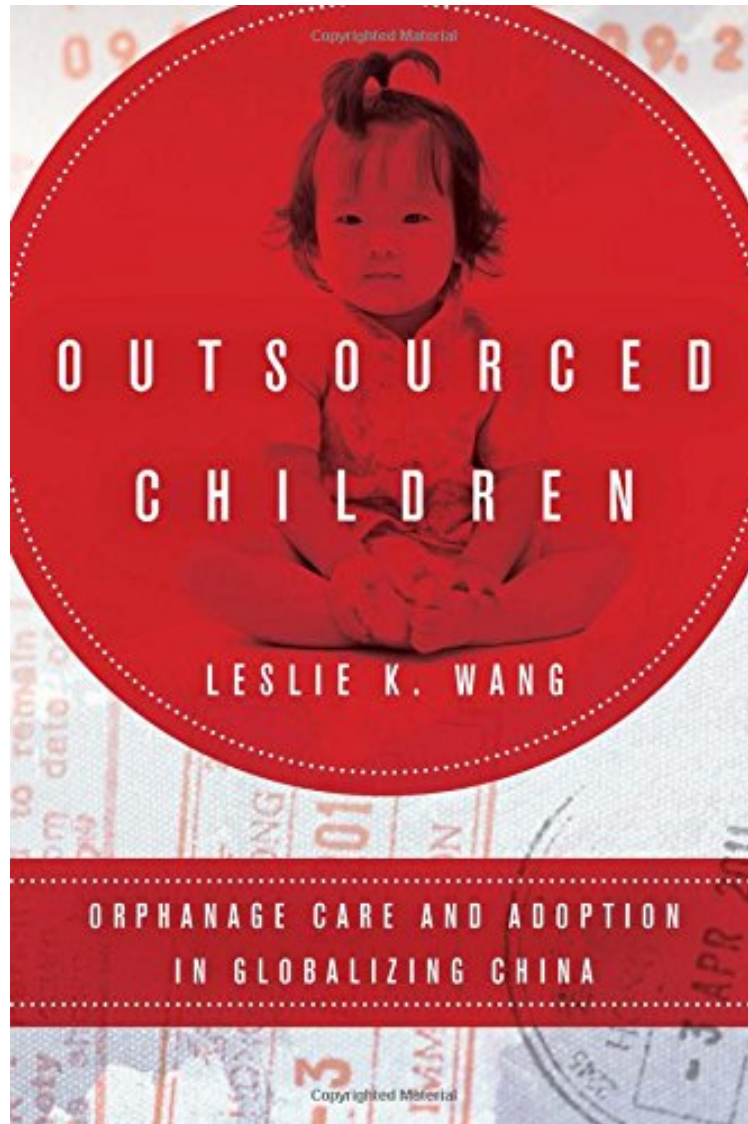


(Download pdf ebook) Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China

Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China

Leslie K. Wang

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Leslie K. Wang : Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By RAKA good Ph.D. dissertation reworked into a meaningful book. Accessible to the non-academic reader. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Rare

insight -- a great read for a variety of audiences

By Steverinie

This is a beautifully written book detailing why certain children have been abandoned in China, what their lives are like in state-run orphanages, and how this relates to international adoption to Western countries. I liked that unlike many other books on adoption that take the form of memoirs/biographies, this book is based on Wang's detailed first-hand research as a long-term volunteer in different orphanages. It gives a vivid, sometimes heart wrenching behind the scenes look at the lives of institutionalized children -- some of whom are adopted (typically healthy girls) and many others who aren't (usually because they have special needs).

By the way, don't be confused or put off by the title, *Outsourced Children*. It doesn't mean the author believes adopted children are bought and sold. Instead, Wang's title refers to her argument that the Chinese state has outsourced the CARE of its abandoned children, both through adoption and by allowing Western humanitarian organizations to assist orphanages.

Overall, this is a carefully crafted, highly engaging analysis of challenging political and ethical issues. I learned a lot and highly recommend it to anyone interested in children, adoptive families, or the side effects and politics of China's economic ascent.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Raising China's "Boats" through International Adoption

By Brian H. Stuy

Leslie K. Wang's book *Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China* is a well-researched treatise on China's adoption program, the result of personal experiences of the author working in various orphanages, combined with academic studies. The central thesis of the book, that China has allowed international adoption of its children as a means to increase the overall value and productivity of its remaining citizens, is a fairly new idea in the adoption community. Few adoptive parents realize the overall goals and objectives of the Chinese government in encouraging and promoting adoption, and for this single reason alone Wang's book is a valuable contribution to the history of China's adoption program.

