Sinking the Mother Ship

Evelyn Robinson

(Definition: *A mother ship is a craft which carries one or more smaller craft; the mother ship may recover the smaller craft or may go its own way after releasing it*.)

Introduction

Human beings are mammals. Like other mammals, they are driven by their instincts. One of the strongest of these is their instinct to reproduce, in order to ensure the continuation of their species. Throughout the ages, different human societies have tried to control people's reproductive urges, by creating their own rules about the circumstances under which reproduction is socially acceptable, based on their particular belief systems.

In my book, ***Adoption Separation – Then and now***, I have published a collection of accounts written by forty-five parents who lost their children to adoption, between 1958 and 1989, in Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland and the United States. I know from my long involvement with the adoption community that their stories are representative of the experiences of many unmarried parents in those countries during that timeframe. This paper, which focusses mainly on the Australian situation, aims to provide a social context for those experiences.

In the middle of the twentieth century, in many English-speaking countries, women who gave birth and were not legally married at the time (unless they had been widowed during their pregnancy), were referred to as 'unmarried mothers'. Not only were they defined by their marital status, they were also defined by what they were not. Their children were labelled 'illegitimate', which meant that they were born outwith the legal protection provided by marriage. The unmarried mothers referred to herein are those who gave birth within the historical and geographical parameters of the book, although mothers in other times and in other places have had similar experiences.

Certain dominant beliefs in those countries were grouped together to form a powerful, dangerous mass, which exerted its influence, to a large extent covertly, operating under the surface of society. When translated into actions, this mass of beliefs led to thousands of illegitimate children being whisked away from unmarried mothers and absorbed, apparently seamlessly, into other families. This became a secret tidal wave of adoptions on which many were swept up and many were swept away.

To those who were not adults during this period in history, in those locations, it may appear that removing many thousands of children from their mothers, on the basis of their marital status, was an act of unmitigated cruelty. However, the behaviour of those who were advising and caring for unmarried mothers was seldom randomly malicious. It was largely based on a set of beliefs, which may now appear indefensible and even, to some, incomprehensible.

Understanding that belief system, however, can provide a context within which to position the experiences of unmarried mothers, at the time when so many of their children were taken from them to be adopted. While this exploration does not in any way excuse what happened to those mothers and their children, it does assist in understanding their experiences, which can play an important role in the healing process.

The Adoption Iceberg

It is well known that icebergs have been responsible for sinking ships. For many unmarried mothers, such as those who contributed to the book, their experience as a 'mother ship' was sabotaged by that powerful, dangerous mass which I have designated the 'adoption iceberg'.

The apparently benign portion of the iceberg which was visible above the surface represents the positive perception of adoption in the general community, as the ideal solution to the 'problem' of an illegitimate child.

Adoption was intended to give the child a home which was emotionally and financially stable and to protect the mother and her family from scorn and disgrace. It was the much larger, invisible mass of the iceberg, lurking beneath the surface, however, which presented the real threat to the mother ship. This was made up of a dangerous combination of beliefs, the potency of which gave the adoption iceberg its enormous power. Many young women who found themselves pregnant and unsupported felt that their mother ships were shipwrecked by this formidable and treacherous configuration.

Beliefs about women

Adoption icebergs existed in societies which held certain beliefs about women. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is the basis of the notion of original sin, which underpins the Christian tradition. Eve, in her role as the first woman, was not only responsible for the fall of Adam, she also bears the enormous responsibility for bringing sin and death into the world, through her weakness and disobedience. According to the Christian bible, if Eve had not acted as she did, the human race could not have come into being. However, Eve became the scapegoat and labour pains were her punishment. This tale set the scene for women being held responsible for men's behaviour and being blamed for enticing men into immoral actions. It also forged a close link in people's minds between sexual behaviour and sin.

The ideal of pure womanhood which formed the basis of the cult of the Virgin Mary was also a powerful theme in the Christian tradition. A great deal of emphasis was placed on the sexual purity of women, although there was rarely the same expectation for men. Historically, the Christian church has preached vigorously against sex outside of marriage. In eighteenth century Scotland, for example, many unmarried expectant mothers found themselves sitting on the 'fornicators' bench' at the front of the church, for all to see and condemn. The Puritans apparently forced an adulteress to wear a scarlet letter 'A' in a conspicuous position on her clothing, to announce her sin to the community. Women who had had a sexual relationship outside of the marriage contract were condemned as immoral and sullied. A woman's personal value was closely linked to her sexual behaviour.

