

COMPARING THE EFFICACY OF DOMESTIC VERSUS INTERNATIONAL CHILD ADOPTION

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ABSTRACT

Domestic and international adoptions allow many couples and singles to build a family or add to an existing family. This manuscript examines legal, economic, and pragmatic issues relating to domestic and international adoptions. The primary strength of domestic adoptions is the accuracy of information regarding child health and emotional development. The primary concern put forth regarding domestic adoptions is the loss of custody should a biological parent change his or her mind about relinquishing parental rights. International adoptions provide greater access to healthy infants and toddlers but child theft and trafficking are growing as a global concern with respect to international adoptions. A nonparametric test provides statistical evidence that the annual growth rate of international adoptions has increased significantly more than domestic adoptions in recent years.

INTRODUCTION

Massachusetts passed the first modern adoption law in 1851, recognizing adoption as a social and legal operation based on child welfare. Today, domestic and international adoptions total approximately 150,000 placements per year and are growing. The purpose of this research is to compare the efficacy of domestic versus international child adoption. This paper is divided into five sections. First, background on legal issues and challenges associated with child adoption are discussed. The next section offers a discussion of supply and demand considerations for child adoption in the United States. The third section puts forth a comparative discussion of domestic versus international adoption issues. The fourth section applies a nonparametric technique to test for a statistical difference in the annual growth rates of domestic versus international adoptions. The final section offers concluding remarks.

LEGAL RIGHTS, ISSUES, AND CHALLENGES IN CHILD ADOPTION

United States courts have traditionally touted rights of biological parents. The rights of the biological parents to rear and have custodial control of their children has been found to be fundamental and entitled to constitutional due process and equal protection (*Troxel v. Granville*, 2000, p. 67). Further, the U.S. Supreme Court has required close consideration when a family association so undeniably important is at stake (*MLB v. SLJ*, 1996, p. 117) and termination of parental rights must meet the

standard of clear and convincing evidence, rather than the normal civil evidentiary standard of preponderance of evidence (*Santosky v. Kramer*, 1982, p. 769).

In a series of cases in the 1970's and early 1980's, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed rights of unmarried fathers to custody of their children. Many states had laws discounting or totally ignoring any right of an unmarried man to his children, disallowing the man from objecting to adoptions or even gaining custody upon the death of the mother (*Stanley v. Illinois*, 1972; *Quilloin v. Walcott*, 1977; *Caban v. Mohammed*, 1978; *Lehr v. Robertson*, 1982). The Stanley court set forth the standard by stating that the "parent's desire for and right to 'the companionship, care, custody, and management of his or her children' is an important interest that 'undeniably warrants deference and, absent a powerful countervailing interest, protection'" (*Lassiter v. Dept. of Social Services*, 1981, p. 27, quoting *Stanley v. Illinois*, 1972, p. 651). However, in the end, the court made clear that the right of the biological father to be heard was not absolute and the states could impose requirements such as putative father registries, obtaining a court order, and even the consideration of an active parental relationship (*Quillion v. Walcott*, 1977, p. 256; *Caban v. Mohammed*, 1978, p. 392; *Lehr v. Robertson*, 1982, p. 267).

State laws govern the parent-child relationship and vary greatly in detail. This alone may be enough to discourage the prospective adoptive parent, combined with inconsistent enforcement in and amongst the states. The ability to permanently sever the relationship between the biological parent and the child is of utmost importance to the adoptive parent. If the laws are not followed correctly or if there is fraud in the process, the birth parent may be able to reclaim the child or, at least, tie the matter up in court for years.

In Texas, for instance, the relationship may be terminated voluntarily through a suit to terminate the relationship or, more commonly, by affidavit of relinquishment or waiver of interest (Dorsaneo, 2003). A voluntary relinquishment by the mother or father must be signed after the child is born, but not before 48 hours after birth, witnessed by 2 credible persons and verified by a person authorized to take oaths and not interested in the case, and a copy of the document must be given to the parent who signed at that time (Tex. Fam. Code §161.103, 2004; *Terrell v. Chambers*, 1982, p. 802). Whether by affidavit or petition, there are extremely technical and detailed requirements as to what the documents must contain, even a list of the child's property (Dorsaneo, 2001). Relinquishment of parental rights may either be revocable for 10 days or irrevocable for up to 60 days (this presumes the baby will be adopted within that period) or permanently irrevocable if the state or a child-placing agency is taking custody. Further, a suit for involuntary termination may be brought for a myriad of reasons, including abandonment, endangerment, failure to support, voluntarily relinquished parental rights, or conviction for certain felonies. Notice of voluntary or involuntary relinquishment must be provided to interested parties, including any person alleged to be the father and, if there is more than one, all must be notified (Dorsaneo, 2003).