Wang spends considerable space putting a personalized face on the orphans in China, mostly special needs. Her time in the Haifeng Children's Welfare Institute (a pseudonym), an orphanage that participated in the international adoption program, illuminates the issues present in the Social Welfare Institutes regarding the severely handicapped. Wang gained access to the Haifeng orphanage as a volunteer for Tomorrow's Children, a Christian faith-based NGO that assisted the orphanage in caring for its special needs children. Her experiences in Haifeng are contrasted with those she had in the Yongping orphanage (also a pseudonym) near Beijing where another group, Helping Hands, worked. This group was comprised of expat women who, as Wang describes, were looking to put meaning into their lives as their husbands went off to work. The contrast between these two groups how their methods were accepted or rejected by the nannies that worked in each facility, by the government, and by the children themselves, is fascinating to read, and provides a valuable assessment of the damage that first-world attitudes can sometimes have in such settings.

But the core of the book is devoted to the idea that China has allowed the exportation of her children with a simple goal in mind: To increase the overall productivity of its people with the stated goal to become a first-world nation. With this goal in mind, Chinese leaders feel that children abandoned by largely rural, uneducated and less productive birth families in a real sense act as weights to the progress of China overall. By removing these children from the national population, the thinking goes, the government accepts that the remaining population would increase in education and productivity.

Wang states that Although urban little emperors bear the heavy responsibility of building a glorious future for their country, a much larger number of youths from rural areas are viewed at best as a hindrance, and at worst as a dangerous threat, to Chinese modernization (p. 29-30). When viewed in this light, the actions of the CCAA and other national governmental agencies can be clearly understood, especially as it relates to ethical breeches and scandals in China's adoption program. Simply stated, orphanage actions such as baby-buying and Family Planning confiscations achieve a national interest, even if those same actions result in lapses in international treaties and standards.

It is important to understand that China's international adoption program was started as a result of advocacy work initiated by World Association for Children and Parents (WACAP), a private adoption agency based in Washington State. This agency was the first to be allowed to adopt Chinese children in 1991 from the Luoyang orphanage in Henan Province, the same Province where Wang volunteered in the Haifeng orphanage. It was WACAP's advocacy that convinced the Chinese that the benefits of international adoption in terms of financial resources and outsourcing the costs of childcare outweighed the loss of face. The creation of China's international adoption bureau, the CCAA, occurred one year later. In 1992, 206 Chinese children were adopted to the U.S. (232 internationally), a number that grew to 4,206 children in 1998 (6,012 internationally), when some orphanages began to feel pressure to recruit children for adoption. By 2002, when 6,119 children were adopted to the U.S. (10,194 internationally), many, if not most, orphanages were heavily involved in baby-buying and other recruitment methods to satisfy the demand for healthy, young infant girls. In 2005, international press revealed that orphanages in central China's Hunan Province had been buying babies, and in 2008 families that had adopted older, aging-out children from the same Luoyang orphanage came forward indicating that their adoptive children had been lured away from birth families under the false pretense of gaining an education and employment in the West.

Which brings me to the one objection I have to Wang's assessment of China's program. Although Wang gives a hat tip to reports of scandals in China's program, overall she maintains that the direction of the adoption program is dictated by Beijing. She states, for example, that it is the outcome of the HCIA (Hague Convention) combined with a proactive effort by the top sending countries namely Russia and China to lower the number of kids they place abroad (p.131) that resulted in the collapse in international adoptions after 2004 (Russia)

