The paradoxical rationalization of modern adoption - social and economic aspects of adoption

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"It's cheaper and easier to buy a baby for $100.00 than to have one of your own." (1) This was the brash slogan of one Chicago baby broker, whose adoption business was revealed during a 1917 investigation of commercial child-caring arrangements known as baby farms. At the same time, the Spence Adoption Nursery in New York (one of the first specialized adoption agencies in the United States) was flooded with so many requests "from the finest families in the country" that it boasted: "Our primary purpose is to place children of unusual promise in homes of uncommon opportunities." (2) In the early decades of the twentieth century, child adoption was an exchange governed by an unstable combination of profitability, benevolence, and upward mobility.

Modernizing child adoption depended on sharp contrasts between commercial, sentimental, and professional ways of making families up. At the dawn of the twentieth-century, baby farms like the one in Chicago provoked sensation, newspapers advertized babies, and indentures and deeds were still used to exchange children. Most states had passed adoption laws in the nineteenth century, following the 1851 Massachusetts statute that defined adoption as a matter of children's welfare and called upon courts to verify that adopters were "of sufficient ability to bring up the child … and that it is fit and proper that such adoption should take effect." (3) Yet in 1900, no state in the country treated child-placing as a specialized occupation or mandated that adoptive homes be investigated or supervised. By 1950, few states allowed unlicenced placements, and kinship rarely became a legal fact without some form of public inquiry, though investigatory probes ranged from perfunctory to painstaking. Dorothy Hutchinson, a na tionally known placement authority on the faculty of Columbia's School of Social Work, put the case for regulatory expertise bluntly in 1947:

Kindliness and benevolence of themselves are insufficient. The panic-stricken unmarried mother, the unprotected child and the thirsty adoptive parents all have a right to security and to the protection of authentic experience and to the best in our scientific knowledge. In the hands of an amateur, adoption practice is a perilous activity whether the amateur be a kindly dilettante or an unprincipled money-changer. (4)

Making adoption modern entailed establishing a new paradigm, kinship by design, and then radically distancing that paradigm from modes of family formation that relied on commerce, sentiment, intuition, accident, or simply common sense. The campaign to rationalize kinship-- through a trinity of professional management, scientific validation, and expanded public bureaucracy--is the focus of this article. Its very partial success tells a story about adoption that is also a story about modernity itself. (5)

Adoption is an ancient institution that was, during the twentieth century, reimagined as a transaction that transformed non-relatives ("biological strangers") into kin through systematic "matching" techniques that replaced, rather than supplemented, natal families. In their eagerness to reduce the stigma and increase the authenticity of kinship made socially, many participants in modern adoption held that institution up to the mirror of biogenetic nature, denying what is surely the most obvious thing about adoption: it is a different way to make a family. The matching paradigm stipulated that parents who acquired children born to others should look, feel, and behave as if they had conceived those children themselves. One result was the novel but tight

linkage that grew between adoption and infertility over the course of the century. Infertile couples have probably always been disproportionately interested in adoption, but prior to 1940, infertility per se did not elicit much probing or concern during the adop tion process. (6) By 1950, adoption was commonly viewed as the quintessential solution for childless heterosexual couples seeking to approximate, emotionally and legally as well as physically, the family they could not produce themselves. It conveniently also offered birth mothers and their babies second chances for normal lives, without the shame of being unwed and illegitimate.

In light of a generation of Kuhnian scholarship revealing cultural and temporal particularism lurking beneath the surface of universalist knowledge claims (8)--including claims to understand development and kinship scientifically--matching today appears as a distinctive social practice, only one of many possible ways to make families up. The "naturalness" of matching still has ardent defenders today, especially with regard to race. Since 1970, however, its axiomatic status has been forcefully challenged by movements demanding open records and open adoptions and by placements that deliberately and visibly violate the paradigm, crossing lines of race, ethnicity, and nation. In an era of reform, it is worth recalling that matching's reenactment of nature directly confronted the central dilemma of modern adoption. It attempted to create kinship without blood in the face of an enduring equivalence between blood and belonging. The results were paradoxical. Matching reinforced the notion that blood was thicker than water, the very ideology that made adoption inferior to the "real thing," a last resort after the normal (and preferred) method of biogenetic reproduction had failed.

If the advocates of matching reinforced the blood bias of American kinship, they also brought dignity and equality to adoption by insisting that governmental and scientific resources be devoted to serving the needs of children who needed parents. By controlling and regularizing the procedures that made families up, they sought to improve adoption's outcome and reputation as well as naturalize its product. Surveying the history of this campaign offers a vantage point not only on adoption, but on the growth of bureaucratic organization, public regulation, scientific professionalism, and other key social processes famously analyzed by Max Weber under the useful rubric of rationalization. (9)

Adoption rationalization certainly illustrates how the most ordinary, intimate, and private corners of social life--from family dynamics to sexual behavior and selfhood itself--have been subjected to constant scrutiny, empirical probing, and novel forms of discipline that "simplified" social relations in the interest of managerial "legibility." (10) Kinship by design appears to be a classic example of modern social engineering, at once arrogant and utopian, striving to bring as much of social life as possible under confident control, sidelining mystery and humility in favor of mastery and prediction. If industrial, intercultural, and international relations could all be rationalized, why not familial relations as well? (11)

The case of child adoption leads to a conclusion less confining, but no less chastened, than Weber's inescapable iron cage. Rationalizers--social welfare, human science, and public policy professionals concerned with adoption--have faced constant resistance from the public and struggled with their own chronic uncertainty about what appropriate adoption standards should be. Was it advisable or dangerous to place newborns and infants? Should adopters' gender preferences be honored or ignored? Should records be sealed or reunions facilitated? On these and many other questions, rationalizers changed their minds.

Rationalization in child adoption has been only partially successful, especially if we measure success practically, as rationalizers did themselves, by counting legislative reforms, calculating the

growth of professional authority, and computing the superior outcomes of adoption arranged by experts. If, however, we consider adoption rationalization as a moral ideal, then it appears as part of a more profound social revolution in private life, one that reconfigured the meaning and experience of kinship. Adoption rationalization forcefully moved childhood and kinship into the public sphere, pried a significant measure of power away from parents, and transferred decisions previously considered beyond the legitimate reach of state power to representatives of government and allied helping professions.

Rationalizers helped to inaugurate a new era of confidence in adoption by promising that risks could be known, authenticity insured, and outcomes predicted in advance. The scrupulously designed family, not widely realized in practice before 1945, was symbolically powerful--in popular magazines and newspapers, government pamphlets, on radio, and in professional literature of many kinds--as a benchmark against which all adoptions were measured. One result was that adoption's statistical prevalence and sheer social visibility rose to unprecedented levels during the twentieth century. (12) For ordinary Americans in 1900, entering a court to formalize kinship was still rare. By 1970, the century's numerical high point, approximately 175,000 new adoptive families were legalized each year. (13) The annual figure has dropped to around 125,000 recently, but adoption retains a powerful hold on the public imagination and is a fixture in media and popular culture. (14) Adoption attracts curiosity in part because it is di stinctive. But it also stands as a symbol of identity and solidarity, social processes that encompass us all. How do we come to know who we are and where (and with whom) we belong?

The Child-Placing Landscape

In the early years of the century, there were hundreds of child placers in the United States. Many worked in orphanages and maternity homes; others operated independently. Only a tiny minority actually sold children, but professionals reserved their most vitriolic criticism for these entrepreneurs, many of them women, whose trade in human commodities had provoked scandalous attention since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. (15) They knew that babies born to desperate unmarried mothers were the most likely victims of commercial adoption, that is, if these infants survived the epidemic disease and malnourishment that ended so many young lives in institutional settings. [Figure 1] In 1909, a Nashua, New Hampshire investigation turned up evidence of brokers, "oozing with evil," who presided over an adoption market "so insidious and deadly as to seem incredible." (16) Not only did commercial adoption correspond to shocking rates of infant mortality, but "tiny defenceless babies, sometimes still unborn, a re openly advertised as if on sale for the board that is due; or to be taken and disposed of 'in a happy home' for the practically uniform charge of $50 a waif!" (17) The next year, Hastings Hart, new chief of the Russell Sage Foundation's Child-Helping Department, reported various cases of adoption-related sale. One baby went for the price of 25 cents and a canary. (18) In 1921, a six-month study of newspaper advertisements concluded that one baby was sold, or casually given away, every single day in New York City. (19)

Wherever market logic ruled, investigators found exploitation at the core of child exchange, and exploitation undermined child welfare. Indenture contracts and deeds were still used in some states, and standardizers denounced them as outmoded, tainted instruments designed to deliver children's labor and services to selfish adults who knew nothing about the true meaning of parenthood. (20) 'I don't want to do what they want me to do," young Earnest Fowler complained to the superintendent of the orphanage who had indentured him in 1910. "I would like for you to find me another place as I don't like this one." (21) Long after formal indenture fell out of favor, adoption remained popular as a method of supplementing the household labor supply, and child-

placing organizations received numerous requests for strong boys accustomed to farm work and girls who could cook, clean, and do child care. E.E Richardson of Chevy Chase requested an adolescent girl from the Washington City Orphan Asylum because his household lac ked servants. (22) In Dallas, a wealthy woman adopted two school-age girls, in succession, whom she mistreated, to care for her in her old age. (23) One veteran whose turn-of-the-century adoption was unknown to him until after World War I reported that his adoptive mother "beat me, made me steal and never allowed me to go to school. I have had only three months school in all my life. At the age of about 13 she swore that I was older and put me in a factory to work." (24) Professionals took a very dim view of such practices.

Infant adoptions, not driven by the need for helping hands, were also considered extremely hazardous during this eugenic era. Professionals suspected that a fair number of the infants involved in the adoption trade were defective, a view endorsed by prominent eugenicists like Henry Herbert Goddard, who believed that adoption would contaminate the gene pool and increase retardation in the American population. (25) Ida Parker, a researcher with the Boston Council of Social Agencies, was impressed by the pervasive mental deficiency and immorality in the natal backgrounds of 852 Massachusetts children adopted between 1922 and 1925. She concluded that "this is not the human stock which people contemplating adoption desire but many times, though by no means always, it is what they secure…. Normal families of good stock seldom give away their children." (26) Progressive-era reformers were skeptical of children's adopt-ability and agreed that it was a "social crime" "to place a feeble-minded child in a home where o ne of normal mentality is expected." (27) Normal children belonged in families. Subnormal children belonged in enlightened, well-managed institutions, where their reproductive sexuality could be contained.

Adopters too were sometimes unfit, and investigations turned up all types of unsavory characters-- from convicted criminals to alcoholics--who had adopted with ease. In Pennsylvania, for instance, a woman whose

first adopted child had been removed from her home in 1918 because of assault and battery charges had no difficulty acquiring another in 1920, and she adopted that child in 1922. (28) In addition to revulsion against the sort of transactions that came intolerably close to slavery, the adoption market lacked the "safeguards" that professionals believed only standardization could guarantee. During the 1910s, exposes of the traffic in children were conducted in Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, New York, and elsewhere. They invariably renewed calls for public supervision of child exchange and produced results like Maryland's "six-months law," which made it illegal to place infants away from their birth mothers during the first six months of life. (29)

Philanthropic amateurs involved in creating kinship had a moral advantage over cash-hungry adoption brokers, but they were also a threat to the country's most vulnerable citizens because they were equally indifferent to standards. Judd Lewis, a writer for the Houston Post, set up a baby bureau and placed more than 100 children by 1914. Nothing was easier than placing parentless children in good adoptive homes, Lewis thought. Assuming that all babies in need were lovable, he picked childless couples who were kindly, clean, and willing to give an adopted child "a square deal." His newspaper appeals were sentimental, emphasizing "the sound of baby laughter" and the "sweetness of dimpled arms about your neck." (30) Lewis's benevolence earned him praise and publicity. Such stories portrayed adoption as a simple humanitarian act that anyone might perform.

Kinship by design, which was antithetical to commerce in children, was also at odds with altruists like Lewis. Advocates of standardization and regulation stressed adoption's many risks and the importance of relying on technical knowledge inaccessible to ordinary people, even those, like

Lewis, who loved children a great deal. If adoptions not arranged by professionals turned out well, it was by accident, and not design. The first specialized adoption agencies, founded by well-intentioned (and often well-off) amateurs in the early decades of the century, were dismissed by professionals as enterprises flawed because they cast adoption in the language of sentiment rather than science, benevolence rather than technique. Good hearts were required for good adoptions, but they were hardly sufficient for success. The new adoption agencies also relied on funding strategies that left them vulnerable to charges of baby-selling. Instead of calling on the generosity of community chests and the financial obligation of nat al families, as professionally-run child placement services did, they openly solicited donations from adopters. In contrast, professionals maintained that any financial transactions between adopters and agencies were inappropriate. Professional agencies did not begin introducing fees until the 1940s; in 1947, only one-third of agencies polled in a major national study asked adopters to partially subsidize adoption costs. (31) Fees were considered a controversial move, and perhaps an unethical one. (32)

One of the early adoption agencies, the Cradle Society in Evanston, Illinois, became famous as a "a supply station for Hollywood mother love," finding babies for George Burns and Gracie Alan, among other celebrities. (33) The Cradle was founded in 1923 by Florence Walrath, wife of a prominent Chicago attorney, who arranged her first adoption a decade earlier by replacing a dead newborn with a perfectly healthy infant. (34) Like the socially prominent women who began the Spence Adoption Nursery and the Free Synagogue Child Adoption Committee in New York, Walrath embraced adoption's potential to bring children and parents together to mutual advantage and celebrated the upward mobility, educational advantages, and cultural assimilation that accompanied the adoption of children born to impoverished immigrants. [Figure 2]

The advocates of kinship by design considered this rosy view extremely naive as well as disgracefully indifferent to the sacredness of blood bonds. Most professional child advocates in the 1910s and 1920s equated the redemption of unmarried mothers with the retention of their babies and believed that surrendering children to adoptive parents not their "own" was an injustice to women and children alike. Adoption manifested twin failures: of maternal instinct and of the professionalism pledged to reactivate it when it ceased being instinctual. (35) The earliest child-placing standards incorporated this anti-adoption bias, reflecting the view of one social work executive who termed adoption "abortion after birth." (36) In 1923, the New England Home for Little Wanderers, a leading regional agency known for its commitment to scientific child study, announced: "We do not care to be known as an agency for the transfer of illegitimate children from their mothers to waiting families." (37) Professionals in the child-p lacing vanguard took a variety of approaches to lightening the burden of shame heaped upon unmarried mothers and their children, but adoption was not usually among them. They avoided permanent placements whenever they could. (38)

Fortified by public health research demonstrating that breast-feeding significantly reduced infant mortality, child welfare professionals insisted that child life literally depended on respect for biological maternity. Except in extreme circumstances, "adoptions should never be hastily entered into" since they harbored "great dangers." (39) As late as 1936, C.C. Carstens, director of the Child Welfare League of America, wrote with satisfaction that so few adoptions were arranged by professional child placers that no national list of agencies providing adoption services even existed. (40)

Rationalization and Its Rationale: The U.S. Children's Bureau and the Child Welfare League of America

Kinship by design offered an alternative to the chaotic child-placing landscape of the early twentieth century and, at the same time, a unifying ideology for nascent social work professionals. Located in legions of professionalizing agencies around the country, advocates initiated protracted attacks on profit-oriented and non-professional placements because they made material measures or emotional displays the index of children's well-being. Commercialism and sentimentality, their argument went, were very likely to produce disastrous adoptions. As an alternative, incipient child welfare elites maintained that placing children in foster (41) homes was a delicate operation in need of technical skill, empirical investigation, and government oversight.