Even in the twentieth century, many unmarried expectant mothers internalised these beliefs and felt a sense of personal shame and responsibility, because they had transgressed the ideal of pure womanhood, which was integral to Christianity. Some hid themselves in residential homes, which were usually operated by religious organisations, or moved to a part of the country where they were unknown, to avoid experiencing contempt and disapproval. This isolation rendered them particularly vulnerable. Many of them were forced to work hard, to impress on them the error of their ways and to discourage them from repeating their 'mistakes'. Some religious workers stressed to mothers that the way to make amends for their sins was to agree to adoption. Unmarried mothers were often told that they did not deserve to be allowed to raise their children. Following in the footsteps of Eve, they were scapegoated.

Sadly, many of these young women found that the Christian emphasis was much more on retribution than on compassion and that some religious personnel were not content for judgment and punishment to be postponed until the afterlife. Unmarried mothers were judged by people who had no authority to pass sentence on them. For many of them, their principal 'sin' was naivety.

So widespread was the belief linking a woman's value to her sexual behaviour, that many unmarried mothers whose children were adopted felt such a sense of shame and guilt that they could not bring themselves to reveal the existence of that child, even to those closest

to them. They had failed to live up to the expectation of sexual purity and they feared that they would be judged and found wanting. Some unmarried mothers avoided revealing the pregnancy to their parents and arranged the adoption themselves, in order to protect their parents from distress and to protect themselves from their parents' disapproval and disappointment. An unmarried woman with a child was considered by many to be 'second-hand goods' and there was a general reluctance on the part of many parents to welcome a woman in this situation as a daughter-in-law.

In other cases, parents who discovered that their unmarried daughter was pregnant made arrangements for their grandchild to be adopted, believing that by doing so they were protecting their daughter, her child and the reputation of the family. Sending their daughter away and concealing the truth about her situation also protected the parents from being confronted on a daily basis by the mother ship (their offending daughter) and the small craft which she was carrying (their illegitimate grandchild).

Their fears for their children and grandchildren were not groundless, as the association of what was perceived as sexual sin with personal value was a very strong one in the community in general and not only among those who would have described themselves as religious. The legal status of illegitimate children was always precarious and they were discriminated against in various ways. The widespread support for adoption was partly based on a general feeling in the community that children should be protected from experiencing the outcomes of their parents' irresponsible behaviour.

Beliefs about families

Beliefs about families were vital to the stability of the adoption iceberg. In the middle of the twentieth century, in the countries represented in *Adoption Separation,* there were still very clear distinctions between married parents and unmarried parents. Women, to a much greater degree than men, were defined by their marital status. A woman who was married, or who had been married and widowed, was referred to as 'Mistress' (commonly shortened to 'Mrs') while a woman who had never been married, no matter how old she was, was referred to as 'Miss'. In correspondence, a married woman was addressed by her husband's first name. A letter to the wife of Mr Robert Smith, for example, would be addressed to 'Mrs Robert Smith'.

These practices were linked to nineteenth century English law, under which a woman's legal identity ceased to exist after marriage. It was not uncommon in Western countries for women born in the early part of the twentieth century to leave the workforce when they were married and never return to it. Being a wife and mother was their career.

The expectation in these societies was that only married people would engage in sexual relationships and that a woman, in particular, would remain 'pure' until her wedding night. Her purity was symbolised by her white wedding gown. At her wedding, the bride was 'given away' by her father to her husband, which symbolised a transfer of ownership and responsibility. Marriage for many women was a transition from obeying their fathers to obeying their husbands.

Although oral contraception (known as 'the pill') was available from the early 1960s, its long term risks were largely unknown and it was viewed by many women and some doctors with trepidation. There were also fears in the community that the contraceptive pill would encourage promiscuity and few doctors in the 1960s could be persuaded to prescribe it for unmarried women. Some doctors, in fact, would only prescribe oral contraception to married women with the permission of their husbands. Abortion was illegal in many places, including parts of Australia, until the 1970s and even then, access was restricted. Many doctors would sanction an abortion only if the mother's health was considered to be seriously threatened by the pregnancy.

It was generally accepted that children who were raised by one parent were less likely to achieve their full potential in life and were more likely to suffer the disadvantages associated with poverty. Most of these children were raised by their mothers and, considering that there were limited employment opportunities for women at this time and that it was legal to pay women less than men for doing the same work, this was not surprising. There was also a fear that if the mother later married, the complications of a step-parenting situation could have a negative impact on the child's well-being.

