TITLE: **Shifting the Paradigm in the Development of Human Intellectual Capital - A Call for Action**

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Shifting the Paradigm in the Development of Human Intellectual Capital - A Call for Action

Abstract

This paper puts forth a call to action for the organization development (OD) community to understand, analyze, and drive sustainable improvements in the process of adoption through application of OD values, theories, intellectual capital, practices and most of all our capacity for compassion. As we examine the deplorable state of the institution of international adoption, we see extraordinary opportunities to apply the values of OD in order to institute an agenda of ethical and humane practices, with governance to impact the policies and operations through existing agencies and government entities, taking OD beyond the traditional corporate and financial institutions. It is imperative that we in OD recognize that this is where we can make a significant impact by shifting the paradigm and doing things differently, tapping into the compassion that humans have within their hearts. OD is uniquely positioned to recognize and seize opportunities to significantly evolve and improve the foundational pillars of societal change, our children. This paper explores the nature of social responsibility and posits the natural extension of social responsibility to include adoption, through a broad historical analysis of both social responsibility and adoption, complemented with research on the positive effects of early intervention for orphaned children and their ever growing population, in view of which the case for action becomes evident.

Introduction

The concept of social responsibility in one form or another has existed for more than a century. It appears to be only at times of great societal distress that we as individuals and professionals revisit the concept of social responsibility. Whether the motivation to re-examine our commitment to our fellow man is based on a sense of guilt for the fortunate blessings we may have received or whether our emerging commitment is a true altruistic desire to accept responsibility for the plight of the unfortunate, particularly those who cannot care for themselves (young, elderly or disabled), is immaterial to the premise of this paper.

The authors of this paper are practitioners/doctoral students who bring the experience and perspective of an attorney, an organizational architectural consultant and a project manager. We have learned over the years in our respective professions that before any problem can be resolved, one must be aware of the existence, nature and scope of the problem. It is our hope that this paper will serve in some small part to stir awareness, discourse and dialogue concerning the benign neglect of children who are parentless.

To our honorable colleagues, it is our humble request and plea that as professionals, we - individually and collectively - shift our respective paradigms for how our orphaned and abandoned children are physiologically and intellectually developed. We propose for your consideration the proposition that professional intervention into the design and administration of the domestic and international adoption process would inevitably lead to an enhancement of human capital for our future by and through our children.

Social Responsibility

Although there are a multitude of definitions for the concept of social responsibility, we have chosen the most generalized definition possible. That being, social responsibility is an ethical or ideological theory that all, whether an individual, organization or government, have a responsibility to society not only to refrain in certain instances from acting but also to proactively act responsibly toward and within society. Social issues, such as occupational health, product safety and labor relations are regulated by statute. Currently, there are very few, if any, legal requirements for an individual or entity to assume any proactive stance in relation to its human capital (employees).

The concept of corporate social responsibility was conceived and incubated within the business environment. Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, public concern about corporate exploitation, factory conditions and child labor achieved new heights. Labor movements grew in strength around the world, challenging capitalism and demanding radical social transformation.

Industrialists retaliated against the appeal of socialism with public relations campaigns demonstrating that industrial companies were good corporate citizens and indispensable to society. The foremost industrialist and philanthropist in the early twentieth-century was U.S. Steel founder Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie promoted two principles he believed were necessary for capitalism to flourish. The first principle was the promotion of charity, whether directly or indirectly through a variety of institutions. Carnegie's second belief was in the principle of stewardship, which required businesses and wealthy individuals to see themselves as the stewards of their property. Carnegie envisioned the wealthy (who derived their wealth from capitalism) as holding their property "in trust" for legitimate use by society.

In 1953, social responsibility as a theory was beginning to be recognized by academia when Howard R. Bowen published "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman." Bowen took a broad-gauged approach to business responsibilities. His construct was a general rubric embracing responsiveness, stewardship, social audit, corporate citizenship and a rudimentary version of stakeholder theory. Bowen discussed social responsibility as an obligation of businessmen to pursue those policies, make those decisions, or follow the appropriate courses of action that are desirable in terms of society's objectives and values.

The 1960s saw expansion of 'corporate social responsibility' by academia. William C. Frederick (1960) opined that social responsibility implies a public posture toward society's economic and human resources coupled with a willingness to insure that those resources are used for broad social ends and not simply for the narrow interests of individuals and organizations. Frederick's belief supported the proposition that businessmen should oversee the operation of an economic system that fulfills the expectations of the public. The economy's production processes should be employed in such a way that production and distribution enhances total socio-economic welfare.