The U.S. Children's Bureau (USCB), established by Congress in 1912, was one centrally important, early home for advocates of adoption rationalization within the federal government. (42) Best known as the brainchild of Progressive-era female reformers and settlement house workers, the USCB mounted public health efforts to reduce infant mortality and became a leader in policymaking related to illegitimacy and unmarried mothers. Its activities on behalf of children in need of adoptive homes, less well known, were equally notable. The USCB worked with local activists to promote state legislative reforms, disseminate massive amounts of original research, and sponsor periodic conferences on child placement issues and priorities. The first major conference on child welfare standards, for example, took place in 1919 under USCB auspices. Its published summary, Standards of Child Welfare, included a resolution on desirable practices in child-placing and supervision drafted by Edmond Butler, Executive Secretary of New Y ork's Catholic Home Bureau, the first Catholic agency to use family homes rather than congregate institutions. Proper placement, Butler noted tersely, "does not mean boarding-out, indenturing, baby-farming, the securing of employment or the mere transferring of the custody of a child from one person to another or to an institution without regard to the object of each transfer." (43)

Like other government and professional organizations devoted to adoption standardization, the USCB was galvanized by scandals that routinely surfaced in connection with commercial and unregulated adoptions. USCB field agents documented deplorable conditions in maternity homes and orphanages and oversaw investigations of "placing out" and interstate traffic through midcentury. They called attention to adoption irregularities shortly after the USCB was founded. "Rascality in a considerable proportion of cases" was a lamentable fact, Emma Lundberg reported in 1915 to Julia Lathrop, the first Chief of the USCB. Advertizing was a common means of exchanging children. Men casually adopted babies "because their wives complain of loneliness and want children as playthings." Illegitimate children were tools of blackmail and extortion. Unmarried women extracted money from their married lovers in exchange for silence. Birth mothers who made "scenes" could be "bribed into quitting the annoyance." Cases had been documented of "white babies falling into the hands of negroes." (44)

The USCB itself provided no adoption services. Still, hundreds of adults seeking children for love, labor, or a combination of the two wrote to the USOB in hopes of realizing their dreams. These heartfelt letters frequently revealed that gender, racial, and ethnic preferences were linked to popular conceptions of heredity. "I want a young foreign girl from 12 to 14 years of age to take into my home to train to help me," wrote Mrs. Standard of West Virginia in 1916. "I prefer German, French or Scandinavian. The reason I want a foreigner is that I think they are likely to have better blood in them than our American orphans.… I will make her one of my own family in nearly every respect." (45) William Sullivan, Mayor of a small Louisiana town, wrote in 1918 inquiring about "a carload" of "white babies" (he specified 30 to 50 infants) to be adopted by the town's most prosperous citizens. Color mattered to Sullivan; religious affiliation did not. "We do not care to know anything about their antecedents or parenta ge. All we want to know is that they are healthy." (46) In 1933, Chas Benthall, a Tennessee man, wrote to inquire "what size girls you

have. Do you know anything about the stock? I don't want a girl whose parents are or was criminals I want one I can be proud of. One thats intelligent & will take an education." (47) "I read in the paper where homes are wanted for Brown Babies," wrote Mrs. Joseph Samuel in 1948 after an Ebony article brought the shortage of "Negro" adopters to her attention. "We both want children so badly, hoping this will be an answer to our prayer. Our choice of color will be brown (light)." (48) Each inquiry was answered promptly and respectfully; letter-writers were referred to local or state agencies whose staff and standards were deemed reliable. From its inception, the USCB recognized that public attitudes about adoption were "touchy" but also desperately in need of change. The life-altering character of adoption made "painstaking and thorough" study and social action urgent in adoptio n, as it was in all the issues of child and family welfare that fell under USOB jurisdiction. (49)

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), another major force in adoption rationalization, is less well known to historians even though the CWLA continues to be a major player in child welfare policy today. It is a national federation of public and private service-providing organizations. Founded in 1915 by fourteen pioneering organizations and supported by the Russell Sage Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund, the CWLA counted approximately seventy members when it formalized its constitution in 1921. C.C. Carstens, already a well established national child welfare leader and opponent of institutional care, was appointed the CWLA's first Director. In 1938, the CWLA issued its first set of adoption standards that distinguished between temporary and permanent placements. By the late 1950s, several hundred CWLA members ranked adoptive and foster placements as a primary concern, and the CWLA initiated a far more ambitious program of standardization, resulting in Standards for Adoption Service (1958). This compr ehensive catalogue of kinship by design was intended to guide social work practice and legal procedure, while simultaneously raising public consciousness. Today, the CWLA counts almost 1000 organizational members and has recently revised its adoption standards bible for the fifth time. (50)

Most of the CWLA's founding organizations, including the New England Home for Little Wanderers and the Children's Home Society of Florida, were located along the eastern seaboard, but one-third were Midwestern agencies. Concerns that family placements across state lines made children especially vulnerable to shady operators and legal inconsistencies were among the founding rationales for the new organization. State officials, like Pennsylvania's Secretary of Welfare, Ellen C. Potter, also doubted that taxpayers would tolerate the future expense, in crime and dependency, of placement's "baffling problems." (51) So Pennsylvania and many other states prohibited any child who was "incorrigible," "mentally unsound," or "a social menace or unable to achieve self-support" from crossing their borders without a significant bond. (52) (In 1918, Pennsylvania required $10,000.) CWLA members approved of virtually all moves toward state oversight and pledged to protect children by cooperating in placements involving geogra phic distance. Standard-setting was part of the CWLA's constitutional mandate.

The CWLA firmly believed that child protection required "definite standards of efficiency" in record keeping, personnel training, and financial management. The new organization reacted in dismay to "very diverse" activities all claiming to advance child welfare. (53) Home-finding was an "old occupation" and one "enmeshed in sentiment that however kindly is ineffective or dangerous unless enlightened by knowledge." (54) Work done on behalf of children outside their own homes, the CWLA freely admitted, "ranges all the way from excellence to such a degree of inefficiency and malpractice as almost to justify legal prosecution." (55) C.C. Carstens' first report to the CWLA described the disorder he had observed while traveling in the field. "One bad example (unnamed) is a society that keeps no family records, uses ministers of the gospel instead of 'real social

workers,' spends more time raising funds than supervising children, and doesn't even know that it lacks good standards!" (56)

The mission of a federal bureaucracy contrasted with the aims of a service-providing federation. Yet the USCB and the CWLA forged a partnership cemented by a shared vision of statism, professional responsibility to "interpret" (57) delicate social operations like adoption, and overlapping personnel at very high levels. C.C. Carstens was a key source of inside information about adoption at the UCSB even before he became the CWLA's first executive. (58) Edith Abbott, sister of the second USCB Chief, Grace Abbott, served as a CWLA board member. So did Katharine Lenroot, a close colleague of C.C. Carstens, who was the third USCB Chief and briefly served as Acting Executive Director of the CWLA in 1953.

From the beginning, the two organizations hoped that regularizing child-placing education and practice would help rebut Abraham Flexner's famous 1915 declaration that social work was an idealistic occupation full of unselfish do-gooders who were "hardly eligible" for professional status. (59) Social workers did too many different things, Flexner thought, and they did them in too many different ways. Rationalizers understood the magnitude of the task they had set for themselves, yet they resolved to put professional child-helping techniques to the test. Benevolence would have to give way to the exacting standards of science.

The earliest surveys of child-placing procedures revealed what leaders already suspected: adoption practices were unpredictable and haphazard. Sometimes, they were so disorganized that family members unintentionally lost all track of one another because no paper trail existed, or because sloppy records lacked accurate names and addresses. "Will you please look in the old records and see if you can trace up my father and mother," begged one former orphanage resident who, like many of his peers, was not a "true" orphan at all, but a child whose family desperately needed help weathering emergencies brought on by unemployment, desertion, or death. "As I grow up in manhood with no one to love but God I feel like a lost sheep.... I been searching for the last 6 yrs." (60)

Anonymity and sealed records did not place information off limits to adoptees until after World War II. During the first half of the century, agency workers commonly helped adult adoptees locate natal relatives. (61) Their best efforts were often defeated by disappointingly meager information. One distraught Massachusetts man, adopted in the 1890s, pleaded for help from the USCB. "WHAT HAVE I DID AS A CHILD TO BRING this on myself. I had nothing to do with my coming into the world but yet afor 36 long years I have lived all ALONE without a MOTHERS LOVE FOR HER SON, and GOD KNOWS I LOVE HER WHOEVER SHE [IS] AND WHATEVER SHE MAY CHANCE TO BE." (62) USCB officials contacted a Boston court officer, Elizabeth Lee, who devoted considerable effort to tracking down the man's adoption before giving up, declaring that "it does seem to be a hopeless task I am very sorry indeed that I have not been able to do anything to help out." (63) The Russell Sage Foundation, a major patron of social work education, reasoned that p oor recording methods were responsible for the many "instances [that] are constantly coming to light of boys and girls who cannot find out who they are." (64) The CWLA collaborated with the American Statistical Association in order to devise a system for uniform reporting and pledged to provide the USCB with all the statistical data its member agencies could muster. (65)

Disregard for basic information, personal or statistical, was not the only obstacle to adoption rationalization. The sheer difficulty of non-relative placements caused much confusion. From the outset, adoptions outside of blood kin were the chief focus. Although they represented only one type of adoption--slightly more than half of the century-long total--non-relative placements were

paradigmatic for standardizers. The axiom that kinship between strangers was most fragile and least likely to succeed was the fundamental premise of all reform. (66) C.C. Carstens was typical of the first generation of adoption professionals in his philosophy of family preservation lubricated by expert knowledge. Mistakes were almost always due to "lack of expertness," according to the first professional child-placing manual, which described child-placing as "exceedingly technical" work that "gives almost uniformly satisfactory results." (67) Until standards were firmly in place, child placers would stumble along with nothing to guide them but trial and error. Some broke up natal families without a second thought; others were reluctant ever to do so. Some studied children and foster homes, then supervised placements carefully; others did only superficial investigation. (68)

Kinship by Design: Professional Authority

The paradox at the heart of modern adoption is that it both naturalized and denaturalized kinship. Adoption professionals aimed to conserve reproductive nature, but when they could not, they tried hard to imitate it. The marching paradigm elaborated during the first half of the century relied on religious continuity and physiological similarity--hair color, eye color, skin color--as indices of authenticity and belonging. Yet kinship had to be significantly denaturalized in order for experts to gain authority over the adoption process and persuade policymakers and the public that professional services were superior to commercial and charitable methods of family-making.

As we have seen, most Progressive reformers believed that blood was thicker than water, but their experience taught them that blood was sometimes not very thick at all. Encounters with birth parents illustrated that maternal love and paternal responsibility were not always "natural" in the sense of being automatic. Nor was the adopt-ability of children, or the parenting capacity of adopters, a simple given, as the proponents of sentimental adoption believed.

Even so, establishing a new role for professionals in the adoption process was a major challenge. The aspiring social workers associated with the USCB and the CWLA in the 1910s claimed a professional identity that was more imagined than real. Social work education barely existed as a formal enterprise in the second decade of the century. The first social work school in the country, the New York School of Applied Philanthropy (which later became Columbia's School of Social Work), opened its doors in 1904; in 1915, there were only five independent and two university-affiliated social work programs in the United States. The American Association of Social Workers was not founded until 1921. Long after the credentialing process was routinized, however, "amateurs" remained the backbone of many child welfare organizations, and the shortage of trained personnel caused elites no end of frustration. Leading figures in the USCB and the CWLA thought that the relationship between specialized training and high-quality adop tion was obvious, but the public shared this view only intermittently. Some birth parents and adopters tenaciously resisted social work incursions into the design and management of private life. So did numerous doctors, lawyers, judges, and midwives, whose own autonomy and professional turf were being squeezed by social work. Diplomacy aimed at allied professionals and outcome research that compared the results of kinship by design to independently-arranged adoptions remained urgent at midcentury in part because the benefits of adoption rationalization were not apparent. (69)

In addition to hurdling barriers that all rising professions typically encountered--putting credentialing mechanisms into place and making believable promises of empirically-verifiable, better-than-random results--would-be social workers had an additional problem: explaining why a female-dominated helping occupation should qualify for professional status. Although a number of social work pioneers were men--C.C. Carstens, Hastings Hart, and William Henry Slingerland in the child welfare field--it was not always clear why women would need specialized training to extend

their "natural," maternal responsibilities into the public sphere. In the early 1910s, an agency official recalled ruefully, "almost any well intentioned woman, of any age, who had a 'love for children,' was thereby qualified for the work." (70) The view that adoptions could be easily and intuitively arranged by women, who were nurturing by virtue of sex, was a chronic impediment to a professional vision founded on skill. It was no small feat to replace faith in common sense maternalism with confidence in genderblind specialization, especially in relation to work that touched such allegedly ordinary, familiar, and private aspects of life.