This summary of just the Texas statutes on the matter demonstrates the vast range of errors that could occur in attempting to obtain clearance for adoption of a child. A forfeiting mother might challenge her waiver of rights on grounds of format, failure to comply with time periods, lack of credibility of witnesses, or bias of the verifier (for instance, *Terrell v. Chambers*, 1982, p. 802). The parent may find grounds to challenge the voluntary waiver by showing fraud or duress in its execution. Successful challenges have included a false promise of post-termination

visitation (*Vela v. Marywood*, 2000, p. 759), and a five day intensive campaign to influence (*Methodist v. NAB*, 1970, p. 544), though the courts have rejected challenges based generally on lack of education or resources, on a change in the adoptive parents or emotional upset in signing (*Diaz v. Beyer*, 1981, p. 730-31; *Terrell v. Chambers*, 1982, p. 802; *Lumbis v. Texas*, 2002, p. 851). In a Virginia case, a fraud challenge was grounded on the father's lack of ability to understand the relinquishment written in English when he spoke only Spanish. The maternal grandmother had tricked him into signing the forms after the death of the child's mother and he had no way to know he had waived his rights until after the state's six month period for revocation, because the grandmother allowed him to continue to act as parent until it had expired (*Green*, 2005, p. 279, citing *FE v. GFM*, 2001, p. 536).

Many cases, including the 1993 headliner "Baby Jessica" case, involve failure to properly notify the correct father (*DeBoer v. DeBoer*, 1993). In the *DeBoer* case, the mother identified the wrong man as the father. Regardless of the reason for not notifying the biological father, if, by no fault of his own, his parental rights were not properly terminated, "[no law] authorizes unrelated persons to retain custody of a child whose natural parents have not been found to be unfit simply because they may be better able to provide for her future and her education" (*DeBoer v. DeBoer*, 1993, p. 1301). The due diligence in location of the father requirement in Texas and the potential that the birth mother may simply lie about knowing who or where the father is, provide ample room for challenges by the biological father (see, for instance, *In the Interest of KW*, 2004). Other states put control over identification of the biological father in the hands of the birth mother as well, including New York and Virginia (*Green*, 2005, p. 275). One author has opined that the birth mothers are primarily at fault: "The disingenuous and frequently tortuous misconduct of the birth mother is the principal causative factor in adoptions that later go awry, either in concealing the pregnancy from the father or keeping the father's identity from the court" (*Howell*, 2005, p.84). In states where publication notice is required, the sufficiency of that notice may be challenged, for instance, for insufficiency or for being only in a limited location (*In re AY*, 2000). Even if these challenges are unsuccessful, they may mean a long, hard-fought battle over the child in court.

The rights of the biological parents in most cases must be balanced with the best interest of the child. This is the standard utilized uniformly in all cases regarding children. For instance, California provides that, even where the father is positively identified, the court should still consider the age and placement of the child and the effect change will have on the child. However, the courts' interpretations of the standard vary significantly and the argument from the "Baby Jessica" case still remains - that if the biological parent never waived their right to custody, there is no right to pass on to the adoptive parent (*DeBoer*, 1993). The uncertain nature of the standard leaves room for even psychological arguments regarding biological connection with a child (*Howell*, 2005, p. 54).

In some cases, the adoptive parents themselves shoulder some blame for their own emotional distress, where the birth parent properly executes his or her right to revoke under state law or has not given consent, but the adoptive parents refuse to return the child of whom they have had custody. Though, when proceedings were initiated, the child may have only been with them a few days, if the adoptive parents are able to retain custody through the trial, this could turn into one to three years or even longer. The case cited by Schremp (2004) indicates another uncertainty for adoptive parents: the possibility that their state's court rulings or legislation will not

be recognized by another state's courts. Though the usual rule is full faith and credit given to laws of another state, the Colorado Supreme Court in that case ruled that Colorado judges could ignore the Illinois County judge's order.

