

Universality of Grief experienced by mothers who lose children to adoption

© Mirah Riben

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- *shedding light on...The Dark Side of Adoption* (1988)
- *The Stork Market: America's Multi-Billion Dollar Unregulated Adoption Industry* (2007)

Riben has been researching, writing and speaking about adoption for more than thirty years, authoring numerous articles. She has been invited presenter at numerous conferences, radio and television.

She co-founded the original Origins of NJ in 1980, was former director of the American Adoption Congress, and past Vice President of Communications of Origins-USA.org.

Overview

- **Adoption on the Continuum of Mother Losses**
 - similarities and differences
- **Irresolvable, Disenfranchised Grief**
- **Universality of Grief**
 - myths that create and support otherness
- **Grief in Open Adoption and Reunion**
- **The Ripple Effect**
- **Conclusion**
- **Resources**

Mothers' losses of children are experienced along a continuum of losses – some natural, others man-made – which include:

- the loss of the dream of conception and the loss of the hope of a successful pregnancy
- miscarriage and still birth
- loss of a hoped for healthy child
- abortion
- custody losses
- voluntary relinquishment or involuntary termination of parental rights
- death of a child

Miscarriage

Death

Abortion

Custody

Adoption

- Some of these losses are socially accepted and accompanied by ritual to aid and comfort the bereaved.
- Some occur within a framework of domestic, political, or ethnic violence
- Some violate societal, cultural or family standards, are disenfranchised, shrouded in shame, guilt, and silence.

These differences impact the ability of mothers to grieve.

Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief by
Pauline Boss (1991)

“...there are also losses that are not given...public validation. The loss is never officially documented or ritualized.

“A family member may simply be missing, as are hostages, missing children, and MIAs.

“...long-term ambiguity is a severe stressor and will make vulnerable even the strongest.”

When ambiguous loss persists over a period of time, a person “is at risk for becoming highly stressed and subsequently dysfunctional.”

Adoption Loss

is a limbo loss with no ritual or closure.

It has been recognized as being

irresolvable,

creating disenfranchised grief,

risk of secondary infertility,

and post traumatic stress disorder.

Holli Ann Askren MSN, Kathleen C. Bloom, PhD, CNM, “Postadoptive Reactions of the Relinquishing Mother: A Review” *Jr. of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing*, Vol. 28 Issue 4 Pp. 395-400, July 1999

“The relinquishing mother is at risk for long-term physical, psychological, and social repercussions....

“Relinquishing mothers have more grief symptoms than women who have lost a child to death, including more denial; despair, atypical responses; and disturbances in sleep, appetite, and vigor.”

Some of the effects of loss of a child to adoption found by Dr. Geoff Rickarby, Member of the Faculty of Child Psychiatry, New South Wales, include:

- Pathological Grief
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Dysthymia and Major Depression
- Dissociative Disorder
- Panic Disorder (and other anxiety disorders including situation stress disorder)
- Alcohol and Prescription Drug Dependent Disorder
- Disorder and incapacity in human relationships

“Healing the Birthmother's Silent Sorrow,” Davidson, Michelene K., 1994. *Family Systems Research and Therapy*, Vol. 3, (pp. 69-89). Encino, CA: Phillips Graduate Institute.

“The birthmother's primary source of pain has been in the area of loss.

“She has not only suffered the loss of her child/ren, but the loss of her sense of wholeness, her sense of control over her life, and loss of self-esteem...”

“In some cases she has lost a home or has lost or suffered damaged relationships with members of her family.

“Often she has lost identification with her mother as a role model.

“She has suffered loss of being accepted by society and loss of her adolescence, as well as loss of her sense of trust and self-worth...

“This magnitude of loss is, to say the least, difficult for her to overcome.

“Sometimes the best a birthmother can do is to remain in denial and numbness for the rest of her adult life, unconsciously encumbered by her silent sorrow.”

Bev MacDonald, member Canadian Council of Natural Mothers, AAC Decree, Fall 2009 Vol. 26, No. 3

“How any of us ever survived all that we lived through is beyond me.

I consider myself one of the lucky ones because I didn't kill myself. I just died inside...”

NOTE: Throughout this presentation, voices of mothers, fathers and others who have personally experienced adoption loss will be in red.

