

Introduction

Adoption is an ancient practice that has received renewed attention as the ability to create ties between parents and children has become more detached from biological descent. In the United States, surrogate, gay, and single parenthood, facilitated by new reproductive technologies, is no longer rare. Family-making has burst out of a rickety frame that assumed the need for blood ties and heterosexuality. In the case of adoption, these reproductive practices have provoked searching questions and experiments that are most visibly striking when the adoptions are transracial, transnational, or both.

In the following pages, I inquire into the kinds of families and communities that are emerging as a result of these adoptions. My interest in writing about transracial and transnational adoption in the United States was sparked by my own experiences with adoption. In 2000, I became the Euroamerican mother of a daughter, whom my husband and I adopted from China. As was true of so many other transracial and transnational adoptive families, we became the focus of a range of sentiments—affection, celebration, naked curiosity, ignorance, and a dose now and then of discrimination. My training and perspective as an anthropologist fueled my desire to better understand my experiences. I began to pursue more deeply and systematically questions about family-making through transnational and transracial adoption in the United States. It rapidly became clear to me that all adoptions were not alike; that issues of class, race, place, and gender led adopting and adoptive parents along different paths of family-making; and that the practices and narratives that emerged among them were inflected by how power circulated in society.

Anthropologists are well aware that people build their lives using cultural models. These models are conceptual, but they take material form as they are

put into practice. They carry meanings that people take for granted. Yet what people take for granted is far from straightforward, common-sensical, or natural. How people make a family, who they deem are its “members,” and what is expected of them are good examples of this. The broad purpose of this book, thus, is to explore the tensions surrounding the making of American families—how they are constituted, the forms they take—and the activities of those who are considered “members” of families, through the lens of transnational and transracial adoption over, roughly, the twenty years between 1990 and 2010. In it, I focus on the experiences of Euroamerican parents who have adopted children from China, parents who have adopted children from Russia, and white parents who have adopted African American children in the United States, within a comparative perspective.¹

My own subject positioning as an anthropologist and a mother who has participated in and experienced much of what I write about informs the narrative I develop. Each step of the way, over the long making of this book, I have reflected on how what I have learned could be personally incorporated into or brought to bear on my own family-building practices. A second defining thread of the narrative is the power of what I call broken links—what is missing or unknown—in the lives of birth parents, adoptive parents, and their children. These broken links attest to power at work that permits severing some people from one another and uniting others; they speak to assumptions people hold about “blood ties,” and they are indicators of how secrets, intimate or very public, are heavy burdens indeed. I argue that adoptive parents and their children are affected by these broken links and that they have catalyzed a burgeoning movement among many adoptees to call into question what *is* taken for granted in American family-building, to give it a name, and to act on it.

“Blood Ties”

To better understand the cultural context of transnational and transracial adoption, it is important to situate it within larger debates about family-making in the United States. The ways Americans make their families provide insight into basic building blocks of American culture, offering glimpses of what the ingredients of biology and culture or nature and nurture have to do with how Americans think about family and the recipes they rely on to make them. Prominent anthropologists, most notably David Schneider (1980), argued that biology was the template on which American kinship relationships and the family were built, underlying American social norms about who was re-

lated to whom. Yet transnational and transracial adoption practices in America have raised questions about whether “biologism” is the sole ground in which kinship ties are rooted. Schneider’s assertion catalyzed scholars to take a fresh look at taken-for-granted constructs such as household, family, child, sibling, and parent, realizing that they might, indeed, constitute American folk models. They began to pay greater attention to the meanings of biogenetics and culture across societies. The growing interest in what, then, exactly constituted “kinship ties”—where did kinship relationships end and other kinds of social ties begin?—were questions Schneider did not address (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995), but they led scholars to wonder why and how assumptions about family-making became naturalized (Carsten 2000: 13–14).

Judith Modell, in her work on American adoption, argued that if Schneider was right about the predominant model of “family” and of “kinship” in America, then “adoption makes absolutely no sense without the biological relationship.” Further, she claimed, “adoption makes sense of the biological relationship. The ‘made’ relationship delineates the terms of the natural relationship: a child born of two parents, the product of their sexual relationship. Fictive kinship tells participants that real kinship means ‘blood ties.’ These determine the structure of a family and also the emotions of its members: the feelings of being a parent and a child” (Modell 1994: 225–26). At the same time, Modell found her informants were struggling with the assumed relationship between biological family-making and “as if” family-making through adoption. She noted that “natives” themselves were articulating and revising theories of kinship and that they “constructed a critique that very much resembles those made by anthropologists, confronting (as these do) the ‘biologism’ that dominates the construction of American kinship” (see, e.g., Schneider 1984). Modell found that her informants were “fish out of water—people well aware of, and interested in probing, the contradictions in their lives” (Modell 1994: 13–14).

