have remained a ward of the state. Furthermore, given some of Benji's health concerns, it is entirely likely that he would not have survived beyond his first three years had this been the case.

It was discovering this fact that a) initially shocked me into action and gave me the desire to find out more about the life of orphaned children in China, b) my enrollment in the PhD program at the University of Louisville's Kent School of Social Work in order to be better equipped to be able to formally study these children and their culture, and c) my present research interest and dissertation focus. Given the dearth of information about

this population and my own shallow understanding of Chinese culture, norms and values, I have chosen a qualitative approach to examining this issue.

Given the experience described above, this has become a very personal matter to me, and one that I cannot hope to examine in a purely objective manner (even if such a thing were possible). Consequently, I shall not try to do so, and this will be reflected in my style of writing as well, particularly in terms of voice. As Patton (2002) points out, “writing in the first-person, active voice communicates the inquirer’s self-aware role in the inquiry...the passive voice does not” (p. 65). Patton goes beyond this however, indicating that the process of finding one’s voice is critical to the qualitative research process, both in terms of critical analysis and thick description. He links this back to feminist theory that draws “the intricate and implicate relationships between language, voice, and consciousness” (p. 65) into the foreground of the qualitative researcher’s experience of the data. Thus, by framing my writing in the first person and active voice, I am communicating the awareness of myself as the primary instrument of my research. By making explicit my own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and assumptions, I am helping to improve the reliability and validity of my data (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002; Rubin and Babbie, 2005).

### **Frequently Used Terms**

The children served in orphanage care in China have arrived via many different paths. Most have been abandoned because of the unique convergence of socioeconomic issues, culture, and population control policies that combine to put an immense amount of pressure on parents in modern China. Some children have disabilities or other special

care needs that families may feel are beyond their means to address, so strategic abandonment may represent a last, desperate attempt for families to secure medical or other care that their children need. Some are true orphans whose parents have died, especially in some of the rural areas in which HIV/AIDS has taken a tremendous toll. All of these children are vulnerable and in need of care; some are served in government-run orphanages, others in non-governmental settings, and still others live on the streets or in the countryside without formal care provision. In the present paper, I will simply use the term “orphan” or to refer to this group and their unique set of vulnerabilities, whatever their path into the orphan care system may have been. Similarly, I will use the term “vulnerable children” to refer to the group of children who are at risk of entering the orphan care system, primarily as a result of their disability status. When discussed together, I will use the convention of “orphaned and vulnerable children” or its abbreviation, OVC.

Also, since I am looking at the ways in which cultures have constructed their views of this phenomenon, I need to refer to aggregated groups that represent cultural perspectives throughout the paper. Although China possesses a very rich and diverse blend of cultures within its borders, I will simply use “China” and “Chinese” to refer to this nation and its culture. Additionally, I will use the term “the West” and “Western” throughout this paper to refer to developed North American and European cultures that have shared cultural values commonly characterized as being humanistic; this is not to imply that other cultures do not share such humanistic values, but rather is simply a term of convenience to identify those cultures that share a common typification of the

phenomenon of orphaned children as being a *social problem* (this is more fully discussed below).

Finally, all Chinese (Mandarin) words will be transliterated into English using China's official *pinyin* system of Romanization.

### **Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in China: The Modern Context**

In January of 1996, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report that highlighted the conditions in which orphaned children were living in China. The HRW reports described conditions at China's flagship Child Welfare Institute (CWI) in Shanghai, which was touted as being the best of the best of China's CWIs:

“We estimate that in China's best-known and most prestigious orphanage, the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute, total mortality in the late 1980s and early 1990s was probably running as high as 90 percent; even official figures put the annual deaths-to-admissions ratio at an appalling 77.6 percent in 1991, and partial figures indicate an increase in 1992” (Human Rights Watch, 1996, p.2).

This report drew considerable international attention to the plight of China's orphans, which, was embarrassing to China on the international stage. As a result, China has become very open to international workers and organizations (primarily from the West and many of which are faith-based) who are helping to address the problem (at a micro level) in China. However, it is unclear how this phenomenon is perceived within China itself (beyond international loss of face). Understanding Chinese and Western



sociocultural agendas around the phenomenon of orphaned children in China will be the focus of this research study.

While there have always been orphaned children and children with disabilities throughout China's history, it appears that the increase in the magnitude of the present problem correlates highly with the 1979 implementation of the One Child Policy (Arnold and Liu, 1986; Johansson and Nygren, 1991). In the next section the history of the one child policy in China will be discussed in more detail, after which the link between this policy and the phenomenon orphaned children will be explored. I will also explain how the one child policy represents a dimension of conflict with fundamental elements of traditional Chinese culture. The last part of the chapter will focus on Western perspectives related to the care of orphans and how Chinese culture (traditional and modern), Western perspectives, and orphaned children in China are all interrelated.

### **China and Population Control Policies**

Faced with explosive population growth in the 1960s and 1970s, China began experimenting with various policies to limit population, culminating in the well-known One-Child Policy in 1979. Under this policy, parents have been given financial and social incentives and opportunities if they limited themselves to having only one child. Conversely, if parents had more than one child, financial penalties and the withholding of opportunities were levied as a disincentive. This policy has been in effect continuously since then albeit with different emphases and without uniform enforcement. The present manifestation is a focus on a "low quantity, high quality" population, where the family's single child receives the time and energy of both parents and all four grandparents (Zhu,

2008). The following figure provides an overview of China's population policies since the beginning of the People's Republic of China in 1949:

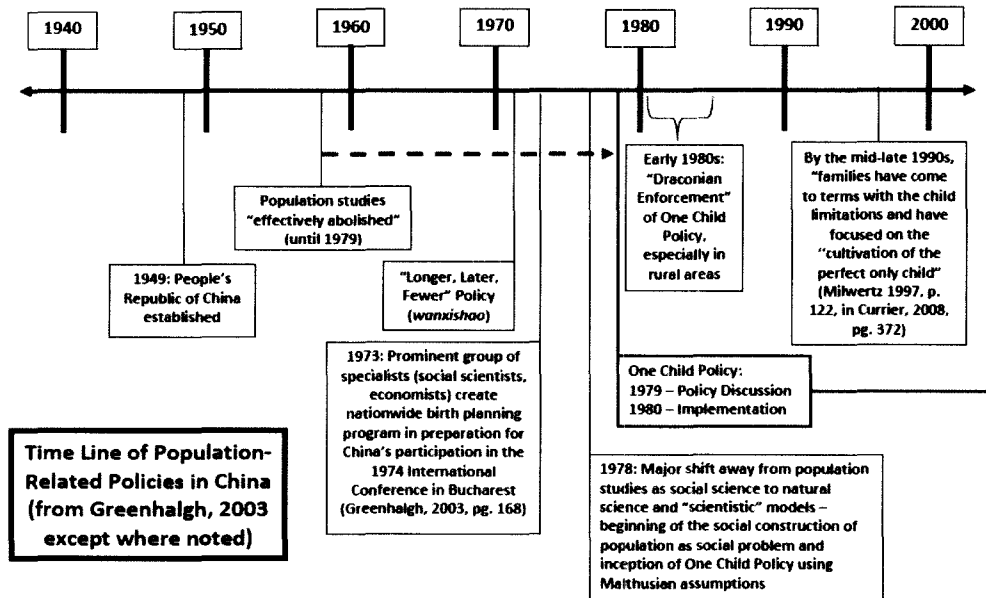


Figure 1. Timeline of Population-Related Policies in China.

Following Mao Zedong's rise to power and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the initial population policy was one of promoting fertility, to increase China's population and replenish those lost to the ravages of war. Principally, these involved preventing women from having access to birth control. However, following the unmitigated success of these policies, concerns began to arise about the booming population's deleterious effects on China's development. Thus, beginning in the mid-1950s, public campaigns were implemented to encourage women to limit family size. This focus on women as bearing the burdens of population control rather than on both men and women, has been a hallmark of China's policies, and has

resulted in criticisms related to the disproportionate price that women have paid under these policies (Currier, 2008).

From the 1950s to the 1970s, family planning campaigns led to an overall decrease in fertility rates, especially in cities, although the population continued to grow (Currier, 2008). These campaigns culminated in the “later, longer, fewer” initiative, where women were encouraged to have children at a later age, to have a longer interval between children, and to have fewer children overall (Greenhalgh, 2003). During this time, Chinese policies began to emphasize economic development in an effort to become competitive with the West as quickly as possible.

Although the Chinese population grew at a smaller rate since the mid-1950s, population began to figure in to this economic development process, ultimately becoming the key component in China’s drive to become competitive by the 1970s. As McLoughlin (2005) puts it, “Over the span of a single generation, PRC authorities have shifted from Mao’s optimistic view of people as a “national storehouse of workers” to a relatively more pessimistic view of people as consumers of resources. This has meant a philosophical shift from people as “hands to work” to “people to feed” (p. 307). This viewpoint, that a large population would diffuse resources and delay economic development and technological achievement relative to the West, set the stage for the development and implementation of the One Child Policy.

Greenhalgh (2003) documents the events leading up to the PRC’s decision to adopt the One Child policy as its official stance on population from a constructionist

perspective. She writes that the social sciences in China had been stifled from the late 1950s through the 1970s when it came to studying the population:

Over the next 20 years, social scientists of population were actively deskilled, deprived of data to analyze, and cut off from methodological and other advances occurring in international population studies... With the death of Mao and the rise of Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s, the planned control of population growth became a critical component of China's socialist modernization. Population experts were needed to help the party define and then reach its goals. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, China was home to one of the most rapid institutionalizations of a field of population studies in history (pp. 166-7).

Greenhalgh points out, however, that because of the policies of the previous twenty years, these social scientists were extremely limited in regard to their access to the most recent technological developments that would allow for a better analysis of China's population trends. A small group of particularly well-positioned engineers and mathematicians who had an interest in population and who had strong ties to China's rush to modernize were not so limited, however. This group was able to utilize computer models and visual representations of their methodologies to present their information in such a way that their claims were widely accepted over that of the social science contingent (these new methods were all the more powerful because they were seen as being both modern and Western in their methods, and so preferable to the arguments of the social scientists).

However, Greenhalgh (2003) writes that this latter group had significantly flawed methodology in terms of their arguments for radical population control, and proceeded under resurgent Malthusian assumptions (i.e. that human population grows at an exponential rate, while renewable environmental resources grow at an arithmetic rate (Malthus, 1798)), that had been widely criticized throughout the West over the preceding decade. Indeed, Greenhalgh contends that it was the underlying view that a large population would slow China's emergence as a modern nation that drove the technological group's methods and assumptions, and it was this desire that ultimately led to the drafting of the One Child Policy in 1979 and its swift adoption in 1980 over the protests of the social scientists and their remarkably outspoken concerns about the consequences for adopting such a policy.

The One Child Policy called for not just a reduction in fertility rates, but a reversal of them (Currier, 2008; Greenhalgh, 2003; McLoughlin, 2005). To this end, the Chinese government utilized a series of incentives for families who voluntarily limited themselves to one child, and penalties for those who did not. In the case of a second child, although permitted under the law, significant financial penalties were incurred by families, although the child was officially recognized and granted citizenship. Children beyond a second incurred more serious penalties, including the refusal of the state to provide their families with a birth license, and therefore denying their citizenship. This meant that education, economic and welfare benefits, and medical care would be denied them (McLoughlin, 2005). This policy was unevenly enforced throughout China, ranging from no enforcement or sanctions in some areas to extremely harsh measures in others.

This was particularly true in rural areas in the early 1980s, where reports of forced sterilizations and abortions among rural citizens were reported: *“In the early stages of implementation, sex selective and coerced abortions, infanticide, and forced sterilization disproportionately affected women by making them responsible for bearing sons and for suffering the consequences when they failed to do so”* (Currier, 2008, p. 366).

In more recent years, however, as birth rates have reversed themselves, especially among urban couples, there has been a more relaxed approach to the One Child Policy (Currier, 2008; Greenhalgh, 2003; McLoughlin, 2005). Indeed, as urban areas have begun to enjoy unprecedented economic development, many families are able to have a second child as a result of their affluence (i.e. the financial penalties really don't serve as a disincentive). Additionally, the government has implemented a series of exceptions to the One Child Policy that allow families to have a second child without penalty under certain circumstances:

Locally accepted exemptions are enacted if both parents are themselves only-children, if the mother delivered her first child after 25 years of age with a gap of 5 years prior to the second child's delivery, if the first child is born with a major defect, and in the case of remarriage where one partner has no child from a prior marriage, or if the parents belong to specific employment groups (e.g., coal miners) (McLoughlin, 2005, p. 311).

The most recent iteration of the One Child Policy is that of the “low quantity, high quality” *yousheng* (literally “good” or “useful birth”) program as discussed in Zhu (2008). In this manifestation, the quality (*suzhi*) of the child is emphasized, with parents

bearing the responsibility of providing their community with as healthy and smart a child as possible. This process occurs well before pregnancy, with mandatory pre-natal classes and strict nutritional regimens undertaken by prospective mothers. Thus, those pregnancies that are planned out far in advance, and mothers who seek out the best medical care, and can purchase the best prenatal vitamins stand to produce the highest quality children (i.e. most able to compete, both in China and internationally). Those families that are most able to do this are generally middle and upper class urban families (what Zhu terms “high *suzhi*” families), while those least likely to be able to fulfill the *yousheng* program are rural families and the urban poor (i.e. those who have low *suzhi*).

This interplay between the *yousheng* mandates and *suzhi* may well be related to the phenomenon of orphaned children in China. Because the focus of China’s population policies have changed from the simple limiting of population to a limited but more competitive population, which is actively promoted via *yousheng* policies, some children with more significant disabilities may be strategically abandoned to orphan care because of the birth parents’ inability/perceived inability to adequately meet these children’s special needs. Those children that are at highest risk of abandonment are rural, poor, female, and/or disabled. Because being both rural and poor are highly correlated (referred to popularly as having “low *suzhi*” with the connotation of this quality being innate (“in the bones”) (Zhu, 2008)), orphaned children are much more likely to be doubly (or trebly) marginalized. This may well affect the greater cultural drive to remedy the problem or to have these children integrated into the larger culture.

In order to better grasp some of these cultural concepts, I have developed the following diagram (Figure 2) that applies Zhu's concepts and in which I attempt to provide a **hypothetical illustration** of the way in which *suzhi* is played out in modern Chinese society. Of particular importance is the potential application of *suzhi* stigmatization to orphaned children:

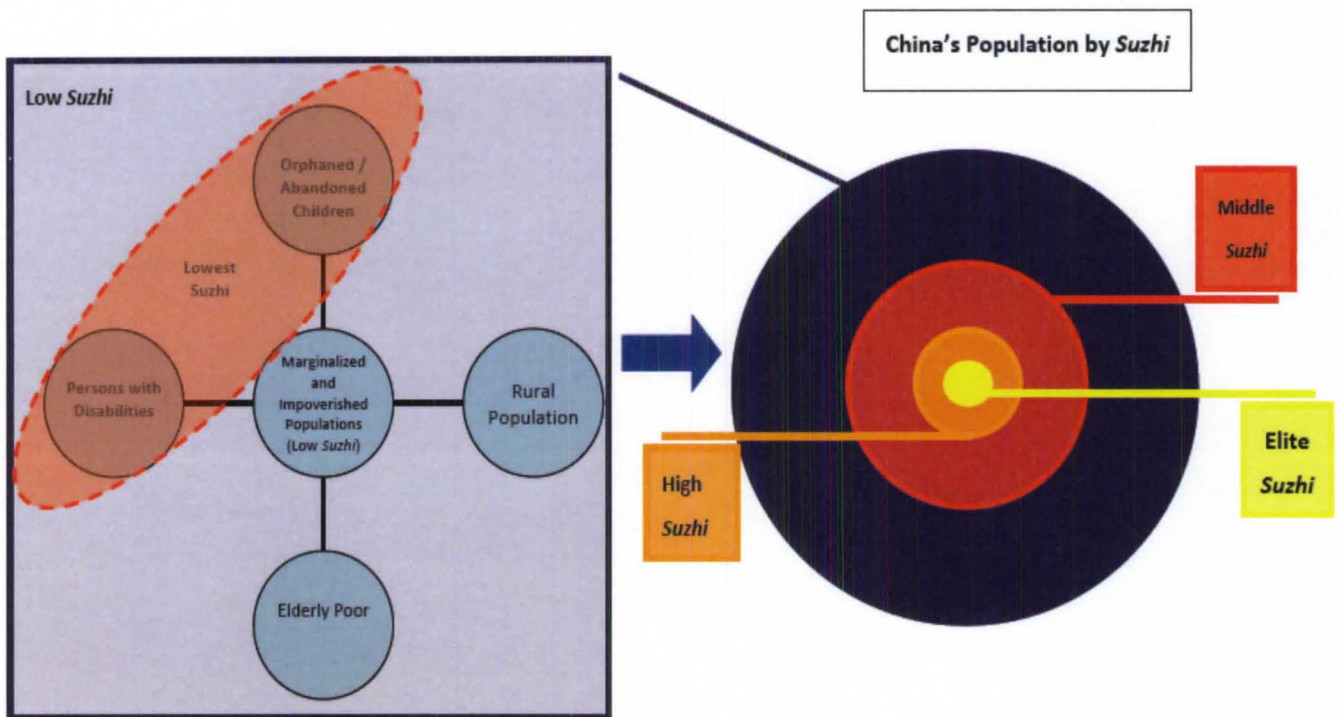


Figure 2. China's Population by Suzhi.

While the One Child Policy was able to dramatically slow population growth in China, a number of additional consequences also emerged as a result. Perhaps the most disturbing of the unintended consequences is the reduction of the number of females born in China (the so-called "Missing Girls" of China). Data indicate that the "standard" expected sex ratio at birth world-wide is 105 or 106 boys per 100 girls (Arnold and Liu, 1986; Johansson and Nygren (1991); and Wu, Viisainen, and Hemminki (2006)). Arnold



and Liu (1986) found that “The overall sex ratio for children in the (1982 One-Per-Thousand National Sample Fertility Survey) is reported to be 108.4 males per 100 females, considerably higher than the sex ratio in most other countries (p. 240)”. More recent studies noted similar findings, with Johansson and Nygren (1991) citing ratios as high as 115 - 118 males per 100 females between 1984 and 1987 and Wu, Viisainen, and Hemminki (2006) finding a ratio of 114:100 in 1993. When applied to the actual number of births, the difference between the expected ratio (106:100) and the actual ratios (108 – 114 depending on the year) produce the number of “missing girls” (for instance, Johansson and Nygren estimate that this number was about 500,000 each year from 1985 and 1987) . All sources concur that these ratios depart from the international norm in the years after 1979, when the One Child Policy was introduced.

Explanations for these higher than expected ratios that have been found across a variety of studies include “under-reporting of female births (including children given away for adoption whose births were not reported), antenatal sex determination and selective abortion of female fetuses, and excess early female neonatal mortality” (Wu, Viisainen, and Hemminki (2006), p. 172, ). With regard to the first category, Johansson and Nygren (1991) found that “adding the adopted children to live births reduces the number of missing girls by about half” (p. 46). There is significant evidence to indicate the prevalence of the practice of aborting female fetuses following sex determination by ultrasound (Arnold and Liu, 1986; Currier, 2008; Greenhalgh, 2003; Johansson and Nygren, 1991; Wu, Viisainen, and Hemminki, 2006). Finally, data on registered *pregnancies* in Anhui province provide information on the mortality rates for newborns:

“Most early neonatal deaths (82%) happened within 24 hours after birth, and during that time, girls were almost three times more likely to die than boys... The death rate of females on the day of birth increased much more sharply with parity than that of males. Girls born from second pregnancies were almost seven times more likely to die on their day of birth than boys, while there was no significant difference in the death rates of first-born girls and boys. At 1–6 days after birth, the death rates of girls and boys did not differ in first or in second pregnancies” (Wu, Viisainen, and Hemminki, 2006, p. 175).

The artificially skewed sex ratios produced as a consequence of the One Child Policy also have a number of other implications for modern Chinese culture as well, given the traditional role of daughters-in-law as caregivers. With many advances in health care, the average life span in China is in the mid-late 70s. This combination of people living longer combined with dramatic reductions in birth rates are creating a crisis of elder care. The 4-2-1 phenomenon (four grandparents and two parents supported by one child) that has occurred since 1979 is placing a new strain on Chinese society, that the government and civil society are struggling to negotiate (Flaherty, Liu, Ding, Dong, Ding, Li, and Xiao, 2007; Zhan, Liu, Guan, and Bai, 2006). Over the past decade China’s central government has worked to reconstruct the value of daughters. This has successfully promoted the lifelong connections between daughters and parents as well as continuing more traditional caregiving roles of parents-in-law, contributing to the strain on family systems.

Interestingly, Greenhalgh (2003) points out that most, if not all, of these consequences were raised as objections by the social science contingent in opposition to the One Child Policy in the debate surrounding its construction and implementation. These then-hypothetical objections were not able to carry the day against the impressive technological presentation of the technocrats, however.

It should be noted that not all of the unintended consequences of the One Child Policy are negative. For instance, women are more able and likely to have careers and work outside of the home (especially among urban women), with grandparents being able to take a greater role in child care than before (Currier, 2008). There is also evidence that relationships between adult daughters and their parents have become closer since the One Child Policy, often remaining in close contact even after marriage, representing a change from traditional Chinese culture, which historically has been patrilineal and patrilocal (Zhang, 2009; Dodge and Suter, 2008).

### **The One Child Policy and Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in China**

When it comes to investigating the link between the One Child Policy and the prevalence of orphaned children, a number of difficulties arise. Firstly, there remains considerable confusion as to how many children are actually abandoned across China each year. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that in 2007, there were 17,000,000 orphaned children from birth to 17 years of age in China ([http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/china\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/china_statistics.html)). On the other hand, Chun (2007) reports that "there are no definitive estimates on the number of orphans in China, though Children's Hope International believes that there are around 600,000 with 70,000

of them in state-run programs” (<http://newsweek.com/id/77710>), while Zhong (2006) writes “there are about 573,000 orphaned children under the age of 18 in China, representing about 0.04% of the total Chinese population of 1.3 billion” (p. 1). NGOs, researchers, and journalists writing on the topic seemingly report a different statistic for each article.

The inability to get an accurate assessment of this population has proven frustrating to researchers and NGOs for a number of reasons. First, fully identifying and disclosing the extent of the problem would be embarrassing to the central government (and this represents a major disincentive for doing so). However, even if this were not the case, there are other confounding factors at play. For instance, Zhang (2001, 2006) reports that in many rural areas, officials responsible for promoting and enforcing the One Child Policy frequently turn a blind eye to families with multiple children, and also to families who informally adopt a child who may or may not share kinship with the adoptive parents. Additionally, Zhang reports that many adopted infants in his sample were actually the parents’ biological children reported to authorities as being foundlings if pressed to account for multiple children in the household.

Nevertheless, the information that is available points to the fact that countless children have been abandoned and that most of these are girls or children with disabilities (Vonk, Simms, & Nackerud, 1998). Additional populations that are likely to experience some of the same issues include rural *de facto* abandoned children. These are children whose parents leave to find work in urban centers, while children, because of laws addressing educational provisions, remain in their home villages, where their parents are

home for only a few weeks/months per year. Other groups include children whose parents succumb to AIDS (increasingly more common in rural China), older orphaned children and victims of child trafficking who become “street kids” (Save the Children, 2004). Needless to say, all of these children are at increased vulnerability to abuse and exploitation.

With regard to children with disabilities in China, the Save the Children (2004) organization provides a broad summary of issues related to their experience in China:

Disability remains a key site of discrimination... Opportunities for employment of most disabled people, outside of separate institutions and factories, seem to be minimal, and this is likely to reinforce the abandonment of disabled children because they would be not only seen as a burden but also unable to support parents in later life. The abandonment of disabled children is followed by their placement in welfare homes (p. 16).

Unfortunately, there is very little information on orphaned children with disabilities in China. Some information is available through international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) working with this population in China, and some is available through both Chinese and international news organizations. However, at best, these sources serve as small snapshots of orphaned children with disabilities in China, and at worst provide widely divergent or conflicting information. It is clear that more work needs to be done to provide a better profile of the lives of these children.

## **Traditional Chinese Culture and the One Child Policy**

The One Child Policy conflicts with China's traditional culture which values large families and desired male offspring as heirs:

In the past, the family in China was dominated by the male patriarch, and the practice of ancestor worship gradually developed. In Confucian times, the patriarchal family structure and the resulting strong preference for sons became institutionalized values. According to the Book of Rites, "A woman is to obey her father before marriage, her husband during married life, and her son in widowhood." These traditions also stress the importance of carrying on the family line through male progeny. These values provided the justification for the tradition of female infanticide. Precise information is not available, but John Aird estimated that the level of differential female infanticide may have been about 2.5 percent prior to 1949 (US Bureau of the Census, 1961). (Arnold and Liu, 1986, p. 226).

This conflict between ancient tradition and modern policy has resulted in thousands of orphaned children since the inception of the One Child Policy in 1979 (Arnold and Liu, 1986; Johansson and Nygren, 1991). These orphaned children were disproportionately female and/or disabled (Vonk, Simms, & Nackerud, 1998).

As an outsider, I believe that there is an underlying dichotomy or conflict that is a key focal point when it comes to understanding how the confluence of culture, politics, and socioeconomic pressures combine around the issue of orphaned children in China that needs further study. The extended family and the roles of each member of the family

are held in the highest esteem, to the degree that many other social configurations organize around a pseudo- or quasi- family model that lends cohesion to society. This, when combined with the centrality of patriarchy (and resultant patrilineal traditions) and “face” (see below for an overview of this concept) in traditional Chinese culture, the collectivist emphasis on the needs of the group over the individual, and pragmatic issues surrounding the allocation of scarce resources to individuals who it is believed will never be able to significantly contribute to the common good of the family (and, by extension, society), all lead to the over-representation girls and children with disabilities among Chinese orphans. It seems possible that the mere presence of some of these children may lead to feelings of profound disharmony in their home environments, around which deep traditions have been constructed over the centuries in China.

Indeed, Chinese culture has traditionally valued harmonious interrelationships among individuals and groups (although historically this harmony has been hard to come by), and this has been addressed by the three great religions and philosophies of China: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. For instance, Confucian philosophy held that society functions harmoniously when individuals know their place in society and function willingly in this role. This was codified in Confucius’ “basic formula”:

If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.

If there be beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.

If there be harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.

If there be order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

(Smith, 1965, p. 196).

Daoist philosophy also values harmony, and has developed numerous practices that focus primarily on an individual's harmony with the natural world. The primary importance of Daoism in relation to the present discussion hinges on the virtues of balance and compassion. In the Daoist view, balance must precede compassion, for only from balanced "being" and perceptions can true compassion emerge (Frantzis, 2001, 2007). The definition of what Daoists call balance (or, more precisely harmony) is fairly complex. This harmony, at its highest level is called *wuwei*, and is usually translated as actionless-action. It simply refers to the immense capacity and power that is present to the person who is in harmony with existence from their innermost being. It is then assumed that this power is directed in such a manner as to benefit others (that is, from balance comes compassion). Indeed, seeking one's own desires rather than the good of others is one of the principle barriers to *wuwei*, and according to the Daoists, is one of the principle sources of trouble that we experience in life (Chang, 1963, Smith, 1965). In other words, human beings in our primal, natural state (that is, a state which is in harmony with Existence) is inherently good and powerful. However, this state is elusive due to our own grasping (refusal to embrace change) and the grasping of others. However, Daoists have long recognized the social nature of human being, and so have applied their principles to society as well, particularly in regard to rulers and the ruled.

In contrast, Buddhism also holds harmony and compassion in high esteem, but holds that compassion produces balance, reversing the Daoist schema. Buddhists hold that becoming attached to the ephemera of the material world and self-gratification leads to suffering (both of the self and of society). Buddhism offers a path whereby this



suffering can be overcome through non-attachment and compassion for all living things. This lends itself more to an “endure and transcend” approach, while stressing compassion for others. It is important to note that for Buddhists, it is this attachment to the world and life that leads to endless rounds of material existence and suffering through reincarnation. By transcending attachment, it is possible to be free of the world of illusion and be reunited with the source of all that exists (Smith, 1965). In China, as far back as the Tang dynasty (618 – 906 AD/CE) Buddhist “monasteries undertook many charitable activities and social welfare services” (Ebrey, 1993, p. 313). In addition, many Buddhist nunneries also served as orphanages in many parts of China (Ebrey, 1993). Thus we see that there is a deep seated culture of compassion for all forms of suffering in traditional Chinese culture.

As Arnold and Liu (1986) pointed out in the quote at the beginning of this section, this entire cultural context is wrapped up in the nature of the relationship between parent and child, especially in a society that reveres (and, in many senses, worships) ancestors. Having a child with a disability may often be interpreted as a result of a parents’ sin and is a punishment from Heaven. Given cultural belief in reincarnation, having a disability may also be seen as being the result of an individual’s bad *dharma* from a previous existence. In either case, there may well be a sense that having a disability may be one’s own fault. This is not dissimilar to many Western religious traditions, where disabilities have been viewed as a punishment from God.

This being said, there are a number of cultural precedents for an alternate view. Both Buddhism and Daoism have compassion and balance as central tenets of these faiths

(take for example Kwan Yin, the goddess/bodhisattva of mercy, arguably the most popular figure of reverence in these faiths). Similarly, in Confucianism, there are expectations of provision from those higher in status toward those lower (Smith, 1965).

One additional component that is related to traditional Chinese culture is that of “face”. Face is roughly analogous as honor, except that there is a generally perceived social mandate that the members of a society are responsible both for their own face, and for the face of others. For example, rather than directly confronting the minor wrongdoing of another, it is customary to couch the reprimand as a request for assistance on the part of the other, thus preserving face. To cost another face is generally undesirable, and could potentially result in loss of face for one’s self as well. Chai and Chai (2007), report two popular Chinese aphorisms with regard to the concept of face: *Jia chou bu ke wai yang* (“A family’s ugliness (misfortune) should never be publicly aired”) and *Ren yao lian, shu yao pi* (“A person needs face (just like) a tree needs bark”). To further emphasize the central importance of the concept, Chai and Chai write:

“a traditional insult is to say that a person has no face (*bu yao lian*), which means that person has no principles. By the same token, one of the worst things that can happen to a person is to “lose face” (*diu lian*)...Without the protection of your good social standing, a person cannot survive” (p. 77).

The importance of this concept in Chinese culture can’t be overstated, and the same importance applies to the group as well as to the individual.

As was stated earlier in this chapter, I believe that it is the cultural reverence of family derived from China’s great philosophical and religious

traditions (especially the Confucian tradition) and this concept of face that collide with China's modern population control policies in producing the social reality of orphaned children in China. In other words, core components of China's cultural agenda related to orphaned children may be able to be accessed by seeking to understand not only the individual cultural components, but also the way that these components interact in the crucible of China's population control policies.

### **Western Perspectives on Orphan Care**

#### **Adoption and Foster Care**

Adoptions in the West have occurred on a massive scale since the end of World War II (Hollingsworth, 2003). War, poverty, and associated phenomena (e.g. disease, famine, social instability) have contributed to heretofore unheard of numbers of orphaned and abandoned children around the world. Finding ways to care for the children has been the focus of all levels of society (individuals/families, nations, and international organizations). Issues from idealism to cost of care all find their place in the discussion of the care of children outside of their families-of-origin.

In the West, care of orphaned and abandoned children has shifted away from congregate/institutional settings to individual placements in homes whenever possible. Data indicate that outcomes are much better for children in both the long- and short-term, particularly when adoptive vs. foster placements are examined (Hegar, 2005). In addition, this shift has proven to be cost-effective. However, for individual placement and care of orphaned or abandoned children to occur, there must be the resources to do so. Institutional care is still prevalent in many countries that have few resources available

for individual care, and probably represents better outcomes than the alternative for children in these situations.

Adoptions have long been considered to be less expensive than foster care in the U.S., and financial incentives from both federal and state governments have been allocated to adoptive families (Barth, Lee, Wildfire, & Guo, 2006). One study found that the cost of care for children in adoptive placements is initially higher when compared to foster care placements, but over time these costs reverse themselves, with adoptions resulting in substantial savings to the state (Barth, et al., 2006). Interestingly, similar studies have found that the cost of adoptive and foster care in China is much less than that of congregate care in State facilities (Dolven, 2002; Shang, 2001)., and, consequently, new efforts to promote adoptions (both domestic and international) and to develop foster care systems have been expanding (Johnson, 2002; Shang, 2001).

Although there is considerable debate over what constitutes the best interest of children, adoptions are generally seen as a means of securing a home for a child with a family who would otherwise have access to neither. Likewise, many adoptive parents are able to have families when they otherwise may not be able to (e.g. infertility). There is much debate on the value of adoption when birth parents are considered, however. The underlying causes of children being orphaned or abandoned (poverty and social inequities, for instance), are seen by some as means by which adoptive families from wealthy nations exploit poor or disenfranchised mothers in developing countries (Hollingsworth, 1993).

In recognition of this dynamic, the Convention on the Rights of the Child sees international adoption as an option of last resort, to be undertaken if and only if a suitable placement in a child's country/culture of origin is not possible. The implications of this shift from seeing international adoptions as a means to "rescue" children from poverty to viewing it as an option of last resort is a startling one to many in the West. Indeed, some posit that the former model of adoption (adoption as rescue) is actually exploitive of vulnerable countries and cultures, and that in the long run, children and women would be better served by eliminating social and economic disparities in developing countries; simply adopting out vulnerable children to wealthy countries is a form of enabling of said disparities (Hollingsworth, 1993; Riley, 1997).

#### **Recent international adoption trends in the U.S.**

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the practice of international adoption has grown from a marginal and unusual practice to the current state of adoptions. Hollingsworth (2003, p. 210) references five waves of international adoptions experienced in the U.S.: post-World War II (with adoptive children primarily from Germany and Greece, although large numbers were also adopted from Japan), post-Korean War era characterized by the adoption of thousands of children orphaned as a result of the conflict (beginning in the 1950s), a third wave with children concentrated from Central and South America (beginning in the late 1980s, but reaching its height in the mid-1990s), a fourth wave following the fall of the Soviet Bloc nations in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the fifth wave (occurring from the early 1990s to the present) of children adopted from China (related to the One-Child policies implemented in the

early 1980s). As a result of this dramatic increase in orphaned and abandoned children moving from their home countries/cultures-of-origin to their new homes (largely in the West, and largely with parents of European heritage), there have been major changes in the ways in which the international community has addressed intercountry adoptions.

**International Law.** The evolution of international awareness and oversight in regard to this evolving system of adoption practices can be seen very clearly in several of the International Conventions that have come out of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH). The HCCH consists of 60 member nations who have come together to standardize private international law (including the area of adoption law). Currently, there are approximately 120 countries (including member states and non-member states) that have become parties to the various Hague Conventions. The first element arising from the HCCH that explicitly addresses areas of international adoption is the 1965 Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law and Recognition of Decrees Relating to Adoptions. This article limits itself to addressing international adoptions between contracting states, and does not extend itself to internal adoptions within said states. Significantly, this Convention was the first to recognize the need that international adoptions should only occur if they are in the “interest of the child”, and provided for means by which all parties involved in the adoption will undergo a “thorough inquiry”. These means, when possible, were to be performed by qualified public and/or private organizations and with the assistance of social workers that have training or experience with issues surrounding adoptions.

The HCCH revisited the area of international adoptions in 1993 (Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption) and again in 1996 (Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children). These conventions served to update the 1965 statutes and to establish a series of uniform protocols and bureaucratic structures that are to be undertaken by HCCH signatories to increase safeguards for children involved in international adoptions (it is interesting to note the timing of the HCCH Conventions as related to the waves of intercountry adoptions referenced in Hollingsworth above).

In many ways, the HCCH served to reinforce the movement to protect children affected by international adoptions, a movement which took a dramatic step forward in 1989, when the United Nations produced its Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN drafted its legislation to recognize childhood as a unique and vulnerable time in life that deserves special recognition and protection. In this document, the UN holds that children have an inherent right to (among many other things) a name and identity, and recognizes that one's nation and/or culture of origin is a significant part of one's identity (Cerda, 1990); consequently, when it comes to international adoptions, the U.N. seeks to protect the cultural identities of individual adopted children.

There are numerous barriers to the implementation of the U.N. Conventions on the Rights of the Child. Many Western nations that have complex federal systems of government have long-standing legal processes related to rights of children. The realignment of these systems to comply with U.N. mandates faces significant social and

political hurdles in these countries (and is one reason why the U.S. has not become a party to the Convention). Tang (2003) points out that the network of national and provincial/state laws that have been largely implemented in response to crises or areas of concern (rather than driven by child-centered legislative policies as promoted by the U.N. Convention) are barriers both because of their entrenched and multi-layered complexity and because of the political will behind their implementation in the first place. It is interesting to note that many Scandinavian countries have been able to complete this realignment and implementation in short order (Tang, 2003); it would seem smaller, more centralized governments with substantially homogeneous populations have an advantage in this.

### **Chinese Culture, Western Culture, and Orphaned Children in China**

I believe that the heart of the subtle conflict between China and the West around this phenomenon relates to the way in which orphans have been framed, typified, and defined as a **social problem** in the West, especially by those with humanistic and/or religious presuppositions (Human Rights Watch, 1996; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). I argue that this conflicts with a Chinese construction of orphans as a **social fact**, deserving of intervention and caregiving, but without laying blame on the government or the people of China. The underlying philosophical positions may well lead to different conclusions about outcomes for orphaned children, while still agreeing on the immediate need to provide the best possible care for these children.

Construction theory holds that although social phenomena certainly exist, social problems (that is, undesirable social phenomena that require large scale efforts to redress



because of severity or prevalence) are constructed. There is a process wherein the social problem is typified (i.e. brought into public consciousness through a compelling image or narrative) and this typification is circulated through a culture, prompting action. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two that follows. It is clear that this construction process has occurred in the West, but it is unclear whether or to what extent it has occurred in China. Investigating this will be a major focus of my research.

To reiterate, orphaned children as a social problem in China has primarily been defined by the international community in general and the West in particular. However, given the perils of public dissent in China, it is virtually impossible for an outsider to know how much or to what extent that the presence of orphaned children in society is/was seen as being problematic. It would appear that the government would ideally control for the prevalence of disability by preventing the births of those with disability, and that the primary limitation of this approach is the lack of screening and planned births among the rural poor (as well as improved technology to detect the presence of disabilities *in utero*).

Apparently this is something of a confounding issue in this case. In a macro sense, if China's prevalence of orphaned children is only defined as a problem because of Westerners, and is addressed only in response to international criticism, then this may well be perceived as the West "forcing" a loss of face on China. To the extent that this is true, this could well make for a passive-aggressive approach to solving the problem (as well as a ramped-up eugenics program that may be an unintended consequence of Western criticism and intervention). These latter points are related to Diffusion Theory

and the social dynamics at play in a given context that either mitigate or aggravate the adoption of new ideas. This, too, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

It would be a grievous error to forget that there are many Chinese citizens who spend their lives caring for orphaned children and who seek to make what changes they can. Indeed, returning to Greenhalgh's account of the social construction of the population crisis and the One Child Policy as its cure, it is striking to note the fact that the social scientists who opposed the One Child Policy, often vociferously and at great personal cost, warned of the consequences of the policy, especially as concerns women and vulnerable children (Greenhalgh, 2003) Nor is this dynamic a new one. While there has been a history of female infanticide in some parts of China (attributed to poverty and generally carried out by drowning), there is also a rich history of seeking social remedies to this practice. For instance, You Zhi of the Infant Protection Society wrote the following in mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century China:

When we look into the charitable institutions available, we find that, besides orphanages, there are foundling homes and nurseries which take in infants for temporary stays and transport them for the villagers. Therefore adopting the principle of Su Dongpo, who saved infants in Huang'e, and Peng Nanyun, who wrote on saving those who were being drowned, we have formulated a way to offer subsidies of cash and rice to make it possible for parents to raise their children at home instead of sending them to orphanages (Ebrey, 1993, p. 314).

It is clear that at some times, and by some people, the prevalence of orphans and the practice of infanticide have been constructed as social problems rather than mere

phenomena in China. The question before me, then, is to what extent is this the case now? Do most Chinese people view the prevalence of orphaned children as a social phenomenon that arose because of a response to a social problem (i.e. overpopulation), or do most perceive this as being a social problem in and of itself? In the case of the latter, what has been the role of the West in typifying this problem?

To the extent that it is primarily the West that is seen as attempting to construct the problem in/for China, this could be a risky proposition if China as a whole perceives the West as forcing the issue and using it as leverage to take the moral high road away from China. Similarly, the international adoption of large numbers of Chinese children, particularly healthy girls, can (and is) seen as exploitative of Chinese children and families by the West. For instance, Hollingsworth (1993) writes,

...that international adoption, although providing assistance to some children, exploits unjust social structures in the “sending” countries from which children are adopted, where they and their biological families have not had access to the freedoms and the resources enjoyed by more advantaged children and families in both the sending and “receiving” countries (p. 209).

The issue of whether or not orphaned children in China constitute a social problem stems in part from cultural conflicts over ideology. The newest expression of values in the West that come to play include progressive ideals such as: Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up in a home/family; and persons with disabilities are to be valued for the unique contributions that they, and only they, can make to society. This progressive approach also indicates that orphaned children and children with disabilities

should be given the supports that are needed to facilitate their successful integration/functioning in the greater society.

I do have some anecdotal evidence related to children with physical and cognitive disabilities being placed in foster care in the community in a small town in central China, and the dim view taken by the community that resulted in returning these children to the orphanage setting. Specifically, a child with a physical disability necessitating the use of a wheelchair was placed with a foster family. This family lived on the fifth floor of an apartment building, which, like most apartments in this part of China, had no elevator. The foster parents had to carry the child and his wheelchair up and down the stairs when entering or leaving the apartment. Reportedly, neighbors found fault with this (and expressed their displeasure) to the point that the child was returned to the orphanage. (P. White, personal communication, November 14, 2008). While this is an isolated anecdote and as such should not be unduly generalized from, it may well point to an underlying (and unidentified) cultural norm that stands in direct contrast to relevant Western norms.

As a social worker in America, I would argue that social work values are highly correlated with Western humanistic values, and thus would conform to or vary from Chinese cultural values to the same extent. That is, if I am correct that social work values are highly correlated with Western humanistic values, then social work values will align with Chinese cultural values to roughly the same extent that Western humanistic values do. I believe that it is this point that deserves a great deal of attention on my part. Simply proceeding under the impression that because my culture says a thing is valuable doesn't necessarily mean that another culture values the same thing in the same way. However, I

do believe that there will be at least some points of intersection (and probably many such points), and that these intersects, once made explicit, will be fruitful for identifying synergistic ways to address the needs of orphaned children in China. Indeed, my hypothesis is that these points of intersection do exist and that they will be most prevalent when it comes to behavioral or environmental aspects of care. For example, issues such as orphaned children, both with and without disabilities, deserve food, shelter, clothing, safety, companionship, etc. There may very well be different cultural motivators that would prompt the provision of these elements, but all would agree that they should be provided.

This sets the stage for identifying potential “winners” and “losers” (i.e. what social elements have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, and what social elements would benefit from change) under the current state of affairs, and under potential changes to the system. Potentially, China itself loses face with the international community based on the prevalence of orphaned children and the manner in which the society has chosen to address the problem – this is a big deal, and can be seen as the genesis for viewing the presence of the issue itself as a social problem. The West (in terms of its humanistic values) can lose if it is perceived as bullying or being self-righteous toward China and its values (this represents the other side of face). The rural poor lose as they are seen as being the ultimate source of China’s loss of face with the West (i.e. because of the attribution of innate low-quality (i.e. *suzhi*), and the popular assumption that most orphaned children come from their ranks (Zhu, 2008)). Obviously, orphaned children themselves are the ultimate losers, given their utter disenfranchisement

from the larger culture, their largely poor quality of life, their broken attachments, the risk for abuse and exploitation, and their lack of ability/empowerment to participate and enrich their home culture (my Western humanistic and religious values coming through).

Since its “opening up” in 1979, there have been numerous significant changes in China’s social welfare provision. As populations have been allowed to become more mobile, the old hometown and work unit-based system has broken down, leaving wide gaps in provision. Nevertheless, the Chinese State does maintain both Social Welfare Institutes (SWIs) and Child Welfare Institutes (CWIs) throughout the country. The CWIs represent the primary institutional provision of direct care services to orphaned children across China. Indeed, many International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) work in tandem with the CWIs, offering to serve the children with more intensive care needs (medical fragility, degree of cognitive impairment, behavioral supports, etc.).

The discussion of gains given the presence of orphaned children in China can be divided into actual/immediate gain and potential gain. Those who experience actual gain from the presence of this problem may include provincial and local governments, which gain from the inflow of both state and private (international) funds that are directed to often very poor communities in order to provide for the care of orphaned children (which may also serve to offset potential loss of corporate face by being able to show that they are attempting to address the problem). Similarly, individuals who are involved in running CWIs and other orphan care programs may also very well benefit by the same influx of funds. Other individuals and communities may gain by having a source of employment, security and resources as a result of participating in the care of these

children. NGOs/INGOs may gain by also being recipients of funds to serve orphaned children, as well as benefitting by having a role to play in the culture (by being bridges between East and West); should this social problem cease to exist, so would many of these NGOs. In terms of potential gain, China can gain face by showing change/improvement in addressing the problem. However, this may be offset by gains that China may be enjoying through the maintenance of the status quo by reducing competition for scarce resources.

This last point represents a purely hypothetical function of the current state of orphaned children, which I think may be extrapolated from Zhu's work with perinatal mothers in Central China. One of Zhu's major findings was the centrality of competition to the conception, birth, and parenting process:

Even before conception, a future mother is educated to prepare a suitable body – that is, strong, healthy, nourished, and happy, in order to cultivate a healthy, smart and, most of all, competitive baby. This group of future mothers is standing at the starting line of the competition their future babies will face. And as one of my interlocutors put it, “this [being well prepared for pregnancy] is a competition, even a battle; we could not afford to lose” (Zhu, 2008, p. 63).

Given the size of China's population, the relative scarcity of the resources necessary to achieve high status (education, finances, etc.), and the aforementioned level of competition even before birth, it is at least possible that one of the functions of the marginalization of orphaned children is reducing the amount/intensity of competition for status and economic resources.

## Summary

In summary, each of the identified dimensions of conflict and agreement surrounding orphan care in China are fundamentally human ones – that is, to some degree exponents of each conflicting viewpoint can be found in both Chinese and Western culture, albeit with a different degree of concentration (and so with differing levels of popular support (this is discussed in more depth under Diffusion Theory in Chapter Two below). Therefore, in the West we should be able to at least conceptually understand the context of the prevailing discussion in China whether or not there is popular agreement in the West. Similarly, changes in regard to orphan care (and, because of the high degree of correlation, services for children with disabilities) that are advocated by the West are in some small way being implemented in various parts of China (and often as a result of connections between Chinese and Western caregivers and advocates for children in orphan care); obviously, the ability to make inroads on even localized and small-scale levels indicates that the Western perspective has some resonance with many elements of traditional Chinese culture. The next chapter discusses some of the theoretical underpinnings that potentially explain many of these observed dynamics.



## **CHAPTER II: THEORIES**

### **Theories Informing the Concept of Sociocultural Agendas**

As I began to explore the way that the phenomenon of orphaned children in China was being discussed in different contexts, I began to notice some significant differences emerging. In order to make sense of these discussions, I am using the term “sociocultural agendas”. In the Merriam-Webster Online dictionary, the second definition of “agenda” is: “an underlying, often ideological, plan or program.” Additionally, the English word “agenda” comes from a Latin root meaning “to do”. Therefore, I am using the term “cultural agenda” to denote underlying ideological plans that emerge from a particular set of socioculturally-specific constructions or narratives. Although these sociocultural agendas are often hidden in a particular set of cultural norms or mores, because they are associated with a definite “doing” plan, I would argue that they are most easily teased out by identifying desired outcomes that can provide the means to make the implicit agendas more explicit. The following theories (Post-Marxian Conflict Theory, Social Construction Theory, and Diffusion Theory) are those which have been the most useful in exploring how these “discussions” are occurring as well as the nature of the variance within and among them.

### **(Post-Marxian) Conflict Theory**

Post-Marxian conflict theory sees society as consisting of groups vying for positions in social institutions and the authority that is inherent in these positions (Ritzer, 2008). For most iterations of conflict theory, there is an exclusively macro-level focus which sees individuals as agents rather than as individual actors (Collins is the exception to this, see below), and sees power/authority as being consolidated in positions rather than in the individuals that inhabit said positions.

Furthermore, society is composed of myriad associations, each of which has its own internal power structure. Dahrendorf holds that each position of authority in each association has both subordinate and superordinate positions around it, and, because authority is vested in the position rather than in the individual, an individual may be in a superordinate position in one association and a subordinate position in another (Dahrendorf, 1985, 2008). For example, a business owner and military reservist has authority over his employees at his business, but very well may be outranked by one of these same employees in his position as a reservist.

In the Marxian roots of conflict theory, praxis was a central component – the purpose of the theory was not just to observe society, but to actively seek its change. However, with both Dahrendorf and Collins, there has been a decided shift away from praxis and more towards generating theory itself (Ritzer, 2008). Collins especially, given his phenomenological and ethnomethodological roots, advocates for scientific study of conflict theory (specifically with regard to social stratification), deliberately moving away from the ideology that produced the focus on praxis in the origins of conflict

theory, and moving toward a more pragmatic and scientific view of the utility of the theory (Ritzer, 2008). Additionally, Collins specifically focuses on the micro level of analysis (while still maintaining the macro elements as being essential to any sociological theory), in order to increase the utility of the theory as being “ultimately reducible to everyday people in everyday life encountering each other in patterned ways” (Ritzer, p. 133).

Conflict theory offers a useful lens for examining the problem of orphaned children in China. First, Dahrendorf hypothesizes that conflict occurs as a result of dichotomous relationships among groups (Dahrendorf, 2008; Ritzer, 2008). The relationships are dichotomous because Dahrendorf sees associations as being formed of two groups (no more, no less) that both have a vested interest in the focus of their association (e.g. a baseball league, a Masonic lodge, a society). One of these groups is superordinate and expends the power of its dominant social positions to coercively preserve the status quo. The other group is subordinate and desires to increase its influence and change the status quo by becoming the dominant group. It is through the interplay of these two forces that social stability or social change (be it gradual or sudden) occur (Dahrendorf, 1985, 2008).

The issue of orphaned children in China can be examined at both the international and national levels. At the international level, the dominant group may be seen as those nations that ascribe to essentially humanistic values and who use the authority of their individual and collective power to promote the idea that every child deserves a family, a normalized place in society, and individual autonomy to the maximum extent possible.

These ideas are codified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and signatories may be seen as being by and large in favor of this view (with certain notable exceptions – China is a signatory, but may be seen as being at odds with many of the values expressed in the Convention; the US is not (yet) a signatory, but may be seen as the principle proponent and exporter of these very ideas). Those nations that offer the greatest support for these ideas also tend to be the most developed and prosperous (and thus the most powerful and authoritative). I would argue that even though China by and large seems to be reluctant to put the tenets of the Convention into effect, they do desire the prestige, power, and authority that come from being a member of this association.

As was discussed in the previous section, it is this “dominant” (i.e. Western) group in the international association that is largely responsible for bringing international attention to China’s large number of orphaned children, and for bringing coercive power into play to create a change in the circumstances in China’s society to both reduce the number of orphaned children, and to improve the lives of the orphaned children that it does have (and to accomplish both of these in a manner approved of by these dominant (largely) Western nations). Given its own cultural elements (such as face), China has proven extremely sensitive to international criticism, but, at the same time, seeks to maintain its own (internal) status quo, while being able to increase its international authority by means of association with the West. Thus, in the international scenario, the West represents the superordinate portion of the association and China (and other developing countries) represents the subordinate group.

