Asia is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to research in the life sciences. Asian countries play a major role both in shaping international research practices and in the formulation of bioethical research regulation in the field of biomedical research and research applications, including stem cell research, genetic testing and screening, reproductive technologies and the banking of biological materials. Not only wealthy welfare societies such as Japan and Singapore but also large developing countries such as China and India, are strong global competitors at the forefront of biomedical research and biotech applications. These new fields of research, on the one hand, promise to revolutionize the life sciences and biomedical knowledge that could enhance the health and welfare of large patient populations, including diabetes, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease. On the other hand, bioethical concerns have come about due to the novel and general nature of research in the life sciences and the application of resultant technologies in some regions where even the most basic healthcare is a scarce good.

This raises the question of whether those emerging assumptions that are formed are in complete alignment of those who are actually committed to the decision to donate their embryos, women and couples undergoing IVF treatment. What value do those people assign to their embryos and what are the culturally inherited assumptions and concerns that impact their decisions to refuse or accept donation of their embryos? These are the questions that shall address both of the finds addressed here in the basis of data gathered during November 2006-2007 in two IVF clinics in South-East and Central China, and are being surveyed at that time among 700 women and 450 randomly selected IVF patients from two large clinics in Central China. The survey included multiple choice and open-ended survey questions to which respondents could provide handwritten comments.

**Technoscientific projects feature high on the Chinese government’s agenda.** The decoding of the rice, chicken, and most recently panda genomes have caught the attention of the media and the masses. A no less ambitious plan is the drive to establish China as a key force in human embryonic stem cell (hESC) research. While in the West hESC research has been slowed by ethical and legal debates, a highly permissive regulatory environment has been fostered in China. Achim Rosenbaum investigates how this corresponds to the perceptions of potential embryo donors. Achim Rosenbaum

**Life without value?**

Voices of embryo donors for hESC research in China

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**Discussion**

These findings suggest that attitudes and perceptions of the value and the permissibility to donate and use human embryos for hESC research are much more varied and complex in China than is commonly supposed. The research participants’ regulatory preferences and regulatory expectations indicate that the starting point of life is significantly less factual with the ethical permissibility of potential embryo donation. It also becomes clear that arguments that pertain to the moral demands that women or society should make in order for hESC research to be able to go forward equally failed by the assumption that due to the high number of embryos carried out in the context of the one-child policy, the value of early forms of human life are generally ignored in striving for stronger human definition. As the findings of this study suggest, perceptions of embryonic life in China, as elsewhere, are intertwined with the overlapping and sometimes contradictory employing measures, values, and personal or social interests of various stakeholders, policy makers, and scientific and clinical intelligence are insufficiently aware.

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**Achim Rosenbaum**

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**CHINESE AND OTHER EAST ASIAN political leaders have repeatedly pointed out that religious-based scriptures such as the Chinese Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist, or Taoist traditions, the majority of which is practiced in China (Pak and Kato, 2008). In China, some(value) is reflected in Confucian, as well as Buddhist and Daoist conceptions. Values such as a formative soul and the existence of life during the period of life that is considered to be non-life or non-existent, in other words, in the beginning of life, often have a religiously based character. Life is not only a sacred value but also an existential value.**