The discourse that adoptive and birth parents, children, and social workers used about families created intense paradoxes for participants in Modell’s study. They desired to replicate the sentiments, characteristics, and functions associated with biologically constituted families, yet also wanted society to recognize their distinctiveness as adoptive families. As Modell put it, all participants were initially engaged in creating “as if” families, grounded in security and love. However, the ideal “as if” family remained just that, as families themselves struggled with the construction of roots through routes and pathways, rather than essences, especially across borders erected by race, class, and nation.

Cross-Cultural Studies of Family-Making through Adoption

Anthropologists realized that one way to investigate the roles that nature and nurture—biology and culture—played in family-making was to explore the premises underlying family-making and the valorization of adoption and fostering in other cultures. They found many examples that stood in sharp contrast from those structuring American family-making. In some societies, adoption and social parenthood were as highly valued as biologically constituted families, sometimes more so. In others, adoption was a requisite practice for strengthening lineage ties, ensuring an heir, and creating pathways to valued resources.

In northern Benin, the norm is social parenthood. Almost all children live with non-biological parents and the identity of their biological parents is kept secret, similar to sealed adoption records in the United States. Nevertheless, biological parents take an avid interest in their child. The degree and kinds of social parenthood in Benin often correlate with labor needs and status, creating patterned kinds of inequalities (Alber 2004: 33–47). In yet other cultures, children move among households of adoptive and biological parents throughout the course of their lives. In Micronesia, adoption is common as a practice integral to the sexual division of labor, as well as a system of land exchange and joint use; adopted children are highly regarded, and if obligations to them are not fulfilled, the adoption can be reversed (Treide 2004: 127–42). In Ifaluk, also located in Micronesia, parents seek to adopt because of loneliness or sorrow, and if a childless couple asks to adopt a child from his or her birth parents, their wish is usually granted. If the birth parents have other children and refuse the request to give up one of them, they are considered stingy and become a target of the wrath of the gods (Le 2000: 208).

Among the Wogeo of Papua New Guinea, according to Astrid Anderson (2004: 111–26), adoptions do not imitate other social relationships but rather are essential to the constitution of the social landscape. Children who are adopted continue to belong to their natal matrilineage but also to the locus, the place, where they are raised by their adoptive parents. Not unlike some adoption practices in the United States, childless parents in Wogeo pressure others to give up their children for adoption. And among the Beng of the Ivory Coast, Alma Gottlieb (2009: 115–38) found that mothers quickly turn over their babies to multiple caretakers, including older children and strangers. Because the Beng believe that all babies return to this world as reincarnated ancestors from the afterlife, they are already familiar with existing social ties and relationships. Beng mothers encourage infants to be open and accepting of strangers, forging “satis-

fyng emotional attachments to many people,” and they discourage infants from forming “singular emotional attachments” to their mother (Gottlieb 2009: 131).

At the other end of the spectrum, anthropologists have also found cultures that stress “blood ties” and biological descent even more than Americans do (Sorosky et al. 1978: 26). In Morocco, Bargach (2002) writes that adoption is a marginalized activity experienced by marginalized people who experience great anguish. The Moroccan state has made it a crime for adopted children to assume their new family’s name. There, being adopted is conflated with being illegitimate; mothers who give up their children for adoption are shamed; and adopted children experience a permanent sense of liminality.

