

# Demography of adoption

**Ernesto F. L. Amaral**

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# Outline

- Introduction
- Construction of adoption and kinship structures
- Global intercountry adoption
- Data available
- Adoptions in the United States
- LGBT adoptions worldwide
- Conclusions



# Introduction

- Review of demographic research on adoption
- Adoption represents a relatively small portion of overall family growth
- But it is significant for demography
- It is a traditional form of family formation

# Overview of data

- Increasing clarity in adoption data
  - Hague Convention on adoptions requests standardized reports from member states
  - 260,000 adoptions annually (United Nations 2009)
  - 85% of these were domestic adoptions
  - About 160 countries have legal recognition of child adoption
  - 20 countries do not have legal recognition
  - 128 countries have some data on adoption





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# Construction of adoption

- For the past 4000 years, non-biological children have been included in families through adoption
- Laws and adoptions safeguarded inheritance claims, maintaining an undisputed lineage for family wealth and social status



# Religion and adoption

- Religious texts and traditions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam share similar concerns about adoptions
  - Adoptions are viewed in the context of moral and humanitarian obligations to care for orphaned children
  - This includes children who are dependent due to financial or health conditions, as well as those whose parents are deceased
  - Stipulations prohibiting adoption aimed to maintain clear lineage in order to avoid incest by siblings who might marry, unaware of their blood relationship



# Religion role on U.S. adoption

- Religious traditions and other factors provided a foundation for the creation of U.S. adoption laws
- Adoption agencies are predominantly private and religious based institutions
  - Baptists, Catholics, Christians, Jewish, and Lutherans
- As of 2017, the U.S. Council on Adoption (COA) listed 167 agencies certified for intercountry adoptions







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# Global intercountry adoption

- Historically intercountry adoptions served as one of many efforts to care for children who were victims of the aftermath of war conflicts
  - During the World War II post war period, intercountry adoptions were mainly driven by humanitarian values along with the post war baby boom child-oriented families
  - After World War II adoption flows followed international crises
  - Wars, famine and disasters precipitated global intercountry adoptions

# Intercountry adoptions growing

- Intercountry adoptions have increased since the 1990s
- Over 600,000 intercountry adoptions were accomplished between 1995–2015 (Selman 2015)
- Half of intercountry adoptions occurred during this past decade



# Hague Convention

- Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption
- It provides for the international protection of children and their families from illegal adoptions abroad using national central authorities to support adoptions in the best interests of the child

# Ethical and legal processes

- Hague Convention on intercountry adoptions
  - The Hague Adoption Convention is designed to provide equal family membership and national citizenship to the children
  - Adoptions follow ethical and legal processes, preventing the exploitation of children
  - The Convention ensures that there are standardized regulations of intercountry adoptions
  - It does not prevent corruption in individual states, with longstanding endemic political bribery



# Domestic and intercountry

- In domestic adoptions the child loses the identity of the birth family
- In intercountry adoptions, adoption is composed with a loss of national origin and ethnic identity
  - For children who are not of age to give informed consent
- Intercountry adoptions are to be considered only after domestic efforts to maintain the child with his biological family and domestic adoptions are exhausted





# Countries in the Convention

- As of 2017 there were 98 contracting parties to the Hague Convention
  - The U.S. joined the Convention on April 1, 2008
- Some of top countries involved in intercountry adoption
  - Have not yet joined: Russian Federation, Republic of South Korea, Ethiopia
  - Have only joined recently: the U.S. in 2008, Ireland in 2010, Vietnam in 2012