and 2005 (China). Wang also writes that the PRC severely limited the supply of healthy girls following the Hunan child trafficking scandal (p.132), and still later observed that it is highly significant that, as the countrys global economic position has improved, the number of children it sends abroad has declined dramatically (p. 148). Intentionally or not, these and other similar statements by Wang imply that the number of children adopted internationally is controlled by the Central Government, controlled from the top down. There is no doubt that this is a commonly held view, even by those involved in the adoption community, but it is largely a misperception. The idea ignores the well-documented data and experiences in Chinas orphanages themselves. There is no question that Chinas program took a dramatic turn in late 2005. In fact, when one graphs the findings (the number of children entering the orphanage) by the orphanages in the provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, Hunan and Jiangxi, etc., the main providers of adoptable children in 2005, one can see the decline beginning in December 2005, exactly when the Hunan scandal was being reported on inside China. In February 2006, three months after the scandal broke and when the decline was already visible, the CCAA (the office of the national government responsible for international adoptions) began actively pushing orphanages to submit as many children as they could, even severely special needs. When the number of submissions continued to fall, only then did China change the criteria for who could adopt. The lack of definitive action to curtail corruption in the face of various adoption scandals since Hunan should also be seen in this light. Thus, the decline in adoptions from China was not a result of top-down actions such as Hague implementation, progress in economic circumstances, access to ultrasounds, the 2008 Olympics, or any of the other macro explanations that have been given. Rather, it was a bottom-up reaction by millions of Chinese birth families, most of whom learned for the first time in December 2005 that their children were being sold to Westerners by the orphanages, and consciously chose to no longer cooperate, largely out of fear for their childs safety and well-being. As a result, the number of healthy children entering the orphanages fell dramatically, and the apparent emphasis shifted, as Wang documents, from healthy young infants to older special needs children. I say apparent, because it was the disappearance of the healthy children that made the adoption of the special needs children both more desirable by Western families due to the longer wait times for a healthy child, and more visible to outsiders. But the mission of the national government is still firmly in place: Adopt out as many children, healthy or special needs, as possible to elevate the productivity and desirability of the rest of Chinas citizenry. Wangs book is a highly interesting view of the China program, and she brings many perceptive and important observations to the conversation moving forward. Do Western NGOs do more harm than good? Are their efforts sustainable? Should the international adoption program be used as a tool of the Chinese government to outsource orphan care? These and many other considerations are addressed and explored by Wang in what is a fascinating read.

It's no secret that tens of thousands of Chinese children have been adopted by American parents and that Western aid organizations have invested in helping orphans in China but why have Chinese authorities allowed this exchange, and what does it reveal about processes of globalization? Countries that allow their vulnerable children to be cared for by outsiders are typically viewed as weaker global players. However, Leslie K. Wang argues that China has turned this notion on its head by outsourcing the care of its unwanted children to attract foreign resources and secure closer ties with Western nations. She demonstrates the two main ways that this "outsourced intimacy" operates as an ongoing transnational exchange: first, through the exportation of mostly healthy girls into Western homes via adoption, and second, through the subsequent importation of first-world actors, resources, and practices into orphanages to care for the mostly special needs youth left behind. *Outsourced Children* reveals the different care standards offered in Chinese state-run orphanages that were aided by Western humanitarian organizations. Wang explains how such transnational partnerships place marginalized children squarely at the intersection of public and private spheres, state and civil society, and local and global agendas. While Western societies view childhood as an innocent time, unaffected by politics, this book explores how children both symbolize and influence national futures.

"Wang's vivid and accessible writing, and her ability to raise difficult issues about the best interests of children in local, national, and transnational contexts makes *Outsourced Children* a compelling read for undergraduate and graduate students, policymakers, and general readers." (Catherine Ceniza Choy H-Diplo _____)"*Outsourced Children* is a provocative analysis of the global assemblages of care around children in Chinese orphanages. Drawing on a deep well of original fieldwork, Wang bring to life the ideologies, economic inequalities, and gendered and raced imaginaries that swirl around children at the intersections of 'soft power' and 'outsourced intimacy.'" (Sara Dorow University of Alberta)"Wang's compelling ethnography shows how state agendas, market imperatives, and conflicting visions of childcare held by Western do-gooders and Chinese caregivers create a transnational market in special needs children that serves different agendas. A caringly crafted, unsettling, yet humane account of how the one-child policy continues to remake our world." (Susan Greenhalgh Harvard University)"*Outsourced Children* takes us into the world of 'relinquished children' in China. It offers insights into the role of state policy, global competition and transnational circuits in shaping the meanings and value of children within neoliberalism. This is a must-read book for anyone interested in childhood in

the global era." (Nazli Kibria Boston University)About the AuthorLeslie K. Wang is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.