Many examples of family-making principles and practices could be cited in which surrogate and alloparenting are the norm, not the exception; the concept of “family” as a unit with clearly defined boundaries responsible for nurturing may not exist; “love” and “good deeds” are not necessarily taken into account as important reasons for adopting a child; neither is adoption stigmatized or excessively focused on, even though it is an important strategy among families in adjusting to the economic and political implications of differing family composition and events (Borneman 2001: 43). At the same time, as Astrid Anderson (2004: 119) has observed, adoption, and what Americans likely would label “fostering,” is not uncomplicated, even if all children are loved the same. As we can see from just the few examples above, forces from afar have considerable impact on adoption and fosterage practices, and all societies filter the pragmatics of adoption through their moral values, customary laws or legal tenets, and economic and political practices.²

Being Related

Given the evidence for such a wide range of family-making practices, not surprisingly, anthropologists began to question Schneider’s assumptions about American family-making, especially as different kinds of families began to make their appearance in higher numbers. Whereas Modell found that the ideal and quintessential cultural model of family-making in America, which her informants were alternately embracing and struggling against, was biological in nature, Janet Carsten (2004) wondered whether biology was ever the sole or principal guiding assumption about American kinship models. Regardless of whether it was, she argued that the more important task for anthropologists was to bring to light indigenous models of relatedness and what the construction and activation of relatedness meant to personhood in the context of people’s practices and interactions. In her words, “[T]he important point here is

that shared meals and living in one house go together, and these two processes progressively create kinship even when those who live together are not linked by ties of sexual procreation. Not surprisingly, there is also a strong moral value ascribed to these processes" (Carsten 2004: 40).

"Relatedness" and how it is constituted among families formed through adoption is central to this book (Carsten 2000).³ Like Modell, I find that biology and "blood ties" continue to lurk as important ingredients in American family-making, including among adoptive parents and their children. However, many practices of creating relatedness as kin have emerged, leading to shifts in the social construction of "family" in American culture. It is not that American ideas about biologism are being supplanted or superseded, but, as Judith Modell documents, they are undergoing revision. As they undergo revision, they become catalysts for changes in how Americans think about family-making and, occasionally, for outright challenges to existing norms.

Private and Public Knowledge and Choices

American family-making is also situated and shaped by cultural notions of public and private, open and closed, and by whether, and how, lines are drawn between these constructs. Janet Carsten points out that these are similar questions to those that feminist scholarship began to ask once it became clear that classificatory models of sexual procreation, domains of private and public, domestic and political, and male-female bodies could no longer be taken as natural (Carsten 2004: 59; Lugo and Maurer 2000). Jane Collier and Sylvia Yanagisako (1989: 30, 36) led the way in arguing against creating a "conceptual impasse" between the "practical" and "symbolic" in approaches to feminist anthropology. This conceptual impasse, they observed, prevented anthropologists from grasping the myriad ways that consensus was achieved about dominant symbolic systems. It also mistakenly led anthropologists to assume that power was exercised in some spheres and not in others, and to create hierarchies of systems of meaning rather than recognizing that "all human practices are created by people living and acting within historically situated systems of meaning." Kath Weston (1991) developed this idea further, specifically with respect to family-making among gays and lesbians. She argued that to understand kinship we need to examine both those relationships that are intimate and very public, and those that are thought to occupy distinct domains.

Using a more historically based approach, Joan Scott (1988) and Bruno Latour (1993) also show that mixtures of nature-culture are socially constructed, and that we need to specify the networks and gatekeepers of networks

that create hegemonic concepts and categories. The use of DNA testing is a good example that illustrates the intervention of nature-culture in contemporary family-making. It has become ever easier to rely on scientific technologies, especially DNA testing, to confirm blood ties, but at the same time, people are giving shape to “family” and arriving at practices that signify “family” bonds to them and others through ever more varied and creative cultural means and ideas (Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; Franklin and McKinnon 2001). The subtext of substantiating biological connections informs how these relationships are imagined, effected, and called into question, often as an uneasy counterpoint. Such connections include, for example, using DNA analysis to expose child trafficking or, increasingly, to confirm relationships between adoptees and birth parents, or birth siblings. Thus, even as bio-relatedness recedes as the taken-for-granted criterion for constituting a family, technologies based on biological connections, and such connections themselves, continue to play central roles in how parents and children imagine their positions and activities in families in America.

I also try to tease out what adoptive parents and adoptees think of as private and public in their family-making practices, the meanings they attribute to these domains, and how they are situated in contexts of power despite many adoptive parents’ fervent claim that the decisions they make are based on individual choice. How do they feel about open or sealed birth records and active interaction with birth relatives? With whom do they share their adoption narratives and journeys, if they do? Is adoption something they want to keep hidden from public view or, in the case of adoptive parents, perhaps even from their children? What does the online explosion of adoption social movements and exchanges mean? Finally, in what ways are children who have been adopted transnationally and transracially attempting to shift the boundaries between these constructs and overturn the constructs themselves, as they grow up? These boundaries are culturally in flux but not easily overturned or moved.