It was also during the 1960s that opposition to the growing movement of corporate social responsibility began to emerge through the discourse of Nobel Laureate Economist and

University of Chicago Professor Milton Friedman. Friedman argued against *discretionary* social responsibilities by managers in his article titled "*The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits*." Friedman believed that corporate managers are fiduciary agents to public companies as distinguished from privately owned companies. Friedman postulated that discretionary action on the part of management is little more than "theft" from consumers, employees, and owners. Essentially, Friedman maintained that when businesses seek to maximize profits, they almost always incidentally do what is good for society.

The 1970s were characterized by confrontational politics that pitted a pro-regulation and re-distributive lobby against public companies. This confrontation caused in part, a further development of corporate social responsibility into corporate citizenship. Corporate social responsibility definitions began their proliferation and metamorphosis into the concepts of ‘corporate social responsiveness’ and ‘corporate social performance’.

The 1980s witnessed fewer definitions of social responsibility and more attempts to measure, as well as research, potential benefits to the business community. Many contend that this research found that, although the previous 30 years attempted to define corporate social responsibility, the concept remained vague and difficult to articulate clearly.

With corporate social responsibility and its various derivations being generally accepted as part of the business environment, the 1990s emerged as a time of theory expansion and new models. During the 1990s, social responsibility significantly made the transition into alternative theories such as stakeholder theory, business ethics theory, corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship. The trend to operationalize social responsibility and to articulate other concepts consistent with corporate social responsibility theory continued through the 1990s.

Since 2000, many scholars and practitioners viewed corporate citizenship and corporate social responsibility as synonymous. However, there are other scholars and practitioners who argue that ‘corporate citizenship’ focuses exclusively on an organization’s values, whereas ‘corporate social responsibility’ focuses on the external factors associated with corporate behavior. Kimberly Davenport postulates that corporate citizenship is a more practitioner-based approach, whereas the discourse of corporate social responsibility emerged from the academic community.

HUMAN CAPITAL

Although an argument may be made for the proposition that human capital is an essential, if not critical, resource for the corporate world, an equally persuasive argument may be proffered that human capital is a sovereign social policy that transcends all else. The term ‘human capital’ tends to refer to the assembly of skills and knowledge embodied in the ability to perform labor so as to produce some economic value. From an application perspective, human capital is a means of production into which additional investment yields additional output.

One of the earliest descriptions of human capital was referenced in Adam Smith’s 1776 classic An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. Smith spoke to the productive power of labor and human capital as being relationally intertwined.

> *The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgement with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour*.

In more recent times, Jacob Miner economist and Nobel laureate, published his article titled *“Investment in Human Capital and Personal Income Distribution”* in 1958. Six years later (1964), Gary Becker inspired by Jacob Miner, published his book titled *“Human Capital.”*

Current human capital literature distinguishes between "specific" and "general" human capital. Specific human capital refers to skills or knowledge that is useful only to a single employer or industry, whereas general human capital (such as education and experience) is useful to all employers. It is the “general human capital” that is central to debates about welfare, education and health care and which is the type of human capital referred to in this paper.

Studies have consistently shown that ‘education’ significantly increases a person’s disposable income after being adjusted for direct and indirect costs associated with attaining the education. Similar longitudinal studies from more than a hundred countries with different cultures and economic systems demonstrate that the earnings of the more-educated individual are almost always well above average, although the gains are generally larger in less developed countries.

As personally experienced by nearly everyone, parents greatly influence, for better or worse, the knowledge, skills, health and core values of their children. Opportunities provided by a viable economy, along with extensive government and charitable support of education, enable the majority of those who come from lower-income backgrounds to do reasonably well in the labor market. It has also been noted that the continuing growth in *per capita* incomes of many countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is partly due to the expansion of scientific and technical knowledge that serves to raise the productivity of labor and other inputs of production. The increasing reliance of economies on sophisticated knowledge greatly enhances the value of general human capital.