**Table 8.1** Hague Adoption Convention membership<sup>a</sup> and entry into force year

<b>Albania</b>	2001	<b>Denmark</b>	1997	<b>Latvia</b>	2002	<b>Russian Federation</b>	
<b>Andorra</b>	1997	<i>Dominican Republic</i>	2007	<i>Lesotho</i>	2012	<i>Rwanda</i>	2012
<b>Armenia</b>	2007	<b>Ecuador</b>	1996	<i>Liechtenstein</i>	2009	<i>San Marino</i>	2005
<b>Australia</b>	1998	<i>El Salvador</i>	1999	<b>Lithuania</b>	1998	<i>Senegal</i>	2011
<b>Austria</b>	1999	<b>Estonia</b>	2002	<b>Luxembourg</b>	2002	<b>Serbia</b>	2014
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	2004	<i>Fiji</i>	2012	<i>Madagascar</i>	2004	<i>Seychelles</i>	2008
<b>Belarus</b>	2003	<b>Finland</b>	1997	<i>Mali</i>	2006	<b>Slovakia</b>	2001
<b>Belgium</b>	2005	<b>Macedonia</b>	2009	<b>Malta</b>	2004	<b>Slovenia</b>	2002
<i>Belize</i>	2006	<b>France</b>	1998	<b>Mauritius</b>	1998	<b>South Africa</b>	2003
<i>Bolivia</i>	2002	<b>Georgia</b>	1999	<b>Mexico</b>	1994	<b>Spain</b>	1995
<b>Brazil</b>	1999	<b>Germany</b>	2002	<b>Monaco</b>	1999	<b>Sri Lanka</b>	1995
<b>Bulgaria</b>	2002	<i>Ghana</i>	2017	<i>Mongolia</i>	2000	<i>Swaziland</i>	2013
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	1996	<b>Greece</b>	2010	<b>Montenegro</b>	2012	<b>Sweden</b>	1997
<i>Burundi</i>	1999	<i>Guatemala</i>	2003	<i>Namibia</i>	2015	<b>Switzerland</b>	2003
<i>Cabo Verde</i>	2010	<i>Guinea</i>	2004	<i>Nepal</i>		<i>Thailand</i>	2004
<i>Cambodia</i>	2007	<i>Haiti</i>	2014	<b>Netherlands</b>	1998	<i>Togo</i>	2010
<b>Canada</b>	1997	<b>Hungary</b>	2005	<b>New Zealand</b>	1998	<b>Turkey</b>	2004
<b>Chile</b>	1999	<b>Iceland</b>	2000	<b>Norway</b>	1997	<b>United Kingdom</b>	2003
<b>China</b>	2006	<b>India</b>	2003	<b>Panama</b>	1999	<b>United States</b>	2008
<i>Colombia</i>	1998	<b>Ireland</b>	2010	<b>Paraguay</b>	1998	<b>Uruguay</b>	2004
<b>Costa Rica</b>	1996	<b>Israel</b>	1999	<b>Peru</b>	1995	<b>Venezuela</b>	1997
<i>Côte d'Ivoire</i>	2015	<b>Italy</b>	2000	<b>Philippines</b>	1996	<b>Vietnam</b>	2012
<b>Croatia</b>	2014	<b>Kazakhstan</b>	2010	<b>Poland</b>	1995	<b>Zambia</b>	2015
<i>Cuba</i>	2007	<i>Kenya</i>	2007	<b>Portugal</b>	2004		
<b>Cyprus</b>	1995	<b>R. of Korea</b>		<b>R. of Moldova</b>	1998		
<b>Czech Republic</b>	2000	<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	2016	<b>Romania</b>	1994		

Source: Hague Convention on Intercounty Adoptions: Status Table (2017)

Contracting Parties that are not Members of the HCCH are in italics

<sup>a</sup>Contracting Parties to this Convention that are also Members of the HCCH are in bold

Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), <https://www.hcch.net>



# Privatization of adoptions

- Many nations criticize the privatization of adoptions
  - It leads to the commoditization of adoptees
  - This privatization is present in domestic adoptions
- Most of domestic U.S. adoptions are through private agencies due to the trend of privatization of social services, including child adoptions
  - The U.S. is the primary nation that relies on the privatization of intercountry adoptive placements



# Privatization in the U.S.

- The U.S. has exacerbated the view of adoptive children as a commodity
  - Preference for market versus state or government regulation of adoptions
  - Privatization model supports adoptions as a market driven businesses
  - Private agencies and organizations have developed or expanded as highly profitable businesses which facilitate intercountry adoptions.
  - The practice of relying on private adoptive agencies is criticized because there is the risk of placement of children due to financial versus ethical considerations



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# Data available

- Demographic analyses require access to data
  - Need global data with standardized information
  - Vital statistics, census, and large-scale survey
  - Accurate registration data on twentieth-century adoptions have been almost impossible to locate
- Flows of intercountry adoptions (Selman 2017)
  - Data from the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) and U.S. State Department
  - Rank sending and receiving states from 2004 to 2015





**Table 8.2** Intercountry adoptions, 2004–2015: Top receiving countries

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
USA	22,989	22,726	20,675	19,601	17,449	12,744	12,149	9320	8668	7094	6441	5648
Italy	4079	4136	3977	3162	3270	3017	3508	2003	1569	1343	2206	2216
Spain	5541	5423	4472	3648	3156	3006	2891	2573	1669	1191	824	799
France	3402	2874	3188	3420	3977	3964	4130	4022	3106	2825	1069	815
Canada	1949	1858	1568	1715	1614	1695	1660	1513	1162	1243	905	895
Sweden	1109	1083	879	800	793	912	729	630	466	341	345	333
Netherlands	1307	1185	816	782	767	682	705	528	488	401	354	304
Germany	744	720	661	783	716	606	513	624	452	288	227	200
Denmark	528	586	450	426	395	496	419	338	219	176	124	97
Switzerland	567	389	410	394	367	349	388	367	314	280	226	197

