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introduction

other people's children: informing debate on adoption in Australia

Denise Cuthbert and Ceridwen Spark

Other people's children

Legal scholar Kerry O'Halloran contends it is impossible to find a definition of adoption which encapsulates all of its dimensions and the shifts in these over time and across cultures. However, he suggests, adoption in all its complexity is most effectively understood as *an action on the part of adoptive parents* (which may be enshrined in law, culture, or custom) whereby the *child or children of others* are taken into the adoptive family and raised *as if* they were the blood offspring of that family (O'Halloran 2006). Adoption is thus an action taken by the adoptive parents which transforms other people's children into their own.

It is this idea of adoption as an action which centres on and transforms *other people's children* which we have taken as the title

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for this collection of essays. Through this title, we hope to reflect the views of all contributors to this volume, namely that the needs and interests of children must be paramount in our considerations of adoption, both past and present. In stating this, we recognise that what may be considered to be the 'best interests of the child' has shifted over time and is currently an issue of some contest and debate. Nonetheless, we hope that the essays in this collection serve as an important reminder of the need to critically reflect on the needs and interests of children in adoption, and to ensure that these needs are given consideration above those of adoptive parents, other parties to the adoption including birth parents and, in the Australian context, the government authorities which regulate and oversee adoption.

O'Halloran's definition also neatly captures the transformation which is at the heart of legal adoption—the transformation of children from one parentage to another. It is this aspect of adoption that distinguishes it from other forms of out-of-family care, such as foster care and permanent care in which children may maintain legal and other connections with their family of origin. The transformative capacity of adoption is the feature which its advocates frequently point to as being crucial to its success. In the view of many adoption proponents, only the complete transformation of other people's children into the children of the adoptive family offers the necessary protection for the adoptive parents and the child which will ensure the stability of the family into the future. Conversely, those critical of adoption just as frequently point to its transformation of the identities of adopted children, by means of the legal fiction of adoption and practices such as the issuing of new birth certificates, as its most objectionable feature. Such critics argue that the legal severance of an adoptee's connections with their family of origin and the loss of identity—and, in the case of intercountry adoption (ICA), culture and language—is too high a price to pay for permanent care in a loving family. Debate around the transformation of the identity of the child has influenced understandings of adoption

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in Australia over the last century and continues to be at the heart of contemporary discussions on adoption.

Notably, O'Halloran's definition of adoption accurately identifies that it is the adoptive parents who must exercise agency if the adoption is to take place. History tells us that other parties to adoption may be more or less active depending on the type of adoption being undertaken. For many years in Australia, adoptions were conducted in such a way that the agency or control of some parties to adoption, including birth mothers and the children themselves, was virtually non-existent. The phrase 'other people's children' serves as a reminder that adopted children started out as the children of *other people* and notwithstanding the legal effects of adoption in disconnecting the child from these people, these connections remain important and identity-defining even in circumstances where the parties never have the opportunity to reconnect. In the past in Australia, as in other comparable countries, every effort was made to erase all connections between the adopted child and the birth parents and wider family; including practices which removed the existence of these 'other people' entirely from the record. This is no longer the case, in local adoptions at least. Reforms in Australian states and territories since the early 1980s have led to the introduction of varying degrees of 'openness' in adoption. For instance, in some jurisdictions 'mailboxes' which enable communication of important information between the birth family and adoptive family have been established, and former adoptees can access the birth and adoption records once debarred them.

The situation is, however, different for many intercountry adoptees who have varying degrees of access to information depending on both their country of origin and the circumstances of their adoption. For some commentators on the rise of ICA in Australia—perhaps especially those with direct experience of adoption such as relinquishing mothers—the circumstances of many ICAs are ominously reminiscent of the kinds of adoption practices which prevailed in Australia in the past. These practices,

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they argue, have brought great pain to both adoptees and their birth families. The feature of ICA which these commentators point to as risking the repetition of the worst aspects of past practices include; children being given up for adoption by impoverished women or unmarried girls who have little choice in the matter, uncertain access for the adopted child to information about the family of birth, the child's disconnection from the culture and language of birth, and persistent cases of child-stealing and trafficking which many argue is an inevitable consequence of high and unmet demand for overseas babies in countries such as Australia.

