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Trends in Intercountry Adoption: Analysis of Data from 20 Receiving States, 1998-2004

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Trends in Intercountry Adoption: Analysis of Data from 20 Receiving States, 1998-2004

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Abstract

The implications of developments in intercountry adoption worldwide in the early years of the 21st century are explored, based on analysis of data from 20 receiving countries. Between 1998 and 2004 intercountry adoption increased by 42 per cent. Problems in data collection and analysis are examined, as is the reliability of estimates of numbers of children sent by countries of origin when derived from data provided by receiving states. Also considered are various measures of standardisation which can be used to facilitate comparison between countries and show trends over time. The potential for more detailed comparative analysis is explored.

Keywords - Adoption numbers, adoption trends, children, fertility, international, migration, orphans, poverty

This paper updates an earlier article (Selman 2002) which reviewed intercountry adoption statistics up to 1998. That article noted that child adoption was "not usually seen as a matter of concern for demographers, but rather an issue of primary interest to social workers, lawyers and psychologists and of secondary interest to sociologists and anthropologists" (Selman 2002: 205), exceptions being papers presented by Weil (1984), Kane (1992) and Lovelock (2000). Since then there have also been useful demographic contributions by Kenney and Ortman (2005) on measuring intercountry adoption; Flango and Caskey (2005) on adoption in the USA in 2000-2001; and Halifax (2006) on "international" adoptions in France.

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The aims of this paper are to present a demographic analysis of intercountry adoption (ICA) between 1998 and 2004; to explore problems of comparability between adoption statistics provided by different receiving states; to examine ways in which crude numbers of adoptions may be standardised to facilitate comparisons between countries and within countries over time; to examine the value and validity of making estimates of numbers of adoptions from countries of origin using figures provided by receiving states; and to explore the potential for a comparative analysis of age and gender of children sent for adoption from different countries of origin.

The demography of intercountry adoption

The first writer to argue for a demographic approach to intercountry adoption was Weil (1984) who noted that many aspects of intercountry adoption were not well understood - e.g. "the total volume of foreign adoptees, how this number has changed over time, precisely what countries are linked in the flows of children", and concluded that "to answer questions such as those listed above requires far more data be collected on a systematic worldwide basis." (Weil 1984: 289-90)

Ten years later Kane (1993) made the first systematic attempt to do this, contacting the government offices of 21 countries estimated to be receiving at least 20 children a year: - and receiving statistics from 14 of these. Kane's study was designed to "apply the basic epidemiological parameters of time, place and person to those inter-country adoptions which occur between non-related people" (Kane 1993: 123-4).

Selman (2000: 2002) attempted to replicate Kane's study and succeeded in collecting data from 18 countries including all of those responding to Kane. Those papers argued that a demography of intercountry adoption must see the movement of children not only as an aspect of international migration – the emphasis in the papers by Weil and Lovelock - but also as related to fertility and family building,

> in that a key motivation in receiving countries is the demand for children by childless couples who have not been successful with infertility treatment and who have faced a diminishing availability of young children for domestic adoption…for this reason, it can be useful to relate intercountry adoptions to the number of births in both ending and receiving countries (Selman 2002: 206).

The present paper updates these earlier studies by estimating the number of intercountry adoptions world-wide between 1998 and 2004, using data recorded by 20 receiving states.

Problems of availability and accuracy of data on intercountry adoption

Weil (1984) noted that in the 1980s "worldwide availability of data on foreign adoptions is uneven in both quantity and quality" (Weil 1984: 277-8) with the best data he obtained coming from the United States. Kane (1993) was able to obtain "relatively complete" data for the period 1980-89 from only 14 countries (see Table1). Some of these data had severe limitations: figures obtained for Canada were for Quebec only; estimates for Germany were based on 4 northern lander; and statistics for Spain were only available from 1988. Kane was unable to obtain statistics from Austria, Israel, Ireland or the United Kingdom and three other (unspecified) countries failed to reply. Many of these problems were still in evidence in respect of data for the period 1993-1998 (Selman 2000). Despite the stress in the 1993 Hague Convention on the importance of gathering data systematically, the availability and quality of data on intercountry adoption continues to vary greatly between countries. In the final conclusions and recommendations of its second meeting in September 2005, the Special Commission on the practical operation of the 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption welcomed the development of draft forms for the gathering of statistical information and underlined "the importance for States Parties to submit general statistics to the Permanent Bureau using these forms on an annual basis" (The Hague Conference 2005).

The present analysis is based on relatively complete data for 20 receiving states, including all those used by Kane (see Table 1). Data were also obtained for Ireland and the UK, but not for Austria or Greece. Other countries providing data but not included in Kane's study were Cyprus, Iceland, Luxembourg and New Zealand.

There are, however, some serious problems regarding the definition and comparability of data. One problem is in respect of relative adoptions. In EurAdopt statistics these are not included, but in many others – e.g. Canada, Spain and the UK – they are. Germany and Switzerland present "overseas adoptions" in 3

categories – non-relative; relative; and step-parent. Where there has been a choice I have followed Kane in including only non-relative adoptions - not because relative and step-parent adoptions are not worthy of attention, but because they present very different issues.[1] Some countries (Australia, New Zealand and the US report adoptions by fiscal rather than calendar year; the UK reports approved applications rather than visas granted or children entering. Several countries, such as the US and Canada routinely record only the main sources and the UK now records only countries sending 5 or more children a year.

This analysis is based on data from the 20 countries mentioned above. The figures for some countries may be incomplete: in Belgium the Central Authority notes that only agency adoptions are recorded and that number of "free" adoptions may be substantial (Wouters 2005). Such adoptions should reduce and eventually cease following Belgium's ratification of the Hague Convention. The figures for Cyprus and Iceland are only for EurAdopt agencies, which are believed to cover the majority of adoptions in those countries. There is also the problem of other states known to receive children for intercountry adoption for which neither Kane nor I could obtain data. In his analysis of statistics for receiving countries in 1998, which was based on answers to a questionnaire distributed by the Hague Conference, Lehland (2000) gives data from Greece for 1995 (236 adoptions) and Israel for 1999 (214); and suggests a further 1,000 from countries such as Austria. Accurate statistics for Austria and Greece have not been obtained. The data presented below are the best available at the time of writing but are subject to further revision and should be read in the light of the limitations noted above.

