

	<p><b>North American Association of Christians in Social Work</b> <i>A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work</i></p> <p>PO Box 121 Botsford, CT 06404 <a href="http://www.nacsw.org">www.nacsw.org</a> 888.426.4712</p>
--	---

**ADOPTION: SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE FROM A BIBLICAL  
PERSPECTIVE**

**By: Karin Price, MSW**

**Presented at:  
NACSW Convention 2011  
October, 2011  
Pittsburgh, PA**

# **Adoption: Social Work Practice from a Biblical Perspective**

## **OUTLINE AND HANDOUTS**

**Karin Price, MSW, LSW**  
Director of Adoption Education Center  
Midwest Regional Coordinator for Dillon International, Inc.  
[karin@dillonadopt.com](mailto:karin@dillonadopt.com)  
[www.dillonadopt.com](http://www.dillonadopt.com)

### **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

Adoption triad - (adoption constellation-agency, foster families, etc)

Adoptee

Birth child , born into our family

Placed in a public setting

Birth, biological parent

Born to unmarried parents

Internationally born child

Child placed for adoption

Child with special needs

Court termination

Make an adoption plan /  
decide/ choose adoption

Intercountry/transnational adoption

Interracial

Confidential adoption

My child

To parent

### Negative Language

Adoption triangle

Adopted child

Own child

Abandoned

Real, natural parent

Illegitimate

Foreign child

Unwanted child

Handicapped child

Child taken away

Give away / give up

Foreign adoption

Mixed race

Closed

Adopted child

To keep

(adapted from Spencer, 1979)

## References

- Anderson, D. (2005). Post-adoption services: Needs of the family. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 9(3), 19-33.
- Backhaus, K.A. (1984). Life books: Tool for working with children in placement. *Social Work*, 29(6), 551-554.
- Bailey, J. D. (2006). A practice model to protect the ethnic identity of international adoptees. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 10(3), 1-11.
- Barth, R.P. (2008). Adoption. In T. Mizrahi & L. E. Davis (Eds). *Encyclopedia of Social Work*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxford-naswsocialwork.com/entry?=t203.e5>
- Bramlett, M.D., Foster, E.B., Frasier, A.M., Satorius, J., Skalland, B.J., Nysse-Carris, K.L., et al. (2010). Design and Operation of the National Survey of Adoptive Parents, 2007. National Center for Health Statistics. *Vital Health Statistics*, 1(50), 1-154.
- Brodzinsky, D. M., Schechter, M.D., & Henig, R.M. (1992). *Being Adopted: Lifelong Search for Self*. NY: Doubleday.
- Engel, M. H., Phillips, N. K., & DellaCava, F. A. (2010). Cultural difference and adoption policy in the United States: The quest for social justice for children. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 18(2), 291-308.
- Hague Conference on Private International Law, Final Act of the Seventeenth Session, Including the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, convention No. 33, May 29, 1993, 32 I.L.M. 1134.
- Harris, H. W., & Harris, B. (2011). Faith and adoption: Applying the principles of Alan Keith-Lucas. *Social Work & Christianity*, 38(1), 51-63.
- Hawk, B., & McCall, R.B. (2010). CBCL behavior problems of post-institutionalized international adoptees. *Clinical Child Family Psychology Review*, 13, 199-211.
- Jackson, L.J., White, C.R., O'Brien, K., DiLorenzo, P., Cathcart, E., Wolfe, M., et al. (2010). Exploring spirituality among youth in foster care: Findings from the Casey Field Office Mental Health Study. *Child and Family Social Work*, 14 (1), 107-117.
- Keller, T. (2010). *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Make Us Just*. NY: Dutton.
- Keyes, M.A., Sharma, A., Elkins, I.J., Iacano, W.G., & McGuee, M., The mental health of US adolescents adopted in infancy. *Archived Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*, 162(5) ,419-425.



- Kirschner, D. (2008). Jean Paton's vision and today's reality. *Decree*, 24(4), 3.
- Kirschner, D (1988). Antisocial behavior in adoptees: Patterns and dynamics. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 5(4), 300-314.
- Lifton, B. J. (2010). Ghosts in the adopted family. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 30(1), 71-79.
- Markon, K.E., Krueger, R.F., Bouchard T.J., & Gottesman, I. L. (2002). Normal and abnormal personality traits: Evidence for genetic and environmental relationships in the Minnesota study of twins reared apart. *Journal of Personality*, 70 (5), 661-694.
- MacLeod, J., & Macrae, S. (2006). *Adoption Parenting: Creating a Toolbox, Building Connections*. NJ: EMK Press.
- McKay, K., Ross, L. E., & Goldberg, A. E. (2010). Adaptation to parenthood during the post-adoption period: A review of the literature. *Adoption Quarterly*, 13(2), 125-144.
- NASW. (2008). *Code of ethics*. Washington DC: National Association of Social Workers.
- O'Malley, B. (2002). *Lifebooks: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child*. MA: Adoption-Works.
- Payne, J. L., Fields, E. S., Meuchel, J. M., Jaffe, C. J., & Jha, M. (2010). Post adoption depression. *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 13(2), 147-151.
- Perry, S. L. (2010). The effects of race, religion, and religiosity on attitudes towards transracial adoption. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 41(5), 837-854.
- Piper, J. (2011). Adoption: The heart of the gospel. In D. Cruver (Ed.). *Reclaiming adoption: Missional living through the rediscovery of abba father* (pp 95-107). Adelphi,MD:Cruciform Press.
- Price, K. (2005). Best interest of a child: An introduction to international adoptions. *Social Work & Christianity*, 32(3), 248-262.
- Schoettle, M. (2003). *S.A.F.E. at School: Support for Adoptive Families by Educators*. MD: C.A.S.E.
- Schraver, J.M. (2004). *Human Behavior and the Social Environment: Shifting Paradigms in Essential Knowledge for Social Work Practice*. NY: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Seubert, S. I. (2011). Adoption shortcuts, safeguards, and pitfalls from an unwed father's perspective. *American Journal of Family Law*, 25(2), 42-49.
- Silverstein, D. N. & Kaplan, S. (1982). Seven Core Issues in Adoption. Retrieved on August 10, 2005 from [http://www.adopting.org/silveroze/html/lifelong\\_issues\\_in\\_adoption.html](http://www.adopting.org/silveroze/html/lifelong_issues_in_adoption.html)

Song, S.L., & Lee, R.M. (2009). The past and present cultural experiences of adopted Korean American adults. *Adoption Quarterly*, 12, 19-36.

Spencer, J.E. (1979). The terminology of adoption. *Child Welfare*, 8(7).

Van Ijzendoorn, M.H., & Juffer, F. (2005). Adoption is a successful natural intervention enhancing adopted children's IQ and school performance. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14(6), 326-330.

Welsh, J., Viana, A., Petrill, S., & Mathias, M. (2007). Interventions for internationally adopted children and families: A review of the literature. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 24(3), 285-311.

Wright, K. (2009) 'Adoption success': The reality of adoptive placements today. *Practice: Social Work in Action*, 21(2), 119-125.

Yoon, D.P. (2001). Causal modeling predicting psychological adjustment of Korean-born adolescent adoptees. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 3(3/4), 65-82.