Dr. John T Condon, "Psychological Disability in Women Who Relinquish a Baby for Adoption," *Medical Jr. of Australia*, Vol. 144, Feb 3, 1986.

Condon's study found "...a very high incidence of pathological grief reactions" among mothers who lost children to adoption.

"...existing evidence suggests that the experience of relinquishment renders a woman at high risk of psychological (and possibly physical) disability.

"Moreover...that actual disability or vulnerability may not diminish even decades after the event.

“67% of the sample reported either no change or intensification of these feelings over the intervening years....the majority of these women reported no diminution of their sadness, anger and guilt over the considerable number of years which had elapsed since their relinquishment.

“A significant majority actually reported an intensification of these feelings, especially anger...

“...the evidence suggests that over half of these women are suffering from severe and disabling grief reactions which are not resolved over the passage of time and which manifest predominantly as depression and psychosomatic illness.

Margaret Moorman, echoes Condon's findings in her book, *Waiting to Forget*:

“Over the years, I had found myself unable to relieve myself of my weighty memories.

“I would forget for months at a time, or even for a year, but there would always come a day when I couldn't...

“I had always assumed my
experience would diminish in
importance as it retreated in time,
but I found instead that it was only
more focused by the passage of
time....

“As I grew older, I gradually gained a cruelly clear perspective on what I had done.

“As I matured enough to think of myself as a possible parent, the ramifications of my youthful act – giving away my child – took on tragic proportions.”

“Long-Term Issues for Birthmothers After Adoption,”
Kathryn Patricelli, MA

“Even when there is virtual certainty that adoption was the right thing to do, it remains a difficult and emotional process for many birthmothers; one that may affect them for many, many years down the road....

“Even when initial grieving has been completed, grief may re-surface and be felt rather acutely during ‘anniversary’ periods (e.g., the child's birthday).”

Despite the depth of loss adoption causes,
it is *the only maternal loss that:*

- *is socially and religiously* encouraged within the U.S.
- *is promoted* by federal government tax benefits, incentives and promotions
- results in a gain for another
- supports a multi-billion dollar industry which promotes it

Universal Truths

“Whether they are upper-middle-class young women with career aspirations and family support, [or] birthmothers in the Marshall Islands whose culture and language do not permit an understanding of permanent voluntary termination of parental rights...or parents with multiple problems that lead to the involuntary termination of parental rights, **birthparents experience a loss that is nearly unparalleled in society.**”

Mary O’Leary Wiley and Amanda L. Baden, “Birthparents in Adoption: Research, Practice, and Counseling Psychology.” *The Counseling Psychologist*, Vol. 33, No. 1. January 2005, p. 30.

Yohane Banda, father of David, the first child Madonna adopted from Malawi:

“He was one month and seven days old. The orphanage made me sign a letter to show that I was handing him over to their charge, but I suppose deep in my heart I always imagined that when he was better, or I had got another wife, I would go and take him back.

“I did not think anyone would want to take him away....

“I would bring him food from my garden,
then sit and play with him for a while.

“I wanted him to know that I was his
father, that I love him very much. He is
my only child still living and I think of
him as a gift from God.

“He is also the best memory I have left of
my wife.”

James Kambewa, father of Mercy James,
Madonna's second adopted child:

“I am devastated. I did not even know that the judges were making a ruling about Madonna adopting my child on that day.

“I feel betrayed by my countrymen who gave me a deaf ear because I am poor and Madonna is rich.

“I will fight until my last drop of blood to have the right to my daughter.”

Myths Create and Support Otherness

Physical, cultural, social, and economic distance between adopters and the families adopted children are born into creates “have” versus “have-not” dichotomies allowing for a *dehumanizing otherness* of those whose loss fills a demand.