The Special Commission of the Hague conference has addressed the problem of missing data by issuing a questionnaire to all member states which should allow direct comparison of statistics from receiving countriesand state of origin.[2] As of late 2006, 50 States had responded to the questionnaire, of which 32 had submitted statistics, although many of these were incomplete. 17 of those returning statistics were countries who defined themselves primarily as countries of origin. The only receiving countries sending in statistics and not in the current study were Andorra, Israel and Portugal.

Table 1 Receiving countrieswith highest number of intercountry adoptions, 1980–2004

Receiving Country [a]	1980-89 average	1988	1993-7 average	1998	2001	2004
USA	7,761	9,120	10,070	15, 774	19,237	22,884
France	1,850	2,441	3,216	3,777	3,094	4,079
Italy	1,006	2,078	2,047	2,233	1,797	3,398
Canada	109 [b c]	232 [b]	1,934	2,222	1,874	1,955
Spain	19 [c]	93[2]	784	1,487	3,428	5,541
Sweden	1,579	1,074	906	928	1,044	1,109
Germany	189 [c d]	875 [d]	836	922	798	506 [e]
Netherlands	1,153	577	640	825	1122	1,307
Norway	464	566	531	643	713	706
Denmark	582	523	510	624	631	528
Belgium	544	662	183 [f]	487	419	470
Switzerland	616	492	468	456	458	557
Australia	356 [c]	516	247	245	289	370
Finland	40 [c]	78	134	181	218	289
Total	**16,268**	**19,327**	**22,799**	**30,804**	**35,122**	**43, 704**
Total (20 Countries)				**31,667**	**36,068**	**44,872**

a. 14 countries used by Kane (1993); listed by rank in 1998
b. Canadian figures are for Quebec only (Kane 1993)
c. Underestimate due to incomplete data (Kane 1993)
d. Estimate based on 4 northern lander (Kane 1993)
e. EurAdopt agencies only

Sources: Kane (1993); Lehland (2000); Selman (2002, 2005b, 2006)

The growth of intercountry adoption

Kane (1993) provides by far the best picture of intercountry adoption worldwide in the 1980s. Using data from 14 countries, she calculates the minimum number of intercountry adoptions (ICAs) between 1980 and 1989 at just over 162,000 – an average of more than 16,000 a year. Noting that she was unable to get statistics for ICA in the UK, Israel, Ireland and Austria, and that statistics for Canada, Germany and Spain were incomplete, she concluded that there was a shortfall of 5-10 per cent and estimated the actual total for the decade as lying between 170,000 and 180,000 – an average of 17-18,000 per annum. Most estimates of global numbers in the early 1990s (e.g. Duncan 1993) suggested an annual total of between 15,000 and 20,000 and most estimates for the mid and late 1990s were in the range 20,000 – 25,000 (Lovelock 2000; NAIC 1997). But by the end of the last century Lehland (2000) had indicated the true figures as nearer to 33,000, an estimate confirmed by Selman (2002). Table 1 shows the growth from 1980 to 2004 for the 14 countries included in Kane's analysis, based on the statistics collected for the period 1995 to 2004. Table 2 gives figures for 20 countries with relatively complete data for each year between 1998 and 2004. By 2004 the total for these 20 countries had risen to 44,872. These tables show that for the last twenty years the United States has been the largest recipient of children for adoption, but that Canada, France, Italy and Spain also receive substantial numbers of children. In a later section I shall show that many of the smaller European countries receive numbers which are relatively greater in proportion to their population size.

Reasons behind the rise and fall of numbers and the timing of such changes in different states need more exploration. Reductions in the availability of young babies for domestic adoption were a key factor in the rise of intercountry adoption in Europe in the 1970s and the subsequent decline in Sweden and the Netherlands (Table 3) may have reflected the negative experiences of some of these earlier adopters.

Table 2 Receiving countries with highest number of intercountry adoptions, 1998-2004

Receiving Country [a]	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004
US	15, 774	16,363	19,237	20,099	21,616	22,884
France	3,777	3,597	3,094	3,551	3,995	4,079
Italy	2,233	2,177	2,225	2,225	2,772	3,398
Canada	2,222	2,019	1,874	1,891	2,181	1,955
Spain	1,487	2,006	3,428	3,625	3,951	5,541
Sweden	928	1,019	1,044	1,107	1,046	1,109
Germany	922	977	798	884	674	506
Netherlands	825	993	1122	1,130	1,154	1,307
Norway	643	589	713	747	714	706
Denmark	624	697	631	609	523	528
Belgium[1]	487	450	419	444	430	470
Switzerland	456	391	458	478	656	557
N Zealand	371	356	358	263	278	351
UK	258	312	326	285	301	332
Australia	245	244	289	294	278	370
Ireland	147	214	179	357	358	398
Finland	181	149	218	246	238	289
Luxembourg	60	66	56	47	51	56
Iceland[2]	15	14	17	19	30	28
Cyprus[2]	12	16	10	3	3	3
TOTAL	**31,667**	**32,627**	**36,068**	**38,339**	**41,248**	**44,872**

a. 20 countries, listed by rank in 1998
b. Adoptions to approved agencies only.
c. EurAdopt agencies only.

Sources: Selman 2005, 2006.