By contrast, supporters of ICA argue that for the individual children concerned, life in an Australian family is preferable to a life of poverty or life in an institution. As such, they argue that every effort must be made to increase the number of children made available to Australian families. In the view of these supporters, as long as intercountry adoptive families display requisite sensitivity to the cultural and other needs of their adopted children, they can compensate for the loss of culture and identity. At the same time, they are able to provide access to opportunities unthinkable in their family and country of origin. The 2005 inquiry into overseas adoption in Australia conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services (HRSCFHS), which received 274 written submissions (Government of Australia 2005a) and conducted public hearing in all capital cities (Government of Australia 2005b) provided a highly politicised context for the airing of these different evaluations of ICA.

Obviously, the debate is complex. This was recognised by the former Prime Minister of England, Tony Blair, who wrote in 2000 that adoption is 'an emotional issue' and one which frequently polarises opinion (Secretary of State for Health 2000, p. 3). Similarly a witness to the parliamentary inquiry into overseas adoption in Australia in 2005 states:

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[Adoption] is often a controversial topic. There are people in the community who are very anti-adoption [...] I know there are anti-adoption people in the community who think that adoption should never occur under any circumstances and that the transracial placement of children should never occur, and that there are people at the other end of the spectrum who think that all children in disadvantaged circumstances in Australia and in the world should be removed from those circumstances and placed into adoptive families. So I think the adoption arena is challenged by finding a balance of those often irreconcilable views, and that is often a difficult place to be (Commonwealth of Australia 2005, p. 54).

Adoption frequently generates emotion and controversy because it goes to the heart of things which we as communities and individuals hold dear; family, identity and belonging. Adoption has and does generate antipathy between pro- and anti-adoption groups. At times, this is so intense it has been described by one commentator writing from the 'trenches' as a 'war' (Rosenwald 2004).

Adoption and the debates about it change over time and, as the work of scholars such as Julie Berebitsky (2000) demonstrates, in each generation the mode of adoption reflects the then prevalent view on what constitutes a legitimate or 'optimal' family. Thus, during the mid-twentieth century, when there was no notion that a single mother and her child *could* constitute a valid family unit, babies were routinely removed from single mothers and placed through adoption with 'respectable' married couples. Such couples, it was believed, could provide a child with the stable family life that her single mother was not able to provide (Marshall and McDonald 2001). At that time, the prevailing view on the best kind of adoption held that those responsible for the transfer of a child from one family to another should work to 'match' the adopted child with its new family as closely as possible. A 'successful' adoption was thus one where the adopted child blended seamlessly with his or her new family.

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With time and social change, these views have evolved. Changing attitudes on sex outside of the married union and the introduction of a Commonwealth benefit for single mothers have seen single mothers increasingly elect to keep their children. Indeed, single mothers now constitute a significant demographic in the Australian population. The rise of ICA—in part a response to the decreasing availability of suitable Australian children for adoption which has been marked in Australia since the mid-1970s—has occasioned a rethinking of earlier ‘matching’ philosophies. Children from another country cannot be seamlessly inserted into new families as they can rarely be ‘matched’ to the physical characteristics of adoptive parents. Thus, ICAs announce themselves in ways which were unthinkable in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. This has almost certainly resulted in the higher visibility of adoption in the present than was the case in earlier periods.

In the face of social change, debates about adoption reflect a range of current concerns and anxieties concerning the constitution of the family unit. For example, as distinct from the earlier concerns about unwed mothers, current concerns focus on the eligibility of new ‘others’ to form families—primarily whether same-sex couples might be considered to constitute a valid family unit for the purposes of raising children. At the time of preparing this volume for publication, the New South Wales Legislative Council’s Standing Committee on Law and Justice is completing its report on the eligibility of same-sex couples to adopt (see Parliament of New South Wales 2008). The commission has received submissions and taken evidence from groups and individuals occupying diverse positions on the question of whether same-sex couples ought to be considered fit to parent and eligible to adopt children. These submissions include strong representations from both gay and lesbian-rights organisations in favour of same-sex couples enjoying the same rights as other couples. Submissions from other organisations, including religious bodies, advocate equally strongly that the best interests of the child are to be served

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by a family unit understood as a (heterosexual) male father and a (heterosexual) female mother. This debate will continue to generate community interest and challenges for Australian legislatures in the near future.