At the national level in China, the central government remains committed to its efforts to reduce its population through the One Child Policy, including its more recent iterations (i.e. Low Quantity, High Quality *yousheng* policies) (Zhu, 2008). Therefore, when seen through the lens of conflict theory, the association is the national society, and the dominant group is the central government, which maintains the status quo through the coercive application of its authority. Therefore, the general population (especially higher status, urban populations) sees this application of power as being legitimate, and works toward the maintenance of the status quo. The subordinate group includes orphaned children and those sub-groups that compose or contribute to this population (e.g. “low suzhi” populations - the poor and rural populations, girls, persons with disabilities) and at least some of those persons (both Chinese and *laowai*) who work with these groups and advocate for them.

Conflict theory then allows for some understanding of the mechanisms for both maintaining the present state of affairs and for seeking social change. Given the unique nature of modern Chinese society, and the extremely vigorous efforts to control associations in civil society by the central government, one could predict that, barring some radical internal change or increased coercive pressure from the West, there will be little chance for change. It should be noted however, that those instances in which the central government have been most tolerant of associations in civil society have often been in regard to orphans and persons with disabilities. I interpret this as the government taking a pragmatic stance to both appease the West and to maintain the status quo (and also could be a result of the infiltration of humanistic ideals and/or the spread of Chinese

culture's own traditions of compassion). This bodes well for the eventual improvement of orphaned children across China in the long run, but not necessarily for the reduction of the phenomenon in a way that would be acceptable to the West.

### **(Social) Construction Theory**

Best (1995), indicates that, among social scientists, there is a debate as to whether social problems are “facts” that exist in a given society or whether there is a process by which the perception of social problems are framed and created. The former view represents a positivist view (i.e. that a social problem, like homelessness, is created by economic, political, and personal forces at play in society, that converge and coalesce into a given problem, which then becomes the focus of study and intervention) and the latter represents a constructivist view. Constructionists hold that by focusing on specific problems, positivists have no way to offer unifying theories of social problems, and instead are limited to studying individual problems (which, in the constructivist view, actually participate in the construction of the problem itself) (Best, 1995; Spector and Kitsuse, 2001).

Constructionists on the other hand, look at the ways in which social phenomena come to be collectively viewed as social problems, focusing on the claims-making process, especially through such means as typification. In this way, constructionists believe that the phenomenon of social problems itself can be understood from a unifying vantage point (Best, 1995; Gergen, 1994; Spector and Kitsuse, 2001). For example, although the phenomenon of driving under the influence of alcohol has been around for as long as there have been automobiles, how did it come to be viewed as a social

problem? There is evidence to suggest that drivers who are affected by fatigue may well be involved in more serious accidents than drunk drivers, yet this is not seen as being a social problem – why not?

On the whole, construction theory seems to be largely focused on macro-level phenomena and interactions (Best, 1995; Gergen, 1994; Spector and Kitsuse, 2001). Individuals become important as claims-makers and when they are used in the typification process (i.e. as symbols of what may become a social problem), but not as individuals themselves. Finally, construction theory seems inextricably linked to praxis – it is fundamentally concerned with the changes that are occurring and of the role of society in creating the impetus for change (Best, 1995).

Given the macro-stage set by conflict theory above, construction theory would seem to be an extremely useful means of looking at the problem of orphaned children in China, especially given the modest gains in organizations serving this population in Chinese civil society. As mentioned previously, constructionism is concerned with how phenomena are perceived as being social problems. Constructionists see those agents (groups and/or individuals) who make an appeal for (or against) a particular phenomenon to be considered as a social problem as claims-makers. These claims-makers serve to advance their particular cause in the public sphere, until such time as said cause gains enough “critical mass” to be viewed by the larger society as being a social problem. Being viewed as a social problem brings numerous resources to bear on the issue that would not be available if it were not viewed as being a social problem (Best, 1995).

The means that claims-makers use to bring their issues to public awareness includes the typification process, wherein they “inevitably characterize problems in particular ways: they emphasize some aspects and not others, they promote specific orientations, and they focus on particular causes and advocate particular solutions” (Best, 1995, p. 9). As Best points out, this is a rhetorical process, relying on both communication (specifically mass communication) and persuasion. This often occurs through the use of vivid imagery and the stories of individuals related to the phenomenon. For instance, in the US, autism awareness took a quantum leap forward after the release and immense popularity of the film, *Rainman*. This presented particular elements in a way that a huge audience could vicariously experience and thereby create an emotional reaction in them. This then translated into increased interest, opportunities, and funding for autism-related endeavors. Autism became typified in the character of “Rainman”, as well as in others, like Temple Grandin, who become lightning rods for the attention needed to perceive a phenomenon as being worthy of “social problem status.”

Thus, in the case of orphaned children in China, I would argue that in China itself, this was not seen as being a social problem, just as a condition that exists in society that the population accepts as a result of the One Child Policy. Overpopulation was seen as being the real social problem, the One Child Policy as being the cure, and a lot of orphaned kids as being essentially an unexpected side effect. It was not until people from the West began to become aware of this situation that China’s orphaned children and the conditions in which they lived (and died), that this phenomenon became a social problem – in the West. Indeed, the typifying experience can be directly traced to the Human



Rights Watch report on January 1<sup>st</sup> of 1996. This sparked considerable interest in North American and European media outlets, leading to further emotionally-charged publicity for the phenomenon. Immediately thereafter, international adoptions of Chinese children, especially girls, skyrocketed. Thus, while not a social problem in China, the huge numbers of orphaned children in China became a social problem outside of China.

Then, especially because of Chinese cultural mores such as “face”, this became a social problem for China, but only because of the aforementioned negative international attention. For the most part, the life situation of orphaned children in China does not seem to be considered a social problem by the Chinese themselves (although, it does seem to be something of a sore spot in relation to outsiders). To alleviate the pressures associated with the involvement with the international community around this issue, the central government has been lenient with regard to both Chinese and foreigners who organize themselves to help to alleviate some of the presenting concerns. This enables governmental claims-makers the latitude to claim forward-motion in addressing the “problem” internationally, without having to make any substantive policy or practice changes internally.

Given China’s central government’s control over media outlets inside of China, it would be extremely difficult for claims-making and typification for phenomena and positions that are not completely in line with the central governments positions to get much coverage. In other words, there are numerous factors that would seem to work against the rhetorical processes by which claims-makers help to construct social problems that the central government does not see as being problematic (and the obverse is also

true). In other words, the means to generate critical mass around the issue of orphaned children in China is essentially short-circuited in China itself.

Two of the three articles on construction theory presented here are similar in that they tend to be qualitative in their approaches to studying social phenomena. Presumably this relates to the fact that construction theory itself arose as a response to empirical claims about particular “social problems” without speaking to the issue of social problems itself (Best, 1995). Consequently, constructionism is rooted firmly in the heuristic tradition and, as such, often utilizes qualitative research methods. As with the preceding section on conflict theory, social psychological applications of the theory seem to be more amenable to quantitative validation.

### **Diffusion Theory**

This idea of critical mass building in a population around a particular concept is drawn from diffusion theory. In his seminal work on diffusion theory, *Diffusion of Innovations*, Everett Rogers (2003) defines diffusion as “the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system.” Rogers lays out the tenets of the theory, including how it applies to all manner of technological innovations, including what he terms “software aspects”, which he defines as the information base for a particular technology. In his discussion on technology, Rogers states, “a technology may be almost entirely composed of information; examples are a political philosophy such as Marxism, a religious idea such as Christianity, a news event, and a policy such as a municipal non-smoking ordinance” (p. 13). It is the use of the term technology in regard to these software aspects that

concerns the present study (although, the transfer of various technologies to address the varied needs of orphaned children in China, such as alternative adoption and foster care models, behavioral or trauma-based interventions, etc., could also benefit from the application of diffusion theory).

Rogers (2003) defines diffusion as “the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (p. 5). Rogers has embedded the four primary elements of the diffusion process in this theory: innovation; communication channels; time; and social system. These relate to the ways in which (perceived as) new technologies (*innovations*) are disseminated by means of interpersonal communication among social networks (*communication networks*) over a period of *time* in a particular group of people (*social system*).

In Rogers’ theory, it would appear that because innovations are diffused throughout every social level, diffusion theory is concerned with every level of intervention – micro (individuals and local communication networks), mezzo (organizations), and macro (mass media, high-level social structures, etc.); diffusion theory offers a means of analysis at each level. Consequently, individuals are definitely active participants – they are the base unit of any communication networks, and are active, unique participants in the process of diffusion. Even organizations and macro level social structures are recognized as being composed of individuals. Individual qualities may increase or decrease the probability that innovations will be diffused throughout a given communication network.

Similarly, the role of praxis would seem to be central to diffusion theory, in that the practical activities that result in the ways in which innovations are (or are not) spread throughout a particular social structure are of primary concern in the theory. Diffusion theory is not concerned with merely abstract social analyses, but is primarily concerned with the ways that actual innovations are diffused through actual places at actual times by means of communication networks that are composed of actual people.

Among its many benefits, diffusion theory offers a schema which enables predictions about whether or not an innovation will be accepted or not, how quickly said diffusion may occur, and helps to identify potential strategies for accomplishing successful diffusion in a particular place at a particular time. This is precisely the premise of my previous section, which is located at the many points of interaction between social construction theory and diffusion theory. I argue that the prevalence of orphaned children in China (and their living conditions) is perceived as being a social problem in the West, but not in China itself. Therefore, Western efforts to make a case for orphaned children as a social problem inside China is an innovative idea (accompanied by innovative technologies for addressing the problem once it is accepted), and thus relates directly to diffusion theory.

By the same token, diffusion theory offers a means to predict the extent to which these innovations may be successfully diffused throughout the Chinese population, potential barriers to diffusion in China, and strategies for maximizing the probability of acceptance of the premise among particular communication networks. For instance, diffusion theory identifies heterophilus and homophilus communication networks.

Heterophilous networks are those in which two or more individuals have dissimilar characteristics (e.g. age, race, education, social status, etc.), while homophilous networks exist among individuals who are essentially similar with regard to these characteristics. Rogers (2003) notes that, “In a free-choice situation, when an individual can interact with any one of a number of other individuals, the tendency is to select someone who is very similar” and that “the transfer of ideas occurs most frequently between two individuals who are similar, or homophilous” (p. 19).

These concepts have obvious relevance for foreigners working in China, trying to promote the idea that the prevalence of orphaned children is a social problem. According to the theory, this group of outsiders is trying to promote a particular innovative viewpoint to a substantial population that largely differs from the innovators in terms of race, social status, income, education, language, and cultural background is going to have a long road toward cultural diffusion of this particular innovation. I would also argue that particular cultural values such as face would only serve to deepen the differences between these groups, as well as creating an additional barrier to adoption if outsiders are perceived as finding fault with Chinese culture and values. This is further compounded by the fact that a free press is not present to participate in disseminating the innovation *en masse*, thus creating a barrier to achieving the critical mass necessary to adopt the population that either share some ideas or are at least open to the innovation (what Rogers terms domestic “innovators” and “early adopters”), then allies may be secured that will begin to aid diffusion among their own communication channels that will be significantly more homophilous than that of the foreign innovators. Rogers’ discussion of

the role of time in the diffusion process may also allow those working in this particular innovation diffusion process to take a long term perspective to their efforts and not to be too discouraged if progress seems slow. Below is a hypothetical model of the relatively rapid adoption of an innovation between societies. The dimension of time is implicit within each communication channel (depicted as arrows) as information passes through the channel gradually rather than immediately:

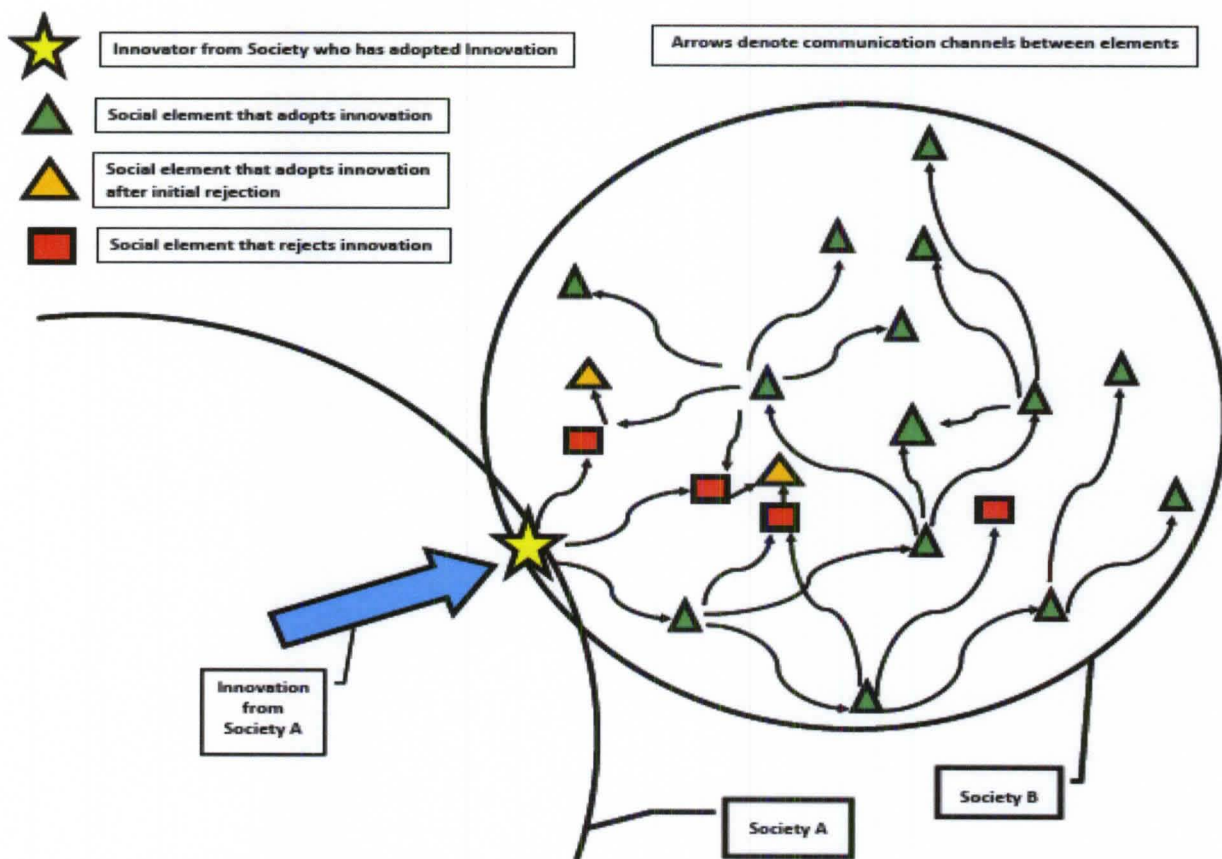


Figure 3. Hypothetical model of the adoption of an innovation between societies.

### Hypothetical Interaction of Theories Around Children in Orphan Care in China

In studying conflict theory, construction theory, and diffusion theory, I have been struck by the degree to which they all overlap. Indeed, it could even be the case that

diffusion theory might be considered a highly technical and well developed subset of construction theory, while conflict theory describes the socially constructed realities that enable either the persistence of the status quo or its overturning. I look forward to additional study with regard to all three theories and in eventually being able to better discern the interplay and reinforcement each has on the others. In the meantime, below is a hypothetical representation of theory interplay *within* a society (between societies could also be similarly represented, too):

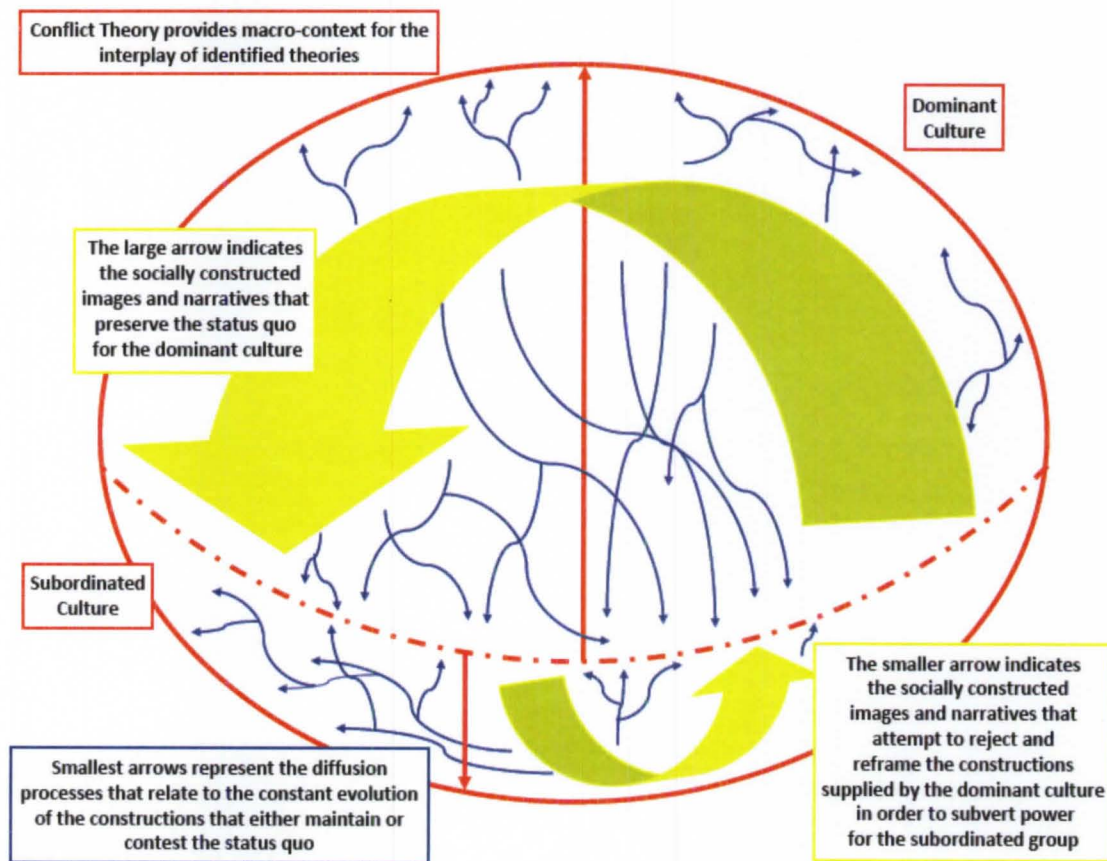


Figure 4. Hypothetical interaction of theories around children in orphan care in China.

## **Summary**

The variants of Conflict Theory, Construction Theory, and Diffusion Theory described above are all present in the concept of “sociocultural agendas” that is used to examine the multi-national/multi-cultural interactions that are occurring around the phenomenon of orphaned children in China. In order to more fully explore the concept of “sociocultural agendas” in relation to orphan care in China, I have used two lenses through which I look at the manifestation of these sociocultural agendas. One is broader – ethnography and one is more specific – case study. This is discussed fully in the next chapter.



### **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to identify cultural norms related to the provision of care for orphaned children in China. Specifically, while both internal (i.e. Chinese) and external (i.e. Western) individuals and groups largely agree in terms of providing immediate care for these children (safety, food, shelter, etc.), what, if any, are the differences in the expectations for the long term outcomes for these children, and if so, how do these relate to cultural bases for doing so?

Because providing for the care of orphaned children seems to be something of a universal good among disparate cultures, and because the need for such care is so great, this seemed to be a reasonable place to start in terms of identifying the ways in which cross-cultural social service provision works out in “the real world”. In other words, I conceptualized that it should be easiest to gain consensus around an issue as pressing and as universal as providing for the care of orphans, and that inter-cultural stumbling blocks should become readily obvious given the pressing need for the provision of such care). Granted, the “construction” of the orphan population in China has taken a very different path than that of other countries, but this, too, seemed to be fruitful ground for study (as it seems self-evident that a country’s policies arise out of its milieu). The fundamental nature of the research involved in this dissertation deals with the ways that seemingly disparate cultures interact around a seemingly straight-forward human rights issue such

as the care of children who have been orphaned. Thus, this study was initially conceptualized as an ethnographic exploration of the way in which the phenomenon of orphaned children in China is framed, communicated, and utilized between China and the West.

### **Evolution of Study**

When I began the process of identifying my research topic, I hoped to be able to generate information that could be of immediate use to organizations that are involved in orphan care in China. In other words, beyond the academic exercise, I hoped that my research could assist orphan caregivers in some way. In order to accomplish this, I identified a number of organizations that work with orphaned or at-risk children in China (Table 1).

Note: in order to preserve their ability to continue to freely serve OVC in China, I have de-identified the organizations with which I worked directly and at length. These shall be referred to as Global Christian Children's Services International and Child Haven.

Table 1 *Organizations Working with Orphaned or At-Risk Children in China*

<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Scope of Work</b>
Global Christian Children's Services International (Foreign NGO)	(throughout China via partnerships)	Orphaned children, children with disabilities, children with significant medical needs, child sponsorship, foster care/alternative family care, intercountry adoption
Caring for China's Children (Foreign NGO)	Xian, Shaanxi	Orphaned children, children with disabilities, children with significant medical needs, child sponsorship, congregate orphan care, foster care in multiple sites in Shaanxi province, intercountry adoption, medical outreach and community development
CRAM Worldwide (Foreign NGO)	Hunchun, Jilin	Orphaned children, children with disabilities, community development, education
Philip Hayden Foundation (Foreign NGO)	Langfang, Hebei	Orphaned children, children with disabilities, children with significant medical needs, child sponsorship, foster care/alternative family care, intercountry adoption
SOS Children's Villages (Foreign NGO)	(throughout China)	Orphaned children, children with disabilities, children with significant medical needs, child sponsorship, foster care/alternative family care
Child Haven (Foreign NGO)	Zhengzhou, Henan	Orphaned children, children with disabilities, children with significant medical needs, child sponsorship, foster care/alternative family care, intercountry adoption
Xingxingyu (Stars and Rain) (Chinese NGO)	Beijing, Hebei	Children with disabilities (autism), special education, residential care, behavioral supports

I contacted these organizations to ascertain if there were any areas of research that could both meet their operational needs as well as providing fertile and valid grounds for my dissertation research. My overtures were met with a variety of results, from no response to invitations to come and join in their in-country operations. In this latter group, there were no identified research areas that were identified as being initially beneficial, but these organizations felt that a research topic might arise out of my involvement.

Of the identified organizations, I had a pre-existing relationship with one of them: Global Christian Children Services International (GCCSI). This organization served as

the placing agency when my wife and I adopted our son, Benjamin. Because of this relationship as well as the proximity, I had the chance to visit GCCSI's offices and have a face-to-face discussion with GCCSI's director, Sharon White. GCCSI did seek to identify some research areas that could be beneficial to both of us, initially identifying the implementation of trauma-informed care that GCCSI has been instrumental in developing. Ms. White also provided me with the contact information for another of GCCSI's associates, who had adopted two children from China, and who had good relationships with a number of orphan care providers in central China. Through this contact person, I was able to begin correspondence with Child Haven, an orphan care organization based in Zhengzhou, Henan, China.

My initial plan was to work with GCCSI to adapt the trauma-informed care model for use by orphan care providers in China. However, during the process of preparing for this, I became aware of the fact that I really had no idea about the degree of congruence between what Westerners saw as a need in terms of orphan care and what was perceived as a need in China. This insight came about as a result of an enlightened survival instinct – I did not want to be in a position where I was seen as pushing the adoption of a particular therapeutic intervention that did not have the support or buy-in of direct care staff or administrators in China (I've had enough experience with this dynamic in the US that I was sensitive to this unpleasant possibility in other contexts).

This line of thought led to the development of my research questions. This, combined with successful correspondence with Child Haven in Zhengzhou resulted in the development of the ethnographic study that forms part of this research. At this point, the

initial plan was for me to spend a period of time in China, to get to know the local community, interview locals (both Chinese and Westerners) about the understanding and interpretation of children in orphan care in China, as well as constructing my own observations and participant-observations related to cultural constructions around this phenomenon. I completed my initial three months of data collection in and around Zhengzhou, Henan, China, and returned to the US in preparation for subsequent data gathering and analysis.

However, upon my return to the US, I was approached by a US faith-based not-for-profit that specializes in international child welfare work to consult on a grant proposal for an orphan care project in China. This US organization was collaborating with a long-time partner in China, which happened to be a Chinese faith-based not-for-profit organization. Given the relevance to my research topic, I jumped at the chance, and adapted my research accordingly. I had the opportunity to study an extraordinarily rich context in the interactions between these organizations for over a year. Thus, the focus of my research shifted from an ethnographic exploration of a particular community's understanding of orphans and orphan care to the case study of an orphan care project that spanned cultures, countries, and communities.

Therefore, this study had two components, namely an ethnographic study and a case study. The ethnographic study was an exploration of the culture surrounding orphan care in Zhengzhou, Henan, China. The case study was a subsequent opportunity that emerged as a direct result of my experiences in pursuing the ethnographic study. This

case study centered on a cross-cultural orphan care project. Both these two components sought to answer the following research questions:

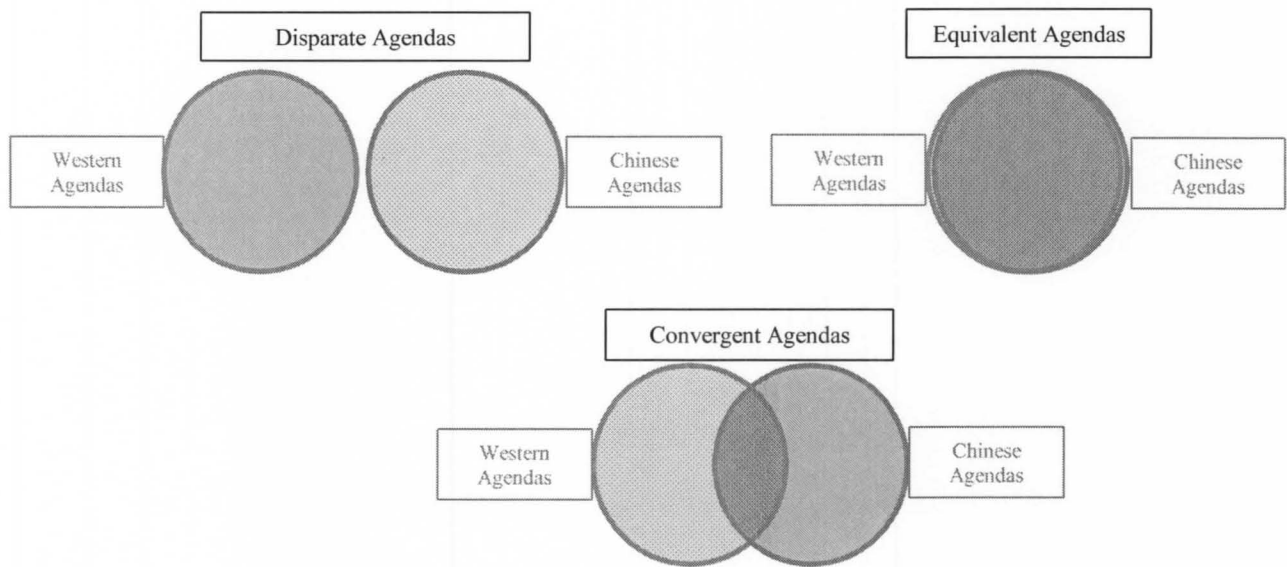
- Do China and the West have different sociocultural agendas regarding orphaned children in China?
- If so, what are they and how do they interact?

### **Presuppositions**

I would like to suggest that there are essentially three possible models for examining the construction of sociocultural agendas surrounding the care and provision of orphaned children in China. The first model, consisting of “disparate agendas”, is that external pollination of humanistic ideology from the West is in effect driving the issue. This would mean that the phenomenon of orphaned children in China has been constructed as a “social problem” by the West and essentially exported to China, and is in a relatively early stage of the diffusion process with regard to the construction of the phenomenon as a social problem in the Chinese population at large. This Western construction exists in contrast to the potential Chinese narrative, which, to the extent that it exists in the culture-at-large (and, indeed, may not, instead being confined only to those specialized governmental organizations charged with direct oversight of the orphan population in China), is essentially a utilitarian response to the social fact that orphaned children exist. Under this possibility, there are essentially no areas of agreement between the Western and Chinese narratives of the phenomenon of orphaned children in China. I would argue that this represents the dominant view of China and its orphans as portrayed in the US and other Western nations.

The second possibility represents the logical opposite of the first, namely, that there are essentially no differences in sociocultural agendas with regard to orphaned children in China (i.e. equivalent agendas). Both cultures agree in terms of the conceptualization of the phenomenon of orphaned children in China as either a social problem or a social fact, and therefore share agreement over the nature and type of care provision for these children. I would argue that this is the least likely interaction model.

The third (and, in my opinion, most probable) model is that there is a dual construction (external and internal) of the phenomenon of orphaned children in China, resulting in convergent agendas. The external (i.e. international/Western) construction proceeds along the same lines mentioned above, that is, as a *social problem*. I would surmise, however, that there is also an internal and specifically Chinese construction of the phenomenon that is co-occurring; whether or not this is being typified as a “social problem” or as some other category of phenomenon remains to be seen. These co-occurring constructions may well be competing for typification in China, and may be perceived as competing ideological perspectives (what I call sociocultural agendas). To the extent that there are different sociocultural agendas with regard to orphaned children, I would posit that these agendas will become apparent with regard to the expected or desired outcomes for these children. The following Venn diagrams illustrate the preceding cultural interaction models:



*Figure 5.* Hypothetical interactions of sociocultural agendas around OVC care in China.

**Presupposition 1: Disparate Agendas:** The Western “social problem” construction is disconnected from China’s “social fact” narrative. Both recognize the existence of the phenomenon of orphaned children, but that is the extent of the overlap in constructions.

**Presupposition 2: Equivalent Agendas:** There are essentially no differences in sociocultural agendas with regard to orphaned children in China. Both cultures agree in terms of care provision for these children.

**Presupposition 3: Convergent Agendas:** Both China and the West have definite sociocultural agendas with regard to orphaned children in China. Although both cultures agree in terms of providing care for these children (safety, food, shelter, etc.), there are differences in referential bases for doing so (i.e. differences in philosophy represent differences in motivation which lead to differences in outcome expectations), and these bases represent sociocultural agendas. Additionally, it may be that for some orphaned



children (e.g. typically developing children), these agendas more closely correlate, while for others (e.g. children with developmental disabilities) there may be considerably less correlation.

### **Overview of Ethnographic Research Component**

The ethnographic portion of the study borrows heavily from the ethnography tradition; it uses a qualitative, exploratory ethnographic scan that drew upon a variety of sources to collect data related to the perspectives of individuals and organizations that provided context for understanding the care of OVC in China. Specifically, exploratory interviews, direct observations of community members, and participant observations were conducted to provide the broader context for the interpretation of the larger multi-lateral program case study that comprises the second part of this research project.

The initial interviewing, observing, and participant-observation was with foreigners (primarily Americans, although some Canadians and Australians are also included) living in China who provide services to orphaned children directly or indirectly by providing regular support and brief care to workers and children in orphan care settings. From this initial group, relationships with other foreigners and Chinese service providers were developed, yielding additional interviews and opportunities for community interactions and observations. An interview guide was designed that guided the interviews and the resulting data was used to help focus the observations and participant-observations. The interview guide was not exhaustive, but was intended to provide a framework for securing the parameters of the cultural context as experienced in the observations and participant observations.

Throughout this process, the degree of proximity between informants and orphaned children in China was conceptualized. The initial ethnographic portion of the study identified a range of proximity from those Chinese and Western members of the Zhengzhou community with little or no direct connection to orphaned children up to those directly involved in providing care to orphaned children. With regard to interviews, more “distal” participants (community members) were interviewed once, with most of these interviews lasting approximately one hour. In most cases in the more “proximal” interviews, an initial interview and a follow up were sufficient to collect data (with each interview lasting 1 – 2 hours).

- “Distal” Interviews: Exploratory interviews with four community members (two who are Chinese and two who are foreign residents (Westerners) of Zhengzhou) were obtained to provide an indication of the broader context for the interpretation of the perspectives identified in the proximal interviews and observations.
- “Proximal” Interviews: Exploratory interviews with four community members directly involved in the provision of care to orphaned children (two who are Chinese and two who are foreign residents (Westerners) of Zhengzhou) were obtained to provide insight into the cultural perspectives surrounding the care of orphaned children in China.

In most cases, proximal interviews occurred prior to distal interviews, as access to proximal sources was easier for me as a foreigner (due to my contacts and introductions before entering the field), whereas I had to expend considerable time and energy to build *guanxi* (i.e. a Chinese term that denotes the presence of a

substantive relationship with the understanding of at least some social obligation on the part of those involved) with previously unknown distal participants before I could approach them about an interview. Besides interviews, additional observations and participant-observations of services, programs, and interactions with the public that these caregivers routinely engaged in were also obtained. Again, the amount of proximity was conceptualized as the degree of focus and influence around the care of orphaned children in China; distal members may have little or no contact with orphaned children on a regular basis, whereas proximal components have a direct connection to orphaned children in China, but may have a relatively limited sphere of influence. These stand in contrast to the individuals and organizations in the Case Study below, which are responsible for providing care to orphaned and vulnerable children in China and who have the capacity/power to influence the manner in which orphan care occurs in China.

### **Overview of Nested Case Study Research Component**

This latter component is a complex endeavor that was initially conceived by two organizations related to addressing broader systems needs related to orphaned children (and children who are at risk of entering orphan care) in China. One organization, Global Christian Children's Services International (GCCSI) is a US faith-based not for profit based in the Midwest, while the other is a Chinese faith-based not-for-profit based in Jiangsu, China, called the AGAPE. Although the program was conceptualized by these two organizations working in concert with one another, it became multilateral due to involvement of the US and Chinese governments. Thus, the focus of the nested case

study is on the inter-stakeholder interactions surrounding the project (and specifically surrounding the following phases: conceptualization, design, funding, and implementation). In this component, I focused on constructing a case study of a multi-lateral, multi-national project designed to provide care to orphaned children in China. The focus of the case study was on identifying interactions related to known/expected factors (i.e. sociocultural agendas) and to potentially identify previously unknown or unaccounted-for factors in the context of cross-cultural orphan care work at the organizational level in China.

The nested case study began in January of 2010, shortly after my return to the US from China, when I was approached by GCCSI to serve as a consultant on a grant proposal for a project organized around orphan care in China. This consultant position evolved into my employment with GCCSI a couple of months later.

Both GCCSI and their Chinese partner organization, AGAPE, were initially focused on developing family- and community-based orphan care services in China's Henan province (because I'd just returned from Henan, and had a working knowledge of the orphan care context in this area, GCCSI and AGAPE were interested in using this to refine the project). I had the chance to work with a number of key personnel from GCCSI and met Liu Lili, Director of AGAPE's Social Welfare Department. The participants from GCCSI, Liu Lili, and I initially met for a period of three weeks in GCCSI's Midwestern campus.

During the course of our work, the scope of the project shifted from a direct orphan care project designed to enhance orphan care services in Henan Province, to a

broader process designed to construct a uniquely Chinese model of family- and community-based services for orphaned and at-risk children across three key provincial capitals in China – Nanjing, Wuhan, and Chengdu. This shift was largely as a result of Liu Lili’s expertise and perspective (discussed at length in the next chapter). One of the primary benefits of this new focus would be the potential for impact at the policy level in China.

The political/governmental dimensions of this research should be mentioned at this point. The proposal that GCCSI, AGAPE, and I were working on was for a grant from the US Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Displaced Children and Orphan Fund (DCOF) project. This funding source would potentially be implemented in China with agreements from China’s Ministry of Commerce (MOC) and Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA). Thus, the US government, through USAID, would fund GCCSI to construct and run a family-and community-based project to serve orphaned and at-risk children with AGAPE as the implementing partner in China, with the agreement and support of China’s Ministries of Commerce and Civil Affairs.

The rich matrix of discussions, agreements (and disagreements), concepts, contexts, and agendas that permeate this process is the essence of the nested case study research component. In this process the sociocultural agendas that are the object of my study came into direct contact with one another, so the unit of measurement of the case study is the project itself:

## **Research Methodology**

### **Ethnographic Research Methods**

Ethnography was initially used in the discipline of anthropology, but has had a long and often convoluted history of use across the social sciences. It has enjoyed something of a resurgence since the late 1980s, to the point that many social science research projects, qualitative and quantitative alike, often use at least some ethnographic methodology. This would appear to be because of the rich and thick description that ethnographies offer, that is, the chance for readers to join the researcher in the process of immersion in another culture (Berg, 2004).

Berg (2004) cites Lofland (1996, p. 30) who provides the following description of the “strategy of analytic ethnography”:

I use the term “analytic ethnography” to refer to research processes and products in which, to a greater or lesser degree, an investigator (a) attempts to provide generic propositional answers to questions about social life and organization; (b) strives to pursue such an attempt in a spirit of unfettered or naturalistic inquiry; (c) utilizes data based on deep familiarity with a social setting or situation that is gained by personal participation or an approximation of it; (d) develops the generic propositional analysis over the course of doing research; (e) strives to present data and analyses that are true; (f) seeks to provide data and/or analyses that are new; and (g) presents an analysis that is developed in the

senses of being conceptually elaborated, descriptively detailed, and concept-data interpenetrated (p. 147).

**Research context.** This research was conducted primarily in Zhengzhou, the capital city of Henan province in Central China. The reasons for choosing Zhengzhou, Henan as a study site were many. Located in North Central China, Henan province could arguably be called the “Heart of China”, in that this province is a reflection of the entire country for the following reasons:

- Henan is home to several ancient capitals of China, and still contains many cultural treasures
- Henan has the largest population of any province in China
- The population of this province is largely rural, poor, and uneducated (in China, each of these characteristics are correlated with increased incidents of child abandonment, particularly when female gender and disability status are considered)
- It does have some larger cities (e.g. Zhengzhou) that are in the process of developing, and in which the wealth of the province is concentrated
- Large numbers of the rural poor are flocking to the cities in the hope of a more prosperous life (thus the dichotomy between the wealthy and the impoverished is stark and unmistakable in the Henan’s cities)

In addition, Henan is one of the crossroads of China; its capital, Zhengzhou, is a hub for air, rail, and road transportation. Similarly, Henan’s neighboring provinces (e.g. Anhui, Shaanxi, etc.) are characterized by similarly rural and impoverished populations

resulting in lack of access to resources, and which seem to have similar patterns of child abandonment.

Because of the reasons denoted above, Henan and Zhengzhou have not had as much contact with the West as have coastal Chinese cities such as Shanghai or Hong Kong, nor as much as power centers like Beijing. As such, it was conceptualized that the insular nature of this area could provide a clearer “cultural” picture of the Chinese perspective in terms of orphan care. Of course, the risk of choosing an insular site is that access to informants is more difficult, as are the language barriers when willing informants are found. A “happy medium” was found by concentrating on the most cosmopolitan area of Henan, its capital city of Zhengzhou. In a city of 5 million people (and an additional 10 million in the incorporated area), there is a relatively small number of foreigners (estimated at less than 1,000). Many of these foreigners were from other Asian countries (such as Taiwan, the Philippines, and Korea), while others were from Africa or the Middle East; Westerners represented a subset of the total foreigner population that I encountered in Zhengzhou, with Australians, Canadians, and Americans (in that order) being the most common).

***Risks and benefits of the study.*** In an effort to “ensure that research is conducted in accordance with the federal regulations, and that the rights of human subjects are protected”, the proposed research project was submitted to the University of Louisville’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), which approved the study.

The focus of the IRB is to ensure that participants are protected, and so require an analysis of risks and benefits to participants. In this study, the most significant risk posed



by the research process to persons residing in China related to asking questions about the culturally and politically sensitive issue of orphaned children and their care. Care was taken to build rapport with participants before probing for information that subjects may have consider threatening (e.g., discussing topics related to deeply held cultural convictions that might be sensitive when discussed with a cultural outsider, as well as concerns regarding anonymity). The researcher made efforts to be sensitive to cross-cultural dialogues and to ensure that non-judgmental and respectful demeanor was maintained at all times. Additionally, the researcher assured participants of strict confidentiality and ensured that data were appropriately safeguarded.

While this research yielded no direct benefit to the subjects involved in the research, it is expected that the potential scientific yield from this research is primarily in the area of increased knowledge and understanding of cultural factors that may affect long-term outcomes for orphaned children in China by making explicit cultural assumptions of care providers and increasing cross-cultural dialogue in this regard. The potential benefits include contributions to cross-cultural relationships that could improve the quality of care and outcomes for orphaned children in China as well as improved application of available resources (both international and domestic) in terms of provision for these children.

***Identifiers and informed consent.*** Because of the sensitive nature of the investigation and because of the particular sociopolitical context in which the care (especially the cross-cultural care) took place, identifiers were not maintained for respondents. Since signing an informed consent agreement would constitute the only identifying link between the participants and their information in this study, a request for waiving this

provision was requested and received from the University of Louisville's IRB. This was fortunate for a second reason that is more cultural in nature: the requirement to sign an agreement (such as informed consent) typically only occurs between parties that have little or no *guanxi* (personal relationships and connections). Had I been required to collect signatures for informed consent, I would be reinforcing to participants who had been selected because of *guanxi*, that I did not recognize this *guanxi*, creating a confusing and unnecessarily difficult context in which to seek insight.

With regard to informed consent, I discussed the research with potential participants by briefly describing the research study and the potential indirect benefits to participants, the organizations for whom they work, and/or the children whom they served. This information was presented in both writing and in conversation. The following is the informed consent script that was presented in both writing and in discussion:

Hello, my name is Dennis Feaster, and I am a PhD student at the University of Louisville in the US and I am conducting a research study. Would you be willing to answer a few questions regarding orphaned children in China? The interview would take one or two hours of your time and be of great value.

*If the response was "yes":* Thank you for participating in the study. There are no known risks for participation in this research study and your participation is voluntary. You do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable and you may choose to stop taking part in the survey at any time. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints regarding this survey or the

research study, please contact Dr. Anna Faul at (502) 852-1981 or by e-mail at [acfaul01@louisville.edu](mailto:acfaul01@louisville.edu). Is it okay to begin the interview?

*If the response was “no”:* Thank you for your time and consideration for participating in this research study. Have a pleasant day.

***Inclusion Criteria for Interview Participants.*** An initial selection of eight interviewees (two Western participants and two local Chinese “distal” participants and another two Western participants and two local Chinese “proximal” participants, all of whom lived in or around Zhengzhou) was enrolled in the study. The individual participants were all healthy adults between the ages of 18 and 70 years of age.

In terms of distal participants, the two community members had to have emic knowledge and perspective of local and national culture in China to provide context. Proximal study participants had to be involved in some capacity (i.e. direct, support, or administration) as a care provider for orphaned children in China and had to be at least 18 years of age. Any prospective participants that did not meet these inclusion criteria were excluded from the research.

***Recruitment and Sampling.*** From these parameters, recruitment was based (at the time data was being collected for the study) on current involvement with the provision of orphan care in China, or working with/for an organization that serves orphaned children in China in some capacity. Because I lived in China for three months and worked as a teacher at a local secondary school, I was able to use this context to help to identify potential participants. For distal participants, the researcher used his daily contacts to create a potential roster of community members that he contacted to gain the cultural

perspective. For the proximal contacts, an initial roster of two foreigners was prepared for initial contact. From this initial group, snowball sampling was used to recruit additional research participants.

***Data Collection Strategy.*** An interview guide was constructed using Patton’s (2002) “General Interview Guide Approach”. This “involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored before interviewing begins...the guide serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered” (p. 342). The content of the interview guide was as follows:

1. Personal and Cultural Characteristics
  - a. Describe self
  - b. Gender
  - c. Age
  - d. Previous education or occupation relevant to purpose in China
2. Work in China
  - a. Vocation in China
  - b. Avocation in China
  - c. Length of time in China
  - d. Location(s) in China
3. Understanding of Western Culture
4. Understanding of Chinese Culture
5. Orphaned Children/Disabled Children in China
  - a. Describe knowledge of this population

- b. Describe exposure to this population
- c. Describe thoughts/feelings/opinions/attitudes about this population
- d. Describe your understanding of Western values related to this population
- e. Describe your understanding of Chinese values related to this population
- f. What are your hopes for these children (both in general and with relation to individual children)
  - i. Describe short-term goals for the care of these children
  - ii. Describe long-term goals for the care of these children
  - iii. Describe the best case scenario for these children
  - iv. Describe a probable scenario for these children
  - v. For these children who are not adopted, what do you think will happen?
  - vi. What changes, if any, have you seen relative to these children since the time that you have been in China?
  - vii. What changes do you think ought to happen here or anywhere?

In addition to these interviews, the ethnographic portion of the study also consisted of participant observations and direct observations. The interviews and observations resulted in the construction of a qualitative database for analysis. All of the database information was coded, in particular to protect the freedom of individuals and organizations to work in the sensitive sociopolitical environment that surrounds the care of orphaned children in China.

## **Nested Case Study Research Methods**

Given the sometimes tumultuous history of case study research, it is useful to examine the case study's relative demerits and merits. Because of its long history and diverse application in a wide range of academic disciplines, the debate about the usefulness and rigor of the case study has run (and sometimes raged) for quite a while, and has in many ways paralleled the debate about the value of qualitative research broadly.

Yin (1981), describes this ebb and flow of opinion, beginning with his analysis of Matthew Miles' 1979 article, "Qualitative data as an attractive nuisance". Yin points out that Miles, as have many other researchers, use "qualitative research" and "case study" sometimes interchangeably and sometimes to refer to distinct phenomena. In his response to Miles' critiques of qualitative research/case studies and in an analysis of Miles' qualitative methodologies (which, according to Yin, were themselves flawed, therefore leading to flawed results and analysis particular to the research design and not necessarily generalizable to either qualitative research or case study methods), Yin takes the opportunity to draw a line in the sand with regard to summarizing what is meant by "case study": "As a research strategy, the distinguishing characteristic of the case study is that it attempts to examine: (a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1981, p. 59).

*Units of analysis.* In my research, then, "the contemporary phenomenon in its real life context" is the process of developing and implementing a multi-layered, multi-lateral

orphan care project in China. Because the focus of the case study is the orphan care project itself, and this project is an entirely abstract construction that came about as a result of the participants' micro-contexts and the macro-context of orphan care in China (including the broader socio-political contexts described in Chapters One and Two), it is impossible to partial out the context from the phenomenon, as the to a large degree, the context *is* the phenomenon.

I relied heavily on the frameworks proposed by Patton (2002) in the conceptualization and execution of this research project. In particular, Patton proposes that case studies represent a focus of study, not a methodology in itself: "Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied... We could study it analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods – but we concentrate, at least for the time being, on the case" (Stake, 2000:435 in Patton, 2002, p. 447). Instead, case studies draw upon a variety of data collection methods collected in field notes, document reviews, etc. Indeed, case studies represent more of a "what" than a "how" when it comes to research:

Case studies depend on clearly defining the object of study, that is, the case. But this too is complex... When more than one object of study or unit of analysis is included in fieldwork, case studies may be layered and nested within the overall, primary case approach.... Thus, extended fieldwork can and typically does involve many mini- or micro-case studies of various units of analysis (individuals, groups, specific activities, specific periods of time, critical incidents) all of which together make up the overall case study (Patton, 2002, p. 298).

This accurately describes my experience in this present study. For my purposes, the unit of analysis is the orphan care project around which individuals, organizations, and even governments arrayed themselves and interacted over the course of 2010 and 2011. This multi-layered project generally, and the participants and stakeholders in this project specifically, comprise the essence of the case study and the subsequent analysis.

Within this larger case study (the proposed orphan care project), there are a number of nested micro-case studies (e.g. organizations like GCCSI and AGAPE, activities like the negotiation of a sub-grant agreement between the two, etc.) and mini-case studies (e.g. individuals like Sharon White and Liu Lili, critical incidents like the sudden appearance into the project of a new Chinese governmental organization, etc.). Direct observations, participant observations, document reviews, and field notes comprise the means of data collection around and within the case study.



## Data Analysis

Table 2 *Qualitative Data Analysis Processes (Patton, 2002)*

Open coding	Process of sifting through data to identify emerging categories of phenomena, and labeling them accordingly; from this process, meaning emerges
Memoing	The process of noting and tracking the thoughts, ideas, concepts, and pre-theoretical constructions that emerge throughout the analysis process
Sorting	The repetitive act of sifting through and ordering the various products of the analysis process in order to identify emerging patterns and coherent “groups” of information
Axial Coding	The process used to identify the relationship of various categories to one another (among other things), and help to identify the organizing constructions/narratives around and between phenomena
Core Category	The primary/fundamental organizing category, around which all other categories are arrayed
Triangulation	The process of finding additional elements outside of the phenomena and relationships being studied to provide additional understanding of said relationship (ideally to confirm or refute) to aid in theory development

### **Ethnographic Data Analysis**

Interviews with proximal and distal participants were combined with the range of observations (both direct observations and participant observations) in order to construct a database for the ethnographic portion of this study. This database was used to identify sociocultural themes that emerged in the context of care of orphaned and vulnerable children in China, and those engaged in their care. These themes were cross-referenced with related portions of the qualitative database in order to construct a picture of the narratives that exist around orphaned children in China, with particular focus on themes related to care provision models, modalities, and foci (both implicit and explicit) for OVC in China's orphan care system, or for those at risk of entering this system. These perceived or stated foci were then used to cycle back into the thematic exploration of the ethnographic database to identify potential sociocultural agendas that are in play in the context of OVC in China. Finally, these themes were then used to inform the subsequent case study portion of this research process.

### **Nested Case Study Data Analysis**

Although the case study is more of a “what” than a “how” in terms of data collection, this is less the case in terms of data analysis in case studies:

“The case study approach to qualitative analysis constitutes a specific way of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data; in that sense it represents an analysis *process*. The purpose is to gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest. The analysis process results in a *product*:

a case study. Thus, the term *case study* can refer to either the process of analysis or the product of analysis, or both.” (Patton, 2002, p. 447)

The research design is thoroughly intertwined with the data analysis techniques, which is also informed by Yin’s “Chain of Evidence” concept:

The final individual case narrative must then present the evidence that was collected. The evidence may be reflected in tables, chronologies, interviewees comments, charts, and other forms... throughout the chain of evidence procedure the criteria are that the evidence be presented in a form that can be inspected by the reader, that allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions, and that can be traced to specific data-collection activities and documented procedure” (Yin, 1982, p. 91).