Between 1998 and 2004 the total number of children received by these 20 countries increased from 31,667 to 44,872 - a rise of 41.7 per cent. The rise has been particularly dramatic in Spain, where recorded intercountry adoptions doubled between 1998 and 2000 and reached 5,541 in 2004, an increase of 273 per cent since 1998 (Selman 2006). Other countries showing an above average increase were Ireland (up 171%); the Netherlands (up 58%); Italy (up 52%); and the US(up 45%). In contrast, several countries have reduced the number of intercountry adoptions, with a decline of more than a quarter in Germany and New Zealand. In the 1980s many countries saw a sharp reduction in numbers and for some European states – notably Sweden and the Netherlands - the current level is below that found in the early 1980s (see Table 3). **– omitted from published version**

Table 3: **Annual number of intercountry adoptions in USA, Sweden, Netherlands and Norway: selected years 1970 – 2004:**

Country	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2004
USA	2,409	5,633	5,139	9,285	7,093	9,679	17,718	22,884
Sweden	1,150	1,517	1,704	1,560	965	895	981	1,109
Netherlands	192	1,018	1,594	1,138	830	661	1,193	1,307
Norway	115	397	384	507	500	488	589	706

Sources: US State Department; Altstein & Simon 1991 Swedish Intercountry Adoptions Authority; Netherlands Ministry of Justice; Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family.; Statistics Norway2005

Standardised measures of intercountry adoption in receiving states

If we wish to compare the levels of intercountry adoption in sending or receiving countries, it is essential to develop standardized measures. One simple standardisation is to relate adoptions to the population size - a crude (Intercountry) adoption rate (CAR). This has been used to make comparisons between receiving countries(Selman 1989; Pilotti 1990; Lehland 1999) and shows Denmark, Norway and Sweden with a much higher rate than the US.[3] The United States, despite the large numbers of intercountry adoptions had a CAR of only 2.8 per 100,000 population in 1990, compared to 11.9 for Norway. By 1998 the Norwegian rate had risen to 14.6 and the American rate to 5.7, but both remained well short of the peak of 22.7 found in Sweden in 1980. Table 4 shows rates for 2004 – with Norway still highest (15.4 per 100,000 population) and the rate for Spain rising to 13.0.

An alternative is to relate the adoptions to the number of births (Andersson 1986, Kane 1993). I have called this an adoption ratio (Selman 1998; 2000), defining this as the number of adoptions per 1,000 live births.[4] Adoptions are seen as in some sense the equivalent to acquiring a child through birth (Andersson 1986). Because of the similarity of demographic characteristics such as age-structure and birth rates in the major receiving countries, the relativities are similar whichever measure is used. In 2004 the adoption ratio in Norway was 12.8, which indicates more than one intercountry adoption for every 100 live births. In Sweden in 1978 the ratio had reached 17.4 per 1,000 - nearly two adoptions for every 100 live births – or equivalent to a rise of 0.2 in the crude birth rate. Table 4 shows both rate and ratio for 17 countries in 1998 and 2004.

Table 4: **Intercountry adoptions per 1,000 live births (adoption ratio) and per 100,000 population (crude adoption rate), 1998 and 2004**

Country	Total Adoptions 1998	Adoption Ratio [a] 1998	Crude Adoption Rate 1998	Total Adoptions 2004	Adoption Ratio [a] 2004	Crude Adoption Rate 2004
Norway	643	11.2	14.6	706	12.84	15.35
Spain	1,487	4.2	3.8	5,541	12.4	12.99
Sweden	928	10.8	10.5	1,109	11.67	12.31
Denmark	624	9.9	11.8	528	8.38	9.75
Switzerland	456	8.6	9.4	557	8.19	7.69
Netherlands	825	4.6	5.3	1,307	6.88	8.05
Italy	2,233	4.4	3.9	3,398	6.4	5.86
N Zealand	371	6.5	9.8	351	6.38	8.80
Ireland	147	2.8	3.3	398	6.32	9.75
Canada	2,222	6.5	5.3	1,955	5.96	6.12
THE US	15,774	4.2	5.8	22,884	5.54	7.75
France	3,777	5.3	6.4	4,079	5.48	6.77
Australia	245	1.0	1.3	370	1.49	1.86
Germany	922	0.9	1.1	506	0.74	0.61
UK	258	0.4	0.4	332	0.50	0.56

a. Adoptions per 1,000 live births
b. Adoptions per 100,000 population
c. Receiving countries ranked by adoption ratio in 2004

Sources: See Table 2

The standardized measures show wide variations in the level of intercountry adoption in different countries. If the UK had had the same rate per 1,000 births as Norway and Spain, there would have been over 8,000 intercountry adoptions in 2004. Halifax (2006) suggests that the low number of domestic adoptions in France is a factor in the high level of international adoptions compared to the UK - and countries such as Sweden and Norway have even fewer domestic adoptions (Selman and Mason 2005) - but the United States has a similar level of intercountry adoption and also adopts many children domestically, especially from public care (Flango and Caskey 2005). Other factors cited as possible explanations of the differences between the UK and other European states include the high cost of home studies - £5,000 – in contrast to France, the Netherlands and most Nordic states where there is no charge (Halifax 2006); the negative attitude of officials (Masson 2001; Hayes 2000); and the past experience of sending "child migrants" to Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Selman 2000:16).[5] There is a clear need for more analysis of the differences in level in receiving States.

The measures outlined above are valuable for making comparisons between receiving States, but Kenney and Ortman (2005) argue that there are other measures which may be of particular value for observing changes *within* countries, e.g. by relating the number of intercountry adoptions to:

- all adoptions
- all non-relative adoptions
- new arrival immigrants
- all child immigrants
- child immigrants by age.

These could also provide an opportunity for comparative analysis. The relationship between in-country and inter-country adoption certainly deserves more attention not only in receiving countries but also in countries of origin. The growth of intercountry adoption in Spain has been associated with an increase in immigration and there is a need for more analysis of the similarities and dissimilarities between intercountry adoption and child immigration.

Which countries send most children?

In the early post-war years the main countries of origin were those defeated in the war - Greece, Italy, Germany and Japan – but from the mid 1950s the main source of children to the United States became Korea. Between 1963 and 1975, Korea became even more dominant, accounting for nearly 15,000 out of a total of 34,568 children going to the US. The next six years (1976-1981) saw 19,283 children moving from Korea to the United States out of a total of 35,229. Ecuador, Colombia, Philippines and India were the next four major sources. This set the pattern for the 1980s, where Kane (1993) identified Korea, Colombia and India as the major sending countries, confirming the picture given by Pilotti (1990) using data from the United States, Sweden and Norway.