Source: Selman (2017)

**Table 8.3** Number of adoptions, top ten states of origin, 2004–2015

	China	Russia	Ethiopia	Guatemala	Colombia	Ukraine	S. Korea	Vietnam	Haiti	India	Top 10
04–15	81,650	50,200	31,401	21,512	15,577	14,456	14,218	11,276	11,094	7876	259,260
2004	13,412	9440	1534	3425	1749	2119	2239	492	1170	1067	36,647
2005	14,484	7569	1800	3870	1500	2035	2120	1199	949	864	36,390
2006	10,765	6837	2184	4230	1681	1077	1813	1363	1108	832	31,890
2007	8749	4926	3041	4852	1643	1623	1225	1691	822	987	29,559
2008	5882	4174	3911	4175	1613	1578	1366	1722	1320	742	26,483
2009	5011	4058	4551	784	1403	1505	1395	1500	1210	710	22,127
2010	5429	3426	4369	58	1827	1098	1128	1260	2502	607	21,704
2011	4373	3424	3455	36	1599	1065	950	704	239	627	16,472
2012	4136	2677	2781	11	933	722	818	214	369	393	13,054
2013	3406	1834	2005	26	575	642	227	295	546	351	9907
2014	2948	1057	1086	32	536	610	506	407	572	353	8107
2015	3055	778	684	13	518	382	431	429	287	343	6920

Source: Selman (2017)

**Table 8.4** Adoptee top sending countries by top receiving countries<sup>a</sup>

	Spain	Norway	Sweden	Denmark	Ireland	U. S.	Switzerland	Italy	France	Iceland	
Year	2007	2007	2007	2007	2006	2007	2007	2008	2008	2006	Total
China	1059	156	280	139	33	5453			144	8	<b>7272</b>
Guatemala					10	4728					<b>4738</b>
Russia	955		4		143	2310		466	315		<b>4193</b>
Ethiopia	481	33		39	14	1255		338	484		<b>2644</b>
Ukraine	338				11	606		640	112		<b>1707</b>
Vietnam			54	51	68	828		313	284		<b>1598</b>
Colombia	174	84	39	26		310	29	434	305	1	<b>1402</b>
S. Korea		44	66	26		939					<b>1075</b>
Haiti						190	12		731		<b>933</b>
India	103	16	56	37		416	37	142		2	<b>809</b>

Sources: Hague Convention Statistics (Davis [2011a](#))<sup>a</sup>Ranked by total number of adoptees

# Adoptees as global commodities

- The flow of adoptees to the core nations from less developed nations treats adopted children as desired commodities
  - Adoption by the privileged classes in the industrialized nations of the children of the least privileged groups in the poorest nations
- Separation of children from birthparents and from racial, cultural, and national communities

(Bartholet 1993)



# Push and pull factors

- Push and pull factors in international adoptions can be better understood if we consider indicators that influence other migratory flows
  - Female singulate age of first marriage
  - Mean age at first birth
  - Total fertility rate
  - Percent of childless women aged 40–44
  - Underage five adoption rate
  - Whether singles are allowed to adopt

# Data on top receiving countries

- Major top receiving countries for intercountry adoptions have
  - High average singulate age at first marriage: 28.9
  - High mean age of first birth: 27.9
  - Below replacement total fertility rates
  - High average of childless women aged 40–44: 15.9%
- As the age at first birth increases, there is a shortened effective reproductive life and an increased likelihood of infertility (Bongaarts, Feeney 1998)



**Table 8.5** Top ten receiving countries adoption indicators

	Female singulate age of first marriage	Mean age at first birth	Total fertility rate	% of childless women aged 40–44	Under 5 adoption rate <sup>a</sup>
USA	26.3	25	2	21.5	385.3
Italy	28.4	28	1.3	13	72
Spain	26	29.1	1.3	13	130
France	30.2	28.7	1.9	10.2	71.9
Canada	26.8	26.7	1.5	15.9	142.5
Sweden	32.3	28.2	1.6	13	208.9
Netherlands	29.9	28.6	1.7	17.5	83.9
Germany		28.2	1.3		89.9
Denmark	30.7	27.4	1.8		225.8
Switzerland	29.1	28.8	1.4	22.9	111.3
Median top 10 countries	28.9	27.9	1.6	15.9	152.2
Median major receiving countries	27.4	28	1.7	10.9	109.6

Source: United Nations (2009)

<sup>a</sup>Rate of Adoption of child under age 5 by 100,000 children under age 5

The singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) is the average length of single life expressed in years among those who marry before age 50.