### **Summary**

This research project has evolved considerably since its first inception. The organic and dynamic nature of the research lends itself to qualitative methodologies broadly, while the core of the research – the multi-cultural and trans-national orphan care project – is ideally suited for a case study, given the complexities of the context and the phenomenon under investigation (i.e. the constructed orphan care project). On a personal note, I found this process to be simultaneously fascinating and frustrating, and required a new degree of adaptability and (I hope) insight in the midst of both data collection and analysis. Indeed, Yin’s (1981) analogy of case study research to the process that police detectives undergo when attempting to solve a crime is unusually apt – the simultaneous gathering and analysis of data occur by the investigators, with the results sending the

investigators down the most probable trails for yet more data to be simultaneously gathered and analyzed. The results of this process of nearly 18 months of immersive data collection are discussed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER IV: NARRATIVE DATA REPORT**

### **Ethnographic Scan and Zhengzhou Narrative**

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to obscure the identities of participating individuals and organizations as much as possible. I have done this to protect the safety, security, relationships, and well-being of these individuals and organizations, in order not to compromise existing and future efforts to improve the lives of orphaned and vulnerable children in China and elsewhere. While this has potentially had an effect on the readability of the information presented herein, this is a necessary sacrifice in order to provide the protection to all involved. For the ease of the reader, I have included a roster of the fictionalized identities of very real individuals and organizations that I encountered during my time in Zhengzhou (*note: asterisks denote those participants who were formally interviewed*):

Table 3: *Roster of Individuals Involved in Ethnographic Scan*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Nationality/ Ethnicity</b>	<b>Relation to OVC</b>
Mary	FIRST	Chinese	Distal
Teacher Eduardo	FIRST	South American	Distal
Leader Yang	FIRST	Chinese	Distal
Teacher Chen	FIRST	Chinese	Distal
Teacher Patrick	FIRST	Filipino	Distal
Teacher Elaine	FIRST	Filipino	Distal
Teacher Sofia	FIRST	Filipino	Distal
Teacher Katie*	FIRST	Chinese	Distal
Teacher Daniel	FIRST	Chinese	Distal
Faye*	Child Haven	American	Proximal
Sam*	Child Haven	American	Proximal
Xiao Mei	N/A	Chinese	Proximal
Jiayue	N/A	Chinese	Proximal
Alan Smithee*	N/A	Australian	Distal
Miriam Smithee*	N/A	Australian	Distal
Sandy Wu*	N/A	Chinese	Distal
Wu Feng*	Rainbow Colors	Chinese	Proximal
Bao Li*	Rainbow Colors	Chinese	Proximal

## **Travel and Arrival**

Prior to make arrangements to travel to China, I'd contacted an organization with whom I was familiar and that I knew did work around orphan care in China. It was my hope that my dissertation could result in useful information to an organization or organizations that were serving orphaned and vulnerable children or other marginalized populations in China, so I consulted with the director of this agency in order to narrow my research agenda. After exploring several different options of evaluating program effectiveness in China, it occurred to me that I had no idea of the extent to which these (Western) programs were valued by people in China. This in turn led to the identification of Western and Chinese agendas surrounding orphan care in China. This organization was then able to provide me with some of their contacts of people that they knew who were working in and around the orphan care system in China. I followed up with these contacts via e-mail, and was welcomed to participate as a participant-observer at their orphan care organization in China.

I'd arranged for employment prior to my travel to China, and, like many expats in China, found a market for my skills as a native English speaker, and was engaged to teach English to students at the FIRST Bilingual School. While I was mildly concerned about the fact that I had no training as a teacher, I was assured by the staff of FIRST that this was not a problem, and was able to negotiate the following: work visa, salary, lodging for myself and my family, school for my children, a possible teaching job for my wife, as well. The most critical piece of this package was the work visa that I would need

in order to stay in China for the year, with the understanding that I would be able to pursue my dissertation research on my off hours.

Our travel to China was a comedy of errors: we flew from Louisville, KY to Chicago's O'Hare airport without incident, but faced a five hour wait prior to catching our flight to Beijing. The five hour wait turned into a seven hour wait, as there was an additional 2 hour delay for "mechanical issues". I also learned that entertaining two young children in an airport while contemplating a 14 hour trans-pacific flight on an airplane that was delayed for 2 hours because of mechanical issues was a source of significant anxiety... fortunately I hadn't yet watched the TV series *Lost*.

We finally boarded the plane and made the trip to Beijing without further problems (beyond stir crazy children), but arrived in Beijing too late to meet our connecting flight to Zhengzhou. After passing through customs (an experience marginally more enjoyable than a root canal under the best of circumstances, but our travel coincided with China's serious concerns about the H1N1 virus AKA bird flu and promises of quarantine for anyone with the misfortune of running a fever), my family and I made a beeline for the airline's customer service kiosk to rebook our flight to Zhengzhou and negotiate for a hotel room for the four of us. My Mandarin was passable at that point, but, given my stress and fatigue, I experienced difficulty in accessing my language; between my under-functioning Mandarin, the customer service representative's even worse English, and the kindness of other travelers, we were able to get accommodations for the night and tickets for the 7:00 am flight to Zhengzhou (I had a brief moment of panic when the airline worker used a phrase that I didn't understand and



a nearby University student translated as, “They are sending you to a hospital” – which I was then able to decode as “they are sending you to a hostel/hotel”).

We were taken with another group of stranded travelers to an airport hotel in Beijing and finally got to our room around midnight. We fell into our beds, and slept fitfully, before awaking to a 3am knock at the door. I opened it as far as the chain latch would allow, and, through the gap in the door, was asked if I would like the services of a female companion, despite the fact that my wife and children were standing blearily behind me. I declined (*Bu yao!*), but chock full of jetlag, we were awake for good. We made the best of it, though, feasting on snacks that we’d packed (a breakfast that my daughter delightedly remembers as the best of her life – Snickers bars, M and Ms, granola, potato chips, and tuna fish and crackers), rationing the bottled water provided by the hotel, and watched the Chinese version of *American Idol* on TV.

Soon enough we cleaned up and headed down with our luggage to catch the 5am airport shuttle. We checked our luggage, boarded the flight, and finally made it to Zhengzhou, where we were met by staff from, FIRST Bilingual School. The staff person who met us was an administrative assistant to the owner and president of the organization, FIRST Bilingual School, and went by the English name of Mary. She and one of Best’s “uncles” (see below for discussion of this term) met us at the airport, helped us collect our luggage, and drove us to our apartment. We parked in an underground parking garage, and took the elevator’s up to the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of our building, and dropped off the luggage. Mary then suggested that we go to a store to buy food, dishes, and other necessary items. My wife and I were exhausted and the children were nearly comatose,

but we went. Our fatigue, combined with a very different sensory and cultural experience in the stores and markets, created a decidedly surreal experience. We went to a couple of different stores, waded through the press of bodies (I would come to find that the sheer mass of people, combined with different cultural norms in regard to personal space one of my recurring challenges in daily life in China), and purchased the bare minimum of what we might need. Mary was very helpful, and the store staff were similarly solicitous, but we were so tired (and had to carry two very limp children) that we just bought whatever we were first offered. I finally had to ask Linda to take us back to the apartment so that we could get some rest. Mary graciously did so, and she and the “uncle” helped us to get our new belongings up to our apartment, where we promptly collapsed.

### **Living in Zhengzhou: Overview of Daily Life**

Our jet lag lasted the better part of the week, with the first four days being the worst. We worked to adjust our sleeping hours to the local clock, but the children, especially our son, had a very difficult time with this. In between cat naps and re-orientation with the children, we began to explore our new home, beginning with the apartment. Our new quarters, as I would come to find out, were extremely nice and spacious by Chinese standards (“Wow – [your employers] really like you” was how it was first communicated when some of our new expat friends first came over to visit). There were three bedrooms, two full bathrooms, a large living room/dining room area, and a kitchen. The floors were a light grey marble-like tile, and the walls were a type of white plaster over sheetrock. The apartment was furnished, and each of the rooms had a bed, a wardrobe, and a full closet with a mirror. The master bedroom contained a king

size bed, and had a walk in dressing area with storage cabinets for clothes. All of the furnishings were the same sort of blonde-colored wood. The living room furniture was more of a modern looking metallic design and color, and consisted of a couch and two large chairs, as well as a table. There was also a large knock-off Toshiba TV that weighed about 120 pounds on top of a TV table (I know it weighed this much because we soon discovered that one of the legs of the TV table was broken and I had to quickly catch and lift the TV to avert a near-disaster). The kitchen was more Westerner-friendly than most, and contained a two-burner gas stove, a sink, a microwave oven, and our office-sized water bottle that you could get either cool or hot water from (the school provided filtered water to each of the teachers – I just had to take the empties to school and remember to get refills and bring them home – assisted by one of the “uncles”). Finally there was a sort of very small balcony that was separated from the kitchen by a full length glass door, and which contained our very small washing machine. (We learned that we could dry our clothes by hanging them on indoor clothes lines that stretched the width of the apartment at the far end of the living room, nearest the largest set of windows that could be opened for a breeze).

Our apartment was on the fourth floor of the corner of one of the peripheral towers. As such we had a view of both the courtyard of the apartment complex and also the side street that ran next to the apartment complex. As it turned out, my employer, BEST, owned five apartments in this complex; all were in the same tower, on the same corner, but were on different floors (floors two through seven). Thus, the apartments directly above and below us were used by my fellow teachers at BEST, and, given the

“active” nature of my children, gave me some cause to be concerned about how our family noise level would impact them. There were three other apartments on the same floor and wing as ours, two to the left of our door and one to the right. Our apartment and the neighbor to the left had corner apartments. The hallway to the apartments was rather dimly lit, and provided access to both the stairwell and two elevators. I noticed that the other three apartments all had some sort of faded and torn red paper decorations on them. The explanation that I received was that these were the good luck decorations that families hung up during Spring Festival (the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration), and that would carry good fortune and prosperity to the family/home (*jia* – the same word in Mandarin) throughout the year. The decorations were left to hang for the entire year, being replaced during the next Spring Festival.

After we recovered sufficiently to explore our apartment and its building, we ventured out into the complex. Our apartment complex, I would come to discover, was particularly nice, consisting of seven or eight “towers” with 20 floors and 2 wings each. These towers were all connected by the underground parking area that we’d experienced on our first day. Upon leaving our building, we stepped out into a brick and concrete pathway that led to a series of courtyards. The largest courtyard had a large, shallow reflecting pool, which had a pathway around it. The courtyards were also landscaped and contained statuary of people and children playing. It was not unusual to see laundry or utensils hung out of the window for either drying or storage, and there were a number of “illegal” mini-satellite dishes attached to the walls of the apartments (we were told by some of our expat friends that we could get a satellite dish, too, but this was risky – if we

were sold a dish and it was set up, there was no guarantee that it would continue to work, and, because it was a *sub rosa* transaction, there was no recourse to get it fixed; their advice, which we followed, was to wait until we lived there long enough to build up good *guanxi* with someone who dealt in this business that would serve as a motivator for “customer service” should we need it).

In the morning, but more so in the evening, the denizens of the apartment complex would all come out and “play “ (*wan* in Mandarin, paying/relaxing/hanging out)— the children running and playing tag and hide-and-seek, and other universal children’s games, the adults playing badminton (sans net), strolling, or, in some cases, dancing. Often, the adults would stroll about in their pajamas (literal western-style pajamas; this was explained to me by one of my Western informants who’d lived in this province for 8 years or more – pajamas are a status symbol, indicating that the wearer is wealthy enough to afford a set of clothes just for sleeping in, rather than having one or two sets of clothes for universal use/wear). There were a surprising number of dogs in our apartment complex, as well, which I was told was another status symbol (the owners are doing so well financially that there is enough disposable income to spend on a dog).

Given the focus of my research, I paid particular attention to children and families that I encountered in our apartment complex. The 4-2-1 phenomenon was ubiquitous (4 grandparents, 2 parents, and 1 child as a result of the One Child Policy). It was very common to see multiple grandparents carrying, walking with, and playing with their young (not yet school age grandchildren) during the day. One of the more noticeable differences of the daily life of babies and toddlers in China was the absence of diapers.

Most children wore “split pants” – crotchless pants that were worn by children who were not yet toilet trained. When one of these kids had to relieve themselves, they simply squatted and went. In the courtyards, the grandparents often carried them over to the bushes or held them over the reflecting pool (I would later discover that diapers were available in some of the stores that catered to foreigners or foreign-influenced Chinese families). The Chinese grandparents and parents I observed were very lenient and often *laissez-faire* in terms of their children and grandchildren, who benefitted from the attention and resources of the extended family.

The apartment complex itself was walled, gated, and guarded, as were most of the more affluent living areas in Zhengzhou. The guards were responsible for knowing who came into the complex and what their business was. It was also their responsibility to forcibly remove and “emphatically discourage” troublemakers (during my brief time in Zhengzhou, I noted a number of physical interactions between civilian security personnel and “regular folks” – it was explained to me by one of my Chinese informants that people tended to not want to involve police, because that might bring too much trouble/official attention, and also because of the corruption and bribes that would come with this attention; therefore, she said, many people handled their trouble themselves through fighting, and security guards were typically hired from one of the many martial arts schools around the area). My family soon struck up a very informal friendship with a number of the guards, particularly because my son thought that they were “cool” and went out of his way to greet them and ask them (in English, which I would translate), about their radios, locks, and other security gear). They also had a vested interest in

ensuring that we, as foreigners, were not in any way bothered by street vendors or others in the area.

We were able to establish similar relationships with a number of the shopkeepers that had corner stores near our apartment. Foreigners were very rare in our neighborhood, and there was a pretty brisk competition to see where we would shop. The nearest corner store ended up “winning” most of our business – the family that ran it was extremely nice, and the mother spoke a little English, making it easier for my wife and children to interact. They also carried Coke Zero, which is one of my vices, so we spent a lot of time there.

Our apartment was located on the south end of Zhengzhou, while most of our expat friends lived on the north side. The north end of town had the governmental offices and more affluent shopping areas (e.g. the *Jinshui* District, the *Erlu* District, etc.). While our apartment complex was very high status, the area immediately surrounding our south end location was much more poverty stricken. The guards always got a little nervous when I went out and didn’t immediately get a cab (when they found out that I walked to some of the larger stores, or even just around the neighborhood, they weren’t terribly thrilled - I was never able to figure out if this was because they were concerned for my safety or if they had some “face” issues with a foreigner seeing the very obvious poverty in the area (but I assume it was a little of each). As a foreigner, I definitely stood out in the neighborhood, and the local population was not at all shy about staring (in fact I was the cause of more than one bicycle wreck as the bike operator stared at me in one direction and travelled in another). I spent a fair amount of time in the mornings and

evenings out walking through the neighborhoods, watching the activity, and interacting with locals until I became less of a phenomenon and I could get a better feel for daily life in Zhengzhou in the brief time I was there.

One of the phenomena I observed early in my stay was that of the rural population travelling into the “big city”. Farm families came into Zhengzhou late at night/very early in the morning to be able to sell their produce at the local street markets (these markets opened around 4 am and were mostly closed by 8 am – the chefs, cooks, and kitchen staff of restaurants, schools, and other businesses that fed large numbers of people came out to the markets very early to compete for the best produce for that day, so the earlier the vendors were set up, the better their profit margins. Because we had a corner apartment that overlooked the street, I spent a great deal of time observing the way that these rural families lived when they came into the city. It was not unusual to see a family (typically father, mother, and child) ride in on a motorized three wheeled vehicle (the front half where the driver sat was like a motorcycle, while the back half was more like an open cargo container – sometimes there were seats and sometimes there weren't) filled with produce. The families would find an open space on the street where they would settle, either spreading out blankets on the ground or stretching thin hammocks between trees, and go to sleep before the markets started. Often there would be 15 or 20 of these families along one stretch of road. These families would stay to sell off their produce along the street (the families that either couldn't get into the market areas, or had leftover produce after the markets closed). The children stayed near their families and played while the parents sought customers. It was a very disconcerting feeling to stand at the



window of our apartment on a sweltering Zhengzhou night and look at the affluent courtyards and people taking a relaxing stroll in their pajamas while walking their dog, and also be able to look over the wall that separated this courtyard from the street where these rural families were sleeping on their little hammocks or thin blankets. However, this served well to typify the modern context of China, and the disparity of resources available to poor rural families, and how this plays into the orphan care system in China.

### **FIRST Bilingual School System**

As mentioned previously, I'd been able to travel and live in China with my family because I was a gainfully employed "foreign expert" that would be teaching my native English language to Chinese students. One of the other advantages of this position was that I was able to observe some of the school-based dynamics of students and teachers, as well as to get a sense of the degree to which people with disabilities and other marginalized populations were represented in the school, and/or how these populations were perceived by those attending and working at the school. It was also my intent to identify as many new contacts that had some connection to the orphan population in China that I might be able to explore (given the makeup of the school's leadership, I was eventually to find out that this would be a bit of a dry well, though).

Additionally, I had a broader goal to identify the sociocultural and cross-sociocultural agendas that would come into play between myself and the school as a sort of laboratory to provide insight into how these agendas might emerge in something as neutral as a work place, the idea being that if I could begin to see the interactions/interplay of these constructions and identify the patterns that emerges, this

would help to identify agenda dynamics when it came to a “charged” issue like orphan care that played out far more broadly.

*Services and Structure.* Once my jet lag passed and I was able to function a bit more ably, I began my job at FIRST. This organization, a private school system that provided bilingual (Mandarin and English) education at the “kindergarten”, primary (grades 1 – 5) and secondary (grades 6 – 12) school levels, was headquartered in Zhengzhou. “Kindergarten” is in quotations because this is the term that is used to translate the concept into English, and, while similar to the English use of the word is a bit different – in China, “kindergarten” refers to education for children from age 3 – 5, encompassing what in the US is called pre-school and kindergarten. Because of the One Child Policy and the pressure on Chinese families to produce “low quantity, high quality” children, a powerful set of industries have emerged, including early childhood education; the more prestigious a school that a child can enter at a young age, the better their future educational opportunities, and so the better/more successful their futures.

One of the reasons that the FIRST apartments were located on the South end of Zhengzhou rather than the more affluent north was the location of the main FIRST campus. The FIRST primary school was located on the extreme southeast part of Zhengzhou, but was very near a couple of the main freeways to provide access to parents and buses. The FIRST primary school was even farther south than the apartments (approximately 45 minutes of brisk walking away). In addition to this main campus, the FIRST system also had a number of “kindergartens” around the city (these were in affluent areas), that served as feeder schools for the FIRST primary school.

The FIRST system started as a “kindergarten” and primary provided about 10 years prior to my arrival. The school simply added on a grade level as the oldest cohort progressed (the oldest students were just entering the 8<sup>th</sup> grade when I began teaching). These older students had been served at the main primary campus until the secondary school campus was complete, which also happened the month I arrived.

The secondary school campus was located on the prestigious/high status north side of town. This meant that getting to work was a bit more of a challenge for those working at the secondary school than for those at the primary school. The solution worked out by FIRST was as follows: Every morning at 7:05, the teaching and leadership staff would meet out by the front gate of our housing complex. One of the school’s “uncles” would pick us up in a school van, and would transport all of us to the primary school. The primary school staff and teachers would get out and go to work, while a second “uncle” would then arrive to drive the rest of us up to the primary school. Because of my height (and the fact that I was an educated white American foreigner), I was ceded the front seat for the ride. Ordinarily I would have declined this, but it would have been unduly ride to do so (beyond the customary refusal and urging dance that was culturally expected and appreciated), and it gave me the chance to literally have a front row seat to observe the layout, structures, and interactions of people on the street over the course of my stay... and the legroom didn’t hurt either.

**Interlude: Traffic in Zhengzhou as a means of gaining insight into sociocultural agendas associated social negotiations**

As an aside, beyond the very different culturally constructed norms associated with traffic, turn-taking, spatial awareness and negotiation, etc., I had the vague sense that, as we drove, “something was missing”. It took me some time to realize what this was, but it finally hit me like a lightning bolt – there were no “Stop” signs (traffic lights at main intersections, yes, but stop signs, never). This struck me as a representation of a core set of differences into the cross-cultural sense of order and meaning-making occurred (in the US, we are accustomed to an overt statement of rules and an interaction in time and space of turn-taking as a representation of fundamental order. In China, it seemed to me that that the non-linear means of “going for it” in traffic interactions spoke to the depth and latitude of the rules around which people organized their lives on a daily basis.

In other words, in the West, we rely upon a negotiated and finalized set of rules which we expect others to adhere to at, say a four way stop. When these finalized rules are violated as they sometimes are, no one indicates:

- “I didn’t know I was supposed to stop at the stop sign”, or
- “Who says that I have to stop at a stop sign”

Rather, violating the agreed upon, finalized rules by not stopping at a stop sign is often constructed as:

- “I thought it was my turn” (with the assertion being “I did wait”), or

- “I thought I was alone/I didn’t see anyone else at the four way stop, so I didn’t need to wait” (with the assertion being that “I knew I was supposed to, but chose not to because I didn’t think that I would be caught.”), or
- “I didn’t see the stop sign” (with the assertion being that “I was distracted, which is bad, but not as bad as simply disregarding the agreed-upon rules”).

In China, though, it was my observation that while there are certainly agreed upon sets of rules that govern interactions, I also observed that there seemed to be relatively few interactions that had arrived at a finalized or fixed state, after which negotiations were no longer allowable. Instead, it struck me that agreements were transactional, and, after this transaction is complete, we are free to negotiate future transactions entirely differently. This is in addition to being able to say, I know that we had one set of agreements yesterday, but this is today, so we are free to look at different ways to continue our negotiations/interactions.

Again, I was a stranger in a strange land, I was not able to be there as long as I would have liked, so these need to be taken into account when it comes to vetting my observations. This being said, however, this awareness of cultural differences in terms of fixed agreements versus fluid agreements went a long way toward helping me to negotiate my experiences and expectations with my employer and other associates.

We would then arrive at the school around 7:50, and classes started at 8 am. I taught English and Social Studies to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who were in the intermediate and advanced English-speaking ranking. The morning was all English-language instruction, and the afternoon was Chinese language instruction. I was able to negotiate the afternoons as time-off (as an application of the set of agendas identified above) that I was able to spend with my family or on my research, so one of the uncles would take me back to the apartment complex around 1:00.

FIRST's secondary school was a boarding school, like many Chinese schools. The secondary school students lived in dormitories, with four students and one teacher (typically one of the Filipino teachers – see below) per room. The students showed up at school on Monday morning with all of their clothes for the week, attended class, participated in after school activities, studied, and went to their dorm rooms. On Saturday around noon, students returned to their homes and stayed with their families through Sunday, returning to school by Monday morning.

The owner and Director of FIRST had a background in early childhood education and special education from Taiwan. She'd intentionally structured some of FIRST's "kindergarten" experience to provide for sensory integration growth and development and movement brakes for typically developing children as a result of her exposure to these ideas from Special Education. She was open to including our son in the kindergarten program with the support of an aide (which we appreciated, but ultimately declined), but, to my knowledge, FIRST did not offer the equivalent of special education

services nor did I ever see or hear of students with identified disabilities ever participating in activities or classes at FIRST.

Finally, in addition to the “kindergartens”, and primary and secondary schools, FIRST also had a series of “training schools” located throughout Zhengzhou. These provided after school English instruction programs to students who could not afford FIRST’s tuition, as well as providing a means by which more affluent parents could test the quality of FIRST’s services before paying high rates of tuition for primary or secondary school. I did not have much direct experience with these programs, although did notice that among secondary school students, the quality of English varied markedly from the students who had attended FIRST programs in primary school from those who attended the training schools.

Overall, the students at FIRST were from higher socioeconomic status Chinese families living in and around Zhengzhou, and also some of the children of the Taiwanese school leadership staff. Additionally, there were a couple of children from Western ex-pat families attending, but these students were fluent in Mandarin and familiar with Chinese culture before beginning secondary school. These two students, both male, both in 8<sup>th</sup> grade were very popular with their classmates, and seemed to benefit from their status as Western foreigners (neither student was from particularly wealthy families, but both seemed to freely socialize with the most high income/high status students, and seemed to be subject to less negative peer attention, although whether this was more due to their ability to successfully fend for themselves or because of their status, I wasn’t entirely able to ascertain, although most of my observations pointed to the former case). This was

in a marked contrast to the small number of non-Western expat students; there were three students who were Korean, and whose fathers were living in Zhengzhou for business. These three students, two of whom were male and one of whom was female, seemed fairly excluded from most of the informal social activities of their peers. The female student in particular was very quiet (to the point of being withdrawn), and was a subject of a fair amount of the “rough teasing”/bullying that occurred from the most high status, male Chinese students. Indeed, this bullying was a source of some concern to me, and when I raised the issue with my Chinese colleagues, I was encouraged to not worry about it as this was just “kids being kids”; however, a number of the teachers, especially foreign teachers, tried to keep a fairly tight rein on the more egregious/overt aggression during the half of the day that we had these students in our classes).

Because I taught English and social studies, and was explicitly charged with providing information to the students on US culture, I was able to bring up the topic of diversity on a couple of occasions. This was a very interesting set of discussions, where we were able to discuss the perceived social position and degree of marginalization between ethnic and religious minorities in the US, and which the students naturally compared to their own experiences in China regarding these populations. When I introduced the idea that disability status was also an area of diversity that was of importance in the US, I was not able to derive much information from the students, as most had not known anyone with a disability, beyond an aging family member. None of the children indicated having an experience of children with disabilities in China, nor did any directly identify any experiences with children in orphan care. There was interest in



working with children in orphan care as part of a service learning project that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade student government undertook, although this was not an area of unanimous interest among the Secondary School students.

***Leadership and Hierarchy.*** The owners of the school (as they were referred to by the staff and themselves) were Chinese, but were originally from Taiwan. The director of the school, as mentioned previously, had a background in early childhood education. Her husband /co-owner was an engineer and builder/developer who had a very successful career in both Taiwan and the Mainland. He was responsible for the new campus, as well as for the non-educational portion of the operations. Thus, between the two of them, they brought a high degree of skill and experience to the private bilingual school system.

The owners also recruited family members and associates from Taiwan to fill most of the high level leadership positions within the FIRST organization. This provided a natural “power bloc” within the school and created the hierarchy that essentially broke down by ethnicity/native language/status and position. For instance, most of the high level leadership meetings were conducted in the Taiwanese dialect of Chinese, which was incomprehensible to the mainland Chinese staff (however, Taiwanese staff also fluently spoke *Putonghua*, the standardized form of Mandarin that serves as the official language of China). In fact, the only non-Chinese member of the leadership team, Teacher Eduardo, who spoke Mandarin fluently, and was able to keep up with the local Henan Chinese dialect, said that when Leader Yang and the other Taiwanese staff were speaking their own language, he was completely dependent on a translator. With the exception of Leader Li and her husband, the senior leadership team, including Teacher Eduardo and

his family, also lived in our apartment building, thus further tying the leadership staff together socially as well as professionally. This was doubly the case since housing was provided by the school as part of the benefit package – losing one’s job or changing employers also meant losing one’s home.

The next tier down was comprised of the mainland Chinese teachers and middle level leadership staff. The mainland Chinese teachers (virtually all of whom were locals from Henan) were responsible for delivering the Chinese language education (the Central Government had a number of required classes through 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and the Chinese teachers delivered this content). A number of the Chinese teachers also spoke some English (typically not fluently, but capably), and they did provide some of the classroom English-language content, as well, especially in the lower grades.

In my observation, there seemed to be a distinct social divide between the Taiwanese staff and the Mainland staff, but since ethnicity/language was also highly correlated with status and position, I was never able to determine the exact nature of the division. I did have a series of conversations with the Taiwanese director of FIRST’s Primary School, Teacher Chen, about his experience as a Taiwanese citizen living and working in Henan province (which has a reputation in China of being intensely nationalistic/patriotic). He related an anecdote to me that served as a metaphor for his perspective on modern mainland China - Teacher Chen said that whenever a cab driver found out that he was from Taiwan, they always asked him the same question: “Why don’t you Taiwanese want to join back with China? We are so prosperous and powerful now.” Teacher Chen said that he typically gave the following response: “You (i.e. China)

can keep your money, we (i.e. Taiwan) will keep our (traditional Chinese) culture.” In his view, Teacher Chen felt that China’s progress came at the cost of traditional Chinese values and cultures and that the China that he experienced was more materialistic and shallow than the culture that he experienced back in Taiwan. Of course, these were the sentiments held by the Nationalists when they fled to Taiwan after the Revolution, so this is probably not surprising.

The lowest tier belonged to two very distinct groups at BEST. The first, and perhaps least surprising, were Henan Chinese staff who typically had very little education and who took care of most of the non-education tasks such as driving, security, cooking, cleaning, etc. This group was referred to by their “fictive-kin titles” that are so common in China: “Aunt” or “Uncle”. Thus, while a teacher would be called by their title and surname (e.g. *Zhang Laoshi* or Teacher Zhang), one of the school’s drivers/security guards was called (*Cheng Shushu*, or “Uncle” Cheng). The members of this tier were universally *Henanren* (natives of Henan province), and spoke only the local Henan dialect (but could understand standardized Mandarin).

The other group that formed the lowest social tier at FIRST was a bit more surprising to me. FIRST Bilingual School was able to attract students from wealthy families who were willing to pay the high tuition by employing a large number of “native English speakers” as teachers/instructors in the FIRST system. However, there were relatively few Westerners that chose to live/stay in Zhengzhou as compared to other Chinese cities (e.g. Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, etc.). Also, for the few Westerners that were employed at FIRST (and there were rarely more than one or two at a time when

I was there, and, from what I was told, before my time as well), FIRST paid substantially higher salaries to them as compared to their mainland Chinese counterparts. So, to make up for the lack of Westerners and to offset the salary costs of the few who did work there, FIRST, like many Chinese companies, recruited heavily from the Philippines for staff. Thus, the bulk of the foreign teachers at FIRST were Filipinos. It was these Filipino staff that comprised the other portion of the lowest tier, despite the fact that all of these teachers had degrees and at least some teaching experience in the Philippines or elsewhere (and many had substantial teaching experience – 10 years or more). For their part, the Filipino teachers identified the fact that there were very few or very limited opportunities in the Philippines, and salaries were very low. Schools like FIRST in China, on the other hand, provided more substantial salaries.

These opportunities and salaries, though, came at a price, at least from the perspective of the Filipino teaching staff. As described to me by my three primary contacts in this stratum (Teacher Patrick, Teacher Elaine, and Teacher Sofia), the conditions that they were promised when recruited in the Philippines and those that they actually experienced at BEST were very different. I believe that the differences can essentially be broken out into two categories – explicit and implicit.

In terms of the explicit differences, these consisted of such things as living quarters (they were promised a teachers' dormitory, but ended up being expected to room with students and continue English language instruction as part of their jobs during all waking hours) and hours of work (they were promised a standard schedule of 8 hours per day, Monday through Friday, and 4 hours on Saturday morning; they actually worked

closer to 15 hours per day, due to English language instruction and tutoring with students in the dorms, being required to eat lunch with students and converse in English during their unpaid lunch hour, etc.) among other things.

The implicit differences in conditions related more to culture and culturally informed assumptions that are present in many cross-cultural transactions and experiences. For instance, the teachers in this group told me that they were accorded significant status and respect (even if their pay was low) in the Philippines because they were teachers. However, they did not receive this same status and respect in China, despite traditional Chinese values associated with teachers. This appeared to them (and to me and some of my Western expat friends who also had Filipino colleagues in Chinese schools) related to the fact that they were viewed as being Filipinos first and teachers second, and they felt that Chinese society did not value people who looked like they did (this group cited features such as being a bit smaller in stature, having darker complexions/skin tones, etc.). Of these three teachers, two left after the end of their contract because of these conditions (despite significant financial incentives to stay), and one remained. The teacher that remained was Teacher Patrick, and, in my observation, was able to be accorded more respect than his colleagues because, a) he was male and b) his personality and professional experience provided him with the ability to address disparities directly and clearly, and so he did not put up with any cultural “disparity”.

There were three staff persons that I’ve left out of the hierarchy, because they did not fit in the fairly clearly defined hierarchy previously described, these being Teacher Katie, Teacher Daniel, and myself. Both Teacher Katie and Teacher Daniel were Chinese

and were native speakers of Chinese, but had spent considerable time in the West, and spoke excellent English. Teacher Daniel lived in the US for approximately 12 years (and graduated from both high school and university in the US), but was originally from Taiwan, and so had the benefits of this from the perspective of the school's leadership. However, he was relatively young, and had a more American sense of work, and it appeared that his resistance to working the Chinese schedule may have been problematic for him. Similarly, Teacher Katie was originally from Zhengzhou, but attended university in Canada, and lived in Canada for a total of 8 years. Both Teacher Daniel and Teacher Katie represented cosmopolitan perspectives, as they were cultural insiders in China, but also had a sophisticated understanding of how the West functioned, even going so far as to prefer some Western ideas (e.g. work schedules, autonomy, etc.) that differentiated them from their counterparts. This was particularly true because both Daniel and Katie had only been in China (or back in China in Katie's case) for only a few weeks. Thus, they represented a "goldmine" of internalized sociocultural agendas, a point which I reflected to them, and explicitly sought their approval for gathering information on their perspectives and permission to "check in" with them regarding some of my own observations. Because of their backgrounds, they were tasked to work closely with me; Teacher Daniel in particular liaised between the school's owners and me, which greatly facilitated my process of information gathering and checking. Beyond this, I had the chance to informally interview both teacher Katie and Teacher Daniel on a number of occasions, and was able to formally interview Teacher Katie shortly before I had to return home to the US.

*Teacher Daniel.* Teacher Daniel was hired at FIRST shortly after I was, and he was tasked with being my primary support/facilitator upon his arrival. Teacher Daniel was born and raised in Taiwan, but had been sent to live with an uncle in the US when he was 12 so that he could benefit from a US education and connections. Daniel also went to college, and graduated with an undergraduate degree in Education, before moving back to Taiwan. Once there, Daniel earned a Master's degree in Education. Daniel had been in Taiwan for a couple of years before being hired by FIRST to handle many of the Secondary School administrative responsibilities (which also included a full teaching load). He'd gotten married a year or so before taking the position with FIRST, and his wife, who was also an educator, was still in Taiwan, as were his parents. Daniel indicated that this was a cause of stress and anxiety between his wife and himself, but thought that teaching on the mainland for an international school was the best way to provide a prosperous future for his wife and his parents. More than once he indicated that he was worried about his father's health and hoped to be able to bring his parents to live with him in Zhengzhou.

Because Daniel spoke English with a native fluency and “had his feet “in both the American culture and the Chinese culture (albeit the Taiwanese Chinese culture), he was tasked by the school owners to facilitate my non-teaching interactions with the school. This was a continual source of frustration for the school owners, Daniel, and me, as there were a number of cultural norms that I experienced as being in direct conflict between the school owners/leadership team and myself.

Time, in particular, was a stressor; it was not uncommon for me to receive a call on a weekend morning during which I was “invited” to attend a previously unannounced work-related activity to begin in the space of half an hour of the call (“and the car is on the way to pick you up.”). Similarly, I had a number of instances in which the school leadership “renegotiated” my responsibilities, compensation, etc. In seeking counsel from my fellow expats, I was advised to politely, but firmly, hold to the initial agreement with regard to time, responsibilities, compensation, etc., so long as I signed other agreements with the school other than my initial employment contract. Every other Western expat that had a teaching position in Zhengzhou to whom I spoke (and this was a pool of around 20 individuals who had taught in China from 1 – 8 years), indicated that they’d experienced this same dynamic, and that, from their perspective, this was normative for the culture. I took this advice to heart, and stuck to the agreed upon schedule, which, unfortunately, put Daniel in the very awkward position of having to communicate my lack of compliance to the school leaders. I tried to be as direct as possible with Daniel, and he certainly vocalized understanding my position. However, I have no way of knowing how this, in turn, was communicated to the school leaders, but I strongly suspect that Daniel crafted face-saving culturally accepted fictions that helped both of us.

For instance, once, when I declined a 10:00 am invitation for a 10:30 bus trip to the Western portion of the province one Sunday morning, I told Daniel (who’d called me via cell phone to extend the invitation) that I had plans that I’d made two weeks previously to meet with some of my expat “guides” who were involved in orphan care in China, and that I could not attend the school invitation because this would mean



“standing up” the people who’d already rearranged their own schedules to accommodate mine, which I could/would not do. Daniel pressed a bit, and I sensed that he was under a lot of pressure from the school owners to get me there, but the visit to my “orphan care guides” was directly related to my purpose in China and the bus trip was not, so, communicating this to him, I continued to decline. Daniel eventually accepted this, and got off the phone, presumably to communicate this to the school leaders. I never heard anything else about this, and I never directly experienced any cost for taking this stand that I was aware of, nor did Daniel ever indicate that there were any hard feelings on the part of the owners/leadership. Consequently, I expect that Daniel probably provided a culturally acceptable fiction that prevented my having to pay a social price (e.g. that I or a family member was very ill and that, as a consequence, I couldn’t attend, so very sorry, but that I looked forward to being able to go next time, and that I thanked them for their generosity). The leadership probably didn’t believe this, but it would have been presented in a way that was acceptable, and that was that). For his part, had Daniel simply indicated, “He’s not coming, he had other plans”. Daniel would have had to pay a price for not being artful or persuasive enough to convince me to come, so it probably worked for him, too.

Beyond these concrete and more or less direct cultural conflicts, there were a number of more nebulous conflicts that Daniel provided insight/assistance. The bullying mentioned previously, for instance, was one such issue. I wanted to work toward sanctioning those students whom I observed bullying others (including punching, slapping, kicking, forcibly taking others’ belongings, etc.). Daniel indicated that this was

not possible, because the school leadership would never back me up, as this phenomenon was seen as a normal/acceptable part of being a secondary school student. Instead, Daniel wisely suggested using instances of these behaviors as a way to discuss the difference between school life in the US and China, which I was able to do, I hope, in a relatively non-judgmental way. Daniel also pointed out that I was perfectly within my authority to stop any aggressive behavior that I directly observed, which I did, just that I couldn't expect to effect change at a wider level. I also had serious concerns about how the Filipino teachers were treated, and I brought these up informally to both Daniel and Katie separately. Katie indicated that this was just the way things were in China, and reminded me (accurately) that this was Zhengzhou, not the US. For his part, Daniel indicated that he didn't like it either, but there wasn't anything that could be done. However, I suspect that he was able to address some of the more egregious concerns tactfully with the leadership (e.g. forcing the Filipino teachers to work at mealtimes and in the evenings without being paid, not providing enough non-work hours, etc.), as a number of these issues were mitigated if not resolved, without having had any direct discussions with the school leaders apart from Daniel.

In this way, Daniel provided a continual series of "cultural lessons", both direct and indirect, about how to negotiate the local culture. As an outsider, himself, Daniel did not have any insight or connections to either the orphan population or the disability community in China, and tended to view these topics from a decidedly American perspective, at least in terms of how he communicated his views to me. I regret that I only had time to scratch the surface before having to return to the US. For his part, Daniel

only remained at FIRST for a few weeks after I left. He communicated with me via e-mail, indicating that he'd had a falling out with the school owners (which came as a surprise to me), and that he'd left Zhengzhou to take a teaching position at an international school in Guangdong province.

**Teacher Katie.** Katie was born and raised in Zhengzhou, and had the opportunity to travel to Saskatchewan, Canada for her undergraduate studies. She told me that she'd had the chance to work for an additional 4 years in Canada for a marketing company. Katie spoke excellent English, but was not as fluent as Daniel, nor had she achieved his level of Western acculturation; this she presented an excellent source of information as an English-speaking Chinese person who was informed by the West, but not shaped by it. This being said, Katie indicated she'd returned to China by necessity rather than choice (her Canadian visa was expired); I gathered that she preferred the living standards in Canada, and would have remained there for at least a bit longer had she been permitted to do so.

Katie had been hired by FIRST several weeks before I was, and she was responsible for getting me settled in to the FIRST system until Daniel arrived. Katie described her initial experience in Canada as being parallel to mine in China: we'd both been able to speak enough of the language to get by, but were very "lost" when it came to activities of daily living. In particular, we both shared the same experience of going to a supermarket and being surrounded by all kinds of food – fresh, canned, frozen, and packaged – and having no idea what any of it was or how to prepare it! She provided

what support she could to my family in me during our first couple of weeks of settling in, and was appreciated by all of us.

Katie taught a wide range of classes to the lower secondary school grades (i.e. 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders), and also picked up some administrative responsibilities as well, including liaising with the Filipino teachers. I gathered that this is not what she would have chosen, but comported herself in a way that was consistent with her Canadian work experience (and which I believe probably went at least a little ways toward making their lives a bit easier).

Like Teacher Daniel, Teacher Katie seemed to operate in a fairly undefined tier in the highly stratified FIRST system. She was Mainland Chinese, and so did not figure in to the Taiwanese leadership stratum, but she spoke excellent English and had a Western education, so she was at higher social “level” than her mainland colleagues. In working with her, I had the distinct impression that Katie was making the best of a bad situation in having to return to China. In addition to my less formal discussions with her, Katie did consent to provide me with an interview for my dissertation research, the results of which are included later in this chapter.

### **Living in Zhengzhou: the Expat Community**

As mentioned previously, I’d been put in touch with an American couple who’d lived and worked in Henan province for eight years. I’d corresponded with them while I was still planning our stay in Zhengzhou, and was able to contact this couple, Faye and Sam, as soon as we were up and moving after our jetlag wore off.

I will discuss Faye and Sam in great detail later in this chapter, with particular focus on their work with orphaned and vulnerable children in China. Now, though, I would like to focus on the critical importance of this couple in terms of getting my family and me connected to the expat community in China, and providing invaluable assistance in helping us to become socialized in terms of what it meant to be not just a foreigner, but a family of foreigners, in Zhengzhou.

Faye and Sam enjoyed high status among the Western expat community in Zhengzhou. The reasons for their status were several, including the simple fact that they'd lived in Henan longer than most other foreigners I'd ever met or heard of (in fact, I only heard of two others that had lived in Henan longer than the eight years that Faye and Sam had been there – one of these had lived in the area for 12 years, and the other for 10; both of these others knew Faye and Sam, and held them in high regard). Faye and Sam were also living and working in Zhengzhou because this was where they'd seen the need for orphan care services for children who had more significant medical needs or disabling conditions. I will discuss their orphan care work in greater detail below, but suffice it to say that this couple made a very effective team in this work. Faye was a very efficient manager for their apartments and personnel (there were a small number of staff, interns, and volunteers that she oversaw), and was also particularly talented in terms of managing supplies and logistics related to the needs of the children. Sam, on the other hand, has an extremely relational approach, and (in my experience) invited a certain avuncular transference. This was reinforced by the fact that he took great pains to include others into his network, provided advice and access to resources, and generally set about

fostering connections among both expats and locals. It is my belief that this constellation of behaviors was a consequence of both natural and temperament and developed habit. It was certainly in harmony with Sam's stated values, and, as a consequence, he was a recognized leader of Zhengzhou's expat community, especially those expats who were in Zhengzhou for primarily faith-based reasons.

*The Role of Faith-Related Activities in the Expat Community.* This is probably a good time to stop and discuss the role of faith-related activities among the portion of the Western expat community in Zhengzhou with whom I interacted most often. As a result of my interactions, I observed that there were essentially three groups of Western expats in Zhengzhou:

- Group 1: Foreigners who lived and worked in China, Henan, and/or Zhengzhou for motivations that were not expressly faith-based (e.g. for business, for career advancement, for adventure, etc.), and did not have any particular ties to nor participated in faith-based activities that were central to the expat community comprised of the latter two groups
- Group 2: Foreigners who lived and worked in China, Henan, and/or Zhengzhou for motivations that were not expressly faith-based (like the previous group), but who did have ties to or participated in expat community faith-based activities
- Group 3: Foreigners who lived and worked in China, Henan, and/or Zhengzhou for motivations that were expressly faith-based (i.e. motivated by spiritual and/or faith-based desires to serve people in China,

particularly vulnerable or marginalized populations, or who saw working in China as a means to sharing their faith/coming to a deeper understanding of what living a “life of faith” meant, etc.), and who had deep ties to and participated in expat community faith-based activities. All of the expats that were in Groups 2 and 3 that I met, directly or indirectly, held to some variant of Christian Protestantism, especially from the more Evangelical end of the Protestant spectrum, although with significant differences from Evangelical Christianity that I have experienced in the US.

In order to have a working understanding of the religious, spiritual, and/or faith-based context in Zhengzhou, it is necessary to understand the “rules” that governed this context. Many in the West seem to be under the impression that religion in general and Christianity in particular are illegal in China. This is not true. Organized religious expression is legal within certain parameters. For Chinese citizens, two Christian denominations are recognized by China’s central government – there is an official Catholic denomination (*Zhongguo Tianzhujiao Aiguo Hui*, the “Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association”) and there is an official Protestant denomination (*San Zi Jiao Hui*, the “Three-Self Patriotic Movement” or more commonly the “Three Self Church”). Chinese citizens are free to attend these officially registered and licensed churches as they wish. It was explained to me that the Central Government wanted to avoid factionalism and religious schisms, which have had a long history in China of being particularly violent and bloody – thus having two registered and official churches helps

the central authority maintain control and reduce the potential for social chaos (*luan*). Nonetheless, it was also explained to me that many Chinese Christians had some distrust of these Churches, as in the past when there have been official crackdowns on religious activities, those attending them have been singled out for sanctions. Also, it was communicated to me that there were real concerns on the part of some Chinese Christians that their ability to worship in a manner that is consistent with a vibrant and authentic faith is severely curtailed by the mandate to function within the parameters set by the Central Government (and which was also communicated to me as being experienced as something of a “forced choice” by Chinese Christians). Thus, a number (and, according to some of my sources, a significant number) of Chinese Christians choose to risk official sanctions (sometimes severe) and organize themselves into small groups of “house churches” that are function in ways that are very similar to that of the primitive Christian Church in the Near East of the 1st Century CE.

Foreigners (defined as foreign passport holders), on the other hand, are free to organize themselves in terms of their own forms of religious expression, including worship, provided these do not interfere with the harmonious functioning of Chinese society. Active proselytization was something that was generally interpreted by Chinese authorities as interfering with social harmony, so this was forbidden among the expat community, and more experienced members made sure to tell the newer members about what was and was not acceptable, so as to avoid trouble between foreigners and the Central Government. In the group of people that I met, I also experienced what seemed to be sincere statements/ convictions by faith-motivated ex-pats that there was a desire to



“honor the authorities” by respecting the local rules, regulations, and laws, and, service, rather than proselytization, was seen as the primary means of expressing personal faith/spirituality in a way that honored both God and the authorities. This being said, while it was verboten for foreigners to introduce religion or faith as a topic of discussion, it was permissible to respond honestly in regard to one’s motivations if a local Chinese citizen inquired about this (i.e. If a foreigner was asked by someone who was Chinese, “Why are you working with orphans if you are not getting paid to do this?”, it was entirely permissible to respond with something on the order of, “Because I am a Christian, and I believe that it pleases God when I take care of his children.” Similarly, if one worked as an English teacher, it was expected that native English speakers would not only provide instruction on language, but also on culture, and in this context, it was permissible to provide a religious explanation for Western social phenomena or practices, which Chinese students were free to discuss as a group).

In Zhengzhou, there was reportedly a wide-spread and vibrant house church culture among the local Chinese population, which had led to some concerns by governmental officials and some arrests of persons believed to be local pastors, some of whom were quite vocal in their beliefs. Indeed, it was communicated to me that when high level provincial or central governmental authorities wanted to deliver a message of restraint/caution to the House Church movement in Zhengzhou, the “usual suspects” (i.e. a group of half a dozen or so house church pastors known by the authorities) would be arrested and held in custody as a means of telling the house church participants to “tone it down”. Because of this dynamic, it was considered unsafe for foreigners to visit house

churches, not because the foreigners were at risk, but rather because it could cause serious troubles for the locals. Similarly, overt messages about faith or religion among expats in a foreign setting were warned against so as to not cause trouble for locals – communication in public or by means of media that could be surveilled (e.g. e-mails, cell phones), was conducted in a very simple “code” that avoided using charged language (some “hot words” were pastor, church, ministry, missionary, God, Jesus, etc. which were replaced in text by omitting certain key letters or in speech by phrases such as “Dad says hi” for “God bless you” or “He’s a ‘p’” for “He’s a pastor”, etc.). In my experience, it was not necessary to do this when gathering for overtly faith-based functions with other foreigners, but was routinely done at all other times.

**“Child Haven”.** As was mentioned previously, Faye and Sam’s primary purpose for being and staying in Henan had to do with their orphan care work. To best understand their vision, approach, and commitment to orphan care, it is necessary to understand their story.

Faye and Sam moved to China when they were in the middle to late 50s. They both had grown children from previous marriages, and had successful lives and careers in North Carolina, their home state. Despite (or perhaps because of) Sam’s unassuming and warm demeanor, he’d spent the better part of three decades as a police detective for the North Carolina state university system. Faye was a homemaker and also worked as an office manager and medical assistant for a medical practice. Faye and Sam met through church, and were married. Not too long after being married, both Faye and Sam experienced what they describe as “God’s call” to do “follow him into something

deeper.” They describe having a shared experience of this call, and spent more than a year in intense prayer, worship, and communion with members of their church. By the end of this time, they both reported that they felt called to travel to serve God in China (it should be noted that neither of them had any particular knowledge of or interest in China or Chinese culture prior to this process).

As a result of this experience with their church and the experience of their calling, Faye and Sam describe feeling a sense of immediacy to their prompting to move to China. At this point in his life, Sam was just two years away from being able to retire and draw a full pension, but chose to take an early retirement and follow this sense of prompting to see where it would lead the two of them. After exploring how to go about the move (e.g. employment, visas, etc.), they found that there was great demand for native English speakers to teach English in China (this was similar to my process, as well, and, speaking from first-hand experience, a native English-speaker with at least some college can generally secure employment that provides a salary, visa, and living accommodations with relative ease). Faye and Sam felt drawn to areas of China that had less contact with Westerners, and so settled upon teaching positions in Luoyang, a smaller city in the western portion of Henan.

With these preparations, Faye and Sam made the move. They settled, teaching English for the small university that hired them during the day, and providing private English lessons during the evening. Because there were so few Westerners in the area, Faye and Sam became minor celebrities in their community, which led to numerous students for their private English lessons. These became so popular, that they started

organizing small groups for English classes; groups of chattering secondary school students and their parents trooping to and from Faye and Sam's apartment became a common sight in their apartment building.

Their notoriety becomes a significant factor in their story. One winter evening, after Faye had ushered students into their apartment for the group English lesson, an out of breath student showed up late. When asked why he was late, he told Faye that there was a baby in a box outside, and that he and some of Faye's neighbors were looking at it. Faye and the class immediately went down to see what was going on. When they arrived in the lobby of their apartment building, they found that some of the women in the building had brought the obviously newborn infant, still in the box but who was wrapped in a blanket, in out of the snow and cold (there was also a note that was included in the child's box, pinned to the blanket in which she'd been wrapped; among other things, the writer of the note wrote that they hoped that something could be done for the child, but the birth family could not afford to pay for the surgery and medical care, so they left her outside of the building where the foreigners lived, in hope that they might be able to help).

The women were speaking quietly and shaking their heads over the child; when Faye asked what was wrong (with one of her students translating), the women pulled the blankets aside to show her: The child, a little girl, was born with an *omphalocele*, a perforation of the abdominal wall which allowed the intestines to protrude outside of the abdominal cavity. Faye told the women and the students to bring the child to their apartment, and told Sam what was going on. Sam immediately raced upstairs to an

acquaintance of his, a man who was a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine. Sam and the doctor came downstairs to the apartment, where the doctor examined the girl. The doctor, through the students, told Sam that unless the child received immediate medical attention, she would soon die.

Faye and Sam, with the help of their students, gathered up the child and, along with the doctor, grabbed a taxi cab and took her to the nearest Emergency Room. The child was able to be seen and evaluated very quickly, due to the reputation and influence of the doctor who accompanied them. The physicians at the hospital told the group that the child's needs were beyond their ability to help, and that the best bet was to get her to a particular hospital in Zhengzhou as quickly as possible, because they had experience in performing the surgery to repair an *omphalocele* of this severity.

So, in quick order, Faye agreed to rush the child to Zhengzhou, and set about finding a cab that would take her and the child. In the meantime, the physicians quickly wrote up the results of their examinations for Faye to give to the hospital in Zhengzhou. Sam needed to stay in Luoyang to take care of business relative to their employment, but planned to take a train to Zhengzhou the next evening, as soon as he was able. A cab was found, Faye and the baby were bundled inside, and, with instructions from the Chinese doctor, Faye and the baby were on their way to Zhengzhou (Faye related that, during the 2 ½ hour drive to the next hospital, her anxiety over the child's survival was profound).

They made it, and the child was immediately evaluated and prepped for surgery in Zhengzhou. Faye agreed to pay all of the costs of the care (in China, then and now, payment for medical procedures are required prior to services being rendered, and Faye

provided the down payment and arranged for the remaining costs to be covered to the satisfaction of the hospital administration), and the girl was soon in surgery. By the time Sam arrived, the girl was out of her surgeries and was recovering in the hospital. They took turns watching over her and travelling back to Luoyang to teach, until she was well enough to return with them to their apartment in Luoyang.