In the early 1990s Romania became the largest single source of children for intercountry adoption (Defence for Children International, 1991). In the United States alone the number of intercountry adoptions rose by nearly 2,000 from fiscal years 1990 to 1991, the increase being entirely due to the 2,594 Romanian adoptions. The total number of adoptions from Romania in the months following the fall of Ceausescu remains uncertain, but the DCI report cited above lists a total of over 4,000 children going to 22 different countries in the seven months from August 1990 to February 1991 and figures as high as 10,000 have been suggested for the period from March 1990 to June 1991, when Romania called a temporary halt to adoptions (Selman 1998). From the mid 1990s China and Russia have been the major sources of children.

The availability of data for countries of origin

Because of the difficulties involved in obtaining comparative data from many Countries of origin, I have followed Pilotti (1990) and Kane (1993) in using data gathered by receiving countries to provide an estimate of the relative levels of intercountry adoption in countries of origin from 1995 to 2003. Such figures can be misleading where countries of origin have particular links with other receiving countries not included, but the exercise is useful in indicating trends over time and comparative levels of involvement in ICA. The Hague initiative mentioned above

should eventually enable us to analyse ICA using data provided by sending countries – at the time of writing 17 Countries of origin had submitted statistics including South Africa; Sri Lanka; eight Latin American countries; and seven from Central and Eastern Europe. China and Russia had not sent statistical returns.

Table 5 Countries sending most [a] children for ICA, 1980 - 2004

1980-89	1995	1998	2003	2004
Korea	China	Russia	China	China
India	Korea	China	Russia	Russia
Colombia	Russia	Vietnam	Guatemala	Guatemala
Brazil	Vietnam	Korea	Korea	Korea
Sri Lanka	Colombia	Colombia	Ukraine	Ukraine
Chile	India	Guatemala	Colombia	Colombia
Philippines	Brazil	India	India	Ethiopia
Guatemala	Guatemala	Romania	Haiti	Haiti
Peru	Romania	Brazil	Bulgaria	India
El Salvador	Philippines	Ethiopia	Vietnam	Kazakhstan

a Ranked by number of adoptions from each country

Sources: Kane (1993); Selman (2002, 2005b).

The rise and fall of adoption numbers

Table 5 shows clearly how much change there has been in the sources of children in the past decade, with China and Russia now heading the list. Other sending countries contributing to the rise from 1995 to 2003 have been Bulgaria, Guatemala, Cambodia, Haiti, Kazakhstan and the Ukraine. However, the first three of these are now showing a reversal in growth.

Since 1990 a number of countries have substantially reduced the number of children sent for ICA. Four of Kane's top ten countries - Sri Lanka, Chile, Peru, and El Salvador, no longer feature in the lists for 1995 and 1998 – and the numbers from

Korea have fallen substantially from the level found in the 1980s. Two other countries –the Philippines and Brazil – had left the “top ten” by 1998 and 2003 respectively.

There are a number of possible reasons for such changes in the number of children sent for intercountry adoption. First, for some countries the social or economic situation leading to intercountry adoption has been transformed, e.g. Greece and Germany who sent many children after WW2, or more recently Chile and Korea. In the case of Korea intercountry adoption continues at a relatively high level but the original motivation – the placement of mixed race children following the Korean war – has been replaced by the adoption of the children of unmarried single mothers (Sarri et al 1988; Selman 2002: 222).

Second, other countries have moved to domestic adoption. El Salvador, Sri Lanka and Brazil have had policies leading in this direction. In the case of Brazil this has led to overseas adoption being restricted to older children, sibling groups and those with special needs. The third reason is suspension of adoption by either side, e.g. Paraguay and Romania and more recently the Ukraine as sending countries. From 2003 an increasing number of receiving countries suspended adoptions from Cambodia in the light of evidence of widespread abuses.

A fourth reason is adverse publicity within a country – e.g. Brazil in the 1990s and more recently Russia – or pressure from outside – e.g. EU pressure on Romania and Bulgaria. Fifth, it has been suggested that the number of adoptions from Guatemala may decline or stop when the United States finally ratifies the Hague Convention (Carolina Hope Adoption Agency 2006). The US has denied this as “a false rumor” (US State Department 2006), but adoptions from Guatemala have already stopped in Canada and most European states following concerns over corruption.

In the context of a continuing high demand for children from many receiving states, there is a fear that reduction in numbers from some countries of origin will lead to pressure on other countries to release more children. This will be considered later in relation to Ethiopia and other African countries.

Table 6 looks in more detail at the number of children sent from 10 countries of origin in 2003 to 20 receiving countries(left panel), and compares the totals with total ICA cases received by EurAdopt agencies and the US.

Table 6: Adoptions from top 10 countries of origin to 20 receiving countries, 16 European states and the USA, 2003

Adoptions to 20 receiving states		**Adoptions to 16 European countries**		**Adoptions to USA**	
Sending Country	**Adoptions**	**Sending Country**	**Adoptions**	**Sending Country**	**Adoptions**
China	11,230	China	3,205	China	6,859
Russia	7,659	Russia	2,321	Russia	5,209
Guatemala	2,673	Colombia	1,433	Guatemala	2,328
S Korea	2,306	Ukraine	1,234	S Korea	1,790
Ukraine	1,958	Bulgaria	753	Kazakhstan	825
Colombia	1,750	Ethiopia	659	Ukraine	702
India	1,172	Haiti	656	India	472
Haiti	1,055	India	579	Vietnam	382
Bulgaria	962	Vietnam	505	Colombia	272
Vietnam	935	Brazil	439	Haiti	250
From all countries	41,248	From all countries	16,896	From all countries	21,616

Sources: Selman (2005b).