The Scope of What Is and Is To Be

Demographically, 1965-1970 witnessed the global population growth rate reach its all time peak of 2.1% per annum. By 2004, the global population growth rate decreased to 1.2% per annum. This decrease in growth may be contributed in part to the global fertility rate falling approximately 54% from 5 children per woman/lifetime in 1950–1955 to 2.7 children in 2000–2005. Nevertheless, the United Nations Population Division, World Bank and United States Census Bureau project the world’s population to grow from its current 6.3 billion inhabitants to 8.9 billion by 2050. In an attempt to appreciate the significance of what is likely to come, it took from the beginning of time until the year 1800 for the world to achieve its billionth inhabitant. At the current growth rate, the addition of a billion inhabitants is projected to take only 13 to 14 years, in comparison to 1,800 years.

Virtually all of the anticipated increase in population is and will be in the economically less-developed regions of the world. More than half of the annual population increase currently occurs in six countries: India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and the United States. Of the total annual increase, the United States accounts for only 4% of the increase.

In the year 2000, approximately 1.2 billion inhabitants lived in the world's economically wealthy regions. The remaining 4.9 billion inhabitants lived in the economically poor, less developed regions of our planet. Currently, the more affluent regions reflect a population increase of 0.25% per annum, whereas the world's poor regions are increasing their population six times faster (1.46% annually). It is projected that thirty of the world's economically developed countries are expected to have lower populations in 2050 than today. For example, the Russian and Italian regions will experience population shrinkage of 29% and 22%, respectively. By contrast, the population of today's poorer countries is projected to rise from 4.9 billion in 2000 to 7.7 billion in 2050.

Between 2030 and 2035, fertility in the world's developed regions is anticipated to fall to its replacement level, causing a reduction in population. Overall, the world's population will increase because of the less developed countries offsetting the richer countries' falling fertility rate. According to these projections, the ratio of population density in the poor countries to that in the rich countries is projected to rise from 2.6 in 2000 to 4.0 in 2050.

THE HISTORY OF ADOPTION

Adoption is generally understood to be the lawful act of placing a child with parents other than those to whom they were born. A judicial order of adoption effectively serves to terminate all biological parental responsibilities and rights, while transferring by operation of law those same responsibilities and rights to the adoptive parents. Underlying the concept of adoption is the presumption of permanency.

From American colonial times through the mid-nineteenth century, the transference of children to substitute parents occurred with little or no formality. The concept of adoption had not been legally recognized in the United States until the 1850's. "It frequently happens that the child who was taken as a servant secures a place in the affections of the family taking him, and so the connection ceases to be a mercenary one" (Massachusetts State Board of Charities, circa 1883). It was in 1851 when the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted the nation’s first adoption statute.[1] This statute required judicial approval, consent of the child’s parent or guardian, and a finding that the prospective adoptive family is of sufficient ability to raise the child or children. The statutory elements of consent, investigation and judicial approval lie as the core elements of adoption statutes and processes across the nation.

The root reason behind a child being informally placed elsewhere was generally a matter of economics. The specific reasons for the informal placement of a child varied from mere survival of the family unit to the promulgation of wealth. Prior to the industrial era, there were no formal procedures other than the Church for the recordation of births, changes and deaths. The lack of orderly documentation facilitated informal adoptive arrangements. In one fashion or another, many informal placements were economically motivated. In rural America, farm families had a significant need for child labor. This need in turn caused an increase in the informal placement of children within different communal and genealogical family lines.

Rapid immigration from nations throughout the world, in conjunction with the aftermath of the American Civil War, resulted in unprecedented overcrowding of orphanages and foundling homes in the mid-nineteenth century. The advent of industrialization caused massive migration to major cities where families were often unable to support or care for their children. This period of economic development further enhanced continuation of informal placements.

Since indentured servitude existed into the latter half of the 1800's, informal adoptive placements were viewed as a *quid pro quo* chattel transaction. There was no distinction between child and adult. In exchange for food, housing, medical care and, if placed with a well-to-do family, an education, the servant child provided labor until adulthood. In 1859, a Protestant Minister Charles Loring Brace[1] articulated his solution of orphanage overcrowding in “The Best Method of Disposing of Our Pauper and Vagrant Children.” This publication commenced the “Orphan Train” movement. Orphan trains were used to transport an estimated 200,000 children from the urban centers of the East to the nation’s rural regions. These children were not generally adopted, but rather indentured to families that took them in. As in times past, some children were raised as members of the family while others were used as farm laborers and household servants. The sheer size of the displacement - the largest migration of children in history - and the degree of exploitation that occurred as a result gave rise to new agencies and a series of laws that promoted adoption arrangements rather than indenture. Moreover, the informal nature of child rearing denied informally placed children the lawful right to share in the estate of the new parents.