During this time, there was considerable discussion about what would be done with the girl. After making inquiries, they found out that they needed to report her to the authorities in Luoyang as an abandoned child, which they did. Ordinarily, a child is then referred to the care of the Child Welfare Institute after this (which in Luoyang, houses over 600 children), but, given their investment in the life and well-being of this child, Faye and Sam were given the opportunity to serve as the child's foster parents. They agreed, and the child, now named Xiao Mei, came to live with them. Not long after, Faye and Sam began to investigate how to adopt Xiao Mei. At the time, Henan was not involved in any foreign adoptions of children in care, and there was no infrastructure set up to accomplish this, but Faye and Sam diligently persisted; it took five years, but they eventually adopted her. The family moved to Zhengzhou to have access to the infrastructure related to their adoption process, as well as to facilitate access to and development of relationships with other CWIs around the province (see below).

As Faye and Sam describe it, this experience came to be important for two reasons: first, and most obviously, was the fact that they intervened to save the life of a child, which changed all three of their lives forever; the second was more subtle, but ultimately no less powerful – they became aware of China's orphan care system, and got

to know some of the major players in the province. Specifically, Faye and Sam began their relationship with the Luoyang CWI at this point, and, given their length of time fostering Xiao Mei, and the esteem in which this couple was held by their willingness to take on the expense and responsibility of parenting a seriously ill child at their age, led to an unprecedented relationship between this CWI and these Westerners.

As a result of their experience with Xiao Mei, Faye and Sam began to become more aware of the orphan care context in China. They began to build upon the relationships with the CWIs that were involved in the care and ultimate adoption of Xiao Mei. Faye began to spend more time at the CWIS and, given her status as a foreigner and the sensitivity around the phenomenon of orphans, began to have unprecedented access to these facilities, including the children and areas that foreigners typically do not get to see. Sam began to build relationships with CWI leadership and, through this and the positive response and networking (*guanxi*) of the orphanage staff began to meet staff from other CWIs around the province. The area in which the CWIs indicated that they were in the greatest need for help and were most open to receiving it was in the area of the care of children with significant disabilities (essentially this meant developmental and/or physical/medical). When the CWIs were sure that Faye and Sam were not going to cost them anything in terms of either face or resources, and when they were sure that the couple was able to provide support for these vulnerable and hard to care for children, then Faye and Sam were “in” with this network of orphan care providers. Faye and Sam both identify this process as being central to their experience of being called to China in terms

of their faith experience, and thus felt “led” to the next phase of their experience in China.

Faye and Sam (and other informants) identified an essential dilemma faced by the CWIs in this province – the mandate to care for all orphaned children that are brought to them, combined with an inability to meet the increasingly complex needs of increasingly vulnerable children. As more and more children with significant disabling conditions found their way into care, the CWI staff were faced with very difficult choices about how to allocate their scarce resources to provide for more and more children, many of whom have these intense needs. Issues about having to decide whether or not to provide food to a young child who was probably going to die due to his/her weakened state and compromised health when there was already a shortage of food for the total number of children was faced by orphanage staff. It was reported to me that many of these staff, with no clinical training and even very little formal education, were put in positions where they had to make assessments about the probable outcomes of children entering care. In those instances where it was felt that new children were not going to be good candidates for survival, then the decision to not “take food from the other children who could survive” was made. It was further reported that it was not unusual in these circumstances for the new children to be placed in “dying rooms” in some orphanages, where they would remain until they ultimately died. It should be noted that there is evidence of this sort of practice from other sources, including, most notably, the 1996 Human Rights Watch report, *Death by Default: A Policy of Fatal Neglect in China’s State Orphanages*. Because of the very public revelations and the incredible loss of face



to China as a result of this report, many CWIs in prominent or accessible (by foreigners) areas had an increase in the resources made available to them for improvements in their care of children. In more rural orphanages in the more rural provinces, however, it seems that the state of affairs that was reported in Shanghai in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is still present to some extent.

It is not surprising to learn that the CWI staff do not like having to make these decisions, and do so only out of the direst need. When someone comes along who can provide the (relative) expertise and resources to care for children whom the orphanage staff would not be able to feed and offers to help, the staff, once relationships were established and motivations clear, jumped at the opportunity offered by Faye and Sam. At first, Faye volunteered to care for a few children (in addition to Xiao Mei), providing for them out of their own resources, as well as from the largesse of family and friends.

With these first successes under their belt, they began to see the need to expand their services, and began to set about increasing their capacity to do so. They hired a couple of members of the local community through their contacts in the local church movement. This network of staff persons is critical, because, in China, employment is typically “for life”, as is the case in the CWIs; these local workers chose to forego the employment security of working in the CWI system for the lower pay and fewer benefits of Faye and Sam’s program. There is a strong faith-based component associated with those who work in the non-CWI orphan care system in the province, both for local workers and for expats like Faye and Sam. They were thus able to connect with other staff through the informal local faith-based network, ultimately enabling them to secure

24 hour coverage for the children in their care. Faye and Sam continued to teach in order to provide for their visas and to support themselves and the children in their care; when not teaching, both Faye and Sam helped directly with the care of the children placed with them (it should be noted that this placement was “official” through the CWIs – Faye and Sam were licensed as foster parents, and through this mechanism the children, who remain wards of the state, were legally placed with them.

As wards of the state, the CWIs were mandated to provide for the medical care of the children whom they serve. This was, and remains, a dilemma for the CWIs: Under the present system in China, there are no longer universal medical provisions for the general population. Instead, medical care is provided as an out-of-pocket expense for most participants (many employers do provide a form of medical insurance to their workers, and this provides the cost of care for the worker and the worker only – not families). Private insurance to cover family members is available, but is so expensive that only the very wealthy can afford it. Thus, for most people who need medical coverage for their children (who are not covered under employer provided medical care), the cost for medical care, including tests, surgeries, etc. is expected at the time of service. Many families who have children with significant disabilities simply cannot afford the costs of care to address the needs of their children. One anecdote that was reported to me was of a family who had a two-year-old who was born with a congenital heart defect. The family was told by the hospital of this condition, and was also told that it would cost the equivalent of \$14,000 USD. This rural, agrarian family simply could not afford this surgery – this was more money than they would see in their lifetime. A loose

confederation of foreign NGOs was ultimately able to provide for the cost of this family's surgery (offset by their ability to negotiate the fee down by having the child served at a hospital in Shanghai with which they had a relationship, i.e. good *guanxi*). The CWIs are bound by this system as well, and while they can often receive some discounts for care based upon their relationships with medical providers, they are still limited by scarce funds and other resources; surgeries are often a "luxury" that they cannot afford for their children.

As Faye and Sam began to understand this system, they began to reach out through their own network of friends and family, and, especially, their church network back in the US. A number of churches began to assist in fund raising efforts to provide surgeries for the children served by Faye and Sam's program, now called "Child Haven". Faye, especially, began to take on more and more of the logistics associated with this process, including building a relationship with a reputable hospital in Shanghai that provided high quality services. This hospital was willing to work with Child Haven to accept payment after services were provided, thus allowing for life-saving surgeries to be provided simultaneous with fund-raising efforts. As the work that Faye and Sam did became more widely known (the fact that they were foreigners helped the word to spread among the CWIs), they began to develop more and more relationships with the CWIs around the province. This also created more demand for their services, and Child Haven soon outgrew their apartment.

Faced with the need for more space to serve the children entrusted to them, Sam began to explore options for their facilities. Sam found that he could get the most value

by renting local Chinese style apartments – this allowed more funds to go directly to children rather than paying for Western-style “luxuries”. Eventually, Child Haven grew into three apartments, all located within a couple of blocks of each other, that serve children based upon age (one apartment is for children under 2, the next is for children from 2 – 4, and the third serves children from 5 and up). In addition to the direct care services and fund-raising for medical coverage, Faye and Sam have also been given permission to help to recruit potential adoptive families for the children in their care. Until recently, it was virtually unthinkable for the government of China to identify a child with a significant disability, especially a developmental disability, as a candidate for intercountry adoption. This has been changing in recent years, and organizations like Child Haven, who have been identified as de facto “pilot” programs, have contributed to the evidence base that is helping to change this in China. Thus, the children in Child Haven either return to the CWI following their surgeries (usually for kids without developmental disabilities) or remain at Child Haven until they are adopted. Sometimes children with developmental disabilities also return to CWI care, too, after they have become healthier/stronger, but this is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Funds come from a variety of sources: Faye and Sam’s direct contributions from their own salaries/assets, donations (both foreign and local), and child sponsorship supervised and maintained by Child Haven’s US-based support ( a small group of 2 or 3 individuals that maintain the finances/accounting and logistics, including the records necessary for Child Haven’s US 501(c)3 status).

Currently, Child Haven continues to serve children who are at very high risk for surviving in CWI care through the provision of direct care services in the “group home” setting. The child to staff ratio is usually 4:1, which, while not ideal, is a dramatic improvement over the ratios in the CWIs which can be 20:1 or more. In addition, Child Haven is very connected to both the local and the expat faith-based communities in Henan. These communities exist in parallel with one another, typically not intersecting in order to protect the local community. However, Child Haven provides a safe way for these communities to intersect, and, given the fact that Child Haven provides critical services to highly vulnerable children without costing the government anything, the government tolerates this co-mingling, provided it remains discreet and does not cause trouble. For their part, the staff and supporters of Child Haven take great pains to keep a low profile and to not jeopardize their ability to serve children.

In terms of the expat community that is involved with Child Haven, I mentioned above that Faye and Sam enjoy a high status among the “3<sup>rd</sup> group of expats”, those who are in China for faith-based motivations. These expats support Child Haven both directly (through donations of goods and funds, and/or through volunteering), and indirectly (through fund-raising and word-of-mouth). Faye and Sam are also willing to use their experience and connections to serve the local expat community (for example, Sam was an invaluable resource to my family when we first moved to Zhengzhou – he provided us with English maps, pre-written direction cards that my wife could show to cab drivers, he oriented us toward stores that had Western style goods, he provided advice on how to navigate the culture, he connected us to other foreigners who had children the same age

as ours, etc., and he served other families in this way as well). Faye and Sam both view the totality of their assets, both material and immaterial, as being intimately tied to their faith-based mission of living and working in central China, and see the act of engaging with others, local or expat, those of similar faiths and those of differing beliefs, etc., as being central to their essential *raison d'être*.

***Volunteering at Child Haven.*** My family and I had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with Faye, Sam, Xiao Mei and the children and staff of Child Haven. My family (Sarah-my wife, Emily - our 8 year old daughter, Benji - our 6 year old son, and me) would take a 30 minute cab ride once or twice a week to spend time at Child Haven. We ended up spending most of our time at the “Older Children’s House (OCH)” – the apartment where eight kids with disabilities age 5 and older lived. There was a McDonald’s that was only about a ten minute walk away from the OCH, where we would take 2 or 3 of the kids each week for a treat (usually the kids wanted ice cream sundaes, but they also liked French fries, corn – a favorite side dish at Western-style fast food restaurants in China – served as cooked kernels off the cob in a French fry container, or hamburgers). We tried to alternate as much as possible in order to give all of the kids some time out of the house and in the community, but there were a couple of children who had more significant needs (probably undiagnosed autism-spectrum disabilities), that the Chinese staff preferred to keep in the house (they were concerned that one of the kids might bolt away and have an accident, thus bringing close official scrutiny to us and to Child Haven – this risk was deemed too great to justify the trip out for this subset of kids).

Our family would exit the cab on the nearest large thoroughfare, and make our way across the road to our cross street. We would then make our way down a narrow alley and into a combination parking lot/courtyard for the residents of the apartment building. We typically found our way to Child Haven in the early afternoon, so many of the residents of the apartments were at work, so navigating the space was easy. On those few times when we arrived in later afternoon or early evening, the place was packed with cars, bikes, scooters, three wheel vehicles, and people of all shapes sizes and ages (we soon learned to adjust our schedule to capitalize on the greater safety and ease of the early afternoon). We would make our way up the stairs of the apartment building – the stairway was cramped and dark. As far as we were able to determine, the stairways and other common areas of the apartment had never been cleaned in the eight years or so since the apartment had been constructed, so there was a substantial layer of grit that coated everything. The stairway itself was dark, and I trudged up carefully, carrying Benji and sweating profusely. It was told that as Chinese-style accommodations went, this building was pretty typical, and represented decent housing for working and middle-class locals. Because Faye and Sam were willing to live on the local scale, they were able to stretch their donations from the US to provide for more children, thus the state of their housing (this was a stark difference from the apartments provided by my employer).

Once we got to the apartment, we would knock on the door, which was answered by the staff. We were invariably warmly welcomed, and I would do my best to carry on a conversation with my intermediate Mandarin and the staff who tended to speak in the local *Henanhua* dialect. We were able to communicate well, and Faye typically made

arrangements/communicated with the staff to prepare for our visit (we were able to get on a regular schedule, which helped). The staff helped the children who were going out to get ready, while we waited and Benji played with the other children. When ready, Sarah and I carried down the children who were travelling with us, while Benji and Emily followed us. Once down to the street, we were able to sort ourselves out: Sarah pushed a stroller, I pushed a stroller and carried Benji on my shoulders, and Emily walked along with us. We made quite a sight as we walked the three blocks to McDonald's, taking a short cut through a shopping area and dodging trucks and motorcycles as we went. Because the children whom we took generally had visible disabilities, we attracted a lot of attention, as people tried to figure out who we were and what we were up to.

Once in the McDonald's I found out what the kids wanted, and placed our order. Sarah got all of the children settled at a table, and then took the kids over to an indoor play area. The first couple of times that we went, the McDonald's staff were as quizzical as everybody else, but, by the second time, a team leader struck up a conversation with us, and found out what we were doing. This helped, and the staff were very solicitous of us on future visits (again, being on a regular schedule probably helped).

The experience of going to this McDonald's with at least three children with visible disabilities (including Benji) was noticeably different than our experiences in other parts of the city. In other places, locals definitely did not seem shy about coming up to us to figure out what was going on with Benji ("Who are these *lao wai*, and why do they have this Chinese kid with Down syndrome?). It was not uncommon for people to pick Benji up or get very close to him to examine his features to verify their guess about



his having Down syndrome. Benji did not like this, and the amount and intensity of the attention that he received, combined with the stress of the move, his sensory/vestibular needs, his inability to understand what people were saying, and his general anxiety were very difficult for him (and for those of us who cared for him). For some reason that I never found out (although I suspect that the staff recognized some of the kids from having come in with Faye and Sam, which provided us with the same status), we were spared this type of scrutiny in McDonald's, which made it a haven for all of us, for different reasons.

After the kids finished eating, we'd repeat the travel arrangements for the return trip back to Child Haven. Once we got back to the apartment, the kids got back into their afternoon routine, and we dropped off food that we brought back for the other children and the workers. After saying our good-byes, we made our way back out to the main road and hunted down a taxi.

During one of our first times volunteering, we made the mistake of arriving around dinner time – this completely overtaxed the workers who were feeding several children who needed assistance; the workers were very gracious to us, and when we realized their dilemma, we stayed to help out. We were probably more trouble than we were worth for the staff, but they seemed to appreciate our efforts. This gave us a chance to get to know the staff and the children, and vice-versa. Once the meal and clean-up were done, the staff persons were a bit freer to engage with us.

The person whom I came to know as the lead staff person for the apartment, a local woman of middle years, smiled and engaged us in conversation. Between my

fatigue and sensory overstimulation from the meal process, her very thick local accent, and my moderate Mandarin, we found the conversation difficult, and one another's efforts comical. We were able to make ourselves understood reasonably enough, though, until the end of the conversation when she looked at me very directly, and asked a question that I didn't understand. After letting her know that I didn't understand, she repeated it, and pointed with her index finger toward the ceiling. I still didn't understand, and she repeated it again, this time pressing her palms together. I began to understand, and asked my daughter, Emily, to show her the little cross necklace that she wore under her collar. The worker beamed and vigorously nodded her head, and repeated the phrase, by which I understood her to be asking if we "followed God". When we nodded in return, she smiled and hugged us, and pointed to herself, also nodding, by which I understood her to be indicating that she belonged to the local church. I was able to verify this later with Faye, who confirmed it, and reminded me of the need for discretion around this topic.

Approximately six weeks after we arrived in Zhengzhou, Faye and Sam put the word out among their network of expats (and, I found out, among the local church network as well), that they needed help. All three apartments were at capacity in terms of the children whom they were serving, but they'd just received referrals for three more infants from the countryside, all of whom had spina bifida, and two of whom had active infections. To serve these children and get them to Shanghai for surgery meant that staff had to be reallocated for the trip to Shanghai and the stay in the hospital there (in China, patients provide for much of their own in-hospital care through family, friends, or in this

case, caregivers, so these staff would be in Shanghai for some time caring for the children). In order to free up the staff necessary to serve these children, Child Haven was looking for families that were willing to foster children who were presently being served in Child Haven (the organization had been given the authority to recruit and train foster families by the local CWI for circumstances such as this). Upon hearing about this, we volunteered to serve as a foster family. Because our family has experience with Down syndrome (in addition to Benji's diagnosis, Sarah worked for several years as a developmental intervention therapist for children with Down syndrome), Child Haven placed a little girl who'd just entered care from a nearby city who had Down syndrome with our family. This child, Jiayue, stayed with our family during the rest of our time in Zhengzhou.

As with our son, Benjamin, Jiayue was also a source of great curiosity to those whom we encountered during the course of daily activities in Zhengzhou. In fact, other than Benji, Jiayue, and a couple of the children at Child Haven, we saw only one other person whom we recognized as having Down syndrome during our time in Zhengzhou. This was highly surprising to me, given the incidence of Down syndrome at 1 per 691 live births (NADS, 2012). Even with the higher rates of termination of pregnancies associated with Down syndrome, I would have expected to encounter many more children and adults with Down syndrome in Zhengzhou (a city with a population of around 10 million people). The response of people whom we encountered, from taxi drivers, to pedestrians, to shop keepers and more, to Benji or Jiayue, was pronounced. Some people were rude (from our cultural perspective), others inquisitive, many were

kind, but virtually all were curious, frequently going out of their way to examine the children, look closely at their faces, and otherwise inspect them (this happened in situations from the casual – like waiting for a bus, to more intimate – meeting friends for dinner). On more than one occasion, cab drivers, after pulling over and preparing to allow us to get in, would wave us off after seeing Benji. This was explained to me by one of my informants from Henan – that some people were very superstitious and thought that children like Benji would bring them bad luck. Others, though, while plainly curious, were very warm and engaging. One of my Zhengzhou informants had a younger “nephew” (fictive kin) who was about 10 years old. This child often accompanied his “auntie” to visit us, and he and Benji had a great fun playing in our apartment, and did not seem in any way put out by Benji’s diagnosis. Sadly, this was not a universal response in China, nor has it been universal in the US, either.

*Expatriate Faith Community.* Soon after our arrival and settling in to Zhengzhou, Sam invited us to the Zhengzhou Expat Christian Fellowship that met the third Sunday of every month at the Sofitel Hotel in Zhengzhou’s north side Jinshui District. This was a loosely organized group of “Group 2 and Group 3” foreigners living and working in Zhengzhou who met monthly at the Sofitel Hotel for a Protestant church service and group fellowship. These services were conducted in English, the native language of the vast majority of the participants, most of whom were Australian, Canadian, or American. There were a few regular attendees who were British or were from other European locales. On one occasion, a group of 5 or 6 participants from West Africa also attended,

but they were only in town briefly. Typically there were about 100 people in attendance, ranging in age from newborns to adults in their 60s or 70s.

The group met in one of the hotel's conference rooms. The group pitched in to pay for the rental of the room (and got a deal because of the regular use), and paid for refreshments from the hotel as well. The group designated two participants to stand at the door to check the passports of those coming to attend, as it was perfectly legal for foreign passport holders to organize themselves in this way, but was strictly forbidden for Chinese nationals to participate. I was told by a number of people that the local authorities regularly sent people who tried to attend, to make sure the group was limiting itself to foreigners only.

After the check-in, there was an initial time of partaking of the refreshments, meeting and talking among the group, and generally getting settled in. At some point, one of the organizers would make an announcement that the worship portion of the service was to begin, and everyone took their seats. The organizers prepared pre-recorded music, and sometimes live musicians, and a group of volunteer vocalists to lead the singing of hymns and praise choruses. After approximately 30 minutes of this, the worship ended with a prayer, and an invitation to greet one another and take another swing at the refreshments. The children were excused at this point to go to the informal Sunday school that the organizers also provided. After the children left (infants stayed with their parents in the main service), there was another prayer, and the designated volunteer led the service, typically by teaching a passage out of the Bible. This lasted another 30 – 45 minutes, and then there was a closing prayer. The children then rejoined the group, there

was more visiting, talking, and then the group broke up and left, with some groups going out for lunch together. It was this larger community of Group 2 and 3 expats that Faye and Sam, along with others, were informal leaders, given their seniority in the country, their age and experience, and their evident commitment to a lifestyle much respected among this community.

I would later find out that this larger group was comprised of smaller “cells” each of which were made up of 10 – 20 foreigners who met weekly on Sundays in their apartments for an informal church service, consisting of a time of singing, prayer, and a brief Bible study led by a rotating roster. The five or six groups of foreigners around the city took turns organizing and leading the large monthly service.

The smaller services that occurred weekly around the city were very similar in content and process as the larger monthly service, including the need to check passports. The group that my family and I participated in told us that during one meeting a couple of months prior to our arrival, there had been a knock at the door of the apartment by a local man who said that he’d heard the music and wanted to know if he could come in and participate. The host for the group politely declined, and the man at the door (speaking English), persisted in his requests. The host again apologized and declined, and the man went away. We were told that the following week, there was another knock at the door, and, this time, there were three uniformed police officers at the door. The leader of this group came in, and asked to look around the apartment (typically this group consisted of around 15 Australian and American participants, most of whom were adults, with 5 or so children under the age of 16. Two of the police officers looked around the apartment,

going in the bedrooms and closets, while the third chatted with the group. We were told that the group offered the police officers coffee (real, ground Western coffee, a luxury in this part of China), and refreshments. After the officers had satisfied their curiosity, they left, and hadn't been heard from again all through the time that we were there. Nevertheless, because of this experience this group (and the others around the city) was particularly vigilant to follow the local laws and requirements.

I mention these groups, because they (along with work groups) formed the primary social networks among Group 2 and 3 expats in Zhengzhou. Significant mutual support networks, the provision of informal psychosocial supports, the sharing of a mutual language and culture, and pragmatic exchanges of knowledge, goods, and services occurred. These groups provided the primary mode of socialization for newcomers such as myself, and the veteran participants, some of whom had been in Zhengzhou for as long as 5 years (except for Faye and Sam, who had been in Henan for 8 years, and one other regular participant who'd been there for nearly 10 years) provided advice on how to negotiate the numerous cross-cultural dilemmas that emerged, and also provided access to their own *guanxi* networks, expanding these to the newcomers, thus providing critical access to knowledge and resources necessary for negotiating the complex nuances of daily life experienced by this group on a daily basis.

This, then, was the context for the group for which Faye and Sam were the gatekeepers for us. They invited us to the monthly service at the Sofitel, and then introduced us to an Australian family who'd been in Zhengzhou for five years, the Smithees. The Smithee family, Alan, Miriam, and their children, Jane (age 16) and Michelle (age

11) provided invaluable contact to my family and me during our time in Zhengzhou. Because the younger Smithee child was close in age to our own daughter, they spent considerable time together, including having sleepovers. Both girls were home-schooled in China, and so we were able to arrange schedules to allow them to hang out together (a critical component for our daughter's adjustment to China). This was challenging as our families lived on opposite sides of the city, but we were able to make it work.

For their part, Alan and Miriam Smithee were extremely helpful to Sarah and me. Alan and Miriam both taught English, Alan at a Canadian secondary school project, and Miriam at a local university. Alan and Miriam were interested in my research, and provided invaluable contact and access to information about orphan care, and vulnerable children both through their direct experience, and through information provided by their students. All of the Smithees were involved with Faye, Sam, and Child Haven to some degree, and, as both Alan and Miriam were gregarious, both had extensive personal networks among both the expat and local communities. They were willing to share their experiences and observations with me, and also put me in contact with useful contacts who were involved with orphan care or work with children with disabilities (which, I learned, was highly correlated with involvement in China's orphan care system). It should be noted that both Faye and Sam and their network, and Alan and Miriam and their network (and there was some overlap), were the source of most of my formal investigations and interviews related to orphan care in Zhengzhou.



## **Local connections to OVC and persons with disabilities**

*Sandy Wu.* Approximately two weeks after we arrived in Zhengzhou, Sam told us about a friend of theirs whom he thought could be of assistance in my exploration of the orphan care context in the Province. Her name was Sandy Wu, and she was a professional tour guide for English speaking tourists all over China, but specializing in guiding groups around many of the cultural treasures of her native Henan province. Sam suggested that we may wish to avail ourselves of her guide services, and, in this way our family could get to know her and she, us. I took Sam's advice, and arranged for a tour to the historic Shaolin temple on Mt. Song (*Songshan*), that is about 2.5 hours west of Zhengzhou by car.

Sandy arranged for a van to take the five of us (Sandy and my family – this was before we fostered Jiayue) to *Songshan* and the Shaolin temple. We met the van driver and Sandy at the crossroads outside our apartment. Her personality was bubbly and vivacious, and she had an immediate connection with our daughter, Emily. During this trip, I had a chance to get to know her, her history, and how she became aware of orphans and orphan care in China.

Sandy was 25 years old when I met her, from a rural village near the town of *Pingdingshan* in Henan province. She was one of the few people in her age group whom I met with a sibling – her fraternal twin brother. She described her upbringing as being very traditional, and described her village life to me in great detail. She also described the process of her parents arranging a marriage for her, which was abhorrent to Sandy. In fact, this became a source of great discord in her family, and Sandy eventually left her

family's home and moved out on her own. She described a very difficult time where she worked 15 hours a day waiting tables at a restaurant, until she saved enough money to leave for Zhengzhou. Here, she was able to use some of her money to enroll in school (she chose tourism because she wanted to see as much of the world as she could). She applied herself diligently, made excellent grades, and worked on her English constantly for two years, creating an immersion program for herself by developing a network of foreign students in her area of Zhengzhou.

After finishing school and earning her tour guide license, Sandy was employed by an agency that provided historical tours of China to foreigners. She described often leading groups in and around Beijing, as well as in some of the western provinces, and, of course, in her native Henan. During this time, she began to become aware of some of the foreigners who were coming to China to adopt. Sandy describes this as being quite puzzling to her, as she couldn't figure out what these foreigners wanted with Chinese children (Sandy also described a rumor that was going around at about the same time: that foreigners were adopting Chinese children, then taking them home and raising them in their armies). As Sandy became more curious, she began to investigate the phenomenon on her own, both with foreigners and with the contacts that she developed at the CWIs to which she accompanied them. Sandy described making a couple of significant friendships with some of the adoptive families that she met, including corresponding with them after they returned home. One or two of them asked Sandy if she could help them to find out more information on the circumstances under which their adopted children entered orphan care, which Sandy did. Some of these interactions and

discussions eventually led her to Child Haven and Faye and Sam, with whom she developed a very close friendship (she describes them as being surrogate parents, and their daughter, Xiao Mei, as being a little sister).

Sandy indicated that she grew up with very little awareness of the phenomenon of orphaned children, and had no idea as to the extent of the phenomenon. In her estimation, very few native Chinese people really understood this, unless they were among the very small number who worked in the CWI system. Sandy also provided information related to some of the infanticide practices that occurred in the rural areas of Henan, which correlated with some of the information provided by Faye and Sam and the Smithees, too (please see Chapter Five for more information). She did not have much experience with children with disabilities, and the little experience that she did have was directly related to the children in orphan care that she encountered and the Western families who were adopting from China. She was aware of an organization in Zhengzhou that served children with disabilities, a “kindergarten” (a combined preschool and Kindergarten program similar to that employed by FIRST) that served typically developing children and children with disabilities, which she provided me with access to. I also had the chance to accompany Sandy to the neighboring city of Kaifeng, where she was working on finding some background information for a family who’d adopted a child from the Kaifeng CWI. I had a tour of the older child dormitory (which Sandy told me had been changed because I was accompanying her – for instance, the older kids with more pronounced disabilities were not there, and the place was in better order than she typically saw it), and had the chance to dine with the CWI director and his staff.

Sandy was a critical piece of the puzzle for me, and helped me to have a fuller understanding of the picture as it related to the phenomenon of orphaned children in China generally and Henan specifically. Sandy provided an “insider’s” view of Henan, but I only had access to her perspective because she was very much an outlier in terms of her own perspective on life (she was a “cosmopolitan” in terms of diffusion theory, and an early adopter of many Western ideas). Sandy also provided access for me to the final set of perspectives to whom I had access before we had to leave Zhengzhou, these being two key figures involved in the inclusive kindergarten, called Qisehua (Seven Colored Flowers).

*Rainbow Colors.* During one of the first experiences that I had with the small group, expat meetings I attended, I heard mention of a school called Rainbow Colors. The group members who discussed (who were visiting from another small group of Canadian expats, all of whom were professional educators, not just native English speakers teaching others their language) volunteering with this school. I probed for some more information, and heard about special education and kindergarten, but didn’t pursue it at this time, given other directions that I was pursuing. However, I continued to hear about this school from a variety of contacts, including Faye and Sam, Sandy, and others. Sandy was finally able to put me in touch with a member of the Rainbow Colors Kindergarten organization, a woman named Wu Feng, and was provided with her phone number.

I called Wu Feng, and was delighted to find that her English was excellent. In fact, I would later find out that she was a professor of English at a local university, and

had spent several years in England, where she earned her Master's degree in Applied Linguistics. During this initial conversation, I shared a bit about who I was and what I was interested in studying. It turned out that we knew a number of the same people in Zhengzhou, all of whom were Group 3 expats. I would find out that this was not a coincidence; Wu Feng was very involved with the local house church community in Zhengzhou, and self-identified as a Christian. This identity and its expression were discussed at length by Wu Feng, and she indicated that this was a central theme in her own life – like Faye and Sam, she was seeking a way to “live her faith” in Zhengzhou, and she found a way to do this through her work with Rainbow Colors.

Wu Feng agreed to meet my family and me at our apartment after I was done teaching for the day. I provided her with the address, and she indicated that she knew where it was. At the designated time, I received a call that she was on the street outside of the apartment complex, and I went out to meet her and bring her in. When I met her, I was struck by the fact that she owned her own car (the only other locals I met that enjoyed this luxury were the owners of FIRST), and drove it herself. I directed her of where to park (in sight of the security guard kiosk), and we went up to our apartment, where she met my wife and kids, and agreed to participate in a recorded interview.

During this interview, Wu Feng indicated that she did not have much involvement with the orphan community in Zhengzhou, other than knowing some of the Group 3 expats who were in some way involved. Rather, she worked with biological parent of children with disabilities who were students at Rainbow Colors. I was intrigued, as the only children with disabilities that I'd encountered (directly or indirectly) in Zhengzhou

were those being served by some form of orphan care provider (this, the reason for including her and the Director of Rainbow Colors, Bao Li, in my sample). Wu Feng indicated that she'd heard about the director of Rainbow Colors, and her struggles with trying to bring about an inclusive education setting for children with disabilities.

*(Note: The following section includes information from both Wu Feng and Bao Li, who I interviewed at Rainbow Flowers, with Wu Feng providing translation, from whom I received information about how Rainbow Colors was started – I've combined these here for the sake of simplicity/clarity).* Both Wu Feng and Bao Li related quite a bit about Bao Li's early experiences, struggles, and ultimate triumph in starting Rainbow Colors: It had started off as a typical "public" kindergarten, and Bao Li, an early childhood educator trained in Zhengzhou, was hired to be the director of the school and its programs. However, Bao Li had a series of interactions with the parents of children with disabilities, and learned that there were no educational opportunities open to these children. Bao Li became interested in trying to create this opportunity. She planned to have an inclusive classroom setting, with a ratio of nine typically developing children to one child with a disability (I would find out that many of these children had autism spectrum diagnoses). Each class would also have one lead teacher and two assistants to 30 children (27 of whom were typically developing, and three of whom had disabilities), all of whom would participate together. Prior to this idea, Bao Li's administration of the kindergarten school was very successful, and enrollment quickly grew to capacity.

After Bao Li announced her plans, there was significant push-back from both parents and teachers, neither of which were in favor of this plan (Wu Feng, and later Bao

Li, indicated that there were concerns with the quality of the learning environment under the proposed setup, as well as biases and stereotypes related to people with disabilities generally). According to Bao Li, when she persisted with her plans, 90% of the parents pulled their children out of the school, and many of the teachers also quit. However, Wu Feng pointed out that Bao Li correctly identified that the 10% of families that kept their children as students had a high degree of buy-in, as did the teachers who chose to remain. Bao Li believed that this commitment would enable her to build a successful program for children who had no opportunities otherwise.

Thus, Bao Li persisted, and experienced continued pressure to not proceed, both from higher officials who oversaw the school, and from the neighborhood where the school was located; the local store owners were concerned about the number of kids with disabilities in the neighborhood, afraid that they would “scare off” business. Bao Li persisted, and the shopkeepers soon found that the students, disabled and otherwise, and their families shopped at the local stores, making it good for their business. Their continued exposure to children with disabilities allowed them to experience first-hand that many of their fears were unfounded, and, rather than being opposed to the school and its students, within a year soon became a strong group of advocates for the school, now called Rainbow Colors – a name chosen to denote the fact that diversity is good – it takes seven colors to make the beauty of a rainbow, just like it takes many different types of children to make the beauty of a school.

Bao Li was also successful in setting and achieving high standards for all of the students attending her school, and the parents that elected to stay were quite happy with

the results. These parents told their friends in a grassroots marketing campaign, as did the parents of children with disabilities, and within a year, Rainbow Colors was again at capacity. As her enrollment grew, and she began to experience the needs of her students with disabilities, Bao Li began to seek out people who knew about disabilities, first through “foreign experts” in the community, then through making contacts with therapists and special educators in other communities, especially Taiwan. To this day, Bao Li continues her programmatic supervision with regular Skype sessions and frequent visits to increase her technical capacity to meet the needs of her students. Because of her vision, persistence, and success, Bao Li and Rainbow Colors have been featured in local media coverage in Zhengzhou, which has increased her ability to reach out to the local (and hidden) community of disabled children.

For her part, Wu Feng indicated that this is how she first heard about Rainbow Colors – through local media coverage. The story touched her, and she sought out Bao Li to see if she could help by volunteering. Wu Feng did so, and began to build relationships with the students with disabilities and their parents. As she did so, she began to hear about the difficulties that these parents had in conducting their daily lives. Wu Feng was inspired to start a support group for these parents, where they could share their stories with other parents of children with disabilities, engage in peer mentoring and support, and have a “night off” from their parenting responsibilities, as Wu Feng and her volunteers provide for child care during the meetings, and organize developmentally appropriate activities and games for the kids – this is one of the few times that these



children can play with others outside the home (this certainly squared with my experience as the parent of a child with disabilities in Zhengzhou).

Wu Feng's group gained participants and momentum as rapidly as Rainbow Colors did, to the point where it spun off from Rainbow Colors to become its own organization, although it operates closely with Rainbow Colors. At the time of this writing, CSNG (short for "The Children with Special Needs are a Gift" Parents Support Group – this doesn't translate well, so it is here referred to as CSNG) had an active participant group of 200 parents. Because of Wu Feng's connection to the local church, this is also the source of many of her volunteers, as was her connection to the university where she teaches.

In speaking with Wu Feng, and later, Bao Li, it was powerful to hear about the significant barriers to daily life that local families that had children with disabilities experienced, including the pressure to relinquish their children from family and friends. It is my observation that these pressures, combined with the financial burden and lack of services, contribute to the phenomenon of overwhelmingly disabled children entering China's orphan care system at present. It was in the discussion about the evolution of services beginning to be provided for these children and their families that many of the sociocultural agendas in the local community emerged.

### **Return Home**

In reflecting upon my experience in Zhengzhou, I need to point out that the original plan that my family and I had was for us to spend at least one year, and probably two in Zhengzhou. It goes without saying that there was considerable "culture shock" and

homesickness experienced during our transition to China. By the third month, though, Sarah, Emily, and I were able to get on a trajectory that was promising. Our son, Benjamin, however was not. Of all of us, given his personality and having a shared culture/ethnicity with the general public in China, I (naively) thought that he would have the easiest time transitioning of all of us. I was wrong.

Rather than finding a source of shared identity in his native culture, Benjamin was a source of intense scrutiny and interest, much of which was not positive. This, combined with the fact that he had significant constraints on his personal freedom as compared to his experience in the US with us, led to anxiety, anger, and depression that, to my wife's and my professional judgment, began to take on clinically significant overtones. Benjamin's behavior regressed, and regressed quickly – he began to have more and more toileting accidents, he had a significant increase in self-injurious and aggressive behaviors to the rest of us, he engaged in the destruction of property in our apartment, and his affect reflected the pain he was experiencing. Gone was the happy, go-lucky, and mischievous child we knew. This Benjamin was angry and sad – he cried frequently, yelled, through tantrums that we had never seen, and, rather than improving, grew increasingly worse, which, in turn, led to his increasing isolation, creating a highly negative and increasingly dangerous spiral.

This, combined with a significant series of health crises that a close member of our family was experiencing back in the US, prompted us to cut our stay short and return home, which we did. We made our plans to return home, and notified our friends,

contacts, associates, and my employer of our decision, and were able to spend our final three weeks in Zhengzhou transitioning out of the field, and back to the US.

### **Summary of Ethnographic Scan**

The ethnographic scan in Zhengzhou provided me with insight into many of the sociocultural agendas that are made manifest in the means of care for OVC and their outcomes. These agendas include institutional vs. family care; constrained resources as compared to the level and amount of need (ideological concerns vs. pragmatic concerns); the social political and faith based ideologies that coalesce around orphan care; and the concept of “the best interest of children”. I found these agendas played out time and again during the course of the SPANS-019 family and community based care of OVC project process discussed in the next section.

### **Nested Case Study: SPANS-019**

In this section the nested case study is discussed. The organizing event that represents the core case study is a project that was organized around changing the way that child welfare services are provided to children in orphan care in China, as well as to children who are at risk for entering orphan care in China. This project was developed in response to an RFA issued by the US Agency for International Development’s (USAID’s) Displaced Children’s and Orphans Fund (DCOF). The project that emerged from the grant opportunity was jointly developed by a US private, not-for-profit faith-based child welfare organization (GCCSI) and a Chinese, private, faith-based NGO (AGAPE). The project was to be implemented in the context of the Chinese Government’s services for orphaned and vulnerable children, and involved China’s

Ministry of Commerce (MOC), Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), and the China Center for Child Welfare and Adoptions (CCCWA, formerly CCAA – the China Center for Adoption Affairs). As such, the case study is put forward as a means to examine the ways in which the sociocultural agendas that are held by each of the project stakeholders (USAID/DCOF and their colleagues in the Department of State, GCCSI, AGAPE, and the MOC, MCA, and CCCWA) are manifested in the expressed behavior of each of these participants over the life of the project. In some cases, these sociocultural agendas are overt (e.g. GCCS's Vision statement, USAID's statement of mission, etc.), and in some cases these agendas are deeply covert (e.g. the US-side of the project's process of translating and interpreting the MCA's counter-proposal to the project).

Because of the multi-layered, concurrent, and complex set of transactions that occurred within and between the individuals and groups that participated in this project, the ability to organize and communicate the essence of this case study (and the lower level case studies of the groups and individuals that compose much of the larger case study of this project) is challenging. Therefore, I have chosen to organize the information around a temporal dimension, and to present the individuals and groups to the reader in the same order in which I experienced them. However, the dimension of time itself can be a bit deceptive, due to the frequency of times in which multiple transactions were occurring simultaneously among and within the participating individuals and groups. Thus, I am presenting the information not in the sense of absolute time (i.e. on October 30, 2010, the following transactions occurred...), but rather in the order in which I encountered them (e.g. On November 10, 2010, I received the following information

about transaction that occurred between X and Y on October 30, 2010...). This is particularly important in terms of the veracity of my reporting on events, as much of the information has been obtained through other people's communication of events to which I myself was not a direct observer. On those occasions where I am reporting on direct observations, I have tried to present as much thickness of description as I can without detracting from the essence of the agendas on which I am reporting. Thus, the presentation of the macro-level case study of the project itself consists of temporally organized reporting interspersed with micro-case studies of participating individuals and organizations in the chronological order in which I encountered them.

In regard to the sociocultural agendas which are the focus of this research, I have chosen to present them as follows: Throughout the linear/temporal presentation of the facts of the case study, I have made observations on those sociocultural agendas that present themselves in particular transactions. In order to capture an appropriate degree of detail without detracting from the narrative, though, a following section that deals primarily with the agendas themselves (apart from the dimension of time, that is, a retrospective analysis of the identified agendas and their interplay in the framework of analysis presented in Chapter Three and in the context of the theories discussed in Chapter Two) is also included. I have tried to include as many of the actual documents and reports as possible in the temporal order in which they were created and/or received, so as to provide as much of a "real time" understanding for the reader as possible; these are set off as boxes to differentiate between the documents/reports I drafted in the course of this project and my narrative in this section. Please note that in the following section of

this chapter, I will attempt to provide sufficient diagrams of the threads/strands/cords that the identified sociocultural agendas combine to constitute in order to provide a means for readers to directly ascertain the hypothetical interrelationships and interactions between these agendas.

As in the ethnographic scan, I have attempted to obscure the identities of participating individuals and organizations as much as possible. For the ease of the reader, in addition to a listing of organizations, I have included a roster of the primary “characters”, that is the fictionalized identities of very real individuals and organizations that I encountered in the process of this case study:

Table 4. *Roster of Organizations Involved in Case Study.*

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Description</b>
AGAPE	Private, Chinese, faith-based provider of development and child welfare services in China
CCAA	China Center for Adoption Affairs; re-purposed in 2011 as CCCWA (see following)
CCCWA	China Center for Child Welfare and Adoptions; Chinese governmental entity functioning under and with the Ministry of Civil Affairs
DCOF or USAID/DCOF	Displaced Children and Orphan Fund; Division of USAID
GCCS	<u>Global Christian Children’s Services</u> : private, US, faith-based provider of children’s welfare services
GCCSI	<u>Global Christian Children’s Services International</u> : subsidiary of GCCS, provides, among other things, in-country social services to children and families
MCA or MOCA	Ministry of Civil Affairs; Chinese governmental entity analogous to the US Department of Health and Human Services
MCA-SWD	Ministry of Civil Affairs, Department of Social Welfare; Division of MCA
USAID	United States Agency for International Development; US governmental entity
World Learning	Agency used by USAID to process and monitor grants and sub-grants

Table 5. *Roster of Individuals Involved in Case Study.*

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Role</b>
AGAPE	Liu Lili	Director, AGAPE's Social Welfare Division
AGAPE	Bai Zimeng	Assistant to Liu Lili
AGAPE	Xiao Cheng	Assistant to Liu Lili
AGAPE	Martina	American; intern at AGAPE
AGAPE	Huo Mei	Friend of Liu Lili; affiliated with AGAPE
CCAA/CCCWA	Ma Lu	Director
GCCS	Frank Goldsmith	President/CEO, GCCS
GCCSI	Sharon White	Director, GCCS
GCCSI	Andrea Greenfield	Assistant to White; Worked on USAID grant
GCCSI	Julie Feldt	Assistant to White; Worked on USAID grant
GCCSI	Tao Shi	Contractor, GCCS
GCCSI	An Shan	GCCS support for USAID grant
MCA-SWD (CCAA)	Wang Da	Initially Deputy-Director, CCAA; then Director-General, MCA-SWD
MCA-SWD	Gao Xiansheng	Deputy-Director, MCA-SWD
MCA-SWD	Yuen Meili	Deputy-Director, CCCWA
MCA-SWD	Bei Dafeng	Project Liaison, MCA-SWD, CCCWA, GCCSI
MOC	Mr. Fei	Project representative, MOC
USAID-Beijing	Meagan Walters	USAID representative in US Embassy
USAID-DCOF	Elizabeth Bronson	Project Supervisor, USAID-DCOF
USAID-DCOF	Ed Hernandez	Director, USAID-DCOF

Also, for the benefit of the reader, I have included an overview of the timeline associated with the information included in this section:

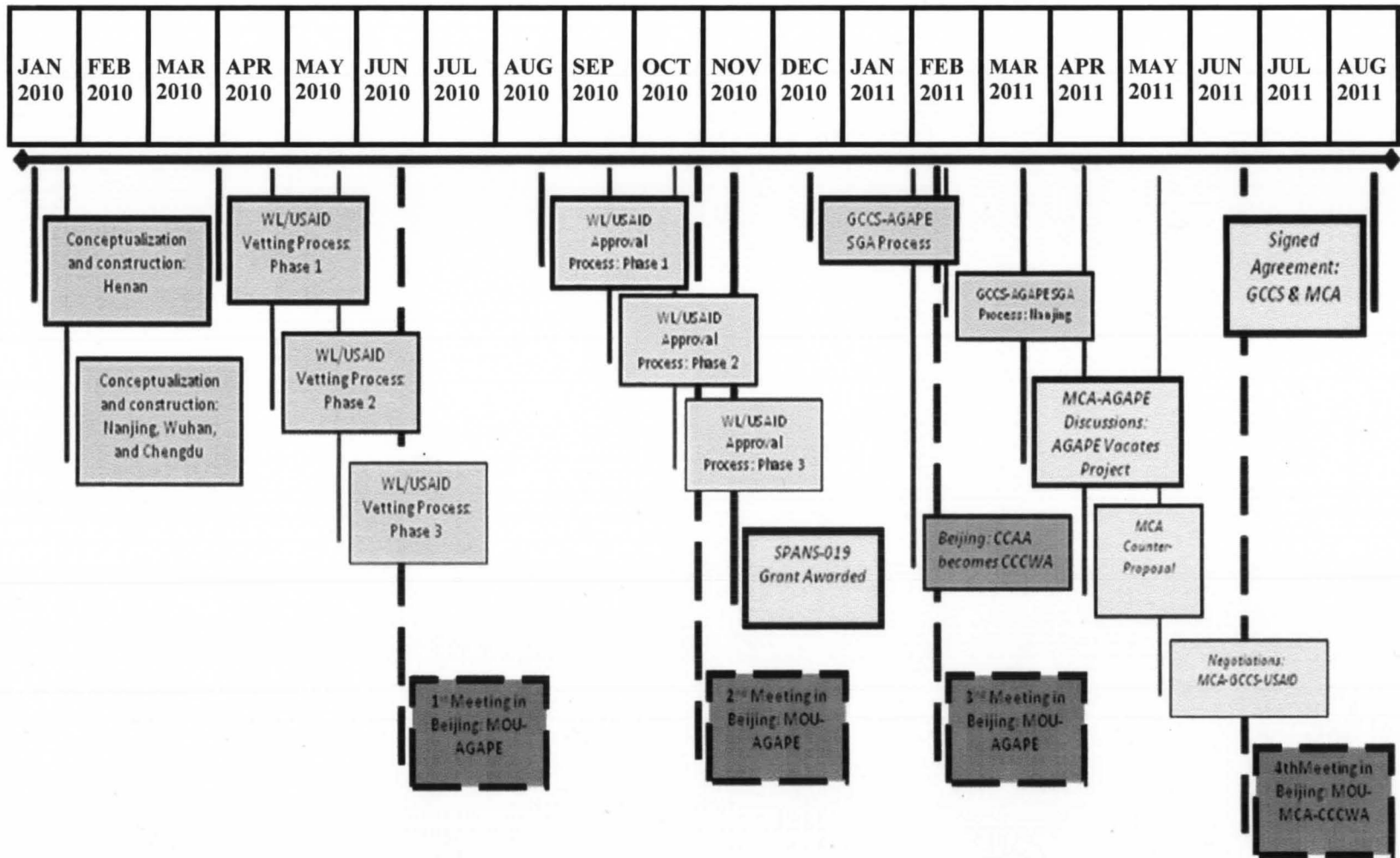


Figure 6. Project Timeline: Critical Events.



### **SPANS-019 Narrative**

Within a couple of months of returning to the US, my family resettled in Michigan, primarily in order to capitalize on special-educational opportunities for Benjamin. Although it was not part of our primary intent for moving, the town to which we relocated was not too far from the national headquarters of Global Christian Children's Services. This is the organization that provided the adoption placement services for Benjamin's adoption, and Global's International Department (GCCSI) was the organization with which I consulted in order to identify a dissertation topic that could be of benefit to organizations involved in orphan care in China.

Shortly after moving, I contacted GCCSI to reconnect with them following our return from China, and to let the GCCSI staff with whom I consulted prior to my travel know about my experiences. This conversation led to discussion regarding a potential job opportunity with GCCSI. In the process of making this application and interviewing, I was approached by GCCSI's director who asked if I was interested in helping to submit a project proposal in response to an RFA from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), GCCSI was developing a program related to orphan care in China to submit to USAID, and was interested in focusing on needs in Henan province. Given my recent experiences in Henan and the research I'd done for my dissertation, key staff at GCCSI thought that I may be of assistance in the program development and proposal phases of this project. My interest and investment in this topic (not to mention my need for income) led me to accept the contract position with GCCSI.

**Global Christian Children's Services (GCCS)/ Global Christian Children's Services International (GCCSI)**

The following information has been included from a functional case study of GCCSI that I constructed in May, 2010 at the request of Sharon White, Director of GCCS' International Department. The purpose of the document was to be able to provide a comprehensive overview of the organization, specifically identifying the Mission, Vision, and Values of GCCSI, and the ways that GCCSI goes about achieving these goals. The typical audience for this material was either new GCCSI employees or persons in positions of leadership in other parts of the GCCS family who needed to become familiar with the scope of Global's operations (e.g. Directors of Operations, Branch Directors, etc.).

I constructed this document through the use of existing materials in some cases (e.g., Partnership Priorities, Guiding Principles, etc.), and in other cases, I drafted the information based upon my own exposure to White's ideas and GCCS's processes (e.g. much of the Continuum of Care information). The act of bringing together these disparate existing materials and the newly constructed information was the work of a partnership between White and me, so the credit needs to be provided accordingly. I have paraphrased or summarized most of the included selections below, which are the more central aspects of this document as it relates to the identification of the sociocultural/ organizational agendas and orphan care, and have changed most of the language from first person to third person.

## **Global Christian Children's Services International**

### **Introduction to GCCS**

Founded in 1944, Global is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that provides adoption and orphan care services through a national network of over 80 locations and is licensed in more than 30 U.S. states. With a strong donor base, financial management history, and over 1,000 staff, Global Christian Children's Services initiates and maintains innovative child-focused programming both nationally and internationally and in accordance with accepted conventions, standards of care, and best practices.

Global Christian Children's Services (GCCS) identifies itself as the nation's largest private child welfare agency, specializing in providing adoption services, as well as caring for women facing unplanned pregnancies and orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) being served on five continents. GCCS identifies a mission to care for children of all ages and in all stages of life; such as serving children at conception by counseling women with unplanned pregnancies and by providing frozen embryos a chance for a full life through our embryo adoption program, through serving children and teens who are living in foster care or in orphanages—children who need a family (whether biological, foster, or adoptive).

GCCSI's comprehensive services include adoption, temporary care, counseling, training, and family support because of the central conviction that children thrive in safe, loving, and strong families. GCCSI identifies a commitment to finding the *best* families for children in need around the world, thereby fulfilling GCCSI's mission to "demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus Christ".

GCCS formed a corporate subsidiary, Global Christian Children's Services International, Inc. (GCCSI) in 1982 to direct all its international programs. GCCS draws upon a wealth of child welfare competencies and a network of internal resources to provide technical assistance, training, support, and capacity-building to all our international partners. Today, GCCSI supports the provision of a continuum of community-based child welfare services (discussed more fully below) in more than 17 countries. These services include: Family Support, Community Development, Temporary Care, and Adoption. The international services of GCCSI are directed through the office of GCCS, headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

GCCSI has formed additional partnerships with NGOs in Albania, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Hong Kong, Kosovo, Lithuania, Philippines, Romania, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, Uganda, Ukraine, and Zambia. GCCS also works in collaboration with national and international NGOs; local, regional, federal governments; UNICEF; U.S. experts and universities; and faith-based communities.