With cases ripped from the headlines as incentive, many state legislators are moving to cut back on the ability of a biological parent to challenge an adoption, particularly one that has already been completed. In an effort to achieve this goal, in addition to eliminating inconsistencies in state laws and providing some certainty to adoptive parents, the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws finalized the Uniform Adoption Act in 1994 (Green, 2005). The states, however, have not moved to adopt the law as a whole, instead opting to stick with efforts written into their own laws. Texas law, for instance, provides for irrevocable affidavits of relinquishment in most cases, which, as opposed to states allowing only revocable relinquishment, will provide for certainty at an earlier date, lacking fraud (Dorsaneo, 2003). Texas courts further hold that the relinquishment is valid, though signed by a minor (*Coleman v. Smallwood*, 1990, p. 357), and provide for a waiver of interest without admission of paternity, attempting to eliminate the case where the father may withhold consent simply because he does not want to admit paternity (*Ivy v. Gladney*, 1990, p. 832). The affidavits of waiver of interest may be signed prior to the child's birth, providing earlier certainty for adoptive parents.

Many states have adopted putative father registries as a tool. This is likely as a result of the *Lehr* decision, confirming that such registration requirements will be upheld by the Supreme Court, though no actual notice was ever received by the father and information was potentially withheld. Significantly, however, the father did not have any significant custodial, personal or financial relationship with the child in that case (*Lehr v. Robertson*, 1982, p. 268). The state laws require any man who believes he has a child to register with the state. Thereafter, notice of adoption proceedings must be given to the father (Howell, 2005, p. 53). In Texas, the putative registry enactment also eliminated the requirement to publish notice to the father whose whereabouts are unknown, including cases where he is registered, but the correct contact information is not available. New York provides the same, though through omission. In some states, the law is absolute. Though the father may not know of the child, he is put on notice by the fact that he engaged in sexual activity (Howell, 2005, n174, citing Arizona and Utah law). The *Lehr* court recognized the benefit of such registries in finalizing adoptions, as well as providing firm guidelines for fathers seeking children (*Lehr v. Robertson*, 1982, p. 264). The registries should be somewhat effective, except in the rare case that the father was involved in the child's life and did not know about, or believe necessary to utilize, the registry.

Though meritorious efforts have been made to put a stop to drawn out legal battles, and many states have moved toward cutting off a biological father's rights to make a claim on his child post-adoption, adoptive parents should not find much comfort in the efforts. In the U.S. legal system, the possibility always remains that the courts will find any new, untested legislative efforts contrary to parental rights. Cases may be caught up in court and appeals for years, all the while the child growing older and more attached to the custodial parents. There are likely just as many advocates of paternal rights now as in the 1970's who will want to ensure that these are not chipped away (see, for instance, Howell, 2005, p. 54). There is also a movement to gain the right to an appointed attorney in civil cases such as parental right disputes. The argument is that biological parents may not be able to effectively protect their fundamental rights if they cannot afford an attorney. Therefore, it is

argued, a free attorney should be provided as in criminal cases (Boyer, 2005). Some states currently appoint attorneys in limited cases. If this becomes the norm, it is likely that there will be more, rather than fewer, legal battles. It would seem that more effort should be put into fast-tracking the process or working toward pre-litigation resolutions, such as through the use of statutorily required arbitration or mediation. In the meantime, adoptive parents are correct in being leery of the adoption process and should certainly avoid involvement in adoption where the father is not absolutely identified through DNA testing and they are personally satisfied that all waivers and relinquishments have been correctly and rightfully executed. There is often a misguided temptation to avoid excessive discussion in the preliminary stages of adoption in order to avoid being perceived as confrontational. It is usually better to know if either of the biological parents have reservations about the adoption in advance and, in the meantime, record efforts to ensure that the biological parent will not change their mind will accumulate as evidence in favor of the adoptive parent in case there is a future challenge.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND CONSIDERATIONS

