

## **TRENDS IN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION: ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM 20 RECEIVING COUNTRIES, 1998–2004**

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The implications of developments in intercountry adoption worldwide in the early years of the twenty-first 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 countries. Also considered are various measures of standardization 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 (1993) and Lovelock (2000). Since then there have also been useful demographic contributions by Kenney and Ortman (2005) on measuring intercountry adoption, by Flango and Caskey (2005) on adoption in the USA in 2000–2001 and by Halifax (2006) on ‘international’ adoption in France.

The aims of this paper are to present a demographic analysis of intercountry adoption between 1998 and 2004; to explore problems of comparability between adoption statistics provided by different receiving countries; to examine ways in which crude numbers of adoptions may be standardized 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 countries; and to explore the potential for a comparative analysis of age and sex of children sent for adoption from different countries of origin.

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### 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, for example '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: 289–290).

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: 123–124).

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 sending 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 countries.

### 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: 277–278), with the best data he obtained coming from the US. Kane (1993) was able to obtain 'relatively complete' data for the period 1980–89 from only 14 countries (see Table 1). Some of these data had severe limitations: figures obtained for Canada were for Quebec only; estimates for Germany were based on four northern *Länder*; and statistics for Spain were only available from 1988. Kane was unable to obtain statistics from Austria, Israel, Ireland or the UK, 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 countries, including all those used by Kane (see Table 1). Data were also obtained for

**Table 1** Receiving countries with highest number of intercountry adoptions, 1980–2004

Receiving country <sup>a</sup>	1980–89 average	1988	1993–97 average	1998	2001	2004
USA	7761	9120	10070	15 774	19237	22884
France	1850	2441	3216	3777	3094	4079
Italy	1006	2078	2047	2233	1797	3398
Canada	109 <sup>b c</sup>	232 <sup>b</sup>	1934	2222	1874	1955
Spain	19 <sup>c</sup>	93 <sup>c</sup>	784	1487	3428	5541
Sweden	1579	1074	906	928	1044	1109
Germany	189 <sup>c d</sup>	875 <sup>d</sup>	836	922	798	506 <sup>e</sup>
Netherlands	1153	577	640	825	1122	1307
Norway	464	566	531	643	713	706
Denmark	582	523	510	624	631	528
Belgium	544	662	183 <sup>f</sup>	487	419	470
Switzerland	616	492	468	456	458	557
Australia	356 <sup>c</sup>	516	247	245	289	370
Finland	40 <sup>c</sup>	78	134	181	218	289
Total	16268	19327	22799	30804	35122	43704
Total (20 countries)				31667	36068	44872

a 14 countries used by Kane (1993); listed by rank in 1998.

b Quebec only (Kane 1993).

c Underestimate owing to incomplete data (Kane 1993).

d Estimate based on 4 northern *Länder* (Kane 1993).

e Number reported to Hague Special Commission; number in annual statistics is 650.

f EurAdopt agencies only.

Sources: Kane 1993; Lehland 2000; Selman 2002, 2005, 2006.

Ireland and the UK, but not for Austria, Greece and Israel. 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, for example Canada, Spain and the UK, they are. Germany and Switzerland present 'overseas adoptions' in three 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 five 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 the number of 'free' adoptions may be substantial (F. Wouters, pers. comm., 2005). Such adoptions should decline 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 countries 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 countries and country of origin.<sup>2</sup> By late 2006, 50 countries had responded to the questionnaire; of these 32 had submitted statistics, although many of these were incomplete. Seventeen of those returning statistics were countries which 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.

### **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 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 intercountry adoption 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 (UNICEF 1999; Lovelock 2000). 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 20 years the US has been the largest recipient of children for adoption, but that Canada, France, Italy and Spain also receive substantial numbers of children. It is shown below that many of the smaller European countries receive greater numbers in relation to their population size.