Subjects and Statistics

The research I conducted took the form of interviews and interactions with thirty families with children adopted from China (CA), fifteen families with children adopted from Russia (RA), and twenty transracial families consisting of African American children adopted by white parents (AA). I selected these categories because at the time I conducted this research, China and Russia were among the top three “sending countries” of children for adoption in the United States.⁴ According to the U.S. State Department (2011), between 1999 and 2010, of the 224,615

children adopted internationally in the United States, 64,043 children, most of whom were girls 2 years of age or under, were adopted from China, far more than from any other country. During the same period, 44,150 children were adopted from Russia, a roughly equally number of boys and girls, and a far higher number of children who were older. I included the adoptive families of African American children in my study because there are marked differences historically in how Americans think about “race” as an ingredient in family-making, in the context of domestic adoption and in reproductive policies in general (Solinger 1992, 2001). This history is pertinent because it bears directly on adoption practices: the availability of infants within the United States for adoption; how prospective parents view transracial adoption; and why they turn to transnational adoption.

Ricki Solinger (1992), Nancy Riley and Krista van Vleet (2012), and Ellen Herman (2002, 2008) have traced historically the sustained differences in how white and black women who became pregnant have been treated in the United States. These differences rest on the social construction of race and on class. Single, white, middle-class young women were whisked away to have their babies, who would subsequently be adopted by childless married couples. They were then encouraged to “get back on track” psychologically in order to conform to an ideal of womanhood that meant having children within a marriage. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the onset of the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, and the sexual revolution, along with the availability of birth control and abortion, led to more white women remaining single and keeping their babies. This change was a principal reason that fewer white infants became available domestically for adoption. In contrast, it was thought that black women “naturally” enjoyed their sexuality and that their friends and relatives would take care of their children. Yet they were also criticized for their behavior. The large number of “illegitimate” black births was used as support for the biological bases of black inferiority and public anti-black policies. Whereas white unwed mothers were viewed as a threat to the moral integrity of the family, black unwed mothers were viewed as an economic threat to white families (Solinger 1992: 41–42). The assumption also was that black people would “always take care of their own” (Solinger 1992: 190) and that therefore there was no need to provide them with adoption or foster services. When welfare policies were enacted and black women took advantage of them, the assumption became that they were having babies in order to use welfare services rather than because they were poor and lacked alternative economic opportunities. Solinger concludes that the “racially specific focus on illegitimate pregnancy and childbearing in the postwar decades and at the end of the twentieth

century has made it very difficult for women of all races and classes to see what they have in common” (1992: 245).

I wanted to ascertain how adoptive parents themselves understood and thought about these racialized and class differences in the context of comparing and contrasting domestic transracial adoptions, represented by AA adoptive families, and transnational, transracial adoptions, represented by CA adoptive families. This seemed especially important given that Americans, in general, were adopting transracially and internationally in far greater numbers than they were adopting black children domestically. I also wanted to trace the reasons for their thinking and what effects it had on children themselves.

The differences in the paths that adopting parents were taking are also writ large in statistics on the different kinds of adoption. Although the interest of the general public in adoption has increased since the early 1990s, in 2011, U.S. adoption numbers were far from their highest. In 2010, approximately 125,000 children had been adopted annually in the United States since the late 1980s. In 2008, there were 463,000 children in foster care, 123,000 of them waiting to be adopted.⁵ Ellen Herman (2008: 303), using data gathered from the U.S. Children’s Bureau and the National Center for Social Statistics, notes that this is a sharp drop from the high point in adoptions—175,000 in 1970. Transnational adoptions, many of which are also transracial, more than tripled annually between 1990 and 2004, from 7,000 to almost 23,000 in 2004, accounting for about 12 percent of all adoptions by U.S. citizens (Kreider 2011a: 84).⁶