Many people who choose adoption to build their families do so after a diagnosis of infertility. Others who are not infertile choose adoption to build a family or to add to their existing family. There are several recent trends influencing the number of children available for adoption. The first explanation is the declining number of women placing children for adoption (Bachrach, Stolley & London, 1992). Approximately 51,000 children born in the United States each year are placed for adoption. In contrast to this number there are approximately a million parents in the United States strongly interested in adopting and over 250,000 prospective parents that have taken concrete steps towards adopting. One of the key reasons for the declining number of women placing children for adoption is the declining stigma of unwed motherhood. Less than 1% of unwed mothers place their children for adoption (Freundlich, 1998). Second, there are a declining numbers of teens placing children for adoption. Over half a million teenagers give birth in the United States each year. Most teens decide to raise their own children or let their families raise them. In fact, the trend with unwed mothers is consistent within the teen cohort as less than 1% elect to place their children for adoption. The third explanation is the declining pregnancy rate. In 1957 the United States fertility rate hit a record at 3.68. The fertility rate bottomed at 1.74 in 1976 and has stabilized around 2.0 in recent years (Kotlikoff & Burns, 2004). Personal choice, demand for smaller families, urbanization, abortion availability on demand after Roe versus Wade decision, and career path delays in the decision to start a family are often cited as reasons for the declining fertility rate in the United States. Fourth, there has been an increase in the use of contraceptives. In 1995, 10.7 million women were using female sterilization, 10.4 million were using the birth control pill, 7.9 million used condoms, and 4.2 million were using male sterilization as a contraceptive technique (Freundlich, 1998). Another significant factor indirectly impacting the supply and demand for adoption is the declining stigma associated with raising children that are not biologically related to one or more parents. Rising divorce rates combined with second marriages have created a positive trend in society at large when at least one adult in a household is not biologically related to one or more children residing under the same roof.

The declining availability of children available for adoption has lead many people to explore open adoption and foreign adoption opportunities. Until quite recently, most domestic adoptions were closed with the birth parents and adoptive family having no contact, and in many cases, not even knowing the names of one another. The current trend in domestic adoption is toward more openness in the process. Open adoption is defined as an adoption in which the birth parents choose their child's adoptive family, and there is ongoing contact. The open adoption process is viewed as an enticement to encourage birth mothers to offer children for adoption without relinquishing complete contact with their biological child. Foreign countries orphanages and institutions are often bursting at the seams with orphans. An estimated 100 million children with no available caregivers live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (UNICEF, 2002). The children become wards of the country because of declining economic conditions and poverty, large family size, wars, death, illness, lack of welfare services, and the social stigma placed on unwed mothers. At the present time China is the primary source of international adoptions at approximately 7,000 children placed with U.S. families in 2004, followed closely by Russia at a little more than 5,000 adopted children.

COMPARING DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

The precursor to international adoption in the United States was the first recorded transracial domestic adoption of an African-American child by white parents in Minnesota over sixty years ago. United States citizens started adopting children from other countries in substantial numbers after World War II. Many of the children adopted were European and Japanese war orphans. Additional adoptions followed after the civil war in Greece (1946-1949), the Korean War (1950-1953) and the war in Vietnam (1954-1975). But war and its aftermath are not the only factors leading countries to allow their children to be adopted abroad. Desperate poverty and social upheaval have been critical factors in the adoption of children from Latin America, the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe over the last twenty years. In China, government population control policies contribute to the abandonment of infant girls and overcrowded orphanages, factors in the government's decision to facilitate international adoptions (Selman, 2000). The Child Citizen Act of 2000 allowed foreign-born adopted children to become automatic American citizens when they enter the United States, eliminating the legal burden of naturalization for international adoptions. Census 2000 further signified the acceptance of domestic and international adoption by including adopted son/daughter as a kinship category for the first time in U.S. history. In this section we describe several broad based issues describing the promises and challenges of domestic versus international adoption.

The financial cost of adopting internationally varies by country. However, the cost is generally between \$13,000 and \$30,000, which range from slightly more to approximately the same cost of adopting domestically. International adoptions cost tend to rise faster because travel to the child's home country is nearly always required at least once, and often twice. In addition, the prospective parents are paying for the overhead costs of two agencies and two lawyers instead of one when adopting internationally. Federal tax credits are offered to adoptive parents regardless of adoption location. Specifically, the Hope for Children Act provides a \$10,000 tax credit for both domestic and international adoptions when families have adjusted gross earnings of \$150,000 or less.

Domestic adoptions have a reputation for being a very lengthy process versus a more streamlined international adoption process. The reality is that both domestic and international adoptions vary greatly across each specific case, state, and country. The home study that most American agencies require will usually last between two and four months, as well as the time needed to find a child and get through the legal paperwork for the adoption regardless of adoption destination. International adoptions usually require time in the child's home country for the adoptive parents to get to know the child and birth culture. These requirements differ greatly from one country to the next, ranging from multiple visits to only a few days of extended stay. It is also important to note that United States citizens are not well received in many countries and language barriers often lead to communication failures, delays, and frustration.