### **GCCSI: Guiding Principles for New International Opportunities**

In a world where there are seemingly unending needs, prioritization regarding the use of financial and human resources can be difficult. The following Guiding Principles have been developed to guide the strategy and decision-making process when considering potential global opportunities (these are taken directly from GCCS documents, and represent a set of explicit statements regarding GCCS'/GCCSI's sociocultural agendas):

- 1. Permanency:** Children have the right to a permanent family of his/her own.

**2. Opportunities to develop effective services within a family-based continuum of care:**

Examples of non-institutional care include counseling services, parental assistance, peer support, substance abuse treatment, life skills development, deinstitutionalization, day care, kinship and foster care, and both domestic and intercountry adoption.

**3. Macro-level support:** While working one-to-one on the micro-level is certainly beneficial, macro-level partnerships, including those with government, may be more likely to impact a greater number of children for longer periods of time.

Care should be taken to follow international conventions and country plans, while striving to influence strong (family- and community-based) child welfare policy.

**4. Potential for impact:** There should be a high likelihood of positive impact, both in the numbers of children and families served and quality of services provided. Ongoing evidence-based reporting practices should document this impact.

**5. Financial resources:** To ensure fiscal responsibility, financial resources should be accessible.

**6. Potential for effective partnerships:** GCCS/GCCSI works on its strong foundation as a child welfare organization within defined partnership parameters and priorities. Of special interest, based on our mission statement, is the potential for relationships with the global Church.

**7. Staff capacity:** Because so much of GCCS'/GCCSI's success on a global level is based on trust and the ability to make changes for children and families, the

capacity of staff to start and management programs must be evaluated.

**GCCSI's Practice Model: the Continuum of Care**

GCCS identifies a commitment to working for loving and stable families for every child, and works with the aforementioned continuum of care model to accomplish this. To this end, GCCSI identifies the following components that are critical to the continuum of care: Family Support, Community Development, Temporary Care, and Adoption. Furthermore, each of these components include the following categories of activities: Training-Education, Collaboration, Direct Service Provision, and Capacity Building (please see the following diagram):

### **a. Family Support**

GCCSI and its partners offer a range of community-based, family support services. One of the main goals of Family Support Services is family preservation—keeping families together—especially during difficult times. Because so many factors can disrupt the security, health, and love of a family—leaving a child at risk—Global and its partners provide short-term support services that enable families to remain intact and care for their children. Examples of Family Support Services include:

- Training-Education
  - Training on parenting skills and child development
- Collaboration
  - Short-term financial assistance (through International Sponsorship)
- Direct Service Provision
  - Family Assessment and ongoing support
  - Individual and family counseling
  - Crisis intervention
- Capacity Building
  - Accessing and developing contextually appropriate community-based support systems

In many cases, the stresses experienced by families lead them to place their children in the temporary care of institutions, such as orphanages. With the goal of returning children to the care of their families, GCCSI's in-country partners seek out the families and relatives of institutionalized children and offer a range of support services so

that the children can safely return home.

GCCSI and partner organization staff provide services through a variety of settings. One example is the provision of school-based services, promoting the development of children, while workers also reach out to parents, relatives, and community members, with the school as their link. Working through schools results in better educational experiences for the children and also provides social workers with access to the families who need support. In some settings, GCCSI also offers or supports prenatal services in settings such as clinics, maternity hospitals, and homes. Pregnant women benefit from counseling, skill development, and financial assistance, which strengthen their ability to care for their vulnerable children.

Examples of GCCS Family Support Services	
Country	Program
Albania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe Homes project</li> <li>• TC social services</li> </ul>
Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Preservation and Child Sponsorship</li> <li>• Family Preservation and Kinship Care</li> </ul>
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Preservation</li> </ul>
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for HIV+ Families</li> </ul>
Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Violence Prevention</li> </ul>
Zambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk and Medicine Project</li> </ul>



## **b. Community Development**

GCCSI and its partners work to contribute to local, regional, and in some cases, national social service systems in our partnering countries. GCCSI views this as a vital piece of their continuum of care efforts, as this represents the point on the continuum where broad and lasting macro-level systems changes can occur. These are designed to empower countries to realign existing social services with best practice models of community- and family-based care, as well as equipping communities to identify and address needs through new service provision initiatives.

GCCSI and its partners conduct a variety of activities that effectively combine the components of training-education, collaboration, service provision, and capacity building by providing training and technical assistance for child development and social services to a range of participants, including:

- Social work students
- Non-governmental organization staff who work in child and family welfare
- Child welfare specialists working for various government ministries
- Orphanage and shelter directors
- Judges and other members of legal and judicial systems
- School teachers
- Parents
- Church leaders
- Local officials

As part of its social system development efforts, GCCSI has been asked to

collaborate with governmental organizations to draft laws, regulations, judicial codes, standards of practice for social services, and national standards for foster care, adoption, orphan care, and life skills services. This macro-level advocacy has a profound impact on the lives of many marginalized children and their families. U.S.-based GCCSI staff and partners also participate in this process by travelling to partner countries to provide seminars for social workers and government officials working in the social services sector. An example of this is the annual “Every Child Deserves a Family” conference in China, provided with the Nanjing-based AGAPE Foundation. This conference helps Chinese systems realign with international best practice models of child welfare service delivery.

Examples of GCCSI Community Development Services	
Country/Area	Program
Albania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global Advanced Training Institute</li> </ul>
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare training</li> </ul>
Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster Care Macro-Systems</li> <li>• Family Support Macro-Systems</li> </ul>
Kosovo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Community Initiative</li> <li>• Social Inclusion</li> </ul>
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers for Children</li> </ul>
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training Leningrad-area Specialists</li> </ul>

### **c. Temporary Care**

To keep orphaned and vulnerable children under the protection of a family, GCCSI and its partners provide an array of services for children and youth who cannot live with their families of origin because of abandonment, migration, war, abuse, disease, or systemic problems within their home country.

GCCSI strongly believes that every child has the right to a nurturing and protective family and works to support or create family- and community-based services. However, in many countries, children are frequently placed in institutions, such as orphanages or transitional homes. Global views institutional care as an absolute last resort for children and works diligently to ensure that there are alternatives to institutionalization and that families have access to these alternatives (see GCCSI and Congregate Care below). In situations when all options are exhausted, GCCSI works with private and government-run facilities to ensure that children living in these institutions are being provided care that meets recognized standards and that there is proactive movement toward permanency.

Temporary care capacity is supported and increased by educating staff and by training and preparing the families who will care for children. GCCSI contributes its professional expertise to governmental and non-governmental organizations as they develop child welfare systems that honor children and respect their families. GCCSI also provides/supports post-placement services and case management.

Temporary Care initiatives provided /supported by GCCSI include: crisis shelters, kinship care, non-relative foster care, and “shepherding” programs that provide housing

and mentoring for women dealing with crisis pregnancies:

Examples of GCCSI Temporary Care Services	
Country	Program
Albania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Foster Care Initiative</li> <li>• H and R Homes</li> <li>• Shepherding Homes</li> </ul>
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster Care</li> </ul>
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniting Against Abandonment</li> </ul>
Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Y. Orphan Care</li> </ul>
Haiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cribs for GLA</li> </ul>
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster Care</li> </ul>
South Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IS Sponsorship Program</li> </ul>

**d. Adoption**

In its intercountry adoption program, GCCSI works with in-country adoption specialists who speak both the local language and English, and who are familiar with the local customs and local adoption process. These specialists assist foreign adoptive families traveling to their country, and are known for their quality service. GCCSI currently serves children through intercountry adoption in the following countries: Albania, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, Hong Kong, Lithuania, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, and Zambia.

While GCCSI is well known in the US as an intercountry adoption provider,

GCCS views this as an only one small part of the continuum of care; in those cases when family reunification is not possible, when local services are either not available or are not appropriate for a child's needs, or when a child is not adopted domestically, then intercountry adoption becomes an intervention of last resort. Increasingly, the children whom GCCSI serves through intercountry adoption are children with "special needs" (i.e. they have a physical, medical, developmental, or psychoemotional disability; are part of a sibling group; are "older"; or some combination of these factors), as these are the children who are most at risk for abandonment even with additional family supports, and are also the least likely children to find a permanent placement in their countries-of-origin.

Sharon White, GCCSI's Director, points out that there are:

...tens of thousands of children identified as candidates for intercountry adoption who, for a number of reasons, are not able to be served in their own countries.

The healthy infants typically thought of are the exception in the current adoption realities. The children currently identified as appropriate candidates for intercountry adoption may have:

- diseases such as HIV or Hepatitis C
- conditions such as down syndrome, genetic abnormalities, fetal alcohol syndrome/ effect, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, or forms of autism
- cared for parents or extended family until their deaths and become a child-headed household
- siblings

- aged to the point where they are considered too old for the ICA “market”
- been marginalized, discriminated against, or persecuted because of race or ethnicity
- witnessed horrendous sights that we cannot even imagine
- emotional damage that they will carry for life due to living on the streets, caring for dying parents, or lack of attachment
- been victims of brutality and/or trafficking
- been abused-sexually, emotionally, physically, or suffered neglect

Being a voice, an advocate for these children, “the least of these”, is central to GCCSI’s and White’s shared vision of a “world where every child has a safe, permanent, loving family.” White has worked to create an organization that is focused on children’s needs first and foremost, recognizing the intense vulnerability of those whom she and the staff of GCCSI feel they have been called to serve, and to serve well; the stakes are incredibly high.

### **GCCSI and Congregate Orphan Care**

GCCS and GCCSI have been recognized for their work on domestic and intercountry adoption. As its adoption practice has improved over the last six decades, GCCSI has come to view intercountry adoption as being only one component on a broader “Continuum of Care”. This continuum includes family support, community development, temporary care, as well as adoption.

As part of their efforts in providing continuum of care services, GCCSI’s focus is on working with individuals, families, and communities in order to prevent children from

entering orphan care in the first place (this is the primary focus of GCCSI's Continuum of Care activities). In accordance with international standards, like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, GCCSI believes that every effort needs to be made to allow a child to remain connected to their biological family, community, language, and culture, and work in countries to achieve this whenever possible (and safe). GCCSI believes that adoption, particularly intercountry adoption, is a serious intervention which is sometimes the only way in which a child can have a permanent, loving family.

The subject of orphan care is central to this discussion. While GCCSI has worked directly with orphanages in the past, we have made the decision to focus on providing family- and community-based care for orphaned children, as the outcome data for these children is compelling:

*Families and family-based care are imperfect, but on the whole they are better than the alternatives. Any type of care, family-based or residential, can be implemented badly and damage children. It is clear, though, that the available literature in child development indicates that families have better potential to enable children to establish the attachments and other opportunities for individual development and social connectedness than does any form of group residential care. Well-implemented family-based care is preferable to well-implemented residential care. (Williamson and Greenberg, 2010)*

GCCSI recognizes that congregate orphan care, which includes both institutional care and group homes with paid staff in the role of primary caregiver, is the only option in some areas, but changing this is part of the broader systems-level interventions that

GCCSI is committed to providing. This is also true in terms of providing support through donor sponsorship, in that GCCSI is focused on using sponsorship funds to help to move children out of congregate orphan care and into family-based care (this includes recruiting and training families and monitoring children in care, as well as improving organizational capacity necessary for serving these children). This is expressed in GCCSI's partnership priorities as follows:

**Priority #2: Programs and services that meet internationally accepted conventions and standards of best practice:**

Current research and standards hold that institutional/residential care is a program of "last resort." GCCSI will work with partners who are presently operating or supporting residential care facilities to gradually transfer Global funding to community-based services.

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*Network Working Paper*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.crin.org/docs/Families%20Not%20Orphanages.pdf> on 5 OCT 2010

**Sharon White, Director - GCCSI**

Sharon White is currently the Director of Global Christian Services International (GCCSI). Born and raised in Detroit, MI, White earned her MSW in 1987. In her MSW program, White completed her internship with Global Christian Services, GCCSI's parent organization, where she focused her clinical work on foster care.



During this time, White began to focus on older and harder-to-place children, eventually beginning Michigan's first older child adoption program. White later left Global, and lived and worked in Romania, where she managed a deinstitutionalization program for children with disabilities. She returned to the US, where she continued her child welfare work. This lasted until she had the opportunity to help in the aftermath of the 2004 Asian Tsunami, when she worked with UNICEF on a child protection program in Sri Lanka, helping this country to construct a viable system of child protection for OVC. In 2009, White returned to GCCS where she assumed the post of director of GCCSI. Since then, White has engaged in a comprehensive restructuring of GCCSI's adoption and social services.

Prior to White's leadership, GCCSI's intercountry adoption program was a "healthy infant" model, in that it was primarily focused on working toward adoptive placements of young children (under the age of 2) without identified disabilities or other special placement needs (adoptive placements of children with special placement needs did occur during this time, but these were the exception rather than the rule). White, with her background in domestic US older child adoption and with her international experiences in working with child welfare systems, saw a tremendous need for focusing intercountry adoption efforts on children with special placement needs: children with identified disabilities (developmental, medical/physical, and/or psychoemotional), sibling groups, children who are older (typically age 5 and above), or some combination of these factors. This represented a significant change from the previous model, as it meant being able to attract and prepare prospective adoptive families for placement of children with

the issues mentioned previously. From a business model, this meant doing fewer adoptive placements, but with much higher costs associated with the placements (as a result of necessarily intensive pre- and post-placement services).

Indeed this shift in intercountry adoption models was just the tip of the iceberg. White also brought a strong international development focus to GCCSI's work. This focus was codified in White's and GCCSI's continuum of care practice model. While child welfare in the west has long utilized a continuum of care from least restrictive to most restrictive placements, White has taken this basic idea and applied it to international child welfare -- creating a continuum of in-country social service provision through intercountry adoption. White identifies the following components of the continuum of care model:

- community development
- family preservation
- temporary care
- adoption services
  - domestic
  - intercountry

White identifies the "Principle of Subsidiarity" as being a key component to this model (a principle that is also recognized in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), which essentially holds that the most local response to a child's needs should occur first, and only after the more local interventions have been ruled out, should less local interventions be considered. In other words, efforts to support children in their biological families and communities of origin should occur first, and only when these fail

should there be movement outward (i.e. family, local community, local region, country, geographic region, international), as an application of the principles of subsidiarity and least restrictive environments.

One of the metaphors that White uses to describe her approach to international child welfare is of a river:

Imagine walking along the banks of a river. When you look into the river, you see children being swept past. What do you do? Do you work to get as many children out of the river as you can, knowing that you will not get them all, or do you continue up the river to find a way to build a dam, bridge, or other structure that would prevent children from being caught up in the river in the first place?

White would be quick to point out that the world needs people who can pull kids out of the river as well as those who can move upstream to address the source, but she has stated her preference for being a dam builder rather than a rescuer. This represents one of her chief agendas – get to the root of the orphan problem in whatever child welfare context one is working in, and then seek to wisely address it.

***White and China.*** Since 2000, White has partnered with her friend and colleague, Liu Lili of the AGAPE Foundation, to provide a series of trainings in China called “Every Child Deserves a Family”. The focus of these trainings is to provide information to CWI leadership, staff, and caregivers, as well as to other Chinese stakeholders (e.g. government officials, academics, etc.) about the benefits, indeed, the need for, family-based care for OVC. These trainings start out with the tenets of the UNCRC translated into Mandarin Chinese, which the group discusses. White then indicates the source of

these tenets, and also the fact that the PRC was the very first signatory to the UNCRRC. Following this, the trainings look at pragmatic ways to build or upgrade systems of family-based care for OVC in China.

White is willing to “put her money where her mouth is”, and has devoted significant GCCS resources to working for family- and community-based deinstitutionalization services for OVC in China. Presently, GCCSI works to provide additional resources to families who are willing to be trained as foster care providers for children in CWI care who have more significant disabilities. Because the CWI stipend is often not seen as being sufficient to meet the needs of these more involved children, GCCSI partners with the CWIs to augment family stipends (through US based family and child sponsorship) and to provide training and technical assistance to CWI workers that are working for more and better family- and community-based care. This has been well received in China, as the participating CWI staff and leadership are convinced by the often dramatic improvements seen in OVC after being in family-based placements after only a short time.

***Motivations.*** White describes her work in international child welfare as being more than a job; rather, to her it is a “vocation” or calling, in the original sense of the word. As a calling, White holds that she has a spiritual responsibility to provide the best possible response to the social problem of orphaned and vulnerable children. Part of the context for understanding this relates to the idea in Christianity of “The Kingdom of Heaven.” Although this term has been used in many different instances to mean many different things, it is here used in the “orthodox Protestant” sense of “the invisible realm in which

the will of God is manifest in human lives and society”. In this sense, it is possible to understand cross-cultural efforts as really being one work of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not necessarily the case that partners or other stakeholders that are participating in projects that are seen as furthering the Kingdom of Heaven also have to realize or even accept this premise. Indeed, it is held by many that human efforts that are a result of divine guidance may not be realized as such even by those who believe in this dimension of reality.

To say that White is a strong proponent of family-based care for OVC is an understatement, and the phrase “a family for every child” is something of a mantra for her. She has verbalized the impact of seeing children in Romanian orphanages, and has spoken passionately about the developmental and psycho-emotional damage to children who have known nothing beyond congregate care. She tells of how a colleague, a person who has done his best to run an orphanage in Guatemala for 20 years told her, “I’ve failed, I’ve succeeded only in raising a generation of sociopaths.” From White’s perspective, it makes no sense to continue to pour resources into building and maintaining artificial congregate care structures that leave children with little or no connection to either primary caregivers or even their own communities. Rather, White holds that these resources are better spent providing permanent family and community based placements for orphaned and vulnerable children, so that the family and community become the same natural supports for these kids as it is for everyone else.

*White's Agendas and GCCSI.* This is best expressed in White's own words; in her GCCSI white paper, *The New Realities in Intercountry Adoption*, White goes in to point out that:

“The reality is that most of the descriptors above are **not** new to the state of the world’s children. Throughout history, children have been killed, exploited, abused, and ignored in the most heinous of ways. However, in the adoption field, a steady supply of young and mostly healthy children took the spotlight. This allowed a family the ability to select a child on the basis of age, race, and gender, and in some cases of intercountry adoption, even have that child “delivered” to the US (a practice we no longer condone). Other, less “desirable” children remained in the shadows. It turns out that this situation was a perfect match: families wanted the types of children who were readily available. “Finding a family for a child” and “finding a child for a family” were interchangeable in practical terms.

This does not mean that “healthy-normal” children were the only ones in need, however. They were the only ones *visible*. Now, due to well-documented changes in areas such as economics, globalization, international agreements, nationalism, politics, and technology, this layer of “healthy-normal” children is no longer concealing the children who have always been there. Now it is *their* time to come out of the shadows and ask “What about me?” They are now in the spotlight, and our natural inclination is to cover our eyes and turn away. This is new; only recently have we been confronted with them and been forced to think about them in the context of intercountry adoption.

*This is the older child with unrepaired cleft lip and palate. Here is the 10-year-old*

*who was burned, left to die on a mat in a European orphanage, too unapproachable to hug. There is the boy who sits lop-sided in a wheelchair and drools. This is the hardened 8-year-old whose uncle repeatedly sold her body in 20 minute intervals. Yes, here is a tiny infant, but because of severe malnutrition and oxygen deprivation, we are not sure how much brain functioning is left.*

Although these global adoption realities have been emerging for several years, there appears to be resistance in our culture in the US to the shift from “healthy infants” to children with special needs and a persistence of the idea that GCCSI’s role is to find children, preferably infants, for waiting families. GCCSI staff are often asked by inquiring families, “Where are all the babies?” Unfortunately, in a desperate act to find “young, healthy infants”, some agencies have allegedly engaged in acts of corruption. Currently, when babies are found in the world, there is usually an element of corruption, trafficking, or exploitation not far away.

### **Laying Out Agendas: Project Construction Process**

***Initial Contact.*** As was mentioned previously, in December of 2009, my family and I moved to West Michigan. During this process, I reconnected with Global Christian Children’s Services International (GCCSI), a faith-based, private not-for-profit organization that provides a wide spectrum of child welfare services, including domestic and intercountry adoption. This is the organization with whom my family worked when we adopted our son, Benjamin, in 2004. Global and also connected me with my contacts in Zhengzhou earlier that year. The Director of GCCS’ International department

(GCCSI), Sharon White, had connected me with my initial contacts in Zhengzhou, and I took the opportunity to follow up with her and her colleagues at GCCSI.

Part of our initial discussions in late December of 2009 and early January of 2010 was a prolonged debriefing of my experiences and observations in Henan Province, and part was for the purpose of job seeking on my part. At that time, GCCSI was involved in a comprehensive restructuring process, and had at least one International Services Coordinator position open for which I eventually applied.

Throughout the first few weeks of January, 2010 I met with some of the GCCS staff as part of the interview process. I came to know White as being quite a visionary, and one of the ways in which this quality frequently manifested itself was in a continual brainstorming/ exploration process involving different and better ways to serve orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC).

One of the principles that White continually espoused during these discussions was that “children belong in families, not institutions”. While I certainly did not disagree with this, I must confess that I hadn’t given the idea much thought prior to these conversations. As a result of these conversations, I did begin to identify my presuppositions around the issue of orphan care, and I realized that the following ideas were present:

- When children were not placed in families, then my default assumption of reasonable care modality was orphanage/congregate care
- This type of care was not inherently bad, and, indeed, those who undertook the provision of such care were doing good



- I did not consciously equate orphanage/congregate care with institutional care, although this is the norm for such settings (or so I would now argue, based upon my knowledge and experiences I gained over the last 18 months). To the extent that this is true, I was therefore laboring under the illusion of family-like institutional care, which does not exist).
- While I was certainly aware of the deplorable situations in orphan care institutions like many of the CWIs in China, as well as many of the stories that have reached the West from Eastern European institutions, my unconscious assumptions were that these were a result of poorly run orphan care settings, rather than being a by-product or natural consequence of the orphanage/congregate care model itself. In other words, my underlying idea was that my perceptions of the advantages of a congregate care setting (i.e. concentration of resources for OVC, safety, meeting of physical and educational needs, medical care, etc.) could be realized if congregate care settings were better funded, staffed, and managed.
  - I have had the chance to observe and interact with an excellent congregate orphan care facility in Hong Kong that served my son in his first 18 months of life. It is very well funded, managed, and staffed and provides for hundreds of children with significant disabilities. It has hundreds of volunteers. It is connected to the community, and children have a chance to go out into the city and surrounding areas regularly. Children were treated with affection

and dignity. This organization became my unconscious/de facto model for how orphan care should look.

- I argue that my initial conceptualizations of the nature of orphan care represent the “traditional Western model” of orphan care that has been present since at least the First Century CE in Europe (McKenna, 1911). This represents one of the manifestations of Western agendas surrounding orphan care that is present in my study.

White’s proposition directly challenged these ideas: *congregate care, by its very nature, is damaging to children, no matter how well run*. She further made the case that if one were to put the amount of resources into building good family-based care settings that we put into building and maintaining new congregate care facilities, then children would ultimately be much better served. White’s experience and training led her to focus not only on the more obvious physical needs of children, but also on the deeper emotional needs that children have, such as bonding and attachment.

White’s approach closely parallels a major shift that is occurring in the international child welfare community – moving from congregate care to family- and community-based care for OVC. A number of organizations concerned with international child welfare have taken a similar approach, based upon several studies that have identified the harmful effects of institutional orphan care on children – effects that not only affect the attachment and emotional infrastructure of children, but also the damage to the neurological growth and development of OVC in institutional care (Chugani, et al, 2001).

The shift from institutional services to community-based services for a number of different populations has been well documented in the US and Europe since at least the 1970s. This deinstitutionalization process has occurred for people diagnosed with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, the elderly, and even the US' own orphan population, as these have shifted to more community based models. Indeed the closing of many of the large intermediate care facilities for persons with mental retardation (ICFs/MR) , often as a result of allegations of abuse and neglect of residents, has been occurring over the course of the last thirty years or more. In many states, Medicaid will not fund institutionally-based services for persons with developmental disabilities, instead funding services that are designed to connect vulnerable populations to their communities. The same shift is present in Western Europe, and the underlying value base that has become manifest in relevant social policies has also been shared. Many of these value bases are enumerated in a number of the Universalist documents such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the United Nations Human Rights Convention (UNHRC), the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, etc. I would argue that the application of these Universalist principles to the manifest behaviors (via policy, funding, allocation of resources, etc.) around the care of OVC represents the competing view of how to care for OVC – what I will call the “Progressive/Universalist model”.

Therefore, I became aware that there was another layer to the sociocultural agendas surrounding orphan care in China:

- The initial dimension of Chinese sociocultural agendas as opposed to Western sociocultural agendas
- A second dimension within the Western agendas: traditional versus progressive care

White and her colleagues at GCCSI were very much committed to the progressive model of orphan care, to the point that this organization would no longer support congregate care structures or organizations for OVC, instead spending resources and providing expertise for the purposes of constructing, expanding, or improving family- and community-based care in countries around the world.

***Family and Community-Based Child Welfare (FCBCW): Henan.*** By late January of 2010, I was approached by White to work with GCCSI as a consultant on a grant opportunity which GCCSI was interested in pursuing. This grant was a SPANS/GSM grant that was funded by the Displace Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). An RFP that aligned with GCCSI's mission and values had been posted, and White and her colleagues at GCCSI were interested in submitting a proposal for family- and community-based child welfare (FCBCW) project in China.

One of the other members of the GCCSI team who worked on the initial project proposal and who had considerable experience working with OVC in China was Julie Feldt. Feldt and her family were originally from West Michigan, but had lived in Tibet and China for the previous five years. Her husband worked for a human rights organization and Feldt worked for GCCSI in China by providing oversight at a number of

the sites where GCCSI was sponsoring foster care programs for orphaned children, especially in and around Henan province, as well as assisting with several of the Every Child Deserves a Family Conferences. Feldt has considerable experience providing oversight and technical experience on a number of child welfare projects in China, having previously worked with Save the Children in Anhui province. Feldt and her family were back in the US for several weeks, as the Chinese government requested that they reside somewhere other than Tibet (and ending up in Shangrila, Yunnan Province).

Much of the initial project development pieces were performed by White, Liu, and Feldt, while the grant writing process was coordinated in large part by Andrea Greenfield, a GCCSI worker based in New Hampshire. Greenfield has lived and worked for a decade in Eastern Europe on a number of child welfare and deinstitutionalization projects, and has experience in writing and managing grants, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation process. Although Greenfield was not physically present in West Michigan with the rest of the group, she was able to effectively coordinate the tasks and roles via phone and e-mail.

In addition to the GCCSI team, White also included a long-time friend and collaborator on FCBCW in China, Liu Lili. Liu Lili was the Director of Social Welfare projects for AGAPE, a Chinese faith-based NGO based in Nanjing, China. Liu and White had collaborated for ten years to present an annual conference in China called “Every Child Deserves a Family”, designed to educate, persuade, and disseminate information on FCBCW to stakeholders in China’s orphan care system. Liu also has been heavily involved in many of the early foster care projects in China, as well as advocacy for

persons with disabilities, deaf education, and a number of other human services initiatives.

**Liu Lili, Director- AGAPE: Social Welfare Division**

I first met Liu Lili at the offices of GCCS in Grand Rapids, MI in January, 2010. Liu lived and worked in Nanjing, Jiangsu, PRC, and served as the Director of the Social Welfare Department of the AGAPE Foundation, a faith-based Chinese NGO (see below). Liu was at GCCSI at the invitation of White, and was working to construct a proposal for the aforementioned RFA from USAID.

Liu's English was excellent. I found her to be extremely knowledgeable about Western culture generally and American culture in particular. She had a number of family members who lived in the US, and she spent quite a bit of time visiting over the last ten years. Beyond this, I found Wu to be a combination of penetrating insight and very firmly held opinions; in these two attributes, she mirrored White, and this may well be why the two got along so well. I came to think of Liu as sort of a Chinese White (or maybe White was an American Liu).

Whatever the dynamic, Liu and White made a formidable alliance and spent ten years advocating for family-based care for OVC in China. Together, they developed an annual conference/training series called "Every Child Deserves a Family"

(每个孩子都值得家庭, *Mei ge haizi dou zhi de jia ting*). The training was geared toward CWI staff and leadership, Chinese academics, and local, provincial, and central government officials. It began with a discussion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and also included information on child development,

attachment, and disabilities. The primary focus, however, was on the benefits of family-based care for OVC, and a discussion of the way that other nations have made the shift from institutional care to family-based care. These conferences were sponsored by AGAPE, and were organized and managed by Liu and her staff. White provided much of the training as a foreign subject-matter expert, and Liu provided the translation and explanation for White's sessions personally. These trainings and the *guanxi* that developed between White, Liu, Global, AGAPE, and the conference participants provide the background for the program proposal to USAID.

Liu told me that her family was from the Shanghai area originally, but that her parents and her sister moved to Jiangsu province when she was young. Her father was an engineer who was employed by the governmental water authority, and was posted to Jiangsu. Lili described her early life to me, including the role of her mother and grandmother, her school experiences, and college. She also described to me the two years that she spent working as a "peasant" in the countryside as a result of the Cultural Revolution, and experience shared by many of her generation. Liu self-identifies as a Christian, and has spent her career working for a faith-based organization; I did not learn at what point in her life she was exposed to Christianity or became an adherent to this faith.

Liu operated at the cusp of two cultures, China and the West (a "cosmopolitan" in Diffusion Theory terms), and was a passionate advocate for the progressive Western ideas about family-based care for OVC in China. Beyond this, Liu's professional interests were focused on improving services for children and adolescents with disabilities. In

particular, Liu has focused on deaf education in China, and has worked to have sign language recognized by governmental authorities in China, along with educational programs designed to promote deaf education and culture in China, and has spearheaded cooperative projects supported by a variety of European governments including Norway, Germany, and others. By Liu's own account of this process, she sometimes had to be forceful, and other times diplomatic to facilitate changes to benefit China's deaf population, and she was willing (and able) to do both; I did not realize it in January of 2010, but Liu's personality and approach would later have a significant impact on the trajectory of the project's efforts.

#### **AGAPE**

AGAPE is a non-governmental organization initiated by Chinese Christians in 1985. Since its inception, AGAPE has developed a wide array of programs that have been designed to address the needs of China's most vulnerable people. These include education, social welfare, child protection, public health and hygiene, environmental protection, rural development, and disaster relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation programs. AGAPE has developed an excellent reputation for service delivery that has a direct positive impact on their target populations. Through a variety of strategic and cooperative relationships developed with both domestic Chinese governmental ministries and community organizations, as well as with a number of international partners (governmental and NGO), AGAPE has developed evidence-based and cost-effective modes of service provision over their 25 year history with the assistance of world-wide donors and volunteers.



It is with regard to orphaned, disabled, and vulnerable children that AGAPE has developed international partnerships that have served to introduce a number of innovative soft technologies to improve child welfare systems. In particular, The AGAPE Foundation works to improve the quality of the lives of orphaned children and provide them equal opportunities to participate in broader society. AGAPE is currently working with more than 65 social welfare institutes to expand their approach to addressing child development needs among the orphaned and vulnerable children in their care. This takes place through a variety of projects including: “AGAPE Grandmas”, foster care, education sponsorship and medical support.

Additionally, orphaned children with disabilities have been a special focus of attention. Recent AGAPE projects have sought to provide these children with care from loving families and communities, the opportunity to attend community-based kindergartens or special education schools, and financial support to address medical needs and to provide supplies to help with basic daily necessities for children (e.g. corrective surgeries, equipment such as incubators, washing machines, air conditioners, milk formula, clothes, etc.). In 1996, AGAPE started its pioneering foster care project in China, now recognized as a best practice model in China. Over the years, these projects have reached 60 orphanages in 11 provinces in China, with thousands of vulnerable children benefitting each year. At the time of the project proposal in early 2010, there were 839 children being served in AGAPE’s foster care project.

The core value of AGAPE’s projects and services for children living outside of parental care is the belief that “each child deserves a loving family”, so it seeks first and

foremost to provide the love and care within a family environment wherever possible. AGAPE's strategy in its orphan care projects is "support and development" in cooperation with the state-run institutes for promoting awareness of the benefits of family-based care for OVC, and working for the increased capacity to provide these services, while advocating for policy changes and program sustainability. This foster care project has been developed in close collaboration with CWI partners, who seek to deinstitutionalize children and provide family-based alternatives to their own institutional care.

Over its history, AGAPE has been a conduit for new social service technologies to enter China. AGAPE itself has benefitted from international standards of program monitoring and evaluation, enabling AGAPE to adopt these standards and develop the internal capacities needed to oversee and evaluate program outcomes. Some examples of this include demonstrated effectiveness in developing standardized sign-language education for children with hearing impairments in Jiangsu province, blindness prevention and treatment in Shaanxi province, and assisting in providing children in institutional care settings in Wuhan and Nanjing with the chance to live in foster care/family settings. The lessons learned through these programs and others have enabled AGAPE to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of program delivery and oversight. Over the last 25 years, fiscal responsibility and rigorous standards of budgetary monitoring and accountability have allowed AGAPE to develop from a fledgling grass roots organization to a cutting edge provider with extensive international partnerships and an annual budget of 100,000,000 RMB (over \$14 million).

## **GCCSI and AGAPE**

In 1996, the AGAPE Foundation began working with orphaned and abandoned children with disabilities and in 1997 established a partnership with GCCSI to provide technical and financial support for children to live in family-based care within communities. In 2000, GCCSI began a series of conferences entitled “Every Child Deserves a Family”. These annual training events continue to be targeted toward multi-level systems including government and orphanage officials, other NGOs, and families. These conferences have produced a wealth of translated materials including participant manuals and Training of Trainers guides. Professionals from the orphanages piloting foster care programs have assisted the national government of China in developing standards of practice for foster care.

### **Project Construction Process, Continued**

Thus, representatives from GCCSI and AGAPE, including White and Liu, organized around the opportunity to construct a progressive family-based care for OVC project that could also provide an evidence base to Chinese governmental stakeholders that could influence policy changes vis-à-vis OVC care in China. The initial focus of the group was to construct a FCBCW project that was based in Henan Province, China, due to the overwhelming needs that had been identified in that Province, and also because of the relationships and resources that GCCS has cultivated in this area over the years. Because I’d just returned from China, and had spent the previous three months in, Zhengzhou, the capitol city of Henan, investigating orphan care, I was contracted to assist

with the writing of the grant proposal, focusing in particular on the situation analysis portion of the proposal.

Over the course of this process, my role gradually came to be involved in some of the program development pieces of the project, as well. The initial thrust was to develop a community-based infrastructure in Henan that would support deinstitutionalized children with significant disabilities in foster families in the general community. While this is not necessarily a new idea in China, the approach that was proposed included getting the services for orphaned children out of the CWIs and into the community. This meant that CWI staff would be decentralized, as would medical care, therapies, and other supports. The status quo for foster care in China is that children have to be placed in foster families that live in close proximity to the CWI, because the foster families need to regularly transport the children to and from the CWIs for medical care, therapies, and, in some all-too-rare cases, education/school. The conceptualized project would move both children and services into the community, ideally transforming the very function of the participating CWIs from orphan care institutions to decentralized community-based support providers. It was discussed that “closing” a CWI would never be accepted, because the leadership and workers would lose jobs, benefits, and position, but transforming the CWI might.

Indeed, another significant benefit to this transformed model would also be the chance to work with children still in biological families who were at-risk of being abandoned and so entering the institutional orphan care system. By having resources and supports for children with disabilities and their foster families distributed throughout the

community, these at-risk children and their families could also benefit from the same, and so potentially not enter orphan care.

It should be pointed out that this model was very much congruent with the essence of the “Every Child Deserves a Family” conferences hosted by AGAPE and presented by White and Liu over the previous ten years. The project was designed to construct a functional model of FCBCW services in Henan that were an expression of the “progressive Western model” of care espoused in these conferences, and that could be rolled out to other areas of China once success and feasibility were established by means of the proposed project. The project would also be a partnership between GCCS and AGAPE, with GCCS providing the overall technical assistance, capacity building, and M&E services, and AGAPE functioning under a sub-grant to facilitate implementation and in-country oversight. This was the first iteration of the grant project on which the team agreed and worked.

*SPANS-019 Sites: Nanjing, Wuhan, Chengdu.* As the project came together and the proposal was constructed, there was an internal shift within the grant construction group. By the second week of work, there was a proposal to shift from having Henan as the target province to working in a more cosmopolitan area that had a longer history of doing foster care. This idea was originated by Liu, as she was concerned that Henan did not have the programmatic infrastructure or knowledge base upon which to build a model program that could be disseminated to other areas of China. This move was initially resisted by Feldt and me, as a result of concerns related to need – we felt that there were more children that could benefit immediately from a project like this in Henan, where the

need was greatest. For her part, Liu identified either the Nanjing CWI and/or the Wuhan CWI as being potential partners that:

- a) Had been providing high quality foster care services for nearly ten years
- b) Worked very closely with AGAPE, and which had *guanxi* (relationship/social capital) with AGAPE generally and Liu personally
- c) Were physically proximate to AGAPE headquarters (located in Nanjing), resulting in easier (and therefore potentially more productive) interactions between AGAPE and the participating CWIs
- d) The preceding factors combined to create an environment that had the greatest potential of producing an accurate FCBCW model that had a better chance of being replicated elsewhere in China

This discussion continued for approximately a week in the heat of grant writing, and under a rapidly approaching submission deadline, with both sides equally entrenched. After discussing this at length with Liu, White, too sided with the idea of moving the project from Henan to one or two of the CWIs with whom AGAPE had history. By this point, much of the rest of the team, including myself, eventually conceded the point, by taking the longer view that a successful, high quality model would ultimately affect a much larger number of OVC across China. Liu's status as the culture expert and the need to secure her buy-in on a project for which she would have a critical role were also weighed in the decision to shift focus.

Once this decision was made, the next task was to identify which site or sites would represent the best possible partnership for the purposes of the project. Liu and

AGAPE had excellent *guanxi* and long histories with CWIs in Nanjing, Wuhan, and Chengdu. The CWIs in Wuhan and Chengdu had received national acclaim for their work in foster care in China, with Chengdu serving as a model for its “foster care village”, and Wuhan being invited to participate in the central government’s construction of standards for foster care practice in China. The cities of Nanjing and Wuhan are relatively near each other by rail or air, but Chengdu is much farther to the rest. The initial compromise, therefore, was to focus on the CWIs in Nanjing and Wuhan, as this would provide some diversity of sites, improve feasibility and reduce expenses.

It turns out, however, that this put Liu and AGAPE in a bit of a bind, however, as not including Chengdu in the project would strain *guanxi* between this CWI and AGAPE. Again, discussion ensued, with Liu advocating for the inclusion of Chengdu, and Feldt and myself advocating for focusing on Nanjing and Wuhan. After discussions with White, the final decision was made to include Chengdu, and to construct the project with three initial sites, the results of which would combine to create a national model for reconstituting the function of CWIs in China, assuming this successfully occurred. Indeed, this was the key argument that prevailed, as the idea of reconstituting the function of a CWI in China would be at best difficult, and at worst impossible, without copious *guanxi*. The idea of being able to continue to drive the way that child welfare services were developed and implemented in China would be an incentive for CWIs with this *guanxi*, and, after speaking with her contacts in these CWIs, Liu was confident that they would have the level of buy-in and political will that was needed to give this project the greatest chance of success. Although the project construction and grant writing team

finally was able to put the issue to rest (although with some concerns about logistics, at least on my part), I would find that this issue would come up in the future, once the discussion progressed beyond our group (but more on this later).

By this time (late February), the deadline for responding to the RFP was fast approaching, and the other issues with which the team had been wrestling – staffing, budget, M&E, etc., were finalized and submitted. Following this, Liu returned to Nanjing, Feldt had already returned to China a week or so previously, and the rest of the GCCS team, including me (I was hired by GCCS on March 1 to assist with their intake process) resumed their normal duties, while we all waited to hear the results of the grant application. I think that it is safe to say that, at this point, none of us seriously thought that the grant proposal would ultimately be accepted, but felt that it was a useful exercise to work through a number of issues that AGAPE encounters in China, and GCCS encounters in many of the country contexts in which they serve children (e.g. progressive family-based care vs. traditional Western institutional orphan care, non-kinship foster care vs. kinship care, prevention of the abandonment of disabled and other at-risk children, etc.). It is also safe to say that I had not yet identified this project as being relevant to my dissertation process, instead being focused primarily on the ethnographic portion that I'd recently finished in Zhengzhou.

#### **Agendas Assessed: SPANS-019 Project Vetting Process**

On April 7, 2010 GCCSI was contacted by an the organization that contracts with USAID/DCOF to manage grants, which communicated that the GCCSI project proposal was in the process of being evaluated, and that the proposal review and evaluation



committee had an additional 25 questions that they would like to have answered in regard to the Technical Proposal. The GCCSI project construction group then organized, under White's leadership and Greenfield's direction, to answer these questions. Many of the questions related to technical elements of the proposal (number of direct and indirect beneficiaries, timeframes, assessments of impact, etc.), but some of the questions relate to elements of sociocultural agendas that were at play around the construction of this project (and these were among the questions that I was tasked with answering). This subset of questions (and GCCSI's response) is as follows:

- *There is a detailed situation analysis, though it does not include anything about the consequences for children of their institutionalization. Is there any information that GCCS could provide concerning the long term consequences for those who have grown up in institutional care in China?*

There is ample evidence to suggest that the effects of institutional care on children are less than desirable. Numerous studies of children in institutional care have identified deficits across all areas of development, including health and cognitive and social-emotional functioning. Indeed, as Vorria, et al. (1998) point out, even when children are served in very "good" institutional care settings, and do not exhibit many of the cognitive delays that are associated with poor institutional care, these children still exhibit significant deficits in terms of their social relationships. Many of these deficits are thought to be related to distorted attachment to a primary caregiver, which, for a variety of reasons such as staff turn-over, large child-to-caregiver ratios, etc., are common in institutional care settings (Ellis, Fisher, and Zaharie, 2004;

Smyke, Dumitrescu, and Zeanah, 2002). The results of distorted attachment appear in global deficits and long-term difficulties in forming meaningful and satisfying relationships throughout life, including long after these children have left care (Tharp-Taylor, 2003). While data related to the long- and short-term effects of institutional care of children in China specifically is hard to come by, the evidence that does exist suggests that the factors that have been identified in previous studies in other countries are at play in China's institutionalized children (Edwards, et al., 2007). Indeed, Hu and Szente (2009) paint a poignant picture of the plight of many of China's orphaned children with disabilities who live their lives in institutional care:

“Orphan children with disabilities are much less likely to develop the basic skills necessary for self-reliance. Jia (2007) reported that many orphan children cannot attend schools due to their disabilities, and are not even allowed to play outside the institution due to safety concerns. Without specialized care, education, and exposure to the real world, these children are likely to suffer from learned helplessness. This condition of being dependent upon others for routine decision-making on a daily basis largely diminishes their quality of life. The consequences for such lifelong confinement in institutions due their physical and/or cognitive limitations are far beyond feelings of loneliness and anxiety; in many cases people also suffer from mental illness” (pp. 82 – 83).

Our references include:

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Tharp-Taylor, S. (2003). The effects of early social deprivation on children reared in foreign orphanages. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED 475594)

Vorria, P., Rutter, M., Pickles, A., Wolkind, S., Hosbaum, A. (1998). A

comparative study of Greek children in long-term residential group care and in two-parent families. I: social, emotional and behavioural differences. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*.39, 2. 225 – 236.

- *Could GCCS provide additional details on the AGAPE's success over time in moving children from institutions to foster care and how this has been achieved and sustained?*

The AGAPE Foundation started the first foster care project in cooperation with the local civil affair department and orphanages in Jiangsu, China in 1996. Since then, AGAPE's foster care project has reached into 35 orphanages throughout the country and currently serves 703 children living in foster families and supported through sponsorship programming. In addition, AGAPE provides technical support to the local foster care projects and capacity building to the orphanage staff, government officials and foster parents through training, seminars, workshops and experiential exchanges. It was this model that provided the genesis for AGAPE's work with GCCS, and indeed for this project. Since 2000, GCCS has worked with AGAPE on the "Every Child Deserves a Family" series of conferences that encourage and support public orphanage directors and foster care professionals who have moved children to family-and community-based care. In partnership with AGAPE, these conferences have trained more than 400 professionals. Combined with these interventions, at both policy-maker and care-giver levels, AGAPE's direct implementation of the principles of these conferences in the target communities of

Nanjing, Wuhan, and Chengdu have resulted in a base of practical evidence of the efficacy of the model, as well as the benefit to the children and families who are being served. To date, the programs have been sustained through both the fund-raising efforts of AGAPE and GCCS, as well as from the support of the government authorities that have the mandate to ensure the care and provision of orphaned children in care.

- *The success potential of GCCSI's proposal is largely based on the assumption that GCCSI and AGAPE have the necessary credibility to garner the active participation and support of many actors within the child protection system. As both GCCSI and AGAPE are Christian organizations, could GCCSI elaborate on its strategy for influencing the child protection system, particularly at the regional and national levels, given that China's Government is officially atheist, Christianity is not one of the country's traditional religions, and Christianity is not extensively practiced in China.*

This is an excellent question, and the answer is one that often comes as a bit of a surprise to those who ask it. The short answer is that China's government takes a very pragmatic approach to organizations that have the time, expertise, and resources to assist the government with amelioration of social problems, particularly those that have been perceived as costing China "face" on the global stage (e.g. the prevalence of orphaned and abandoned children in China). Once the government bodies that have the responsibility to oversee the particular area of intervention (especially as regards the province of child welfare) have the opportunity to build relationship (in Chinese

culture, this is called *guanxi*) with the organization in question, then more and better opportunities to collaborate emerge. The nature of *guanxi* is one that is built on mutual trust and understanding, particularly when applied to sensitive areas such as China's infrastructure and vulnerable populations.

In terms of faith-based organizations generally and Christian organizations particularly, China's central authorities are keenly interested in ascertaining whether or not these organizations will respect China's sovereignty in terms of its *National* religious mandates. This means, in effect, that China is willing to not only allow faith-based national and international NGOs to operate on Chinese soil, but also to partner with these organizations in some instances, once it has been determined that these organizations are interested in social welfare work and not in proselytizing.

China's government is heavily invested in policies that promote social harmony and mitigate against occurrences of *luan* or chaos, that have been all too characteristic of Chinese society in the past. Once authorities reach a certain level of comfort with regard to identified organizations in this regard (i.e. that the social welfare focus will serve to reduce social problems and simultaneously increase social harmony and decrease *luan* through their social welfare efforts, and will not increase *luan* and decrease social harmony as a result of proselytizing), then the pragmatic desire to utilize assistance and expertise of interested NGOs can be pursued. This is how a number of foreign faith-based NGOs such as GCCS, Caring for China's Children, The Philip Hayden Foundation (and many others), as well as domestic faith-based NGOs have developed buy-in and even partnerships with governmental stakeholders

at all levels.

Evidence of this subtle, but evident focus can be found on AGAPE's website in the following places:

The AGAPE Foundation, an independent Chinese voluntary organization, was created in 1985 on the initiative of Chinese Christians to promote education, social services, health, and rural development from China's coastal provinces in the east to the minority areas of the west.

Abiding by the principle of mutual respect in faith, AGAPE builds friendship with people at home and abroad. Through the promotion of holistic development and public welfare, AGAPE serves society, benefits the people, and strives to promote world peace.

In this way, AGAPE:

- contributes to China's social development and openness to the outside world,
- makes Christian involvement and participation in meeting the needs of society more widely known to the Chinese people,
- serves as a channel for people-to-people contact and the ecumenical sharing of resources.

And more explicitly at the following portion of the site, which recruits foreigners to come to China to teach with AGAPE:

“It is important that candidates be in sympathy with AGAPE's goals, which emphasize Christian service rather than proselytizing.”

This being said we realize that the success of this project is dependent upon strong and active participation and support from many actors. Christianity is at the core of the mission and vision of both GCCSI and AGAPE, and it is the core Christian values which drive both organizations' commitments to the lives of the world's most vulnerable, regardless of the prevailing religion in the countries in which we work. The project builds upon the credibility and solid reputations of both organizations in China, gained from years of successful work with multi-level actors as described above. The strategies for influencing the child protection system, particularly at the regional and national levels, include: active participation of high level partners in working groups, conferences and workshops; joint development of standards, legislative recommendations, advocacy messages and other resources; experiential exchanges and study tours highlighting child protection models and practices; etc.

To summarize, propagating a particular religious view, values or practices is not a focus of this project, rather the project will work from the solid foundation, values and priorities of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which the Republic of China is signatory and regional and national governments are quite familiar. To date, the Christian-nature of the primary project partners has not been an issue in China.

- *Although the proposal indicates that 90% of the children in institutional care in China have disabilities, no overview is given of the nature of those disabilities nor is there a plan for how to address them in ways to facilitate the social reintegration of children with disabilities. Could GCCSI address more fully the issue of children with*



*disability with respect to this proposal? For example, could GCCS describe how disability issues would be incorporated into the strategy and trainings? Could GCCSI provide some examples as to how AGAPE has adapted systems or the environment to accommodate children with disabilities? Is GCCSI working with any Chinese Disabled People's organization advising them on interventions for children with disabilities?*

The nature of disabilities in orphaned children in China is, as one may expect, a bit of a thorny issue. For instance, being able to define exactly what this term “disability” means in a way that is meaningful in many areas of China where there is no one to provide a clinical evaluation or diagnosis in terms of identifying specific disabilities can be problematic. For instance, Wang (2010) describes (her) experience in working in a child care unit of a local orphan care provider, when she describes the types of disabilities as consisting of cerebral palsy and including “(but are not limited to) spina bifida, congenital heart disease, imperforate anus, hydrocephalus, liver failure, cleft lips/palates, autism, Down Syndrome, skull malformation, skin disorders, severe prematurity and a variety of undiagnosable terminal illnesses” (pg. 9). As can be seen in this illustration, all manner of medical and developmental diagnoses are lumped together in the term “disability”. Similarly, the identification of “undiagnosable terminal illnesses” and the inherent contradiction therein (i.e. how do you know that a condition is terminal if you don’t know what it is?) is seemingly characteristic of the level of care that is able to be provided in many orphan care centers. This is compounded by the fact that it is the children in this broad category of

“disabled” that are going to be in care for the rest of their lives: “Most of the mentally and physically healthy children will be adopted by adults inside and outside China. Those who suffer from diseases and disabilities tend to stay in the homes for the rest of their lives” (Meng and Kai , 2009, p. 46).

It is for this reason that the knowledge and experience of an organization like AGAPE is invaluable when it comes to the care of orphaned children in China. The AGAPE Foundation has been working in the broad field of disabilities in China since 1990, and has initiated several interventions for children with disabilities, including early intervention and education for the blind and deaf, a community-based project for children with cerebral palsy and other disabilities, and community-wide interventions such as publishing books and resources on the topic of disabilities. AGAPE’s work with the deaf community in China is a prime example of the comprehensive nature of their interventions, having worked to get deaf-friendly signs placed in local hospitals and public institutions, increasing sign language education in China, increasing public awareness of deaf issues with the broader public through publications and media exposure, and increasing opportunities for children and adolescents who are deaf to participate in more educational opportunities. The person primarily responsible for these initiatives, Lili Liu, is the Director of Social Welfare for the AGAPE Foundation, and is an expert in the field of children with disabilities. She is a member of Jiangsu Research Association for the People with Disabilities and the Jiangsu Rehabilitation Association and active partnerships with these organizations and others will continue throughout the proposed project, as will

engagement with disabled federations and organizations, schools for special education, rehabilitation hospitals, and other community partners.