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

Receiving country <sup>a</sup>	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004
USA	15774	16363	19237	20099	21616	22884
France	3777	3597	3094	3551	3995	4079
Italy	2233	2177	2225	2225	2772	3398
Canada	2222	2019	1874	1891	2181	1955
Spain	1487	2006	3428	3625	3951	5541
Sweden	928	1019	1044	1107	1046	1109
Germany	922	977	798	884	674	506
Netherlands	825	993	1122	1130	1154	1307
Norway	643	589	713	747	714	706
Denmark	624	697	631	609	523	528
Belgium <sup>b</sup>	487	450	419	444	430	470
Switzerland	456	391	458	478	656	557
New 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 <sup>c</sup>	15	14	17	19	30	28
Cyprus <sup>c</sup>	12	16	10	3	3	3
Total	31667	32627	36068	38339	41248	44872

a Top 20 countries, listed by rank in 1998.

b Adoptions to approved agencies only.

c EurAdopt agencies only.

Sources: Selman 2005, 2006.

Reasons behind the rise and fall of numbers and the timing of such changes in different countries 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.

### Standardized measures of intercountry adoption in receiving countries

If we wish to compare the levels of intercountry adoption in sending or receiving countries, it is essential to develop standardized measures. One simple standardization is to relate adoptions to the population size: a crude (intercountry) adoption

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

Receiving country	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2004
USA	2409	5633	5139	9285	7093	9679	17718	22884
Sweden	1150	1517	1704	1560	965	895	981	1109
Netherlands	192	1018	1594	1138	830	661	1193	1307
Norway	115	397	384	507	500	488	589	706

Sources: US State Department; Altstein and Simon 1991; Swedish Intercountry Adoptions Authority; Netherlands Ministry of Justice; Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family; Statistics Norway 2005.

rate (CAR). This has been used to make comparisons between receiving countries (Selman 1998; Pilotti 1990; Lehland 2000) and shows Denmark, Norway and Sweden with a much higher rate than the US<sup>3</sup>, which, 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) 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<sup>4</sup>. 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 19.4 per 1,000, nearly two adoptions for every 100 live births, or equivalent to a rise of 0.2 in the crude birth rate (Selman 1998). Table 4 shows both rate and ratio for 15 countries in 1998 and 2004.

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 intercountry adoptions compared to the UK, and countries such as Sweden and Norway have even fewer domestic adoptions (Selman and Mason 2005), but the US 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 countries include the high cost of home studies, £5,000, in contrast to France, the Netherlands and most Nordic countries where there is no charge (Halifax 2006); the negative attitude of officials (Hayes 2000; Masson 2001); and the past experience of sending 'child migrants' to Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Selman

**Table 4 Intercountry adoption ratio<sup>a</sup> and crude adoption rate,<sup>b</sup> 1998 and 2004**

Receiving country <sup>c</sup>	Total adoptions 1998	Adoption ratio 1998	Crude adoption rate 1998	Total adoptions 2004	Adoption ratio 2004	Crude adoption rate 2004
Norway	643	11.2	14.6	706	12.8	15.4
Spain	1,487	4.2	3.8	5541	12.4	13.0
Sweden	928	10.8	10.5	1109	11.7	12.3
Denmark	624	9.9	11.8	528	8.4	9.8
Switzerland	456	8.6	9.4	557	8.2	7.7
Netherlands	825	4.6	5.3	1307	6.9	8.1
Italy	2233	4.4	3.9	3398	6.4	5.9
New Zealand	371	6.5	9.8	351	6.4	8.8
Ireland	147	2.8	3.3	398	6.3	9.8
Canada	2222	6.5	5.3	1955	6.0	6.1
USA	15774	4.2	5.8	22884	5.5	7.8
France	3777	5.3	6.4	4079	5.5	6.8
Australia	245	1.0	1.3	370	1.5	1.9
Germany	922	0.9	1.1	506	0.7	0.6
UK	258	0.4	0.4	332	0.5	0.6

a Adoptions per 1000 live births.

b Adoptions per 100,000 population.

c Receiving countries ranked by adoption ratio in 2004.

