

Silberman School of Social Work



Child Welfare Practice II

Silberman School of Social Work

Session 5:

Adoption – Part II

What is Adoption?

Adoption is the social, emotional, and legal process in which children and youth who will not be raised by their birth parents become full and permanent legal members of another family while maintaining genetic and psychological connections to their birth family.

Adoption

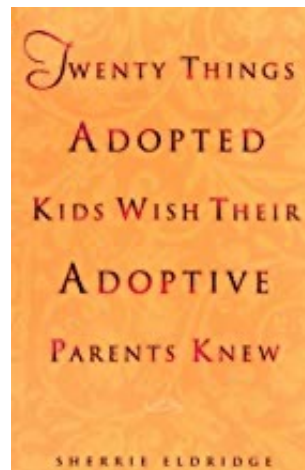
Adoption has many facets and touches people in different ways—depending on their role and perspective.

Read: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/>

Essential Books for Your Library

Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew

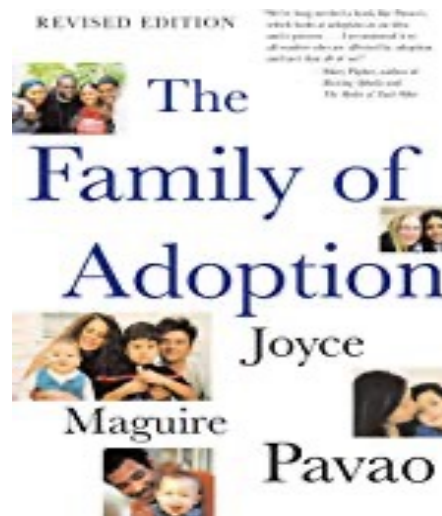
by Sherrie Eldridge



Essential Books for Your Library

The Family of Adoption

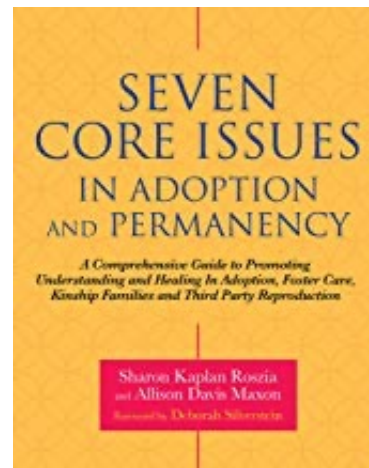
by Joyce Maguire Pavao



Essential Books for Your Library

Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency

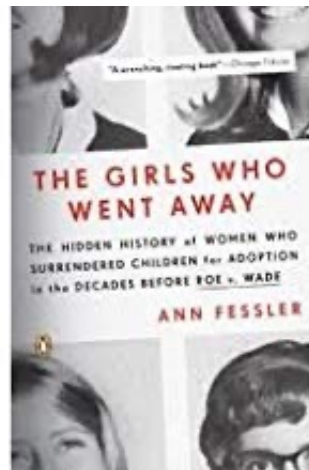
By Sharon Kaplan Roszia and Allison Davis
Maxon



Essential Books for Your Library

The Girls Who Went Away

by Ann Fessler



Essential Websites

[Born in June, Raised in April](#)

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/born-in-june-raised-in-april/id1088504227>

[Adopt US Kids](#)

<https://www.adoptuskids.org/>

[Struggle for Identity](#)

<http://www.pspny.com/living-adoption-series>

Essential Websites

Adoption Counseling & Search

<http://dorneradoptiontraining.com/index.html>

Oregon Department of Human Services

<https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/children/adoption/Pages/index.aspx>

[px](https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/children/adoption/Pages/index.aspx)

Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center

<https://www.orparc.org/>

The Adoption Life Cycle
Explore the Core Issues of Adoption
Exploring the Complexity of Transracial
Adoption

*Adoption is not an event but a lifelong process.
Working with adopted people and their
extended biological and adoptive families
requires training and awareness of attitudes,
perspectives, beliefs, and values that shape
everything social workers do.*

- Adoption is a lifelong, intergenerational process that unites the constellation of birth families, adopted persons, adoptive families, and their extended families forever.
- The adoption journey for all is characterized by joys and challenges.
- Recognizing how some universal life experiences influence the adoption experience is an important tool for prospective adoptive parents.