Kinship by Design: Scientific Validation

The professionalizing strategy adopted by many men and women in the adoption field required a set of unimpeachable tools to reinforce their new authority. Configuring adoption as an exacting, scientific process offered such tools at the same time it discredited the notion that virtually any woman (or unusually caring men, like Judd Lewis) could arrange good adoptions. Devising technical means of determining the elusive qualities of adoptability in children and parental suitability in adults was one of the most important strategies adoption professionals used to carve out a new jurisdiction. Mental measures were among the first of these technical innovations, introduced in the United States after the turn of the century, they spread rapidly in the 1910s and 1920s. Child placers found the I.Q. test (a novel revision of the Binet scale published in 1916) useful in avoiding the problems of under- and over-placement (placing bright children with dull parents and vice-versa) and creating kinship that could overcome the flimsiness of non-genetic bonds. (71) Religion was the first matching requirement to be embodied in law during the nineteenth century, (72) but synchronizing the mentality of children and parents was considered almost as important to adoption success. Like testers intent on detecting feeble-mindedness among students, immigrants, and soldiers, child placers welcomed intelligence as a proxy for social status. "You must bear in mind that there are first-class, second-class, and third-class children," William Slingerland pointed out in his 1919 manual for professional child placers, "and there are first-class, second-class, and third-class homes." (73) In a meritocratic society, intelligence was a defensible rationale for social distinctions. It appeared to produce hierarchy legitimately.

In the 1920s and 1930s, professionals intent on placing children with parents perfectly matched to their "class" and intelligence added developmental scales beginning at birth to their storehouse of technical aids. Such placement technologies were pioneered by CWLA member agencies. The New England Home for Little Wanderers, for example, a regional agency with a central Boston office, hired psychologist Rose Hardwick to administer mental examinations to all children under care in the agency's new Study Home beginning in September 1915. Every single candidate for adoption was admitted to the Study Home "by way of precaution." (74) Like most early mental testers, Hardwick improvised a great deal, adapting instruments designed for school-age children and adults for use with toddlers, even infants. (75)

The Gesell Normative Schedules, by midcentury the most widely used developmental tests in the United States, were also used as placement aids. They were developed by Arnold Gesell, a welt known developmental psychologist, pediatrician, and head of the Yale Clinic of Child Development, founded in 1911. (76) Professionals wrote to Gesell from all around the country to inquire about the application of his scales in adoption practice and a number of major organizations administered them to adoption candidates. (77) The use of normalizing technologies, such as Gesell's scale and the I.Q. test, served the cause of kinship by design by marking the adoption process as delicate, difficult, and distant from the transparency of material signs and symbols. Neither adopters nor independent child placers were equipped to recognize the authentic ingredients of family love. Child placers who acted out of ignorance were all too prone to confusing love with money, and those

motivated by money obviously overlooked love entirely . Adopters, on the other hand, were easily taken in by adorable infants, and needed to be rescued from their own gullibility and the faulty assumption that love followed directly from charming behavior or attractive appearance. Only professionals were equipped to pierce the superficial veneer of development by conducting "a scientific study of mentality and personality" for every child in need of placement. (78) They boasted that such studies distinguished the professional placement process as superior to the many adoptions arranged independently and without benefit of mental measurement.

Gesell was a lifelong champion of professional child welfare who maintained ongoing affiliations with the USCB, served on CWLA adoption committees, and worked with advocacy groups closer to home. Gesell advised USCB officials and CWLA member agencies on policies related to placement age and pre-placement testing. (79) In 1926, he wrote a pamphlet for the USCB on "Psychoclincal Guidance in Child Adoption," arguing that "purely impulsive adoption should be discouraged and the whole procedure should be surrounded with clinical and supervisory safeguards." (80) The following year, he contributed "Reducing the Risks of Child Adoption" to the CWLA Bulletin. (81) In 1938, after the CWLA formalized its first adoption standards, he urged the organization to publish "a convenient standard manual, printed perhaps in more than one language, that would be the bible for good adoption procedure." (82) In 1939, he warned Connecticut judges that only expert guidance could protect against "the intense suffering" and parental h eartbreak caused by "bungled" adoptions. (83) Even a decade after Gesell's retirement, Gesell Institute staff were still avidly promulgating the same basic messages: "Psychological Tests Important in Preventing Unsuitable Adoptions" and "Lack of Mental Tests Results in Parents' Adopting Defective Child." (84)

Gesell's clinic tested 1500 adoption candidates by 1939 and estimated that 10 percent were unadoptable. His articles, books, and speeches described a number of these cases. (85) One telling example involved a "cute" baby girl who "was just the kind of child who would smite the heart of questing adoptive parents." But since Gesell suspected that she would never even complete high school, he predicted that "there may be genuine pangs of regret" in store for any parents foolish enough to adopt her as an infant, before her true developmental potential could be known with certainty. (86) Benevolent adoption mediators were as naive as adults desperate to become parents, and Gesell disparaged "private individuals who are motivated by a kind of match making impulse and who find a certain mental satisfaction in making the business of others their own concern." (87) As another adoption researcher pointed out a few years later, "it becomes the agency's duty to protect these parents, by not letting them take a child know n to be unable to utilize the opportunities they can provide." (88)

Tests of intellectual and developmental status served not only as matching devices but as methods of product certification that responded to the "demand" side of the adoption market, a harsh reality that professionals could not avoid. "I want very much to be unselfish and charitable in planning for the welfare of a child who needs help," one "mentally panicky" physician's wife defensively explained to Gesell. She wanted a child who would fit into her upper middle-class milieu, where children were expected to be bright. "I feel it is only wise to try to be sure that I am not being led by sympathy and sentimentality into a situation which is essentially unworkable." (89) One indelicate Yale graduate announced that, even during the Depression, he had a very substantial income and was willing to "do everything possible to secure a child that will have the capabilities of making the most of a college education and all that goes with it." (90) "We can give a child a great many advantages," pleaded yet another quest ing parent. "Out of fairness to ourselves as well as the child, we desire to avail ourselves of the latest scientific achievements, to insure a happy outcome." (91) "We have understood from our reading on the subject that you are able to judge mental capacity of a child with fair accuracy even at such an early age," a Williams College

physicist wrote in hopes of securing a highly intelligent infant boy with Gesell's aid. "We feel that adopting a baby is less hazardous if this is true." (92)

Gesell and adoption professionals sought to dispel unrealistic expectations of perfect adoptees, repeatedly pointing out that no guarantees came with "natural born" children. Yet they promised to systematically identify and disqualify "unadoptable" candidates so that adopters would not be "cheated" out of the children they deserved. (93) Professionals took credit for developing technologies that could protect good-hearted parents from unwittingly taking in genetic lemons. Iris Ruggles Macrae, who studied 56 Boston adoptions between 1926 and 1935, exulted that "the increasing clinical study of children has made it possible to find really good babies for adoption, and hence there is at present more demand than there are 'certified' babies." (94) Commercial and non-professional adoptions did not offer similar products and services. Quality assurance came only with kinship by design.

Kinship by Design: State Power

Kinship by design allowed agency workers to distinguish themselves from both commercial and humanitarian child placers. They recognized love and belonging as precarious, manipulable resources rather than natural facts outside the bounds of human intervention. They aimed to predict and control the ingredients of intimate solidarity. The premise of standardization was that public safeguards should be elevated over private interests, and that values associated with consumption and blood should be subordinated to children's emotional welfare. Yet standards aimed to erase all traces of expert labor, so that adoptive families would look perfectly natural and real, as if they had not been designed at alt. Experts had to denaturalize kinship and make it artificial in order to design it scientifically, but they had to hold their designs up to the mirror of nature to legitimize them culturally.

The earliest adoption standards were formulated as minimums by the USCB and the OWLA, a strategy also adopted by legislators. One legal historian described lawmakers' willingness to have agencies act with state-like power in promulgating public regulations as a clear case of "regulatory capture." (95) For their part, rationalizers preferred minimal requirements to optimal ones. Given the obstacles they faced, minimum standards were feasible. They offered average agencies a baseline to encourage improvement, but were not "so radical in their requirements as to provide discouragement" for organizations with a long way to go. (96) Standards included three basic elements: careful investigation of the parties prior to placement, post-placement supervision, and a lengthy waiting period prior to finalization in court. (97) In 1917, Minnesota passed the first state law mandating that children's adoptability and prospective parents' suitability be investigated before adoption decrees were granted. (98) Two decades lat er, more than 20 states had translated similar standards into law. (99) By midcentury, virtually all states required individual and organizational child placers to be licensed, and the vast majority had new or revised adoption statutes on the books (not all of them mandatory) echoing the standardizers' constant refrain: investigate and supervise. (100)

Early standards included detailed specifications for kinship as well as more general criteria for an effective design process. Birth parents should be beyond rehabilitation, children should be "normal," and adopters should be "industrious and thrifty," of the same religion as the child, and not too "advanced in years." (101) Adopters were presumed to be married couples--most surely were--but no rigid codes excluded singles from consideration and a fair number of women succeeded in adopting by themselves, or with their female partners. (102) This was especially likely if these women had personal and professional connections to the Progressive-era child

welfare world, as social work educator and theorist Jessie Taft did. [Figure 3] Religion was the only factor singled out for matching by adoption laws in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Intended as guarantors of "religious protection," religious matching provisions provoked heated controversies that prefigured later debates about transracial, tr anscultural, and transnational placements. Religion frequently intersected with these other axes of social identity. (103)

Child placers were directed to follow a fixed list of items when investigating a home: the house's physical character and geographic location, personalities and child-caring experiences of family members, church attendance, income, and reputation with neighbors and community leaders. Carefully standardized placement increased the chances that provision for children would be both materially and emotionally adequate, but only painstaking post-placement observation could guarantee that a child's welfare was actually being served. "To place out without such supervision is a crime and should be treated accordingly." (104)

Meticulous written records were essential for many reasons. None was more important than the mandate to evaluate individual cases in light of evolving knowledge and general principles. (105) By 1925, the CWLA supplied its members with standard forms specifying the information they should gather and the questions they should ask in evaluating children and identifying prospective homes. Other markers of standardization included a minimum number of visits (four per year) that should be paid to children after placement and the trial period (one year at least) that should proceed legal adoption. (106) Formulated in the name of child welfare, minimum standards turned helping practices themselves into calculable operations. The first large-scale adoption outcome study, How Foster Children Turn Out, published in 1924, defined "success" by utilizing "the ordinary objective tests of self-support, law observance, and response to educational opportunity." (107) Sophie Theis, the study's author and a major figure in adopt ion modernization, confessed that spotty early records hindered her inquiry. Improved record-keeping would make future placements--and the science that tracked them--more successful. Once standardized, kinship by design could be measured. (108)

Formalizing Standards, 1938-1958

In 1938, the CWLA issued, for the first time, standards that distinguished between permanent (adoptive) and temporary (foster) placements. Spurred into action by reports of "shocking practices" in the adoption market as well as the deplorable lack of "intelligent public opinion," the CWLA set Out once again to combat the forces of crude commercialism and naive benevolence. "Infants and young children are given away without consideration of their best interests, and in some instances are even given for cash." (109) Too many people had "unfortunate experiences with organizations for the adoption of children that are either on a commercial or a philanthropic basis," Executive Director Carstens informed the membership in 1936. (110) He singled out the Cradle, the Willows, and the Veil for special rebuke. The first was a specialized adoption agency; the others were commercial maternity homes. All were perceived as businesses that catered to the desperation of birth mothers and the baby-hunger of childless couples with money.

The 1938 list of minimum safeguards took direct aim at placements that featured a dangerous mixture of impulse and cash. "Both family and child need protection from the hazards liable to be connected with the complicated readjustment of human lives involved in the social procedures of an adoption," Carstens insisted. "The family should be safeguarded against receiving with high hopes a child who in the long years ahead will prove to be a disappointment to them. The child should be safeguarded … against becoming an artificial anchorage for an unsuccessful marriage, or against becoming the victim of a woman's desire for a baby that might be to her a plaything--when

she should have acquired instead a poodle dog." (111) Publicity material for these standards featured a photograph of a baby over the headline: "Don't Sell Us or Give Us Away." (112)

The CWLA's standards equated expert knowledge with tangible benefits unavailable in the market, where profits came first. Commercial exchange offered only the most superficial, material measures of quality, such as blond curls and healthy bank accounts. The specialized training of adoption professionals, in contrast, allowed them to probe below the surface of child development and adult motivation, averting the "tragedy and disappointment" so likely in independent placements. (113) In 1938, the CWLA's standards promised the candidate for adoption "that he is wanted for the purpose of completing an otherwise incomplete family group" "and that the prospective parents be well adjusted to each other." They promised that "the child have the intelligence and the physical and mental background to meet the reasonable expectations of the adopting parents. They promised the public that "the adoption process … avoid encouragement of illegitimacy on the one hand and trafficking in babies on the other." (114)

Minimum standards sought to eradicate the most pernicious features of commercial and casual adoptions. The standards fit on a single page. Through regulations "as can be undertaken only by the state itself," the CWLA intended to eradicate the most "appalling" mechanisms of family formation and prevent calamitous mistakes from occurring. (115) One report of "poor adoptions" cited a newborn (who turned out to be feeble-minded) given away without any investigation, "elderly" single women adopting babies on a whim only to reject them later, and a child "given in adoption at one year to shiftless colored couple." (116)

The CWLA's standardizing efforts may have been directed against the "traffic in babies," but they were shaped by market realities that influenced professionals just as keenly as other child placers. (117) The CWLA prioritized adoption because "the well-known decline in the birth-rate, and the demand on the part of childless families for children to adopt makes a consideration of procedure of ADOPTION a timely subject." (118) CWLA members understood that commercial child placers frequently appealed more effectively than they did to birth mothers, and knew they had to compete more vigorously. "Are we so inflexible that we cannot find a way to serve this group in need and yet serve them in a socially safeguarded way? Before we attempt to tear down the commercial agency which is meeting their need, we must be sure our service can be made acceptable." (119)

The fact that "adoption has become distinctly the fashionable thing to do" gave professionals some reasons for hope, especially during the Depression. (120) At its most idealistic, adoption indicated that struggles for material survival had renewed people's faith in the non-material qualities that children and home ideally represented. The irreducibly human quality of love was a theme dear to the hearts of professionals. They approved of stories like that of John Murdock, a former investment banker who lost all his stocks and bonds during the Depression but whose "investment" in two adopted children produced "dividends" that permanently altered his beliefs about wealth, demoting materialism and enshrining attachment as the true measure of value. (121) Money still mattered, as this self-conscious use of financial terminology indicates. Professionals themselves habitually inquired about potential adopters' employment and income, budgetary discipline, housing, insurance, and ability to pay for whatever education an adopted child might need. "A bank account and property owned are, of course, always points in the applicant's favor," one social worker wrote in 1937, stating the obvious. (122) What the precise financial qualifications for adoption should be was an enduring dilemma for professionals who recognized and even celebrated the upward social and economic mobility involved in adoption, but who never tired of reiterating that love--and children--could never be purchased. (123) [Figure 4]

Evidence that a "big bull market" in children was thriving elicited their most withering criticism. (124) They denounced "investors" in "baby securities" who preferred infants and toddlers over older children and, in a reversal of the typical gender preference, requested more girls than boys. One sarcastic observer even dubbed girls "market leaders" who "go like hot cakes; we simply can't keep them on hand." (125) Professionals did everything they could think of to explain to the public that professional services were better precisely because they sharply curtailed consumer choice. Agencies did not allow applicants to look over the merchandise, "as if on a shopping expedition." (126) Wise selection of a single child fitted to a particular family was far more effective than the "poor salesmanship" displayed by independent operators who allowed parents to pick out children for themselves and then return them, for any reason at all, if expectations were not met. (127) [Figure 5]

In the late 1930s, promoting kinship by design still required public relations flair. By lengthening and complicating the adoption process, professionals knew they were alienating birth parents and angering adopters. Fervent, repeated warnings about dangerous quackery in adoption had not dramatically increased public appreciation for adoption professionalism or decreased complaints about the numerous frustrations of agency placements. (128) Residency requirements for maternity services also proved to be a stubborn obstacle to agency success. Unmarried women who wished to keep their pregnancies secret by moving away from home did not qualify as residents in the cities and towns where they went to give birth. This problem was often blamed for the persistence of blackmarket placements, which had the distinct advantage of offering birth mothers enough money to survive their pregnancies. By the late 1930s, agency waiting lists for healthy white children were already extremely frustrating to potential parents.

When the CWLA sampled community attitudes in New York in 1938, it found that public interest in adoption was high and complaints about professional practice were widespread. (129) The survey suggested that adopters viewed the extra time and bureaucracy accompanying professional services not as "safeguards," but as "very trying" or even "positively inhuman" strategies for keeping adults away from the newborn infants they wanted. (Until at least 1930, most agency-mediated adoptions in New York involved children over age two. Even in the late 1930s, when agencies began making more infant placements, they considered a four- to six-month observation period prior to adoptive placement an absolute minimum. (130) After dealing with professionals who made a habit of "asking the same questions over and over as though they were trying to trap them into a wrong answer," some would-be parents inferred that agencies were hostile to adopters and adoption, and looked elsewhere. Others went so far as to suggest that professio nalization was tyrannical. "When bureaucracy strides into the home telling people whether they may have children or not," one man wrote bitterly to a well known professional advocate, "democracy has flown out the window." (131) One parent expressed a strong preference for "boot-leg" over professional agencies: they offered much faster service and treated adopters like "customers," with warm appreciation rather than cool objectivity. Another parent expressed the belief that extra "pull" was needed to adopt through an agency. Many parents resented professionals who treated applications to adopt as cries for help disguised as generous acts. Although would-be adopters looked to these very professionals for information and reassurance--especially about children's physical well-being and genetic background--they did not appreciate being treated as if their parenting credentials were on trial. Which of course they were.

Becoming more enthusiastic about adoption helped professionals compete. Professional hostility to permanent placements had decreased significantly by the time the CWLA issued its 1938 standards. (132) The Freudian world view had already started to rewrite the old script of women sexually victimized by predatory men, replacing it with a new script of psychopathological

maternity. Women who became pregnant outside of marriage were considered deeply troubled and filled with unconscious hostility. Whether they knew it or not, they were pregnant on purpose. The theory that non-marital pregnancy originated in the twisted psyches of birth mothers helped to turn the dogma of social work's founding generation on its head: babies had to be given away rather than kept. Because adoption offered a mutual solution for white, middle-class unmarried women and infertile couples, the era after 1945 witnessed the rise of "the adoption mandate." (133) Adoption became "the best solution" rather than the last resort. (134)

Although the rhetoric of professional neutrality and client self-determination dampened frank endorsements, most child-placing professionals embraced adoption by World War II, a turning point in the emergence of the United States as a psychological society. (135) In 1939, social worker Mary Brisley declared that babies born to unmarried mothers were automatically "deprived." Their resentful mothers were plagued by guilt and "an unconscious wish to eliminate the child altogether." Without benefit of placement in a normal family headed by a married couple, the child of a single mother was "practically foredoomed … to become one of the 'neurotic personalities of our time.'" (136) Two years later, psychiatrist Florence Clothier flatly stated that "unmarried mothers, with rare exception, are incapable of providing sustained care and security for their illegitimate babies." (137) If unmarried mothers were trapped in unresolved oedipal and pre-oedipal developmental dramas of their own, if they had become unstable, neurotic, hysterical, narcissistic, or even psychotic, then their manifold emotional confusions threatened their own as well as their children's prospects for psychological health. Once children's interests were refigured as more secure apart from their mothers', adoption emerged as a positive good.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a series of membership surveys and conferences on adoption convinced CWLA officials that standardization had not progressed far enough. "Adoption as a professional service is still very young," members admitted to themselves in 1948, as they took stock of their own dramatically changing practice on matters ranging from infant placement to fee-charging, infertility, and "hard-to-place" children. (138) Agency professionals knew that their practices confused the public and their self-criticism of "fearful and perhaps, overly cautious" agency practice was honest. (139) But independent placements remained worrisome. "If we are going to do away with the black market or even diminish it, we must compete with it," one social worker concluded. (140) Certain that they would eventually prevail, CWLA members affirmed that "adequate safeguards in adoption are possible only through accredited adoption agencies with responsibility for the entire process." (141) Professionalism, they told t he public, was safe and effective. Why risk the unknown by acquiring children privately when authorized adoptions delivered healthy children in exchange for a little extra time and red tape? [Figure 6] In the postwar years, the CWLA embarked on another phase of adoption standardization.

The numbers of adoptions taking place in the United States (along with the proportion of non-relative placements mediated by agency professionals) spiraled rapidly upwards after World War II. Adoption's postwar popularity was traceable to the defeat of racial purity ideologies and the boomer-era equation between parenthood and responsible citizenship. Adoptions seemed more compatible with democracy than ever--socially as well as personally meaningful acts--and the numbers doubled in the decade after the war to reach approximately 100,000 each year. (142) Since almost half of all adoptions were still arranged by freelancers, professionals warned that more people than ever would suffer the ill effects of botched adoptions. "For infants we have a 'sellers' market," explained Martha Eliot, Chief of the USCB, "but for older children the 'salesman in the person of the social worker has to do an intensive job." (143) Old scourges proliferated with adoption's new popularity. Babies were still being casually "offered for adoption to financially secure persons" in newspaper ads. (144) Parents risked avoidable disappointment. Children risked

debilitating maladjustment. Citizens in communities around the country risked a tidal wave of preventable, costly social problems. (145)

After 1945, the adoption landscape looked dramatically different than it had a few decades earlier. Agencies were gingerly starting to arrange newborn placements, introduce professional fees, and test the feasibility of adoptions previously ruled our of bounds and still considered difficult and costly: children of racially and ethnically mixed heritage, children with physical and mental disabilities. With the first systematic efforts by professionals to arrange "special needs" adoptions, leaders in the field believed that even more standardization and regulation was needed.

In the interwar period, the nature-nurture debate had taken a decisive turn toward nurture. The genocidal link between Nazism and biological determinism closed the door on most open professional sympathy for eugenics and prompted a new appreciation for the democratic potential of adoption. In January 1955, the CWLA sponsored a major national conference at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago to celebrate the "peaceful revolution" underway in American adoption. (146) The event brought together rank-and-file social workers, leading figures in many scientific fields, and the small but growing body of investigators whose research focused on adoption itself. NBC even broadcast selected interviews from the conference, including one with childrearing guru Benjamin Spock, on its "Home" show. (147)

Organizers left an impressive published record of their work, which stands as the preeminent statement of kinship by design at midcentury. It included a comprehensive national survey of agency practice, a remarkable range of scientific papers, and a study of "special needs" adoptions that portrayed the professionals who had formerly promised to exclude defective children as the proud authors of an inclusive definition of adoptability. (148) "Adoption is appropriate for any child without family ties who is in need of a family and for whom a family can be found to meet his need." (149) This was the new mantra of postwar kinship by design. With eugenics discredited and demand for children high, beliefs about "imperfect" children changed.

Adoption was the first order of business when the CWLA embarked on its post-conference push toward standardization in spring 1955. The timing could not have been more auspicious. United States Senator Estes Kefauver (D-TN), an adoptive father himself, was about to launch congressional hearings calling for much stronger federal laws in order to combat the interstate black market. As one part of a major federal initiative on juvenile delinquency, the hearing reiterated the view, common since the Progressive era, that improperly placed children would become social menaces and criminals. Kefauver expressed "nothing but contempt for certain unscrupulous individuals who are fattening on the emotional hunger of others and reaping sizable profits by placing children for adoption through highly dubious methods." He made it clear that he wanted the federal government to back up the authority of adoption professionals. Placement called for "specialized social knowledge." (150)

This dovetailed with the CWLA view. Since the late 1930s, when the CWLA had issued its first standards, professionals' share of placements had increased substantially and their therapeutic vision had become more popular in a culture infatuated with expert helpers proffering psychological advice. When CWLA President Marshall Field announced a three-year standards project, funded by the Ittleson Family Foundation, he lamented the fact that "everyone is an expert when it comes to children" and repeated the familiar warning that "too many would-be 'specialists' do not recognize the seriousness of the work they attempt." (151) But he also predicted that new standards would finally "take the 'folklore' out of child care and would substitute in its place the most scientific knowledge currently available" in "psychology, psychiatry, sociology, anthropology, genetics,

pediatrics, child development and medicine." (152) In the mid-1950s, the standards project was the CWLA's "Number One priority." (153)

Zitha Turitz, a graduate of Radcliffe College and Simmons School of Social Work, managed the ambitious and unwieldy project, which mobilized large committees whose members met to discuss outlines of principles and make detailed comments on drafts of standards, sometimes over lengthy periods. The adoption committee was the first to be appointed because of "the pressing need for nationally accepted standards, and the fact that almost every aspect of child welfare appears in adoption." (154) Chaired by Elizabeth Townsend of the Children's Bureau of Delaware, the committee's 25 members met for the first time on December 20, 1955, hosted by the USCB in Washington, DC. (155) They met monthly through June 1956, then turned to the onerous, sometimes trying, task of revising numerous drafts and reaching consensus.

The result was Standards for Adoption Service (1958), a handbook used to refine agency practice, educate public opinion, and guide the work of attorneys and judges who handled adoption cases. (156) It detailed the protections that should be offered birth parents, children, and adopters. It described exactly what should happen before, during, and after children were placed. Specific standards illustrated how dramatically high-quality services had been reconceptualized since the CWLA's founding. Rather than underlining the risks to adopters and stressing the dangers to children of removing them from birth mothers and blood kin, the manual pointed out "that many young women who become pregnant out of wedlock have serious personality disturbances, need help with their emotional problems, and in most social groups encounter serious social disadvantages if they keep their children with them." (157) In order to make good on its pledge to help them and their children, agencies were advised to accept surrenders whenever birth parents were emotionally ready, not when viable placements materialized.

It was still true that children placed for adoption needed to be carefully studied, but the reasons had changed. Warning explicitly against efforts reminiscent of Gesell's to predict future development, (158) the new standards underscored that adoptability was a sweeping concept: "There are no hereditary factors that should automatically rule out adoption." (159) Data-gathering was no longer required to prevent adoptive parents from assuming the burden of damaged goods. Instead, it offered information that might satisfy children's future curiosity about natal origins. But that information was increasingly general. The sort of identifying information that had previously been given to adult adoptees was, in the interwar years, the target of more and more laws that sealed original birth records. After World War II, relatively more unmarried birth mothers came from white, middle-class families; they had mortified parents who desperately wanted their daughters to have another chance at marriage and "normal" mother hood. Legislative efforts motivated by the desire to protect the confidentiality of adoption from the prying eyes of a judgmental public gradually calcified into polices of secrecy, guarding the identities of birth mothers and shielding adoptees from information that might stigmatize or shock them. (160) Narrow concepts of feminine respectability and fears of children's emotional vulnerability legitimized the secrecy that increasingly surrounded adoption.

As for evaluating the capacity of applicants for adoption, standards directed caseworkers to select parents "who can provide the conditions and opportunities favorable to healthy personality growth and the development of individual potentialities." (161) In order to accomplish this, a host of factors would have to be carefully considered: "total personality," "emotional maturity," "quality of marital relationship," "feeling about children," "feeling about childlessness and readiness to adopt," and "motivation." (162) These general terms referencing adult well-being embodied class- and culture-bound understandings of maturity and motivation. In addition to the bottom-line

presumption that applicants would be legally married heterosexuals of childbearing age, a household division of labor that made wives economically dependent upon husbands was expected; working mothers were generally considered ineligible to adopt. (163)

By the postwar period, infertility was also an issue inseparable from adoption. On the one hand, infertile couples were viewed as such logical adopters that it was difficult for many adoption professionals to take seriously applications from couples who already had children of their own or were capable of conceiving them. Standards for Adoption Service noted only two "valid" reasons that a fertile couple might wish to adopt: "factors in heredity or serious risk to the life of the mother." (164) Built into adoption policy, in other words, was a theory that poignantly and paradoxically underlined adoption's status as inferior, last-resort kinship. Only couples unable to produce children themselves could be expected to adopt, and matching still guided placements, at least as far as race and religion were concerned. (165) On the other hand, infertility was a probable source of difficulty if a couple's feelings about it were unresolved. Partly for this reason, the home study was reimagined as a therapeutic techniq ue and not simply an evaluative one. Ongoing contact with professionals was both "an experience which may bring about change and growth in applicants' attitudes and expectations" and a method of determining "their flexibility and adaptability to adaptive parenthood." (166) For adopters, the journey toward parenthood involved a delicate and uncomfortable balance. They were expected to display a penchant for personal growth, on the one hand, while also submitting to inspection for pathology.

The 1958 Standards defined adoption as a child welfare service that helped children "who would not otherwise have a home of their own, and who can benefit by family life, to become members of a family which can give them the love, care, protection, and opportunities essential for their healthy personality growth and development." (167) The point was to nurture the fragile personalities of children by placing them with parents who had the requisite emotional resources to help them navigate a treacherous developmental process. Typical cases from this period are full of efforts to probe and interpret unconscious motivations. Agencies sometimes revoked approval of adopters who had sailed through exhaustive home studies because their psychological profile raised suspicions. After Louise Wise Services, a progressive Jewish agency in New York, agreed to place a baby with the Ws in the mid-1950s, for instance, the agency's psychiatric consultant argued that their superficial presentation as a happy young couple maske d deep emotional difficulties. Mr. W, an economist, had an "obsessive compulsive defense structure" and "would rather deal with intellectual things than people." Mrs. W had a close relationship to her own mother that crossed the line between acceptable intimacy and pathological dependence. Her strong preference for adopting an infant girl betrayed a narcissistic desire to recreate the unhealthy symbiotic tie with an adopted child. The agency's psychiatric consultant reasoned that "if her child behaved in some frustrating way, she would totally reject it." (168) Louise Wise rejected the Ws instead.

In the postwar period, adoption assumed a thoroughly psychological cast, frequently based on loose readings of Freud's "family romance" theory and psychoanalytic perspectives on child development, gender, and sexual orientation. In this discourse, material considerations were subordinated to emotional qualifications. (169) No party to the adoption triangle was emotionally innocent or whole. All were diminished by some combination of unconscious motivation and abnormal life experience.

Adopted children were psychologically disadvantaged because the fantasy of being adopted -- a fantasy Freud hypothesized helped most children gain independence from their biological parents -- was not a fantasy at all. (170) "The reality factor" for adoptees meant that "the idea of adoption

had woven itself into the framework of the child's personality configuration" where it "played a role in symptom formation and object relationships." (171) Knowledge of rejection by birth parents damaged children so deeply, inflicting such "severe narcissistic injury," that adoption itself became, for some professionals, a risk factor for the development of mental illness. (172) For their part, women who had children out of wedlock were suffering from masculinity complexes and personality disorders. According to Leontine Young, who wrote widely on the subject of non-marital pregnancy, "we know that the unmarried mother is an unhappy and neurotic girl who seeks through the medium of an out-of-wedlock baby to find an answer to her own unconscious conflicts and needs." (173) Finally, adults who wished to adopt might actually be waging an unwitting boycott against parenthood. "Psychogenic sterility" (as infertility with no apparent physiological cause was then called) was attributed to "resistance," a significant danger for any adoptee unlucky enough to be saddled with such abnormal parents. (174)

In sum, kinship by design reimagined family formation as an act of psychological engineering so intricate that diagnostic sophistication was imperative if adoption was to turn our well. Adoption was no business for amateurs.

Assessing Rationalization Historically

At midcentury, virtually all states in the country had acted to bring their adoption laws into harmony with the principles underlying USCB guidelines and CWLA standards. In some cases, insistence on minimum requirements made a clear difference. One New York woman who had adopted a little girl in the 1910s was not allowed to adopt another in the 1920s after it was revealed that she had casually handed the first child over to the Salvation Army. When the second adoption was refused, the woman complained bitterly about the unfairness and inflexibility of adoption standards, to no avail. "I could not get a child no matter how much better Home I have now. Is My past life got to be always throwed in my Face? I even tried to talk with the Judge show hime where these things were being Held against me were False. He wouldnt even talk to me, slammed the door in my Face." (175)

In other parts of the country, however, a considerable gap separated regulatory rhetoric from reality. In 1917, when Minnesota passed the country's first mandatory adoption investigation law, most jurisdictions lacked the professional and bureaucratic capacity to accomplish any such goal. This remained the case for a considerable period afterward. (176) In Illinois, many adoptions were still not subject to investigation, and the investigations that did take place often followed placement. Some people working with unmarried women and dependent children heard the message of scientific professionalism dimly, if at all. These facts illustrated "the possibility of evading the inquiry of the stare," and therefore the frustrating shortcomings of rationalization itself. (177)

In the interwar years, professional authority, scientific validation, and enhanced state oversight-- the trinity of rationalization--remained unrealized dreams in many locations. According to a series of USCB studies in the 1920s, the country's most vulnerable citizens were more vulnerable if they lived in states where standards had not been revised, or where standards had been formalized but were simply ignored. In thirty Georgia counties, investigators found that mother-infant bonds were accorded little respect. Poorly run and staffed agencies accepted surrenders at birth and judges rarely bothered to investigate adoption cases appearing before them. The regulations that did exist--requiring child placers to be licensed, for example--were so habitually ignored that the USCB concluded nothing was being done in Georgia to safeguard the adoption process. (178) In Pennsylvania, maternity homes persisted in the despised practice of accepting babies upon

payment of a surrender fee of $50-100. (179) In Washington, no effort was made to persuade birth mothers to keep their children and court records showed little evidence of investigation. The relatively few children placed by the Washington Children's Home Society, the state's major social agency, had incomplete records that testified to inferior casework. (180) In North Carolina, "the opinion that the child born out of wedlock is invariably better off if removed from its mother seemed to be widely held." (181)

In spite of widespread statutory reform, legal loopholes gaped wide open at midcentury. The interstate, commercial placements that had galvanized USCB and CWLA action in the 19 10s were still most likely to be blamed. During the 1950s and 1960s, the two organizations were as active as ever in exposing baby-selling operations. (182) After World War II, intercountry adoptions emerged as a new focus for standardization efforts when they became more numerous and visible due to a combination of mounting domestic demand and the devastating impact of war on children in Europe and Asia. (183) The USOB and the CWLA cooperated with organizations like the International Social Service/American Branch to combat commercial trafficking across national borders. Sometimes this took old forms, like advertizing. One German man, for example, inquired about airing the following on NBC radio: "We have a baby for placement--not under 1000 dollars--boy, 2 months old, sound family, now unemployed. If possible, we would be willing to have him adopted." (184) There were new variations on old scourges too, like "proxy adoption," through which U.S. citizens adopted foreign children in foreign courts, in absentia. The controversial activities of Harry and Bertha Holt, an evangelical Oregon couple who began making intercountry placements after a special act of Congress permitted them to adopt eight Korean war orphans in 1955, publicized the proxy process. [Figure 7]

Such end runs around the basic safeguards required in most domestic adoptions angered child welfare professionals and reinvigorated their legislative and public relations efforts to promote rationalization. (185) Yet public sentiment often ran against them. Woman's Home Companion, a magazine that had previously enlisted in the battle to promote adoption professionalism, published heart-breaking narratives of loving couples, childless after years of patient waiting. They denounced arrogant and inflexible social workers who had lost touch with their service mission and preferred playing God to making families. "Over and over again they have placed the observance of rigid rules above common sense and the welfare of children in their care," explained a 1950 article, "Why You Can't Adopt a Baby." (186) If couples, frustrated to the point of desperation by red tape, resorted to independent placement, who could really blame them?

In 1955, renowned novelist Pearl Buck bluntly accused professionals and religious institutions of sustaining the black market by standing between tens of thousands of homeless children and willing parents in order to preserve jobs. (187) "The mediocre quality of the average social worker as a person" was to blame for holding so many children hostage, compounded by the fact that "there is no leadership, worthy of the name, in child adoption." (188) CWLA Executive Director Joseph Reid howled that Buck's views were "inaccurate and misleading," even "slanderous," but they were clearly shared by many ordinary Americans. (189) "Which is the bigger crime?" one Oregon woman scornfully asked. "To buy your babies, or to have them left in these over crowded homes so someone has a good job caring for them?" (190) Like many other Americans, this woman knew a wonderful couple who had been waiting patiently for years to adopt. Unable to understand the awful delay, she castigated stingy, self-interested professionals and "un forgivable tight laws" for the growth of an intercountry black market. (191)

Professionals tried to defend themselves and address public frustration simultaneously. "All of us respond to the idea of rescuing helpless children from the dragon of deprivation," declared USOB

Chief Katharine B. Oettinger in 1959, attempting to explain regulators' concerns. "Problems in adoption are infinitely harder to resolve in an adoption which spans the ocean…. The mere fact that we are in a hurry does not mean that we should speed the adoptive process so much that we are forced to by-pass the necessary safeguards. Human beings are too complex to be thrown helter-skelter into permanent family relationships." (192) In protesting the unequal treatment that foreign children were given when adopted by U.S. citizens, reformers both raised the bar of rationalization and acknowledged the inevitable incompleteness of their efforts in the continually shifting adoption world.

After 1940, however, the standardizers' victory was more than merely rhetorical. A new cultural openness to adoption, a move toward environmentalism in the human sciences, and the relatively greater availability of public social welfare services resulted in progressively higher rates of non-relative adoptions arranged by agency professionals. Until 1970, when 175,000 adoptions marked the statistical high point of twentieth-century adoption, the fortunes of adoption professionals were on the rise. After World War II, the proportion of independent placements decreased from more than 50 percent of all non-relative adoptions to an all-time low of 21 percent in 1971 and 1972. (193)

Since then, the total number of annual adoptions has dropped, and the share of professionally mediated adoption has dropped with them. Activist movements led by adult adoptees have crusaded against the "secrets and lies" of confidential adoption. Legal challenges to closed records, searches and reunions with birth families, and experiments in open adoption have all undermined the authority that adoption professionals worked tirelessly to achieve during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. There is no reason to believe that the revolt against secrecy has been a revolt against expertise per se. Some professionals have recently aligned themselves with adult adoptees, returning (whether they knew it or not) to earlier historical roles as facilitators of reunion with natal kin. Independent adoptions have probably been no more open than their agency counterparts, and some adoptive parents have pursued the exclusivity that closed adoption promises at least as avidly as social workers. (194) But policies th at sealed birth records and hampered later reunion efforts were publicly identified with the professional goals of maximizing matching and minimizing stigma. When the tide turned against secrecy, professionals were often held responsible for being architects of the hated adoption closet.

Rationalization was hobbled by shortfalls in professional personnel, bureaucratic capacity, and credible evidence that kinship by design offered a consistently superior product to arrangements made by parents, friends, or other non-professional intermediaries. Values associated with blood, consumption, and privacy also proved tenacious alternatives to kinship by design. Throughout the century, many birth parents, adopters, non-professional mediators, judges, attorneys, midwives, and physicians refused to concede what the USCB and CWLA thought was obvious: that a state-sanctioned professional design process was required to make up families where children would be reliably loved and protected, and in which belonging without blood would be authentic belonging nonetheless.

Standardizers were passionately devoted to their cause. They earned rhetorical and practical points by warning that safeguards were all that stood between child welfare, irresponsible parents, and the heartless values of a consumer society. But those heartless values remained close to the hearts of many adults. Blood gave birth parents the right to control where and how children were placed. Practices associated with the commercial, consumption-oriented culture of a modern market society suggested that adopters had the right to shop for exactly the sort of children they most

desired. Deeply rooted beliefs in the right to privacy endowed Americans with the freedom to make and re-make families autonomously, beyond the menacing reach of state power.

Even adoption professionals themselves, dedicated to transcending the rubric of commodity exchange, could not escape their roles as gatekeepers in the adoption market. Their modernizing practices aspired to determine children's adoptability and parental suitability by technical means that would replace commercial and sentimental measures of worth with impartial and protective standards. But making adoption rational never eradicated the problem of value, and standardization necessarily encroached on moral questions. Standards amplified the voices of scientific professionals in the twentieth-century conversation about family formation, but that conversation still revolved around dilemmas as ancient as they were enigmatic. What is a family? Who belongs there? Does adoption make one just like any other?

ENDNOTES

(1.) Arthur Alden Guild, "Baby Farms in Chicago, An Investigation made for the Juvenile Protective Association," 1917, p. 24, Child Welfare League of America Papers, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota (CWLA (SW55), Box 44, Folder 4. For a summary of the Chicago investigation, see also "Boarding and Sale Homes for Babies," Survey (January 5, 1918):403-407.

(2.) Henry Dwight Chapin, "Babies Wanted," Review of Reviews 78 (August 1928):185; from the Spence Alumni Society 1916 Annual Report, in "Excerpts from the Archives of Spence-Chapin Adoption Service," n.d. but probably 1955, CWLA (SW55.1), Box 7, Folder: "Adoption 1925-1966."

(3.) Quoted in Joan H. Hollinger, "Introduction to Adoption Law and Practice," in Adoption Law and Practice, ed. Joan H. Hollinger (New York, 1994), 1-23.

(4.) Dorothy Hutchinson, "Adoption Practices," talk given at Annual Meeting, Episcopal Service or Youth, February 13, 1947, Dorothy Hutchinson Papers, Columbia University Library, Box 1, Folder 7.

(5.) Historians have written relatively little about the history of adoption in the twentieth-century United States. The exceptions are E. Wayne Carp, Family Matters: Secrecy and Disclosure in the History of Adoption (Cambridge, 1998), Julie Berebitsky, Like Our Very Own: Adoption and the Changing Culture of Motherhood, 1851-1950 (Lawrence, KS, 2000), and Barbara Melosh, Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption States (Cambridge, 2002).

Excellent recent scholarship on neighboring topics, from social work and social welfare to orphanages, unmarried mothers, parent education, child guidance, and infertility, is a useful starting point for adoption history. See, for example, Kenneth Cmiel, A Home of Another Kind: One Chicago Orpltanage and the Tangle of Child Welfare (Chicago, 1995); Hamilton Cravens, Before Head Start: The Iowa Station and America's Children (Chapel Hill, 1993); Linda Gordon, The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction (Cambridge, 1999); Julia Grant, Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers (New Haven, 1998); Timothy A. Hacsi, Second Home: Orphan Asylums and Poor Families in America (Cambridge, 1998); Kathleen W. Jones, Taming the Troublesome Child: American Families, Child Guidance, and the Limits of Psychiatric Authority (Cambridge, 1999); Regina G. Kunzel, Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945 (New Haven, 1993); Margaret Marsh and Wanda Ronner, The Emp ty Cradle: Infertility in America from Colonial Times to the Present (Baltimore, 1996); Elaine Tyler May, Barren in the Promised Land: Childless Americans and the Pursuit of

Happiness (New York, 1995); Rickie Solinger, Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Rose V. Wade (New York, 1992); Daniel Walkowitz, Working with Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity (Chapel Hill, 1999); Viviana A. Zelizer, Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children (New York, 1985), chap. 6

Social scientists, legal scholars, and policy analysts have contributed to a vast and growing adoption literature of their own. For a few recent examples, see Elizabeth Bartholet, Nobody's Children: Abuse and Neglect, Foster Drift, and the Adoption Alternative (Boston, 1999); David Brodzinsky and Marshall Schechter, eds., The Psychology of Adoption (New York, 1990); Hollinger, ed., Adoption Law and Practice; Judith S. Modell, Kinship With Strangers: Adoption and Interpretations of Kinship in American Culture (Berkeley, 1994); Joyce Maguire Pavao, The Family of Adoption (Boston, 1998); Katarina Wegar, Adoption, identity and Kinship: The Debate over Sealed Birth Records (New Haven, 1997).

(6.) Benson Jaffee and David Fanshel, How They Fared in Adoption: A Follow-up Study (New York, 1970), 34, 109. This study of 100 families who adopted through agencies during the 1930s found that case records contained very little if any information about infertility even though 78 percent had been childless prior to the adoption.

(7.) Recent studies suggest that 11-24 percent of couples with infertility problems take steps toward adoption. Mosher, William D. and Christine A. Bachrach, "Understanding U.S. Fertility: Continuity and Change in the National Survey of Family Growth," Family Planning Perspectives 28 (1996), no. 1: 4-12.

(8.) David A. Hollinger, "How Wide the Circle of the 'We'? American Intellectuals and the Problem of Ethnos since World War II," American Historical Review 98 (April 1993):317-337.

(9.) Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958).

(10.) James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed (New Haven, 1998). Scott's book is neither about adoption nor the modern United States, but its provocative view of state formation and "high modernist" social engineering is relevant to this case. On the control of selfhood, see Peter N. Stearns, Battleground of Desire: The Struggle for Self-Control in Modern America (New York, 1999).

(11.) For example, see Richard Gillespie, Manufacturing Knowledge: A History of the Hawthorne Experiments (New York, 1991); Ellen Herman, The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts (Berkeley, 1995); Walter A. Jackson, Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938-1987 (Chapel Hill, 1990).

(12.) Statistics on twentieth-century domestic adoptions are not extremely reliable because a national reporting system existed only between 1945 and 1975, when the U.S. Children's Bureau and the National Center for Social Statistics collected data voluntarily supplied by states and territories, but it is perfectly clear that legal adoption was still an exotic procedure in 1900. Recent studies conservatively estimate that one million adopted children are currently living with adoptive parents, that five million adoptees of all ages are alive in the United States, and that 2-4 percent of all American families have adopted. Approximately 125,000 adoptions have taken place annually in recent years, but the numerical high point for twentieth-century adoption occurred around 1970, when adoptions reached 175,000 and the adoption rate was at its peak. International placements

became more numerous after World War II and have increased dramatically in recent years; in 2001 there were 19,237, more than double the 1991 figure. Virtually all international adoptions have been non-relative adoptions. But non-relative adoption has comprised only slightly more than half of all legal adoptions throughout the twentieth century, the rest consisting of adoption by natal relatives and step-parents. Like international placements, transracial adoptions have received a great deal of attention, but they are far less statistically than culturally significant. The largest number of transracial adoptions occurred in the years around 1970, when there were perhaps a few thousand annually. One of the only national surveys of black children adopted documented 4336 adoptions in 1969, of which almost one-third were transracial placements. See "Adoption of Black Children in 1969," International Social Service/American Branch Papers, Social Welfare History Archives (ISS/AB), Box 26, Folder: "Oregon-Adoption," Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota. See also the statistical profile compiled by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institu te, http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/ressta.html; Anjani Chandra et al., "Adoption, Adoption Seeking, and Relinquishment for Adoption in the United States," Advance Data from Vital and Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/National Center for Health Statistics, no. 306 (May 11,1999); Kathy S. Stolley, "Statistics on Adoption in the United States," The Future of Children 3 (Spring 1993):26-42.

(13.) Stolley, "Statistics on Adoption in the United States," 30-31, Fig. 3

(14.) For a sample of popular coverage, see two major series on adoption in the Boston Globe (May 8-10, 1998) and in the New York Times (October 25-27, 1998). See also Jill Bialosky and Helen Schulman, eds., Wanting a Child: Twenty-Two Writers on Their Difficult But Mostly Successful Quests for Parenthood in a High-Tech Age (New York:, 1998), Karin Evans, The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past (New York, 2000), Ann Kimble Loux, The Limits of Hope: An Adoptive Mother's Story (Carlottesville, VA, 1997), Margaret Moorman, Waiting to Forget (New York, 1996), Sharon Rush, Loving Across the Color Line: A White Adoptive Mother Learns About Race (Lanham, MD, 2000), and Jan L. Waldron, Giving Away Simone: A Memoir (New York, 1995). Recent feature films that treat adoption themes include Babe (1995), Losing Isaiah (1995), Mighty Aphrodite (1995), Flirting with Disaster (1996), Secrets and Lies (1996), and Stuart Little (1999). On television, current dra mas like "Family Law" and "Judging Amy" treat adoption on a regular basis, while shows like "E.R." feature adoptees as major characters. Several books by Betty Jean Lifton have been important resources for adoption reform: Lost and Found: The Adoption Experience (New York, 1979), Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter (New York, 1975), and Journey of the Adopted Self: A Quest for Wholeness (New York, 1994).

(15.) Sherri Maxine Broder, "Politics of the Family: Political Culture, Moral Reform, and Family Relations in Gilded Age Philadelphia" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1988), chap. 4.

(16.) Mary Boyle O'Reilly, "The Daughters of Herod II," New England Magazine 43 (October 1910): 279; Mary Boyle O'Reilly, "The Daughters of Herod: A Plea for Child-Saving Legislation in New Hampshire," New England Magazine 43 (October 1910):140.

(17.) O'Reilly, "The Daughters of Herod," 138, emphasis in original.

(18.) Hastings Hart, Preventive Treatment of Neglected Children (New York, 1910), 229.

(19.) "A Baby A Day Given Away," New York State Charities Aid Association, 1922, CWLA (SW55), Box 44, Folder 3.

(20.) USCB, Children Indentured by the Wisconsin State Public School (Washington, DC, 1925).

(21.) Earnest Fowler to Mrs. Squires, November 1, 1910, Hillcrest Children's Center Papers, Library of Congress (HCC), Box 3, Folder: "Indentures, Adoptions, Court Orders, 1870-1923, 1941."

(22.) E.E. Richardson to Dear Madam, March 12, 1912, HCC, Box 3, Folder: "Indentures, Adoptions, Court Orders 1870-1923, 1941."

(23.) Tillie Rinebolt to USCB, March 9, 1924, U.S. Children's Bureau Papers, National Archives (USCB) (Central File), Box 210, Folder 7-3-4-2.

(24.) E.L. Beckwith to Grace Abbott, June 21, 1931, USCB (Central File), Box 406, Folder 7-3-3-2.

(25.) Henry H. Goddard, "Wanted: A Child to Adopt," Survey 27 (October 14, 1911): 1003-1009.

(26.) Ida R. Parker, Fit and Proper?: A Study of Legal Adoption in Massachusetts (Boston, 1927), 26.

(27.) W.H. Slingerland, Child-Placing in Families: A Manual for Students and Social Workers (New York, 1919), 103. He repeats this same point, in slightly different words, on p. 69.

(28.) Case studies of abuse in deed adoption, 1925, from PA commission report, in Robert H. Bremner, ed., Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History, vol. II (Cambridge, 1971), 140-142.

(29.) George Walker, The Traffic in Babies: An Analysis of the Conditions Discovered During an Investigation Conducted in the Year 1914 (Baltimore, 1918); USCB, The Welfare of Infants of Illegitimate Birth in Baltimore: As Affected by a Maryland Law of 1916 Governing the Separation from Their Mothers of Children Under 6 Months Old (Washington, 1925). For a critique of nursing laws as an obstacle to adoption, see Eleanor Garrigue Gallagher, The Adopted Child (New York, 1936), chap. 11.

(30.) Ewing Galloway, "He Likes Babies," Collier's (June 20, 1914):23-24.

(31.) "Special Bulletin: 'A Preliminary Report of a Study of Policies and Practices in Adoption,' dated April 1948, compiled by Henrietta L. Gordon, Information and Publications Secretary, CWLA," pp. 33-34, OWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5.

(32.) "Adoption Practices, Procedures and Problems: Report on Workshop Material and Proceedings of the Adoption Conference Held May 19-21, 1948 in New York City," pp. 58-60, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 6.

(33.) Milton MacKaye, "The Cradle," Saturday Evening Post 210 (April 9, 1938):12.

(34.) It is unclear whether the adoption was arranged for Walrath's sister or a close friend. On The Cradle, see Neil M. Clark, "Filling Empty Arms," American Magazine 110 (September 1930):24-25, 82-90; Gallagher, The Adopted Child, 222-237;MacKaye, "The Cradle"; Paula F. Pfeffer, "Homeless Children, Childless Homes," Chicago History 16 (Spring 1987):51-65. On the invention of the adoption agency and the tension between adoption amateurs and professionals, see Peter Romanofsky, "Professional Versus Volunteers: A Case Study of Adoption Workers in the 1920's,"

Journal of Voluntary Action Research 2 (April 1973):95-101. Curiously, many of the agencies started by nonprofessional volunteers evolved after World War II into agencies on the cutting edge of professionalism.

(35.) "Case Work Problems on Illegitimacy," Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction (1915):l14-126.

(36.) J. Prentice Murphy, "Mothers and--Mothers," Survey 42 (May 3, 1919):176.

(37.) Little Wanderers' Advocate 59 (June 1923):20.

(38.) Martha J. Megee, "The Problems of Children as a Child Placing Agency Sees Them," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 121 (September 1925):159-163.

(39.) "Principles to Be Employed by Child-Caring Organizations in First Contact with Cases," p. 1, n.d., but probably 1920, CWLA (5W55), Box 1, Folder 1.

(40.) C.C. Carstens to Alice Leahy, March 11, 1936, CWLA (5W55.1), Box 1, Folder: "Correspondence--C.C. Carstens, 1932-38."

(41.) Until well after World War II, the term 'foster' was used to denote both temporary and permanent family placements. The distinction between the two was invariably made, however, even before "adoption" came into widespread use to designate permanent, fully legal, family ties. See, for example, "Appendix B. Standards Applicable to Members of the League," n.d., but probably 1926, CWLA (5W55), Box 12, Folder 10. This document notes that "the term 'foster home' shall be understood to apply to every family, including relatives, in which a child is placed and for which the agency is responsible."

(42.) Molly Ladd-Taylor, Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930 (Urbana, 1994); Kriste Lindenmeyer, "A Right to Childhood": The U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46 (Urbana, 1997); Robyn Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935 (New York, 1991).

(43.) Edmond J. Butler, "Standards of Child Placing and Supervision," in USCB, Standards of Child Welfare: A Report of the Children's Bureau Conferences, May and June 1919 (Washington, 1919), 353.

(44.) Rollin Lynder Hartt to Helen L. Sumner, May 10, 1915 and memo from E.O. Lundberg to Miss Lathrop, USCB (Central File), Box 60, Folder 7346.

(45.) Mrs. Standard to Julia Lathrop, January 21, 1916, USCB (Central File), Box 67, Folder 7-3-4-2.

(46.) William Sullivan to Gentlemen, April 27, 1918, USCB (Central File), Box 67, Folder 7-3-4-2. For an extended discussion of a case in which color also trumped religion, see Gordon, The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction.

(47.) Chas Benthall to USCB, January 1933, USCB (Central File), Box 548, Folder 7-3- 3-4.

(48.) Mrs. Joseph Samuel to USCB, October 28, 1948, USCB (Central File), Box 159, Folder 7-3-3-4-1.

(49.) Lundberg to Lathrop, USCB (Central File), Box 60, Folder 7346.

(50.) Standards for Adoption Service was revised in 1968, 1973, 1978, and 1988. The newest revision is Child Welfare League of America, Standards of Excellence for Adoption Services, revised ed. (Washington, 2000). CWLA: www.cwla.org

(51.) Ellen C. Potter, "State Supervision of Placing-Out Agencies," in USCB, Foster Home Care for Dependent Children (Washington, 1926), 181-182.

(52.) USCB, Laws Relating to Interstate Placement of Dependent Children (Washington, 1924), 6.

(53.) Minutes, May 14, 1916, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1); C.C. Carstens, "Report of the Director to the Executive Committee," February 28, 1921, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1).

(54.) "Brief Summary of Plans for Providing Apprenticeship Training and Training in Practice for Children's Case Workers," n.d., but probably 1926, p. 1, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1).

(55.) "Brief Summary of Plans for Providing Apprenticeship Training and Training in Practice for Children's Case Workers," p. 1, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1).

(56.) Minutes, May 14, 1916, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1); Carstens, "Report of the Director to the Executive Committee," February 28, 1921, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1).

(57.) "Interpretation" is an important keyword in the rationalization of modern adoption. It is ubiquitous in the professional literature, suggesting a long-lasting self-consciousness among trained professionals about their simultaneous and often contradictory roles as educators of an unenlightened public and service-providers who depended on public support.

(58.) Hartt to Sumner, May 10, 1915 and Lundberg to Lathrop, USCB (Central File), Box 60, Folder 7346.

(59.) Abraham Flexner, "Is Social Work a Profession?" Proceedings of the National Conference on Charities and Correction (1915):588.

(60.) Georgia G. Ralph, Elements of Record Keeping for Child-Helping Organizations (New York, 1915), 4.

(61.) For examples of early disclosure practices, see Dortha Diller to USCB, May 1926 and Katharine Lenroot to Dortha Diller, May 22, 1926, USCB (Central File), Box 294, Folder 7-3-4-3; James E. Stuart to Mrs. Miller, January 30, 1926, HCC, Box 4, Folder: "Genealogical Data, Legal Adoption, 1876-1942." Wayne Carp has recently provided considerable evidence that, at least in Washington state, disclosure was not replaced by confidentiality until at least 1940. Impressionistic evidence suggests that agency workers elsewhere actively aided adult adoptees in the search and reunion process well into the century. For example, Jennie Specter to Dear Madam, undated, and Superintendent to Jennie Specter, May 11, 1940, HCC, Box 3, Folder: "Letters from Children, 1871-1941" and Dorothy Swisshelm to Mr. Ralph A. Ricketts, February 19, 1940, HCC, Box 4, Folder: "Genealogical Data, Legal Adoption, 1876-1942."

(62.) Beckwith to Abbott, June 21, 1931, USCB.

(63.) Elizabeth Lee to Miss Katharine F. Lenroot, August 6, 1931, USCB (Central File), Box 548, Folder 7-3-3-2.

(64.) Ralph, Elements of Record Keeping for Child-Helping Organizations, 5.

(65.) Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee, January 21-23, 1926, 9-10, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1).

(66.) "The ties created by the process of adoption are not necessarily so strong as those of blood." USCB, Adoption Laws in the United States: A Summary of the Development of Adoption Legislation and Significant Features of Adoption Statutes, With the Text of Selected Laws, by Emelyn Foster Peck (Washington, 1925), 22.

(67.) Slingerland, Child-Placing in Families, 120, 142, 48.

(68.) Draft letter to the Commonwealth Fund, August 1920, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1).

(69.) Doctors and midwives figured as prominent collaborators in baby farming scandals. See, for example, Leopold Katscher to USCB, May 14, 1914 and "Infanticide and Children Traffic in America" [about a Philadelphia case], USCB (Central File), Box 60, Folder 7346; Memorandum for Miss Lathrop, July 22, 1918 [about a Kensington, MD case], USCB Paper (Central File), Box 60, Folder 7349.1; Helen Schaefer to Katherine Lenroot, August 26, 1933 and Agnes Hanna to Helen Schaefer, August 31, 1933 [about a Tulsa, OK case], USCB (Central File), Box 543, Folder 7-3-1-1; CWLA (SW55), Box 17, Folder 12 and Box 18, Folder 1 [CWLA investigation of Southern California adoption black market in early 1960s]. Complaints about doctor- and lawyer-arranged adoptions were legion even when allied professionals were not explicitly commercial mediators. The USCB and the CWLA supported local and national outreach efforts to persuade doctors and lawyers that placement should be left up to social work professionals. For example, the CWLA circulated its first set of adoption standards with a 4-page addendum directed to physicians. "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors," November 4-5, 1938, CWLA (SW55), Box 2, Folder 2. After World War II, the USCB and the CWLA worked with the America Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians, the American Medical Association, and the American Bar Association to improve inter-professional understanding. See Joseph Reid to Norman V. Lourie, January 10, 1964, CWLA (SW55.1), Box 65, Folder: "CWLA--Joseph H. Reid, adoption" and Ursula M. Gallagher, "The Professions' Roles in Serving the Unmarried Mother and Her Baby," 1958, USCB (Information File), Box 135, Folder 7-4-3-0 G13. See also "Adoptions: A Panel Discussion," Pediatrics 20 (August 1957):366-386. One example of the type of material developed for the purpose of inter-professional cooperation is "What to Do About Adoption? A Doctor, Lawyer, & Social Worker View Their Roles," pamphlet reproduced by U.S. Department of HEW (1961), CWLA (SW55.1), Box 65, Folder: "CWLA--Joseph H. Reid, adoption."

For examples of outcome comparisons, see: Catherine S. Amatruda and Joseph V. Baldwin, "Current Adoption Practices," Journal of Pediatrics 38 (February 1951):208-212; Donald Brieland, An Experimental Study of the Selection of Adoptive Parents at Intake (New York, 1959); Abraham Joseph Simon, "Social Agency Adoption; A Psycho-Sociological Study in Prediction" (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, St. Louis, 1953). Helen L. Witmer, Elizabeth Herzog, Eugene A. Weinstein, and Mary E. Sullivan, Independent Adoptions: A Follow-up Study (New York, 1963).

(70.) Katherine P. Hewins, "The Child in the Foster Home," Survey 47 (March 18, 1922):963.

(71.) Even before the I.Q. test was introduced, mental examinations were described as "highly technical" procedures best left to qualified psychologists involved in the adoption process. See Ralph, Elements of Record Keeping for Child-Helping Organizations, 44.

(72.) Brian Paul Gill, "The Jurisprudence of Good Parenting: The Selection of Adoptive Parents, 1894-1964" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), chap. 3; Hollinger, "Introduction to Adoption Law and Practice," 1-24-1-47.

(73.) Slingerland, Child-Placing in Families, 118.

(74.) Rose S. Hardwick, "The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Examination Re-Interpreted With Special Reference to Qualitative Differences" (Ph.D. diss., Radcliffe, 1924). Hardwick's dissertation describes 175 tests given at the NEHLW between June 1918 and October 1923.

(75.) Rose Standish Hardwick to Robert Yerkes, April 14, 1917, Robert Yerkes Papers, Yale University Library.

(76.) Ellen Herman, "Families Made by Science: Arnold Gesell and the Technologies of Modern Child Adoption," Isis, 92 (December 2001): 684-715.

(77.) For example, September 1939 correspondence from Alice Taylor, Arnold Gesell Papers, Library of Congress (AGP), Box 60, Folder: "Subject File: Clinical Records, Matilda Harris, [Adoption case--Penn.], 1938" and Louise B. Heathers to Arnold Gesell, September 17, 1946 and attached mss, "Psychologists Look at Adoption," Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption." See also Avis Carlson, "To Test a Baby," Atlantic, June 1940, 829-832. Matilda Harris is a pseudonym. Confidentiality of client names was a condition of access to Gesell's papers.

(78.) Slingerland, Child-Placing in Families, 73.

(79.) For example, see "Adoption," Memorandum re: Child Welfare League of America Program, June 7, 1939, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption [Law]"; Maud Morlock to Arnold Gesell, July 22, 1944 and Arnold Gesell to Maud Morlock, July 27, 1944, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption, 1939-56"; Memorandum re: Child Adoption, January 30, 1939, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption [Memoranda]"; Memorandum re: meeting of Committee, CWLA, June 9, 1939, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption, 1939" [CWL of America]".

(80.) Arnold Gesell, "Psychoclinical Guidance in Child Adoption" in USCB, Foster-Home Care for Dependent Children, rev. (Washington, 1926), 193.

(81.) Arnold Gesell, "Reducing the Risks of Child Adoption," Child Welfare League of America Bulletin 6 (May 15, 1927):1-2.

(82.) "Adoption," Memorandum re: Child Welfare League of America Program, June 7, 1939, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption [Law]."

(83.) Arnold Gesell, "Child Adoption in Connecticut," 3, address delivered to the quarterly meeting of the probate judges of Connecticut, May 17, 1939, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption."

(84.) See also Frances L. Ilg and Louise Bates Ames, "Stress on Mental Tests in Adoption Shows Gain," AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption, 1957."

(85.) The earliest appearance of adoption in Gesell's published work came in 1923, when he reported that his assistant, Margaret E. Cobb, had evaluated the potential of 198 candidates for adoption at the Yale Clinic. See Arnold Gesell, The Pre-School Child from the Standpoint of Public Hygiene and Education (Boston, 1923), 137. For Cobb's original research report, see Margaret Evertson Cobb, "The Mentality of Dependent Children," Journal of Delinquency 7 (May 1922):132-140.

(86.) Gesell, "Psychoclinical Guidance in Child Adoption," 200-201. For personal testimony from an adopter who was informed by a psychologist that the "gorgeous looking boy often months" she wanted "would be dull when he reached school age," see Anonymous, "A Baby in Your Arms," Child Welfare League of America Bulletin (December 1937):2.

(87.) Arnold Gesell, "Child Adoption," June 29, 1937, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption."

(88.) Iris Ruggles Macrae, "An Analysis of Adoption Practices at the New England Home for Little Wanderers" (M.S. thesis, Simmons College, School of Social Work, 1937), 68.

Parents were sometimes urged to return children who turned out to be defective since, if they did not, "some other child with good mental endowment would be deprived of the advantages of this excellent home where a child would be welcomed and loved." Edith F. Symmes, "An Infant Testing Service as an Integral Part of a Child Guidance Clinic," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 3 (October 1933):427.

(89.) Elizabeth Comeau to Arnold Gesell, June 29, 1950, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption."

(90.) Thurston Blodgett to Yale Psycho-Clinic, n.d., AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption, 1923, 1932 [Agencies]." The address on the letter suggests that it was written in the late 1920s or 1930. Gesell's operation was renamed the Yale Clinic of Child Development in 1930.

(91.) E.J. Mandeville to Yale Psycho-Clinic, July 11, 1940, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption, 1923-43 [cases, with individuals concerning].

(92.) Ralph P. Winch to Department of Human Relations, Yale Medical School, March 29, 1939, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption, 1923-43 [cases, with individuals concerning].

(93.) Gesell used the word "cheated" to describe a mother who had unwittingly adopted a feebleminded baby. See Arnold Gesell, "Clinical Aspects of Child Adoption" in Arnold Gesell and Catherine S. Amatruda, Developmental Diagnosis: Normal and Abnormal Child Development, Clinical Method and Pediatric Applications, 2nd ed., rev. (New York, 1947), 331.

(94.) Macrae, "An Analysis of Adoption Practices at the New England Home for Little Wanderers," 103.

(95.) Gill, "The Jurisprudence of Good Parenting," chap. 2.

(96.) "Executive Director's Report, Submitted at Meeting of Board of Directors of the League, October 29, 30 and 31, 1928," p. 5, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1).

(97.) "Resolutions on Standards Relating to 'Children in Need of Special Care'," in USCB, Minimum Standards for Child Welfare: Adopted by the Washington and Regional Conferences on Child Welfare, 1919 (Washington, 1919), 11-12.

(98.) For the text of the MN statute, see USCB, Adoption Laws in the United States, 27-28. This was also the first law in the U.S. that sealed original birth records.

(99.) Agnes K. Hanna, "Some Problems of Adoption," Child 1 (December 1936): 4.

(100.) Social Work Year Book, vols. 1-10 (New York, 1930-1949); Social Work Year Book, vols. 11-12 (New York, 1951-1954); Social Work Year Book, vols. 13-14 (New York, 1957-1960); Encyclopedia of Social Work, vols. 15-19 (New York, 1965-1995). The Social Work Year Book (renamed the Encyclopedia of Social Work in 1965) was conceived as a comprehensive reference guide to the varied activities of social work professionals. Its entries on adoption, which begin in 1929, offer a useful introduction to the expansion of adoption regulation and illustrate how deeply professionals believed child welfare depended on the expanding jurisdiction of regulatory authority.

(101.) Butler, "Standards of Child Placing and Supervision," 355-356.

(102.) Berebitsky, Like Our Very Gum, chap. 4.

(103.) Gordon, The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction; Ellen Herman, "The Difference Difference Makes: Justine Wise Polier and Religious Matching in Twentieth-Century Child Adoption," Religion and American Culture 10 (Winter 2000): 5 7-98.

(104.) Butler, "Standards of Child Placing and Supervision," 357.

(105.) Like establishing credentialing institutions, rationalizing written procedures was fundamental to the professionalization of social work. Ralph, Elements of Record Keeping for Child-Helping Organizations.

(106.) Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee, March 27-28, 1925, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1).

(107.) Sophie van Senden Theis, How Foster Children Turn Out (New York, 1924), 4.

(108.) The CWLA's emphasis on calculation was self-conscious. See, for example, "Outline for Measuring the Work of Child-Placing Agencies," n.d., but probably 1928, CWLA (microfilm, reel 1).

(109.) "Adoptions, A Statement of the Problem," November 5-6, 1937, p. 2, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5.

(110.) C.C. Carstens to CWLA members, June 22, 1936, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5.

(111.) C.C. Carstens, "Safeguards in Adoption," Child Welfare League of America Bulletin (April 1936): 4.

(112.) Publicity brochure, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Subject File: Adoption [Memoranda]."

(113.) "Adoptions, A Statement of the Problem," p. 1, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5.

(114.) "Minimum Safeguards in Adoption," approved by the CWLA Board of Directors on November 3, 1938, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5. These safeguards were published under the title, "A Program in Education," Child Welfare League of America Bulletin 17 (November 1938):4.

(115.) "Adoptions, A Statement of the Problem," pp. 2-3, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5.

(116.) "Some Poor Adoptions," May 4, 1939, AGP, Box 45, Folder: "Adoption [Memoranda]." See also "Regarding Adoptions," March 1937, CWLA Special Bulletin, pp. 1-4, CWLA (microfilm, reel 3).

(117.) "Adoptions, A Statement of the Problem," p. 3, OWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5.

(118.) "Adoptions, A Statement of the Problem," p. 1, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5.

(119.) "Regarding Adoptions," March 1937, OWLA Special Bulletin, p. 8, CWLA (microfilm, reel 3).

(120.) Macrae, "An Analysis of Adoption Practices at the New England Home for Little Wanderers," 5; For evidence of adoption's popularity during the Depression, see Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, "Demand for Babies Outruns the Supply," New York Times Magazine (March 3, 1935):9.

(121.) John C. Murdock, "Dividends," American Magazine 120 (October 1935):74-76.

(122.) Macrae, "An Analysis of Adoption Practices at the New England Home for Little Wanderers," 23.

(123.) The best analysis of the paradoxical correspondence between the adoption market and cultural insistence on children's non-economic value is Viviana A. Zelizer, Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children (New York, 1985).

(124.) Elizabeth Frazer, "The Baby Market," Saturday Evening Post 202 (Feb. 1, 1930):25.

(125.) Frazer, "The Baby Market," 85-86. The preference of adopters for girls has long been reported anecdotally in the social work literature and it has generated a curious literature on the difficulty of assessing gender preferences among adopters. See, for example, Ruth F. Brenner, A Follow-Up Study of Adoptive Families (New York, March 1951), 35-43. H. David Kirk offered a sociological explanation: girls were a compromise between wives desires to adopt and husband's loyalty to definitions of kinship based on patriarchal lineage. See H. David Kirk, Shared Fare: A Theory of Adoption and Mental Health (New York, 1964), chap 8. For a more historical perspective, see Melosh, Strangers and Kin, 56-69.

