

# FAMILY BONDS

---

ADOPTION AND  
THE POLITICS  
OF PARENTING

---

*Elizabeth Bartholet*



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

*Boston New York*

#### A SNAPSHOT OF ADOPTION'S REALITIES

Our society's current laws signal adoption's inferiority to the biologic family and proclaim the dangers allegedly inherent in raising children apart from their birth families. Almost all the rules are designed either to ensure that a child is not improperly removed from the biologic family or that a child is not placed with an inadequate adoptive family. There are no rules, or at least none with any teeth, that give children a right to a nurturing home or that limit how long they can be held in limbo.

Our laws design adoptive families in imitation of biology. The central symbolic event is the issuance of a new birth certificate for the child and the sealing of the old certificate, together with other adoption records. The goal is to ensure that the birth parents, the child, and the adoptive parents can all proceed with their new lives as if the child had never been born to the original parents. The clear implication of this "as if" model of adoption is that adoption is an inferior and not quite real form of family which can at best aspire to look like the real thing.

The central legal event in adoption is issuance of the adoption decree, which completely severs the legal relationship between the child and the birth family, transferring to the adoptive family all rights and responsibilities. Legally as well as symbolically, it is as if the child were born to the adoptive parents. This promotes a rigid separation of the birth from the adoptive family, reinforcing notions that the true family is the

closed nuclear family and warding off as much as possible any sense that adoptive relationships might be more contingent and less proprietary than traditional parenting relationships.

The "as if" adoption model produces parental screening policies that confirm traditional prejudices. The home study process favors married couples who look as if they could have produced the child they will adopt. It tends to screen out prospective parents who do not fit traditional notions of what parents should look like; among those disqualified or ranked at the bottom of eligibility lists are singles, older parents, gays and lesbians, and people with disabilities. The rules for matching waiting children with prospective parents are designed to maximize sameness and avoid what is seen as dangerous diversity within families. Originally the goal was literally to match — to give prospective parents children with similar physical features and similar mental characteristics, so that the parents could pretend to the world and even to the child that this was their biologic child. In addition, the idea was (and to a great degree still is) that adoption has the best chance of working if the child is as much like the parent as possible. After all, how can you expect a smart parent to relate to a not-so-smart child, or a musical parent to relate to a baby jock? What would happen to the talented child in a family of pedestrian minds? In today's adoption world, the matching ideal has given way significantly to reality: there are relatively few healthy babies in this country to match with the mass of eager prospective parents. But interestingly, traditional matching principles are very much alive with respect to race. Powerful policies in force throughout the nation restrict adoption across racial lines, reinforcing notions of the importance of racial barriers.

family ties " family bonds, familial connection, blood relations, relations among relatives " English contemporary dictionary. Family Home Evening " (FHE) or Family Night, in the context of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, refers to one evening per week, usually Monday, that families are encouraged to spend together in study, prayer and other wholesome activities. According to " Wikipedia. Bonds, Barry " in full Barry Lamar Bonds born July 24, 1964, Riverside, Calif. U.S. baseball player. With a power he knows not, an ancient prophecy and one Severus Snape practically raising him, interesting at least is a given. Rated: Fiction T - English - Family/Adventure - Harry P., Severus S. - Chapters: 76 - Words: 517,184 - Reviews: 8,266 - Favs: 8,309 - Follows: 8,369 - Updated: 7/5/2014 - Published: 1/8/2012 - id: 7724057.