Sources: See Table 2.

2000:16).<sup>5</sup> There is a clear need for more analysis of the differences in level in receiving countries.

The measures outlined above are valuable for making comparisons between receiving countries, but Kenney and Ortman (2005) argue that there are other measures that may be of particular value for observing changes within countries. For example, the number of intercountry adoptions may be related to all adoptions, to all non-relative adoptions, to new-arrival immigrants, to all child immigrants and to child immigrants by age. These could also provide an opportunity for comparative analysis. The relationship between within-country and intercountry 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 postwar years the main countries of origin were Greece, Italy, Germany and Japan, but from the mid-1950s the main source of children to the US 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. In the next six years (1976–1981) 19,283 children moved from Korea to the US out of a total of 35,229. Ecuador, Colombia, the 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 US, Sweden and Norway.

In the early 1990s Romania became the largest single source of children for inter-country adoption (Defence for Children International 1991). In the US 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 intercountry adoption. The Hague initiative mentioned above should eventually enable us to analyse intercountry adoption 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.

### **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 2004 have been Bulgaria, Guatemala, Cambodia, Haiti, Kazakhstan and the Ukraine. However, some of these are now showing a reversal in growth. Since 1990 a number of countries have substantially reduced the number of children sent for intercountry adoption. 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, for example Greece and Germany which sent many children after World War II, or more recently Chile



**Table 5 Countries sending most children<sup>a</sup> for intercountry adoption, 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 For each year, countries are ranked by number of worldwide adoptions.

Sources: Kane 1993; Selman 2002, 2005.

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 mothers (Sarri, Baik and Bombyk 1998; 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, as in 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.

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

In the context of a continuing high demand for children from many receiving countries, 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 is considered below 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, and compares the totals with total intercountry adoption cases received by EurAdopt agencies and the US. China and Russia continued to be the largest source of children worldwide in 2004 and 2005, but in

**Table 6** Adoptions from top ten 10 countries of origin received by 20 receiving countries, 16 European countries and the USA, 2003

Adoptions received by 20 receiving countries		Adoptions received by 16 European		Adoptions received by USA	
Sending Country	Adoptions	Sending country	Adoptions	Sending country	Adoptions
China	11230	China	3205	China	6859
Russia	7659	Russia	2321	Russia	5209
Guatemala	2673	Colombia	1433	Guatemala	2328
S Korea	2306	Ukraine	1234	S Korea	1790
Ukraine	1958	Bulgaria	753	Kazakhstan	825
Colombia	1750	Ethiopia	659	Ukraine	702
India	1172	Haiti	656	India	472
Haiti	1055	India	579	Vietnam	382
Bulgaria	962	Vietnam	505	Colombia	272
Vietnam	935	Brazil	439	Haiti	250
All countries	41248	All countries	16896	All countries	21616

Source: Selman 2005.

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 US now accounts for 95 per cent of adoptions from Guatemala but takes no children from Madagascar. Adoptions to France are particularly high in Vietnam, Haiti and the francophone countries of Africa. In Italy, the most important sources in recent years have been Russia and the Ukraine, and no children have been 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 and 2004 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 demonstrated in Table 8, which contrasts estimates with official data from three countries of origin.

Kane (1993) justifies the use of receiving countries as a means of estimating num-

**Table 7 The ten countries of origin sending most children for adoption to USA, 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					
22884	22728	4079	4126	5541	5423

Sources: US State Department; Mission de l'Adoption Internationale (France); Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Spain).

bers 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 per cent for the years 1985–1989.