Notwithstanding the humanity or lack thereof surrounding the Orphan Trains, adoption has been called the quintessential American institution, embodying faith in social engineering and mobility. While it is generally accepted that the modern form of adoption emerged in the United States, the practice of adoption precedes the Roman Codex of Justinianus. Ancient adoption practices were utilized differently from the economic basis described above. These adoptions were used as a legal instrument to strengthen political ties between wealthy families and provide male heirs to managqe noble’s estates. History has documented that many of Rome's emperors were adopted sons. Roman legal records indicate that some children were taken in by families and raised as one of their own. For the unfortunate and abandoned, they were literally enslaved rather than being adopted as we know the term today. In fact, abandoned children are thought to have composed a significant percentage of the Roman Empire’s slave supply. Other ancient civilizations, notably India and China, similarly used a variegated form of adoption. Unlike the economic and altruistic reasons cited above, informal placement practices were implemented to ensure the continuity of cultural and religious practices rather than the creation of new families.

The Middle Ages engendered a dark time in the evolution of adoption. Celtic, Germanic and Slavic cultures dominated Europe following the decline of the Roman Empire. The nobility of these cultures denounced the practice of adoption. Bloodlines in medieval society were paramount; a ruling dynasty that lacked a natural-born heir apparent was replaced by a new family, a stark contrast to Roman traditions. The evolution of European and English Common Law incorporated this aversion to adoption.

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[1] Charles Loring Brace was founder of the New York Children’s Aid Society in 1853.

Without support from each culture's respective nobility, the practice of adoption gradually devolved into the simplistic abandonment of children. With a large number of children left on the doorstep of the community's churches, the Catholic Church initially, with other denominations subsequently, began to find new homes for the abandoned children, thus inspiring the Church to take on the role of adopter. Eventually, the abandonment of society's children commenced a shift towards institutionalization of child-care. The creation of hospital and orphanage infrastructures is the ironic result of cold-hearted self-serving human acts.

ADOPTION STATISTICS

It is estimated that one million children in the United States live with adoptive parents, and that 2% to 4% of American families include at least one adopted child. From the 1950's through 1970's, related adoptions increased three-fold. The most common form of related adoptions involve stepparents. During this same time period, the number of unrelated adoptions also increased three-fold. Starting in the early 1980's to this date, both related and unrelated adoptions have declined and remain relatively constant.

Adoptive placements over the last four decades have undergone significant change. In the 1950's, 18% of unrelated adoptions were arranged through public agencies, 29% were arranged through private agencies, and 53% were independently arranged, *e.g.*, doctor, attorney and clergy.

Public agency adoptions more than doubled from 18% in the 1950's to 39% in the 1970's with the percentage remaining fairly stable since then. From the early 1960's through the early 1970's, private agency adoptions also increased to 40% of all unrelated adoptions. Since 1973, the percentage of private agency adoptions has declined to 29% of all unrelated adoptions. Independent adoptions have consistently decreased over the years. This decline may be contributed in part to concerns over black market adoptions.

Internationally, the U.S. Department of State reported that Americans formalized 15,583 intra-country adoptions for the fiscal year 1998. For fiscal year 2008, there were 17,433 intra-country adoptions, with the high-count year being 2004 with 22,884 adoptions. The significance, or perhaps insignificance, of formalized inter-country adoptions can only be appreciated in the context that there are 9.5 million children available for adoption in under-developed world orphanages. Yet, in 2001, there were only 34,000 children -- mainly from Asia, central and eastern Europe -- adopted in Western Europe and North America, less than one-half of one percent (0.4%) of all available children.

With such a large supply of children available for adoption, in conjunction with the appetites of parents for adoptable children, an environment was created that caused others to seize the opportunity to trade/sell children for cash. In recent years, moratoriums have been imposed on or severely restricted adoptions from Vietnam, Cambodia, Romania, Peru, Brazil, El Salvador and Paraguay, which only succeeds in denying orphans a healthy environment while simultaneously shifting the demand for adoption to new countries such as Russia and China. In an attempt to stifle proliferation of child trafficking and exploitation, the Hague Convention introduced a treaty titled "Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption"[2] that is presently in force in 75 countries as of August 2008.