The annual number of adoptions from China to the United States rose from 61 In 1991 to 4,206 in 1998 and 6,859 in 2003; the number from Russia rose from 324 in 1992 to 4,491 in 1998 and 5,209 in 2003. By 1998 these two countries dominate the ICA field worldwide, largely due to US adoptions, but Russian adoptions also increased sharply in France, Germany and Sweden; and Chinese adoptions in Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands, so that these two countries are also the most important in Europe by 2003. Guatemala and Korea are key countries for the United States but not for the European countries where the number of children from Ethiopia and Brazil is much higher than in the United States. **– omitted from published version**

Table 7: 10 countries of origin sending most children for adoption to US, France, and Spain, 2004 and 2005

USA		FRANCE		SPAIN	
2004	**2005**	2004	**2005**	2004	**2005**
China	China	Haiti	Vietnam	China	China
Russia	Russia	China	Haiti	Russia	Russia
Guatemala	Guatemala	Russia	China	Ukraine	Ukraine
S Korea	S Korea	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Colombia	Colombia
Kazakhstan	Ukraine	Vietnam	Russia	Ethiopia	Ethiopia
Ukraine	Kazakhstan	Colombia	Colombia	India	Bolivia
India	Ethiopia	Madagascar	Madagascar	Bolivia	Peru
Haiti	India	Ukraine	Brazil	Nepal	India
Ethiopia	Colombia	Latvia	Ukraine	Bulgaria	Kazakhstan
Colombia	Philippines	Brazil	Mali	Romania	Nepal
Number of adoptions		Number of adoptions		Number of adoptions	
22,884	22,728	4,079	4,126	5,541	5,423

Sources: US State Department; Mission de l'Adoption Internationale (France); Commissione per le Adozioni Internazionali (Italy)

China and Russia continue to be the largest source of children worldwide in 2004 and 2005, but in 2005 Haiti and Vietnam had become the main source for France and Ethiopia had become more important in the three largest receiving countries(Table 7). The differences between the three countries suggest that more attention could be paid to the flows between individual countries to explore why the United States now accounts for 95 per cent of adoptions from Guatemala but take no children from Madagascar. Adoptions to France are particularly high in Vietnam, Haiti and the francophone countries of Africa. In Italy, Russia and the Ukraine have been the most important sources in recent years and no children were received from China.

Estimating adoptions from countries of origin using data from receiving countries

The data in Column 1 of Table 6 are derived from the statistics provided by the 20 receiving countries listed in Table 2. These in turn are the basis for the 2003 listing of "top ten countries" in Table 5. The listing for 1980-1989 is based on data collected from 13 receiving countries (Kane 1993); and the listings for 1995 and 1998 are based on data from 10 receiving countries (Selman 2002). For this reason I have not given any numbers for the earlier years, as these would not be comparable – however the order of countries is probably an accurate reflection of the relative importance of the countries in the stated periods. The accuracy of estimates will clearly increase as more receiving countries are included and this is clearly demonstrated in Table 8 below, which contrasts estimates with official data from three countries of origin.

Table 8: Official figures and estimates for ICAs from Korea, Brazil and India, 1988-2004

Country	Korea		Brazil		India	
Year	Official Data [1]	Estimate	Official Data [1]	Estimate	Official Data [2]	Estimate
1988	6,463	6,210[3]	N/A	----	1,661	----
1993	2,290		1,655		1,134	
1995	2,180	2,145[4]	991	627[4]	1,236	970[4]
1996	2,080		848		990	
1998	2,443	2,294[4]	637	443[4]	1,406	1,048[4]
1998	2.443	2,348[5]	637	642[5]	1,406	1,571[5]
1999	2,409	2,388[5]	630	601[5]	1,293	1,615[5]
2002	2,365	2,339[5]	N/A	358[5]	1,066	1,231[5]
2003	2,287	2,306[5]	N/A	477[5]	1,024[8 7]	1,172[5]
2004	2,258	2,238[5]	228 [7 6]	447[6 5]	1,021[8 7]	1,043[5]

Sources:

1. Data from Ministry of Health and Welfare (Korea); Immigration section of Foreign Ministry (Brazil).
2. Data from India's Central Adoption Agency (CARA): before 2002 total excludes non-resident Indians (NRIs).
3. Based on data from 13 receiving countries (Kane 1992): - estimates for Korea only
4. Based on data from 10 receiving countries (Selman 2002).
5. Based on data from 20 receiving countries. (Selman 2005b)
6 Figure quoted at Hague Special Commission, September 2005.

Kane (1992) justifies the use of receiving countries as a means of estimating numbers of children sent by countries of origin by comparing her estimates with official data from two countries: Her estimate for Colombia in 1989 was 2,293, compared with 2,399 recorded in Colombian official records – most of the discrepancy being attributed to adoptions to receiving countries not included in her estimate. In the case of Korea there was an average underestimate of 2.8% for the years 1985-1989.

The 1995 and 1998 estimates for Korea are close to those recorded by that country, as the 10 countries used include most of those receiving significant numbers of children. In contrast the estimate for Brazil is about a third lower than their official figures as a result of not including Italy, which takes a large proportion of the children adopted from Brazil (about 40 percent in 1994). Similarly India is underestimated by 20-25 percent as the estimates do not include adoptions to Spain and Italy**.** Nevertheless the exercise can be useful in highlighting trends (see Fonseca, 2002; Selman 2004).

The revised estimates for 1998, based on data from 20 receiving states, demonstrates clearly the importance of a more representative set of countries than those used in the earlier papers by Kane and Selman. The estimates for Korea and Brazil in 1998 are very close to the official figures – and much closer than the estimates based on only 10 receiving states. However, the estimate for India is less satisfactory and the inclusion of data from the additional receiving countries has led to an over-estimate of 165 in contrast to a previous under-estimate of over 250. This seems likely to be partly due to the official figures for intercountry adoptions up to 2002 excluding those involving non-resident Indians (NRIs -a total of 257 in 2003); these were classified as “in-country” and so inflated those numbers. From 2002 India’s Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA) has listed NRI adoptions separately and the estimate for 2003 is closer to the official figure.[6]

Standardised rates for Countries of origin

A crude inter-country adoption rate (per 100,000 total population), which was used in relation to receiving countries in Table 4, is less suitable for countries of origin, where it is the number of young children which is most relevant in assessing the impact of intercountry adoption.

For this reason it is more appropriate to standardise against the population aged 0-4. In this paper I have used a rate per 10,000 population under-5, rather than per 100,000 total population as in earlier publications. Table 9 shows the very different ordering of countries of origin that results from using the two rates. Guatemala and Haiti have the highest crude rates; Bulgaria and Belarus the highest rates per 10,000 population under age 5. As with receiving countries an alternative is to standardise against births (an adoption ratio). This has the advantage of relating adoptions to the number of potentially adoptable infants born in a year. It accentuates the gap between high and low birth rate countries – e.g. Vietnam and Korea – with similar crude rates.