Common adoption myths that foster this division and justify an ethos of ethnocentric redistribution of children include:

- adoption “rescues” an abundance of “unwanted” “orphans” languishing in orphanages
- Chinese girls are given away because of government restrictions
- mothers are “relieved” of a “burden” and free to get on with their lives by relinquishing
- extremely impoverished mothers in places such as Guatemala are so desperate they sell their babies

Unpleasant Realities

- Nearly 90 % of children in orphanages worldwide are not orphans, but have at least one living parent and are not available for adoption.
- In Guatemala, India, China, and other parts of the world babies are stolen, kidnapped and trafficked for adoption as demand creates supply.
- Baby brokers pass stolen babies off as abandoned or pay women to claim they are the child's mother and are relinquishing voluntarily (continued)

- Others are coerced or deceived into believing their children are being taken to be educated and will be returned, or are made to sign documents they cannot read.
- In many of these countries, systemic corruption and criminal immunity leaves the mothers no legal recourse and they are accused of selling their babies that have been kidnapped.

The case of Ana Escobar of Guatemala unequivocally proved a stolen child was put up for adoption.

Reported kidnapped by an armed robbers, Ana recognized her daughter before she was sent to adopters in the U.S.

DNA tests confirmed Ana's identification and Esther was returned to her.



Research-China.org found that **mothers in China**, forced to abandon their female children, report that it is due to pressure from *their parents*:

“Li Feng indicated that the paternal grandmother was especially concerned that they have a son, primarily to carry on the family name but also due to fears that the family would not be viewed well if they had two girls...

“When asked if the paternal grandparents had been dead at the time their daughter was born, would they have abandoned that daughter, both [mothers interviewed] adamantly stated that they would have kept the girl....

“How often does each of them think about their ‘lost daughter’?

“The answer from both was immediate and identical: every day.

“Both showed in their faces the regret and shame they felt for what they had been forced to do...

“...perhaps not forced in any literal sense, but in a cultural one.

“Out of respect for their elders, both of these women and their husbands felt they could not fight the pressure of their parents.”

Korean birthmothers have been staging protests holding picket signs that read, "Real Choices for Korean Women and Children," "Korean Babies Not for Export" and "End Overseas Adoption."

"We hope that no other mothers have to go through the pain and suffering that we went through. Overseas adoption leaves deep-rooted scars both on the birth mothers and the children," Roh Myung-ja said in an interview with Yonhap News Agency.

Korean mothers struggles are documented in:

- A video of the Dandelion group's demonstration to end adoption at a Korean train station.
- *Resilience*, a documentary film by Tammy Chu depicting the loss, separation and building of broken ties of a Korean birthmother and her "American" son as they attempt to build a relationship after thirty years apart.
- (see references for links to both)

Open Adoption

Open adoption was intended to help adoptive families grow in honesty, reduce feelings of rejection and abandonment of adoptees as they grew, and ease the grief of relinquishing mothers.

The term “open adoption” is used to describe arrangements ranging from:

- pre-birth meetings of expectant mothers and prospective adopters, to
- letters and photos sent at intervals, to
- ongoing contact arranged informally or via a formal written agreement.

Studies of Open Adoption Indicate:

- as many as ninety percent of domestic *agency* infant adoptions today are open or semi open according to some sources
- adoptions that remain open are reported to provide satisfaction for adoptive and birth parents
- it is reported, however, that 80% or more of all "open adoptions" fail to remain open, leaving mothers feelings deceived and betrayed in addition to the traditional feelings of loss, grief, and shame.

“Birthmothers in semi-open or closed adoption may grieve their loss of ability to share in their child's significant life events.

“Birthmothers in open adoption arrangements may also have difficulty, for while they may be present at these special events, they are [not] acting as the mother of the child, but instead as more of a close friend or extended family member. They may grieve the loss of that closer relationship that ‘could have been’ with the child.”

“Long-Term Issues for Birthmothers After Adoption,”
Kathryn Patricelli, MA

When Open Becomes Closed

“After surrendering a child [in open adoption], some mothers find they are not able to keep their promises to visit or even maintain contact. For some it is too painful or too difficult logistically. Their decision may leave their child’s adoptive parents disappointed....

“However, when the adoptive parent(s) choose(s) to end contact, a mother can be left not knowing if her child is alive, and well taken care of. The adopters hold all the legal power. Yet the relinquishing mother takes the far greater risk, and stands to lose more. While subject to [a variety of differing] state laws, there is little recourse to uphold promises of openness in adoption.”

Riben. M. *The Stork Market: America’s Multi-Billion Dollar Unregulated Adoption Industry*, pp 121-2

“I did receive pictures and letters for the first year ‘as promised’. After that it was cut off. I have written to the agency every year since 1993 and I get the same response: ‘The parents have not shared anything at this time’.