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

- Two authors, Silverstein and Kaplan, identify seven life experiences and how adoption may generate feelings related to these experiences.
- To this list we add two: fantasy and loyalty.

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

1. Loss
2. Rejection
3. Guilt and Shame
4. Grief
5. Identity

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

6. Intimacy

7. Mastery/control

8. Fantasy

9. Loyalty

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

- Families and individuals experience diverse feelings related to adoption.
- Understanding the commonality of these experiences, for all persons, prepares and assists adoptive parents by anticipating and understanding their child's feelings and behaviors.

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

- These themes are especially powerful because of the nature of adoption and its experience of loss that is common to all members of the adoption constellation.
- The philosophy of some adoption professionals is that adoption is “win-win-win” for everyone involved.

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

- However, this approach denies the reality of strong feelings in a relationship that include joys and challenges for everyone involved.
- These joys and challenges can be discussed in experiential terms as relating to loss, rejection, guilt and shame, grief, identity, intimacy, mastery/control, fantasy, loyalty....

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

- Experiencing strong feelings related to at least some of these themes is expected from those participating in an adoption journey no matter what their role.
- When these feelings are denied or covered up, their presence can disrupt an adopted person's emotional, interpersonal, and spiritual health.

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

- Many adopted persons particularly have challenges during adolescence.
- They become more aware of the significance of adoption, develop their own identity, and move toward independence and autonomy.
- These changes are developmentally appropriate and can be anticipated.

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

- The emphasis on these themes as related to one's adoption experience is consistent with defining adoption as a lifelong journey and empowering parents to anticipate challenges.

Lifelong Themes in Adoption

- Without a surrender/termination/relinquishment of parental rights there can be no adoption.
- Adoptive parents often acknowledge the significance of what is gained through adoption.
- Most people are quick to comment on what a great thing an adoptive family has done in adopting a child.

Search and Reunion

Everyone searches, either internally or externally

The questions of: Who am I? Who were my people? Why did they give me up?
Are powerful questions that need answers

Reunion is different from search it requires some facilitation

Summary

The following tasks and questions will help individuals and professionals explore the lifelong themes in adoption:

1. List the losses, large and small, that you have experienced in adoption.
2. Identify the feelings associated with these losses.
3. What experiences in adoption have led to feelings of rejection?

4. Do you ever see yourself rejecting others before they can reject you? When?
5. What guilt or shame do you feel about adoption?
6. What feelings do you experience when you talk about adoption?

7. Identify your behaviors at each of the seven/nine stages of the clinical process. Have you accepted your losses?

8. How has adoption impacted your sense of who you are?

Vignette #1

Maria is a pregnant 16 year old girl. She is opposed to termination of her pregnancy by abortion. Maria has decided to surrender her child for adoption and you are the social worker who will help her with the parental termination of her rights.

What do you do/
How do you assist her?

Vignette #2

Mrs. Peñafuerte is an Asian woman who surrendered her child for adoption when she was 19 year old. She is now 30 years old and has suffered from depression and suicidal attempts twice. She has told you that she feels she cannot live anymore without finding her son, She is desperate to find him, but it was a closed adoption.

How do you help her?

What do you say/

Vignette #3

John James is a 40 year old African American man he has known that he was adopted since he was 10 years old. He was determined to find his birth mother and when he did, he found that she was mentally ill and that he had been conceived by rape.

He is depressed, upset and deeply confused by this news

How do you help him?
What do you say?

Vignette #4

Mrs. Smith is a 55 year old, never married white woman who adopted an African American baby as a single woman, who is now a 25 year old man, named John. John has told his mother that he had been secretly communicating with his birth mother whom he had contacted 5 years before without telling his mother. Mrs. Smith is upset, hurt, and angry that her son has made this connection without her permission. She is depressed, upset and deeply confused by this news. John feels that this is his right

How do you help them
What do you say?

Review of the Session

Adoption is a lifelong process with joys and challenges for all parties involved

Adoption clinical issues are specific to the adoption process

Search is a process that everyone affected by adoption goes thru either in fact or in their head

Reunion is different from search

Reunion should be facilitated

Next Session:
LGBTQIA+ Issues in Child Welfare

Read:

<https://www.thehrcfoundation.org/professional-resources/all-children-all-families-lgbtq-resources-for-child-welfare-professionals>