In the early 1990s the adoption ratio for Romania would have been the equivalent of 4-5 per cent of annual births, although the age-range of the children moving in the peak year would make such a standardisation of limited value. Bulgaria has had the highest standardised rate of adoptions in the early years of the 21st century, but this is set to change with the pressures on that country (and Romania) to reduce the number of ICAs in anticipation of entry to the European Union in 2007. Adoptions from Bulgaria to Italy fell from 265 in 2003 to 37 in 2005 (Selman 2007)

In the 1980s adoptions from South Korea peaked at 8,837 in 1985 when the adoption ratio was over 13 per 1,000 live births (Hubinette 2006). Thereafter the numbers declined sharply, following adverse publicity at a time when Korea was hosting the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988 (Hubinette 2004; Selman 2002).
By 1992 the annual number of adoptions had fallen to 2,045, but remained at a similar level over the next 12 years (see Table 8) despite repeated assertions from the government that the numbers were to be reduced and replaced by domestic adoption (Sarri et al. 1998).

Table 9: Intercountry adoption rates and ratios for 18 countries of origin, 2003

Sending Country	Adoptions 2003	Crude Adoption Rate (per 100,000 population)	Standardized Adoption Rate (per 10,000 population under-5)	Adoption Ratio (per 1,000 live births)
Bulgaria	962	12.2	31.5	15.5
Belarus	636	6.4	14.9	7.2
Guatemala	2,673	21.6	13.8	6.4
Russia	7,664	5.3	12.5	6.3
Ukraine	1,958	4.0	9.6	4.8
Haiti	1,055	12.7	9.4	4.2
South Korea	2,306	4.8	7.9	4.1
Kazakhstan	857	5.6	7.5	3.4
Romania	456	2.0	4.0	1.96
Colombia	1,750	1.7	3.7	1.8
Poland	345	0.97	1.85	0.95
China	11,230	0.86	1.21	0.6
Vietnam	935	3.6	1.22	0.57
Madagascar	390	2.2	1.28	0.54
Thailand	476	0.8	0.90	~~0.44~~
Ethiopia	847	1.2	0.68	0.28
Philippines	399	0.50	0.41	0.19
India	1,172	0.11	0.1	0.05

Note: Based on ICA adoption totals to 20 receiving states.

Source: Selman (2005).

Sex of children adopted from countries of origin

Everyone “knows” that Chinese adoptions are predominantly of young baby girls but many of the published statistics for receiving countriesdo not include a breakdown by gender and/or age; exceptions are the EurAdopt Statistics, and those published by Australia, Canada and the Netherlands. However, most of the countries submitting general statistics on adoption to the Hague Special Commission have provided a breakdown by gender and age and this will enable a much a much clearer profile of children adopted from different sending countries. Table 10 below is based on data from receiving States.

Table 10 Intercountry adoptions by sex of child sent by selected countries of origin to EurAdopt agenvies, USA and Canada 2002 and 2003

Sending Country	Euradopt 2002			USA 2002			Canada 2003		
	Female	Male	% Female	Female	Male	% Female	Female	Male	% Female
China	1317	84	95%	5870	228	96%	1064	31	97%
India	165	72	70%	336	127	73%	32	18	64%
Vietnam	96	67	59%	438	328	57%	21	16	57%
Colombia	257	283	48%	135	162	45%	12	20	38%
Ukraine	7	33	18%	510	596	46%	9	12	43%
Korea	102	208	33%	752	1030	42%	23	50	32%

Sources: Euradopt Statistics; US State Dept.; Adoption Council of Canada;

Three major Countries of origin – China, India and Vietnam - had a clear majority of girls in the children sent to all 3 receiving categories, but there were others – notably the Ukraine and South Korea - where intercountry adoptions were predominantly boys. In the case of Korea this may reflect a preponderance of females in domestic adoption, possibly associated with concerns over lineage, or the high male-female sex ratio associated with selective abortion.

Age of children adopted from countries of origin

Thanks to the efforts of the Hague Conference, we now have data on age as well as gender for many receiving States; previously these had only been easily available in EurAdopt Statistics. Table 11 below shows the age distribution for France (2004) and the United States (2002-3), based on the statistics submitted to the Hague, and on the 2005 EurAdopt Statistics. Data by age of child are still not available for Spain and the UK.

Table 11 Intercountry adoptions by age of child placed (percentages): United States 2002-3, France 2004, EurAdopt 2005

Sending Country	USa Hague States 2002 Non-Hague 2003			France 2004			EurAdopt 2005		
	< 1	1-4	5+	< 1	1-4	5+	< 1	1-4	5+
Korea	94.3	5.1	0.5	97.6	2.4	0	97.3	2.7	0
Vietnam	76.4	17.1	6.6	77.5	22.6	0	75.0	22.4	2.6
Guatemala	77.4	17.9	4,7	43.1	54.2	2.7	33.3	66.7	0
Colombia	74.8	12.6	12.6	21.3	55.4	23.2	63.7	27.0	9.3
Cambodia	59.6	36.5	3.9	0	100.0	0	0	66.7	33.3
China	43.3	54.2	2.5	13.4	86.4	0.2	38.3	60.9	0.8
India	37.8	49.7	12.6	0	100	0	23.7	74.2	2.1
Russia	26.3	53.7	20.0	21.0	79.0	0	24.1	67.8	8.1
Ethiopia	14.3	28.6	57.1	24.1	49.0	26.9	61.1	24.0	14.9
Haiti	13.4	44.4	42.2	10.0	73.2	16.8	11.6	76.6	12.8
Ukraine	8.0	60.2	31.6	0	75.4	24.6	0	62.5	37.5
Philippines	6.8	53.3	40.0	12.5	75.0	12.5	25.0	75.0	0
Thailand	6.0	67.2	26.9	4.6	74.7	20.7	6.2	91.2	2.7
Brazil	3.8	30.7	65.4	2.2	27.2	70.7	2.9	48.6	48.6

Sources: National submissions to Hague Special Commission 2005.
EurAdopt Statistics 2005

The figures show a wide variation in the age of children sent by different countries of origin. The placement of young babies is most evident in adoptions from Korea, but infants under the age of one are a majority of adoptions from Vietnam, Colombia and Guatemala, and from Cambodia to the United States.