“I believe that my ‘healing process’ has been put on hold since that last picture arrived because I have so many unanswered questions about him.

“What does he look like now? Is he healthy? Is he safe and secure?”

Sharon Roberts, <http://library.adoption.com/articles/open-adoption-9.html>

"I put my first son up for adoption 12 years ago. This was thru an agency [in] San Antonio. It was supposed to be a 'semi-open' adoption. I was to receive, at minimum, an annual photograph of my child.

“In the first year of his life, I received two very nice letters & two sets of photos from the adoptive parents...

“After that, they never sent me anything, ever again. I have been pleading with the adoption agency for over a decade ...

“I don't know if my son's alive or dead. I think about him every day and wonder if he's okay.”

Heather Webb, TX, USA.

“Levels of Cooperation and Satisfaction in 56 Open Adoptions”
by J. Etters, Child Welfare, Vol. 72, (1993), p. 266.

"Biological parents in many locations are reporting that their supposedly open adoptions have become closed once the decree has been signed.

“Adoptive parents report that attorneys have told them to promise biological parents anything because once the adoption is legalized they can do whatever they want....

“Some agencies are finding their adoptive parents making verbal or written agreements for future contact and then not keeping their promises.

“The written adoption agreements may be solid but they are not legally binding, as determined by Oregon courts, because they have no statutory support.

“Yet making them legally enforceable will not necessarily solve the problem. As John Chally, Oregon attorney, pointed out in an interview, promissory notes are legally binding yet frequently broken”

“It happens every day on the email support groups where birth mothers go to seek a soft shoulder,” says Heather Lowe, VP of CUB, in her article, ‘Broken Promises.’

“Ladies, help. I don’t understand what’s going on. My daughter’s parents are cutting me out of their lives.

“While I was pregnant, they told me again and again how I would always be a part of her life. They promised lots of pictures and twice yearly visits. Well, the visits haven’t materialized and I haven’t had pictures in ten months.

“What is going on? Why did they lie to me? I would never have entrusted my daughter to them if I had known this was how it was going to be.”

Quoted in *The Stork Market*, p. 122

Reunion

Most mothers, including those living in various levels of denial, welcome being found but may have to face their fear of revealing their secret to spouses and other children.

Regardless of who initiates the reunion, upon meeting one's adult child mothers become acutely aware of all they've lost. The joy of being reunited is often tinged with sadness and let down as the pain of all their child's lost years come flooding into the forefront reality.

As in open adoption with visitation, some find it painful to hear another called "Mom" while they may be introduced by first name, or the reunion is kept secret from adoptive parents.

The Ripple Effect

The loss of a child to adoption effects more than the mother, father and the child.

The adoptee and his or her lineage becomes a severed branch of his original family's tree and a loss of all future descendants.

Affected by the loss are:

- both sets of grandparents who lose a grandchild
- previous or subsequent children who have lost a sibling and live with a ghost or a skeleton in the closet
- aunts, uncles and cousins
- every relationship and every person the parent who relinquished is in relationship with

The Irish Times - April 12, 2010: Giving up a child for adoption

This letter, written by the sister of a child placed for adoption shows the depth of loss and grief experienced for more than just mothers.

“I recently found out that I have a sister who my mother gave up for adoption in the early 1970s in Ireland. The story is heartbreaking...

“Having researched the subject of adoption in Ireland ... I felt a strong need to raise awareness and ultimately to remember each and every mother who entered a mother and baby home throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s in Ireland.

“It is devastating to learn of the number of women who, due to their unmarried status, had no choice other than to endure the unpleasant environment of these homes for the duration...

“...of their pregnancy, give birth to their child ...and then return to society and carry on as if nothing had happened without anyone giving a thought for their emotional wellbeing.

“This letter is dedicated to my mother, as well as the thousands of other women who, due to their circumstances, very sadly had to go into mother and baby homes to have their babies alone and in secret. The majority of these women still live every day with the burden, the painful memories and the secret of having given up their child many years ago.

“Often they have not been reunited with their child, and can only wonder about their well-being and hope that they have led or are leading a prosperous life. Please take a moment to remember these incredibly brave women and their children.

