ADOPTION: SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Adoption: Social Work Practice from a Biblical Perspective

OUTLINE AND HANDOUTS

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Objectives
- Assess personal values and beliefs regarding adoption.
- Understand adoption as a viable alternative to building families.
- Identify key challenges faced by social workers providing services to members of the adoption triad.
- Discuss the Biblical perspective of adoption.

Definition of Adoption
- Adoption is a legal action which creates a family for a child.
- The percentage of adoptees under the age of 18, in the United States, is 2.5% (Barth, 2008)

Current Global Reasons for Adoptions
- Client’s self determination to make an adoption plan
- Government Policies
- War
- Cultural Beliefs
- Poverty
- Disease and Death (Price, 2005)

Types of adoption
- Foster/adopt
- Domestic
- Transracial
- Intercountry (transnational)
- Kinship

Spectrum of openness

Adoption process for adoptive families:
- Application (state laws and international laws regarding who can adopt)
• Homestudy
• Adoption education
• Background checks
• Identify a child or children
• Placement
• Post placement services (subsidies)
• Post adoption services

Federal Laws
• Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978
• Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act of 1978
• Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994
• Interethnic Placement Act of 1996
• Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997
• Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980
• Tax credit laws passed in 1996 and 2001
• Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendment of 2001
• Adoption Promotion Act of 2003
• Keeping Children and Families Safe of 2003

International Treaty: Hague Convention
• United States is a member
• Hague Convention protects, promotes, and prevents
• Hague Convention requires parents to receive training on raising a child that was born in another country.

(Hague Conference on Private International Law, 1993)

Social work practice: micro, mezzo, macro
  Biblical
  • “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”
    (James 1:27, NIV)
  • “Learn to do right. Seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of fatherless. Plead the case of widows.”
    (Isaiah 1:17 NIV)
  NASW Code of ethics
  • “Social workers should promote the general welfare of society from local to global levels, and the development of people, their communities, and their environment.”
“Social workers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only with the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience or other relevant professional experience.”

(NASW, 2008)

Providing Services: Ethical Dilemmas
- Whom do we help?
- How much do we help?
- When do we help?
- How do we help?
- From where do we help?
- With what attitude do we help?

(Keller, 2010)
- Cultural conflicts: race, religion, and ethnicity (Engel, Phillips, & DellaCava, 2010)
- Birthfathers (Seubert, 2011)
- Best interest of the child (NASW, 2008)

Adopted Child Syndrome: Does it exist?
(Kirschner, 2008, 1998)
(Lifton, 2010)

What is Your Perspective?
Pathology Perspective
- Person has symptoms related to adoption
- Problem focused
- Childhood trauma predicts mental illness

Strengths Perspective
- Person is defined as unique with talents, traits and resources
- Possibility focused
- Childhood trauma may weaken or strengthen the individual - resilience

(adapted from Schriver, 2004)

Adoption: An Overarching Theme of the Scriptures
- Social workers can play a key role by educating others to the scriptural foundations of adoption.
- Galatians 4:4-6
- James 1:27
- Romans 8:14-16, 29
- Ephesians 1:5
- We are all adopted into the family of God, through Christ.
• Esther and Samuel

Comparison of adoption in earthly family and heavenly family

Adoption: Earthly Family
• Costly
• Legal
• Plan
• Heir

Adoption: Spiritual Family
• Christ died for us
• Justified and Redeemed
• Galatians 4:4-7
• Heir

(Piper, 2011)

7 Core Issues of Adoption for adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents
• Loss
• Rejection
• Guilt and Shame
• Grief
• Identity
• Intimacy
• Mastery/control

(Silverstein and Kaplan 1982)

Assessment Questions for Adult Adoptees
• Tell me your adoption story.
• Describe your current relationship with your parents? Siblings? Extended family members? Birth family members?
• Who else do you talk to about what your adoption?
• How did you celebrate your birthday this year? Last year?
• What holidays do you celebrate? How do you celebrate those holidays?
• What role does spirituality have in your life? What about religion?

Social Work Interventions
• Adoption is an intervention (van Ijzendoorn & Juffer, 2005)
• Spirituality (Jackson, White, O’Brien, DiLorenzo, Cathcart, Wolfe, Bruskas, Pecora, Nix-Early, & Cabrera, 2010)
• Medical intervention (Welsh, Viana, Petrill, & Mathias, 2007)
• Reactive Attachment Disorder (Welsh, Viana, Petrill, & Mathias, 2007)
• ADHD, ODD (Keyes, Sharma, Elkins, Iacono, & McGuee, 2008)
• Practice model to protect ethnic identity (Bailey, 2006)

Transracial Adoptive Families
• Ethnicity, culture, heritage (Yoon, 2001; Song & Lee, 2007; Perry, 2010)
• Sense of belong (Brodzinsky, Schechter, & Henig, 1992)

Research
• Motivation to Adopt (Bramlett, Foster, Frasier, Satorius, Skalland, Nysse-Carris, et al., 2010)
• Behavioral Problems of Post-Institutionalized International Adoptees (Hawk & McCall, 2010)
• Self Esteem (Yoon, 2001)
• Preparing Children for Adoption - Lifebooks (Hanna, 2007)
• Post-Adoption Depression (McKay, Ross, & Goldberg, 2010)
• Twins Reared Apart (Markon, Krueger, Bouchard, & Gottesman, 2002)
• Disruptions and Dissolutions (Wright, 2009)

Case Example: Moses
### Cultural Competence: Current Adoption Terminology

#### Positive Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adoption triad</td>
<td>(adoption constellation-agency, foster families, etc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adoptee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth child, born into our family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Placed in a public setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth, biological parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Born to unmarried parents</td>
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<td>Internationally born child</td>
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<td>Child placed for adoption</td>
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<td>Child with special needs</td>
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<td>Court termination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make an adoption plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercountry/transnational adoption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interracial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidential adoption</td>
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<tr>
<td>My child</td>
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<tr>
<td>To parent</td>
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#### Negative Language

<table>
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<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adoption triangle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adopted child</td>
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<td>Own child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abandoned</td>
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<td>Real, natural parent</td>
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<td>Illegitimate</td>
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<td>Foreign child</td>
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<td>Unwanted child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handicapped child</td>
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<td>Child taken away</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give away / give up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign adoption</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed race</td>
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<td>Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adopted child</td>
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<td>To keep</td>
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(adapted from Spencer, 1979)
References