In some cases the age at adoption reflects procedural rules about the age at which children can be adopted – e.g. Thailand and Philippines, which have few adopted under age 1, or Korea which does not normally allow adoptions over age 3. In other cases it reflects a requirement that in-country adoption be explored first, or a decision about the children who are deemed suitable for overseas as opposed to domestic adoption. The latter is seen most strikingly in Brazil, where intercountry adoption is now considered only in the case of older children, sibling groups or children with special needs.

Demographic influences on intercountry adoption

Selman (2002) noted that the most commonly cited causes of intercountry adoption were the "crises of war, famine and disease, which make it impossible for poor countries to provide for all their children" and that "a Malthusian interpretation would see these crises as demographic in origin". The three "sending" countries which dominated the story of intercountry adoption in the 1990s - Romania, China and Russia - all had below replacement fertility but had experienced "particular demographic pressures to which intercountry adoption had seemed to offer a relevant – if minor and inappropriate - response" (Selman 2002: 220)

Table 12 shows that, as in 1998, the major Countries of origin are not all high birth rate countries facing Malthusian population growth, but include 5 countries with total fertility rates below that of the major receiving countries(Table 13). Only 3 of the major countries of origin had a total fertility rate over 3.0. By 2005 the total fertility rate in Korea had fallen to 1.2, one of the lowest in the world, and the government was trying to encourage people to have more children, while continuing to send over 2,000 a year for adoption. China and Russia continue to be the major sources of children but Romania has now called a halt to all intercountry adoptions with the exception of those involving close relatives.

Table 12

Social and demographic characteristics of the 10 countries of origin sending most children for intercountry adoption in 2003

	Adoptions	Income	Fertility	Mortality
Countries of origin V	**Children sent to 20 countries**	**Per Capita GNI (USD)**	**Total Fertility Rate**	**Infant Mortality Rate**
China	11,230	1,100	1.8	30
Russia	7,659	2,610	1.1	16
Guatemala	2,673	1,910	4.4	35
Korea	2,306	12,030	1.4	5
Ukraine	1,958	970	1.2	15
Colombia	1,750	1,810	2.6	18
India	1,172	530	3.0	63
Haiti	1,055	380	3.9	76
Bulgaria	962	2,130	1.1	14
Vietnam	935	480	2.3	19

Source: UNICEF (2005).

The economic disparities between receiving countriesand Countries of origin in per capita GNI are large; $16-38,000 for the receiving countries (Table 13); less than $3,000 for all the sending countries other than Korea ($12,030). The differences in infant mortality rate are also substantial: 4 -7 for receiving states; up to 76 per 1,000 live births for countries of origin. However of the ten countries listed only two had a GNI per capita less than $500 in 2003 (and none below $300).

Table 13

Social and demographic characteristics of the 5 receiving countriestaking most children for Intercountry adoption, 2003

	Adoptions	Income	Fertility	Mortality
Receiving States	**Children adopted from abroad**	**Per Capita GNI [USD]**	**Total Fertility Rate**	**Infant Mortality Rate**
United States	21,616	37,610	2.1	7
France	3,995	24,770	1.9	4
Spain	3,951	16,990	1.2	4
Italy	2,772	21,560	1.2	4
Canada	2,180	23,930	1.5	5

Source: UNICEF (2005).

In-country and intercountry adoption

One of the many unresolved issues is whether intercountry adoption has hindered or facilitated the development of in-county adoption in countries of origin. Sarri (1998) has argued that in Korea dependence on intercountry adoption has led to a continued failure to develop “alternatives for parentless and abandoned children”. The existing adoption agencies remain dependent on funds from overseas adoption. Similarly, Dickens (2002; 2006) has argued that “whilst inter-country adoption may be used to secure some resources for the development of in-country services, it paradoxically undermines the effectiveness of those services for the children who are left behind” (Dickens 2002: 76). The impact of the virtual cessation of intercountry adoption from Romania since new legislation in 2004 will afford an opportunity to monitor the impact on domestic adoption (Dickens 2006).

Table 14 gives details of in-country and intercountry adoptions in India and Korea from 1988 to 2004, utilising data provided by the countries themselves.[7]

Table 14: Intercountry and in-country adoptions: India, 1988-2004; Korea, 1969-2004

	INDIA		KOREA	
YEAR	**Intercountry**	**In-country**	**Intercountry**	**In-country**
1969			1,190	1,553
1988	1,661	398	6,463	3,298
1990	1,272	1,075	2,962	1,647
1992	1,007	1,293	2,045	1,190
1995	1,236	1,424	2,180	1,025
1998	1,406	1,746	2.443	1,426
2001	1,298	1,960	2,436	1,770
2003	1,024	1,949	2,287	1,564
2004	1,021	1,707	2,258	1,641
Live Births 2003	25,052,000		562,000	
Ratio (per 1,000 live births)	0.04	0.08	4.1	2.8

Sources: CARA (India); Ministry of Health and Welfare (Korea).

Korea continues to have limited success in replacing intercountry by in-country adoption despite continuing attempts by the government to restrict the number of intercountry adoptions (Sarri 1998; Hubinette 2004; 2006). Meanwhile the number of children in institutional care remains high and there is little evidence of the adoption of special needs children domestically or internationally.

The total number of adoptions in India remains low in relation to the reported number of abandoned or institutionalised children. Data collected on intercountry adoption seem to reflect the reality as experienced by receiving countries but there

are many reports of irregularities and of child-trafficking which may not be reflected in these data (Smolin 2004). Efforts to increase the number of domestic adoptions have shown little success, especially in respect of older children and those with special needs for a few of whom international adoption continues to provide the only hope of a family life. However, Dhana (2005) suggests that many in-country adoptions are not reported to CARA.

Case Studies:

Cambodia

Data from receiving countries can also be used to explore recent developments in sending countries which do not provide reliable data on intercountry adoption. The number of adoptions from Cambodia to the 20 receiving countries rose from 346 in 1998 to 625 in 2002 (Table 13). The majority of these were to two countries, the US and France. During the same period there were no recorded adoptions to the Nordic countries, which had long been concerned about practices in Cambodia.