While it is always much easier to adopt disabled and emotionally disturbed children, regardless of whether it is domestically or internationally, most adoptive parents want healthy children. Often healthy children are difficult to get domestically. Many families prefer infants or toddlers in order to minimize emotional and developmental problems associated with long-term abandonment and orphanage care. The limited number of infants and toddlers available from domestic adoption sources results in many families focusing on adopting a young child from international locations. There is a greater access to lower health risk children when looking internationally because of a larger total supply of available children for adoption. On the other hand, many international countries are high-risk locations for physical and mental development problems or HIV and AIDS, especially Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Although it does vary, there are some countries that have lower adoptive parent restrictions determining who can and cannot adopt. Single individuals, homosexual partners, and adoptive parents above the age of forty often face numerous restrictions with respect to domestic adoptions. One particular example is that homosexual couples in the state of Florida are not permitted to adopt. However, if they chose to adopt internationally they would be welcomed. Also, there are age restrictions for parents over the age of forty that often do not apply for international adoption. On the other hand, China has limited the number of single parent placements for each agency to a maximum of 5% of an agency's adoptions.

Domestic adoption agencies and orphanages are usually forthcoming with health, physical development, and emotional development information about prospective children for adoption. For example, the state of Texas includes an extensive and updated health, physical development, emotional development, and intellectual development report on children available for adoption. Children available for adoption internationally are often subject to information problems. Medical records are often scarce in international localities. Information about maternal alcoholism and drug abuse, neglect, and emotional detachment issues are normally forthcoming with domestic adoptions but subject to large errors and omissions in the international environment. Orphanages realize that families are less likely to adopt a child with a history of medical, emotional, or physical illnesses and are more likely to withhold information in foreign than in domestic centers. The goal of the orphanage is to place the child as soon as possible. Eastern Europe is a prime location for international adoptions where there are serious concerns about maternal alcohol and drug abuse having a negative impact on the child. A second information problem with international adoptions is that an adoptive parent could be interested in a certain

child and it is not uncommon for the international orphanage to promise this child to several agencies. A third information concern is that international locations can and do shut down all adoptions in their country for various reasons. This means any adoptions in the process are stopped. Even if adoptions are not shutdown in a country it is still very possible that significant and unpredictable delays may exist in foreign countries. Romania offers a prime example of information problems associated with international adoptions (Selman, 2000). The break-up of the Soviet Bloc played a role in the sudden spurt of adoptions from Romania during 1991. The adoptions followed the 1989 overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu, Romania's President for twenty-five years, and subsequent publicity in the United States about the thousands of children living in inadequately staffed and funded orphanages. The sudden drop in adoptions in 1993 was the result of a temporary suspension of adoptions by the Romanian government. Subsequently, American interest in adoptions declined after unfavorable press reports about health problems, including HIV infection and developmental delays, experienced by Romanian children adopted from orphanages. Recently, American adoptions of Romanian children had been increasing, but in June 2001, the Romanian government temporarily suspended international adoptions in order to revise its adoption procedures. The international adoption moratorium in Romania has still not been lifted.

The single biggest concern with international adoption is the possible ethical dilemma created by a market exchange for human beings. Over the past thirty years over 250,000 children have been adopted from foreign countries. Little is known about the children prior to their arrival in the U.S. and limited research is available on the parents that adopted them and the long-term outcome. There is little doubt that the adoptive parents usually have altruistic intentions toward the adoptive child and are certainly not practicing a modern form of slavery. On the other hand, the international adoption process does generate an exchange of money with several different players involved in the game. There has been concern regarding the illegal trafficking of children worldwide as a commodity. These children may or may not have family that can care for them. The possibility of rural families having children stolen without consent and brought into an urban area as an orphan for adoption is a growing concern in several countries. Citing baby selling, baby abduction, and a seriously flawed adoption process in Cambodia, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service declared an immediate suspension of U.S. adoptions in Cambodia on December 21, 2001. Credible concern that Vietnamese children offered for adoption were bought or stolen led the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to announce a review of the Vietnamese adoption process in 2003. In 1993, the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption was put forth. The purpose of the Hague Convention is to protect children, birth parents, and adoptive parents; and to prevent child trafficking. Over sixty nations, including the United States, have passed the treaty in recent years. Through the U.S. Central Authority, there will be a database containing information on children adopted from other nations and their adoptive parents. In addition, post-placement services will be promoted.

In the United States, depending on the state, adoptions used to be declared final up to twelve months after the adoption decree was issued. This is not always the case, based on numerous recent adoption court cases in the United States there is serious doubt whether any domestic adoption can be considered final once a birth parent changes his or her mind and initiates a custody suit. American parents

considering domestic adoption have a well-warranted fear of having the child they have partially raised taken away and given back to the biological parent. These highly publicized cases have been national news over the past decade and often result in the return of the child to the birth parent. A major benefit to international adoption is that the possibility of having a child taken from the adoptive parent is unlikely to occur.