Adoption Impediments

Many barriers to adoption exist. However, for purposes of brevity, we briefly discussed the most commonly encountered pre- and post-natal risk factors. One post-natal risk factor is the age of the available child. As children grow older, it becomes increasingly difficult to locate adoptive families and harder to keep them adopted. Researchers have consistently concluded that as older children arrive at and start to pass eligibility for adoption, they become less likely to be adopted and stay adopted. Although research has failed to identify any difference between adopted and non-adopted children in infancy, toddler-hood and during the preschool years, it is when the child reaches 5 to 7 years of age that significant differences between adoptee and non-adoptee children begin to emerge. Most children at this age start to understand the meaning and implications of being adopted. As the child's knowledge of

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[2] The guidelines and procedures that are set forth in the Hague Convention are also for the protection of birth families, as well as adoptive families. Part of the Convention's guidelines ensures that one Central Authority is in place in each country so that adoptive parents get the most accurate information regarding adoption. The Department of State is the U.S. Central Authority for the Convention. According to the State Department's web site, implementing the principles of the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption is the State Department's top priority at this time. The United States signed the Convention on March 31, 1994 and the U.S. Legislature ratified the Hague

adoption deepens, so do his or her feelings of anxiety and confusion about his or her family status.

The time that it takes for a child to wait for an adoptive family is difficult to accurately determine. Factors associated with the timeliness of transition within the adoption process remain largely unstudied. Reform and refinement in policy and practice can only be identified and measured against the capacity to improve the timeliness of adoption -- particularly for those children that come from abused and neglected homes, who are beyond the infant and toddler stage, and those with known or potential medical conditions.

Adding to the ‘wait’ time in locating a suitable adoptive family is the time that it takes for a prospective adoptive family to move through the adoption process and be authorized by the government and legalized by the courts. An understanding of the factors associated with the wait and process delays should facilitate efforts to instill in the child a sense of permanence.

Affecting the time it takes to proceed to a state of legalization are a variety of factors that include the child’s gender, ethnicity, medical, behavioral, and emotional conditions, whether there is a history of abuse and neglect in the child’s past, the child’s placement history of living in multiple homes; and substance exposure at birth, as well as whether the adoptive parent is single, whether the adoptive parent is related to the child by blood or marriage, and the adoptive parents' ethnicity. In the legalization phase, the various factors that impact timing include the age of the child at the time of adoption, the adoptive family's annual income, and whether there will be a governmental subsidy or other financial assistance.

In addition to the adoptee’s personal characteristics, delays in reaching a state of legalization may also be institutionally caused. For example, the U.S. Interstate Compact Act was created in 1960 to facilitate adoption across state lines, but in application the Act has delayed, if not prevented, placements.

Adverse pre-natal experiences are linked to increased developmental problems during childhood. Heightened maternal stress, poor maternal nutrition, and inadequate medical care,

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Convention on December 12, 2007. Thereafter, the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption entered into force for the United States on April 1, 2008.

as well as fetal exposure to alcohol, drugs, and other teratogenic agents are examples of that affect.

Another adoption barrier conspicuously absent from professional literature is the economics of adoption. The proposition that demand for adoption services is similar to demand for other goods and services is a view generally accepted by those within the adoption forum. In application, the proposition equates into the position that if the cost of adoption services is low, then more prospective adoptive families will seek to adopt a waiting child. Conversely, if the cost of adoption services is high, then fewer prospective adoptive families will seek to adopt a waiting child.

Adoption costs should and must also include the value of time, such as the time to complete the requisite parental paperwork, meetings with professionals and wait time, which often takes years. Excluding non-monetary expenditures, the cost for adoption services within the United States for the year ending 2008 can exceed $40,000.

RANGE OF ADOPTION MONETARY COSTS

Type of Adoption	**USD**
Foster Care	$0 - $2,500
Licensed Private Agency	$5,000 - $40,000+
Independent	$8,000 - $40,000+
Facilitated/Unlicensed	$5,000 - $40,000+
Inter-country	$7,000 - $30,000

The above referenced range of adoption costs is noteworthy in that the spread between minimum and maximum cost can exceed 800%. Utilizing the theory of consumer behavior and classic economic principles, a potential solution to the ever-increasing number of children waiting to be adopted is to reduce costs and/or provide financial subsidies.[3]

THE IMPACT OF ADOPTION

[3] Pursuant to the 1997 U.S. Adoption and Safe Families Act, states acquired additional funding for child welfare services. In 2002, the United States Government Accounting Office reported that 13 of 46 states used some or all of their funds to hire or contract additional social work staff. Whether the Adoption and Safe Families Act has been effective in its objective has yet to be determined.

Historically, adoption has been viewed as a highly successful societal solution for the problems confronting children whose biological parents could not or would not provide for them. Professional literature overwhelmingly supports the benefits associated with adoption. This is particularly apropos when considered in the light of alternative care-giving options such as institutional orphanages and foster care. Over the past three decades, however, a sizable body of empirical, clinical and theoretical writings has emerged focusing on the complexities of family life and the psychological risk associated with adoption.

It has been, and continues to be, argued that the behavior of a child primarily reflects the context in which the behavior occurs. When the environment changes from good to bad and from bad to good, the child's behavior changes correspondingly, all without a trace being left of the earlier experience. In contrast, it has also been argued that each stage of psycho-social development is influenced by the previous stage. As an illustration, basic trust emerging from close relationships with adults during infancy influences development in toddler-hood.

Research has found that at the age of 7, an easy temperament in early childhood is related to positive social development. Another factor that influences favorable social development is strong levels of maternal sensitivity (infant attachment security) during early to middle (inclusive) childhood. It is believed that the presence of two or more protective factors is strongly correlated to favorable social development and adjustment. The converse will also be true - that children who encountered more than two risk factors, such as difficult temperament and stressful life events, are illustrative of poor social development and adjustment.

In one study, one hundred sixty (160) internationally adopted children were tracked from infancy to age 14. The study revealed that social development in adolescence is a product of both past experiences and concurrent circumstances. Many researchers and scholars are starting to conclude that personal development is the interplay between a changing environment and a changing individual. However, early experiences and adaptations do not fade away; instead, past experiences indirectly shape future adaptation through their influences on a child's intermediary developmental steps.

A sizeable U.S. health survey found that approximately 2% of the population of children under 18 years of age are being raised by non-biological relatives (non-related adoptees). Yet, non-related adoptees constitute approximately 5% of the children referred to outpatient mental health clinics with a disproportionate rate of psychological problems. A review of the literature provides support for many studies which demonstrate that adopted children have been shown to manifest a higher than expected rate of acting out behaviors, including aggression, oppositional and defiant behaviors, hyperactivity, stealing, lying, running away, and other antisocial behavior. In addition to these disruptive behaviors, adoptees in clinical settings have been found to manifest a higher rate of personality disorders (antisocial personality and borderline personality) than non-adoptees, as well as a higher rate of substance abuse, eating disorders, learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

A growing body of research supports the view that at 6-7 years of age (school age), adoptees manifest different patterns of adjustment than non-adoptees. In one study, it was noted that adopted children experienced a higher incidence of conduct disorders, personality problems, and socialized delinquency than non-adopted children. Longitudinal data from a family study in the State of Delaware produced valuable information concerning psychological risk associated with adoption. At 5 years of age, adopted children were rated as more fearful, less confident, and less task motivated than were non-adopted children. During the elementary school years, this pattern was even more apparent.

Finally, numerous studies undertaken in several countries have shown that, for children living in disadvantaged families, adverse experiences during infancy can lead to intellectual impairment and, more specifically, to verbal deficiency. Research findings have shown that the adoptive environment for children adopted after 4 years of age is effective in boosting low IQs. Children who had low pre-adoption IQs and were adopted between the ages of 4 and 6 had much higher scores, an average IQ gain of 13.9 to 19.5 points at adolescence.

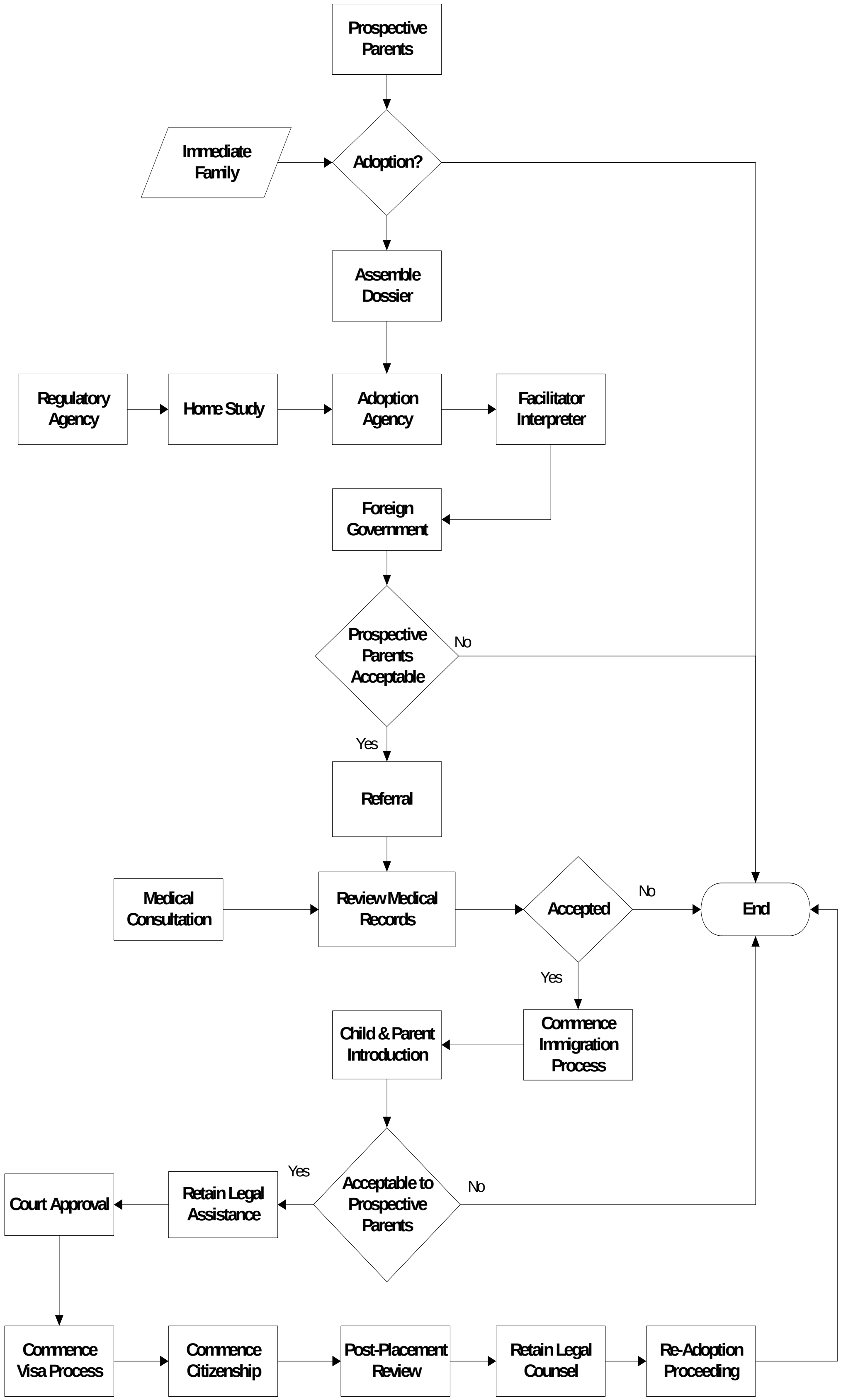
ADOPTION PROCESS

On paper, the act of adopting appears to be relatively straightforward. As a generalized illustration, the prospective parents locate an adoption agency and submit an application to adopt. Within 6 – 9 months, a home-study report is prepared and submitted to the adoption agency. A typical home-study addresses the prospective parents' autobiographies, family history, community, schools, neighborhoods, health, finances, criminal and employment histories, references and motivations. Presuming acceptability of the submitted home-study, the prospective parents commence the child's immigration process while collecting a significant amount of documentation (dossier) in conformity with the requirements of the country of adoption. At the sole discretion of the foreign country, a child is referred to the prospective parents for adoption consideration. Medical records are generally transmitted with the child referrals. It is strongly recommended for prospective parents to secure medical and psychological expert consultation. This component of the adoption process may take as little as 3 months and as much as 3 years or more.

It is at this juncture of the process when prospective parents commence their journey through a morass of procedural mazes with regard to acceptance of the referral. Travel to the child's country is arranged for meeting the child and to commence the process of adoption with the child's Immigration Visa being sought from the applicable Embassy. Some adoption agencies require three or more trips to the child's country. When the child arrives at his or her new home, he or she will become the subject of a post-placement supervision process with the home study agency. Thereafter, a legal adoption proceeding is commenced in the jurisdiction in which the child is domiciled. Upon finalization of the adoption proceeding, an Adoption Decree (Judgment) is entered and a birth certificate is issued.

In reality, the international adoption process is highly inefficient and fraught with delay and uncertainty. Complexity of the mechanics in navigating a successful adoption may be examined in the context of the number and variety of participatory stakeholders in the process. At the top of the stakeholder list are the prospective parents and their immediate families (parents and siblings). Next is the adoption agency and applicable staff. Two governments are involved, along with their respective regulatory components; e.g., ministerial departments and courts. Then an army of professionals (doctors, attorneys, judges, psychologists, interpreters, facilitators and social workers) emerges on both sides of the border. Other than the adoptee, there are at a minimum 25 stakeholders, all with competing interests, diverse objectives and levels of authority. Figure 1 provides a visual illustration of the current flow of processes.

FIGURE 1: Adoption Process



A Call to Action

In summary, the previous pages have tendered an argument for OD to apply energy and rigor to addressing the institution of international adoption. Regardless of one's personal view concerning social responsibility, the adoption process is appropriately worthy of further exploration and promotion. Those of us in OD are obligated to live up to our values under a humanistic framework, including a concern for inquiry and science, democracy, and being helpful. The core of OD is aligned to optimize both human benefits and production objectives. We cannot proceed any longer with a clear conscience and ignore the plight of these children left to suffer throughout the world. We must hold our corporate institutions to high standards of appropriate ethical values.

Ingrained in society since the beginning of man's time on Earth is the instinctual desire to perpetuate and sustain, much like an organization's desire for formation and sustainability. Medical advances and treatment have extended the physical life of man, which in turn has expanded man's collective intellectual capital. However, the inequality of resource distribution throughout the world is causing the diminution of human capital in the form of orphaned children.

Professional literature overwhelmingly supports the fundamental premise that the existence of the family unit improves the quality of society's general human capital. Yet, the very process of facilitating an adoptive family unit discourages family unit formation; therein lie the gravitas of this paper. We as scholars and practitioners are exposed to the public, quasi-public and private sectors within the paradigm of international and domestic adoption. Within each of the three sectors, there are a number of stakeholders who could each benefit from critical analysis and performance enhancement. Each critical analysis may be examined from a sociological, psychological, developmental, organizational, cultural, economic, moral, political or legal perspective, to name a few. The various interactions within and between the three sectors, along within each of the stakeholders, may be examined and explored. Opportunities exist for those in corporate OD to partner with the corporate social responsibility departments to leverage capacity of OD to assist adoption agencies and government in evolving policies resulting in positive improvements for the children.

From a self-serving professional perspective, the theories, data, findings and applications that could be derived from an earnest review of the adoption process could be extraordinarily valuable to the field of OD. We in OD are at a critical juncture where we embrace the opportunity to apply ourselves, live in our heritage and demonstrate the courage to ask the difficult questions, take risks, and be leaders, as opposed to supporting leaders. Let us be role models for the world to see how we apply ethical values in our everyday world. Let us as OD professionals demonstrate what an ethical leader is through the sustainable positive impact we will have on the international adoption process.

From a moral perspective, each of us, but for the grace of God, could be one of the 9.5 million children desperately needing a family and suffering a life-long fate seldom experienced by first-world countries. Should that have been the case, what a tragic loss of scholarship we would experience in society and in our profession.

The time has come for OD to apply its core values, practices, theories and most of all compassion for humanity, and address this situation immediately. The OD field is in a unique position at a unique point in time in that the current global economic downturn has dramatically increased the awareness of the impact ethical behavior has on sustainable success. Let us not permit this opportunity to slip from our grasp but let us instead focus on the impact that our legacy could have in the present and future. If we are successful in increasing the number of international adoptions by a mere 1%, we will positively impact 95,000 children. The potential for these children to realize their dreams is extraordinary. One can only imagine the many ways the world can reap the benefits of their intellectual capital as they become valuable members of society. If each of us in the OD field invested time in applying the values of OD to institute an agenda with regard to adoption of ethical and humane practices, with governance to impact the policies and operations through existing agencies and government entities, we will have a significant impact on shifting the paradigm from ‘focus on the process’ to ‘focus on the children’. The OD field should recognize that this is where we must begin to interject authenticity and compassion into our respective professional, as well as personal, practices.

# # #

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