“Yours, etc, CJ O'REILLY, Garratt Lane, London, England.”

Conclusion

There are no “other” when it comes to losing a child. A loss is a loss is a loss. All mothers, and their children, suffer unending grief from being torn apart.

The ongoing psychological and physical disabilities caused by losing a child to adoption makes it incumbent on every society to stop promoting this option and instead fund more family preservation programs.

It is also imperative that mothers, fathers and their parents considering voluntarily relinquishing a child for adoption receive *impartial* option counseling that allows them to make a truly *informed choice*.

So-called “counseling” currently provided expectant mothers by adoption practitioners, typically does NOT include the known lifelong effects of adoption loss. Mothers are ill-prepared, often having been told the opposite of reality:

- that they will forget and “get on with their lives”
- that they can have other children when they are ready
- that “open adoption” will alleviate the grief experienced by relinquishing mothers in the past

Proper pre-birth counseling:

- needs to ensure the parties are fully aware of all of the documented consequences such as irresolvable grief, just as one is informed of risk prior to a medical or surgical procedure.
- needs to provide honest information about the limitations of enforcement of open adoption contact agreement promises.
- must be provided to expectant mothers by a source not connected with an adoption agency which depends upon adoption placements to remain in business.

No adoption should be approved until a judge is ensured that a truly *informed* consent was obtained subsequent to proper and *impartial* counseling has been provided and that all the rights and consequences are fully understood.

Unlike this presentation,
there is no conclusion to the lifelong pain of
losing a child to adoption.

The irresolvable chronic pain ebbs and flows with flare ups triggered by anniversary dates and occurrences as common place as being asked how many children you have.

“Open Adoption” and reunification, often exacerbate feelings of loss, rather than abate the sadness.

There is no conclusion
for this ongoing limbo loss.

Resources on Mother Loss in Adoption

Books:

Boss, Pauline (1991). *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*

Clapton, G. (2003). *Birth fathers and their adoption experiences*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Interviews with 30 birth fathers about their reactions and emotions during the pregnancy and postadoption periods.

Coles, Gary. *Ever After: Fathers and the Impact of Adoption* (2004) This text on one level is a father's personal story of the parallel searches for himself and his son. It is also a comprehensive account of the repercussions of adoption for all members of the separated family, but in particular the father.

Fessler, Ann. (2006). *The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades Before Roe v. Wade*.

Foge, L., & Mosconi, G. (1999). *The third choice: A woman's guide to placing a child for adoption*. Berkeley, CA: Creative Arts Book Company. Two adoption counselors take birth mothers through the periods of pregnancy, adoption planning and placement, and grief and recovery.

Gediman, Judith, St. Brown, Linda P. *Birth Bond: Adoptees, What Happens After* (1989)

First person testimonies of reunion in the lives of parents and children by a mother and a social worker.

Gritter, J. L. (1997). *The spirit of open adoption*. Child Welfare League of America. A pioneer in open adoption practice gives a realistic look at the pain, joy, and beauty that open adoption holds for all members of the triad.

Jones, M. B. (1993). *Birthmothers: Women who have relinquished babies for adoption tell their stories*. The stories of several birth mothers are told addressing all the issues birth mothers encounter, including the pregnancy, placement, dealing with grief, marriage, later children, searching, and reunion.

Kelly, Ruth. *Motherhood Silenced: The Experiences of Natural Mothers on Adoption Reunion* (2005) Examines the experiences of a group of mothers who have had a reunion with their child who had been placed for adoption and the life-long consequences that impact mothers on reunion and beyond.

Mason, M. M. (1995). *Out of the shadows: Birthfathers' stories*. Edina, MN: O.J. Howard Publishing. The stories of 17 birth fathers are told to highlight the situation of this often forgotten group.

McKay, Linda Back. *Shadow Mothers: Stories of Adoption and Reunion* (1999) A collection of stories of adoption told by the mothers.

Pavao, J. M. (1998). *The family of adoption*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. The author, an adopted person and an adoption therapist, describes the developmental stages and challenges for adopted people, and includes real-life examples to illustrate these stages.