Beliefs about work ethic

Towns in Britain were traditionally divided up into parishes, each with its own church, which took care of the poor and the needy. Even now, those who obtain assistance from the government are sometimes described as being 'on the parish'. Churches were responsible for welfare until the introduction and gradual development of the welfare state in the twentieth century. Britain has for many years considered itself to be not only a Christian but also a Protestant country, committed to the 'Protestant work ethic', which meant that people were admired for working hard in order to provide for themselves. This tradition was carried to Australia, New Zealand and North America by British migrants. A single man had the responsibility of supporting himself and a married man had the responsibility of also supporting his wife and children. Being 'on the parish' therefore, has traditionally been viewed as a shameful and unfortunate condition, if it resulted from people failing to fulfil the social expectation of being independent and able to support themselves.

The belief in the Protestant work ethic formed another important component of the adoption iceberg. While there was some degree of tolerance for a pregnancy which was followed by a hasty marriage, there was little tolerance for situations where children were born to unmarried mothers, who found themselves in a very difficult position. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, many women worked at home and so it was possible to earn money and raise children at the same time. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, workplace conditions in many Western countries dictated that women were forced to resign from their employment after their marriage, or else when they subsequently became pregnant. An unmarried expectant mother usually had to resign before her pregnancy became obvious. Had she chosen to raise her child, it would have been rare for her to be offered re-employment after the birth. These conditions made it almost impossible for an unmarried mother to provide the necessary on-going financial support for herself and a child.

In those days before access to education was available throughout people's lives, an unplanned pregnancy could also spell the end to the mother's educational opportunities. Lack of education would be likely to result in poorly-paid employment, providing another reason why an unmarried mother would find it difficult to support herself and a child.

The belief in the Protestant work ethic led to the transfer of many children of unmarried mothers to married couples, who were expected to be able to support them financially and give them more opportunities in life. Many unmarried mothers felt guilty and apologetic, because they were bringing a child into the world for whom they could not provide financial support. They had failed to comply with the demands of the Protestant work ethic. The expectation that adults would provide for themselves also meant that many unmarried expectant mothers were required to pay their way, either in cash or by working for their accommodation, in homes for unmarried mothers, or in private accommodation, often caring for other people's children.

Attachment theory

The influential beliefs which contributed to the mass of the adoption iceberg were founded not only in religion, but also in psychology. The adoption iceberg was made much more robust by adding the element which represented belief in 'attachment theory'.

When the Second World War broke out, in 1939, Dr John Bowlby, a British psychologist, appealed to the British government not to allow children under the age of five years to be evacuated without their mothers. After the war, when many children in Britain were left without homes and parents, Dr Bowlby was asked by the World Health Organisation to develop a report on the needs of those children. By 1958 (coincidentally the date of the earliest account in *Adoption Separation*) he had formulated the foundation for what would become known as attachment theory. Prior to 1958, it appears from the available information that there were fewer children born to unmarried mothers, but a higher percentage of those children were raised within their families of origin.

Bowlby's theory was presented in a three-volume series, published between 1969 and 1982 and its impact has been substantial. His work was supported by that of psychologist Anna Freud (daughter of Sigmund Freud), who found that the British children who had remained in the major cities with their families during the war, instead of being evacuated to the country to live with strangers, had fared better, not only emotionally, but also physically.

Put very simply, Bowlby proposed that infants require 'a continuous, warm relationship' with a mother or mother figure and that if this does not occur in the very early period of life, then there is a likelihood of long term mental health issues in adulthood. Bowlby's theories around attachment were accepted by governments in many countries and led to the gradual closure of orphanages and institutions and to more emphasis being placed on foster care and adoption for children unable to be raised by their parents.

Bowlby's views on the importance of early attachment led to a widespread belief that children would suffer long term adverse consequences, if they were not cared for on a full-time basis in their early years, by one person, ie their mother or a substitute mother figure. This created a genuine fear, which is apparent in the narratives contained in *Adoption Separation*, that any children denied this care would grow up to become delinquents and display anti-social behaviour. Because of the acceptance of Bowlby's views, very few infants, in the middle of the twentieth century, were cared for by strangers.