Disability issues will be at the core of all strategies and training approaches, as this is the main issue facing Child Welfare Institutions in China: how to improve the quality of life of institutionalized children with disabilities (CWIs are responsible for all orphaned children in their region, whether in congregate care or foster care). In China, the mandates of the Disabled Person's Federations (DPFs) do not cover children with disabilities that are institutionalized. However, utilizing Lili Liu's connections with these groups in the target communities, working to build bridges between the DPFs and children with disabilities in care will be a natural linkage that this program will facilitate. Similarly, because the purview of the DPFs do not include children who are served by CWIs (whether in institutional care or in foster care at this point), this is why GCCSI has focused on developing and maintaining strong relationships with the local and regional Civil Affairs Department, which is ultimately responsible for the care and wellbeing of these children. Even under the present status quo, DPFs can be great sources of information and support for all people living with disabilities, but by working to forge an effective alliance between groups that are concerned with disability issues in China's communities.

Broadly speaking, though, the plan for facilitating the social reintegration of children with disabilities presently being served in institutional care is to normalize their experiences as much as possible by placing them in families that are connected to their communities (so that these children are no longer "hidden away") and to

provide social services to assist their families in caring for them. This support will take the form of community-based rehabilitation centers, support groups for parents, inclusive education, and awareness-raising in the communities. All core trainers and consultants will have experience with issues surrounding children with disabilities and inclusion strategies.

References:

Meng, L. and Kai, Z. (2009). Orphan care in China. *Social Work & Society*, 7, 1. 43 – 57

Wang, L. (2010) Importing western childhoods into a Chinese state-run orphanage.

*Qualitative Sociology*, published online (3 March 2010)

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/87k7613224325hx8/>

- *The proposal seems to give s little attention to dealing with the vested interests for maintaining the status quo of institutional care (jobs, local patronage by leaders, potential financial interests related to adoption, etc). Could GCCSI explain how such factors that serve to maintain institutional care would be addressed in order to overcome resistance to change?*

As has been previously indicated, China was one of the first signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). China is rightfully proud of this fact, which itself has facilitated discussion about deinstitutionalization. Indeed the preamble of the UNCRC explicitly states that “Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and

understanding”. Discussion of this statement and the UNCRC is an integral part of GCCSI’s and AGAPE’s child welfare training in China, and this statement has proven to be a powerful tool for identifying the need for systems change. The target areas of Nanjing, Wuhan, and Chengdu have been primary sites for many of these training sessions.

Indeed, the issue of buy-in on the part of community stakeholders and the potential for resistance to change is the very reason that the proposed project is focused on the municipalities of Nanjing, Wuhan, and Chengdu. Because GCCSI and AGAPE have been working in these communities in terms of providing training and education in the areas of child welfare, child development, and disabilities, and because foster care has already been successfully piloted by GCCSI and AGAPE in conjunction with both governmental and NGO stakeholders in these cities, much of the work of changing the status quo and achieving buy-in has already been accomplished. This is not to say that there will not be instances of this dynamic that may occur during the course of the proposed project; but, since a solid foothold has already been achieved, the positive inertia will serve to mitigate resistance from other quarters by the accomplishments of local participants who are heavily invested in continuing to progress in the direction of the project. Additionally, since GCCSI and AGAPE have successfully addressed issues of buy-in and systems change in these communities, we have the experience, relationships, and data necessary for rolling out similar projects in other areas of China. In fact, the time is ripe for such a project as many recent articles on child welfare systems change indicate that China

is moving in this direction anyway (Wang,, 2010; Meng and Kai, 2009; Hu and Szente, 2009) – it is anticipated that this project at this point in time will demonstrably increase the rate of adoption of the proposed child welfare systems changes in China both directly (in the target areas) and indirectly, as the need for system-wide standards and regulations for foster care provision has already been identified by Chinese scholars (Meng and Kai, 2009).

Nevertheless, in those situations that emerge wherein resistance to change by vested interests is present, the strategies that have produced the greatest effects in similar situations relative to GCCSI's/AGAPE's deinstitutionalization work will be employed. The main way such factors will be addressed is slow, steady and consistent communication, paired with small expectations of change, one after another. Open and honest communication of what “de-institutionalization” means in the Chinese context and small, reachable and measurable goals will help both government officials and institution workers overcome their resistance to change. It also needs to be mentioned that although GCCSI would love to see all child welfare institutions closed, and full community based care for orphans, GCCSI did not include full closure of these institutions as a goal for this project, because it felt three years was just not enough time to overcome these vested interests in maintaining the status quo. This is not to say that GCCS will not try to achieve this goal in the upcoming three years and the years beyond, as this is a main goal and priority for GCCSI.

References:

Hu, B.Y. and Szente, J. (2009). The care and education of orphan children with disabilities in China. *Childhood education*, 86, 2. 78 – 86.

Meng, L. and Kai, Z. (2009). Orphan care in China. *Social Work & Society*, 7, 1. 43 – 57.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Wang, L. (2010) Importing western childhoods into a Chinese state-run orphanage.

*Qualitative Sociology*, published online (3 March 2010):

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/87k7613224325hx8/>

After receiving confirmation of receipt of this response, there was little additional communication on the proposal, until a second round of questions was received on April 29, 2010. Because of work-related conflicts, both Greenfield and White were not able to dedicate as much of their time to this process as was previously the case, so I began to provide additional coordination and management of the response process. The questions were answered and submitted to World Learning on May 6, 2010. Again, a period of a few weeks passed, after which a third round of questions were again asked of the GCCSI and AGAPE team on May 20, 2010.

The interest in these latter rounds of questions seemed to be wholly directed toward technical considerations and organizational/structural capacity and was less concerned with issues that might be interpreted as being manifestations of sociocultural agendas relating to orphan care in China. The third round of questions was to be the last

portion of GCCSI's vetting process by USAID's proxy organization. Of most significance to the exploration of sociocultural agendas as expressed by Chinese governmental stakeholders is the following letter drafted by the then Deputy Director General of the China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA), Wang Da:

**LETTER OF SUPPORT**

April 14, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

As Deputy Director General of the Department of Social Welfare and Welfare (*sic*) Promotion in the Ministry of Civil Affairs in the People's Republic of China, I would like to offer support for the projects of Global Christian Children's Services International in China. We have worked closely with GCCSI since 1994 and we believe that future collaboration on programs of this nature will be of benefit to all concerned.

Our relationship with GCCSI in China has been long and beneficial. We have enjoyed working with GCCSI on a variety of projects related to child welfare and service provision to children in China. We continue to offer our support in such partnerships and look forward to subsequent opportunities to collaborate. We have found GCCSI to be a very professional and dedicated organization and we appreciate their desire to both improve the lives of children in China, and also to learn about Chinese culture. It is with



this foundation of mutual respect and assistance that we will continue to work with GCCSI on projects that will continue to improve the lives of children. They have provided important and relevant information, expertise, technical assistance, resources and support to our child protection workers and families. We have no doubt that this and all such projects will be developed and implemented in the same manner.

Finally, I am looking forward to more cooperation with GCCSI to promote the development of child welfare in both of our countries.

Sincerely,

(signature – Chinese )

Wang Da

Deputy Director General

Department of Social Welfare and Social (sic) Promotion

Ministry of Civil Affairs

### **Wang Da**

Wang Da would play a pivotal role at several points in the process of this orphan care project. At the beginning of this project, he was in the position of Director-General of CCAA; in this role, he knew GCCS and GCCS through the intercountry adoption services that they provided. Because intercountry adoption was a focus of the Government of China, and because GCCS had a long history of providing good services,

good *guanxi* (good professional relationship with high mutual regard ) existed between CCAA and GCCS, as well as good personal *guanxi* between Wang Da and GCCS' president/CEO Bill Goldsmith,.

Indeed, Wang Da as head of CCAA had visited GCCS' headquarters and corporate campus in Grand Rapids, MI as part of a study tour undertaken by Chinese governmental stakeholders in intercountry adoption. In fact, during this visit, White attempted to repeatedly engage Wang about some of the foster care initiatives that were going on in China (especially through AGAPE), but was told by Wang's translator/facilitator in no uncertain terms that Wang "was not interested in discussing this", instead preferring to focus on expanding intercountry adoptions.

Wang was described to me by White and to a less extent by Goldsmith as being relatively young and very upwardly mobile in the government/bureaucratic system. The documentation supplied by Wang for the purpose of the USAID grant was not a Letter of Commitment as was requested, but rather was a Letter of Recognition (see above). The reason for doing this was primarily because, in May of 2010, Wang was transitioning out of his position at CCAA as he was being promoted to a leadership position in the Ministry of Civil Affairs. For several months following this promotion, Wang Da was "off the radar" in terms of GCCS, GCCS, and the FCBCW project; he would reemerge in a position of great importance, and this will be discussed later.

#### **Agendas Discussed: Process Interlude Meeting in Beijing (1<sup>st</sup> Meeting)**

At this stage in the development of the project, the GCCSI/AGAPE team began to get the necessary permission from the Government of China lined up. Although the Local

CWIs had provided Letters of Commitment, and the Local and Provincial Civil Affairs Departments in Nanjing, Wuhan, and Chengdu had already provided their unofficial blessings, AGAPE indicated that none of the Chinese stakeholders would be free to fully participate without approval from China's Central Government. Liu was able to articulate the issue, which was that although the Central Government would not be directly involved in the project, their endorsement (tacit or otherwise) was needed to effectively provide "political cover" for participating individuals and organizations in the project's target areas. Once this political cover was achieved, then the stakeholders could freely participate.

In June of 2010, Frank Goldsmith, the President and CEO of GCCS (GCCSI's parent organization), travelled to China. While there, he had the opportunity to meet with an individual surnamed Fei, of China's Ministry of Commerce as well as other stakeholders from the US Embassy. Because this project would bring foreign funds into China, the Ministry of Commerce would need to approve the project and processes, as this division of China's Central Government had oversight of (non-commercial) foreign funds entering China. By all accounts the meeting went well, with Fei expressing approval of the project and a will to move forward. Goldsmith returned home, and the project continued to evolve.

While this was an important development for the project, it also complicated matters in regard to implementation: although the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) was officially responsible for the project and gave its permission to move forward, the CWIs fell under the purview of the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), and they would need

approval from their superiors within this Ministry to participate in the project. Therefore, although the Ministry of Commerce had “official” responsibility to allow or disallow the project, the Central MCA certainly had the de facto authority to do so. The process of managing these relationships and their associated processes represented the bulk of the project’s work at this point in its development.

### **Agendas Interact: FCBCW Project Negotiation Process**

Over the summer of 2010, GCCS and AGAPE team members returned to their various work foci, and waited to hear the final decision on the project. In August, GCCS was “unofficially” notified by USAID’s proxy that the project had been approved, and that a number of processes were occurring that needed to happen in Washington, DC for the project to advance. In the interim, GCCSI was requested to modify the original project documents with the information from the vetting process. This information – the technical proposal, the budget, the budget narrative, the sub-grant budget, and the sub-grant budget narrative – were revised and sent to USAID via its proxy as the final set of grant documents that would be approved. Most of these (largely mechanical/structural) tasks that were fundamental to the project’s approval process occurred between GCCS and World Learning between the end of August, 2010, and the beginning of November, 2010. The initial information indicated that the grant agreement would be presented to GCCSI and ready to sign on October 1, 2010, but there were a number of delays, primarily related to the OAA review process. The actual award occurred on November 19, 2010, and was backdated to November 1, 2010.

### **Agendas Discussed: Meeting in Beijing (2nd Meeting)**

Following Goldsmith's meeting with MOC in June, a number of efforts were simultaneously ongoing to work through the agreements necessary with both the implementing agents (AGAPE, CWIs, local and provincial governments) and with the unofficial but very real "stakeholder mass" of the MCA. The MCA is interrelated with CCAA, and both of these Central Government stakeholders were in a position to move the project forward or shut it down (with the CCAA following the MCA's lead). In particular, the division of the MCA that was most directly concerned with the project and its implementation was the Department of Social Welfare and Charity promotion. While the MOC could officially sanction the project, the project could not and would not be advanced without some kind of signal from the Central Governmental MCA to the provincial/local MCAs and the CWIs (and, indeed, AGAPE, too could not drive the project forward without the blessings of the MCA) that it was okay to cooperate with GCCSI on the project. For their part, the MCA apparently was similarly aware of their position in this regard, and wanted to make sure that the project was appropriate, safe (politically as well as safe for the children involved), and was aligned with their internal plans prior to providing for the okay.

At this point, Wang Da re-entered the scene. He had been the former head of CCAA and had a good relationship with GCCS/GCCSI and their leadership in this capacity. He turned up as the new Deputy-Director of the MCA's Department of Social Welfare and Charity Promotion (MCA-DSW), and he was the person in a position to, at some level, endorse the project or not. A meeting was set for each of the primary project

stakeholders to meet at MCA headquarters in Beijing: Wang Da and his staff (MCA-DSW), Mr. Fei and his staff (MOC), Meagan Walters of the US Embassy in Beijing and her staff, Bill Goldsmith and his facilitator/translator, Tao Shi (GCCS/GCCSI), and Liu Lili of AGAPE. The SPANS-019 technical proposal was provided prior to the meeting in both English and Chinese (translation was provided by AGAPE). By all accounts, the meeting started well, and Wang recognized and welcomed Goldsmith. Fei and Walters were supportive of the project (reportedly Fei and Walters had been working behind the scenes with MCA to get to the point where they could get the necessary endorsement), and Wang seemed favorably disposed.

However, it seems that Liu was very forceful and direct in presenting this project and AGAPE's role in it. This was quite consistent with my experience of Liu, and is also consistent with repeated observations of many of our mutual colleagues (Liu herself "owns" her approach and has expressed to me on a couple of occasions that the importance of this work – preserving and improving the lives of children with disabilities in China – was too important to "dance" around. Consequently, she was not able to strike a culturally expected tone (i.e. one of particular deference) to establish the needed rapport with MCA leadership. In fact, during subsequent discussions with Tao, Goldsmith, and Walters, they all indicated surprise at this approach (Goldsmith's assessment was essentially that inexperience with interacting with this level of government combined with anxiety contributed to Liu's approach).

For her part, Walters told me that she and her associates who were present though that "as an outsider from Hong Kong" Liu did not know how to appropriately engage

with Wang. When I shared with Walters that Wang was not from Hong Kong, but was born and raised in Shanghai and Jiangsu, she was shocked. Those present who did not know Liu apparently assumed (as a result of her approach and as a result of her focus on family- and community-based care) that Liu was personally as much of an outsider as was her agenda. In essence, Liu was perceived as too un-Chinese, which was threatening to the Government of China in the context of this discussion given the sensitive nature of OVC in China. This, I contend, is evidence of Liu's position, function, and construction as a Cosmopolitan in the schema of Diffusion Theory, in that she is more Western than Chinese in regard to her expressed and perceived sociocultural agendas, despite being born and raised in China

The result in the moment was that Wang, because of the lack of deference and "face" being displayed, bluntly put Liu "in her place", reportedly stating, "I know Global, I don't know AGAPE. AGAPE is only implementer, I will deal with Global." Thus, there was no room for Liu in the discussion that followed; Liu had to sit quietly in the room, pointedly ignored by the US and Chinese governmental officials while Global tried to negotiate a signed acknowledgement and "blessing" of the project from the MCA, preferably in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MCA and Global. This exchange was one that would have long-reaching ramifications for this project, but it is unclear whether the ramifications were a result of the exchange or occurred because in MCA's eyes it was a foregone conclusion.

A number of discussions points occurred following this meeting. GCCSI continued to work with WL and USAID to finalize the grant process, culminating in a

final signed Grant Agreement on November 19, 2011. The agreement itself was dated back to November 1, 2010, however. Simultaneously, the Sub-Grant Agreement between GCCSI and AGAPE was approved by WL and USAID, which meant that GCCSI could then begin the process of securing the signed SGA between itself and AGAPE.

#### **Agendas “Dance”: GCCSI-AGAPE Sub-Grant Agreement Process**

The process of securing a signed sub-grant agreement between GCCSI and AGAPE was, itself, surprisingly difficult for the following reasons:

- The GOC had not yet endorsed the project
  - CWIs were not free to cooperate without endorsement
  - Other local/provincial governments were similarly not free to participate without approval from the Central Government
- AGAPE-specific issues
  - AGAPE would be at risk to sign a SGA when their constituency was reticent due to GOC “non-position”
  - Given Liu’s experience in Beijing, she was aware of personal and professional vulnerability in process (OK if GOC signs off, though)
  - Liu was later in her career, and anticipated retirement in the not-too-distant future, as well as having more of a personal interest in deaf education in China that would have to be sidelined should the project move forward. so question as to whether the hassles of such a project were worth it or not



- Some indication that there was truly no expectation that project would ever actually be approved by USAID, so possibility that things moving to this stage were surprising and unnerving
- AGAPE had experience working with other foreign governments on similar projects, and used these experiences (Norway, Germany, et al) as bases for their expectations. USAID's requirements, however, were much more restrictive and confining, and represented a real hardship in terms of the alignment of AGAPE's systems with those required by USAID. There is a definite culture issue here as well, as the nature of this sort of rules/regulations/reporting/procedures essentially communicates intense lack of trust and suspicion in China – for a project that was already creating a sense of vulnerability for AGAPE on China's side of things, this also created vulnerability from the US side of things

A number of exchanges occurred between GCCSI and AGAPE, primarily between me and Liu, throughout December and January. There were a number of stages of negotiations, including reporting, reimbursement and auditing requirements, information from CWIs, and some larger role issues related to AGAPE. The higher level issues were primarily addressed by Liu on AGAPE's part, while the more specific elements of budget and implementation mechanics were addressed by her colleagues. This was the real beginning of the “dance” with AGAPE, and negotiations and re-negotiations occurred constantly over the course of two months. However, everyone involved understood that nothing substantive would happen unless and until the

government provided an official “covering document”/endorsement of the project. Rather, the discussions with AGAPE were designed to create the alignments and structures necessary to move quickly once the GOC ultimately did provide said endorsement.

Indeed, GCCSI had been working on this endorsement in the form of an MOU with the GOC since June. The MOC had long since expressed a willingness to sign an MOU regarding the project, and had been instrumental in getting the MCA to the table (leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting in Beijing in October). After that meeting, efforts were made to get the MCA to sign an MOU that would endorse the project and allow all of the component stakeholders to begin implementation. GCCSI was asked to draft an MOU and provide this to the GOC. An MOU was drafted over several iterations: GCCSI-MCA, GCCSI-MOC, and GCCSI-MCA-MOC. These were provided to GCCSI’s China consultant, Tao Shi, and also to the USAID rep at the US embassy in Beijing for comment prior to submission to the GOC. After some delays (including the Christmas holiday), feedback was received regarding the MOU:

- The embassy indicated that the MOC had been pressing for an MOU between the United States Government (USG) and the GOC regarding this project, but the USG preferred not to enter into such an agreement
- An MOU between GCCSI and MOC and/or MCA was a useful solution to the aforementioned point
- The tri-partite MOU was indicated, as it would bring both the *de jure* authority (MOC) and the *de facto* authority (MCA) into the project

The MCA asked GCCSI's consultant for an MOU to review on December 12. The consultant communicated this to GCCSI, and the MOU was drafted appropriately (under the guidelines provided above) and was provided to GCCSI's consultant in Beijing who delivered it to MCA/MOC and provided background discussions to these stakeholders in the process. Several weeks later, between the end of the West's Christmas/New Year's holiday season and the beginning of China's Spring Festival, GCCSI was told that one of Wang Da 's deputies had been tasked with addressing the MOU and also with setting up a meeting between GCCSI's project staff and the MCA as quickly as possible.

GCCSI's liaison was provided with the name and contact information of this person and passed this information along to me at GCCSI. My colleagues and I made multiple attempts to communicate with this individual (Mr. Ping), with limited success at best. Initially we were told that he was out of town on business, and could not be reached via e-mail or phone. Later we were told that he'd hurt his back and was out of the office due to the injury, and so was unavailable to meet to discuss the MOU or the project. The initial plan was to meet in the third week of January, before Spring Festival, but, after a number of scheduling changes and challenges in communication and coordination related to Mr. Ping's availability, we were eventually informed that the project had been handed over to a Mr. Gao, a deputy-director of the MCA-SW. We would later find out through some "backdoor channels" that, in fact, Mr. Ping did not want to be involved in a potentially "messy" situation between the US and China, and so passively avoided the issue until it was passed on to someone more willing to navigate these waters.

### **Agendas Discussed: Third Meeting in Beijing**

Once Gao came on board, things happened pretty quickly. This occurred after the first two weeks of the Spring Festival. A meeting was set up between GCCSI and the MCA to discuss the project and to get their buy-in in the form of an MOU. GCCSI was specifically invited to this meeting, and, conspicuously, AGAPE was not invited. The initial meeting was set for 2/14, and travel was booked for White and myself from 2/13 – 2/19 (with the time after the meeting being spent at AGAPE HQ in Nanjing to iron out the sub-grant agreement – Liu provided White and me with an official invitation for this purpose).

The trip was made, and White and I were met in Beijing by Tao, Global's in-country liaison and adoption consultant. Tao, an attorney by trade, had spent several years in the US, and spoke excellent English. She was also very well connected on the China side of things and had built an excellent reputation personally and as Global's representative in China. Tao had a very clear preference for adoption as a means of providing for the best interests of OVC in China, feeling that a life in the US via adoption would provide far better opportunities for children than those who might remain in China, even as part of a foster family. Consequently, White felt strongly that she and I needed to spend time with Tao in order to explain the project and secure buy-in, as Tao would be essentially tasked with "selling" the project directly to MCA through her translation and advocacy with MCA and CCCWA. This meeting with Tao was scheduled for the morning of 2/14, with the meeting with MCA and CCCWA scheduled for later that day. Upon meeting with Tao that morning, we were informed that the meeting had been

moved to the following morning (2/15). This provided the three of us – Tao, White, and me – an entire day to present, deconstruct, and explain the program. This was undertaken with great zeal in a coffee shop immediately adjacent to the hotel where we stayed in central Beijing. Tao’s legal training became very apparent in the way in which she asked questions and probed particular lines of inquiry that would be pursued by MCA and CCCWA. After the first couple of hours, a marked change came over Tao, and she indicated – “this is a good project; this will help children.”

The central issue for her seemed to be that GCCSI was NOT advocating for stopping adoptions and promoting foster care, instead. Rather, that the project would be used to increase the capacity of foster care and other family- and community-based interventions to get children out of institutional care and into family-based care. Since children in CWI care who were higher functioning and/or with relatively minor disabilities tended to be adopted out more quickly, this left the children who were more moderately or severely disabled whom China did not consider to be candidates for adoption (either domestic or international) to be permanently served in the CWIs. Instead, this project would in particular target these latter groups of children as being those for whom we would seek family- and community-based placements. Following this meeting, we then parted ways with plans to meet in the morning: Tao would arrive at the hotel and would have her driver convey the three of us to the MCA offices, where the meeting would be held.

When White and I met Tao the next morning, we had a short period of time in which to talk before we had to leave for the MCA. Tao indicated that the previous

evening, she'd received a call from Mr. Ma, the Director-General of CCAA, Tao indicated that Ma was upset, and, in very impassioned manner, asked her why Global was pushing for "the foster care project" (Note: the FCBCW project was commonly referred to in under this moniker in China – revealing the understanding/focus of Chinese stakeholders, but, to Global's thinking, indicating a fundamental misunderstanding of the essence of the project – Tao herself had referenced the project by this term prior to our discussion the day before), essentially questioning Global's motives, with an underlying concern that Global was moving away from adoptions. Tao was able to convey to Ma her understanding of the project based upon the lengthy discussions of the previous day, and this seemed to help calm Director Ma a bit. However, White and I were cautioned by Tao that we should be prepared for stiff resistance/concern by the central government stakeholders (i.e. MCA and CCAA) in the meeting. Thus, it was with some anxiety that we prepared ourselves and departed for our appointment at MCA.

The following section is the English language summary document of the proposed Family- and Community-Based Child Welfare project that was translated by Tao Shi and was presented to the delegates from MCA and CCCWA:

**SPANS-019 Project Summary:**

Global is honored to be able to continue our long relationship with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and other partners in China in serving orphaned and vulnerable children. We would like to first address some potential concerns related to this project:

- This project is NOT designed to limit or replace adoption
  - It is our desire to assist in finding permanent family placements for as many

children as possible.

- Unfortunately, however, there are more children in orphan care than there are families who are able to adopt them.
- This project is designed to support children who may not ever be adopted
- This project is NOT designed to eliminate CWIs
  - It is not our desire to disrupt CWIs as the primary means of providing care to orphaned and vulnerable children
  - Instead, we anticipate working to facilitate a shift from providing primarily intra-CWI care to extra-CWI care
  - This means utilizing existing CWI staff to provide a broad range of community-based support services including the following:
    - Expanded foster care services (more and better-trained foster families that can support children with more intense disabilities or medical needs in the community)
    - Expanded case management services (Providing more professional services to provide oversight to children and families in the community)
    - Access to a broad range of community-based services to support children and families (including therapies, medical care, support groups, education and day care services, parent and caregiver education, etc.)
  - It is probable that CWIs would be in a position to hire additional staff to be

able to provide this array of community-based services

- This project is NOT designed to implement a pre-existing model of care
  - It is our desire to utilize Global's experience in the US, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa to facilitate the discovery of a model of community- and family based care that grows out of China's unique cultural and social context
  - Utilizing lessons learned from our experience in international child welfare, Global hopes to work with partners in China (Governmental, Non-Governmental, Academic, and Community partners) to build a model of community-based services that is unique to China

Global and the project's funders are very interested in continuing to grow our relationships with our partners in China. We are all committed to developing and expanding mutually beneficial relationships in the service of orphaned and vulnerable children in China and around the world. Therefore, in order to be very clear to our partners and friends in the Ministry of Civil Affairs, we would like to provide a summary of this project's goals:

- This project is designed with the following primary goals:
  - Promote permanent family placements for children in orphan care
    - Deinstitutionalization: Working to move children out of institutions and into adoptive or foster families
    - Helping to provide family-based rehabilitation to improve the function of children in care, so that children who were previously considered



- “unadoptable” because of the degree of impairment, could improve so that they are eligible for either domestic or intercountry adoption
- Helping to provide long-term foster care for children who are not adopted
  - Provide prevention services to at-risk children and families
    - Provide community-based services to enable children with significant disabilities or medical needs to remain with their biological families rather than entering the orphan care system
  - Provide technical support and training to promote a wide range of community-based support services to children with significant disabilities and their families
    - Provide training in case management and community-based service provision to CWI staff
    - Create a link between the following child welfare stakeholders to improve coordination of services:
      - NGOs
      - Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
      - Governmental partners
      - Academic partners
  - Work with academic partners in China to provide accountability and sustainability

- Utilize a research-based method of program evaluation to identify successful and unsuccessful project components
  - Utilize data to construct Standards of Best Practice for community- and family-based child welfare services
  - Provide a system of continuous evaluation and improvement that is fundamental to the long-term sustainability of family- and community-based child welfare services
  - Provide project data to all project partners
- Utilize evidence-based practice models to disseminate information across communities
- Establish a child-welfare based social work curriculum to provide a steady supply of highly trained child welfare professionals to expand community- and family-based child welfare services
- Create models of care in strategic communities
  - Phase 1 (Years 1 – 2): Working in communities that have a demonstrated history of success with providing excellent foster care services and that also have the level of infrastructure needed for academic and community-based organization components (Nanjing, Wuhan, and Chengdu). These communities then become sustainable centers for the dissemination of resources and child welfare “technologies” to other communities around China (and potentially

internationally as well). Subsequent communities can build relationships with Governmental, NGO, CBO, and Academic stakeholders in these communities to develop and expand services in other communities

- Phase 2 (Year 3): Roll out of project to additional communities to begin the process of providing community- and family-based child welfare services
- Phase 3 (Year 4? – 10?, Contingent upon success of Phases 1 and 2): Potential for project stakeholders to expand work to more rural and developing communities and regions based upon attaining successful working models of community- and family-based child welfare services

**GCCSI Observations and Concerns :**

It should be noted that the participants from MCA and CCCWAA referred to the SPANS-019 project as “The Foster Care Project”, representing what appears to be a fundamentally flawed understanding of the essentials of the project. It also seemed that the concerns with AGAPE also stemmed from this misunderstanding of the project. It was not clear to the GCCSI contingent to what extent the US Embassy representative understood the distinction between the project as understood by the participants from the Chinese government and the proposal as written. It is GCCSI’s desire to clarify these distinctions in order that the negotiations that ensue between the US and Chinese governments are centered on the actual project rather than a misconception of the project.

On what we believe is a related note, Ms. Tao received a call from the new Director-General of the CCCWAA, Mr. Ma, the evening before the meeting (she asked GCCSI to keep this confidential due to the sensitive nature of this meeting, and is presented here with the understanding that *this will be kept in confidence by GCCSI and US governmental stakeholders*). Because Ms. Tao has an excellent relationship with the MCA and the CCAA/CCCWAA, Mr. Ma was able to contact her directly. Apparently, CCCWAA was becoming involved (and could end up being the lead agency?) on the Chinese side of this project due to its new responsibilities regarding Child Welfare in China.

Ms. Tao indicated that Mr. Ma was upset and agitated when he called her. He expressed “strong emotions” about GCCSI’s involvement with “the foster care project”, apparently believing that this would detract from GCCSI’s commitment to and involvement with intercountry adoptions (ICA) in China. Ms. Tao was able to discuss the project with Mr. Ma, who indicated that he had not yet read the project material. During this discussion, Ms. Tao was able to provide more specific information, including the relationship between the SPANS-019 project and the generally positive effect that it was believed that this project would have on ICA in China (as described in the summary above). Mr. Ma reportedly calmed by the end of the conversation, but was still “concerned” about the project. GCCSI believes that the concerns presented by Ms. Yuen (Mr. Ma’s deputy) in the meeting on February 17 reflect Mr. Ma’s concerns. Therefore, being able to accurately and thoroughly communicate the essence of the SPANS-019 project to Chinese governmental stakeholders is imperative to the eventual successful

implementation of the project.

Consequently, GCCSI and AGAPE will not be able to progress toward implementation until the negotiations between the governments of China and the US conclude. It is also understood that the resolution of these discussions only represent the first stage of work at this higher level before implementation. Obviously, the results of any negotiations would need to be incorporated and planned for prior to implementation beginning. In the meantime, GCCSI, AGAPE, researchers, and stakeholders will continue to work on planning and implementation-system construction in the belief that the factors needed for the successful implementation of this project will occur.

The following information is a summary and analysis of this meeting that I provided to USAID/DCOF following my return to GCCSI after the trip:

**Meeting Summary:**

The meeting at the Ministry of Civil Affairs on 17 FEB 2011 was informative and productive, although not necessarily in the ways that we'd hoped. Prior to this meeting, participants were provided with copies of the SPANS-019 technical proposal (in Mandarin and English) and a two page summary document (in Mandarin – please see below for the English version of this document). In attendance at the meeting were:

**The Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA)**

Mr. Gao Xiansheng, Deputy Director General, Department of Social Welfare and

Promotion of Charities

**The China Center of Child Welfare and Adoption Affairs (CCCWAA – formerly  
CCAA)**

Yuen Meili, Deputy Director General

**Department of International Cooperation**

Ms. Liu Quan, Director, Division of Bilateral Affairs

Ms. Zhang Binbin

**Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM)**

Guo, Jie, Department of International Trade & Economic Affairs

**US Embassy**

Ms. Chu Meimei (Assistant to Dr. Meagan Walters)

**Global Christian Services International (GCCSI)**

Ms. Sharon White, Director

Ms. Tao Shi, Liaison

Mr. Dennis Feaster, International Project Coordinator

The meeting was opened by Mr. Gao, who welcomed all present, and recognized the common desire of all present to work for the good of children (this was to be a common theme of the meeting, although that it is worth noting that there is, as yet, no common understanding as to the meaning of “the good of the children”, and GCCSI believes that arriving at consensus on this issue represents a substantial focus for future discussions and negotiations). Mr. Gao then asked for participants to introduce themselves and their role.

Mr. Gao then recognized Sharon White of GCCSI. Ms. White thanked the MCA for the opportunity to meet with them, and expressed the hope of working with the MCA on the SPANS-019 project. Ms. White provided an overview of GCCSI and our role in similar projects in other countries. Ms. White concluded her remarks by requesting input/comment from the MCA on the proposed project. She then invited Dennis Feaster to provide an overview of the project itself (essentially a truncated version of the summary document provided earlier).

Yuen Meili then took this opportunity to follow up. She introduced herself and her role and experience at CCAA. She then discussed the changing role of the CCAA to include broader child welfare responsibilities as reflected by the new acronym: CCCWAA. Ms. Yuen made it clear that she had not yet read any of the project documents, but did have some initial concerns, including: children in foster care being able to access CWI medical and rehabilitation, the role of adoption with regard to the project, issues with the locations that have identified for the project, and the role of the AGAPE Foundation in the project. Ms. Yuen stated that she would read the project in greater detail and would provide additional substantive comment the following week.

Although GCCSI staff were prepared to respond to/rebut Ms. Yuen's concerns, Mr. Gao immediately followed up Ms. Yuen's comments by stating "This is all implementation-related discussion", and redirected the discussion toward the MCA's goals:

1. Obtaining an agreement between the governments of China (MCA or CCCWAA) and the US (embassy or USAID).

2. Using this agreement as a foundation to form a tripartite committee that would provide oversight to the SPANS-019 project. It was proposed that the committee would be headed by Mr. Gao, and would also include the CCCWAA and GCCSI/AGAPE. It was proposed that this committee would have offices in Beijing and would meet regularly and would receive regular reports/updates regarding the project. It was stated that all members of this committee would have input into the implementation of the project.
3. This committee would then provide the SPANS-019 participants with the official support of the Chinese government. Mr. Gao stated that it was permissible for the project to proceed as is and without the participation of the MCA or CCCWAA, but that the project impact would essentially be confined to the identified communities. Without participation, the MCA/CCCWAA will not utilize SPANS-019 results more broadly, nor would there be consideration of data in terms of affecting child welfare policy.

The meeting was brought to a quick and summary conclusion immediately following this discussion. Tao Shi, the GCCSI liaison was able to succinctly interject some of the basic concerns of GCCSI, in particular that while we were able and willing to offer some compromises to the project construction, any significant changes would result in the construction of a different project, which may or may not be feasible/desirable from USAID's perspective. The meeting was then adjourned.



**Agendas Discussed: Follow-up Meeting between GCCSI Liaison and  
MCA/CCCWAA**

Obviously, there was intense interest from USAID about the nature of these discussions and the progress that GCCSI and AGAPE were making toward securing the necessary agreements for implementation of the project. In reporting this, I included the following information from Tao Shi, GCCSI Liaison, who attended the 17 FEB meeting on GCCSI's behalf, and served as translator. Ms. Tao participated in a follow-up meeting on 28 FEB, and reported the following via e-mail:

As was discussed in the meeting on 17 FEB, there was additional movement for forming a Project Office to include MCA, CCCWAA, Global and AGAPE, to supervise and lead the implementation of the project. The MCA appointed Mr. Gao, Mr. Bei and another staff person as the Project Office representatives. CCCWAA appointed Ms. Gan and Ms. Cui as their staff members. GCCSI could appoint two to three people to be the members in the office. Ms. Tao, suggested to them that AGAPE could appoint two of their staff members, and that GCCSI would identify a key staff person to fill the third position. Having gotten to this point, there is a need to move quickly to get the GCCSI and AGAPE people appointed. The first meeting is planned to be held in Beijing to announce the beginning of the project.

Ms. Tao spoke at length to Ms. Cui, who had some questions about the project (*Note: Ms. Tao and Ms. Cui have a long history of working together and have a good relationship, thus Ms. Cui and Ms. Tao were able to speak freely with one another about the core issues discussed here*). Specifically, CCCWAA's biggest problem is "Why

AGAPE?” Ms. Cui asked if GCCSI could change partners. Ms. Tao explained how the project was constructed and the central role of AGAPE as implementer, thus building the case for the present construction of the project. Following this, Ms. Cui asked what role MCA and CCCWAA should play (MCA/CCCWAA indicated their disappointment because the project money goes to AGAPE through Global, and not through MCA). This is connected to another concern that was discussed, namely that CCCWAA will not have much control of AGAPE, even though AGAPE would work under the umbrella of MCA’s name. Ms. Cui indicated that CCCWAA has no problem working with Global, but they questioned the rationale for their cooperation with AGAPE on this project. Ms. Tao made the following observations in her analysis of this meeting:

- CCCWAA has a strong desire to control this project.
- Based on her experience with CCCWAA, Ms. Tao thinks that it is doubtful that CCCWAA would be satisfied with quarterly reports (as suggested in the meeting on 17 FEB) from AGAPE.
- Rather, CCCWAA clearly stated their intention to have much more “say” on the project, so there will be monthly meetings at least.
- This relates back to earlier interactions between Ms. Tao/GCCSI and the MCA: When the MCA heard how much money involved in this project they were excited, but when they heard that the money would not go through MCA, they were disappointed.

Ms. Tao closed by noting the following: It is interesting to see the distinction between the approaches of the Ministry of Commerce (MOC or MOFCOM) and the

MCA/CCCWAA. In particular, MOFCOM has no problem with the role of AGAPE in the project (or, more accurately, the way in which the project funds will be disseminated). Mr. Fei of MOFCOM told GCCSI from the beginning (i.e. back in July of 2010) that they only get involved with the signing of MOU and they would not get involved with any funding issues.

### **Closing**

In order to further clarify the next steps for progress at the GCCSI level, Ms. Tao provided the following answers to questions posed by GCCSI leadership:

GCCSI Questions:

- From your perspective, what exactly does MCA and/or CCAA want from this project in order to be able to move this to implementation with their support?
- Do you know if Ms. Yuen has been able to read through the project yet? Is she still in favor of keeping children in CWIs for rehab (as opposed to moving both rehab services and children out of the CWI and into the community)?
- In your opinion, are the proposed monthly meetings an "actual" request or is this a negotiable element?

Ms. Tao response (*GCCSI notes in italics*):

In answer to these questions, there are a few issues that I am aware of (but no official answers yet):

1. CCAA (*CCCWAA*) and MCA do not want to provide their endorsement so that AGAPE can “do whatever they want to do” (*i.e they want a system of checks/controls in place for them to endorse AGAPE’s work*)

2. Budget does not go through CCAA (*CCCWAA*) so they will have no control.
3. The project is so huge that it will change the current system; AGAPE is not capable of doing this project alone (*concern with MCA/CCCWAA's understanding of AGAPE's role relative to GCCSI and other community stakeholders including provincial and local governmental organizations*).
4. What is the detailed plan for implementation? The project planning we provided to them only shows the goals, and is vague. (*GCCSI/AGAPE will provide this information*)
5. There will be more meetings at the beginning, but later on it should not be the case.
6. They have read the project and it is consistent with MCA's long-range plan. MCA has had plans to open all the orphanage rehab facilities to the communities. (*Although it should be noted that this does not reflect the reality of the SPANS-019 project, whose goal is to get services OUT OF the CWIS and INTO the community*).

As a result of the preceding, as well as of additional communication between GCCSI personnel and counterparts in China, it seems that the essence of the present stage for GCCSI is essentially educating and “winning over” the new stakeholders in CCCWAA. There is some evidence that some CCCWAA personnel understand the implications and long-term advantages of the SPANS-019 project to the government of China’s goals vis-à-vis China’s orphan population. Because the CCCWAA have just been brought on board by the MCA, we will need to allow some time for this process to occur.

## **Agendas Interact: Project Negotiation**

Following the meeting at MCA, White and I travelled down to Nanjing to meet with Liu and her colleagues at AGAPE headquarters. The flight down experienced turbulence, especially during the landing, and this, combined with stop and go traffic for 45 minutes as we were driven to our hotel by Liu and the AGAPE driver, combined to put me out of commission for dinner that evening. White, however, was able to dine with Liu and caught her up to speed on the recent series of events in Beijing.

By the next morning, I was feeling quite a bit better, and White and I were driven to AGAPE headquarters for our meeting with the AGAPE staff who were dedicated to working on this project. White and I met with Liu, Bai Ziming, Xiao Cheng, Martina (American translator working as an intern at AGAPE), Huo Mei, and two other AGAPE staff. Our meeting was held in the basement of AGAPE's headquarters, and the heating was not working. Although not as cold as Beijing, it was plenty cold on this February day in Nanjing, so the basement meeting room was brisk to say the least – all of us wore our outside winter coats, and White and most of the AGAPE staff also wore hats, scarves, and gloves. Liu and staff were apologetic about the temperature, and our mutual joking about it provided a way for the GCCSI and AGAPE contingents to “join”.

In short order, the meeting was begun, being conducted primarily in English (as in many Chinese organizations, most of the AGAPE professional staff spoke at least some English, and most spoke and understood quite well). Translation was provided by Martina from English into Mandarin Chinese also, however. In an effort to capitalize upon the “joining” that had already occurred, and to dissipate the tension that was present

as part of the sub-grant negotiation process, I took the opportunity to apologize profusely for having had to send so many verbose e-mails related to USAID's requirements. I joked that the AGAPE staff, especially Bai Zimeng and Xiao Cheng, probably had panic attacks whenever they checked their e-mails and saw my name in the sender's address. Everyone laughed and Bai Zimeng and Xiao Cheng heartily agreed. This then provided the opportunity to reiterate that we had to operate under USAID's organizational constraints, since the project funds were theirs, and also to make clear to AGAPE that GCCSI and I were also very much experiencing a learning curve (so as to normalize feelings of frustration with the level of detail and regulations that were required of all parties). Finally, we were able to come to a consensus that the purpose of the meeting that day was to further align GCCSI's and AGAPE's systems around this project, in the hope that we would soon have an MOU with the GOC, and that until this MOU was solicited, we all understood that no implementation could occur.

The meeting itself was then initiated, with considerable time and detail being spent on many of the mechanics of the sub-grant agreement (e.g. payments made on an advance disbursement as opposed to a reimbursement schedule, differences between AGAPE's usual method of establishing organizational costs as opposed to USAID's very detail-oriented system of accounting and reporting, cost matching processes, funds for the project's opening ceremony, etc.). As these were being discussed, there was also the opportunity to revisit the fundamental purposes/functions of the project. Like the MCA, AGAPE, too, continued to refer to the project as a "foster care project", and White and I

took the opportunity to have a re-orientation discussion with the AGAPE staff that was very similar to that which White and I had with Tao.

The breakthrough during this discussion had to do with getting services out of the CWIs and into the community with kids and their families (yes, foster families, but also, and ultimately more importantly, with families of origin and at-risk children, too). I physically modeled this dynamic by getting up, describing myself as a child with a disability (I used autism in my example because this is a “hot topic” in China, and is very scary to a lot of parents and caregivers) – I got up and stood behind a floor length curtain at one end of the room, and peeked out from behind it to speak to the group. I said that this is like a child in a CWI, sometimes able to peek out and see the room, but hidden from sight and involvement, while the life of the community went on without me. I then indicated that the project was designed to get these children out from behind the curtain, and into the community, and the only way that this could happen was if the services in the CWI also went with the children into the community.

This was very well received, as the physical modeling of the dynamics was not dependent upon language and verbal nuance. As I finished up, there was considerable discussion in Chinese, too fast for me to follow. Huo Mei, whose English is excellent, broke in and very directly responded to the discussion. There was a brief moment of quiet, and then the AGAPE staff all broke into laughter at the same time. Huo Mei explained to White and me – during my brief set up of the scenario, I spoke of my experience in working with people with autism in community settings in the US. Most of my Chinese audience understood me to be saying that I had autism, and that I was now

able to function well because I had been served in the community. Huo Mei clarified this, and we all had a chance to join together in laughing. This set us up to take a break from discussions, take a quick tour, and then go to lunch (which was good because we all had chattering teeth by this time, and it was actually warmer outside than in AGAPE's basement).

The discussion that afternoon and evening provided the chance for us to build upon the shared foundation of that morning, and, while there was still some negotiations that needed to be worked out, it was agreed that we had a corpus of agreement (and goodwill) upon which to build the implementation of the SPANS-019 project. Liu and Huo Mei accompanied White and me to the Shanghai airport early the next day. We travelled by train from Nanjing to Shanghai, which provided yet more opportunity to build relationship/goodwill/guanxi between GCCSI and AGAPE. We got to the airport with fairly little mishap (except that I injured my wrist – I actually thought that I'd gotten a hairline fracture, but turned out in the US to be just a bad sprain). I returned to the US, and White flew to South Korea for a monitoring trip for GCCSI's projects in South Korea.

Upon my return, I took the opportunity to document the substance of our interactions with the MCA/CCCWA and also with AGAPE, which I provided to USAID in a quarterly report. This was as a result of discussions by phone and e-mail to let USAID/WL know what the status of the project was in China. GCCSI's concern was that as time progresses during the life of the project, the more time that passed without implementation, the more likely USAID may be to pull the plug on the project. I took



efforts to convey both the facts of the involvements and our subjective impressions/interpretations of the interactions in a parallel form, so that USAID and WL could have as broad a base to make an informed decision as possible in regard to their decisions related to the life of the project. USAID agreed to wait and see what the result of the meeting in Beijing might be, and further understood that nothing would happen in China without the endorsement of the government.

**Agendas Manifest: SPANS-019 Process Summary (3/6/2011 – 3/14/2011)**

*Section Note: in an effort to be as true as possible to the original data, I have elected to include the e-mails verbatim; as many of those corresponding are non-native English speakers, there are numerous grammar, syntax, and spelling errors. Similarly, there is some redundancy with previous information as it is repeated and parsed in “real time” in the e-mail; this was also kept in the text for accuracy and for context.*

The MCA's/CCCWA's response to the meeting soon became apparent, as is addressed in the following summary provided by me to USAID/DCOF in March, 2011

Over the course of this time, communication between GCCSI, the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), and the China Center for Adoption Affairs (now the China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption Affairs - CCAA/CCCWAA) has been intense. Most of this communication has come through GCCSI's Beijing liaison, Tao Shi. Through Ms. Tao's efforts, we have been trying to identify exactly what the MCA and CCAA/CCCWAA need to be able to provide clearance for the project, and this finally seems to have emerged:

1. CCCWAA wants to be an implementer in the project

2. They have doubts about the extent to which AGAPE can implement the project
3. They want AGAPE's Implementation Plan
4. CCCWAA will review AGAPE's Implementation Plan and will counter with one of their own
5. CCCWAA will either be co-implementer (and will seek grant funds for implementation activities) or, should they believe AGAPE's plan is insufficient, would offer themselves as sole implementer (and presumably will seek grant funds for implementation activities)

The context and the implications surrounding these points are found in the following 9 e-mails (the first three are from the previous week, and are included for continuity). *Please note, in these e-mails, references to "CCAA" are for the sake of convenience and refer to the new entity of the "CCCWAA":*

**E-Mail #1** (from Tao Shi – GCCSI Liaison to Sharon White – GCCSI Director, 2/28):

Per what we discussed, I had contacted MCA and CCAA today. Here is the update for you:

As we were told, there would be a Project Office formed among MCA, CCAA, Global and AGAPE, to supervise and lead the implementation of the project. MCA appointed Mr. Gao, Mr. Bei and another staff as the Project office staffs. CCAA appointed Ms. Gan and Ms. Cui as their staff members. It is good news that Ms. Cui would join the office from CCAA side. We have known each other for over ten years. Mr. Bei asked me if I will be in the office which I told him that I would check with Sharon . As suggested, Global could appoint two to three people to be the

members in the office. I suggested to them that AGAPE would appoint two of their staffs. Thus, we need to move quickly to get the people appointed. The first meeting will be held in Beijing to announce the beginning of the project.

I talked to Ms. Cui today about the project. She has some questions about the project. The biggest problem is WHY AGAPE. She asked if we can change our partner. I told her NO then explained how Global got the project. Another question asked is what role MCA and CCAA should play. CCAA showed their disappointment since the money will go to AGAPE through Global, not MCA. They indicated that this leads to another concern that CCAA will not have much control of AGAPE although AGAPE would work under the umbrella of MCA's name. Ms. Cui indicated that CCAA would have no problem to work with Global, but they questioned the rationale for their cooperation with AGAPE for this project. CCAA has a strong desire to CONTROL. Based on the experience I have with CCAA, it is questionable that CCAA would be satisfied with quarterly report from AGAPE. They stated clearly their intention to have much more "say" on the project. There will be a monthly meeting at least. As we talked about before, when they heard how much money involved in this project they were excited. But when they heard that the money will not go through MCA, they are disappointed.

MOFCOM has no problem about the money. Mr. Fei told me from the beginning that they only get involved with the signing of MOU and they would rather not to get involved with any money.

Would you tell me if there will be any budget to cover the office operation and

necessary spending? Who will cover their travel expenses and from where if there will be any visit from their side to check the work? On the other hand, as always, I work for Global's social services as volunteer work and I am not looking for any compensation.

At this point, it is my suggestion that we keep this communication among us only since we do not want their words to hurt AGAPE feelings. After all this project would last several years and it could be awkward for all the parties if there would be ill feelings built among them during this early stage.

Tao Shi

**E-Mail #2** (from Dennis Feaster - GCCSI Coordinator to Tao Shi, 3/1):

Thanks for all of your diligence in helping us to work through this process. Bill, Sharon , and I met yesterday to go over the information from the trip and your update was very helpful. We did come away with some questions that we hope you can help us to answer:

- The biggest question is: From your perspective, what exactly does MCA and/or CCAA want from this project in order to be able to move this to implementation with their support?
- Do you know if Ms. Yuen has been able to read through the project yet? Is she still in favor of keeping children in CWIs for rehab (as opposed to moving both rehab services and children out of the CWI and into the community)?
- In your opinion, are the proposed monthly meetings an "actual" request or is this a negotiable element?

Thanks again for your assistance as we get this figured out. We are very aware of the constraints on your time and are exploring some options regarding staffing the meetings in Beijing to keep this from being too burdensome for you (we'll probably be in touch with some more questions on this as we try to identify the best way to address this).

**E-Mail #3** (from Tao Shi to Dennis Feaster, 3/1):

To answer your questions, I think (no official answers yet) there are a few issues:

1. CCAA and MCA do not want AGAPE to do whatever they want to do with MCA's endorsement.
2. Budget will not go through CCAA so they will have no control.
3. The project is so huge as it will change the current system, AGAPE is not capable of doing this project alone.
4. What is the detailed plan for implementation? The project planning we provided to them only shows the goals, and is vague.
5. There will be more meetings at the beginning, but later on it should not be the case.
6. They have read the project and it is consistent with MCA's long-range plan. MCA has had plans to open all the orphanage rehab facilities to the communities.

We should have a short and quick conference call before Sharon talks to Jennifer.

You can call my Skype address: (*address deleted*).

**E-Mail #4** (from Tao Shi to Dennis Feaster, 3/6):

CCAA and MCA had another meeting about the project. They have one question about AGAPE. They said that they would like AGAPE to present a detailed the plan

how to implement the project as it is very vague in the project. Is this community within one neighborhood, or within a district, or within the city, or near where the orphanage is? They have talked to the orphanage directors and the answer from the orphanage directors were they heard a little about it, but do not know how to do. There will be a lot of government organizations involved if this project starts. If AGAPE has a detailed plan, please present it to CCAA and MCA for review. If not, MCA will present their detailed plan. They do not insist on changing three orphanages though it is not final yet. I think it is a positive sign. Please ask AGAPE to send one please.

Another thing is Sharon will be in the steering committee, but not Liu Lili. Liu Lili will be in the operation office.