In the next section, we discuss the deep community ambivalence at work between ideas of family as only truly existing in relation to blood, and views of family based on ideas of nurturance and belonging. We do so through reference to recent representations on the internet and in the media; namely Deborra-Lee Furness' *Orphan Angels* (Furness 2008) campaign and the Channel 7 television show, *Find my Family*.

Blood and belonging

Because adoption represents one opportunity for the state to intervene in and 'engineer' families, it is inevitable that community debates which centre on the family—its constitution and its role—invariably come to be reflected in debates on adoption. Frequently however, these debates reveal how difficult we, as a community, find it to reflect objectively on issues to do with family. The views of many of us are shaped by cultural and religious values, and by deeply held biases such as the belief that no matter what other bonds may exist, 'blood is thicker than water' (Schneider 1980). So deeply entrenched is the bias toward blood connection that some individuals subscribe to this view even in the face of unhappy family experiences of their own; others in the face of evidence that for some children, life with their families entails neglect and abuse.

A number of those advocating for adoption, and for increasing access to children for adoption in Australia, argue that this so-called 'blood bias' works against adoption in several ways (see for example the reports by the HRSCFHS 2005 and 2007). In these reports, the committee argues, for example, that the belief that 'blood is thicker than water', allegedly pre-disposes government officers in the child welfare area *against* adoption as a placement option for Australian children. In the view of this committee,

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adoption in Australia has become the 'poor relation' of child protection and child welfare policy. The 'blood bias' also works against adoptive families by influencing the view that adoptive families are not as 'authentic' as families whose connection is genetic. Many adoptive families feel that they are treated by the government and in the community as 'second-best' families, and that consequently, they enjoy fewer rights and less recognition and support than families related by blood.

In 2008, the Australian actor and wife of Hugh Jackman, Deborra-Lee Furness launched her *Orphan Angels* website as part of a campaign to reduce what pro-adoption campaigners refer to as the 'red-tape' surrounding adoption. Furness' chief aim is to increase the rate at which 'orphans' from overseas might be placed into loving Australian families. Furness' status as an adoptive mother and the *Orphan Angels* (Furness 2008) campaign have generated significant public interest as evinced by numerous media features on Furness, Jackman and their adopted family (Murray 2008; Sunrise 2008).

The terms of Furness' pro-adoption advocacy and the *Orphan Angels* campaign highlight one view of adoption in which its transformative potential for the lives of children—notionally, but in reality not always, orphans—is emphasised. In this view, adoption is able to bestow on children, who may otherwise not experience either, the gifts of family and belonging. These gifts are generated through the love and generosity of the adoptive parents who open their hearts and homes to other people's children; and through love and nurturance raise them *as* their own. This view of adoption highlights, and in many instances, sentimentalises, adoption's *constructivist* capacities. That is, the capacity of adoption to forge and build family bonds where none previously existed, and to construct for the adopted child, as for the adoptive family, experiences and opportunities which would not otherwise exist. In this view of adoption, true belonging is not dependent on blood connections but is forged through love and nurturance which can transcend the actual circumstances

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of blood, birth, race and colour. In short, adoption transforms strangers into kin.

Within this wholly positive view of adoption, any obstacle to expeditious adoption or critique of it is viewed in negative terms. For Furness, for example, Australian legislative requirements for the screening of adoptive parents and the delays on processing adoption applications of ICA in particular are seen as callous bureaucracy merely for the sake of it. Thus, anything which stands in the way of an 'orphaned angel' being placed in a loving Australian home is contrary to the best interests of that child. Furness and others engaged in pro-adoption advocacy therefore frequently seek to minimise or overlook the negative outcomes of adoption in some cases; or the fact that the delays experienced by many prospective adoptive parents are, in part, an unavoidable function of the Australian government's compliance with the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.