In the United Kingdom, in the 1960s, some children were cared for in day care centres. However, this type of care was considered to be so unfortunate and inappropriate for children, that the only children who qualified for places there were those who were at risk of being removed from their parents because of neglect or abuse. These centres existed only so that those disadvantaged children could be placed there by the authorities for their own protection. In the twenty-first century, in contrast, many young children of quite competent parents spend long hours being cared for by an array of strangers in child-care centres.

Unless unmarried expectant mothers had someone on whom they could rely for financial support after the birth, they were considered to be unable to provide their children with the full time nurturing in their early years, which would allow them to develop good, long-term emotional and mental health. They were therefore judged by many to be unfit to raise children, which is why many hospitals required them to see the almoner (the name by which a hospital social worker was known in the United Kingdom) as soon as possible, so that options could be explored. Many unmarried mothers were persuaded by the powerful beliefs about attachment theory with which they were presented and accepted that adoption was going to be the way to ensure that their children would not grow up to develop the mental health issues predicted by Dr Bowlby.

Pregnancy and birthing experiences

From the accounts contained in *Adoption Separation*, it is clear that, for many unmarried mothers, the realisation of the pregnancy came as a shock, as there was very little preparation or education for young people around sexual behaviour. In many cases, expectant mothers struggled alone through the months of pregnancy, trying to imagine what the outcome might be for themselves and their children.

If they were not able to use the time between the confirmation of the pregnancy and the birth of the child to put in place plans and arrangements, that would allow them to raise their children, they were very vulnerable to coercion. If they presented at a hospital or a home for unmarried mothers, alone and unsupported, then it often seemed clear to those responsible for their care that no appropriate plans had been made for mother and child to stay together. By not providing evidence of such plans for the future, these mothers were often assumed, by default, to have planned for their babies to be adopted. There is evidence of this in both hospital and social work department files of the time. Some records indicate that mothers were 'compliant' with the adoption process; this may have been partly because they had been raised to respect and obey those in authority and partly because they could envisage no viable alternative.

Staff in hospitals and homes for unmarried mothers brought with them to their work their own belief systems and values. Those who had the responsibility to care for these mothers generally believed that adoption was the most beneficial outcome for their children. For some of those workers, that certainty gave them a particular comfort and security, which allowed them to distance themselves from the mothers and objectify them as delinquent and inferior. In some cases, Christianity provided a degree of confidence and self-righteousness, which allowed workers to justify discrimination against unmarried mothers and their children in harsh and punitive ways. Some workers felt that the whole experience should be as uncomfortable for the mother as possible, in order to deter her from repeating what they considered to be immoral and irresponsible behaviour. Many mothers experienced this treatment by staff as humiliating and demeaning.

In residential homes, mothers were sometimes locked in and only allowed to leave under supervision. They were seldom allowed to make telephone calls or have visitors and sometimes their mail was censored. It was rare for unmarried mothers in any setting to receive any preparation for either the physical or emotional issues around childbirth, far less preparation for the forthcoming separation from their child and its long term impact. They were generally prevented from attending ante-natal classes, where these were available. In some cases, places in homes for unmarried mothers were only available to women who had already committed themselves to proceed with adoption.

There was a wide range of opinions on the most appropriate care of unmarried mothers and their babies in the immediate post-natal period. There were those who believed that keeping mother and baby together for some time after the birth would be best for both. Babies would get the best possible start in life, with their mothers and those mothers would be forced to face the reality of the outcome of their actions and not totally escape the consequences, which would ensure that they did not repeat their irresponsible behaviour. However, there were also those who believed that parting mother and baby as early as possible would make the adjustment to separation easier for both and allow the babies to form a healthy and unambiguous attachment with the women who were to become their surrogate mothers.

There was also a fear that if the mother was allowed to spend time with her baby after the birth, she may develop such an attachment to the child that she would rashly refuse to allow the adoption to proceed, thereby condemning the child to a life of poverty and disadvantage – and, according to Bowlby, possible long term mental health issues. Some workers genuinely believed that the less involved the mother was with the process of birthing

and motherhood, the easier it would be for her to recover from her experience, put it behind her and 'get on with her life'. During this period of time following the birth, it was common for mothers and babies both to be isolated, lonely and uncomforted. The long term impact of this period in their lives has been significant in many cases.