In Table 8 the 1995 and 1998 estimates for Korea are close to the numbers 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 its official figures as a result of not including Italy, which takes a large proportion of the children adopted from Brazil, about 40 per cent in 1994. Similarly India is underestimated by 20–25 per cent, 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 countries, demonstrate 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 countries. However, the estimate for India is less satisfactory and the inclusion of data from the additional receiving countries has led to an overestimate of 165 in contrast to a previous underestimate 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, a total of 257 in 2003; these were classified

**Table 8 Official figures and estimates of intercountry adoptions from Korea, Brazil and India, 1988–2004**

Year	Korea		Brazil		India	
	Official data <sup>a</sup>	Estimate	Official data <sup>a</sup>	Estimate	Official data <sup>a,b</sup>	Estimate
1988	6463	6210 <sup>c</sup>	n.a.	–	1661	–
1995	2180	2145 <sup>d</sup>	991	627 <sup>d</sup>	1236	970 <sup>d</sup>
1998	2443	2294 <sup>d</sup>	637	443 <sup>d</sup>	1406	1048 <sup>d</sup>
1998	2443	2348 <sup>e</sup>	637	642 <sup>e</sup>	1406	1571 <sup>e</sup>
1999	2409	2388 <sup>e</sup>	630	601 <sup>e</sup>	1293	1615 <sup>e</sup>
2002	2365	2339 <sup>e</sup>	n.a.	358 <sup>e</sup>	1066	1231 <sup>e</sup>
2003	2287	2306 <sup>e</sup>	n.a.	477 <sup>e</sup>	1024	1172 <sup>e</sup>
2004	2258	2238 <sup>e</sup>	228 <sup>f</sup>	487 <sup>e</sup>	1021	1043 <sup>e</sup>

Sources: a Ministry of Health and Welfare (Korea); Immigration section of Foreign Ministry (Brazil); Central Adoption Resource Agency (India); b Before 2003, exclude non-resident Indian (NRI) adoptions. 2003 and 2004 include NRI adoptions as follows:

Year	NRI	Foreign	Total
2003	257	767	1024
2004	174	847	1021

India's statistical return to the Hague Convention gives 1,098 as the total for 2003; c Based on data from 13 receiving countries (Kane 1992); d Based on data from 10 receiving countries (Selman 2002); e Based on data from 20 receiving countries (Selman 2005b); f Figure quoted at Hague Special Commission, September 2005.

as 'in-country' and so inflated those numbers. From 2002, India's Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA) has listed non-resident Indians' adoptions separately and the estimate for 2003 is closer to the official figure.<sup>6</sup>

### Standardized rates for countries of origin

A crude intercountry 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 effect of intercountry adoption.

For this reason it is more appropriate to standardize against the population aged 0–4. In this paper I have used a rate per 10,000 population under five, 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 five. As with receiving countries an alternative is to standardize 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

**Table 9 Intercountry adoptions rates and ratio for 18 countries of origin,<sup>a</sup> 2003**

Sending country <sup>b</sup>	Adoptions 2003	Crude adoption rate <sup>c</sup>	Standardized adoption rate <sup>d</sup>	Adoption ratio <sup>e</sup>
Bulgaria	962	12.2	31.5	15.5
Belarus	636	6.4	14.9	7.2
Guatemala	2673	21.6	13.8	6.4
Russia	7664	5.3	12.5	6.3
Ukraine	1958	4.0	9.6	4.8
Haiti	1055	12.7	9.4	4.2
South Korea	2306	4.8	7.9	4.1
Kazakhstan	857	5.6	7.5	3.4
Romania	456	2.0	4.0	2.0
Colombia	1750	0.7	3.7	1.8
Poland	345	1.0	1.9	1.0
China	11230	0.9	1.2	0.6
Vietnam	935	3.6	1.2	0.6
Madagascar	390	2.2	1.3	0.5
Thailand	476	0.8	0.9	0.4
Ethiopia	847	1.2	0.7	0.3
Philippines	399	0.5	0.4	0.2
India	1172	0.1	0.1	0.1

a Based on intercountry adoption totals to 20 receiving countries.

b Ranked by adoption ratio.

c Adoptions per 100,000 population.

d Adoptions per 10,000 population aged 0–4.

e Adoptions per 1000 live births.