Robinson, Evelyn. *Adoption Reunion: Ecstasy or Agony?* (2009) Evelyn's third book is an updated and condensed version of her first two books. She explains concisely what it is about adoption separation and reunion which causes such intense and varied emotions. Each chapter includes a responses to questions she has been asked over the years.

Roles, P. (1989). *Saying goodbye to a baby. Volume I: The birthparent's guide to loss and grief in adoption*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America. Written by a social worker and birth mother, this book covers all of the issues faced by birth parents, including the pregnancy, adoption decision, loss, later issues, and reunion.

Romanchik, B. (1999). *Being a birthparent: Finding our place*. R-Squared Press. Handbook, written by a birth parent in an open adoption, discusses the role of the birth parent in an open adoption.

Romanchik, B. (1999). *Birthparent grief*. R-Squared Press. Handbook, as above.

Romanchik, B. (1999). *Your rights and responsibilities: A guide for expectant parents considering adoption*. R-Squared Press. Handbook, as above.

Rosenberg, E. B. (1992). *The adoption life cycle: The children and their families through the years*. A clinical professor in psychiatry draws on case examples to show how the different members of the adoption triad influence each other and to describe developmental tasks for those in the adoption circle.

Memoirs and Autobiographies by Mothers Who Have Lost Children to Adoption:

Barton, Elisa M. *Confessions of a Lost Mother* (1996). A day-by-day account of searching and reunited mothers, fathers, adoptees, and adoptive parents, weaving them into her own poignant story.

Denton, Kathy and Cummings, Teresa. *The Search of a Lifetime* (2000) The true story of Kathy's search for her daughter, lost to adoption and the fight for open records.

Darwent, Sharon. *Looking Back-Moving Forward: A Birthmother's Journey* (2003) An autobiographical account of a young woman's journey, beginning in 1970 when she discovers she is pregnant, her struggles coming to terms with the surrender of her son to adoption, her decision to search twenty years after his birth, and their emotional reunion ten years later.

Dusky, Lorraine. *Birthmark* (1979). The author describes how the loss of her daughter 12 years earlier marked her emotionally, intellectually, and politically and her drive to find the daughter whom she has never seen.

Ellerby, Janet Mason. *Following the Tambourine Man: A Birthmother's Memoir* (2007). Set during the sexual revolution of the sixties, the author follows her path from a protected and privileged childhood and early adolescence to her unplanned pregnancy and banishment and to her daughter's birth and adoption.

Guttman, Jane. *The Gift Wrapped in Sorrow: A Mother's Quest for Healing* (2000) After thirty years, a mother discovers the whereabouts of a son she relinquished as a teenager. The story depicts her attempt to contact him and her pain from his rejection.

Hall, Meredith. *Without a Map: A Memoir* (2007) A moving but unsentimental memoir begins in 1965, when she becomes pregnant at sixteen, her wandering life impacted by invisible grief. When he is twenty-one, her lost son finds her. Their reunion is tender, turbulent, and ultimately redemptive.

Kane, Beth J. *Thank You Son, For Finding Me: A Birthmother's Story* (1999)

Chronicles the author's successful reunion with the son she gave up for adoption.

Moorman, Margaret. *Waiting to Forget: A Motherhood Lost and Found* (1998)

Described by the "New York Times Book Review" as "uniquely enlightening", Moorman's story of losing her son to adoption, her successful career as a writer, her marriage and the birth of a daughter, and eventually coming to terms with the surrender 30 years later.

Musser, Sandy. *I Would Have Searched Forever* (1992) The author tells her personal story of losing her child for adoption in the repressed days of the 1950's.

Schaefer, C. (1991). *The other mother: A true story*. The author tells her story of being a birth mother and of later searching for and finding her son.

Scott, Betty Sue. *Shared Heartbeats* (2009) The author shares her journey from surrender to reunion. The latter half of the book contains stories and letters from other mothers who lost children to adoption. The author presents her inspirational story from a Christian base.

Souza, Susan Mello and Joanne Medeiros Harrington. *The Same Smile: The Triumph of a Mother's Love After Losing Two Daughters* (2002) The author, sixteen, unmarried and pregnant, was forced to surrender her daughter to adoption. Later she married and had three more daughters. Tragedy struck again when one of her raised daughters died from cancer. The book concludes with the author's joyful reunion with her first daughter and the beginning of a happy relationship.