Domestic transracial adoptions have increased, but there are no reliable statistics, which is telling in itself. Ruth Kreider, who works with the U.S. Census Bureau (2011b: 97), notes that “there are few nationally representative data sources that can provide information about interracial adoptive families and how they might compare in basic demographic and socioeconomic characteristics with interracial families that were formed in other ways. Even estimates of the percentage of adopted children that are interracially adopted are very few.”⁷ Approximately 18,957 African American children were formally adopted in the United States through public agencies in 2002, but only approximately 1,000–2,000 African American children are adopted transracially each year by parents who do not consider themselves African Americans (Ly 2005).⁸ Domestic adoption statistics are unreliable, and there are no accurate statistics on private adoptions. As Herman (2008: 303) observes, the symbolic significance of adoption is far greater than its statistical significance in the United States. In part, this is because of the high visibility of transracially constituted families.⁹

Inequality and Family-Making

Family-making through adoption is embedded in complex, contradictory, multilayered political and economic processes. These processes contribute to inequalities in how adoption unfolds across class, race, and national borders (Marre and Briggs 2009; Ortiz and Briggs 2003: 39–57). In making sense of how inequalities structure transnational and transracial adoption, I draw on a political-economy framework and on critical race theory. The policies and practices of states, international agencies, and many other kinds of institutions actively give rise to inequalities. It is well documented, for example, that children being adopted tend to move from poorer persons or “sending” regions to wealthier “receiving” ones (Coutin, Bibler, Maurer, and Yngvesson 2002).¹⁰

Adoption across national boundaries may also be used as a blunt weapon in confronting geopolitical tensions between countries. In 2013, the U.S. government, for example, passed a law (the Magnitsky Act) targeting Russians who had violated human rights. In retaliation, President Vladimir Putin, with strong support from the Russian congress, approved a law in January banning all U.S. adoptions of Russian children. Although it is indeed true and a serious concern that nineteen Russian children adopted by Americans have died (out of 60,000 adopted over twenty years), the ban was a convenient and powerful weapon that had very little to do with adoption itself or the rights of children.¹¹

Informal and diffuse mechanisms also serve as means by which power is exerted and represented. These inequalities affect the choices adoptive parents make, the risks they take, and the categories and ideologies that are embedded in the stories they share about their adoption experiences.

The original underpinnings of critical race theory were oriented toward critiquing and transforming unjust legal policies and systems that purported to be founded on and operate with principles of neutrality. My goal here is less ambitious. It is to bring to light how race and racism work with and through gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nation as systems of power, and to specify some of their more significant impacts on transnational and transracial adoption (Crenshaw 1991; hooks 1992). The exercise and circulation of power often stratifies or masks commonalities and interconnections among different social classes or sectors, resulting in identity politics. Just as problematically, the narratives and experiences of marginalized subjects may prevent those subjects from recognizing what unites them or how they might organize to contest the very forces and ideologies that fragment them (Nash 2008). By placing transnational adoptions, some of which are transracial, within the same frame as domestic transracial adoptions, the social construction of race at work leaps

into view. For example, although adoptive parents use “heritage” with respect to transnational transracial adoptions, they tend to use “race” in the context of domestic transracial adoptions. The reasons for this make for very different choices and activities among families formed through adoption.¹² Crenshaw puts this well:

To say that a category such as race or gender is socially constructed is not to say that the category has no significance in our world. On the contrary, one of the projects . . . is thinking about the way power has clustered around certain categories and is exercised against others . . . to unveil the processes of subordination and the various ways those processes are experienced by people who are subordinated and people who are privileged by them. . . . Categories have meanings and consequences. . . . This is not to deny that the process of categorization is itself an exercise of power, but the story is much more complicated and nuanced than that. . . . Clearly, there is unequal power, but there is nonetheless some degree of agency that people can and do exert in the politics of naming. (Crenshaw 1991: 1296–97)

The vectors of power through which adoptions unfold in the United States and how inequalities are confronted over time constitute complex dynamics and ethical conundrums. One frequently cited example addressed in the following pages concerns white adopting parents who have the luxury to choose between transnational and domestic adoption. Often they choose the former, adopting black children from abroad while there remains a need for permanent homes for black children in the United States. Yet even white parents who do choose to adopt black children from within the United States face criticism from blacks who are concerned that white families will not adequately equip black children to navigate America’s racialized terrain.¹³ Controversy also abounds over whether the inherent geopolitical inequalities between sending and receiving countries of transnational adoptees trump the ethical value of providing every child with a loving family (Bartholet 1993, 1996; Fogg-Davis 2002; Freundlich 2000; Hollingsworth 2003; and Marre and Briggs 2009).