There were also those who interpreted Dr Bowlby's work to mean that the best outcome was for children to be raised by their mothers. Some homes for unmarried mothers, therefore, had a policy that babies remain with their mothers for a set period, in order to allow the mothers to recover from the birth and be in a better position to consider the future for their children. Sometimes fathers and grandparents, who had refused to support the mother throughout the pregnancy, had a change of heart, when they were personally introduced to the child. As a result, some mother ships were rescued at the last minute and the mother and child found their way into a lifeboat.

The dominant issues for many mothers were the disempowerment and lack of self-determination which they experienced, at a time of extreme emotional vulnerability. Rarely were they allowed to choose whether or not to see their baby, to name their baby or to nurse their baby. Some were even forced to deliver while under a general anaesthetic. This practice was intended to prevent post-natal bonding of mother and child. In situations where the father of the child may have wished to be included, he was often prevented by family and professionals from any involvement.

There is no doubt that some of those in positions of power took opportunities to abuse it. In some cases, organisations abused their power, such as the horrific history of the Magdalene Laundries in Ireland, which operated from the late eighteenth century until 1996. Many thousands of women were incarcerated for the flimsiest of reasons, often for many years, in Magdalene Laundries, which operated in the twentieth century as adoption agencies. We also know from the accounts of mothers, that in other cases individuals abused their power in a variety of ways.

Availability of financial assistance in Australia

During the Second World War, in 1942, a Widow's Pension was made available in Australia, but originally only to a genuine widow or to a 'deserted wife' under certain circumstances. It was rarely made available to unmarried mothers, partly because there was a fear in the community that if benefits were too readily available for unmarried mothers, that this would encourage irresponsibility and sexual immorality.

In some families, children, regardless of their legitimacy, were valued to the extent that a way would be found for them to remain in the family. In such cases, some government assistance was available. A Special Benefit could be paid, but this was a short term payment, not designed to take the place of a permanent income. Family Allowance was payable to unmarried mothers, but this was a small payment, intended to supplement, not to replace a steady income. These government allowances, however, could assist a family to support an unmarried mother and her child, if the family chose to do so.

Then, in the early 1970s, unmarried mothers in Australia, with the support of the Council for the Single Mother and her Child, began to lobby the federal government to provide financial support for them, in order that their children could experience the same emotional benefits as the children of married mothers and widows. In 1973, new legislation was introduced which meant that unmarried mothers were entitled to a Supporting Mothers Benefit. Since that time, single mothers have been able to provide their young children with the necessary nurturing, while the government provides the necessary financial support.

The name of the payment was changed in 1977 to Supporting Parents Benefit, when single fathers became eligible. The payment is now known as a Parenting Payment.

Recipients are required to seek child support, where appropriate and so the responsibility of both parents to provide for children is acknowledged.

Percentage of illegitimate children who were adopted

Although not all unmarried mothers of this era lost their children to adoption, it is impossible to determine what percentage of them did actually raise their children as single mothers, because of the way in which personal details were recorded in countries such as Australia.

Mothers who were living in de facto, or common-law marriage situations were, nevertheless, legally unmarried and their children were recorded as illegitimate. Those children, who were actually raised in a family situation by their parents, would be counted among the ones who were not adopted.

Some unmarried mothers who had support from their families, on the other hand, were not allowed to raise their children. Many illegitimate children were separated from their mothers and raised by another relative, whom they grew up to regard as their mother. Those children also would be counted among those who were not adopted.

This means that a comparison between the number of adoptions and the number of illegitimate children born in this period does not provide an accurate picture of the percentage of illegitimate children who were raised by single mothers.

However, we now have considerable evidence from the unmarried mothers whose children were adopted, which indicates that most of those mothers did not have financial support from either the fathers of their children or their own parents, which would have allowed them to be full-time carers to their infants.

The number of mother ships which came to grief on the adoption iceberg could have been reduced, if adequate financial support from the government had become available at an earlier date.

The dilemma

Unmarried mothers, as portrayed in *Adoption Separation*, were judged to be guilty of acting both immorally, by violating the prescribed sexual code of conduct and irresponsibly, by breaching the Protestant work ethic. They were therefore considered to have failed themselves and their children on both counts. They often found themselves shamed and blamed by families, friends, religious organisations and welfare professionals.

Even if they felt strong enough to withstand the community disapproval, which could have a long term impact on their own lives as well as the lives of their children, they still faced an insoluble dilemma. In order to fulfil their responsibilities under the Protestant work ethic ideal, they would be forced to transgress the attachment theory ideal. If they planned to provide for their children financially, they were going to be unable to provide for them emotionally.