# Data on top sending countries

- Major top receiving countries for intercountry adoptions have
  - Low average singulate age at first marriage: 22.1
  - Low mean age of first birth: 22.3
  - Above replacement total fertility rates, with exceptions
  - Low average of childless women aged 40–44: 6.4%
- As the age at first birth decreases there is an increased likelihood of fertility

**Table 8.6** Top ten sending countries adoption indicators

	Female singulate age of first marriage	Mean age at first birth	Total fertility rate	% of child less women aged 40–44	Under 5 adoption rate <sup>a</sup>	Single allowed to adopt
China	23.1		1.7	1.1	29.5	No
Russia	21.8	23.1	1.3	7	209.6	Yes
Ethiopia	20.5	20.1	5.9	4.1	4.1	Yes
Guatemala	20.5	22.7	4.6	8.7	115.7	
Colombia	23.1	21.8	2.6	11	17.9	
Ukraine	21.7		1.1	8.2	225	Yes
S. Korea	26.1	27.1	1.2	2.8	92.8	
Vietnam	22.1		2.7	7	22.4	Yes
Haiti	22.3	21.9	4	8.2	22.7	Yes
India	19.9	19.5	3.1	5.5	1.5	Yes
Median top sending	22.11	22.31429	2.82	6.36	74.12	
Median not top receiving	22.5	22.6	2.7	7	20.8	

Source: United Nations (2009)

<sup>a</sup>Rate of Adoption of child under age 5 by 100,000 children under age 5

# Under 5 adoption rate

- Analysis of relationship between adoption rate and demographic factors of the sending and receiving countries (Davis 2011)
- Among sending countries: net migration
  - Countries with greater numbers of emigrants also placed more children in adoption
- Among receiving countries: net migration, GDP
  - Countries with greater numbers of immigrants and richer countries also received significantly more adoptees



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# Adoptions in the United States

- Adoption data in the United States
- National Survey of Adoptive Parents (NSAP)
- The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)
- Administrative court statistics
- Departments of State and Homeland Security
- Who are the adopters and adoptees?
- Gay and lesbian adoptions in the United States







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# LGBT adoptions worldwide

- Cultural and societal changes about “family” have rapidly changed in the past three decades
  - Higher divorce rates, older and childless families, cohabiting couples, non-marital childbearing
  - Normalization of legal rights of gays and lesbians, including the right to marry and adopt children
- LGBT adoptions are governed by legislations
  - Country of adoptive parent (receiving country)
  - For intercountry adoptions, also country of origin of the adoptee (sending country)

**Table 8.7** International legality of same sex family structure by year

	Registered partners/legal unions	Marriage	Adoption
Argentina		2010	
Australia		2017	2000
Belgium	1998 <sup>a</sup>	2003	
Brazil	2017		2017
Canada	2000	2005	
Columbia	2009	2016	
Denmark	1989		1999
England/Wales		2013	
Finland	2001	2015	
France	1999 <sup>a</sup>	2013	
Germany	2001	2017	
Greenland		2015	
Hungary	1996 <sup>a</sup>		
Iceland	1996	2010	2001
Ireland		2015	
Luxemburg		2014	
Malta		2017	
Mexico		2009	
New Zealand	2001	2013	
Norway	1993	2008	
Portugal	2001 <sup>a</sup>	2010	
Scotland		2014	
South Africa	1999	2006	2002
Spain		2005	
Sweden	1995		2003
The Netherlands		2001	1998
Uruguay	2008	2013	
United Kingdom	2004		2002
United States		2015	

Sources: Andersson et al. (2006), Amnesty International (2010), Festy (2006), Merin (2002), Masci and Desilver (2017) and Pew Research (2018)

<sup>a</sup>Recognition with limited rights

**Table 8.8** Requirements of top ten sending countries

	Married	Single	Gay/lesbian	Income	Health	Age
China	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colombia	Yes	Limited	No	–	–	Yes
Ethiopia	Yes	Females	No	–	–	Yes
Haiti	Yes			–	–	Yes
India	Yes	No	No	Yes		Yes
Russia				–	Yes	Yes
S. Korea	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ukraine	Yes			Yes	–	Yes
Vietnam	Yes	No	If Married	No		Yes

Source: U.S. State Department 2018

No information on Guatemala



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# Conclusions

- Hague Convention addresses ethical and legal issues to protect children from abuse, neglect, and trafficking
- Intercountry adopters may have humanitarian motives of rescuing children from poverty
  - But private agencies often use adoptions as a commodity
- Intercountry adoptions flow from south to north
  - Sending countries are less developed (exception of South Korea)
  - Receiving countries are wealthier, more developed



# References

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