

SEEKING SISTERS: TWINSHIP AND KINSHIP IN AN AGE OF INTERNET MIRACLES AND DNA TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract

In the past decade, more than 50,000 children born in China have been adopted to the United States, a movement across national borders that is part of a growing wave of transnational adoption involving many other countries as well. This paper examines how Chinese adoption reflects broader shifts in discourses and practices around adoption, and how families in the United States with children adopted from China have struggled with the tension between genetic and social relatedness. As a window into this tension, I focus on recent efforts to find biological siblings, through DNA testing and Internet connections, among adopted Chinese daughters. Adoptive parents' yearnings for connections with birth families and "birth culture," which focused in the 1990s on fantasies of the unknowable birth mother, have turned in the past two years to sibling searches. This new interest can be understood in light of a wider societal fascination with "genetic genealogy," increasingly popularized in the media, and ongoing efforts by the adoption community to create and affirm a multiplicity of ties to China.