STATISTICAL TRENDS IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

Is there a difference in the growth rates of domestic versus international adoptions? In this section we compare the annual growth of domestic and international adoptions for the years 1987-2004. The data sources are the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, United States State Department, and National Adoption Information Clearinghouse. The statistical methodology incorporates a nonparametric approach to comparing the growth rate of domestic and international adoptions. The Kruskal-Wallis test is employed because it offers the most powerful test statistic in a completely randomized design without assuming a normal distribution. The Kruskal-Wallis test is designed to be sensitive against differences among means in the k populations and is extremely useful when the alternative hypothesis is that the k populations do not have identical means. The Kruskal-Wallis test is used in this study to test the null hypothesis that the k annual growth rates of domestic and international adoptions are derived from an identical distribution function. For a complete description of the Kruskal-Wallis test see Conover (1980). The specific equations used in the calculations are as follows:

- (1) $N = \sum_i n_i$ with $i = 1$ to k
- (2) $R_i = \sum_j R(X_{ij})$ with $j = 1$ to n_i
- (3) $R_j = \sum_i O_{ij} R_i$ with $i = 1$ to c
- (4) $S^2 = [I/(N-I)] [\sum_i t_i R_i^2 - N(N+I)^2/4]$ with $i = 1$ to c
- (5) $T = (I/S^2) [\sum_i (R_i^2/n_i) - N(N+I)^2/4]$ with $i = 1$ to k
- (6) $|(R_i/n_i) - (R_j/n_j)| > t_{1-\alpha/2} [S^2(N-I-T)/(N-k)]^{1/2} [(1/n_i) + (1/n_j)]^{1/2}$

where R is defined as the variable rank and N is the total number of observations. The first three equations are used to find average ranks. Equation (4) is used to calculate the sample variance, while equation (5) represents the test statistic. If the null hypothesis is rejected, equation (6) is employed to determine multiple comparisons across the k sample populations.

The empirical approach yields a T-value of 14.26 (p-value = .0001), indicating a significant difference in the annual growth rates of domestic and international adoptions. Assuming an alpha level of .05, the empirical results from equation 6 indicate that annual growth rate of international adoptions are significantly greater than domestic adoptions. The growth of international adoptions was approximately 8,000 in the year 1987 versus 24,000 in the year 2004. Domestic adoptions growth was approximately 118,500 in the year 1987 versus 128,000 in the year 2004. Hence, total growth during the eighteen-year period was approximately 200% for international adoptions versus 8% for domestic adoptions. There is a clear statistical trend toward growth in the international adoption arena. Although all of the factors mentioned in the proceeding sections contribute to this trend, it is the

contention of the authors that limited availability of domestic infants and toddlers combined with the trend of domestic courts prioritizing the rights of biological parents over adoptive parents are the primary drivers in annual growth rates of international adoptions. It is important to acknowledge that the math associated with domestic adoptions is somewhat biased by the fact that half of all domestic adoptions are within the biological family. It is possible that adjusting for biological domestic adoptions would have a greater impact on the denominator than the numerator in the Kruskal-Wallis rank comparison, although it is hard to believe the results would be dramatically different given the enormous difference in the annual growth rates of the two populations.

CONCLUSION

The responsibility and reward of parenthood is an activity most adults experience at some point in their life. Most families raise biological offspring but a significant and growing number of families include adopted children. This research discusses several domestic and international adoption issues. Domestic adoptions appear to have an advantage of providing accurate information about the health and welfare of prospective adoptive children. Adoption costs and procedural time are about the same with domestic and international adoptions, although there is extreme variability depending on the specifics of each case and location origin. International adoptions tend to be more flexible in offering children to nontraditional households plus greater access to infants and toddlers. The primary ethical issue revolving around modern international adoption is the growing concern about the possibility of illegal trafficking of children as a commodity. The right of an adoptive parent should a biological parent change his or her mind and initiate a custody suit, possibly tearing apart an established family, is a growing concern associated with domestic adoptions. A nonparametric test provides statistical evidence that the annual growth rate of international adoptions have grown significantly more than domestic adoptions during the last eighteen years. Current empirical research on adoptions is somewhat restricted by a limited amount of consistent and reliable data and information. Recent improvements and modifications regarding adoption data collection should create numerous opportunities for sophisticated research analysis on domestic and international adoptions in the near future.

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