By distinction, *Find my Family*, hosted by Australian actor and prominent adoptee, Jack Thompson, highlights the persistence in Australian culture—as in many other cultures—of a contradictory structure of feeling and thought around adoption. In this program, first aired in 2008 on Channel 7, families fragmented primarily by adoption are re-united. In the narratives of family search and re-union which unfold in each weekly episode of *Find my Family*, the viewer is left in no doubt as to where 'real' family connections lie and how they are constituted. Week after week, no matter what the circumstances of upbringing and nurture might have been for the men and women raised in adoptive families, the moment of discovery of their blood kin is the moment of true familial connection, belonging and fulfilment in the quest for personal identity. In episode after episode, the moment of seeing the face of the 'lost' other is marked as a moment of recognition and self-knowledge: the seeker finds herself in finding family, blood ties prevail over complicated histories of separation and involvement in other families, and the 'truth' of blood

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connections are written boldly in shared facial and physical features which are highlighted in close-up images of faces. Thus, years of loss, longing, separation and, it seems, those other 'families' to which each has been attached, fall away as the irrefutable 'truth' of kinship as biology is revealed.

In this view of adoption and family formation, blood is family. Biology prevails even where none of the ties of belonging that are forged through nurture and shared experience exist. Notably, however, *Find my Family* never deals with the issue of how these reunited 'families' function over time. As such, it presents an equally sentimental view of adoption and kinship as Furness' *Orphan Angels* campaign.

The public interest in Furness' *Orphan Angels* campaign and *Find My Family* highlight some of the persistent contradictions at the heart of adoption which have driven and continue to drive changing conceptions of adoption in Australia, and competing and ambivalent responses to it within Australian culture and policy. Clearly, however, neither the narrative of family as 'blood' nor that of family as 'belonging' is sufficient to account for the interrelations between belonging, family, identity and blood connections which constitute our dynamic and constantly shifting families and relationships—adoptive and other. Yet, in the highly emotional and increasingly politicised debates about adoption in Australia, pro and anti-adoption positions are frequently articulated in these terms. The tensions between views of adoption which privilege either blood or belonging are highly indicative of other tensions, contradictions and ambivalences which mark the history and development of adoption in Australia; and which continue to characterise contemporary community and political debate on adoption in this country. One of these is the tension between adoption viewed primarily as a way to provide families for children in need, as distinct from a view of adoption as a mechanism for adults to secure children to form families of their own.

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Families for children, or children for families?

Throughout its history, adoption has always been ambiguously situated between being understood primarily as a mechanism by which children in need of family may be placed with caring parents, and one by which the interests of adults in need of children to form a family may be served. This history of legislated adoption, which in Australia commences with the first adoption legislation in Western Australia in 1896 (with the remaining states moving to legislate on adoption in the 1920s), sees the state taking an active role in attempting to balance the interests of children in adoption with those of adoptive parents. Theoretically, at least, adoption has the capacity to meet both sets of needs within the context of any individual nation-state. 'Successful' adoption certainly removes a burden from the state which would otherwise be charged with the responsibility and expense of caring for children whose own families are, for many reasons, unable to care for them. However, this theoretical capacity of adoption to meet the needs of *both* parents and children has frequently faltered in practice. There is mounting evidence in the Australian context that the adoption practices of the past were geared primarily to the needs and interests of adoptive parents, and gave scant regard to the rights and interests of birth mothers and the longer term interests of children themselves (Parliament of New South Wales 2000). At present, the capacity of adoption to meet the needs of both children and parents within a national context is complicated, some would argue compromised, in the case of ICA which sees Australian parents seeking children for adoption from other countries. In this context, prospective parents either bypass or ignore children that may be available for adoption in their own jurisdictions in preference to the children sourced from elsewhere. This is the situation which has emerged in Australia in the last 30 years, where ICA now constitutes over 70% of all adoptions (AIHW 2008).