Source: Selman 2005.

between high and low birth rate countries, for example 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 standardization of limited value. Bulgaria has had the highest standardized rate of adoptions in the early years of the twenty-first century, but this is set to change with the pressures on that country (and Romania) to reduce the number of intercountry adoptions in anticipation of entry to the European Union in 2007. Adoptions from Bulgaria to 20 receiving countries fell from 962 in 2003 to 115 in 2005.

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

**Table 10** Intercountry adoptions by selected sending countries and sex of child, EurAdopt agencies, USA and Canada, 2002 and 2003

Sending country	EurAdopt 2002			USA 2002			Canada 2003		
	Female	Male	%F	Female	Male	%F	Female	Male	%F
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 2002; US State Department 2005; Adoption Council of Canada 2003.

sharply, following adverse publicity at a time when Korea was hosting the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul (Selman 2002; Hubinette 2004).

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).

### 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 countries do not include a breakdown by sex and 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 sex and age and this will enable a much a much clearer profile of children adopted from different sending countries. Table 10 is based on data from receiving countries.

Three major countries of origin, China, India and Vietnam, had a clear majority of girls in the children sent to all three receiving categories, but there were others, notably the Ukraine and South Korea, where intercountry adoptions were predominantly of 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 sex for many receiving countries; previously these had only been easily available in EurAdopt Statistics. Table 11 shows the age distribution for France (2004) and the US (2002–3), based on the statistics submitted to The Hague, and in 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, USA 2002–3, France 2004 and EurAdopt 2005, percentages**

Sending country	USA			France			EurAdopt		
	Hague countries 2002		Non-Hague 2003	2004			2005		
	< 1	1–4		5+	< 1	1–4	5+	< 1	1–4
Korea	94.3	5.1	0.5	97.6	2.4	0.0	97.3	2.7	0.0
Vietnam	76.4	17.1	6.6	77.5	22.6	0.0	75.0	22.4	2.6
Guatemala	77.4	17.9	4.7	43.1	54.2	2.7	33.3	66.7	0.0
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	0.0	100.0	0.0	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	0.0	100.0	0.0	23.7	74.2	2.1
Russia	26.3	53.7	20.0	21.0	79.0	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	0.0	75.4	24.6	0.0	62.5	37.5
Philippines	6.8	53.3	40.0	12.5	75.0	12.5	25.0	75.0	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 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 US.

In some cases the age at adoption reflects procedural rules about the age at which children can be adopted, as in Thailand and the Philippines, which have few adopted under age one, or Korea which does not normally allow adoptions over age three. 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

**Table 12 Social and demographic characteristics of the ten countries sending most children for intercountry adoption, 2003<sup>a</sup>**

Sending country	Adoptions	Income per capita GNI (US\$)	Total fertility rate	Infant mortality rate
China	11230	1100	1.8	30
Russia	7659	2610	1.1	16
Guatemala	2673	1910	4.4	35
Korea	2306	12030	1.4	5
Ukraine	1958	970	1.2	15
Colombia	1750	1810	2.6	18
India	1172	530	3.0	63
Haiti	1055	380	3.9	76
Bulgaria	962	2130	1.1	14
Vietnam	935	480	2.3	19

a Based on intercountry adoptions to 20 receiving countries.

Source: UNICEF 2005.

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 five countries with total fertility rates below that of the major receiving countries (Table 13). Only three 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.

The economic disparities between receiving countries and countries of origin in per capita GNI are large: \$16–38,000 for the receiving countries (Table 13) and less than \$3,000 for all sending countries other than Korea (\$12,030). The differences in infant mortality rate are also substantial: 4–7 per 1000 live births for receiving countries and up to 76 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.

### **In-country and intercountry adoption**

One of the many unresolved issues is whether intercountry adoption has hindered or facilitated the development of in-country adoption in countries of origin. Sarri *et al.* (1998) argued that in Korea dependence on intercountry adoption has led to a continued failure to develop 'alternatives for parentless and abandoned children'.