(126.) Bromley, "Demand for Babies Outruns the Supply," 9. For a description on one (unnamed) agency that did operate on the consumer model, complete with display room, see Anonymous, "We Adopt a Child," Atlantic Monthly 165 (March 1940); 346-323.

(127.) Frazer, "The Baby Market," 86.

(128.) Florence Clothier, "Adoption Procedure and the Community," Mental Hygiene 25 (April 1941): 196-209.

(129.) Unless otherwise noted, all references and quotations in this paragraph are drawn from "A Study of the Adoption Situation of New York City as It Relates to Protestant Children," January-April 1938, CWLA (microfilm, reel 3). For a brief, published summary of this survey, see Mary Frances Smith, "Adoption as the Community Sees It," in Social Case Work With Children: Studies in Structure and Process, Jessie Taft, ed. (Philadelphia, 1940), 6-16. This volume was originally published as The Journal of Social Work Process 3 (December 1939).

(130.) In 1940, very few babies were placed for adoption before six months of age by New York agencies, and a very large number were still placed between the ages of one and four. See Frances Lockridge and Sophie van S. Theis, Adopting a Child (New York, 1947), 12.

(131.) Percy Maddux to Justine Wise Polier, June 23, 1944, Justine Wise Polier Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe, Box 18, Folder 205.

(132.) There is some controversy over the timing of this shift in the social work profession generally. Kunzel, Fallen Women, Problem Girls; E. Wayne Carp, "Professional Social Workers, Adoption, and the Problem of Illegitimacy, 1915-1945," Journal of Policy History 6 (1994):161-184; Martha Heineman Field, "Social Casework Practice during the 'Psychiatric Deluge,'" Social Service Review 54 (December 1980): 482-507.

(133.) Solinger, Wake Up Little Susie, esp. chap. 5.

(134.) Melosh, Strangers and Kin, esp. chap. 3.

(135.) Herman, The Romance of American Psychology.

(136.) Mary S. Brisley, "Parent-Child Relationships in Unmarried Parenthood," Proceedings of die National Conference of Social Work (New York, 1939): 436, 437-438, 439.

(137.) Florence Clothier, "Problems of Illegitimacy as They Concern the Worker in the Field of Adoption," Mental Hygiene 25 (October 1941):579.

(138.) "Adoption Practices, Procedures and Problems," p. 5, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 6.

(139.) "Brief Summary of Adoption Conference Called by the Child Welfare League of America in New York City, May 19-20-" 1948, p. 3, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5.

(140.) Evelyn Seeley, "Agencies Share Blame for Baby Black Market," PM 7 (December 9, 1946):9.

(141.) "Adoption Practices, Procedures and Problems," p. 60, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 6. The survey of adoption practice conducted preparatory to this conference can be found in "Special Bulletin," CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 5. A second survey and conference took place in 1951. See Child Welfare League of America, Adoption Practices, Procedures and Problems: A Report of die Second Workshop Held in New York City under die Auspices of the Child Welfare League of America, May 10-12, 1951 (New York, 1952).

(142.) Penelope L. Maza, "Adoption Trends: 1944-1975," Child Welfare Research Notes #9 (USCB, August 1984), table 1, CWLA (SW55.1) Box 65, Folder: "Adoption--Research--Reprints of Articles."

(143.) Martha May Eliot, "Adoption as a National Problem," Address at Committee on Adoptions Panel Discussion at the 25th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics, New York City, October 8,1956, 5, Martha May Eliot Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe, Box 8, Folder 108. Eliot estimated that 55 percent of non-relative adoptions in 1954 had been arranged by agencies (approximately 26,000 adoptions) and 45 percent were independent placements (approximately 21,000 adoptions).

(144.) Adoption ad from the Brooklyn Eagle, March 1948, Shad Polier Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts, Box 8.

(145.) Obsession with eradicating independent placements is a constant theme in the history of professional child-placing, but it seems to become especially marked after 1945, perhaps because adoption's increasing popularity and the period's general preoccupation with family life constantly reminded professionals of precious opportunities missed to design families correctly. See, for example, the following report on a typical conference devoted to the war against independent adoption (military metaphors were common). USCB, Protecting Children in Adoption, Report of a Conference Held in Washington, June 27 and 28, 1955 (Washington, 1955).

(146.) Address by Marshall Field to the National Conference on Adoptions, January 26, 1955, P. 4, CWLA (SW55), Box 16, Folder 8.

(147.) Memo to member agencies from Mr. Reid, January 24, 1955, CWLA (SW55), Box 16, Folder 8.

(148.) Michael Schapiro, A Study of Adoption Practice, 3 vols. (New York, 1956). A great deal of additional material related to the conference can be found in CWLA (SW55), Box 16, Folders 7-11 and CWLA (SW55.1), Box 1, Folder: "Speeches--Joseph Reid, 1952, 1955" and Box 10, "Adoption--National Conference on Adoption, 1955."

(149.) Schapiro, A Study of Adoption Practice, vol. 1:9.

(150.) U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, Hearings, July 15 and 16, 1955, "Interstate Adoption Practices," 84th Congress, 1st session. Led by Sen. Estes Kefauver (D-TN), 2, 3.

(151.) "Proposal for Special Project for Development of Child Welfare Standards," September 1,1954, p. 1, CWLA (SW55), Box 12, Folder 10.

(152.) Press release dated April 15, 1955, p.2, CWLA (SW55), Box 12, Folder 10; "Proposal of Special Project for Development of Child Welfare Standards," September 1, 1954, p. 2, CWLA (SW55), Box 12, Folder 10.

(153.) Memo dated April 29, 1955 "To: All Member Agencies of the Child Welfare League of America," CWLA (SW55), Box 12, Folder 10.

(154.) "Annual Report, Standard Project," May 1956, p.5, CWLA (SW55), Box 12, Folder 10.

(155.) "Working Committee on Adoption Standards," December 16, 1955, CWLA (SW55), Box 13, Folder 7. Careful attention was given to insuring that the interests of private and public agencies would be represented on the committee, whose members also included a physician, a psychiatrist, and individuals appointed to express the views of researchers and social work educators. Geographically, however, the committee was not representative. No state west of Pennsylvania was represented, nor were any rural constituencies included. Most committee appointees came from New York (6), Washington, DC (6), Baltimore (3), Richmond (3), and Philadelphia (2).

(156.) Zitha R. Turitz, "The Standards Project, A Progress Report, November 1960," p. 2, CWLA (SW55), Box 12, Folder 10; Zitha R. Turitz, "Follow-up Report, Use of Child Welfare League of America Standards, May 1963" CWLA (SW55), Box 12, Folder 10. Brian Gill's survey of legal cases suggests that, shortly after its publication, Standards for Adoption Service was indeed being widely cited by judges and used by state officials to shut down agencies who would not comply with CWLA requirements. Gill, "The Jurisprudence of Good Parenting," chap. 2. Adoption standards were followed by standards for homemaker service, foster family care service, child protective service, services to unmarried parents, day care service, group care, services to children in their own homes, residential treatment, community planning and organization of child welfare services, administration and organization of child welfare services, and state child welfare services.

(157.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service (New York, 1958), 14.

(158.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service, 19. "On the basis of current knowledge, present methods of medical examination and psychological testing, it is not possible within the first year of life to predict with a high degree of accuracy an infant's future mental or physical development." (Emphasis in original)

(159.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service, 19, emphasis in original.

(160.) Carp, Family Matters.

(161.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service, 38.

(162.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service, 38-39.

(163.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service, 35, 37.

(164.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service, 37.

(165.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service, 19-20 (on children of mixed racial background), 24 (on the advantages of racial matching), 25-26 (on religious matching).

(166.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service, 32.

(167.) CWLA, Standards for Adoption Service, 6.

(168.) All details and quotations in this paragraph are from Helen Fradkin, The Adoption Home Study (Trenton, NJ: Bureau of Children's Services, 1963). The case record, which ends with approval for adoption, is presented in full on pp. 106-127, but chapter 5, "Psychiatric Factors in Adoption," explains why Mr. and Mrs. W should have been rejected as adoptive parents.

(169.) Jessie Taft, a remarkable and understudied figure, was prophetic on this point. See Jessie Taft," Relation of Personality Study to Child Placing" (paper presented at the National Conference of Social Work, 1919), 63-67.

(170.) Sigmund Freud, "Family Romances," in Collected Papers 5, ed. James Strachey (New York, 1959), 74-78.

(171.) Marshall D. Schechter, "Observations on Adopted Children," Archives of General Psychiatry 3 (July 1960):29. See also Bernice T. Eiduson and Jean B. Livermore, "Complications in Therapy with Adopted Children," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 23 (October 1953):795-802.

(172.) Schechter, "Observations on Adopted Children," 31. Others disagreed with this view. For example, see H. David Kirk, "Are Adopted Children Especially Vulnerable to Stress? A Critique of Some Recent Assertions," Archives of General Psychiatry 14 (March 1966):291-298.

(173.) Leontine R. Young, "The Unmarried Mother's Decision About Her Baby," in Understanding the Psychology of the Unmarried Mother (New York, 1945-1947), 14.

(174.) Robert P. Knight, "Some Problems in Selecting and Rearing Adopted Children," Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic 5 (May 1941):65-74.

(175.) Mrs. J.S. Milliken to USCB, July 16, 1927, USCB (Central File), Box 292, Folder 7-3-2.

(176.) In the 1930s, the USCB was still actively publishing material designed to guide the large number of volunteer and untrained child placers toward professional standards. See, for example, USCB, The ABC of Foster-Family Care for Children (Washington, 1933).

(177.) Elinor Nims, The Illinois Adoption Law and Its Administration, Reprinted in David J. Rothman and Sheila M. Rothman, eds., Women & Children First: Social Reform Movements to Protect America's Vulnerable 1830-1940, vol. 8, The Origins of Adoption, Two Reports (New York, 1987) 97.

(178.) USCB, Dependent and Delinquent Children in Georgia: A Study of the Prevalence and Treatment of Child Dependency and Delinquency in Thirty Counties With Special Reference to Legal Protection Needed (Washington, 1926).

(179.) USCB, A Study of Maternity Homes in Minnesota and Pennsylvania (Washington, 1926), 63.

(180.) USCB, Child Welfare in Selected Counties of Washington (Washington, 1931), 28-44.

(181.) USCB, Public Child-Caring Work in Certain Counties of Minnesota, North Carolina, and New York by H. Ida Curry (Washington, 1927), 41-42.

(182.) On activities related to the adoption black market in the 1950s and 1960s, see Albert Deutsch, "The Baby Sellers," typescript, CWLA (SW55), Box 16, Folder 1; Box 17, Folder 12; CWLA (SW55), Box 18, Folder 1; CWLA (SW55.1), Box 7, Folder: "Black Market Adoption"; USCB (Central File), Box 882, Folder 7-3-1-1.

(183.) Statistics on intercountry adoptions are fairly reliable because a single agency, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, must issue visas for children to enter the country. For

summary and by-country statistics, see http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/ressta.html and http://www.calib.com/naic/adptsear/adoption/research/stats/intercount ry.htm

(184.) Karl Spitzer to NBC, February 25, 1957, translated, ISS/AB, Box 10, older: "Proxy Adoptions, 1954-1956."

(185.) Much time and effort, for example, were devoted to putting the Holt operation out of business, although they did not succeed. The Holt agency responded to the pressure and gradually evolved into a professional agency which continues to make international placements today. On Holt, see ISS/AB, Box 10, Folder: "Children--Independent Adoption Schemes, Holt, Harry, vol. I 1955-1957"; Folder: "Children--Independent Adoption Schemes, Holt, Harry, vol. II 1958-1959"; Folder: "Children--Independent Adoption Schemes, Holt Program, vol. III 1960-1967"; Folder: "Harry Holt-Independent Adoption, vol. IV 1968-1972."

On proxy adoption in general, see CWLA (SW55), Box 17, Folder 1; CWLA (SW55.1), Box 10, Folder: "Study on Proxy Adoptions 1957-1958" (1 of 2) and Folder: "Study on Proxy Adoptions 1959-1960" (2 of 2). ISS/AB, Box 10, Folder: "Proxy Adoptions, 1954-1956" and Folder: "Proxy Adoptions:, 1957, 1966." USCB (Central File), Katherine B. Oettinger, "Supplementary Information on Legislative Proposals on Inter-country Adoptions," February 12, 1959 and "Selected Summaries of Proxy Adoptions Reported to the Children's Bureau," n.d., but probably 1959, Box 883, Folder 7-3-1-2; memo re Intercountry Adoption: Role of the Children's Bureau, August 23, 1961, Box 883, Folder 7-3-1-3. See also USCB (Information File) Boxes 131-132 for material related to federal legislation on inrercountry adoption in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

(186.) Albert Q. Maisel, "Why You Can't Adopt a Baby," Woman's Home Companion, March 1950, 31.

(187.) Pearl S. Buck, "The Children Waiting: The Shocking Scandal of Adoption," Woman's Home Companion, September 1955, 33, 129-132.

(188.) Buck, "The Children Waiting," 132.

(189.) Joseph Reid to Paul Smith, September 15, 1955 and Joseph Reid to Pearl Buck, September 15, 1955, CWLA (SW55), Box 15, Folder 7.

(190.) Anonymous letter from Salem, Oregon, March 13, 1958, USCB (Central File), Box 882, Folder 7-3-1-1.

(191.) Anonymous letter from Salem, Oregon, March 13, 1958, USCB (Central File), Box 882, Folder 7-3-1-1.

(192.) Katharine B. Oettinger, statement on legislation re intercountry adoption, May 20, 1959, 6, 8, USCB (Information File), Box 132, Folder 7-3-1-3 Oe8. Professionals were keenly aware that the surge in intercountry placements was directly related to the drastic shortage of infants available for domestic adoption. See, for example, Confidential memo from Wells C. Klein to TAISSA Board of Directors, October 18, 1972, ISS/AB, Box 18, Folder: "Casework Statistics."

(193.) Stolley, "Statistics on Adoption in the United States," 30-31, Fig. 3 and Maza, "Adoption Trends: 1944-1975," table 3, fig. 2.

(194.) The desire for exclusivity in adoption is probably one of the forces behind dramatic recent increases in intercountry placement. In the vast majority of international adoptions, birth parents and natal kin are unknown and untraceable. This type of "closed" arrangement is far less prevalent in domestic adoptions than in the past.