Proponents of ICA extol its capacities to reach out to children in need, irrespective of national borders and differences in culture and language. They point to research showing very good outcomes

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for many intercountry adoptees in Australia and elsewhere as evidence that this mode of adoption brings benefits to children. Critics of ICA note that, with the exception of the United States which is both a major receiving country for ICA and also sending increasing numbers of African-American children to other countries, this form of adoption is largely characterised by a flow of children from the poor and underdeveloped world to the affluent west. As such, they argue, ICA is vulnerable to charges of the exploitation of poverty to suit the needs of couples from relatively affluent western countries such as Australia. As David Smolin writes, parents engaging in ICA for the formation of their own families (which may be achieved at the cost of other people's families) need to grapple with some tough ethical issues now and in the future:

[I]magine, as an adoptive parent, explaining to one's adult adopted child why it was ethical to spend [US] \$30,000 on their adoption, while being unwilling to provide [US] \$300 to enable the child to remain with their original parents and family. Would there be some discomfort in the discussion? What would it feel like to say, 'I wanted you as my child, so I was willing to pay a lot for that, but I wasn't going to adopt your parents, and so I wouldn't do anything to help them keep you.'? (2007, p. 431).

Smolin's hard-headed approach forces us to consider the question of whose interests are being served in ICA, and perhaps, in adoption more generally. Does adoption serve the primary purpose of finding families for children, where the interests of the children are paramount? Or are there grounds to conclude that adoption, including ICA in contemporary Australia, is driven by the desires of childless couples to form families? How do we balance the needs of the child, the needs of his impoverished family and the desires of relatively more affluent couples and individuals from countries such as Australia who desperately seek children to raise and nurture as their own? How do we as

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a community balance these sometimes competing interests in developing a form of adoption which may produce the greatest good, or, the least harm? Is adoption the best way for permanent family-based care to be provided for children in need, or should we, as a community, be thinking of alternatives?

About the chapters in this book

The chapters in this collection have been written by researchers from a range of different backgrounds—including history, anthropology, social work, sociology and applied ethics—and cover aspects of the Australian experience of adoption from the early days of legislated adoption in South Australia (Forkert) through to contemporary experiences of ICA (Gray, Walton, Rosenwald *et al.*). While one chapter takes up the issue of media representations of adoption and their impact on adoptive families (Williams Willing), others look at the broader political and social factors framing the development of adoption in Australia (Fronek, Cuthbert and Spark). The unique and emotionally charged issue of the adoption of indigenous children is also considered, albeit very differently, by two commentators, Kirsten McKillop and Christine Cheater. While not comprehensive in its coverage, the collection provides a significant window onto Australian adoption, past and present.

From our perspective as editors, one of the most exciting features of the volume is that many of the contributors speak out of their direct experience of adoption. Thus, while all contributors are actively engaged in research on adoption in Australia—some as established scholars in their fields and others as emerging scholars—they embody and represent perspectives from various points in the often referred to 'adoption triangle' (Marshall and McDonald 2001). For instance, Indigo Williams Willing and Jessica Walton are both intercountry adoptees; Helen Riley is a 'late discovery' adoptee, learning of her adoptive status in her twenties, Trudy Rosenwald and Kim Gray are adoptive mothers; Damien Riggs is a foster parent and Christine Cole is a mother

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whose daughter was taken from her when she was 16 years old. Representing what is sometimes referred to as the fourth point in the 'many-sided [adoption] triangle' (Marshall and McDonald 2001) or even the 'adoption rectangle' (McRoy 2008), Christine Vickers writes reflectively, and with the benefit of hindsight on her own early practice as a social worker in the adoption field in Victoria in the early 1980s, while Susan Gair reports on research with social workers practising in the adoption field in Queensland from the 1960s to 1990. Both essays reflect the changes in social work practice in line with changing societal attitudes towards single mothers and adoption: both contribute the voice of social workers to the historical record on adoption in Australia.