Adoptive parents may embrace children’s rights, regardless of race or nation, as an impulse for adoption, yet that same embrace may be compelled by sentimental ideas about rescuing “poor and primitive” others and avoiding risks. In short, the ability to pursue adoptions across borders—racially, economically, or nationally—is the consequence of geopolitical inequalities that are themselves the result of particular histories and policies that the United States has helped create. Adult adoptees have articulated their own positions in these debates

and have become increasingly active in making themselves heard, not an easy undertaking when they realize they must confront both the power and the love of multiple parents.

Transnational and transracial adoption practices in America, therefore, reflect how Americans conceptualize kinship and how family-making activities are embedded in ideas about race, class, and gender. Sexuality too is a factor, given the increase in single, gay, and lesbian parents and the battles they are waging for states to extend to them the same rights as heterosexual couples (Weston 1991; Carp 2004; Gailey 2006a; Lewin 2006; Horridge 2011). These ideas are converted into practices that carry meanings through which power circulates.

Ethnographic Approaches

Two major currents run through adoption research: therapeutic approaches, concentrating on the psychological and physical well-being of members of adoptive families; and sociologically or psychologically grounded quantitative studies that examine correlation or causality among variables such as race, income, and education (the data from these studies are abundantly available and I occasionally cite them). However, my intention here is not to arrive at broad generalizations. It is to vividly portray the lives of families who have chosen to make their families across lines of race, color, gender, class, or nation and to illuminate new understandings of adoption within a particular cultural and historical context.

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw an explosion of books, articles, movies, and memoirs about adoption in particular, and about families in general. This passionate attention to family in America might be a consequence of the long history of the centrality of families to labor regimes, state formation, gender relationships, religion, medical practices, and making a profit, especially via media accounts that pull at people's heartstrings or sensationalize family scandals and affairs. Without discounting this possibility, I would argue that the renewed attention to families and to family formation is indicative of cultural unrest about how families are perceived and understood, the practices associated with their formation, and how they actually work. This unrest is not due to a single cause but rather to a multiplicity of currents interacting in tension with existing discourses and structures of power.

An ethnographic perspective has the capacity to offer a nuanced account of why and how power is exercised and experienced among different groups of people, and the reasons for the seemingly sudden explosions of hatred or violent conflict around the world. It also allows people to reflect more on how their

own assumptions and beliefs are channeled into their behavior and reactions. An ethnographic account can shake things up. Further, anthropologists themselves, whether “studying up” or “studying down,” have become more explicit about defining their own subject positions (Nader 1972). What I most wanted to avoid in this ethnography was to *assume* that I already knew why and how participants in adoption felt and what guided them in what they did. Bruno Latour (2007: 53–58) lays out methodological requirements that he argues would permit social scientists to recognize “figuration”—how forces of power come to *be* and exert themselves—rather than taking them for granted and then drawing somewhat obvious conclusions from those assumptions. He also asks that sociologists, in particular, pay closer attention to the ideas that people have about what they are doing and what compels them to certain decisions and actions. In a similar but more anthropological vein, Jane Collier, Michelle Rosaldo, and Sylvia Yanagisako (1997) lay out why it is more theoretically productive and ethnographically meaningful to view family-making as dynamic, processual, relational, and taking place in more than one locale or institution. I have tried to heed emergent forces at work, tracing how they create connections, agency, breaks, and disruptions among people, and to take note of the metaphors people embrace and act upon.

All parents create narratives and a sense of origin or tangle of roots for their children (adoptive or not). Likewise, authors weave together a narrative, or sometimes more than one. There are intersections between the narratives I have built as a Euroamerican adoptive parent and the narratives that have emerged in my research. Hence, not least because I am very much both subject and engaged participant, I have erred on the side of restraint, striving to combine close analysis with tolerance and respect for the many voices and points of view that I listened to and reflected upon in the course of my research. I find myself in agreement with Alma Gottlieb who, reflecting on the problematic inequalities entailed in writing for or about “the Other,” concluded:

To live in a world in which we have given up on the dream of understanding the motivations for behaviors, feelings, and opinions of other human beings, or groups of human beings—whether each of those persons or groups comes from a different religious tradition, socioeconomic class, or language group from our own . . . or is our neighbor or child or spouse—this is a frightening thought. At an ideological level, such a world paves the way for war, with its assumption that the Other is epistemologically problematic and thus a legitimate candidate for annihilation. (Gottlieb 1994: xvi)