Table 15: Intercountry Adoptions from Cambodia by receiving countries, 1998 – 2003

Receiving state	1998-2003	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
USA	1543	249	248	402	266	254	124
France	1083	95	153	169	278	328	60
Italy	43	0	0	0	0	14	29
Canada	85	N/A	N/A	21	19	22	23
UK	49	2	0	1	0	6	40
TOTAL	2,846	347	403	596	565	626	309

Sources: Selman (2005b).

In 2003 the numbers fell back to 309, following new restrictions on adoptions from that country to the US and France. In that year the UK was the third largest recipient of children from Cambodia. This changed from 22 June 2004 when Margaret Hodge, the Minister of State for Children, announced an immediate, "temporary (though indefinite) suspension" of intercountry adoptions to the UK from Cambodia. The number of applications for Cambodia fell to 18 in 2004. By 2004 the number of adoptions to France had fallen further to 6 and no orphan visas were granted for Cambodia in the United States in 2004. However, the number of children sent to Italy continued to rise – to 43 in 2004 and 76 in 2005 - and there was also an increase in adoptions arranged by the one Austrian agency providing figures - 7 in 2004 and 41 in 2005.

Ethiopia

Until recently the number of children adopted from Ethiopia in common with most other African states was very low, but there has been a dramatic change in the last few years and Ethiopia now features as a major source of children for many European countries (Table 7). In 2005 Ethiopia was second only to China in the number of children placed with agencies which were members of EurAdopt and fourth, after Vietnam, Haiti and China for France. In the United States there were over 400 adoptions from Ethiopia in 2005 and a growing number from other African countries such as Liberia and Nigeria. Madonna's "adoption" of a child from Malawi in October 2006 has fuelled much debate on international adoption, but may also have highlighted the possibility of adoption from Africa, although Malawi had previously sent very few children for adoption. Table 16 shows the change in numbers of children sent by Ethiopia between 2001 and 2005.

Table 16: ETHIOPIA : Countries receiving most children 2001-2005

Receiving country [a]	2001	2003	2004	2005
France	234	217	390	397
THE US	158	135	289	441
Spain	0	107	220	227
Italy	79	47	192	211
Netherlands	25	39	72	**72**
Belgium	38	52	62	**112**
Australia	37	39	45	**59**
Germany	23	19	**20**	**18**
Switzerland	25	58	43	**n.a**
Denmark	22	40	41	30
Canada	15	14	34	**31**
Sweden	17	21	26	**37**
Ireland	0	7	16	**13**
TOTAL (to 20 countries)	**728**	**847**	**1,510**	**1,689**[1]

Source: Selman (2006).

[a] A further 33 and 51 children were sent in 2004 and 2005 respectively to Austria and Malta , who are not included in the database of 20 countries used in this analysis

Conclusion and recommendations for further research

The number of intercountry adoptions is now at its highest ever level in global terms with a rise of over 40 per cent between 1998 and 2004. During this period the growth has been most evident in respect of adoptions to Spain and the THE US and from China and Guatemala, but there has been an upward movement in a majority of both sending and receiving countries. Whether this will continue remains uncertain with the numbers recorded for the US, Spain, France and Italy showing a decline in 2005.

Intercountry adoption remains – as it has always been – predominantly a movement of children from poorer to richer countries (Selman 2002). Lovelock (2000) has argued that the level of adoption is determined by the demand for children in rich Western countries as much as the availability of children in those countries afflicted by poverty and other ills. Several commentators (e.g. Weil, 1984; Hoksbergen, 2000) have argued that "the nature of intercountry adoption has changed over time and that the humanitarian motivation of the early years has given way to a demand from childless couples" (Selman 2002: 223). Some (e.g. Freidmutter 2002) go further and say that intercountry adoption is increasingly a trade in children, and Smolin (2004) suggests that it will probably continue as such, "with a recurrent cycle of scandal, excuse and ineffective reform" until eventually it is abolished as a "neo-colonial mistake".

It important to continue to monitor the number of children moving between countries and to encourage demographers to explore a more sophisticated analysis of the available data. There is a need for strengthening research on what Kane (1993) has called the "epidemiological parameters relating to the movement of children for intercountry adoption". Several issues need to be addressed:

First, the quality of data for many countries remains poor and there is a need to build on the initiative of the Hague Conference to encourage the provision of data in a consistent form from as many States as possible. Second, most writing about intercountry adoption focuses on non-relative adoption and there is a need to consider the possibility of measuring step-parent and relative adoption to identify the countries between which the latter occurs and the extent to which it represents a form of economic migration rather than meeting the subsidiarity requirements of the Hague Convention. Third, there is room for more exploration of links between intercountry adoption and migration – both statistically and in terms of the different experiences of internationally adopted children, child immigrants and second generation ethnic minority children in childhood and later, including research on their ethnic identity and importance attached to their country of origin.

It is also important to explore further the relation between inter- and in-country adoption in both sending and receiving states. For countries of origin this will require more attention to alternatives to adoption for institutionalised and abandoned children, but also more analysis on the extent to which the principle of subsidiarity is being applied in intercountry adoption. The Hague Conference Statistics returns include details of birth in-country and intercountry adoptions and should facilitate such analysis. Finally, the motivation for intercountry adoption is often infertility, but there has been little analysis of how people make choices between adoption and the new reproductive technologies and the impact of religious and other factors on the incidence of each.

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[1] See Collard (2006), who shows that intrafamilial adoptions "represented between 5.2% and 7.2% of all international adoptions in Quebec between 1990 and 2004"

[2] See the 1993 Convention web-site at http://www.hcch.net.

[3] Such a rate could be calculated for sending countries, but would be misleading in making comparisons between states with different age-structures.

[4] Kane refers to a "rate of adoption" per 100 births.

[5] Another commonly cited difference is the absence of mediating agencies (Selman 1998).

[6] The addition of recently obtained statistics from Israel would have had no impact on estimates for the three countries in table 8, but would have added significantly to the totals for Russia (+82) and the Ukraine (+94).

[7] Selman (2005b) looks in detail at the experience of these two countries over the past 15 years, noting the similarity in total numbers of in-country adoptions despite the very different size of population.