The book is divided into four sections with chapters grouped according to the theme of each section, although, inevitably, some chapters touch on issues raised in other sections. Framing key issues in Australian adoption, the first section of the book contains three chapters. In his contribution '*Lacerated feelings and heart burnings: An historical background to adoption in Australia*', Joshua Forkert addresses what he identifies as an oversight by Australian historians who rarely broach the history of adoption policy and practice. Examining the development of what he calls 'sentimental' adoption, Forkert argues that changing attitudes towards adoptive parents who came increasingly to be seen as 'good people with good motivations' were instrumental in facilitating the passage of adoption legislation in the 1920s. In chapter 2, '*Intercountry adoption in Australia: A natural evolution or purposeful actions*', Patricia Fronck takes us into a more recent era in Australian adoption. Focusing on the rise and development of ICA in Australia, she discusses the development of adoption from Korea into Queensland during the 1970s. Her chapter provides valuable insight into the interactions between various proponent and opponent groups and their influence on government and popular opinion in the growth of intercountry adoption. In our contribution to the collection in chapter 3 which we have called, "*Society moves to make its own solutions*

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...': *Re-thinking the relationship between intercountry and domestic adoption in Australia*', we examine the divergent histories of domestic adoption and ICA in Australia since the 1970s, and suggest ways in which returning to this history might help us reframe adoption in the present with a focus on the needs of children, as distinct from the desires of adults.

In the second section of the book, entitled '*Talking through the pain*', the focus shifts to a much more personal and experiential realm. In chapter 4 'Hearing the voices of social workers in past adoption practice with mothers and their babies for adoption: *What can we learn?*', Susan Gair asks challenging questions about the role of the profession of social work and social workers in the adoption process through a series of interviews with social workers practising in Queensland over a 30-year period. Adding the voices of social workers to the record, her findings reveal an evolving social work practice reflective of emerging social change. Providing another perspective on the role of social work in the adoption process, former social worker Christine Vickers uses her vantage point in 2009, and her subsequent training as an historian to reflect on a troubling case she dealt with as a young social worker in Victoria in the early 1980s. In '*(Re)membering adoption: Reflecting on adoption and social work practice in Victoria*', Vickers 're-members' the poignant case of 'Michael', who was engaged in the search for his mother in the months before Victorian legislation changed to give former adoptees access to their records.

The final chapter in this section is Christine Cole's '*The hidden tragedy of the white stolen generation and its consequences: Perspectives on Australian adoption from a mother of the white stolen generation*'. In this chapter, the contemporary politics of adoption are examined through the critical lens on adoption and its outcomes provided by Australian birth-mothers' activism and testimonies. Parallels between the conditions of contemporary ICA and domestic adoption in Australia and elsewhere are highlighted. Cole argues that where the adoption of children is

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driven by market forces and seen as a 'service' to adoptive parents, it risks producing great harm to both children and families. Cole calls for full accountability by the Australian community for wrongs committed in past adoption practices to avoid the continuation of these into the future.

In the third section of the book, the authors take up issues of rights, accountability, cultural and sexual difference in relation to adoption policy and practice in Australia from a variety of viewpoints. In chapter 7, '*Torres Strait Islander customary adoption: Providing legal recognition for alternative paradigms of family in Australia*', Kirsten McKillop examines the practice of indigenous customary adoption amongst Torres Strait Islanders. McKillop compares and contrasts the legislative approach taken towards customary adoption in the state of Queensland with that taken by the Northwest Territories and Nunavut of Canada. Arguing that the current Queensland approach of ignoring customary adoptions is inadequate and that the explicit legislative recognition of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut represents a preferable approach, her chapter also serves as a reminder that adoption has different meanings across cultures and traditions. Among at least some of the societies associated with these other traditions, adoption is a common and unremarkable response both to the needs of parents for children and vice versa.