**E-Mail #5** (from Dennis Feaster to Tao Shi, 3/8):

Attached below is the preliminary implementation plan. The highlighted areas are those that have been adjusted previously to accommodate for the delay in implementation, but, as you can see, most of the timeframes in the document will need to be adjusted for the implementation timeline. This being said, the sequence of events and the overall strategies remain the same. Also, I will be happy to talk to AGAPE and see about their clarification for the specific points enumerated below.

**E-Mail #6** (From Tao Shi to Dennis Feaster - 3/9):

I forwarded your attachment to Ms. Cui. Both MCA and CCAA have a positive view of the project now because the project is consistent with their long-range plan. They would like to move forward the project. However, they want to get involved

more in the project, not just policy guidance which I hoped, as they mentioned earlier that AGAPE would not listen to them if they do not get involved in the project. Please read her questions carefully. I asked her when they are going to send any written comments and she replied that they are not going to do it and asked me to send you the questions. The following questions were written down when she talked to me:

1. What is Embassy's response to the structure of the implementary committee?

Hua Ming attended the meeting. After her report to Jennifer what is the following up? The structure will be Global and MCA sign the MOU, but MCA is not sure if MOFCOM and US Embassy will be part of it? The operation of the project will be carried out by both AGAPE and CCAA.

2. The plan you forwarded is too vague, just some numbers. There should be more details, such as the location of the community, e.g. Nanjing, Chengdu, and Wuhan cities spread out so much, which of the area will AGAPE start first? In one of the districts? In one community first? Or several communities all at once? etc. If AGAPE does not present a detailed plan CCAA will present one. But CCAA would respect AGAPE's plan first. CCAA does not want to see the situation that AGAPE will say AGAPE does not mean it after AGAPE sees CCAA's plan.

3. Both CCAA and AGAPE will be the implementary parties, that is CCAA will involve actively in the project. This is the condition for the project cooperation with MCA.

It is my reading that part of the budget will go to CCAA if they are going to be part of it to carry out the project. Please respond to these questions.

**E-Mail #7** (from Dennis Feaster to Tao Shi - 3/9):

Thanks for all of your assistance on these matters. I am working with Bill, Sharon, and AGAPE in trying to get as much of this information to you as quickly as possible, so that you can communicate this to CCAA. I am hoping that you can clarify something for me, though - in #3 of your e-mail, CCAA indicated that the plan was too vague, although the questions that came after this comment were answered in both the Technical Proposal and the Preliminary Implementation Plan - is there something specifically that I can answer, or is CCAA's concern more broad? Is the concern with the implementation plan focused on AGAPE's role specifically, or does Global need to clarify our plan, too (and, if so, on what points)?

Also, can you help me to understand the significance of CCAA not wanting to send written comments to us? As you know, we are responsible for communicating our progress on the project to our funder, and having feedback from stakeholders helps us to do this. We can certainly communicate the essence of the issues to them, but having more direct communication from CCAA (or anyone else with a stake in the plan) helps us to avoid any errors related to misunderstanding or miscommunication.

Thanks for helping me to understand this, and I will try to get the answers to CCAA's questions to you as soon as possible.

**E-Mail #8** (From Dennis Feaster to Frank Goldsmith, GCCS President - 3/9):

Hi Frank,

I am working on getting a response together for Tao Shi, as well as coordinating



AGAPE's response with Lili. It appears to me that we are getting MCA and CCAA/CCCWAA's bottom line on the project and their cooperation: namely a role as co-implementers (at least) and compensation for implementation activities from grant funds.

Additionally, the trend in the communications from CCAA/CCCWAA (via Tao Shi), contain CCAA's stated doubts about AGAPE's ability to handle implementing a project of this scope, concerns with the "lack of detail" (despite having the technical proposal, the M&E plan, and the Detailed Implementation Plan), and a desire to have access to AGAPE's implementation plan before offering an alternative plan of their own (they specifically indicated that AGAPE should show theirs first). Therefore, it is my guess that the national-level government folks will make a case for AGAPE's inadequacy as implementing agency, and will move to replace them with themselves (obviously, this would include their budget, too). This has been Lili's concern about working with National MCA/CCAA from the beginning, and probably explains the hard stance that she took in Beijing last October.

If this is the case, then I believe it raises some serious issues for the viability of the project as expressed in DCOF's conference call with Sharon and me yesterday. One of the primary concerns is the financial accounting procedures that USAID (and the OMB) requires, and the lack of transparency in MCA and CCAA/CCCWAA (DCOF expressed doubts about the amount of funds that would actually trickle down to project sites under this configuration). Indeed, one of the primary reasons that the project was constructed in the manner it was, relates to minimizing the conflict of

interest between the adoption system in China and foster care; unfortunately, the concern is that CCAA's proposed configuration amplifies this conflict. There is also a concern on USAID's about the philosophy of paying millions of dollars to a government to which we are greatly indebted to provide services that they should already be providing - this is certainly not palatable to USAID, and the project, as constructed, avoids this. The new iteration, should it come about, will not.

At any rate, the first of the questions that Tao Shi is asking on behalf of CCCWAA relates to info from Meagan Walters, so I'm following up on the communication between Global and her in terms of the issues enumerated in #1 below:

- What is the US Embassy's response to the structure of the implementing committee?
- Hua Ming attended the meeting; after her report to Meagan, what is the follow up?
- The structure will be for Global and MCA to sign a MOU, but MCA is not sure if MOFCOM and US Embassy will be part of it?
- The operation of the project will be carried out by both AGAPE and CCAA (reiterated in #3 below).

Any assistance that you could provide in helping us to answer these would be most appreciated!

**E-Mail #9** (from Dennis Feaster to Liu Lili – AGAPE, 3/9):

Hi Lili,

I need to get you caught up on our communications with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, though. As you remember, last month we provided you with the information that we had from our meeting in Beijing when we met with you in Nanjing. Since then, we've had a number of conversations (through Tao Shi) with MCA/CCAA, as well as with USAID directly. We were uncertain as to what MCA/CCAA really wanted, but it seems to have become pretty clear (see especially #3 below):

From an e-mail on 3/8 from Tao Shi (my emphasis has been added):

Both MCA and CCAA have a positive view of the project now, because the project is consistent with their long-range plan. They would like to move forward the project.

However, they want to get involved more in the project, not just policy guidance which I hoped, as they mentioned earlier that AGAPE would not listen to them if they do not get involved in the project. Please read her questions carefully. I asked her when they are going to send any written comments and she replied that they are not going to do it and asked me to send you the questions. The following questions were written down when she talked to me:

1. (For Global to answer): What is Embassy's response to the structure of the implementation committee? Hua Ming attended the meeting. After her report to Meagan what is the following up? The structure will be Global and MCA sign the MOU, but MCA is not sure if MOFCOM and US Embassy will be part of it?

- GCCSI Note: We were told both in the meeting and from other sources, that MCA would NEVER sign an MOU with an NGO like

GCCSI, but rather only wanted to sign an agreement between governments, so we don't know how to interpret this.

The operation of the project will be carried out by both AGAPE and CCAA

· see also #3 below

2. (For AGAPE to answer) CCAA said that they would like AGAPE to present a detailed the plan how to implement the project as it is very vague in the project:

Is this community within one neighborhood, or within a district, or within the city, or near where the orphanage is?

They have talked to the orphanage directors and the answer from the orphanage directors were they heard a little about it, but do not know how to do. There will be a lot of government organizations involved if this project starts.

If AGAPE has a detailed plan, please present it to CCAA and MCA for review. If not, MCA will present their detailed plan.

If AGAPE does not present a detailed plan CCAA will present one. But CCAA would expect AGAPE's plan first (CCAA does not want to see a situation where AGAPE changes their plan after they see CCAA's plan).

3. Both CCAA and AGAPE will be the implementing parties. That is, CCAA will be actively involved in the project. This is a condition for cooperation with MCA on the project.

· It is noted that it would probably be proposed that part of the budget

will go to CCAA if they are going to be part of carrying out the project.

So, it seems that we will need to figure out how to handle this. Here are some of my proposed steps:

1. GCCSI will try to get the answers to #1 above from the Embassy as quickly as possible
2. AGAPE can work on #2:
  - I have already submitted the Preliminary Implementation Plan (that was approved by USAID) to CCAA through Tao Shi.
  - Therefore, CCAA and MCA should have the Technical Proposal, the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, and the Detailed/Preliminary Implementation Plan.
    - o If I understand the questions that CCAA is asking, it seems that these documents should provide them with the answers that they are seeking (although I followed up with Tao Shi on this very point to see if they could provide me with clarification), so I don't understand their questions
  - I (and the rest of us at GCCSI - Sharon , Andrea, Ann, etc.) will be happy to provide whatever assistance and support that we can to you and AGAPE in this process; please let us know what we can do
  - I will let Tao Shi know that we are all working on this, and that we will have the information to them as quickly as is feasible

3. Sharon and I have been in communication with USAID on the stages of the project. They have very definite ideas about what they will and will not fund. CCAA's direction (and the changes that are involved) will certainly need to be taken into account, and could affect whether or not USAID is interested in continuing to fund the program.

- I will be happy to provide additional insight into this last piece of information by whatever method you prefer (e-mail, phone, Skype, etc.); please let me know, and I will provide you with the details

Please let me know if you have any issues with these steps, or if you identify steps that I have missed. It would probably be a good idea to set up a Skype call between GCCSI and AGAPE to go over all of these things in greater detail, but I wanted to let you know what was going on first. Please feel free to follow up with me on whatever I or GCCSI can do to support you in your efforts. Also, I am very interested in your analysis of these developments, and what you think these mean – this would help us to coordinate with USAID in terms of what is actually happening, as opposed to what we think is happening (i.e. we are aware that we are “cross-culturally blind”).

Thanks for all of your help on this, Lili, and I look forward with great interest to your understanding of this situation.

**Discussion:**

During last week's conference call with DCOF, Elizabeth Bronson indicated that she'd identified both political and technical dimensions relative to the latest developments in moving toward SPANS-019 implementation. Some of the concerns

that GCCSI has at this point relate to these dimensions, and include the following:

1. The role of CCCWAA (political)

- a. Rather than being involved as an Implementer, could it be involved as a Monitor (with the Monitoring activities spelled out). This would clean up the issue with US funds going to the Chinese government to do the job that they are supposed to be doing anyway. It may also clarify the following issue: If MCA/CCAA are primarily interested in control, it could work; if they are primarily interested in money, it won't (but will clarify their agenda).
- b. The most recent communication that we have from AGAPE on this topic indicates that AGAPE would be willing to bow out of the project (from a sense of self-preservation if nothing else) – the concern is still that the Ministry of Civil Affairs and/or CCCWAA would in all likelihood seek to be paid from SPANS-019 funds for implementation costs (see also discussion under #3 below):

**E-Mail #10** (from Liu Lili to Dennis Feaster, 3/13/2011)

Pls. see my comments in red. [*Note: In her original e-mail, Liu's comments were made in red font; these have been reformatted into Calibri font and have been italicized and bracketed for ease of reading*]. I hope you can understand my concerns and situation.

From an e-mail on 3/8 from Tao Shi (my emphasis has been added):

Both MCA and CCAA have a positive view of the project now, because the project is

consistent with their long-range plan. They would like to move forward the project.

However, they want to get involved more in the project, not just policy guidance which I hoped, as they mentioned earlier that AGAPE would not listen to them if they do not get involved in the project. Lili's comments: [*I am glad to hear about it. For reaching the goal of the project of transferring the child welfare system in China, CCAA can take over the role of AGAPE in signing the Subgrant Agreement with Global now. I feel I have finished my mission of participation in the planning stage.*] Please read her questions carefully. I asked her when they are going to send any written comments and she replied that they are not going to do it and asked me to send you the questions. The following questions were written down when she talked to me:

1. (For Global to answer): What is Embassy's response to the structure of the implementation committee? Hua Ming attended the meeting. After her report to Meagan what is the following up? The structure will be Global and MCA sign the MOU, but MCA is not sure if MOFCOM and US Embassy will be part of it? [*The new structure CCAA proposed in the meeting with you in Beijing won't work with AGAPE. AGAPE can't function and play the same role in the project as originally planned in the proposal under that new structure. For the protection of AGAPE and myself, i would rather suggest that AGAPE steps down from the project and let Global to cooperate with CCAA as Global did before and is doing now with **Tao Shi's** involvement. This will be good for everybody, MCA/CCAA/Global/Tao Shi*].

GCCSI Note: We were told both in the meeting and from other sources, that MCA



would NEVER sign an MOU with an NGO like GCCSI, but rather only wanted to sign an agreement between governments, so we don't know how to interpret this. [I

*don't understand it either. It is strange!]*

The operation of the project will be carried out by both AGAPE and CCAA [No, I don't think it would work that two organizations will play a similar role in one project. Besides, AGAPE is not in the equal position with MCA and not treated with respect from the very beginning contact up to now. ]

see also #3 below

2. (For AGAPE to answer) CCAA said that they would like AGAPE to present a detailed the plan how to implement the project as it is very vague in the project:

Is this community within one neighborhood, or within a district, or within the city, or near where the orphanage is?

They have talked to the orphanage directors and the answer from the orphanage directors were they heard a little about it, but do not know how to do. There will be a lot of government organizations involved if this project starts.

If AGAPE has a detailed plan, please present it to CCAA and MCA for review. If not, MCA will present their detailed plan. [*That is very good for MCA to present their detailed plan.*]

If AGAPE does not present a detailed plan CCAA will present one. But CCAA would expect AGAPE's plan first (CCAA does not want to see a situation where AGAPE changes their plan after they see CCAA's plan). [*This sounds so strange!!! How can*

*AGAPE work in such a unfriendly and distrust relationship? It is too risky for AGAPE. The orphanages are their territory and I don't want to cause trouble to the directors of orphanages either.]*

3. Both CCAA and AGAPE will be the implementing parties. That is, CCAA will be actively involved in the project. This is a condition for cooperation with MCA on the project. *[Sorry, as I've said that we can not work together. I don't want to bring AGAPE into this difficult situation to work with CCAA who looks at AGAPE as their competitive opponent.]*

It is noted that it would probably be proposed that part of the budget will go to CCAA if they are going to be part of carrying out the project.

(NOTE: There were no comments in the last section, so this was deleted in the interest of space).

*[Finally, I am sorry that this project plan will have to be changed because of the MCA/CCAA's request of changing the structure and their direct participation.*

*After all, it may not be a bad change. I think MCA/CCAA is in a better position and with more resources than AGAPE to manage the project. It will helps the project to reach its goal in the earlier days.*

*Of course, AGAPE could still participate in some activities in the future if AGAPE is invited and our experiences in the past are respected.*

*Best regards,*

*Lili]*

2. The timeframe of the project relative to the amount of time that passes before implementation activities begin (technical). The following points are raised as part of GCCSI's contingency planning process:
3. During the discussion with DCOF last week, the issue of delay was mentioned. This represents a significant concern on GCCSI's part, as the SPANS-019 project had ambitious goals as a 36 month project. The more time that passes prior to implementation, the more difficult it becomes to attain already ambitious goals.
4. Assuming that the political dimensions are successfully negotiated and that stakeholders do continue moving to implementation, it might be possible to correct for time constraints by reducing scope and costs to fewer sites. This has the disadvantage of losing between-site comparison data (as well as broader dissemination of results and process), while gaining the advantage of being able to obtain at least some useful data by concentrating resources in one area.
5. The "dual-relationship" that GCCSI would have with CCCWAA (i.e. ICA and grant), especially if grant funds end up going to CCCWAA (political and technical):
  - a. When this project was initially conceptualized and presented to USAID and World Learning, all of our organizations saw the potential

for a conflict of interest should GCCSI's intercountry adoption (ICA) activities intersect with the SPANS-019's activities. The following steps were taken to avoid any such conflict:

- i. GCCSI would not provide intercountry adoption services to children from any of the SPANS-019 project areas
  - ii. By working through an in-country partner like AGAPE for implementation, there is an additional "buffer" between the project activities and children whom GCCSI may serve through ICA in other parts of China
  - iii. Initially, GCCSI was working with both the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) and the Ministry of Civil Affairs' Social Welfare Department in working toward an agreement that would allow for implementation. This allowed for an effective separation from the China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA), who is responsible for oversight of GCCSI's ICA activities in China
- b. Unfortunately, when CCAA became the China Center for Child Welfare and Adoption Affairs (CCCWAA), they effectively "inherited" the SPANS-019 project, resulting in the following conflicts:
- i. The same Chinese Governmental Agency would be providing oversight for both GCCSI's ICA functions and the SPANS-019

project

- ii. If SPANS-019 project funds end up going to CCCWAA for SPANS-019 project implementation, then GCCSI is in the position of providing funding to the same organization that authorizes GCCSI's ICA activities – this is not permissible by GCCSI standards, World Learning or USAID, or the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.
- iii. Therefore, if AGAPE drops out of the process (because of the competitive relationship with CCCWAA on this project that is being established by both MCA and CCCWAA, then GCCSI will not be in a position to provide funds to CCCWAA, even should USAID be willing to do this

**Follow Up/Next Steps:**

1. GCCSI's is seeking the following information from our liaison in Beijing:
  - a. What do MCA and CCCWAA mean by implementation?
  - b. What is the structure that CCCWAA is considering regarding implementation assuming that they mean the same thing that we do by this term?
  - c. How does the MCA/CCCWAA propose handling the conflict of interest described above?
2. GCCSI is seeking the following information from World Learning and USAID:
  - a. Would USAID be willing to provide grant funds directly to MCA or

CCCWAA?

- b. If so, would the same sub-grant procedures (including accounting) apply?
  - c. What would USAID need from GCCSI and CCCWAA relative to the potential conflict of interest between SPANS-019 and GCCSI's intercountry adoption activities (such as an acknowledgement of the potential conflict and transparency around activities)?
3. GCCSI is seeking input from Dr. Walters at the US Embassy/Beijing regarding her perspective in the above
4. GCCSI is tentatively proposing the following (subject to change based on feedback from the above):
- a. Propose "Monitoring" role to CCCWAA rather than "implementing" role: this should allow CCCWAA to have input into the project, but will also maintain separation between SPANS-019 funds and CCCWAA, as well as between GCCSI's intercountry adoption activities and SPANS-019.
    - i. SPANS-019 cannot directly fund either MCA or CCCWAA at the national level (although some proposed project funds would go to municipal level Civil Affairs to fund deinstitutionalization staff like foster care case workers, etc)
  - b. Advocate for AGAPE's role in the project as designed
    - i. AGAPE has the expertise and experience regarding implementation in China around child welfare
    - ii. AGAPE provides a means of accountability for project funds to

enter China and flow to the intended designee's in a transparent way

iii. Although AGAPE can't directly create national-level systems change, they can certainly provide SPANS-019 project data to MCA and CCCWAA that these organizations can use to accomplish this

**c. GCCSI recognizes that what is being communicated by the above is that MCA's or CCCWAA's insistence upon implementing SPANS-019 and being reimbursed by grant funds, then this could result in the termination of the SPANS-019 project.**

#### **Agendas Interact: Project Negotiation**

Thus, the results of the MCA's proposal were to create an adversarial relationship between AGAPE and the GOC, through competition for the role of project implementer. AGAPE immediately perceived the danger to their continued existence in light of being in an adversarial relationship with the GOC, and quickly and graciously removed themselves from the project. It would turn out that this seemed to be exactly what the GOC wanted, and GCCSI was informed that the MCA would develop their own proposal for implementation and/or project construction. This pretty well put the ball in the MCA's court: everyone understood that the only way for the project to proceed would be with the direct involvement of the Central Government. It was unclear to GCCSI and me if this was because the primary motivation was to access the funds that would flow from

USAID to the implementing partner, or if there was truly will to access the soft technologies and methodologies that the project would bring to bear on OVC in China. A number of discussions regarding motivations and next steps occurred between GCCSI and USAID, until the MCA provided their own project agreement.

***MCA Counter-Proposal to SPANS-019.*** The following is a translation of the Ministry of Civil Affairs' counter-proposal to the SPANS-019 project. The origins of this proposal can be found in the February meeting in Beijing and in the subsequent discussions around the dynamics of the project (see mini-case studies #5 and #6 above). Following the translation of the proposal, a second translation with notes analysis follows (this latter translation was provided to USAID/DCOF with the analysis by me in my role as a Global employee to provide a context for USAID/DCOF to evaluate their interest in continuing with the project). *Section note: Some of this information is repeated, but was kept to convey the "real time" communication and analysis present in the actual process.*

#### **Cooperation on Projects with Global**

Global is an international charity agency that works with foster care and adoption, and is well known in the US. This organization (*i.e. Global*) is applying to partner with our Department (*i.e. Ministry of Civil Affairs' Social Welfare Department*) to cooperate on family foster care services, the main focus of which are as follows:

- to follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, for the best interests of the child, so that more children living in welfare institutions can move into loving families as soon as possible,
- to disseminate concepts of child welfare from Child Welfare Institutes to the



community

- to integrate community resources by establishing child welfare community centers to provide professional services and support to foster families, and to provide assistance and protection for families of children who are at-risk to prevent abandonment of children

Since Global does not have a representative office in China, the organization (*i.e. Global*) intends to delegate project implementation to the AGAPE Foundation. Rather, since Global would carry out the project with funds provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the project should take the form of intergovernmental cooperation; therefore, we (*i.e. MCA's Social Welfare Department*) suggest that our Department and Global together delegate the China Center for Child Welfare and Adoption Affairs (CCCWAA) as the implementing organization for this project. The project would involve the joint establishment of a Project Leadership Group and office, the AGAPE Foundation could be represented in this office. Specific ideas for this project are as follows:

First, the establishment of the Project Leadership Group:

- Project Leader: Wang Da , Director (MCA-Social Welfare Department)
- Project Director: Gao Xiansheng, Deputy Director (MCA-Social Welfare Department)
- Project Deputy Directors:
  - Yuen Meili, deputy director (CCCWAA)
  - Sharon White (Global International Department Director)

- Project Members:

- Cui Hua (CCCWAA)
- Wang Ming (CCCWAA)
- Ming Xiajin (CCCWAA?)
- a representative from the Ministry of Civil Affairs - Social Welfare Department
- a representative from the Ministry of Commerce
- a Global staff member
- a staff member of the AGAPE Foundation

Second, the cooperation policy:

“We are primary, for our benefit”

Third, the welfare project pilot locations:

Because of the level of experience of the CWIs in Nanjing, Chengdu, Datong, these would serve as sites for project models. Additionally, we recommend Haerbin as a site to increase welfare in the pilot.

Fourth, operational requirements and objectives of the project:

a. Project timeframe:

i. Three years

1. Years 1 and 2: to create models,
2. Year 3: to be promoted/expand models

b. Financial operations:

- i. The project office is responsible for management of project funds,

including their distribution, allocation, auditing, etc.

c. Reporting:

- i. Three year project implementation master plans and annual plan will be developed by CCCWAA. Annual plan will be developed early in each year and progress reports will be provided at the end of the year.

d. Project objectives:

- i. To improve and perfect the work of family-based care at the project sites, to summarize the experience of family foster care project sites in order to develop model to improve foster care services that is applicable to all foster care programs in different areas.
- ii. To explore and develop family-based child welfare service system in which family foster care service centers provide support and services to children with disabilities and children in need in the community and Child Welfare Institutes provide technical support.

The following information was composed by me in order to process MCA's proposal with USAID/DCOF, and interjects GCCSI's analysis (completed by my colleague, Wang Li and me) with the translated document:

**MCA Proposal: Feaster Notes and Analysis:**

Cooperation on Projects with Global

Global is an international charity agency that works with foster care and adoption, and is well known in the US. This organization (*i.e. Global*) is applying to partner with our

Department (*i.e. Ministry of Civil Affairs Social Welfare Department*) to cooperate on family foster care

services, the main focus of which are as follows:

- to follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, for the best interests of the child, so that more children living in welfare institutions can move into loving families as soon as possible,
- to disseminate concepts of child welfare from Child Welfare Institutes to the community
- to integrate community resources by establishing child welfare community centers to provide professional services and support to foster families, and to provide assistance and protection for families of children who are at-risk to prevent abandonment of children

Analysis: This language is certainly in alignment with the SPANS-019 project's goals, and is actually quite encouraging. The language in this section indicates that there is substantial agreement on the part of the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) with the primary objectives of the SPANS-019 project. The ability to utilize project data to impact policy in China is one of the more difficult/delicate set of objectives, but it appears that MCA is indicating that they would certainly be willing to use this project to inform policy.

Since Global does not have a representative office in China, the organization (*i.e. Global*) intends to delegate project implementation to the AGAPE Foundation. Rather, since

Global would carry out the project with funds provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the project should take the form of intergovernmental cooperation; therefore, we (*i.e. MCA's Social Welfare Department*) suggest that our Department and Global together delegate the China Center for Child Welfare and Adoption Affairs (*CCCWAA*) as the implementing organization for this project. The project would involve the joint establishment of a Project Leadership Group and office, the AGAPE Foundation could be represented in this office. Specific ideas for this project are as follows:

First, the establishment of the Project Leadership Group:

- Project Leader: Wang Da , Director (MCA-Social Welfare Department)
- Project Director: Gao Xiansheng, Deputy Director (MCA-Social Welfare Department)
- Project Deputy Directors:
  - Yuen Meili, deputy director (CCCWAA)
  - Sharon White (Global International Department Director)
- Project Members:
  - Cui Hua (CCCWAA)
  - Wang Ming (CCCWAA)
  - Ming Xiajin (CCCWAA?)
  - a representative from the Ministry of Civil Affairs - Social Welfare Department
  - a representative from the Ministry of Commerce

- a Global staff member
- a staff member of AGAPE

Analysis: Obviously, the Project leadership is stacked with MCA/CCCWAA insiders.

In one sense this is beneficial, in that the ability to accomplish change and secure buy-in is essentially guaranteed. A significant concern with the proposed structure is in regard to financial monitoring requirements and transparency in both financial and program reporting.

Second, the cooperation policy:

“We are primary, for our benefit”

Analysis: This phrasing represents the biggest potential source for misunderstanding.

Essentially, this is a very general comment that is open to a number of different interpretations:

1. At one extreme, this is a beneficial construction as it opens the project up to a number of potential iterations. Under this interpretation, it is possible and reasonable to view this as analogous to a client-centered focus, as in a clinical intervention. Under this interpretation, the client sets the goals and does the work with facilitation by the therapist/clinician. Of course, the analogy breaks down at the point when funding is considered – generally therapists don’t pay the client for the opportunity to provide therapy.
2. At the other extreme, this is China’s declaration that they are the “owner” of the

project and it is entirely up to them as to what will happen and the processes that will be used to carry out this project. Under this phrasing, it is entirely China's prerogative to terminate the project at any point. Considering that this project is focused on a number of highly sensitive issues in China, this is a very real interpretation.

3. The truth or intent behind including this phrase in this section probably involves both interpretations to some extent, and is probably related to the following concerns:
  - a. The MCA and CCCWAA recognize that they lack some critical expertise in a number of the technical components related to family- and community-based services, so they need to leave the door open to provide room for collaboration without any overt admission for the need for such assistance. It would seem that they are probably moving up their timeline to address the problem of orphaned and vulnerable children in China to coincide with the resources of this project.
  - b. This is a very vulnerable/insecure position for China to be in, and there is a tacit acknowledgement that by phrasing this generally, they are relying upon Global/World Learning/USAID to "fill in the blanks", and are opening themselves up (to some degree) to scrutiny, and so there is considerable anxiety about the potential for bad press or international criticism.

- c. This is intimately connected to China's criticism of the US in that China has voiced the opinion that the US is a "self-appointed policeman" that is over-concerned with other sovereign countries' internal affairs. In this sense, it is a very clear indication that they do not want the US to "tell them what to do"

Finally, we have requested additional information from MCA on this particular section, and, assuming that we get a substantive response, this should serve to indicate the degree of emphasis in regard to their intentions

Third, the welfare project pilot locations:

Because of the level of experience of the CWIs in Nanjing, Chengdu, Datong, these would serve as sites for project models. Additionally, we recommend Haerbin as a site to increase welfare in the pilot.

Analysis: These four sites, Nanjing, Datong, Chengdu, and Haerbin, represent leading cities in larger regions (the eastern coast, the central provinces, the Southwest, and the Northeast respectively). In effect, the proposed changes serve to effectively blanket the country with the project. The presumed motivation behind this would seem to be the accounting for as many diverse areas in the construction of a model of family- and community-based services as possible, while simultaneously providing regional coverage and support for roll-out sites.

Fourth, operational requirements and objectives of the project:



e. Project timeframe:

i. Three years

1. Years 1 and 2: to create models,
2. Year 3: to be promoted/expand models

f. Financial operations:

- i. The project office is responsible for management of project funds, including their distribution, allocation, auditing, etc.

g. Reporting:

- i. Three year project implementation master plans and annual plan will be developed by CCCWAA. Annual plan will be developed early in each year and progress reports will be provided at the end of the year.

Analysis: This project is essentially the first opportunity that the Ministry of Civil Affairs has had to work closely with an international partner on something as sensitive as child welfare/child protection. Given the simplicity of the proposed timeframe, financial structure, and reporting process, it would appear that the MCA's/CCCWAA's structure may not be easy to align with USAID's processes or standards. Some of the language related to finances in particular may indicate that the MCA, which is typically in the role of funding projects, is confusing the funder processes with the implementing partner processes. Consequently, this would seem to be an opportunity to bring the MCA up to speed on what this looks like with an international partner. The counter-balance to this opportunity is the amount of time and energy that would need to be

expended to accomplish this (and, doubtless, there would be substantial amounts of each required).

h. Project objectives:

- i. To improve and perfect the work of family-based care at the project sites, to summarize the experience of family foster care project sites in order to develop model to improve foster care services that is applicable to all foster care programs in different areas.
- ii. To explore and develop family-based child welfare service system in which family foster care service centers provide support and services to children with disabilities and children in need in the community and Child Welfare Institutes provide technical support.

Analysis: As with the initial section, these objectives denote substantial agreement with the SPANS-019 project objectives. Therefore, given the document as a whole, it would appear to indicate that we are all interested in accomplishing the same goals, but there are substantial differences in how to actual accomplish these goals.

Summary

Probable Advantages:

- Articulated agreement between MCA's goals and the goals of SPANS-019
- Our sources (including AGAPE) agree that establishing a partnership with China's government as implementing organization is the best way to secure sustainable change and policy impact; this is coupled with the opportunity to build a strong foundation for future collaborative social welfare projects between the governments of the US and China
- The proposed structure provides greater access to disparate areas that can provide significant contributions to the construction of universal model for family- and community-based services to orphaned and at-risk children in China
- Having the government as partner could conceivably provide significant advantages in terms of working with at-risk children and families in communities

Probable Disadvantages:

- Time – it will take more time to get the Program Leadership Group and the project sites “caught up” to the level of AGAPE and the previous project sites; 1/6 of the allotted project time has already elapsed, so the question of feasibility under the additional time constraints arises
- Scope – the project sites have been increased from three sites to four, two of which are new to the technical side of the project. There will need to be additional efforts made to identify and train counterparts in these communities (particularly so in

Haerbin, as MCA indicated that they needed to develop, but didn't necessarily have "maturity" in terms of foster care provision, for instance).

- The degree of transparency/accountability that would accompany the proposed structure (what the project would gain in reach could be lost in data) is a source of great concern. Additionally, it will take time to identify a financial and project structure agreeable to both MCA and USAID

Risks:

As has been mentioned previously, there is a dual expression of a desire to work with this project to redress some of the critical needs around orphaned and vulnerable children in China (and the tacit understanding that we have the technical information needed to accomplish this and they don't), while at the same time the need to save face in light of this "weakness" by stressing their own sovereignty (which is also certainly understandable). However, the risks associated with these positions are significant:

- If data generated by the project are perceived as either being threatening to the government or as a potential source of embarrassment, then it is entirely probable that this data will be either deleted or modified to alleviate these concerns. Any model that emerges from skewed data will itself be problematic.
- Because the MCA is not experienced in working with either international organizations or other governments directly, there is a significant learning curve involved with developing and running a project of this magnitude. There will also,

no doubt, be a series of ongoing negotiations that will probably occur even after “agreement” has been reached. These negotiations represent a probable set of confounding variables in the project.

- Related to this is the role confusion that MCA is evidently experiencing.

Not being the primary funder of the project (unless additional funds from MCA are negotiated and committed as part of this process), it would appear that they are unused to having to engage in the financial reporting and transparency that is required under USAID. Therefore,

- MCA will have to either agree to follow USAID’s requirements (which is somewhat doubtful), or
- USAID could modify the requirements in a way that is more palatable to China (and at the risk of not being able to fully account for the funds spent on the project – a very real risk), or
- MCA could designate a GO-NGO (“government owned NGO”) as being the intermediary agency in this process, and which could comply with USAID’s rules while allowing the MCA to save face by not having to open their books to a foreign government. Even an organization like AGAPE that has twenty years of experience in working with foreign governments experienced a significant learning curve in working with USAID processes, so it is not unreasonable to expect a “newer”

organization to require substantial time and training in order to restructure

- If either the process or the results of the project are perceived by MCA as being undesirable, then it would be expected that the project could be summarily terminated at any point in the process

Potential Benefits:

- Being able to work out an agreement with MCA/CCCWAA on how to implement this project could certainly be a strong foundation for future partnerships in China, and could serve as a model for intergovernmental engagement around social issues that are problematic in China but in which the international community has a vested interest
- As one of the stated goals in the SPANS-019 project is providing data to policy-makers in order to change policies for the benefit of orphaned and vulnerable children in China, then working directly with the MCA represents the best opportunity to accomplish this
- If successful, the scope of the impact of this project could far exceed that previously considered, including as it does regional “centers” for family- and community-based services for orphaned and vulnerable children that have the full weight and backing of China’s central government behind them
  - This would also serve to dramatically increase China’s timetable to address these issues, with the probable benefit of being able to assist in

**Agendas Interact: Project Negotiation**

The original Chinese document, the translation, and the translation with analysis were all provided to both USAID/DCOF and World Learning. Obviously, there were a number of concerns that would need to be discussed and addressed should USAID be interested in continuing the project. White and I were invited to meet with the USAID/DCOF staff in Washington, DC on April 19, 2011, where these details were discussed in full. Both White and I believed that this meeting was a crossroad for the project, and that without a cogent argument for the continued effort toward implementation, USAID/DCOF would in all probability end the project.

White and I met with the USAID/DCOF representatives, including Hernandez and Bronson, and processed the developments to date. A particular focus was the analysis of MCA's motivations in regard to wanting to be the implementing partner, and the gist of the discussion was related to the degree of actual (versus stated) buy-in that MCA had; in other words, did MCA really agree with the project and want to be the implementing partner so that they could directly absorb the "soft" child welfare technologies that the project represented, or was this more of a ploy to access program funds, whether or not the child welfare technologies were particularly desired? It was generally agreed that this would not be known until there was more behavioral evidence produced by further discussions, and that this was sufficient, combined with the potential benefits for OVC in China, to justify further discussions. After considerable discussion about the relative

merits and demerits of the situation to date, the decision was made for both USAID/DCOF and GCCSI to identify the elements of the project that were negotiable and non-negotiable relative to the proposal from MCA.

The process of GCCSI and USAID each identifying the negotiable and non-negotiable elements of the project were then undertaken, with USAID primarily identifying that they would not allow program funds to directly reimburse government workers, with the associated requirement of a US-style fiscal transparency process. GCCSI concurred with this, and identified the programmatic infrastructure that related to sufficient and sustainable community-based services and supports necessary for viable family-based placements of OVC with significant disabling conditions. USAID also advocated for a finite and agreed-upon timeline for implementation to begin, with which GCCSI whole heartedly agreed.

#### **Agendas Discussed: Virtual Meeting with Beijing**

Following the finalization of these issues, and with the directive to proceed from both USAID/DCOF and GCCSI, I set up a phone discussion intended to clarify GCCSI's and USAOD's position with the Government of China. The designated contact person for this discussion was Gao Jianzhing of the MCA, the same individual who chaired the February meeting in Beijing. Translation was provided by An Shan, a GCCSI International Services Coordinator and native speaker of Chinese. The following summary was prepared by me as a reporting mechanism to USAID/DCOF, and contains the interactions, analysis, and resultant questions:

**16 May 2011 Discussion with MCA**



## **Context**

The chain of events leading up to the 16 May discussion with Mr. Gao Xiansheng, Deputy Director of the Ministry of Civil Affairs' Social Welfare Department (MCA-SWD) began with the receipt of the MCA's "Cooperation on Projects with Global" proposal on 7 APR 2011. The Mandarin version of the proposal was forwarded to GCCSI by GCCSI's Beijing liaison, Tao Shi. This document was then translated by GCCSI International Service Coordinator, An Shan.

In addition to the proposal, Ms. Tao also provided the name and contact information for Mr. Bei Dafeng, an employee of the MCA-SWD, as a direct point of contact between GCCSI and the MCA (Mr. Bei reportedly is comfortable communicating in English) for issues related to the SPANS-019 project. The MCA's proposal generated a number of questions from US stakeholders, and a number of attempts to communicate with Mr. Bei were initiated by GCCSI, but no responses were received (please refer to Appendix A for the content and timeline of these e-mails).

However, on 9 May, GCCSI received an e-mail from Ms. Tao indicating that she had spoken with Mr. Bei, who was advocating for a direct conversation between his superior, Gao Xiansheng and GCCSI personnel in order to authoritatively address GCCSI's questions (*Note*: Mr. Gao chaired the meeting attended by GCCSI personnel to address SPANS-019 implementation in Beijing on 15 FEB). Ms. Tao worked to facilitate this conversation, and on 16 May, GCCSI personnel were notified that Mr. Gao would be available for discussion that evening (the following morning Beijing time). In preparation for this discussion, GCCSI received information from USAID regarding issues of

negotiation, including parameters that are able to be negotiated and those that are non-negotiable.

### **Conversation**

GCCSI Director, Sharon White was in transit to Hong Kong on 16 May, so could not directly participate. GCCSI staff members An Shan and Dennis Feaster participated in the discussion (with Ms. An providing translation) with Mr. Gao. GCCSI staff phoned Mr. Gao at the number that was provided previously by Ms. Tao. Ms. An made the requisite introductions, and after a brief discussion about the intent of the conversation, Mr. Gao indicated that he was open to answering questions that GCCSI had regarding the proposal from MCA. Mr. Feaster then began the discussion by pursuing the questions that were asked of Mr. Chen in the initial e-mail sent to him.

The first of these questions had to do with clarification of the phrase translated “We are primary, for our benefit” (以我为主、为我所用 - *Yi wo wéi zhu, wèi wo suoyòng*). Mr. Gao indicated that the MCA has numerous project/program opportunities, and that this phrase denotes the method that is used to prioritize these opportunities. By focusing on the projects that provide the best access to new technologies (including “soft” technologies), then this advances the MCA’s agenda, and so is considered a useful project.

The next set of questions from GCCSI included issues related to timeframe, scope, and budget. In particular, the issue of timeframe was stressed, given the fixed nature of the project start and end dates; it was made clear that from both GCCSI’s and

USAID's perspectives, the project was already underway, and that we are now seven months into a fixed three year project without implementation. Thus, timeframe, and the fact that what was an ambitious three year project is a potentially unfeasible 2.25 year project without additional resources from China were critical concerns to US stakeholders. Mr. Gao responded by indicating that we should be secure in China's ability to accomplish things very quickly once they are underway. The issue of location was also connected to the shrinking timeframe, specifically concerns related to expanding the project from three sites to four and doing so in less time and without additional resources. Mr. Gao indicated that he would discuss these issues with his team.

The next point of discussion was on issues related to reporting mechanisms; both project activities/outcomes reporting and financial reporting were introduced. Mr. Feaster indicated that GCCSI was responsible for meeting the reporting criteria established by USAID and delineated in GCCSI's Grant Agreement, and that any implementing partner would need to agree to these and be able to satisfy these requirements. Mr. Gao indicated that he would also discuss this with his team.

Finally, given the information that was provided by USAID via e-mail that denoted parameters that are able to be negotiated and those that are non-negotiable, the issue of funding going directly to the Government of China was addressed. It was indicated to Mr. Gao that while the MCA's interest in the project was very encouraging and that the chance to engage in a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas was also promising, USAID did indicate that "we cannot give money to the Government of China". Upon hearing this, Mr. Gao said, very quickly and directly, "Then it sounds like

we have no common ground.” A brief discussion of the context for why this funding requirement was necessary from the US stakeholder perspective ensued, to which Mr. Gao repeated his earlier statement about not having common ground, and after which the conversation was politely but swiftly wrapped up.

#### **GCCSI Debriefing/Discussion**

Immediately following the conversation, the GCCSI staff involved, Wanda Wang and Dennis Feaster, processed the discussion. During the course of this processing, it was indicated that Mr. Gao said, at the very end of the discussion when he reiterated not having any common ground “It sounds like you want to work with AGAPE, so we have no common ground.” It should be noted that GCCSI staff at no point mentioned AGAPE during this discussion, nor, indeed, any NGO. Although the conversation was over when this came up, and so could not be immediately explored with Mr. Gao, given this comment, it is possible that Mr. Gao was operating in a binary mode of thinking with regard to the project (e.g. *only* AGAPE, or *only* MCA as implementers). If so, then identifying non-binary options (e.g. a different NGO identified by MCA and acceptable to USAID and GCCSI) could be a way to navigate this. Whether or not MCA will identify this as a potential solution during their internal discussions remains to be seen (and could conceivably be an indication of the level of commitment to the project), but this could certainly be suggested in future discussions, should MCA still be willing to talk.

However, it still raises the question of the acceptable degree of funding that could go to the GOC, given the integrated nature of Central Government involvement with entities

potentially connected to this project. For instance, in the original project proposal, AGAPE would have provided some funds to municipal-level Child Welfare Institutes (CWIs) for training and funding deinstitutionalization/ foster care case management staff. This money would not have gone directly to the Central Government, but municipal CWIs fall squarely in the Central MCA-Provincial MCA-Municipal/Local MCA hierarchy. Therefore, questions for USAID and US stakeholders to address would be:

- At what level and to what extent would it be acceptable for funds to flow from USAID and World Learning, through Global, to the GOC?
- Is the acceptability of a particular degree of funding related to the functional relationship of the entity being funded as well as to the funds themselves?
  - Although the CWIs mentioned above were to have received funds for providing one part of a subset of implementation activities as overseen by AGAPE, is this fundamentally different than a GOC entity replacing AGAPE, and having all implementation funds flow through it and on to other entities, some GO and some NGO, for implementation activities?

### **Agendas Interact: Project Negotiation, Continued**

Following this discussion and its reporting, USAID undertook an internal review of other USAID projects that were implemented in China (by other departments within USAID) to determine whether or not there was precedent for funds flowing to some level of government to reimburse project expenses/costs. It turns out that there was, in particular through an HIV/AIDS related community outreach project that was designed to

reimburse the analogous levels of government as the CWIs and their provincial and municipal structures. Given this, USAID/DCOF revised its assessment of what was allowable and permitted GCCSI to re-open negotiations with MCA, with the stipulation that although funds could flow to the CWIs and associated provincial /municipal structures, none would go to reimburse Central Government level workers at either MCA-SWD or CCCWA. Along with this was the stipulation that the Chinese implementing body would need to be willing to function as any other USAID sub-grantee, and must be willing to accept and abide by all flow-down provisions included in both GCCSI's Grant Agreement and any associated Sub-Grant Agreement (essentially functioning under the same requirements as AGAPE). Finally, USAID/DCOF, in consultation with GCCS/GCCSI identified the following timeline necessary to continue the program: a signed agreement between the Government of China and GCCSI had to be obtained by August 1, 2011 and implementation had to begin by September 1, 2011. Ed Hernandez, Director of USAID/DCOF sent a letter to this effect to the USAID representative at the US Embassy in Beijing for translation and communication to MCA-SWD and CCCWA.

The return to negotiations was ably facilitated by GCCSI's President/CEO, Frank Goldsmith, who again travelled to Beijing at the end of June, 2011 to meet with Wang Da (MCA-SWD) and Ma Lu (CCCWA) following their receipt of the communication from USAID. The result of Goldsmith's trip and discussion was, to my immense surprise, a verbal agreement to these terms by MCA-SWD and CCCWA. MCA-SWD indicated that the implementing partner would be CCCWA (under the authority and supervision of

MCA-SWD), and an MCA-SWD staffer, Bei Dafeng, who could ably communicate in English was appointed to be the liaison between MCA-SWD, CCCWA, and GCCSI.

As the primary GCCSI worker tasked with the SPANS-019 project, I was tasked with the subsequent communications with Bei to get to the point of having a signed agreement by August 1, 2011. Although it was agreed by all parties that the project would be endorsed and supported for implementation, actually getting to the point of having a binding agreement that translated into project work was another thing altogether. Specifically, communicating the highly pre-/proscriptive sub-grant agreement requirements to CCCWA and working to set up the internal systems to execute these requirements was daunting. I constructed several abbreviated and direct documents communicating USAID's requirements as well as the timeframe and activities associated with implementing SPANS-019, and sent these to Bei, who provided them to his people at CCCWA.

Although this process was largely anticlimactic, we were still working through the necessary details into late July, with the August 1 USAID/DCOF-created deadline for having a signed agreement looming ever closer. With a final flurry of activity, the signed agreement was secured and was presented to USAID on August 1, 2011, thus meeting the first and more significant deadline. With the receipt of this agreement being taken as evidence of at least a modicum of agreement in the confluence of sociocultural agendas under examination, I ceased collecting data, and moved to wrap up my data collection and analysis process.

### **Summary of Nested Case Study**

I trust that it is evident from the above narrative that this was a very complex set of interactions by many different people and organizations, all with their own set of agendas as to what it means to work for the “best interests” of OVC in China. In the final chapter I attempt to reconnect the events discussed previously to my initial research questions.



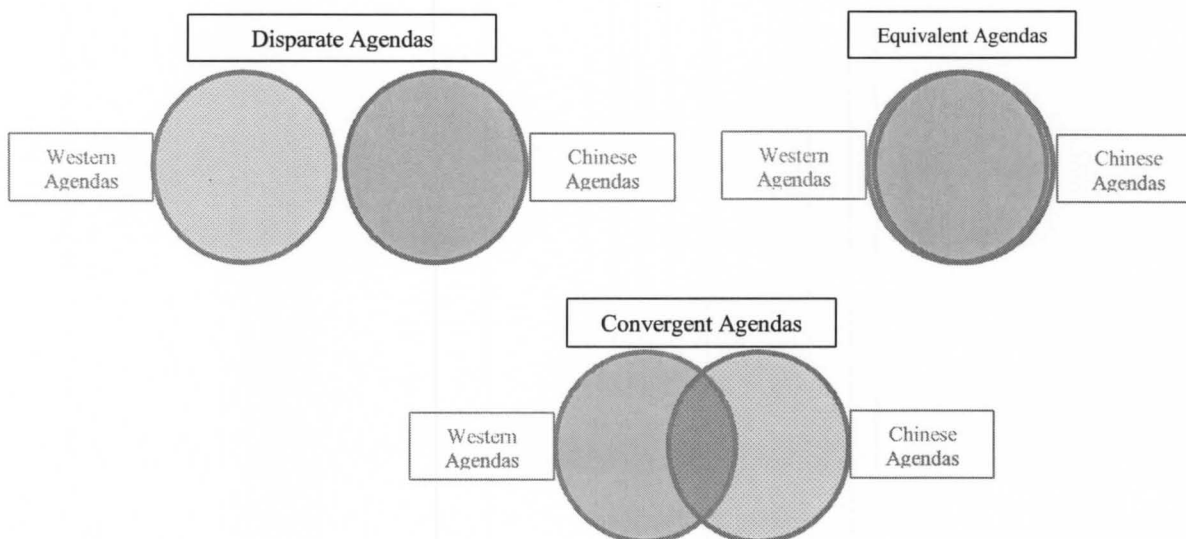
## **CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Restatement of Presuppositions and Diagrams**

In Chapter Three, I identified the following research questions, which I have attempted to answer throughout my investigation:

- Do China and the West have different sociocultural agendas regarding orphaned children in China?
- If so, what are they and how do they interact?

In my initial set of research and experiences with the care of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in both China and the US, I identified the following presuppositions about the way that sociocultural agendas would interact around the care of OVC in China:



*Figure 7.* Restatement of hypothetical interactions of sociocultural agendas around OVC care in China.

### **Review of Context and Presuppositions**

I initially expected to find competing Chinese and Western agendas around the care of OVC in China. While I did find competing agendas in China, these were not in the initial categories that I expected to find. Before discussing this, though, it may be helpful to present a recap of the historical and political context of orphan care in modern China.

Remember, while orphaned and abandoned children have always been present in Chinese culture (and indeed in all cultures), it was not until the inception of China's population control policy (The One Child Policy) that the present and historically anomalous orphan population came into existence in China, consisting of a very large number of children: typically developing females and males and females with disabilities.

Historically, China's *de facto* methods for addressing both female children and children with disabilities were handled via the family and local structures, utilizing strategies of perinatal mortality, kinship care, indenture, and arranged marriages to address the phenomenon. The relatively small remainder of typically developing orphaned children would then have been provided for by religious institutions (both Chinese and Western), craftsmen, or becoming what we would call "street children" and being at considerable risk for abuse and exploitation. In preceding eras, due to the disabling condition or to more intentional acts, children with more significant disabilities typically did not survive. Again, none of these outcomes for OVC are unique to China, being equally present in Europe, other parts of Asia, and Africa, as well.

With the implementation of China's One Child Policy in 1979, however, there was suddenly a massive effort that unintentionally resulted in, as far as we can tell, huge numbers of "orphaned" children needing care. Again, as far as can be told, the vast majority of these children are not "true orphans/double orphans" (i.e. children who have two deceased parents), or even "single orphans" (i.e. children who have one deceased parent); instead, these children have largely been strategically abandoned by their parents, often in locations far from their places-of-origin. With China's historical emphasis on producing a male heir to carry on family lineage, many in this first wave of children entering state-run orphan care were typically developing females, abandoned because their parents would incur significant penalties for having subsequent children as the couple tried for a male heir. By the mid-1980s, the Central Government needed to

find a way to care for this vast number of newly abandoned children, as the existing orphan care infrastructure was quickly overwhelmed.

### **Traditional-Western Agendas and OVC Care**

This set the stage for the *expanded* Child Welfare Institute (CWI) system to emerge. These were modifications of the Child Care Centers and the Social Welfare Institutes (SWIs) that existed to provide for the elderly or disabled (especially adults with acquired disabilities) who had no other support that have been in existence in China since the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, the adoption of a system of large institutional state-run orphanages represents the adoption of a strategy that had been used widely by Eastern European governments throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This system represented a newer permutation of the long tradition of institutional orphan care in the West, which has been a mainstay of Western OVC care since at least the First Century CE (McKenna, 1911). In the US, this form of orphan care ceased to be a widespread form of OVC care by the 1960s (although it was still widely used as a means of caring for persons with significant developmental disabilities and/or cognitive impairments through the 1990s).

One of the last children to grow up in this system in the US is R. B. Mitchell, who arrived at the Covenant Children's Home in Princeton, Illinois in January, 1958 at the age of three; Mitchell lived in this orphanage for the next 14 years, and describes his experience in his book, *Castaway Kid* (2007):

Eight to sixteen boys under age ten lived in our Little Boys unit... There was nothing private about our bathroom. There were two of everything, and everything was white – white-painted wooden stalls for the white toilets, white

ceramic tiled floor, white cast-iron tubs, and white sinks low to the floor for easy reaching. We had a large living room with industrial –strength carpet, two long, heavy-duty couches, a couple of rugged chairs, and a pair of large tables for homework, drawing, and games... In our four bedrooms, black cast-iron single beds sat on black linoleum floors. One room had three beds, one five; the other two had four. An oak chest with several drawers completed each room. Every kid had a drawer he called his own, assigned according to height... Since kids frequently came and went, there was little time to make friends... Kids often arrived angry, confused, and frustrated. It didn't help to be part of a crowd. We lived with many others, but each of us felt alone. The staff tried to deal with our wide range of backgrounds and emotions. To help keep order, strict rules were enforced and a regular daily routine was followed (pgs. 12 – 13).