Taylor, Patricia E. *Shadow Train: A Journey Between Relinquishment and Reunion* (1995) Taylor tells of her struggle and her baby's father struggle to keep their daughter. She describes her life after losing her daughter and their reunion. The book provides another accurate and sad picture of adoption loss, not only for the mother, but for the father as well. It presents convincingly arguments against adoption.

Research Articles and Book Chapters:

Askren, H. A., & Bloom, K. C. (1999). Postadoptive reactions of the relinquishing mother: A review. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing*, 28(4), 395-400. The authors use 12 studies with a total of 625 birth mothers showing long-term risk for repercussions; grief reactions, long-term effects, efforts to resolve, and influences on the relinquishment experience are discussed.

Carr, Mary Jo (2000). Birthmothers and Subsequent Children: The Role of Personality Traits and Attachment History. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*. Springer Netherlands, Vol. 9, No. 4 / October, Pp.339-348

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2004). Impact of Adoption on Birth Parents Series: Factsheets for Families www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_impact

Condon, Dr. John T. (1986). "Psychological Disability in Women Who Relinquish a Baby for Adoption," *Medical Jr. of Australia*, Vol. 144, Feb 3. <http://tinyurl.com/j-t-condon1986>

Connelly, M. (2002). *Given in love: For mothers who are choosing an adoption plan*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. Booklet describes emotions that many birth mothers experience when making an adoption plan and addresses such topics as naming the baby, keeping mementos, writing letters, and spiritual grief.

De Simone, M. (1996). Birth mother loss: Contributing factors to unresolved grief. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 24(1), 65-76. Authors surveyed 264 birth mothers an average of 25 years after placing their infants for adoption to solicit information on such topics as unresolved grief, extent of social support, moderating variables, and reunion experiences. Higher levels of grief were correlated with the mother's perception that she was coerced into the placement and with feelings of guilt and shame.

Deykin, E. Y., Patti, P., & Campbell, L. (1984). The Postadoption Experience Of Surrendering Parents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 54 Issue 2, Pp. 271 - 280. Published Online: 24 Mar 2010. Survey of 334 individuals. Findings indicate that having surrendered a child is perceived as having a protracted negative influence on marriage, fertility, and parenting.

Deykin, E. Y., Patti, P., & Ryan, J. (1988). Fathers of adopted children: A study of the impact of child surrender on birthfathers. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 58(2), 240-248. Questionnaire data provided by 125 birth fathers indicated long-term unresolved issues related to the adoption.

Fravel, D. L., McRoy, R. G., & Grotevant, H. D. (2000). Birthmother perceptions of the psychologically present adopted child: Adoption openness and boundary ambiguity. *Family Relations*, 49, 425-433. Interviews with 163 birth mothers in the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project show that the child placed for adoption remains psychologically present.

Portuesi, D. (1996). Silent voices heard: Impact of the birthmother's experience—then and now. *Adoption Therapist*, 7(1), 1-4. The author, a birth mother and psychotherapist, describes some of the emotional reactions of the birth mother, as well as ways that therapists can aid in the healing process.

Silverstein, D. N., & Kaplan, S. (1988). Lifelong issues in adoption. In L. Coleman, K. Tolbor, H. Hornby, & C. Boggis (Eds.), *Working with older adoptees* (pp. 45-53). Portland, ME: University of Southern Maine. Retrieved April 23, 2004, from <http://fairfamilies.org/newsfromfair/1999/99LifelongIssues.htm>. The authors describe seven issues that all members of the adoption triad must address.

Winkler, R., & van Keppel, M. (1984). *Relinquishing mothers in adoption: Their long-term adjustment*. Melbourne, Australia: Institute of Family Studies. The authors studied 213 birth mothers who had placed children up to 30 years earlier and found that many had continuing experiences of loss, which were often worse for women who lacked social support and opportunities to discuss their loss.

Other Sources:

Chu, Tammy. Resilience. A documentary film about loss, separation and building broken ties. Follows a Korean birthmother and her “American” son as they attempt to build to relationship after thirty years.

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A video of the Dandelion group’s demonstration to end adoption at a Korean train station can be seen at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Rfygpzugkk>