**Table 13 Social and demographic characteristics of the five receiving countries taking most children for intercountry adoption, 2003**

Receiving country	Adoptions	Income per capita GNI (US\$)	Total fertility rate	Infant mortality rate
US	21616	37610	2.1	7
France	3995	24770	1.9	4
Spain	3951	16990	1.2	4
Italy	2772	21560	1.2	4
Canada	2180	23930	1.5	5

Source: UNICEF 2005.

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 effect of the virtual cessation of intercountry adoption from Romania since new legislation in 2004 will afford an opportunity to monitor the effect on domestic adoption (Dickens 2006).

Table 14 gives details of in-country and intercountry adoptions in India and Korea from 1988 to 2004, using data provided by the countries themselves<sup>7</sup>. 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 *et al.* 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 institutionalized children (Selman 2005). 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 2005). 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 intercountry 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 347 in 1998 to 626 in 2002 (Table 15). 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 14 Intercountry and in-country adoptions, India, 1988–2004 and Korea, 1969–2004**

Year	India		Korea	
	Intercountry	In-country	Intercountry	In-country
1969			1190	1553
1988	1661	398	6463	3298
1990	1272	1075	2962	1647
1992	1007	1293	2045	1190
1995	1236	1424	2180	1025
1998	1406	1746	2443	1426
2001	1298	1960	2436	1770
2003	1024	1949	2287	1564
2004	1021	1707	2258	1641
Live births in 2003	25,052,000		562,000	
Adoption ratio <sup>a</sup>	0.04	0.08	4.1	2.8

a Adoptions per 1000 live births in 2003.

Source: Selman 2005.

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 six, and no orphan visas were granted for Cambodia in the US 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: seven in 2004 and 41 in 2005.

### *Ethiopia*

Until recently the number of children adopted from Ethiopia in common with most other African countries 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 US there were over 400 adoptions from Ethiopia in 2005 and a growing number from other African countries such as Liberia and Nigeria. The pop-singer Madonna's 'adoption' of a child from Malawi in October 2006 has fuelled much debate on intercountry adoption, but may also have highlighted the possibility of adoption from Africa, although Malawi had previously sent

**Table 15 Intercountry adoptions from Cambodia by receiving country, 1998–2003**

Receiving country	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	2846	347	403	596	565	626	309

Source: Selman 2005.

very few children for adoption. Table 16 shows the change in numbers of children sent by Ethiopia between 2001 and 2005.

### 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 USA 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' (Smolin 2004: 325).

It is 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: 338) 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 countries as possible. Second, most writing about intercountry adoption focuses on non-relative adoption and there is a need to con-

**Table 16 Intercountry adoptions from Ethiopia by receiving country, 2001–2005**

Receiving country <sup>a</sup>	2001	2003	2004	2005
France	234	217	390	397
USA	158	135	289	441
Spain	0	107	220	227
Italy	79	47	192	211
Netherlands	25	39	72	72
Belgium	38	52	62	112
Norway	50	46	47	36
Australia	37	39	45	59
Switzerland	25	58	43	n.a.
Denmark	22	40	41	30
Canada	15	14	34	31
Sweden	17	21	26	37
Germany	23	19	20	18
Ireland	0	7	16	13
Total (20 countries)	728	847	1510	1689 <sup>b</sup>

a Countries receiving most children in 2004; b 34 and 51 children were sent in 2004 and 2005 respectively to Austria and Malta; these are not included in the 20 countries.

Source: Selman 2006.

sider 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 intercountry and in-country adoption in both sending and receiving countries. For countries of origin this will require more attention to alternatives to adoption for institutionalized 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 both 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 effect of religious and other factors on the incidence of each.

## Notes

- 1 See Collard (2006: 1), 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 website 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 effect 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 (2005) 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.

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