I contend that the adoption of the institutional model of OVC care in the 1980s by China represents the adoption of a set of Western sociocultural agendas for orphan care, primarily focused on the most efficient means of providing the most basic *material* necessities to sustain the lives of children. I will label this reliance on institutions as proxy caregiving entities for OVC as the “Traditional Western” OVC model, and manifesting traditional Western sociocultural agendas around OVC.

### **Evidence of Traditional-Western Agendas in China OVC care**

Beyond the fact that large Child Welfare Institutes (CWIs) are present in all parts of China, and are heavily utilized across the countries, a number of exchanges with

representatives of the Government of China during the course of my Nested Case Study data collection represent the sociocultural agendas surrounding this OVC care modality.

At several points of the broader discussion surrounding the USAID-funded Family- and Community-Based Child Welfare project (SPANS-019), representatives of the Government of China voiced their support of and commitment to “the best interests of the children.” This language was similar to that used by GCCS/GCCSI, AGAPE, USAID, and even the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, so it would seem that substantive agreement exists. However, when defining the best interests of children, it is clear that there is a very different focus:

The Ministry of Civil Affairs said yesterday more welfare institutions for orphans will be built in the next five years. Dou Yupei, vice-minister of Civil Affairs, said the ministry would allocate 200 million yuan (US\$25 million) annually between now and 2010 to build welfare institutions in each prefecture-level city across the country. *The institutions will have multiple functions, such as better care, education and rehabilitation*, Dou said at a donation ceremony yesterday....The plan, called the "Blue Sky Plan," means orphans will live under the same blue sky as normal children. This was advocated by President Hu Jintao during a visit to a children's welfare institution on June 1. "China is still a developing country with limited government funding for welfare," Dou said. "We are very grateful for the donations and support from home and other countries and hope more warm-hearted organizations and individuals will join our cause in the welfare of

children." (*China Daily* December 29, 2006, from  
<http://www.china.org.cn/english/China/194282.htm>)

This "Blue Sky Plan" has been the primary focus of China's changes to its orphan care system in the wake of the 1996 Human Rights Watch report. The primary focus of the Blue Sky Plan is essentially building bigger, cleaner, better staffed, run and furnished orphan care institutions around the country. A number of Chinese and Western groups and individuals have partnered with China in implementing and supporting this plan.

One of the reasons that this orphan care system arguably remains so attractive for the Government of China is because of China's use of the CWI system as the means for children to enter the intercountry adoption (ICA) system. Many of the children currently in CWIs who are deemed to have "minor or correctable" disabilities are identified as being potential candidates for ICA. There is significant investment in this system as there are a number of incentives for the GOC to promote this, including direct revenue for the CWIs, utilization of hotels, transportation, restaurants, and tourist attraction by internationally adopting families, and the lessening of the number of children for which China's OVC system needs to provide. One such discussion with a very high level governmental official by GCCS/GCCSI staff is as follows:

Tao received a phone call from Ma, the Director-General of CCCWA on the evening of 16 FEB 2011. Tao indicated that Ma was upset and agitated when he called her. He expressed "strong emotions" about GCCSI's involvement with "the foster care project", apparently believing that this would detract from GCCSI's commitment to and involvement with

intercountry adoptions (ICA) in China. Tao was able to discuss the (SPANS-019) project with Ma, who indicated that he had not yet read the project material. During this discussion, Tao was able to provide more specific information, including the relationship between the SPANS-019 project *and the generally positive effect that it was believed that this project would have on intercountry adoption* in China (as described in the summary above). Ma reportedly calmed by the end of the conversation, but was still “concerned” about the project (from reporting of incident by GCCS staff to Feaster, 17 February 2011)

The official whose concerns were expressed in this conversation was not present at a meeting held the following day, but one of his Deputy Directors, Yuen Meili, was:

Yuen made it clear that she had not yet read any of the project documents, but did have some initial concerns, including: children in foster care being able to access CWI medical and rehabilitation, *the role of adoption with regard to the project*, issues with the locations that have identified for the project, and the role of the AGAPE in the project. Ms. Yuen stated that she would read the project in greater detail and would provide additional substantive comment the following week (from recording of meeting with Chinese officials and GCCSI staff, including Feaster, on 17 February 2011).

The sociocultural agendas associated with the Traditional-Western model of OVC Care are focused on providing the best material care and support of OVC in as efficient a



method as possible, and that this represents the content of the expression “the best interests of children” for those who hold this perspective. The Blue Sky Plan represents the expression of this set of sociocultural agendas in action, intending to provide expanded and improved institutionally based OVC care through better funded and equipped CWIs. It is important to bear in mind that adoption also has a role in the Traditional-Western model, and that this model exists to provide care until adoption occurs, or in the event that it does not. In China, not all children are identified as being “adoptable” (e.g. children with more significant disabilities), so for these children and for “adoptable” children that are not adopted, then Traditional-Western OVC care is operant until these children age out of the system, or transfer to the Social Welfare Institute (SWI) system in the case of persons with significant disabilities who age out of the CWI.

### **Progressive/Universalist Agendas and OVC Care**

However, since at least the late 1950s in the West, there has been a counter-narrative emerging, representing a set of competing sociocultural agendas about children and childhood generally and about OVC especially. This competing set of sociocultural agendas has been supplanting the more traditional Western OVC care agendas in many countries, and has been widely adopted in the US and a majority of Western European countries, and is being adopted to some degree by many other countries around the world. This narrative and its associated sociocultural agendas are rooted in the Universalist perspective espoused by a number of organizations, but principally by the United Nations and its subsidiaries, including UNICEF. These Universalist principles (which are here taken as explicit statements of associated sociocultural agendas) address the issue of

children generally and OVC and/or children with disabilities particularly in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), which include the following (from <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>):

From Preamble (emphasis added):

- Recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,
- *Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children*, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,
- *Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,*

Article 20 (emphasis added)

1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.
2. States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative

care for such a child.

3. Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or **if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children**. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

**Article 23**(emphasis added):

1. States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.
2. States Parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate to the child's condition and to the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child.
3. Recognizing the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or others caring for the child, ***and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving***

***the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development***

4. States Parties shall promote, in the spirit of international cooperation, the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children, including dissemination of and access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services, with the aim of enabling States Parties to improve their capabilities and skills

I contend that the focus of these statements is upon the recognition of the primacy of family- and community-based care for all children, and allow for the existence of institutionally based care as an approach of last resort. These statements represent a greater appreciation (presumably as a result of better understanding) of the nonmaterial necessities that coexist with material necessities required to sustain the lives of children, as espoused by what I will call the Progressive/Universalist Model of OVC care. These nonmaterial necessities include the psychosocial phenomena of bonding, attachment, and security, particularly as these relate to young children, both typically developing and for those children who have disabilities, and that this represents the content of the expression “the best interests of children” for those who hold this perspective.

Before I begin to enumerate the evidence for this set of sociocultural agendas, I think that it is important to point out that, to some extent, the Government of China has chosen to demonstrate at least a superficial (and possibly deeper) level of agreement with

the Progressive/Universalist perspective. Despite its systematic reliance upon massive CWIs to provide care for OVC, China was the first signatory to the UNCRC, a fact that both White and Liu make it a point to use to introduce their *Every Child Deserves a Family* trainings every year for the last 10 years in China (evidence arising from my own research is discussed below). Thus, there is at least some evidence of what appear to be conflicting sociocultural agendas within the Government of China when it comes to OVC care.

### **Evidence of Progressive/Universalist Agendas in China OVC care**

**USAID/DCOF.** The events leading up to the second phase of my research began with the issuance of a Request for Application (RFA) on January 8, 2010 by USAID for Displaced Children's and Orphans Fund (DCOF) programs. In this RFA, USAID/DCOF identifies itself as follows:

Since its inception in 1989, USAID's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) has provided financial and technical assistance to improve the well-being of especially vulnerable children and youth (defined as under age 18), through direct interventions with beneficiaries as well as through strengthening human and institutional capacities at the family, community, and national levels. DCOF attempts to ensure that all funded activities build upon and contribute to the knowledge base of evidence concerning the most appropriate practices for ensuring appropriate care, protection and development of children (pg. 4).

In its discussion of the goals for any program that would be funded by USAID/DCOF in this process, this RFA denotes "measurably improve the safety, well-

being, and development of highly vulnerable children” as the primary program goal, and identifies “strengthening the system of child protection” as being one of the two primary strategies for accomplishing this goal (SPANS/GSM RFA #5, pg. 5), and included the following in its discussion of this strategy (emphasis added):

Assisting governments and civil society actors *to strengthen and support family-based care is a key aim...* Strengthening systems of child protection can be achieved through a variety of means such as *improving family and community capacity to protect and care for vulnerable children*; increase children’s capacities to better meet their own physical and developmental needs; build the capacity of governmental and non-governmental actors and improve coordination and collaboration among child protection actors, including, as appropriate, US Government actors.

***DCOF Priorities.***

- *Enabling children to grow up in a family and community;*
- Keeping children in school or helping those out of school to return;
- Preventing recruitment of children into military or other armed groups (e.g. by providing constructive alternatives, such as education, training, or economic opportunities);
- Preventing and addressing exploitation or abuse of children;
- *Strengthening the capacities of families, communities, and governments to provide appropriate care and protection of their children.*

**Activities and Programs Excluded** (excerpted from pg. 8, emphasis added)

Applications for the following activities **will not be** considered for funding under this RFA:

- *Institutional care (orphanages), except as it relates to deinstitutionalization;*

These themes ran through all of GCCSI's and my interactions with USAID/DCOF and its proxy organization World Learning. Thus, I contend that the inception of the FCBCW program that GCCSI and AGAPE constructed and presented to USAID was fundamentally conceived and expressed (and ultimately funded) as part of this larger set of Progressive/Universalist orphan care agendas. Obviously, there were also a set of more political agendas that were also at play, particularly as regards USAID's emphasis on civil society, and no doubt the fact that OVC care represented a particularly palatable context to work in China to this end also played a role.

**GCCSI/White and AGAPE/Liu**

To say that GCCSI and White hold deeply to the set of Progressive/Universalist ideals and their corresponding sociocultural agendas is a radical understatement. The corporate vision statement of GCCS (GCCSI's parent company) is: *GCCS envisions a world where every child has a loving family.* GCCSI's and White's motivations relate to seeing this vision come to pass. At White's behest, I drafted the following Position Paper describing GCCSI's view of congregate/institutional orphan care, and this represents the single most coherent statement about the Traditional-Western model of OVC care:

### **GCCSI and Congregate Orphan Care**

Global Christian Children's Services and Global Christian Children's Services International (GCCSI) are widely recognized for our work on domestic and intercountry adoption. As our adoption practice has improved over the last six decades, GCCSI has come to view intercountry adoption as being only one component on a broader "Continuum of Care". This continuum includes family support, community development, temporary care, as well as adoption.

As part of our efforts in providing continuum of care services, our focus is on working with individuals, families, and communities in order to prevent children from entering orphan care in the first place (this is the primary focus of GCCSI's Continuum of Care activities). In accordance with international standards, like the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we believe that every effort needs to be made to allow a child to remain connected to their biological family, community, language, and culture, and work in countries to achieve this whenever possible (and safe). We believe that adoption, particularly intercountry adoption, is a serious intervention which is sometimes the only way in which a child can have a permanent, loving family.

The subject of orphan care is central to this discussion. While GCCSI has worked directly with orphanages in the past, we have made the decision to focus on providing family- and community-based care for orphaned children, as the outcome data for these children is compelling:

Families and family-based care are imperfect, but on the whole they are better



than the alternatives. Any type of care, family-based or residential, can be implemented badly and damage children. It is clear, though, that the available literature in child development indicates that families have better potential to enable children to establish the attachments and other opportunities for individual development and social connectedness than does any form of group residential care. Well-implemented family-based care is preferable to well-implemented residential care. (Williamson and Greenberg, 2010)

We know that congregate orphan care, which includes both institutional care and group homes with paid staff in the role of primary caregiver, is the only option in some areas, but changing this is part of the broader systems-level interventions that we are committed to providing. This is also true in terms of sponsorship, in that we are focusing on using sponsorship funds to help to move children out of congregate orphan care and into family-based care (this includes recruiting and training families and monitoring children in care, as well as improving organizational capacity necessary for serving these children). This is expressed in GCCSI's partnership priorities as follows:

**Priority #2: Programs and services that meet internationally accepted conventions and standards of best practice:**

Current research and standards hold that institutional/residential care is a program of "last resort." GCCSI will work with partners who are presently operating or supporting residential care facilities to gradually transfer Global funding to community-based services.

References:

Williamson, J. and Greenberg, A, (2010). Families, Not Orphanages. *Better Care Network Working Paper*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.crin.org/docs/Families%20Not%20Orphanages.pdf> on 5 OCT 2010

The entire conceptualization of the project that was constructed in response to USAID/DCOF's RFA is a programmatic expression of these Progressive/Universalist sociocultural agendas. In the Technical Proposal document (pgs. 6 – 7), GCCSI and its initial implementing partner, AGAPE, identified the following problems to be addressed by this project:

Two challenges are central within the existing child protection system in China: the overwhelmingly large number of children living in the institutions (the majority being female and disabled), and the fact that currently the only viable option for vulnerable children in China is institutionalization... The second problem is directly tied to the first in that the only service for the vast numbers of orphans and vulnerable children currently is institutionalization. There is ample evidence to suggest that the effects of institutional care on children can be devastating. Numerous studies of children in institutional care have identified deficits across all areas of development, including cognitive and social-emotional functioning, as well as overall health. Indeed, as Vorria, et al. (1998) point out, even when children are served in very "good" institutional care settings, and do not exhibit many of the cognitive delays that are associated with poor institutional

care, these children still exhibit significant deficits in terms of their social relationships. Many of these deficits are thought to be related to distorted attachment to a primary caregiver, which, for a variety of reasons such as staff turn-over, large child-to-caregiver ratios, etc., are common in institutional care settings (Ellis, Fisher, and Zaharie, 2004; Smyke, Dumitrescu, and Zeanah, 2002). The results of distorted attachment appear in global deficits and long-term difficulties in forming meaningful and satisfying relationships throughout life, including long after these children have left care (Tharp-Taylor, 2003). While data related to the long- and short-term effects of institutional care of children in China specifically is hard to come by, the evidence that does exist suggests that the factors that have been identified in previous studies in other countries are at play in China (Edwards, et al., 2007). Indeed, Hu and Szente (2009) paint a poignant picture of the plight of many of China's orphaned children with disabilities who live their lives in institutional care:

“Orphan children with disabilities are much less likely to develop the basic skills necessary for self-reliance. Jia (2007) reported that many orphan children cannot attend schools due to their disabilities, and are not even allowed to play outside the institution due to safety concerns. Without specialized care, education, and exposure to the real world, these children are likely to suffer from learned helplessness. This condition of being dependent upon others for routine decision-making on a daily basis largely diminishes their quality of life. The

consequences for such lifelong confinement in institutions due their physical and/or cognitive limitations are far beyond feelings of loneliness and anxiety; in many cases people also suffer from mental illness” (pp. 82 – 83).

In response to these identified problems, the FCBCW project constructed by GCCSI and AGAPE was designed to provide the following, as delineated in the Technical Proposal (pg 6):

Services will assume that all children in institutions have some level of special needs, either because they entered with a disability or due to the impact of their institutionalization and living without the protection of a family. Broadly speaking, the needs of children with disabilities are integrated into the services and activities and the plan for facilitating the social reintegration of children with disabilities is to normalize their experiences as much as possible by placing them in families that are connected to their communities and to provide social services to assist their families in caring for them. This support will take the form of community-based rehabilitation centers, support groups for parents, inclusive education, and awareness-raising in the communities... The lives of the children will be directly changed through systematic de-institutionalization and the development of models of family- and community-based child protection services, including family reintegration, independent living services, community

foster care and domestic adoption. The project will impact systems change by building the capacity of local Civil Affairs officials to develop and maintain a continuum of community resources and services that supports children in families and discourages institutionalization.

For all intents and purposes, AGAPE's and Liu's agendas match that of GCCSI's. GCCSI was the face of the program in the US and AGAPE was the face of the program in China (at least initially). While there was some subsequent discussion about some of the mechanics of implementing USAID's "rigorous" sub-grant agreement requirements, both GCCSI and AGAPE were united in terms of the vision and values of the project and were so intertwined in terms of the shared sociocultural agendas as to be indistinguishable (AGAPE provided the initial means of contextualization of the shared Progressive/Universalist agendas). The relationship between GCCSI and AGAPE was one of particular interest to USAID/DCOF and World Learning during the initial vetting process, as expressed in the questions from USAID/DCOF-WL to GCCSI/AGAPE that were presented in Chapter Four. For its part, the Government of China made a very clear distinction between GCCSI and AGAPE, despite the shared set of agendas. GCCSI was a known (and trusted) quantity with whom the Central Government (MCA and CCCWA) had worked closely on the sensitive issue of OVC over the years; AGAPE was neither known nor trusted, especially because this Chinese organization and its leaders had such a "non-Chinese" view or approach. GCCSI had good *guanxi* with the central government; AGAPE did not. As such, I believe that AGAPE was viewed as a barrier to Central

Governmental influence in the project while GCCSI was viewed as an opportunity for the Central Government to access both the knowledge and the “soft technology” represented by the project (diagrams from the GCCSI/AGAPE Technical Proposal):

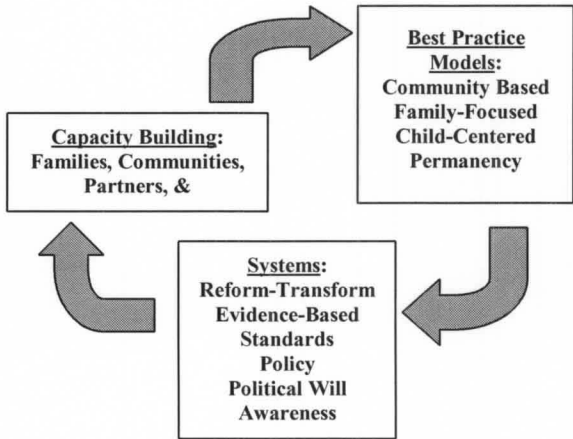


Figure 8. FCBCW Interactive Cycle.

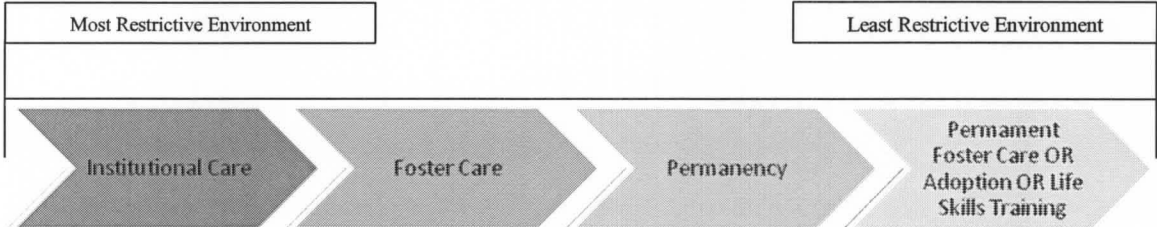


Figure 9. Continuum of FCBCW Services.

**MCA and CCCWA**

Finally, there was additional evidence of at least some openness to Progressive/Universalist OVC agendas that emerged from the Central Government’s counter-proposal document as presented in March, 2010 (emphasis added):

### Cooperation on Projects with Global

(From page 1): Global is an international charity agency that works with foster care and adoption, and is well known in the US. This organization (*i.e. Global*) is applying to partner with our Department (*i.e. Ministry of Civil Affairs Social Welfare Department*) to cooperate on family foster care services, the main focus of which are as follows:

- to follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, for the best interests of the child, so that more children living in welfare institutions can move into loving families as soon as possible,
- to disseminate concepts of child welfare from Child Welfare Institutes to the community
- to integrate community resources by establishing child welfare community centers to provide professional services and support to foster families, and to provide assistance and protection for families of children who are at-risk to prevent abandonment of children

(from page 4) - Project objectives:

- To improve and perfect the work of family-based care at the project sites, to summarize the experience of family foster care project sites in order to develop model to improve foster care services that is applicable to all foster care programs in different areas.
- To explore and develop family-based child welfare service system in which family foster care service centers provide support and services to children

with disabilities and children in need in the community and Child Welfare  
Institutes provide technical support.

These agendas that seem to correspond to the Progressive/Universalist set of OVC care agendas were articulated by the very same organization that served as the “architect” of the aforementioned “Blue Sky Plan” that was and is spending millions of dollars on building more, bigger, and better CWIs. White identified and repeatedly articulated that “we are at a crossroads in China where the lives of millions of children are at stake; if we are able to do this project, it could save millions of lives.”

I remain uncertain as to the essence of this articulation of (seemingly) contradictory agendas. Either the Central Government is unified in its approach and is committed to one set of agendas and not the other (and sees this dual articulation as a means of obfuscation and “spin doctoring” that will actually allow the real but hidden goal to be pursued with less resistance), or the Central Government really does have conflicting factions that are “fighting it out” in terms of policy construction, to see which agenda will ultimately carry the day. It’s also possible that one OVC agenda (i.e. the Traditional-Western) represents immediate goals (e.g. reducing competition for scarce resources, adopting out the care of children, and “improving population quality”) and the other (i.e. Progressive/ Universalist) represents the more preferred set of long term goals (e.g. having an internationally accepted model of OVC care that is at least as humanistic as many Western countries). This last was the primary assumption that I adopted as being



the most optimistic in regard to the ultimate success of this project in China, should it ever actually come to pass.

**Do China and the West have different sociocultural agendas regarding orphaned children in China? If so...**

**...What are they?**

Thus, the answer to this question is to some extent, yes, there are differing sociocultural agendas that are associated with OVC in China. However, the difference is not so much a set of Chinese agendas versus a set of Western agendas, as China has already adopted the Traditional-Western approach to OVC care; in other words, Traditional-Western OVC care agendas have become the default Chinese OVC care agendas.

The difference in OVC care agendas in China is related to the Traditional-Western institutional approach to OVC care versus the Progressive/Universalist family- and community-based approach to OVC care that has characterized the latter third of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the West and in many other parts of the world as well. While there is still some degree of disconnection between the phenomenon of OVC in China as social fact versus social problem, I encountered significantly more emphasis on modality of orphan care in China as social problem, as constructed in the phrase “in the best interest of children”:

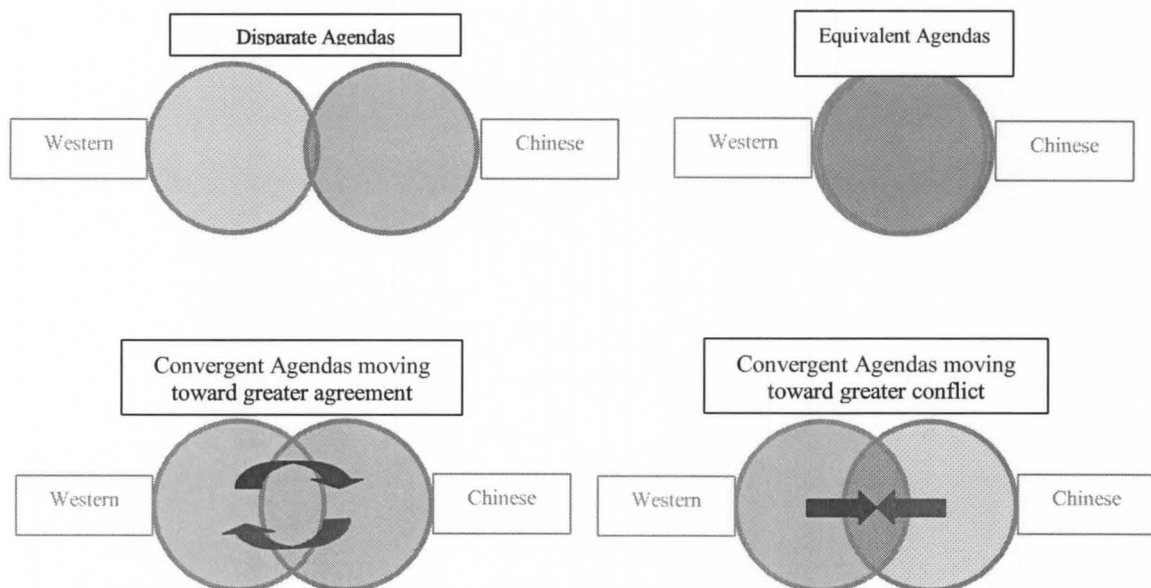
- Proponents of the Traditional-Western sociocultural agendas were concerned that by removing OVC from the CWIs would also remove them

from the vital support services (e.g. medical, habilitation, physical safety) that were needed for at least material survival.

- Proponents of the Progressive/Universalist sociocultural agendas were concerned that children who do not grow up in a family setting would never experience the vital nonmaterial supports (e.g. attachment, bonding, identity) that are needed for material survival and human thriving.

**... And how do they interact?**

The categories that I identified as presuppositions prior to my research were useful, but simplistic. To some extent, I find that all of these interaction models were present in my observations of sociocultural agendas and OVC care in China, albeit in different constellations. In order to account for my observations, I had to add dimensions to the model:



*Figure 10.* Reconstructed hypothetical interactions of sociocultural agendas around OVC care in China.

*Disparate Agendas.* The Western “social problem” construction is disconnected from China’s “social fact” narrative. Both recognize the existence of the phenomenon of orphaned children, but that is the extent of the overlap in constructions. In China, I have encountered four broad perspectives with regard to the phenomenon of OVC in China:

- The first group has little or no understanding or perception of the phenomenon of OVC (this group knows OVC exists to some extent, somewhere, but has little direct exposure to the issue – thus, this group has an “abstract” social fact construction. I would argue that most of the general Chinese population falls into this category;
- The second group has much more experience and/or knowledge of the phenomenon of OVC, but also espouses more of a “social fact” approach. Many of those employed in OVC care through CWIs or their associated local political or governmental structures (e.g. local/municipal MCA, etc.) may fall into this category, as well as at least some of those families who have relinquished custody of their children to China’s orphan care system.
- The third group seems to have more of a binary view, understanding both the predominant Chinese construction of OVC as social fact AND the Western counter narrative of social problem. For those in this category, primarily higher level provincial authorities as well as central government workers, much of their work appears to be associated with managing these constructions both internally and externally. This group represents one variant of Patton’s Cosmopolitans.

- The fourth group consists of those who have more experience and/or knowledge of the orphan care phenomenon. And who have adopted the OVC as social problem construction. Most of those whom I have encountered who hold this view are Chinese who have either spent a great deal of time in the West or who have adopted other foreign agendas (such as Existentialist agendas related to Christianity, for instance).
- Finally, I have encountered anecdotal evidence of local Chinese who have spent a great deal of time, energy, and resources taking in and caring for OVC, including OVC with significant disabilities. I have no way of knowing whether those who compose this group have Chinese or Western Existentialist agendas, or hold with either the social fact versus social problem construction, therefore, this group remains unknown.

*Equivalent Agendas.* There are essentially no differences in sociocultural agendas with regard to orphaned children in China. Both cultures agree in terms of care provision for these children. This can be seen in China's adoption of Traditional-Western sociocultural agendas where the focus is on the efficient provision of material needs of children within resource constraints.

*Convergent Agendas.* Both China and the West have definite sociocultural agendas with regard to orphaned children in China. Although both cultures agree in terms of providing care for these children (safety, food, shelter, etc.), there are differences in referential bases for doing so (i.e. differences in philosophy represent differences in motivation which lead to differences in outcome expectations), and these bases represent

sociocultural agendas. Additionally, it may be that for some orphaned children (e.g. typically developing children), these agendas more closely correlate, and while for others (e.g. children with developmental disabilities) there may be considerably less correlation; can be associated with some existential agendas (i.e. people with disabilities equally valued and have equal importance, even though have reduced capacity for material contribution to group). While I observed convergence, in my initial presuppositions, I did not account for the degree to which this convergence occurred via agreement or conflict:

- **Convergent moving toward greater agreement**

Evidence of the increasing adoption of FCBCW in small scale in many parts of China denotes convergent moving toward greater agreement with Progressive/Universalist agendas in China, the West, and elsewhere. This also seems to be correlated to some degree with more emergence of civil society associated with this as families and advocacy groups organize to provide the community-based resources necessary to support OVC (especially children with significant disabilities) in families.

- **Convergent moving toward greater conflict**

Convergent agendas are at play when considering the Progressive/Universalist versus Western-Traditional constructions, resulting in greater conflict when asserting the “best interests of children”. Additionally, sociocultural agendas are a factor in terms of the political liability associated with the number and type of children in care, e.g. China wants to mitigate liability and save face, West wants

to (potentially) exploit liability and gain an opportunity to make the case for more democratic processes and transparency, also resulting in greater conflict.

### Reconnection to Theories from Chapter Two

I argue that the interaction dynamic related to the interplay of the theories associated with sociocultural agendas that I hypothesized at the end of Chapter Two should be viewed at two different points in time:

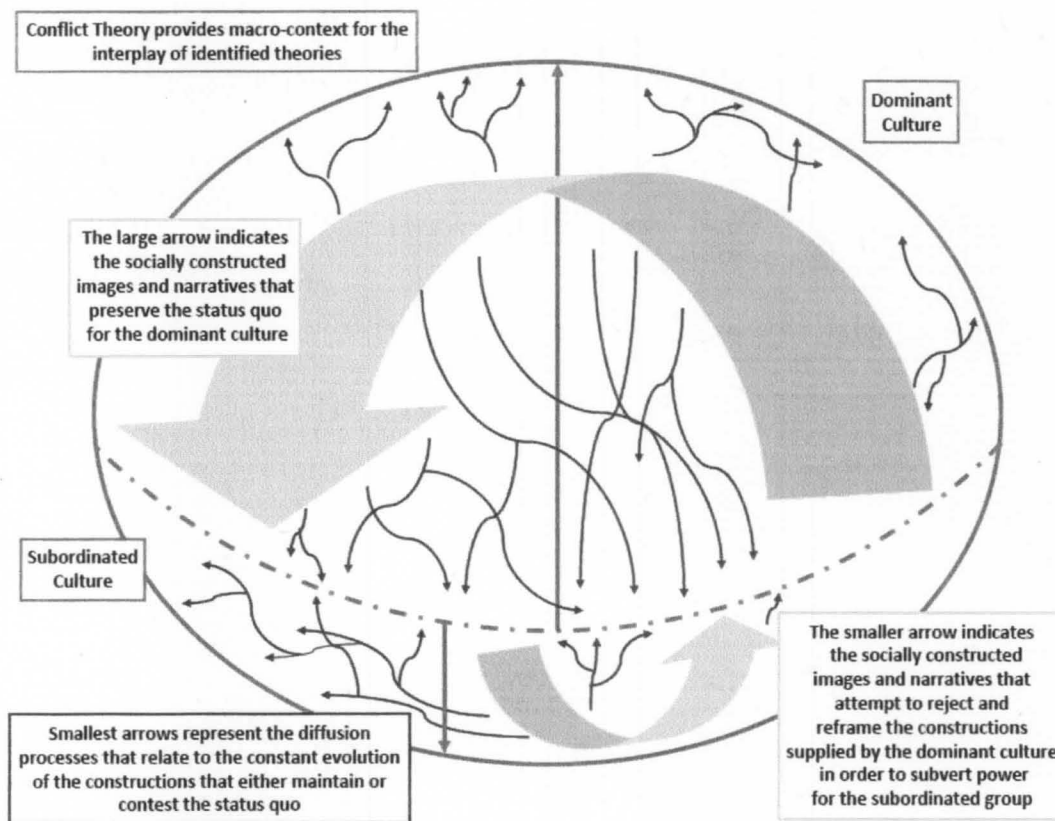


Figure 11. Hypothetical interaction of theories around OVC in China.

The first point in time relates to China's implementation of the One Child Policy in the 1980s. The diagram at this point depicts the dynamics associated with the process

by which Traditional-Western OVC Care agendas were adopted by China, after the large number of OVC entering State care following the implementation of the One Child Policy. In this iteration, the largest arrow/dominant culture initially relates to the broadly held set of traditional Chinese family norms, and the subordinate arrows represent the Government of China's efforts to reframe these norms through its population control policies. The strength of the central government and the sociocultural and political power brought to bear on implementing these policies essentially "forced" the inversion of this diagram. Thus, the One Child Policy and "low quantity/ high quality" children become the dominant culture and follow the trajectory of the largest arrow. When faced with the massive numbers of OVC that emerge as a social phenomenon and an unintended consequence of the One Child Policy, the Traditional-Western model of institutional OVC care and associated agendas (provision of resources necessary to maintain physical life under significant economic constraints as efficiently as possible) essentially came along as "invisible" riders to the Policy and were adopted as the quickest means of meeting immediate goals relate to OVC.

The second iteration of the OVC care agendas as expressed in the theoretical interaction model is occurring now, and has been evolving over the last decade or so, which is the timeframe associated with the beginning of localized foster care pilots for children in OVC care. At present, the dominant culture in the diagram (depicted by largest arrow) is associated with the institutional orphan care strategy employed by China through its CWI system as an expression of Traditional-Western OVC care agendas; the

associated narratives are reinforced by the Blue Sky initiative and Chinese and foreign organizations that are working to support it.

The subordinate culture in the diagram is the movement to adopt more of the Progressive/Universalist OVC care agendas through family- and community-based placements and services. At this point, there is no coherent Progressive/Universalist narrative in China that can serve to mount a viable challenge to the dominant narrative. It is my belief that the SPANS-019 Family- and Community-Based Child Welfare project represents an opportunity for the set of Progressive/Universalist sociocultural agendas to become a catalyst for an organized counter-narrative to challenge the dominant Traditional-Western OVC care agendas.

### **Limitations of Study**

I experienced two very different sets of dynamics with regard to the two phases of research, and these are reflected in two sets of limitations to my study. In the ethnographic scan, I was able to work fully as a researcher (apart from my work at FIRST, my entire focus while in China was on research). Thus, I was “freer” in a sense, with regard to the process of establishing credibility and confirmability, as I was constantly in dialogue with those with whom I was working about my observations, ideas, conceptualizations, and conclusions. The research context of the ethnographic scan was relatively stable, and made for a straightforward approach to accounting for and conveying information relevant to the dependability of my study.

The nested case study process was much different, both in terms of the “organic” way in which it evolved as well as in the longer timeframe. Because there were a number



of different participant groups and individuals, and because, to some extent, these groups were either aligned collaboratively or competitively, I had free access to “check in” with some participants (e.g. GCCSI, AGAPE, USAID/DCOF, etc.) and much more limited access to others (e.g. MCA, CCCWA, etc.). Thus, for those more limited relationships, my ability to directly establish credibility with regard to my interpretations of their agendas was more compromised; this dynamic was reflected in many of GCCSI’s and my communications with AGAPE and USAID/DCOF, for instance, as we were all working to interpret and accurately identify motivations for particular actions/decisions of different divisions of the Government of China with whom we were engaged around the FCBCW project. On the other hand, this limitation forced me to be much more rigorous in terms of my dependability and confirmability structures, and this was reflected in much of the information reported in Chapter Four (and accounts for some of the redundancy present in the document reporting). Indeed, because the project never got to direct implementation, my quarterly reporting process to USAID was essentially one of the means for establishing multi-lateral confirmability, dependability, and triangulation vis-à-vis the Government of China.

Finally, for both parts of my study, extreme care must be taken to transferability of findings. The ethnographic scan took place over three months in one particular area of China; it is entirely possible that different findings could emerge from either different timeframe, or different areas, or both. Similarly, the nested case study was of a unique project that was conceived of and negotiated at a particular point in time in the context of

emerging and evolving sociocultural and political dynamics in both the US and China; the same project at a different point in time may yield a very different set of results.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

There is a great deal of room for future research on orphaned and vulnerable children in China. Even in China, there is little or no aggregated information about this population, although I am given to understand that China's central government is undertaking its own initiative to develop this. Whatever the case, those invested in the lives of OVC in China, including and especially children with disabilities, need to know more about:

- The composition of OVC in China: numbers, outcomes, disability status, etc.;
- The systematic comparison of outcomes associated with institutional OVC care versus family- and community-based OVC care in China; and
- The children with disabilities who do NOT enter OVC care; this is a particularly invisible and extremely vulnerable population

It is understood that for any of these to occur and for the information to become available to researchers outside of China's central government, there would need to be an unprecedented level of transparency associated with a very sensitive and potentially face-costing set of information.

### **Postlude/Epilogue**

As mentioned in Chapter Four, I stopped collecting data on the SPANS-019 Family- and Community-Based Child Welfare project on August 1, 2011 following the signing of an agreement between GCCSI and CCCWA to implement the project. After

securing this agreement, the plan was to work toward beginning implementation by September 1, 2011. To this end, there was a lot of activity at both GCCSI and CCCWA to align systems with another and with USAID's grant/subgrant requirements. In the midst of this activity, GCCSI received notification from USAID/DCOF that we should temporarily slow these processes while an internal dialogue was conducted at USAID.

The political climate in the US was shifting. The economic recession was central to the push to drastically reduce budgets in Washington, D.C.; in Congress, popular bipartisan efforts to reduce international development aid generally and to China in particular were underway. GCCSI was watching this process closely.

The following was reported by Matthew Pennington in Bloomberg Business Week on November 15, 2011:

**Lawmakers take aim at millions in US aid to China**

Lawmakers demanded to know: Why should China, a major foreign competitor and America's biggest creditor, be receiving millions of dollars in development aid from the U.S.? A House panel took a close and critical look Tuesday at \$4 million of proposed funding for promoting clean energy, encouraging the rule of law and fighting wildlife trafficking. The committee has put that aid, approved last year, on hold as it presses for explanations from the U.S. Agency for International Development of how the money would be used. Republican Rep. Donald Manzullo of Illinois said the aid for promoting clean energy would boost the competitiveness of Chinese manufacturers at the expense of U.S.

manufacturers and jobs, and in a sector where the U.S. has protested to the World Trade Organization over Chinese subsidies. "Given the state of the U.S. economy and with government debt approaching a record \$15 trillion, it is absurd to think that any U.S. government entity would spend a single dollar trying to encourage China to do the right thing," said Manzullo, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia. Nisha Biswal, assistant administrator for USAID, defended the aid to China as supporting U.S. values and interests. She said none of the programs directly funds the Chinese government or involves the transfer of technology. The aid aims to improve China's environmental law and regulatory system and, with support from U.S. companies, offers training to Chinese factories on international environmental and health standards. Biswal said the program also offers an opening to Chinese markets for U.S. businesses. Participating companies include General Electric, Honeywell, Wal-Mart, Alcoa, and Pfizer. In the past decade, various U.S. government agencies have provided nearly \$275 million of assistance to China. But as the United States scrambles to restrain the national debt, foreign aid, which makes up less than 1 percent of the federal budget, is among the first items on the chopping block. Of recipient nations, fast-growing China represents a prime target. While a strong reaction in Congress won't force a change in President Barack Obama's policy of seeking a cooperative relationship with China, it can constrain it, as Capitol Hill controls the budget strings. Still, to the apparent surprise of lawmakers, Biswal said the disputed environment and rule of law programs have been mandated by Congress

for several years and the Obama administration has not sought funding for them in its most recent budget request. Biswal said for fiscal 2011, USAID has allocated \$12 million for its program in China, an almost 48 percent decrease over 2010. The money will go on for fighting HIV/Aids and for Tibet, whose exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama is widely respected in Washington. Many lawmakers blame China in part for America's economic woes, and in a divisive political climate it is one of the few issues that Democrats and Republicans sometimes agree upon. Rep. Brad Sherman of California, the sole Democrat to speak at the hearing, said the U.S. was borrowing money from China to pay for things that China doesn't think important enough to pay for itself. He said that amounted to "an insult to the American people." China, the world's second-largest economy, holds about 11 percent of U.S. federal debt, making it the largest foreign creditor. Last month, there was bipartisan support for a bill to punish China for undervaluing its currency, which is viewed as hurting U.S. exports at a time when America's unemployment is 9 percent. Lawmakers have also assailed Beijing for human rights abuses, intellectual property theft and counterfeiting components that end up in U.S. military hardware.

(<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9R1DON80.htm> retrieved March 11, 2012)

Despite ardent support from DCOF, the decision was made by USAID to stop funding any new development projects in China. In addition, all current China-based aid projects were also de-funded, including SPANS-019, Family- and Community-Based Child Welfare for OVC in China. As a result, this program ended on December 31, 2011, with implementation never realized. For its part, the Government of China has so far elected not to fund this project, either, although they are permitting these efforts to move forward in local contexts, as long as participating organizations can provide their own funding.

### **Final Thoughts – Personal Agendas Derived from this Process**

I am a social worker; I have chosen my profession for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the ethical emphasis on the “client as expert.” Throughout all of my observations in the years that I have spent on this project and its associated research, I never once had the opportunity to hear from any of the myriad of children in China whose lives we (GCCSI, AGAPE, USAID, and the Government of China) were seeking to influence (other than through my interactions with Child Haven). Although I did not have the chance to directly secure this insight, I would like to offer the observations of R.B. Mitchell as a sort of proxy for the children in orphan care in China, and to summarize the subtle yet fundamental shift in my own understanding as a result of my investigation. Mitchell, like millions of Chinese children in CWI care, grew up under the influence of the set of Western-Traditional sociocultural agendas, and this is his perspective:

It wasn't that things were so bad at the Home that we hated it. Most of us got much better care than our parents had given us. But even at age seven I could see that kids preferred poverty if they were loved, rags if they were cared for, and homelessness if someone wanted them. We were willing to suffer much if we could only be part of our own families (Mitchell, 2007, pg. 28).

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### Education

- Ph.D., Social Work

University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

*Dissertation: "The best interest of children": An exploration of sociocultural agendas associated with the care of orphaned and vulnerable children in China*

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- Master of Social Work

Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI), Indianapolis, IN

*Clinical Concentration*

2000

- Bachelor of Arts, Sociology and Law & Society

Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN

*Majors: Sociology; Law and Society*

*Minors: Psychology; Anthropology*

1991

## **Employment History**

- International Project Coordinator  
“Global Christian Children’s Services (GCCSI)”, Midwest, USA  
Jan 2010 – present
- Research Assistant  
University of Louisville, Louisville, KY  
Mentor: Dr. Anna Faul  
May 2007- May 2011
- Program Consultant  
The HDB Service Group, La Grange, KY  
Sept 2006-May 2007
- Director of Vocational Services  
Cedar Lake Lodge, La Grange, KY  
May 2003-Sept 2006
- Medical Social Worker  
Miami Valley Hospital, Dayton, OH  
Mar 2002-May 2003



- Social Worker

Family Service Agency/Family Service Association , Springfield and Dayton, OH

June 2000-July 2002

- QMRP/Developmental Disabilities Professional

Schools and Community Agencies, Indiana and Ohio

May 1993 – June 2000

### **Awards**

- University Fellow

University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

2007-2009

- Dean's Freshman Honors Scholar

Purdue University

West Lafayette, IN

1987

## **Career Experience**

### **Research**

#### **The University of Louisville, Louisville, KY**

- Dissertation (in process): Conducted qualitative research in Zhengzhou and surrounding areas in China's Henan province where I had the opportunity to live, work, learn, and build relationships with a number of individuals and organizations that serve orphaned and vulnerable children in this region; investigated the ways that China's orphan population and their caregivers (both foreign and domestic) are affected by the interplay of cultural agendas from both China and what are primarily Western developed nations (Aug 2009 – Nov 2009)
- Collaborated with faculty, staff, and students on a variety of new and ongoing social science research activities
- Participated in and conducted social research design, data collection, coding, analysis, and reporting of results of both quantitative and qualitative research
- Participated in cohort-based two-year long intensive research project, involving the initial collaboration with community partners (needs assessment: factors leading to retention of homecare aides), theoretical modeling and concept mapping, review of literature, research design, data collection and analysis, and communication of results (including

presentation of results at conferences and publication in peer-reviewed journal)

### **Teaching**

- Currently serving as Field Instructor for GVSU MSW internship
- Taught SW460A, *International Social Work*, in Spring 2011 semester for Kuyper College
- Taught children, adolescents, and adults in Zhengzhou and surrounding areas in Henan, China on a broad range of cultural, social, and English language content areas
- Presented content modules as part of cohort learning process for the following courses: SW 764, *Teaching in Social Work*; SW 759, *Theory I – Social Work Change Theories*; SW 755, *Theory Development in Social Work*; SW 757, *Theory III, Analysis of Social Policy*
- Presented book chapter on social work identity in the context of interdisciplinary collaboration in the provision of healthcare services to persons with disabilities to Joint Hungarian—American Conference of Social Work Healthcare (University of Louisville – 9/13/2007)

### **Service**

- Served as PhD program student liaison to the Kent School of Social Work's faculty and staff members (2008 – 2009)
- Helped to establish the first Special Education Parent – Teacher Association (SEPTA) in Kentucky and served as Vice-President of the

organization which advocated for students with disabilities and their families, and promoted issues of social justice in the context of education and marginalized populations. Also provided information on disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and strategies to promote the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in school and community based environments.

## **Employment**

### **“Global Christian Children’s Services (GCCSI)”, Midwest, USA**

- Participated in grant writing, program development, and project management related to child welfare services in China, resulting in award of \$2.2 million dollar USAID grant to GCCSI
- Responsible for coordination, management, and planning of grant activities for family- and community-based services project for orphaned children and children with disabilities in China
- Provide support to other grant and sponsorship activities related to GCCSI child welfare continuum of care projects

### **The HDB Service Group, La Grange, KY**

- Responsible for planning and developing programs that serve persons with disabilities, seniors, and other vulnerable populations in the agency service area

- Responsible for data collection and analysis used by agency and grantors for specific agency programs
- Facilitated comprehensive revision of agency policies and operating procedures

**Cedar Lake Lodge, La Grange, KY**

- Responsible for data collection and analysis of programs in vocational service areas
- Participated in the development and implementation of client programs, including behavior support needs
- Developed and supervised Adult Day Program for persons with CI/DD diagnoses
- Served as liaison with US Bureau of Wage and Labor with regard to sub-minimum wage record keeping
- Supervised management staff in vocational and adult day programs
- Facilitated opportunities for advocacy and staff/community training vis-à-vis persons with developmental disabilities in Kentucky
- Provided staff training on interdisciplinary collaboration, effective communication, and teamwork to agency-wide work groups
- Monitored budget and regulatory compliance with to both vocational and adult day programs

### **Miami Valley Hospital, Dayton, OH**

- Worked with patients and their families in the hospital's oncology units (medical, surgical, gynecological, and radiation)
- Provided clinical diagnostic support and utilized brief therapy techniques to assist oncology patients and families
- Responsible for discharge planning process as part of multi-disciplinary team
- Worked with hospice and palliative care teams to provide support to patients and their families
- Assisted in crisis intervention in other hospital departments

### **Family Service Agency/Family Service Association**

- Administered psychosocial assessments and provided therapeutic interventions with children, adolescents and adults in individual, family, and group contexts utilizing a variety of therapeutic modalities
- Specialized in working with developmentally disabled clients and with mandated client populations
- Developed and facilitated mandated anger management and offender-based domestic violence treatment groups
- Provided school-based psycho-educational groups to elementary aged children
- Provided client referrals to identified community resources to assist in additional client system supports

### **QMRP/Developmental Disabilities Professional**

- Performed functional behavioral analyses with persons with developmental disabilities
- Responsible for data collection and analysis of client behavioral programs
- Developed and implemented behavior service plans for clients across a wide variety of environments (home, school, work, transportation, etc.)
- Responsible for providing training on behavioral support plans to clients, family members, school personnel, community members, and professionals
- Supervised and assisted direct care staff
- Coordinated/assisted staff development (social workers, guidance counselors, special education personnel)
- Composed and submitted applications for alternative services grants to the Indiana Department of Education
- Served as home/school liaison for students with autism
- Provided one-to-one assistance to people with autism across home, school, and community environments
- Implemented behavior service plans and individual education plans

## **Field Placements/Internships**

### **Field Placement: Echoing Woods ICF/MR, Dayton, OH**

- Conducted agency-wide program evaluation designed to improve both client services and satisfaction as well as improving staff training, recruitment, and retention
- Developed and facilitated client advocacy and self-governance council
- Developed and implemented alternative behavior intervention programming system, with a focus on non-aversive and re-directive client-centered practices
- Provided training and staff development system designed to solicit staff feedback, participation, and buy-in to new systems

### **Field Placement: Advo-Kids Alliance (CASA/GAL), Indianapolis, IN**

- Participated in providing oversight to foster parents and investigating allegations of abuse and neglect made by children in foster care
- Participated in making placement recommendations for children entering the foster care system and moving toward permanent placements
- Participated in providing training to agency volunteers and to the community at large, and helped with volunteer recruitment activities



## **Selected Volunteer and Community Service Experience**

### **Foster Parent and Volunteer, “Child Haven”, Zhengzhou, Henan, China**

- Worked with organization to gather data on orphan care in Henan province  
Initiated fund raising efforts to provide urgent surgeries for medically fragile children in orphan care settings
- Provided full-time foster care to child with special needs
- Worked to assist organization in their community integration efforts for children in orphanage care

### **SEPTA of Oldham County, Crestwood, KY**

- Helped to start the first Special Education Parent-Teacher Association in the State of Kentucky
- Served as Vice-President of the organization during its first year of operation
- Helped to organize and disseminate information to recruit persons with disabilities and their families, friends, neighbors, and teachers
- Developed and implemented initial SEPTA needs assessment to identify primary areas of interest for constituents
- Assisted in identifying and recruiting speakers for ongoing Special Education Law and disability information sessions per needs assessment

### **Hope Center, Indianapolis, IN**

- Served as Vice-President from 1992-1993
- Assisted organizational leaders in providing resources, food, vocational information, and social supports to homeless individuals and families

- Served as liaison to area congregations to gather and disseminate resources to Indianapolis' homeless population
- Developed information clearinghouse for organization to better identify and target needs of individual participants relative to area congregations

### **Special Olympics, Multiple Locations in Florida, Indiana, and Kentucky**

- Served as event assistant/coordinator for participants and volunteers
- Coached participants in track and field events
- Assisted with recruiting participants, volunteers, and resources for Special Olympic events

### **Publications**

#### **Peer Reviewed Articles**

- Faul, A.C., Schapmire, T.J., D'Ambrosio, J., **Feaster, D.**, Oak, S., & Farley, A. (In press). Promoting sustainability in frontline home care aides: Understanding factors affecting job retention in home care workforce. *Home Health Care Management and Practice*.

#### **Book Chapters**

- **Feaster, D.**, (2009). Social Work Identity in the Context of Health Care Service Provision to Persons with Disabilities: Analogies for Consideration. In Lawson, T. (Ed.). College of Health and Social Work, University of Debrecen, Hungary

### **Peer Reviewed Presentations**

- Faul, A.C., D'Ambrosio, J, Farley, A., **Feaster, D.**, Oak, S. & Schapmire, T. (2008). *An Aging Society: Job Risks And Opportunities Facing The Frontline Caregivers Of Elders Who Prefer To Age In Place*. The Gerontological Society of America's 61st Annual Scientific Meeting, National Harbor, MD, Nov. 21-25.
- Faul, A.C., D'Ambrosio, J, Farley, A., **Feaster, D.**, Oak, S. & Schapmire, T. (2008). *Problem-based learning: integrating gerontology with research to develop new doctoral scholars*. 54<sup>th</sup> CSWE Annual Program Meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Oct 30–Nov 2.

### **Invited Presentations**

- **Feaster, D.** (2007). *The social worker as “pathfinder”*: Facilitating health care services for persons with developmental disabilities. Joint Hungarian—American Conference of Social Work Healthcare, Louisville, Kentucky, Sept. 13, 2007.

### **Professional Memberships**

- National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
- Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR)