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EXPLORING THE ORIGINS OF ADOPTION IN HUMAN EVOLUTION: A
LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Human adoptive practices have persisted for centuries across countries and cultures. Yet as Darwinian thought would dictate, theories such as kin selection and natural selection do not necessarily mesh with the practice of adoption. Caring for the offspring of a close relative is one thing, yet many individuals across the world invest an abundance of time, money and emotion in order to receive a non-biologically related infant that will then consequently need care and resources for much of its life. If we are to believe that parental investment is reserved for only the closest, biologically related kin and behavior otherwise would prove costly to our own evolutionary fitness, how could it be that adoptive practices developed in human evolution?

As with much of anthropological and sociological studies, concrete answers are rare. However through exploring the adoptive practices among primates, the parental investment patterns among various family structures and the historical origins of adoptive practices both in the United States and abroad, we can attempt to piece together the story of adoption throughout human evolution and thus the reasoning for it. Some of the conclusions reached may surprise us, such as the adoptive practices that have in fact been recorded among some primate species. Other ideas proposed may bring awareness to the misconceptions often targeted toward the overall well-being of adoptive families. Both culturally and historically though, recorded adoptive practices and behaviors provide a rich story for how the process evolved, and continues to evolve, in human history.

The following thesis aims to explore not just answers, but also analysis on the current literature on adoption. By the conclusion, I hope to have offered a succinct examination of the evolutionary, sociological, cultural and historical evidence of the origins of adoption in human evolution.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Chapter 1 Exploring the Importance of Kinship and Adoptive Practices in Non-Human Primates.....	1
Introduction to Kin Selection: Basic Definitions & Social Complexities among Primates.....	2
Issues of Genetic Recognition among Primates	4
Altruistic Behavior among Female Primates toward Kin & Non-Kin	5
Further Adoptive Behavior among Female Primates	7
Conclusion to Chapter I.....	10
Chapter 2 Parental Investment among Adoptive Families.....	11
Comparing Parental Investment between both Adopted and Genetic Children.....	12
Further Comparison of Differing Family Structures	15
Parental Attachment in Adoptive Families: A Closer Look at Mothers and Infants	17
Conclusion to Chapter II	19
Chapter 3 Cross-Cultural Practices of Adoption.....	21
Early Historical Origins & References	21
Cross-Cultural Practices of Adoption: A Look at Various Regions.....	22
The Baatombu of West Africa	22
The Massai of East African.....	24
History and Practice in China	26
Analysis of Intercountry Adoption in North America, Europe, and Beyond	29
Conclusion to Chapter III.....	35
Chapter 4 Adoption History & Trends in the United States	36
Early History: Highlights from the Sixteenth Century through Nineteenth Century	36
The Progressive Era of the Early Twentieth Century	38
Adoption in the United States during WWII and the 1950s.....	40
Adoption in the 1960s and 1970s.....	41
Adoption in the 1980s and 1990s.....	44
Conclusion to Chapter 4: Adoption Today-Changing Demographics and Issues of Record Keeping.....	46
Chapter 5 The Future of Adoption: Considering Ethics, Moving Forward, and Final Thoughts.....	47
Ethical Concerns and Potential Solutions	47

Final Thoughts51
REFERENCES.....53

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1. Summary of Altruistic/Adoptive Behavior of Primates Presented in Chapter I.....	9
Table 2-1. “Comparisons of parental investment in adopted and genetic children”...14	14
Table 2-2. “Comparisons of outcomes of adopted and genetic children”.....14	14
Table 2-3. “MANCOVAs by Family Structure on Constructs Reported by Mother”..16	16
Table 2-4. “Mean Level of Perceived Social Support for Non-adopted, Intra-racial Adopted and Interracial Adopted Groups”.....19	19
Table 3-1. Risk of Abandonment Among Chinese Girls.....28	28
Table 3-2. “Major sources of ICAs: 1980-89, 1995 and 1998”.....31	31
Table 3-3. “Selected states of origin by rank, 2003-2007 (peak year in bold)”.....32	32
Table 3-4. “Annual Number of International Adoptions: USA, Sweden, Netherlands and Norway: selected years 1970-1995”.....33	33
Table 3-5. “Intercountry adoption to selected receiving countries, 1998-2007”.....34	34
Table 5-1. Contracting & Non-Contracting States of 1993 Hague Convention.....48	48

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Chapter 1

Exploring the Importance of Kinship and Adoptive Practices in Non-Human Primates

For those whom understand the most basic of Darwinian thought, the common theme revolves around the idea of survival of the fittest. This notion, stemming from the theory of natural selection, guides us in nearly every realm of our lives. Individuals engaged in the world of athletics, business and even academics understand this very basic rule; the strong rise to the top while the weak eventually die off, both literally and figuratively. In non-human primate populations, this theory takes on a more serious tone as those with traits that are unfavorable will most certainly die off. With that said, over the course of my anthropological studies as an undergraduate student, we have learned a great deal about the importance of kinship ties, as those whom are favored by their kin will reap the benefits of access to food, shelter, mates, and group protection. This genetic bond also weighs heavily on individual survival for juvenile non-human primates. In primate groups, if and when a new dominant male enters the group, that male will likely engage in infanticide. The simple reasoning for this behavior can be traced to the desire for the animal to promote his own genetic lineage. A dominant primate male does not desire to care for the genetic offspring of another, and thus will simply kill off any infant in the group.

Considering this, it would seem that non-human primates lack any form of adoptive practices within their social groups. It may also make one wonder how humans

then evolved the capacity to care for offspring which come from a different genetic lineage than their own. I hope to answer the latter question by the conclusion of this thesis; however, for this first chapter I will explicitly address the former. Additionally, I feel it is necessary to explore within the literature just how significant kinship ties are to non-human primate groups. The following chapter will lay the foundation for how we can ultimately understand the origins of adoption in humans.

Introduction to Kin Selection: Basic Definitions & Social Complexities among Primates

Before discussing kin selection in depth, it is important to understand where the concept originated from. In 1964, William Hamilton introduced a revolutionary idea derived from the behavioral costs and benefits associated with the coefficient of relatedness. Known as Hamilton's rule, if the coefficient of relatedness and benefits associated are greater than the cost, altruistic behavior will be favored. Specifically, this mathematical equation, $br > c$, where b =benefits, c =costs, and r =relatedness, must be met. Kin selection theory is also known as the inclusive fitness theory (Foster et al. 2005). To explain further, the coefficient of relatedness is "the average probability that the two individuals acquire the same allele through descent from a common ancestor" (Silk, 2001, p.852). Simply put, Hamilton's rule favors the idea that altruism is reserved for kin and costly altruism is reserved for close kin.

However, this mathematical equation is sometimes difficult to apply to the complexities of the wild. Particularly with primates, it is often difficult to quantify such positive effects of altruistic behavior on lifetime fitness. Therefore, it is actually rather

difficult to approximately measure the benefits (b) and costs (c) present in Hamilton's equation. More importantly, it is quite difficult to acquire accurate data on genetic relatedness in primates, as most genealogies are traced through the maternal line only (Silk, 2001, p.853). We also know a great deal less about the altruistic behavior among New World monkeys than we do of Old World monkeys. Therefore, we lack data on the importance of kin selection across a broad range of altruistic behaviors. Certainly, data collected over the years has shown us a great deal about the grooming practices of numerous non-human primate species, however there is still much to be learned about food sharing and warning-call behaviors within groups.

In fact, social behavior observed among primates may not necessarily always be based on kinship ties. Exploring the behavior of grooming, Joan B. Silk suggests that grooming may at times be a reciprocal act, exchanged either for support from higher-ranking individuals or as a means of reducing tension among primates in various scenarios, i.e. feeding sites (2001, p.862). Similarly, kin selection does not always imply altruistic behavior. Animals, including primates, have the capacity to be just as aggressive toward kin as toward non-kin (Silk 2001). E.O. Wilson and his colleagues have raised arguments against the traditional line of thinking associated with Hamilton's rule of kin selection theory. Specifically, Wilson offers the critique that ecological factors in any particular scenario may have a greater influence on altruistic behavior than relatedness, citing the importance of colony level effects among insects (Foster et al., 2005, p.58). Whether the foundations of E.O. Wilson's critiques can hold up against the evolutionary theory in which William Hamilton derived nearly fifty years ago is not of particular importance to this thesis. However, a point to be made clear is that Hamilton's

rule is not flawless, and thus we cannot assume that kin relations will always predict altruistic behavior. Nor can we assume that discriminatory behavior among groups is based solely on kinship. Such altruistic behavior may also be a result of group ranking and dominance. As I will touch upon later in this chapter, altruistic behavior among non-kin has been documented among primate social groups.

Issues of Genetic Recognition among Primates

Another important note to make in regards to kin selection is we do not know precisely how, and even if, primates can accurately recognize members of their genetic lineage. Primates live in relatively large social groups, and it would seem that primates rely mainly on early association to identify relatives (Silk, 2001, p.855). However, this would point more toward maternal recognition as primate males play a much less active role in parent-care. While evidence has also suggested familiarity and visual cues as means of recognizing kin, we cannot be sure how exactly an absentee father would distinguish kin from non-kin. Except of course, in the case of a dominant male taking over an entirely new group, in which any infant present is certainly non-kin.

It has been recorded in multi-male groups, in which promiscuous mating systems are in place, that “fathers do not treat offspring preferentially, which suggests that paternity is not recognized, at least individually” (Chapais, 2000, p.205). Interestingly though, Buchan et al. conducted a study published in 2003 in which they studied the members of five wild savanna baboon (*Papio cynocephalus*) groups in Amboseli, Kenya. Typically baboons leave their group before or soon after the birth of the infants in which

they have sired. However, in the study around 50% of the 75 juveniles observed still had their fathers, which were identified unequivocally, present among their social group. Buchan and his colleagues also observed agonistic disputes, collecting data on the intervention of fathers. According to their findings, males intervened on behalf of their offspring significantly more so than on the behalf of un-related offspring (Buchan et al., 2003, p.179). Some have argued that this data should instead be based on the notion of males simply intervening at random based on proximity; however if this were the case one would presume males to intervene against their kin as often as they intervene in favor of their kin (Buchan et al., 2003, p.179). This study overall suggests that paternal kin recognition is possible in the wild. The extent to which this kin-favored behavior occurs is not entirely known, and I would conclude that even though paternal recognition potentially exists in the wild, the involvement of male-parenting in the majority of non-primate social groups still lacks in comparison to that of females.

Altruistic Behavior among Female Primates toward Kin & Non-Kin

As one might expect, females perform many altruistic behaviors toward their offspring, mainly in the form of protective behaviors against predators and threatening members of the social group. In fact, such pro-infant care among females is not limited to biological kin. Consider allomothering, which is simply the care of young by individuals other than their mother. Researchers have observed female vervet monkeys (*Chlorocebus aethiops*) engaging in allomothering behavior, noting that “females that spent more time allomothering were more successful in keeping their first born infant alive” (Chapais,

2000, p.210). This allomothering behavior ensued despite the costs associated, which included “time and energy spent in pursuing mothers and carrying infants, and increased aggression” (Chapais, 2000, p.210).

Another term for allomothering is cooperative breeding. In a study conducted by Manfred Eberle and Peter Kappeler, female gray mouse lemurs were observed nursing and grooming foreign young. Eberle and Kappeler captured 505 mouse lemurs (*Microcebus murinus*) from the Kirinidy forest of Madagascar between 1994 and 2005 and subsequently determined the genetic relationships among the lemurs using DNA from ear biopsies (2006, p.583). During the experimental study, Eberle, Kappeler and their colleagues filmed the females and their dependent young in artificial nest boxes. Individuals were identified with the help of marked radio collars and markings on ears. As stated above, the females were filmed both grooming and allonursing non-kin young. Although the female lemurs always preferred their own young and foreign nursing increased only when just one mother was present in the nest, as compared to when all mothers were present, the foreign pups were never rejected from nursing (Eberle & Kappeler, 2006, p.586). Nursing was always initiated by the pups and therefore it was determined that allonursing was not due to misdirected parental care, brood parasitism (milk theft by pups), milk evacuation (allonursing behavior to evacuate surplus milk), or genetic imprinting (Eberle & Kappeler, 2006, p.587). These conclusions were further supported by the reciprocal nature of allonursing observed.

Further Adoptive Behavior among Female Primates

Dario Maestriperi has also explored the idea of infant adoption in primates within his 2001 piece entitled “Is There Mother-Infant Bonding in Primates?”. As Maestriperi declared, “infant adoption is defined as a permanent association between a lactating female and a nutritionally dependent infant other than her offspring, which is initiated during the postpartum period and in which the female shows all the patterns of maternal behavior typically shown with offspring” (2001, p.97). He then went on to describe two general observations that have been made in regards to infant adoption among group-living primates. The first scenario depicts mothers whom adopt a different newborn if their own infant dies soon after birth. The second scenario depicts mothers who adopt additional newborns to raise alongside their biological offspring. As seen in pigtail macaques (*Macaca nemestrina*), lactating females show increased interest in other female’s offspring within several weeks of suffering the loss of their own offspring (Maestriperi, 2001, p.97). The degree to which such adoptive practices occur varies. In some instances, infant adoption occurs seamlessly, as the adoptive infant’s own mother has abandoned them. In other instances, infant adoption takes on the form of kidnapping. Evidence of infant adoption, without the apparent loss of biological offspring, has been observed in both Japanese (*Macaca fuscata*) and rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*). A report published by Fuccillo, Scucchi, Troisi and D’Amato in 1983 detailed the case of a mother adopting an additional female newborn that had been abandoned in addition to her own biological female newborn. Further, in 1998 Ogawa observed two free-ranging Japanese macaque females adopting a male infant that had been abandoned. This

adoption took place a day after parturition and both females involved had male infants of their own (Maestriperi, 2001, p.98).

While it is difficult to draw a direct correlation, I find it interesting that a primate mother seems particularly interested in adoptive behavior after the loss of her own infant. Could this be the link to human females that typically turn to adoption upon learning they are unable to conceive on their own? This will be a point I hope to return to later as I explore more explicitly why humans adopt. However such evidence for adoptive practices in the wild, while it may not be abundant, still alludes to the potential for primates to take on the responsibility and costs of unrelated infants. One could argue whether such behavior reflects a selfish need to fulfill a certain biological duty of parenthood, rather than an altruistic interest in caring for non-kin. Nevertheless, adoptive practices in the wild, particularly in primates, are not a completely foreign concept. Table 1-1, below, summarizes the adoptive behavior of the handful of primate species I have discussed throughout this chapter.

Table 1-1. Summary of Altruistic/Adoptive Behavior of Primates Presented in Chapter I

PRIMATE SPECIES	ALTRUISTIC/ADOPTIVE BEHAVIOR OBSERVED
<i>Male savanna baboons</i> (<i>Papio cynocephalus</i>)	Male intervention on behalf of offspring occurred significantly more so than for non-offspring; Conclusion: paternal kin-selection is possible in the wild (Buchan et al. 2003)
<i>Female vervet monkeys</i> (<i>Chlorocebus aethiops</i>)	Allomothering behavior observed; the care of the young by individuals other than the mother (Chapais 2000)
<i>Female gray mouse lemurs</i> (<i>Microcebus murinus</i>)	Nursed and groomed foreign young; females preferred their own young, however did not reject foreign pups when allonursing (Eberle & Kappeler 2006)
<i>Female pigtail macaques</i> (<i>Macaca nemestrina</i>)	Lactating females showed increased interest in others females' offspring within weeks of suffering the loss of their own (Maestriperieri 2001)
<i>Female Japanese macaques</i> (<i>Macaca fuscata</i>)	Infant adoption of abandoned male by two females observed; both females had biological-male offspring of their own in addition to the adopted male (Maestriperieri 2001)
<i>Female rhesus macaques</i> (<i>Macaca mulatta</i>)	Infant adoption of abandoned offspring in addition to own biological-offspring (Maestriperieri 2001)

Conclusion to Chapter I

As I have explored various concepts throughout this chapter, I have attempted to lay the groundwork for how we can apply the adaptations of kinship and allomothering to the practice of adoption in humans. While kinship ties typically favor altruistic behavior in primates, such costly behavior is possible among non-kin. Paternal and maternal kin recognition still needs to be explored more extensively in order to understand just how primates comprehend kin versus non-kin, however the evidence still points to the presence of a basic level of recognition among kin and non-kin in social primate groups. Allonursing and adoptive practices certainly exist in primate groups, allowing us to draw some comparisons to adoptive practices in humans. Still, even as we have evidence for the potential evolutionary lineage of adoption in humans, we must also explore parental investment and altruistic behavior in relation to adoption in human-beings. Does the evidence of altruism toward non-kin in primate groups translate to human households? What evidence do we have for informal adoptive practices among human groups? I will address such questions in chapter two; Parental Investment among Adoptive Families.

Chapter 2

Parental Investment among Adoptive Families

As we consider our own families, we can understand the altruistic behavior parents bestow upon their children. From sleepless nights nurturing infants to entrusting young adults with vehicles to investing in a child's education to allow for a future full of opportunity, parents engage in quite costly behavior for the benefit of their kin. When considering adoption, one may wonder if such altruistic behavior is possible toward a non-genetically related child. Numerous studies have been done that show in some families, non-kin are treated more harshly than genetically related kin. For example, considering step-families, "discriminative parental solicitude" (DPS) has been observed as step-children are typically more likely to be abused and less likely to receive favorable investments (Gibson, 2009, p.184). One could see the association between this type of behavior and the infanticide that occurs in certain primate social groups with a dominant male presence. Still, we observed in chapter one the adoptive and altruistic behavior of certain primate species toward non-kin. Thus, we must ask ourselves 'can we always assume humans will mistreat non-genetically related kin?' As this chapter will discuss, the answer is most certainly no.

In chapter one I introduced Hamilton's Kin Selection Theory and discussed its importance among primate social groups. As the title of this chapter alludes to, I would like to apply the same theory and discussion to human groups. In particular, I will discuss parental investment in adoptive households. Simply defined, parental investment alludes to any type of financial, physical, or emotional investment parents perform for the benefit

of their kin, despite the apparent costs for themselves. One might assume that parents follow through with a Darwinian line of thinking when it comes to their children; the ‘fittest’ child will receive the greatest investments as a ‘non-fit’ child will not be worth the associated costs. One might also assume that an adopted child, much like a step-child or foster child, would fall into the category of ‘non-fit’ due to the lack of genetic relatedness. However as numerous studies have been conducted on various family structures, this is rarely the case. In fact, as Kyle Gibson of University of Utah discovered, it is sometimes the opposite.

Comparing Parental Investment between both Adopted and Genetic Children

In 2009, Gibson published his study entitled “Differential parental investment in families with both adopted and genetic children”. Gibson hypothesized that families with this type of structure would most certainly favor the genetic child when it came to parental investment, yet after conducting a series of surveys the results yielded told a very different story. In short, Gibson discussed that while adopted children and genetic children generally received the same amount of health investments (i.e. trips to the doctor, orthodontic braces, contact lenses) there was a significant difference between adopted children and genetic children when it came to educational and personal investments (2009, p.187). Adopted children were more likely to receive early schooling (i.e. attend pre-school) and private tutoring, as well as were more likely to attend summer school (Gibson, 2009, p.187). Based on the survey results, adopted children were also more likely to receive financial investments such as cars, loans, and rent money than

genetic children (Gibson, 2009, p.187). In terms of personal investments, parents were more likely to devote more time to an adopted child's extra-curricular activities, including sports (Gibson, 2009, p.187). While these findings reject Gibson's initial hypothesis, there are a few limitations to the results. We cannot say for sure whether adopted children received more educational, financial and emotional investments due to a parental bias or simply due to a significantly higher need for such investments. While a great deal of adopted children go on to live successful lives and have tight-knit families of their own, Gibson noted that a few of his adopted responders may have required extra-investments due to their personal troubles. Compared to the genetic children within the study, adopted children were more likely to have been divorced, arrested, in need of public assistance for various disorders and in need of treatment for alcohol and drug related issues (Gibson, 2009, p.187). However, the purpose of this analysis is not to expose the percentage of adopted children with special needs and developmental issues. What is significant, and thus the key message to take away from this study, is that despite an adopted child's seemingly 'un-fit' characteristics, parental investment is not deterred. Gibson's study in fact showed that parental investment significantly increased for a 'non-fit'-non-genetically related child in comparison to a more 'fit'-genetically related child. Tables 2-1 and 2-2 offer the numerical data from Gibson's study.

Table 2-1. “Comparisons of parental investment in adopted and genetic children” (Gibson 2009).

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>Health</i>				
Braces	0.946	137	0.088	0.005
Contacts	0.742	137	0.087	0.463
<i>Education</i>				
Preschool	0.037	121	0.084	4.400
Private Tutoring	0.014	121	0.057	6.083
Summer School	0.001	137	0.047	12.56
<i>Personal</i>				
Car	0.002	138	0.073	9.586
Rent	0.007	138	0.090	7.412
Personal Loan	0.005	138	0.089	7.961
Wedding	0.860	137	0.077	0.031
<i>Time</i>				
Sports	0.043	88	0.229	4.209
Homework	0.124	96	0.223	2.409
Dating Issues	0.724	89	0.240	0.126
Family Issues	0.203	95	0.218	0.203

Table 2-2. “Comparisons of outcomes of adopted and genetic children” (Gibson 2009).

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>Divorce</i>	<.001	85	0.065	14.74
<i>Mental Health Treatment</i>	0.002	127	0.060	10.18
<i>Alcohol Treatment</i>	0.041	138	0.044	4.211
<i>Drug Treatment</i>	0.001	137	0.040	10.94
<i>Arrested</i>	0.038	128	0.041	4.355
<i>Income</i>	0.938	92	10266.1	0.006
<i>Education</i>	0.023	131	0.546	5.263

Further Comparison of Differing Family Structures

Jennifer Lansford and her colleagues published a study in 2001 in which they examined the differences among adoptive, two-parent biological, single-mother, step-father, and step-mother households. In the course of their research, Lansford et al. measured for parent well-being, child well-being, family relationships, and family climate among the nearly 800 families whom participated in the second wave of the National Survey of Families and Households. Lansford and her team hypothesized that due to societal stigma, “members of adoptive families will have lower well-being and poorer quality relationships than will members of other types of families” (2001, p.841). According to the results, only a limited amount of support for their hypothesis was found. While adoptive-mothers generally reported more disagreements with their children and greater occurrences of their children externalizing problems, adoptive-fathers and adopted children did not demonstrate significantly different results in comparison to other family structures. In fact, adoptive-mothers also testified to spending more time with their children and possessing higher family cohesion than the majority of the other family structures (Lansford et al., 2001, p.849). Only two-parent-biological-family mothers reported spending around the same amount of time with their children as adoptive mothers. In terms of children’s school grades, as well as relationships among family members and friends, Lansford and her colleagues found no significant differences among the family structures in which they studied. Lansford et al. alluded that the reported differences among mothers’ responses from varying family structures may be based quite simply on a mother’s intuition versus and father’s and child’s tendency to

deny the existence of a problem; yet even as adoptive families only slightly differed from other types of family structures in general well-being, Lansford and her team of researchers found adoptive families to be at no significant or greater risk for poor relations and poor family climate in comparison to the other types of family structures. Thus, we can conclude that while parental investment may range across various types of family structures overall familial well-being and relations do not significantly differ among differing family structures. To strengthen this perspective further, I believe it is important to take a closer look at the relationship among parental attachment in adoptive families. First, though, table 2-3 depicts the numerical data Lansford and her team collected.

Table 2-3: “MANCOVAs by Family Structure on Constructs Reported by Mother”
(Lansford et al. 2001).

Familial Construct	Adoptive	Two-Parent Biological	Single-Mother Biological	Stepfather	Stepmother
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
<i>Child Well-Being</i>					
Internalizing	1.49 (0.33)	1.28 (0.28)	1.34 (0.35)	1.31 (0.31)	1.49 (0.42)
Externalizing	1.65 (0.38)	1.44 (0.32)	1.58 (0.41)	1.50 (0.36)	1.62 (0.40)
Problem-Behaviors	0.21 (0.41)	0.07 (0.26)	0.26 (0.44)	0.21 (0.41)	0.19 (0.40)
<i>Child's Family Relationships</i>					
Parent-Child	0.06 (0.61)	0.12 (0.51)	0.00 (0.79)	0.04 (0.55)	-0.49 (0.97)
Disagreements	2.47 (0.80)	2.06 (0.74)	2.28 (0.89)	1.99 (0.70)	1.90 (0.68)
<i>Family Life</i>					
Satisfaction	5.47 (1.43)	5.98 (1.09)	5.49 (1.52)	5.74 (1.52)	5.72 (1.32)
Time with children	0.00 (0.59)	0.16 (0.58)	-0.09 (0.75)	-0.06 (0.57)	-0.23 (0.71)
Family cohesion	3.99 (0.65)	4.08 (0.56)	3.97 (0.77)	3.95 (0.65)	3.75 (0.66)

Parental Attachment in Adoptive Families: A Closer Look at Mothers and Infants

As research has consistently shown, the development of secure, emotional child-parent attachment is a necessity for “healthy psychological adjustment, not only in infancy, but in later childhood as well” (Singer et al., 1985, p.1544). Leslie Singer and her colleagues conducted a study in 1985 examining mother-infant attachment in adoptive families in comparison to non-adoptive families. Singer notes in her introduction that adoptive parents often face more stress when awaiting the arrival of an adopted infant in comparison to non-adoptive parents awaiting the arrival of a newborn baby. Such stresses include the often extended waiting period for a child to become available for adoption as well as the “rather extensive evaluation by agency personnel—a process that most parents find highly intrusive and anxiety arousing” (Singer et al., 1985, p.1544). Singer et al. hypothesized that adoptive parents and infants may experience a disadvantage in terms of attachment due to the lack of immediate post-delivery contact between an infant and its parents and, in the case of interracial adoption, apparent dissimilarities between child and parent may make it more difficult to form a strong attachment. Through collecting and assessing data using the Strange Situation Paradigm, Singer and her team attempted to address four particular questions all of which assessed the quality of mother-infant attachment in adoptive versus non-adoptive families. As the results indicated, no significant difference existed between mother-infant attachment in adoptive and non-adoptive cases. What was significant was the difference in friend and familial support for mothers adopting interracial infants. Mothers within this category reported receiving less emotional support from friends and family prior to the adoption

taking place (Singer et al., 1985, p.1547). With that, mothers within this category expressed a greater degree of discomfort in having members of their extended family care for their adopted infant (Singer et al., 1985, p.1547). Yet while Singer and her colleagues speculated that parents adopting interracially may need more time to adapt to their parenting role due to racial differences potentially undermining their own self-confidence in their parenting abilities, it should also be noted that adoptive parents of interracial and intraracial infants experienced a greater level of support from family and friend post-adoption in comparison to non-adoptive parents (Singer et al., 1985, p.1547).

Nevertheless, the results from the study clearly indicated that the inability to experience immediate post-delivery contact among adoptive parents did not hinder their ability to form emotional bonds and attachments with their adopted infants. Instead, as Singer suggests “what seems to be more important is the emergence of caretaking confidence and competence on the part of the parents, and a general caretaking atmosphere that is warm, consistent and contingent on the needs of the infant” (Singer et al., 1985, p.1550).

The numerical data from Singer’s study can be found below in table 2-4.

Table 2-4. “Mean Level of Perceived Social Support for Non-adopted, Intra-racial Adopted and Interracial Adopted Groups” (Singer et al. 1985).

Adoption Status	Non-adopted	Intra/Adopted	Inter/Adopted
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
<i>Type of child care:</i>			
Husband	1.40 (0.75)	1.85 (0.75)	1.75 (0.68)
Extended Family	1.10 (0.30)	1.15 (0.49)	1.06 (0.25)
Non-family	1.30 (0.80)	1.45 (0.69)	1.25 (0.58)
<i>Mother’s comfort with type of child care:</i>			
Husband	4.65 (0.75)	4.70 (0.92)	4.75 (0.45)
Extended Family	4.32 (0.93)	4.52 (0.61)	3.59 (1.16)
Non-family	3.74 (1.19)	4.49 (0.60)	3.40 (0.93)
<i>Emotional support prior to birth/adoption:</i>			
Husband	4.85 (0.50)	4.70 (0.47)	4.69 (0.48)
Extended Family	4.60 (0.68)	4.70 (0.92)	4.31 (0.79)
Non-family	4.56 (0.58)	4.85 (0.37)	4.35 (0.47)
<i>Current emotional support:</i>			
Husband	4.85 (0.48)	5.00 (0.00)	5.00 (0.00)
Extended Family	4.65 (0.67)	5.00 (0.00)	5.00 (0.00)
Non-family	4.30 (0.92)	4.95 (0.35)	4.81 (0.40)

Conclusion to Chapter II

Throughout this chapter we have evaluated the importance of parental investment in adoptive families, including in comparison to other family structures. As the results of the studies discussed indicate, many of our assumptions about adoptive families based on societal stigmas and stereo-types do not exist in reality. Parental investment as well as mother-infant attachment does not significantly differ among various family structures; if anything, parental investment is typically *greater* among adoptive families. The reasoning behind such phenomena varies based on circumstance, yet what we can take

away from this is that parents are no-less likely to invest in an adopted child simply based on a kin versus non-kin basis. Evolutionarily speaking, this is of importance because it would suggest that adoptive familial structures pose no significant risk to the fitness of a family in comparison to other types of families. Still, while we may not have explicitly revealed *why* humans evolved the practice of adoption, we have addressed the common misconceptions associated with adoptive families. Now that we understand that adoptive practices pose no significant threat to our own fitness, we may be able to further explore some of the fundamental reasons for adoptive practices in humans. In the following chapter, I will address both informal adoptive practices and historical origins from various regions across the world.

Chapter 3

Cross-Cultural Practices of Adoption

Early Historical Origins & References

The historical origins of adoption have been traced to the Code of Hammurabi, roughly 2,000 years before the birth of Christ, as it states:

“If a man take a child in his name, adopt and rear him as a son, this grown up son may not be demanded back. If a man adopt a child as his son, and after he has taken him, he transgresses against his foster-father; that adopted son shall return to the house of his own father” (Huard, 1955, p.744).

Adoption also has biblical roots, with ties to the Hebrews and the Egyptians, through the story of Moses and the Pharaoh’s daughter (Huard, 1955, p.744). Yet it is the Romans who provide us with the most elaborate historical accounts of adoption. The Romans practiced two forms of adoption, both in a strict sense (*patria potestas*) and through adrogation (*sui juris*) (Huard, 1955, p.744). As Leo Albert Huard describes in his article “The Law of Adoption: Ancient and Modern”, primitive adoptive practices likely did not evolve with the adoptees best intentions in mind. Many individuals adopted simply to extend their own familial lineage; “Its ancient purpose was to prevent the extinction of a family” (Huard, 1955, p.743). Thus with Roman law, an adoptee assimilated into the family and could potentially gain access to the adopter’s property upon death.

As we might expect, though, in historical English law adoption was not formally recognized. For the English, only a blood related legitimate child could be considered an heir. That is not to say that informal foster-parenting practices did not occur, only that such practices did not have legal recognition. As Huard states, “adoption in the Roman

sense of the term was not legally possible in England until the Adoption of Children Act of 1926” (1955, p.746). I will return later to the origins of adoptive law, specifically discussing the United States. Still, the main point to take away is that adoption, both informal and formal, has been in practice for thousands of years. Just as the laws of adoption have evolved over the years, so have the reasons for it.

Cross-Cultural Practices of Adoption: A Look at Various Regions

Numerous informal adoptive practices persist into the late twentieth century across various cultures. Such practices can be seen among both indigenous and more modernized groups. In each case, the beliefs surrounding adoption and fosterage vary, yet the motivation for such behavior often revolves around the welfare of the adoptee. Within this particular section of the chapter, I will address a handful of examples of cross-cultural approaches to adoption.

The Baatombu of West Africa

In Northern Benin, West Africa, the Baatombu regard fosterage and adoption as an honorable form of parenting. Despite the lack of clarity between the terms “adoption” and “fostering” as applied to the behavior of the Baatombu, children are typically “transferred” to the care of an aunt or uncle or grandparent around the age of three. In many respects, this behavior has been referred to as “social parenthood”. While the term “social parenthood” offers a broad understanding of the various roles other people play in

the lives of children (outside of their parents) we can understand the term in this context to refer to the temporary care of a child by an individual other than the biological parent (Bowie, 2004, p.34). Among the Baatombu, a single individual of the same sex takes on the responsibility of the transferred child in every aspect. Most notably, in addition to rearing the child, the social parent provides the child with an education, teaching them gender-specific tasks important to the society and is responsible for paying either the dowry or bride-price for the child's first husband or wife (Bowie, 2004, p.38). Social parents also obtain the right to have the child work for them as a helper either with the cooking, collection of resources, agricultural work or to act as a messenger (Bowie, 2004, p.38). Upon the payment of the dowry/bride-price, the Baatombu regard the child as "set-free" and thus the period of social parenting comes to an end.

The Baatombu believe in a variety of cultural taboos and concepts that fuel their social parenting behavior. Upon the birth of a child, mothers are expected to practice social-distancing toward their newborn and are never to call their child by its first name (Bowie, 2004, p.40). The Baatombu also believe in providing the child with new clothes upon adoption, in a sense symbolizing that as the old clothes are left behind, so too are the biological ties to the mother and siblings. In terms of direct reasoning for social parenting, the Baatombu regard biological parents as too lenient on their children, and thus feel that they cannot provide an adequate education to the child. As an elder Baatombu man expressed:

"There are three things biological parents cannot teach their children, but they have to learn from others. Firstly, biological parents are not able to educate them in a rigid way. Secondly, children have to learn to express themselves in front of older people. And thirdly, they have to learn to respect their elders" (Bowie, 2004, p.41).

The Baatombu also regard the offer of a child as a gift and the refusal of such a gift is viewed as disrespectful. In no way is the giving away of a child viewed as something tragic, quite contrary to what we typically associate with a Westernized view of adoption. Instead, this adoptive/fosterage behavior is seen as a crucial event for the well-being of the child and it is actually quite honorable for a biological parent to deny their child publicly (Bowie, 2004, p.40). It should be noted that the biological parent will often keep watch over their child in secret. Many children grow up never knowing the identity of their biological parent, yet the parent will often engage in offering food, clothing or money to their unaware child (Bowie, 2004, p. 42). While this practice may seem extreme in comparison to our understanding of the importance of parental investment, this cultural practice illustrates how adoptive behavior applies in various ways. The following examples only further depict this point.

The Massai of East African

Among the pastoral Massai of East Africa, there are many cultural attitudes geared specifically toward the fertility of women. Women who are childless are often excluded from engaging fully with other men and women of the group and are seen as immature and “not good” (Bowie, 2004, p.67). The Massai often attach religious and cultural attributions to a childless woman, noting that a household without a child is “in chaos”, illustrates a type of misfortune, and “is no more complete than a house without livestock” (Bowie, 2004, p.70). As pastoralist societies typically emphasize redistribution and a morality of sharing, the Massai share the belief that a household needs a child in

order to “restore the order”; Adoptive practices stem more for the sake of the household and moral order than the childless woman (Bowie, 2004, p.72). The procedure of adoption among Massai women is quite ritualized, involving a variety of practices to legitimize the adoption. Typically a childless woman will approach an expecting female relative and asks for the unborn child. If the expecting mother and her husband comply, then the childless mother will assume both practical and social responsibilities for the child immediately upon birth, including providing the required ram to be slaughtered (Bowie, 2004, p.72). The fat of the animal is divided evenly among the adoptive and biological mother, used for nourishment and also believed to induce the production of milk. The adoptive mother then goes into seclusion, nursing the child (with the biological mother occasionally alternating) at home and behaving as would a mother that had just given birth (Bowie, 2004, p.73). Ritualistically and ceremonially, no difference exists between how an adoptive mother and biological mother behave toward their respective child.

Adoption may also take place after the age of weaning, typically occurring in cases where the biological mother has passed away and a childless mother is available to care for the child (Bowie, 2004, p.73). Due to the patrilineal structure of the Massai, boys typically are not given away for adoption and the husband has the final say in whether or not the child, boy or girl, may be given away (Bowie, 2004, p.74). Nevertheless, the Massai believe in a cultural structure built upon sharing and equality as well as ensuring the moral goodness of the group. As opposed to the Baatombu, who practice adoption more explicitly for the benefit of the child, the Massai engage in adoptive practices for the benefit of the entire group. Still in both cases, adoption is deemed a necessary

sacrifice in which the biological parent(s) are expected to comply despite any internal conflicts with the decision. Adoptive/fosterage practices in both of these societies are regarded as moral behavior with the seamless assimilation of the child an important factor in the success of the arrangement.

Yet not all regions and cultures equally believe in the nobility of adoption. Many regions have very strict cultural practices and values in place that in fact make it difficult for domestic adoption to exist. One major example of this involves the situation in China. Stern patriarchal family values coupled with an intervening government have led to a complicated history of adoption and abandonment.

History and Practice in China

As the literature suggests, adoption in China has played an important role in the formation of kinship for centuries. Contrary to the legal and lineage expectations that conferred adoption should occur between bloodlines, cultural beliefs among the adopters often led to adoptions outside of bloodlines. The concept *minglingzi* has much to do with this. *Minglingzi*, meaning “mulberry insect children”, frequently referred to the adoptees and was rooted in the belief that “the wasp took the young of the mulberry insect and transformed them into young wasps, making them its ‘own children’” (Johnson, 2002, p.383). Rather than placing the emphasis on biological ties, this concept instead focused on the importance of transforming the likeness of the offspring from one set of parents (biological) to the other (adopted) through nurturing and cultivating social relationships (Johnson, 2002, p.384). While historically the adoption of males provided the means of

obtaining an heir, females were often adopted as well. There were many reasons for this including the view that females were more dispensable than males. In pre-Revolutionary China, many females were adopted through the now outlawed practice of *tongyangxi*. *Tongyangxi* involved the adoption of an infant girl with the intention of raising her to become a future daughter-in-law and wife for a son (Johnson et al., 1998, p.485). Girls were also traditionally “bought” as household servants, treated like daughters in the sense that the head of the household often arranged marriages on their behalf (Johnson, 2002, p.384). Others adopted females with the hope of bringing in a suitable son-in-law to become an heir to his potential father-in-law, and took solace in the fact that a daughter could still become a future caretaker (Johnson, 2002, p.385). More contemporary reasons for adoption in China revolved around evolved cultural ideals. For many, despite having a son, an additional daughter could provide the image of the ideal family. Daughters also were valued for more emotional reasons and were thought to be more loyal than sons, who were valued more for economic reasons (Johnson, 2002, p.386). Yet in spite of the general interest in the domestic adoption of females, the Chinese government did very little to encourage domestic adoption. As orphanages continued to overcrowd into the 1990s, the Chinese looked to international adoption as a means to alleviate the issue. It has been theorized that the government turned to such regulations in an attempt to bring in funds for a wanting welfare system in need of improvements and expansion; As of Johnson’s 2002 article, “Politics of International and Domestic Adoption in China”, international adoption brought in “U.S. \$3000 per capita in mandatory orphanage donations and an additional U.S. \$1000-\$2000 in other fees and expenses paid by adoptive parents in China” (2002, p.388). Still, local Chinese residents certainly had an

interest in adoption so why were they ignored? The initial reasoning behind this may not be known, however the “one-child policy” soon enacted certainly had far-reaching effects.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese government instilled policies that attempted to control the population while simultaneously favoring a patriarchal family. In 1991, a new national adoption law further restricted Chinese couples from obtaining their “ideal family”. The law limited the practice of adoption to childless parents over the age of 35, which many considered “an unacceptably advanced age to become a first time parent according to Chinese social norms and practice” (Johnson, 2002, p.389).

Unfortunately this led to a common trend of infant abandonment. Infant abandonment had occurred within Chinese history before the late twentieth century, typically varying over time due to current economic conditions, as well as eras of famine. Yet the infant abandonment that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s revolved mainly around the efforts of birth planning. As one might expect, girls were typically abandoned more frequently than boys. Still, as table 3-1 depicts, not all girls were equally vulnerable to abandonment.

Table 3-1. Risk of Abandonment Among Chinese Girls (Johnson 2002).

	Only Child	Brothers Only	Brother(s) and Sister(s)	(Sisters Only) One	(Sisters Only) Two	(Sisters Only) Three	(Sisters Only) Four	Total
# of Abandoned Girls	11	4	21	69	62	26	3	196
Percent	5.5	2	11	35	32	13	1.5	100

Johnson and her colleagues deduced based on the limited data of 196 abandoned girls and their sibling composition that girls with no brothers and with one or more sisters were the most likely to be abandoned. Many parents that abandoned their daughters did so to avoid penalties for being “over-quota” in terms of family size while simultaneously holding out hope for a son (Johnson et al., 1998, p.480). As parents expressed regretful feelings associated with the abandonment, many strived to avoid punishment for their actions. In fact, many scenarios of abandonment are in fact no secret to surrounding communities, yet a great deal of abandonments go legally unpunished (Johnson et al., 1998, p.480).

This system of abandonment consequently fuels the orphanages and the demands that stem from international adoptive hopefuls. As China presents, the ethics of adoption can be quite complicated. Near the end of the 1990s, adoptive reform laws were put in place that most notably lowered the age for legal adopting to 30 as opposed to 35 (Johnson, 2002, p.390). However local authorizes and welfare agencies still implement policies that make it less than simple for Chinese couples to adopt domestically, continuing to fuel the rates of international adoption.

Analysis of Intercountry Adoption in North America, Europe, and Beyond

The above examples from Africa and China help illustrate a more cultural perspective when attempting to understand how and why adoptive practices originate. Yet there is also a great deal of demographic influence on the origins of adoption, especially considering the historical context. Fueled by the effects of World War II, intercountry adoption evolved within Europe and North America mainly due to the

efforts of allied nations to care for the numerous orphaned children (Selman, 2002, p.209). Specifically in Canada, during the course of the war nearly 4,000 children came to Canada from Britain as evacuees (Lovelock, 2000, p.915). Many of these children were eventually reunited with their parents; yet, the intake of child evacuees sparked the trend “whereby Canada offered the opportunity of migration and support to children in war-torn countries” (Lovelock, 2000, p.915). A similar response occurred in New Zealand both before and during the war. While more strictly regulated than what was seen in Canada and the United States, New Zealand took in a number of groups of children, especially Polish children. New Zealand did not take in children from all allied nations, though. An exclusive arrangement was made with Britain during the time and in 1949 the Child Migration Scheme between the two nations was put into effect (Lovelock, 2000, p.916). After the war, many children remained in New Zealand and were fostered until they reached an age where they could work and thus provide labor to the nation (Lovelock, 2000, p.916).

As one might expect, the greatest rates of orphans post WWII originated from defeated nations such as Germany, Italy, Greece and Japan (Selman, 2002, p.212). These countries, for a period of time leading up to the 1950s, were historically recorded as the countries that sent out the most children for adoption or fosterage. During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, though, as a result of both the Korean and Vietnam wars, intercountry adoptions from Europe became less common and those from Korea and Vietnam spiked. During the 1980s as intercountry adoptions from Europe continued to decline, those from Korea as well as India, Ecuador, Columbia and the Philippines continued to climb. By the 1990s and early 2000s, however, European intercountry adoptions had again begun to

rise in addition to those from Asia, South America, Central America, the Caribbean and Africa. Tables 3-2 and 3-3 illustrate the major sources of intercountry adoptions (ICAs) through the 1980s into the early 2000s;

Table 3-2. “Major sources of ICAs: 1980-89, 1995 and 1998” (Selman, 2002, p.214)

Country	Annual adoptions 1980-89*	Country	No. of adoptions 1995**	Country	No. of adoptions 1998**
Korea	6,123	China	2,559	Russia	5,064
India	1,532	Korea	2,145	China	4,855
Columbia	1,484	Russia	2,014	Vietnam	2,375
Brazil	753	Vietnam	1,523	Korea	2,294
Sri Lanka	682	Colombia	1,249	Colombia	1,162
Chile	524	India	970	Guatemala	1,143
Philippines	517	Brazil	627	India	1,048
Guatemala	224	Guatemala	574	Romania	891
Peru	221	Romania	558	Brazil	443
El Salvador	218	Philippines	427	Ethiopia	438
Mexico	160	Paraguay	360	Bulgaria	347
Haiti	153	Poland	301	Thailand	333
Poland	148	Ethiopia	297	Poland	326
Honduras	110	Bulgaria	232	Philippines	322
Thailand	86	Thailand	222	Cambodia	307
		Chile	142	Haiti	248
		Mexico	131	Ukraine	237
				Mexico	210

*adoptions to 13 receiving countries: (USA, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, and Australia)

**adoptions to 10 receiving countries: (USA, France, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Australia, UK and Ireland)

Table 3-3. “Selected states of origin by rank, 2003-2007 (peak year in bold)” (Selman, 2009, p.580)

<i>Country</i>	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Ratio in peak year*
China	11,228	13,404	14,493	10,740	8,753	0.83
Russia	7,745	9,425	7,471	6,783	4,873	7.7
Guatemala	2,677	3,424	3,857	4,227	4,844	10.9
Korea	2,287	2,258	2,101	1,899	1,265	4.8
Ukraine	2,052	2,021	1,928	1,053	1,619	5.0
Columbia	1,750	1,741	1,470	1,629	1,626	1.8
India	1,172	1,062	857	798	941	0.03
Haiti	1,055	1,159	914	1,063	736	5.4
Bulgaria	962	378	125	96	95	15.5
Vietnam	935	483	1,190	1,364	1,692	1.02
Kazakhstan	861	903	823	699	753	6.0
Ethiopia	854	1,527	1,778	2,172	3,031	0.93
Belarus	656	627	23	34	14	7.5
Total**	41,530	45,288	43,857	39,742	37,526	

*Ratio= No. of adoptions per 1,000 live births

**Total children sent to 23 receiving states

As the tables indicate, various countries range in interadoption rates over the course of just a few years. Within certain countries, such as Vietnam and Ethiopia, adoption rates have been on the rise while in other cases, most notably Belarus, adoption rates have decreased rapidly. Many of the influences on such ranges are due to demographic factors. Situations of war, famine and disease make it possible for poorer countries to migrate their children into richer countries (Selman, 2002, p.218). As with the case of Belarus, government intervention can greatly impact adoption rates. In 2004 when President Aliaksandr Lukashenko asked his cabinet to investigate intercountry adoptions, “virtually all intercountry adoptions in Belarus ceased...the Government of Belarus changed its adoption procedures in 2005 but adoptions have yet to move forward” (adoptionservices.org, 2007). Yet another important note to make is, “it is, however,

evident that the major sources have not been the poorest or highest birth rate countries, that patterns persist long past the “crisis” and that demand for children is also a key factor” (Selman, 2002, p.218). As societies evolve over time, so too does the reasoning for adoption as well as the frequency and patterns of it. Infertility rates as well as ever changing adoption laws, both domestically and abroad, are just a couple of factors that can also seriously impact adoptive practices.

Typically, the United States has been the frontrunner in terms of receiving children through intercountry adoptions. However, after the 1970s many other European countries began to interadopt in significant numbers, considering their average population sizes. Tables 3-4 and 3-5, below, illustrate the numerical intercountry adoption trends in these countries for selected years from 1970 to 2007:

Table 3-4. “Annual Number of International Adoptions: USA, Sweden, Netherlands and Norway: selected years 1970-1995” (Selman, 2002, p.211)

Country	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
USA	2,409	5,633	5,139	9,285	7,093	9,979
Sweden	1,150	1,517	1,704	1,560	965	895
Netherlands	192	1,018	1,594	1,138	830	661
Norway	115	397	384	507	500	488

Table 3-5. “Intercountry adoption to selected receiving countries, 1998-2007” (Selman, 2009, p.576)

Country	1998	2001	2003	2004	2006	2007
USA	15,774	19,237	21,616	22,884	20,679	19,613
Spain	1,487	3,428	3,951	5,541	472	3,648
France	3,777	3,094	3,995	4,079	3,977	3,162
Italy	2,233	1,797	2,772	3,402	3,188	3,420
Canada	2,222	1,874	2,180	1,955	1,535	1,713
Subtotal for top 5 countries	25,493	29,430	34,514	37,861	33,851	31,556
Netherlands	825	1,122	1,154	1,307	816	778
Sweden	928	1,044	1,046	1,109	879	800
Norway	643	713	714	706	448	426
Denmark	624	631	523	528	447	429
Australia	245	289	278	370	421	405
Total*	31,710	36,379	41,530	45,288	39,742	37,526
% to top 5	80	81	83	84	85	84
% to USA	49	53	52	51	52	52

*13 other countries are included in the overall totals: Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, and the UK and with the addition of Israel and Andorra from 2001.

While the numbers make it appear as though the United States has always been the dominant country with intercountry adoptions, it is important to take into consideration the relative size and population of the United States in comparison to the smaller European countries depicted. Specific data on the prevalence of domestic adoption within these European countries was hard to come by. Most detailed reports only include adoptions that took place overseas or internationally, as with Scandinavia and the Netherlands where domestic non-relative adoptions are a rarity as it is (Selman, 2002, p.208). However, as the tables indicate the practice of adoption still occurs across a multitude of nations and cultures. Numbers fluctuate on a yearly basis due to issues of population sizes, child supply and demand, economic factors, “crisis” factors, including

war and famine, intercountry relations, cultural beliefs, record keeping and legality issues.

Conclusion to Chapter III

In the final chapter of this thesis, I will address more explicitly the ethics of adoption in addition to exploring the future of adoption. While the handful of regions represented in this chapter only offer a glimpse of the adoptive practices cross-culturally and cross-regionally, this chapter has reached a clearer perspective on the various reasons why individuals practice adoption. From the traditional practices among the Baatombu and Massai of Africa to the complex and seemingly tragic history of adoption in China, to the demographic influences on interadoption trends across Europe and beyond, it is clear that adoption is utilized to satisfy a variety of individual, cultural and national needs. Some feel that adoption and fosterage is necessary for the proper upbringing of a child while others wish to adopt to suit a personal longing. Adoption also takes place when the biological parents of the offspring are economically, physically or mentally unfit to raise a child, or if the biological parents have passed away.

Armed with a better understanding for the differing reasons for adoption, I still would like to address the historical and cultural context of adoption in one region that is much closer to home, literally. The following chapter will touch upon the transition from informal practices to the establishment of formal adoptive laws and adoption trends in the United States.

Chapter 4

Adoption History & Trends in the United States

Early History: Highlights from the Sixteenth Century through Nineteenth Century

The history of adoption in the United States is rooted mainly in practices based on apprenticeship and service. Such English concepts in America were instilled with the arrival of the Puritans to New England. Dating back to 1648, the Laws of the Massachusetts Colony prompted the practice of “putting out” children, as it was known (Presser, 1971, p.456). As the law stated, “when children were allowed to become ‘rude, stubborn, and unruly,’ the state might take them from their parents and place them in another’s home” (Presser, 1971, p.456). Continuing into the eighteenth century, it became customary practice for individuals of wealth to integrate orphan children into their families (Presser, 1971, p.459). These adoptions took place not only because wealthy individuals had the resources to adopt, but also due to their desire for more labor. By the late nineteenth century, formal adoption statutes reportedly existed in both Mississippi (1846) and Massachusetts(1851). Under the Massachusetts statute, adoptions needed to meet seven requirements*;

- 1). Written consent must be given by the natural parents or legal guardian of the child to be adopted
- 2). The child himself must consent if he is fourteen years or older
- 3). The adopter’s wife or husband (if the adopter is married) must join the petition for adoption
- 4). The probate judge to whom the petition for adoption was presented must be satisfied that the petitioners are of satisfactory ability to care for the child and that it is fit for the adoption to take place
- 5). Once the probate judge approved the adoption, the child would become ‘for all intents and purposes’ the legal child of the petitioners for adoption

- 6). Upon adoption, the legal parents surrender all rights and obligations in respect to the now adopted child
- 7). A petitioner or child that is subject to petition may appeal to the Supreme Judicial Court upon the verdict of the probate judge

*Source: Presser, 1971, p.465

Statistically, there is a lack of substantial records concerning the number of adoptions that took place during the sixteenth through late nineteenth century. However, formal laws continued to develop as the wish of some individuals to legalize adoption for inheritance purposes increased and others desired “increased regulation to ensure that the rights of children and birthparents were protected” (Kahan, 2006, p.54).

A major concern for the welfare of adoption children and their birthparents stemmed from the practices of Revered Charles Loring Brace. In 1853, Brace established the New York Children’s Aid Society, focusing mainly on poor areas within the city. Brace held a number of radical beliefs, particularly that poor children were a threat to society; “He believed they could be cleansed and reclaimed, and his moralism and disrespect for those whose ‘family values’ were constrained by poverty only strengthened his commitment to child welfare” (Kahan, 2006, p.54). Brace notoriously would gather children from the city, orphanages, prisons, asylums, and almshouses and send them to rural Pennsylvania via train where a local community would be waiting for their arrival (Kahan, 2006, p.55). As the train arrived, children would stand on the platform waiting to be claimed by local farming families (Kahan, 2006, p.55). Post-adoption, Brace and his colleagues rarely checked on the well-being of the adopted children, not to mention the environments into which the children were placed. Many of the birthparents of the adopted children were also not notified, as it was not required to do so (Kahan, 2006, p.55).

During this time period others also embraced Brace's concept of "saving" children, yet did so with a much less radical approach. Sister Irene, as she was known, of St. Peter's convent in New York founded the New York Foundling Asylum of the Sisters of the Charity on October 8th, 1869 (National Orphan Train Complex 2013). Shortly after the inauguration of the building, it became a refuge for both unwed mothers and abandoned infants. Eventually, the New York Foundling Asylum grew to include a Boarding Home, Maternity Pavilions and an Adoption Department, specifically introduced to "find suitable permanent homes for those children who were legally free to adopt" (National Orphan Train Complex 2013). Clearly contrasting Reverend Brace's unusual, and for all intents and purposes non-regulated, approach to adoption, Sister Irene and the NY Foundling Asylum sought to care for not only children in need but also single mothers. Such regulated adoption practices continued into the twentieth century as the Federal government became more involved.

The Progressive Era of the Early Twentieth Century

Beginning in the early twentieth century, the Progressive Era marked a period of advocating both against unconventional adoptive practices and in favor of preserving families. In 1909, a national meeting took place at the White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children headed by James West. West, a lawyer and secretary of the National Child-Rescue League, as well as a child of an orphanage himself, pushed President Theodore Roosevelt to address the alarming rate of children in need (Kahan, 2006, p.56). During the time of conference, in the United States nearly 93,000 children

lived in institutions, with 50,000 in foster care (Kahan, 2006, p.56). By 1912, the United States had its first juvenile courts, a federal Children's Bureau and a program for Mothers' Pensions. The intention of the Mothers' Pensions fund was to aid the financial costs of raising a child, in particular supporting widows with children (Kahan, 2006, p.58). Unfortunately, funding for the program was insufficient and thus could not adequately support mothers with children across the nation.

During the Progressive Era, social work also became a profession occupied mainly by white, middle-class, college-educated women (Kahan, 2006, p.59). Many social workers aimed to prevent adoption from happening, hoping to keep families together at all costs rather than split them apart; yet with some cases, adoption was deemed necessary even if it was considered a last resort. Due to efforts to continue to regulate adoption, in 1917 the Children's Code of Minnesota was launched. While the research lacks a satisfactory explanation as to why and how the state of Minnesota became a leader of state legislation regarding adoption, the Code nevertheless eventually became a model for other state regulations. Specifically, the law "required an investigation for of potential adoptive parents to determine the suitability of their home for a child, ...provided for six-month probationary periods in which the child lived with the adopting parents before the adoption became final, and most portentously, called for the sealing of all adoption records" (Kahan, 2006, p.59). It should be noted that individuals directly involved with the adoption, such as the birthparents, adopters and adoptees, could gain access to the records if they wished (Kahan, 2006, p.59).

Adoption in the United States during WWII and the 1950s

As described in chapter 3, there was a large spike in adoption rates before, during, and after WWII. Within the United States, adoption rates between 1937 and 1945 nearly tripled and then practically doubled once more in 1955 (Kahan, 2006, p.60). A multitude of factors contributed to the rise in adoption rates, including the rise of illegitimate births and rising marriage rates. “During and after the war, parenthood was hailed as a patriotic duty. Childless couples were shunned, and record numbers sought adoption (Kahan, 2006, p.60). By way of the impacts of the war, intercountry adoption was introduced as President Truman released a directive in December of 1945 allowing for the migration of evacuees and unaccompanied minors (Lovelock, 2000, p.911). In 1948 Congress then launched the Displaced Persons Act which consisted of a “provision for the immigration of 3,000 ‘displaced orphans’ over and above existing quotas” (Lovelock, 2000, p.912). While both decrees were put in place more in response to the refugee problem across Europe, rather than to create a system of intercountry adoption for U.S citizens and orphans, in the 1950s intercountry adoption took off. During this time, the demand for children outnumbered the supply available domestically. Many turned to intercountry adoption as an alternative solution.

While domestic legislation had been put in place, international adoption legislation had not been adequately established. In the early 1950s, laws were put in place that allowed military and government employees to adopt within the regions in which they were stationed (Lovelock, 2000, p. 912). The Refugee Act of 1953 specifically put in place a nonrestrictive intercountry adoption policy utilized by couples across the U.S.

Thousands of international children were adopted by U.S. couples during the 1950s as legislation continued to evolve to meeting the growing concerns rooted in the welfare of the children involved. Initially, with adoptions finalized in the United States, all biological ties of the adoptee were claimed to be severed thus prohibiting chain migration from occurring (Lovelock, 2000, p.913). Yet as the responsibility of overlooking intercountry adoption and the Orphans program shifted from the Department of State to the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice in 1957, the INS focused more on the “suitability of these children for migration and the suitability of the adoptive families as primarily an immigration concern” (Lovelock, 2000, p. 914).

Both internationally and domestically, those who were preferred for adoptive homes consisted mainly of individuals whom were white, married, active church members, infertile, psychologically-sound, close to their families, and in their early to mid-thirties (Kahan, 2006, p.61). Social workers handling these cases often upheld a level of secrecy in efforts to either “protect the process, maintain the privacy of single mothers, and to continue the expansion of professionalization of social work” (Kahan, 2006, p.61). Adoption records that had been previously declared confidential shifted to be made secret.

Adoption in the 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of war, political protests, civil rights, women’s rights, hippies, drugs, ‘free love’ and good music. As intercountry adoption rates continued to climb, by the 1970s domestic adoption, both interracial and intraracial, had

reached a plateau. The number of healthy Caucasian infants available for adoption in the United States had deeply declined and the women's rights movement of the 1960s brought about changes that effected the practice of adoption. While many women in the 1950s typically adopted infants due to their own infertility, the women putting their children up for adoption at that time commonly did so to avoid the social stigma surrounding illegitimacy and single motherhood. Yet through the 1960s into the 1970s, women suddenly had access to more effective birth control as well as the option of abortion. While in general the societal stigma that had surrounded single motherhood had declined, the shifting gender roles led to more women in the workforce and consequently declining marriage rates and smaller family sizes; "Women wanted control over their own bodies, they wanted control over the number and, more important, the timing of their births because an untimely or unintended birth...could have dramatic consequences for their lives" (Kahan, 2006, p.64).

As these issues gained momentum, the 1970s also saw the emergence of the open adoption system. Headed by Florence Fisher, the Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association was founded in 1971 (Kahan, 2006, p.64). The ALMA sought to end the practice of secret or sealed adoption records, promote open adoptions and help adopted children locate their birth parents (Kahan, 2006, p.64). Open adoption was initially defined as "an adoption in which the birth parent(s) meets the adoptive parents, relinquished all legal, moral, and nurturing rights to the child, but retains the right to continuing contact with knowledge of the child's whereabouts and welfare" (Kahan, 2006, p.64). However, despite the push for more women's rights and domestic adoption

reform, military involvement in Vietnam continued to push the ethical issues surrounding intercountry adoption.

“Operation Baby Lift”, a humanitarian-fueled adoption program launched in 1975 by the United State government, initially sought to aid child caught in the war zones of Vietnam (Lovelock, 2000, p.922). During the course of the program, nearly 2,000 children were airlifted from Vietnam to the United States for adoption (Lovelock, 2000, p.922). Yet many ethical issues surrounding the program led to a highly controversial response. Many of the children that were airlifted and declared orphans were not in fact orphans; in many cases they had just been separated from their families (Lovelock, 2000, p.923). The U.S. officials orchestrating the adoptions often did not complete adequate background checks on the children, leading to problematic processing of the intercountry adoptions taking place. In addition to this, many felt that the U.S. effort to airlift these children out of Vietnam was rooted more in a concern over declining support for the war as opposed to significantly increasing the well-being of the children through adoption.

Similar to the effects of WWII, the Vietnam war, despite the inherent political and humanitarian conflicts, continued to promote the practice of intercountry adoption in the United States. By the late 1970s, more and more children were being adopted from impoverished areas of Latin America. As the social revolutions of the time impacted the reasons for and slowing rates of domestic adoption, couples battling with infertility were still seeking infants to adopt. The lack of infants available domestically ultimately led to the push for increased adoption in Latin America (Lovelock, 2000, p.927). Unfortunately, as also seen with controversy in Vietnam, intercountry adoptions continued to lack appropriate legislation. Many government agencies involved, including the Department

of State and Immigration and Naturalization Service, overlooked the methods in which children from other countries were obtained citing the issue of intercountry adoption as a “private matter” (Lovelock, 2000, p.928). These ethical issues continued into the 1980s and 1990s.

Adoption in the 1980s and 1990s

Intercountry adoption continued to prosper into the late twentieth century, with an alarming rate of non-ethical practices. As intercountry adoption had reached a global level, the lack of regulation led to black markets, “baby farms”, and child trafficking; “Children for adoption in these instances were being treated as commodities and in all of these instances their welfare needs were at best secondary concern” (Lovelock, 2000, p.929). Abuse of children in these circumstances was common and many of the black markets that were established were put in place to grant prospective parents healthy village children as opposed to the often disease prone institutionalized children (Lovelock, 2000, p. 930).

Finally in 1993, the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect to Intercountry Adoption addressed the growing concerns over the legislative and ethical issues surrounding intercountry adoptions. As opposed to the 1986 UN Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children and the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which were unsuccessful in their aims to establish policies on intercountry adoption, the Hague Convention successfully represented “the first intergovernmental endorsement of

intercountry adoption as a practice, and for the first time intercountry adoption was elevated as a practice over and above institutional or foster care in the child's country of origin" (Lovelock, 2000, p.928, 938). The convention established three clear objectives that represented the minimum standards for Contracting States to uphold;

First, "establish safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoption take place in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights as recognized by international law; Second, "establish a system of cooperation among Contracting States to assure that the agreements made by them are respected and thereby prevent the sale of or traffic in children; Third, "secure recognition in Contracting States of adoptions made in accordance with the Convention" (Lovelock, 2000, p. 938-939).

On March 31st, 1994 the United States officially became a signatory to the Hague Convention and established a system of legislation for public-agency intercountry adoptions (Lovelock, 2000, p. 938). Unfortunately, the Hague Convention did not address the issue of independent adoption agencies, and issue I will return to in the final chapter.

Domestically, during the late 1980s the Child Welfare League of America instituted a resolution that regulated open versus closed adoptions. As long as the adopting family and birth parent agreed, an open adoption could take place. The CWLA also pushed for adoption agencies to offer adoption services citing that, "Adopted individuals, birth families, and adoptive families are best served by a process that is open and honest; one that supports the concept that all information, including identifying information, may be shared between birth and adoptive parents" (Kahan, 2006, p.66). During the mid-to-late 1990s, 17 states allowed intermediaries in cases of adoption to read files and then contact birth parents to inquire if they were interested in reuniting with their biological children (Kahan, 2006, p.66). Nearly twenty other states established "mutual-consent registries" for both birthparents and adoptees and a handful of other

states permitted the release of adoption records without a registry, as long as both the birthmother and adoptee gave their consent (Kahan, 2006, p.66).

Conclusion to Chapter 4: Adoption Today-Changing Demographics and Issues of Record Keeping

Unfortunately, United States data for domestic adoptions is scattered over a variety of national surveys, Census results, welfare agencies, and court systems with no comprehensive registration system in place to keep track of domestic adoptions (Davis, 2011, p.61). Due to strict immigration laws and reforms made throughout the twentieth century, intercountry adoptions are more accurately tracked and recorded and thus statistical information is easier to come by.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of comprehensive data and changing government and intercountry relations, the traditional reasons for adoption have persisted throughout centuries. Children living in impoverished conditions, residing in war-torn areas, born to ill-equipped parents or suffering from maltreatment are the most commonly adopted. Women lacking spousal, parental and familial support, financial income and stable resources are the most likely to put their children up for adoption. In some cases, women are pushed into adoption more involuntarily than they may wish to be, however these women still typically fall into the lower-class category. What seems to vary the most when considering the history and evolution of adoption, is the characteristics of the individuals who adopt. As we consider this, along with the other important notes and issues raised in the previous chapters, we can begin to examine the future of adoption and the ethical implications of the practice.

Chapter 5

The Future of Adoption: Considering Ethics, Moving Forward, and Final Thoughts

Ethical Concerns and Potential Solutions

The first four chapters of this thesis have merely outlined snippets of the evolutionary history of adoption, the sociological data on adoptive familial well-being, the cross-cultural practices of adoption and finally, the history of adoption within the United States with a particular focus on intercountry adoption. As we move forward, there is still much to be learned and understood about this practice. The lack of comprehensive data on adoption hints to us just how complex this practice is, with its numerous forms, functions and outcomes. While not explicitly addressed in this thesis, numerous children have grown up and continue to grow up never knowing the identity of their birth parents. My own mother, adopted as an infant in 1955, never learned the identity of her birthmother. Her adoptive parents were also never told the name of her birthmother and thus could not assist her in a search. Adoption, while it can bestow the miracle of life and the blessing of a child upon families that cannot conceive on their own or wish to take in a child in need, is also surrounded by a cloud of controversy rooted in suspect transactions and secrecy.

Even seemingly successful attempts to reform the complexities of adoption have their shortcomings. As the Hague Convention attempted to reform intercountry adoption in 1993, it failed to adequately address independent adoptions, typically regarded as the most common form of intercountry adoptions as they are generally less regulated.

Leaving it up to State officials to manage independent adoptions utilizing, the quite unclear term, “competent authorities”, the Convention also did not take action against independent agencies in the business of trafficking children (Lovelock, 2000, p.940). Finally, children are only protected within Contracting states as the Convention did not address non-Contracting states (Lovelock, 2000, p.942). Table 5-1, below, lists both non-Contracting states and Contracting states for the 1993 Hague Convention:

Table 5-1: Contracting & Non-Contracting States of 1993 Hague Convention (Hague Conference on Private International Law 1993)

Contracting States	Albania, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland, USA, Uruguay, Venezuela
Non-Contracting States	Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belize, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Columbia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Fiji, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Nepal, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, San Marino, Senegal, Seychelles, Swaziland, Thailand, Togo, Vietnam

As independent adoption agencies remain in existence, illegitimate adoptions continue to take place. Human trafficking remains a large problem into today, particularly among young children and adolescents. Not only do stricter regulations need to be put in place to address this issue, officials collectively need to become less ignorant to the issue as it occurs at an alarming rate in the United States.

More research also needs to be done on the welfare of families and children post-adoption. For children adopted interracially and internationally, throughout the developmental period into adulthood we can expect a great deal of cultural adjustment and issues concerning identity. Parents, adoption agencies and researchers alike should consider such issues before placing a child into a new home. It is not enough to assume that moving a child from a poor home to a wealthier home will warrant a positive outcome; the emotional, physical and psychological well-being of the adoptee in relation to the environment and characteristics of the prospective household and parents should all be considered.

As addressed in the conclusion of chapter four, better record keeping will allow for more comprehensive and conclusive studies on adoption practices, trends and outcomes. Many of the types of adoptions taking place within the United States, including step-parent adoptions, related/unrelated adoptions, formal/informal adoptions, Native American tribal adoptions, and foster child adoptions, are done through a variety of methods that may not require legal consummation (Davis, 2011, p.62). There is no federal requirement in place for national data on adoption trends and practices, making it difficult for researchers to put together a comprehensive analysis of United States adoptive practices into the twenty-first century (Davis, 2011, p.62). The scattered

numerical data leaves researchers not only with incomplete data sets, but also with limited facts to develop theories that would typically aid officials and agencies with implementing improved adoption procedures and legislation with the best interests of the adoptee, adopter and birthparent in mind.

Certainly as the demographics and societal trends within the United States continue to evolve, we can expect to see changing reforms and legislation concerning adoption. Same-sex couples are not only fighting for their right to marry, but also for their right to adopt and raise a child in union. Teen mothers, made popular by networks such as MTV, continue to turn to adoption as both an alternative to abortion and as a means of giving their child a chance for better opportunities in life. Step-parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, close relatives and family friends alike engaging in informal and formal adoption processes will continue to shape the ever evolving make up of modern families. Advances in technology are also shaping the methods of adoption. Infertile women seeking infertility treatment now have the option of embryo adoption. With this technology, another couple's sperm and egg is inserted into the patient's uterus, promoting the possible growth of an embryo (Kahan, 2006, p. 69). Finally, international relations also greatly impact the practice of adoption, as most recently Russia's President Putin supported a proposed ban on the United States adopting from Russia citing child-abuse issues (BBC News 2012).

Final Thoughts

I had hoped throughout this thesis to more explicitly address domestic adoption in the United States, with a focus on such demographic issues. As stated above, scattered records, as well as personal time constraints, limited my ability to cover the topic of Americans adopting Americans adequately. Yet as this section reflects moving forward in the study of adoption, it is important to consider questions that should be addressed as the research of adoption continues to grow, even if I was unable to address them myself.

Researchers should pay more attention to our own foster-care system, considering how many children are in foster care (which currently is likely into the 100,000s or more) and how many couples within the U.S. are capable of adopting. It should also be considered why inter-country adoption attracts so many couples in the U.S., especially if there are plenty of children available domestically. Is this an issue of race or gender or the availability of healthy children domestically? Does the economy play a role in the statistics of adoption? Has it become a sort-of status symbol to adopt culturally exotic infants? While these questions may be broad in their nature, they nevertheless point to just a small fraction of the factors that can influence adoption trends and statistics. A great deal of attention has been given to intercountry adoption trends, yet domestic adoption trends in the United States have appeared to take a back-seat to other sociological issues. This must change if we wish to more adequately understand the relationship between adoption and societal demographics, economics and stigmas, as well as individual well-being throughout the adoption process.

Nevertheless, I had initially set out to write this thesis as a means of understanding more clearly my mother's own experience with adoption. Integrating my anthropological and sociological studies, I gained an understanding of not only how adoption evolved throughout human evolution but also how it has morphed throughout history. What seems most remarkable is the multitude of forms adoption can take on as a practice, occurring both among primates and humans from all walks of life. It would seem that traditional Darwinian thought, and concepts derived from kin selection, are called into question when considering the frequency of adoption, the financial and emotional costs of adoption and the scenarios in which adoption typically occurs. Despite the concept of survival of the fittest, which I am by no means denouncing, humans have also evolved the capacity to care for infants and adolescents completely biologically-unrelated to them.

While I have attempted to address the questions of how and why humans adopt, I have learned that no simple answer will suffice. As with the question of nature versus nurture, it remains unclear whether our capacity to adopt evolved from a biological need to produce and care for offspring or a societal push to open our homes to children in need. What does remain clear, though, is adoption will continue to change and increase in complexity as the world around us advances technologically, shifts politically, and as humans continue to evolve biologically and sociologically.

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