This situation contrasts with the shame and secrecy that continues to characterise the experience of donor offspring in Australia, a group Helen Riley considers in her chapter, '*Listening to late discovery adoption and donor offspring stories: Adoption, ethics and implications for contemporary donor insemination practices*'. Riley explores stories told by people who have discovered their adoptive and donor insemination offspring status late in life. Despite the different practices involved, these stories reveal common experiences in which the 'late discoverers' have to deal not only with the news of their birth status but with the long years of secrecy and deception surrounding this status. As an applied ethicist, Riley concludes that the findings from her

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research have implications for the practice of assisted reproductive technologies. Damien Riggs' chapter also considers the matter of accountability in adoption. In '*Race privilege and its role in the 'disappearance' of birth families and adoptive children in debates over non-heterosexual adoption in Australia*', Riggs explores issues of race privilege germane to the rights claims of white Australian lesbians and gay men seeking access to international adoption. The question of indigenous adoption forms the subject of chapter 10, '*My brown skin baby they take him away: A reassessment of the role of adoption in the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families*'. Here, Christine Cheater shows how changing social attitudes have shaped policies on Aboriginal child removals and led to the demonisation of the adoption of indigenous children by white parents. While we cannot be certain how many indigenous children were adopted by non-indigenous families during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s—which saw the heyday in domestic adoption in Australia—Cheater argues that the adoption of these children represented a highly invidious form of assimilation. Many of them lost all connection with indigenous people and culture. Indeed, some may never have become aware of their indigeneity.

Fittingly, perhaps, given that the overwhelming majority of adoptions in Australia are now ICAs, the final section of the book provides a series of contemporary perspectives on ICA from researchers who, as indicated above, are all directly connected to adoption as either adoptees or adoptive mothers. This section of the book opens with chapter 11 in which Trudy Rosenwald provides a brief demographic survey of 30 years of ICA in Australia. In '*Ten thousand journeys*', Rosenwald reports on her original demographic research, and fills some gaps in the data on the numbers of ICAs in Australia, the countries of origin of these children and their destinations. The next two chapters, by Jessica Walton and Kim Gray respectively provide valuable insight into the experiences of intercountry adoptees. Jessica Walton's chapter '*More than a 'Korean adoptee': Making sense of identity and*

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adoption in South Korea and adoptive countries explores how adult Korean adoptees experience their identities in situated contexts of belonging and 'otherness' in South Korea and their adoptive countries respectively. Gray also considers the diverse experiences of intercountry adoptees who journey to the place of their birth. Looking at adoptees who made these trips at different times in their lives, she argues that adoptees' 'return' experiences need to be placed historically and socio-culturally if we are to understand their complexity.

Reflecting on the relationship between celebrity and ordinary adoptions, Indigo Williams Willing explores how 'ordinary' adoptive parents respond to the intense media attention directed towards celebrity adopters, Angelina Jolie and Madonna. Moving beyond celebrity adoption, the final chapter, '*Well-being and identity of adolescent and adult intercountry adoptees and non-adopted migrants in Western Australia*' by Trudy Rosenwald, Alison Garton and Moira O'Connor provides a grounded and useful discussion of the well-being and identity of adolescent and adult intercountry adoptees as compared with their non-adopted migrant peers in Western Australia. Both the research methods and findings of the research undertaken by Rosenwald break new ground in the understanding of ICA in relation to adoptees' well-being and identity. Along with other chapters, the work of Rosenwald *et al.* highlight the large gaps in local Australian knowledge about adoption and its outcomes, as well as the pressing need for further research.

As the above outline makes clear, the contributors to this volume speak from a variety of positions, reflecting the multiplicity of views on adoption in Australia. We hope that the readership of this book will be similarly diverse and particularly that it will include other researchers, students, members of adoption communities across Australia (including prospective adoptive parents), policy makers and service providers in the adoption field and members of the wider community. We further hope that the essays in this collection provide insights into what

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is distinctively Australian about the history and experience of adoption in Australia, while at the same time pointing to the links between Australian adoption and adoption in other places. Having highlighted just some of the intellectual, emotional and political complexities at stake in contemporary debates about adoption in Australia in this chapter, we would like the book to open up and inform discussion around the subject of adoption in Australia. We will consider the volume a success if it assists the wider community to engage in informed and reflective discussion of adoption, and of the need for all of us to give due regard to the interests and rights of all children—those of other people and our own.

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