Because of this, the strong message, which they encountered both directly and indirectly from many sources, was that if they loved their children, they would agree for them to be adopted, rather than selfishly try to raise them and thereby condemn them to a life of both financial and emotional disadvantage. In this way, their love for their children was used as a weapon against their motherhood. Any unmarried father who considered raising his child would have been faced with the same dilemma.

Because of the apparently insoluble nature of this dilemma, many unmarried mothers felt that they were being ***forced by circumstances*** to consent to adoption, in spite of the fact that they had no way of knowing what the long term outcomes would be, for themselves or for their children. Many unmarried mothers were placed in a powerless situation and were therefore unable to assert themselves in defence of their motherhood. In most cases, the question which was presented to them was not whether they wanted to raise their children,

but whether or not they wanted what was ‘best for their children’ - which was, of course, defined for them by others.

It was very difficult for individual mother ships to circumvent the adoption iceberg, because of its massive destructive power. The result was that many loving mothers were prevented from raising their children, in spite of the fact that they had not shown any indication of being incompetent. Many did, in fact, go on to become very competent parents to subsequent children. However, they often felt diminished by the experience which resulted in the loss of what was, for most, their first child and, for some, their only child.

For some mothers, the separation from their child became permanent. They were prevented from discovering the whereabouts of their child initially by the child’s name being legally changed. The rationale for this may have been based on a fear that when the mother was able to recover from the birth and consider the reality of her relationship with her child, she may have been able to find a way out of her dilemma and then attempt to claim back her child. This policy of changing the child’s legal identity and concealing that new identity suggests an unacknowledged awareness that many mothers did not part with their children voluntarily and that, if support had become available, they may have attempted to reclaim and raise their children.

In the majority of the geographical locations represented in *Adoption Separation*, mothers are still prevented, when their children become adults, from accessing the legal documents which would give them this information and allow them to attempt to trace their adult children. It seems to some mothers that they are doomed to be permanently punished for having been forced by circumstances into ‘doing the right thing’. There is a painful irony in the fact that they were considered to be responsible enough when they were much younger to make a life-altering decision, but it seems that once their children are adults, those same mothers cannot be trusted to have information about their children’s identities.

Conclusion

Societal changes in the countries represented in *Adoption Separation* have to a large extent resolved the dilemma which was faced by unmarried mothers in earlier times. Religious beliefs have been robustly challenged and the power of religion to define people’s convictions has diminished. This has led to a more liberal attitude towards sexual behaviour. The efforts of the Feminist movement have helped to improve equity for women in the workforce. Because many parents whose lives have been affected by adoption separation have been brave and generous enough to share their experiences, we have learned from the errors and horrors of the past. Society has also benefited from learning of the experiences of those who were adopted and of the long term impact on them of being separated from their families of origin.

It is rare nowadays for mothers in the countries represented in the book to be discriminated against with regard to ante-natal and post-natal care on the basis of their marital status. The result for all of those countries, Australia in particular, has been that very few mothers and children are separated by adoption in the twenty-first century, for the reasons which prevailed in the past.

Many thousands of parents and children in those countries, however, are still suffering because they were separated by adoption. As a result, several state and territory governments in Australia have issued formal apologies to all those whose lives have been adversely affected by the past adoption policies and practices described in *Adoption Separation*. In 2013 we expect an apology from the Australian Federal Government. These apologies attest to the fact that the policies and practices which resulted in so many family separations were both harmful and indefensible.

However, there are still countries around the world in which many mother ships are foundering on adoption icebergs. Since the middle of the twentieth century, hundreds of thousands of children have been removed from their mothers and families in countries such as the Philippines and the Republic of Korea to be adopted into other countries, including Australia. Unmarried mothers around the world are still feeling that they are being forced by circumstances to part with their children. Their experiences are very similar to those for which Australians are currently receiving apologies.

Australia has acknowledged the damage caused by unnecessary separations of children from their families. We also have a responsibility to assist those countries, in which this is still occurring, to develop solutions, which will meet the needs of families who find themselves in difficulties. We must cease to support the unjustifiable removal of children from their mothers, anywhere in the world.

Australia must now bow to increasing national and international pressure to consider further apologies for having continued to support the insupportable in other countries.

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Adoption and Loss – *The Hidden Grief*

Adoption and Recovery – *Solving the mystery of reunion*

Adoption Reunion – *Ecstasy or Agony?*

Adoption Separation – *Then and now*

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